

The Business of the State is Government, Not Business

Sunil S. Bhandare

When the State ignores this maxim, it does so at the cost of the Education and Health of the poor and the disadvantaged. As the Gujarati proverb goes, 'When the King takes to trade, the people must take to begging'!

While over the years many countries across the world have evolved and implemented successfully the strategy of disinvestment and privatization of public sector enterprises (PSEs), this powerful tool of public policy still continues to remain contentious in India. When undertaken sensibly, PSEs' disinvestment and/or privatization certainly lead to greater productivity and better economic performance.

Unfortunately, in India the process of disinvestment and privatization of PSEs has virtually been stalled for the past over two years. Most strident opposition to PSEs' disinvestment is coming from the Left allies of the UPA Government, which is largely driven by ideological considerations, and not so much based on the courage of their genuine conviction. While this is not surprising, it is extremely damaging from the viewpoint of the long term interests of stakeholders (except for the vested interests of a select band of politicians and bureaucrats). Indeed, it stifles incremental growth momentum of the economy.

So often in recent times, economic reformers have reminded policymakers that persistent "Left" criticism should not deter the Government from reviving a vigorous disinvestment and privatization policy. It is high time to call the bluff of its Left allies, as there is so much at stake for the Government itself. The UPA government is half way through its full five year tenure, and will be presenting its fourth Union Budget by the end of this February in the context of one of the most fortuitous economic ambiances for the past many years.

Why is the present time perceived to be so opportune? The forthcoming budget will perhaps be the last opportunity for the UPA government to prove its credibility with some big time reforms. The subsequent two years will largely be pre-occupied in managing the political economy prior to the next general election, and hence nothing significant is likely to be accomplished. Secondly,

the economy for the past four years has been giving a consistently robust performance and this now needs to be leveraged by bold policy initiatives. Thirdly, the Government's concerted attention is increasingly being drawn towards the lagging physical and social infrastructure sectors like power, irrigation, rural connectivity, education and health. Apart from

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policy and institutional support, all these functional areas call for massive financing support from the government. Indeed, the sustainability of high economic growth will depend on how effectively the government deals with these challenges.

What is now essential is a powerful message from the Government demonstrating its ability to push through some challenging reforms like vigorous disinvestment of PSEs or their strategic sales. At this stage, such efforts make sense for a variety of reasons.

To mention four key ones:

- First, the Central Government has a major responsibility towards improving the nation's budgetary health on a sustained basis, not merely in response to the FRBM targets, but also keeping under tight leash its internal indebtedness. India's debt to GDP ratio (excluding contingent liabilities) continues to be very high at about 68%, and annual debt servicing (principal *plus* interest) at Rs.381,929 crores knocks off over 38% of total revenue receipts of the Central Budget. Withdrawal of budgetary support to sick PSEs will reduce the pressure on budgetary resources immediately, while the subsequent strategic sale of many such PSEs will unlock significant resources – part of which could be deployed for the repayment of the government's high cost debt.
- Second, a number of PSEs, whose part equity has been divested over the last decade or more, have been witnessing unprecedented and significant valuations of their equity capital thanks to the improved performance of many of these PSEs on one hand, and rising investment sentiment and confidence in the Indian stock market on the other. Such opportunities of excellent valuations, based on the actual performance of many profit-making PSEs, now need to be exploited optimally. We are witnessing that capital raising activities of the private corporate sector are on the rise, and in the coming year there are expectations that major private companies together will raise something like Rs100,000 crores from the domestic capital markets. Why should profit-making PSEs shy away or be denied the opportunity of raising new equity, and in the process also divest a part of the existing equity capital is a moot question.
- Third, and related to the previous observation, is the issue of expanding the equity base of the economy on a continuous basis, given the fact that we now have a robust capital market infrastructure and the urgency of making available increased quantity of

good quality equity to investors. In fact, reactivation of PSEs disinvestment programmes will act as a powerful initiative in furthering the cause of expanding the equity culture of investors, and strengthening the capital market infrastructure of the economy.

- Finally, after a decade and half of economic reforms, there is a fundamental issue that needs to be decisively resolved: Is it the business of the State to be in business in the first place? With the success of the market driven economic system, it is imperative for the Planning Commission to redefine the role of the State while finalizing the Approach Paper on the 11th Plan. Equally importantly, the Government must mediate a consultative process (cutting across party lines) to review the policy positions outlined in the National Common Minimum Programme with respect to the disinvestment of PSEs and strive for a new, more pragmatic consensus on this issue. Already, the Indian private corporate sector has convincingly proved its mettle in managing liberalization, competition and globalization over the last decade. Hence, it is the opportune time to prepare a road map for the eventual exit of the state from manufacturing, commercial and other business activities, and instead establish its focus on some of the critical areas of physical and social infrastructure, and more importantly, on providing good governance.

