

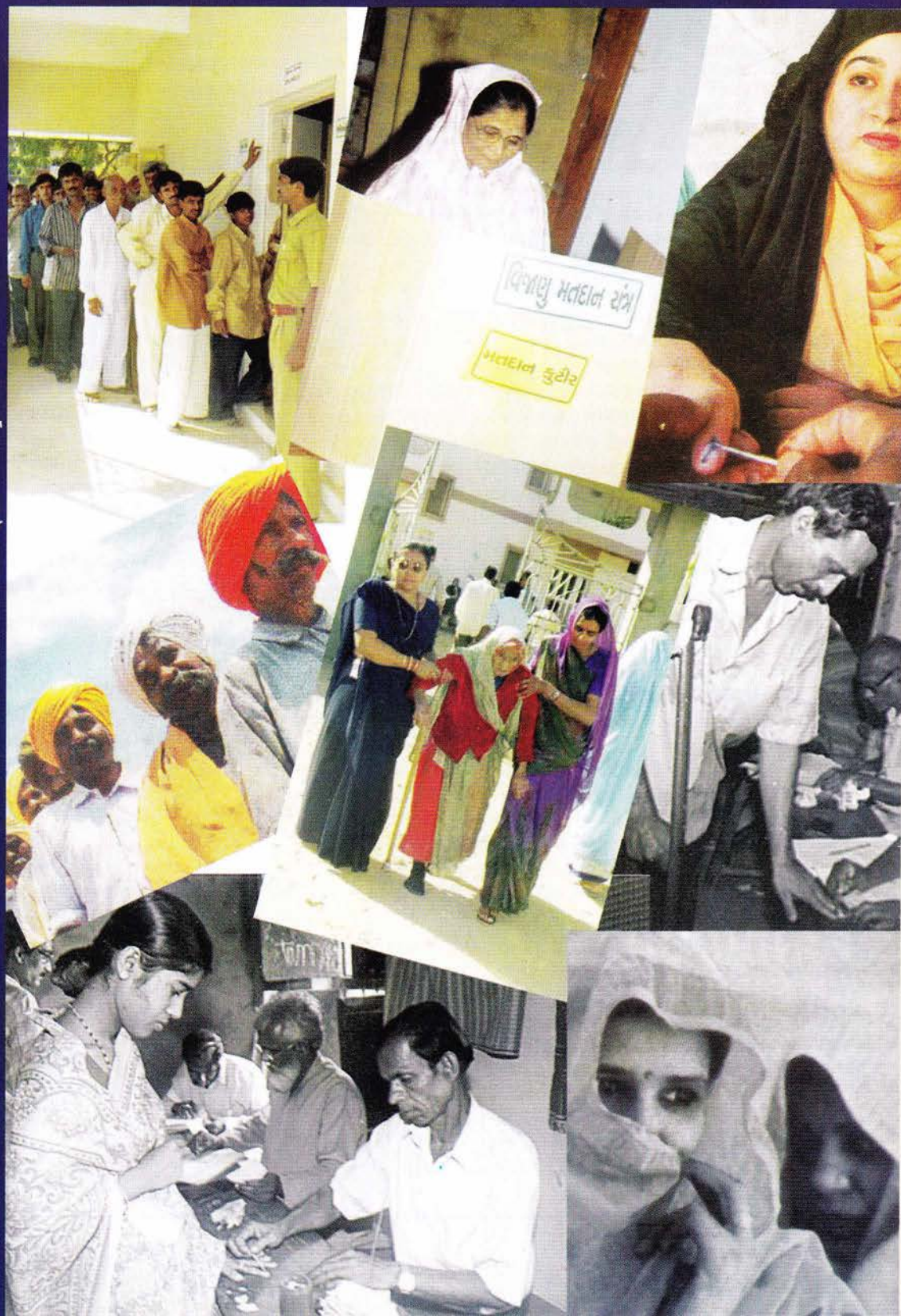
Freedom First

No. 461, April-June 2004
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A Liberal Quarterly

**India's
Festival
of
Democracy**
-Elections 2004

**A Decade of
Central Asia's
Independence**





(July 3, 1909 - March 22, 2004)

life and death. Little did they know or dream that this infant child in the years to come would make them proud has he has made our country proud.

Tarkunde gave up his practice in 1942 to become a full time member of the Radical Democratic Party and went on to become its General Secretary in 1944. After independence he started practicing in the Bombay High Court and acquired a large practice on the appellate side.

Chief Justice Chagla persuaded Tarkunde to accept judgeship of the Bombay High Court and he was elevated to the Bench in 1957. He was undoubtedly the most distinguished judge of the post-Chagla 1957 period. His thinking and judgements were marked by originality and boldness. He did not relish obstinate adherence to obsolete rulings and outdated judgements.

Tarkunde became a stalwart on the Original Side. He tried many famous and difficult cases including the libel suit filed by Thackersey against the tabloid *Blitz* in which he awarded damages of Rs.3 lakhs against *Blitz* which in the mid-sixties was a substantial sum. It is in that case that he passed the controversial order that the evidence of one Mr. Goda should not be published by the press. The correctness of that order was challenged and ultimately became the subject matter of a decision by the Supreme Court in the celebrated *Narash Mirajkar vs. State of Maharashtra* case.

Tarkunde's invaluable contribution to constitutional jurisprudence was his judgement in the *Passport* case. He was the first judge in India to hold that the right to travel abroad was implicit in the concept of personal liberty guaranteed in Article 21 of the Constitution and since without a passport that right could not be meaningfully exercised, a person had a fundamental right to obtain a passport. I had the privilege of arguing the case before him. His reasoning was subsequently endorsed by the Supreme Court in *Satwant Singh's* case in 1967 which was reaffirmed in the *Maneka Gandhi* case in 1978.

Justice V. M. Tarkunde

Fearless Crusader for Freedom and Human Rights

Tarkunde commenced practice in the Supreme Court from scratch in 1969. His services were in heavy demand. However he did not confine himself to his briefs. He took an active part in all matters concerning the independence of the judiciary or the autonomy of the Bar. When the supersession of three judges of the Supreme Court took place in 1973 Tarkunde was in the forefront of the opposition to this executive onslaught on judicial independence. He was active in organising a one day strike by the Bar against the government's action.

Tarkunde appeared in a number of important cases including *Kesavananda Bharati*, *ADM Jabalpur* and *S. P. Gupta*. Having experienced the pleasure of appearing before him I now had the pleasure of appearing with him in these landmark cases. But the most memorable, unforgettable experience was working with him in combating the spurious emergency of 1975. Telephones were tapped. Hence messages and communications from friends and colleagues in Bombay would be slipped by me late in the evening under the front door of his Defence Colony house to the utter bewilderment of his then teenage daughter Manik.

Tarkunde was in constant touch with Jayaprakash Narayan when he was in detention in Chandigarh and was undergoing medical treatment. He filed several applications to ensure that JP got proper medical facilities. It is not generally known that Tarkunde was, in a way, responsible for saving the life of JP who was dying in the PG Institute in Chandigarh where he was confined because of the mysterious failure of both his kidneys.

Tarkunde was no doubt an outstanding lawyer. But his claim to greatness as a lawyer and as a human being lay in his commitment to the cause of freedom and human rights without counting the cost. This was at a time when fear gripped many and erstwhile courageous souls had turned timorous. He possessed that rare and lovely virtue courage which is not merely one of the virtues but the essence of every virtue at the testing time. Emergency was the testing time for Tarkunde. Indeed that was his finest hour.

Soli Sorabjee

(Extracted from an obituary speech delivered by Attorney General Soli Sorabjee at the Supreme Court of India on April 7, 2004)

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Founder
Minoo Masani

Editor
S. V. Raju

Associate Editor
R. Srinivasan

Advisory Board
Sumant Bankeshwar
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Geeta Doctor
Yogesh Kamdar
Jehangir Patel
S. A. A. Pinto
Nitin Raut
Abe Solomon
Ajay Varadachary

Cover
Mayur Kotak
E-mail : kotaknet@vsnl.net

Publishers
Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom*
3rd Floor, Army & Navy Building,
148, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Mumbai 400 001.
Telefax : +91 (22) 2284 3416
E-mail : freedom@vsnl.com

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

This time's cover feature is on the General Elections of 2004 based on analyses by participants at a discussion meeting on May 22, organised by *Freedom First* in association with the Indian Liberal Group and the Project for Economic Education. The discussions covered a wide canvas and produced numerous perspectives. Valuable in themselves these perspectives have provided much food for thought. The discussions were not an end in themselves. The two associate organisations mentioned above are interested in pursuing the many weaknesses in the electoral system, ranging from the large number of citizens missing from voters lists to law and order problems that continue to prevent the free exercise of the vote particularly in parts of northern and eastern India. We welcome your comments for publication.

We have titled the cover feature "India's Festival of Democracy – Elections 2004. Why so? Because irrespective of whether who won or lost; or whether the voters gave a 'fractured' mandate which resulted in 'hung' parliaments or assemblies, the fact is that the large majority of voters had a selection of candidates and parties to choose from and, by and large, they exercised their choice freely. The fact also remains that we Indians have now got used to voting in or voting out governments, without causing upheals in civil society – what is often called smooth transfers of power. We have matured that far. This in itself a cause to celebrate – hence we should view elections as festivals of democracy.

The Indian Liberal Group and the Project for Economic Education have produced a model liberal budget. They have titled it "The Liberal Budget - Building an Equitable Society" and it is scheduled for release on June 23. By the time the next number of *Freedom First* is released, the Union Budget of the new government would be public. We shall therefore feature the Liberal Budget as the cover feature and carry articles which evaluate the provisions of the Union Budget against the benchmarks in the Liberal Budget.

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*

If we say yes, they will sit. If we say no, they will stand.

West Bengal's communist Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee referring to the Left Front's support to the Congress-led coalition at the Centre, *The Statesman*, May 24

Death due to starvation is the greatest violation of human rights and state governments cannot escape from their responsibility.

National Human Rights Commission chairman Justice A. S. Anand, *The Indian Express*, June 2

Most politicians are *goondas*. But those who perform are preferable to others who indulge only in crime.

Dr. Rajib Ghosh a resident of Purulia in West Bengal, *The Statesman*, May 10

I am doing Christ's work this way.

Rev. Thomas David of the Church of South India explaining why he along with three other padres had joined the BJP, *Sunday Times of India*, April 25

An election is not exactly a dip in the Ganga so it cannot cleanse you of all your sins. But this one decisively marks the decline of negative issues that have blighted our politics since 1989.

Shekhar Gupta, Editor-in-Chief, *The Indian Express*, May 8

The Congress opened the locks of the ill-fated Ayodhya masjid; but it was the BJP, which gained from the subsequent *Mandir* mood. Now the BJP talks of 'India Shining' and woos Muslims; and it is the Congress that appears poised for a revival.

Writer Amaresh Mishra, *The Indian Express*, April 30

Osama bin Laden must be delighted with American quasi-imperialism in Iraq. Instead of quashing terrorism, the US has surely created more terrorists.

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar, *Sunday Times of India*, May 2

You cannot justify killing of Sikhs in Delhi and condemn what happened in Gujarat, you cannot

condemn Narendra Modi (BJP) if Sajjan Kumar (Congress) is your man in Delhi.

Tavleen Singh, *The Indian Express*, April 25

If five-star hotels can import skimpily clad belly dancers all the way from Russia, why book hotel owners for obscenity and vulgarity?

A member of the Association of Hotels and Restaurants (AHAR) reacting to police raids on dance bars in Mumbai, *The Indian Express*, April 7

It is easy to compare Bush with Saddam! Wasn't oil the common reason for invading Kuwait and Iraq!

C. R. Irani, Editor-in-Chief, *The Statesman*, April 11

To my mind, probably the most corrosive aspect of the BJP-led government was something that was not always visible to the public eye: Its constant desire to control our lives. To decide what books we should read and what movies we should watch, what our newspapers, magazines and websites should print, what kind of speeches should be made, what kind of art is permissible, what kind of food we should eat.

Siddharth Varadarajan, *The Times of India*, May 22

The best way to listen to Navjot Singh Sidhu (the former test cricketer-turned-commentator and now a BJP member of parliament) is in complete silence. Sit back, press the remote to 'mute' and marvel at his excesses - sartorial or verbal - and the *bhangra* of his index finger.

Shailaja Bajpai, *The Indian Express*, April 14

Irrespective of how many Indians of different religious persuasions are killed, it did not matter to the mandarins in power during Congress rule, nor to the BJP today.

Patwant Singh, *The Indian Express*, April 23

When the common citizen has to fight for 10 months with 11 departments just to keep the file moving - this explains why the Third World is poor.

Gurcharan Das, *The Sunday Times of India*, May 2

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Justice V. M. Tarkunde (RIP)

Elsewhere we have reprinted extracts from the tributes paid to the late Justice Tarkunde by Mr. Soli Sorabjee. I would like to pay my tributes and that of *Freedom First* to an unquestionably outstanding individual.

At a condolence meeting organised by the local PUCL in Mumbai, I was surprised when the chairman of the meeting former Supreme Court Chief Justice Chandrachud chose me to be the first speaker particularly when there were many others on his list of speakers including himself who knew Justice Tarkunde far more intimately than I did. Ruminating on this on my way home from the meeting the reason for my surprise became obvious to me. Freedom to Justice Tarkunde was first above else and so it was logical for Justice Chandrachud to ask the editor of *Freedom First* to speak first!

Keeping company with so many radical humanists it was inevitable that one day I would meet Justice Tarkunde. And meet him I did. The opportunity came when Dr. Indumati Parikh asked me to drive her, Justice Tarkunde and a couple of others to a training camp at a village called Aine near Dahanu. Parts of the road were under repair and if we had to keep our schedule (it was around a hundred kilometers from Mumbai) unorthodox driving was called for! Much to my delight Justice Tarkunde sitting next to me encouraged me to be as unorthodox as I wanted to be and actually enjoyed the risks I took to overtake the long line of trucks along a hillside. I still remember his expressions of impish delight. He was enjoying every moment of the ride. And that spoke for the man. He was not afraid to take risks when required.

I came to know more about the man and his achievements when I assisted Mr. M. A. Rane, a devoted friend of Justice Tarkunde, who was editing a volume of extracts from Justice Tarkunde's writings for presentation to him on his 80th birthday.

Truly, a remarkable man. *Freedom First* salutes his memory!

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



Sumant Moolgaokar Remembered

Mr. D. R. Pendse who was, for almost 20 years Chief Economist to the Tata group of industries, has written a very readable anecdotal little book on the late Mr. Sumant Moolgaokar (SM). As the author himself observes in the preface it is not a biography but his own interaction with Mr. Moolgaokar who made TELCO what it is. Writes Pendse:

"This little book is not a... history of TELCO. Nor is it a biography of SM. But it seeks to capture in a story telling format, the story, my story of a dedicated visionary and a staunch patriot; the story of one giant (JRD Tata) discovering another giant (SM) ...and the two moving ahead together for the growth of industry and of the country's economy in the face of the most adverse policy-induced circumstances. A story as it unfolded day after day, before my own eyes." An aspect that ought to interest readers, from a historical perspective, is how SM ensured that the permit-licence-quota raj caused minimal damage to TELCO!

Priced Rs.120, those interested in acquiring a copy may please contact the author Mr. D. R. Pendse on phone 022-24939056; Email:drpendse@roltanet.com

*

The Creation of Wealth

My friend Russi Lala has sent me a re-issue of what I consider his classic *The Creation of Wealth - The Tatas from the 19th to the 21st Century*. First published in 1981, this is the fourth edition - bringing the story of the Tatas up to date. The third edition was reviewed in *Freedom First*. What caught my interest in the fourth edition is the epilogue by Ratan Tata, particularly the

passage in which Ratan Tata having taken over from JRD Tata worries that the latter would interfere in the work of his successor and found that his fears were unfounded. Please turn to page 48 where this passage has been reproduced. It speaks volumes for the kind of man JRD Tata was.

A book every young entrepreneur should read and imbibe the spirit that is contained in the following quotation from J.R.D. Tata: "What would have happened if our philosophy was like that of some other companies which do not stop at any means to attain ends...If we were like other groups we would be twice as big as they are today. What we have sacrificed is a 100 per cent growth' and firmly added: 'But we wouldn't want it any other way.'

*

Ramakrishna Paramhans *versus* Swami Vivekananda

Even the communists are talking religion in their election propaganda, according to a report in *The Statesman*. The appeal of the Left Front to voters mentions Vivekananda but leaves out his guru Ramakrishna Paramahans. When an enterprising *Statesman* reporter asked Mr. Biman Bose, chairman of the Left Front why,

Mr. Bose replied: " You cannot put them in the same bracket. Ramakrishna was a great figure but there is only one facet to his life while Vivekananda had three." When he was told that he was perhaps bypassing the fact that Vivekananda always acknowledged that his life and philosophy was based on his guru's teachings, Mr. Bose said: "Before Vivekananda became a disciple of Ramakrishna, he was a school teacher. Could Ramakrishna ever teach in school? Vivekananda had many faces. His Chicago speech reveals his religious philosophy but his social activities later in life have a different ramification!" In other words Swami Vivekananda was a 'progressive' Swami while his guru Ramakrishna Paramahans was -'reactionary'?

*

More Indian Students in the US despite 9/11

The Indian student population in the United States has doubled in the last ten years. According to the US Ambassador, for the second straight year the maximum number of students in the USA were from India. There were 74,603 students in the USA in 2002-2003. Obviously 9/11 hasn't frightened the Indian student community.

SVR



The Spirit of Swatantra ...

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

As far as the Swatantra Party is concerned and so far as I am concerned, I would definitely seek and advise the party to work to educate

the electorate rather than run after the immediate pleasures of transient political power. The economy of this great big nation is a complicated affair and it has been further complicated and made into what must be called a mess by the megalomania of the leaders of our political freedom struggle who took over the administration of the country. The foundation of our independence and self-respect has to be improved. The foundation is sound education of all sections of our population nothing less.

C. Rajagopalachari
June 1, 1968

India's Festival of Democracy

Elections 2004 – A Brief Review

This is a summarised report based on the proceedings of a discussion organised by Freedom First in association with the Indian Liberal Group and the Project for Economic Education in Mumbai on May 22, 2004. The focus of the discussion was (a) on the organisation and conduct of the elections by the Election Commission; (b) the issues that dominated the election campaign; (c) what is the message that the voter has conveyed; and (d) the impact of the results on India's polity.

The discussion was structured to maximise participation. Presentations by discussion leaders were confined to 10 minutes leaving 50 minutes for discussion at each session. This report follows the same pattern. The presentations followed by questions/answers and comments.

The Election Commission - Is its Autonomy at Risk?

S. V. Raju

There is real danger of the Election Commission (EC) losing its independence. Hence it is important for us, as citizens to ensure its continuing autonomy. At a recent meeting organised by the Leslie Sawhny Programme former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mr. Lyngdoh said he was convinced that the Election Commission was expanded from a single CEC to a CEC plus 2 ECs not because of government's concern with the burden that the CEC had to bear, but to pack it with its own men. Fortunately as it turned out government's ploy did not succeed because the two men they appointed proved to be men with minds of their own. They were prepared to stand up for the independence of the Election Commission. Fortunately again, for Indian democracy, the Election Commission continues to be independent with a little help from the Supreme Court of India.

The Election Commission needs government support in for manpower to manage an exercise of this magnitude (see box 'B'). Between 1967 and 2004 the cost of holding an election in India increased 720 times (see box 'A'). So governments at the Centre and in the states

exploit the EC's need for personnel and funds.

