

Freedom First

The Liberal Position

❖ *Issues of Governance*

- Do Indians Have the Stomach for a People's Revolution
- Issues in Governance

❖ *Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project*

- The Controversy is a Smoke Screen
- A Fact Sheet

❖ *Religion And Democracy*

❖ *Different Hues of Blasphemy*

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Freedom First

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Between Ourselves...

The Japanese have repeatedly claimed that though they were training themselves to deal with natural disasters what actually happened was way beyond their worst fears. – Tsunami and an earthquake of an intensity unknown to man. This tragedy was compounded by the Fukushima nuclear power plant explosions bringing back horrible memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Our sympathies to the brave people of Japan.

The Advisory Board of *Freedom First* at its last meeting had decided to carry articles explaining the Jaitapur Nuclear Project. This was before all hell broke loose in Japan Expectedly the Fukushima disaster was an added ammunition in the hands of those who opposed the Jaitapur project. We had the choice of withdrawing the articles by Dr. Phondke and Dr. Godbole or going ahead with what had been written which did not negate in any away their reasoning why India needed nuclear power plants. Once things come back to normal (perhaps normal is not the right word to use because it will be a long time before the Japanese can say that) we would debate the issues dispassionately as Liberals generally do. So you can expect more on Fukushima *vis-à-vis* Jaitapur and a host of others. We'll leave it at that for now.

We have been mailing soft copies to those who have asked for it. Forwarding the March issue we asked the recipients their 'take' on the ferment in the Arabistans and were happily surprised to receive some interesting comments, many of which we have published on page 4. We invite you to send us your views. While on this subject we asked you dear reader: "Do we want India to be a superpower or a country that has no global ambitions but the modest desire to eliminate poverty and hunger and provide opportunities for people to develop and grow...etc.

No one has responded.

Meanwhile permit me to be a little provocative. During the cold war years we clearly supported the free world against the world behind the iron and bamboo curtains. Individual liberty was at stake and we and our publishers the ICCF were not prepared to choose freedom for bread. We were critical whenever India took a neutral stand when such issues were involved. But now the scene has changed. The pick and choose policy of Western powers of villains and victims is not acceptable We support India abstaining in the Security Council and opposing the use of armed force against Gaddafi even if he is the current WMD – Incidentally why haven't they dislodged the defeated president from his mansion in the Ivory Coast?

Editor

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From Our Readers

Is This Rule by Fiat?

The Times of India of 8th September 2010 carried an interesting article, “Is This Rule by Fiat?” by Vikram Singh Mehta in the context of the Enemy Properties Act – which opens a door of distinction between political democracy and human rights, usually assumed together, which is not so. Behind the Enemy Properties Act 1968, with ordinances before and since, Mehta has clarified the critical differences, which most fail to recognise. Most assume democracy and human freedom automatically go together. It is simplistic unreality. Only an active and an alert liberal citizenship can ensure that they go together. It does not exist. It means citizens’ better control of elected leadership in democracy before, at and after elections. It is not simple or easy. Nine-tenths of the Indian electorate has known the illusions of ten General Elections, and many more at state and other levels.

Indian delusions are historical and psychological. When Vikram Mehta’s father Jagat and I were students in Allahabad University (the hub of the Congress ‘*netas*’ then in 1940-1942, as a student of history, I wondered why the then educated High Command of the Congress were demanding ‘*Purna Swaraj*’ for decades before Independence, and never commissioned a factual historical study of the ‘*desi*’ lessons of *swaraj* in the pre-colonial centuries, even before Ghazni and Ghoris. Did they imagine centuries of ‘*Ram Rajya*’? As a consequence, that same leadership blindly accepted, lock, stock and barrel, the colonial laws, administration, police and sarkari attitudes, in what was really “a mere transfer of power” from white to brown hands; of the same colonial governance, then a Westminster model, later amended over 70 times in less years to suit Indminster mindsets. The result is there for all to see, in and also after the Emergency. The Ninth Schedule of the Constitution is really to keep legislation and the powers of the ‘*sarkar*’, old and new, beyond the judiciary. It is a typical part of the Indminster model of our Constitution. Not to speak of what we have done to freedom from Kashmir to the North East states, to the longer cancer of Maoism among India’s poorest and weakest tribals and forest dwellers – the victims for decades, of the ‘legal’ Indian Forest, Police and Land Acquisition Acts. The Indminster model in action!

The reason for my doing so, is for the reinvigoration of at least those who call themselves Indian Liberals. We have fooled ourselves too long, including Nehru since his moving words on that historic 14th/15th August night in 1947, of “India awakens while the world sleeps”. Liberal India still sleeps, if it really exists. Elections are primarily to give constitutional power to politicians, legalising power, patronage, and now brazen, unaccountable corruption; with networks of dynastic

power, henchmen contractors, and colluding babu bureaucrats; a most formidable network of exploitation in the name of, and under cover of, democracy. It is a fraud on Freedom.

The legal writ of the state does not run for the freedom and human rights of citizens. Cultural Nazis have even misappropriated the right to censor unread books, and dictate their hooligan versions of Indian culture.

The duality of Indian democracy and freedom is recognised internationally, though not nationally, in world public opinion. Over the years, India scores relatively high as a durable electoral democracy. It stands low in freedom and the quality of life, shamefully in the class of the sub-Saharan states.

Where is there a recognisable, small, solid body of functioning Indian Liberals in this context? Especially in the capital Delhi, the strategic centre, where a body with a Youth Wing for the future, a solid realistic agenda, a long-term strategy with requisite resources? Now that India has a rising middle class of about 100 million, the social foundation of a liberal democracy, including a critical element of educated mothers and wives, it seems the first really opportune time in Indian history. The second liberal generation of my time failed, especially after the critical Emergency, which exposed the weak hollowness of the political class, top to bottom. Minoo Masani, the founder of the Indian Liberal Group and the last conspicuous relic of political liberals, admitted he was “not starry-eyed about democracy. I know its limitations”.

Whatever changes for the better in India since the Emergency, apart from a compulsive, more liberal economy since 1991 after bankruptcy; the political class has become far more criminalised; all arms of the Constitution have weakened, even the higher judiciary. India and its official ‘development’ have reverted massively to ‘*sarkari sauda*’, which Kautilya once knew, and which has become the sarkari cancer of the state and the people. Every decade of delay makes it more difficult for Indian Liberalism to revive and grow.

A. D. Moddie, Mumbai.

*

Prime Minister on the Appointment of the CVC

The Prime Minister’s statement on the appointment of Thomas as CVC starts with an assertion that it was not due to coalition politics. No one had suggested that. He has followed the general line of vigorously denying the truth. If not DMK, Raja certainly had a hold on him.

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)
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*

What is your take on the ferment in the Arabistans?

We make available soft copies of Freedom First to those interested. While forwarding the March issue I asked the recipients "What is your take on the "Liberation" Movement in the various Arabistans? Here are some replies:

Liberation movements spreading in African countries which were under the grip of dictators and military junta and supported by oil mongering nations appears to be a very good sign in support of democracy. The only fault I could find is that it may be taken over by the Muslim Brotherhood which is definitely not a good sign.

Prabhakar Nanawaty, Pune

*

Much too early to celebrate, as the "establishments" in these states will make a play to retain power.

Risk of Islamist takeover (Hamas, Hizbollah, Algeria 1990s) is real. Even Russian revolution first installed a moderate regime before Lenin came and took over.

The real prize is Saudi Arabia. Saudis, unlike Egyptians, might fall for radical Islamism. However, it is unlikely that the Al-Sauds will be ousted.

Implication for India – wait and watch, build connections with all power centres, and do business with whoever comes to power.

Nitin Pai.

*

I have not studied it. But are we gradually heading towards it?

Girdhar Patil, Nashik

*

The unexpected changes in the Arab world reminded me of a quote by Desmond Tutu: "Once people decide to be free, there is no force which can stop them." Seems like many under these regimes have finally decided to be free. Sharing the following comments by a friend of mine who was in the middle of the Egypt uprising.

"Too many people are trying to plot a 'domino effect' in what's happening in West Asia and North Africa. One of the startling similarities is about the large share of the youth in each country's population and the high unemployment among them.

"Having said that, I think the situation there is best described as a 'chain reaction', with the reality in each country - except possibly in Yemen, where the revolution is most likely to succeed - quite different from others. So you ask yourself the question: why are the protests not so loud in the Saudi kingdom? "That's

because, like in Kuwait and Bahrain, the rulers there bribe the population into submission; basically pointing to the thought that despite decades-long lack of proper freedom, the people can sit quietly if their pockets are lined.

"There's another angle to it: The interests of world powers. The US and EU, which supported undemocratic, repressive regimes as long as they suited American/European interests. They do not look at India in that manner any more. India's economy being in the stage it is, it's not as dependent on any kind of aid from the West any longer."

Sethu Das, Cochin

*

"It's astonishing that after such a long subservient regime the Arabs have realised that their leaders have been fleecing them dry up until now! You see the Bahrainis thought it was so cool to get a block of land for free! - little realising that the oil wealth that the sheikh had was worth more billions than the block.

Seriously all the Bahraini boys who used to fly with us thought having half an acre to build their castle was so grand! Little do they know that the interest alone for the oil barrels sold were worth billions. Only now are the Bedouins getting educated. In fact, Oman was the only country that insisted all their nationals get free education no matter where they wanted to study. The result is that that Arab country is in a league of its own with the Omanis being the most educated Arab race.

It's a rude awakening for the Arabs – and it will only escalate after Gaddafi is gone.

Lorraine Valladares, Australia

*

Hope it restores democracy and not a theocratic state like Iran!

Narendra Nayak

*

First, I don't believe these are real revolutions. That requires the overthrow not just of a particular tyrant but an entire system. Cromwell nearly succeeded. Lenin did in the absolute sense. Unless these overthrows translate into genuine democracies they just are not revolutionary

Cont'd. on p.35

Justice R. A. Jahagirdar

A Rationalist Thinker and a Humane Judge

Justice Jahagirdar, born on 15th August 1927, (20 years later that day marked India's Independence Day) was a truly Independent Spirit. I met him for the first time on the occasion of the birth centenary of M. N. Roy and was much impressed by his unassuming, friendly and helpful nature. Till then, being a Judge, he had refrained from openly airing his views on public platforms. But after retirement he zealously inculcated rationalist, atheist and humanist values in the youth at every opportunity that came his way.



15th August 1927 – 23rd February 2011

The movement initiated by the Rationalist Association of India and carried on despite insurmountable difficulties by Prof. R. D. Karve, began tapering off during the post independent era as the newly independent Indian society being enamoured of the concept of the welfare state secularism, Nehruvian socialism, Marxism, etc. felt no need for rationalism *per se* any more. But soon it was realized that all these isms cannot take care of human frailties like greed, hunger for

power, lack of empathy, blind belief and fanaticism. Justice Jahagirdar was one of those who realized the importance of rationalism. Unless reason is given primacy of place in our mental attitude, we cannot get rid of these curses. *Reason*, the journal of the Rationalist Association of India was very popular among rationalists in India and abroad right from its first issue, way back in 1931 until its last one in 1942. Justice Jahagirdar brought out a series of user friendly CDs by scanning the pages of all the old issues, lest this precious intellectual asset be lost forever and hence had the CDs distributed to various educational institutions and universities.

As a judge, his judgments had a humane angle. Once a poor woman was accused of committing suicide and of trying to kill her child along with her. Justice Jahagirdar acquitted her, reasoning that since the woman had shouted for help she must have inadvertently fallen into the well (as she later claimed) and had no intention of killing her daughter. This was necessary because, he said, convicting the woman was convicting the innocent child and destroying the child's future.

He had cheerful and jovial nature with a tinge of childlike mischief in it. On many occasions at the M. N. Roy Campus, Bandra when snacks were offered, Justice Jahagirdar made it a point to take my photograph while I was eating, telling me he wanted to keep a record of my contribution to the cause!

A few years back he suffered a stroke. He was unconscious for over a week. Dr. Sharad Jahagirdar, his wife tirelessly nursed him day and night, knowing full well the gravity of the situation. He came out of it and although physically not his original self, mentally he was as alert as ever. He contributed a lot to the rationalist cause after his recovery. His daughter and other relatives used to tease him for refusing to see the 'divine hand' in it. He gave all the credit to his wife and called her a modern 'Savitri'. But sadly, this did not last long and within a couple of years his health started deteriorating. The end came on the morning of 23rd February.

Justice Jahagirdar maintained that rationalists do not swear by any set of principles or tenets like other systems of philosophy and therefore do not degenerate into any dogma or religion. It is a mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience, independent of arbitrary assumptions or authority. He, therefore, advocated rationalism on every platform made available to him. He also believed that decisions in all walks of life political, social, educational and health should be subjected to rationalist thoughts and arguments and should never be based on emotions.

With his own funds, he founded the 'Rationalist Foundation Trust' in 1995 to inculcate rationalism in our society by arranging lectures, publishing printed material and helping individuals who advocated rationalism and suffered as a consequence. He travelled all over

Maharashtra to spread rational values. This trust is now ably handled by Mr. Prabhakar Nanawaty, a retired senior scientist from DRDO, himself a staunch rationalist. He has already published two anthologies of Justice Jahagirdar's writings and a third is on its way. He is carrying out Justice Jahagirdar's work forward despite the irreparable loss of his valuable guidance.

Suman Oak

Freedom First *salutes the memory of a good friend and a great human being. After his retirement from the Bench he threw himself into the rationalist movement with a single-minded determination. In this cause we had the opportunity of persuading him to not only write for us but to participate in a number seminars and conferences among the last of which was one on the Administration of Justice when he led the discussion on "Judging the Judges"!*

We convey our deepest sympathies to his wife Dr. (Mrs.) Sharad Jahagirdar and the members of her family.

David Pinto

An Officer of Impeccable Character and Integrity

It is hard to believe that Dr. David Pinto is no more. Only the other day, I exchanged New Year Greetings with him on phone, little knowing that it would be the last time I would hear the old familiar voice. A born fighter, David overpowered the killer disease, only to succumb to it, nine years later. Even when death stared him in the face, he continued to be cheerful and optimistic and hoped for an extended lease of life. Unfortunately, it was not to be!

David was God's good man. He upheld Christian values and practiced his religion with deep faith and conviction. He believed in simple living and high thinking and was truly a man of action. He spoke little, but did much. Though seen as a stern and ruthless administrator, he was known to be compassionate and kind, reaching out to the needy, especially the lowly municipal employees whom he endeavoured to give a better quality of life by helping them fight addictions of all kinds.

My association with David goes back to the days when we both worked on our doctoral dissertations under the able guidance of Prof. S. P. Aiyar. I saw the effort he put in, as he combined BMC service with academic pursuits. With an M.A. in Political Science and an LL.M. in Constitutional Law and Criminology, he got his Ph.D. degree for his thesis – *The Mayor, The Commissioner and the Metropolitan Administration*, which was widely acclaimed as a bold administrative and political assessment of the working of the Municipal Corporation. He published the work and won accolades for it. Decades later, he decided to update this book and we collaborated in bringing out *Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and Ward Administration*.

This new book turned out to be a Herculean task. Collecting data, working on facts and figures, undertaking statistical analyses and put it all on paper in a way that was readable and valuable to the common man was a never-ending job and in this, I must say, David worked relentlessly to give his best. It goes to his credit that he envisaged the need to bring local government to the door-step of the people. With his deep insider's perception of the working of the municipal system, he attempted a study of Ward Administration, something never



15/7/1928 – 26/2/2011

done before. As former Municipal Commissioner B. G. Deshmukh put it in the Foreword of the Book, "Every aspect of Ward Administration has been critically studied and analysed in order to give citizens an understanding of how this gigantic and complex system works and how to work their way through it." Within the covers of a book, David wanted the entire story of the MCGM to unfold itself. All this resulted in a huge book that has seen a revised edition and a Marathi translation and is best described as a *magnum opus*.

As he liked to say of himself, he rose from the ranks. He made a humble beginning in the MCGM which soon became almost a second home for him, for nearly four decades. In this mammoth organization, he worked his way up, first as Secretary to a long line of Mayors and Municipal Commissioners, then Senior Ward Officer and finally retiring as Deputy Municipal Commissioner. His stint as 'A' Ward Officer in the 1980s deserves special mention. His work defined him as a man with a vision and a mission. With exemplary courage, he led from the front in undertaking night raids on unlicensed hawkers, health and cleanliness campaigns, beautification of gardens and parks, and even got private agencies involved in Ward Management, at a time when private-public partnership was unheard of.