It is evident that since the beginning of the disinvestment policy in 1991-92 till March 2006, the proceeds from this source amounted to Rs.49,241 crores, the best performance being in 2003-04, when as much as Rs.15,547 crores were raised, and when many came to believe that this policy strategy had finally arrived. But it was not to be, and the entire process has since been virtually disrupted. Interestingly, the market capitalization of 41 listed Central PSEs was of the order of Rs.646,645 crores, and has probably scaled up further by at least 35% since then. The valuation of the remaining profit-making PSEs cannot be gauged in the absence of any disinvestment and consequential listing of their shares.

Against this backdrop, we suggest the following course of action. First, given the current mood of stock markets; in the light of the appetite and capacity of investors to participate in equity ownership, and the improved performance of the PSEs in general, Government can target to raise at least Rs.25,000 crores from the disinvestment and strategic sales of PSEs in 2007-08 and aim at progressively reaching towards higher targets in

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Professor Sadanand Varde

A Dedicated Life

He was quintessentially a socialist in the sense that he did not derive any benefit from the public posts he held. He was a corporator, a legislator and a minister, but his life style remained what it was as a popular professor. He lived in a rented premise in a suburb of Mumbai, he died there. And this is what has been noted by the press, the Marathi Press, not the so-called national (read English) press.

A socialist died in the early hours of January 29, a day before Gandhi *Nirvan Divas*, throwing hundreds of socialists in Mumbai into grief. It was expected, all too well. It was common knowledge that he had given up taking medicines because he knew that the end was near and that there was no use postponing the D day. And though he was persuaded to go to hospital for a couple of days to seek some relief, he prevailed upon the family to take him back home so that he could die there. It is not known whether he remembered Yusuf Meherally in those last hours, because Yusuf Meherally too had persuaded his colleagues to take him from the nursing home to die at home.

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1925-2007

He was a product of the Rashtriya Seva Dal (RSD) – a Sane Guruji-inspired, S. M. Joshi-nursed unique socialist institution in Maharashtra – which has created thousands of good socialists, socialists with character, with dedication, with commitment. A few days before his death, actually when he was waiting to die, he visited Naldurg where post-Latur earthquake the RSD has set up a hostel for the children of villagers who had died in the calamity. It was a sentimental journey and the family took him there to fulfill his wish. And though weak and fragile he spoke for a few minutes before the children and felt fulfilled. The inmates, the children, who were there and heard him, will never be able to forget those few minutes of his talk and one can depend on the RSD to make these children good socialists like him.

He had embraced the broad nationalism of the Freedom movement, the *Sarva Dharma Samabhav* as preached by Gandhiji, the *Antar Bharati* spirit of Sane Guruji, the easy accessibility of S. M. Joshi and the

intellectual discipline of Nanasaheb Goray to become what he was. He would often narrate how a Dalit woman who went to him for some work sat on the ground but not on the chair next to him. She would refuse and he would insist and latter would bodily lift her to make her sit on a chair. This was quintessentially a socialist sense of equality that his generation of socialists had inbibed. That was the meaning of equality for him, for socialists. He had earnestly accepted the early objective of the socialist movement to create a casteless society and when for electoral reasons using caste to garner votes became a fashion, even among socialists, he felt saddened and disturbed. If Premji were alive and had written an obituary - that is what he did in the last few years of his life - he would have called him a true PSPer. He had all the qualities of a good PSP man, a distinction only those who have lived in those days of fratricidal quarrels within the socialist family would understand.

S. S. Varde, popularly known as Anu, like all socialists of his age, came to socialism during the '42 movement and he remained a socialist till the end. Sudha, his wife, a product of RSD like him, though, did not hold any public post as he did, has served the socialist cause and women's movement with equal distinction and she practiced socialist equality at home. It was, as it should have been, a partnership of equals, depriving his friends and admirers that much used *cliche*, one or the other was the cause of the success of the other.

He embraced the cause of euthanasia and kept promoting it till the end as Minoo Masani did. Somehow it did not fire the imagination of Mumbai socialists, though they were in sympathy. And by refusing medicine towards the end, he underscored his commitment to the cause he held dearly till the end. In fact, at the time of his death, he was the Chairman of the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity.

G. G. Parikh

Courtesy: Janata.

Attacks on the Press

CPJ's Report for 2006

CPJ or the 'Committee to Protect Journalists' is a New York based independent non-profit organisation that works to safeguard press freedom worldwide. The CPJ publishes a Report each year on 'Attacks on the Press'. According to their latest Report, a total of 55 journalists were killed worldwide as a direct result of their work in 2006. 32 of them in war-torn Iraq, making it the deadliest year in a single country ever recorded by CPJ. The number of journalists jailed for their work is 134.

The Report includes one on South Asia, Afghan-Pakistani border off-limits to most journalists, an analysis of the pressure on report from the frontlines and countrywise summaries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We bring to you excerpts from this Report. The following is the 'Introduction' to the Report by CNN correspondent Anderson Cooper.

