

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ACT (AFSPA)



A Rational Appraisal



The Rural Perspective

Understanding Onion Politics

Agriculture and the Union Budget 2011-12



Rabindranath Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary

Gitanjali's Centenary Year

On Nationalism

Thank God for Pakistan!



Corporate Ethics

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Freedom First

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Between Ourselves...

Normally our cover stories are featured in the beginning pages. This necessarily compelled us to restrict the number of pages particularly if the subject had the benefit of a detailed discussion earlier at a 3-hour seminar. We may be wrong but we felt our readers deserved more. And so it is this time with a controversial subject like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). The issues raised by this law are important from a civil or human rights point of view – particularly in the present context of violence by terror and insurgency which puts at risk our democratic fabric and the freedoms it implies.

We decided therefore that after you, the reader, have perused the shorter and “more interesting” articles, you would at your leisure, find the time to read the pros and cons of the AFSPA and come to your own conclusions.

This is the 150th birth centenary of Rabindranath Tagore as also the centenary year of “Gitanjali” the book of poems that won him the Nobel Prize for Literature. Everyone, even those of the present generation, may have heard of Tagore, his Nobel Prize and Gitanjali. But how many know what Gitanjali is all about. So we were able to persuade Prema Nandakumar, an authority on the subject, to educate us.

We do not have a ‘Book Review’ section but we have two book reviews alright honouring two outstanding men with the books they wrote: Professor M. S. Gore an outstanding social scientist and Shyam Chainani an equally outstanding champion of environment and heritage conservation. Also a lesser known but outstanding liberal nevertheless Mr. K. Rama Rao a civil engineer with a tremendous sense of social responsibility. All three passed away between last November and January this year.

How often we have heard seasoned newspaper readers who cannot do without the newspaper with their morning tea complain that they no longer feel like opening their paper because they are full of stories of human misdemeanors such as corruption or rape and things like that. There are too many ‘man bites dog’ stories. Even those who first turn to the editorial page rarely do so now because the page itself has been shunted to a lower end of the paper and often editorialise on trivialities. This readership fatigue is increasing what with papers and journals filled with an overload of scamsters and their scams.

Aware of this, and even while offering what we would like to believe is a critique, and claim to be a journal that views men and matters from the liberal perspective, we feel that we now need to look at what needs to be done. Is there need for a new paradigm after our experience of the kind of political economy we have been in the last 60 years after the birth of our Republic?

Share your thoughts on this with us.

Editor

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From Our Readers

On *Freedom First*

As an old reader of *Freedom First*, I wish to suggest that you should publish articles which are more contemporary and relevant to the present era. I find that the contents of the magazine revolve too much around the events of the '50s and the '60s. You could highlight human rights violations and corruption of our times; spearhead a campaign to delink the Police Department from the Home Ministry as has been suggested by the Supreme Court in the wake of the Soli Sorabjee Report; raise a voice to make the CBI an independent investigating agency, totally insulated from the control and influence of the Central Government.

The recent episodes of corruption on a gigantic scale have further highlighted the need for an independent investigation agency to probe into the nefarious activities of bureaucrats, politicians and unscrupulous industrialists. Unfortunately, there exists no such agency to expose dishonest politicians. We all know that all the incriminating evidence and documents would go missing so as to ensure that the culprits go scot free.

You may also publish articles on the rampant misuse of the powers vested in the Armed Forces Act in the North East states and Kashmir. Misuse of archaic legislations like the Official Secrets Act to book whistle blowers is another issue which can be the subject of an effective campaign.

The role of the opposition in Parliament while boycotting the entire Session resulting in huge losses and blocking the passage of numerous bills cannot be called a service to democracy. Why can't you highlight these issues? Judicial Accountability Bill and Communal Riots Bill along with many other legislations involving human rights just could not be passed because of an adamant opposition.

Discrimination on the ground of language against people from other states is another issue which requires to be debated in the wake of imposition of the regional languages by some states to the exclusion of English & Hindi.

I hope you will take these suggestions in a positive and constructive spirit and do the needful.

Kaiser Ansary, Advocate, Thane (Maharashtra).
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*

Democracy Entangled in the Web of Corruption

Corruption is well covered in the January issue. We need to find remedy for it.

It is noticed that allotment of land at concessional rates is the deceptive way of doling out favours. It is even claimed to be a measure of benevolence. This discretion for concession should be stopped and the Government could consider giving cash grants to any group of bureaucrats, politicians, NGOs and schools/hospitals.

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.),
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*

I am sure that like me, many of your readers too must be furious after reading the series of articles appearing under the caption "A Democracy Entangled in the Web of Corruption". But should we rest content with merely writing to you? And is that all you expect from us? Should our righteous indignation at the recurrence of endless scams and scandals, cases of corruption and legalized atrocities end by writing letters and articles to a few journals and seeing them published? No, many of your readers may agree with me that we can and have to do more than that. "When a nation begins to think (and act), it is impossible to stop", said Voltaire, the French philosopher and writer. At present what we, the civil society, are doing is mere thinking and giving vent to our anger by way of writing letters, of course, sometimes in bold too! It is time we began to act too. The recent news that holds a lesson for us is that, fed up with a 24-year misrule, when the Tunisians *en masse* came on to the streets protesting against their President, he had to flee his country to Saudi Arabia! Tunisia is smaller than many of the districts in our country. When it could get rid of its pestilence of corruption in such an easy way, why can't we? I, therefore, earnestly request *Freedom First* to take the initiative in calling for a meeting of like-minded people and organizations to chalk out a plan of united action to pressure the government to bring about electoral, judicial and administrative reforms in a given time frame for absolute accountability and transparency in governance at all levels. We must also act as a watch-dog to follow up all those cases of public interest pending in various courts so as to check the government and other vested interests who would like to dilute these cases.

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The Fewer the Visits to the Taxman, the Lesser the Corruption!

The new Direct Tax Code, coming into effect from April 1, 2012, incorporates quite a few harsh provisions. One of the harshest is the proposal to withdraw Forms 15G and 15H. If implemented, persons earning interest from which tax is deductible at source, but still have no taxable income, would be put to much inconvenience, because in all such cases tax would be deducted, unless a certificate for payment of interest without TDS is obtained from the income-tax department, and submitted to the tax deductor. Those who ever have had to visit the department know that the process of obtaining the certificate would be too difficult a task, unless palms are greased. It seems that the government draftsman lost sight of the fact that the huge volume of applications received by the department would cause inordinate delay in issuing the certificates, and subsequently, harassment to the applicants, especially to senior citizens. Moreover, most of the applicants will have to seek professional assistance, in obtaining the certificate. Considering the genuine difficulties, the proposal deserves to be dropped. The fewer the visits to the taxman, the lesser the corruption!

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*

A Bank Account Too Can Empower the Poor.

She is a domestic help for the last 10/15 years working in one of the housing colonies of Mumbai. However, she has no identity – no ration card, no voting right. The slum-lord does not allow it. He collects Rs.1000 rent per month and Rs.400 for electricity both without any receipt. When she started working for us a few months ago we asked her whether she has an account in a bank, and when she replied, ‘no’, we asked her whether she would like to have one. She immediately agreed to have one. She said that nobody had suggested this to her.

We had started a savings account in the post office, and later in a nationalized bank branch for our earlier maid 10 years ago and she had thanked us for that as she could save money regularly. She saved about one lakh rupees in these years which she would have spent on inessentials – marriage of cousins, various celebrations in her area. None of her close relatives knew about this account. After she received Rs.10 lakh for her hut from a builder, she and other family members shifted to Virar and bought a self-contained one-room kitchen house for Rs.6.50 lakhs, spent Rs.50,000 on furnishing the house and kept Rs.3 lakh in a FD with the post office. This is one of few good things that have happened to the poor with the development frenzy that is going on in Mumbai.

I asked one of the officers of the bank whether our new domestic help can start an account without a ration card or a voting card. He said she has to have an address which proves her identity. When the maid told us that her daughter is studying in the Municipal School, we asked her to get the admission form from the school with the name of the daughter, father’s name and the address. Unfortunately she had to shell out Rs.200 to the clerk to get it. She did it without our knowledge. With this information we requested the manager of the bank to allow her to start an account. The manager told us that he has two conflicting criteria for an account in the bank. There is what is called KYC – Know Your Customer, and then there is a mandate to promote “financial inclusiveness” of the poor. He asked us to give a letter of introduction which we did.

The maid and her husband, a construction worker, are happy that they have an account in a bank. She started an account with Rs.1000/- and is now saving Rs.1000/- every month.

There is definitely wealth at the bottom of the pyramid but the banks do not know it though they were nationalized 50 years ago to help the poor. It is reported that half of India’s 1.2 billion people do not have a bank account (*The Indian Express*, Jan.2, 2011).

However, every account holder can help the poor known to him/her to have an account and empower them to some extent till the banks and the government make it their mission to extend banking facilities to all citizens. Adhar, the UID scheme, which seeks to provide an identity to all Indians, can start it from the slums of Mumbai so that they can avail all the facilities that the government wants to help the poor.

Poor people from villages go to the nearest town, city or distant megacity in search of work. Unless the government provides primary health-care and education including vocational education to the poor in villages to find gainful employment in the village itself or in its vicinity, they will all flock to urban areas to live in slums. If the government does not focus on the development of villages, where almost 70 percent of the people live, they will drift to the nearest town or rather to the prosperous distant city.

Mahatma Gandhi is right that India lives in its villages. Our former President is right when he updated Gandhiji’s vision of gram swaraj with his concept of PURA – Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas – physical connectivity (roads), electronic connectivity (telecom) and knowledge connectivity (health & education) which will lead to economic connectivity.

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Thank God for Pakistan!

Firoze Hirjikaka

We Indians somehow muddle through. And surprisingly, we are emerging and commanding international respect as an economic powerhouse – not because of our government, but in spite of it.

Thank God for Pakistan! During the past dismal year, when scam after financial scam came tumbling out of political and bureaucratic closets, all right-thinking Indians felt justified in lamenting the venal and pathetic state of governance their country was subjected to. As the deliberate dilatory tactics and obfuscations practiced by the ruling class ensured that the guilty would be put through the motions of an “inquiry” without actually nailing any of them, it seemed that the rot had set in too deep to hold out any hope of reform. And maybe it has.

And then there is Pakistan. Our obscurantist neighbour – and a pampered ally of the United States – periodically reminds Indians that as bad as things are, they could be a lot worse. The latest trigger for this illusory euphoria is the recent murder of the governor of Pakistan’s Punjab state, who was shot in cold blood by his own security guard. The governor’s “crime” was that he opposed the archaic and brutal blasphemy law that had found its way into Pakistan’s judicial system. And as gruesome as the murder was, even more horrifying was the reaction of a significant section of Pakistan’s civil society. The assassin, far from being condemned, was hailed as a hero and Allah’s good soldier. Even the priests meant to officiate at the governor’s funeral, declined as they felt threatened by the hardliners.

For the uninformed, here is a brief primer on the blasphemy law. In simple terms, it states that anyone saying anything derogatory about the Prophet Mohammed, even in a private conversation, can be tried and convicted of blasphemy. Actually, the word “trial” is a mockery here, since all that is needed for a conviction is the uncorroborated statement of a witness or witnesses (a good way to settle unrelated scores). And the penalty is death by hanging. Yes, you read that right; the penalty is **death**. The latest victim is a Christian woman in Pakistan and, in fact, the Punjab governor was assassinated because he opposed the law and the imposition of the death penalty on her.

Even Nawaz Sharif, leader of Pakistan’s main opposition party, hedged his bets. Instead of condemning

the slaying outright, this was his mild response. “Taseer should have been more balanced and careful. Pakistan needs moderation for both fundamentalists and liberals.” Either he was displaying political opportunism of the highest order, or it did not occur to him that moderation, by definition, is anathema to fundamentalists.

What is particularly horrifying to many Indians is the radicalization that Pakistani society has undergone in the past few decades. For many in the West, the goings on in Pakistan may not evince much surprise, since it is the sort of thing they routinely hear about in fanatical regimes like Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. But for us Indians, the transformation is truly astounding. Don’t forget that the very concept of Pakistan is a blip in the history of the subcontinent. For all but 60 of the 5000 years that Indian civilization has flourished, Pakistan did not exist. Even after it was carved out of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 and declared itself an Islamic state, it was more in letter than in spirit. The people of India and Pakistan remained as one. Even Pakistan’s Muslim identity did not set it apart. In fact, to this day, there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan. Although successive governments in Pakistan – and particularly that country’s military establishment – have attempted to foster a feeling of hostility towards India, the peoples of the two nations, with few exceptions, have remained cordial towards each other. Therefore, what is happening in Pakistan today seems almost unreal to most of us.

On another level, however, the radicalization of our neighbour evinces a feeling of relief and smug satisfaction in many Indians. There but for the grace of God, they say, go we. Yes, we have incorrigibly corrupt “leaders”; we have a plethora of lethargic and self-serving bureaucrats; we have government projects that are invariably and inordinately delayed; but we also have a free and vigorous media and we do not need to look apprehensively over our shoulders every time we criticize the government or some deity. For sure, India too has its fringe Hindu and Muslim radical groups, but their occasional atrocities are nowhere as fanatical and are, by and large, roundly

(Cont’d. on page 30)

Corporate Ethics

Ashok Karnik

A lot has been written about the Radia tapes in the past months but the subject is going to be with us for quite some time. Hence this attempt to put some facts together.

The Radia tapes have opened a healthy and long due debate over what is acceptable by way of outside influence in policy formulations by the Government. It is well known that from foreign governments to indigenous business houses all are interested in influencing Government's policy decisions. Mere expectation of a favourable decision and waiting for it is one thing and to manipulate the circumstances to arrive at favourable decisions is another matter. If lobbyists can manipulate Ministers or even the choice of Ministers and bureaucrats to create favourable circumstances, there must be some thing wrong in the system. The line between educating decision-makers and influencing them is very thin. Besides lobbyists who earn a living by manipulating events, business houses who employ them have a lot to answer for.

