

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine



A FORGOTTEN TALE OF HEROISM

It took an ungrateful Government 50 years to honour the soldiers led by Captain Shaitan Singh who died defending their motherland.



Major Shaitan Singh
Param Veer Chakra

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Between Ourselves ...

... let us keep reminding ourselves what we stand for. And this is precisely why, when we completed 60 years and entered the 61st year of publication we decided that every cover of our journal will remind us what *Freedom First* believes in. Wonder how many of us have noticed this reminder before turning over to the inside pages. If you have, then you would have also noticed that the six-liner assertion of what we believe in, the word “liberal” does not figure though we continue to describe on our masthead, also on the cover, that we are a “Liberal Magazine.” When we were a ‘Quarterly’, I recall being pulled up by our founder Minoo Masani when publication of an issue was delayed on the ground that we were waiting to comment on some event or happening. He reminded us that we are not a ‘news’ magazine but a ‘views’ magazine. And the expression of ‘views’ was not time-bound. For good measure he would add that we should also take care that the views are expressed from a ‘liberal perspective’ which meant eschewing dogma.

Take for example the liberal position on Foreign Direct investment better known by its acronym FDI. Do we support it or oppose it? While we believe in free markets and in free commerce across borders, we need to keep in mind the Indian context at any given time.

Editor

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From Our Readers

On *Freedom First*

Please accept my hearty congratulations on the excellent cover-page design and general get-up of *Freedom First*, November 2012. The cover page get-up is so eye-catching that it is difficult to put it down without a second look. The light and shade effect, the black and blue colour blending with a lovely photograph of Malala makes it tempting to open the magazine and browse.

May you keep it up and May God Bless *Freedom First* and its devoted staff to bring out more and more such issues!

B. M. N. Murthy, Bangalore.
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I've been an ardent reader of *Freedom First* since the last two years. I look forward to its new issue every month with its in-depth analyses of things affecting our society and country at large. Be it in regards to politics, sociology or international events, I find the view, presented by *Freedom First* with its liberal touch, highly refreshing to read.

While I may not agree with all viewpoints, I do tend to sympathize with many viewpoints presented in the periodical, especially those that relate to politics. I especially respect the fact that even though our political system is rotten to the core and there is a suppressed, yet serious desire amongst the masses for some kind of political revolution to "clean it all up", *Freedom First* always favours legal and constitutional methods to overcome this wretchedness instead of resorting to drastic measures.

I personally consider myself to be an amateur economist with a deep interest in the subject. Therefore, the addition of Mr. Sunil Bhandare's articles in the last few months is really welcome. His insights into the state of the Indian Economy are truly enlightening.

In this context I would like to give two suggestions: Firstly, though the quality of the existing articles on international events is good, I feel that *Freedom First* should carry more articles on international events.

Secondly, I have been reading a lot of flak being directed at our State's chief minister Mr. Narendra Modi especially by Mr. Firoze Hirjikaka. I honestly think, he goes too far sometimes as do other writers on the subject. While there is no doubt that the Gujarat riots of 2002 will leave a blemish on Mr. Modi's record as an administrator, it does not mean that he should always draw flak from the media because of it.

The media conveniently forgets all the other good things that Mr. Modi has done for Gujarat. He has made Gujarat the safest haven for business and investment, disposed off red tape and made the bureaucracy probably the most efficient in the country; has invested heavily in social welfare schemes; built world class rural and urban infrastructure and all this has benefitted minorities including Muslims. All this work hardly ever gets highlighted in the media. This is not fair to Gujarat, Gujaratis and Mr. Modi. I believe the media should provide a balanced view of Mr. Modi's achievements as well as his shortcomings.

I also resent the fact the media in general portrays Gujaratis with amusement (which is in fact veiled condescension) when they try and figure out why Mr. Modi gets re-elected all the time despite the so called "facts" being clear. The fact is that Gujaratis are not the fools the so-called "secular cosmopolitan circuit" (of which the media is a part) believe them to be. They (the Gujaratis) know who works for them and what works for them. That is the reason they vote for someone like Mr. Modi, despite his shortcomings.

The views I have presented are shared by countless other Gujarati men and women who, in turn, reciprocate the media's sentiment with an "anti-media" and "anti-Centre" sentiment. This is not healthy for a democracy based on liberal values like ours. We are getting more and more polarized as time progresses. I shiver to think what the builders of our democracy viz. Nehru, Patel, Azad and Ambedkar would have had to say on seeing our country in such shambles.

I sincerely hope and wish that you continue the great work you have been doing to propagate liberal ideas. God knows, India needs them more badly than ever.

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Dr. Verghese Kurien

I enjoyed reading the "Untold Tales of Verghese Kurien", not only for the phenomenal achievements of an extraordinary individual, but also for the splendid manner in which Sharad Bailur has encompassed them in just two and a half read-worthy pages

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Allan Octavian Hume

In his weekly column “Odd man” in the *Free Press Journal*, 25 October, 2012) the well-known journalist M. V. Kamath writing on “A. O. Hume Unhonoured and Unsung: observed *inter alia*: “The tragedy is that not just the Sonia Congress but the entire media has ignored him. Credit, therefore should go to the monthly liberal magazine *Freedom First* for publishing a full-length article on Hume by Dr. Prabha Ravi Shankar, Associate Professor of History SNDT University, Mumbai.”

I thought I should bring this to the notice of the readers of *Freedom First*.

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Manmohan Singh’s “Place in History”

I enjoyed Mr. Hirjikaka’s *Cornucopia* (*Freedom First* 545 November 2012), especially his neat analysis of ‘The Strange Case of MMS’s Desperate Dynamism’. The author feels or suggests that this last-ditch dynamism may just salvage MMS’s “place in History”.

No doubt MMS’s place in Indian political history is assured. My only point of departure is to ask, ‘place in history’ for WHAT?

Surely merely reducing illogical and deleterious subsidies, selling-off productive corporate assets owned by the people, and allowing foreigners to invest in our economy, can be considered a mark of ‘dynamism’ only for a moribund politician and proclaimed as such by a servile media.

MMS most certainly will take his place in India’s political history – for presiding so smugly and blithely over perhaps the most flagrant and massive pillage and plunder of this Nation’s assets, wealth and reputation, in its entire existence!

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Solar Power

Mr. Bhide hits the nail on the head when he says “solar energy will become strategically very important in future” (Avoiding Power Grid Trips, *Freedom First* September 2012); that future is not too far. In fact, the Sardar Patel Renewable Energy Research Institute (SPRERI), situated in Vallabh Vidyanagar, was established as early as January 1979 as a result of the initiative taken by a group of foresighted persons led by the late Mr. H.

M. Patel, ICS, and finance minister in the Janata Party government after the emergency, and the late Mr. Nanubhai Amin of Jyoti Ltd.

World-wide, solar energy accounts for about of one percent of total energy generated. In India, where we have about 140000 MWs of thermal capacity, the grid connected to solar power is under 100MWs. Wind energy is over 10000 MWs. Since solar panels require space, the land that is not suitable for farming or inhabitation is ideally suited. India’s Thar Desert in Rajasthan and some areas in Gujarat can provide the required land for setting up either solar thermal or Solar Photo Voltaic. But we need to have transmission lines to get the power generated there. Gujarat has aggressive plans and currently implementing Projects with 600MW capacity. The country needs to set up 20000 MW of solar power by 2020.

Despite the interest in this sector, it would remain a supplementary power source and the base loads will have to be met by thermal power. The advantage with solar is that it is most efficiently available in summer, when the power position turns critical with hydro electricity generation reaching its lowest. The base loads of thermal power could be supplemented in summer by solar power and during monsoons by hydro electricity and in winter by both solar and hydro electricity.

Solar power has one special advantage over other forms, as it could be produced and consumed at the same place. It is ideally suited for villages and low density urban areas, where the supply of grid power would be uneconomical. The panels could be erected either on poles or on rooftops for individual houses. One KLV solar panels require 13 to 15 sq. mtrs of space and can generate 100 to 150 units per month which would meet the basic requirements of a household in rural and small towns.

While solar power is a desirable option, it is very expensive and not affordable without huge subsidies by the state. Currently one MW solar energy plant costs three times that of one MW thermal. 15 crores vs. 6 crores! State Electricity Boards do not pay even Rs.3 per unit to thermal energy producers. On the contrary governments are willing to pay between Rs.9-12 for solar energy. With Gujarat planning to install over 600 MWs solar capacity, one can imagine the amount of subsidy the government has to bear.

What India needs to do is to use solar energy in areas where it makes sense. It makes no sense to lay cables and transformers to connect far flung villages. The

(Cont’d. on p.10)

In Memoriam

Two good friends of *Freedom First*, Liberals in the true sense of the word, passed away recently. Both had plenty of goodwill for the journal and encouraged and supported the journal whenever we sought their assistance. There are few in the world of voluntary organisations and in the corporate world who do not know them.

R. M. Lala (1929-2012)



Russi M Lala started as a journalist in 1948. At the age of 1959 he was manager of the first Indian publishing house in London. Russi came into his own when in association with Rajmohan Gandhi he founded *Himmat Weekly* in 1964 which he edited for a decade. Soon he turned to writing books. In 1981 he wrote *The Creation of Wealth* which I had

opportunity to read and review it in *Freedom First*. Many books followed eg. *Beyond the Blue Mountain: A Life of JRD Tata* in 1992; *Celebration of the Cells, Letters from a Cancer Survivor* (1999); *A Touch of Greatness: Encounters with the Eminent* (2001) and the *Love of India: The Life and Times of Jamsetji Tata* in 2004. Russi Lala's last two books were *The Art of Effective Giving* and *Counting Your Blessings*- the latter published posthumously.

In my view a person is really on test when he is doing well in terms of pelf, position and power. Having interacted with Russi both before he was appointed

Director of the Dorab Tata Trust and during the time he held this position I noticed no change in his attitude to men and matters. He continued to hold a low profile retained his usual low profile warm self. His office being in Bombay House he patronised the RTI restaurant Piccolo - almost next door. I had the pleasure of being invited by him on a few occasions to share a meal with him at this restaurant. Such sessions I found were very educative. I found him relaxed and engaging, but never patronising.

In the preface to his last book *Counting Your Blessings* he writes inter alia " When I was sixty, I was diagnosed with cancer (non-Hodgkin's lymphoma). I was given about four different kinds of chemotherapy. In those days the treatment was far harsher than it is today. In 1989, I came out of the spell in about six years...It flared up again in 2003 when I was under great pressure.. Mercifully it was for a brief period. The desire to finish a book I was working on kept me going. Today" (and he was writing his last book in August 2012) " ten years later my desire to write still occupies my mind and keeps me going. But I think of many others who are not as fortunate and I have a great desire to assist them in meeting the challenges of old age.." This was the kind of man who left us on October 19. I am sure he would be glad, wherever he is, to hear me conclude this obit by saying: May his Soul rest in peace.

Kekoo Gandhi (1920-2012)



I knew Kekoo well and yet I did not. A Gandhian to the core he functioned in a world of artists, painters and those in the fine arts. He was a quiet, almost self-effacing person giving no indication of his influence and knowledge of the esoteric world he was in.

To run into Kekoo Gandhi, whether at the old Gallery Chemould on the first floor of the Jehangir Art Gallery, BombaY – or more recently, at its successor institution, Chemould Prescott Road, directed by his daughter Shireen – was to be drawn instantly into his latest scheme for civic improvement or his latest proposal for sweeping reform in the nation's art infrastructure. When Kekoo passed away on Saturday morning, he took with him a nation-sized archive, an intimate knowledge of the epic debates as well as the invisible micro-politics that had shaped the field in which many of us, his younger contemporaries, have chosen to plough our paths: postcolonial Indian art.

We have taken the liberty of publishing the first paragraph of Ranjit Hoskote excellent tribute to Kekoo Gandhi.

For the full text of Ranjit's tribute please visit <http://outofprintmagazine.blogspot.in/2012/11/in-memoriam-kekoo-gandhy-by-ranjit.html>

Ease of Doing Business – India’s Dismal Ranking!

Sunil S. Bhandare

Why does India perform so dismally being 132nd of 185 countries?

India is now turning to be an economy of about US\$2 trillion measured at the current market exchange rate; this in turn has enabled India to be ranked ninth in the global league. By using the measure of purchasing power parity (PPP), the country’ GDP would probably exceed US\$ 5300 bn. and perhaps has already overtaken Japan to be ranked third in the current year, next only to the USA and China. According to the WTO’s latest annual report, over the last two decades, India has gradually expanded her share of global exports, ranking nineteenth in her merchandise exports worth US\$ 297 bn. in 2011. India now ranks sixth in the world in the export of commercial services touching US\$ 148 bn. Until recently India was acclaimed to be the second fastest economy after China in the group of major economies of the world.

Yet, why does India perform so dismally being 132nd of 185 countries? At the same time, other members of BRICS economies, namely, Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa are ahead of us. So also are our neighbours from South Asia – Sri Lanka (81st), Pakistan (107), Bangladesh (129) and even Nepal (108). What are the distinguishing features of the top ranking countries as compared to India? Can

India afford to remain sanguine even as the UPA II government is trying resolutely to push ahead with its new economic policy reforms? Are there some substantive issues or are they problems of perception? Surely, the policy makers and those concerned with economic governance of our country cannot afford to remain complacent on the vital aspect of steering India’s rank to a respectable position which is in conformity with her emerging status in the global economy.

The recently released World Bank study, the 10th edition of *Doing Business 2013 Report*, seeks to take stock of how far the world has come in business regulatory practices and what challenges still remain across various countries. It may be mentioned that the number of indicators for assessing the overall ease of doing business has increased from 5 in 2003 to 11 now. The Report points out that “in the first Report, one of the main findings was that low-income economies had very cumbersome regulatory systems. Ten years later it is apparent that business regulatory practices in these economies have, gradually but noticeably, been adopting more efficient practices common in higher income economies.” But there

	Brazil	Russia	India	China	S. Africa	Singapore
GNI per capita (US\$)	10,720	10,400	1,420	4,930	6,960	42,930
Population (mn)	196.7	141.9	1241.5	1344.1	50.6	5.2
Ease of Doing Business (Rank);						
<i>in which</i>	130	112	132	91	39	1
1. Starting a business	121	101	173	151	53	4
2. Construction permits	131	178	182	181	39	2
3. Getting electricity	60	184	105	114	150	5
4. Registering property	109	46	94	44	79	36
5. Getting credit	104	104	23	70	1	12
6. Protecting investors	82	117	49	100	10	2
7. Paying taxes	156	64	152	122	32	5
8. Trading across borders	123	162	127	68	115	1
9. Enforcing contracts	116	11	184	19	82	12
10. Resolving insolvency	143	53	116	82	84	2
Note: the bench-marking is amongst the group of 185 countries now as compared to 133 countries in 2003.						

is still a long way to go compared to “business-friendly regulations” practices in the ten top ranking countries viz: Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand, the United States, Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea, Georgia, and Australia. Singapore tops the global ranking for the seventh consecutive year.

Comparison within BRICS & Singapore

The table on page 7 summarizes the position of India under various parameters *vis-à-vis* other BRICS countries and the best in the world. India is far behind in terms of per capita gross national income (GNI). But GNI *per se* does not influence the status of a country in terms of ease of doing business, though a substantial improvement in the latter would certainly improve in enhancing its per capita GNI.

Where does India stand in this comparative framework of ten separate parameters? She is the lowest among BRICS countries, but at least in a couple of areas India stands out – namely, (a) getting credit (perhaps reflecting spread, strength and depth of Indian banking and financial sector, and its closer relationship/networking with business and industry); and (b) protecting investors (perhaps reflecting relatively efficient and competent role of our financial regulators, be it RBI or SEBI). However, India is among the lowest in (a) enforcing contracts; (b) dealing with constructions permits; (c) starting business; and (d) paying taxes (slightly better than Brazil). All these areas are concerned with inadequacies and fault lines of institutional and regulatory systems, including that of judiciary and tax administration.

Closing in on Singapore benchmarks (or for that matter with other top ranking countries) is almost an impossible task for India, but closing the gap with China and South Africa is doable within a reasonable time-frame. Is this to happen, India must undertake the Next Big Reforms, if it really wants to accelerate domestic investment and FDI inflows to regain and sustain high economic growth. This involves not only expediting the implementation of new economic policy reforms announced recently (including those that are in the pipeline), but more importantly also substantially improving business regulations and processes. Equally importantly, India has to enhance her standards of accountability and transparency in policy matters, be it relating to pricing of natural resources (coal, mines, water, telecom spectrum, etc), land acquisition and allotment, real estate and property development, labour reforms or tax administration.