Funds and Manpower Needs

How can we, as citizens, help in 'tamper-proofing' the Election Commission (EC)? We can, by ensuring that the Election Commission is less dependent on governments for infrastructure support, by requesting or conscripting, if necessary personnel from the corporate world and from the large number of NGOs in our country.

Some Chairmen and CEOs of PSUs were selected to man polling stations. They were furious that they were being asked to do what they considered was not commensurate with their official status. The Electoral Officer of the state said that there had been a mistake. They were 'excused and staff from these PSUs lower down the line were asked to do the job.

We need to have election observers for monitoring. There were reports in the press that the Election Commission was challenged by the leftist parties (led by CPM in West Bengal) saying, that these observers 'interfered' in the election process. The 'leftist' party cadres even threatened the observers. Matters went to such an extent that the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal filed an FIR against the CPM. The CPM Chief Minister, according to press reports, disclaimed responsibility saying "I have nothing to do with it, the Bengal Government has no problems with the observers, it is the CPM"!

Discouraging Criminals from Contesting Elections

Thanks to two IIM Professors Jagdish Chhokar and Trilochan Sastry, candidates are now compelled to

Box 'A'			
Poll Years	No. of Voters (mn)	Govt. Exp. (Cr.)	Inflation Adj. Exp.
1967	250.2	1.8	1.8
1971	274.2	11.6	10.1
1977	321.1	23.0	11.4
1980	356.2	54.8	20.3
1984	379.5	81.5	22.4
1989	498.9	154.2	30.9
1991	511.5	359.1	58.1
1996	592.6	597.3	63.0
1998	605.9	666.2	62.4
1999	619.5	880.0	79.6
2004	671.5	1300.0 Est	103.0

Source: Times of India, May 8, 2004.

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declare their assets, and provide details of criminal records, if any. But thanks to the brouhaha raised by all political parties without exception, candidates who have criminal cases pending against them cannot be disqualified from contesting the elections. This initiative of the two professors must be carried forward. When the election campaigning was on, the Patna High Court delivering a judgement on a PIL ruled that all those who are facing criminal charges cannot stand for election. Sadly, the Election Commission charged with defending the law as it stands was compelled to play the role of the devil's advocate by appealing to the Supreme Court against the Patna High Court saying: "It may be true that we don't want criminals but you can't make a change in the middle of an election campaign."

Civil society must go all out to compel the government and the parties in the opposition to get the Representation of the People Act amended to deny nominations to those who have criminal charges against them.

Straying Beyond its Jurisdiction

At the same time, the Election Commission should

Box 'A' Elections 2004 Statistics on Electronic Voting

Total States & Union Territories: 35
Number of seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament): 545 (of which 2 are appointed by the President.
Total Number of candidates: 5398
Total Votes Polled: 38,74,53,223
Average Votes Per Candidate: 70,665
Number of Registered Voters: 675 million
Number of Polling Stations: 700,00
Duration of Election: 3 weeks in 4 separate rounds (for different areas)
Highest Polling booth in India: At Fastan village (Ladakh), 5180 metres altitude, 26 km. from the nearest road.
Largest Parliamentary constituency: Ladakh (173,265 square kilometres, with a population density of 1.3 people per sq.km.)
Total Number of Parties: 220
Total Number of independent Candidates: 2369
Seats needed for majority: 272
Total Cost of the Election: Rs.100 Million approx.
Voter Turn-out: About 56%, or nearly 380 million people.
Number of constituencies in India: 543

not stray beyond its jurisdiction though, understandably, they do so because the elected executive fails to perform its role as the lawmaker. For instance their suggestion to the Central government that Gujarat be placed under President's Rule. On the face of it a good suggestion but quite clearly it is not the Election Commission's business to ask for President's Rule. It is one thing to say that the ground conditions in Gujarat are not conducive to the holding of elections and another to suggest what is a patently political decision, best left to Parliament to decide.

When the EC asked the Uttar Pradesh administration to register a case against Lalji Tandon for bribing voters, in what has come to be known as the Saree tragedy when 22 women and children were killed in a stampede, the Election Commission perhaps over-stepped its jurisdiction when it asked the UP administration to take legal action.

Checking passenger baggage. The Election Commission asked that any one carrying Rs.Ten lakhs and above in cash and passing through the airport be questioned and the matter reported to the appropriate authorities. If this was to deal with unaccounted money – the main source of election expenses, one couldn't have thought of a more stupid method. This is not the business of the Election Commission. In any case it is not a crime to carry cash (see Box 'C' below).

Another doubtful area of transgression was demanding a ban on exit polls/opinion polls. The Attorney General of India Soli Sorabjee and a strong advocate of human and civil rights was very clear in telling the Commission that what the EC demanded went against the fundamental right to freedom of speech expression. A similar issue was the censoring of poll advertisements. This saw a fierce debate between the media and the government. The government quietly passed the buck to the Supreme Court which in turn

Box 'C' Cash in Transit Not Allowed

A Congress party leader and MLA in the dissolved Andhra Pradesh assembly was caught at Bangalore Airport carrying Rs.13.5 lakhs on Tuesday morning.

Airport sources said, M. Thippeswamy, Congress MLA from Palamur constituency in Chittoor district was caught after he landed at the airport by Indian Airlines flight IC 916 from Hyderabad around 10.30 a.m. He was on his way to his constituency and the money was meant for elections, sources said.

Courtesy: *The Indian Express*, 7th April 2004.

ruled that the Election Commission could decide on surrogate advertisements (Advertisements supporting one or the political party ostensibly sponsored by some non-party NGO but really a cover for the political party concerned).

These are highlighted not with a view to be unduly critical of the Election Commission but to caution it from

straying beyond its core competence – which is the organisation and conduct of elections. The Election Commission must always be seen to be fair and objective. Along with the Supreme Court, the Election Commission is the only other organisation that has kept the Indian democratic system alive and well. It is important for civil society to ensure that the EC continues to perform its duty without fear or favour.

The Discussion

This is a summary of the discussions that followed this presentation.

Code of Conduct

Question: What is the sanctity in law of the Code of Conduct? Is it just adopted by convention, or is there any law to enforce it?

Answer: The Code of Conduct is a set of rules framed by the Election Commission. For violation of the Code, the Election Commission can withdraw recognition granted to a party. The Election Commission originally formulated it. Then the political parties said, they would not go along with the Code, and filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court did not want to decide it one way or the other. Then the political parties and the Election Commission arrived at a sort of an agreement and an agreed Code of Conduct was formulated. The Election Commission and the political parties agreed that the Code of Conduct would come into force when the Election Commission makes a declaration that elections are to be held on specified dates. However the Code of Conduct has no statutory basis at all. The Election Commission, pursuant to the powers vested in it, has framed rules under which it can withdraw recognition of the political party, which violates the rules. So far this has not been done though there have many violations.

In an earlier election during the period the Code of Conduct was in force there was an agitation by cotton growers of Andhra Pradesh demanding that they be allowed to export of cotton. The then Minister of Textiles and the Textile Secretary allowed the export of cotton. The order was passed through the Election Commission. Mr. T. N. Seshan the then CEC put his foot down, saying that it would vitiate the atmosphere and could influence the voters. So he wouldn't allow it. A letter written to him on behalf of the cotton growers elicited no response. The same letter was faxed to the Chief Justice of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh. He treated this letter as a petition under PIL and summoned the Election

Commissioner, the state government and the Union government and to a hearing the day after receiving the letter. The Judge reprimanded the Election Commissioner stating that the Union government ought not to have abdicate their responsibility to the whims and fancies of the Election Commissioner. Mr. Seshan was furious but he had to obey the court order.

Declaration of Assets by Candidates

Question: About the declaration of assets, if a declaration of assets by a candidate can the Election Commission do something about it?

Answer: Not the Election Commission, but If somebody gives a false declaration, an NGO or some other organisation or any individual can challenge it in a court of law and it can be undone or punished.

Declaration of Criminal Charges against Candidates

Question: About criminal charges against candidates. Is it a good thing that these criminal charges are now being exposed even though people have not been convicted. Does it not open up the danger that the opponents of a candidate may file flimsy criminal charges against the candidate.

Answer: Merely because a case has been registered against a person I don't think in this country we can debar him or her from contesting elections. Because cases are registered, false charges can be made, then the inspectors in charge of police stations will become arbiters of who should contest the elections. That is one of the reasons why the Cr.PC. was amended to provide for anticipatory bail. There is a provision already in the Representation of the People Act that persons who have been convicted and sentenced for more than two years would be debarred from contesting the elections. That is why Shahabuddin continues contesting the elections. Though he has been charged with several murder cases.

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but the law as it stands today he is innocent until proved guilty. The Supreme Court, has held, in another case held that a person by being convicted does not lose his other civil rights. He continues to enjoy all the rights under Article 19 of the Constitution of India.

Perhaps one way to deal with this could be that a person who has got cases registered within the last year prior to the declaration of elections is not barred from elections. The one year period or may be six months is to ensure that there are not 'got-up' charges which are filed in order to eliminate a person from contesting elections.

On the knotty question of criminal charges against candidates, the above answer above may be technically correct. But realize the consequences. There are criminal charges against a large number of candidates who succeed in getting elected. Shahabuddin is one of them. Once a man is elected, criminal charges against him never get to a finality. There are people who have gone on and on with these charges hanging around their heads and have never been convicted and never will be. Are we going to allow this to happen? Or should we try to change the law such that at least when a man is charged by a court, he is prevented from contesting an election.

We can suggest to the government that whosoever files the nomination to contest an election, no matter whether he wins or loses, if he has admitted the fact that he is facing criminal charges he should be tried in a special court and it should be completed within a month or two months. That will discourage criminals from contesting elections.

Retired Election Commissioners Joining Political Parties

Question: A precedent has been set which may have a bearing in the long run on the independence of the Election Commission. A former Chief Election Commissioner has been brought into the Rajya Sabha. On the face of it, it is very innocuous. But it is a temptation for future Chief Election Commissioners that after they retire they have this opening. Any ambitious man would start in his own subtle way to cultivate a political party, which offers to send him to the Rajya Sabha or some other sinecure.

Answer: What is so special about former Election Commissioners getting into Parliament. So many judges have gone into Parliament representing various political parties. Where and how are we going to draw the line?

Will it interfere with the fair dispensation of justice? Is that the conclusion that we must arrive at? Or are there certain categories of Indian citizens who must be barred from Parliament? It is a far larger issue than saying that an Election Commissioner or a person holding high judicial or a person holding high judicial office has gone into Rajya Sabha. It cannot be dealt with in this fashion. This is a question that considers serious consideration because there cannot be a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

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When Citizens are Deprived of their Right to Vote

While the Election Commission has not been able to ensure that every registered voter is able to vote it has actually created hurdles which prevent even a registered voter from casting his vote. For example under the Representation of the People Act, when the ID card concept was brought in, it was by description and intent a second qualification of a voter. Suffice it to say that you ought to be an Indian citizen, you ought to be 18 years of age and you ought to be registered. Beyond that you don't need a qualification to be a voter to cast your vote.

The provision in the Representation of the People Act has to be modified to enable a qualifier new rule to come into being, and the process for doing this is simple. One ought to place on the Table of Parliament the amended rule under the Representation of the People Act for 60 working days even if it is spread over two sittings or two sessions. If nobody objects, it automatically becomes a law. So far I haven't heard of such a procedure having been followed with regard to ID cards. Why shouldn't Indians insist that once they register themselves they have the right to cast their vote. Unfortunately, why should I, if I wish to register myself, face the prospect of having to trudge all the way to the Collectorate and make sure that my name is on the voters list? I think the CEC does not have the discretion to disenfranchise a voter simply because of somebody's clerical mistake. This is a huge assault on the citizens' right and I think this is an area where Citizens' Groups ought to come in and tell the CEC that once an Indian citizen is registered the onus is on the Election Commission. It should not be difficult to develop software, which makes it unnecessary for people who change their places of residence for example, do not have to register afresh as they are already on the rolls and registration at the new place ought to cancel each other.

The Election Commission has to work only through the State Government. A study in Tamil Nadu revealed that there is an inflation of voters to the extent

of 70 lakhs. If you compare the census figures wherein they give the age-wise break-up, the number of those who are 18 and above in Tamil Nadu ought to be 4.25 crores. But there were nearly 4.92 crores voters, an increase of 75 lakhs. So on the one hand there are a large number of bogus names on voters lists and a large number of names of genuine voters missing. Very often, it also happens that a sackful of applications are given by the political parties for adding to the electoral rolls just before the election. So it is the responsibility of the political parties, the government machinery and the voters.

One of the biggest problems in the recent elections in Tamil Nadu was the number of people going to vote possessing voter identity cards finding their names missing in the rolls and therefore unable to vote. Your name is not there, though you have the Voter Identity card, you cannot vote. If you have your name in the rolls and not the card, you can vote. So the sanctity of the card is lost. We must insist that the Identity Card should have sanctity.

Just as the RBI Governor signs on currency notes that he promises to pay the bearer of a five rupee note five rupees which is equal to the value of that note, the CEC should sign on the Voters Identity Card, "I promise to protect the voting right of the bearer of the card". At least in the assembly constituency, if I have got a card for a particular assembly constituency, I should be free to vote at any polling station in an assembly constituency. Today this freedom is not available because everything is abused. If the elections are staggered, I can vote in one area and go elsewhere and vote again in another area. So the responsibility is not solely that of the Election Commission. The Election Commission has to function through the State Government officers. And the integrity of the State Government officers depends very much on

the morality of the State Government as well.

The ideal state institution to ensure the accuracy of voters' lists is the post office. The number of post offices is much more than the number of taluka offices. And the postman is every day on the street. When we change the address, we inform the postmaster and not the tehsildar or the voter concerned. You can keep the electoral roll in the post office. As the regular delivery of mail has come down because of the mushrooming courier services there are umpteen other things that the post offices are doing. So why can't post offices handle the job of maintaining electoral rolls in their postal areas? There is accountability. The post office has a defined jurisdiction. The postman has a defined beat. For these streets, he is responsible. There is therefore micro-level accountability.

Addressing the problem of many urban people getting disenfranchised, there is an income tax law, which says that you will automatically be in the income tax net if you have one-by-six. So why can't the Election Commission take the assistance of income tax, the people who are already in the tax net and take them straightway on the rolls?

In Andhra Pradesh too local MLAs and party leaders went round areas to high schools and elementary schools to gather names. They listed the names of elementary school boys and girls and they submitted the list to the tehsildar or the revenue divisional officer concerned who was acting as the registration officer for inclusion in the electoral rolls. As a result the number swelled beyond the total population of the constituency! It indicates how easy it is to cheat by artificially inflating electoral rolls. This makes a mockery of the election process.



Corruption is at all levels of politics and government. But the ordinary citizen comes face to face with it only at the lower levels: in the electoral booth and in his village or *mohalla* at polling time; at the clerical or junior officer level or at quasi-government offices. He should bear in mind, however, that corruption at the lower levels is not likely to be eliminated or even curbed unless the disease is tackled at the top levels.

Jayaprakash Narayan, *Everyman*, September 29, 1973.
Reproduced in *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol.4, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai

The Issues that dominated the Campaign

Nagindas Sanghavi

The complaint so often heard before in India was also heard this time that the elections did not throw up any significant issue or issues on the basis of which the voters can formulate an informed opinion and choose between the alternative programmes. It is true that the election manifestos of the parties had nothing to offer but inanities and generalisations that had no substantive programmes of action. They all talked about the goals of development and of providing the daily necessities of the people about which there can hardly be any differences of opinion or any scope for debate. But then, party manifestos are aimed at ensnaring the maximum number of credulous voters and therefore they have to be exercises in pleasing all and stressing none. The manifestos cannot afford to be precise and specific statements of policy. Moreover the pragmatic functioning of the government has to respond to evolving situations only a few of which are controllable and therefore it is but wise to portray the ultimate goal rather than road maps to achieve those goals.

India Misses a Turning Point

As far as political parties are concerned they was hardly anything to differentiate between the Tweedledum and Tweedledee. This election to the Lok Sabha involved two major issues and if they had been sufficiently articulated and discussed, they would have made this election a turning point for the Indian polity. Unfortunately these were mostly neglected and manifested themselves in oblique and obscure references that were hardly understood even by those who mentioned them. As a result India has refused to turn at the turning point and has chosen to return to its old and set pattern. The first and the most important issue was the new orientation that was sought to be imparted to the most explosive issue in the post-Independence Indian politics. The BJP had rode to power by riding on the tiger of a blatantly disruptive and anti-minority platform. The pressure of coalition power-sharing forced a reluctant BJP to discard much of this explosive baggage of militant Hindutva and Vajpayee played a crucial role as the single most important factor in this process. The BJP during its tenure of power and during this election campaign chose to focus not so much on its basic ideology or its organisation but on a mascot who a few years back had been derided and described as a mere mask for the then the militant Party of Hindutva, the

BJP. It is both a triumph and a tragedy for the party that by a curious quirk of fate the mask had to be accepted as the mascot and under his leadership, BJP made a strenuous effort to climb down the tiger that the party had been riding for almost its entire life span.

BJP: It's not Easy - Getting off the Tiger's Back

Its minority baiting was largely replaced by minority wooing and this did attract a few Muslim stalwarts of note if not of worth. The communal programme was sought to be discarded in favour of an economic agenda. The party chose to stand squarely and proudly on a platform that had hardly any plank from its ideological backyard. The BJP blatantly tried to appropriate the fruits of fifty years of incremental growth. "India Shining" is an indisputable fact, but it had many fathers. The BJP was only the last one to hold the baby and revelled in the glory of exclusive parenthood. Whether such a posture was accompanied by any genuine alterations in the innards of the Party organisation is one of the most hotly debated questions posed by this election. But the opportunity has been wasted and the established *cliché* in political parlance that one who tries to climb down the tiger ends in its stomach has been demonstrated once again. The defeat and the resultant frustration may be conducive to the recrudescence of the Hindutva in its more vulgar form and Ram may once again be dragged into the political arena. Disquieting voices are already being heard that Indian politics might once again be dominated by the obscurantism of the past rather than by the striving for the bright New World.

Congress: The Return of the Dynasty

The second and an equally important issue, deals with the Congress. This once dominant party was doddering on its path to oblivion and was facing the most crucial challenge of its career. It was a question not of its organisational revival but of the survival of its pattern of dynastic leadership. A setback would have most certainly freed the party from its feudal and frenzied devotion to a family that is a blot on democratic norms and values. But it has now received a shot in the arm and has emerged from a decade long darkness into the sunshine. This most unexpected victory is to be credited not to its leaders or to its organisation or ideology. It was entirely a one-man or rather one-woman

show and if a leader ever deserved to sit on the prime ministerial chair, it was Sonia Gandhi and she alone. She never lost faith and never lost her enthusiasm and faced the darkest scenario with courage and stamina. By choosing to step aside she has covered herself with glory and would be even more revered by the masses. One can only admire such a stalwart but the outcome

of this election would take us back to 1984 when power was shifted not on the basis of merit but on the accident of birth and where the politics of sycophancy reigned supreme. The personal glory of Sonia would strengthen rather than weaken the dynastic succession in a democratic Republic. We may 'love Sonia Gandhi a lot but we should love the Republic a little more.'

The Discussion

This is a summary of the discussions that followed this presentation.

Glamour and Glitter from the Tinsel World

Glamour and glitter marked the General Elections of 2004. The media, particular the English press, was full of news about which actor joined which party. Both camps were in competition to 'capture' for their side the maximum numbers of people from the world glamour. The essential aim in this was the winnability of a candidate not what or she stood for.

