

Freedom First

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Of Non-Violence When Faced by Violence

From Our Readers

Freedom First

Freedom First was started by the late Minoo Masani to fight the menace of Communist totalitarianism in India. It has exposed the double-talk of the communist party which formed joint-fronts with other parties and eminent individuals to come to power. It could get power only in Kerala and West Bengal through this method. They wanted to take over the Congress as well. In the 'fifties and the 'sixties communists were thinking of being the mahout of the Congress elephant – this is how P. C. Joshi described their plans. The fall of the Berlin Wall signalled the end of communism. Of course, it flourishes in China after it abandoned its basic philosophy of state ownership. Just now there are more millionaires in China than in India. It is more a dictatorship than a communist state.

There are other threats to freedom and they come from mis-governance, terrorism, Naxalism and corruption. *Freedom First* must continue to fight these and other menaces that bedevil our country and our freedom.

The ICCF and the Advisory Board are right in coming to the conclusion that the monthly magazine of 32 pages at a price of Rs.20 and annual subscription of Rs.200 etc. As a life subscriber and an occasional writer to the magazine, I am sending a small contribution by post. I believe that it should be possible to increase the advertisements with some effort. Send a sample copy to all members of the leading associations/chambers in Mumbai for getting more subscription.

I appreciate the January issue on India-China Relations. Every issue or at least every second issue should have similar discussion and analysis on the major issues that confront the country. Some of the think-tanks in the country could be associated with it.

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Tatas Set An Example

It is heart-warming to know that the House of Tatas has set an example for others to follow by disbursing Rs.2.5 crore to the families who lost relatives at the Taj, CST, Metro junction and Cafe Leopold in the terrorist attack on 26/11 last year according to a press report. The Taj Public Service Welfare Trust, which was set up immediately after the attack, is also providing medical help, vocational training, educational grants and trauma counselling as well. The Trust has identified 360 families of the victims in Mumbai's slums and in their 'native places' all over the country enlisting the support of 20 students from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and is providing more

than 100 families with monetary help ranging from Rs.7,500 to Rs.10,000 and that 30 children are being supported with school fees, books and transport. This is testimony to the social responsibility that the House of Tatas have assumed. In addition, the Trust has launched a micro-finance scheme to help the victims or their families, and has taken over an Industrial Training Institute to impart training in computers, baking and house-keeping to employ them in their group of companies. This is indeed in tune with Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Trusteeship. He would have applauded these actions. Kudos to the House of Tatas.

Both letters are from M. D. Kini, Mumbai.
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A Calamity in the Nilgiris

In November 7, 8 and 9, 2009, we had heavy landslides, floods and calamity in the Nilgiris which took 47 lives, of which a government bus driver Luis and his 7 family members (just a kilometre from my house, on Achanakal Road) were washed/crushed away at midnight when there was no power.

In 1978, 1993 and now in 2009, these unusual landslides have taken a heavy toll of lives, mostly the poor, who depend on their low income.

In 1978, a Central Geological team advised better drainage system, alternative roads and avoiding building on slopes. Both the authorities and the public ignored them. Of course, in two nights, there were over 80 cms. of rain which is unprecedented for November.

But, the authorities (among them many corrupt officials) never bothered to accept Nature's importance. Only even more number of Eucalyptus trees have come up, but Shola trees are much fewer. A good number of forest trees, were removed by greedy contractors with the support of corrupt officials.

The so-called Mudhumalai National Park has a barren look. We have been seeing it since the 1950s; and many Shola trees were removed from time to time. We have seen the administration of late Mr. Lobo Prabhu, ICS, in the Nilgiris during the 1960s who did much to preserve the forest cover. Such noble officers have gone from the scene now. It is very difficult to see an honest officer in these times. Corruption is a way of life. If this trend continues the whole upper Nilgiris would be washed away in course of time. It is time a high-power committee of experts is formed immediately to take urgent steps

to restore nature, raising forests and restricting the new construction of buildings on the slopes. There is a law that prohibits building on slopes over 30° of the terrain. But this is only on paper and not followed!

Unless appropriate action is taken, it is difficult to save the Nilgiris, the great Blue Mountains of the Western Ghats.

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A Commission “Without Precedent”

Having read Shri Keshav Rau’s article “Commissions of Enquiry” and the comments of Shri Ashok Karnik (*Freedom First*, No.511 January 2010) I am prompted to commend to the readers of *Freedom First*, an excellent book “Without Precedent – The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission” published by Knopf(2006).

The former governor of New Jersey, Thomas H. Kean, and former Congressmen Lee H. Hamilton were appointed by the President of the United States to investigate the 9/11 disaster.

Kean and Hamilton acted as one although Kean was named Chairperson he accepted Hamilton as co-chair and not as deputy. What was more they got four representatives from the two major political parties as members of the Commission. During its meetings the seating arrangements were such that no two representatives of the same party sat together at the hearings. This helped create a team which presented a unanimous report even while in the larger political arena the Republicans were apprehensive and the Democrats were trying to score points. The Report was being prepared during the controversial Presidential election campaign of 2004!

The Commission always worked in the open. It started with invitations to the victims’ families of which some 600 were from New Jersey. These families which had already started working on getting to the truth about the functioning (or malfunctioning) of the various intelligence agencies etc., provided a list of 52 issues to the Commission at the very start!

The military, diplomatic and intelligence agencies were reluctant to provide the needed materials, Overcoming such difficulties, keeping the press and the media well-informed, they produced their Report. They wanted the Report to reach all parts of the over the USA simultaneously and thus got printed 2.5 million copies which were produced in 3 days and made available at just US\$10 a copy. It became a bestseller selling another 6 million copies in less than a week.

The White House was reluctant to meet the whole Commission but they persuaded and got all the ten members to question the President and the Vice President together at the Oval Office! The Commission which was given 18 months, sought only 3 months extension and completed its work.

Finally they created a “Public Discourse Project” a private foundation dedicated to ensure that the Commission’s recommendations for reform and their time deadlines for implementation were adhered to.

In short it became a Commission “**Without Precedent.**”

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Proportional Representation Needed to Correct Distortion

In his column in *The Indian Express* of December 29, 09 Pratap Bhanu Mehta effectively questions the morality and integrity of Indian citizens. I am not so pessimistic about the intrinsic morality of Indian citizen. The trouble is that our electoral system (of simple majority) debars any honest, law-abiding individual from entering politics. The voters have to vote for one from among the the criminal, dishonest candidates on the ballot paper simply because no honest person is prepared to enter the fray. So only the dishonest and the criminals get elected. They select the ministers from among themselves. Obviously the ministers excel in these vices. They select the top police officials and top bureaucrats, to serve the ministers and the elected representatives, and not the nation and the citizen. A person like Rathod in the Ruchika case, is preferred for promotion and protection, as he is ruthlessly efficient in collecting the loot, and being a criminal, can be blackmailed to give a greater share of the loot to the ministers. Thus there is a vicious chain of graft and criminality starting from the election process to the representatives, from them to the ministers, from them to the police and the government servants. The socialist (!) government and politics play such a dominant role in the society, that it is not surprising that the poison percolates into the entire society. What is surprising is that there are still so many honest people with their intrinsic moral values intact have survived in this poisoned environment.

This situation can be corrected only by replacing the present electoral process by proportionate representation and run off voting.

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Copenhagen Offers Hope – Not Despair!

Meera Sanyal

Let us take a leaf out of Copenhagen and adopt goals that make sense for India and for every Indian. We are blessed with the largest young population of the world; with a culture that is naturally respectful of nature; and above all a spirit of innovation.

Today, as I fly back from Europe, Copenhagen is covered in snow and a sense of sadness at the impending failure of our world's leaders to reach agreement. Global warming and its solutions seem to have been blanketed under a cloak of darkness.

Yet as I reflect on the days spent last week in Copenhagen I am filled with hope. Perhaps it is better not to have a protocol that gives the impression of progress when in fact the reality is that there is still no political consensus on what needs to be done, by whom and by when. And this is true not just at a global level but in most nations including in the Indian parliament.

So what gives me hope? Being in Copenhagen – outside of the plenaries of Bella Centre was an uplifting experience.

The city of Copenhagen itself, has laid out a bold and futuristic plan to be carbon neutral by 2025. This goal is backed by a clear and auditable plan signed by the entire city administration led by Ritt Bjerregaard the Lord Mayor. They have laid out clear milestones for every year till 2015, and identified 50 specific initiatives to meet the 2015 goal of a 20% cut in CO₂ emissions between 2005 and 2015.

The plan states upfront: “It is true that this has a cost now. But it is an investment with good returns. Financially speaking and in terms of health, performance and well being for all who live work and stay in Copenhagen.”

It is a beautiful, clear and lucid plan backed by tangible examples of how the implementation of this plan will work in a way that makes Copenhagen a better city to live in.

What gives me hope is the optimism of leaders like Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace prize winner, who with her beautiful deep voice says “Do not wait for a global protocol – leave here inspired by what you see and take action in your own local community.” This from a lady, who has so inspired women across Kenya, that in the past 30 years more than 35 million trees have been planted. The Kenyan army has joined her Green Belt

movement taking on the mandate to plant trees and preserve forests in areas controlled and supervised by them.

What gives me hope is the rag picker Santu from Delhi who speaks out loudly and clearly in chaste Hindi to an international audience explaining why rag pickers like him do more to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions than the Waste incinerator plants being set up in the garbage dumping grounds in the NCR of Delhi.

What give me hope is that global corporations like Skanska, Johnson Controls and CPL among many others, stand proudly in panels sharing the solutions that they are bringing to the market which are commercially viable and financeable – and which they are investing in, not from a sense of Corporate Social Responsibility but simply because that is where they see the future markets.

Copenhagen is a tipping point whether a protocol is signed or not, because a future generation of consumers values public goods like clean air, fresh water and open spaces more than their parents. They are driven not just by ideology or the Science of climate change but by the simple reality that these precious commodities are getting scarcer.

The political potential of this next generation of voters has perhaps best been recognized by China. Though cynics dismiss much of the Chinese position as “spin”, there is no doubt that China has sought to and in many ways succeeded in projecting itself as a leader in the climate space. In his very well researched article on ‘Deconstructing CO₂ emission targets’ Sujit Bhalla points out that China is in fact promising a near zero cut over BAU, if one compares their emissions target for 2020 against the promised reductions in “emissions intensity”.

Given these facts and without in any way wishing to demean China, what is astonishing is how poorly India, in comparison, has projected its views, visions and achievements in the climate change space. Unlike China, India seems to be projected as obstructionist in global forums and as obsequious and pandering to the West in domestic forums.

This is not just a pity but an opportunity lost. Let us take a leaf out of Copenhagen and adopt goals that make sense for India and for every Indian. We are blessed with the largest young population of the world; with a culture that is naturally respectful of nature; and above all a spirit of innovation.

Projecting the future in terms of Carbon intensity or ppm or even degrees of temperature is not inspiring, cannot build consensus and does not lead to action.

The challenge that lies before the leadership of every global political leader but particularly those of India, is to step outside (both literally and figuratively) of the dry plenaries of the Bella Centre to the vibrant heart of Copenhagen.