Economic Significance

What is the economic significance of this annual

comprehensive *Doing Business Report*? It has many valuable lessons for our policy-makers and those engaged in the economic governance of our country in recalibrating their policy options.. This message comes out loud and clear from the many interesting findings incorporated in the Report. It points out that “based on a 5-year panel of economies, one such study finds that in low-income economies that implemented reforms making it easier to do business, *the growth rate increased by 0.4 percentage point in the following year*”. It also notes that evidence emerging from analysis based on 8-years of *Doing Business* data and building on the earlier studies shows that “improvements in business entry and other aspects of business regulation matter for aggregate growth as well”.

It also points out that “a growing body of research has shown that simpler entry regulations *encourage the creation of more new firms and new jobs in the formal sector*. Economies at varying income levels and in different regions saw noticeable increases in the number of new firm registrations after implementing such reforms. Within-country studies have confirmed the positive association between improvements in business registration and registration of new firms in such countries as Colombia, India, Mexico and Portugal. These studies have found increases of 5–17% in the number of newly registered businesses after reforms of the business registration process”.

Yet another finding of this Report relates to the relationship between foreign direct investment and business regulation. It states that “a case study in this year’s report shows that although the *Doing Business* indicators measure regulations applying to domestic firms, economies that do well in this area also provide an attractive regulatory environment for foreign firms. Again using data from multiple years, *the case study shows that economies that are closer to the frontier in regulatory practice attract larger inflows of foreign direct investment*”.

To sum up, the ultimate touchstone for measuring the success of the UPA II Government’s recent policy reforms with, hopefully, more to follow, will have to be reflected in an improvement in India’s ranking in doing business in the global league. For this purpose, the next big reforms will have to be highly focused on institutional, regulatory, judicial and administrative areas. Undoubtedly, the consequential improvement in our rating would lead to rising standards of living for our citizens! But those who responsible for policy-making need to respond, and not treat such reports with scant attention!

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FDI in Organised Retail Trade

Suresh C. Sharma

It should be a matter of concern to us why the big industrial houses of India have failed to stir the pot of retailing....

A few years ago, some of the corporate houses set up malls and entered the organized retail trade. The retail sector in India is worth USD 250 billion a year and likely to expand at the rate of 15% per year. No surprise that the corporate houses are keen to enter this sector. The existing traders were unhappy with the advent of a competitor with deep pockets and some of the politicians jumped into the fray. They led unruly crowds to throw stones and picket the new stores. One of the national level politicians declared that he would permit the organized retail stores to function only over his dead body. The violent crowds perhaps comprised the easily available toughies that enjoy violence and an opportunity to gain money as reward.

The opposition died down and more than one chain is functioning now, largely in metro towns. India is a free country and there can be no logical reason to ban organized retail trade or wholesalers opening retail outlets. Government's interference generally works against the interests of the farmers and consumers. The waste in storage of foodgrains in government warehouses is a regular occurrence. An enterprising fruit vendor can progressively rise to a multi-product shop. There is no ceiling for a successful businessman. Mumbai particularly has many people who have risen from rags to riches.

Negative Fallout from Retail FDI

The main reason for opposing organized retail trade is the likely unemployment ensuing from retail chains. Data presented to the European Parliament suggested that the supermarkets destroyed two to three times as many working class jobs as they created. The price advantage was mostly in goods purchased by the middle classes.

Due to cost of space in towns, most of the retail chain stores are established in the suburbs. In UK, during 2000 to 2009, fifteen thousand shops in town centres closed down. That came to almost one in three shops being wound up. Opening of retail chain stores was not the main reason for it. High property cost in town centres, lack of parking space and shift to e-mail orders were additional reasons for the closing down of these shops. A resident of London observes that there are shops within ten minutes drive from his home but there is no parking space available. So

he shops at supermarkets in the suburbs where adequate parking space is available. High fuel price is a disadvantage for him and many customers prefer to shop in the town for small number of items.

In USA, organized retail trade was introduced at the time of an expanding economy. The unemployed traders and employees were easily absorbed in other sectors. This was not the case in UK and unlikely to be the saving grace in India. In addition to high property prices, organized retail trade ventures are energy guzzlers. Electric power is costly in India and subject to frequent interruptions. Home sizes in metro cities are small and it makes no sense for them to purchase groceries in bulk. Frequent trips to the malls in the suburbs may not be easy for customers, particularly for working couples.

Any responsible government cannot ignore the likely impact on employment. In India, a small shop is often the only source of income for the family. The critical issues are price benefits to producers and customers. The retail chains may be able to offer cheaper goods by procurement in bulk, but it might entail increased costs due to the need to store products in cold storages. The brick and mortar retailer enjoys the advantage of making deliveries at home even for small orders. There is no doubt that he would be able to usher in on-line orders and delivery at the opportune time. Looking at the organized retail vendors operating today, the trade is far from brisk which is essential for their survival. Customers patronize only stores which are located in the residential areas. The quality of fruits and vegetables is not consistent. As for other articles, the one-item stores give a better choice and service. That is true for fruit vendors on the pavement as well. The government should not interfere and let the customers and producers decide.

FDI for Whose Benefit?

There is no advanced technology involved in retail trade. Nor is there dearth of capital required for establishing retail chains. The plea by the Central Government for inviting FDI in retail trade is based on creating confidence amongst foreign investors. Are we looking after the interests of the foreign corporate companies or that of our own people? It will not ease the foreign exchange

problem, for foreign investors will venture only to remit more money than what they bring in. We should look for confidence building measures in manufacturing industries. The foreign joint ventures in retail trade may bring down the prices initially but increase them after getting established. A watch has to be kept. China, Malaysia and Thailand had to make special laws to check prolific expansion of foreign malls.

The biggest advantage that US retailers bring to the market is their supply chains. They are able to reduce costs in transportation. They are constantly trying to determine which products will sell and in what quantities. It should be a matter of concern to us why the big industrial houses of India have failed to stir the pot of retailing in any significant way. There seems to be a competency gap among Indian business executives. We must acknowledge this and bridge it. Another major weak point is the wastage in storage of farm products. It is a grave concern that farm products are not procured on time and payments made instantly.

The present Congress Government and its chorus boys (and girls) – the civil servants – have begun to say that food inflation is India's biggest problem. They then say foreign retailers will be able to source tomatoes from Argentina if need be. That may not be necessary. The bulk purchase of farm products will certainly have an adverse effect on the intermediaries who are protected by the APMC Act and enjoy political patronage. Indian industry will face competition from global players. This may be of benefit in the long run.

From Our Readers (Cont'd. from page 5)

expenses would be prohibitive. In those areas solar energy makes sense because it available off grid. Even in urban areas low energy consumption households (mostly poor), must be encouraged to go for captive solar energy. For low power requirement, solar energy is ideal and the state subsidies could be made available to the users. For highly dense usage, grid distributed thermal power would remain the best option for quite some time to come.

As Mr. Bhide mentions, generating solar energy through photovoltaic technology has limitations and the capital cost several times higher than the traditional sources of energy. Therefore, alternative methods of tapping solar power become imperative. Mr. Bhide has also mentioned the second alternative of thermal technology, which involves conversion of solar energy into steam at high pressure and high temperature of sun's rays. It is possible to build plants with 50 to 100 MW capacity, which is significantly less capital-intensive.

It is interesting to note that India's innumerable business news outlets never discuss the health of the retail industry. Consumer spending is a very reliable indicator of the economic health of a country in all Western business discussions (the home of the mega retail franchises).

Obstacles in Retail Trade

The biggest stumbling block to growth of retail in India is dispute resolution. As long as courts take years to resolve issues, small businesses cannot grow. What India needs is faster dispute resolution, building silos, air conditioned trains for fresh farm products, better unloading facilities for freight trains/trucks, and e-commerce solutions. We should invite FDI in these areas and knit the retail chain ourselves.

The Government has already announced 51% FDI in retail trade, subject to approval by the State Governments. The states ruled by the Congress are willing to allow FDI in retail trade. The announcement stipulates that it would be allowed only in cities with a population of ten lakhs or more. There are only twenty cities with that population in the states which have favoured FDI in retail trade. In USA, the first Wal-Mart store was opened in a small town and was a great success since it offered items which shops in small towns usually did not stock. The question remains what could be the fall-out when the Congress is replaced by another party in a State allowing FDI.

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We could consider replicating what Germany has done, given the bounty of sunshine God has blessed us with. Germany encourages home owners to set up solar panel roofs to feed into the grid against which they get a tariff for solar power generated by them and supplied to the grid, which is twice the tariff they pay for drawing power. This policy has resulted in the creation of solar roof investors looking for empty roofs and investing in them after making an arrangement with the home owners; In Australia, the government supplies free solar panels to home owners willing to junk their existing system and to pay the price of new plumbing. In India, too, the Ministry of Power is trying to work out ways to make solar power industry viable and has worked out a scheme to bundle the more expensive solar power with the cheaper thermal power it has on tap, in the ratio of 1:4 units, respectively, in order to bring down the cost.

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India's Anti-Corruption Movement Now Derailed

N. S. Venkataraman

While Kejriwal and his associates will, in all probability, go into oblivion after the next parliamentary elections with people rejecting their methods and outlook, the forces of corruption will remain undefeated.

When Anna Hazare launched a nationwide anti-corruption movement with the image of being a Gandhian and using the Gandhian tool of fasting, there was genuine support and appreciation from all quarters. However, when Anna Hazare declared that the Lokpal Bill would be the ultimate tool to root out corruption in India, many people disagreed with him while still having faith in Anna Hazare's commitment to the cause. It is a tragedy that the Anna Hazare's movement got diluted with all and sundry getting into the bandwagon thus losing a sense of direction. When Anna Hazare's movement inevitably collapsed due to the use of vituperative language and apparently coercive tactics (with people like Ramdev facing tax evasion charges also being associated in some way), Anna Hazare had to withdraw the movement for all practical purposes.

Now, Anna Hazare has announced that he will revive the anti-corruption movement and has formed a new team. It remains to be seen whether Anna Hazare's move to provide a second birth to the anti-corruption movement will take off. Of course, his movement and pronouncements will be covered by a sensation-hungry media. What is important is not the media coverage but creating faith amongst the people that the revived anti-corruption movement would do good to the country. Considering the fact that Anna Hazare will continue to adopt the same strategies of whipping up mass hysteria, it is more than likely that his movement will remain only as a 'movement of sensation'.

Today, in India, corruption exists at all levels and in every field of activity. One cannot even cremate a body without paying a bribe. Therefore, the battle against corruption should be fought in the minds and hearts of people if it is to achieve the intended results, where individuals in large numbers would be willing to sacrifice personal benefits and comforts for the sake of the anti-corruption cause. It remains to be seen whether the new team formed by Anna Hazare will aim at a micro level campaign against corruption without politicising it, but in all probability, this looks unlikely.

Kejriwal's Antics

While a large section of countrymen feel sad about the petering of Anna Hazare's movement, Kejriwal and his friends tried to fill the vacuum, giving an entirely new colour to the movement. The dignity associated with Anna's movement is not evident in the antics of Kejriwal and he has virtually brought ridicule to the movement by levelling allegations from public platforms and through the media without following the due process of law to expose the corrupt people. His method is one of provoking hatred about people whom he selects for targeting at his whims and fancies.

Further, Kejriwal's source of funding is being openly questioned by several well meaning people and the lack of transparency is obvious. Kejriwal and his associates do not have the wisdom and maturity to understand that wild accusations and the use of abusive language will have only bring short term gains; it will not sustain any movement. The average Indian can see through the game of the politicians and activists, as has been repeatedly revealed by the defeat of several political parties being removed from power during the elections. Certainly, people do not approve such antics and do not trust the media beyond a point.

Kejriwal has derailed the anti-corruption movement by trying to step into the shoes of Anna by playing to the gallery. The movement in the country is back to square one now. While Kejriwal and his associates will, in all probability, go into oblivion after the next parliamentary elections with people rejecting their methods and outlook, the forces of corruption will remain undefeated. The country will continue to search for new messiah. The abusive stage shows by Kejriwal has done damage to the movement. While it is absolutely necessary that the anti-corruption movement forge ahead, it appears that the country has to look beyond Anna Hazare and Kejriwal to sustain the movement and take it to its logical end.

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Cabinet Reshuffle: An Empty Political Ritual

Nitin G. Raut

In India a reshuffle is a compulsive political action that has nothing to do with administrative efficiency or political cohesion. It is like a game of cards where a pack of cards are reshuffled before distribution among the players.

The Prime Minister described the October 2012 reshuffle of his Cabinet as "...a combination of youth and experience..."; but the Prime Minister was not speaking his mind. He was merely acknowledging the none-too-invisible diktat of the Gandhi Family scion. Be that as it may, the issue of reshuffle is peculiar phenomenon witnessed periodically in Indian politics. It is pompously described as an exercise for administrative efficiency, political cohesion or streamlining the Ministerial functioning. It is a practice perhaps alien to British Parliamentary Democracy or to any European Democracy which seldom see reshuffles.

What then is a 'reshuffle'? It is like a game of cards where a pack of cards are reshuffled before distribution among the players and the same exercise is repeated with the same pack of cards and the same set of players except that with each round the players get different cards to play with. In a reshuffle the players are Ministers and cards are Ministries and the same Ministers are circulated for different Ministries. It can also be called a game of musical chairs or a political lottery.

In India a reshuffle is a compulsive political action that has nothing to do with administrative efficiency or political cohesion. At times the reshuffle is intended to balance caste and regional equations with different permutations and combinations, or play one 'heavyweight' against the other, or to accommodate disgruntled elements, or accommodate different political social and religious interest groups, or use one leader to control the influence of another, or to signal political 'action' to the voters if elections are due in a particular State. Therefore, can a Minister, considered a failure in one Ministry, be more efficient for another merely by a reshuffle?

Politics of Reshuffle

In the recent reshuffle if Andhra Pradesh got a bounty of five Ministers it is because of the threat posed by Jagan Mohan Reddy's rebellion. If Maharashtra drew a blank it is because there is no immediate threat to the Congress political base in this State. The allocation of

prime portfolios is also a signal to the targeted vote banks in view of the 2014 election.

The reshuffle cannot address the issues of scams, corruption or administrative paralysis which calls for a radical paradigm shift and bold political initiatives. In the present case it is a political exercise by a Prime Minister, at the behest of elements without accountability or responsibility, and had to helplessly fall in line. The reshuffle in no way helps the Prime Minister to energise reforms. The reshuffle may satisfy the Congress Party's sycophantic and submissive culture and nothing more. At best it has given a political mask to a tainted government. More importantly, the reshuffle is hardly geared to meet the challenges for the future: a depreciating rupee, declining exports, dwindling FDI, sluggish growth, not to mention the internal and external threats.

After the present reshuffle the former Law Minister Salman Khurshid has been inducted as Foreign Minister. As Law Minister he was better known for his penchant to stir up an intoxicating cocktail of politics, religious quotas and policy issues. Even when religious quota is held unconstitutional, the Law Minister, during his Party's campaign in the last U.P. Assembly elections, promised 8% reservation for Muslims – a clear appeal for votes on religious grounds – but got away with a rap on the knuckles by the Election Commission. Charged by Arvind Kejriwal for alleged irregularities in a family trust controlled by Salman Khurshid and his wife, and Kejriwal's threat to stage a protest in Farrukhabad Parliamentary Constituency, the former Law Minister exploded saying: "I have been made Law Minister and asked to work with a pen. I will work with pen, but also with blood" and "let them come to Farrukhabad. But let them also return from Farrukhabad". Surely it was unbecoming for a Law Minister to talk the language of "blood". Is the External Affairs Ministry, a position to ease him out of the Law Ministry?

The External Affairs Ministry is an important portfolio. It has to deal with sensitive issues of relations with super powers like the United States – now with the

new Obama team – and handle delicate foreign policy issues on West Asia, Afghanistan and Iran. It requires, not dealing with local political equations, vote bank composition, quota politics and the like.. Foreign policy requires dispassionate and objective decisions based on sound and mature national strategic and security interests.

The outgoing External Affairs Minister, S.M. Krishna, had his own share of goof-ups. Addressing the last U.N. General Assembly, he blissfully started reading the speech which turned out to be the text of the Portuguese Foreign Minister and it was only after “discovering” the *faux pas* that he switched over to his own prepared text. At the world’s top forum there could not have been a more defining manifestation of incompetency and irresponsibility.

So even in the reshuffle one continues to shuffle

on, however clumsily. Such is the nature of reshuffle that it is structurally impossible to bring cohesion or efficiency. Reshuffle ought to be for the national good and not merely because the Prime Minister is prodded by extra constitutional bosses. It has become an exercise simpliciter to break the monotony or simply to distract attention from corruption charges. Reshuffle can be viable if it delivers but the last reshuffle is neither aimed at reforms nor to uproot corruption. It is a flimsy idea for short term non-economic reliefs. As an arrangement it does not overcome problems but is an unpalatable alternative to administrative cleanup. On the whole it is just an empty political ritual without any purpose.