David Pinto will always be remembered for his impeccable integrity and character, his outstanding sense of duty and ability to go that extra mile in the best traditions of public service. He will be missed very much, not only by his wife Annie and his faithful dog Prince, but also by relatives, friends, colleagues and citizens of Mumbai.

I salute a noble soul and pray that the Almighty grants him eternal rest.

We at *Freedom First* pay our tribute to a man who earned a simple but what is increasingly becoming rare description of being an officer of impeccable character and integrity.

- **Professor Marina Pinto**

Do Indians Have the Stomach for a People's Revolution?

Firoze Hirjikaka

(This country) is a place where people are trying to lead normal, middle-class lives, but they are frustrated at every turn by overstaffed and lethargic bureaucracies. It does a good job of getting kids to attend primary school, but the quality of the educational system is terrible. Corruption is rife. It takes 218 days to get a building permit, with all the attending bribes.

The above lines read like a litany of familiar complaints most Indians have against their government. Except that they are taken from a column by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks; and the country he is talking about is Egypt. Thanks to extensive media coverage, by now the whole world knows about the people's revolution taking place in Egypt, where ordinary, unnamed Egyptian citizens are making a concerted effort to get rid of a well-entrenched dictator. Whether they will ultimately succeed or not is still up in the air, but at least they are having a damn good whack at it.

Can one imagine a similar scenario in India, where ordinary Indians face all the problems mentioned above; the only saving grace being that they live in a (somewhat) functioning democracy instead of a dictatorship? Oh sure, we write fulminating letters to the editor, complain loudly to anyone willing to listen and have endless television debates, but does it result in any perceptible improvement to the way we are governed? Do we have the guts and fortitude to assemble in large numbers and stay there, even at the risk of a *lathi* charge by government-controlled police? In short, are we prepared to put our money where our vociferous mouths are?

I am not advocating an overthrow of the government, as the Egyptians want to. For one thing, it would be a futile exercise, since the government that replaces it would probably be as corrupt and indifferent as the last. But perhaps we can do more to make them accountable to the public. On paper, at least, India has the advantage of being a functioning democracy, where the people are supposed to tell their leaders how to act. In theory, we have been telling them for 60 years, but all we get in return is lip service without any significant change.

India's tragedy is that the democratic system it inherited from the British has been cleverly and insidiously manipulated by our so-called rulers for the past 50 years. They carried on the British colonizer's tradition of convincing a largely rural and semi-literate electorate that

they were the *mai-baap* and not to be questioned. They doled out periodic sops in the forms of subsidies and made grandiose promises that were rarely fulfilled. They allowed a back door entry to criminals and grossly unqualified individuals, whose only purpose in joining politics was to make a lot of (undeclared) money at the taxpayers' expense. In the process, bad governance and secrecy became the norm and corruption was virtually institutionalized. The law making body of Parliament manipulated laws and amended the Constitution to ensure that they would never be adequately punished for their misdeeds. They were aided in this endeavour by a compliant and equally corrupt police force that was completely subservient to their political masters.

And the people of India kept on taking it. Self-styled liberals and political pundits exhorted the people to use their vote to make a change, but many of them themselves took a holiday on voting day. Yes, the common people did display their acumen and changed the government when they felt they had been lied to. The only problem was that the party they voted into office was no better or worse than the one they booted out.

The situation is not hopeless, of course. Small, but refreshing, breezes of change have been blowing across the country in recent years. The Right to Information Act is slowly but steadily whittling away the veil of secrecy politicians and bureaucrats have long used to hide their venal practices. The emergence of multiple television channels has ensured that ministerial wrongdoings are constantly subjected to public glare, even to those who don't read newspapers. And politicians and bureaucrats are growing increasingly desperate in their attempts to justify their myriad deeds of omission and commission.

But is it enough? Yes, politicians and bureaucrats are squirming; and their excuses are becoming ever more inventive and pathetic, but there is as yet no serious indication that they have got the message. They are still indulging in the time honoured ritual of buck passing to

take the heat off themselves - without actually admitting to anything. I'm sure they are well aware of public anger and frustration, but they are secure in the knowledge that the present laws will prevent them suffering anything more than an easily reversible resignation, suspension or transfer. Their complacency is heightened by the realization that they alone have the power to amend the laws to impose harsher penalties; and they are hardly likely to cut their own throats.

So what is to be done? Somehow I can't visualise tens of thousands of Indians congregating at public squares in major cities and resolving to stay there until the reforms they demand are implemented. There is a delicious irony in this, because the same tens of thousands would willingly gather for a religious festival or a *mela*. But for some reason, political activism on a mass scale doesn't seem to be in our blood. Indians being individualistic to the core, it would not be long before a mass gathering subdivided into factions, each trying to engineer the maximum advantage to itself.

The unpleasant reality is that for all the purported outrage at corruption in public life, many Indians would not be averse to indulging in it themselves if they perceived a monetary advantage in it. In public, we lament that corruption has become a way of life among our politicians and bureaucrats, but in private, we routinely pay bribes to "get our work done".

And so, it seems we Indians do not have the stomach to stage a people's revolution. The desperately poor are too busy just trying to survive, to indulge in such luxuries. The middle class is preoccupied looking after number one; and any fire that may exist in their bellies is quickly quenched by rising incomes and increased purchasing power.

But there are some things we can do, without resorting to mass protests and street demonstrations. The present system of elections is clearly not working, because whatever party we vote into power is as bad, if not worse, than the one we booted out. I am not sure if the following suggestions are entirely practical, but almost anything is

better than the political status quo:

- Force the government to enact or amend existing laws on corruption, so that those politicians and bureaucrats found guilty of looting the public exchequer are given stringent punishment, including imprisonment.
- Remove political control over the police, state and central investigation agencies and give them the power to prosecute any public official, no matter of what rank, without requiring sanction from the government.
- Make it mandatory for public officials accused of corruption to be suspended *without pay* as soon as they have been chargesheeted; and be tried as criminals.
- Prohibit individuals who have been chargesheeted for criminal activity from running for elected office, even if their case is yet to be decided in a court of law.

The bottom line is that politicians, bureaucrats and public officials must be made to realize that once their acts of corruption are exposed, they could face very serious consequences, including jail. Now I am aware that some of the above suggestions have been made before, by people far more qualified than me, but they have remained just that – suggestions. I am also aware under our present parliamentary system, it would be difficult to implement them. After all, when the country's highest law making body is populated with individuals of questionable integrity who are intent of protecting their ill-gotten wealth, who is going to bell the cat?

Well, somebody has to. The question is how – and there is no easy answer. Maybe we should take a leaf out of the page of the Father of the Nation and resort to civil disobedience. Our current *netas* are as arrogant and full of themselves as our erstwhile British rulers; so why not? The problem is that it is hard to get a few thousand of our countrymen to agree on a common plan of action; let alone a few million. But still: what is the alternative?

MR. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA can be contacted at Leonardo_99@yahoo.com

From a Call to Liberals to the Wisdom of Rajaji

Sanjeev Sabhlok whose column "Come on Liberals!" has lent meaning and substance to *Freedom First* dedicated to the spread of the Liberal Idea, even while raising issues that one could debate. Just when he was getting into territory that is of great relevance to Indian Liberals he has decided to take a vacation to attend to his health and complete his next book. That it is only vacation – is a relief! His last column in the present series is printed on page 30 of this issue.

Meanwhile we shall keep our readers engaged with letters written by C. Rajagopalachari to his friend K. K. Phatak over the years. To be published by the Rajaji Foundation, we are grateful to Mr. Phatak for giving *Freedom First* the exclusive right to publish a selection. The column is titled "A Stream of Correspondence" which is also the title of the proposed publication. **Ed.**

Issues In Governance

N. Vittal

It is not enough to have institutions with requisite power for ensuring good governance. It must be ensured that they are all the time manned by the right people.

The Twin Deficits of Trust and Governance

The current cascade of mega scams in practically every sector of governance and the erosion of the integrity of the institutions which were meant to ensure good governance has resulted in what the Home Minister described as a 'twin deficit', the 'trust deficit' and a 'governance deficit'. 'Trust deficit', I suppose indicates that people have lost faith in the institutions which are designed for ensuring the smooth and fair functioning of a democracy resulting in good governance. 'Governance deficit' represents the massive shortcomings and the extensive corruption which denies our people, particularly the poor, a share in the economic development of the country despite being rated as one of the major economies in Asia. In the eyes of the foreign investors, the BRIC countries, Brazil, Russia, India and China are emerging as the countries which should be dominant in this century and attract investment.

When there is Multiple Institutional Failure...

The paradox of enviable economic growth rate of around 9% in the recent years combined with explosion of corruption has raised the question whether India has sunk into crony capitalism. As has been remarked, the relationship between crony capitalism and real capitalism is between that of the praying mantis and the praying true Christian. This situation has arisen because of the systematic erosion and destruction of values of integrity and what has been described by the Supreme Court (in the case challenging the selection of Mr. PJ Thomas as Central Vigilance Commissioner) as neglecting 'institutional integrity.' If there is an individual with multiple organ failure, experts in the different fields of medicine can form a team to save a person's life. But if there is a multiple organ failure of governance, then who are the 'specialist doctors' going to be?

As I see it, the doctors are the institutions visualised in the Constitution and the basic structure of governance of the country. Our Constitution visualises three pillars of governance, the legislature which makes the law, the judiciary which interprets the law and the executive (both

political and permanent bureaucracy) which implements the law. In addition, as the freedom of speech is very vital for a meaningful democracy, the media, both print and electronic, act as the 'fourth estate'. Apart from these institutions, ultimately, it is the empowered, enlightened and educated citizen of the country who, through non-government organisations and activists, has to keep a vigilant eye on the performance of the government and where necessary, intervene effectively.

The recent explosion of people's frustration and anger in the form of spontaneous demonstrations forcing changes in long established dictatorships whether of the military type or the monarchical type shows that ultimately people's power has its own vigour and confers legitimacy on the state. Starting with Tunisia in the Middle East, Egypt, Libya and to some extent Iran and Yemen have witnessed the explosion of long suppressed anger of the citizens forcing dramatic changes in the regime and the system of governance.

Landmark Judgements

Is there danger of a similar thing happening in India? Hopefully not, because we have for the last 61 years a Constitution duly formed by the enlightened leaders at the time of the freedom movement and this Constitution adopted in 1950 has undergone more than a 100 amendments. The judiciary as the ultimate watchdog of good governance has been able to play a key role and initiate correctives to ensure that the principles of democracy are fully followed. At this stage it is worth recalling the landmark judgements and cases since independence which record the activist and constructive role played by the judiciary in the long term interest of the nation's democratic fabric:

"1964: It was perhaps the first stand-off between the judiciary and the legislature. The UP legislature had ordered the arrest of one Keshav Singh for committing contempt outside the legislature. He filed a *habeas corpus* plea with the Allahabad High Court's Lucknow bench and got bail. The legislature ordered him rearrested and asked for the two High

Court judges who had granted bail to be brought in custody to the House to answer contempt charges. A full bench of 28 judges of the High Court (excluding the two) issued an interim order staying the Assembly order. The Speaker still issued arrest warrants against the two judges while a petition sought to initiate contempt of court proceedings against the Speaker and MLAs. The Supreme Court ruled in 1965 that legislative privileges were subject to judicial review.

1973: In the Kesavananda Bharati case, the Supreme Court held that the power of the legislature to amend the Constitution has limits. The legislature, it held, could not amend the “basic structure” of the Statute. While there were differences in the bench on what “basic structure” meant, the majority held that supremacy of the Constitution; Republican and democratic form of government; secularism, separation of powers and federal character formed the basic structure.

1975: The Allahabad High Court upheld an election petition filed by Raj Narain alleging that Indira Gandhi had indulged in electoral malpractices like using government machinery for her campaign in the 1971 Lok Sabha polls. The High Court struck down her election and barred her from contesting elections for six years, which would effectively have meant she would have to quit as Prime Minister. The situation ultimately resulted in the imposition of the Emergency.

1979: A case involving Maneka Gandhi’s passport being seized led to the Supreme Court introducing the concept of “due process” in our jurisprudence. The court held the mere fact that laid down procedures were followed before depriving Maneka of her passport, did not amount to due process having been followed. It said due process – meaning that the law is “right, just and fair” – must be shown where fundamental rights are curtailed.

1992: In the case of Indira Sawhney and Others versus the Union of India, the Supreme Court upheld the proposed reservations for OBCs, but subjected them to important caveats. These were the stipulation that the “creamy layer” of OBCs must be excluded from reservations and that reservations must not exceed 50% of the total available jobs. With 22% already reserved for the SCs and STs, this meant OBCs could get a quota of only 27%.

1993: In what is known as the “second judges case”, a nine-judge Supreme Court bench ruled that in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court

and High Courts, the executive cannot go against the opinion of the Chief Justice of India (CJI). It spelt out what consultative process the CJI must go through in forming his or her opinion. This overturned a 1981 judgement in the “first judges case” which had given primacy to the executive in appointments to the higher judiciary.

1994: In what is generally referred to as the Bommai judgement, a nine-judge Supreme Court bench held that the proclamation of President’s Rule in a state under Article 356 was not immune to judicial review. It also held that such a proclamation would have to be ratified by both houses of Parliament. The ruling had the effect of drastically curbing the earlier wanton use of Article 356 by ruling parties at the Centre against state governments run by their rivals.

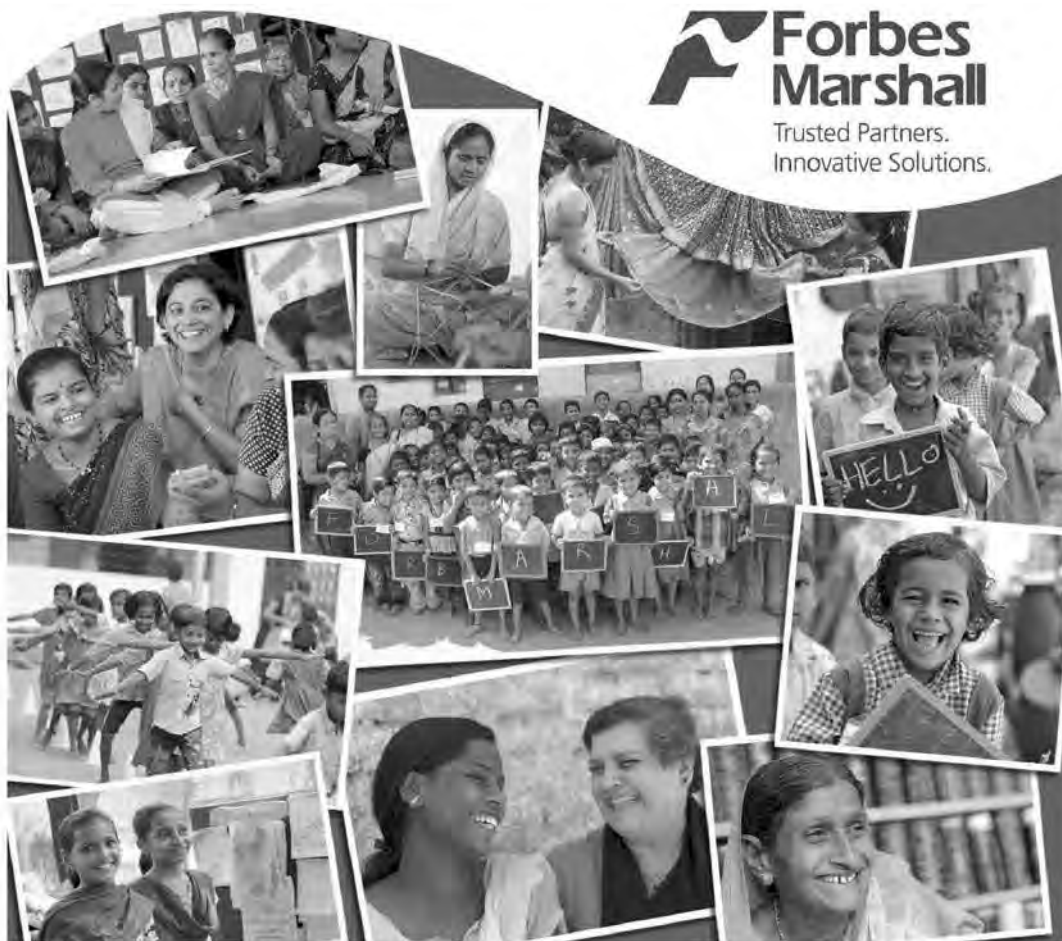
1997: As part of its judgement in the Jain Hawala Case, the Supreme Court said that the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) should be made a statutory body and the Central Vigilance Commissioner should be appointed by a three-member panel consisting of the Prime Minister, Home Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. It tried to insulate the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate from political control by saying that the heads of the two bodies should be appointed by a panel headed by the CVC.