For instance can we commit to electrify every home in our 400,000 villages with solar PV cells by 2015? The technology to do so already exists and is available for

commercial deployment in India. At a cost of no more than Rs.10,000 for each household, the solar PV cell, LED lights one fan and a point for a domestic appliance such as a TV or sewing machine; this is well within reach. This can be financed through micro finance and where necessary subsidised through poverty alleviation schemes.

Let us take simple purposeful steps like these that will provide light to every child in every village of India, while at the same time be a tangible way to a lower carbon footprint.

Steps like this are what the city of Copenhagen is taking – and these in the ultimate analysis is what will lead to reduced emissions and more importantly a better planet for us all to live in.

MRS. MEERA SANYAL is a banker and National Convenor of the INDIAN LIBERAL GROUP. This commentary was written as the writer was returning after participating in the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December 2009

From Kyoto Protocol Promise to Copenhagen Compromise

Sadanand B. Kumta

India which was expected to be in the vanguard to protect the interests of the developing countries has been apparently outsmarted by China which is a member of the BASIC group to which India also belongs.

The Kyoto Protocol

In 1997, it was agreed that all Annex 1 countries (37 developed countries) should bring down the emission levels to 5% below the 1990 levels. The legally binding emission cuts were to be implemented from 2005 and the first stage was to be completed by 2012. The second stage would commence in 2012 and end in 2020. It is a pity that the emission cut achieved so far according to one estimate is only 5% of the targeted emission cut.

The Copenhagen Summit

The 192-country climate change world summit was held at Copenhagen from 7th December to 19th December 2009 at the Bella Centre in snowy surroundings. The conference was marked by noisy protests from developing countries as heated and even acrimonious debates raged in the conference halls.

There were three main groups of players in the game. One, the group of influential rich countries; the second one of the BASIC countries of Brazil, South Africa, India and China, plus the G-77 and third, the rest of the world who stood up for their demands till the very end, resisting all pressures.

Until 18 December, there was practically no

agreement and only on the 19th, the extended day, an accord of some sort was drawn up. China and America were able to get India's consent by using the sweetest of diplomatic skills.

The Accord

What did the conference finally achieve? Briefly:

- 1) It was essentially a political agreement but not a blue print for action.
- 2) The Kyoto Protocol had stipulated the quantum of emissions for Annex 1 countries. It was legally binding. The accord has now made the provision negotiable, making the Protocol's future uncertain.
- 3) The accord says that Global temperature increase should not exceed 2 degree C.
- 4) The peaking year of emissions for each country is still to be decided, though more flexibility is permitted to developing countries.
- 5) It allows international consultations and analysis of self funded emission cut targets.
- 6) There is vagueness about the burden sharing formula.

The comments by the UN Secretary General on the Accord are very revealing. He said that the agreement is an 'essential beginning' though 'unambitious', with an

expectation that this would lead to a legally binding treaty by the end of December 2010.

India's Stand

Our PM outlined India's stand. He stated that:

- 1) The worst affected countries by climate change are those which are least responsible for it.
- 2) Emission cuts as mandated in the Kyoto Protocol should be implemented. Also the Bali Action Plan of 2007 together with the UNFCCC principles and provisions are to be honoured. [The Bali Action Plan had suggested two approaches: Track 1- Kyoto protocol stipulations regarding emission cuts be followed. Track 2- Long term agreement be made on emission cuts for every country.]
- 3) The need of every developing country for development and growth needs to be respected.
- 4) There is need for equitable burden sharing and to accept that every citizen has equal entitlement for the atmospheric space.

One can easily see that the COP 15 agreement has weakened India's stand though the GOI has strongly defended its role. The MRV regime that every emission reduction be "measurable, reportable and verifiable" is now qualified by the provision for consultation and verification. The USA has come out with the proposal of 100 billion

dollar package of aid through multiple agencies. India has agreed to 20% emission cut by 2020 over the 2005 levels though this is not legally binding. The biggest gainers from the accord are the USA and China, two of the largest CO2 polluters of the world.

The Compromise

India which expected to be in the vanguard to protect the interests of the developing countries has been apparently outsmarted by China which is a member of the BASIC group to which India also belongs. The choice of alternate route to rich countries has weakened the Kyoto Protocol unless remedial measures are taken at Mexico in December 2010. The peaking year for emissions is also kept vague though there is some concession to developing countries. The door has been opened to international scrutiny, even for self funded mitigation measures.

Though India has not been able to maintain its declared stand at the international level to our advantage, there is hope still to remedy the situation at the Mexico Summit. With the world belching out 27 billion tonnes of CO every year, our planet is on the edge of disaster. Nature will not forgive our collective sins in over- exploiting our resources recklessly.

MR. SADANAND KUMTA, a regular contributor to *Freedom First* is retired Director of Technical Education, Government of Gujarat.

Pragati The Indian National Interest Review

Why Pragati?

From our inaugural editorial - April 2007

The National Interest

In a land of over a billion minorities, the Indian republic – which owes its existence to the loftiest moral struggle in modern times – presents the best hope for the well-being and development of all its citizens. The survival, security and strengthening of the Indian nation and its institutions, therefore, is not only a matter of supreme moral consequence, but of immense human importance.

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Suicides By Children – Why Are Kids Giving Up So Easily

Firoze Hirjikaka

So what is the cause of the facility with which youngsters succumb to despair and take that extreme step?

The recent news report on two young children committing suicide, for reasons that hardly merit such a drastic step, has shocked the nation. A 12 year-old boy hanged himself in the school toilet because he had failed some class exams. An 11 year old girl, who was a promising dancer and had appeared in a couple of television reality shows, also took her own life.

The really alarming aspect here is that these are not isolated incidents but the latest manifestation of an alarming new trend amongst today's young people. A couple of years ago, two teenage girls in Mumbai hanged themselves over perceived academic failure. Two days later came another report of a 22 year-old Indian Institute of Technology student committing suicide for similar reasons. It seems that the tolerance limit for disappointments is being rapidly lowered for today's youth. Sure, people have been committing suicide for centuries but, up to as recently as 50 years ago, the reasons that drove them to this irrevocable action were far more profound; the death of a child, perhaps, or the prospect of an impossibly bleak future.

So what is the cause of the facility with which youngsters succumb to despair and take that extreme step? A large number of teenage suicides in India appear to stem from academic failure, often more perceived than actual. It is very tempting to put the blame on demanding parents who pressurize their children to excel academically and paint a forbidding picture of consequences if they fail. However, parents have been parents since the beginning of time. Parents of my generation (I'm 62) were not that different. True, we grumbled and cursed and some rebelled out of sheer cussedness, but the thought of killing ourselves never entered our minds.

So what has changed? Paradoxically, one reason may be that the so-called Generation Next has never had it so good. Allowances and, consequently, spending power has increased dramatically: friendship is just an SMS away; and instant entertainment is at their fingertips, literally – just click on the remote. The result is that frustration sets in very easily, without the maturity to cope with it.

True, peer pressure is not a new phenomenon. Keeping up with the Jones's has always been with us.

But nowadays it has assumed alarming proportions. Young people are taking to crime with far less compunction than before; robbery seems an easy solution to fund the incessant desire for indulging in the latest fashions, impressing your girlfriend at the pub; in short, just being hip. The gruesome murder not that long ago, of an old lady and her infant grandson is a case in point. That youngsters could even contemplate such a heinous crime just for a few hundred rupees is, sadly, a sign of the times. The urge to be part of the gang, to fit in, is so overpowering that these misguided youths will go to any lengths. And in many cases, the wrong doers come from fairly affluent families. So it is not desperation that derives them to commit these dreadful acts. It's almost a game. And the frightening part is, the end is so important that they believe any means justify it. Even murder is not treated with the gravity it deserves.

So is there any solution? Certainly no easy one comes to mind. The concept of the pampered son has always been part of Indian tradition, but parents seem to be taking it to extremes nowadays. In their eyes, their little darlings can do no wrong. So what if he wants the latest mobile? He or she has to keep up appearances. And it reflects on the family too. It would never do for the Mehtas to point fingers at the Patels and say they are too cheap to buy their child the latest gadget. And the child starts to believe that everything is within easy reach. And if it isn't, it has to be obtained by any means whatever. Parents seem to forget that they were deprived of things when they were growing up; and it did not ruin their lives. They need to rediscover that simple but very important word. NO.

MR. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA. Leonardo8_99@yahoo.com

Political Parties typically undergo a four-stage cycle after a major defeat. It goes something like this:

1. We didn't really lose. (The other guys just happened to lock into an appealing candidate – but the people still prefer us.
2. OK, we lost – but only because voters are idiots.
3. OK, we lost and maybe the voters are not idiots – but there is nothing we can do without betraying our sacred principles.
4. He maybe there is something we can do.

The British Conservative party has reached stage 4. The US Republican party is stuck in stage 1.

David Frum, *The Spectator*, 14 November 2009

Indian Students in Australia – What’s Brewing?

Sunita

Drumming up hate in the media and blowing it out of proportion only causes more angst, unrest, worry for students and heartache for their loved ones in India. Australia’s image is already sullied with the recent spate of incidents.

My countrymen at home are really at odds, wondering what is really going on in Australia. Is Australia a racist country? Are Indian students being targeted? Watching the media and reading the news, about Nitin Garg’s death and a partially-burnt body that might be of a 25 year old Indian (yet to be formally identified) would give you goose bumps or a cardiac arrest, if you had a young relative studying on this side of the globe. It certainly has me worried.

Currently international education earns Australia \$17 billion as revenue. Latest statistics show a 46% drop in overseas student visa applications from India compared with the July to October period in 2008. Education is Australia’s second most valuable export after metals.

The question on everyone’s lips is *why*? Was it just simply Nitin Garg being at the wrong place at the wrong time? One would not walk in the Bronx or Chicago late at night. Would you stroll through a lonely area, or arrive at a train station where you are the sole inhabitant? It is risky no matter which part of the world you live. In Australia too, we have dangerous suburbs.

Most Aussie kids refuse to do the graveyard shifts leaving such vacancies for migrant students to pick up. This means returning home at ungodly hours of the night, alone and vulnerable because of the distance they travel to obtain 20 hours of employment.

Crime happens everywhere, in India too. India’s papers are replete with reports of crime yet the very size of the population and the many languages in which these are reported go largely unnoticed in the national press and television other than those involving the high profiled. In Australia with a relatively smaller population of under 22 million such crimes grab front page headlines.

Yes, there is a large population of Indian students and if the related question, is it only race, then the kids of other migrant communities would also be affected. There may be some element of race too but, I am convinced, it is not a primary or the driving force behind these incidents.

I asked several of my Australian and Indian friends what their opinion was. Let’s put their thoughts in a thumbnail imprint in this article. It is generally the very best who get out of India to study. Most of them, whether you admit it or not, seek to study in Australia as it qualifies them to migrate and that is the foremost reason many Indians study abroad. It is not cheap, in fact the financial burden is so hefty and living expenses so high, one baulks. They have left their country behind and look forward to making something of themselves. I did! Australia is the land of plenty, with opportunity, space, hardly any racial discrimination and a lifestyle to be envied.