Need for Lobbyists

It is necessary to examine the role played by lobbyists without attributing motives to those employing them. In a democracy, everyone has the right to propagate his view point even through PR firms or lobbyists. Ratan Tata argues that when the House of Tatas realised that some industrial houses ganged up against them in 2001 and swamped the media with hostile stories, he felt the need for an effective Public Relations agency to protect its interests. He then employed Vaishnavi Communications (Niira Radia). Acceptable and fair enough! The next question is: how do you control the agency hired by you? Are you not responsible – even vicariously – for the actions of that instrument of yours? Can you stand aside and disown everything done by that agent to further your interests, possibly without your explicit consent?

The Niira Radia case is further complicated by her alleged foreign connection. The Finance Minister was alerted anonymously about the possible use of Radia's firms by foreign intelligence agencies in 2007. Hence the telephone interception! How is it that the Income Tax Department ordered the tapping in a case of espionage? It is the function of the Intelligence Bureau to handle such a complaint. Income Tax Department/Enforcement Directorate can track tax evasion, money laundering, hawala deals etc. Is there some confusion in the affidavit given

by the Government to the Supreme Court to justify the phone tapping? The Enforcement Directorate had dozens of reasons to tap Radia's phones as she was known to be a wheeler dealer, and a foreigner operating in India to boot. Was the Government trying to strengthen its case by adding the espionage angle? If there was suspicion of espionage for the last 3 years, should the Intelligence Bureau not be in the picture already? And what is the finding after 3 years of watch?

PR or Manipulation?

Lobbyists claim to be Policy Advocacy groups, which is an impressive sounding name for a dubious business. When does Policy Advocacy turn into Policy Distortion and Policy Formulation? Niira Radia is heard talking to senior journalists on familiar terms as if she expected them to do her bidding. They claim that they were just stringing her along as a journalistic tactic to elicit information. May be true, but it does leave a bad feeling that they were a party to her manipulations. Each journalist has to answer to his/her conscience as the world watches cynically wondering how far they were influenced by Radia. We are so flooded with stories of misdemeanour and corruption that we tend to believe the worst of everybody. The impression is that nothing is what it looks like and the world is crooked. It is a sorry state of affairs but there we are.

Radia did not stop at mere journalists; she manipulated seekers of Cabinet posts and toyed with their possible assignments. It is as if she could determine what portfolios they should get. Her attempts may or may not have affected the PM's decisions in allocating portfolios but in reality one could see that her plans actually succeeded, may be occasionally. She planned to have A. Raja in Telecom and there he was. Who were the beneficiaries of such strategic placements? Will the famed business houses answer this inconvenient question? Admittedly, they can deny any role in the entire process but after all Radia was not doing all this just to amuse herself. She was obviously helping her clients. Would the clients stand up and argue that this was a normal public relations exercise, a policy advocacy function? Is it acceptable as an ethical part of business?

It is time the Government decided what is acceptable in lobbying. Educating the legislators about a business project for opinion forming may be fine as in the US but influencing their decision-making in any manner should be prohibited. Those using the PR route should be extra careful. Influence peddling can take many forms and most lobbyists would step over the line at the first opportunity. At the risk of being draconian, this practice needs to be regulated through legislation on the lines of the US where lobbying is a somewhat controlled industry. It is a tricky business and the Government has to be careful not to allow it to become a brokerage house. India as a developing democracy has to be doubly careful not to allow the lobbyists to control the levers of power or even give that impression. Lobbyists will always try to create that illusion to attract clients but the Government must allay all suspicions of being manipulated. The Corporate Houses too should review what their aim is and ensure that the agents employed by them do not cross the *Laksman Rekha* of legitimacy. They should be held accountable for the actions of the agencies employed by them. Salman Khurshid, Minister for Corporate Affairs, has hinted that a legislation to control lobbying could be considered. It would presumably cover all these aspects. Until now, Niira Radia might have done a lot of mischief but the CBI has not registered a single offence against her, despite interception of her phones since 2008. That says a lot for our law and our system.

Privacy vs Public interest

Ratan Tata's claim that his talks with Radia were of a private nature and should not be brought out in the public domain is justified in principle. He asserted that he had no objection to the intercepts being used to unearth illegalities and that investigative agencies have the right to use the intercepts for their official work. His only objection was to the intercepts being made public. Tata should recognise that the intercepts have not been made

public by the Income Tax Department which had ordered the interception but through leaks either from the I-T office or the mobile service providers. It would require an independent probe by itself to determine the source of leakage and then to stop it before the entire gamut of tapes is made public. Ratan Tata can win a legal point but the damage would have been done. The real point is that once the existence of the tapes is known, an RTI application for the tapes cannot be rejected by the Income Tax Department on grounds of secrecy unless the tapes contain information of a secret nature. The departments that have the extraordinary powers to peep into private lives of citizens should have the rectitude and responsibility to guard their findings till these are called for by law courts. It would be interesting to see how the Supreme Court decides this issue. If the tapes contain information leading to exposure of deals manipulating government appointments or policies to favour select business houses, could such intercepts be kept out of the public domain on grounds of privacy? The tapes would be of definite interest to the public at large. The public has the right to know if their interests are bartered at the behest of extra-constitutional entities like lobbyists. If the tapes reveal no illegality, privacy of the innocent should be protected. However, the corporate world should take note of the PM's words that the business world suffers from ethics deficit. The PM would hopefully realise that there is growing perception that there is credibility deficit at his end too.

A lot has been written about the Radia tapes in the past months but the subject is going to be with us for quite some time. Hence this attempt to put some facts together.

MR. ASHOK KARNIK, formerly Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau, Government of India. He is a member of *Freedom First's* Advisory Board and a columnist. Ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.com.

The Press and the Radiia Tapes

The tapes reveal the porousness of categories. The journalist, the PRO, the promoter, the investigator, all seem porous categories. The difference between slanting news and planting news from the rigours of investigation disappears. The media becomes a tout to power, indifferent to its own integrity. Forget personalities. Look at the logic of the conversations, the indifference to ethics and values that pervades the texts. The media offers itself as a plumber of news, ready to create leaks or to fix them.

The Radiia tapes... seek to tamper with power in an indirect way, hinting at possibilities, displacing candidates, changing the combination of a Cabinet. There is a sense of sophistication, the snobbery of name-dropping...

India today stands between two models, the Stalinist idea of the non-person and the sycophantic idea of the inviolate person. The media seeks to erase the persons it targets to oblivion. Yet when it faces its own kind it pretends to be like Gandhi's monkeys. More than corruption, it is the silence about corruption that corrodes. Silence is an acid that can destroy years of integrity. That much the media must realise and make amends for.

Excerpted from social scientist Shiv Visvanathan's article "Dear Editor Your Halo is Slipping" *The Age*, December 3, 2010.

Shyam Chainani

– Unflinching Warrior for the Environment

Cyrus Guzder

His book “Heritage and the Environment – A Diary” tells us why his untimely death is an irreparable loss for the nation.

Shyam Chainani succumbed to cancer last month, just a few years after publishing the first volume of his life-long struggle for protection of India's urban and natural environment.

Shyam Chainani's book was many years in the writing. Indeed it seemed to many of us, his friends, to whom he sent umpteen drafts to read, that it may never reach the press. After all, it's called “Heritage and the Environment – A Diary”*, and diaries go on and on. As long as the story being told is work in progress, it is difficult to write a concluding chapter. More so, when the stories being told, like the Arabian Nights, cry for another day, and yet another, to reveal the next episode in the story, stories of greed and avarice, wanton destruction of buildings and forests and collusion between politicians, bureaucrats, the defense services, the public sector and private developers.

The narrative is a detailed testimony to the values that drove Shyam's relentless campaigns. Four more (mostly completed) books await publication.

Choosing a title that conveys the essence of a story as complex as this, must have presented a challenge to Shyam. Inspired as he was by his voracious reading of military history, war campaigns, biography and the law, he could well have subtitled his book as, “*The Forty Year War for the Environment - Field Notes from the Battlefield*”, or “*Builders, Government and the Heritage – Lies, Damned Lies and Litigation*”.

However, Shyam Chainani's narrative is not a mere

account of strategies and tactics in a war to recover a vanishing environment; it is also a story of idealism and courage, and, like a great epic, needs to be read for the many lessons it imparts – not least regarding the courage of a few and the moral failures of many.

After returning to India with engineering degrees from MIT and Cambridge (UK), Shyam joined the Tata Administrative Service to begin a promising career there. But he soon got involved in the Save Bombay Committee's intensive exercise to redraw the contours of a hopelessly ill-conceived Development Plan for (then) Bombay and, thereafter, in a campaign to relocate the giant RCF Fertilizer project which was to be sited on a beach, near a protected forest at Uran opposite the Gateway of India.



(1942 - 2010)

Shyam recounts in the book, how a highly placed politician suggested to a Director in Tatas, that Shyam's presence in the Tata Group was an “unfriendly act”. The response of Shyam's generous and benevolent employers was to provide him a shield of sorts, moving him periodically to a less

conspicuous position but still leaving him free to battle on. A remarkable example (as Shyam Chainani himself admits) of Corporate Social Responsibility!

Shyam's book is, at first sight a chronological account of how he quickly moved beyond the limited boundaries of the Save Bombay Committee to set up BEAG (the Bombay Environmental Action Group), to instill an environmental ethic into city governance, and a concern for the sustainability of the environment among citizens at large. He moved from one environmental issue to another, quickly mastering the principles underlying Town and Country planning and developed the skill of reframing policy in the language of the legislators.

* Heritage & Environment: An Indian Diary by Shyam Chainani. Published by Urban Design Research Institute, Mumbai in 2007
● Pages 532 ● Price: Rs.995/-

After the bruising RCF campaign which saw the project relocated to Thal-Vaishet, a site which equally dismayed Shyam who, decades ago, saw the Alibag, Janjira coastline as the future green belt for Greater Mumbai, he devoted several years to save the built heritage of the city. The story of how an ethic for heritage conservation was promoted and nurtured in Mumbai and the first Heritage Regulations of any city in India were enacted, is told in great detail; then, the efforts to identify and protect the heritage in Pune and seven other cities. Thereafter, he turned his attention to other areas where the richness of the heritage was under threat: Gujarat, Daman and Diu, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, New Delhi and West Bengal. In each case, the outcome was agreement by the local or State Government to some form of legislative protection for key elements of the built heritage.

He then turned his attention to Hill Stations and areas that are “ecologically sensitive”. His treatment of how Government came to be persuaded of the value of the ecological assets of Mahabaleshwar and Matheran, will long remain a case study on how special regulations to protect environmentally sensitive regions came into being.

In the 1980’s Shyam then engaged himself in a debate with the Union Government on protection of the country’s coastal areas, a debate that led to the notification of the Coastal Zone Regulations. In converting these regulations to Coastal Zone Management Plans there were successes and disasters. Shyam would have been distressed to see the January 2011 revision of these Regulations, about which he was in prolonged correspondence with Union Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh, almost till his last days.

Finally, to underpin the historical narrative, the last chapters of his book deal with the fundamentals of regulating city development, the planning process (including how the process is blatantly misused by Government to undermine the basic character of approved city Plans) and how Building Control Regulations are framed and implemented.

Shyam’s outrage with the perverse planning decisions that were destroying our cities’ urban fabric was probably provoked by his recollections of Bombay in the 50’s and his readings of earlier times. He recalls a former Municipal Commissioner James Halliday writing in 1930 that “this refined and well ordered city with its own Magistracy, Sheriff, City Police (in blue with yellow turbans), its own Port Trust, town services and city Government,” was the nearest thing to a Greek City State that the modern world could show”.

Shyam made it his mission to evangelize a set of principles – around conservation of the heritage, built and natural; the need for open spaces; the requirement to combine aesthetics with urban development; and the need to worry all the time about where to locate large industrial projects never in forests or unproductive agricultural land.

In successive chapters, Shyam details graphically the exchanges between himself and the Atomic Energy Establishment (to preserve ‘the Old Yacht Building’) from demolition; the Army (on preservation of the best of their Cantonments across India), the Navy (to safeguard the Naval Dockyard at Mumbai), the ONGC (on forestall devastation of Nhava island and the Janjira estuary), the Western and Central Railways (to preserve their Headquarters buildings in Mumbai). Who would have thought INTACH would later get the Victoria Terminus listed on the schedule of UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites?

In his concern about the appalling legacy our generation seemed hell bent on leaving to our children, Shyam’s campaigns brought him into direct conflict with a host of antagonists, mostly government officials or developers. Not once was he deterred by the high standing or power of his opposition as he was incorruptible as he was persistent.

These encounters were revealing in that the proposals and projects Shyam advocated decades ago, then regarded as unthinkable or unworkable, are now accepted as part of conventional wisdom. For example,

- the idea of saving a maritime heritage structure or ship and converting it into a National Maritime Museum; the proposal to open up the Naval Dockyard and Bombay Castle to visitors for Heritage Walks; the push to create conservation areas or Precincts around the old “village” settlements in Bombay such as Kotachiwadi and Matharpakadi.
- a small part of India’s industrial history in the form of Mumbai’s textile mills, natural waterbodies and chimneys, and the majestic, through derelict, Dockland structures, be adaptively renovated for modern usage;
- large tracts of open spaces/green areas at Nhava, Uran, Elephanta and the Alibag region be protected to provide recreational areas for Bombay’s exploding population.

Shyam’s Purpose

In the final analysis, Shyam’s life, as mirrored in the epic struggles of his “Diary”, exemplified a level of moral courage that is hard to find in contemporary society. It was a struggle for a set of principles which, most of us would wish to espouse but fail to do so. Shyam was steadfast, regardless of attempts to intimidate or corrupt

him. His struggles were against individuals and groups, always powerful, influential (whether in politics or business) and hypocritical; yet he managed in most cases to win their grudging respect. Finally, there was his personal struggle, revealed only now and then in telling moments of reluctant confession, of how the course he charted for himself led, in one way or another, to sacrifice a career, a marriage, family life, his health, and much else.