2002: A three-judge Supreme Court bench made it mandatory for election candidates to declare their assets, criminal cases filed against them & their educational background. The poll panel followed with a notification to the same effect a month later. The government tried to counter this through an amendment to the Representation of the People Act based on an all-party consensus. In 2003, another bench struck down the amendment as unconstitutional.”

(The Times of India, Chennai, 3rd March 2011)

Constitutional Safeguards

The judgement of the Supreme Court in the case of the selection of Mr. P. J. Thomas as the Central Vigilance Commissioner, has to be seen in the context of a major constitutional body like the judiciary taking the initiative to strengthen other institutions for good governance and in the process laying down principles which will ensure long term good governance. Going back to the analogy of the specialists in medicine treating a person with multiple organ failure, in so far as the democratic state is concerned, such institutions have been visualised in the Constitution.



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As I see it, there are three Constitutional institutions and one Statutory institution apart from voluntary non constitutional bodies which can act as the doctors to correct the ills of the body politic. The most important perhaps is the judiciary, which we have already discussed. The second is the Election Commission of India. Thanks to the formidable Mr. T. N. Seshan, the institution showed how it can bring a certain degree of discipline among unruly politicians and ensure that the elections are conducted in a free and fair manner. At least in so far as the role of muscle power in elections is concerned, the Election Commission by imposing its rules strictly for better behaviour by implementing a code of conduct from the date when the elections are announced has been successful. Where they have confessed failure is in the massive role of money power played in the elections.

Sainath in a very insightful article in *The Hindu* in 2009, after the last general elections to the parliament pointed out that if one had 15 million dollars, he had 75 times more chance of getting elected compared to a person with 5 million dollars. Politics in India has been reduced to a mere exercise of money power. The money is mostly money generated through corruption and illegal means.

So far as the third constitutional body, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) is concerned, by its very nature, audit is *post facto* and to that extent, it cannot be effective. Nevertheless, the CAG which submits its report to the government annually and which is discussed in the Parliament, and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) provides a healthy check, massive cases of fraud and violations of canons of financial propriety are highlighted. The current case before the PAC which has attracted universal attention is the mother of all scams called 2G Scam.

Central Vigilance Commission

The fourth body which can act as a check for ensuring good governance and overcome the evils of misgovernance is the Central Vigilance Commission. And the selection of the chief of the Central Vigilance Commission (which is expected to be in the words of Supreme Court, an institution of integrity for the nation) was sought to be tampered with by a brazen violation of the principles laid down by Justice Verma in the famous landmark judgement on the Jain Hawala Case that precipitated another public interest litigation involving the CVC himself. The judgement of the Supreme Court delivered by Chief Justice Kapadia on the 3rd of March 2011 is one of the landmark judgements in the tradition of the other judgements mentioned above.

Before examining further the issue of the CVC, I

would like to make one important point. It is not enough to have institutions with requisite power for ensuring good governance. It must be ensured that they are all the time manned by the right people.

The judiciary is the most powerful of all, because it can look into any decision taken by the government in the context of the violation of the basic structure of the constitution.

So far as the Election Commission is concerned, its role is restricted to elections and Mr. Seshan set an healthy tradition by which at least during the period of elections, the Commission could ensure that malpractices are reduced to the minimum. His successors have by and large tried to maintain his tradition.

Then comes the CAG, which because of the very nature of its post audit function it has not been very effective. Unless there are cases like the 2G or Commonwealth Games where Audit brings out the facts after due diligence and examination, the overall impact of the CAG has been much less than that of the Election Commission.

So far as CVC itself is concerned, it has been only given additional powers after the judgement of Justice Verma in the Vineet Narain case and even these powers are advisory. Because the CVC has become a Statutory body, the advice of the CVC becomes almost mandatory so far as the disciplinary authorities are concerned. Like the UPSC, cases of violation by the disciplinary authorities not carrying out the instructions of the CVC are included in the Annual Report of the CVC which are laid on the table of Parliament. Unfortunately, as in the case of CAG, these reports are not discussed in the parliament or its Committees.

There is however a saving grace. The CVC having become a Statutory body is today entrusted with the task of supervision of the vigilance function of the government of India. This means that if the instructions of the CVC are not obeyed, to that extent the disciplinary authorities can be held to be guilty of misconduct under the Conduct of Discipline and Appeal Rules applicable to Central government servants. This discipline has to be imposed effectively to start the process of cleansing.

The Supreme Court judgement of 3rd March 2011 has clarified some of the grey areas left after the judgement of Justice Verma in the Hawala case. The judgement isaid that the CVC must be selected by a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Home Minister. I was the first CVC to be

selected by the due process and held office from 1998 to 2002. After me from 2002 to 2006 it was Mr. P. Shankar, former Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu, followed by Mr. Pratyush Sinha, IAS for a year. Sinha retired in 2010. There was no controversy because there was political consensus in the High Power Committee. The selection of Mr Thomas led to a controversy because in the High Power Committee the Leader of Opposition Ms Sushma Swaraj raised an objection. She pointed out that there was a case pending regarding the personal integrity of Mr. Thomas because he was accused No.8 in a case in the 90s involving import of Palm oil. This deal apparently caused a loss of Rs.2.32 crores to the government of Kerala. Mr. Thomas was Secretary, Food at that time. But she was overruled. Based on this case the court has held that a decision in the High Power Committee was null and void or *non est* and the following principle must be adopted:

- *Zone of consideration won't be restricted to civil servants;*
- *CVC is to be appointed from among bureaucrats in All India Services having requisite knowledge and experience and also from among persons who have held or are holding office in a government corporation or public sector undertaking who have experience in insurance, banking, law, vigilance and investigations*
- *If one member disagrees with the choice of the other two, he should give reasons for his disagreement; the majority should also give reasons why it was brushing aside the dissent. This will inject transparency in the process*
- *Empanelment of candidates on recorded rational basis*
- *No person below the rank of secretary be empanelled*
- *Empanelling authority to enclose complete material for and against the candidates. No relevant material is to be withheld. All adverse remarks to be brought to the notice of selection committee*
- *Panel may adopt a transparent process of consideration of the empanelled officers*

A 2T Situation

These conditions, therefore, have created what I would call the 2T situation, so far as the post of CVC is concerned. The first 'T' is Transparency. There has to be total transparency, so far as the records of the people are concerned or the decision making process. The main fault of the process by which Mr. Thomas was selected was that when Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Leader of the Opposition brought the fact of the Palm oil case against Mr. Thomas,

the other two merely bulldozed the decision invoking their majority instead of recording in details the reason why the objections of Ms Sushma Swaraj was overruled. This lack of transparency has only caused the decision to be held to be null and void or '*non-est*'. Even more important is what the Supreme Court observed as the integrity of the institution. The CVC is supposed to be the highest authority looking into taking action against corruption against public servants in the government of India. If a person himself is challenged because of the criminal case pending against him in the court, then appointing such a person erodes tremendously the very credibility of the institution of CVC. It is this compromising of the integrity and credibility of the institution that the Supreme Court took seriously and struck down the selection of Mr. Thomas.

This judgement has a direct bearing on the practice of selection of people to occupy sensitive and high level posts. Our political leaders have perfected the art of filling up such posts with people who toe their line. To achieve this, they have discovered the weapons of suspension and transfers so that the back of the bureaucracy is broken. It is this which has eroded the credibility of institutions and led to the twin deficit.

A TINA Situation

The procedure now laid down by the Supreme Court, creates what I would call a TINA situation (There Is No Alternative). Applying the principles of the Supreme Court which are now mandatory, in future it is very difficult to select a person who can be criminally tainted or who may not be politically neutral. It is this impact of the Supreme Court judgement that gives us hope that now that the principle of integrity of the institution has been invoked, we can extend the same concept, say for example, the integrity of the institution of Parliament as a law making body. If the body itself is for law making, can it contain people who are themselves violators of the law and who are law breakers? Law breakers cannot become law makers. This anomaly today exists in our political system because of the general principle that everybody is innocent till proved guilty.

The media played a remarkable role, so far as exposing corruption is concerned. Some channels really went hammer and tongs at the exposure of corruption and did not allow issues to die. It is the active role played by the press which is commendable and in future also the media should continue to play this role. There may be a situation where the media in the anxiety to score maximum TRPs do not verify the facts and due diligence. This must be corrected.

The cleansing process initiated by the Supreme Court's judgement in the Thomas's case can be a good starting point for cleaning up the entire system of governance. The basic principle to be adopted is that every institution which has the powers to contribute towards good governance should also be manned by the right type of people. To ensure that this happens all the time, we should follow the 2T formula. There should be transparency in selection and the procedure should be such that there is no alternative but to select the best person possible as has been explained in the case of the CVC.

If right across the spectrum of government organisations and departments, this principle is adopted,

thanks to the principles enunciated by the Supreme Court and the judgement given by the Supreme Court, then we would have found a method of cleaning systematically the present system of governance and remove the present twin deficit – 'trust deficit' and the 'governance deficit'. That as I see it, is the ultimate significance of the historic judgement delivered by Chief Justice Kapadia on 3rd March 2011.

MR. N. VITTAL IAS (Retd.) has had a long innings in public administration and Industrial Management. Positions occupied by him include Secretary in the Department of Electronics; Chairman of the Telecom Commission. After retirement he was appointed Chairman of the Public Enterprises Selection Board and later as Central Vigilance Commissioner.

Inflation because our Villagers Splurge?

We are faced with inflation because rural India is out shopping. RBI Governor D. Subbarao indicated recently. Prosperity in the villages is leading to more demand and hence the scarcity. The image of this idyllic household bursting with goodies was hard to resist. We panned out in search of the well-to-do villager. We realised rather quickly that television sets inside mud huts and dish antennae on their roofs may be sending out about as simplistic a signal of the economy as a *saas-bahu* serial does about life.

At first glance there are many television sets and mobile phones out there. Village stores stock up on colas, noodles and soaps. But these do not in any way indicate that the Indian farmer is buying things rabidly

At Kangaon village, a centre of the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) and cotton procurement in Wardha, Maharashtra there are a series of shops selling consumer goods like music systems, cellphones and electrical equipment. But there are no buyers to be found here, let alone shopaholics.

Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, the father of the green revolution, says, "The economic survey shows that 70 crore of the 120 crore people in the country are dependent on agriculture and allied sectors. But the GDP share of this sector is doing down and is at less than 15 per cent right now. So it would be superficial to look at the televisions and cell phones and pretend there is prosperity in the villages. They buy cellphones because they are essential, they can check prices and keep in touch with relatives. But we still have the world's largest number of hungry people in the world.

The 900-odd residents of Mhalunge in Kolhapur district can get shampoo sachets at the local grocer but have to travel eight kilometres by road to the nearest primary health centre at Panhala. For childbirth, women are taken to the Kolhapur Civil Hospital, which is 27 kilometers away. What's more the village does not even have a proper road. The one made in 2001 by the Zilla Parishad is pothole-ridden.

In Manjuluru, D. Subbarai's native place in Andhra Pradesh – young people dress in urban clothes but can study only up to standard V in the lone government school. They can buy an aerated drink but the water tank built ten years ago has bleached water, which they refuse to touch. The villagers have climbed out of poverty by leasing out their lands to others for anything between Rs.5,000 and Rs.7,000 per acre per year and working on it as labourers

In Chikkathimmanahatti (C T Hatti) in Tumkur district, Karnataka, farmers have invested in tube pumps. But they have poor power supply. Most of our fields and orchards have gone dry, Chittappa a farmer says. It doesn't help him that auto-rickshaws now outnumber bullock carts in his hamlet. Many in his village have migrated to garment and metal factories at nearby towns. They send money back through remittances. Dr. Swaminathan says that if there is an increase in consumption it is due to remittances of this nature. Many others in Chittappa's village, aware that that towns are where the future lies are desperate to send their children to the English-medium schools at the headquarters. This education is a heavy burden on their already small pockets. They don't really have money left to go shopping for goodies.

Courtesy: *The Times of India*. Excerpted from a report in the *Mumbai Mirror* March 13, 2011.

On Rabindranath Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary

Honour Declined



In March 1919, the Government of India enacted the Rowlatt Acts which permitted the State to intern agitators without trial. It also empowered judges to try cases without jurors. This sparked unprecedented civil discontent uniting all the communities against the government. Gandhi proclaimed a campaign of passive resistance, non-operation and demonstrations.

Civil disobedience reached its height in the Punjab. General Dyer in Amritsar opened fire on an unarmed assembly in an enclosed space killing 379 persons and wounding 1200 (April 1919). There was unprecedented public indignation spread all over the country and a Committee of The House of Commons condemned it.

Tagore in response returned his Knighthood awarded to him and wrote to the Viceroy:

Your Excellency,

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilised governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organisation for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers – possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons. This callousness has been priased by most of the Anglo-Indian papers, which have in some cases gone to the brutal length of making fun of our sufferings, without receiving the least check from the same authority, relentlessly careful in smothering every cry of pain and expression of judgement from the organs representing the sufferers. Knowing that

our appeals have been in vain and that the passion of vengeance is blinding the noble vision of statesmanship in our Government, which could so easily afford to be magnanimous, as befitting its physical strength and normal tradition, the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part, wish to stand, ~~shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of~~ my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings. And these are the reasons which have compelled me to ask Your Excellency, with due deference and regret, to relieve me of my title of knighthood, which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the hands of your predecessor, for whose nobleness of heart I still entertain great admiration.

Yours faithfully,

Calcutta,
6, Dwarkanath Tagore Lane,
May 30, 1919.

Rabindranath Tagore

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

The Egyptian Revolution

1. The Tahrir Square protest by millions of Egyptians (January 25-February 11) warmed the hearts of freedom loving people all over the world. A non-violent revolution was able to overthrow a well-entrenched regime, buttressed with 30 years of uninterrupted power. This was a miracle of which Mahatma Gandhi would have been proud. The Jasmine revolution which began in Tunisia a month earlier liberated the most populous Arab nation with thousands of years old civilization. If this is not an epoch making event, what is? The torch is likely to be picked up by others in the middle-east as Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain and Yemen are already stirring. Libya is the worst affected by violence at the time of writing. Iran and Saudi Arabia must be watching with trepidation. Not that the protesters will succeed everywhere. They may be crushed in some countries but the point is that dictatorships are no longer immune to public anger. (Communist dictatorships are yet undisturbed, though).

1. The euphoria of success of democratic forces is tinged with anxiety. The armed forces have taken charge in Egypt and although they have promised elections in six months, armed forces are known to cling to power, given a chance. Hope they act differently in Egypt. Despite the departure of Hosni Mubarak, Tahrir Square is still restless; protesters are not entirely happy. It is said that during a storm, jetsam and flotsam rise from the bottom of the sea. The same is true of revolutions; the scum of the society comes to the fore. Hope this does not happen in Egypt as there was no violent social upheaval there. However, the Muslim Brotherhood which is the most organised political force in Egypt is lurking in the shadows. It is the ideological progenitor of the Al Qaeda. If it grabs power in the political vacuum, Egypt would slide into a dark age. There are already demands for return to the Shariah, which are not happy tidings.

PM and the Nation

2. In the midst of rising concern about the state of the nation, the Prime Minister decided to face the nation through a press conference with electronic media representatives (Feb 16). It was a long delayed but welcome step intended to clear the much polluted political atmosphere. The PM tried to assure us that things were not as bad as they looked. He drew attention to the economic progress of the country and urged the media not to concentrate on defects alone to the detriment of the morale of the people. He indicated that he was not going to quit and had a lot of unfinished tasks. He also declared that he was very serious about corruption and that he was prepared to face any Committee to explain his stand. He repeated the same arguments later in Parliament. Good, as far as it went! The Supreme Court judgment voiding the Chief Vigilance Commissioner's appointment as 'non est' (non-existent in law) was a further blow to Government's battle for credibility.