But when the students get to Australia they are at odds. They bring with them their cultural beliefs, mannerisms, quirks and idiosyncrasies. Little minor mannerisms they could use in an attempt to assimilate may include:

- Being polite and using ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. Indians having a caste system back home, with maids and servants at their beck and call, may have created an imbalance where the norm is a demand rather than a polite request. (For example when they require a form at a University, instead of a polite request asking if they could please have the form they demand by saying ‘I want a form’).
- Being careful about personal hygiene and vigilant about deodorants (to put it mildly so no one takes this amiss).
- To talk softly instead of screaming on their mobiles in the tram or train (In India we do have the habit of talking loud, perhaps to be heard above the noise and din! Out here it is a quieter world).
- The Aussie twang or the accent also throws them out of gear. Indian students are reluctant to admit that they are unable to understand the lingo. Their retort is ‘what’ in that rude manner, not meaning to be rude at all. How do we get so many students whose English comprehension is below par?
- Rental costs are so high, many Indian students to

save rental fees cram into one small flat. In India this is an accepted norm, as real estate is more expensive than in Australia. However the landlords feel cheated.

All these minor issues do not for one moment deflect from the undoubtedly awful incidents that are occurring. It is quite frightening if it were true that they were being racially vilified. Also all, irrespective of class, creed, race and colour, after living in Australia for two years become Australian citizens. So when an Indian is attacked it could be anybody and anyone of the above. Our Police are at a loss to know who is behind these barbaric attacks.

Humour is the best *forte* in an Australian's armour. They love it, flaunt it, and proudly banter with it. Indians cannot hack humour, they don't understand. It is culturally different and their hackles are on full alert should somebody dare say 'hey you curry head? The Aussie's love curry, they will beg you to cook it for them. It is a funny term of endearment and no offence meant..

Whilst the Indian Government is putting out an eight-point warning about the do's and don'ts, we in Australia need to help and assist our international students to assimilate in Australia once they arrive by:

- organising an induction night
- teaching and encouraging them to accept cultural differences (when In Rome do as the Romans do)
- getting the Ministry of Cultural Affairs develop seminars
- improving overall security
- providing an orientation program to new migrant kids
- focussing on security up-skilling

- enhancing vigilance with networks linking colleges, migration agents and organised crime, using students as a cash cow. Close down such colleges offering courses such as commercial cookery for instance.

India's Foreign Minister S. M. Krishna, warned that the incident (the murder of Garg) could affect bilateral ties between the two countries. Yes it will, if the media beat the "racist drum" Media controls what is being said and reported and this consequently leads to bias, revenge and hate. Our Deputy Prime Minister Julie Gillard has insisted Australia is overwhelmingly a safe place. It is, compared to many parts of the world. Vasan Srinivasan President of the Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria was right; the weekend's murder was not a racist attack. So lets move on to a safer playing field.

Let us all sheath our claws; treat every incident on merit without speculation.

Drumming up hate in the media and blowing it out of proportion only causes more angst, unrest, worry for students and heartache for their loved ones in India. Australia's image is already sullied with the recent spate of incidents. I read recently that Australia reneged on the uranium deal that the Howard government had promised. Is this an economic issue? Is India flexing its muscle power because it is not happy with the Rudd government's policy? Let's not make racism a political scapegoat. India will be a dominating force in the next decade, let it be with pride. Let the Australians not be negligent, arrogant or complacent with what is happening on our streets. Let's work together in harmony to harness what is best for both, thus creating an ambience that supports all students wishing to study the Down Under Land of Plenty!

SUNITA is an Indian in Australia. freedom@vsnl.com

The young man from Chandigarh who drove me (has) done his MBA from the Australian Catholic College and is now driving a taxi since the job market is not terribly good for MBA degree holders or even IT professionals.... So, why doesn't (he) come home? ...He grinned and said simply, "I like it here."

I asked him whether he wasn't afraid of being attacked on the streets - was it worth the risk? His response ..." The media has played up the attacks so much that young, jobless Aussie men are taking bets with each other and saying, 'Watch me on the telly, mates. I'm going to bash those Indians and become famous'." According to Sonny, it is all about rising frustration levels, especially since desis work really hard, are generally better educated and get superior jobs at higher salaries

I met a few middle-aged Sikh drivers who have been in Australia for decades and never faced a single racial issue. But they had to acknowledge things had changed ever since the recession, with rising joblessness and a cost index to match. Most of these older taxiwallas have children in colleges across Australia. Of course, they are worried and concerned about their safety, but they shrugged and said philosophically, "What is happening here could also happen in India. My son could be mugged or killed back home as well."

Shobhaa De: Extracted from her blog posted on December 18, 2009 from Melbourne

Compulsory (read Coercive) Voting

R. C. Saxena

The said Bill will only transform the citizens of a modern democratic State into the subjects of an autocratic State.

The Gujarat State Assembly recently passed the Gujarat Local Authorities Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2009 which is at once contrary and antithetical to the idea of a liberal democracy. The said legislation is not only illiberal but also a retrograde step considering the fact that democracy in this country has stood the test of time and has flourished.

The Bill makes voting compulsory in elections to all the Municipal Corporations, Municipalities, District Panchayats and Taluka Panchayats in the state of Gujarat. Aimed at making democracy more representative and meaningful the Bill has been passed, as claimed by the state Government, to make the educated and the intellectual class take part in democracy at the grass root level. Admittedly the business of the state is to legislate but it cannot be extended to being the conscience keeper of the citizens, whether educated or not, who have the freedom of will and choice to participate or not to participate in the process of elections. What is alarming about the said legislation is the coercion which characterizes it. The legislation has, without meaning to cast aspersions on the present state government, the potency to become an instrument of political coercion in the hands of unscrupulous rulers. Apart from conflicting with the Fundamental Rights to equality, liberty and freedom of movement, the Bill impinges on the freedom of will and choice conferred on human beings under the law of nature. This Bill will only transform the citizens of a modern democratic State into the subjects of an autocratic State.

Vote, as a noun, is understood to mean formal expression of a wish, will, choice or opinion. Such an expression cannot be elicited by coercion, as the Bill purports to do. Moreover, to caste a vote is understood to mean to exercise discretion. Discretion is a very solemn and delicate legal premise and has been held to be something which cannot be compelled. To make people vote under coercion would amount to subjugating them to the will of the State which is not what democracy is all about. The real danger in making voting compulsory is that it will load the dice in favor of the ruling party which is ruling at any given point of time. One can only imagine the situation if power goes into the hands of

extremists of a right or left ideological persuasion.

The idea of compulsory voting appears, on first blush, to be appealing in order to make our democracy more representative. But who says ours is not a representative democracy? In fact, Indian democracy is more representative than other democracies if one considers the diversity of our people and the growing number of political parties. The successive coalition governments formed at the Centre and in many states clearly indicates the representative character of our democracy. It would be trite to believe that increase in the number of votes, and that too by way of a coercive legislation, will make our democracy any more representative than what it already is.

It must be noted that the right of vote is not a fundamental right under the Constitution of India. Correspondingly, the duty to vote is also not a fundamental duty under the Constitution. In fact, the Constitution, as well as other laws related to election in India, do not consider voting as a right or duty. The Constitution and other election related laws merely provide for qualifications and procedures to vote. One also does not find any specific power in the Union, the State and the concurrent lists, under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India, which permits for enacting legislation, either by the state or the centre, which coerces the citizens to vote under compulsion.

One wonders what is the compelling public interest, or even Government interest, in legislating compulsory voting by citizens if not the compelling delusion of the legislators.

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As a noted columnist remarked on Pakistani politicians' prodigious capacity to botch it up: "It is our luck that down the years Pakistan has been led or ruled – although, in all honesty, the proper word is screwed – by a bizarre set of characters... After Musharraf we deserved something better. What do we get? Zardari. There's a Shakespearean classic waiting to be written here.'

Quoted by Ranjan Roy, the Sunday Times of India, December 27, 2009

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.

Save the Earth

1) The Copenhagen meet of 192 states was intended to save the earth from our rush to self-destruction. The tragedy is that we don't know whether it was successful. A lot of verbiage came through, not making us any the wiser. We heard of 'deficit of trust' between the developed and the developing world; 'mitigation burden', 'non-binding agreement'. The journey was from Copenhagen to Floppenhagen to Hopenhagen. President Obama saved the day through last minute intervention, getting twenty odd important countries, including the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) to agree to something. In stead of being a total disaster, the convention could pretend to have achieved something. India and China emerged as comrades in arms, defying the rich who wanted to place the burden of remedial action on the developing countries. Now the negotiations will continue in 2010 in Mexico when it is hoped a deal would be struck not to destroy the earth. One must learn to live on hope.

Our Lok Sabha MPs gave a strong signal recently about how even though India has adopted parliamentary democracy, the reality is totally different. If proof was needed it was the Question Hour on November 30....A good 24 MPs who had questions for oral replies in the Question Hour played truant... For the first time since the Lok Sabha was constituted in 1952, a new record of absentee MPs led to the collapse of Question Hour.

**N. Vittal, Mumbai Mirror
December 21, 2009**

1) The Copenhagen Accord decided to limit the increase in earth temperature to 2 degrees by 2050 and activate self-imposed controls to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The equation of progress = development = carbon emissions = earth warming defeated all attempts at a compromise. Nobody wants to forego development. The developing nations' argument that they needed financial compensation for adopting new technologies and cutting down on carbon emissions was understandable. President Obama promised to help raise a fund of US\$ 100 bn a year from 2020 for this purpose. These pie in the sky promises do not work very well as most countries try to back out of such commitments. The earlier Kyoto Protocol demanding that the developed world undertake certain obligations has never been implemented and in fact all attempts were made to jettison it. It is like the old robbers, sitting pretty on the loot, asking the new ones not to rob the earth further. India which is among the lowest in per capita pollution index has decided to give up this argument and be more flexible. Jairam Ramesh has come in for criticism for softening the Indian stand and opening the door for international inspection of its corrective measures. Obama has also come in for criticism at home for failing to get India and China to accept restrictions. Nobody is happy. As Jairam Ramesh put it, the accord is 'work in progress'.

And then, there are skeptics who argue that even without human mischief, the earth went through the cycle of warming, flooding, ice age and thaw for millions of years. So, what is the big deal now? The question defies all logic!

Another States' Reorganisation?

2) Telangana agitation finally forced the Centre to accept the idea of division of Andhra Pradesh. Although the Centre appears to have backtracked after facing opposition from Congressmen from rest of AP, the Pandora's Box has been opened. The first States' Reorganisation in 1956 was based on the exalted principle of people's right to be governed in their mother-tongue; the present demand is based on grievances over lack of development of certain areas in a state. Lopsided development is the issue. Such grievances are widespread. It is the deficiency of

2) The Pandora's Box has already thrown up the barely contained demands for separate Vidarbha, Gorkhaland, Purvanchal Pradesh and there are more in the cookhouse. Regional aspirations are natural but new states involve non-productive expenditure on new legislatures, ministers, bureaucrats and administrative infrastructure; there is no guarantee that greater investment would flow into neglected areas. The new states have to be administratively and economically viable. The Panchayati Raj was meant to attend to local aspirations by strengthening local self-

administration and iniquitous division of investment. The argument is that an administration that is close at hand is more sensitive to people's needs and responds faster; smaller states are more well-knit and easier to manage. There is no disputing the fact that some regions have remained underdeveloped and there is a feeling that regional bias is responsible for the neglect. The next stage would be for each district to push its own demands and allege partiality towards the next district. Where does this stop?