The common voter's maturity and level of understanding has gone up enormously in the last ten years thanks to the electronic media, cellular phones and other communication networks. Unfortunately the political parties have not kept pace with the people. They have lagged behind; their level of understanding is as it was ten years ago. The parties felt that they could influence the voter by inducting some cinema actors. All the cinema actors were voted down in Andhra Pradesh as well as in Tamil Nadu. Maybe it is a new

phenomenon in Northern India and Bombay and people like Govinda got elected.

Sonia Gandhi's Foreign Origin

An issue, which dominated the campaign, was the issue of what we mean by *Bhartiyata* or Indianness. Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin was a major issue for the RSS, the BJP and all its partners in the NDA coalition. Of the arguments put forth by them, one was Indian pride; another, the question of her citizenship - whether a naturalised citizen can be equated with citizenship by birth.

Sonia Gandhi's response was to project an image of the traditional Indian *bahu* or daughter-in-law. This also gives us a perspective of looking at women in Indian politics - the kind of women who reach the top. Sonia is accepted more as an Indian *bahu* and not so much as a capable leader.

Election Scene

Falling standards of political leadership; (*Freedom First*-Jan-March 2004) is perhaps the understatement of the century. The unprincipled alliances, the phenomenon of new found virtue by those who were once the bitterest critics of two main political parties, cases of family feuds for denying ticket resulting in breaking filial bonds, criminals caught in the act of receiving bribes being rehabilitated, *a la* Tehelka mode, pseudo-intellectuals, film personalities, bureaucrats, scions of erstwhile royal families jumping into electoral fray and political novices of Gandhi-Nehru lineage literally pushed into the center stage to do pantomime jig acting to a script etc have made the election scene bizarre and most perplexing.

Psephologists have a heyday reeling out statistics giving it a bad name have angered one party or the other calling for its ban. We are now hearing about surrogate advertisement which made Supreme Court entering the scene when Election Commission threw up its hands in despair unable to exercise control over "mudslinging" of the worst type imaginable. In all this, of course the basic value system and political morality have gone for a toss

"India shining" and "Development" by one party and rubbishing it by another party have become the catchwords to lure the voters who have become thoroughly confused. Youth who constitute a sizeable percentage of the electorate are largely indifferent.

It is back to caste politics and ideologies have taken a beating. One thing that has emerged is that old style of electioneering is a thing of the past. Keeping with the modern technology, it has given way to high tech blitz aided by array of computers, computer savvy wizkids giving real time statistics, keeping in touch with the constituencies with thousands of SMS orchestrated by young Turks of the two main political parties with gift of the gab trying to sway the voters. It has all a touch of surrealism and nobody knows how it will play out in the game of numbers, which is at the root of politics to manage the levers of power and not to serve the people. The words, promises, assurances etc are only mere cliché to be dumped in the dustbin to be resurrected once again for the next election.

H. R. Bapu Satyanarayana, Mysore.

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Dynastic Rule

While one shares Prof. Sanghavi's dislike of the sycophantic behaviour of party members, their obsequiousness, their servility all which we saw on the television screen, concerning the institution of Dynasty in India, one could argue that it performs a role. Once when Rajiv was asked what about dynastic democracy, he said, we may be a democratic polity but we are, in fact, a feudal society. And the biggest argument in favour of 'dynastic democracy' is that this is endorsed both within the Congress Party and outside. If Rahul Gandhi or Sonia Gandhi were simply imposed on the people, that would be unacceptable. But they stand for elections and are returned with overwhelming majorities by the voters. Therefore, how far this could really be said to be objectionable when it is endorsed democratically by the people is a moot point.

Another argument in favour is that it has helped to keep regional satraps in order, otherwise these regional satraps keep quarrelling with one another as the princes of old quarrelled with another.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who was among the most democratic leaders that India had allowed a lot of satraps to emerge throughout the country. And those satraps did carry a lot of weight in their satrapies. In 1969, his daughter Indira Gandhi, engineered a split in the Congress which thereafter became a personal fiefdom of her family. She saw to it that only those loyal to her were nominated and elected to parliament.

Insofar as Sonia Gandhi is concerned after she became a widow, she stayed for seven long years inside her house. Then she came back and the people of this country have given the mandate to her at least in 145 constituencies.

Today, admittedly, it is a fact that without Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, the Congress will not survive. It is a fact of life.

We are besotted with this idea of one family and dynasty. Yes, in four generations, eight people have contested and won elections from the Nehru-Gandhi family. But the space that is required by a whole lot of genuine Indians who want to get into politics – maybe they may not succeed at the parliamentary level – are being denied that space because every political party wants to bring a wife, a sister, a son, a daughter or, a grandson, into politics. This phenomenon is prevalent from the village upwards.

Is India Really a Democracy?

The point was put forward that dynastic rule and democracy are contradictory. But is the democracy in India in the real sense? Simply casting a vote once every five years is not sufficient. Democracy means participation of the people. India's population is made up of many castes, creeds and religions. There is no social democracy in India. It is our tradition to project the privileged class. If they stand for elections, everybody votes for them irrespective of the party he/she belongs to. Can this be called democracy?

Mahatma Gandhi did not give preference to his sons. But Motilal Nehru did. Then Nehru did not prefer even Shastri. The same tradition, his followers continued. They brought their sons, and if not the sons, then their wives. We are blaming Laloo Prasad Yadav because he got his wife elected as Chief Minister. This is the tradition, which is becoming universal. In fact, in this election, there was a very good opportunity to change this tradition. We people, those who are the elite, those, who are able to think independently irrespective of the political alignment, should realise the need for social change and not merely political change. Unless there is social awareness, there will be no political change, whichever party comes. If we cannot hit at the root, cutting a few leaves and branches will be futile.

The North-South 'Divide'

In 1977, soon after the Emergency, when elections were held, there was an entrenched government at the Centre. The basic issue then was '*Indira hatao*'. In that election, the entire South went with Indira Gandhi and the entire North went with the Janata Party. That was partly because the excesses of the emergency were felt mostly in the North. At that time it was viewed as a North and South divide.

1. If we apply this test to the current elections, we find that Congress has got 145 and the BJP 138 and as Prof. Sanghavi said, there is hardly any difference. If you see the election results region-wise, in the South out of a total of 132 seats the BJP-led NDA got 84, the Congress 80. So somehow there is again a North-South divide. But when you go State-wise – this is important – Andhra Pradesh the Congress and its allies got 34, the NDA only 5. In Kerala, all the seats went to the leftist parties, not a single seat to the NDA. So another South Indian state went against the NDA. Tamil Nadu gave the same result. Jayalalitha's AIADMK did not get a single seat. So three of the four South Indian States went against

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the NDA. But they have gone in favour of different political parties. In Kerala, entirely to the leftists parties; in Tamil Nadu entirely to the DMK and its allies; in Andhra Pradesh it is the Congress. In Karnataka, the BJP and allies got 18 and Congress and its allies have 8.

2. Is there any trend here, any issue that dominated? In each State, different issues seem to have dominated. In Tamil Nadu it was anti-Jayalalitha because just a few months before the elections, she had alienated the entire bureaucracy and the government servants by punishing them, by starting prosecution against them; She alienated the minorities by bringing about a law banning sacrificial killings of goats and chickens. That became one of the issues in the elections in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka there was the issue of the neglect of rural parts of the state being neglected; of farmers committing suicide because of the failure of the rains; in Andhra Pradesh, the issues were the same as in Karnataka. So I there no issues common to all the states. No single issue dominated this election.

The leftist parties say they will support the Congress Party from outside but will not join the government. Thus posing a threat to bring down the government if they misbehaved. The same thing will happen as it happened after the Janata regime, when Indira Gandhi bounced back with a greater majority. We should not allow this to happen.

The Anti-Incumbency Factor

If at all there is one issue that appeared to cut through states it was anti-incumbency. There is a certain amount of fatigue amongst all of us. Delhi is too far away. Their immediate problems are what make them decide to vote in a particular manner. I don't think we can say that the electorate is not mature. Perhaps the political parties, were not mature going in for movie stars etc. but the electorate by and large acted very well. They seemed to be saying, "I don't mind so long as the person who is not in power today is going to be in power tomorrow". That is the simple message, which has come across. This has led to a fractured vote. When people like us are discussing what the message is and what was the single dominant issue, the electorate may perhaps have told all the political parties, "Just do you job, govern."

I think this particular election has thrown up serious issues, which we ought to contend with – that,

the BJP with its overstated campaign of 'India Shining' wittingly or unwittingly brought out the issue of 'development' something that the people hanker after. This is one election where it abandoned its old skin. What it would have done, again, is anybody's guess. Are we going to acknowledge that this election has seen voters say "*ke hamare yahan kuch development nahin hua hey*". Very few people spoke about the Ram mandir; very few people spoke about the communal divide. I mean it is significant. And equally significant is the loss of two State Governments. Both were at the end of their second term. Madhya Pradesh, 'bottom-up', Digvijay Singh tried his best, or we assume he did his best. He was thrown out. Andhra Pradesh, it was seen as something of 'top-down'. It did not work. Probably if you go into the kind of comments that common voters made, it is development, development and development. And the fourth point is impatience. They waited ten years to throw out two governments; Vajpayee lost in the fifth or sixth year. Are political parties ready to contend with this idea that voters now want short-term promises and quick delivery.

Coalition Governments are in, One-Party Dominance is Out

Clearly we have reached the stage of coalition governments and they are going to stay for some more time. We can recall the United Front experience – to rope in all parties except the BJP. Then we have the NDA experiment – rope in every party except the Congress and the Left. Now we have three fronts, one led by the Congress, the other led by the NDA and the third is the Third Front. Interestingly, for all the three fronts, the financiers are the same.

The fact remains that NDA lost but the Congress did not win. Unfortunately all political parties, without exception, failed to gauge the mood of the public. They were projecting some non-issues which are not of concern to the people at all. For example, in Vajpayee's constituency, the polling percentage was as low as 37% and in the booth where Vajpayee cast his vote, it was as low as 22.

Interpreting Secularism - the BJP's Grievance

Why is it that when we talk of secularism, the focus is always the BJP and the Sangh parivaar? If the BJP has a Muslim leader like Mukhtiar Abbas Naqvi, he becomes a Muslim showpiece of BJP. And if BJP does not have Mukhtiar Abbas Naqvi, then BJP is anti-Muslim. Likewise it was stated that BJP was soliciting Muslim votes and partly it was sincere effort and partly it was hypocritical. I may add one more word – maybe it was

motivated also. But if the Muslims did not vote for BJP in spite of it, can it be called a Muslim communal reaction? Now, these issues have to be raised. They are not stated when we are talking. Is it only incumbent upon the majority to reach out to the minority? Is it not that you find a common ground halfway and have a healthy discussion on this? It can't be that communalism is only identifiable with the majority and there is nothing like minority communalism. Why is it that the

Samajwadi party, which identifies itself with the Muslims, is called a secular party? And why is BJP, which identifies itself with the Hindus, called a communal party? Why is it that the unfortunate developments in Gujarat attract the stigma of communalism but the ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir with successive governments in Jammu and Kashmir remaining mute spectators does not attract the stigma of communalism?

What is the Message that the Voter has Conveyed?

Ashok Karnik

In this election 2004, the voter's message has jolted all of us including those who have won – the leftist parties, the Congress Party, the BJP certainly, the NDA.

Voters Prove Pollsters and Astrologers Wrong

For two months we were subjected to political analyses based on opinion polls and later exit polls. Now the verdict proves that the voters are not influenced at all by opinion polls. There is no need to ban them in a democracy, let them continue, but they can perhaps ban themselves for the next five years till they arrive at a better scientific method of coming out with opinion polls.

The same thing with astrologers. In fact, *Freedom First* should publish an article to indicate where the astrologers have gone wrong and where the opinion pollsters have gone wrong. It is a lesson to be learnt that these are an exercise in futility.

Preference for Younger Candidates?

One small indication perhaps is that voters have started preferring young, educated candidates to the old tried out candidates. A small message. Perhaps it may work; perhaps there was dynasty behind these educated youngsters that is why they got elected. But there is a message saying 'let this boy do something, that the other man has failed to do.

Ideological Considerations Absent

Ideological considerations have not come into the picture at all. We may, according to our convenience and predilections, think that a certain 'ism' has failed and a certain 'ism' has been victorious. But it does not appear to be so from the election results. Perhaps it is a negative vote as some speakers pointed out; the voters

obviously don't care for one ideology or the other. Otherwise you cannot explain how the BJP got 138 seats and the Congress got only 145 seats – a difference of just 7. If there was a preference for dynasty or a changeover to a better party, the Congress should have got much more and the BJP much less. That hasn't happened.

So it would be wrong on our part to believe that one ideology has been defeated and another has won. Perhaps it has never been so. Communalism perhaps has never won earlier too. It is change from one to the other that was indicated. Here too, although Professor Sanghavi said that there was no anti-incumbency factor in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, it was so because the elections to the state assemblies in these three states took place only three months earlier. Had it been another year or so, perhaps one may have seen a different picture in these states as well. The only exceptions are West Bengal and Bihar. Not even in Orissa, because in Orissa the percentage of votes for the ruling coalition actually came down.

So what do we read from this? Either you have a Communist-like stronghold over the cadres or give full marks to the Communists, who have shown their grip of governance over the state. In West Bengal it is not the Babu who controls, it is the minister who counts and he is in firm control of the state. In Bihar, probably it is the caste that is controlling. If you can manipulate the caste, perhaps you can win.

Voters Demand Instant Delivery...

What the voters are saying is that they are not interested in the pie in the sky. They want something

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for themselves today. This is the message that the voters conveying clearly. Now, can a government deliver the voters' wishes, their aspirations within the short time that is available before the next election? Can five years be a period when the voters can be made happy? If we give them first things first in the first year, they expect something more in the second year. And at the end of five years you find that the voters are still unhappy. So are the voters demanding too much? Or will the party that wants to continue to govern or win have to resort to populist measures completely irrespective of what happens to the country? Just to win an election, declare a lot of populist measures in the fourth year of the rule, then you are assured of victory again. Is that the message that is coming through? If that is so, then it is a disaster, because nobody can implement any long term policies but you have give them short term benefits as they want. So the voter says, 'No ideology, We first. He wants something in his pocket immediately every time. Is that the message we are getting?

The second message is, are we all becoming irrelevant to the voters, irrelevant to the system, all of us who think, the intelligentsia. We have a lot of things to say, this should be done, that should be done. Is that

all irrelevant? It is a cynical proposition but it is my lurking suspicion that what we say does not matter at all. What the papers, media, projected all along, or the political parties projected all along, does it matter to the voter? Or does the voter want something in his pocket at the time of voting. I am not saying buying of votes, but something from which he has benefited by government action. If that is so, then will democracy progress? Or will each succeeding government be affected by this 'give away' populist desire, give them whatever they want and let me win the election?

...Or Listen to Emotional Appeals

Exceptions have been found why a government can continue maybe on purely sentimental, emotional issues, like the Kargil war, or maybe the Godhra incident. This kind of thing, if it is engineered, or if it happens, then maybe the government may succeed and win the election again. Otherwise each succeeding government may fail. We shall soon see what happens in Maharashtra four months hence in the elections to the State Assembly. As the present reading goes, this state is likely to fail badly because they have done very badly, unless the Sonia factor comes in wherein she

Incumbency Factor Irrelevant in West Bengal

The Left Front in West Bengal has set up some kind of a record. The Marxists have been in power in this State for twenty seven years continuously under a bourgeois democratic Constitution. I do not know if this does more credit to our Marxists, who have long professed to be Stalinists, or to our Constitution, which has been so hospitable to the Marxists. The question is, what has made this possible?

The Left Front would have lost power long ago had the non-Communist forces in West Bengal stood united. So the question is, what keep the non-Communist forces so persistently divided? The division between the Congress and the BJP is not something special to West Bengal. What then is special about the alignment of political forces in this State?

What is special is that the Congress itself has two mutually incompatible attitudes towards the CP(M). It depends on whether one is trying to assess the situation from the point of view of the provincial Congress or the all-India Congress. From the point of view of local Congressmen, the CP(M) represents an oppressive

regime. Like all good Stalinists, the Communists here are strongly critical of violence when violence is perpetrated by any bourgeois party; they condone violence when their own party indulges in it. Since local Congressmen are the direct victims of this duplicity; they want to get rid of the Left Front government in West Bengal. The Congress as an all-India party with ambitions to hold power at the Centre has a very different view. There are two reasons to go soft with the CP(M). The support of the Left in one form or another, is advantageous to the Congress in the powergame at the Delhi. West Bengal is a border state. For the Central government, the CP(M) in opposition may be a much greater nuisance than the same party running the government in West Bengal. This strongly divided attitude within the Congress helps keep the Communists in power in this State. Added to that is the organisational weakness of the Congress outfit in West Bengal. An uneasy co-existence with the CP(M) running the government in West Bengal and the Congress hopefully holding power at the Union level (how long?), appears to be the preferred scenario for the Congress.

Prof. Amlan Datta, Kolkata

comes up and says, "I have sacrificed so much" and then the people get moved. It may be welcome for this government, but it will be bad for democracy. People should not be moved by this kind of appeal. But they will be moved, or something else happens between now and the elections in the State this November which appeals to the people's emotions.

Voters are not Necessarily Wise

As was said here during this discussion, voters are not necessarily wise. Voters can be very selfish, perhaps are very selfish. They want something for

themselves. They don't care what happens ten years hence. If that is the short-term view of the voter, then there will be a short-term view of the rulers also. Then we will proceed on a short-term basis one step to another. But we will not be able envisage ten years or fifteen years hence where the country will be. If we think of India's progress in 2020, forget about it. You have to see what happens in 2005. That is what is going to win the elections for any immediate government going in for elections. That is the problem that we are facing. Think about it. I am not, I hope, too cynical. I would like to be proved wrong.

Impact of the Results on India's Polity

Uttara Sahasrabudhe

Out of twenty-eight states of the Union, there are only six, which matter as far as power in Delhi is concerned. These states are Uttar Pradesh with 80 seats, Maharashtra with 48 seats, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal with 42 seats each, Bihar with 40 and Tamil Nadu with 39. Together they add up to 291, which are 19 more than the halfway mark required for a majority in the Lok Sabha.

If you look at this particular scenario, then you can infer what is going to happen, what has happened and why it has happened the way it has happened. Uttar Pradesh is fragmented where Congress and BJP are the fourth or third parties. In Maharashtra obviously these parties have allies with whom they contested this particular election. In West Bengal the Left dominates the politics of the State and in Tamil Nadu there are two regional parties which determine the politics. Bihar, again, is as fragmented as Uttar Pradesh is. In Andhra Pradesh, again, it is a contest between the regional party and the Congress Party. It explains probably why for the last decade and a half, we are electing one after the other hung Lok Sabhas and maybe for another decade and a half we may continue to do so.

'Fractured Mandate' Reflects India's Diversity

This brings me to the point what some people fear and a lot of people outside keeping saying that it is a 'fractured' mandate or a 'fragmented' mandate. Both the words 'fractured' and 'fragmented' may sound a little derogatory but I would not accept the derogatory sense behind that. I believe very sincerely that this so-called 'fractured' mandate actually reflects the diversity of India in a better way than it has happened in the past,

prior to 1989. What is important to understand is that gradually the election results in India have begun to reflect the diversity that is part of our society. There are no all-India issues on the basis of which elections are conducted here, as so many observed earlier in this discussion. There are no all-India waves, any more which would take the people in one direction. I think the last all-India wave which helped one party to win an election was in 1984 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated. Otherwise no such phenomenon has taken place in India after 1984.