And yet, till the end, he believed deeply that his stubbornness and his crusades for the greater good of society through protection of the environment, were the

only way to save our country from going the way of other, ill-fated societies, described thus in the words of a British poet, where

“the law doth punish a man or woman
that steals a goose from the Common,
But it lets the greater felon loose
that steals the Common from the goose”.

**CYRUS GUZDER is Chairman of AFL Private Limited
and a Trustee of the Bombay Environmental Action Group.**

Kancherla Rama Rao



(15.04.1937 – 03.01.2011)

An active citizen par excellence, a hard-nosed Liberal and a good friend of *Freedom First*, Mr. Kancherla Rama Rao succumbed to a heart attack on January 3 at Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. He was 74

A prominent citizen of Vijayawada, Mr. Rama Rao was a civil engineer by profession. A self made man with a Bachelor of Engineering degree he began his career as a junior engineer with the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Board. Three years later he left the Board and gained experience in various Power Plants including Thermal, Hydero Electric and Nuclear before launching his own company Indwell Constructions which today is a leading sub-contractor for BHEL, NTPC, and various State Electricity Boards.

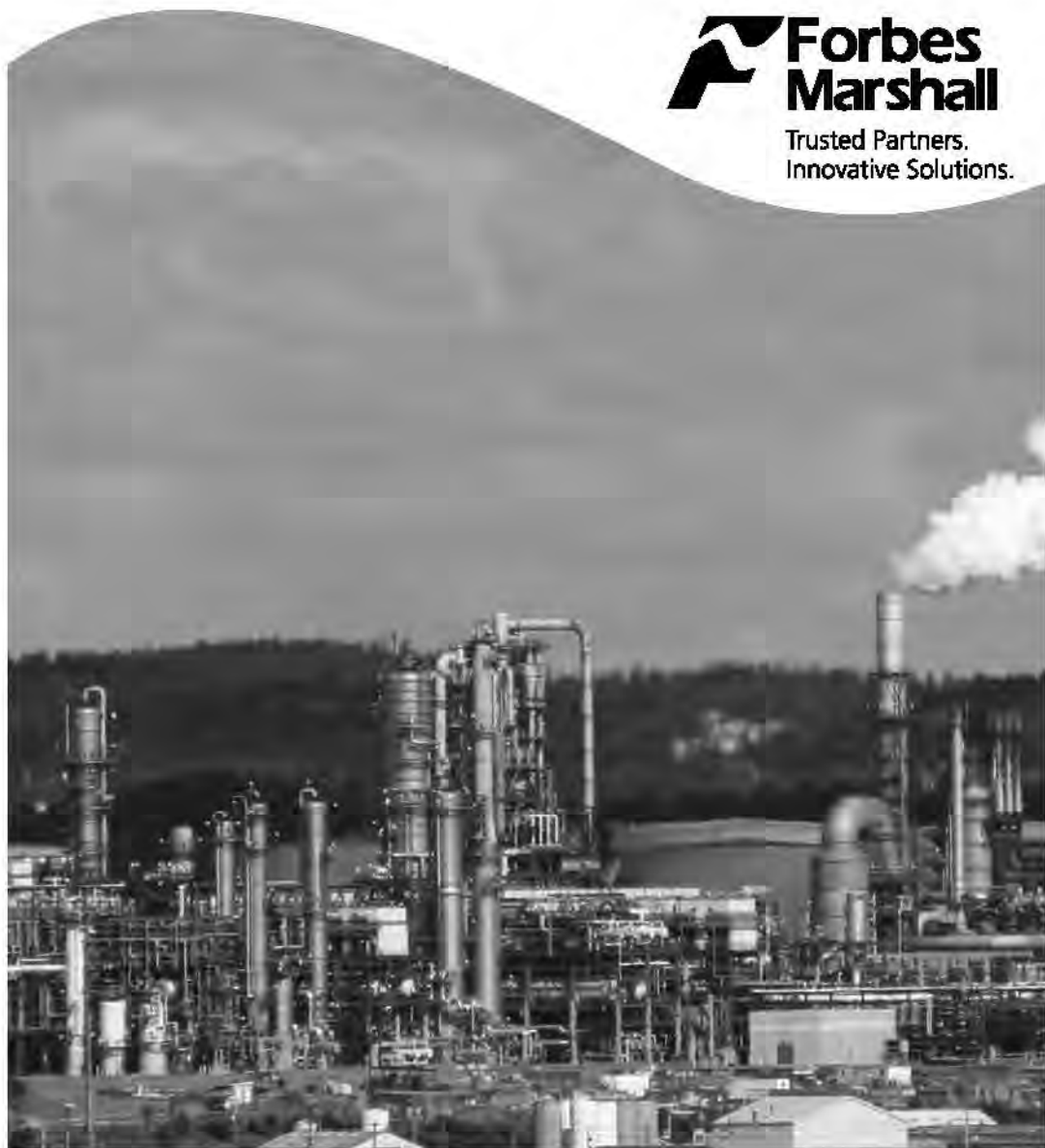
In the last three decades Mr. Kancherla Rama Rao as Chairman and Managing Director of his company contributed about 30,500 MW to the National Grid. He provided employment to thousands of skilled and unskilled workers and persons trained by him hold responsible positions in leading enterprises in the public and private sector. A true liberal he believed that only an educated citizenry could contribute not only to their own personal growth but also the prosperity of the country. He contributed Rs.50 Lakhs towards the construction of a

High School Building in the village of Pamarru, where he had done his schooling This school now boasts of around 1000 students. He was associated with the Siddhartha Academy which monitors fourteen Colleges and Institutions including two Engineering and a Medical College; Not content with this he was a founder member of the Siddhartha Foundation, providing educational aid to thousands of students. He was sponsoring a child every year through the Child Aid Foundation, an institution providing facilities of food and shelter to street children. As a member of the Senior Citizens Forum he helped fund an Old Age Home. He was a life member of the Indian Liberal Group and a supporter of *Freedom First*

My first meeting with Mr. K. Rama Rao was in 2000 when he participated in a programme organized by the Indian Liberal Group. He was well read and well informed, outspoken, a clear thinker with the courage of his conviction. Whenever he was impressed with an ILG publication he would promptly get it translated and published in Telugu so that it could be read not only by the Telugu litterati but also those active in public life particularly decision-makers.

On behalf of *Freedom First*, our readers and members of the Indian Liberal Group we pay our tribute to his memory. The country in general and the Liberal movement in particular has lost an outstanding champion of liberal values. We convey our deepest sympathies to his sons Keshav Rao, Yogender Chakravarty and their family on their sad bereavement.

– Editor



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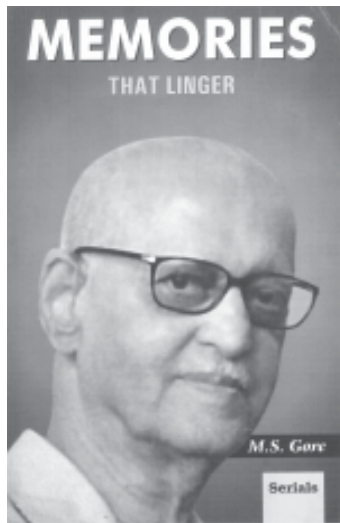
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Dr. M. S. Gore, Eminent Social Scientist

J. S. Apte



(15.8.1921-19.11.2010)

Dr. M. S. Gore served the Institute for twenty years – 1962 to 1982. He passed away at the age of 89, on 19th November 2010, at Hubli, his home town in Karnataka.

Childhood and School Education

Born on 15 August 1921, Madhav Gore had his primary and secondary education at local schools in Hubli. His father was a reputed private medical practitioner. Madhav had three elder sisters and one younger sister and brother. He had two step siblings, elder brother and elder sister. 'Dr. Gore remarks in his book 'Memories that Linger,* "The fact that the two were our step siblings was not even known to us, the younger children, until we were much older' (p.11). Children were nurtured in an affectionate and caring environment.

Liberal Atmosphere

The Gores were nurtured and reared in a liberal, tolerant and understanding atmosphere at home. 'None of the elders – my father or my elder brothers – had ever supported high profile Marathi patriotism' (p.6).

The family was influenced by the nationalist and theosophical movements. At a public meeting (Hubli) addressed by Mahatma Gandhi in 1924, responding to his appeal. Madhav's mother 'took off the gold bangles from her forearm and gave them to the Mahatma' (p.25). This

* Memories That Linger, by M. S. Gore, Serials Publications, 4830/24, Prahlad Street, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002. Published in 2007; Pages 427, Price Rs.395/-

incident was an example of the nationalist and sacrificial spirit in the family.

School and College Education

Madhav Gore passed the Matriculation examination in 1938. He completed his college education in 1942 at three towns – Dharwad, Pune and Sangli. He graduated with English (Honours) of the University of Bombay. Thereafter he studied at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and obtained his post-graduate diploma in Social Service Administration in 1945. He was awarded the Sir Dorabji Tata Research Scholarship. The First All India Conference of Social Work was held at Bombay in December 1947. Mr. B. Chatterjee and Madhav Gore took the initiative in the preparation and organization of the Conference. Mr. P. D. Kulkarni, Miss Phyllis Marr and other graduates of the Institute helped them as and when required. After the conference was over, Madhav Gore studied and appeared for the M.A. examination in Sociology in April 1948 and passed the M.A. examination with a First Class First, (University of Bombay). After his education Madhav Gore went to Delhi in June 1948 to join the National YMCA School of Social Work as a Senior Lecturer. In May 1949 Madhav Gore married Miss Phyllis Marr, a graduate of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. While both were working at the Delhi School of Social Work, Mathav Gore was selected for the Smith-Mundt Fellowship (1951-52) for higher studies in U.S.A. and Mrs. Phyllis Gore was also offered the Commonwealth Foundation Fellowship (1951-52) for study at the New York School of social work. He studied sociology in the Columbia University (U.S.A.) and obtained his doctoral degree from there in 1961. His doctoral thesis was published by Popular Prakashan, Bombay in 1968 under the title 'Urbanization and Family Change'.

TISS Director

Dr. Gore was appointed in 1962 as Director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. An alumnus of the Institute he became its head. During his 20 years of directorship, the Institute was recognized as a deemed university, rose to the much higher status as a nationally and internationally reputed centre of advanced study in social work and social research. With his initiative a variety of courses in social work and personnel management, M.Phil and Ph.D courses and a number of different short

term educational programmes were introduced. Shri Vijay Tendulkar, the renowned dramatist, script writer and author, a leader of *avant garde* theatre movement was appointed as a Visiting professor. Under his guidance a number of documentary films depicting development projects were produced. He interviewed for the Audio Visual Unit of the Institute distinguished social workers like Mother Teresa, Baba Amte.

Important Positions

Dr. Gore was appointed as Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research for two terms from 1971-1977. In 1972, the Government of India appointed him as Chairman of a High Power Committee on Police Training. Dr. Gore writes with due modesty. "I did not see what competence, I had to say anything about the police. I was therefore, hesitant..... It was the Prime Minister's wish. I accepted the assignment very reluctantly". (p.332)

Dr. Gore's work on Government appointed committees went on before, during and after the emergency. Even though never supported the imposition of the Emergency rule in India. He received a statement 'forwarded to him by the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister requesting that he should agree to sign the statement which after it had been signed by other scholars and public men should be published in the London newspapers where an advertisement had appeared condemning the incarceration of Jaiprakash Narayan during the emergency'. The statement was badly drafted and it was "purported to be critical of JP's activities and a justification of government's action against him". I certainly did not agree with the statement and I had no intention of signing it", wrote Dr. Gore. On the advice of Prof. Choksi, Mr. Bhabha, the Chairman of the Governing Board and Mr. JRD Tata. Dr. Gore replied, 'Since I had not taken any part in any public political debates, I saw no reason to do so now'. At a meeting convened by Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi for knowing what the feelings were of the people round the country about the emergency'. Dr. Gore expressed, "I feel that the emergency has made the life of the common man more insecure" (p.337). These two incidents clearly show that Dr. Gore, the liberal democrat was not at all in favour of the imposition of the emergency.

Intellectual Contribution

Dr. Gore devoted his long life to studying, teaching education, research and writing. Till the end of his life he was seriously thinking about new ideas in sociology, social work and social development.

His approach to writing was analytical; he was free from preconceived views, opinions and biases. His

B.A.(Hons.) in English literature and M.A. in Sociology helped him a lot in contributing papers, longish articles, writing and editing books. Analytical in thought and clarity of ideas were his two assets in his writings. His publications include over 30 articles, papers, books and edited books, his contributions were on social work philosophy in India. Among his publications, large on social and political aspects of development in India were, *Aging and the Future of Human Beings*, *Health Care of the Elderly*, 'Secularism in India, Non-Brahman Movement in Maharashtra. *Indian Education: Structure and Process*, Vitthal Ramji Shinde. *An assessment of his contribution*, *Unity in Diversity: The Indian Experience*, in *National Building*, *Social Context of an Ideology: Ambedkar's Political and Social Thought*.

Awards, Honours, Positions

Dr. Gore was a recipient of many honors and awards. Among these are Padma Bhushan and Silver Jubilee Award for Social Scientists (ICSW). He was Chairman of the Indo-U.S. Sub Commission on Education and Culture, member of the National Police Commission and the Vice Chancellor of University of Bombay.

Dr. Gore and Phyllis Gore and led a contented life. Son Vikas, an architect is settled in Singapore and daughter Anita is in Canada. Dr. Gore says, "Phyllis enriched my life in many ways and brought to me an understanding a life lived by a different set of religious values". In another context he remarks, "Despite financial worries we were a happy couple. In some ways we were an unusual couple" (pp.418-419). In the evening of his life, Dr. Gore observed, "I thought of myself as an agnostic but I have gradually discovered that I am attracted to some form of belief in the existence of a power beyond the physical mechanist world. I had always been drawn to Krishnamurthy even when I did not understand him fully..."