2. Apart from the bravado about sticking to his task, the press conference was a disaster in public relations. The PM failed to create the impression that he was in charge. Asking the media not to be negative is fine but has its limitations. It is the government which has to create confidence and raise the morale of the people; media can then follow, if it will. The PM's confession that he was not as bad as is being made out was pathetic; it means that he is somewhat bad! His excuse of being a victim of coalition politics (which obliged him to overlook corruption?), the danger of frequent elections and obfuscation about the loss in the 2 G scam were either amazingly brazen or utterly naive. If he was prepared to face any committee, why did he waste a whole Parliament session over the JPC? We would still like to believe that our PM is an honourable man but he has to do something for us to hold on to this belief. We are desperate, Mr. Prime Minister.

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The Davis Affair

3. The arrest of the American 'diplomat', Raymond Davis for the murder of two Pakistani youth in Lahore (Jan. 27, 2011) led to strains in diplomatic relations between the US and Pakistan. The affair became curiously and curiously as time passed. Davis is suspected to be a CIA agent/contractor who was on some mission of his own in Lahore and believed that he was being abducted by two persons following his car on a motor cycle; he shot them down in 'self-defence'. Why was he traveling alone in a potentially hostile area for Americans? What was the provocation for his extreme action? The two dead men were reportedly ISI men tailing Davis – the linkage denied by Pakistan. Did Davis have diplomatic immunity as claimed by every US official including President Obama? The matter reached the President's level as Americans refused to concede any ground and threatened Pakistan with dire consequences. It is clear that Davis was a security/intelligence operative engaged in some cloak & dagger work in Lahore. Reports about his being a double agent are just red herrings.

Join the Revolution the SMS Way!

On the eve of the Rahul Gandhi's campaign in Mumbai last year and his much publicised much sanitised travel by a suburban train many including your editor received the following SMS: "India needs you to change politics; youth of Mumbai

Come join the REVOLUTION.join YOUTH CONGRESS. Visit www.iye.in/mumbai or SMS IYC to54646. Sender TA-IYCMUM

3. Pakistan finds itself in a bind since the 'murders' took place in Punjab ruled by Nawaz Sharif's party, which is at logger-heads with the Federal Government controlled by Zardari's PPP. The Sharif group heightened the anti-US passions to make it impossible for the PPP to release Davis and took the case to Court to determine Davis' diplomatic status. It is alleged that Davis was not listed as a diplomat by the US embassy and initially produced an ordinary passport; later the US Embassy produced a diplomatic passport in his name. The question is whether Pakistan can prosecute a US mission official for any offence, howsoever grave? It can perhaps merely request the US to waive his diplomatic immunity or it can declare him '*persona non grata*' and eject him from the country. The enraged Pakistanis are not prepared to countenance diplomatic niceties and are even opposed to the 'blood money' compensation, permitted in Pakistan to settle the case; in fact, some rich men have offered equal money to the bereaved families so that they do not accept the 'blood money' compromise. The Pak Taliban has threatened to kill anybody who helps release Davis. It has become a huge political battle and shows the anti-US mood in Pakistan. The Army which may play a decisive role ultimately is standing aside for now and may leverage the case to wrangle some concessions from the US for releasing Davis.

Readers are invited to send their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in

Our India

An article on Manmohan Singh by Arathi R. Jerath in *The Times of India*, February 20 2011 caught the eye of Nitin Pai, Founding editor of *Pragati* particularly the following from Jerath's article that Minoo Masani's book *Our India* influenced Manmohan Singh:

"..Manmohan Singh is an unlikely politician, who has reached the top without taking the familiar route. Early in his student life he had no plans to study economics, the subject that would one day build his reputation and pave the way for his political success. He opted for medicine under parental pressure. Then a book changed the course of his life.

"I read Minoo Masani's '*Our India*' and that book had a profound impact on me," Singh told this correspondent, "I wanted to know the cause of our poverty. Someone said I should study economics for that." "

Masani wrote *Our India* for children. In 1989 he had the choice of updating that book first published in 1944 or writing another based on his experience of a free India for next 4 decades and more. Written in 1943 by 1955 the book had sold over a million copies. In his autobiography written in 1977 he explains both its popularity and why he decided not to publish an updated edition: "*Our India* appealed to the national pride of the Indian and gave expression to his discontent. It's easy to blame it all on British rule and say that once India was free, all the right things, as laid down in the book would be done. The book also popularised the concept of planning. I was later to regret some of the damage done by this particular aspect of it and particularly the passage boosting collective farming in Russia the material for which was planted on me during my visit to the Soviet Union in 1935."

The book which was a prescribed text book in secondary schools was quickly withdrawn after Masani planted the flag of the liberal opposition to the statist policies then rapidly enveloping the country!

The Controversy is a Smoke Screen

Bal Phondke

The Jaitapur plant is to be erected in collaboration with France, a country which produces a full 78 percent of its total power with nuclear plants.

“There is no power more expensive than no power” Homi Bhabha had declared presiding over the first ever International Conference on Atomic Energy held at Geneva way back in 1955. That forecast by the visionary scientist has come to haunt us today not only in Maharashtra but almost all over the country. Heavy load-shedding is beginning to threaten our economic surge that has catapulted us, if only in absolute size, to the fifth largest economy in the world. If we have to bring into reality the dream of pioneering thinkers to make India a world power by 2020 then we have to make sizeable additions to our power generating capacity. And that too very fast.

Sanctions that Proved a Blessing

The conventional modes of power generation that have been the mainstay in the past are now beset with some serious difficulties. Some of these problems are ecological like the fly ash pollution caused by coal-based thermal plants. Others are more sociological like rehabilitation of those displaced by large artificial lakes that form behind a dam built to generate hydro-electric power. Gas based thermal units lead to emission of greenhouse gases. Moreover fossil fuels are going to be increasingly in short supply till they run out entirely in the next half century or so. One has, therefore, to look towards non-conventional and eco-friendly sources like nuclear energy. This has now been accepted as a green technology the world over. India is one of the undisputed leaders in development of complex technologies needed to harness nuclear energy, having gone on our own in that field for well nigh forty years in the face of a world ban on supply of not only materials and parts but even know-how. Those sanctions indeed proved to be a blessing in disguise.

We are the only country with a three stage nuclear fuel cycle programme that aims at utilization of our vast stocks of thorium. The latter is not a fissionable material. Hence it cannot be used as a fuel for a nuclear reactor directly but can be converted to fuel grade uranium. This long term plan was devised by Dr Bhabha fifty years ago but had lagged behind due to non availability of adequate

supplies of uranium required for the first stage of the programme. With the new Indo-US nuclear deal now in operation this fuel has become abundantly available. We can now go ahead full steam.

The ambitious nuclear power project proposed to be set up at Jaitapur in the coastal Konkan region of Maharashtra as also the one to be set up later at Kodankulam in Tamilnadu has to be viewed from this perspective. These power units are expected not only to bridge the present gap in generation and demand for electric power but will form the stepping stone for the third stage of the nuclear fuel cycle that will ensure our energy independence for a long time to come.

However, even before the proposed plant gets off the ground it has become mired in controversy and some fierce opposition from local residents. The concerns of those whose land is to be acquired for this purpose can be appreciated. They may be worried about compensation that they would get and the manner in which it would reach them. But those not directly affected seem to be putting up even stiffer resistance citing what are termed as environmental hazards.

Environmental Hazards

Are these real? Or are they imaginary merely being raised to give their hostility an aura of moral respectability? That is a question one has to ask and resolve in an objective manner. There appear to be three major objections to the erection of this plant at Jaitapur 1. Nuclear energy is extremely harmful and endangers the flora and fauna of the area. Further, radioactivity released by the plant in the environment will pose a serious threat to health and well-being of the residents in a large area surrounding the plant 2. The release of hot water in the sea will adversely impact fishing industry and hence the livelihood of fishermen in the vicinity. 3. The world has rejected this mode of power generation and pressure is being brought to bear on us by the developed world. There are others too. But those are minor ones which do not deserve much consideration.

Chernobyl

To substantiate the thesis that nuclear energy is dangerous critics usually cite the Chrenobyl incident. If a similar accident were to happen leading to meltdown of the reactor then the released radioactivity could travel far and wide, adversely affecting life in a very large area. Theoretically, this point is well taken. But one would also have to look at the probability of such an incident to put it into proper perspective. More than four hundred and fifty reactors are in operation all over the world today. Some of them have been active for more than 40 years. Yet, besides Chernobyl, and one could arguably add Three Mile Island to the list, there has been no accident resulting in a reactor turning rogue. That makes the rate of such accidents to be less than half a percent. More accidents and deaths have occurred on the roads involving motor vehicles. Yet, it is nobody's case that auto industry should be shunned for ever. When an aircraft plunges out of the sky hundreds of deaths occur. Even so, nobody thinks of banning air travel. That is because people do understand that the number of planes, and hence the number of passengers, in the air at any one time is very high compared to those unfortunate ones who lost their lives.

Why should nuclear energy be treated with a different yardstick? One should not, but people do because they remember what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. What they do not realise is that atomic weapons are based on the principle of uncontrolled fission chain reaction whereas nuclear power plants take all precautions to efficiently control that very chain reaction for peaceful and beneficial purposes. That this control is meticulous and highly successful is borne out by the four hundred odd reactors generating 15 percent of the total power output in the world.

Secondly, outdated technology and poor safety regimen were responsible for the nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl. That technology is not used today anywhere in the world. Our reactors are no exception. Moreover, even at Chernobyl the reactor melted down and did not explode as feared by the doubting thomases.

Fail Safe Mechanisms

It would not be out of place to cite a concrete incident that occurred at Kalpakkam where a large nuclear power plant operates right beside the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research which houses some research reactors. The disastrous Tsunami that devastated a large part of south and south east asia had also struck this centre.

Waters entered the plant as well as the residential colony rising to a level of 3 meters. A correspondent of the well known newspaper *The Hindu* visited the centre on the third day when he could safely make his way to the site to get first hand information on the damage. He found that the plant was in full operation and environs cleaned and back to their old glory. The reactors had automatically shut down when waters entered the premises. They did damage the cooling system which was restored to normalcy in the intervening period. The reactors were turned on and taken to full capacity. The correspondent published this astounding story the next day. That alone should vouch for the efficiency and strength of the safety systems.

Critics also contend that nuclear power plants release large quantities of radioactivity subjecting not just plant workers but even those residing in the vicinity to high, and hence, detrimental doses. Furthermore, the flora and fauna of the vicinity would also be exposed to this radioactivity thereby endangering farming activity in the area. These views are born out of misconception. The Jaitapur plant is to be erected in collaboration with France, a country which produces a full 78 percent of its total power with nuclear plants. As many as 59 reactors generate a total of 63000 megawatt of power. If these were releasing such unacceptable levels of radioactivity that entire country should have become desolate with nary an individual living there. France, on the other hand, is one of the most verdant and beautiful countries in the world with its people enjoying robust health.

There is only one country in the world that has experienced the tremendously destructive capacity of nuclear power. It is Japan. It is also one of the most earthquake prone region. So the Japanese, if anyone, should have been most circumspect about harnessing nuclear power. Yet, that tiny nation has as many as 52 reactors generating 25 percent of its total power output.

Radioactivity

It is also not true that environment of nuclear installations alone is filled with radioactivity. In fact, radioactivity is everywhere. There are no nuclear installations in Pune or Bangalore or Delhi or Shimla. That does not mean that these places are free from radioactivity. Air everywhere, even those places kilometers away from any nuclear installation, is radioactive. This is known as natural background radiation. On an average, every one of us is exposed to a dose of 2.5 millisieverts of radiation.

And we start receiving that dose right from our birth. All of our past generations too have been receiving this dose without any harmful effect. The International Commission on Radiation Protection (ICRP) has decreed that any nuclear installation does not expose those in the vicinity to an additional dose of more than 1 millisievert. The track record of seven centres of nuclear power generation in our country is impeccable in this regard since the maximum dose of additional radioactivity in these areas is less than 10 percent of the recommended limit.

There are other places where natural background radiation is ten times that of the normal value. One such area is along the Kerala and Tamilnadu coasts. Sands on the sea shore there contain mineral ores of elements like Uranium and Thorium. These contribute to the high level of natural background radioactivity. This has been present since the earth came into being. Studies have been conducted over the last 50 years to find out if this high dose has had any adverse impact on the health and well-being of residents there. The parameters considered for the purpose include *inter alia* hemoglobin levels, total blood cell count, blood cell abnormalities, infertility, spontaneous abortions, still births, deformities in children, infant mortality, total life span, geriatric problems, incidence of cancer. The cancer survey includes more than 3 lakh individuals. More than 1.5 lakh children have also been examined. None of these parameters studied have shown any significant difference from what is seen in normal background radiation areas. Studies conducted at similar areas in other parts of the world, like the one in Brazil, have also shown identical results. All these are published in internationally reputed peer reviewed journals. It is clear thus that radioactivity is no demon as portrayed. Nuclear installations are clean in this respect. There is no reason to think that Jaitapur would be any different.

Why Nuclear Power Plants on Sea Coasts

Nuclear power generating plants require large sources of water. That is why most of the nuclear power plants in the world are located on the sea coast or on the banks of large rivers. The heat generated by nuclear fission has to be converted into steam that turns the turbines. The residual heat in the form of hot water needs to be dissipated. That is accomplished by releasing that hot water into the sea. Fishermen are afraid that this operation would raise the temperature of coastal waters to unreasonably high levels thereby affecting their catch.

Their fear is unfounded since a tunnel on the seabed

carries that hot water 200 to 300 meters away from the coast. As the sea water freed from the tunnel rises to the surface it forms a spout that keeps increasing its radius. Consequently, by the time it reaches the surface region it spreads over a large area and also cools down.

Impact on Marine Life

Scientists from the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre have carried out thermal ecological studies at Kalpakkam and Tarapur to determine the actual impact of released water on marine life. They find that the maximum increase in temperature is of the order of 5 degrees Celsius and that is confined to an area 500 meters long and 200 meters wide. And it is well away from the regions where fishermen throw their nets. No adverse impact on the marine life in that arena of higher temperature has been noticed. If anything, the fish in that region appear to be breeding at a slightly faster pace.

Likewise the contention that the developed world has abandoned nuclear energy is also not true. Most of these countries have surpluses of power. They do not need to add to their capacities. Besides, the objection could have had some validity if these nations were building power plants based on sources other than that of nuclear fission. But that is not the case. News coming out of USA tells us that four new nuclear power plants are getting erected there, two in Georgia and two in Tennessee. There are also applications for at least 20 other reactors under scrutiny at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). This ought to further demolish the above argument.

It would be abundantly clear, therefore, that the proposed power plant at Jaitapur does not pose any threat to the pristine ecology of the terrain. The environmental evils sketched out by the detractors are figments of a fertile imagination. The demand of those who lose their land for adequate and speedy compensation is genuine and has to be met. Both the state government and the nuclear power corporation have committed themselves publicly to satisfy these demands. The rest of the campaign appears to be a smoke screen. Considerations of national interest are being sacrificed at the altar of vote bank politics. The Chief Minister has now gone on record stating that foreign elements seem to be behind the protests. That possibility cannot be ruled out as nuclear power generation is a multi-billion dollar business.

DR. BAL PHONDKE is a scientist who had worked in the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and later edited the Science magazine of The Times Foundation.

A Fact Sheet

RCA Godbole

Roughly 400 million people do not have access to electricity in India. In the light of these facts, the need for ensuring energy security for the country cannot be a contentious issue, even while speaking for the rural, poor or the disenfranchised of our country.

The Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project seems to be providing a focus for venting the frustrations directed at the venality and bad governance in our country. This, by itself, is a useful contribution, since our country needs a lot more constructive dissent. But it is important to regroup the whole orchestra to its original score, namely the generation of energy for the country. Dissent without an alternative for energy generation on the same scale should be seen as sabotage.

Problems of Power Generation

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), coal/peat account for nearly 40 percent of India's total energy consumption, followed by nearly 27 percent for combustible renewables and waste. Oil accounts for nearly 24 percent of total energy consumption, costing us \$79,552 million in 2009-10, for 159.2 million tonne of crude oil. According to the Indian government, nearly 30 percent of India's total energy needs are met through imports. IEA data for 2008 indicate that electrification rates for India were nearly 65 percent for the country as a whole. In urban areas, 93 percent had access to electricity compared to rural areas where electrification rates were approximately 50 percent. Roughly 400 million people do not have access to electricity in India. In the light of these facts, the need for ensuring energy security for the country cannot be a contentious issue, even while speaking for the rural, poor or the disenfranchised of our country. It is a fatuous argument and a flagrant disregard for the social contract to suggest that the energy generated in a specific part of the country should only provide for the needs of that part of the country. If Punjab started producing just enough wheat to meet its own needs, let alone India, the world economy would be hit.