Towards a Bi-polar Polity with a Difference

So what is emerging and what kind of impact does this have on our polity? The first fact is that we are moving towards a bipolar polity where Congress and the BJP are the two poles. Frankly speaking, to my mind, there is hardly anything that differentiates the two. If you look at it from this viewpoint, while one party has assaulted the secular ethos of our polity, the other party has assaulted the liberal ethos of our polity. So there is hardly anything to differentiate between the two parties - Congress and the BJP. Look at the statistics. The voting percentages of different political parties would show that the Congress and the BJP together have cobbled up something around 50% of the votes, which means that 50% of the votes are with the Congress and the BJP together, and the rest 50% divided between different political parties. Now this kind of polity is going to stay here for some time.

What is the impact? To answer this several questions need answers:

India's Festival of Democracy

Can the Congress Lead a Coalition?

The first is to what extent will the Congress Party be able to lead a coalition at the Centre. It is the first time that the Congress is leading a coalition at the Centre. All other coalition governments at the Centre have been either anti-Congress or non-Congress. There is no evidence that the Congress Party has actually imbibed that culture of coalition. Therefore much will depend upon how this party can lead a coalition successfully and how long it will be able to do it? That is one issue.

The Political Leadership of the Congress Prime Minister

The second question, which will be extremely important not only in the near future but also in the longer run, is what the headline of some newspapers said, "Will Dr. Manmohan Singh, the CEO, be different from Dr. Manmohan Singh, the CFO?" Will Dr. Manmohan Singh the Prime Minister be different from Dr. Manmohan Singh as the Finance Minister of the country?

The issue that I am trying to raise is his ability as a leader to lead a coalition where his party is essentially far short of a majority. His own problem is the fact that while he is widely respected as an intellectual, let us admit he hardly commands any mass base. In that sense one can say that he is not a mass leader. Another factor that goes against Dr. Manmohan Singh is the fact that he is a Rajya Sabha member, not a Lok Sabha member. I am not saying that this has happened for the first time. This had happened even earlier and on different occasions. However, a Rajya Sabha member leading a coalition government will find it extremely difficult to keep all those people together in this particular country. How well can he manage this?

Impact on the Economic Reforms Process

Another issue is the fact that he has been the person credited with launching the process of economic reforms and liberalisation in this country. Will he be able to continue to do that in the light of the fact that his 145-strong party is supported by a 61-strong left front led by the Communists? To what extent, that process will influence the kind of path the reforms process will take under Dr. Manmohan Singh. That is another thing, which we should be looking out to as far as the impact of this election is concerned.

Will the BJP revert to the Ram Mandir Issue?

Prof. Sanghvi has already mentioned the third

thing which I wanted to mention. Will the BJP go back to the Ram Mandir issue? Will they revive the original Sangh Parivaar agenda? The kind of frustration that some of their leaders have shown immediately after the elections is a point of worry for many of us.

Impact on India's Foreign Policy

Another issue relates to the foreign policy of India. What kind of foreign policy will India follow under this government, under this particular coalition? Will it be a continuation of what has been done in the past few years? What kind of relations will this government follow particularly with Pakistan and the United States? With particular reference to these two countries, the record of the earlier Congress Governments has been dismal, to say the least. So what is going to be the course of foreign policy under this particular government?

Let me sum up by saying that while the NDA was an experiment in a different way, a Congress led coalition is also going to be an experiment in a different way at the Centre. While one hopes that it succeeds, I don't know how optimistic one can be for the near future.

Participants at the Discussion on the General Elections 2004 held on May 22, 2004

Dr. Amitabh, Social Activist • Mr. G. Balakrishnan, Advocate • Mr. S. S. Bhandare, Economist • Mr. T. B. Dhabhar, Textile Technician • Mr. N. K. Dhondy, Advocate • Mr. Kashinath Divecha, Trade Unionist • Dr. Louis D'Silva, Teacher • J. B. D'Souza, Retired Civil Servant and Social Activist • Mr. Allwyn Fernandes, Media Consultant • Mr. Ernest Fernandes, Consultant • Mr. A. V. Gopalakrishnan, Advocate • Mr. C. J. Guzder, Businessman • Ms. Rajni Iyer, Advocate • Justice R. A. Jahagirdar (Retd.) • Mr. Yogesh Kamdar, Civil Rights Activist • Mr. Ashok Karnik, Retired Officer IB • Justice A. A. Kazi (Retd.) • Mr. Kishan Khanna, Consultant • Mr. Fali Kumana, Businessman • Mr. Sidney Pinto, Merchant Banker • Mr. S. V. Raju, Social Activist • Mr. S. Ramachandran, Social Activist • Mr. R. Ramakrishnan, Political Activist • Ms. Kashmira Rao, Executive • Mr. V. V. S. Rama Rao, Agriculturist • Mr. Nitin Raut, Advocate • Dr. Uttara Saharabudhe, Teacher • Mr. Satish Sahney, Former Police Commissioner • Professor Nagindas Sanghavi, Retired Teacher • Dr. Y. Sivaji, former member, Rajya Sabha • Mr. P. N. Subramanian, Chartered Accountant • Mr. A. K. Venkat Subramanian, Retired Civil Servant and Social Activist • Dr. Usha Thakkar, Academician • Mr. Vikram Thomas, Chartered Accountant • Mr. Mahesh Vijapurkar, Journalist • Mr. Francis Vincent, Teacher • Mr. Vinci Wadia, Company Director.

The Discussion

This is a summary of the discussions that followed these two presentations.

Shifting Alliances

The difference in vote share between the BJP and the Congress is very small – BJP 34.83% and the Congress 34.59%. The BJP has alliance with 10 partners, the Congress with 16 partners. This shows in a nutshell what our future is going to be. It is going to be alliance politics. In the BJP alliance, except for the BJP and Shiv Sena, others are not ideologically motivated. Similarly in the Congress-led alliance too, every political party decides, not on the basis of principles and policies but on what is expedient and convenient. After all, in Tamil Nadu, till recently the DMK, the MDMK, and the PMK were with BJP. in the last Parliamentary elections and Assembly elections.

They have now gone over to the Congress-led alliance this time. There are 8 parties in Tamil Nadu now – the Congress, the BJP, the CPI, the CPM, the two DMKs, the MDMK and the PMK. In the recent elections, there were 6 parties in one alliance and 2 in the other alliance. In 2001, it was 2 in one alliance and 6 in the other. Neither the MDMK nor the PMK is ideologically oriented. Everybody seeks convenience on a 'give me more, I come with you' basis. This is likely to be the state of affairs for quite some time.

And more state and sub-regional parties are sure to emerge. The TRS (Telingana Rashtriya Samiti) was not on the scene in the last election. Even in Tamil Nadu there is a section, which says 'Divide Tamil Nadu into two – North of Cauvery and South of Cauvery.' So there will be more parties on regional and caste bases.

The Challenge of Stability and Growth

The challenge will be for the Indian electorate and the elected representatives despite these differences will be to give a stable and progressive government. One thing that may help meet this challenge is more decentralization. More powers to states and more powers to panchayats. No party has spoken about this. The need is to decentralize power to local bodies.

2004 - Not One Election but Many

Someone correctly observed that this was not one election. There were as many elections as there are States. Because of the way they have developed over the last fifty years, each state has developed its own peculiar political culture. Perhaps the time has come to seriously

consider having proportional representation. Because parties with less than 1% vote are demanding 5 berths in the Cabinet of the government at the Centre. The PMK for instance with 0.5% of the total votes polled asked for at least 2 or 3 ministers in the Cabinet.

Unhealthy Competition

And there is competition among partners in the coalition for certain ministries which are lucrative like steel, mines, petroleum, finance, external affairs, home – muscle power and money power via Cabinet berths! On the other hand there is no demand for such ministries as education, health, social welfare. Nobody wants rural development or water resources. Everybody talks of linking of rivers but there are no takers for the Ministry of Water Resources.

The Case for Proportional Representation

In Tamil Nadu, Ms. Jayalalitha polled more than 1 crore votes. But she did not get a single seat. Yet the difference between the two alliances was only 40 lakh votes out of an electorate of 4.72 crores. In 1999, in Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha got 227 out of 234 seats in the State Assembly. The DMK had only one representative in the Assembly then, Mr. Karunanidhi. That does not mean that they got only 1% of the total votes. Hence the need to think about proportional representation.

Congress and Leftists

Power is the best glue possible. You have power; you have the best possible glue. The leftists have always sat with the Congress. In Indira Gandhi's time too they sat with the Congress, in Rajiv Gandhi's time, with a huge majority, they sat with the Congress. They will sit with them because over the years the leftists have discovered that they can influence the Congress quite so easily to adopt leftist policies.

Voters in Temple Towns Reject BJP

Talking of secularism, communalism and all it is that in the three temple towns of Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura, the BJP lost. And if this is not connected with communalism and secularism which is an ideological issue, then what is? What the voter was communicating was he would reward those who promote communal harmony in this country, which has a legendary, traditional history of tolerance, and punish those who seek to destroy inter-community relations.

Election Fever in the Summer of 2004

R. Ramakrishnan

This election was forced on the people early by about six months. Legally the government of the day can call for elections at any time during their tenure but they are morally bound to govern for the full term of five years. The BJP, elated by the state assembly results of Rajasthan, M.P., and some other states and also Gujarat elections earlier, got over-ambitious and over-confident and made lots of miscalculations, as they often do, and did not judge the mood and anger of the people in many other states. They opted for an early general elections believing that they could win a clear majority on their own and jettison the NDA so that they could speedily implement their hidden agenda.

There were no issues of national importance involved in the campaign of all the parties. Campaigning was restricted to calling names, issuing challenges to other parties on inconsequential subjects, and replies to them and on non-issues that do not affect the people at all. Campaigning was reduced to much noise, heat, dust and hot air. Rallies were packed with hired people and often it was the same crowd at meetings called by different parties! During the earlier elections, bribing voters with money, liquor, clothes and other articles were done secretly. The night before the election was known as *Katal Ki Raat*, whereas now they are done openly on any day. This year's election campaign was the cheapest and poorest in quality when compared with other elections.

The third front [Socialist Party (SP) and some other parties] joining the Congress-led alliance after the

second phase of polling, led to the defeat of the candidates of the NDA by small margins. Several small regional parties ensured the Congress victory. If the SP and some of the small parties had joined the Congress-led front earlier, perhaps the victory might have been bigger.

The NDA and the BJP in particular, was rejected by the urban and semi-urban middle class electorate. They were angry with the BJP: (a) for inadequate, inept handling, and corruption in relief and reconstruction works after the earthquakes in Gujarat; (b) the Gujarat riots, the killings of Muslims and subsequent sham trials; (c) inaction of the Prime Minister in the Gujarat riots and trials; (d) the UTI, Tehelka and many other scandals that were sought to be swept out of sight of 'Shining India'.

Aggressive and sustained attack on Sonia's foreign origin resulted in a considerable number of women voters moving away from the BJP.

NDA leaders and particularly the Prime Minister literally begging for votes, seats and power, during the last phase of the election, sealed the fate of the BJP-led alliance.

The new set of people who have formed the government is a mixture of ideologies of the Left, the Left of the Centre, liberals, hitchhikers, opportunists and a few persons of doubtful character. Let us all hope and wish that this mixture of ideologies is proportionate, and lead to good governance.

MR. R. RAMAKRISHNAN is a political activist.



Major General Eustace D'Souza Honoured

Major General D'Souza has been honoured by the Royal United Service Institute Queensland (RUSIQ), Australia by making him an Honorary Life Member of this venerable institution. The citation states: "The Royal United Service Institute Queensland

Incorporated is proud to award Honorary Life Membership to Major General E. D'Souza in recognition of his many years of loyal support of this Institute, his expert analysis of military subjects which has added substantially to our knowledge; and his tireless contribution to the cause of peace on earth."

The Citation says it all.

Freedom First readers are familiar with the writings of the Major General on subjects ranging from National Security, Defence, Nuclear War, the Armed Forces, China, Kashmir, Tibet, Pakistan, to environment protection. *Freedom First* congratulates RUSIQ for honouring our very own Major General Eustace D'Souza.

Electoral Upsets in India: The Politics of Dependency

Nimai M. Mehta

Democratic politics in India has every interest in maintaining the very patron-client structures that may be expected to produce the sort of electoral upsets seen in these elections.

Many observers see the defeat of the Vajpayee government and the return to power of the Gandhi family as one of the most remarkable electoral upsets of post-independent India. A number of questions now hang on how this electoral upset will be interpreted. Has the electorate rejected the progressive, market-oriented reform agenda promoted by the Vajpayee government? Did it turn the clock back on the perceived maturation of Indian democracy? Is the Indian electorate 'fickle'? Did the market-oriented reforms fail to 'trickle-down' to the rural masses? An op-ed article in the mainstream Indian business daily, *The Economic Times* even suggests that the Marxists are better equipped to bring genuine "capitalist" reform to rural India! The political pundits are clearly struggling over these events, unable to provide a coherent interpretation.

Yes, the Indian electorate has matured. Its aspirations, however, are not so different from the median voter whose demands dominate welfare-state politics in the U.S. while the American welfare state translates into targeted programs such as Medicare and Social Security, the net of dependency has been cast over significantly greater territory in India. And unlike the U.S., politics in India is characterized by personal, patron-client relations. This link between politics and dependency in India is not sufficiently understood, or even admitted to, by commentators – both Indian and foreign. Thus, the widespread belief that in the post-1990s' liberalization era, Indian politics is

driven by a reformist game plan. The failure of Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the polls is, in this logic, taken to indicate that it was mistaken in playing the reformist game. But, did the BJP play the idealized reform game? I believe that it did not. The BJP, along with opposition, played the dependency game. And it lost to the Congress party, fair and square. The Congress and its allies simply better argued their case in committing to the dependency demands of their clientele at the local district and state level – whether for access to water and sanitation, telephone and electricity, or subsidized inputs and credit; preferential college admissions or public employment, rent-controlled housing or free medical care and food.

After fifty plus some years of servicing its dependent electorate, the Congress party maintains a tremendous lead in "learning-by-doing". And it holds, at present, a comparative advantage in servicing and extracting political profits from the dependency economy. The rural electorate in India is sufficiently discerning to sense this comparative advantage – both at the local and national level. This explains their continuing support and "affection" for the Gandhi family that, in turn, firmly anchors the Congress and its allies to a loyal base not yet available to the Vajpayee group. This is a lead that the BJP will find hard to overtake. But the two parties have only now entered the race in all earnestness.

The market versus state debate

transposed to the developing world provides a convenient fig leaf cover for the realpolitik of dependency. The rhetoric of secularism versus Hindu nationalism serves a similar function. While these grand ideas may whet the appetite of intellectuals in India and elsewhere, the electoral upset in India exposes the real spoils at stake in the political fight. It also helps dispel the modern myths that inform much academic discussion on Indian reform – that Nehruvian policy howsoever inspired effected a socialist state whose role centered on productive, as opposed to unproductive,

Murphy's Law on Accountability

"Accountability" – "Accountable". These words have existed in the oldest English dictionary which I used and referred to in my school days, half a century ago.

We received our education in the best of English medium schools and colleges after which for over the past more than four decades, our correspondence, reading, conversation, expression and even thinking have been practically ninety per cent in English. Yet, I have come to know the existence of these words only during the last five years or so, when there is NO ACCOUNTABILITY, in this country!

The existence of many persons and objects is realised only when they are absent or lost – Murphy's Law?

Dadi M. Darbary

India's Festival of Democracy

activities; and that the post-Nehru era is defined by attempts to transition from a socialist to a market economy. Both the BJP and the Congress, as the elections drew near, switched away from their more ideological rhetoric – on secularism, socialism, markets, nationalism, Hindutva, etc. – to providing assurances on the demands of a dependent electorate.

A review of the post-1990 economic reform record will confirm that the BJP and the Congress, while toying with “big-ticket” items of deregulation, privatization and trade liberalization, have left untouched the vast structure of dependency and favours that affects the daily lives of the Indian masses. Not only have they not dismantled the culture of political and bureaucratic clientelism – whether in the rural hinterlands or in the urban slums – they have actively courted it. That a plan of economic liberalization and modernization can co-exist with a politics of entrenched dependency is clearly disturbing. The electoral defeat of the Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh is a case in point. Mr. Naidu, the most progressive face of the BJP coalition and a re-incarnated IT-savant, credited with bringing Bill Gates to Hyderabad, India's second silicon city, leaves a state in a precarious financial condition. While in power, Mr. Naidu was not averse to playing the patronage game. However, burdened with the fiscal reality of financial bankruptcy, Mr. Naidu entered the electoral race with an incumbent's handicap. Mr. Reddy, the opposition candidate, not yet constrained with actual fiscal responsibility, campaigned and won on a promise of free power to poor farmers. And, his first act as the new Chief Minister, was the cancellation of arrears in power fees for the farmers.

Democratic politics in India has every interest in maintaining the very patron-client structures that may be expected to produce the sort of electoral upsets seen in these elections. Nehruvian politics both acquiesced in and actively promoted the widespread state of dependency – cultural, economic, and social – that the British had, in turn, inherited from the long decaying Muslim-India. C. Rajagopalachari, the true doyen of Indian liberalism, accurately characterized post-independent politics as the “License-Permit Raj”. This culture of dependency, built upon and solidified after India obtained her independence, fed the growth of successive Congress governments. Nehru's so-called mixed economy consisted of a set of misguided restrictions on productive activity that could only last if complemented by a tentacular network of support. Support spawned widespread

dependency. And dependency, serviced by local political agents, became institutionalized through the works of a burgeoning bureaucracy. Long deprived of real power under Muslim and British-India, the Hindu secular-bureaucrats amassed it now with an unmatched zeal.

The BJP, even with Vapayee as their most progressive medium, lacks the leadership, character, and inclination to forfeit the political benefits extractable from such a structure. The Congress party, giddy with electoral victory, has just been re-invigorated in the race to service India's clientele base. Any program of economic liberalization for India is a hostage to this race and will only go so far as the underlying patronage relations allow.

DR. NIMAI M. MEHTA is Adjunct Professor and Visiting Research Fellow, Center for Study of Public Choice. Email: nmehta@gmu.edu

Tainted Ministers

A lot is being said about tainted ministers these days. There is a lot of confusion over various stages involved in a criminal investigation and prosecution. There appears to be a deliberate obfuscation of facts so that the common man does not understand what is wrong and what is right any longer. Criminal investigation progresses step by step, viz. allegations, FIR, charge-sheet, conviction and appeals against convictions. At what stage is the accused to be held unfit to hold public office is the crucial question. Legally, the man needs to be convicted and his appeal rejected to deny him public approval by election. Since this is a never-ending process, it was thought that those charge-sheeted by courts (not merely hauled by the police) should be denied public office.

There is a proviso to this penalty, that is, those who are charge-sheeted for offences of moral turpitude should alone be denied the public office. This would protect those involved in political agitations and trade union movements. Advance, Joshi, Uma Bharati etc. presumably fell in this category. Now the new government has expanded the boundaries of morality to say that conviction alone can debar a person from holding public office. Permissiveness is the order of the day and why should our esteemed ministers be denied the fruits of easy morality? Next step is that anybody elected by the people should be acceptable, irrespective of his criminal record. After all, if people want him, who are we to object?

All politicians should be tried in the people's court and not in the judicial courts. The latter are meant for you and me.

A. V. Karnik

Impact on India's Foreign Policy

Nitin G. Raut

Any reversal to the Nehruvian foreign policy on West Asia under the new External Affairs Minister, K. Natwar Singh, himself a relic of the Cold War – would be unrealistic.