Bullet-Proof Jackets

3) Bullet-proof jackets, their effectiveness and corruption in their procurement are a topic of discussion in Maharashtra since 26/11. Everybody has become an expert on how improper equipment was the cause of the havoc of 26/11. Poor equipment might have reduced our efficiency in dealing with the crisis but it was not the cause. Once the terrorists entered Mumbai, the crisis was already upon us. All our attention is focused on how the crisis should have been dealt with and not on how the crisis should have been prevented. To add to the confusion, we have the case of Hemant Karkare's missing jacket or its faulty design. Besides, the file about the purchase of jackets went missing or was tampered with. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which sets the parameters for the central government, has also come under suspicion for fudging the tests on bullet-proof jackets. It could be a serious lapse and needs corrective action but it should not be mistaken as a cause of 26/11. The manufacturers of the jackets do not like the phrase 'bullet-proof'; nothing is bullet-proof in what they make. The correct phrase is protection against bullets. The problem is that the Government's credibility is so low that the worst interpretation of its action is most readily accepted by the people, be it about purchase of weapons, bullet proof-jackets or anti-terrorism policies.

government. Zilla Parishads were supposed to take the Government to people. All this comes to naught if smaller and smaller states are formed to satisfy local aspirations. There would be nothing wrong in having smaller states if our record of non-productive expenditure was not so poor. An unwieldy state needs to be pruned but should some states be broken up just because a region feels neglected? Is amputation the only remedy? Why are the Regional Development Boards toothless?

3) Protection from bullets is provided by strong chemical yarn/sheets called Kevlar or its derivatives developed by various countries, including India. The jacket has to be light enough to be worn comfortably for long durations without affecting the wearer's agility. Herein lies the rub; it is easier to advocate that the jacket must stop any or all bullets. Normally policemen might be attacked with knives or country-made guns which do not have much penetrating capacity. A single layered jacket is adequate for the purpose. Now we want protection from assault rifles like AK 47 and that too those fired from 8-10 feet. If an ordinary jacket weighs 6 kgs, the one we want will weigh 20 kgs; can the anti-terrorist commando move wearing such a protective jacket and pursue the terrorist? The same logic applies to the body area covered; heart, lungs, liver, kidneys are sought to be protected. That leaves the neck and face unprotected. The greater the areas covered, greater is the weight and greater is the immobility. Should the beat constables be provided with such jackets or only the commandos? Selection of a bullet-proof jacket is not a matter of merely spending more money and getting the best equipment. Comfort and mobility are the deciding factors. There may or may not be corruption in the jacket procurement process but let us not get carried away by one-sided arguments.

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

Google Strikes a Blow for Free Speech

In the last two decades, China's economic reform programs and its citizens' entrepreneurial flair have lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese people out of poverty. Indeed, this great nation is at the heart of much economic progress and development in the world today.

We launched Google.cn in January 2006 in the belief that the benefits of increased access to information for people in China and a more open Internet outweighed our discomfort in agreeing to censor some results. At the time we made clear that "we will carefully monitor conditions in China, including new laws and other restrictions on our services. If we determine that we are unable to achieve the objectives outlined we will not hesitate to reconsider our approach to China."

These attacks and the surveillance they have uncovered – combined with the attempts over the past year to further limit free speech on the web – have led us to conclude that we should review the feasibility of our business operations in China. We have decided we are no longer willing to continue censoring our results on Google.cn, and so over the next few weeks we will be discussing with the Chinese government the basis on which we could operate an unfiltered search engine within the law, if at all. We recognize that this may well mean having to shut down Google.cn, and potentially our offices in China.

Excerpted from the Google Blog – Posted on 12 January 2010

Salute the Sri Lankan Democracy

N. S. Venkataraman

The fact that the former Chief of the military has resigned the post and ventured to contest the election for the post of President is typical of any vibrant democratic society.

Sri Lanka which was till recently viewed as a country facing an internal war with part of the territory held by the rebels, now looks much more vibrant and forward looking. This has particularly been so, due to the fact that there would be a Presidential Election immediately after the cessation of an internal strife in the country, that has caused the loss of hundreds of lives and great misery to everyone. It requires enormous confidence in its strength and destiny, for any country to immediately go for national election after undergoing such bitter internal conflict.

Perhaps, world opinion would not have found fault with the Sri Lankan Government if it had sought to postpone the elections by an year or so, citing the need for rebuilding the war torn region of the country. One should salute Sri Lanka for its admirable strength of confidence and conviction in its spirit of democracy, as it goes for the Presidential Election.

The fact that the former Chief of the military has resigned the post and ventured to contest the election for the post of President is typical of any vibrant democratic society. He has given up a prestigious and powerful post to contest in an election where he would not be sure of the final verdict, thus taking a calculated risk. We have seen military Generals in several Asian and African countries who have tried to stage coup to attain power. But, here is a General, who has entered the election fray and is willing to subject himself to the judgement and mandate of the people. Nothing can be more democratic than this.

The political debate during the elections, as published in the media, appear to be in tune with healthy democratic process, practices and traditions. Even a fairly well established democratic country like India has many unsavoury developments during the elections, though the basic democratic system in India is well intact. Therefore, there is no need for undue concern even if the exchanges between the contesting political parties become a little more harsh. Even electoral debates in the U S Presidential elections have often tended to border

on personal attacks and the Sri Lankan debates in the election appear to be no worse in this respect.

In recent times, there have been many international criticisms that journalists in Sri Lanka have been subjected to harassment by the authorities. It is true that the Sri Lankan government has not answered such criticisms effectively and may have even ignored them to some extent. This can be considered as an avoidable blot on the image of democracy in Sri Lanka. It appears that during the electoral debate that is now happening, the issue of the plight of journalists in Sri Lanka in the recent strife torn period has not become a subject of debate. It would have been far more healthy if the contesting Presidential candidates would recognize this issue and go to some extent to reassure the journalist community and the media personnel that the government would be far more democratic in dealing with them in the post war period. It would have also been very appropriate if the Government would immediately release the journalists from any pending litigations or from prison if any one of them happen to be in prison.

After all, media and journalists are an integral part of the democratic process and there can be no claim of democracy if the media would be under stress due to any vituperative actions of the government.

It would also be appropriate if during the electoral debate, some reassurances are extended to the Tamil population living in the Jaffna area, who have suffered enormously and some firm action plans are announced for the debate. As we see in the media reports, such overwhelming feelings of consideration for the suffering Tamil population have not been expressed.

All said and done, while minor corrections may still be required, democracy in Sri Lanka is now firmly evident and Sri Lankans should be proud of this.

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VIP Syndrome : Why This Obsession?

Nitin G. Raut

Ordinary citizens have to subject themselves to the rigours of the law and rules but not so the elite. And this is precisely what moulds our reaction to SRK type episodes. It is a crass and perverse mindset.

The political brohuaha and media hype over the detention of Shahrukh Khan at a US airport some months back was nothing but hot air and gas without any substance much less logic or rationale.

It is one thing for someone to be a film icon in India and quite another to expect an alien nation to overlook its law and be infected with the VIP and celebrity virus to which we have surrendered ourselves.

The US has strict anti-terror laws like the Patriot Act enacted after 9/11 and it is enforcing it in all seriousness to protect its country and citizens from future terrorist attacks. The law may be harsh or cause inconvenience to some but its larger objective to protect civil society and fundamental freedoms cannot be overlooked. It is absurd even to think that if someone is detained on suspicion, subject to legal provisions, of course, it amounts to discriminatory or racial profiling. It is even more puerile for the Indian political leadership to react by saying that because of SRK a tit for tat policy should be meted out to Americans coming to India or for the Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor to twitter that the issue will be taken up with the US Administration. What kind of priorities do we have in our foreign policy? Is a Bollywood hero going to be the factor to determine the course of India-US relations? Would the Indian Government have reacted if an ordinary citizen was detained? True the US law enforcement agents will have to keep in mind the norms of civil society and rule of law but they cannot be expected to dilute the law because of someone's celebrity or VIP status. It is not for India to advise or counsel the US how to enforce its laws.

If that incident had occurred in India it would have been dubbed as anti-minorityism but these elements dare not make such allegations in the USA. Sometime back when a cricketer was embroiled in a match fixing controversy or when a T.V. actor was allegedly unable to buy a flat in an upmarket society, it was attributed to minority discrimination. In India it is common to politicise such issues to invite controversy or raise a futile debate to stir up the political or social cauldron. Such gimmicks are a pastime for our Page Three elite.

Certain sections of society – political leaders, celebrities, actors, money bags – considered the 'exclusively privileged' class are virtually above the law. The capacity to jump queues, get out-of-turn bookings, get past security without check ups, jumping green signals and buying their way out, determine status in India! Ordinary citizens have to subject themselves to the rigours of the law and rules but not so the elite. And this is precisely what moulds our reaction to SRK type episodes. It is a crass and perverse mindset.

The cult of hero worship in public life has undermined our self respect and esteem both at the national and individual level. That is why dozens of NSG commandos are deployed to "protect" one politician at tremendous cost to the exchequer. Politicians, their children and sons-in-law are exempt from security checks while the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy and Airforce are not. It is this VIP syndrome that we have enslaved ourselves – and we expect countries like US to follow suit.

When George Dubya Bush was the President of the US a cop hauled up the president's underaged daughter Jena, for patronising a pub. Can this happen in India?

Some time back when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited a hospital in New Delhi, the security sealed the hospital thereby even preventing a seriously ill patient from availing emergency treatment and this resulted in his death. VIP security causes unnecessary inconvenience to the public time, but the PM's security cost someone's life also. The presence of scores of policemen cannot afford security. Otherwise Rajiv Gandhi or Indira would not have been assassinated.

India should understand that it is better to be secure with tough anti-terror and national security laws, than to be lax in that respect or be overawed by the VIP and celebrity syndrome. Politics ought not to determine the fate of national security. That is why after 9/11 the US has never had a terror attack while we are still wondering when and from where the next terror attack will come from or which law is best for our national security.

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PAISE (Poverty, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Social Infrastructure and Environment

- A Primer for the Uninitiated

V. Venkateswaraprasad

When a person is unable to address his basic needs, he is termed poor. If that person identifies his problem on his own or through other sources he is better equipped to tackle and emerge victorious with respect to his economic condition.

When a person is unable to address his basic needs, he is termed poor. If that person identifies his problem on his own or through other sources he is better equipped to tackle and emerge victorious with respect to his economic condition.

Poverty

Poverty is the condition of thousands and thousands of people, arising out of drought, famine, floods, earthquake and lack of proper education. Governments with all their power at the centre and the states acting swiftly can tackle this issue. The public who fall under 'Below Poverty Line' (BPL) must be equipped to learn and stand on their own feet. Eradicating poverty is by itself a great achievement for any Government. It is because the so called BPL people are slowly contributing to the National Income. The quantum of contribution may be small in number but you see progress.