Energy input at that level would free these very people from hard and unrelenting labour which is their customary lot. Energy generation is the primary step to take care of supply at that level. Energy is the engine for growth. For a large country like India with over one billion population and rapid economic growth rate, energy multiplies human labour and increases productivity in

agriculture, industry as well as in services. To sustain the growth rate in economy, energy supply has to grow in tandem.

Opposition to New Power Plants

The operative word behind any dissent has to be constructive. There is a whole list of bad practices which should be publicly discussed and avoided in future, there should be suggested interventions to ensure safe and equitable progress of the project and all of these should be aired in public, made available for action. What seems to be happening instead is that the whole dissent is about a show of political strength in order to extract power mileage from the situation. There is a cynical attempt to disseminate mis-information, and scupper the project in order to prove political clout. This is a manipulation of public opinion against national interests, and should be recognised as such.

Jaitapur Project

Having stated these positions in the beginning, I wish to showcase the Jaitapur Nuclear Power project (JNPP), which is an attempt to mitigate the energy shortfall in our country mentioned above.

According to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) prepared for the Jaitapur project by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), the total land acquisition for JNPP site and residential complex is 938.026 ha. This is done in five villages: Madban, Warilwada, Karel, Nivel and Mithgavne, but does not involve physical displacement of even a single family. A quick look at the proposed site, using the coordinates 16 36 21.54 N, 73 19 16.97 E on Google Earth should make the lie of the land clear to those who are interested.

The compensation paid for this land would be commensurate with the classification given in the following table, the actual figures are still under discussion. The compensation figure is a political issue, having no scientific or strategic underpinning. The land acquired for the

JAITAPUR NUCLEAR POWER PROJECT

residential complex of 245.715 ha is comparable to the JNPP site land in the land record classification, and is to be compensated in the similar framework.

The important finding which is clear from the table below is, that almost all the land acquired is of little agricultural value.

Furthermore, according to the Department of Forest vide letter No. B/Survey/Land/1352/2005-2006 dated, 27 November 2005, the above land does not fall under the category of Forest land. Even then, a snapshot of the current status of the JNPP acquired site as far as biodiversity and conservation is important. A pilot study carried out in order to prioritise areas for Forest Conservation in the Konkan region, a study which happens to encompass a few villages around the JNPP project site, states that even if the area of Western Ghats houses upto 20% of the sub-continent's plant diversity, less than 4% of the species on the IUCN red-list are found in the Konkan region of the Western Ghats hotspot. Moreover, most of these species are in the low risk categories. This may be due to the fact that high-risk, red listed species are totally lost in the region or the lack of an assessment of species within the region that fulfill red-list criteria. The JNPP relevant villages shown on the maps in this study, that either have threatened habitat types or highest species richness for a particular vegetation type lie north of the JNPP site. So what this study indicates is that we have to bring in biodiversity and reforestation efforts around the JNPP project, where, at present, there exists nothing that can be conserved. The NEERI EIA reports similar findings as regards marine life around the site.

Dangers of Radiation

The public perception of safety aspect of the energy generation in a nuclear power plants is an important criteria for the success of the project. The EIA gives all the details of the six layers of safety measures to be adopted in the design of the plant and also elaborates on the disposal procedure for the spent fuel from the plant. It is very important that these procedures are scrupulously followed and systems are in place for safe handling of the material. Transparency in these matters and safety audits should be an integral part of the project operations. It is equally essential that one does not ignore over 400 functional nuclear reactors generating power all over the world and chooses Chernobyl disaster as a default setting while thinking of nuclear power generation.

Any discussion about the JNPP should ideally happen with framework of facts stated above, or with parallel facts sourced from comparable sources. Opinions, prophesies and conjectures should be based on these facts. In absence of this primary precaution, one would be wasting everybody's time.

There is an overwhelming need to think about money involved in this project. The people there have to be given good fiscal services and advice. There is just one bank, a cooperative one at that, operating in this area. The city folk purportedly concerned about the local people should look at the fiscal health of this bank, provide alternative financial services, enable delivery mechanisms for the money to flow to legitimate recipients. One also needs to think about the urbanization process that this money would inevitably bring about. We have to set standards for this *de novo* urbanization about to occur

Sr No	Name of the Village	Type of Land (Area in Hectares and as percentage of Total)								Total land being acquired (Ha)	No. of Khatedars
		Bagayat (Irrigated)		Kharip		Varkas (Fallow land)		Pot Kharaba (Barren)			
		Area	%	Area	%	Area	%	Area	%		
1	Madban	0	0%	62.074	8.99%	227.565	32.96%	400.762	58.05%	690.401	1719
2	Varilwada	0	0%	0	0.00%	0.380	19.90%	1.53	80.10%	1.910	22
Total		0	0%	62.074	8.97%	227.945	32.93%	402.292	58.11%	692.311	1741

Source: District Administration Ratnagiri, May, 2008

in an area, where the current population density is 150 persons / sq km, and whereby the population density for Maharashtra varies between 300-500 persons/ sq. km. The new influx of money and people should not create unplanned and unsightly sprawls marring scenic beauty and clean air in these parts. Houses should be strictly regulated in height and each residential project must nurture a given number of trees proportional to the people using the property. Architectural guidelines suitable for the local climatic conditions have to be laid down for any future building construction in the area. Transportation needs

around the JNPP site should be based on waterways with strictly limited fossil fuel consumption. Influx of promised money and benefit of this money felt by the local population rather than carpet baggers who are bound to gather there, are vital for the success for this and future projects of this nature, and by offering best practices and constructive advice, we as responsible citizens can aid this attempt at righting some energy starvation in our country.

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Issues involved in Somali Piracy - Avoidable Media Frenzy in India

In recent days sections of the audio-visual media have sought to whip up public hysteria by demanding direct negotiations with Somali pirates and even “flexibility” and readiness to pay ransom to them, who were threatening to kill four Indian sailors, working in an Egyptian ship and held captive. Relatives of those held by the pirates were mobilised. They asserted that if government leaders could make billions through scams like the 2G spectrum scam, they should have no hesitation in paying a few millions as ransom to the pirates. The media, of course, had no time or inclination to study the complexities of the issues involved, or the accepted international practice that governments will not negotiate directly with pirates. These negotiations are invariably between ship owners and pirates, with governments playing a discreet role behind the scenes.

Responding to Indian media frenzy, Egypt's envoy in New Delhi Khaled el-Bakly bluntly stated: “Egypt is doing all it can. I am on the phone every day, talking to Cairo. But please understand it is prohibited under international law to negotiate with pirates. All that the Egyptian government can do is to persuade the owner of the vessel to negotiate with the pirates.” Sadly, there appears to be very little appreciation and even less understanding in India about the international challenges that Somali piracy poses. There are navies of 21 countries ranging from those of the US and its NATO allies to Russia, China, India, Japan, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia actively collaborating, to deal with Somali piracy. The UN has been actively involved, with Security Council Resolution 1838 of October 5, 2008, authorising ships to pursue pirate vessels into Somali territorial waters.

India was among the first to deploy naval vessels to deal with piracy on November 23, 2008. Moreover, pirate vessels coming close to our shores have been challenged and attacked, with pirates killed or taken prisoner. The efficacy of the policy of not negotiating with pirates directly has been demonstrated. While pirates continue holding 53 Indian sailors captive, they released 124 sailors since 2008 without our compromising vital national interests or international obligations.

As of December 11, 2010, it has been estimated that Somali pirates use 35 captured ships for their activities and hold 650 sailors hostages. The time has, perhaps, come for intelligence agencies across the world to come together to work out strategies to covertly eliminate pirates and their patrons in Somalia even while undertaking measures to see that Somali fishermen are not deprived of their traditional livelihood.

Apart from the media frenzy on being “flexible” with Somali pirates, there has been recent carping on why not enough has been done to evacuate India nationals from the troubled countries like Egypt and Libya. Complaints from well-heeled Indian tourists holidaying in Egypt about having to pay some excess fare for being repatriated to India from Cairo in specially chartered aircraft received sympathetic media coverage.

While one can understand the Indian taxpayer footing the bill for abandoned workers stranded in the Gulf, it is ridiculous to expect the Indian taxpayer to pay for repatriation of tourists or professionals who seek employment abroad. While India completed repatriation of all its nationals wishing to come home from Libya on March 12, most Chinese nationals evacuated from Libya are still in makeshift transit camps in Libya's neighbourhood. One hopes that norms will be evolved for positioning armed guards in Indian maritime vessels to ward off pirate attacks. Legislation should also be enacted to give the Navy powers to seek out, capture and kill pirates in international waters.

G. Parthasarathy, Retired Indian Diplomat

Excerpted from the Net, Courtesy: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20110317/edit.htm#1>

Religion And Democracy

Christie Davies

Democracy does not and cannot guarantee good government but it does give the people the power peacefully to get rid of a truly objectionable government at election time.

The countries in the world that have enjoyed continuous, stable, legitimate democracy are few: Australia, Britain, Canada, Costa Rica, India, the Republic of Ireland, Israel, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the five Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and the United States. Today it would not be unreasonable to add the Czech Republic, Germany and Japan to the list, despite past unfortunate interruptions. It is striking that most of the democracies are Protestant, Hindu or Jewish. The older ones historically either had a Protestant majority or where the population was mixed Protestant and Catholic, a strong Protestant tradition. What is noticeable is that there are only three Roman Catholic countries listed and no Muslim ones at all. Many European Catholic countries such as Austria, Italy, Portugal and Spain have managed to become democratic but only in the latter half of the twentieth century. France has been fractured by conflicts between Catholics and militant anti-clericals and the French fourth republic collapsed in 1958 with a coup d'état. It had only lasted twelve years.

There is no sign that any Muslim country ever has been a stable democracy or ever will become one in the future. There is a marked contrast here between India and Pakistan. Hindu India is the world's largest democracy and survived the hiccup of Mrs. Gandhi's state of emergency. The first proof of Indian democracy is that after a relatively short time Mrs. Gandhi felt obliged to call an election because that was the Indian way. The second proof is that the Indian people then threw her out of office, exerting one of the main virtues of democracy which is to be able to "turn the rascals out". The third is that she went quietly and the army stayed out of politics as is the Indian tradition. Democracy does not and cannot guarantee good government but it does give the people the power peacefully to get rid of a truly objectionable government at election time. Pakistan is by contrast an Islamic shambles born of the unwillingness of the Muslims of British India to live in a secular democratic India with a Hindu majority. The Kashmir problem stems from this. Pakistan has lurched in and out of military dictatorship, whereas the Indian army has always behaved constitutionally. In the background is the menace of Islamism, an ideology that is bigoted, intolerant, violent and often explicitly and always implicitly opposed to the values of democracy, to the autonomy of

the individual, to freedom of speech, to religious pluralism, including the right of Muslims to switch to another religion and above all to the possibility that an alliance of non-Muslims, lapsed Muslims and liberal Muslims might win an election and undermine the hegemony of Islam.

When the sad example of Pakistan is borne in mind, it is clear that there is little chance that the present disturbances in the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa will lead to the creation of stable democracies. Islam means "submission" which is a mind-set as well as a religion and an ideology. When relatively secular leaders come to power undemocratically and restrict Islamic hegemony, they still retain the intolerance, the lack of respect for the autonomy of the individual and his or her right to dissent and speak out and a belief in the virtue of absolute power that so characterised Islamic thinking.

Consider Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, Nasser in Egypt, Saddam Hussein or the secular Ba'athist parties of Syria and Iraq. The cult of the strong man, the frenzied nationalism, including attempts to exploit xenophobia, the rigid controls over the citizen are all descendants of an Islamic heritage. Today, democrats, including the meddling, foolish Obama and the clueless Cameron, obsessed with empty fine phrase-making when it would be better for them to shut up, are cheering the overthrow of the corrupt autocrats in the Arab world. It is the imperialism of the gesture. They are the heirs of the naïve western 'wish-gooders' who wanted to see the Shah of Iran deposed, even though it was highly likely that he would be replaced by a far worse regime. He was. There may well in some Arab countries now be a brief democratic interlude but, then, either fanatics will take over or the military will intervene. It has happened before, as when the French Revolution led to The Terror, and then to the emperor Napoleon or when Kerensky was replaced by Lenin.

Democracy succeeds only when the social and cultural order permit, namely an existing religious pluralism, a free economy and an engrained respect for individual liberty. These conditions do not exist in the Arab world nor have these countries been able to make much social or economic progress or to cope with modernization. They will never be able to match the rapid economic

development seen in India in the last twenty years. When Arab countries are rich it is because they are rentiers. They sit on oil that foreign entrepreneurs engineers and developers from Europe, America, India or China extract and process for them.

What is true of the Muslim world today was once true of Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian Europe. In some ways it was at its worst in the absolutist Russia of the Tsars where the Tsar ran both church and state almost as one unit; when Holy Russia fell it gave way to another and far worse tyranny – the Soviet Union. Today's religion shapes tomorrow's polity. In Western Europe the Roman Catholic Church long ameliorated the possibilities of tyranny since it enjoyed a status and a power independent of the state.

However, when democracy came, the Popes opposed it and it was even denounced as heresy. They held to the same delusion as the Muslims do today, namely that God had decreed that theirs was the only true religion and that they had a mission to convert the entire world. The horrors of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism with their forcible conversions were related to this outlook. America, though a Protestant country, received large numbers of Roman Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Italy and Poland in the nineteenth century and Popes feared that 'Americanism' meant their assimilation into American pluralism and democracy such that the Roman Catholic Church became just one more denomination with no special privileges and no chance of becoming the dominant religion. This is what happened. Back in Europe countries such as Austria, France, Italy, Spain became bitterly divided between Catholics who disliked democracy even when they accepted it and anti-clericals seeking to erase

altogether the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Only in the latter part of the twentieth century did strong Christian Democrat political parties emerge. Often they or other similar democratic parties came into being only after the demise of periods of clerical fascism notably that of Franco's Spain. Hindus and Jews by contrast do not seek converts or dream of controlling the world outside their own countries. They do not believe in a single immutable and infallible 'faith'. Protestants are divided into denominations and have learned religious toleration from this, a toleration they later extended to Catholics and Jews. The missionary societies in Britain were angry that they were not given state sponsorship in India under British rule but the British were not like the Muslim Mughals who believed in forcible conversion or the use of discriminatory taxation to induce it. The British legacy in India today is not Protestantism but the democratic ideas that Protestantism first made possible.

The colonial ruler of the Arab world (and indeed the Christian Balkans in Europe) was the Turkish Ottoman Empire. The Sultan was not only an absolute ruler but was the leader, the Caliph of the Islamic world. It is no accident that Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali in India of the Khilafat movement opposed his downfall. He was a Muslim ideal. The Arab countries today face a sorry undemocratic future but it has grown out of a sorry undemocratic past. Unless they can break with that past and with the worst aspects of the Islamic tradition the present uprisings will only lead to more of the same.

PROFESSOR CHRISTIE DAVIES who has been a visiting scholar at several Indian Universities has published extensively on comparative politics.

The Case of Bahrain

Bahrain is an island kingdom in the Persian Gulf with a population of about 1.2 million. Seen from a distance, the Arab revolts of 2011 all seem connected and broadly similar: The spark with which a Tunisian vegetable seller set himself ablaze spread on the invisible wind of satellite signals and is now burning to the ground regimes that are mainly alike in their record of greed, incompetence and despotism.

Yet on closer inspection the convulsing states of the Arab world look more like Tolstoy's classic description of unhappy families: Each is unhappy in its own way. Yemen's protests have a large secessionist element. The demonstrators in Tahrir Square were urban middle class. Libya's revolt has an important tribal dimension. The protests in Algiers are largely about rising prices and mass unemployment. The beleaguered regimes also vary widely, from the mildly authoritarian in Morocco to the brutally totalitarian in Libya.

These differences matter because while the uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Libya may be momentous and vivid, they are not particularly interesting. Mubarak, Ben Ali, Saleh and Gadhafi were (or are) lousy rulers: They finally got their long-overdue comeuppance. *Sic semper tyrannis*.