Under the NDA-BJP rule, Indian foreign policy, after decades, adopted a pragmatic approach. There was a perceptible improvement in Indo-US relations and for the first time, the US accepted India as a strategic ally, if not a partner. The Indo-US joint military exercises and strategic cooperation on terrorism is an acknowledgement of India's status as a key regional power. A dogmatic and pathological anti-US policy of the Left Communists (LC) will not only mar the improving Indo-US relations, but will compel the US to shed its even handed policy in the Indo-Pak dispute. Given the messy Iraqi invasion and the factor of Pakistan as a key ally in the Islamic world, in US strategic perception, amidst mounting anti-US sentiments, any Cold War inspired approach will impair Indo-US relations and will adversely affect the peace process with Pakistan. Anti-US policy may even isolate India and affect its growing relations with the ASEAN, a crucial area of strategic importance for India. The realities of a unipolar world cannot be wished away and India does not have the economic and military clout to usher in multipolarity in the present world order as glibly touted by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the LC axis.

The relationship with Israel will also be under the scanner of the UPA-LC dispensation. It is not the support for a Palestinian State – a fact even accepted by Israel – that is the issue. Rather it is the hostility towards Israel to justify friendship with the Palestinians that reflects the perversities of India's West Asia diplomacy.

Israel has emerged as a key and second largest supplier of hi-tech and inexpensive defence equipments, after Russia, like AWACS, hand pagers, guns, radars, etc. Any stoppage or slowdown of such supplies or recession of such

contracts in the pipeline will adversely affect the level of preparedness of the Indian Armed Forces. During the Kargil invasion, and Operation Parakram, Israel had promptly responded by supplying the required ammunition. Therefore dubbing Israel as "guilty of State terrorism" by the CPI's A. B. Bardhan, appears to be a disturbing precursor of the pressure the LC axis intends to exert in relations with Israel. The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) states "that traditional relations with West Asia will be given a fresh thrust" and the assertion of "decades old commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people for a homeland of their own" is a none too veiled threat to downgrade the relationship with Israel, if not jettisoning it.

Any reversal to the Nehruvian foreign policy on West Asia under the new External Affairs Minister, K. Natwar Singh, himself a relic of the Cold War – would be unrealistic. The Arab bloc cannot be a counter balancing force in the UPA-LC's perceived quest for multipolarity. Further, if India has to play a positive role consistent with its geo-political status and emerging regional Asian power, it will have to adopt a parity in its relations towards both Israel and the Arabs. The traditional friendship with the Arabs continued even under the NDA-BJP rule but that should not mean singling out Israel for step-motherly treatment to revive a failed dogmatic policy. Both India and Israel have built mutually beneficial relations based on shared values of democracy, free society and joint fight against the scourge of terrorism. The growing relations ought not to be affected or sacrificed on the altar of ideological dogmas.

MR. NITIN RAUT is a lawyer, and a member of the Editorial Board of *Freedom First*.

I AM A TERRORIST

Tensin Tsundue

I am a terrorist.
I like to kill.

I have horns,
two fangs
and a dragonfly tail.

Chased away from my home
hiding from fear,
saving my life,
doors slammed on my face,
justice constantly denied,
patience is tested
on television, battered
in front of the silent majority
pushed against the wall,
from that dead end
I have returned.

I am the humiliation
you gulped down
with flattened nose.

I am the shame
you buried in darkness.

I am a terrorist
shoot me down.

Cowardice and fear
I left behind
in the valley
among the meowly cats
and lapping dogs.

I am single,
I have nothing –
to lose.

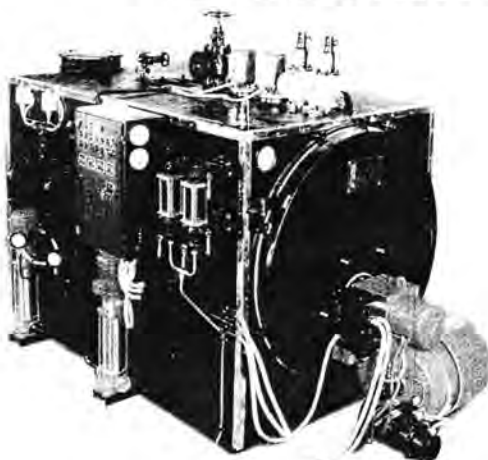
I am a bullet
I do not think

from the tin shell
I leap for that thrilling
2 – second life
and die with the dead.

I am the life
you left behind.

MR. TENZIN TSUNDUE is a writer and activist for Free Tibet.

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Reflections Serious and Facetious

Louella Lobo Prabhu

Rajya Sabha – For Losers and Troublemakers

Kuldip Nayar, writing in *The New Indian Express*, mentions that one third of the Rajya Sabha's membership is retiring, and will have to be replaced. He is clearly unhappy that the residence qualification of yore, has been dropped, by recent constitutional amendment, but it resulted in members starting their career with a whopping untruth, as to place of residence. What does

shock, is that the nominations go to those who lose Lok Sabha elections, and have to be accommodated. Others, are trouble makers who have to be kept quiet. Others still, with no discernible reason at all. Its composition marks one more nail, in the coffin of parliamentary democracy.

Sachin Tendulkar's Ferrari

Everyone appreciates Sachin Tendulkar, for his contribution to sporting history. He is equally appreciated abroad, for having scored 29 test centuries, on a par with Don Bradman. As a concrete manifestation of its admiration, and doubtless for its advertisement value, the Ferrari Motor Company, Italy, presented him with a red Ferrari Sports Car and then, his troubles began. The car was assessed for a duty of Rs.1.6 crores, from which Arun Jaitley tried to extricate him on grounds of national service. Fortunately, the Ferrari Company offered to foot the bill. The car – ironically – still had to pay the road worthiness test.

Again, Sachin was fortunate that the rules themselves changed. Finally, came the problem of fuel. The best fuel made in India by the refineries does not suit the Ferrari's rarified fuel system. Once again, his fame came to his rescue. B.P.C.L. has created a new fuel, especially and only for him. It contains High Octane 97, in keeping with the Ferrari's special requirements. The service will be free. I wonder whether this is an over-extension of positive discrimination in favour of a single individual, no matter how merited. It goes against Article 13(2) of the Constitution: Equality before the Law.

A Shocking, Stunning Blow

Much of the "feel good" factor in India, was due to the belief that India had at last succeeded in correcting the U.S. tilt towards Pakistan. It was therefore a mortal blow, when after being in India, with no hint on what was to come, Colin Powell announced that the U.S. was about to bestow the status of major Non Nato Ally – on Pakistan. This was supposed to be in return for Pakistan's help as a front line State, in the global war on terrorism. (What price the leakage of nuclear technology and materials to roque States? The safe haven afforded by Pakistan to terrorist groups, including the Al Quaeda?)

The President's decision has to be ratified by the Congress. (It will be). With this tag, a country may use U.S. government funding to lease some defence items. It becomes eligible for loans of military supplies. It can buy depleted uranium, it can have U.S. owned military stock-piles on loan. It can receive American military training, on easier financial terms. Quiet the moon, and the stars as well. The only consolation is, that Powell refused to comment on the Kashmir issue, saying that it was a bilateral issue to be solved by both countries. In fact, the reliefs flowing through the new status of Pakistan are not much more than the facilities it already enjoys. But the timing is bad.

Right to Personal Privacy

Black supermodel Naomi Campbell, can add one more record to her illustrious modelling career. She is the first model, to present her case before the House of Lords, and to win the same. The House Lords, Legal Bench, is Britain's highest trial court, and even the admission of a petition by it, may be considered a coup – winning is an even greater coup. Ms. Campbell's case,

was the violation of her right to privacy, by a British tabloid, which leaked her attendance at a Drug Rehabilitation Programme. At issue were the right of free speech; the public's right to know and the right to personal privacy in matters not pertaining to the public domain. The last won.

Carousel

Rightly has *The Times of India* put down in a double headlines, on the top quarter of the first page an item, not of hard news, but one which deals with a work of Art. Plaudits to the editor! The item in question was that a Picasso painting just went under the auctioneer's hammer, to fetch a record-breaking price of US\$ 104 million – the previous high being 84 billion for a Van Gogh painting. This painting belongs to Picasso's "rose" period, which, along with his "blue period" is decidedly more attractive to the common man, than his later periods. The painting depicts an

adolescent boy, with a garland of roses on his dark hair. The roses make all the difference to his "look", turning a moody-looking adolescent, into a young God. The buyer remains anonymous. It is a pity that one person will have this painting for his exclusive viewing pleasure for it should have been available to art lovers, everywhere. In a world where so many are destitute, it emphasises the great divide between the rich and the poor. Some, do not have a roof over their heads, while others can spend 104 million dollars for the exclusive enjoyment of a painting.

The Hutton Report

Indian papers have become insular in their coverage, unless the story involves an Indian angle. *The Times of India* is the only one of the three Karnataka dailies, which carried the story of Tony Blair's acquittal, by the judge who went into the Kelly Affair, at the behest of the British Parliament. The charge made by the BBC was, that Kelly, the Weapons expert sent to Iraq, had "sexed up" his report on Iraq's military capabilities. To justify the war, in which the British were almost the sole supporters of the U.S., not being joined in any significant way, by other countries of the NATO Bloc. Kelly committed suicide, because the pressures and adverse publicity, were too much for him to bear.

Lord Hutton, who wrote a 328-page report, strongly castigated the BBC for having the story broadcast, without editorial checks. It seemed as though it had a judgement pre-prepared and was looking for some way of corroborating it. Hence leaning on Kelly. The judge has therefore cast an aspersion on the BBC's credibility on its own turf. The judge has, or is, also considering suing the newspaper which published highlights from his report, before it was officially released. A small photograph, shows Tony Blair celebrating his triumph with a glass of bubbly. He is one of the most charismatic of Prime Ministers, whom Britain has had, lately. I am glad he does not have to quit – in disgrace.

What Caused the Death of the Great Alexander

The Discovery Channel had a fascinating programme on the death of Alexander the Great. It took place in Persia, in the year 323 B.C. This fact emerges from a stone tablet; and the Royal Diaries, which document his last 12 days on earth. Having conquered 2 million kilometres of the then-known world, he was contemplating the conquest of the Arabian Peninsula, and later, Italy and Europe. But his end caught up with him, when he was but 32 years old. His body and mind were both vulnerable, as a result of wounds from many campaigns, and the Macedonian weakness for hard drink.

One theory is, that he could have died from natural causes, considering the many traumas to which his body had been subjected. But the royal diaries were quite clear that he had a specific illness – 12 days of

fever, before he died. Another theory put it down to a bout of Nile fever, brought on by migratory birds.

This still does not clear all the details of his illness. Then, there is the theory of death by poison. Alexander's tutor Aristotle, is named as a suspect, as Alexander had killed his nephew, in a drunken bout. This theory is also dismissed, after due consideration. The Channel goes on to say, that the Hiliborous plant, its leaves and flowers, administered in homeopathic doses as medicine, offers a true explanation of the 12-day illness, which finally overcame his traumatised body.

The episode has all the fascination of a modern detective story, which quotes from many authorities. It made the age of Alexander come alive, once more.

Have you visited www.liberalindia.com
The website of the INDIAN LIBERAL GROUP?

Debate

An Open Letter to Sharad Joshi*

Mr. Sharad Joshi's Reply

Dear Chaudharyji,

Thanks for your kind and detailed reaction to the decision of SBP-NDA alliance (10 March 2004). You have called it an open letter. Given its tenor it's more a personal letter. I am replying it as such, hoping you have not given it to the Press.

I too have had a dream of an Indian nation based on the sacred principles of individual liberty and Rule of Law. I took up the cause of the farmers because I thought that was the community most trampled upon under the regime of Nehruvian Socialism. We all made our contribution to the fight against the Socialism and Totalitarianism both inside India and outside. Ultimately, the USSR failed and so did the Nehruvian Socialist misadventure.

Unfortunately, with Socialism the nation appeared to have lost the whole economic agenda. In a way, the Indians throw away the baby of the economic agenda with the bathwater of Nehruvian principles. The license-permit-quota-inspector raj has produced a society plagued by communalism, casteism, corruption, crime and violence. People are trying to find solace in past glory and folklore. Rama and Shivaji have suddenly become powerful totems that can swing whole communities in elections.

I often wonder where K. M. Munshi and even C. Rajgopalachari would have stood today on the issue of Ayodhya Temple. I am sure Masani would have been with me.

Like you, I would have liked to go it alone as I did in the past and contest elections without alliance with any of the two dubious national alternatives. The past experience and practical wisdom shows that that would be Quixotic and would finish off the young saplings of the liberal movement that I have guarded for 25 long years.

The fact stands that liberalism as we dreamt of is politically impossible today. The voters would not vote for it. The liberal intellectuals are too cowardly to come out openly in its support. Even the entrepreneurs who would be the largest beneficiaries of economic reforms have deserted the liberal flag and are vying with each other to curry favour from communal despots.

* *Freedom First*, January-March 2004

A very difficult responsibility lies on my shoulders. I have to keep the flag of liberalism flying in a situation when it is politically impossible, till the day the historic superiority of liberalism will make it politically inevitable.

I had a dubious choice to make between the tweedledum and tweedledee - a pseudo-secular party dominated by a dynasty and giving socialistic enticements to the electorate on the one hand and a much maligned alliance which is trying to come out of its less savoury past and is actually implementing a liberal programme, on the other. Any decision would have been wrong *per se*. It was my misfortune that I had to make it.

As of today, it is impossible to distinguish between tweedledum and tweedledee of the two major national alliances. The alliance that the SBP has chosen holds greater promise of change and reforms since it does not restrict its reins of authority to a dynastic family. Even an ordinary village-level worker can one day aspire to be the top leader of this alliance which certainly is not true about the other alliance that claims to be more secular.

I am afraid this will not assuage all your concerns. I am writing in the hope that there will be no cause for personal acrimony.

Sharad Joshi



COURTESY: *Free Inquiry*, December 2003/January 2004

Defending Re-Trial in the Best Bakery Case

R. C. Saxena

This has reference to the article "The Perils of Criminal Retrial" written by Mr. Nitin G. Raut in the January-March 2004 issue of the *Freedom First*. The tone and tenor of the article is against the liberal traditions, considering the facts and circumstances involved in the Best Bakery case.

What the article fails to mention is the fact that the all the witnesses, including those who turned hostile, belonged to the minority community. This was neither merely a case of witnesses turning hostile nor was the uproar that was stirred merely about witnesses turning hostile. Now that the Supreme Court of India has ordered for re-trial of the case, the facts have come out in the open. The facts, besides witnesses turning hostile, involved the breakdown in the judicial machinery, the prosecutors virtually pleading for the witnesses, presence of gun-toting councilors in the trial Court, the prevailing politically vitiated atmosphere and the fact that the witnesses belonged to a minority community. The severe indictment of the state government by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, in order its for re-trial, does not make this case anything other than *exceptional* and hence, being rarest of the rare cases, re-trial was inevitable.

The author some how could not conceal his distaste for the NGOs who so vigilantly pursued this case by bunching them with page three coffee-shop elites. On the contrary the leader of one of the NGOs, in whose custody the prime witnesses were kept, is an equally honorable member of the Bar as the author himself is and as much a page three celebrity as the author! When the majority community shuns the witnesses, when the state prosecutors instead of prosecuting the accused plead for them, when the state itself plays *Nero*, it becomes the duty of the NGOs to protect such witnesses

and it behoves the liberals to support such NGOs.

The author has also discussed Article 20 of the Constitution of India, which expounds the theory of double jeopardy. This doctrine contemplates that no person shall be tried twice for the same offence. However, the Indian Constitutional provision is narrower than the English and American Rule of double jeopardy. Article 20(2) can be invoked only when there has been prosecution and punishment in the first instance. If a person has been prosecuted for an offence but acquitted then he can be prosecuted for same offence again and be punished. In order for Article 20 (2) to be operative both prosecution and punishment should co-exist. In fact the provision in the criminal jurisprudence for appeal against any person acquitted is, in substance, a continuation of prosecution. Hence, a person cannot be punished once again if he is convicted but he can be punished for the same offence if acquitted.

In the case of the Best Bakery Case, the public campaign and public trial, so stridently denigrated by the author, came to be eventually vindicated by the order of re-trial by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

One can understand the author's professional concern that re-trial upon a witness turning hostile can become a bad precedent, prone to misuse in subsequent cases. But the Best Bakery case was not just about a witness turning hostile. There was a lot more to it. It raised significant and disturbing questions such as the conduct of the judicial machinery, the role of the state, the rights and protection of the minorities guaranteed under the Constitution and the dispensing of equal justice to the members of the minority community.

MR. R. C. SAXENA is an advocate practicing in Vadodara and a member of the Indian Liberal Group.



The public sector is devoid of the living spring out of which flows human energy, and human enthusiasm and human vigilance. Laziness, indifference and barren dullness are the unmistakable and well-known marks of the public sector. We must reduce this necessary evil, the so-called public sector, to the minimum and not let it encroach and spread over fields where the private citizen's own interest can be well and safely yoked to the public interest. Wherever this has been done we have remarkable success in spite of every handicap that has been needlessly put in the way by a government that has fanatically adopted a wrong dogma.

C. Rajagopalachari, *Swarajya*, June 10, 1961

D's Column

Feedback on *Freedom First* No.460, January-March 2004

N. Dharmeshwaran

The article on Yusuf Meherally highlights a hidden gem; but does not the adjective "genuine" smack of marketed goods!

Will my boxed query on p.13 be lost on the readership in the dust and din of the Elections, albeit the query pertains to that area, ironically! Hoe triksaidecaphobia* will not operate!

Noted that the contents are interspersed with quotes from the ubiquitous Net, it is desirable that instead of the omnibus identification of Internet, the specific web page could be cited, for the benefit of the curious browser, who wants to pursue or branch off.

Glad that my suggestion earlier has been taken in good spirit and a short story has appeared on p.17 amidst more serious stories, that our nation is heir to!

The piece on p.23 reminds me of "Circumlocution Office" lampooned by Charles Dickens, the way of government offices there! Adamic resemblance is universal and more so in certain areas, it appears.

Mr. Krishna Prasad, my very good friend and mentor appears to have been seized of Sonia-itis, as his observations here and elsewhere show!

The appreciation is quite objective and pragmatic and rules outright the ascension of my lady!

* Triksaidecaphobia means morbid fear of number 13 with the date 13 occurring on a Friday.

To my mind, however, the base of rebuttal is wider and qualitatively different in that why the mere and even accidental inclusion in the Nehru clan should entitle her to supersede (blame my government service!) many competent and senior aspirants in the Party. Why national interests should become a party to this undesirable attitude. A Constitutional provision appears expedient. I must however admit my ignorance of First Class in citizenship defined as such in the US or elsewhere. An Indian immigrant has contested for the Governorship of a State in the USA. KNK would no doubt make us wiser.

The Book review on p.44

The point on Taxi number 1729 in the context of Prof.Hardi and wizard Ramanujan appears more apocrypha than a real anecdote! The 'inauspicious' factor said to have been raised by Prof. Hardi, an Englishman and a Mathematician at that needs a pinch of salt! Many other variations are in circulation! Be that as it may, I shall be thankful to any of your readers who can clearly explain the significance and oddity of 1729. Is there not any other number which could be expressed as the cube of two sets of numbers?

Registered as a Newspaper and definitely with more than fifty paying subscribers, do you not have the freedom of concessional postage? The franking on the envelope carrying FF 460 makes me think so. The provisos above are laid down in Post Office Act 1893 and Rules

1935 made thereunder recently forfeited this facility to "*Madras Musings*" a fortnightly devoted to Heritage and Environment *et al* and distributed gratis by the voluntary donations from readers and corporates. I feel that the 1893 and 1935 were to take care of smaller magazines / newspapers spearheading the cause of freedom then so that they do not get this benefit. A suitable amendment or Exemption powers need to be brought in.