Agriculture

The backbone of the Indian economy is agriculture. The majority of the people in India belong to this sector. When drought hits, it boomerangs all sectors as well. If panchayats can bring education related to farmers and proper marketing mechanism to sell their produce, it can bring cheer to agriculturists. Terminal Market Complex (TMC) is a novel idea yet to gain sufficient momentum. In a TMC project both perishable and non-perishable agriculture commodities finds place. TMC will include all perishables including fruits, flowers, vegetables, aromatics, herbs, medicinal plants, meat products, poultry products, dairy products, fish and marine products. Non-perishables include foodgrains, oilseeds, pulses, cereals, condiments, spices and other agricultural commodities not included in the perishable commodities.

The person who sows and cultivates has little money. The middle men benefit a lot; and the consumer pays exorbitant sums to run his family. This situation should change. We have now regularised selling of milk

and milk products. Similarly, if it can be done for other agricultural commodities in a much larger scale than ever before we can certainly bring smiles to farmers and their families.

Physical Infrastructure

Like food is for our body to function, similarly infrastructure is the basis for the economy to function properly. The meaning earlier assigned to this word "infrastructure" according to the Oxford Dictionary is (military) base of a country. Now this word has acquired a wider meaning and includes defence installations, roads, railways, ports, airports, power (generation, transmission and distribution), telecommunication network, educational institutions, and financial institutions created solely for the purpose of facilitating "Infra Projects."

Defence

To protect Mother India we take necessary steps such that enemies are prevented from entering our territory. This is applicable whenever there is a land invasion, airspace invasion and crossing into the territorial waters of our Nation.

Power

As we need nutrient food to work enthusiastically so does Industry needs uninterrupted power supply in order to run their factories/machines. The sources of generating power are from solar energy, tides, nuclear energy, hydro-electric, thermal energy and the list can go on. We are blessed with abundant resources to tap electricity. The next stage is, of course, transmission and distribution. Here, we are rather careless and waste nearly 26% of power that is being generated while transmitting and distributing it. Apart from these losses, due to theft, subsidised and free supply of electricity makes electricity boards financially weak. If Power Sector Reforms are given top priority we can expect a turnaround not only in this sector but also in other sectors as well.

Telecommunications

The telephone density in our country is at an all time high. With the integration of television, computers and telephones, the means of communication become much cheaper and connectivity gets increased. As a result businesses grow manifold. This has a multiplier effect and in our economy gets harmonised with the global economy. To market our agricultural products rural telecommunication network also needs to be strengthened. The network of networks worldwide namely 'Internet' has already started playing a major role in shaping market driven economy.

Petroleum

The petroleum sector is one sector which of late has been making fortunes. But at the same time it spirals the prices of all commodities as a whole. Early stabilisation of petroleum rates by Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) will favour the economy both in the short run and in the future.

Financing

To provide all the major infrastructure projects we need finance. Unless it is financed we can't think of bringing such vital infrastructure in place. Leading Financial Institutions (FIs) like Infrastructure Development Finance Company Limited (IDFCL), Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) and Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), etc fund Infrastructure related projects.

A prudent selection of projects, feasibility study, debt-servicing and many other factors have to be gone into before selecting a project for funding. For financing mega infrastructure projects these above mentioned FIs need resources for funding the same. The money is mobilised from Indian Nationals (including Non-resident Indians) by issuing Infrastructure Bonds coupled with Tax Incentives. The money thus collected is deployed for the sole purpose of providing physical and vital Infrastructure.

Social infrastructure

This sector is yet to gain momentum and importance in India. Only education can change the lives and fixed mindsets of people. Unity in diversity and communal harmony should be spoken from the heart and translated into action. Religious fanaticism should be driven out. Respecting every individual could be the best of bringing harmony. Act according to your essential nature (*swadharma* in Sanskrit) which automatically results in individual and societal development. **Weave our social fabric to be colourful.**

Education

In today's world dominated by technology and commerce, social values are seldom considered part of our life. Swami Vivekananda said feel from the heart to uplift the masses, who are in their millions and millions. If Swami Vivekananda were in our midst today, he might say, "Give me one lakh strong men of character. I will change the destiny of the entire world in bringing about universal brotherhood and harmony." The topic chosen has a significant relevance in this divided society which has to be re-united. Educate means to draw out. Education must bring out the latent and inherent potential of every man and woman for the overall benefit of the Indian society.

Health

There is a saying in Tamil it goes like this: 'You can paint only when there is a wall available for painting'. Health is the substratum based on which education is woven around. A fit and fine mind is the need of the hour to all concerned. A healthy mind and a healthy body guided by our powerful intellect can do wonders. Dada Vaswani rightly advised how to build our character. Positive thought translated into action (through mind & body) when repeated becomes our habit. When a habit is established it moulds our character.

Environment

The definition of environment in Wikipedia.org is as follows:

"The natural environment comprises all naturally-occurring surroundings and conditions in which living things grow and interact on Earth. These include complete landscape units that function as natural systems without major human intervention, as well as plants, animals, rocks, and natural phenomena occurring within their boundaries. They also include non-local or universal natural resources that lack clear-cut boundaries, such as air, water and climate."

The burning issues are climate change, conservation of forest wealth, energy, genetic engineering, intensive farming, land degradation, nano-toxicology, nuclear issues, ozone depletion, pollution of every kind and resource depletion generally.

We the People, Corporates, governmental agencies, non-governmental Organisations must join hands to tackle the above issues on a war footing to ensure that the next generation does not suffer much.

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Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

Fight Against Terrorism – We’ve Given Up Too Much

Are knee-jerk reactions to every potential security threat the solution? It's like we are puppets dancing on the strings being pulled by the evil ones.

Many Americans are congratulating themselves – perhaps deservedly so – on the fact that there hasn't been a major terrorist attack in the United States after 9/11. That is undoubtedly true, but reflect on the price they – and many of the world's nations – have paid to keep themselves safe. Personal freedoms have been steadily whittled away in the name of homeland security. Trusting one's fellow passengers on a flight has become a chimera. Getting there used to be half the fun. Now the fun has been replaced by suspicion, sometimes bordering on paranoia.

This is particularly true of air travel. Every time an inventive terrorist comes up with a new means of inflicting pain and causing mayhem, greater restrictions are placed on flyers. Curbside check-in was the first to go; and so did the convenience of arriving at the airport a few minutes before take off. Some nut built a bomb in his shoe, so now we all have to pass shoeless – and belt less and jacket less – through security. The bad guys found a way to mix explosives in liquids; so we can't carry on any, except miniscule bottles. Discretion and common sense have gone out the window. Two years ago at LAX, I suffered the mortification of having a brand new bottle of Napoleon cognac confiscated from my hand luggage, because I was considered potentially ingenious enough to sneak liquid explosives into a factory-sealed bottle.

The latest incident, where a Nigerian gentleman, Umar Faruk Abdulmutallab, set his legs on fire in a plane, has resulted in predictable overkill. Be prepared to be patted down at airports – and that's just the beginning. No access to your stowed hand luggage one hour after take off and before landing. The aircraft's GPS is likely to be switched off; so that you are left wondering where you are and

how many more hours you have to endure in cattle class. Blankets and pillows will be whisked away one hour before landing; and woe betide you if you attempt to get up from your seat. So what happens if you just have to use the toilet? Tough luck, buddy. Maybe adult diapers will become the next must-have travel accessory.

Is this winning? Sure, we have to make some sacrifices to stay safe, but for how long and to what extent? It is the terrorists who are calling the shots; not us. We are spending more and more time at the airport, so much so that it in some cases, it exceeds the actual flight duration. Are knee-jerk reactions to every potential security threat the solution? It's like we are puppets dancing on the strings being pulled by the evil ones. The bad guys always seem to be one step ahead of us. Besides, overdoing the precaution angle may have its own pitfalls. No matter how well trained the people manning the security gates at airports are, they are normal human beings. When they have to look at thousands of similar items on a small screen every day, a sense of fatigue and boredom is inevitable; and there are increased chances of something nasty slipping by.

I know what you're thinking. It's easy to criticize, but what's the alternative? Honestly, I don't know. Maybe the security people should rely more on intelligence reports and less on blanket procedures. Sure, it means increased risk, but there's a risk every time you take your car out on the road, for example. Maybe we should accept it as one of the new realities of life in the new millennium. Although an explosion or a shooting spree undoubtedly has a bigger impact, a secondary aim of terrorists is to disrupt the lives of ordinary citizens. And they seem to be doing just fine at this.

Of Bulletproof Jackets and Missing Files

I have faith in the politicians abilities. In India, the crooked always find a way to come out on top.

The way the media is playing up the affair of the infamous 26/11 bulletproof jackets and missing files, you'd think it was an Agatha Christie movie. In my opinion, this is a storm in a teacup. In actual fact, the matter is so routine and predictable.

The most likely sequence of events is as follows. The contract for the supply of the bulletproof jackets was awarded to an incompetent party. Technical expertise was

(Cont'd. on p.24)

Why A Soldier Fights To Die

This piece has been extracted from the unpublished notes of the late Brigadier Noshir Grant a well-respected military engineer and a prolific writer who contributed to a number of journals including Freedom First. I am grateful to his wife Mrs. Mini Grant for permitting the article and other to follow to be published. I believe the many articles he wrote about 'Arms and Man' which the well-read readers of Freedom First would recognise as the title of George Bernard Shaw popular play, are as relevant today (perhaps more) as when he wrote them. God Bless his Soul.

Brig. F. S. B. Mehta (Retd.)

Ten years ago the Kargil War suddenly brought about a country-wide concern for the soldier, who till then was forgotten and taken for granted, by a complacent nation. Never since independence had there been such a spontaneous acclaim for the welfare of the jawan and his family, money for whom, had poured in on a tidal wave of so called patriotism. People donated blood, wrote emotional letters and the media was agog with adulation for the soldier. Although fifty times Kargil numbers died in the 1947/48, 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan, the 1962 NEFA War with China and the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka, and the continuing battle-like skirmishes on our borders, they have seldom been highlighted and promises made to their families, if any, have long been forgotten.

Within three days of the guns of Kargil having fallen silent, one had to hunt to find the name "Kargil" mentioned any where in the media. It's place being taken by the political wrangling of the upcoming election – it was business as usual.

This year too, the 10th anniversary of the Kargil War in July 1999 passed without much of a mention. Why has such unparalleled bravery been forgotten by our countrymen within a span of a decade? Have our nationalistic feelings atrophied to such an extent that the sacrifices made by our brave young soldiers and airmen are forgotten? These are the people who fought valiantly to restore the sanctity and pride of their motherland.

The irony of this is that a poll taken only a few weeks ago by two national journals indicate that in spite of a surge in patriotism, and a considerable increase of the pay package of the armed forces, only ten percent of the undergraduates and post graduates in the country opted for a preferred option with the armed forces.

What makes a youth join the forces to fight and in the process are willing to die? Studies of wars have

aptly proved that ultimately a soldier makes the supreme sacrifice not because he is more courageous or more patriotic than his civilian fellow mate, he certainly does not do it for the army pay he receives or the false promises made to him. Even the Army Act does not enjoin him to die, the only reason he dies without batting an eyelid is because he is made to believe that he is a superior citizen and as such can not let himself down in the eyes of the Nation, but more so let down the "honour of his regiment."