But then what about little Bahrain? Its people have a per capita GDP of \$27,000, women have the franchise, and the country is an excellent place in which to invest. And despite having a minority Sunni government ruling over the Shiite majority, the country is religiously tolerant enough to have a Jewish woman as its ambassador to the U.S.

What Bahrainis don't have is political freedom. Representative government is a sham. The ruling al-Khalifa family calls all the shots – and, when threatened, fires them too. Add rising economic expectations and growing inequality to the mix, and you have the ingredients of a bourgeois revolution.

Write to bstephens@wsj.com

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Different Hues of Blasphemy

Of Salman Taseer and G. Venkataswamy

S. Viswam

Taseer invited attention by accepting, for onward transmission to the President, a mercy petition submitted by a Christian woman accused of blasphemy ... G. Venkataswamy questioned the style of functioning of the Congress President Sonia Gandhi. What is more, he went to the extent of asserting that the Congress has no future in India as long as Sonia Gandhi heads the party.

Indian politicians ought to take a serious note of the aftermath events in Pakistan in recent weeks after the assassination of the Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer. Taseer appears to have paid with his life for not conforming with his country's notorious blasphemy laws. Even the Pakistanis were taken by surprise at the nature of the punishment meted out to Taseer by one of his aides although punishment for defying the blasphemy law is only to be expected in that country. One would have thought the murder of a politician holding a constitutional office would have merited condemnation. However, to many students of Pakistan politics the world over, the tacit approval by Pakistan's civil society to Taseer's murder is just par for the course. In other words, no one in Pakistan is surprised that the reaction to Taseer's assassination is so stridently in favour of the retention of the blasphemy laws.

Indeed, according to an article by a senior journalist, thousands of people belonging to a number of major and minor political parties participated in a rally in Lahore to warn the government (and others) against advocating any amendment to or repeal of the existing blasphemy laws which are part of the Pakistan Penal Code. "Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles of the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) shall be punishable with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine."

The death penalty, absent in the Code earlier, was introduced by President General Zia-ul-Haq. According to the author of the article, many people accused of blasphemy have lost their lives at the hands of religious fundamentalists without a proper hearing in a court of law. Many were killed while on trial. Taseer invited attention by accepting, for onward transmission to the President, a mercy petition submitted by a Christian woman accused of blasphemy, Aasia Bibi, who incidentally was the first woman to be served the death penalty under the blasphemy laws. Taseer was named a blasphemer, and was later assassinated.

Pakistan, says the article, is fast turning into a country where it is difficult for liberals to voice their opinions. This, to most Indians used to voice their opinions on all matters regardless of whether they are well-informed of the subject or not, is most unfortunate. To the extent that the country's own laws preclude free expression, albeit in respect of a specific theme, Pakistan's "democracy" will be seen to be flawed. We are rather more fortunate. Freedom of expression is one of our constitutionally bestowed rights.

However, all rules have exceptions, don't they? Within one of our own political parties, the Indian National Congress, certain unwritten blasphemy laws are in vogue, and have also been followed regularly, often strictly and vindictively. This particular so-called blasphemy "rule" attracted media attention a few days ago when G. Venkataswamy, a senior Congress leader from Andhra Pradesh, questioned the style of functioning of the Congress President Sonia Gandhi. What is more, he went to the extent of asserting that the Congress has no future in India till Sonia Gandhi heads the party. He pointed out that ever since she took over the party leadership, the Congress' electoral fortunes have dipped seriously. The party heads only a handful of state governments whereas time was when it ruled almost all the states and the Centre also.

Predictably, all hell broke loose, and Mr. Venkataswamy was the target of attack by all partymen for the worst kind of blasphemy there can be in the "Congress culture". Questioning the supreme leader is one of the more serious cases of blasphemy and asking for his/her replacement is most sacrilegious. Yet, poor Mr. Venkataswamy, a senior leader nearing his eighties, a Backward Classes stalwart, let loose a cannon, fully knowing that he was treading dangerous ground. It was sheer frustration at being ignored for selection as the country's president that made him lose his cool. As a Backward Classes leader who has held senior positions in the state government and at the Centre, he felt he was justified in claiming a higher honour. The fact that he was a representative of the weaker sections of society made

his claim even stronger.

However, if he had stopped with registering a claim, he would have remained safe. But he stepped beyond limits when he assailed the supreme leader and on an issue where the Leader is most vulnerable. His most grievous offence was to highlight the fact that Sonia Gandhi is after all a foreigner. It was better if the Congress were headed by a natural-born Indian if it was to regain its past glory.

The party spokesman reacted by declaring that Mr. Venkataswamy had “lost his mental balance.” Other reactions from lesser Congress souls were on the same lines, and broad hints were dropped that Mr. Venkataswamy’s days in the party were numbered. The fate that has befallen earlier blasphemers awaited him too: he would be expelled from the party, and would remain unsung and unhonoured, till such time as he suffers enough isolation to realize the enormity of his crime.

What, after all, was his crime? He spoke out of turn, true. He said things which even leaders and ranks in the opposition parties hesitate to say. He revived an issue which everyone in India believes has been effectively buried. No one talks of Sonia Gandhi being a foreigner any longer, possibly because the talk has lost steam. So, why was Mr. Venkataswamy tilting at the windmills?

Because patience also has limits, and he had obviously reached the breaking point.

But to be fair and frank, the veteran leader was fully right in his observations. He was also within rights in being critical of the leadership. After all, the Congress claims to be a democratic party! It is true that under Sonia Gandhi’s leadership the party has been losing states one after another. But no one in the party dare say so openly. The same Congress culture which calls for expulsion of the blunt and outspoken prevailed even during the Indira Gandhi era. She at least was a vote getter and hence was revered by Congressmen. After her assassination, the Congress was returned to power with four-fifths majority, a feat not achieved by the party during the Nehru era. The beneficiary of this pro-Indira wave after her death was her son Rajiv Gandhi but he himself did not prove to be a vote-getter.

Loyalists are fond of saying: “Inside the Congress, hero. Outside the Congress, zero.” They have been proved right on many occasions. Those who defied the leadership were cast into political wilderness and had to beg on bended knees to be taken back. It will be interesting to watch G. Venkataswamy’s political career from now onwards.

S. VISWAM is a veteran journalist.
Courtesy: *Janata*, February 13, 2011.



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Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjickaka

India is a Lollipop State for Terrorists

Look at how facilely Pakistan has exposed our impotency in the matter of the terrorists directly responsible for the Mumbai terror attack?

India is a lollipop state for terrorists and pirates; easy to lick and just as disposable. If any further proof was needed, it was amply provided by the absolutely pathetic performance of the country's Foreign Minister in Parliament recently. When asked what he was doing to secure the release of Indian seamen captured and held to ransom by Somali pirates – the expiry date on the lives of whom was rapidly approaching – the best he come up with was that he had “stressed” upon the ship owners to “negotiate” with the pirates. And that too, after his ministry sat on their collective behinds for months until the media exposed their criminal indifference. We have become almost inured to our politicians making inane and meaningless public pronouncements, but this one must stand out as a command performance.

Considering the fact that the ship's crew had been held captive for months without any resolution of their ordeal, it should have long ago been apparent to foreign ministry “experts” that the “stress” they were exerting on the ship owner was not yielding any results; and was probably being treated with indifference. After all, the ship was probably insured, so he was not going to suffer any financial loss; and the crew members were, well, expendable. The Somali government didn't seem too concerned either. Moreover, it should be a source of embarrassment for our country that our exhortations are being met with indifference bordering on contempt. It doesn't say much for an “emerging superpower” with one of the world's largest navies. What is the use of possessing clout if we are not prepared to use it? And why rely on others when India possesses formidable military resources of its own? Was a commando style raid to rescue the seamen even contemplated? Alternatively, since India already has naval ships in the region, it had the potential to put real pressure on the pirates and the Somali government.

Is it any wonder, then, that terrorists and pirates lick their lips in anticipation whenever they are planning an operation on Indian soil; or involving Indian nationals? And it is not just terrorists. Look at how facilely Pakistan has exposed our impotency in the matter of the terrorists directly responsible for the Mumbai terror attack? They keep making ever more ridiculous “legal” excuses for not taking action against Saeed, Lakhvi and company and we

keep responding in a “civilised” and totally ineffective manner. Our Prime Minister with the beatific smile keeps assuring the Pakistanis that all “options” are on the table – all except any option that would cause our neighbour real pain.

An article that appeared in *The Times of India* in May 2010, listed the nine major terrorist bombings that have taken place in the country since 2005; and the current status of the investigations to trace the culprits. In a word, the current status of the investigations is pathetic. Most of the bombers have escaped or remain untraced; and few of the masterminds behind the attacks have been conclusively identified, let alone brought to justice.

The reaction of India's security agencies in the aftermath of a terrorist incident has become so predictable, that it is almost text book. A ‘high alert’ is declared; and roadblocks are set up at major traffic junctions. The problem is that, in most cases, the policemen manning the roadblocks have no real idea what they are looking for; and only end up harassing ordinary law-abiding citizens.

It is a classic example of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. I am sure the security agencies don't need to be told that every big terrorist attack is the result of months of meticulous planning and considerable resources. It is ludicrous to expect the terrorists to carry out another attack the next day; or the day after. The emphasis, unfortunately, is everywhere except where it should be – taking steps to prevent future attacks.

As has been proved, even in countries that have first rate security agencies, it is virtually impossible to stop all terrorist attacks. However, a good many of them can be prevented with good intelligence. The tragedy of India is not that its intelligence gathering agencies are totally incompetent – they are not. The shame is that even after intelligence is received by the state governments it is rarely acted upon in time. There is no malevolent intent behind this apathy. The slow reaction time is almost inevitable, because the intelligence runs up against the brick wall of the traditionally lethargic Indian bureaucracy. Moreover, the indifferent bureaucracy usually finds a natural ally in that other bugbear of the Indian polity:

corruption.

The most in-demand posts in India's police forces are those where the cops come in frequent contact with the general public. Frequent contact translates into frequent bribes. There is no percentage in joining an Intelligence

department, where one has no avenues for personal enrichment.

And so the cycle will repeat itself ad infinitum. As a wise man once said, "those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it."

Why Mumbai Will Never Be World Class

A first class city deserves, nay needs, first class citizens. I'm afraid we still have a long way to go.

A few days ago, a Maharashtra minister once again came out with a grandiose announcement about transforming Mumbai into another Singapore (no longer Shanghai?). Our politicians routinely make tall promises about making Mumbai "world class", but their vision seems limited to blowing up limited funds on constructing ever more flyovers and skywalks and ever higher skyscrapers. Nary a thought given to basic requirements like infrastructure or sanitation, or even fulfilling a fundamental need like unpolluted drinking water.

While no one denies that transforming Mumbai into a "first class" city will require enormous funds, money alone cannot be a one-stop panacea for all the problems that plague the megapolis. Also, it is not only a question of sanctioning funds. The money needs to be judiciously utilized. Is it? Past experience does not hold out much hope.

There is no argument that improvement of this city's roads has to be a top priority. However, as a result of almost non-existent planning, perfectly good roads in South Mumbai are dug up for concretization, while roads in the suburbs, that would be an embarrassment even to a mofussil town, are neglected or, at best, shoddily patched up.

Then again, consider the ongoing plan to transform the area around the Gateway of India into a Singapore-class tourist attraction. The idea itself is laudable: a promenade, garden, ample parking. But will it really change

anything? This area happens to be part of my evening walk. What do I observe? Litter, hawkers, photographers and, most annoyingly, the beggars who plague every white-skinned foreigner without exception and stick to them like leeches. And all this goes on in full view of the Tourism Police, who were launched with great fanfare, ostensibly as a force specially set up and trained to assist foreigners and other tourists and ensure that they are not harassed. Need I say more?

And there is another basic reason why, even with the best of intentions and unlimited resources, Mumbai will never become a world class city. And that reason is within ourselves, the Mumbaikars. In a trait that is distressingly commonplace among Indians - and particularly Mumbaikars - we look out for ourselves and are oblivious to what is around us. Hence, we blithely walk past mounds of garbage, resign ourselves to surrendering footpaths to hawkers, do nothing more than turn up our noses at the smell from slums and people defecating in public. We merely grumble when our lungs are seared by pollution and shrug off the gobbling up of the few remaining recreational spaces by unscrupulous builders.

A first class city deserves, nay needs, first class citizens. I'm afraid we still have a long way to go. As long as we accept that the way we live is the best we can expect, Mumbai will remain a Third World City.

MR. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA can be contacted at Leonardo_99@yahoo.com

Interested, Dear Reader?

This year we are going to experience four unusual dates:

1.1.11, 11.1.11, 1.11.11, 11.11.11 and that is not all ... Take the last two digits of the year in which you were born. Now add the age you will be this year and the result will be 111 for everyone. This is the year of Money!!!!

This year October will have 5 Sundays, 5 Mondays and 5 Saturdays. This happens only every 823 years. These particular years are known as Money bags.

The proverb goes that if you send this to eight good persons, money will appear in the next four days. As is explained in Chinese fengshui, it is a mystery, but it is worth a try!.

From the Net. Forwarded by Narendra Kotak, Mumbai

The Vulnerability Of Indian Society

by Dr. Sampurnanand

The vulnerability of society in all countries, particularly in India, depends almost entirely on factors which, for want of a better name, may be called "spiritual". Politics and economics cannot be ignored, but they do not occupy that dominant position which one might be tempted to ascribe to them.

In the history of India we find that during periods of great political depression, our society was able to preserve its character and individuality. When the Huns and the Scythians invaded India, they were assimilated and absorbed into the social structure of the country. During the political domination of the Pathans and the Moguls, a defence mechanism was evolved which enabled our society to withstand the impact of a powerful alien influence. But things have changed today; and as the old spiritual values have declined so has the vulnerability of Indian society increased.

A social organisation stands together if it has a system of common fundamental belief, if it has an article of faith it can cling to and which it can fall back on in times of crisis. A belief may be wrong, but even a wrong belief, if honestly held, may later be abandoned in favour of a right one – provided the importance of belief itself is recognised. Today in India we seem to be living in a period when all that is believed is that there is nothing to believe in; and there lies the danger.

We have lost all faith, there is nothing we hold sacred, there is nothing to which we can cling in a crisis and which can form the basis for our intellectual and political activities. The result of such moral and intellectual anarchy is obvious. A person who is a cynic, an unbeliever by preference, can have no place for any permanent values.

Our philosophy has been that the individual is an end in himself and that he has a significance apart from any other that he might have as a member of society. This might sound selfish, but in reality it is not. The individual is not in conflict with society, rather he is one with it, and his joys and sorrows are the joys and sorrows of the society – and not vice versa. Such a concept alone can

form the basis of democracy in India. The only alternative to it would be anarchy and later the dictatorship of a small clique.

Democracy in India, or anywhere else, can only rest secure on the recognition of human individuality. If the individual has no purpose save that of the community, then his rights and his very individuality can have no meaning. The triumph of such logic must destroy democracy. We have then to decide as to what kind of dispensation we are going to live under. That is our most vital problem.

But our difficulty is that there is a chasm between our leaders and the mass of our people; in New Delhi one cannot help but recognise them. ... The impression in New Delhi is that of a foreign world, imported and transplanted on alien soil. In such surroundings it is not surprising that the country's leadership is not attuned to the traditions of the land. As a result of this our people have not had any cultural, much less spiritual, guidance from those who are their chosen leaders. They, being out of tune with Indian tradition, can speak only in their own terms. These terms are those of secularism. All talk of religion is suspect, and secularism has been equated with the absence of faith, and an attitude of contempt for religion. ... The inevitable result is an increasing general absence of faith, and therefore of any factor of national cohesion. Such a state of spiritual vacuum cannot last; it can suppress only for a short time these fundamental questions which invite answers in keeping with the spirit of the times and in consonance with our spiritual heritage. Such answers have to be given.

What then is our task? Certainly we must put an end to this state of affairs, but we must also once more make the individual the centre of all activity. If our approach to problems is to be in the spirit of *Dharma*, then we must create the proper climate for it. We must get over the narrow, negative conception of secularism and adopt a more real and positive attitude. A beginning can be made in our institutions of learning where education can include an attitude of faith, reverence and inquiry.

(DR. SAMPURNANAND, a teacher and politician who served as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh from 1954 to 1960. He was a scholar of Sanskrit, and a founder member of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom)

Come On, Liberals: Let's Change India!