Alternative to the Rajya Sabha

Many feel rightly sceptical about the utility of the Rajya Sabha in the present context, though the purpose behind it is good but is not viable now.

It appears to be a hall to push in political favourites, compromise candidates and serve as a sinecure sabha.

The best thing would be to abolish the institution and reserve ten percent of seats in the Lok sabha exclusively for experts, specialists, social activists, reputed artistes *et al*, who, by consent should be allowed to be elected unopposed.

Thus, expertise, wisdom together with powers to vote on financial matters with finality, which the Rajya Sabha does not enjoy, would be there. They could be relied upon to function without political compulsions.

ND

We were there ...

When



'Operation Flood' provided milk for millions in India • When

fertilizer projects triggered the

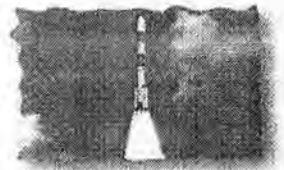


'Green Revolution' • When power

plants



unlocked the energy of the atom • When

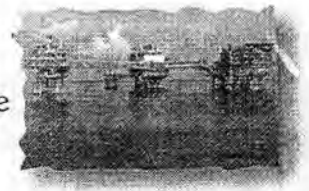


India took a giant leap in aerospace • When

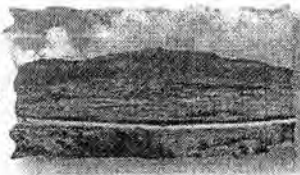


our defence services guarded

the nation's honour • When oil platforms tapped the riches below the

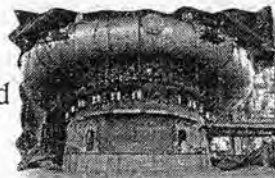


ocean bed • When



bridges and highways knit the country

together • When steel plants provided spine and



sinews to industry

• When IT



carried the Indian tricolour around the world



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Clarity

Why Communal Harmony? To Save '*Apna Watan*'

P. M. Bhargava
Chandana Chakrabarti

Our country has a unique set of assets – natural, man-made, human and social – that, perhaps, no other country in the world has or has ever had. In fact, our country's greatest strength has been its diversity in every respect – be it religion or language, physical features or its ethnic groups. Where else would you find some 450 minor and nearly 40 major ethnic groups?

Diversity is a prerequisite for evolution, for example of excellence, just as uniformity is a recipe for extinction. One reason for this diversity has been that all through history, our '*Watan*' has had an open policy of accepting and assimilating whatever we found worthwhile from anywhere and everywhere – be it Greece or the Middle East, Mongolia or the Anglo-Saxon countries.

We ought to (and can) use our diversity – specially religious diversity – for considerable benefit to our people. Communal harmony is, in fact, an imperative for development. Unfortunately, today, we are doing exactly the opposite, and using our religious diversity for our destruction. How do we reverse this trend? To do so, we must first take note of the following.

- (1) We must recognize that the majority in this country does not have a real religion. Hinduism is a term that has never been mentioned in our ancient or medieval literature. It is not a religion in the real sense, as there are no set criteria (unlike in other religions) which must be satisfied for a person to be called a Hindu. You can, in fact, be an agnostic or an atheist and call yourself a Hindu, and no one would object to it; this is something that you cannot do in any codified religion. Indeed, if there were no invasions of India, and no exploiters, there would have been no Hinduism of the kind that is being professed as a religion today. In fact, as of today, in our country, all those who do not subscribe to any other religion, or do not declare themselves as atheists or agnostics or as non-Hindus, are Hindus. They are the people who explicitly call themselves Hindus. One is, therefore, a Hindu by exclusion. Even in its current connotation, Hinduism as a religion has numerous variants – far more than in any other religion – so much so that all those who call themselves Hindus cannot even draw water from the same well, or worship in the same temple, or eat at the same table.
- (2) All codified religions (such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism or Zoroastrianism, that have had a book, a prophet and/or a founder), as well as Hinduism in the form that it is practiced or followed today, have four components: values, facts, beliefs and distortions. The *values* are common to all religions and are supported by science. The *facts* are supported by history and are value-free; they do not hurt anyone. Religious *beliefs* are, by definition, beliefs which do not have established or proven historical, scientific or factual basis and, therefore, cannot be argued. Examples can be given from every religion. For example, miracles for which there has never been any real evidence, are an integral part of the obligatory beliefs in every religion, and are not arguable. And *distortions* of the original precepts and concepts, exist in today's religious practice and pronouncements in all religions. Innumerable examples of such distortions can be given. There is every reason to believe that these distortions are a consequence of the use of religion for exploitation of the people by the ruling and the preaching class.
- (3) The values of all religions unite us, and that is one of our greatest strengths which we must exploit. On the other hand, beliefs (that include the dogma) of a religion distinguish one religion from another, give a religion its identity, and divide us. Beliefs are a personal matter, and it is only fair and proper that they remain entirely in one's personal domain. They must not

be institutionalized or coercively disseminated or publicized, contrary to what is being done today.

- (4) A new-born child has no religion. Religion is given to a child, like his name. A niece of one of us adopted a lovely abandoned child. With all the advances in biotechnology accessible to us, there was no way that we could find out what the religion of the biological parents of the child was. Genetically, all human beings are 99.9 per cent identical. We all make our chemical constituents exactly in the same way. There are, at times, ethnic differences (such as skin colour) that are reflected in our genetic make-up; this is not true of religious differences. You can change your religion but not ethnicity.

Therefore, we all in our 'Watan' have three responsibilities:

- (a) To respect the first three components mentioned above of all religions: that is, the values, the facts and the beliefs of every religion. As mentioned above, the basic values of all codified religions are the same. It follows as a corollary that we must have equal respect for those who do not have any religious beliefs but who would not compromise on values; they would, thus, fall in the category of atheists or agnostics.
- (b) To ensure that our beliefs are totally a personal matter and do not vitiate our values; thus, they must not come in the way of any kind of social intercourse, including marriage.
- (c) To resist distortions of religions

as originally preached or stated.

If we do all this, we will all act in synergy to develop our country. If we don't, we will act at cross purposes and destroy ourselves.

One way of bringing together people who claim to belong to various religions because they have different beliefs (not because they have different sets of values), would be to convert major religious festivals of the country into common festivals with each festival devoted to celebration of one important value. They could then become national festivals proclaiming strength in the diversity of the country. This is something that we could fight for.

DR. P. M. BHARGAVA, a Molecular Scientist, heads Anveshna.

CHANDANA CHAKRABARTI is a Consultant.



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A Decade of Central Asia's Independence: An Overview

Vasundhara Mohan

**In the on-going global war against terrorism Central Asia becomes
more important than ever.**

Introduction

In the referendum held in March 1991 on the question of preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a union of equal sovereign states, the Central Asian Republics overwhelmingly voted for a renewed Union; the "yes" vote percentage varying from 93.7% to 97.7% (Tajikistan 95.2%; Turkmenistan 97.9%; Kyrgyzstan 94.5%; Kazakhstan 94.1%; Uzbekistan-93.7%). A loose alliance of some of the former Soviet Republics came into being as the Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS), when the three Slavic Republics of Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine signed documents on December 8, 1991 dissolving the Soviet Union and creating a body of successor states.

The Central Asians had no love lost towards the Russians. Some of the Central Asian Republics' leaders did not hesitate to point out that decades of command administrative system had usurped power in the Union and had conferred on itself the right to speak and act on behalf of all the people. Yet they would have liked to get out of the Union, like the Baltics but for the complicated economic relations established with Moscow and also amongst themselves. Even though Russia's nationalists like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy blamed the non-Russians for every single problem that the Russians faced, right from high death rates and infant mortality to fuel shortages, Central Asian leaders like Nursultan Nazarbayev strongly felt that "the disintegration of the Union will inevitably result in the complete collapse of the Republics' economies, a sharp deterioration in the living conditions of millions of people, will set us all back by whole

decades and will cause irreparable damage to cooperation with other countries of the world community. We have no path other than renewal of the Union on the basis of the conclusion of a treaty between sovereign equal Republics".

Although the Central Asian leaders did not want to be left out of the CIS, the CIS was no substitute for a renewed Union, nor did Russia take interest in the CIS till the Central Asian Republics were found trying to strengthen their relations with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in a multi-national framework. With no central authority to dictate as before, each former Soviet Republic was now at liberty to set its own future agenda and charter its own course on the way to democratisation and market economy.

Geo-Political Importance

However, in the last ten years, the progress made by the Central Asian countries on the path to democratisation and market economy and the actual achievements differs from one country to the other. Although Russia remains the main centre of attraction in the post-Soviet Union years, the economic and geo-political importance of Central Asia is equally important not only to Russia but also to the outside world. In the on-going global war against terrorism Central Asia becomes more important than ever. Central Asia's proximity to Afghanistan, Iran and the Middle East in the south; Turkey in the West and China in the east, made the Soviet Union ensure the security of the Russian southern boundaries at all costs. Keeping the Islamic factor also in view, the Soviet leaders since Khrushchev have tried

to keep the non-Russian nationalities of Central Asia happy by promising the indigenous leaders security of tenure and allowing a substantial degree of local political and cultural autonomy in exchange for their support.

After independence, though every Central Asian country promised to introduce democracy, a multi-party system was not quick to develop. Instead, the single party authoritarian system was replaced by Presidential form of governments. With almost absolute powers vested in them, some of the Presidents have been exercising power in an authoritarian and arbitrary manner, often in violation of the constitution. An attempt is made to present, in brief, the socio-economic status and geo-political importance of the five Central Asian countries.

Uzbekistan: President Islam Abdughanievich Karimov headed the Republic after being elected First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee in June 1989. Elected President on the 24th of March 1990, Karimov consolidated his position by taking up issues like making Uzbek the official language, reduction in the cotton-sown area, health, and environment. He did not agree to make Uzbekistan an Islamic State. Although Uzbekistan is termed a "secular state", Islam has been declared as an integral part of Uzbek culture, with a view to satisfying certain sections of the population and stalling the birth of Islamic fundamentalism.

Karimov rules Uzbekistan with a heavy hand by breaking up the opposition and crushing public demonstrations

Self-reliance: the keynote of our independence

Long before we won our freedom, self-reliance was the goal of those of our people who could think for themselves and shed the shackles of dependence : men of foresight and determination, like Ardeshr and Pirojsha Godrej, who had confidence in the country's capabilities and shared the same ideals with Tilak, Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru who practised self-reliance.

In Godrej, self-reliance has been considered indispensable to progress, the aim being not just self-sufficiency for

the organisation but for the whole country. Progress can only be achieved in a milieu of progress.

Based on our country's needs, and exploiting the country's own resources, Godrej have diversified.

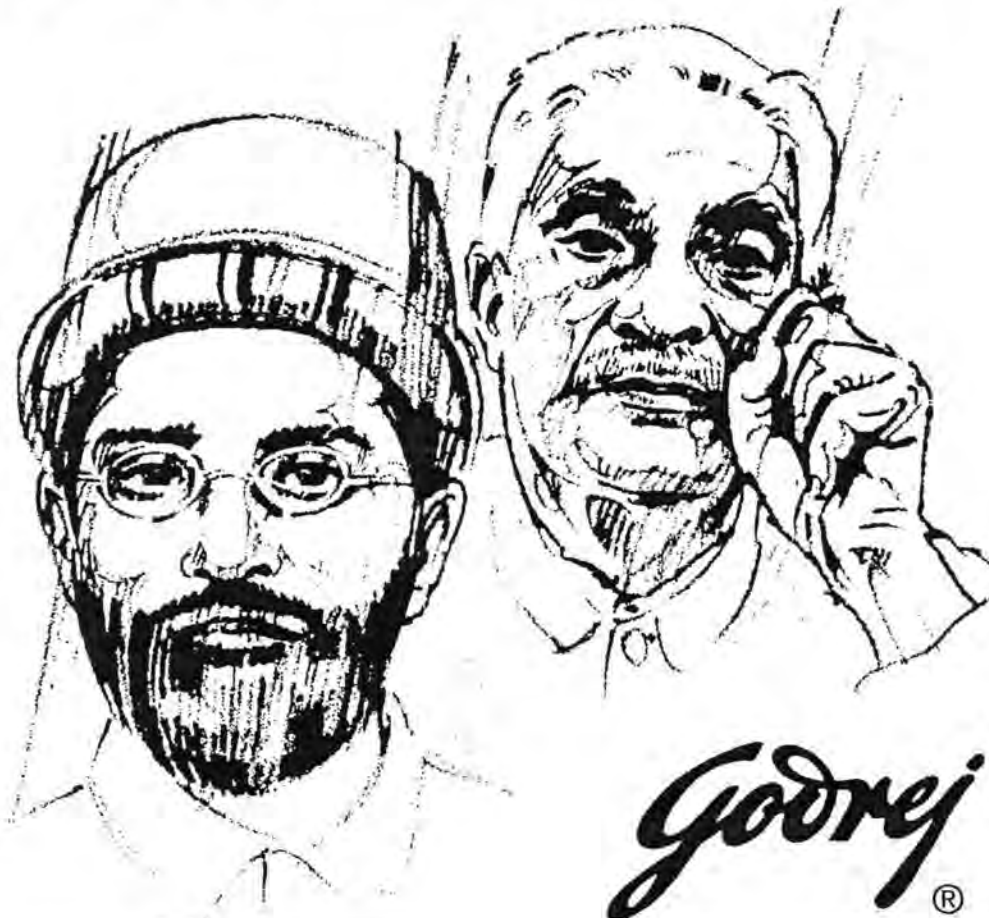
Made to international standards and backed by continuous technical innovation, their products range from locks and security equipment, machine tools, forklift trucks, architecture and steel castings to furniture, typewriters, refrigerators, computers and electronic

business systems as well as soaps, detergents, toiletries, chemicals, animal feeds, agro-products and edible oils.

The Godrej industrial garden township at Vikhroli-Pirojshanagar is an example of self-reliance and progress. For their worker Godrej have provided - in a unique environment - many social benefits : extensive housing, schools, and adult education, recreation, medical and family-planning benefits..

Self-reliance is both a means and an end.

For Godrej it is the essence of independence.



over increase in the prices of bread. The 1993 Constitution has granted enhanced powers to the President. Intolerant of opposition, Karimov used his powers to suppress even the media. But Karimov has reiterated his resolve to transform Uzbekistan into a democratic, rule-of-law state, with constitutional guarantees for all religions and the Press.

Government's strict control on the economy, import controls, restriction on the exports of cotton, fuel, ferrous and non-ferrous metals and ores, restrictions on the repatriation of profits and convertibility of the Uzbek currency have been discouraging foreign investors. Uzbekistan ranked the least attractive transition economy.

Kazakhstan: This is one Central Asian state in which the titular population forms a minority. In 1996, Kazakhs constituted 48.1% of the country's population as against 34.1% Russians. Nursultan Nazarbayev, a Kazakh, became Kazakhstan's first democratically elected President in December 1991 in an uncontested election.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, independent Kazakhstan faced economic turmoil, territorial disputes, environmental problems (half a million people living in Semipalatinsk, the nuclear testing site, were affected by radiation and the Aral sea dried up) and socialist inefficiency. It also had a huge stockpile of nuclear weapons. Nazarbayev chose the path of democracy, opened up the country's economy to foreign investors and built friendly relations with Russia, China and the United States.

Under the privatisation programme, big and medium scale industries were converted into joint stock companies and collective enterprises. Privatisation started with small state-owned enterprises. By the end of 1995, the government sold 60 to 100 percent of the stock of assets of existing industrial enterprises in the core branches of the economy (oil drilling and refining plants, energy, ferrous and non-ferrous met-

allurgy and chemical industry.

Nazarbayev's political prestige and personal reputation helped Kazakhstan in attracting foreign economic cooperation from China, US, South Korea, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Italy. Apart from being a major wheat producer, Kazakhstan is rich in oil, coal and minerals. American oil giant Chevron has signed a 40-year agreement for the development of Kazakh's oil industry. Kazakhstan has been able to sort out its border dispute with China, and secure borders with Russia, apart from entering into treaties of friendship and cooperation with neighbouring Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Nazarbayev also got rid of Kazakh's nuclear arsenal, and dismantled the infrastructure at the testing site, in exchange for American assistance and leased out the Baikonur space station to Russia. He signed a non-proliferation treaty with Washington in 1994. Kazakhstan is also a member of NATO's program "Partnership for Peace". In December 1994, the country's security was guaranteed by the US, Great Britain, Russia and subsequently by China.

In spite of poor performance in the various sectors of the economy,

Kazakhstan is considered to be one of the Central Asian countries that have performed well since independence.

Turkmenistan: Poorest of the Soviet Republics, with nine-tenths of its land a desert, the Turkmenistan government is considered to be more authoritarian among all the Central Asian States. It is alleged that President Saparmurad A. Niyazov, has attempted to create a cult of personality through heavy-handed self-promotion. Niyazov, who was declared President-for-Life in 2000, has not allowed any reforms in the political system. There is no chance for an opposition to take shape. At the December 1994 elections to Parliament, all seats were filled up Soviet style – without any contest.

Turkmenistan's economy is largely based on natural gas, oil, and cotton, which together account for 85% of its exports. Imports include consumer and investment goods. Turkmenistan has been exporting gas through a Russian pipeline, bringing in about US\$ 1 billion per year. But in 1993, Russia closed down Turkmenistan's only pipeline because it competed with Russia's own gas exports. Turkmenistan was forced to limit its gas exports to its central



Asian neighbours, who were unable to pay their bills. Consequently, production had to be cut by almost 50%. Turkmenistan has opened a pipeline route to Iran, thereby disturbing the US, the enemy of Iran. So far, the new plan has not brought in money, and the country is living off loans from Western countries who hope to partner with the oil-rich, money-poor Turkmenistan in due course.

The State provides free education at all levels to all citizens. Extensive subsidies on basic consumer goods and a tight monetary control have kept inflation low since 1998. As Turkmenistan guarantees employment to every citizen, officially there is no unemployment in the country. There has been almost 10% increase in the employment during 1998, which was mostly accounted for by the agriculture sector and to a lesser extent by the industrial sector.

Kyrgyzstan: Under President Askar Akayev, Kyrgyzstan has been considered as "an oasis of democracy in a sprawling desert of authoritarianism" in Central Asia. But, Kyrgyzstan's status as a democracy was affected before long for various reasons like economic crisis, a corrupt bureaucracy and anti-democratic measures adopted by the leadership to regain control over its eroding authority. Kyrgyzstan's Constitution, adopted on May 5, 1993, gives broad powers to the President. The Parliament has confirmation authority but rarely opposes the President. During 1994, the President suppressed two newspapers supporting the opposition and dissolved parliament before its term. The February 1995 elections were marred by electoral frauds and corruption. With neither the President nor the opposition factions securing clear majority, Akayev was forced to go in for an alliance with the opposition. When the parliament refused to extend his term, he called for elections in December 1995 and won 71% of the votes polled. After the elections, Akayev expanded the powers of the President through a referendum. Irregularities in the 2000 Parliamentary elections, followed by

imprisonment of some candidates, brought into question the country's intention for democratic reforms.

While the country is also home to other nationalities like Russians, Uzbeks, Dungans etc., (who comprise about 50% of the population) the Kyrgyz parliament voted that the land and mineral resources of the country would belong exclusively to the Kirghiz people.