The question, therefore arises as to how this feeling of superiority can be inculcated in the soldier in peace time, so that it becomes a part and parcel of his entire mental make-up and automatically manifests itself during a crisis in battle.

No country in the world, including a rich country like the United States of America, can afford to pay its military personnel as much as they would earn in industry. However the civilian societies of these countries see to it that the military officer, in spite of his meagre salary is automatically accepted in the highest society and in the best of clubs, and at no time his honour and prestige is ever allowed to be lowered in the eyes of the nation.

Again it is unthinkable that our President and Supreme Commander of the Indian Forces has never once paid homage to the unknown warrior at Amar Jawan Jyoti Memorial at India Gate on Republic Day, nor has he/she let alone visited Kargil, or has even bothered to ever address our troops on television.

Finally, if there is one event on which we must hang our heads in shame, at the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, at a function held at Sapru House in New Delhi, after several foreign and Indian dignitaries had spoken, it was left to a UN British representative to ask the audience to stand in silence, in

(Cont'd. on p.24)

26/11 – The Pradhan Committee Report

An Analysis

Ashok Karnik

It is to due to the integrity and expertise of the two members that the Committee could come out with its findings within four months, rather than years as has been the practice in this country. That the State Government took another seven months to publish the report is another matter!

Scope

The two-member committee comprising R. D. Pradhan and V. Balachandran was appointed by the Maharashtra State Government as a High Level Enquiry Committee and not as a Commission of Inquiry to look into the 26/11 attack; its role was circumscribed due to its very formation as a Committee. It is to due to the integrity and expertise of the two members that the Committee could come out with its findings within four months, rather than years as has been the practice in this country. That the State Government took another seven months to publish the report is another matter! Initially it was wrongly publicised that the Committee had given a clean chit to the police, which caused a public furore. The Committee was asked to look into lapses of the police to act on intelligence inputs, action taken to safeguard lives and property during the 26/11 crisis and recommend remedial measures. This in itself fell short of what was needed but the Committee can hardly be held responsible for it.

Obfuscation

There is a fine bureaucratic sleight of hand in the formation of the Committee. In reply to a PIL demanding an enquiry into the 26/11 massacre, the State Government could inform the Court that it had set up a mechanism to look into the matter; the Central Government, which should have looked into such a major national tragedy, could escape with the plea that the State Government was actively engaged in examining the matter. Neither the Opposition nor the media understood what was happening and meekly waited for the Committee's report. They were extremely proud when a copy of the report 'fell' in their hands. The media resonated with triumphal shouts how they were the first to get a copy of the report; the Opposition thought it had caught the Government on the wrong foot and demanded investigation into the leakage of the report. A red herring if there was one! There were further diversions like the missing Bullet-proof (BP) jacket, missing file about BP jacket purchase, etc. They missed the real issue, i.e. the terrorist attack and how and whys of it. The problem

of terrorism and how it needs to be prevented got buried under a lot of sub-issues. We will never learn whether the attack could have been prevented and who were responsible for not preventing it. As usual, sound bytes prevailed over common sense.

Committee's Findings

The Committee began its report stating that it did "not find any serious lapses in the conduct of any individual officer". This was latched on to by the media as proof of the Committee giving a clean chit to the police. The sting is hidden in the very next sentence: "What we have found are instances of lack of: intelligent appreciation of threats, handling of intelligence, maintaining high degree of efficiency in instruments specifically set up to deal with terrorist attacks and certainly lack of overt and visible leadership..."

The Committee went on to applaud individual valour and appreciated the speed and urgency with which the Mumbai police machinery reacted. It made a critical observation that "a civil police structured as in Mumbai would not have been able to face a professional and well trained set of commandos". Among numerous shortcomings found by the Committee are:

- a) Quick Response Teams, the only police group capable of tackling the situation was split into different teams as requests came in from different areas for additional force. QRT thus became ineffective. Besides, QRT had done no firing practice due to shortage of ammunition for over a year. Another special group, 'Assault Mobiles' were so ill-trained that they were no better than ordinary armed police. They were of no use. Yet another group called 'Special Operations Squad' (SOS) is normally not used for assault but to give protection to raiding police officers! It appears that there is no dearth of special squads but mostly they are used for collateral purposes in 'peace' times.
- b) There was near chaos in the Police Control Room(CR) as hundreds of panicky calls were received there in

the first few hours claiming that various areas were under attack. There was even a rumour that 60 terrorists had entered Mumbai. No wonder the CR did not know where to send reinforcements. Despite lack of weaponry, the Mumbai Police acted with urgency, risking their lives. Mumbai will remain ever grateful for their dedication.

- c) The Committee has come down harshly on non-adherence to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) by senior officers like the Mumbai Police Commissioner and acting in haste on the basis of individual initiative. It held that the Commissioner of Police should have remained in the CR to take charge and, more importantly, to show that things were under his control.
- d) Despite warning that terrorists were likely to attack from the sea side, coastal security remained uncoordinated.
- e) Intelligence alerts from the Centre received by the State Government were treated with scant regard by Mantralaya. The Secretaries responsible for the security of the State did not even know of such alerts as these were received by Desk Officers and forwarded for action to the police. The Committee described this as a 'shocking revelation'. What more negligence do we need before the whole system collapses?

Omissions

The Committee did not have authority to go into the functioning of Central agencies like the Intelligence Bureau, Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW), Coast Guard, Navy etc. The contribution or shortcomings of these agencies could not be examined. For example, it would have been pertinent to find out:

- a) Whether the alerts sent out by the Centre were enough or could the Central agencies have done better?
- b) How many alerts were sent out during the year and what was the State Police expected to do with them? Whether the State Police have intelligence gathering capacity to probe into such alerts or they are just required to show that something is being done?
- c) What was done or not done by the Coast Guard/Navy to trace and stop the suspect ship from Pakistan from entering Indian waters?
- d) There is no answer why the MARCOS (Marine Commandos) who were available in Mumbai could not tackle the outnumbered terrorists.

The Committee was not responsible for these omissions as it was not authorised to raise these questions.

The entire emphasis was on how the Mumbai Police functioned before and after the attack and what systemic changes need be made to ensure that there is no recurrence of the mistakes made. There is no comment on the absence of reliable intelligence which is the only way to prevent such attacks. What we do after an attack is of less importance because once terrorists enter the city, the damage is done; we may control them sooner than on 26/11 but our aim should be to prevent their entry in this city or any other. The Committee report thus becomes more of a post-mortem although, to its credit, it has come up with very valid suggestions to improve the police handling of such catastrophic events.

Centre's actions

Centre's actions, which followed 26/11, speak volumes for what was wrong earlier. Chidambaram who replaced the earlier defunct Union Home Minister has sprung into action and taken quick decisions:

- i) National Investigation Agency (NIA) was formed to coordinate investigation of terrorism related cases all over the country
- ii) Multi Agency Centre (MAC) was formed to collate and disseminate intelligence inputs from all agencies on daily basis.

It has been further decided to form a National Counter-Terrorism Centre to head all intelligence agencies and a National Intelligence Grid (Natgrid) to put together all intelligence data together. Chidambaram hopes that no turf wars would break out over supremacy of these organisations over the existing ones. He has warned that if such turf wars do break out, only God can save the country. Plain speaking indeed but very true as our bureaucratic structure shuns changes in the power equations. While the Home Minister has shown the way, it is to be seen if his plans are actually put into action; usually there is a lot of gap between plans and their implementation. We are very good at formatting plans but poor in action. Top heavy organisations are no substitute for intelligence production. The whole structure can be effective only if it receives credible intelligence from the field.

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So you thought you'd had enough of Page 3? Newspapers in Maharashtra think otherwise. Some of them had more than one, on several days during the recent state elections. They even had supplements within supplements. So you had page 3 in the main paper. Then a further supplement with its own page 3.

P. Sainath, *The Hindu*, December 24

Our 26/11 Report Was Not Meant To Be a Thriller!

V. Balachandran

The Government of India should have ordered a national enquiry instead of focusing on a State level enquiry.

Anniversaries allow politicians to ride the wave of public emotions. Clever politicians divert tidal waves of public anger by creating a smokescreen of patriotism. The anniversary of 26/11 followed this pattern. Two prominent people who were lighting memorial candles on the night of 25 November at the Gateway of India had some role in Mumbai's unpreparedness on 26 November 2008. One of them, interviewed by the media as a victim on 26/11, had a share in the State-level strategic failure in strengthening vigilance. TV channels vied with each other to garner TRP ratings by focusing on side issues that turned into major controversies. Those who suffered in this 2009 cacophony were Mumbai policemen who had lost several comrades one year ago. The martyrs' memorial unveiled did nothing to raise their shattered morale as controversy engulfed them.

Even Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram, who had more than anybody else in Indian history contributed to the tightening of our internal vigilance, got involved in this controversy. Egged on by a persistent TV anchor on 25 November, he said that the Mumbai police should learn "not to speak out of turn". He forgot that the present Mumbai police leadership did not stir the hornets' nest. It was done by a former commissioner. So why chide the present leadership and demoralise them? He also said that the "Pradhan Committee" did not reveal anything "sensational" and the report contained "what we all knew". This was a weak defence of why the report was not published despite the Maharashtra Chief Minister's promise. It is true that our report did not contain anything "sensational", for we were not asked to write a Dan Brown thriller. On the other hand, major controversies surrounding the Cama Hospital incident and a former commissioner's reported remarks about dereliction of duty by some of his colleagues would not have arisen had our report been published.

Unfortunately, the Government's failure in releasing the true story destroyed police morale, exposing them to public ridicule. It also opened up internal controversies, bound to affect this force's cohesion in tackling another 26/11, which public shows like march-pasts with heavy weaponry will fail to achieve. Politicians who are responsible for this situation are now trying to set up

another enquiry, as announced by the State Home Minister, who confessed that he had not studied the report.

When we had started our enquiry we had to search for answers to the screaming headlines that were asking why a 45,000-strong Mumbai police force could not counter a band of ten terrorists. We had to complete the enquiry within three months. We started our work within five days of getting the Government order, well before they provided any reasonable infrastructure, which took 18 days. By 18 April 2009, our report was ready with all the answers, especially on who failed and who succeeded. We could submit it to the Chief Minister only in May because of the Maharashtra elections. As committee chairman Ram Pradhan recently said, "The State Government found it inconvenient to make it public."

The Government of India should have ordered a National enquiry instead of focusing on a State level enquiry. Apart from the involvement of several Central agencies like the Army, Navy and NSG who were beyond our charter, there was a leak by a prominent Delhi daily on 1 December 2008 saying that intelligence about the sailing of an LeT vessel was picked up by a Central agency on 19 November. Former Maharashtra Home Minister Jayant Patil stated on 19 December 2008 that the IB advisory of 19th did not reach the State police or even the Central intelligence teams that had visited the Trident hotel for "advance security liaison" for the Prime Minister's visit to that hotel on 29 November. Why the NSG arrived several hours later despite standing orders of immediate take-off from Delhi's Palam airport, and the inordinate time taken to get rid of the terrorists should have been another reason. Both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister parried Opposition leader L.K. Advani's demand to set up a Central Government enquiry stating that the "Pradhan Committee" was looking into the incident. However, they had nothing to say when the Maharashtra Government relegated our report to the dark labyrinths of secrecy. As usual, the State police is the propitiatory victim.