They Deserved More Than Silence

Anderson Cooper

Silence. When a journalist is killed, more often than not, there is silence. In Russia, someone followed Anna Politkovskaya home and quietly shot her to death in her apartment building. The killer muffled the sound of the gun with a silencer. Her murder made headlines around the world in October, but from the Kremlin there was nothing. No statement. No condolences.

Silence. When Vladimir Putin was finally asked by reporters about the murder of one of his nation's most prominent investigative journalists, he said Politkovskaya's influence in Russia was "insignificant." Anna Politkovskaya was anything but insignificant. Her reporting on human rights abuses in Chechnya had upset many powerful people. Threats against her life were nothing new. She was an award-winning writer for *Novaya Gazeta* and had been named by CPJ as one of the most prominent defenders of press freedom in its 25-year history. She deserved more than silence.

According to CPJ, Politkovskaya was the 13th journalist killed in Russia in a gangland-style hit since Putin became president in 2000. Guess how many of the people responsible have been brought to justice? None.

Silence. As CPJ documents in this important book (*Attacks on the Press*), all too often, attacks on journalists go unsolved. Authorities either refuse to investigate, or refuse to acknowledge the possible link to the reporter's work. When a bomb exploded outside Yelena Tregubova's Moscow apartment in 2004, police said it was an act of hooliganism – nothing to do with her reporting.

In Turkmenistan, there is silence surrounding the death of Ogulsapar Muradova, a radio reporter arrested in June 2006. Branded a traitor by Turkmenistan's president, she was imprisoned for more than two months and wasn't allowed contact with anyone. Then she was put on trial. It lasted all of a few minutes. She was sentenced to six years in prison, and three weeks later she was dead. Authorities refused to say what

happened when they handed her body to her family on September 14. They would not allow an autopsy or an investigation.

Silence. In the United States, we worry about access, objectivity, and the legal consequences of protecting confidential sources; for most of us, however, security fears are not a daily concern. Reading this Report, you will be reminded just how lucky we are. This past year, I've reported from Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Israel, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in each of these war-ravaged lands I've met local journalists who encounter conditions every day that many of us in the West simply cannot imagine. They face threats not only against their own lives but against the lives of their spouses, their children.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, many Western reporters now travel with Kevlar vests and private security guards, or they embed with U.S. and British militaries. Few local journalists, however, have such protections. Afghan reporters face threats from Taliban insurgents, al-Qaeda operatives, warlords, corrupt officials, drug traffickers, nervous soldiers, and security services. All too often, their sacrifices go unnoticed.

In Pakistan, especially in the tribal areas along the Afghan border, journalists are under constant threat. While Pakistani authorities made arrests in the 2002 killing of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, investigators have produced nothing in the slayings of seven journalists since. *Silence.*

Iraq, of course, remains the most dangerous place for journalists, but there are many countries where editors and writers, correspondents and photographers risk their lives daily to report the truth. In Ethiopia, more than 20 journalists are in jail. Only China and Cuba imprison more members of the press.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, massive corruption and

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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man studies all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to debate opposing viewpoints so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Overtures to Pakistan

● Pranab Mukherjee's visit (January 13-14) to Pakistan was a gesture of goodwill despite a clear perception that General Musharraf had failed to implement the assurances that Pakistani territory or Pakistani-dominated territory would not be allowed to be used by terrorists. Mukherjee's official duty was to invite Musharraf for the 14th SAARC Summit. He got a rebuff at the outset when Pakistan pointed out that it was the Indian PM's turn to visit Pakistan and only the Pakistan PM would attend SAARC. Pakistan also pointed out that the Confidence Building Measures (CBM) had little relevance unless the Kashmir issue was resolved. In spite of all these adverse reactions, Mukherjee felt that his visit had moved the peace process forward. Is that foolhardy optimism or overwhelming desire to achieve peace at all cost? The international community loves nothing better than the countries talking to each other; because if you are talking, you are at least not at war.

It is clear that Musharraf could not control the jihadis even if he wanted to. The US National Intelligence Chief John Negroponte made it clear that Al Qaida was spreading its tentacles from Pakistan to affiliates throughout the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. He praised India's restraint. Musharraf also gave a dressing down to his top officials for failing to control terrorists and extremists. Does this make any difference to India? The US does what serves its national interests best. We should not naively believe that the US does something just to help India. We too need not do anything just to please the US or the international community. The overtures to Pakistan should be based on our own national interests. In all such manoeuvres, there is a risk that the common man is misled into believing that the danger from terrorism is a thing of the past and everything is going to be fine now onwards. Lulled into the belief that terrorist attacks were a one off thing, we get a shock of bomb blasts in Delhi or Mumbai and or failed attempts in Nagpur or Bangalore. It is perilous to lull your population to sleep when it needs to be alert to all dangers.