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From the Memoirs of Minoo Masani

In the last issue of FF, we shared with readers the first part of an anecdote that involved him, Nath Pai, J.Nehru and Krishna Menon with Nehru’s threat to resign if the Party, at its November 7, 1962 meeting, insisted on Menon’s dismissal. Now read on..



“Mahavir Tyagi took the bull by the horns and said that would be too bad but, if necessary, the party and the country were prepared to face that contingency. That was the end of that so far as the Congress Parliamentary Party was concerned. It was clear by then that if Nehru did not yield and if the matter was raised in Parliament by some of us in opposition, Nehru’s fate would

be that of Chamberlain in 1940 – the larger part of his own party would not be prepared to sustain him in office...

All the same, I carried out my promise to Nath Pai. I sat in the room outside Nehru’s own, occupied by his personal assistant, waiting for my turn. I was told that R. K. Khadilkar, a former colleague of mine in the CSP days, but now a communist fellow traveller, was with the Prime Minister... Khadilkar came out and sat next to me on the sofa and told me what had happened. He said he had warned the Prime Minister that if he did not jettison Menon their “cause” would suffer a tremendous blow. I did not ask Khadilkar what that cause was. It was the cause of the pro-Soviet socialists to whom both Nehru and Khadilkar belong. I asked him how Nehru had responded to the plea. It was met, according to Khadilkar, with a not very displeased smile, and he was very confident that

Jawaharlal would do the ‘right thing,’ which was to ditch Menon in order to preserve his own position. ..

“My conversation with Nehru started by my telling him ...that old colleagues and friends of his like myself, who had unfortunately found it their duty to criticise his policies and warned against the catastrophe which had descended on the country, would rally round him if we felt that he was pursuing the battle against the Chinese communists whole-heartedly and without reservation... Nehru gave me a wan smile and muttered ‘Thank you’. We then drifted into an informal chat in the course of which I recall his telling me two things: One was his bewilderment as to how to fight an enemy for whom his soldiers’ lives meant nothing and who used them as cannon fodder. He recalled how Mao, during Nehru’s visit to Peking, had told him that if there was a nuclear war in which a hundred million Chinese were destroyed, that would not bother him as enough Chinese would be left to carry on! He threw up his hands somewhat helplessly at his predicament.

“Then, in an obvious response to the friendliness I had shown, he took me into confidence about his problem with Nepal and the defence of that part of the border. He mentioned that there was insanity in the royal family and that the then king was half -ad and therefore very difficult to deal with.”

Minoo Masani met the King of Nepal in 1963...

(to be continued).

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.



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.

BALASAHEB (R.I.P)

1. Balasaheb Thackeray was unique, a political leader who had no theoretical underpinnings to his politics. His politics was a product of emotions. Political scientists were dumbstruck by his mass appeal as no logic could explain it. He evoked intense controversies; he was adored by millions and hated viscerally by his critics. His journey from being the champion of the 'Marathi Manoos' to 'Hindu Hriday Samrat' was viewed with suspicion since, unlike the RSS or Savarkarites, he did not back up his emotions with tomes of Vedic literature and peans on Hindu Sanskrit. He spoke as he felt and acted without further deliberation. That was at once his strength and his weakness. His wit and thunder came from his father, Prabodhankar Thackeray. His art of cartoon drawing was his own. His ideal was Chhatrapati Shivaji; he invoked Shivaji's memories to rationalise his politics. He was called a dictator, a Hitler, a communalist and worse but none of it bothered him. He went his way and carried millions of youth with him. That is what angered his critics most. How could a man with no pretensions of ideology or cerebration attract the unadulterated devotion of millions? It did not fit any organisational theorem. All he had was the people's pulse. His raw, blood and thunder oratory swayed the Shiv Sainiks but sounded meaningless to analytical observers. Where did the tiger's roar come from? What was his charisma?

Never explain yourself to anyone because the person who likes you doesn't need it and the person who dislikes you won't believe it.

1. Balasaheb's appeal went beyond his politics. No doubt his 'Marathi Manoos' agitation provided jobs to thousands of Maharashtrian youth, who became his life long followers, prepared to die for him, His method of direct action to secure his *dictats* verged on illegality but was effective nonetheless. While others dithered in deciding what was right and wrong, Thackeray went ahead and got his demands conceded. His politics of coercion gradually brought diminishing returns. He appeared to have lost teeth but he would suddenly bare his claws to stump his critics. His Dussera video address made it clear that he knew the end was near. On a personal level, he was an anachronism. His old world sense of loyalty and demand for obedience were foreign to the politics of subterfuge and selfishness. Anybody who prostrated himself before him for help, be it Sanjay Dutt or a harried flat owner, got his 'ashirvad' and 'amnesty'. He became the supplicants' protector for ever; he gave loyalty and expected loyalty in return. The betrayals by his *protégés* became doubly intolerable as it damaged his Sena and became a personal affront to his sense of family. The Chhagan Bhujbals and the Ranes were his crosses to bear for ever. Raj Thackeray remains an exception although his actions hurt him the most. He remained for ever a courteous man in his old world etiquettes; there was no duplicity in him. He was what he showed, without any hypocrisy. He was child-like in his sense of humour and simple in his beliefs; right was right and wrong was wrong; there were no shades of grey in his thinking. His simple thinking caught the imagination of the simple men he led. He died (November 17) a greatly revered man. Few receive such adoration.

The Hunting Season

2. There is an unending list of leaders who are being exposed for corruption. The recent list started with Suresh Kalmadi, and A. Raja, continued through Robert Vadra, Salman Khurshid, Virbhadra Singh, Rahul Gandhi, Sharad Pawar, Supriya Sule along with Maharashtra leaders like Chhagan Bhujbal, Sunil Tatkare, Gulabrao Deokar, Ajit Pawar and many MPs. Nitin Gadkari, BJP President, was also caught out. Earlier there were the erstwhile CMs like Jayalalitha, Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Yeddyurappa, Ashok Chavan and many more. Then

2. The unfortunate part is that the hunting guns are out and no public figure is safe as eager beavers seek an hour of TV glory by 'exposing' a VIP. Scams after scams are dotting our days; news channels and the print media are busy sifting through one set of allegations before another emerges. IAC adopts a hit and run policy, accusing one leader and shifting to the next. Many allegations are without substance and many may be outright concoctions. The old socialist times have reappeared when being rich was evil; being a businessman/industrialist and politician is

there were disclosures of Swiss bank accounts. Where does it all end? Some leaders were charge-sheeted, some are being investigated, and some are just facing allegations. Nobody is yet convicted due to our archaic investigative procedures and judicial shortcomings. The Congress response to all is to attack the messengers for having the temerity to point an accusing finger at the high and mighty. It is easy to attack Arvind Kejriwal and call him names. The problem is that the Congress should answer the charges levelled by him, not vilify him. India Against Corruption (IAC) should also realise that the boot can be on the other foot and its own members can face similar sensational but unsubstantiated allegations.

Kejriwal's Politics

3. Arvind Kejriwal has admirable qualities and his fight against corruption along with Anna Hazare drew nationwide support. Kejriwal's integrity is above board. However, there was always a sneaking suspicion that Kejriwal, along with Prashant Bhushan, had something more on their minds than mere corruption; there was a larger political agenda, be it the recall of public representatives, a socialistic mind set suspicious of economic success or change in the political system. With his divorce from the Anna movement, the contours of Kejriwal's agenda are becoming clear. People are united against corruption but all may not agree with the carpet bombing of the extant political system. Destruction of the system itself is not everybody's staple. If the aim is to dismantle the existing system, Kejriwal has to win a majority in Parliament or try to pull the edifice down with violence like the radical Naxalites; the only difference between them would be that Kejriwal believes in non-violence while the Naxalites believe that violent overthrow of the system is the answer. We are lucky that Kejriwal is still not disillusioned with the peaceful path.

an unforgivable offence. Who would dare to be successful when all the civil society watchdogs and news channels are after your blood? How can we know the truth? The Government asks the accusers to produce proof before acting. How can a private person produce proofs? It is the duty of the Government to verify the allegations. Not to do so is unfair even to the person under attack as in the public perception, he remains suspect. Besides, UPA II's credibility gets tarnished as it goes into denial. The unfortunate impression is that every politician is on the take and every deal hides a scam.

3. Tactically, Kejriwal would have achieved more by sticking to fewer targets. The scatter gun approach frustrates his supporters as no attack reaches fruition. It was unfortunate that Anna's movement got divided because the country needed a national movement against corruption. The division was inevitable, given the different orientation of its leading lights. Removal of corruption is their common aim and Anna hopes that the two paths would converge by 2014. Kejriwal's tactics may, however, alienate people as he hits out at one and all. He believes that all political parties are acting in cahoots to fleece the common man. It is a nihilist argument. His attack on RIL, right or wrong, stems from the belief that private parties should be excluded from developing national resources; India's socialistic misadventure began with this mindset. In his haste to debunk politicians, Kejriwal tends to base his attacks on a mixture of official documents, conjectures and half-truths, all ending in a miasma of suspicion but leading nowhere. His honest campaign may end in chaos unless he offers a viable alternative.

TV Debates

4. These are interesting times with a dose of excitement being served every evening. With scams breaking out every week or so, one waits for TV debates for understanding the nuances. Every channel brings forth expert politicians to present their side of the story. The trouble is that all this erudition goes waste in the cacophony that comes out of the TV studios. Each participant tries to shout louder than the other and the anchor does nothing to stop it. His success perhaps lies in the decibels raised in the studio. TRPs grow with the sound level and the abusive content. The channels wittingly or unwittingly support the allegations hurled by the civil society and there is no scrutiny of the allegations; it amounts to a media trial of

4. TV debates can present a variety of opinions simultaneously. There is the excitement of thrust and counter thrust and one wants to hear a decisive argument backed by a balanced concluding statement of the anchor. Nothing of the kind happens. Nobody is allowed to conclude his argument and every participant is left half-done, still shouting to be heard when the debate ends. The anchor is in fact a participant, shouting like all others. He does not stop the shouting participant and one who shouts the most gets maximum time on the mike. Some experts are so well known for their pre-determined views

(Cont'd. on p.26)



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

The Curious Case of Robert Mango

DLF was more than happy to oblige. They were well aware that in a Congress-ruled State, it would be a foolish public official who would dare to say no to the First Damad.

Robert Vadra is India's poster boy for men who aspire to marry above their station. Some would argue that he has merely followed in the footsteps of his mother-in-law, a *hausfrau* of limited talent and accomplishment who had married upward to become the most powerful individual in the country. However, this article is not about her.

So just how did this banana trader from Moradabad manage to ensnare the Heiress Apparent into matrimony? By a benevolent act of divine miscalculation, he found himself studying in the same school as Priyanka Gandhi. What she saw in him will remain one of those eternal unsolved mysteries. One would have imagined that she was prescient enough to see the dross behind the rakish façade. Perhaps her somewhat sheltered upbringing as a member of India's First Family had something to do with it and, let's face it; she wasn't exactly a man-magnet in the looks department. Be that as it may, he managed to captivate Priyanka and even more surprisingly persuaded the *grande dame* to accept him into the family. Not even his best friends would accuse Vadra of being an intellectual giant, but there is no denying that he has impressive street smarts. In a political system where sycophancy is an art form, particularly in the Congress hierarchy, he soon found himself in VIP heaven. With zero status or accomplishments, he nevertheless was the lord of all he surveyed. For example, he breezes through airport security without frisking; a privilege generally reserved for the President and Prime Minister.

Normally arrogant Congress politicians afforded him a deference that was completely undeserved but nonetheless flattering. In a country where name dropping will get you almost anywhere, he could drop the most powerful name of all. By this simple expedient, all doors were open to him. He had it made. A lesser man would have been content with this undeserved exaltation, but not our boy. In an era which is regarded as the golden age of corruption, he soon discovered that there was money to be made – and a seriously obscene amount of it. After all, he possessed the most valuable commodity of all – influence – and it would be criminal to waste it. In and around major metropolitan areas, land is literally a gold mine. So he approached one of the biggest builders

in the region, DLF, and allegedly made them an offer they could not refuse. DLF would practically give away valuable parcels of prime real estate to Vadra and in return the latter would ensure that the builder's "work got done". DLF was more than happy to oblige. They were well aware that in a Congress-ruled State, it would be a foolish public official who would dare to say no to the First *Damad*. They sealed the deal with a golden handshake.

Everything was hunky dory in the beginning. Even if Opposition bigwigs became aware of his shady dealings, they would keep silent. There was an unwritten and mutually beneficial understanding among senior political leaders that skeletons in respective cupboards would not be exposed. That would open the door to anarchy. Vadra was safe. But the new millennium ushered in a new and sinister threat to Indian politicians and their underlings. In a moment of inexplicable foolishness, mum in-law had given her assent to a draconian measure called the Right to Information Act. Now even some nobody from the street could ask inconvenient questions of the high and mighty and expect to get a reply. And if that wasn't bad enough, the media was becoming increasingly inquisitive and aggressive. Really, what was the country coming to?

Inevitably, Lucky Robert's rapid ascent into the billionaire club was exposed – and the media went to town. Everyone was baying for his blood it seemed, but he could have weathered the storm. Senior Congress Ministers quickly formed a protective ring around a representative of the 'royal' family and were willing to fall on their swords for him. All Vadra needed to do was maintain a discreet silence. That, however, would presume the possession of a modicum of intelligence and humility. By now, Robert was so puffed up with self importance and so incensed at the temerity of his accusers that he sneeringly described them as "mango people in a banana republic". It no doubt escaped his attention that only in a banana republic could a non-entity like him become a tycoon. Anyway, that single act of stupidity promptly united the general public against him, forcing him to retire into oblivion and lick his wounds.

So what's next for Robert Mango? Right now he's keeping a low profile under the umbrella of mummy-ji. And for all the huffing and puffing in the media, there is

no imminent prospect of him being divested of his ill gotten gains; so he has nothing to lose. But what if Congress loses the next election – as is increasingly likely – and Sonia-ji is no longer able to protect him? Swiss banks are

one option but even those are not quite the safe havens they used to be. Uneasy indeed is the head that wears the crown, even if he is only a Pretender.

The Quixotic Swamy

He is like a pesky fly that is always buzzing around the Gandhi dinner table and threatens to contaminate their fare.

Subramanian Swamy seems to be a man with a one point agenda; and that is to embarrass, mortify and enrage the Gandhi family. Such unrelenting animosity has to be personal, even though it is cloaked in the garb of public interest. We may never know the true reason, but it is fun to speculate. As long as you don't express your thoughts in public, however wild they may be, you cannot be sued for defamation.

Swamy's latest antic is a petition to the Election Commission to derecognise the Congress party. The basis for this outrageous demand is the allegation that Sonia Gandhi *et fils* used party funds - which are exempt from income tax - to provide a loan to a company that owns the venerable National Herald newspaper and thereby acquire the iconic Herald House building. If this charge is true, it is technically an offence, but hardly novel in India's political system. Swami is astute enough to know this, but his grouse is not against the Congress anyway. His real intention is to force the Gandhi's into a corner and diminish their aura in the eyes of the public; and in this he has already succeeded. The people see senior Congress leaders on television rushing to debunk Swamy's claim without offering any cogent counter argument – and they are highly sceptical. They, Congressmen, themselves know they are unconvincing, but they have no choice.

Swamy has no real political power. After all, his Janata Party is virtually a one man outfit. However, he does have impressive nuisance value and that is why he is coddled by the BJP, albeit not openly. He is like a pesky fly that is always buzzing around the Gandhi dinner table and threatens to contaminate their fare. He may not succeed in that endeavour, of course, but he does manage

to keep the empress and heir apparent off balance. His perpetual expression of smug superiority is annoying and puts off a lot of people, but then he is not out to win a popularity contest. His intention is to keep himself in the public eye and he does so adroitly, filing court cases at the drop of a hat and making portentous pronouncements on the misdeeds of the First Family.

For example, during the infamous 2G spectrum scam, while the BJP went to town vilifying the Congress party as a whole, Swamy concentrated his venom on the Gandhi family. He raised allegations that Madam's two sisters received sixty per cent of the kickbacks in the 2G scam, amounting to Rs.18,000 crore each (source: Wikipedia). In April 2011, he filed a petition with the Prime Minister seeking permission to prosecute Sonia Gandhi. In the past, he has claimed to have evidence of corrupt acts committed by Sonia-ji as early as 1972. Last year, at a lecture on corruption, he again repeated his allegation against Sonia Gandhi, saying she has Rs.1 lakh crore stashed abroad. He is said to have written to then President APJ Kalam asking him to stop Sonia Gandhi from becoming Prime Minister on account of her foreign origins. Kalam has subsequently denied that he ever spoke to Swamy on the citizenship issue, nor did he mention it to Sonia Gandhi, but the whole truth may never be known.