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On Rajaji's Campaign for Test Ban and Nuclear Disarmament

K. Vedamurthy

"The Great Powers who have secured this nuclear secret and developed a satanic, anti-God technique based on that secret, have by no law of God or man obtained the right to destroy all the nations of the earth and their achievements through many millenia of evolution. Neither Russia nor America nor Britain nor France has acquired the right to do this."

- C. Rajagopalachari, *Swarajya*, November 18, 1961

In his review of a book by P. M. Kamath in the November 2009 issue of *Freedom First*, editor S. V. Raju says: "Rajaji led a delegation of the Gandhi Peace Foundation and met President John F. Kennedy in 1962 to plead for universal disarmament." C. Rajagopalachari whom Mahatma Gandhi called the "keeper of my conscience" was one of his closest and oldest associates. He stayed as a guest in C.R.'s rented house in Madras in March 1919 – and it was in that very house that Gandhiji had an early morning dream, leading him to launch the first nationwide Non-violent Satyagraha against the alien British rulers on April 13, 1919. To put it in Rajmohan Gandhi's words: "For his unflinching loyalty to Gandhi and his programme, and because of a similarity in physical appearance, he (C.R.) was satirised by some opponents ... in Gaya ... as the 'Deputy Mahatma'. Gaya as a whole, however, called him Rajaji, a form probably coined by Mahadev Desai, the Mahatma's secretary." For a few months before India's freedom, Rajaji had been co-operating with both Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru (the 'trio' may be called the Triumvirate in Office) to lay the foundation of modern India's vibrant, secular democracy. Significantly, Jawaharlal Nehru asked him, as the last Governor-General of free India, to launch the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of India, and instal Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the first Rashtrapati (President) of our Republic, on January 26, 1950. As a member of the first Cabinet of Independent India, in different capacities, he made a historic contribution to the successful functioning of our parliamentary democracy. Unrivalled as an administrator and a Parliamentarian excelling in and enlivening the debates in our Parliament – all that is now, recorded history. But it was not that Nehru and Rajaji saw eye to eye in domestic policies, to realize Gandhiji's dream.

Socialism was no novelty to Rajaji. His book on Hinduism testifies to his genuine Gandhian Socialist commitment beginning from his Salem days of 1901. When the Congress Party was moving towards socialism, Rajaji was apprehensive of its totalitarian potentialities and launched the Swatantra Party in June 1959 from Madras, and later inaugurated its first National Convention in

Bombay on 1st August with the willing co-operation of genuine socialists like M. R. Masani and Prof N. G. Ranga. No wonder, Loknayak, Jayaprakash Narain, hailed Rajaji (when Jawaharlal Nehru was still India's Prime Minister) as the 'democratic conscience of independent India'. A Minister in the present Union Cabinet, the irrepressible Sashi Tharoor, has called the Swatantra Party, in one of his articles in *The Hindu* as India's main, secular Opposition Party in its days. So much from the recent history of India for the youth generation here and elsewhere, as nobody of consequence either in the Union Government in Delhi or in our various State Governments cares to refer to Rajaji publicly on important occasions, though quite a few of them admit in private his continuing relevance to our motherland in both domestic and international affairs!

Coming to S. V. Raju's statement on Rajaji quoted above, the delegation that met President Kennedy in the winter of 1962 was led by R. R. Diwakar, then Chairman of the Gandhi Peace Foundation with B. Shiva Rao, a 'gem of the purest ray serene', from the world of journalism, or who could be called a statesman as one of its three members. Rajaji was designated the 'Chief Spokesman', being the most senior of the delegation. Past 83, Rajaji was not very willing to make his first ever trip to the West, but credit for persuading him to make it should go to G. Ramachandran of the Gandhigram University. Jawaharlal Nehru too wrote to Rajaji, giving reasons why he should go (the Prime Minister's letter was released to the print media then by his office). The then Maharashtra Governor, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, rushed to the airport in Bombay at midnight, from her official tour of some interior place, to give her family friend a warm send-off as did his own young family members!

Though immersed in the negotiations with the British authorities along with Nehru, Sardar and Maulana Azad, his mind was agitated in an equal measure, with the catastrophic devastation caused by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the day of Independence, on August 15, 1947, when he was being sworn in as the first Governor of West Bengal, he had written an article

on the Nuclear menace that had begun to stare the defence-less humanity of this planet, for publication on that historic day. From that day his almost 'one man' campaign from our motherland, against Nuclear weapons may be said to have been launched. He had, since then, been reading everything that had to do with the making of these deadly weapons, and the disastrous consequences they had in store for the silent, innocent and uninvolved population of the whole world. As a keen student of Physics from his College days and with his native interest in anatomy, physiology and, therefore in every aspect of the growing medical sciences in advanced countries, he surprised many visiting scientists and diplomats in his simple Madras home with his astonishingly deep knowledge of the subjects of his discussion with them and his deep concern about the growing menace to the health not only of the living, but even of the generations yet to be born and to the environment as such.

When Nikita Khrushchev and Marshal Bulganin of the then Soviet Russia were in the Madras Raj Bhavan on their first State visit to India, they spent quite some quality time with Rajaji (who held no office then) on the vexatious question of stopping the underground nuclear tests – it was a measure of the impression he made on those international statesmen, that the Moscow Radio broadcast an interview with him on that then burning question. As one of the two Super Powers of the Cold War era, Soviet Russia under Nikita Khrushchev's leadership, unilaterally stopped for six months the underground testing of their nuclear weapons – an unprecedented demonstration, in international affairs, of the practice of the Gandhian principle of Unilateral Action.

Rajaji, in the many articles he wrote on the subject for the dailies and periodicals, in the public meetings he addressed in Madras, Hyderabad, Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi and in the interviews he was giving to dignitaries visiting him over the years dwelt on this all the time. Against this background one should see the discussions he held with the top brass of the U.S. Administration who had to administer the defence requirements under John F. Kennedy. Rajaji had a high admiration for the impor-



President Kennedy with Rajaji

tant functionaries of the Administration he then met with, for their quick grasp of his point of view, and yet without deviating from their country's vital foreign and national defence

policies, they were frank, sincere and intelligent. To quote his son (who was Member of Parliament for ten years from 1952 to '62) C. R. Narasimhan: "I could see from his face and attitude in those days that he was collecting the intellectual, spiritual and diplomatic powers under his command with grim determination to the noble mission to which he felt he had been called (Page 229: "*Rajagopalachari: A Biography*", Radiant Publishers, New Delhi).

What happened in the interview with President Kennedy on the evening of September 28, 1962 has been described by ambassador B. K. Nehru, who accompanied the delegation:

"We had barely sat down in the waiting room-which was, incidentally, the Cabinet Room of the United States - when the door opened, a young man walked briskly in, shook hands all round and took us into another room a short distance away where flash bulbs popped, television lights shone and batteries of cameramen started taking pictures. Rajaji looked up to the man on his left, who was a whole twelve inches taller than he, and said in a very gentle voice:

'Am I in the presence of the President of the United States?'— Rajaji had not realized, till the photographing started, that the young man who had led us in was President Kennedy himself."

Kennedy sat in his rocking chair, with Diwakar and Shiva Rao on his right and Rajaji and B. K. Nehru on his left. Rajaji began disarmingly. He was not pleading, he said, for American disarmament: how could he, when his own government had a policy of armed defence? But the immediate cessation of nuclear tests stood on a different footing. Delicately he introduced the argument that the world as a whole had a right to say to the nuclear powers that they could not, in the name of testing, poison the atmosphere and endanger humanity, now and in the future.

Continues B. K. Nehru: "I have had the good fortune of being present when great men have argued their points of view with each other in many parts of the world. But I had seldom seen a case presented with such lucidity of argument, such economy of speech, such felicity of language, such gentleness of manner and such command of 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"

Recorded B. Shiva Rao: "The minutes sped far beyond the allotted time of twenty-five minutes. Messen-

gers kept coming at regular intervals with notes from impatient aides to remind Mr. Kennedy that other appointments were falling behind schedule. The President ignored them all; with a face aglow with admiration he seemed absorbed in the practical wisdom of his Indian visitor. 'Governor' he said every few minutes for a brief intervention - but made it clear that in ultimate purpose he was in complete accord with Rajaji." (From "*The Rajaji Story*, 1937-72, by Rajmohan Gandhi).

Continues Rajmohan Gandhi: They had been with Kennedy for over an hour, but he was in no hurry to send them away. He showed them a massive writing desk that Queen Victoria had presented to a previous White House occupant, gave them a view of the garden, and, taking leave, asked Rajaji to keep in touch. After the delegation had gone, the President apparently told Philips Talbot (Assistant Secretary of State) who was present at the interview, 'Seldom have I heard a case presented with such precision, clarity and elegance of language.' Kennedy also appears to have remarked that the interview with Rajaji 'had a civilizing quality about it'. In a gesture rarely accorded to one who is not a Head of State or Government,

the White House issued a communique on the talk between 'the President and Mr. Rajagopalachari,'

'Was it a fruitful talk?' a reporter asked.' It was flowerful', said Rajaji. But it had been a little more than that. Chester Bowles disclosed to the delegation that the points C. R. had made to Kennedy constituted the first item on the agenda of a meeting of senior State Department officials held two days later.

May I conclude this narration with a moving quote from his son late C. R. Narasimhan:

"CR had by this time, according to the vast number of his admirers, emerged as a world statesman. It is my own personal feeling (it can not be gainsaid that I could be partial to him) that had he settled himself in Europe or the United States, after his retreat from government offices, his compeers would have utilised his services for the welfare of mankind as a whole. He would, I believe, have risen then to his fullest stature."

MR. K. VEDAMURTHY is one of C. Rajagopalachari's family friends in Chennai.

Do you Remember this Man?

Thick dark glasses which cover sharp eyes; you can't seem them, but they observe you and the nation. Who was he?

He was so near to us. He was born in December 1878 and passed away in December 1972.

You can't remember?

No.

He would not have been angry because he was a kind person. The nation's memory is short. A dynamic personality, one of the top leaders in the freedom struggle; the first and last Governor General of India. He should have been the first President of India. But was not. Why? We don't know.

He was born in the village of Torapalli in Salem District and educated in Central College, Hosur near Bangalore. Highly intelligent, he spoke in simple language mixed with light humour. I have not seen another personality like him. He was well-versed in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavatam, the Upanishads, the Thirukkai and Avvaiyar. Though religious he was neither orthodox nor rigid.

Who was he?

He denounced the licence-permit-quota raj. He left the Congress Party of which he was one of the top leaders and formed The Swatantra Party. He dreamed not only of *Swaraj* but also of *Su-raj*. When Tamil Nadu opposed the imposition of Hindi he started spreading Hindi and English through the Dakshin Bharat Prachar Sabha.

You still can't remember?

He was always dressed in simple spotlessly white khadi. Even when he was Governor General he washed his clothes himself.