Sleaze TV and Racism

● Shilpa Shetty has suddenly shot to fame on the back of the "Celebrity Big Brother". She was called a "dog", a "Paki", a person who ate with her fingers, which went where only the god knows, etc. These comments were made by her so-called colleagues/rivals on the show. The comments offended the sensibilities of the viewers but not Shilpa's. There was furore in the British Parliament and the media. There was debate if Shilpa deserved any sympathy since she had entered the show knowingly to earn nearly Rs.3.5 crore. She is also likely to earn more through the recent notoriety. In any case, the reality show shows the condition as it exists in the UK; so why should anybody object to facing the truth?

All very true. Racism exists in the world, including India. However, the format of the Big Brother and its version in India, the "Big Boss" needs to be questioned. A show, which thrives on the basest human instincts, like denigration of fellow beings, abusive language, backstabbing and competition in vulgarity, is being projected as a crowd puller. Human instincts are sometimes ugly but does that justify their public glorification? One should not be paid for execrable behaviour. Just because people enjoy a show of behavioural ugliness, it should not be put on display. How can you put a premium on bad behaviour? The reality show makers must understand that sleaze does not pay! Will the viewers wake up?

Readers are invited to send in their points of view on serious issues of the day to avkay@mtnl.net.in

Pandit Nehru – ‘The Literary Gaol Bird’

S. Jagadisan

Benjamin Disraeli said, “ Other men condemned to exile and poverty, if they survive, despair; the man of letters may reckon those days as the sweetest of his life.”

Stonewalls and iron bars do not make a prison. Physical restrictions and geographical limitations cannot cramp the human spirit. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) the Dutch jurist was condemned to life imprisonment. He escaped from prison, but the two years he spent there were devoted to writing. The Spanish novelist Cervantes (1547-1617) wrote *Don Quixote*, when serving a five-year term in prison. Many of John Bunyan's (1628-88) books were written in prison. Nearer home, Bal Gangadhar Tilak wrote *Gita Rahasya* when he underwent deportation in Mandalay. Maulana Azad wrote his commentary on the Koran, while in jail.

Birthday Gift from Prison

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru belonged to this category of ‘literary gaol birds,’ over whose mind and spirit the prison wall had no power. He suffered long spells of imprisonment, but his mind was free to wander over “strange, uncharted seas of thought.” His adventure in “realms of gold” culminated in his fascinating and engrossing books. *Glimpses of World History* is a series of 196 letters written by Nehru to Indira Gandhi from prisons in Naini, Bareilly, and Dehra Dun. They span the period from October 26, 1930 to August 9, 1933. *Glimpses* was preceded by *Letters from a Father to his Daughter*, written in the summer of 1928, when Indira was ten. He describes his letter dated October 26, as his birthday gift. All his letters, in a sense, may be considered as his precious gift to a wider reading public. While *Letters from a Father* deal with the “early days of the world” in simple, direct style, *Glimpses* shows a wider range and sweep. Nehru wrote *An Autobiography* in prison from June 1934 to February 1935. *The Discovery of India* was written in Ahmednagar Fort prison between April and September 1944.

Glimpses, which K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar describes as “epistolary harvest” and an “unpremeditated legacy from the British,” and *The Discovery of India* cover a wide spectrum of topics—art, literature, philosophy and religion, politics, science, war and peace, etc. The sweep and amplitude of Nehru's mind are incredibly astonishing. He had very little access to books in prison and had to rely on his notes. How he, despite this limitation, turned the knowledge he had already laid up for creative purposes

is indeed a marvel. Nehru covers long stretches of time and takes us through the dim, long corridor of the past, letting in a clear ray of light through many a window. On the extensive canvas is projected a panoramic view of civilisations, oriental and occidental, the multidimensional dispersal of the Aryans, the glory of Indian culture and its decay, the march of the Arabs, the European Renaissance, the wave of foreign invasions of India, the growth and spread of science and industry, eminent personalities, the new emerging ideologies and so on. The two books are, indeed, a mosaic, rich and variegated.

Companions through Life

Nehru is at once a maker and interpreter of history. A nation, to him, is not just a dash of colours on the map. Though a lover of the woods and the meadows, of the snow clad mountains and the sparkling rivers, he goes beyond the geographical features to discover and underline the cultural, emotional and spiritual character, which gives meaning and life to a nation and a people. His focus is on the inner life of a nation, not on battles won or lost and treatises signed. Under his magic pen, the dead past quivers with life. Generally, we see too much of the politicians lost in the rough and tumble of political activity to appreciate the personal side to their character. Nehru's writings illumine his multifaceted personality—the historian, the thinker, the literary artist, the son, the father and the husband. His tender references to Motilal Nehru and Kamala cannot but touch the reader's heart. How deep and abiding was his influence on her has been described by Indira Gandhi “My father's three books—*Glimpses of World History*, *An Autobiography* and *The Discovery of India* have been my companions through life. It is difficult to be detached about them. Books fascinated Nehru. He sought out new ideas. He was extraordinarily sensitive to literary beauty. He was a luminous man and his writings reflected the radiance of his spirit.”