"But I am still intellectual in my approach and want to understand life at the rational level. The appeal of life and writings of saints continues. I have read Dnyaneshwari. I am currently reading the Eknathi Bhagvat but I had no experiences beyond the physical and psychological world". (p.419).

Dr. Gore lived a full life, of uncompromising honesty and integrity, gentleness, humility and simplicity. His contribution to social work, Sociology and Social Work Education will be ever remembered by generations to come. May his soul rest in peace.

J. S. APTE, formerly with the Family Planning Association of India (1970-1990) as Field Programme Officer, Director (Training) and Director (Branch Management), is a freelance writer on development issues.

The Rural Perspective

Understanding Onion Politics

Sharad Joshi

In recent weeks the humble onion surpassed all political scamsters, Bollywood idols and IPL auctions in capturing the headlines, in both the print and the electronic media.

In recent weeks the humble onion surpassed all political scamsters, Bollywood idols and IPL auctions in capturing the headlines, in both the print and the electronic media.

The previous peak onion prices in India had reached was around Rs.40-60. That led to electoral reverses for the BJP in half a dozen Assembly polls. Ever since, 'onion price' has been a sensitive political issue.

Onions started making political news in the late 1970s under the regime of the Janata Party. It is difficult to say if the phenomenon was not older. For me, it was since 1977 that the Janata Party government introduced the practice of banning the export of onions at harvest time and lifting the ban after the stocks had passed into the hands of the traders and exporters. Farmers suffered serious losses because of a fall in prices consequent to the export ban and traders made a killing when exports were resumed. For three years in a row, 1977-79, farmers suffered heavy losses.

Forty per cent of the nation's onion crop is from Maharashtra, particularly the Nashik and Pune districts. Nashik specializes in the production of 'Rangda' and 'Pol' varieties that are taken in Kharif and late Kharif seasons. These varieties do not take well to any kind of storage. They are red or pink in colour and start drying up as a whole

bulb within days of being stored. These are the varieties, which are preferred by the NRI populations in Middle East and South East Asia.

Pune district produces a different variety, locally called, 'Fursungi'. This variety is essentially a Rabi produce, golden yellowish in colour. This has the remarkable quality of not drying up as a bulb when kept in storage; its layers dry up one by one starting from the outermost. And the dried up layer becomes flaky and separates itself from the bulb effortlessly.

Onion is not an easily restorable agricultural produce. Only the larger producers and the traders attempt storage after taking into account the foreseeable loss of weight and the possible price advantage that can be gained during the period of storage.

In 1980, the farmers took advantage of the special position of Nashik and Pune districts in the production of onions to control the supply to the point where the government would be willing to purchase the onions from



the farmers at the price they demanded. But the 1980 onion situation was radically different from the situation that occurred this year:

- In 1980, the cost of cultivation was round Rs.60 per quintal; this year, in the areas where the crop was badly damaged by unseasonable rains, the cost of cultivation is as high as Rs.60 a kilogram.
- The cost of seed/seedlings has gone up a hundred times.
- The minimum daily wage in 1980 was a bare Rs.3/-; it is now 50 times higher Rs.150;
- The cost of fertilizers has gone up almost 80 times.

In 1980, the then government banned the export of onions when the retail price in Delhi reached Re.1 per kilogram; the price of balcony tickets in cinema houses was Rs.2.50!

If one discounts the present price at the rate of inflation during this three-decade period, the maximum price onions of Rs.60 is well short of 2/5th of the current price of balcony ticket of Rs.250/-.

The peak price of Rs.60 per kilogram in the last week of December barely covered the actual cost of cultivation of the onion producers of Nashik district whose produce was in the market. The 'Fursungi' variety from Pune district is due to arrive in the markets only in the month of January.

The export ban imposed by the UPA government this time is qualitatively different from that imposed by the Janata Party government in 1980. The 1980 ban was termed indefinite though everybody knew that it would be lifted once the traders had control of the stocks; the

UPA ban is limited to a period extending up to the 15th of January 2011. Even then that was unreasonable because the domestic price was still barely equal to the cost of cultivation. Further, it could still be considered as not unreasonable, taking into account the consumer prices of most other commodities.

The four-month period of 'Chaturmas', when there is a taboo on the consumption of onions, is barely over and there is a frenzied rush to make up for the deprivation. This has caused an extraordinary bloating of demand. On the other hand, untimely rains have destroyed 80-90% of the Kharif *Rangda* and *Pol* onion crop in Nashik district that is the major supplier apart from Lonand area in Satara district.

Under these circumstances, the situation could have been handled more sagaciously rather than resorting to extreme measures like banning of exports and opening the door to imports from Pakistan. For example, the Prime Minister, could have emulated Lalbahadur Shastri, by announcing his decision to abstain from consumption of onions till 15th of January 2011. That would have given a lead to the nation as a whole.

The blanket ban on export will result in permanent loss of some markets abroad as it will affect the credibility of the Indian traders in those markets. Opening the door to Pakistani onions is even more disastrous as it will encourage, the traditional competitor, Pakistan to capture traditional Indian markets.

Blanket bans are certain to harm long-term interests of the Indian onion and the Indian Farmer.

Pre-Budget (2011-12) Discussions for the Agricultural Sector

Sharad Joshi

This was a Note prepared by Mr. Sharad Joshi for a meeting with the Union Finance Minister on January 7, 2011

Introduction

2009 was a bad year for agriculture and for the farmer. According to the data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 17,368 Indian farmers killed themselves during the year. This represents an increase of 1,172 over the number in 2008 though a decrease of just 374 from the annual average number of suicides during the period since 1997. The chronic economic predicament of the farmers along with inimical State policies and vagaries of climate will soon create a situation where it will be difficult to have food stocks necessary for the Food Security plans

of the Government. The Finance Minister will have to take the lead and initiate policies that will make Agriculture turn the crucial corner. These include:

1. Review of DRLW

It is clear that the **Debt Relief and Loan Waivers Scheme (DRLW)** of 1998 has failed in bringing any relief to the farming community. This was inevitable since the whole scheme was drafted without a proper understanding of the problem of rural indebtedness.

Rural indebtedness covers all farmers across the board. In fact, it is the larger farmers who produce the food surplus for the country, the ones who have been more deeply in debts. This section has derived no benefit from the DRLW scheme. The scheme applied to this section only if they belonged to certain districts and were able to repay a 3/4th of the accumulated dues by a certain date. It so happened that during this period these farmers had no accruing incomes from which to repay the loans. The six-month extension declared by the Finance Minister in the last budget provided no palliative.

2. Electricity Dues

Rural indebtedness also included the dues for electricity bills which is the largest single element of agricultural costs.

I had occasion during last year's pre-budget discussions as also in the Rajya Sabha to submit that a comprehensive review of the application of the DRLW scheme should be undertaken in order to establish true facts about the improvement brought about by DRLW in the situation of indebtedness of farmers. Unfortunately, this was not done.

The consequence is that the suicides by farmers continue unabated at the same rate that prevailed during the period 1997-2009.

I humbly submit, once again, that the *Finance Minister may consider initiating a comprehensive review of the situation indebtedness and the extent of relief brought by the DRLW scheme.*

This has become particularly necessary on account of the vagaries of climate the country has been experiencing since last year.

3. Climate Frailty

If the year 2008 was marked by widespread drought, the Kharif 2009 marked a season of cloudbursts and inundations. This has resulted in serious loss of crops in lakhs of hectares in many states like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The misguided farm leaders as also the state governments are inclined to ask for or provide lump-sum *ad-hoc* relief based on an assessment of the damage to the crops. This is a shortsighted approach. The agricultural policy should be such that the farmers are able to meet the losses in bad years from the surplus in good years or from a commercial Crop Insurance based on well established Mortality tables based on experience of farm management units.

Strangely, in certain states, actions are being

initiated to cut off the power supply of farm connections in order to punish the defaulters. Unfortunately, since the villagers resist disconnection, some foolhardy ministers have launched the idea of removing transformers from Taluka places, thus obviating the need for the line staff to enter the defaulting villages.

Apart from the fact that this amounts to punishing the non-defaulters along with the defaulters, it could result in substantial reduction in the production and the productive capacity of all farm units.

4. Training in Bio-fuels Production

It is now impossible for the farmers to go back to diesel pumps since prices of diesel are rising all the time. The government's policy on production of Ethanol and Bio-diesel has been perfunctory and vacillating. It is submitted that the Finance Minister may make special provision for training farmers in production of bio-fuels. Apart from augmenting the incomes of farmers, this would also help resolve the petroleum crisis by reducing the country's dependence on imports.

5. Promoting Eco-farming

The experience of kharif 2010 shows that the administrative mechanism for supply of seeds and fertilizers failed miserably. There were several instances of rioting by farmers unable to get even the minimal supplies. The Finance Minister may consider granting a lump sum endowment for each *guntha* of land brought under organic farming.

Agriculture has been badly affected by lack of manpower with the necessary tilling skills. More than half the agricultural population has formally expressed its unwillingness to continue with this non-paying vocation. The "free lunches" schemes of the government have ushered in an era of lethargy and indolence in the rural community for the first time in the history of a hardy peasantry.

The Finance Minister may consider granting 80% subsidy on light tractors and implements.

6. Food Security

While the government is keen on ensuring food security, its



The Richest Person in India
From the Net. Contributed by Nagesh Kini

policies indicate that it is not willing to take measures that will ensure the food stocks necessary for implementing any scheme of food security.

The experience of the last two years shows that we are undergoing an epoch of climate frailty rather than global warming. The situation can be met only by recourse to sophisticated technologies even if they involve a certain element of risk. The policy of the government on the GM foods seeds has caused considerable despair. Little is being done to promote other technologies of developing GM seeds that can withstand extremes of temperatures and precipitations and other techniques of developing resistance in crops against abiotic stresses such as multiple layer coating of seeds and “YEA” technology.

7. Land Reforms

There is considerable unrest in the farming community at the news that the government intends to complete the incomplete agenda on land reforms and reduce their agricultural land ceilings to 2 Ha of irrigated land and 5 Ha of unirrigated land.

Reducing rural land ceilings while permitting limitless accumulation of wealth in the industrial and services sector can only have a disastrous consequence in a sector which is already showing laggard growth.

The experience in the past has shown that land distributed under land reform programmes is often not used for agricultural purposes at all and even in cases where it is so used, the production and yields are much lower. Any attempt at lowering the land ceilings in agriculture can have far-reaching adverse consequences on the availability of food in the country.

The Finance minister may consider giving an assurance that there will be no further reduction in the agricultural land ceiling limits.

8. Trade Policies

The knee-jerk reactions of the government to ban or restrict exports and facilitate imports of agricultural commodities every time there is some sign of domestic shortage can be a counterproductive measure. Even in extreme circumstances where exports need to be curbed and imports encouraged, effort should be made to introduce graduated export or import tariffs. This, apart from being WTO consistent, will help India preserve established markets and ensure that Indian traders do not lose their credibility in established markets.

9. Shortage of Edible Oil and Oilseeds

Edible oil shortage has been a chronic problem, as

serious as the petroleum shortage. It is submitted that a study be undertaken to review the tariff structure for edible oil, oilseeds, crude oil and oil bearing material.

Pending the recommendations of the review the finance minister may consider raising duty on crude oil to 10 % and that on refined oil to 17.5 % to offset the effect of various taxes being levied locally. The revenue generated could be used to boost oil seed production with a view to reducing our dependence on imports.

10. Futures Markets as Default Marketing Channel

Futures markets, despite their Indian origin, have suffered from a casteist prejudice. Those who stand for administered prices maintain a suspicion that is not based on any objective facts. The report of the Abhijit Sen Committee had clearly established that there was no link between inflation/volatility in prices and the working of the future markets.

All the same, the first reaction of the government, in a situation of shortages/hike in prices is to ban exports and futures markets, restrict domestic trade and promote imports in the nature of dumping.

The government needs to be congratulated on restoration of the futures trading in sugar after an interval of 19 months. Sugar is a sensitive commodity. The futures trading even after a prolonged break has been healthy and promising.

Futures trading permits the farmers to take informed decisions about crop patterns and obtain an assurance of prices at the time of the sowing itself. It obviates the need for the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) whose recommendations have been proven to be dubious. It prepares the ground for a structural reorganization of agriculture by emphasizing the role of an aggregator and scientific warehousing. It further facilitates agricultural credit and finance and can go a long way in removing the paucity of investment and credit in the agricultural sector.

The Finance Minister may consider the possibility of making a statement declaring futures market the default channel of agricultural marketing, permitting scrapping of the CACP, FCI (Food Corporation of India). This will actually go a long way in ensuring food security.

MR. SHARAD JOSHI, Founder, Shetkari Sanghatana, a former Rajya Sabha MP. And president of the Swatantra Bharat Party.

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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

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

The Wen Visit

1. There is a stream of foreign dignitaries to India this winter. The US, French and Russian Presidents came and signed billion dollar deals underlining the importance of India as a huge market. The Chinese Prime Minister's visit was slightly different, although he too signed trade deals. The US, French and Russian Presidents had no quarrels to settle with India whereas the Chinese leader, Wen Jiabao, had several irksome issues to address. India being a gracious host pretended that the Wen visit was a success although not a path-breaker. The two sides decided to stay engaged which in itself was an achievement. The signing of six MOUs and expectation of trade of 100 bn dollars till 2015 could be considered a good beginning, if we so desire. Expectations that some vexatious issues would be resolved were belied. One could be satisfied that we did not concede new ground to China, as we normally do. In fact, omission of the routine reference to 'One China' in the joint statement was a bold and new counter to China's stance on Kashmir. China is known to make routine sugary gestures without changing its position on any vital issue. The talk of sharing each others' concerns is a diplomatic way of saying that nothing was resolved. Wen's visit has to be seen in the light of his visit to Pakistan where the tone was markedly different. China's refusal to treat J&K border of 1500 kms with Tibet/China as border with India shows how far it has hardened its K policy.