The Liberals Must Lead

Sanjeev Sabhlok

We know that liberty has never been offered on a platter. It has had to be defended through vigilance and active participation in the affairs of the state. Whoever lets down his guard must be prepared to be governed by thugs and incompetents – as indeed, has transpired in India over the past decades.

Particularly after the valiant efforts of Rajaji and Masani came to an end, India has essentially been governed by criminals. I say this from personal experience, but even the N N Vohra Committee report¹ confirmed that ‘in certain states ... these gangs enjoy the patronage of local level politicians cutting across party lines, and the protection of government functionaries’. Most political leaders today are also extremely incompetent, being unaware of the most basic tenets of freedom and policy analysis.

One thing is clear: it is *we* who have allowed the situation to come to this, and only we can change it. There are three ways to do this: by preaching, teaching, or directly making the change. Preaching is, in my view, the lowest form of citizenship: exhorting others to do ‘good’ never works. So let’s not preach to our politicians. Teaching is a higher form: showing precisely how it is done. But clearly no one out there wants to listen to good advice. And so, *doing* is the highest form of citizenship. I suggest that liberals directly get the job done. The liberals must become political representatives and change India’s governance.

The Freedom Team of India

This is my 29th article for *Freedom First*, starting August 2008. Given the pressures on my time, I will pause after this. But I have basically said what I wanted to say. By now you know that the Freedom Team of India (FTI) exists to help you engage with India, should you want to actually do something. Indeed, if you don’t have it in you to change things, then please stop complaining about things around you; sheer wasted breath.

FTI (<http://freedomteam.in>) is a platform for those liberals determined to lead India to freedom. It is not itself a political party but its members will contest elections after due preparation.

Over the past year, many new members have joined FTI and its activities have ramped up. FTI recently held its second annual conference, and on the 23rd of February, *The Times of India* provided the first national coverage of FTI’s activities.² But while this is good, it is not good enough. At least another 1000 liberals are needed, and soon, if we are to make a serious attempt to form national government in 2014.

The Leadership Challenge

What kind of people does FTI want? I suppose these are the same qualities that you want to see in your political representatives:

- *Intellectual superiority.* As John Stuart Mill wrote in his essay on Representative Government (1861), our representatives should be ‘in any intellectual respect superior to average’.
- *Prudence and good moral character.* Our MLAs and MPs must possess at least a moderate level of prudence and good moral character.
- *Awareness of their role in relation to our freedom.* Our leaders should be aware of the requirements of freedom and of the role of a government in protecting our freedoms.
- *Awareness of and dedication to good public policy.* Our leaders should have at least some knowledge of the world’s best policy literature, and dedication to creating outstanding public policy.
- *Responsiveness.* Finally, our leaders should be easily approachable and responsive to the people of India.

Other qualities might include: being strategic (focused on results); having a sense of proportion; being optimistic, enthusiastic and confident; being patient and forbearing; and being pleasant to work with – and, of course, being an excellent communicator.

These expectations from our leaders can be framed in the context of Jim Collins’s leadership model. The lowest level of leader (Level 1) has a big ego and only modest ethical standards. The highest level of leader (Level 5)

has a modest ego and high ethical standards. The Level 5 leader is also determined to deliver results, and is focused on finding and developing new leaders. Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln come to mind as examples.

Given that Level 5 leaders are always scarce, FTI should be content to get level 3 leaders who aspire to become level 4 or 5 leaders. I'm sure that thousands of such leaders exist in India. I suspect, though, that they are a disheartened lot, for the task of reform appears too daunting. And so indeed it is – if we try it alone. The key is to work together and to prepare thoroughly.

FTI's leadership development strategy

Before someone can join the team, they are asked to self-declare that they meet FTI's joining conditions. That is followed by vetting of applicants through email.

Once accepted, members must comply with FTI's Code of Conduct. Should anyone in India have reason to complain about an FTI member, our disciplinary process will investigate and take corrective steps. We believe that if FTI is to reform India's governance, its members must meet the gold standard of leadership.

After a three-month probation, an initial FTI member can apply to become a full member. For this, he or she needs to receive five votes from existing full members. But getting these five votes is not easy for it requires demonstrated initiative and leadership ability. FTI's leaders must also provide ongoing leadership on local and national issues. They are being groomed to represent the people and must be fit to lead.

FTI works as a close-knit team. There is no single leader. All (full) members have exactly one vote each. Thus, the standards of citizenship, openness, and collaboration required to be a successful FTI member are extremely high. An aggressive or impatient person won't last long.

FTI is, above all, a philosophy-based organization, founded on the principles of classical liberalism. Its members are expected to have a deep understanding of what freedom means, and why freedom is crucial for a successful India. Thus, anyone who wants to impose his religious views on society is not welcome, nor is anyone who wants to impose irreligious views on society. Classical liberalism does not dispute religious

belief: it only disputes the imposition of such belief (or non-belief) on others through the instruments of the state.

Till we meet again ...

Anyway, it is time for me to take your leave, and to focus on finishing my next book and recovering my health. I look forward to keeping in touch with you through other means, such as my blog: <http://sabhlokcity.com/>. The best way to keep in touch would be through the Freedom Team, should you now (finally!) be ready to stand up. If you are not still ready but want to support FTI, please become a Freedom Partner (<http://partners.freedomteam.in>).

I want to end by thanking Mr S. V. Raju for the enormous contribution he is making by keeping alive *Freedom First*, and also for letting me write for this magazine for over two years. I also want to thank readers of this magazine who have supported my work over this period. I assure you that I will resume my article once I find more time. Till, then, *au revoir*. And godspeed!

MR. SANJEEV SABHLOK can be contacted at sabhlok@yahoo.com

(Footnotes)

¹ <http://sabhlokcity.com/2010/12/vohra-committee-report-1993/>

² <http://bit.ly/eM84WW>

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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.

Dated: 1st April, 2011

J. R. Patel
Publisher.

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 Ardeshir 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 or-

ganisation 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 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 workers 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.



Union Budget 2011-12

Prescription for Food Insecurity and Inflation

Sharad Joshi



I had prepared a marking system for grading 2011-12 budget. The greater the capacity of the budget to generate higher production higher would be its grade. The lesser the potential of the budget for increasing production and productivity lesser would be its grade.

I regret to say that the budget has failed very badly in scoring any grade and would, most probably, cause famines at a time when the nation is looking for food security and higher nutrition.

The initial mistake started in the great haste with which the UPA government launched the agricultural Debt Relief and Loan Waiver (DRLW) Scheme. The farmers' movement never demanded waiver of only the bank loans; it had clearly asked for a general write off of electricity tariffs as well. This was logical in the sense that electricity tariffs, for long long years, have constituted the single largest item of farm expenditure and the non-remunerative character of agriculture was bound to affect the ability of farmers to pay the power bills.

To synchronize with the move of certain state governments to cut off power connections at points far away from the villages affected, came the phenomenal hike in fossil fuel prices. The government continued its policies of importing crude oil from Arab countries. It would appear that political considerations made such a choice necessary. Little or no attempt was made by the UPA government to encourage domestic production of bio-Diesel or Ethanol. A measure to encourage production of bio-Diesel and Ethanol would have made agriculture more paying. The policy of letting the petroleum companies decide the prices

of petrol was highly unpatriotic and disastrous for agriculture.

The policies of the UPA government to obstruct the healthy development of Futures Markets despite substantial evidence it had to show that the futures markets add neither to volatility nor to inflation.

Apart from the power cut offs and the anti-national policy on bio-fuels, the UPA government has been following policies that discourage the hardy peasantry and encourage an ambiance of indolence and lethargy. On the other hand, all the flagship schemes of the UPA government result in pumping large amounts of money into the hands of the consumer; there is little effort to make production concomitantly.

As a whole, the Budget 2011-12, as it stands, will only prove the Expert Committee of the PMO on Food Security right and actually generate food shortages and food inflation which will make Food Security well neigh impossible.

I have not talked of the possible reaction of the farmers. The farmers may well be inclined to go for production of quality foodgrains, keep it limited to domestic consumption. All the production coming out of the use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides may well be diverted to production of bio-fuels.

The attempts on the part of the farmers to produce food grains exclusively for domestic consumption might result in some sort of a levy system of pre-1965 days or in outright efforts by bandits to rob the food granaries preserved by the farmers.

The 2011-12 budget is entirely ignorant of the real and the practical situation of Agriculture and, in fact, will result in Food insecurity and its concomitant price inflation.

MR. SHARAD JOSHI, former member of the Rajya Sabha is the founder of *Shetkari Sanghatana*. For more articles by him on rural India visit www.shetkari.in

When the World is Pushing for Nuclear Disarmament, Is China Wavering on Its Commitment to NFU

P. M. Kamath

It is China that had made its commitment publicly to the NFU in October 1964 when it first exploded its nuclear weapon.

Development of nuclear weapons technology in the US has always been tempered by the concern for nuclear disarmament. The earliest such expression of concern came at the highest level of lawmakers soon after the US dropped the atom bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 as a part of the then ongoing World War II. Using such high potency weapon of mass destruction kills thousands of civilians unconcerned with war or its fighting. Hence, American lawmakers spoke of No First Use of nuclear weapons or (NFU) as an ethical stand of using nuclear weapons only as weapon of self-defence. Thus, the NFU has its intellectual origin in the US.

However, the US has abandoned it in favour of a threat to use Nuclear Weapons as weapons of first use as a part its deterrence theory. The US position had some relevance during the Cold War period, because of the Soviet Union's preponderance in conventional military strength and its presence in Eastern Europe – thereby acting as a constant threat to the Western camp. But today, the US has moved NATO power close to the Russian borders as the sole Superpower and is in no way justified in sticking to its Cold War position.

But it is China that had made its commitment publicly to the NFU in October 1964 when it first exploded its nuclear weapon. The Doctrine of NFU involves basically two principles: First, it will not use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear weapons state (NNWS) in a military conflict under any circumstances; and second, it will not be the first one to use it against a Nuclear Weapons State (NWS) in a military conflict under any circumstances but reserving its right to use it as a weapon of self-defence in a retaliatory second strike.

However, on January 7 this year it was forced by circumstances to reassure the world community, when Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hong Lei said: "Since the very day China got nuclear weapons, Chinese government has made a solemn pledge never to be the

first to use nuclear weapons at any time under any circumstances." Lei added that reports of China considering changing the policy are "groundless and out of ulterior motives." It was Japanese news agency Kyodo that had carried earlier news item that the Chinese military will consider launching a preemptive nuclear strike if China faces a critical situation in a war with another nuclear state. China thus reiterated its commitment to the doctrine of 'No First Use' (NFU) of nuclear weapons in a military conflict with another Nuclear Weapons State (NWS).

In addition to China, India ever since its first nuclear test in May 1974 adhered to the concept of NFU of nuclear capability and once it declared itself as a NWS after nuclear tests in May 1998, it has also publicly committed itself to the doctrine of NFU of nuclear weapons. Today, in addition to the US which has a policy of relying on nuclear weapons as weapons of first strike, Pakistan which also tested its nuclear weapons in May 1998 in response of Indian tests says it will use nuclear weapons as the weapons of first strike! Thus, China's all-weather friend, Pakistan, is in the US camp on the question of the use of nuclear weapons, while, India is on Chinese side!

But, it is not for the first time that there was a global concern over the possibilities of Chinese moving away from its commitment to the NFU as a doctrine governing the use of nuclear weapons. In July 2005 a Chinese Major General, Zhu Chenghu, Dean of Chinese Defence College told a group of Hong Kong based journalists that "if the Americans draw their missiles and position guided ammunition on to the target zone on the Chinese territory, I think we will have to respond with nuclear weapons." He further added that China would prepare itself "for the destruction of all of the cities east of Xian. Of course, the Americans will have to be prepared that hundreds... of cities will be destroyed by the Chinese." Then the US state Department had sought clarifications from China and it had disowned the views of Major General Chenghu and had stated its continued adherence to the policy of "not

to be the first to use at any time and under any circumstances.”

In the current case, Chinese motives are still under analysis. One view is that China may be aiming to alter its policy since 2005 or at least there may be an internal debate on the subject. Russia had followed NFU until the end of the Cold War but shifted to first use policy. The second view is that the US Defence Secretary is due to visit Beijing after almost five years and probably China wants to show its growing concern on US military aid to Taiwan which it claims as its territory.

Thus, the world community, particularly, the US, Japan and India, which were disturbed were reassured that China was not preparing to move away from its commitment of NFU. It is also a great relief to all those who believe in gradual nuclear disarmament beginning with control of the

growth and spread of nuclear weapons. Incidentally, during the last week of December in Mumbai, VPM's Centre for International Studies organised an international Seminar on “Nuclear Disarmament: Global Steps towards Human Security.” More than forty scholars on the subject developed a consensus in favour of NFU as a first step to achieve nuclear disarmament. Japan and India continue to favour the policy; it is the US which has failed to commit itself to NFU despite President Obama's forceful endorsement of nuclear disarmament and also winning the Nobel Peace prize in 2009. The US commitment to NFU will enhance its moral power to prevail upon China in case it again tries to move away from the doctrine of No First Use of nuclear weapons in any military conflict.

Professor P. M. Kamath, recently published his book *India's Policy of No First Use of Nuclear Weapons: Relevance to Peace and Security in Asia*, New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2009.

From Our Readers (cont'd. from p.3)

enough. And I have my doubts about that – it could merely be the pigs taking over from Farmer Jones.

As for the cause, it is fear. A dawning nameless fear among the mass of the people regarding, not their present tyrant of the moment, but of something they find themselves unable to put their finger on. I wrote in a book review for *Freedom First* some time ago: “The fact is that the communications revolution has become the greatest and most insidious enemy of all forms of absolutist thought. It was primarily responsible for the destruction and fall of communism all over the world. This revolution is seen in Muslim countries and by Islamic authority in general as having originated in the ‘degraded’ West. The communications revolution is quintessentially anti-Islamic because it encourages free thought and critical enquiry by the mere fact of encouraging curiosity. It thereby “attacks” the very essence at the core of Islam – that it is the last and final word of God.”

It is the fear of having their entire *raison de etre* being pulled out like a bedraggled rug from under their feet.

Sharad Bailur, Mysore

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I have no view on the immediate contemporary events. However, I do not believe they will result in stable democracies. I can do you a brief piece called Religion

and Democracy which shows why the world's stable established democracies are Protestant, Hindu or Jewish. Democracy came late to the Catholic countries of Europe and lacked legitimacy and even more so in Latin America.* This is also true of Orthodox Christian countries such as Russia and Greece and Serbia. If you believe your faith is uniquely true and others ought to convert, this is not easily compatible with democracy. These countries took on democracy only when faith dwindled and after conflicts between the faithful and an equally fierce anti-clerical secularism. Muslim countries are the worst of all in this respect and the Arabs the worst of the worst. They cannot accept pluralism nor the autonomy of the individual which are the basis of democracy.

The best hope for Arab Muslim countries is benign autocracy. The worst is Islamic fundamentalism or sectarian conflict. The most likely is a corrupt dictator with military backing. The Americans do not see this and will probably meddle in the name of democracy and create chaos instead. However, I do not know enough about the local politics of the Arab countries to make specific predictions.

Christie Davies, U.K.

We accepted Christie's offer *. Please turn to page 23 for his article “Religion and Democracy”. – Ed.

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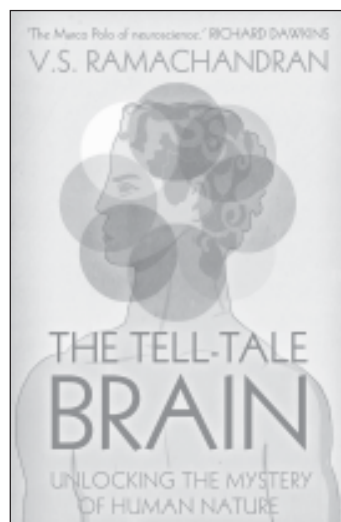
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BOOK REVIEWS



THE TELL-TALE BRAIN. UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN NATURE
by Dr. V. S. Ramachandran ● Random House India ● 2010 ● Pp.358 pages ● Rs. 499.

Reviewed Sharad Bailur, author, freelance journalist and a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First. Email: sharad.bailur@gmail.com.