Swamy will no doubt reiterate that all his actions are out of public spiritedness and he has no personal axe to grind, but he does not really sound convincing. The facts reinforce the perception that he is determined to remain a constant bugbear to the Gandhis. He has so far cleverly concealed the reasons for this sustained hostility. Perhaps we will have to wait for his memoirs to learn the truth.

The Doomsday Prophecy

For some reason, 2012 has spawned a lot of End of Days predictions. A terrifying Day of Judgement is said to be coming when the good shall be "saved" and the rest condemned to eternal damnation

So here we are in December and some of us are probably wondering if we'll be alive to see January. Remember, 21st December is when the Mayan calendar ends and so apparently, does the world. And it's not just the Mayans. There are all sorts of doomsday scenarios

floating around. For example, in October an email purportedly from NASA was doing the rounds. The email predicted a total blackout throughout the world between 23rd December and 25th December. This would be caused, they claimed, due to the sun and earth aligning for the

first time with the Universe, whatever that means. As a result, the earth will shift from the current third dimension to zero dimension, then shift to the fourth dimension. The veracity of this email was later debunked by NASA themselves, but nonetheless, it caused a lot of anxiety to a large number of people.

For some reason, 2012 has spawned a lot of End of Days predictions. One spiritual guru who organizes Art of Dying workshops has also propounded the fourth dimension shift and advised his followers to stay calm on 21st December and think only good thoughts. Those who harbour animosity and vengeance will allegedly meet an unhappy end. There are also theories about the reappearance of the long missing Twelfth Imam and the Second Coming of Christ – referred to by Christians as the Rapture. A terrifying Day of Judgement is said to be coming when the good shall be “saved” and the rest condemned to eternal damnation. Another theory says that the earth’s magnetic poles will suddenly reverse themselves, as a result of which the world will suffer unimaginable natural calamities that will virtually wipe out the whole of mankind.

The amazing aspect is not so much that these wild scenarios are floating around. The amazing thing is that they are believed by millions of people around the world. Many of us seem to have developed an Armageddon complex; for no apparent reason. It has given rise to a personal dilemma for me. Do I blow up my life savings on a round-the-world cruise before the big date? After all, you can’t take it with you, so why hold on to it. I’ll have to give it some serious thought.

On a more serious note, I find it wondrous and a bit perplexing that this Armageddon scenario has caught on among so many intelligent, rational and logical men and women, although very few will openly admit it. Hindus, of course, have long believed that we are currently living in the *kaliyug*. And for those who subscribe to the Doomsday prophecy, there are signs which can be interpreted to suit their theory. Firstly, few would argue that the planet is in a state of turmoil not witnessed outside of all-out war. More human beings are being killed, tortured or starved to death than at any time in recent history. And it is not just armies and warlords that are slaughtering each other, not to mention hundreds of innocent non-combatants. Ordinary people are on a shooting spree, particularly in the United States, where incidents of random shootings by disturbed or just sadistic young men are being reported almost every month.

The irony here is that instead of getting alarmed enough at these dire statistics to meaningfully restrict the

proliferation of handguns and even assault rifles, American politicians, as well as a sizeable population of ordinary citizens are justifying their inaction by taking recourse to all sorts of excuses, including the nation’s Constitution itself. Even the Almighty seems to be fed up with the humans He created in His own image. Nature is unleashing calamities like earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis of increasing ferocity and with increasing frequency. The planet is in a god awful mess and the inhabitants are largely responsible.

Assuming the day of judgement really is nigh, what can one do to avoid being consigned to hellfire and brimstone? In my personal opinion, not much. We’ve left it too late. Whatever God you worship, I believe He will judge you over a lifetime of deeds, good and bad. And trust me, no amount of *maha-aartis* or *pujas* or Christian Mass or whatever will help. Contrary to the prevailing practice in this country, God cannot be bribed. If I may be permitted a slight digression here, it always amazes me how even highly successful men of the world have such ridiculous misconceptions about the gods they believe in. You hear of Amitabh Bachhan donating a diamond tiara worth lakhs at the Tirupati temple; or Vijay Mallya proposing to coat the statue of Sai Baba at Shirdi with gold leaf in the hope that his present financial crisis will be ameliorated. For Heaven’s sake, these highly evolved spiritual beings have long abandoned their physical temporal bodies and now dwell in a heavenly realm where material wealth has no value or meaning. Do these people really believe that the gods will be grateful for such offerings? Communion with God is not a barter system where you make promises to hold a ritual or go on a pilgrimage in return for favours. You will get a much better return on your investment through honesty, diligence and helping the less fortunate.

There we are then. Being an eternal optimist, I am still going to submit my Cornucopia column for the January issue of *Freedom First*. If none of us are around to read, maybe the Almighty will stumble across it and have a chuckle or two. God bless.

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The Democrats are the party that says government will make you smarter, taller, richer, and remove the crabgrass on your lawn. And, the Republicans are the party that says government doesn’t work and then they get elected and prove it.

- James Thurber

Contributed by Melanie Silveira

The Floating Home of the Birds of Kumana

Ashish Chandola

I believe that what was called Yala East National Park in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is now known as Kumana National Park. This is fair enough, because it is the mangrove swamp of the Kumana, which attract the spot-billed pelican, painted storks, spoonbills and a host of other birds in large numbers, that has made the place famous.



I noticed that their breeding season was well on the way and while some birds were still sitting on eggs, others were rearing chicks that followed the parent bird ever so nimbly across the lily pads.

I knew from literature that these birds were polyandrous and after a short while it became easy to identify the female birds because they were not only larger than the males, but also of brighter plumage. They demonstrated vigorously with wings outspread, assuming a slight crouch at neighboring females. When an intruder landed in the territory of the one bird that I was observing most closely, it would be attacked immediately and sent scurrying.

As the old name suggests, Kumana is contiguous with Sri Lanka's largest protected area, Yala National Park, which covers a large chunk of South East Sri Lanka and has, as its South and Eastern boundary, hundreds of kilometers of unbroken, untouched, pristine coastline.

I was at Kumana to shoot a documentary; a 'place' film that was not really to have any central character or be species specific, but to be much like so many shows on our own Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary at Keoladeo in Rajasthan.

No sooner had I begun work, my attention strayed from noisy hordes, each species nesting at a different level in the trees, to the dapper and petite Pheasant-tailed Jacana who seem to be ever active squawking and calling, demonstrating and gliding gracefully on slender black and white wings over the lily pads and other floating vegetation that grow in profusion along the shallow edges of Kumana villu (tank).

As I spent more and more time observing the birds

With nesting well on the way I had to work fast but filming a bird that nests and in fact performs all the rituals associated with nesting on floating vegetation, is a challenging task. With a small bird the task is even more challenging as the camera needs to be as close to the bird as possible, without disturbing it.

The hide for filming had to be positioned in water and to make the work somewhat simpler, I used slotted angle iron with which to make the structure with a platform for me to sit and film from, just above water level. This hide was placed far away from a nest and slowly moved closer over a number of days. Moving this, through tangled vegetation, was no easy task but it was essential to ensure that the bird got used to the hide and was not spooked.

That year the rains had been scant and as a result the vegetation in the villu was tall and obstructed the view which made detailed filming of the courtship and nesting behavior of the Jacanas nearly impossible.

Then one night, the unexpected happened. It poured

for a couple of hours and our camp close to the *villu* was inundated. We spent much of the night securing the guy ropes of the tents to trees, branches and stones. The kitchen shed, made of bamboo with coconut fronds for its roof, withstood the downpour very well, and when we went to take a look at the *villu* in the morning, it was totally transformed.

The rain had caused the water level to rise to such an extent that the vegetation in the lake had been submerged. This had also resulted in nests with eggs being destroyed and exposed the small chicks of the Jacanas.

Of all the predators, I hardly expected the grey herons to be the most lethal but that is exactly what they turned out to be. They spotted chicks with uncanny accuracy and picked them off so rapidly, that from what I could observe the Jacanas had lost all their chicks within a matter of hours.

However, the Jacanas were quick to cut their losses - so to speak - and possibly because their breeding season was not too far advanced, territorial squabbles, courtship, nest building and egg laying started once again. This time, for my camera the visibility was excellent.

It was a matter of luck that much happened fairly close to the hide I had positioned earlier and it was interesting to see the male bird build the nest. After the birds had mated, I noticed one dark brown egg, sharply

pointed at one end on the floating nest one morning. Three more eggs were laid at exactly the same time over the following three consecutive mornings!

A wild elephant feeding on the water vegetation shook up a nest that I was filming. The male bird whose nest it was, was very agitated and I was amazed to see it float the eggs one at a time to a patch of vegetation about 15 meters away where he made another floating nest and using the underside of its beak, pulled the eggs on to it.

At an alarm call from the parent bird, I had often observed the chicks freeze and at times sit down amongst the lily pads. Then, on one occasion the chicks, which were quite large, just vanished in front of my eyes. This required investigation and when I went to check where I had last seen them, I found them hiding under water with just their beaks and nostrils stuck out for air.

The completed 28-minute film was titled 'A Floating Home' and when I showed it to Dr. Salim Ali, he told me that he was very pleased to see the egg-moving scene as he had never seen this himself and knew the behavior only from the description provided by Peter Jackson who had observed it near Delhi!

ASHISH CHANDOLA is a well known wildlife photographer and a director/cameraman with several highly regarded wildlife documentaries to his credit. He lives in Bangalore and can be contacted at chandola.ashish@gmail.com.

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Bt Brinjals in Indian Kitchens

Rca Godbole

The ground reality is that once the technology is available, and if it is of advantage to our farmers, it will be adapted regardless of official procedures. It would be far more constructive to envisage the dangers and think of ways to skirt them, rather than junking the technology officially.

In a recent decision on a Public Interest Litigation hearing, the Supreme Court of India refused to ban open field trials on genetically modified crops despite a court-appointed expert panel recommending a 10-year halt on them. This rekindles the controversy caused by the ban on commercial release of BT Brinjal and the promise of a re-look at the ban, once a better regulatory system was installed to ensure food and environmental safety.

Brinjal (*Solanum melongina*), is believed to be an originally Indian vegetable, unlike upstart imports like potato, tomato, chillies or cauliflower. A wide extent of Brinjal biodiversity is seen in India. Preference and availability of Brinjal varies even within districts, let alone States. Brinjal being a popular vegetable throughout the country, we, as Indians, would like to continue enjoying them in *vangyacha bharit* or *katrika poorachakute*. There are dark warnings and forebodings about this whole issue of changing or 'manipulating' the, 'natural' state of our agricultural produce, so the proposed entry of the Bt Brinjal into our markets is a trigger for us to list some important points about Brinjals and biotechnology in the manner of cabbages and kings.

Are the Fears Justified?

The first apprehension is that of changing a common vegetable into an unknown entity, such that it would harbour harmful substances that could cause allergies or toxic reactions. The second is the fear for the environment, that these changed entities might have unpredictable behaviour or replicate themselves out of control in the wild, eliminating surrounding biological environment - competing animals and plants.

Let us look at things we know for sure: things that we eat or even the people who eat them are manifestations of their respective genomes, which have undergone gradual but continuous changes to evolve from their common ancestors to their present forms. So **changes in the genome, per se, are facts**, not matters of opinion. Change, whether millennial or instantaneous, is then the next issue.

The staples like rice, wheat or pulses most of us

see on our kitchen shelves are all products of selective mutational breeding, and have been around since the time some of us started on solid foods. Till 2004 in all 313 commercial varieties of cereals, grain legumes, oil seeds, fibre crops, and vegetables have been released in the Indian market from government funded efforts. The way to select and breed a plant with a desirable trait was to bombard a batch of half acceptable seeds of the plant with high-energy radiation or chemicals, causing unspecific changes in the genome. All the seeds were then grown, and those with desirable traits in the progeny were identified. These were then used for further crossing and fixing of the desired traits. Here the **change in the genome was instantaneous, but it still took a few generations of the product to get to the market.**

In the controversial Bt Brinjal, the plant has a fragment of genetic material from a soil bacterium, put into one of its immediate predecessors, which enables it to dissolve the gut lining of the larvae of certain pest insect species. The insects are quick to understand, and leave the plant in peace to produce the vegetable we buy. In the absence of this particular trait, the plant would have been sprayed 60 times on an average during its productive life with various noxious chemicals. According to a study conducted at the National Centre for Integrated Pest Management, for example, commercial Brinjal fruits were shown to contain residues of cypermethrin and imidacloprid at 0.28 and 0.78 ig/g respectively. The primary effects of longer term, lower-dose exposure to imidacloprid are on the liver, thyroid, and body weight (reduction), and those of cypermethrin are on overall growth, the liver, kidneys, and the nervous system. In the normal course, the pesticide residue **would** reach our guts, if not dissolving them, to make their presence felt adversely over a period of time.

What is the Best Strategy?

The purported danger of recombinant technology products, the immediacy of the change, is addressed in the national and international guidelines drawn up to evaluate these products. Having said that, it is very important to bear in mind that there **is no new technology**,

which can guarantee complete safety, and the expectations from bio-safety framework have to accommodate this fundamental fact. Life itself is unpredictable and carries no user's guarantee. Human beings have been opportunistic and exploitative all through their history, and it is unrealistic to say that the current batch should not be so. This present-ism ensures that, we get to the stage of the actual testing of the products only if the whole process is not litigated against, slowed down, torched off or sabotaged in some manner.

As seen from the prior experience with Bt cotton, this whole framework of safety regulation often collapses with the foot dragging. We find that a 'cottage industry' has sprung up in parts our country, crossing the Bt trait into local varieties of cotton, bypassing any regulatory framework laid down by the government and supplying more than half the Bt-cotton seed used in this country. In fact, a study on cotton farming in Gujarat has gone on to say “ **sequestering of Bt technology in either the regulatory or property sense has not proved administratively or politically feasible**” The ground reality is that once the technology is available, and if it is of advantage to our farmers, it will be adapted regardless of official procedures. It would be far more constructive to envisage the dangers and think of ways to skirt them,

rather than junking the technology officially.

And it is not just the Brinjal, but okra, potato and chillies next on the agenda of many private and public sector research organisations. There is no way that a beneficial technology can be confined to laboratories, because the interested farmers would do their utmost to secure it for their field. It is only fair and sensible to test it thoroughly, not to damn it before this stage. Not only is this an anti-science approach, it also is pretty futile. We as consumers buying our Brinjal at our local stall, have no simple way of determining its antecedents. Chances are, that many of us are already eating several Bt products. If we are concerned about the long term health implications of these products, it is better to support the technology whole heartedly with the trials and tests involved, rather than making empty green noises. We are lucky enough to live in a country with decentralised agriculture, and entrepreneurial farmers. The technology has to prove itself to the farmers, whose self-interest cannot allow the end consumers being harmed by what they eat. That, ultimately, might prove to be the best safeguard to our health.

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Growing Convergence in India-Japan Relations

A New Factor in the International Relations of the Region And Beyond

B. Ramesh Babu

Since Japan is the immediate target of the escalation of conflict by China, Japan has launched a vigorous campaign to strengthen her relations with India and to expand the bi-lateral equation to encompass new and more sensitive areas.

We have discussed at some length the transformational changes sweeping the world since the 1990s. Consequently, all major powers have been re-formulating their foreign policies and re-aligning their foreign relations with one another, be they allies or adversaries in the past, as pointed out in this column in an earlier issue of this magazine. In this ongoing process of alignments and re-alignments, the growing convergence of interests between India and Japan brings in a new nuance to the international politics of the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

By all accounts the centre of gravity in the world arena has shifted from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. There are many factors behind the shift. The most important among them is the aggressive bid of China to become a regional hegemon and a global Super Power to counter American domination of the world. The spectacular and sustained economic growth of China since the 1990s is the foundation of China's military ascendancy in the region and beyond. Of late China acquired the capacity to target the mainland of the US and also to destroy incoming missiles in outer space. While these newly acquired capabilities are in no way comparable to the huge and mighty arsenal of the US, China believes that it has "enough" power to deter any possible American attack.

India's remarkably rapid and sustained economic growth is also one of the key factors behind the global power shift to Asia-Pacific. Though the rates of growth of India and China have decreased recently, their economies are seen as the main sources of global economic recovery. The rise of the Asian

Tigers in the 1980s and their continued good performance since then are important contributing factors for the rise of Asia. On the other side, the industrially advanced western countries, including the US, are caught in economic gloom since the recession of 2007-2008. Furthermore, the US military mission in Iraq and Afghanistan failed. In fact, the menace of international terrorism has worsened. America is waiting to get out of Afghanistan. The US has once again become shy of foreign adventures and is perceived all over the world as a hegemon on the decline!