1. In strategic terms, we are where we were before the visit. As an expert quipped on our relationship with China, "Far from breaking new ground, it has run aground"! If any diplomatic exchange leads only to postponement of decisions, be sure that nothing has been achieved. Our Foreign Secretary, Nirupama Rao revealed in self-congratulatory tones that the issue of stapled visas was brought up by Wen himself (instead of India) who explained that it was a matter which would require serious consultations. This meant that China was not prepared to change its stance on this issue. On the boundary dispute, Wen argued that it was a complicated historical legacy that would take time to settle (same negative response). He also understood India's desire to be active on world stage through the UNSC. (No support promised!) He refused to touch the issue of Pakistan and terrorism. Although our Government reportedly felt that the Wen visit has had a stabilizing effect, the stark reality is that nothing was resolved. The nett result is that we shall keep talking as we were doing earlier. Thank you Mr.Wen for nothing!

We've all descended from monkeys...and we are still descending.

Former Cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu,
The Times of India, January 12 2011

Rahul's Folly?

2. Wikileaks caused another embarrassment to the Congress Party when it revealed that Rahul Gandhi had told the US Ambassador that Hindu terrorism was a bigger threat to India than Lashkar-e-Taiba. The Congress spokesmen tried to question the veracity of the statement but were later rescued by Rahul's 'bold' acceptance of the remark with a convenient clarification that all forms of terrorism were equally condemnable. The BJP/RSS jumped on the 'folly' by describing Rahul as immature and blamed him for discussing such views with a foreign diplomat. One explanation for Rahul's injudicious remark is that the time when he made the statement (2008?), the role of Colonel Purohit, Sadhvi Pragya Thakur etc in the Malegaon bomb blast was just coming into focus and the role of a group of 'Hindu' extremists associated with the RSS was being

2. The problem is that a person touted as the future Prime Minister of the country does not have the reticence to conceal such personal speculations from a foreign diplomat who is tuning into every nuance of his words. This could be overlooked as un-statesman-like immaturity of a political novice. A worse interpretation is that this is a strategy to hit back at the BJP/RSS as these organisations are a major political threat to the Congress party and need to be cut down with all means possible. This is in tune with Rahul's comparison between the RSS and SIMI and Antulay/Digvijay Singh's crude attempts to link 'Hindu' terrorism with the 26/11 Mumbai attack. The AICC has itself declared war on majority terrorism. Rahul's remarks cannot, therefore, be taken as stray thoughts. There is a political strategy behind it all. However, it is shameful for

investigated; the extent of the virus was not known and those so inclined (read Rahul, Digvijay Singh, Antulay) were free to believe the worst. The cases against those involved in the Malegaon and Ajmer blasts are in the courts. Suspicions regarding the Hyderabad and Samjhauta Express blasts are being worked out by the police. If the police find an RSS connection on the organisational level, action can be taken against that organisation too. Till then wild conjectures need to be avoided. After all, the Congress is in power at the Centre and can use the IB, CBI and the newly formed National Investigation Agency (NIA) to trace RSS linkage to terrorism, if any, instead of shooting in the dark.

Terrorism is terrorism; there is nothing to choose between the Islamist variety, greater in scope, and the Hindutva variety, more insidious in its effect on the country's socio-cultural fabric.

– Editorial in *The Times of India*, January 12, 2011

The JPC Riddle

3. The Scam Republic continues to wade through the debris of the misdeeds of those in power. The powerful are still defiant and intransigent enough to claim innocence. The nation watches aghast at the decline of ideals that defined our struggle for independence. Where have the high principles gone? There is just legal hair splitting as to what constitutes a crime! Nobody is prepared to stand up and own moral responsibility for what has gone wrong. JPC is just an imperfect instrument of reviewing the detritus.

In a way it is good that the Congress-led UPA government has not conceded the demand for JPC. If it had done so promptly, the corruption, the all pervading one, would not have become such a sensitive issue.

– Janata, January 2, 2011

senior functionaries of the Congress to play politics with matters of national security. It is true that fringe elements belonging to the RSS stream of thought, but unhappy with RSS inaction, appear to have taken to this kind of stupid violence, but to accuse whole organisations for actions of a few disgruntled individuals is not wise. The L-e-T, which aims to break India into splinters and dominate the world, cannot be equated with a motley group of Hindu madmen. It weakens our fight against a dangerous enemy stalking us from across the border. How can a proxy war be equated with a street fight? A Prime Ministerial aspirant and his party need to show greater political acumen and rise above pettiness. This kind of wild gamesmanship can lead to divisions in the society on the vital issue of terrorism, where our efforts are still falling short. A war cannot be won by a divided nation.

3. The Government's opposition to the appointment of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to look into the corruption mess is inexplicable. So is the Opposition's boycott of the Parliament. JPC will hardly put the humpty dumpty (The pristine Republic) together. The JPC is not a magic wand. It would at best point fingers at a few politicians, which will be ignored by those in power. How can it change the culture of permissiveness towards moral turpitude and ostrich-like nonchalance to circumvention of law that makes corruption almost inevitable? It would require a radical broom to sweep the political system. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) which examines the audit reports on Government expenditure is even worse equipped to scrutinize Government policies.

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

From Ram Narayanan

A quote from Lenin: "The Capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them."

The Chinese communists need not hang the capitalists because by 2020 all leading capitalists of America will most probably be working to serve China's interests!!

According a report in *The New York Times*, General Electric (GE) is to share Jet Technology With China in a new Joint Venture. The following an excerpt from an article reported by David Barboza, Christopher Drew and Steve Lohr and written by Mr. Lohr and published on January 17, 2011

And no Western company has been more aggressive in helping China pursue that dream than one of the aviation industry's biggest suppliers of jet engines and airplane technology, General Electric.

G.E. plans to sign a joint-venture agreement in commercial aviation that shows the tricky risk-and-reward calculations American corporations must increasingly make in their pursuit of lucrative markets in China.

G.E., in the partnership with a state-owned Chinese company, will be sharing its most sophisticated airplane electronics, including some of the same technology used in Boeing's new state-of-the-art 787 Dreamliner.

For G.E., the pact is a chance to build upon an already well-established business in China, where the company has booming sales of jet engines, mainly to Chinese airlines that are now buying Boeing and Airbus planes. But doing business in China often requires Western multinationals like G.E. to share technology and trade secrets that might eventually enable Chinese companies to beat them at their own game – by making the same products cheaper, if not better.

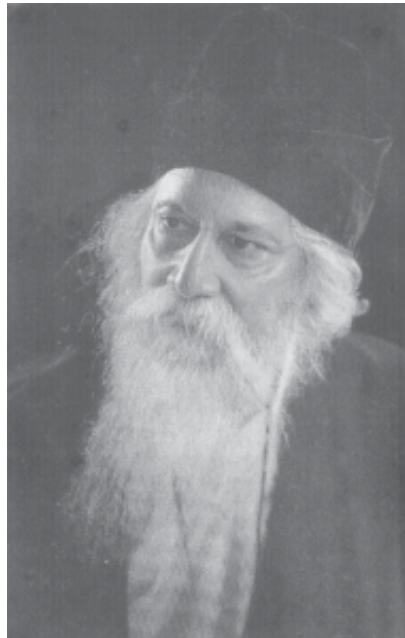
The other risk is that Western technologies could help China play catch-up in military aviation – a concern underscored last week when the Chinese military demonstrated a prototype of its version of the Pentagon's stealth fighter, even though the plane could be a decade away from production.

Towards Gitanjali Centenary

Prema Nandakumar

The 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore is an apt time to get back to *Gitanjali*. For, in another three years we would be celebrating the centenary of this collection of songs gaining the Nobel Prize. Mother India is still awaiting the second Nobel in literature!

In 1913, the news of the award was received with pleasant surprise by the Indian literati. It kindled hopes in the Indian writer that he could also pursue the seemingly impossible dream of world-wide fame. Far away in Pondicherry, the self-exile Subramania Bharati (1882-1921) was electrified by the news. He was Tamil Nadu's foremost poet. Yet, he hadn't money to print his poems! This did not deter him from hailing Tagore's achievement. Such is the generosity of understanding that marks great minds. One of his last essays (August, 1921) hailed Tagore as our global ambassador, for the Nobel Laureate was traveling in Germany, Austria and France at that time. Bharati exulted that Tagore had proved India was indeed the guru of the world, by reiterating the Vedic message that the Divine pervaded all creation. This is but one example of the joy with which Indians received *Gitanjali*'s triumph.



general structure of their thought – has ceased to hold our attention.”

Tagore's poems, however, carried the very essence of India's religious and spiritual tradition that had remained alive for millennia:

“The work of a supreme culture, they (the poems) yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and of the noble. If the civilization of Bengal remains unbroken, if that common mind which – as one

divines – runs through all, is not, as with us, broken into a dozen minds that know nothing of each other, something even of what is most subtle in these verses will have come, in a few generations, to the beggar on the roads.”

The bare facts of the contents of *Gitanjali* are well-known. The one hundred and three poems are drawn from four Bengali lyric collections of Tagore: *Gitanjali*, *Naivedya*, *Kheya* and *Gitimalya*. They were translated by the poet himself when he was past fifty. While in England, his friend Sir William Rothenstein saw the translations and invited W. B. Yeats to look at them. Yeats was captivated and wrote a splendid introduction when the volume was published in 1912. Though well known in Bengal for his poetry, music and fiction, Tagore was a stranger to the rest of India and *Gitanjali* was but a first publication in English. However, the Irish poet's introduction itself waxed poetic. Yeats had uncannily realized that the English language lacked mystic poetry and said:

“Since the Renaissance the writing of European saints – however familiar their metaphor and the

Bengal may have been partitioned in 1905, but its soul remained one. *Gitanjali* itself is proof that despite all the assaults on India's heritage, the soul of India has remained unsplintered from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari. This is what makes the land special in the comity of nations. No wonder Yeats was followed by other voices from the West that greeted the song-offerings of Tagore in effusive terms. Thus another Nobel Laureate, Halldor Laxness of Iceland:

“This strange, distant and subtle voice at once found its way in the very depths of my youthful spiritual ear; and ever since, at given moments, I feel its presence in the innermost labyrinths of my mind. In my country and elsewhere among Western

readers the form and flavour of the *Gitanjali* had the effect of a wonderful flower we had not seen or heard of before.”¹

Spirituality and nature were thus closely associated with this poetic creation that stimulated the western mind. The Indians who knew no Bengali recognized the familiar brought to them in what was then considered an alien language. Poetic experience that was being increasingly imprisoned in punditry-ridden clichés in Indian languages found itself released into electric freedom by the enchanting music of simple words. One had just to open the book to begin dancing gently in the breeze:

“Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life. This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new. At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable. Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.”

Scriptures like the Isavasya Upanishad have been telling us how this world is pervaded by the Divine, *Isavasyam idam sarvam*. The flute-playing Krishna, again, is an image that has become part of the Indian consciousness. The yoga of divine love that began with the Bhakti Movement had now been revealed to the West through this work. The Movement had begun in Tamil Nadu in the 3rd century with the advent of the Alvars. In due course, it spread all over India. Bengal received the Vaishnava impact in full. The coming of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the popularity of the Radha-Krishna cult overwhelmed the area. With hymnologists like Chandidas, Vidyapati, Nidhu Babu, Jnanodas and Horu Thakur, it was Vaishnavism all the way for Bengal.

Born in Kolkata, Rabindranath Tagore grew up in an atmosphere of Vaishnava bhakti. Quite early in life, he produced a set of bhakti hymns and had them published in *Bharati*. He said he had discovered them in an old manuscript of one Bhanu Singh of 15th century! The Baul songs of Bengal were another major inspiration. Perhaps due to such beginnings his poetry became one long romantic mysticism as for instance the 38th poem in *Gitanjali*:

“That I want thee, only thee – let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core. As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the

cry – I want thee, only thee. As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is – I want thee, only thee.”

The *Gitanjali* was the royal gate through which we entered the rest of Tagore’s poetry since English translations were now undertaken at a steady pace. One could see that the Tagorean approach had an astonishing evenness in the style and content. The music is lost in translation, but the rest remained even in a bad translation, for such was the power of Tagore’s focused, prayerful imagination directed towards his Jivan Devata, the Indwelling Universal.² One had to learn ‘to connect’ with this Divine Within. Such a connection was possible with the help of instruments all around us. Meditating upon Nature was a helpful medium and some titles of Tagore like *The Gardener* and *Fruit-Gathering* are revelatory in this regard. Again there is action going on all the time. The sparkle of comedy, the passion of romance, the interplay of emotions leading to tragedy are but a few of them. *Gitanjali* brings us all and hence can be seen as a preview of the entire Tagorean world of poesy. Speaking of the Nobel-winning collection, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar says:

“The poet detaches a fragment of experience that has come his way and by the power of all his art sets in a timeless context. The apprehension of the true quality of an experience in its universal aspect does ‘good’ to us – brings us enlightenment, heightens our sensibility, awakens us to the sheer delight of existence. The merit of the best pieces in *Gitanjali* and its immediate successors – *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon* – is that they affect us just in this way.”

Necessarily each of the one hundred and three poems remains independent. After all, they were selected from various collections. Again, Rabindranath Tagore had chosen more poems and translated them into English. But the number was brought down and the poems themselves were probably arranged to suit the thought-processes of his English friends like William Rothenstein, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Sturge-Moore, Henry Nevinston and Stopford Brooke. In his humility, Tagore would give an extra free hand to the English readers of his manuscript. For instance, he writes to Ezra Pound on 5 January, 1913:

“I am not at all strong in my English grammar – please do not hesitate to make corrections when necessary. Then again I do not know the exact value of your English words. Some of them may have their souls worn out by constant use and some others may not have acquired their souls yet. So in my

use of words there must be lack of proportion and appropriateness perhaps, that also could be amended by friendly hands.”