Master of Language: Magic in History

Nehru's mastery over the English language is remarkable. He is an artist in words. His is a model of

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Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

Misplaced Morality?

Segolene Royal is a remarkable Frenchwoman: smart, attractive, young for a politician (she's 53); she is the favourite to lead her country's Socialist Party bid for the Presidency of France. It's not going to be a walkover, by any means, but she could win – in France. In America, she could not.

Why not? Not because she is a woman. The USA has not had a female President yet, but many Americans would be comfortable with Hillary Clinton, for example, in the top job. The reason Royal could never hope to be President – or even a Senator or a Congresswoman – is that she is living with a man with whom she has had four children. She is not married to him.

Americans, by and large, are a tolerant people when it comes to sexual partnerships. Even gays and lesbians, though not exactly embraced, are regarded with equanimity and left alone. But when it comes to their politicians – particularly those in high office – they expect them to be paragons of virtue.

What is ironical is that this semi-puritanical attitude bucks the general trends in American society. New census figures recently released by the *New York Times* revealed that only 49.7% of America's 111 million households were made up of married couples. In other words, for the first time ever, the number of divorced and cohabiting couples in the US has overtaken the married ones.

So, then, does America's insistence on "upright family values" – or, at least a show of them – for its leaders, smack a tiny bit of moral hypocrisy? Dukakis was hounded out of the presidential race because of a misdemeanour that was never really proved. Are we too quick to pass moral judgments? The Dukakis example is perhaps a bit extreme. Adultery – even if it is alleged – is not something to be encouraged, even if it does not preclude the accused from being a very good leader. Why has a show of marital bliss and fresh faced offspring become an almost *de-rigueur* criterion for electability in American politics? If more Americans are getting divorced than those getting married, why is divorce for a potential leader, for example, considered to be taboo?

A classic case in point is the Bill and Hillary show. I'm quite sure Hillary Clinton was well aware of her husband's sexual proclivities, long before Bill ran for President. But she put on this amazingly convincing Tammy Wynette stand-by-your-man act, because she desperately wanted to be First Lady – as a run up to being President. If Clinton had confessed to Gennifer Flowers, or any of the others, in 1992, his Presidential hopes would have sunk like a stone. But would it really have made him a less effective President? Monica Lewinsky notwithstanding, there is a general consensus – except, perhaps, among the bible thumpers – that Bill Clinton was a highly intelligent individual and his Presidency was an overall success.

If "morality" is indeed the paramount quality required in a great leader, one has to look no further than George W. Bush. Even his detractors will admit that he is, morally, a good man; a man-of-god. Indeed, to some Bible-belters he is close to God himself. Laura Bush may not have been entirely joking when she complained of being a "desperate housewife." This man is so "good"; he almost puts you to sleep. What he does not possess is a razor-sharp intellect and a grasp of world affairs – reasonable expectations in the leader of the free world, I think. Most of this became almost embarrassingly apparent during his first term itself, but he still managed to get re-elected. Partly because he has some ruthlessly efficient and cunning "handlers" (I'm naming no names), but mainly because he is a "good" man. The disillusionment is starting to set in – inevitably, I suppose – but millions of conservatives in middle-America still love him.

Segolene Royal – if she wins – has the abilities to make a very good President. Whether she would make a better President if she was married to the man she is living with is a matter for speculation – but highly unlikely. The French – and many Europeans – are more mature in such matters. They focus on the essentials required for the job at hand – the peripherals can be discreetly overlooked. Maybe America needs to grow up too.

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From Our Readers

(A Thought of Importance or Interest or in response to an article published in *Freedom First*)

This page arises from a suggestion by reader Brigadier R. Lokaranjan (Retd.) that we should have a column "Just a Thought of importance or interest to share with readers." We invited the Brigadier to 'inaugurate' the column with something he considers would be of importance and interest. He has sent in his letter with which we open this column and invite you to participate. This column will also be open for comments by readers on articles published in Freedom First – Ed.

Dear editor,

Kind of you to have even taken note of my vague suggestion for a column "Just a thought of importance or interest" to share with readers.

It came to me impulsively when thinking about Saddam Hussain having just been executed, and my wondering about death sentences being actually carried out even as a rarest of rare punishment for whatever reason. I thought what do responsible senior citizens feel about it, to share their views, not leaving them unexpressed, if there is such a column.

Anyway, this is my letter to *Freedom First* in case such a column can be got going. Views on "Trying to figure out Rebirth" and other such matters which occur to senior citizen readers of *Freedom First*, may be expressed in "Just a Thought" to be shared!

Brigadier R. Lokaranjan (Retd).

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On Nanotechnology

Since the last two years and having lost mobility due to a hip and spinal operation, I was beginning to lose interest in current affairs when Sharad Bailer's mind boggling article on Nanotech technology in *Freedom First* Issue No.476, December 2006, prompted me to make the following observations.

Every new breakthrough in Human Knowledge brings in new opportunities for plenty and new capacities for disharmony and destruction.