Tajikistan: The birth of Tajikistan as an independent country took root in the February 1990 riots. When the demonstrations turned violent, the army intervened to quell the riots resulting in casualties. Taking the riots as an excuse, the Soviet government repressed political dissent, clamped censorship on the media and imposed a state of emergency, which lasted for a long time after the riots. Immediately after the August 1991 coup, Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet voted for independence in September 1991.

Among the diverse groups of individuals and organisations, three opposition parties were granted recognition during 1991. From 1992, Tajikistan witnessed vicious battles between the neo-soviet anti-reformist groups and a coalition of reform-seeking opposition. The battles continued into the mid-1990s all over Tajikistan and across the border with Afghanistan. Starting 1994, UN-brokered peace talks began between the post-civil war government in Dushanbe and the opposition in exile in the presence of representatives of Russia, UN and other intermediaries. A cease-fire agreement took effect in October 1994, which continues to be in force. At the November 1999 elections, Rakhmanov was elected President for a 5-year term.

Agriculture forms the mainstay of Tajik economy, dominated by cotton, fruits, vegetables, and grain. Though Tajikistan has no food scarcity, the output has declined sharply in the mid-1990s. Among the industries, aluminium processing and chemicals contributed about 30% of the net material product in 1991. However, by 1996 the produc-

tion of aluminium dropped to 40% of the 1990 level.

Early in 1991, Dushanbe legalised leasing and privatisation of state enterprises with a few exceptions. However, the transition met firm resistance from the bureaucracy and political figures with ideological objections. Sharp increase in prices that followed price-decontrol in the initial reform stage resulted in fear, anger and hardships among the population. Reduced to poverty, the population was living on meagre incomes and the government had to introduce rationing. While slowing down the pace of reforms, the government lent support to the establishment of private enterprise on a small or moderate scale. By the mid-1990s, about 50% of all small businesses, especially those in the service sector were privately owned. The economy is in a bad shape, with a number of industrial units either closed or working below capacity. Unpaid wages and ever-falling budget revenues affect Tajikistan too. The country remains highly indebted to Russia on various counts.

Conclusion: The Central Asian Republics are anything but homogeneous. The borders traverse through ethnic enclaves, turning Central Asia into a patchwork quilt rent by complex disputes (ethnic, regional, tribal) over land, water and natural resources. Although the Central Asian Republics were benefited under Soviet rule in the form of development of agriculture, and achievements in the fields of culture, science, education and public health, the Union government's policies towards the Republics had made the latter's economy depend, to a great extent, on Russia.

The Central Asian Republics were merely providers of raw material to the manufacturing facilities set up in the European part of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the Central Asian Republics could not develop skilled manpower and had no facilities to process the raw material they produced. The Soviet government promoted cotton in Central Asia at the cost of food grains. The

residues of herbicides and pesticides extensively and recklessly used to increase cotton yields, polluted streams and rivers affecting the health of the population. Diversion of Central Asian rivers for irrigating cotton fields resulted in the drying up of the Aral Sea, exposing its chemical encrusted bed. Wind-blown dust from the Aral Sea has been one of the major environmental disasters affecting Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Critics point out that the Soviet planners turned Central Asia from an exporter of food to one dependent on outside their area for subsistence.

Thus, once Central Asia was no longer under any body's grip, it started attracting foreign powers and investors on account of its rich natural resources. Central Asian countries started re-establishing links with countries with whose culture and traditions they identified themselves. The main problem with the oil-rich Central Asian Republics is to find exit routes for their oil, overcoming Russian intransigence in the construction of new oil pipelines, wars in the Caucasus, civil war in Afghanistan and finally western (US) sanctions against Iran, which did not allow western oil companies and banks from investing in new oil pipelines through Iran.

The Clinton administration had not only extended the area of US vital interest to Caspian Sea and the Caucasus region, but also said that it would not block the construction of a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey, passing through Iran. China, similarly, offered to help the construction of an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China and another pipeline from Central Asia to the Gulf through Iran. It is also possible for China to build an oil pipeline to carry Kazakh and Turkmenistan oil to China and from there to South Korea and Japan. If these developments are encouraging to the Central Asian Republics, their difficult relations with Russia and the determination of Gazprom (the major Russian gas company) to block the sale of Central Asian fuels through pipelines that do not pass through Russia holds out complications.

The prosperity of Central Asia, in the long term, depends entirely on the development and export of their petroleum, natural gas and precious metals. Particularly with regard to energy, if Central Asia offers an alternative source to West Asia, the development of the oil resources requires advanced technology and large-scale capital investment, which only China, Japan, America and West Europe can provide. It is for this reason of mutual interest that the Western and European powers and Central Asian countries are depending on each other. The former also would like to keep Central Asia out of the religious influence from the Islamic world.

In revamping their domestic economies, the Central Asian Republics are yet to go a long way, as they did not have the fundamental levers for economic transformation like finances, customs, banks etc. Secondly, as in the case of Russia, the Central Asian Republics did not have a well-established rule of law that would create confidence among foreign investors. In fact, the newly independent states could not get over the decades of Soviet-type administration so soon. Consequently, in spite of their efforts at transition from a hyper-centralised to a market economy and proclamations of desire to transform their societies from a totalitarian to democracy, the Central Asian Republics continue to exhibit authoritarianism and exercise a significant extent of state control over the society and economy. The frequent cancellation of contracts signed with Western companies by some of the Central Asian governments is an example of this phenomenon. The other problems common to the Central Asian Republics that has been affecting the climate of foreign investment include: corrupt and top-heavy bureaucracy; frequent changes in fiscal policies; government's inability to pay wages and pensions; unemployment; and poor healthcare system.

Foreign Policy: In their foreign policy formulations and building international relations, the Central Asian states have had to necessarily keep both Russia and

China in mind. Apart from the fact that Central Asian relations with Russia are rooted in a century-old tradition, the new influential industrial groups that emerged in Russia after the Soviet break-up favoured restoring special relations with Central Asia, which had all the raw materials and a sizeable consumer market. For the Communists preserving ties with Central Asia meant a national restoration of the Soviet legacy. On the other hand, dealing with China directly is a new phenomenon for Central Asia, although Central Asian and Chinese relations are equally old. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, China was concerned with the political situation in Central Asia, with whom the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region shares its border. If Kazakhstan, with a 1700 km long common border with China, holds out special attraction to China on account of its oil resources, Central Asia by and large is of special geo-political importance to China, for it is the source of a separatist nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism and pan-Turkish influence. Therefore, China apparently intends to fill strategic vacuum, which emerged after the collapse of the USSR, and to counteract efforts by Turkey and Iran to extend their influence here. In spite of the Central Asian states looking beyond Russia for technical and economic cooperation, Russia still remains the main trading partner and considers the region as falling under its sphere of influence.

In the years to come, the Central Asian Republics are likely to gain importance for the reasons discussed above. With rich oil and mineral resources, the Central Asian states could become prosperous societies provided the leadership gets over its past and adopts modern methods of running their economies.

DR. (MRS.) VASUNDHARA MOHAN is Director, Centre for Central Eurasian Studies, University of Mumbai.

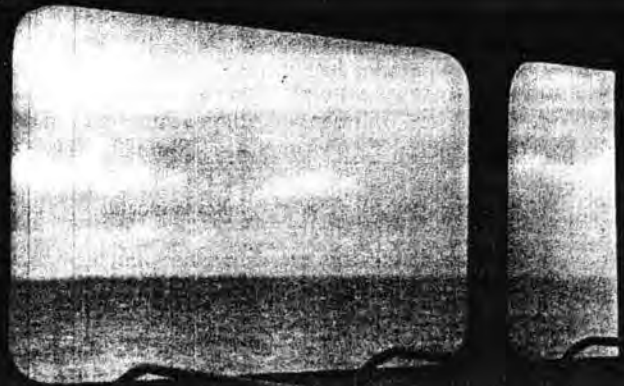
Due to space constraints, we are unable to print the entire 4600 word article. Those interested can write to *Freedom First* and we would be pleased to send a soft or hard copy of the article.

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BOOK REVIEWS



THE INDIAN ECONOMY MAJOR DEBATES SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Edited by
Terence J. Byres

Published by
Oxford University Press, YMCA Library Building,
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Reviewed by
Dr. T. K. Velayudham, Chairman, Institute of Economic Education and
formerly Economic Adviser, Reserve Bank of India.

It is somewhat surprising that this book has not received the publicity it deserves. It is a volume which is useful from the point of view of historical research, from the point of view of evolution of Indian economic policy since India's Independence and for the light it throws on the views and ideas prevalent at the time. More importantly, the arguments for or against a given policy approach to the Indian economy, overall or sector-wise presented in the book lead to inferences which converge on the need for a liberal economy. This is, in retrospect, an interesting outcome directly relevant to the programme of economic liberalization launched in the country in July 1991.

The book contains nine chapters, the first three of which are contributed by the editor himself. In these three chapters, the editor presents, by way of background, an interesting account of the developments in Indian economic analysis and policy, with reference to individuals, institutions and institution builders. The editor is of the view that on any reckoning economic debates in independent India have been wide-ranging, of high quality and intellectually exciting; and there is no country in the world which can match India in this respect. In fact, the editor could present only a cross-section of the debates for the simple

reason that there has been so much to choose from! This introduction sets the stage for discussion of particular debates.

Planning : The Grand Debates

The debate on planning started before 1947 with the setting up of the National Planning Committee in 1938 by the Indian National Congress. This was followed by the Bombay Plan, Peoples Plan and Gandhian Plan. The debate on planning was not whether there should be planning but about what sort of planning there should be. The National Planning Committee formed a broad spectrum of views of business, trade unions and intellectuals.

The Bombay Plan was authored by Indian Capitalists and it embodied their conception of the strategy of development and asked for substantial public investments. The People's Plan stated the Left position of State Capitalism with radical redistribution of assets especially land. The Gandhian Plan, authored by Shriman Narain, visualized a self-sufficient village economy. The process proceeded around the formulation of the First Five Year Plan, which was an *ad hoc* affair designed to put together some projects, and the Second Five Year Plan based on the Mahalanobis Strategy.

The core in any discussion of Indian planning is the Mahalanobis strategy and an intense debate developed around this strategy; and the debate became more intense as the underlying consensus began to break down during the second plan period itself, under the impact of inflation and balance of payments crisis. The two crises raised a few questions about the Mahalanobis strategy. As far as balance of payments crisis, Mahalanobis had assumed a closed economy and ignored the possibility of external trade playing a role in expanding investments.

But the point to note is that even if Mahalanobis had not assumed a closed economy, the foreign exchange constraint would have operated due to stagnant exports and would have necessitated the domestic production of investment goods.

Three positions emerged on the nature of planning as reflected in the Second Five Year Plan strategy i.e. Mahalanobis Model. The first relates to the authors of the Bombay Plan representing domestic big business who saw planning as an aid to capitalist development, without radical redistribution of property.

In contrast, the left and the near left position, was to regard planning and public sector development, not as ushering in socialism

but as an anti-imperialist measure. The official position fell between the two.

While it adopted the objective of achieving a socialistic pattern of society, it visualized public sector as a permanent phenomenon i.e. state capitalism. It is interesting to observe that the different perceptions notwithstanding, planning that finally emerged commanded wide support at least till the mid-1980s.

Agriculture

The economy was dominated by a backward agriculture in 1947 and the need was to transform it and make it more dynamic. The question was how to bring this about. Was land reform necessary to uncover the springs of growth? What manner of technical changes were necessary? Until the agricultural crisis of the mid-1960s triggered by two droughts in 1965-66 and 1966-67, there was a measure of agreement about potential for agricultural growth and the policy options to realize it. Two essential features of this consensus were: first, the leading role public investment had to play in supplying infrastructure (irrigation, research, extension, power and transport) to mobilize growth potential; second, redistribution of land directly to the cultivator and creation of cooperatives (for credit, marketing and rural industry) so that growth benefits would spread among the population at large. This consensus broke down under the impact of the crisis of 1965-67 and alternatives were put forward in response.

The alternative view took shape in the form of the New Agricultural Strategy (NAS) which almost abandoned institutional reforms (so necessary for growth and social justice) and emphasized a technology-led process of growth, supported by a system of price incentives (eg Green Revolution). While the NAS based on the new

technology of high yielding varieties was unexceptionable, the price, subsidy and investment policies that accompanied the NAS, did little to counter the emerging class and regional inequalities. The role of private investment in agriculture and efficacy of market prices in releasing agriculture's full productive potential were severely limited. This "Growth-First" option not only lowered growth but also necessitated a separate strategy (an assortment of special programs e.g. IRDP) aimed at reducing poverty.

The spread of agricultural growth has been uneven over time, space and among agricultural classes, leading to increasing inequalities. A deeper analysis of the underlying sources of uneven growth suggest the crucial importance of public investment and the distorting effects of the existing agrarian structure on incentives. The proximate sources of growth are identified as area expansion, cropping shifts, change in land-use intensity and yield increases. Some of the central issues that have arisen in the extensive debate on agriculture relate to: price responsiveness; inverse relationship between land-size and productivity, mode of production, interlinked markets and intersectoral terms of trade.

In the content of recent reforms, the two challenges facing agriculture are: opening agriculture to world markets and the growing concern over the environmental effects of agricultural expansion. As for the former, there has been no liberalization of agriculture symmetrical to liberalization of industry, reflecting an anti-agriculture bias as a result of trade and industrial policies, which kept farm prices down. However, the Uruguay round of GATT is expected to initiate the process of agriculture sector reforms. As for environment it is going to be harsh on the poor. It is easy enough to correlate rural environmental

degradation with the expanding scale of population – two-thirds of the workforce continue to derive their livelihood and many of their requirements from the primary sector.

One debate which received attention in the wake of the crisis of mid-1960s and new agricultural strategy, is the relationship between planned industrialization and agrarian growth and mobilization and the controversy over the terms of trade between agriculture and industry. This is relevant to the debate on the second great sector, namely, industry.

Industrialisation

The most intensely and widely debated aspect of Indian Planning is the industrialization of the country. From the outset, there was agreement over the need for industrialization of this large economy with its rich resources of coal and iron ore. However, there was disagreement over the form of industrialization. Should it be a "textiles-first" type of strategy, based on consumer goods and with an eye to employment creation? Or should it have the capital goods sector at its centre, with a high degree of capital intensity? The choice fell on the latter type of strategy as reflected in the acceptances of the Mahalanobis model.

The public sector was assigned an important role to take the initiative in developing industries which were considered essential but where the private sector was unable or unwilling to participate. With the adoption of the socialistic pattern of society as a national objective in 1954 the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 emphasised the need for expanding public sector to prevent concentration of economic power and ensure the ownership and control of material resources (i.e. owning and managing plants and enterprises). The private sector was to be

regulated to ensure that its activities were consistent within the national plan and national objectives.

The deceleration of industrial of growth from the mid 1960s raised serious debate on the structure and character of industrial development. The sharp fall in public sector investment from the late 1960 was a severe setback for the whole industrial sector and for the economy. The slowdown in public investment was borne heavily by the infrastructure sectors, while it also implied a fall in demand for capital goods industries which inevitably percolated to the private sector also. The fall in the industrial growth rate was also due to exhaustion of import substitution possibilities. A large number of control instruments, including licensing, were introduced to regulate producers and ensure a more effective utilization of resources. But experience has shown that government regulation was not successful in achieving the declared objective, as controls acted as a serious constraint on industrial growth. The productivity performance of the industry was low primarily due to India's policy framework, comprising extensive bureaucratic control over production, investment and trade. Targets fixed by the government were often wrong and the firms chosen for licensing were not the most productive. The policies discriminated against exports and the firms found it easier to operate in a protected market than compete in the domestic international market. Above all, government controls have caused large scale inefficiencies.

The social objective of preventing concentration of economic power was not realized. On the contrary, the fruits of whatever development has taken place, have not been equitably shared. Some of the fundamental expectations of India's planners (eg Mahalanobis), namely, reduction in income inequalities and generation of employment remained

largely unfulfilled. Far from the liquidation of unemployment, even the new jobs created during the Second and Third Plan were unable to absorb the additions to labour force, resulting in growing backlog of unemployment.

Continuing unemployment and poverty resulting in worsening income distribution, created a serious structural demand problem. Poor agricultural growth intensified this problem, creating difficulties for the industrial sector and also for the growth of the Indian Economy.

The upshot of the debates on Indian planning in general, on the industrial development and on the role of agriculture was that, though the strategy was widely welcomed and the initial results were encouraging, the tempo of growth could not be sustained, for a variety of reasons discussed earlier. The debate also contributed, though not explicitly, to the building up of an economic case for liberalization.

Liberalisation:

The debate on market determined economic activity versus state controlled economy is as old as the discipline of economics. The arguments in favour of a market economy and counter arguments of market failure in meeting social goals echo the theories and postulates which have existed for a century. The word liberalization is prone to multiple interpretations. In the context of economic policy, it connotes reduction of government regulation and state intervention and allowing full operation of market forces in determining economic processes.

The Indian debates on state control versus economic liberalism, though based on well known arguments for and against, were influenced by the structural characteristics of the Indian economy and the imperatives of particular periods. The debate has been continuous and complex in the

post independence years and it comprises four distinct periods. The first period relates to food controls which began in the War years and continued after 1947. The debate was whether liberal markets or government controls would ensure better domestic food security. The second period covering the years 1965-66 and after was marked by agricultural failure, external crises, rupee devaluation and trade liberalization. The third period began in early 1980s when the government raised a sizeable medium term loan from the IMF, involving commitments to liberalise economic activity in specified areas.

The final episode in the evolution of economic liberalism began in 1991 (and is still under way) as an official package of economic reforms.

Some interesting points emerge from the Indian debate on economic liberalism. First, the Indian government inherited, at the time of independence, a very liberal economy with fewer controls on internal and external markets. The main government controls in operation at the time, were controls on food. Subsequently there were shifts in policy between liberalization and planning. Second, in each period, the shift in policy came about in response to a crisis – whether in food or balance of payments or the fiscal situation. Third, there is the misconception that liberalization means reduction in economic influence of the state. The withdrawal of the state in economic terms is a chimera. What occurs often in liberalization is not effective reduction in state involvement but a change in the nature of state involvement. Last, there have always been substantial difference between theoretical arguments and actual policies pursued. This is due to the difficulties of a purist approach in the real world of economic policy-making and also due to power equations with society at any given time. Perhaps

liberalization debates in India will continue in the new context of globalisation.

In addition to the four themes of debate discussed here, the book also deals with fiscal and population policies which are well-known and which form part of the overall debate on planning policy.

BIO-TERRORISM



In the last two decades biotechnology has been taking big strides in physiology, medicine, organ transplantation, producing new organs from stem cells, tracing malevolent and benevolent genes and utilizing all this knowledge for improving human life. This accelerated advance made some scientists to predict that in the very near future human beings will stop dying of old age or diseases and become almost immortal. A darker, sinister side of the advance however, mars this hope. It is the equally big strides that have been taken in the development and proliferation of biological and chemical weapons.

Many countries are involved in this sinister endeavor. Some have invented group specific bacteria and viruses that will attack 'them' and will be ineffective against 'us.' Israelite specific and White farmer specific pathogens can wipe out Israel and the white farmers of Zimbabwe, leaving no need for suicide bombings and attacking white farmers! Biological warfare and bio-terrorism are here! We have to take notice of this alarming

To conclude – the book under review is a very interesting analytical cum historical account of the developments in Indian economic thought in the post-independence period. Its reach is comprehensive and serves as a valuable background to the process of economic reforms begun in 1991.

*

We are sad to inform readers that Dr. T. K. Velayudham who sent us this review earlier this year, died of a heart attack on March 4, 2004. On behalf of *Freedom First* and its readers we convey our deepest condolences to his bereaved family.