Most of these friendly critics were to sing another tune in later years, but that does not matter. Rabindranath remains a Kavindra, and the *Gitanjali* is the reality. The volume continues to be a rare experience that certainly teaches us again that simplicity of utterance and sincerity of expressed emotions are the very stuff of immortal poesy. It is like Shakespeare’s Edgar telling King Lear: “Ripeness is all.” India speaks through Tagore’s voice. There are loveable poems on nature that connect God and man:

“When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life, come with burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.” (poem 39)

Just the prayer for the contemporary man, enclosed from all sides by frustration, terror and hopelessness. Certainly, man was the centre of Tagore’s attention. In invoking the Lord’s compassion on man, the poet takes the typically Vaishnavite stance of approaching the Purusha (Conscious Soul) through Prakriti (Nature Soul), like Daya Devi comforting the jivatman when Sri Venkateswara is angry:

“Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end.

But call back, my lord, call back this pervading silent heart, still and keen and cruel, burning the heart with dire despair.

Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like the tearful look of the mother on the day of the father’s wrath.” (poem 40)

Almost all the poems are prayerful reflections. Sometimes life is seen as a journey. Having crossed his fiftieth year, it sounds natural to read Tagore say that it has been a long voyage and perhaps distantly autobiographical as well in the context of *Gitanjali*’s growth as an English volume of poems: “The traveler has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.” (poem 12). Though a slim volume, its content cannot be easily summarized or listed. There is no aspect of life that Tagore ignores and his eyes take in the tiller, the stone-breaker and the beggar.

Many images rise before us and get linked with some important concept. Darkness and light speak for Ignorance and Knowledge; river and ocean for life here and hereafter; the king for the Supreme who is never seen but always seems to be around for our call, and who is verily an image of terror and ecstasy:

“Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked with starry gems; but thy sword, O lord of thunder, is wrought with uttermost beauty, terrible to behold or to think of.” (poem 53).

Life is a battle, life is a difficult voyage, life is uncertain at every step. But Tagore will not vote for renunciation. Again and again we have the Vaishnava approach which surrenders to the Divine. Like Guru Nanak, Tagore sees the whole of Nature to be carrying on a momentous worship:

“The river has its everyday work to do and listens through fields and hamlets, yet its incessant stream winds towards the washing of thy feet.

The flower sweetens the air with its perfume; yet its last service is to offer itself to thee.” (poem 75)

Like a golden string, the poet’s mood of surrender penetrates all the poems for these are song offerings to the Divine in man:

“Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.” (poem 103).

When Death came to him less than three decades after the publication of *Gitanjali*, he was ready with his last poem of complete saranagati:

“In front lies the ocean of peace,
Launch the boat, Helmsman,
You will be the comrade ever ...”

(Footnotes)

¹ Quoted in Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore* (1962), p.223

² Not everyone accepts this view. In an extended discussion on the subject in Sahitya Akademi’s 125th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Tagore on 29th August, 1986, Prof. Devipada Bhattacharya said that Tagore’s Jeevan Devata is the guiding force of man which is different from the Universal Brahman. Dr. V. K. Gokak, Chairman of the session in his closing remarks pointed out that Tagore’s was a dynamic religion that moved from point to point: Upanishads, the Religion of Man, the Universal Man. And so on.

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On Rabindranath Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary

Tagore On Nationalism Centenary

R. Srinivasan

By the closing decades of the 19th century, nationalism was gaining widespread acceptance among the Indian intelligentsia. An earlier generation had confronted problems relating to Hindu religion, social reform, improvement of the status of women. The younger generation (Young Bengal, Young Bombay) regarded itself to be different from its elders.

By the closing decades of the 19th century, nationalism was gaining widespread acceptance among the Indian intelligentsia. An earlier generation had confronted problems relating to Hindu religion, social reform, improvement of the status of women. The younger generation (Young Bengal, Young Bombay) regarded itself to be different from its elders.

Impact of Mazzini and Garibaldi

Nationalism inspired by the Italian example and the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi were greatly admired. Even earlier in 1866, Raj Narain Bose wrote a small pamphlet calling for the need for a society for the promotion of national feeling among the educated Bengali. The Hindu Mela was promoted a little later and the Tagore family were enthusiastic participants in the annual event. Soon Surendranath Banerjea toured North India and popularised Mazzini and the concept of nationalism electrifying audiences. Inspired by him, Lala Lajpat Rai translated Mazzini's *Duties of Man* into Urdu and wrote biographies of Mazzini and Garibaldi. In the US, he published *Young India* (1916) obviously inspired by the example of Young Italy. N. C. Kelkar published in Marathi a biography of Cavour. In Madras too, the pamphlets of Mazzini were printed by a local publisher.

Nationalism put other institutions such as caste almost in the shade. It was a sense of belonging to a larger entity, a belonging that was organic and brooking no rivals. It is ours and this itself is self-legitimising" ... not because they lead to virtue or happiness, justice or liberty ... rather they are to be followed because these values are those of my group ... of my nation ... and I shall achieve fulfilment or happiness by identifying myself with them." (I. Berlin) pp.342-3)*.

Japanese Nationalism

The nationalism exemplified by Japan became the cynosure of the nationalists. People as different as G.

Subramania Iyer of the *Hindu* and Lala Lajpat Rai wrote books on Japan. Iyer's is one of the earliest books on Japan in Tamil and he lauded the role of the Samurai in the making of modern Japan. A number of Indian students in the first decade of the century went to Japan for higher education, particularly in science and technology.

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed Tagore writing a number of essays exploring the nature of Indian politics and pointing a difference between *Samaj* and *Rashtra*, the myriad faceted community the *Samaj* with *Rashtra*, the State. He also emphasised the difference between the nation and the Nation where the population is organised for a mechanical purpose, the pulsating bonds of filiation between members of the community wear out gradually and finally snap all that remains is the Nation; here competition and organisation dominate "where the personal man is eliminated to a phantom." (p.12). In short what Tagore bemoans is the disappearance of the community which gets replaced by contractual relationships. In putting this forward he reverts to the idea of the philosophies of the Social Contract, notably Rousseau. This will have serious and a corrosive impact on society in the long run. The difference between the two is similar to the difference between the handloom and the powerloom. While one reflects the individual personalised stamp, the other is efficient but with a dull deadening uniformity with no variety. Like Carlyle and Ruskin and later William Morris castigating materialist industrialisation, Tagore dreads the soulless onset of an industrial culture. Societies such as India's had very little of politics, for the ruler was far away and politics did not occupy the centre stage, it was society that dominated. A great deal of freedom was in the interstices of government. Today the administration is very different from the earlier loosely organised government; the advantages are questionable.

A continuous stifling surveillance of the people by the Nation and the authorities leave no corner too dark not to be penetrated by the Argus-eyed administration. In spite of its power and prosperity and its pervasiveness,

* All quotations with page numbers are from Tagore's *Nationalism*, published by Macmillan's, London, 1917

the paeans of praise and hymns in Churches it cannot hide the fact that the “Nation is the greatest evil for Nation (p.29). The birth of any nascent nation is a threat to it and it can only flourish by cannibalising others, while new areas like those of China are being totally exploited to a pernicious anemia. China with its teeming population is literally cut like a melon. People have been persuaded to believe that the salvation of a nation comes from aggressively following the logic of the unnecessary turning of the wheels of mechanical machines.

Weaker Nations

Feeding on the feebleness of the world, the Nation sends its poisonous fluid into the vitals of a living people. (p.30). Asia and particularly China offer the best pasture for its mauling. She is the target of the Nation. The suggestion that the weaker nations should strengthen and arm themselves does not appeal to Tagore. He would rather the weaker nations control their greed and cultivate humility – a suggestion which would not cut any ice with the Nation. The weak that cannot survive should go to the wall and this is the logic of science. Tagore rejects this and asserts that the world of man is moral. But of course, the reality of the modern world is that of denying the place of values in modern history. The moral vision of that continent has been blinded and has been entranced by the slogan of efficiency. The greatness of Europe was because of its adhering to his moral vision. Intellect and science know not the finer values; they are like grammarians chewing the battery of verbs, parsing and analysing them forgetting the poetry. The result of this has been “like an exaggerated giraffe whose head has suddenly shot up miles away from the rest of him.” (p.38). The nourishment of munched leaves cannot reach the body for it is too far to lodge itself in the stomach.

Human qualities if allowed to develop unhindered elevates us, and fosters social amity and prevents social conflict. But in its place, you have dehumanisation in commerce and politics. Trust among communities has given way to unabashed spying of one country on another. An



Picasso's Güernica

aside is illuminating. He mentions that while in Japan he exhorted his listeners to eschew the organised “selfishness of Nationalism as its religion, never gloat upon the feebleness of its neighbours (p.39) and not be unscrupulous in relations with weak nations. The newspapers commented that this was a view from a defeated people. Tagore noticed that this was the dominant world view in that country. Distrust of people is accompanied by envy and apprehension of the rising of another nation. One’s humanity is forgotten in the restless quest for power and organisation.

“... the idea of the Nation is one of the most powerful of anaesthetics that man has invented. (p.43). The death throes of the Nation has commenced” and we witness something like the “dance of the Furies, shattering its own limbs, scattering them into dust.” (p.44). Tagore in these pages recalls the gruesome painting of Goya and of Picasso’s “Güernica”. Commodification of persons, the terrible visage of unbridled industrialisation which with its iron scratches out the heart of the world and knows not what it has done.” (p.45). This is indeed a terrible indictment.

While admiring the Japanese, he has his apprehensions that Japan would go the way of Europe. While the once glorious civilisation of Greece and Rome has gone the way of Ozymandias, those of India and China based on spiritual values still flourish. To the Westerner, Asian civilisation looks inert and static in contrast to Europe. They are static even as a tree appears unchanging but grows all the time reaching to the ground and all the time drawing sustenance from the ever hospitable Earth.

Tagore is compelled to admire the positive aspects of contemporary Europe, the spirit of altruism, the Western critique of the pace of armaments. Freedom is sedulously pursued and great things prevalent in Europe and its large spirit is pulsating even as the lust for power is pursued. East Asia stresses not material or mechanistic efficiency but emphasis spiritual values; but he is apprehensive of their being on the retreat. Power and its pursuit is gradually seeping in the country. Japan has boldly faced the reality of the world and she “must infuse the sap of a fuller humanity into the heart of modern civilisation (p.65). Her noble idea like the Fuji rising into great heights should be visible from afar (p.68). In contrast to the rush and drive of mechanisation, in Japan, there is still an emphasis on the human and on nature and civilisation (p.74). A vision of beauty suffuses the entire culture and attempts are made to live in harmony with nature. The ideal of *maitri* which Tagore regarded to be at the foundation “of their culture *maitri* with man and *maitri* with nature” (p.73) being threatened by modern developments did not go unnoticed

by him. He was fearful of the whirlpool of modernisation in their ancient country. Slogans like the survival of the fittest were giving a pseudo scientific value to the pursuit of an aggressive nationalism. Jettisoning its vast hoary culture, it was joining the international political order.

Tagore notes the telescoping of centuries of development to a bare fifty years and this compelled the grudging respect to Japan of the western world (p.84). He warns that in all this the land will be infected with crass materialism leading to the smothering of the carefully nurtured civilised sensibilities. Japan by going the European way will extinguish its great spirit. He reminds that nationalism in the West has been aggressive industrial action, pursuit of imperialist ambitions, quest for territories and for domination.

Indian Nationalism is the theme of the third lecture.

In India, the problem was racial unity and caste distinctions which are endemic. Attempts at forging harmony have been tried for ages through the efforts of saints like Nanak, Kabir and Chaitanya. They tried to bring people together who were divided by geographic and other boundaries. This they tried by stressing the common spirituality of all beings.

Finally, he fears nationalism to be a great menace and traces all contemporary troubles to this. Unlike monolithic nationalism, here we have in India diversity of races, and differences expressed through the caste system which also are laboratories of social experiments and constitute a loose federation that Hinduism is. Coming from a loosely structured India, Tagore while in Japan was jarred by the rapid mechanisation that he witnessed in the sea ports and the feverish pace of industrialisation. He feared for the very survival and graces of old Japan. "I could see what an amount of ugliness had been created in the world through men's passions ... In port after port, man's greed mocks heaven with hideous gestures."

In several senses, *Nationalism* is painfully prescient.

It reminds us of the subterranean currents of Xenophobia and a mindless glorification of *Machtpolitik* that does not prophesy anything good for the region. When many Asians intellectually were seduced by the might of this small nation, it was left for Tagore to question the hosannas sung to Japan. He castigated the new nationalities for its "abnormal vanity of its own superiority" and which perpetrated "humiliation of defeated nations by exhibiting trophies of war." "True modernism is freedom of the mind not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action not tutelage under European

schoolmasters. It is a science but not its wrong application to life." (p.70). Many Japanese did not like the observations of Tagore and they criticised that this was a voice from a defeated nation. Initially lionised in Japan with tens of thousands crowding the auditorium where he lectured towards the end of the tour, the audience dwindled to a miserable number and he spent his last two months in isolation in Japan.

Nationalism is neither on the ideology or on the phenomenon, but tends to wrongly identify one aspect of modern industrialisation with nationalism itself. That nationalism has had pre-industrialised roots is overlooked by him. The intense nationalist movements in Europe, that of Poland, Italy and Greece were in pre-industrialised times and they remained pre-industrialised for a long time. In Japan, nationalist sentiments were developed along with Shintoism. A marriage of these made for nationalist developments of a rather aggressive kind. Her glory was built upon the ruthless trampling of a number of neighbouring countries and he was one of the earliest to bare the sword beneath the chrysanthemum. He also should be commended in stressing that the other entities besides the nation state have their own legitimacy not less glorious than those of victorious nations.

As a book, *Nationalism* is disappointing for we expect it to be on the ideology and on national developments. It should be regarded as containing the reflections on the happenings of his times. It contains the anguished reflections of a sensitive intellectual regarding a world that has been irretrievably lost. He expresses an aversion to the rapid feverish industrialisation that is taking place all the time for the benefit of the Western and Indian comprador class which is tearing off the framework of Asian culture. The scramble for territories backed by armaments, is racing ahead with no care for the irreplaceable destruction of the country's resources. The near obliteration of ancient cultures and the onward march of the western power in their quest of their national interests leaving behind shards and dismantled structures are the mute witnesses of a so-called scientific advance to promote the "survival of the fittest", who are also the most rapacious.