The Dragon's Aggressiveness

Since July 2012, a new explosive factor has intruded into the ongoing churning in the global arena. China has embarked on an aggressive bid to resurrect its hitherto dormant claims of sovereignty over the many disputed islands and the adjacent waters in the East and South China Seas. There is a legacy of turf wars between China on the one hand and Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and so on over the many island chains in the region. In recent months Taiwan and South Korea have also joined the tangled web of claims and counter claims. The discovery of oil and gas in the adjacent waters of these islands is the reason behind the current escalation of conflicts over the islands in the region. Of late China has chosen to escalate the hitherto dormant disputes with her neighbours by re-asserting its sovereignty over them and threatening to take punitive steps if they do not come round peacefully. In September 2012 one such dispute between Japan and China exploded on the floor of the UN General Assembly. The Chinese Ambassador to the UN accused Japan of "stealing"

her islands! Naturally, this led to shrill verbal duel between the two delegates. The UN Secretary General and the American Secretary of State appealed for “cooler heads to prevail.” But, the Chinese Ambassador walked out in protest.

Obviously, the most crucial challenge confronting Japan and the ASEAN countries is how to contain China. They have to forge a united front to deal with the aggressive dragon. There was a precedent of common diplomatic initiative in the Asian Regional Forum in July 2011, as discussed in an earlier article in this column. It was also pointed out that China was determined not to be deterred by such puny little legal hurdles. In fact China made her intentions clear by warning Malaysia of dire consequences if it indulges in military adventurism over the disputed islands, also discussed in an earlier article.

Japan's Response to China

Since Japan is the immediate target of the escalation of conflict by China, Japan has launched a vigorous campaign to strengthen her relations with India and to expand the bi-lateral equation to encompass new and more sensitive areas. For example, at a meeting held in Tokyo towards the end of last month (October 2012), it was agreed that the two nations will hold their maiden meeting on cyber security. This meeting was noteworthy in itself because of the rarely used 2 + 2 format (i. e. the meeting of the Foreign and Defense Secretaries of the two nations) and took decisions to enhance defense and security cooperation between the two countries. The proposals are to be fine tuned at the Summit Meeting between the two Prime Ministers scheduled to be held in November 2012. India seems to have come around on the need for trilateral cooperation (i.e. India, Japan, and US) on maritime security. It is reported that the trilateral will discuss Afghanistan and Central Asia. Efforts are on to ‘embed’ India into the regional diplomatic architecture of the East Asian Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, and APEC. India does not seem to be too averse to play a larger role in any multi-national effort to contain China. Japan finds it to be in her immediate and long term interests to move closer to India and consolidate the convergence of interests and shared concerns into a ‘security alliance’ with India. It was reported

(*TheTimes of India*, 5 November 2012, p.7) that according to the Japanese media, the security situation in the South China Sea will be discussed during the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Japan on 15 November 2012.

Another straw in the wind is to be found in the recent meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-AOC) held in Gurgaon (near New Delhi) on 2 November 2012. Addressing the 19-nation meeting the new External Affairs Minister of India, Salman Kurshid, welcomed the addition of the US as a dialogue partner of the group. He described the meeting as a turning point because it saw “convergence of aspirations.” China is already a dialogue partner of the group.

The tri-laterals are the new tools in US diplomacy to build consensus among small groups of nations in different regions. If the groups are large, America finds it difficult to build consensus among them because of mutual rivalries among them. For example, America finds it easier to build consensus on a number of issues and policies, if the trilateral comprised of only the US, Japan, and Australia. If the number is increased divergences among them would creep in. This is a very clever device to garner issue based support for its policies by segments and then collate them to broad agreement among many nations. Only time can reveal as to how far it will succeed in bringing several countries together in containing China. There are other global issues in which this strategy may win wider support for the US.

Conclusion: Consolidation of Convergence

Over the decades several common interests and shared concerns are pushing India and Japan to pull together in the Asia-Pacific region. The immediate provocation certainly is the widely known expansionism of China; China respects and responds to power. When the US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta described India as the lynchpin of his country's new security strategy, China immediately declared that her equation with India is “one of the defining relationships in the 21st century.” Towards the end of October 2012, the country's media and strategic experts said that China was the target of

the Japan-India-US trilateral talks. One International Relations scholar remarked that Tokyo was using India to create a diversion to the west of China because of the ongoing tensions over the disputed Diaoyu (or Senkaku) islands. India wants to pile up pressure on China hoping to gain on the border issue.

In addition to keeping up the strategic pressure on China, there are other important issues on which India and Japan should cooperate closely and consolidate the growing convergence of interests. Crucial among them is the Membership on the UN Security Council. The two countries have been coordinating their diplomatic initiatives in this regard for some years now. This should be strengthened further. Large scale expansion in the economic and commercial relations between the two countries has enormous potential. That the two countries are talking

about cooperation in the civilian nuclear arena is suggestive of how far the two have moved in recent years! Maritime security and prevention of piracy in the Indian Ocean is another vital and littorally vast area for close cooperation between the two navies. The two have conducted joint naval exercises along with those of the US and Australia. Recent developments in the bilateral relations indicate long years of close cooperation between Japan and India for mutual benefit and stability and peace in Asia-Pacific and beyond.

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Point Counter Point (Cont'd. from p.16)

the injured party. Then there are the usual suspects, masquerading as neutral commentators but are useless in that capacity as their pre-determined opinions are well known.

I believe we should all pay our tax with a smile. I tried - but they wanted cash.

that you know what he/she is going to say before it is said. Can the anchor not have the mechanism to 'disconnect' the person who has exhausted his time? Can the Anchor refrain from taking sides and imposing his views on the participants? It is hoped that TV debates would evolve into a forum for logical arguments rather than end up as so much froth.

Cabinet Reshuffle

4. The great expectation of a miracle cure materialised on October 28: the cabinet was reshuffled. Various theories were floated before and after the reshuffle: it was dubbed as the PM's new economics-driven Cabinet; it was Rahul Gandhi's youth brigade and a generational change in governance; it was a signal for a reformist initiative; it was a slap in the face of Mamata; it was an answer to Arvind Kejriwal's attack on Salman Khurshid. TV Channels and newspapers had a field day with the 'earth shaking' development. Since it was a big reshuffle, the excitement was bigger; since it was considered to be the much needed blood transfusion for UPA II, it gave rise to fanciful expectations. The question is whether it is a new pack or a soiled pack reshuffled to continue the old game?

4. We are still naive enough to believe that a cabinet rejig would change the fortunes of the country. It matters little to the common man who drives the nail in his coffin. As the Goa CM put it succinctly, if the engine is faulty, what is the use of changing tyres? It is good to see young faces in the Cabinet but it ultimately depends on what they do and not how young they are. All one can say is, give them a chance. The country needs a boost and if the young brigade gives it, it is welcome but let us not invest too much hope in it as we have seen too many failures. The main engine of expected change, Rahul Gandhi, has still not ventured to join the rescue act.

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

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A Forgotten Tale of Heroism

The 1962 India-China War – In Ladakh

Suresh C. Sharma

It has taken fifty years for the Government of India's Ministry of Defence to honour the bravery of the soldiers. The time is therefore opportune to review the operations in Ladakh.

The proud Indian Army suffered a humiliating defeat against China on its own Indian soil in 1962. The scars of the defeat persist even today on the national psyche. The sense of defeat and humiliation has been so overpowering that there has been a curtain of silence even on the deeds of valour and sacrifice in NEFA and Ladakh. The nation wiped out from its memory the battle in Rezang La in Ladakh which compares with Thermopylae and Saragrahi. The Indian Army fought with its traditional élan in Ladakh and the senior commanders in the Western Commands gave exemplary direction. These details have been confined to the regimental histories and hearts of the veterans who have been reluctant to talk about them due to a lurking feeling that they would not be believed. The villagers wondered why these soldiers survived while others died.

On 20 October 2012, the Defence Minister and the three Service Chiefs honoured the memory of the brave-hearts that made the supreme sacrifice in the 1962 war. It has taken fifty years for the establishment in the South Block to acknowledge the brave deeds of the soldiers. The time is opportune to review the operations in Ladakh.

Government in a State of Denial

Ladakh is one of the highest inhabited regions of the world. There is little rain, not much snow and is extremely cold. The communications to Srinagar were through a tortuous 400 kms long road going over passes at heights of more than 3000 metres. The 3529 metre high Zoji La pass remained closed during winter. About 300 kms away from Leh, the capital of Ladakh, is Chushul. It is 24 kms from the Tibetan border. It had a landing ground at an altitude of 4300 metres. China had made a road through the Aksai Chin plateau connecting Tibet to Sinkiang. An Intelligence Bureau [IB] patrol was ambushed in Ladakh on 20 October 1959. The Government of India launched a forward policy of setting up posts close to the border to establish our own claim in 1961.

In July 1962, the 1st Battalion of the 8th Gurkha Regiment (1/8 GR) post at Galwan was surrounded by the Chinese and our supply line was interrupted. They were

being supplied by air. Some of the supplies fell into Chinese hands. The Indian Army did not vacate the post and was overrun in the first wave of Chinese attacks. Clashes occurred from 21 July onwards. Lt. Gen. Daulet Singh, Army Commander Western Command pointed out that conflict would be inevitable if the Aksai Chin road, vital for the Chinese, was threatened. He recommended suspension of a forward policy till India built up its strength to four brigades and supporting arms as suggested earlier. His views were ignored. On 18 August 1962, Daulet Singh wrote to Army HQ that a conflict with China was imminent. After four days, he got a reply that the Government at the highest level was of the view that no conflict was likely in the near future.

Exemplary Zeal and Bravery of the Indian Army

Daulet Singh, however, had on his own initiative moved 114 Infantry Brigade under Brigadier [later General] Raina to Chushul in May 1962 and 3 Infantry Division of three brigades was in position in Ladakh by end October 1962. Major General Budh Singh took over command of the division. Two troops of tanks, field artillery, heavy mortar platoon and a company of machine guns were also moved to Ladakh. In spite of difficult terrain, 114 Infantry Brigade built up strong defences with the help of local yaks and ponies. The airlift of the squadron is a saga of determination and innovation. The unit selected was the 20 Lancers located at Ferozepore and equipped with AMX 13 tanks procured from France. Gen. Daulet Singh called Lt. Col. Gurbachan Singh of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and told him to arrange the airlift of tanks.

The tanks were carried to Chandigarh in tank transporters and 44 Squadron IAF equipped with AN12 was assigned the task of airlifting them. The weight of AMX 13 tank was 13 tons while the capacity of AN12 was only 11 tons. The weight was reduced to 11 tons by removing heavy access plates from engine compartment and spare bogie wheel. The floor was strengthened with wooden planks to reduce the load per square inch. Only a few inches were left between the tank and wall of the aircraft. Trials helped to ensure that the tank remained secure on take off and landing. This called for skilled

loading and unloading. IAF Squadron Leader Chandan Singh who started his military career in the then Jodhpur state army's Lancers insisted on flying the first tank without any trial. The unit had achieved a first in the world by landing tanks at a height of 4300 metres and gave a bloody nose to the Chinese. The media in France lauded the airlift of their tank. Incidentally, 20 Lancers was the first unit to draw blood in the 1965 war in the Akhnur sector and Major Bhaskar Roy was awarded the MVC. All ranks of 20 Lancers and 44 Squadron IAF displayed exemplary zeal and enthusiasm in the task. Victory in battle is not merely a courageous charge by the soldier with a bayonet. It involves meticulous administrative work and commitment all through.

The Army Commander visited Chushul on 9 October and reinforcements started reaching Chushul a few days thereafter. The 13 Kumaon regiment was deployed at Rejang La and Feature Gap. Company D of 1/8 GR under Major D S Thapa held the position at Sirjap guarding the approach to Chushul from the north. The two posts held by him dominated an area of 50 square kilometers. Major Thapa organized his defences well. He told the men to dig deep and reinforce the trenches with sand bags and ration bags. Thapa's cheerfulness kept the morale of the men high. Initial attacks by China commenced on 20 October. The J & K Militia fought gallantly but was overrun by superior numbers. The posts at DBO (Daulet Beg Oldi – among the highest peaks in Ladakh) were directed to fall back. The attack by 600 Chinese came after artillery shelling from 0400 to 0700 hours. It was beaten back. The radio set was damaged and there was no communication with battalion HQ. The second attack was also beaten back. By this time, only seven men had survived out of 34. Major Thapa came out of his bunker which had caught fire and continued to fire. He was overpowered. The unit had sent two boats to assess the situation since the radio set had been damaged. One of the boats was damaged in firing and sank. One of the men who had come in the boat reported that Major Thapa had died. He had been taken prisoner and was made to undergo punishment for killing a large number of Chinese soldiers and declining to make any statements against India. He was awarded the PVC. He later retired as Lt.Col.

13 Kumaon regiment moved to Ladakh from Baramula and was deployed at Chushul on 24 October 1962. Company C/13 Kumaon regiment, under command of Major Shaitan Singh was made responsible for Rejang La at a height of 5000 metres. No artillery support was available since the position was crested by an intervening hill. The expected Chinese attack came on Sunday, 18 November. The visibility was poor and icy winds were

blowing. The Chinese had concentrated their troops during the previous night and launched a silent attack in order to achieve surprise. They advance through gullies and were spotted by a patrol. The visibility had improved by 0500 hours and the Kumaonis opened fire at close range. The attack was beaten back and the enemy suffered heavy casualties. The second attack met the same fate. The Chinese next tried to surround the defended locality and attacked from the rear. Major Shaitan Singh displayed exemplary leadership and moved within the locality encouraging his men. He was wounded. Two of the soldiers tried to pull him to a safe place. Shaitan Singh ordered them to fall back to the base and he breathed his last. His radio operator Ramchander was charged with hiding his body so that the Chinese would not find it. He concealed his body behind stones. By 0900 hours, the position had been overrun. Out of 1 officer, 3 JCOs and 124 soldiers, only 14 persons survived and nine of them severely wounded. The next position at Gurung Hill fell on 19 November. The Chinese suffered many more casualties. By 20 November, the Brigade readjusted the defences at Chushul and remained undefeated. On 21 November, the Chinese declared a unilateral cease-fire. Brig [later general] Raina was awarded the MVC.

In January 1963, a shepherd came across the dead bodies. The cold had frozen the dead. Brigadier Raina MVC led a party to recover the dead. Every man had died a hero and the scene was recorded on camera for posterity. Major Shaitan Singh was awarded the PVC and eight received the Vr.C. 13 Kumaon wears the battle honour Rejang La with pride. Only the body of Major Shaitan Singh PVC was evacuated to Jodhpur and cremated with full military honours. Subedar Major Hari Singh lit the pyre for 96 bodies that the unit managed to recover. So intense was the sorrow of the Subedar Major that he suffered a heart attack and his body was added to the funeral pyre. War memorials have been erected in Chushul and Rewari. Most of the martyrs were Ahirs and came from the cluster of villages in Rewari.

There was a marked difference in the conduct of operations in Ladakh and NEFA. Western Command also received same advice that conflict with China was not imminent. Army Commander, Western Command used his own initiative to rush troops to Ladakh. In NEFA, we were planning and operating in a doctrinal vacuum. The senior commanders allowed themselves to be browbeaten into unwise deployment and the Army High Command failed to impress the political leaders about the impossibility of the tasks set for them. They exposed men into high

(Cont'd. on p.37)

Rajaji, the Great Thinker

K. Vedamurthy



“I had seldom seen a case being presented with such lucidity of argument, such economy of speech, such felicity of language, such gentleness of manner and such command of the facts as Rajaji displayed that day. It was interesting to watch President Kennedy’s reactions. One could almost see his eyes open wider and wider in wonder and in admiration.”

B. K. Nehru then India’s Ambassador to the USA.

“History”, said Ralph Waldo Emerson “is but a biography of great men”. India’s last and only Indian Governor-General, C.

Rajagopalachari’s, (whose 134th birth anniversary falls on the 10th December 2012) place in the history of modern India, ‘as a maker of new India’ along with Mahatma Gandhi is secure, in spite of the studied omission of any reference to him in the modern biographies of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. A perusal of the text books of history prescribed for study in our schools and colleges is sure to make the readers feel as if no one by that name ever existed! Richard Attenborough’s much acclaimed and award winning film on Mahatma Gandhi ignores not only C. Rajagopalachari but the South of India itself, even though it was in Madurai, deep down in the South, that Gandhiji took to his ‘loin cloth’! Attenborough did not, however, forget Indira Gandhi, far junior to the stalwarts of the Gandhi era, even though she never played any part in the historic evolution of the Gandhian philosophy of Truth and Ahimsa or in his most innovative campaign like the ‘Salt Satyagraha’ inspiring the whole of India to join him in the fight against the British Imperialists in India. *The Hindu* published a long letter of mine on the omission of C.R.’s role in that film, but, apparently, the maker of that film had no time to notice it!