Dr V. S. Ramachandran is an internationally known neuro-scientist. His accolades read something like this: Director of the Centre for Brain and Cognition, Distinguished Professor, Psychology Department and Neuro-

sciences Programme, University of California, San Diego, Adjunct Professor of Biology, Salk Institute; Ph.D. from Trinity College Cambridge; Fellow of All Souls College Oxford; Life Member of the Royal Institute; Henry Dale medalist; Ramon y Cajal medalist from the International Psychiatric Association; Ariens Kappers medalist from the Royal Netherland Academy of Sciences; Reith Lecturer; Padma Bhushan – whew!

We are dealing with no ordinary writer here. He was referred to as: “a modern day Marco Polo” by Richard Dawkins and “the modern Paul Broca” by Nobel laureate Eric Kandel. The views about this book are even more laudatory: “His descriptions of patients are fascinating and his experiments... both simple and ingenious” – Sir Francis Crick Nobel Laureate. “Vintage Ramachandran, full of ideas that are bold, irreverent, original and ingenious” – David Hubel, Nobel Laureate, Harvard University. “A masterpiece. The best of its kind and beautifully crafted... Ramachandran is the foremost pioneer – the Gallileo – of neurocognition” – Alan Snyder FRS, Australian National University. Whew and whew again!! I can only add one more. Probable Nobel winner in the next few years.

I read this book from cover to cover at one sitting over a period of 14 hours at a stretch. Quite a feat for a 64 year old with one functioning eye. But that is the kind of book it is. Digesting it took another four days, but digest it I did, even though I knew nothing about neurology. Luckily that is not a drawback. Here is what Dr. Ramachandran has to say: “Like my previous books, The Tell-Tale Brain is written in a conversational style for a general audience. I presume some degree of interest in

science and curiosity about human nature, but I do not presume any sort of formal scientific background or even familiarity with my previous works....The casual reader wants a thought-provoking guided tour of an unfamiliar subject, not a treatise, not a tome. I have done my best to strike the right balance.” Now I would suggest to Dr. Ramachandran that he changes its title to: “The Demystified Human Brain”. Dr. Ramachandran has written two other books before this about which I knew nothing: A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness and Phantoms in the Brain.

Before I forget I must mention an aside: Arthur Koestler wrote in his book, “The Roots of Coincidence” about his own experiments with out of body experiences. He embroidered it in the language of parapsychology, much to my incredulousness and amazement, because Koestler, otherwise, was such a down to earth writer, whom I still continue to almost venerate. What is important is that when explanations are not available, imaginations take over, and often tend to overwhelm common sense. We have an inherent tendency to say “We Know”, when in fact, we don’t.

It now turns out that out of the body experiences are nothing but the brain starved of oxygen resulting in the firing of specific neurons in a particular pathway in the brain. Here is Dr. Ramachandran himself: “As we saw earlier, one job of the right hemispheres is to take a detached, big picture view of yourself and your situation. This job also extends to allowing you to “see” yourself from an outsider’s point of view....This idea can also account for out of body experiences. Again, we only need to invoke disruption to the inhibitory circuits that ordinarily keep mirror neuron activity in check. Damage to the right frontoparietal regions or anaesthesia using the drug ketamine (which may influence the same circuits) removes this inhibition. As a result you start leaving your body, even to the extent of not feeling your own pain; you see your pain “objectively” as if someone else was experiencing it. Sometimes you get the feeling that you have actually left your body and are hovering over it watching yourself from outside. Note that if these “embodying” circuits are especially vulnerable to lack of oxygen to the brain, this

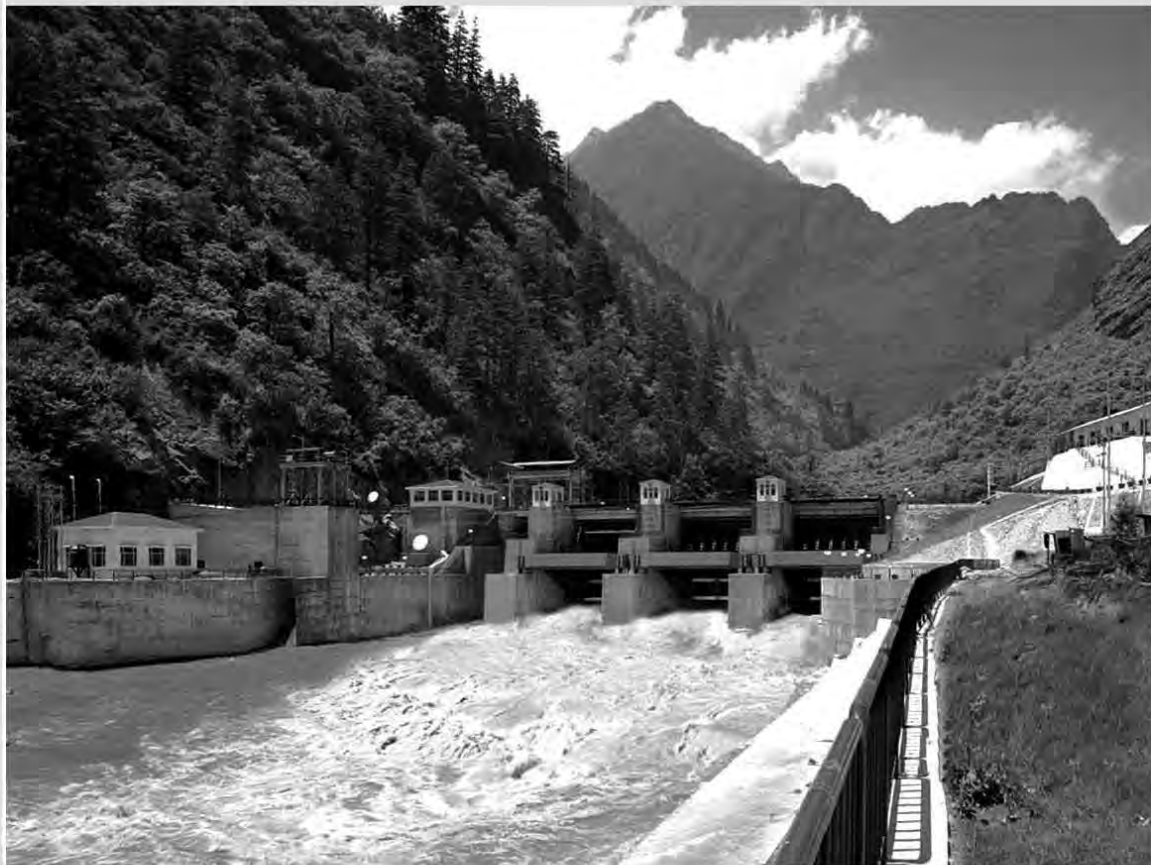
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could also explain why such out of body sensations are common in near-death experiences.” (Page272).

Human beings says Dr. Ramachandran, are truly unique and special, not just another species of ape. With this he dismisses the hardnosed hard science view of human intelligence. His attitude is based on investigations into the workings of the brain in exquisite detail to the point at which he can substantiate every statement he makes. When Alan Turing cracked the Nazi coding of their Enigma machine all he needed was one working sample of the machine, a notepad and his own brilliant brain. He did not need to know anything about the research and development history of the device or about the prototypes or earlier models. This does not apply to biological systems, says Dr. Ramachandran.

According to him, many of our unique traits have evolved through the novel deployment of brain structures that originally evolved for other reasons. This was the point of view that was held by Koestler as well. Violence, Koestler believed, stemmed from the crocodilian primitive brain. Ramachandran of course has a more sophisticated explanation taken from animal behaviour for violence.

Chapter 1 deals with the human brain’s amazing capacity for change and reveals how a more expanded form of plasticity may have shaped the course of our of our evolutionary and cultural development. Chapter 2 explains how the brain processes incoming sensory information. Humans have the same basic processing mechanisms as other animals but we have taken it to a completely new level.

Chapter 3 deals with the intriguing phenomenon called Synesthesia, a strange blending of the senses that some people experience as a result of unusual brain wiring. So if you are Synesthate you could taste colour, or see colour in written text or feel the texture of, say, green or red. It opens a new window into the genes and brain connectivity of certain types of creative people and may hold clues about how we have become such a creative species.

Chapter 4 deals with the existence of mirror neurons that allow us to adopt the viewpoint of others and it far surpasses that of other species. This is what makes us attain a full-fledged culture. Problems with mirror neurons result in autism, aloneness and extreme detachment. Chapter 6 explains how mirror neurons may have helped in the development of language, the crowning achievement of humanity. Chapter 7 and 8 deal with the human ability to appreciate beauty. Dr. Ramachandran believes that there are probably some universal laws of aesthetics, but Art

is a uniquely human achievement. Oddly, there is no mention about music. This, I find surprising because music is also a uniquely human achievement. In Chapter 9 Dr. Ramachandran discusses human awareness: The “I” inside each one of us, what Koestler called the ghost in the machine. Over the years Dr. Ramachandran has collected a number of syndromes of people who leave their bodies temporarily (referred to above), see God during seizures, or even deny that they themselves exist. It must be remembered that Prophet Mohammed was dictated the Quran by the Angel Gabriel during various episodes of epileptic seizures that he used to have.

When one reads a book of this nature, one always wishes for more. This reviewer does as well. Among the things I wish for would have been a scientific explanation of morality if that is possible and of humour as human minds understand it. As Sam Harris says in a recent refutation of his book “The Moral Landscape” published by the Huffington Post, “In my view, morality must be viewed in the context of our growing scientific understanding of the mind. If there are truths to be known about the mind, there will be truths to be known about how minds flourish; consequently, there will be truths to be known about good and evil.....Comedy must also be susceptible to this kind of study. There will be a fair amount of cultural and generational variation in what counts as funny, but there are probably basic principles of comedy – like the violation of expectations, the breaking of taboos, etc. – that could be universal. Amusement to the point of laughter is a specific state of the human nervous system that can be scientifically studied. Why do some people laugh more readily than others? What exactly happens when we “get” a joke? These are ultimately questions about the human brain. There will be scientific facts to be known here, and any differences in taste among human beings must be attributable to other facts that fall within the purview of science. If we were ever to arrive at a complete understanding of the human mind, we would understand human preferences of all kinds. Indeed, we might even be able to change them.”

This book is a unique *tour de force* of the human brain and the human mind. Original and creative at the same time, it depends upon as many as fortyseven pages of references gleaned from sources all over including his own researches over the decades. A reference must also be made to Dr. Ramachandran’s sense of humour that peeps out occasionally even when he discusses such a serious topic.

Taking from the above, it is best to quote Dr. Ramachandran in his own words: “As a scientist I am one with Darwin, Gould, Pinker and Dawkins. I have no patience

with those who champion intelligent design, at least not in the sense that most people would use the phrase. No one who has watched a woman in labour or a dying child in a leukemia ward could possibly believe that the world was custom crafted for our benefit. Yet as human beings we have to accept - with humility – that the question of ultimate origins will always remain with us, no matter how

deeply we understand the brain and the cosmos that creates it.” Precisely the view of the quintessential agnostic.

I am proud to be the owner of a copy. It is from such collectables that a good library is made.



PLATO'S INDIAN CONNECTION (Government Research Fellowship Lectures 2008-2009) by Sheryar K. Ookerjee ● The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 136, Bombay Samachar Marg, Fort, Mumbai. ● 2010 ● pp.41 ● Rs.100

Reviewed by Dr. Prema Nandakumar, author and freelance writer. Email: premnand@gmail.com.

The Research Fellowship instituted by the Government of Bombay in the Cama Oriental Institute way back in 1917 has been going on down the decades with addresses by eminent intellectuals like R. Zimmermann, R.N. Dandekar and Jamshed K.

Sahib is very much tuned to Kautilyajee. Dr. Ookerjee gives the *Arthashastra* view of the ideal King as a practical administrator, while Plato prefers a philosopher-king. It is a brilliant presentation of the key ideas in *Arthashastra* and the *Republic*, the former practical, the latter idealistic. In the end Plato, for all his big talk shrinks because of his petty 'straightforwardness' while Kautilya is a man for our season of corrupt rulers when he says:

“As dreams, they are excellent, but we have to deal with real people and real monarchs, my friend, not angels. Goodbye and may you live long to weave more fantasies to give us delight.”

Choksy. The latest in the roll call of honour is Dr. Sheryar Ookerjee who chose an extremely motivating subject for the 2009 lectures. The title is an attractive bait and we take off with “Plato, Karma and Rebirth”.

The final lecture of Dr. Ookerjee has a twentieth century Plato from Athens being interviewed by an assistant editor of *The Times of India*. Plato is coming after two millennia and finds India vastly changed. An excellent mouthpiece for an academic's view of contemporary India. The cities reek of inefficiency, corruption and disrespect for law. In the background of the Scamocracy being led by our Indian leaders, Plato is almost helpless in giving solutions:

“It is a kind of chicken-and-egg predicament: unless the rulers are of the right kind, the education can't be of the right kind; but unless the education is of the right kind, you won't have the right kind of rulers. I saw the difficulty long ago, but I have no solution.”

The Karma theory closely follows the law of nature. If you plant a rose, the bush gives you roses; if you plant the *datura*, the plant yields the poison flowers. Such is the Dharma that rules over human life on earth as well. Prof. Ookerjee takes us to Plato's Dialogues and shows the presence of this theory (considered unique to India's philosophy) in the Greek philosopher. But why do good people suffer and evil men prosper? To overcome this riddle, the ancients posited the theory of Rebirth. Neither India nor ancient Greece seem to have considered the body any more than a living prison for the soul which had existed earlier and will continue to do so in the coming birth. While the Indian theory projects an automatic receipt of the 'fruits' of action as per moral law, in the Platonic dialogue there is a Divine who is in charge of dispensing the 'fruits'. Incidentally, this is close to the theory of Grace posited by Sri Ramanujacharya.

Behind the façade of a frisky style, Dr. Ookerjee places serious subjects like the basic differences between the philosophers of the East and the West and the need for law to be the master of a government. *Plato's Indian Connection* is a reading experience of a novel kind and comes at a critical time in our nation's history. With this blueprint on hand, research lectures will cease to be morose baskets of platitudes, and learn the value of humour in academic discourse. Without a sense of the absurd, mankind would have done a lemming-act long ago!

The second and third lectures whacked me with surprise. Fancy having imaginary dialogues as endowment lectures! But why not? We have here an extremely charming “pseudo-Platonic dialogue” between Plato and Kautilya. Both of them speak for the Indian audience hence Plato



His Holiness the Dalai Lama

“As early as the 1960s, I have repeatedly stressed that Tibetans need a leader, elected freely by the Tibetan people, to whom I can devolve power. Now, we have clearly reached the time to put this into effect. During the forthcoming eleventh session of the fourteenth Tibetan Parliament in Exile, which begins on 14th March, I will formally propose that the necessary amendments be made to the Charter for Tibetans in Exile, reflecting my decision to devolve my formal authority to the elected leader. Since I made my intention clear I have received repeated and earnest requests both from within Tibet and outside, to continue to provide political leadership. My desire to devolve authority has nothing to do with a wish to shirk responsibility. It is to benefit

Tibetans in the long run. It is not because I feel disheartened. Tibetans have placed such faith and trust in me that as one among them. I am committed to playing my part in the just cause of Tibet. I trust that gradually people will come to understand my intention, will support my decision and accordingly let it take effect.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama
From his March 10, 2011 Address

*

THE FUTURE IS HERE AND HE KNOWS IT

Tenzin Tsundue

The Tibetans may not have had a strong standing army, nor learned to exploit their rich resources to make bombs, but they have someone they are rightly proud of – the ‘Wish-fulfilling Gem’, Chintamani, the Yeshin Norbu as His Holiness is known in Tibetan. Tibetans working close to him address him as ‘Kundun’, the holy presence, while His Holiness signs his name simply Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso.

Of all of his 14 lives, this Dalai Lama has been the most relevant to Tibetans personally, touching every life. The suffering Tibetan people under Chinese occupation – as more than a million, one sixth of its population died from starvation and torture – found unity under his leadership. As the head of the numerically dominant Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama has won the hearts of believers of all other sects by his non-sectarian practice and lineage teachings. History will hold him to be the most iconic Dalai Lama ever, although he’s spent most of his life in exile, even calling himself son of India.

Today, instead of preparing for his next incarnation, the Dalai Lama is investing his faith in something more modern and sustaining – Democracy. This has been his long-standing vision: To create a system and culture of accountability within the Tibetan community. Instead of begging His Holiness to lead us on, we must come forward and take up the challenge he is handing over to us, his children.

Excerpted from his article in *The Times of India*, March 13, 2011

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