That is because a corresponding breakthrough in values does not take place. We still believe that articulate and inspiring lectures on values would lead to insight into human life and relationship. This is a myth for, Information seldom leads to transformation. Why?

One major reason is there is no understanding through direct perception – a flash of insight without the conditioning influence of knowledge, ancient or modern.

Misuse of language with its emotive associations, signs and symbols and constructs is perhaps the single major fact preventing direct perception.

What took Alfred Korzibeski (Science and Sanity) hundreds of pages to explain this fact was stated by J. Krishnamurthy in a single sentence 'The word is not the thing'. Functioning authenticity is possible by moving from the symbol to its referent. No amount of information about an apple can lead to 'knowing how it tastes'. No amount of information about Muslims can help an authentic understanding of Rashid. No amount of Hindutva can help one observe Raju as he is.

This relationship between symbol and referent should be the beginning of education from the primary level in schools to its more complex understanding at higher levels of education.

Then there is perhaps the possibility of developing a society of Nanotech technology leading to a life of plenty without the possibility of destruction on an ever-widening scale.

Dr. S. K. Parukh, Educationist and Counsellor.

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Debate

The "Foreign" Fetish

Reference the item in Cornucopia of *Freedom First* of December 2006; Government recognition is essential for disciplines like medicine and law or for government jobs and post-graduate studies. It should not be necessary for absorption in industry. For example, an institute in Pune imparts studies in computer discipline. They have not bothered about recognition by the Government. Their education standards are acceptable to the industry and their students get picked up faster than those from established colleges. The important point is the quality of education. Students desirous of recognition can pass the examinations of the Institution of Engineers, having acquired the skills and knowledge.

We should be more concerned about the prevailing atmosphere in our universities like that in Meerut or in Bihar.

Brig. S. C. Sharma [Retd.], Pune

A Writer Under Siege

Orhan Pamuk - Nobel Laureate in Literature

R. Srinivasan



One of the excruciating developments in the 20th and 21st centuries is the attempt of many countries at wiping out past historical happenings. Almost every country is complicit in this. Groups in Germany have attempted to exonerate Hitler and the 'final solution'. Historians have been attempting to whitewash the genocide of the Jews in Hitler's Germany but fortunately this has few

takers. Some historians have attempted to put a new gloss on the achievements of British colonialism.

Another earlier modern international tragedy, was the ruthlessness of the Turks in suppressing Armenian nationalists between 1890-1915. In fact, Sultan Adul Hamid II had a plan to systematically eliminate them. Yet the contemporary Turkish government would like to underplay its role in this manoeuvre. The official Turkish position is that only a few hundred thousand died in the long conflict. Turkish Law has Article 301 which punishes denigrating Turkishness. "Where insulting being a Turk is committed by a Turkish citizen in a foreign country, the penalty to be imposed shall be increased by one-third". It also stipulates that "when an offence is committed through the print or other mass media, the penalties are automatically increased".

The eminent Turkish literateur and Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk had to undergo unbearable suffering and humiliation for reminding his nation of its sordid past on this issue.

Orhan Pamuk now in his fifties remains one of the best known novelists of Turkey and his novels have been translated into several languages. He writes in the grand tradition of European novelists and explores the continuous conflicts inherent in a traditional society and the challenges that it necessarily faces in changing circumstances. His novels were regarded as worthy of the award of the Nobel Prize and were often shortlisted.

In an interview with a reporter of a Swiss newspaper, he referred to the millions of Armenians massacred and

the near 30,000 Kurds killed in his country. This led to a trial by a xenophobic media and he was denounced as a traitor and faced threats of death. He took refuge in the West for a brief period and, on his return, the Public Prosecutor charged him with "public denigration of Turkish identity". The trial that started in December 2005 could have resulted in three years' imprisonment. Not only Pamuk, but a Turkish Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink was also put on trial on the same charge. The charges were ultimately dropped. This was perhaps because of Turkey's chances of entry into the European Union would have been irreparably compromised had the government proceeded with the trial. For it would have "violated the European standards of freedom, and by that token, weakened Turkey's bid for membership of the European Union". The unanimous condemnation by European opinion and its possible fall-out perhaps came to the rescue of Orhan Pamuk.

The trial took place before he was awarded the Nobel Prize. The government will now perhaps be guarded in its moves to touch him. Meanwhile, as we go to press, comes the sad news that Hrant Dink, the Turkish journalist who took a similar stand, was assassinated on January 19, 2007.

DR. R. SRINIVASAN, retired professor of political science, Mumbai University and Associate Editor, *Freedom First*.

The Anger of the Damned

The members of the wealthy, pro-modernist class that founded the Turkish Republic reacted to resistance from the poor and backward sectors of society not by attempting to understand them, but by law enforcement measures, prohibitions on personal behavior, and repression by the army. In the end, the modernization effort remained half-finished, and Turkey became a limited democracy in which intolerance prevailed. Now, as we hear people calling for a war between East and West, I am afraid that much of the world will turn into a place like Turkey, governed almost permanently by martial law. I am afraid that self-satisfied and self-righteous Western nationalism will drive the rest of the world into defiantly contending that two plus two equals five, like Dostoevsky's underground man, when he reacts against the "reasonable" Western world. Nothing can fuel support for "Islamists" who throw nitric acid at women's faces so much as the West's failure to understand the damned of the world.