Gandhi on Rajaji

Read Chapter XXX, ‘That wonderful spectacle’ in Part V of Gandhiji’s autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*. “(The Rowlatt) Bill had not yet been gazetted as an Act.... when I received an invitation from Madras I

decided to take the... long journey... I have ever felt at home in the south. Thanks to my South African work I felt I had some sort of special right over the Tamils and Telugus and the good people of the south have never belied my belief. The invitation had come over the signature of the late Sri Kasturi Ranga Iyengar. But the man behind the invitation.... was Rajagopalachari Rajagopalachari had then recently left Salem to settle down for legal practice in Madras at the pressing invitation of the late Sri Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, and that with a view to taking a more active part in public life. It was with him that we had put up in Madras. This discovery I made only after we had stayed with him for a couple of days. For, since the bungalow that we were staying in belonged to Sri Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, I was under the impression that we were his guests. Mahadev Desai, however, corrected me. He very soon formed a close acquaintance with Rajagopalachari, who from his innate shyness, kept himself constantly in the background. But Mahadev put me on my guard. ‘You should cultivate this man’ he said to me one day. And so I did.” What a turn in our history was brought about by this personal secretary of the Mahatma! (Mahadev did not stop with his taxing, routine secretarial service to his Master. As a person of intelligence, character and ability, he had played his own part in the cause of our freedom).

Gandhiji continues, “We (himself and C.R.) daily discussed together the plans of the fight.... I felt myself at a loss to discover how to offer civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Bill if it was finally passed into law.... ...news was received that the Rowlatt Bill had been published as an Act. That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question....I was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me – it was as if in a dream. Early in the morning I related the whole story to Rajagopalachari..... Rajagopalachari was at once taken up with my suggestion. Other friends too welcomed it when it was communicated to them. The date of the hartal was first fixed on the 30th

March 1919, but was subsequently changed to 6th April. The people thus had only a short notice of the hartal...But who knows how it all came about? The whole of India from one end to the other, towns as well as villages, observed a complete hartal on that day. It was a most wonderful spectacle.”

Tributes to Rajaji

Decades later, after India won her Independence, W.R. Crocker, who came to New Delhi as Australia's High Commissioner, wrote in 1971 on C.R., “Tributes are due. Yet the most unusual quality in this man of exceptional range and exceptional depth is his indifference to tributes or praise. Of the men I have met in my lifetime, men of thought, or men of action, or men of power, only Arnold Toynbee compares with him in an utter lack of vanity or self-interest; and writers and political figures are, according to my observations, the men most prone to vanity.”

Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan wrote in the *Swarajya Annual Number of 1962*, “Politics are of evanescent value, but at the moment they dominate national life.....So, something must be said of Rajaji as a political leader, particularly since his break with Jawaharlalji and the Congress. It is easy to evaluate his political career up to that event. Suffice it to say that he was one of the five top-most national leaders, who, next to Gandhiji, dominated the Indian political scene for three decades, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, Rajaji, Rajen Babu and Maulana Azad....Only Rajaji shone brightest as a mental phenomenon. What he did during the Freedom movement, though important and valuable, was part of a great job that others were also doing equally well. But Rajaji's contribution to the post-Independence politics of this country is something which he alone could have made....Had he been ten years younger; there is no question that he would have put that beyond doubt.”

An Aam Aadmi from a Different Era

Radha Padmanabhan

He was sitting there all alone in a third class waiting room of the Calicut railway station. We had expected the room to be crowded with dignitaries belonging to the government, with news reporters and others. So we almost missed him. He was reading a newspaper and his back was turned towards us. We thought he was someone else not the man we had come to meet, until he put down the newspaper. The room was dirty, dusty and not spruced up as it is now. He did not ask for help nor were there any toadies round to curry favours because favours he would give none. He was waiting at the station for a connecting train that was expected in a few hours. This was way back in the early '60s.

We got a trunk call from Sadasivam, M.S Subbalakshmi's husband. They often used to stay with us whenever MS gave a *kutcheri* (concert). We had gladly agreed to go to the railway station and deliver a simple lunch to the man as he could not digest hotel food. The meal I had prepared was simple, with rice, sambar, tomato rasam, vegetable and curd. “You should not have taken all this trouble” he said to us as we started to serve him his lunch. “I could have lunched at the railway canteen.”

The simplicity of the man hit us with force. This man who a few years ago occupied the highest position in the land, from 1948 to 1950, the second governor general of India – C. Rajagopalachari or CR as he was popularly known, a man of the highest integrity and the strictest of principles.

He was entitled to command the best government accommodation and his needs to be looked after, but he preferred not to. He was a freedom fighter and was awarded the Bharat Ratna. Gandhiji once said that he was the “keeper of my conscience”. He was a close associate of Nehru and Patel and was respected by them although he had many differences with them. He was a staunch protector of his political principles and never hesitated to disagree with his closest associates. He therefore started a political party - The Swatantra Party.

He lived in a small old house in Kilpauk, in Chennai (then Madras). He could have easily got an allotment of a house with a garden – he did not. His family never earned the name of the first family. He did not believe in political dynasty, neither did the Mahatma nor did his family benefit monetarily. As for Swiss bank accounts, property deals, get rich quickly - these were alien to his ways. Scam is a word that was not in his dictionary.

In some ways he is lucky that he did not live to see the present political scenario with all the scams that are being exposed. Rip-offs, fraud, trickery, swindles, amassing money by means of deception, fake-photos, non-existent addresses, non-existent directors of companies, companies without addresses ...the list is endless. Election promises are made claiming to represent the *aam aadmi*. CR represented the *aam aadmi* – he was the real *aam aadmi*.

Courtesy: Radha Padmanabhan and New Indian Express, 29 October 2012

Not to be missed is Rajaji's almost one man campaign against testing nuclear weapons by the then world powers in the interests of saving this planet for the generations to come. On the day of Indian Independence on August 15, 1947, his article published in the daily press was on this issue of utmost concern to the 'Uninvolved' nations of the world. Nikita Khrushchev, the dictator of the then undivided Communist Russia had Rajaji's *Mankind Protests* translated and published in Russian.

President Kennedy received him with warmth when he met him in Washington as a spokesman of the Gandhi Peace delegation to urge him to stop the poisonous nuclear tests forthwith. Asked by a pressman waiting outside the White House about his talks with the US President, C.R. described them as 'flowerful'! That was his first and last visit abroad. He was only 83+ then! The then Indian Ambassador, B. K. Nehru had this to say about that historic meeting, "The colloquy was one that gave me rare delight. I have had the good fortune of being present when many great men have argued their points of view with each other in many parts of the world. But I had seldom seen a case being presented with such lucidity of argument, such economy of speech, such felicity of language, such gentleness of manner and such command of the facts as Rajaji displayed that day. It was interesting to watch President Kennedy's reactions, for he too was a great admirer of style. One could almost see his eyes open wider and wider in wonder and in admiration of the frail little

man who was making this masterly presentation. Rajaji, as was the foregone conclusion, did not at once succeed in his mission – for the world is not governed by the good but by the strong – but he left an abiding impression on President Kennedy."

As W. R. Crocker put it, the best tribute to Rajaji, as to Gandhiji, is to *read him not just to read about him*. This is what Rajaji wrote about the Bhagavad Gita, "The Gita is not a book for study and examination. It is a book that tells men how to regulate their activities and their minds. It is like a railway guide. It is a guide-book for the journey of life. We should travel with its help, not commit it to memory. Merely committing it to memory will not enable us to reach the journey's end."

On October 8, 1972, Rajaji made his last public appearance to make a speech in the Gandhi Mandapam in Guindy, Madras, where he said, "I have poured out my heart in the columns of *Swarajya* each week. There is no reason for jubilation. There is reason for turning our hearts in humble prayer. We should learn confession from Jesus and God-fearing from the Prophet of Arabia. Then we shall be able to act as the Gita wants us to act."

When will the likes of him come again?

K. VEDAMURTHY, author and freelance journalist based in Chennai, was closely associated with Rajaji. Email: kv2001@yahoo.com

Freedom Team of India's All India Policy Writing Competition

Rs. 500 lakh in Prize Money

I had introduced readers of *Freedom First* some years ago to the Freedom Team of India (FTI), members of which will contest elections (when FTI is ready) to offer India governance that will defend citizens' liberty, eliminate corruption and enable prosperity.

As most readers of this magazine will agree, India's problems can entirely be attributed to poor policies. We need policies that are grounded in liberty and take account of markets and incentives.

I am pleased to inform that on 15 November 2012 FTI launched an All India Policy Competition to invite high quality policies from India's best policy thinkers. **Details are available at <http://freedomteam.in/policy>, with 28 February 2013 being the last date for submission of policies. The competition, in which teams or individuals can participate, is open to everyone; but only Indian citizens are eligible for prizes.**

FTI was able to raise Rs.5 lakhs in prize money from over 50 contributors in about two weeks of fund-raising. This strong support demonstrates that India's middle class is sick of third rate governance, and is willing

to pay for good governance. The first prize is Rs.1 lakh, with 20 other prizes of Rs.20,000 each.

On behalf of FTI, I request you to participate in this competition and publicise it widely within your networks. From the web link provided alongside you will be able to download and print the competition poster and post it on university/ college/ library/ institution notice boards to increase participation from high quality contestants. Please join FTI to bring the world's best policies to India. India deserves good governance after six decades of socialism.

Let me also repeat my ongoing request to readers of *Freedom First*. FTI is searching for high quality leaders to lead India. That is its main goal at this stage. Good policies will mean nothing if there are no leaders to seek India's mandate (through elections) to implement them. So if you are interested in leading India, and otherwise satisfy FTI's joining conditions (please visit its website), you should apply to become part of the Team that will bring freedom to India.

Sanjeev Sabhlok

Navigation in Ancient India and Social Taboo against Overseas Travel

B. M. N. Murthy

It has been proved beyond doubt by the research works of ever so many foreign scholars that the Indians of the past were not stay-at-home people, but went out of their country for exploration, trade and conquest.

There has been a general belief in the West that ancient Indians were mostly other-worldly and that the average Hindu was mostly enchanted with the idea of an ascetic, all-renouncing and empty philosophical life. They think that the ancient Hindu only believed in the doctrine of Karma and that he had no intention to live and enjoy the comforts of a pleasant mundane life. The basis of this misconceived notion is the inadequate understanding of Indian History, its tradition and culture. It is one thing to pay due tribute to the eminence of ancient Hindus in their magnificent achievements in Philosophy, but to call them other-worldly is to turn a blind eye to their achievements in the various fields of pure and applied sciences like Medicine, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Mathematics, Robotics, Aviation. Navigation and overseas travel in self-built ships for purposes of trade and commerce and for spreading their ancient culture outside India is no exception. In fact, experts believe that the word 'Navigation' in English is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Navika' which means 'sailor' and the word 'Navika' has its root in the Sanskrit word 'Nau' which means a ship.

The Rigveda, considered the very first Book of Knowledge used by a civilized society, is replete with Vedic Mantras which confirm and produce irrefutable evidence that Vedic Aryans were experts in the construction of

seafaring vessels and that marine trade across the seas was quite common. The Vedic people regarded sea as a repository of wealth. The enterprising merchants were going out on long sea-voyages in their locally built ships in search of marine wealth and they were well acquainted with the treasures of the sea. There existed a flourishing maritime trade between India and other foreign countries. The purpose was not merely one of trade and commerce but also to spread the tenets of our *Sanathana Dharma* across the globe by carrying with them our ancient scriptures like the Vedas and the Upanishads. Ananda Coomaraswamy, the great Art Historian and Indologist of the 20th century, in one of his works says, "We may be sure that people who performed Vedic rituals and chanted the Vedic Mantras, actually possessed horses and ships, had experience of crossing the seas and tilled the soil themselves."

Fortuitous Location of the Sub-Continent

India has been extremely lucky in that its situation on the globe has been conducive to maritime trade. Situated at the central point of the ocean that washes its coast on three sides, she seemed destined very early for a maritime future. Apart from the several references to navigation in ancient India in the Vedic times, the Ramayana refers to two islands namely Yavana Dweepa and Suvarna Dweepa [Java and Sumatra] and to the Red Sea as well. Kalidasa's famous drama '*Abhijnana Shakuntalam*', King Harsha's drama '*Ratnavali*', and '*Shishupalavadha*' of poet Magha, all relate stories of sea voyages of merchants. Several other early literary works are replete with stories of sea voyages by ancient Hindus. The famous historian R.C. Majumdar states, "The representation of ship on a seal indicates maritime activity, and there is enough evidence to show that the people of the Sindhu valley carried on trade not only with other parts of India but also with several centres of culture in Western Asia, and with Egypt and Greece".

Indian traders would set sail from the port of Mahabalipuram [Tamil Nadu], carrying with them



"MAHRATTA GRABS AND GALLIVATS ATTACKING AN ENGLISH SHIP"
From the pictures in the possession of Major J.B. Pugh

cinnamon, pepper, and their civilization and culture, to the shores of Java, Cambodia and Bali. It has been proved beyond doubt by the research works of ever so many foreign scholars that the Indians of the past were not stay-at-home people, but went out of their country for exploration, trade and conquest.

Internationally famous Sanskrit scholar from Madras Dr. V. Raghavan in his book, *An Anthology on Aspects of Indian Culture*, says, "In ancient days Indians went out by land routes as well as by sea routes and from the evidence of early literature and sculpture, they appear to have been a vigorous ship-building and sea-faring people. A Tamil proverb says, "Cross the surging seas and gather your riches." Continuing further, Dr. Raghavan says, "According to Aristotle's music pupil Aristoxenus, India philosophers were seen in Athens interviewing Socrates... Voyages to Alexandria were most common... there were Indians living in Alexandria in the first century of the Christian era."

That there has been enough Navigation expertise in India right from Vedic days is evident from other historical records also. The excavations and the researches conducted at the Mohenjodaro and Harappan Civilization sites have established long distance marine trade contacts between India, West Asia, and South East Asia. In fact one of the subjects taught in the Takshashila University [now called Taxila], the first university in the world established in 600 BC, was called "Nowka Shastra" [Science of navigation]. Even the travelogues of the Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hien and Huein-tsang, the Rock Edicts of Emperor Ashoka, the writings of Megasthenes and a host of other records clearly establish India's expertise in navigation and ship-building from ancient times.

Sometime in the 19th century and early part of the 20th century a myth started gaining ground that if a Brahmin crosses the sea and goes overseas, he becomes polluted and that on his return he should undergo some propitiatory ceremony [*Prayaschitta* as it is called in Sanskrit] to get purified and return to the society. It is difficult to pinpoint how and when this myth came into force. We do not find any scriptural authority prohibiting overseas travel at any time in India's history. Even in historical times our ancestors crossed the high seas and spread our culture and civilization in several foreign countries like the Far East, Middle East. Even today we find Brahmins and other castes, the remnants of our ancient culture and civilization in Thailand, Sumatra, Java, Cambodia and many other places.

This myth, with no scriptural sanction, receded to the background at the end of the 19th century with the

advent of Swami Vivekananda, particularly with his visit to Chicago in 1893. While Swamiji's journeys to the West had considerable impact on several aspects of the general Indian outlook on life, one notable aspect was the imprint he left on the Sea Voyage Movement which had started in some parts of India and which was totally opposed to the taboo that a Hindu is defiled by crossing the seas. Even before Swamiji made up his mind to travel to the distant shores, *The Hindu* of Madras, writing on the Sea Voyage Movement said, almost prophetically, "Bold and fearless examples are wanted more than anything else. Such of us who have means and other facilities must make it a point to travel to foreign countries across the seas".

After Swamiji's glorious performance at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in September 1893, his name had become a household word in India. On 18th May 1895, the famous journalist from Calcutta, Sri Surendranath Banerjee, wrote an editorial in his paper *Bengalee* entitled 'Swami Vivekananda on the Sea Voyage Movement'. The paper said "There is not a Hindoo who is not proud of Swami Vivekananda – who would not honour him and his teachings. He has done honour to himself, to his race and his religion". Quoting abundantly from a speech which Swamiji delivered at Calcutta on 18th November 1894 wherein his explicit views favouring overseas journeys are enunciated, the editorial remarks "It is something to know that so high an authority and so good a Hindoo as Swami Vivekananda supports travel to foreign countries. A time has come when a practical step should be taken to hasten forward the solution to a question which is fraught with such great good to the country"

Swami Vivekananda passed away on 4th July 1902. On 13th July 1902, *The Mahratta* newspaper founded by Lokamanya Tilak in Poona in 1881 wrote, "It was his [Swami Vivekananda's] ambition to carry his mission to distant lands, and in this respect he excelled the greatest Bengalee reformer – we mean, Raja Ram Mohan Roy – 'We cannot do' he said, 'without the world outside India. It was our foolishness we thought we could, and we have paid the penalty by about a thousand years of slavery. All such foolish ideals that Indians must not go out of India are childish. They must be knocked on the head. The more you go out and travel among the nations of the world, the better for you and your country.'