BIO-TERRORISM

by
L. R. Reddy

Published by

A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 5 Ansari Road,
Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110 002.

Year of Publication: 2002. No. of pages 225. Price Rs.495

Reviewed by

Mrs. Suman Oak, Lecturer in English (Retd.) and a freelance writer.

menace, hold elaborate discussions, create awareness and alertness among people and educate them as to how to react to occurrences of bio-terrorists' attacks. This is what the author attempts to do in the book 'Bio-terrorism.'

Almost all nations, that can afford, have indulged in manufacturing biological weapons. The poisonous rye argot, purgative herbs, rotting carcasses, plague infected mice or corpses and smallpox infected clothes were used against the enemy since ancient times, till modern research invented more sophisticated and efficient biological weapons. Now many nations have stock piled biological weapons and the necessary delivery systems. All of them claim to have begun this outrageous research, only to respond to a perceived threat of biological warfare, their enemies purportedly wish to inflict on them. So like the nuclear race, the biological weapons race widens and sharpens.

However sometimes sane voices seem to prevail and people take notice of the impending danger

emanating from research in biological weapons and even take steps to put a stop to it. In 1969, President Nixon stopped all offensive biological and toxic weapons research and production by an executive order. Later all stock piles of biological agents and munitions were destroyed. In 1972, many countries including USA, USSR and Iraq signed the biological convention.

But despite this historic agreement, some countries still continue biological warfare research. Several cases of suspected or actual use of biological weapons like the yellow rain in southeast Asia, accidental release of anthrax at Sverdlovsk, use of ricin as an assassination weapon in London in 1978, etc., have come to light. L. R. Reddy gives an account of covert research and preparations in biological warfare carried out by nations like Russia and Iraq; Iran, Libya and Syria helped by desperate Russian scientists deprived of their jobs and salaries at the end of the cold war.

The author explains in simple language, toxicity, ease of production and stability of a number of toxins, as also how effective they were when put to use in warfare. He also describes how the toxins work, which body parts are affected, populations at risk and counter measures and protection against them. Toxins are more effective in confined spaces. But their effect can be nullified through the use of collective filtration systems.

Bio-weapons, unlike nuclear weapons, are a recent phenomenon. Efforts to deal with them have made very little progress. But it is very important that the medical community educate itself and the public, so that, they do not panic but respond to an attack with a cool head. The long term solution, of course, lies in the scientific community making the policy makers aware of consequences of bio-terrorism and building a global consensus condemning research, development and manufacturing of bioweapons and bringing perpetrators of this heinous crime to book. The policy makers and the academic community tend to dismiss bio-terrorism as just a theoretical possibility. The use of bio-weapons, they maintain, is very rare because it is morally repugnant. Secondly, only the most sophisticated laboratories can produce enough organisms so as to use them in making effective weapons. Dispersing them on targeted popu-

lation is, all the more difficult. Again the potential destructiveness of these weapons, as compared to 'nuclear winter', the assured result of a nuclear war, is extremely small. L.R. Reddy proves the invalidity of these arguments, citing a number of incidents of bio-terrorism and stresses the importance of preparing ourselves to counter it.

Like the 'Biological Weapons Convention' of 1972 and the NPT, America has piously called for Non-proliferation of chemical weapons and wants to wipe out Saddam Hussein along with his chemical weapons laboratories and production centers. But the US themselves have not yet ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention that has been signed by 158 other countries, because that would cost them billions of dollars in disposing of their existing stockpiles of arsenal and would hamper their trade in chemical weapons and technology. American companies had sold Nerve Gas materials to Saddam Hussein, before the Gulf war, to fight Iran. Reddy mentions another disturbing fact in this regard. With all their rhetoric against rogue nations and the axis of evil, the equipment that US provided their soldiers against use of chemical weapons was dangerously inadequate. Protecting American interests does not include protection of American soldiers!

After this little digression into chemical warfare, Reddy turns again to biological agents. He describes 28 biological agents giving details like causative organisms, mode of spread, quantity of dose that would prove lethal, clinical features, diagnostic findings, etc. The medical management for dealing with the consequence of all biological agents including whether an effective vaccine is available, as well as prophylactic treatment wherever possible is also given. All this information is certainly very important for health service providers.

There are 26 appendices, almost all of which are articles published on or around 12th October 1999. Naturally there is a good deal of repetition in them. They give an interesting account of bio-terrorist attacks.

The book makes interesting reading for the layman although it is impossible to remember any details regarding diseases caused by biological weapons and how to deal with them. All the same it makes a good manual for health service providers, in America, as we in India, can't afford this costly panic and the means to deal with it. The use of the language shows that L.R.Reddy is an American Indian and talks mostly about the dangers as perceived by Americans, although the book is published in India.



Competitive free enterprise is the law of the people's good. So I would suggest that the Liberal, in working for economic development should stand foursquare for the principle of peasant proprietorship on the land and for competitive free enterprise with minimum control. The role of the State must be that of laying the infrastructure and acting like a referee, blowing the whistle when somebody indulges in a foul. The referee does not join in a boxing match; he only stops a foul from being committed; if the referee joins in one side he ceases to be a referee. This should be the role of the State in economic affairs.

Minoo Masani, *Democracy & Development*,
An Indian Liberal Group publication, 1969

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The book is an account of the tragic twists of the Indian Army's operations in Sri Lanka, code named Operation Pawan. The ethnic conflict, as in similar other situations, owes its origin to the attempt by the majority community to correct the favours shown to the minority by the colonial powers.

A large number of Sri Lankans of Tamil origin were deprived of their citizenship rights. Representation did not achieve any result and a group of them took to violent agitation. The LTTE was formed in 1972 by 10 students and Prabhakaran first came to notice when he assassinated the mayor of Jafna in 1975. He was then 18 years old. The author who was then the Army Commander responsible for the operations acknowledges the incredible motivation and magnificent fighting powers of the LTTE.

The IPKF was inducted into Sri Lanka on 30th July 1987. The military task was to separate the two warring groups. It was clear within two weeks that the LTTE were not surrendering all the arms and there was no trust between the two parties. The suicide by 17 LTTE personnel captured by the Sri Lankan Navy led to the massacre of 200 Sri Lankans by the LTTE. On 6th October 1987, the Army Chief Gen. Sunderji visited Sri Lanka and issued orders to use force against the LTTE. Gen. Depinder Singh's suggestion not to use force was brushed aside as a defeatist attitude. The Army should

have started examining alternatives, when they found not only lack of cooperation but hostility from both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government.

The Army Commander admits that the troops were sympathetic to the LTTE and took some time to think of them as the enemy. He does not explain what steps he took to cut off aid to the LTTE from India, even after the operations against the LTTE had commenced.

The operations conducted with the usual valour, courage and professionalism are an example of

waste due to confusion at the political level. The military cannot escape the charge of drift and lack of realistic presentation to the political masters and rushing to perform an undefined task. The casualties of the IPKF failed to get even a whimper of applause and affection seen during the Kargil War. Let the killed and wounded of Operation Pawan be a reminder to the politicians and the generals to understand their responsibilities better.

Gen. Depinder Singh brings out the shortcomings in the Army's tactical conduct, but pays handsome tributes to the various Army branches.

IPKF IN SRI LANKA

by

Lt.Gen. Depinder Singh, PVSM, VSM

Published by

Natraj Publishers, 17, Rajpur Road, Dehradun 284 001

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Reviewed by

**Brig. A Thyagarajan(Retired) a freelance writer,
engaged in leadership training.**

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

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J. R. Patel
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A NARRATIVE OF COMMUNAL POLITICS

UTTAR PRADESH, 1937-39

By
Salil Misra

Published By

Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., M-32 Market, Greater Kailash-I,
New Delhi 110048.

Year Of Publication: 2001. No. of pages 363. Price Rs.295.

Reviewed By

Brig. S. C. Sharma (Retd), currently working in industry as an adviser,
is a freelance writer and a regular contributor to *Freedom First*

The book is a study of communal politics in UP during the period 1937-39. The divide between the Hindus and Muslims in the 19th century was initially and erroneously placed on the suppression of and neglect of the Muslims during the British Rule. Some other factors were the revivalist movements which went their separate ways pursuing the Hindu and Muslim glorious eras respectively. The Muslims did not have a reformist movement like that of the Hindus who easily took to modern education and trade. Cultural differences grew by way of differences in dress and salutations. Two schools of thought developed amongst the Muslims – one for cooperation with the Hindus against British Rule and the other for safeguards under British Rule. There was yet another shade of Shaukat Ali, distancing himself from the Congress but against Imperialist rule.

The divide was strengthened by separate electorates. Jinnah got rebuffed in the Muslim majority provinces and turned to UP for support, where he was helped by his personal friendship with some of the Muslim landlords, poor support for Congress amongst the Muslims there and an existing Muslim political body in the form of Muslim Unity Board. The rise of Nehru next to Gandhi and adoption

of socialism by the Congress diminished the possibility of Congress making religious appeals for political mobilization. The author has well researched the rise of communal politics during the pre-election period in 1937 and how the failure to form a coalition government in UP widened the gulf between the two communities. It is claimed by some politicians that there was an understanding before election for such a coalition government. It was firmly ruled out by Nehru. It is difficult to say whether therein lay the seeds of the ultimate partition of India. As for the role played by the British in their divide and rule policy Bipin Chandra writes – “After 1937, the British shifted from balanced to uncontrolled communalism, encouraged total communal division, gave virtually open support to the Muslim League.”

The Muslim League took full advantage by developing mass support by concentrating their opposition to singing the ‘Vande Mataram’, hoisting of Congress flag and the Wardha education scheme of Mahatma Gandhi. It is interesting to recall the objection of the Chairman, Maharashtra Minorities Commission to the singing of ‘Vande Mataram’ recently.

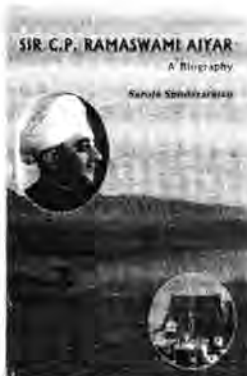
On their part, the Congress

launched a programme for building up mass support amongst Muslims and restraining the Hindu right wing. Initially successful, the Congress did not pursue it vigorously. The Congress gave up the idea of pacts with Muslim League or any other communal organization. During 1937 to 1939, Muslim politics took a great leap forward, but the Congress did not take note of it and kept talking of the Congress and the Imperialist power. They failed to recognize the rise of the third force – Muslim politics. The Congress took up the challenge from the Muslim League from the platform of nationalism and secularism. This did succeed in restraining the growth of the Hindu Mahasabha but failed to get response from the Muslim masses. The Hindu Mahasabha took shape only after the communal riots in Kanpur and Banaras during 1938-39.

The book is of interest in understanding the communal politics in UP which became the main support base for the Muslim League and played a major part in the partition of the country.

You only have power over people so long as you don't take everything from them. But when you have robbed a man of everything he is no longer in your power - he has become free again.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn



SIR C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR A BIOGRAPHY

by
Saroja Sundararajan

Published by

Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 15, J. N. Heredia Marg,
Ballard Estate, Mumbai 400 001.

Year of Publication: 2002. No. of pages 777. Price Rs.490

Reviewed by

Prof. R. V. Chary, retired professor of Commerce and Management
and a freelance writer.

C.P., as he was affectionately called by his admirers and friends, was born on November 13, 1879, to Pattabhirama Aiyar and Rangammal, at Wandiwash, a small town of North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu. The family, which had a long lineage, were the descendants of the famous Sanskrit scholar, Appayya Dikshithar, author of more than 104 works. The title, "*Dikshithar*" is conferred on a person, who has performed a yagya/yaga and the family is entitled to suffix the title for the next seven consecutive generations. As Pattabhirama Aiyar was the eighth descendant, he had to forgo the title and naturally preferred the simple "Aiyar" at the end of his name.

C.P.'s father had meticulously charted the career for him. Though well-to-do, he had denied all facilities and privileges, instilling thereby a sense of strict discipline at every level, even to the extent of preparing a special lectern for him, so that he had to keep standing while studying the textbooks. The discipline that was inculcated in him, stood him in good stead during his college days and also in his career. He was brought up on English literature, and was made to speak and think in English. To strengthen the foundation further, his mother was also asked to learn the English language. A prodigious child that C.P. was, he could pick-

up with ease, the poems of Shelley, Coleridge and Wordsworth. He had, besides, effortlessly memorised long passages from Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. At that tender age, he had also mastered the works of great scientists like Charles Darwin and Huxley. His extraordinary proficiency in the Bible brought him the Peter Cator Prize, so much so that the then Governor of Bombay, Shri P. V. Cherian paid a very handsome tribute for his erudition. The flame of his literary knowledge was further kindled, when he decided to spend his vacations at Bangalore, in the house of the Dewan of Mysore, Kalpati Seshadri Iyer, who heartily encouraged him. He completed his B.A. in Mathematics in 1898 from the Madras University, carrying with

him the Elphinstone Prize, for his Nebular Theory. At the time of his marriage, he was still a student, just aged 16 years and the bride was 8 years old.

After completing the graduation course, he applied for the post of Asst. Professor of English, but was vetoed by his father, who urged him to go for legal degree. He cleared the law course in 1901 and got himself apprenticed to V. Krishna-swamy Iyer in 1902. His father, all of a sudden, passed away at the prime age of 45, in 1902, which came as a rude shock to him. C. V. Kumara-swami Sastri, who was considered "the most brilliant representative of the Madras Judicial Service" and was his brother-in-law, was

Of Winners and Losers

When a winner makes a mistake, he says, "I was wrong"; When a loser makes a mistake, he says, "It wasn't my fault." A winner works harder than a loser and has more time; A loser is always "too busy" to do what is necessary. A winner goes through a problem; A loser goes around it, and never gets past it. A winner makes commitments; A loser makes promises. A winner says, "I'm good, but not as good as I ought to be"; A loser says, "I'm not as bad as a lot of other people." A winner listens; A loser just waits until it's his turn to talk. A winner respects those who are superior to him and tries to learn something from them. A loser resents those who are superior to him and tries to find chinks in their armour. A winner feels responsible for more than his job; A loser says, "I only work here." A winner says, "There ought to be a better way to do it." A loser says, "That's the way it's always been done here."

Rakesh Pandey

responsible for the rapid rise in the fortunes of C.P. He used to go through meticulously every case, with the available case-laws and judicial pronouncements, which sharpened his intellect. In a very short period, he had made his mark and was making an income of Rs.25,000/- p.m., not an inconsiderable amount during those days. The highest fee that was received by him was from the Maharaja of Patiala, which amounted to Rs.2,50,000/-. Of the various cases handled by him, the famous case of G. Narayanaiah vs. Annie Besant, takes the pride of place. An orthodox Telugu Brahmin, G. Narayanaiah, had two sons, J. Krishnamurti aged 14 years and J. Nityananda aged 11 years. After much persuasion from Annie Besant, he consented, on March 16, 1910, to appoint her as the guardian. Both the boys were entrusted to the care and guidance of C. W. Leadbeater. After a lapse of some time, Narayanaiah found to his horror, that Leadbeater was leading the boys to homosexuality, and hence wanted to take back the boys under him, by annulling the

deed of transfer of guardianship. C.P. who was requested to take up the case, was ably assisted by two eminent lawyers, N. Chandra-sekhara and M. Subbaraya Aiyar. Annie Besant argued the case herself. The cross-examination of Leadbeater by C.P. had created so much interest throughout the city and suburbs that the entire courtroom was fully packed, even before the commencement of the case. It was one of the greatest moments in his life and C.P. had very ably and competently handled the matter. Though the case was won at the High Court, it was lost at the Privy Council, when leave of appeal was permitted to Annie Besant.

In the political arena, some of his notable achievements include the Mettur Dam, the Pykara Hydro-electric Scheme, the Pallivasal Hydroelectric Scheme, the settlement of the Periyar Water dispute, etc. The opening up of the temples in Travancore to all and sundry, irrespective of caste or creed was a momentous occasion that was warmly welcomed by all the political

parties. This took place on November 12, 1936, on the occasion of the birthday of Maharaja Chitra Thirunal, at the initiative taken by C.P. The Travancore State Congress contained a handful of disgruntled elements who were not happy and had planned to attack him. The murderous attempt was made on July 25, 1947, at about 7.10 p.m., when he was returning after attending a music concert of Semmengudi Srinivasa Iyer. But he escaped with a few serious bruises though he was hospitalised for some time. Due to the hatred that was whipped up, he decided to relinquish his job immediately. He suddenly passed away on September 2, 1966, while in London.

The book, well-thought out and well brought up, is priced at Rs.490. The photographs, reference and bibliography (pp.699-764) enhance the value of this very interesting biographical book of a great and eminent personality.

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"As we left the meeting, I walked him (JRD Tata) back to his office and with his very characteristic humility he turned to me and said, 'Do you want me to move out of my office?' I said 'Of course not Jeh - don't even think about that. That office is yours. It's your space and nothing is really going to change. I look to you as somebody I will always turn to.' And although I said

that and I meant it, I did have some concerns that Jeh would be in the office every day, that he would interfere and that he would forget that he was not any longer the chairman, that he would be irritable and render somewhat impotent the moves that I was hoping to make.

"All these fears I had were unfounded because he was just fantastic. He was indeed in the office every day, but he never interfered. He acted as the senior statesman. He was available for counselling, he was available for advice, he was available for guidance. He was my best adviser."

* *The Creation of Wealth - The Tatas from the 19th to the 21st Century* with a foreword by J.R.D. Tata and an Epilogue by Ratan N. Tata, Author: R. M. Lala. Published by Penguin/Viking. Price Rs.450.00

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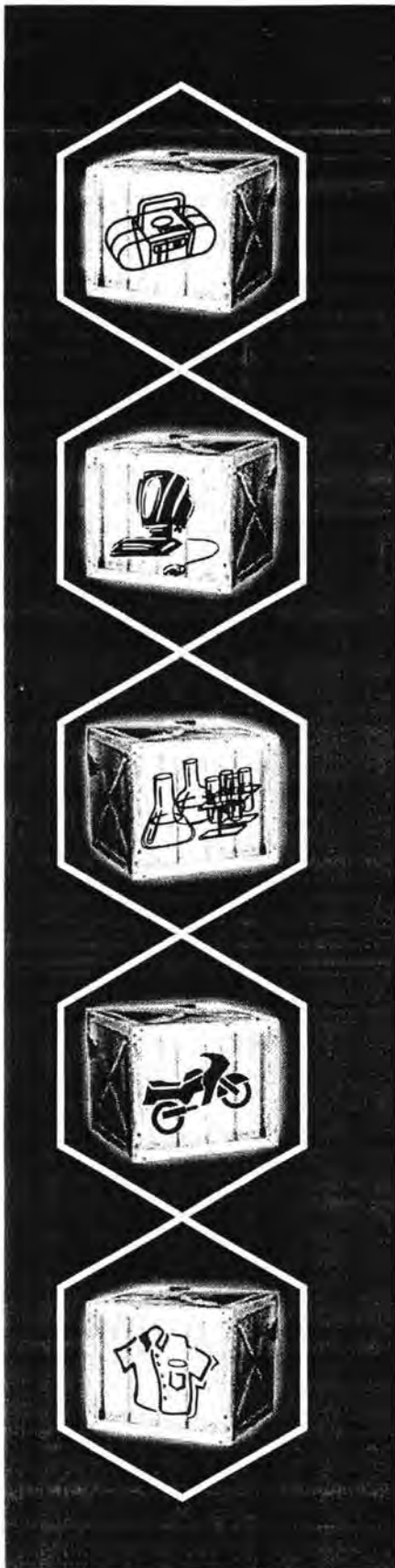
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