Orhan Pamuk

Extracted from the *New York Review of Books* November 15, 2001.

The Business of the State is Government, Not Business (cont'd. from p.2)

the subsequent years. Second, such proceeds necessarily need to be placed in an exclusive escrow account and not in the general budgetary receipts.

Third, and the most important, the allocation of the proceeds must be one-third each for specific purposes, namely, (a) building up social safety net and social sector programmes; (b) repayment of high cost debts of the Central government; and (c) funding of infrastructure projects that are languishing for want of financial support. As a matter of fact, one third of the disinvestment proceeds could be deployed in strengthening the PPP (public private partnership) mechanism through SPVs (special purpose vehicles) and VGF (viability gap funding) for the infrastructure projects.

In substance, the Central Budget 2007-08 must send clear signals about the government's intentions to reactivate PSEs disinvestment and privatization policy. Such initiative is not only desirable from the viewpoint of mobilizing resources for various critical functions of the Government, but more importantly in accelerating the momentum of growth, and in enthusing the climate of investment on a sustained basis. Let the opportunity not be lost once again at the altar of the obsolete ideological stance of 'Left' allies!

MR. SUNIL S. BHANDARE, a Consulting Economist, is Chairman of the Drafting Group of the Liberal Budgets, an initiative of the INDIAN LIBERAL GROUP and the Project for Economic Education, Mumbai.



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Pandit Nehru – 'The Literary Gaol Bird' (cont'd. from p.6)

polished prose and his style has the majesty and grace, as the flow of a river. He heightens history with the colouring of his imagination. "If in the future some Indian children are to learn English, they will do well to insist that they are taught from these *Glimpses* rather than from Macaulay or Gibbon. They will learn better history and better English" (Tom Wintringham. *Nehru*. Abhinandan Granth, 1949). In his last letter in *Glimpses* Nehru writes, "If you look upon past history with the eye of sympathy,

the dry bones will fill u with flesh and blood and you will see a mighty procession of living men and women and children in every age and clime, different from us and yet very much like us, but there is plenty of magic for those who have the eyes to see." True, there is magic in *Glimpses* and *The Discovery of India*.

MR. S. JAGADISAN is Professor of English (retd.) Presidency College, Chennai.

Attacks on the Press (cont'd. from p.4)

a complete lack of judicial protection allow gunmen to operate with impunity. Tens of thousands of women have been raped, and rarely are the attackers arrested. Journalists are killed or threatened, and there is no investigation, no justice. *Silence*.

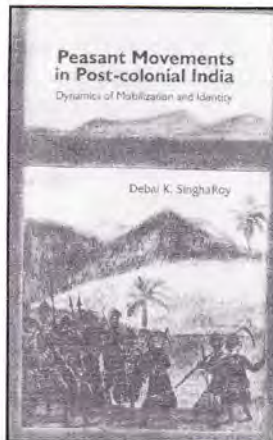
It would be easy to pretend that all these attacks on journalists do not have an impact, do not stop reporters from pursuing important stories. But, of course, they do. In the former Soviet Union, CPJ notes that attacks on the press have a "chilling effect on media coverage of the sensitive issues of corruption,

organized crime, human rights violations, and abuse of power." In countries around the world, the effect is the same.

That is why this book and CPJ's work are so important. They serve as witness. They give voice to those who have been silenced. They speak. Too many others no longer can.

ANDERSON COOPER is a CNN correspondent and author of the 2006 best-seller *Dispatches from the Edge*, which recounts his coverage of the South Asia tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, and other major news events.

Book Review



PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN POST-COLONIAL INDIA – Dynamics of Mobilization and Identity by Debal K. Singharoy • Published by Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd , B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area Mathura Road, Post Bag 7, New Delhi 110 044 • No. of pages 275 Price • Rs. 295

Reviewed by S. Arunajatesan, formerly Deputy General Manager, State Bank of India.

The book on peasant movements in India is based on a detailed study and the views presented are supported by elaborate data. The author has dealt with the conceptual framework in the first chapter followed by five other chapters on the peasant movements in Tebhaga (West Bengal) and Telangana in Andhra Pradesh and the Naxalite movement in both states. Although the presentation of the concept is not lucid the other chapters are simple and clear.

Agriculture has never been given importance in the country as the people working in the field are SC/ST communities and other backward castes. They consist of small and marginal farmers share croppers, agricultural labourers who are large in number but poor, illiterate, and powerless. On the other hand large tracts of land, even after land ceilings is in the hands of small number of big farmers who belong to the high caste, and are rich and powerful. They traditionally dominated and subjugated the peasants and treated them in an inhuman and cavalier manner.