MR. B. M. N. MURTHY is a retired Chief Engineer, Life Insurance Corporation of India. After his retirement Mr. Murthy has devoted his time to inform "the younger generation of the spiritual wisdom of India, reminding them of the great traditional lineage to which we all belong". On the 14th of July he completed 700 weekly articles spread over twelve and half years. He can be contacted at bmnmurthy@gmail.com.



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M For Melody - C. Ramachandra

Arvind Ananthanarayanan



C. Ramachandra prolifically composed melodious music for Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Bhojpuri films during the period from 1940 to almost 1970, in a career spanning three decades. As many as 26 of the movies, for which he scored music, celebrated silver jubilees, and three even achieved a golden jubilee run.

In every walk of life, from time to time, one comes across people who are born to bring about a paradigm shift in their field of choice and herald a change in the dynamics of their profession. Many

such talented individuals have graced the field of music. Music is one of the greatest of God's gifts to mankind and indulging in it is surely divine.

Here I pen on one such person, of course my favourite without doubt, whose presence in the field of Hindi film music was brief, but during this time he left an indelible impression on the critics and connoisseurs of Hindi film music. He played a key role in changing the course of popular Hindi film music from traditional and mostly classical to the prevalent trend of employing a pot-pourri of styles, to capture the mood of the moment. I am writing of the yesteryear music director, whose given name was Chitalkar, was known affectionately as "Anna Saheb" and is immortalized by the name he used in filmdom, 'C. Ramachandra'.

Lata Mangeshkar voice and Ramchandra's music

C. Ramachandra prolifically composed melodious music for Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Bhojpuri films during the period from 1940 to almost 1970, in a career spanning three decades. Some of his more popular songs include, 'Meri jaan meri jaan Sunday ke Sunday', 'Gore gore, O banke chore', 'mere piya gaye Rangoon', 'Ena mina dika', 'Mobobat aisi dhadkan hai', 'Shola jo bhadke', 'Aadha hai chandrama, raat aadhi', 'jaag dard-ishq jaag', 'radha na bole na bole' and last but not the least the patriotic song, rendered by the inimitable Lata Mangeshkar 'e Mere watanke logo'. I am confident that this will surely refresh the memories of my readers,

especially our senior citizens. However this is only a very small list compared to the contributions made by him. He composed musical scores for over a hundred films.

Of course, any music director depends on great singers to bring his/her creation to life. Ramchandra was no different and he had the able Lata Mangeshkar to render most of his songs. Indeed, the Lata Mangeshkar/Ramachandra combination is still considered to be one of the singer/ best music director duos, each bringing out the best in the other. As many as 26 of the movies, for which he scored music, celebrated silver jubilees, and three even achieved a golden jubilee run. Ramachandra's magnificent achievement is made all the more noteworthy by the fact that, although a Maharashtrian, he won unique laurels in Hindi films.

Ramchandra as Singer and Actor

He was also a singer to reckon with. For many who are unaware, he lent his voice to all the three leading heroes of that time, namely Dev Anand, Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor. He was also the singing voice to his dear friend Bagwan Dada. Ramchandra and Bagwan Dada shared a special bond. Very few know that, Ramachandra got his first break in a Tamil film through the efforts of Bagwan Dada. He not only scored music for the film but also sang in Tamil, a language not known to him, with perfect diction. A few reckon he is the first real playback singer of Tamil films. To appreciate his choreographic sense one should see the video of the epic song in Tamil *kannumkannumkalandu* from the film *Vanjikotai Valipanan* or the Hindi song 'Aplam Chaplam' from the film *Azad*.

Ramachandra was a colourful, tall, handsome and charming man. He was also an actor in his own right. He also produced and directed a couple of Hindi and Marathi films. He was a staunch believer of Shirdi Sai Baba and a great patriot. During the Indo-China war Ramachandra with his troupe toured the border to entertain our jawans. He

(Cont'd. on p.37)

Popular Marathi is Sixty

Vijayadashmi of 2012 was a special day for Popular Prakashan. Its Marathi department completed sixty years of publication. Though Marathi publishing continued to be just about one-fifth of its total business, the Marathi Division developed such a great reputation that often readers believe that Popular is largely a Marathi publishing house.

While Popular Prakashan cannot claim any specific foundation day, its parent, the Popular Book Depot existed and published since May 1, 1924. The bookstore that started publishing in various fields preferred focussing on medicine and social sciences in particular. It had developed as a bookshop with various specialised sections, where academics, librarians and readers could browse through a sizable collection of books on various disciplines. Students, both school and college going, were equally well served. 'From Primary Books to Encyclopedias' was its slogan; publishing was just one of its departments.

The big change came in 1948 when it acquired Bombay Book Depot, just a kilometer away. Culturally it was a different territory. P.N. Kumtha, put in charge of newly acquired Bombay Book Depot, realised that this had to develop as a Marathi centre. Kumtha was educated in Kannada, but, as a student of English literature, it took just a little hard work to develop basic knowledge of the Marathi cultural world. This led to signing up of Gangadhar Gadgil as its first author in Marathi. The parent company developed its publication division under the guidance of the second generation consisting of Sadanand and Ramdas Bhatkal. It took over the publishing project of Bombay Book Depot. It was this decision that eventually led to the birth of 'Popular Prakashan' as an independent publishing house.

The first two Marathi books published by Popular Prakashan were short story collections of Gangadhar Gadgil and Arvind Gokhale, two of the stalwarts of the new literary movement, 'Navakatha' in particular. Popular Prakashan eschewed the temptation of working with the bestselling stalwarts of the times and chose to identify itself with the new trends. The essence of the new approach was the recognition that life is not all black or white, but grey, and for that matter made up of different shades of colours. New forms were evolved to depict these variegated experiences. Popular looked out for senior authors such as Mama Warerkar and Kaka Kalelkar, V.V. Shirwadkar (Kusumagraj) and Durga Bhagwat, Prabhakar Padhye and P.S. Rege, Vishram Bedekar, Vibhavari Shirurkar

and Indira Sant who had started writing much earlier, but their muse was capable of erasing the difference between the old and new.

Popular Prakashan soon developed a list consisting of some of the finest writers of post independence Maharashtra. To mention just a few, these included G.A. Kulkarni, Sadanand Rege, Vinda Karandikar, Vijay Tendulkar, Narayan Surve, Grace, Kamal Desai, Anil Barve, Bhau Padhye and Uddhav Shelke. Popular was also particular in bringing to light the text of important plays by many of those mentioned above. Thus Popular Prakashan developed a reputation as the prime publisher of poetry and plays, forms which were neglected by most publishers.

There are some characteristics that are special to Popular Prakashan. The most significant being the comfortable co-existence of Marathi and English language publishing, as well as its constant intercourse with the book trade nationally and internationally. Many features of good publishing practiced in other regions were transplanted into the Marathi publishing microcosm such as the relationship with authors and publicity methods.

The other aspect was the support that Marathi publishing had from the organisation in terms of expertise, experience, infrastructure and financial backing. That the owners did not have to depend on returns from Marathi division in the short term, allowed the editorial team to work without the pressures of commercial consideration. Thus, the selection of books to be published was dictated by considerations of quality rather than market.

A third characteristic was the relationship that Popular Prakashan developed with its authors. Of course, not all the works of each author could be published by one publisher. Yet, nearly seventy-five outstanding authors of this period came to be identified as 'Popular' authors. This has enabled the company to build up perhaps the strongest backlist among regional language publishers. Though Marathi publishing continued to be just about one-fifth of its total business, the Marathi Division of

Popular Prakashan developed such a great reputation that often readers believe that Popular is largely a Marathi publishing house.

The special position that Popular Prakashan has enjoyed as a bilingual (in fact multilingual) publishing house has enabled it to venture into other areas. It has contributed to 'book culture' by arranging exhibitions in different centres in Maharashtra, and even abroad. It has published many Marathi titles in other languages. It has produced a literary TV serial 'Paulkhuna' (footsteps) arguably one of the best ever. It has produced stage shows, organised academic

seminars, Popular readers' camps in association with different academic institutions and published one of the most widely read house journals 'Priya Rasik', just to mention a few.

The most important contribution of Popular Prakashan is the development of a professional organisation, not dependent on a family or an individual. Started as a hobby of a member of the family, it has as its Marathi editors some accomplished scholars who have ensured continuity of a sound literary approach over sixty years.

M For Melody - C. Ramachandra (Cont'd. from p.35)

was a "maverick", and was truly *avant garde*. He could churn out music very quickly with the emphasis being on melody and simplicity. He used to pack every song of his with melody to the brim, and he had once remarked "In music M stands for melody and without M it is U Sick". However, his appearance and disappearance from the world of Hindi film music was rapid.

Ramchandra's Decline

Many attribute Ramachandra's decline to the fall out with some person/s and many others feel he lost interest somewhere down the line, but the real truth according to me is that he lost his focus at some point of time. When others were striving to attain perfection in their composition, Ramachandra went for sheer numbers. He was more of an ideas man and was perhaps more focused on the next project even as the present one reached completion. While his talent was doubtless, it is likely that he did not have the patience to refine or the will to tweak

endlessly to reach the zenith of perfection. If it sounded melodious, it was usually good enough. Is this the truth? Perhaps we will never know.

However, I have often felt that while he scored many tunes, his music lacked the final refinement that was becoming the *de facto* standard with the emergence of the new music directors. His music and principles of melody was not readily appreciated by people who wanted to enjoy not only melody but harmony and who in many cases lacked any extensive knowledge of music. This is an important part of film music in that it must transcend the nuances of music and appeal to the masses. With the changing times, C. Ramachandra fell out of favour. His sad demise early in January 1982 was a great and irreparable loss to modern music.

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A Forgotten Tale of Heroism (Cont'd. from p.28)

mountains insufficiently clothed and poorly armed against an enemy well prepared for war. The military commanders are to blame for the rout. The enemy could not have been stopped at Namka Chu and Tawang but evacuation of Sela was a betrayal of trust. The one thing common in both the theatres was the gallant jawan, ready as ever to make the supreme sacrifice. By way of epitaph on the Namka Chu action, the *Hindustan Times* published a poem:

We were your soldiers, men of bravery and pride,

Yet we died like animals, trapped in a cage, with
no escape,

Massacred at will, denied the dignity of battle.

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Why This Clampdown?

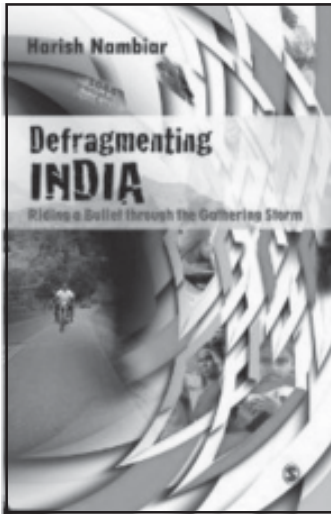
"The Mumbai police's announcement to Mumbaikars to stay indoors - and only step out if there is an emergency - was most surprising. One would have expected a crack police force to be proud of their capability to keep their city functional and safe without issuing what sounded like an unofficial curfew, officially declared.

"They could have sealed off parts of the city to traffic as obviously they have had to, and ensured that law and order prevailed in the rest. The signal they were sending out seemed to say: we don't think we can manage and keep you safe from what the Shiv Sainiks might do, so lets keep you indoors and say we have done our jobs."

"I sent a message to this effect to a high-ranking police officer. His reply was 'conviction is a luxury of those who occupy the sidelines'. I couldn't help wondering that if citizens are on the sidelines, who constitutes the front line?

Rama Bijapurkar, management and market research consultant. Courtesy: *Mumbai Mirror*

BOOK REVIEW



DEFRAGMENTING INDIA: RIDING A BULLET THROUGH THE GATHERING STORM • By Harish Nambiar • Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. B/1-11 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura, Road, New Delhi 110044 • www.sagepublications.com • 2012 • Pages 260 • Rs.350

Reviewed by Arvind Ilamaram, secretary, Freedom Team of India and Engineer with ONGC Petro-additions Limited. Email: vi.arvind@gmail.com

Defragmenting India is an exquisite fabric woven from the wonderfully varying strands of Indian society that clad India south of the Aravalli range. This travelogue is a sincere effort to show India in its

authentic flavour by two friends who embark on an adventurous road trip through the southern states of the nation. The author, who is a journalist by profession, brings stupendous ammunition of anecdotal acumen and apt advertency to this effort of analyzing the evolution of Indians as individuals and India as a nation.

The journey on the motorbike 'Bullet' starts in the backdrop of the Gujarat communal riots of 2002 and other related riots triggered by it that left hundreds dead and scarring the nation's secular visage for good. The animated discussion between the author and his childhood friends is an indication of the superficial harmony and divisive communal undercurrents that hold Indian society together. As the journey progresses through Malegaon in Maharashtra, the author explores the riotous propensity and communal sensitivity of the place. The poverty of the populace and its role in making them incendiary towards communal politics has been well caricatured.

If Gujarat and Maharashtra portrayed communal divisiveness, the travel through Odisha (formerly Orissa) captures its artistic heritage in the ebbing magnificence. Apart from indulging the reader in a delicious buffet of artistic delicacies from Raghurajpuram artisans to the Lingaraja temple, the author provides an incessant narration of the glory and *status quo* of art in Odisha. The author also reflects on the impress of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Svayam Sevak (RSS) over their Hindu fundamentalist engagement in the backdrop of certain events they witnessed during their travel.

The travel shifts to Andhra Pradesh whose socio-politico-economic scenario stand in contrast to that of Odisha. The author draws upon this difference to outline

the social psyche of the Oriya people, its futility and the need for a dynamic turn-around. He dwells on the dynamic forces of pacifism of Asoka and radical fundamentalism of VHP responsible for a predicament for Odisha. He analyzes the factors conducive to the IT revolution in Andhra and draws a character profile of the politicians involved. The author oft seeks in varying degrees of success to dissect the Gujarat riots in the light of increasing exposure to various socio-political elements spread across the country.

The journey enters the penultimate stage in Karnataka. Here the author throws light on the fast evolving middle-class mentality captured through events of a friend's family. How the growing economy changes the median objectives of the middle-class, how it responds to other dynamic forces in the society in the face of adversity; and touches upon the many simple yet significant elements of middle-class life. The author emphasizes the need for social consciousness as a pre-requisite for economic prosperity by contrasting the towns of Bhatkal vs Manipal in Karnataka. This leg of the marathon also witnesses the narration of many strands of history that elegantly embeds into the grandiose framework called India.

The adventure ends back in Mumbai through Goa with reminiscent reflections from all the people and places visited over a course of three weeks. This last leg provides the reader with an insight into the underworld of Mumbai and its tentacles into the civil society. The Mumbai blasts of 1993 are recounted through a journalist's eyes. It also provides the author with a definite perspective on the Hindu-Muslim divide by virtue of when one of his acquaintances, an ex-RSS man, sees the Muslims as his brothers.

This journey is a cadence of social, economic and political disparity plaguing the nation that has hitherto been left partially unattended. The author presents an array of perspectives of people belonging to polar ends of the ideological spectrum and thereby constructs a well-argued call for holistic integration of the Indian society in light of the nation's contemporary challenges as an emerging global power and its perennial call for domestic peace.

Educating Adults

The Right to Education Act (6)

Reservation for Weaker Sections

Suresh Sharma

Present indications are that the government would reimburse Rs.10,217 per student per year. Compare it with Rs.32,550 per child being incurred by the Mumbai Municipal Committee [BMC] in their schools.

The RTI Act lays down that 25% seats will be allotted to children from disadvantaged background in aided private schools. These seats will be equally divided between Economically Disadvantaged Sections [EWS] and Socially Disadvantaged Sections [SWS]. Residential schools with day boarders and minority schools will be exempted. There will be no interviews or screening and admissions will be by lottery. It is not clear whether parents have a choice of schools. The schools may start a second shift to cater for extra seats for students of EWS and SWS sections. The schools had not received guidelines on the criteria for EWS and SWS for the current academic year when admissions in most of the schools were finalized. Parents of general category are worried that the Government may force cancellation of admission of their wards in order to assign seats to students from EWS and SWS.

There may be cases when there are no applicants from students of the reserved category. Do the schools have an obligation to search for applicants? We do find urban areas without any SC or ST population. A sub-division of quota between ST and SC could further complicate the issue.

The expenditure on these 25% students will

be partly financed by Government. The remaining costs will be borne by the 75% students of general category. It is wrong to presume that all these students come from prosperous families. Some of them have to work hard and overtime to meet their family needs. They are only more aware of the need for good education. I recall some of our colleagues in the armed forces volunteered for field service so that the family could continue to stay in a station having good schools. There could be resentment amongst these 75% children for increase in fees due to free schooling for others. There are reports of discrimination against students from reserved category in Karnataka. As per media reports, three children were forced to cut their hair short and in another school, they were allotted seats at the rear benches. Rear bench seats are not an act of discrimination and some one has to sit there. If it is due to caste discrimination, it should be severely dealt with. It will need careful monitoring to ensure avoiding a mini-class war. Forum for Fairness in Education has recommended that the teachers should be sensitized and trained in handling these students. They may not be as well behaved as the others and their uniforms may not be as clean. The teachers should try to instill good values in them without discriminating or punishing them. There is



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a need to change the mind set of teachers and parents of affluent students.