The book is far from cogent, but consists of random thoughts on the nature of western industrial society and the decline of the community. Loosely structured and repetitive, yet it is valuable in expressing scepticism on a concept (nationalism) which was regarded as a good thing in itself.

DR. R. SRINIVASAN is retired professor of Political Science, University of Mumbai and Associate Editor of *Freedom First*.

This month in February 1954

NOTES

The Bombay Government's order restricting admission into English-teaching schools to Anglo-Indians and non-Asians must be viewed with grave misgivings by all those who cherish the democratic way of life and have the cause of good education and Indian unity at heart.

In every civilised society, it is the inalienable right of parents to educate their children according to their own lights. The State can compel them to send their children to school, but it cannot dictate the choice of school or enforce segregation on grounds of race, religion or language. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children". India is a signatory to this declaration and the Bombay Government's order is clearly in conflict with Article 26. The Indian Constitution also lays down that educational institutions receiving governmental aid shall not discriminate in the admission of pupils except on grounds of merit. While the representatives of India speak out loudly, at international assemblies, for equal rights for all, nearer home such rights are being threatened. Mr. Frank Anthony has rightly described the Bombay Government's attempt to segregate school children on grounds of race and language as "educational apartheid"

At Last

At long last thousands of Chinese and North Korean prisoners of war have won the freedom for which they risked their lives during the past year or more. January 23 was indeed a great day for the free world..

Throughout the night prior to their release by the Indian Custodian Force the communists had kept up their campaign of blackmail and bluff by broadcasting ceaselessly to the helpless prisoners that they would be "killed by communist gunfire" if they tried to return to the U.N. lines.

But next morning their bluff was well and truly called when the Chinese prisoners marched out of their camps carrying portraits of President Chiang Kai-shek and Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and waving Nationalist flags and the Koreans shouting "Banzai" as they marched past a portrait of President Syngman Rhee.

Indians have reason to feel relieved and happy that the ultimate issue of this country's intervention in this matter has been the release of the anti-communist prisoners. Such satisfaction cannot but be mixed with regret, however, that General Thimayya who, along with his troops comes out of this entire chapter with flying colours, should have been directed to attach to the act of handing over the prisoners to the U.N. somewhat ungracious admonitions against releasing them on the one due date. While taking the grace out of a correct act, this has given a handle to mendacious communist propaganda.

On Re-Writing History

The re-writing of history to suit particular causes has so far been associated mainly with Russia. As far as we are aware no attempts have been made in India to write history with particular objects in view. At worst, historians have been guilty of suppressing facts unpalatable to them and giving prominence to others which support their own theories. This is a human failing, and nothing much can be done about it.

Dr. P. V. Kane's address at the History Congress at Waltair on December 29, 1953 should open our eyes to a great danger that exists in this country. Politics is our national pastime and political propaganda has often made use of history as a medium. Dr. Kane referred to the report of the Zakir Hussain Committee on basic national education which contains an unusual suggestion. The report stated that as the Indian nation has adopted non-violence as a method preferable to violence, Indian children should be taught the superiority of non-violence over violence in the context of history. Dr. Kane rightly observes that no Indian history based on principles stated above can be written, particularly for the period from about 1200 to 1920 A.D. and it would be better not to teach any history at all rather than one which is so obviously tailored to political ends. Fortunately, no history books of this type have yet been written, and we hope that any attempts to do so will be strongly discouraged by everybody concerned.

With Many Voices

The failure of India's foreign policy was never more evident before as now when the country finds itself without friends at this critical period of its history.

Asoka Mehta in *The Times of India*, January 2, 1954.

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Manmohan Singh – Con Artist?

The bottom line is that Manmohan Singh always hedges his bets and stays away from controversies, thereby ensuring that he offends nobody and consequently protects his chair.

I'm beginning to think that India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, may be a very accomplished con artist. This might seem an astounding statement to make about a man universally respected for his integrity, honesty and humility. Let me explain.

Yes, the man possesses all the qualities mentioned above. However, in my opinion, his most remarkable accomplishment is staying power. Without quite appearing to do anything, he manages to hang on to his seat – no matter what. During the past several months, he has given the nation an object lesson on the art of survival. Consider the facts.

The monumental corruption and skulduggery perpetrated in the Commonwealth Games and allocation of 2G spectrum has dominated the headlines for months now. Skeleton after financial skeleton keeps tumbling out of the closets of Suresh Kalmadi and A. Raja, but the PM's closet remains firmly shut. For sure, he has been attacked by the opposition parties, but that is to be expected in any case. The Congress, meanwhile, pulls out all the stops to ensure that his halo is not tarnished. Even the Supreme Leader misses no opportunity to give him a ringing endorsement.

The hard reality is that Manmohan Singh is probably the most impotent and ineffectual Prime Minister this country has ever had. He is also the most honest, but he has not once used his rectitude or stood on his principles to benefit the nation or bring the guilty to book. His favourite whipping boy, viz: "compulsions of coalition politics" has been adroitly used by him to cover up his indifference bordering on incompetence. The Congress

may persist in singing hosannas to their nominal leader, but it would take a suspension of normal intelligence to believe that the PM was totally unaware of the machinations of Kalmadi and Raja, among others. And what was his reaction? He neither condemned, nor condoned. He merely flashed his beatific smile and did precisely nothing.

Similarly, in the present agricultural crisis when prices of onions and other vegetables are reaching astronomical levels, other than uttering platitudes, the PM is sitting on the sidelines. Not once has he rebuked or pressurised Sharad Pawar, who openly displays his indifference and disdain for the agriculture portfolio he holds. In fact, he seems to have relegated all tough public pronouncements to the next man on the totem pole, Pranab Mukherjee.

Even when he appears to be proactive, as in offering to appear before the PAC to answer questions regarding the 2G scam, it is a cleverly calculated move. The PM knows full well that if he is called, the opposition will weaken its case for insisting on a JPC; and therefore, the possibility is remote.

The bottom line is that Manmohan Singh always hedges his bets and stays away from controversies, thereby ensuring that he offends nobody and consequently protects his chair. That is why he deserves the epithet of con artist. With all his obvious failings, he has somehow managed to maintain his image as an elder statesman and a respected world leader – as is evident from the accolades heaped on him by the likes of Obama and Sarkozy. That requires talent.

You Scratch My Back ...

In my opinion, the only plausible reason for this bizarre behaviour is that everybody knows everyone else's dirty secrets.

Nowadays I feel that the media should pay both the BJP and the Congress a salary as content providers, since both parties obligingly furnish the print and television media with a sensational new headline almost every week – *gratis*. In fact, they readily act as cannon fodder for self-appointed crusaders like Arnab Goswami and Rajdeep

Sardesai of *Times Now* and *CNN-IBN* respectively – and there seems to be no end in sight.

Hence you have the BJP's obdurate Yedurappa gleefully defying his party leadership and continuing in his shameless ways; all the while presenting a beaming

smile to television cameras. On the Congress side, the wily and wilfully corrupt Kalmadi continues as head honcho of the Indian Olympic Committee (IOC) – even after being brutally exposed – the very organization he and his cronies so skilfully used to amass huge personal fortunes at the expense of the public exchequer. And of course, the infamous 2G telecom scam and its grinning perpetrator, A Raja, is now an urban legend. In the latest brouhaha about onion prices, the Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar has scored an obvious self-goal with his seeming indifference and pathetic explanation for the avoidable crisis. Don't the country's two major political parties realize that their image is taking a humiliating beating in the eyes of the voting public? Why are they so intent on committing political suicide? Can they really be that dumb?

They are not, of course. It takes a great deal of cunning and ingenuity to transform oneself from a humble fruit seller into a crorepati within the short span of a few years. If the Congress and the BJP are deliberately smearing egg on their faces by shielding the badly exposed and patently culpable scamsters, there has to be a more devious explanation. In my opinion, the only plausible reason for this bizarre behaviour is that everybody knows everyone else's dirty secrets. It is a classic application

of the Biblical injunction: let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

And so the government is going through the motions of appointing inquiry commissions and conducting income tax raids; probably after coming to a tacit agreement with the perpetrators that it is just a show for public and media consumption; and giving them more than enough time to destroy or "misplace" any incriminating evidence. If any proof is needed, you just have to observe the smug expressions on the faces of Kalmadi and Raja even as they are being "raided." They are confident that the powers that be cannot impose any significant punishment without themselves being exposed. I would exclude Sharad Pawar from this particular charade, but then, he has a different agenda. Pawar has made no secret of his desire to shed his agriculture portfolio and concentrate on his cricketing activities. By displaying such blatant incompetence on the onion issue, he almost seems to be goading the Prime Minister to sack him.

I am no fan of the loud mouthed Rajdeep Sardesai, but for once, one of his stock phrases is very appropriate here: *is hamam me sab nangey hai*.

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Come On, Liberals: Let's Change India!

The Beliefs of the Liberal

Sanjeev Sabhlok

Liberalism gives primacy to two key values: life and liberty. It asks for the protection of “autonomous spheres in which the ends of the individuals are supreme” (Hayek). It asks that we must be allowed to do what we want as long as we don't harm others.

Classical liberalism has been vindicated in the 20th century through the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy, and communist USSR. Attempts in the West to promote a social democratic welfare state have also floundered badly. These ideas – that give the government a role beyond delivering law and order and a modicum of infrastructure – have by now been thoroughly discredited.

Freedom First has bravely defended classical liberalism in India for over 57 years in the face of socialist delusions. But not only have liberal ideas emerged unscathed, the only things that have actually worked in India since independence are based on the liberal philosophy. Thus, its 1950 constitution has defended at least some civil rights, and the liberal economic policies forced upon reluctant socialists (after they had bankrupted India in 1991) have helped it recover from a disastrous experiment with socialism.

Despite the sterling success of liberalism (even in India), even today there is no national liberal political party, and the shenanigans of corrupt socialists continue, unchecked. It is crucial for liberals to assert the moral claims and worldly benefits of liberalism, and to put to bed socialist and other collectivist ideas that have harmed India for so long.

Why Freedom?

Liberalism gives primacy to two key values: life and liberty. It asks for the protection of “autonomous spheres in which the ends of the individuals are supreme” (Hayek). It asks that we must be allowed to do what we want as long as we don't harm others.

This crucial value – of freedom – can be explored from two angles: the moral and empirical. The moral imperative requires everyone to be treated equally under the law, which means everyone should have the same freedom of action. All moral theories of justice also lead us to freedom. Individual justice (*not* social justice: a vacuous concept) is the other side of the coin of freedom.

The idea of justice makes sense only where free-will prevails. Only a free man can be held to account.

The other aspect – empirical – argues that freedom is the only value capable of ensuring a harmonious society. The liberal, as a scientist, observes human weaknesses and limitations; and hence promotes a system that will permit us freedom but hold us to account. Another key empirical justification for freedom is that it generates huge amounts of wealth.

Institutions of Liberty

The institutions of liberty are designed to empower self-interested individuals with widely differing tastes to cooperate voluntarily to achieve their personal goals using knowledge which is scattered across the society. I highlight below some of the key institutions below. A detailed excursion into liberty and its institutions is provided in my draft manuscript, *The Discovery of Freedom* (<http://discovery.sabhlokcity.com/>).

The state – for the defence of our freedom

Liberalism opposes anarchy. A state (nation) with an agreed boundary and government is the basic liberal institution. Also, “[o]ne must be in a position to compel the person who will not respect the lives, health, personal freedom, or private property of others to acquiesce in the rules of life in society. This is the function that the liberal doctrine assigns to the state: the protection of property, liberty, and peace” (Ludwig von Mises). The government must therefore perform the key functions of defence, justice, and police. In particular, justice must be quick, proportionate, and accessible.

Limited government

Functions beyond these core areas of responsibility can be taken up by a government only where a strong case for the provision of public goods, or a level of equal opportunity, exists. In doing so, the government *must not* reduce our liberties, nor skimp on the delivery of its core functions. It is particularly important also that each citizen

is allowed to pursue his own happiness the way he or she pleases. The government must never become our nanny.

Live and let live

A harmonious society can arise only when no one is permitted to forcibly impose his personal beliefs (religious or otherwise) on others. Note that liberalism is not against religion. Far from it. But it does demand tolerance and freedom of expression. It is intolerant of intolerance.

Separation of the domains of the state and religion

The liberal state is non-denominational. It does not support nor comment on any religious matter. Thus it does not make religious law, nor fund religious activity. Religions, similarly, are expected not to impose their demands on the functions of the state.

Participative government

As part of equal freedom, every adult should have equal political rights – including democratic franchise. Different views exist, however, on which form of democracy is best. Based on an analysis of incentives (see *Breaking Free of Nehru*: 0 for details), I recommend continuing India's current form of democracy, subject to a few reforms.

Limited democracy

There is a belief among some liberals that the 'will of the people' is supreme. This is incorrect – to the extent that such 'will' tramples on the liberty of a minority. Just as the government should be restricted to its core functions, democracy should be limited through constitutional safeguards that disallow the rule of the mob. Democracy is not an innate social value. Our freedom is.

Accountable government

The authority we give to the government is not a blank cheque for whimsical taxation or interference in the economy, or whimsical support for one group at the expense of another. The citizen, as principal, is entitled to hold his agent – his political representative, and the government – firmly to account. The executive must disclose the reasons for its decisions to the parliament, and the parliament must return back to the people every few years to renew its mandate.

To bring about greater accountability, the governance system must align our agents' incentives (i.e. of MPs, MLAs and bureaucrats) with ours, so that our agents advance our security and welfare, not just their own. This means, in particular, that MPs' and bureaucrats' compensation must be high enough to eliminate corruption, with a major part of it linked to performance indicators of

freedom, integrity, and prosperity.