This state of affairs which was deplorable during British rule has improved only slightly in independent India and the change is not very perceptible. It is evident from the book that injustice prevails even today in a modified form. The oppressed and suppressed peasants all over

the country and more so in West Bengal and Telangana (A.P) have been mobilized and supported by communists and Naxalites of various hues and colours, in their struggle against landlords, the police and government officers who formed a nexus to put down the peasants. The peasants in those areas despite being benefited through organized struggle continue to be dominated. It was the tyranny of landlords and rich farmers in those days and that of politicians now. Improvement in the position of peasants is illusory. It is still a question of subordination for survival. There is a long way to go before they are able to attain a decent status. The book exposes the sad state of affairs in the country and it must be read by NGO's, bank officials and bureaucrats and all those who are involved in rural development.

Milton Friedman and the Post Office



The recent death of Milton Friedman reminded me of a telephone conversation we had a decade ago. I expressed admiration for a couple of his ideas but could not understand why he was so rigidly anti-government. We argued back and forth, until I said, what about the Post Office of the 1930s, '40s and '50s? Remember how they delivered the mail twice a day to residences, and three times to businesses? Packages arrived swiftly and intact. A 13-cent special-delivery stamp would guarantee delivery immediately by courier upon arrival at the destination post office.

Friedman chuckled and said he had to concede, fondly recalling how he had relied heavily on the post office when courting his wife, Rose. I was delighted to have scored a point with the great man. But then he asked me to ponder why I had to reach back so far to find a convincing example of government working. He had me. I knew there were other government agencies that performed well, but all the recent examples that came to mind were small agencies. I know government can work. But it is true that most of the large institutions could stand a lot of improvement. The point is that many of the them, like the CDC, do essential work. Instead of wasting time arguing pro or anti government, as do too many Democrats and Republicans, we should concentrate on ways to make these essential agencies do a better job.

Charles Peters

COURTESY: *The Washington Monthly*, January/February 2007.

Between Ourselves ...

It bears repeating that the business of the state is government not business. It is not dogma but commonsense. In one of his speeches during the election campaign of 1962, Rajaji compared the government's preoccupation with things other than governance to a mother busying herself with make-up while feeding the child! The 'make-up' referred to the government's insistence on being in industry, business and trade, neglecting its essential task of providing good governance. If economic reforms are to reach rural India then the sooner the state jettisons its obsession in being the owner of large industrial undertakings the better. On the eve of the Union Budget for 2007-2008 liberal economist Sunil Bhandare yet again reasons why. As we go to press it would appear from newspaper reports that there is a weak attempt at reviving the process of disinvestment.

Yet another outstanding Indian has left us, further impoverishing the already dwindling number of men of

integrity. We pay our tribute to Professor Sadanand Varde and mourn with his family and his many friends and admirers the passing of a "true PSPer as GG Parikh describes him in his tribute in *Janata* weekly (which we are privileged to reproduce).

Alongside journalism of the page-3 kind we also have some outstanding examples of journalists who at considerable personal risk bring us news and analysis. The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) recently released its Report for 2005. We shall bring you excerpts from this very important Report entitled "Attacks on the Press" in the next few issues beginning with this one.

An extension in a manner of speaking of the CPJ Report is our story of Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish Nobel Laureate in Literature and his persecution by his government. Read about it on page 9.

Editor

Many Voices

Mulayam Singh Yadav might win the elections because he has condemned the hanging (of Saddam Hussein) more openly.

Indira Congress member Salman Khurshid,
The Week, January 14

Lohia was a hard nut to crack. But today, these (his followers the Lohia socialists) are walnuts. You can crack them with yours hands.

Shiv Sena Chief Bal Thackeray,
The Indian Express, January 30

Inflation is rising and politicians are squawking.

Economic journalist Swaminathan Anklesaria Aiyar,
Sunday Times of India, January 21

The most dramatic change in Indian business in the past decade has been the surge in ambition.

TV journalist Andy Mukherjee,
Hindustan Times, February 2

Muslim leaders and intellectuals find it easier to criticize outsiders for the harm inflicted on fellow Muslims. When it comes to recognizing the suffering caused by

fellow believers there is a tendency to fudge the issue.

Hussain Haqqani, *The Indian Express*, February 7

Elected governments see most problems in terms of votes to be gained or lost and rarely from a public interest perspective.

P. K. Doraiswamy, retired civil servant,
Industrial Economics, 15-29 November 2006

For a nation of incorrigible me-first shovers and pushers with seldom a care for the aged, women and children, India's post-independence generation tends to be extraordinarily sensitive about any accusation of bad manners.

Dilip Thakore, *Education World*, December 2006

For those in the West asking when Islam will have its Reformation, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that the process appears to have begun. The bad news is it's been marked by calumny, hatred and bloody violence.

Farzed Zakaria, *Newsweek*, published in
The Indian Express, February 6

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