Present indications are that the government would reimburse Rs 10,217 per student per year. A suitable deduction will be made for concession in allotment of land and purchase of equipment. Compare it with Rs 32,550 per child being incurred by the Mumbai Municipal Committee [BMC] in their schools. Reimbursement of expenditure for reserved category students is likely to be a source of corruption. We already have instances of false claims for mid-day meals. The schools and Government inspectors will find a convenient method of cheating the State.

The Government has opted to pass on their own responsibility to private parties who are not well equipped or always inclined to carry out the mandate. It would be better if,

- the Government should expand the Central Schools chain who are providing good education
- Free education is limited to two children per family. We are shy to admit that large families lead to increased poverty

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India's Growing Leadership Deficit

Attributes of Leadership

Godrej N. Dotivala

We shall keep returning to this topic time and again. Right leadership is the key to good, transparent and effective governance. In this article Mr. Godrej Dotivala, Public Relations Officer of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) shares with Freedom First readers what he considers ought to be the essential attributes of leadership.

I have been in the Rotary for well over thirty years and all along I have been closely associated with the Youth Movements of this great world-wide organization – Interact, Rotaract, RYLA and MUNA at Club, District and International levels and it has given me immense satisfaction. Among other things this has enabled me to conduct numerous seminars and symposia on Leadership Development. In the process I have interacted with eminent personages but none can hold a candle to Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, the victor of the Bangladesh War. He was in a class by himself.

A very essential pre-requisite of leadership is to be courageous. During the Second World War Field Marshal Manekshaw gallantly fought on the Burma front against the Japanese. He was in the forefront of battle and was severely wounded. His body was riddled with bullets. So his commander on the battlefield removed his own Military Cross medal and pinned it on Manekshaw. This was a rare honour. My father Lt.Colonel Naval M. Dotivala, I.M.S. was the first Parsi to receive the Immediate Award of the Military Cross in World War I.

In the days of yore monarchs and potentates were always in the thick of battle. Commanders like Field Marshal Erwin Rommel led from the front and won glorious victories. They did not sit back and conduct operations from their headquarters as the present day commanders are wont to do.

A leader has to be loyal to his country and his community and have a deep sense of commitment. He must be full of vim and vigour. To be effective as a leader you must be able to carry your team with you because it is physically impossible for one individual to do everything himself. An astute person who is at the helm of affairs has to concentrate on overall goals, delegate responsibility to his juniors and monitor results.

A trend-setter must have a sterling character and ought not to take refuge in pomp, bluster and showmanship. He has to be innovative and assertive, but not rude or arrogant. He should possess a fine sense of humour. A great leader is a great listener and an effective communicator. He has to often take calculated risks to get things done.

A true leader never demands respect, he commands it. An effective boss has to be self confident, should have a logical and decisive frame of mind. He must mind his own business and not meddle in others' affairs. This reminds me of a true story narrated to me by Field Marshal Manekshaw. One day Prime Minister Indira Gandhi called him to her place and told him bluntly that she had heard that he intended to take over the running of the Government. The Field Marshal candidly replied, "Madame, I have a big nose and you have a big nose and if you don't poke your nose in my affairs I shall not poke my nose in your affairs."

It is absolutely vital that the trail blazer should have a friendly caring approach and a charming personality. He must be a democrat, not a dictator. Diplomacy is the hallmark of a charismatic leader. But at the same time one should not be a hypocrite. The head honcho has to be scrupulously honest straightforward, law abiding and incorruptible. Red Tape is the bane of many an organization in our country. The top man can and must cut out superfluous Red Tape.

As the greatest guru of Human Relations, Dale Carnegie postulated, "Be hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise." But the key factor here is that you should be sincere and honest when you pay compliments to others. How many of you have read Dale Carnegie's ever popular book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*? It's the finest book I have ever read and I strongly recommend it to all of you. The leader must genuinely have the welfare of your people at heart at all times. If you give succour to them in their difficult times, they will always support you in your hour of need.

In India we suffer from the malady of 'Stretchable Time'; but if the leader has to set an example he should always be punctual, unlike politicians and film stars.

We have just enumerated some of the outstanding characteristics which go to make a capable leader. On the other hand we have the remarkable instance of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, who was the antithesis of the popular concept of a leader. Most of you must have *heard of him* but not have seen or heard him. He was a diminutive and bare-chested, wore only a loin cloth and his speech was halting and not at all clear. Winston Churchill called him the 'naked fakir'.

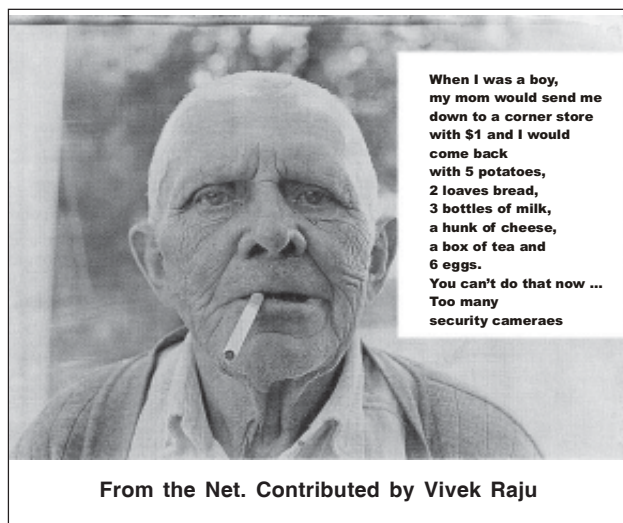
Gandhiji, as you may be aware, became a barrister from England and then went to South Africa where he practiced for several years. When he returned to India

the then Uncrowned King of Bombay Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, as President of the Bombay Association, invited Gandhiji to give a public lecture at the Town Hall. Pherozeshah requested Gandhi to give a synopsis of his talk in advance. Gandhiji said that as he normally spoke extempore he could not give a gist of his speech before hand. But Pherozeshah prevailed upon him to at least jot down a few points and pass them on to him. Reluctantly Gandhiji agreed.

Then on the appointed day Sir Pherozeshah introduced Gandhiji in his usual thundering speech and requested Gandhiji to address the gathering. Thereupon Gandhi got up to speak but before he could utter a single word he was completely overwhelmed and he sank into his seat. Sir Pherozeshah with his instant presence of mind saved the day by announcing that Gandhiji after his long and arduous journey by ship from South Africa was too tired and completely worn out so he could not make his speech, but Sir Pherozeshah Mehta requested his good friend Sir Dinshaw Wachha to read out Gandhiji's address. This was done, and as they say, all's well that ends well. It is a strange irony of fate that this man who later captivated the hearts of millions in India and became their Mahatma was completely tongue-tied in his very first public appearance in our country.

Then we have the classic case of Nani Palkhivala. As a youth he stammered a lot. Through painstaking effort he overcame this affliction and went on to become the greatest orator this country has produced in recent times. That shows firm determination.

Based on a talk Mr. Godrej Dotivala gave to 300 young Parsi boys and girls as part of the BPP's 'Flagship Project' "The Holiday Programme for Youth.



A Tale of Two Cities

Sunita Narain

I travelled to two different cities in two different states last week – Indore and Guwahati. I came back with images identified by common distinctions: piles of garbage and glitzy new shopping malls. Is this our vision of urban development? There is no question that cities are imploding; growth is happening faster than we ever imagined. Construction is booming and expansion is gobbling agricultural land.

The two cities are different ecosystems, so they should have had different water and waste issues. One is located in the relatively dry Malwa plateau and the other in the high-rainfall region on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra. But both cities have acute water stress, even as rain leads to swamping of cities, disrupting life and destroying property. Both cities have no water culture. Both are drowning in their waste.

Indore, because of its location, had a rich tradition of lakes. Rain water was harvested and stored in structures, which recharged groundwater. Then, in 1977, the city brought Narmada water from some 110 km to the city. Indore should have had enough to drink and to swim. But 35 years later, the water has still not reached all distribution pipelines. Over 50 per cent of the 172 million litres per day of water it sources is lost in distribution, which means there is far more costs but far less water to supply. The city water utility has no money to repair and extend its water system. It spends all it has and more in just electricity costs of bringing the water. Politicians are vying with each other to bring the water from the Maheshwar dam. The recent jal samadhi by the Maheshwar dam-displaced has met with enormous anger from Indore's power elite. They say they need the dam's water at all costs. They do not care if the people, whose land has been submerged by the dam, have not received compensation or been resettled.

The same power elite never demand systems to deal with the sewage they flush out of their homes. In Indore, the sewage system was constructed in 1936 at the time of the Holkars. Independent Indore has added to it insignificantly. The bulk of the sewage pours into its rivers,

Khan and Saraswati, and Piliyakhal Nullah, untreated. It forgets that the Khan pollutes the Kshipra; the main water source of the neighbour, Ujjain.

Guwahati is no different. When I went in early October, floods were still ravaging the city. This was the third pulse of flooding, which began in early June. Residents explained that the intensity and duration of floods had made life impossibly difficult. They also spoke of desperate water shortages in this region of plenty. Worse, life-giving water is now the cause of diseases—death by dengue fever was top news in Guwahati.

For instance, they should not repeat the mistake of allowing fleets of cars to take over their roads. Indore was an enlightened city to plan for a bus-based future. Some years ago it invested in new buses, rationalised routes, created systems for efficient operation and put GPS in place to track and inform customers. Now cost of bus fuel is up, fares have not been revised and buses are losers. Still the majority of the city population rides or walks, even though the city's footpaths are long gone. Indore is now building a bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor. It has a many foreign and Indian consultants to design the system but the people of Indore have no idea what is being proposed and why BRT is important. So they already hate it.

Guwahati's footpaths are gone as well, taken over by mounds of garbage. The city has taken the route of its bigger cousins. It has put the task of garbage disposal out to a concessionaire, who, it hopes, will sweep the city clean. It does not. Instead, Guwahati could collect, segregate and compost garbage at the household level. It could reserve areas in colonies for environmental services. This way it would not have to first collect and then transport the waste. It would not have to live in filth.

In the end Indore and Guwahati will be the creations of their people. The only question is whether they will be dreams or nightmares

Courtesy: Down to Earth reproduced from CSE Fortnightly News Bulletin October 18, 2012. Excerpted from the editorial by Sunita Narain.

Our New Hobby

by Laeeq Futehally

WE Indians are in a fair way to becoming a nation of Nature-lovers. Or at least Bombay is becoming a city of Nature-lovers. There is no doubt about it. We have discovered Nature suddenly and we cannot leave it alone. We must talk and write volubly about our discovery. Our Ministers of State prattle about the "green glory of the forests" in every rain season. The V. I. P's of Delhi all come together at the meeting of the local Bird-Watching Society. And our morning paper carries a learned dissertation on the relative merits of the Flame of the Forest and the Coconut Palm on the middle page, all among Mr. Nehru's speech and the Peace with Atom. Which other nation except the United Kingdom of Great Britain could ever show such a delicate sense of proportion?

As I said before, we have been overwhelmed by the discovery that Nature is wonderful. We cannot get over the sudden realization that trees are beautiful and that it costs nothing to go and look at a jungle full of trees. And when, by a sort of subtle popular communication, it gets about that a certain spot outside the city is to be considered a beauty spot thousands of enthusiastic pilgrims congregate there every Sunday to pay homage to it. Witness Powai Lake, its admirers have settled on its shores and started a little colony of Powai fans. See any of the roads leading into the woods and open spaces on a Sunday. They are covered with humanity in a way in which no road was ever covered a few years ago except on the occasion of a religious mela. There are large family parties on the roads, there are parties of students, parties of girls, parties of friends and just parties. Nearly every one carries a heavy bulky bundle, containing food and other forms of entertainment. Most of them wear chappals or sandals which ensure that they walk with the maximum discomfort, and many are sweating profusely in the midday sun due to the pullovers and scarves they started out with in the tepid early morn. But, uncomfortable or not, hot or cool, tired or fresh - it is a conglomeration of happy Indians. They wave and shout to each other, they sing ribald songs, they shake their fists indulgently at the dust of every passing car; and they are glad and happy to be away from the crowded squalid city and among the trees.

This exodus from the city into the country every Sunday is not the only sign of our new nature-consciousness. The reverse process of bringing the

country into the city has also begun in no small way.

Witness the rock-gardens in Bombay's traffic roundabouts, witness the gardening efforts which accompany every new house and building which goes up.

Almost before the last iron bars have been affixed to the windows, the builder as matter of course puts in a couple of brick-bordered flower beds and a trellis over the gate for bougainvilleas. The drive is cemented, and the space around the house is left open to take in a row of crotons - and lo! Nature has been brought into the city.

May our new enthusiasm never wane -may it grow from strength to strength, for surely, if our new national hobby is to love Nature, no other nation ever had a vaster field in which to develop its national hobby. And above all, let us not forget to congratulate ourselves on having found a hobby which even we can afford.

NOTES

Agitation Over Bombay

The form that the agitation over Bombay's inclusion in Samyukta Maharashtra has taken is particularly odious. The attempt to break up the Congress meeting on Chowpatti sands was highly objectionable. It is the right of all citizens to hold and express any opinions that they like. Any interference with that right by the police or the *goondas* is a gross violation of any elementary rule of democracy.

What happened the next day when the leftist leaders gave the call for a strike was far more serious. The life of the city was paralysed and there were innumerable acts of *goondaism* including the burning of public vehicles and injury to innocent passersby. The police firing, which was the direct result of wilful disobedience of orders on the part of demonstrators, took a toll of twelve lives, besides a good number of injured some of whom are still receiving treatment in the hospitals...

What you have just read are excerpts from Freedom First No.43 of December 1955. To also read other stories including an editorial by its editor V. B. Karnik with the 'juicy' title: "Let Us Know Who Kisses Us and Why" and a comment on the report of the States Reorganisation Commission published 57 years ago, a visit to our archives at www.freedomfirst.in is recommended!

Freedom First / Quest Digitisation Project

Readers of *Freedom First* are aware of this Project to digitise the contents of *Freedom First* from June 1952 onwards and also to develop our own website where the digitised copies can be lodged. The first phase of this project has been completed. Barring 44 issues (listed below) which are missing, all the rest, upto and including this issue you are reading, are available in digitised form and have been archived on the website. The URL is: **www.freedomfirst.in**. This has been an expensive process. Thanks to contributions from our subscribers and well-wishers we have been able to meet a part of the cost.

For first time readers, *Freedom First* is a monthly which began publication 60 years ago. It was founded by the late Minoo Masani, author and MP, at a time when free India was just five years old, World War II had ended and the Cold War had begun. As a participant in India's freedom struggle he shared the vision of the leaders who led us to freedom that, with independence, our country would launch towards the winning of a new world - the creation of a new society secular in its foundation, ensuring liberty of thought, belief and action and the realization of economic and social justice for all.

This vision *Freedom First* has steadfastly adhered to, even when it was politically incorrect or 'unpopular' to speak up for liberal values not to mention liberal economics.

We are poised to enter the second phase. In this phase we will be digitising *Quest*, a bi-monthly of enquiry, criticism and ideas. This journal too was published by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) between the years 1956 and 1976. Outstanding litterateurs, poets, writers and academics were its editors and contributors. *Quest* had to shut down in 1976 during the 'Emergency' due to difficulties with the Censors. Incidentally, digitising both journals involves over 19,000 printed pages. The project will be completed hopefully in the next three months with the incorporation of the search function to make it user-friendly.

This means additional costs. We appeal to those who are reading this and have not yet responded to help us cover the costs of this venture. Cheques made out in favour of "ICCF" will be gratefully accepted. Our address: The Hon. Secretary, Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001. Phone: 022 2284341, 66396366 • Cell: Hon. Secretary 9820016392 • Emails: freedom@vsnl.com / freedomfirst1952@gmail.com.

Freedom First / Quest - Missing copies

This is an appeal to long time subscribers who may have preserved copies. Should you be in possession of any of the issues listed below or have passed them on to libraries may we borrow them from you with the promise to return them to you after they have been digitised?

Freedom First – Missing issues (44)

Year	Numbers	Month/s
1964	151	December
1965	152 to 163	January to December
1966	164 to 175	January to December
1967	176 to 187	January to December
1976	284 to 289	July to December
1982	351	May

Quest – Missing Issues (8)

No.49 – April-June 1966
No.50 – July-Sept. 1966
No.52 – Jan-March 1967
No.53 – April-June 1967
No.56 – Jan-March 1968
No.64 – Jan-March 1970
No.74 – Jan-March 1972
No.80 – Jan-Feb. 1973