I remember his simple speech in English in Puttanna Chetty Hall, Bangalore. He said: 'The government has already entered your drawing room; tomorrow it will step into your kitchen and the day after into your bedroom and rob you of your privacy.'

He was none other than Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari affectionately known as Rajaji!

This is a free translation of the original in Kannada by Dr. S. Venogopal Rao of Hassan and published in Samyukta Karnataka in its various editions; translated for Freedom First by reader Mr. R. S. Patil of Shirur in Bagalkot District of Karnataka.



Delhi High Court's Verdict on Sec.377 of the Indian Penal Code

Navasikha Duara

Chapter XVI, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code is a piece of legislation introduced during British rule that criminalises sexual activity “against the order of nature”. The section (drafted by Lord Macaulay in 1826) was read down to decriminalise same-sex behaviour among consenting adults in a historic judgement by Delhi High Court on 2 July 2009.

The recent Delhi High Court ruling on Sec.377 of the Indian Penal Code has resulted in heated discussions across the country. If the object of the media hype was to sensitise the young and adult minds alike, the purpose was definitely achieved. Unfortunately, the discussion on this delicate issue instead of being objective has seen the emergence of a ‘we’ and ‘they’ syndrome. Each side, advancing its own rigid arguments, unwilling to even consider the other point of view. This is sad. There need is to shift the ‘discussion’ from a Zero-sum game formula to a Variable-sum game. A difficult task but not impossible.

At the outset, it is necessary to understand how the Delhi High Court verdict has merely decriminalised homosexuality. The judgment does not go beyond that. Mere decriminalisation will not necessarily be followed by legal sanction. Most of the hostility towards the judgment will be cleared if it is emphasised that the Delhi High Court judgment will simply result in not treating homosexuality (having same gender sexual partner) as a crime. Whether same sex marriage should be legalised or not does not come within the purview of the judiciary. It is the prerogative of the legislature to decide. This aspect should provide solace to those viewing the Delhi High Court Judgment negatively, fearing detrimental impact on the institution of marriage.

Decriminalising Sec.377

All of us as part of the civil society need to consider whether the issue of treating homosexuality as a crime is justifiable or not. ‘Crime’ is considered as an act harmful to the society at large. In that case, can homosexuality be considered a crime? The answer to this vital question should be given keeping in mind the fact that the Delhi High Court verdict has laid down that homosexuality will not be a crime if it is 1. in private and 2. between consensual adults. In other words only consensual sex between adults in private is decriminalised. The parameters so provided should make the apprehensions of the so called

‘conservatives’ that the Judgment is capable of producing destabilising impact on the society is unfounded.

Diversity - the Edifice of a Pluralist Society

The Delhi High Court ruling should be viewed in the spirit of allowing diversity to co-exist in a democratic and pluralist society. A pluralist society is tolerant and allows the co-existence of different identities, be they linguistic or religious or otherwise; this should be kept in mind. Can social prejudice and social ridicule against the people with alternative sexuality be allowed in a country like India, when the Indian Constitution is committed to ensure the dignity of the Individual and establishing Social Justice? It is to be noted that the principle of Social Justice demands the removal of artificial discrimination including gender based discriminations. Don't people with alternative sexuality deserve the right to have a dignified life free from needless harassment and cruelty?

Sec.377 Conflicts with Constitutional Premises

The Provisions of sec.377 of the Indian Penal Code, which is a legacy of the British rule is definitely in conflict with many of the constitutional provisions of Independent India. Dr.Ambedkar in the course of discussions on minority rights famously observed: “It is wrong for the majority to deny the existence of minorities.” He seems to have echoed the sentiments of J.S Mill, One of the greatest exponents of liberty, who had opined that “freedom includes not only freedom to agree but freedom to differ also.” This being the case the majority has no right to silence (or disallow) the minority having a different sexual orientation. The inalienable natural right to life and liberty to which different constitutional provisions are committed makes a case for homosexuals stronger. Little effort is required to indicate that the provisions of sec.377 of the IPC is gender biased and goes against a section of society having a different sexual orientation from the rest. This brings us to the question of majority rule (opinion) vs. Minority rights (sexual minority rights).

Finally, a discussion of decriminalising homosexuality is incomplete if the views of those advocating Law as a medium of change are not taken into account. For them, law is not only about regulating human behaviour, bringing acceptance in human behaviour, but also a vehicle for change. Therefore, changes in provisions of the Law is a must in order to conform to changing societal outlook and values.

Law is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end; the end being 'Justice', giving each one what is due to him/her. What is needed is an unbiased discussion not a judgmental one in an atmosphere of openness with the spirit of give and take. Positive gains need to be weighed

against possible ills that might arise out of decriminalising homosexuality. What was the object behind sec.377 (drafted by Lord Macaulay in 1860)? Can the provisions of Sec.377 be regarded as a reflection of social retribution triggered by orthodox Christian mindset? That one needs to be punished for being different from the rest? Do the provisions of Sec.377 achieve their objective of having a deterrent effect on homosexuals? The answer to these questions will probably end the deadlock, ushering in a changed mindset, unmindful of the other's private space. Hopefully the new magical mantra to "Leave and Let Live" will bring social acceptance in the not so distant future.

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Cornucopia (Cont'd. from p.15)

given minimal importance. In business as usual, the job was given to the firm that offered the biggest kickback. To be fair to the cops, they probably had no sinister motive, like putting their colleagues at risk. They must have reckoned that the greatest threat the police would face would be a gangster with a country-made pistol; and the jackets were adequate for that purpose. So what was the big deal if some people made some money out of it?

26/11, of course, changed the whole ball game. The defective jackets proved to be lethal – not just to Karkare and his two colleagues – but also to top police officers involved in the procurement. Not surprisingly, the people responsible for their purchase panicked and hurried to bury the evidence. Losing the file was an obvious and time-tested ploy; and it usually works. In this case, however, the intense media pressure meant that they couldn't

get away with the usual stonewalling. So they went to Plan B. Blame it on some low level underlings. This is quite a common practice - and relatively painless. The top guys have an understanding with the "guilty" ones: just quietly take the rap and face suspension. After the pressure has died down, they would be reinstated with full benefits and back pay - and possibly a bonus. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

Now the judiciary has stepped in and the cops are in a real dilemma. On top of that, the politicians have sensed an opportunity to make themselves look righteous. It will be interesting to see how they wiggle out of it. But I have faith in their abilities. In India, the crooked always find a way to come out on top.

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Why A Soldier Fights To Die (Cont'd. from p.16)

a tribute to the seven Indian military medical personnel killed in Somalia. There can be no greater shame, than for our erstwhile rulers to remind us to venerate our own service dead.

Nothing will inspire men to take to the profession of arms, and make the supreme sacrifice except political leadership which is prepared to place "IZZAT" of the soldier as a foremost battle winning factor. Whereas all other countries including Pakistan, have gone out of their way to foster that feeling, our country has still not grasped the significance of the word "IZZAT."

In another emergency, the Indian soldier will again gladly make the supreme sacrifice to safeguard the security

of the nation, as he or she did in all previous wars with Pakistan and China. The nation in turn owes it to the soldier to give him a place of honour in peace, but much more that that, to enhance his social prestige in the eyes of the nation. If we want the best youth to take to the profession of arms as he or she once used to, and are prepared to die for the country, as they did in Kargil, we must create conditions of honour and prestige as their most important forte.

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Of Non-Violence When Faced by Violence

Ajay B. Agrawal

It is amazing why anybody wants to remind us that violence is bad.

The Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives and the ICCF arranged a programme on 25 November 2009. Their invitation to the function states that the programme is being organised “to remind ourselves that violence in words or deed is wholly unacceptable”.

It is amazing why anybody wants to remind us that violence is bad. We have been the target of violence for the last one thousand years. We were beaten, butchered and targeted by men like Mohamed Gazni, Mohamed Gori, Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali to mention just a few. Loot, rape of women and destroying temples was a way of life with them.

Then came the British. Again we were at the receiving end. One example will suffice. In 1857 Bahadur Shah Zafar was caught. The British brought a tray covered with a piece of cloth to him. Declaring that it was a present they removed the cloth and their ‘gift’ was the heads of the two sons of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Now we are facing terror from outside. What we need is determination to face this challenge boldly. Unfortunately, some have this fad for non-violence. This peace-talk should be addressed to the butchers. But our peace lovers have no channel to communicate with them. So they preach peace to us – the victims of violence.

What needs to be preached is our determination not to take any further beating. This attitude is there in the Europeans. They did not give in to Hitler. They did not give in to the Communists. No big terror attack took place in America after 9/11. In our case because of this lopsided idea of peace we are being continuously beaten by terrorists in Kashmir and elsewhere in the country. This will go on because we are used to being beaten for the last one thousand years or more. And there are overenthusiastic people in our midst who will remind us to remain peaceful after every brutal attack on us.

If we don’t learn from history, history repeats itself. Have those who are in power learnt anything from the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai? Did we demand to know from our leaders why we were caught unprepared? Because the correct attitude is not being developed in our mind we need to correct our mindset.

On 26 November, 2008, three very senior police officers in a single vehicle, were killed by two terrorists who were in an Indian police van captured from our policemen. Half an hour earlier the same two terrorists had fired and killed people in Colaba and then had gone to CST railway station to kill many more. Our blood does not boil when all this happens. Instead of pondering over this issue, peace talk is our priority.

And how does a single American police woman officer deal with bloodshed? In November last year this lady officer was going home when she heard firing. She reached the spot immediately and being trained to deal with such situations she overpowered the shooter though she herself suffered gunshot wounds. Where do we stand on what she did? If we don’t ponder over our weakness, then we should be prepared to face the next terrorist attack and the next, and then the next.

In 1950, when China occupied Tibet, the American ambassador to India told Jawaharlal Nehru that the best guarantee of peace was to be fully prepared for war. But Nehru went on preaching peace. War certainly came in 1962 and we all know what happened.

Buddha taught us how to live peacefully. But he had not preached what to do if foreign butchers invade India. And when invading hordes attacked Kashmir and Punjab a thousand years ago, the peace-loving Buddhists in Taxila and other places with large congregations of monks were massacred.

When the not so peaceful Tibetans reached the borders of China in the 7th century A.D. the Chinese Emperor had to marry off his daughter to the Tibetan king to buy peace. But the most peaceful Tibetans lost their independence in 1949.

There can’t be anything most disastrous than to talk of peace when we do not have the capability of protecting ourselves.

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We are happy to introduce to you a new monthly “Pragati” published by a group of young professionals. For details turn to page 4.

The Cover Feature for the April issue will be: “What *Price Freedom of the Media?*” This will be based on a half-day discussion of the subject, tentatively planned for Saturday February 27 or Saturday March 6 in Mumbai. The discussion will centre around the recent revelations about “Paid News” particularly during the last elections to the Maharashtra Assembly; and discuss a recent Mumbai High Court judgement in which the Court upheld the ban on a book by the Maharashtra Government and, even while doing so, the judges commented on when banning is justified and when not.

If you wish to participate in the discussion will you kindly email S.V.Raju at jurasv@gmail.com or speak to him on 9820016392 or fax 22843416.

Editor

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