Rule of law, and general rules

As Hayek noted, "[t]he great aim of the struggle for liberty has been equality before the law." The state must not create special laws for special 'classes' of people – whether religious or otherwise, or favour particular businesses at the expense of others. (For instance, it can't give the powers to issue currency only to a single bank.) Further, the functionaries of government should comply with, and disclose precisely how their decisions are compatible with the general rules. There is no place for whimsy in the free society.

Reasonable equality of opportunity

Free societies generate huge quantities of wealth, leaving only a tiny residue of poverty. But while a harmonious society can exist even with extreme economic inequality, poverty dampens the allegiance of the poor to the nation. For many other reasons, as well, the liberal accepts the need for a *direct* social insurance mechanism that supports, at a frugal level, those who fail to earn a minimum livelihood despite their best efforts.

These, in a nutshell, were the beliefs of the liberal. Clearly, India is far from being a free society. The liberals have a lot of work ahead of them to bring freedom to India.

Freedom Team of India

FTI (<http://freedomteam.in/>) is looking for Indian liberals to step forward and lead India to freedom. Please join or otherwise support FTI!

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

Thank God for Pakistan! (Cont'd. from page 4)

condemned by the press and the general public. There is definitely no public adulation of the kind we are currently witnessing across the border.

And so, we Indians somehow muddle through. And surprisingly, we are emerging and commanding international respect as an economic powerhouse – not because of our government, but in spite of it. In fact, most Indians have traditionally gone about their business treating their "leaders" with amused tolerance and almost complete indifference. And maybe that is not such a bad thing.

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Armed Forces Special Powers Act

Freedom First, in association with Freedom First Foundation, has been organising discussions and seminars on national security concerns. Issues tackled at earlier seminars were: 1. Secularism in the Armed Forces; 2. New Challenges for the Armed Forces; 3. Status of Discipline and Morale in the Indian Army; 4. India's Coastal Security and 5. India China Relations: Some Strategic Perspectives.

On 16 October 2010 the seminar this time was on the highly controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). Earlier, on 4 September 2010 at a seminar on the Kashmir problem (see "Kashmir Conundrum" Freedom First, October 2010), the role of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act was discussed. Time constraints prevented a fuller discussion of what was a major issue of human rights and the use of the Indian Army in domestic disputes. This led to another seminar the following month on October 16 exclusively devoted to the CRPF and the AFSPA in view of their implications and relevance in a liberal democratic India. At the same time Freedom First which as a Liberal journal places the individual first would want reason and not emotions to prevail where national interests are concerned in assessing the need for this Act.

A paper by Brig. Suresh Sharma was circulated in advance, a summary of which forms part of this cover feature. There were a number of retired army personnel at this seminar. All of them retired. Hence the suffix (retired) is not mentioned each time there is reference to such persons. The seminar was chaired by Major General D. R. Dutt.

Summary of the Paper by Brig. Suresh Sharma.

Insurgency has taken a heavy toll of human lives. Between 1980 and 2000, more than 100,000 lives have been lost to terrorism. Apart from damage to life and property, the psychological impact is far greater. Terrorism is much more than a law and order problem. It is a method of warfare which has become more lethal with modern weapons and explosives. Most Western democracies have armed the police with additional powers to tackle domestic violence and there are specific laws in the UK and USA preventing the use of the country's armed forces in tackling internal violence except for rescue missions, defusing explosives and destroying strong points where insurgents have dug themselves in. The Police have the advantage of local intelligence, assistance from Interpol, knowledge of laws and legitimate authority to launch prosecution.

In India, it became necessary to induct the Army in the North East due to there being no established administration in that region when the insurgency started. In Jammu and Kashmir the Army was already present to drive out the invaders from across the border. Sympathy amongst the police for the insurgents, intimidation of those in charge of the criminal justice system and the danger of anarchy were some other factors that required the Army's presence. The Army has no authority to intervene and had to be vested with powers for arrest, search and corrective action. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act

[AFSPA] was legislated for that purpose in 1958 and amended in 1972.

Salient Features

The Act applies to the Army, Air Force and Assam Rifles in land operations. This rules out strafing or bombing from the air. It has four important clauses. Firstly, the Act authorizes an officer, Junior Commissioned Officer [JCO] or Non-Commissioned Officer [NCO] or equivalent rank to arrest suspects without a warrant. Secondly, they can enter premises and search. Thirdly, they can destroy ammunition dumps or other fortifications. Fourthly, they can use force to disperse an assembly after due warning, where possible. Prisoners captured by the Army are to be handed over to the nearest civil police as soon as possible. No time limit is laid down. The Central Government or Governor or Administrator of any Central Territory can impose the Act and it is to be reviewed after six months. Members of the military or paramilitary force can be prosecuted only after approval of the Central Government.

Some Common Objections

- The Army is subordinate to the Civil Authority and not allowed to take over civilian authority. The Army acts on behalf of the Central Government which is an elected body.
- Insurgency has not been wiped out in spite of the Act being in force for more than a decade.
- The authority for arrest is delegated to an NCO. The

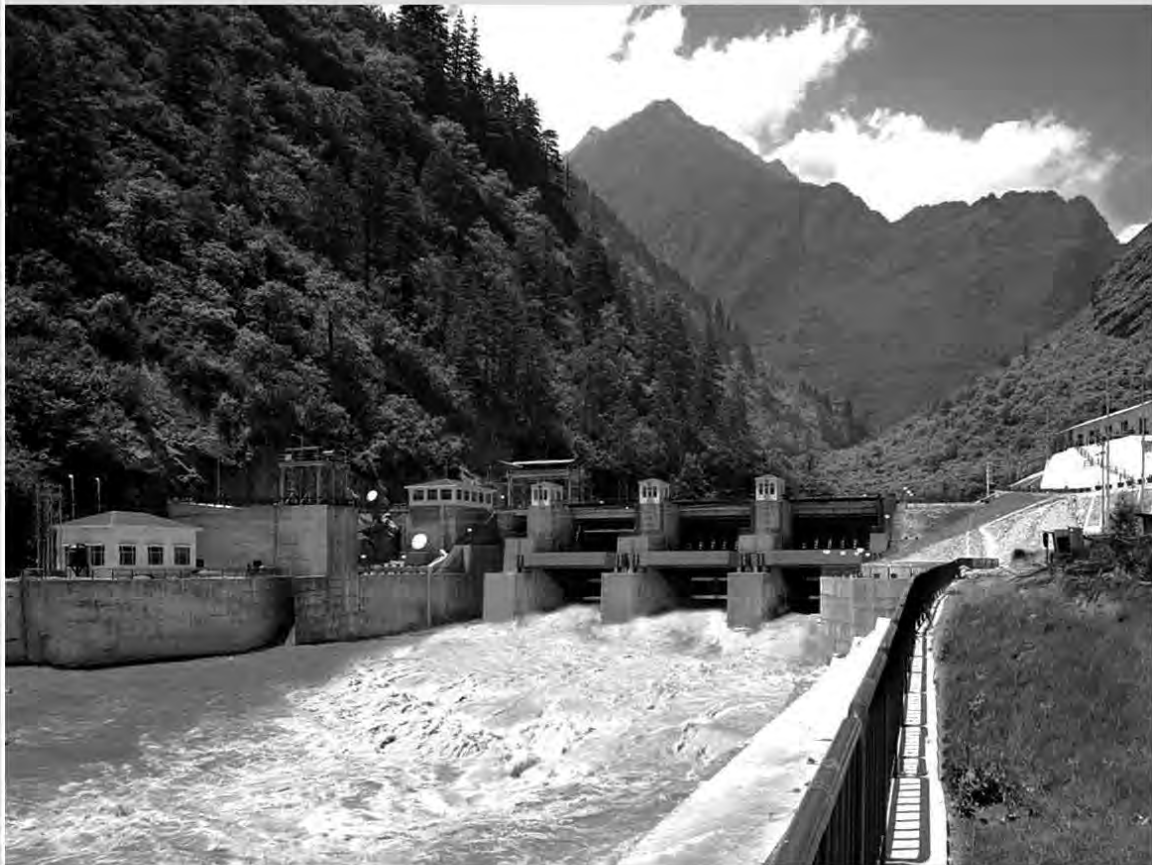
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Army is stretched out in small detachments and the authority has to be exercised by the individual on the spot.

- The Act is against human rights. When the Disturbed Area Act was extended to Jammu, the Chief Minister remarked “It is amazing that there is more concern for the terrorists than for innocent citizens.”
- The Act can be misused.

There is bound to be some collateral damage to civilian population and property as the insurgents do not hesitate to employ women and children. The death of an innocent civilian is a great tragedy but we must note that the soldier is guarding the community and has to take split second decisions. A soldier guarding a community or an installation is also innocent. In the last 57 years the soldiers have made a tremendous contribution to safeguarding the republic from sliding into anarchy. Apart from the loss of lives of thousands of soldiers, the strain and tension of daily life in an insurgent affected area is tremendous. In J&K, the ‘militants’ (a euphemism for terrorists or insurgents), mostly foreigners, have developed pockets in civilian areas where the population is coerced or is infiltrated by extremist groups. They throw grenades or fire on security personnel in crowded markets. Stone throwing crowds financed by Pakistan or youths attempting to burn army vehicles and snatching their arms have to be resisted.

Allegations Against Security Forces

Charges of torture have often been hurled against the security forces. False allegations against security forces is a universal practice among militants in order to demoralize the security forces. Out of 1511 complaints made against the security forces, 1473 were found to be false and 104 were punished. The security forces personnel also have human rights and the government should initiate legal action against those who make false complaints.

Can We Do Without the AFSPA?

A study of the successes and failures of counter terrorist operations shows that success demands emergency powers of detention, interrogation and mandatory longer sentences. Other measures are also required but they are of little use unless supported by emergency powers.

Can We Do Without the Intervention of the Army?

We certainly can. The Western democracies have

not used the Army for domestic counter-terrorist operations. They have given emergency powers to the police and other security agencies. If the Army is to be used when the situation gets out of control of the Police, they have to be given due authority and a clear objective. The Army should be withdrawn as soon as the situation is normal.

Justice Reddy Committee Report

The Government of India spurred by demands for the abolishing of the AFSPA had the demand studied. Arising from this was the Justice Reddy Inquiry Report which recommended that AFSPA should be scrapped. In its place a provision to be added to the Indian Penal Code [IPC] giving certain powers of arrest etc. The criminal justice system which takes 10 to 12 years is not capable solving the problem. We must remember the way the army works. Generals are responsible to pursue victory. When the army fights, all resources are utilized by the Force commander and there is no place for half-hearted measures. If AFSPA is withdrawn and IPC suitably modified as recommended by Justice Reddy, troops on duty at that time will be concerned over the legal action that will follow. That is one of the reasons why the police do not take prompt action when houses are set on fire and people are killed on the most trivial issues. Police are more concerned about the subsequent case in the court of law, than taking immediate action.

Winning the Hearts and Minds of the People.

We are told that armed action is not good; we should win the hearts and minds of the people. That is very true. But a soldier is not the best tool to win the hearts and minds of the people. He can only create conditions for the politicians to do that. To ask the army officer to conduct schools and run hospitals is wrong. They are meant for a certain purpose. If you divert them from their purpose, they will sometimes forget what their main task is. This is what is happening in J&K today, where the army is getting involved in being misused for winning the hearts and minds of the people by opening schools and hospitals.

THE DISCUSSION

Initiating the discussion, the Seminar chairman Maj. Gen. D. R. Dutt shared his experience of service in Nagaland. He underlined the fact that the Army is brought in only when the Police and Para-military forces have failed to contain the insurgency and has to operate on

its own. Harsh measures further alienate the local population who are already disenchanted with a dysfunctional local administration.

The Soldier is Trained for Instant Response

The insurgents offer a target only when they are firing at the security forces. If the commanders of the Army detachments concerned don't have the power to retaliate immediately, the chances of that split second opportunity will be lost. It must be remembered that these forces, while operating continuously on patrolling and undertaking cordon and search operations, get such split second opportunity only after a long period of operations in that area. If this opportunity is lost, the morale of the troops will suffer. Secondly, if they are not able to retaliate immediately and have to refer back to their superiors, they can even suffer casualties. Extraordinary powers thus have to be delegated to junior officers.

The Insurgent's Tactic of False Accusation

The immunity granted to the security personnel from prosecution in any civil courts without sanction of the Central Government is often questioned. It must be realized that one of the tactics of the insurgents is to foster false and fabricated cases against the security personnel by forcing the civil population by coercion, intimidation and blackmail. Over a period, an overwhelming majority of such cases have proved to be false. The witnesses whose evidence had been recorded by the army personnel on the spot turn hostile or they go underground. So therefore the army personnel are left disillusioned. Over a period of four years, we would only have 50 percent of the strength of the infantry battalion on active duty because the other 50 per cent would be attending court. It will undermine the trust between officers and soldiers and damage the unit's operational readiness to combat external aggression.

In India, observed Col. Ravi Joshi, it would appear that the human rights of terrorists are more important than the life of a citizen who can be kept quiet with a dose of compensation. We have to realize that human rights are meant to protect innocent people first and others later. Some Naga organizations and lawyers' organizations had filed several writs against this Act in the Supreme Court in 1997. Kapil Sibal arguing against the Act commented that it was better to declare Emergency or Governor's Rule instead of the AFSPA. The Supreme Court differed, saying that this Act is far more conducive for democratic ideals than either the declaration of the emergency or invoking

Governor's Rule.

Bad things do happen often in good faith, often because of misguided and weak leadership. The army does not claim to be without fault. We need to have a just method of dealing with this problem. The government should give reasons for not taking action against a particular section as has been observed in the Supreme Court judgment. The Army has no problem with it. The Army doesn't look after its own criminals. It is a misconception that the Army wants to get entrenched in these areas. The Army would be happy to quit and concentrate on its primary task of defending the country against aggression.

The Role of the CRPF

The Central Reserve Police Force is akin to what the Army is doing during the internal insurgency pointed out former Deputy Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) Ashok Karnik. The Act controlling the CRPF states that it will be used in aid of civilian authorities. The CRPF's role is meant for the purpose for which the army is now being used. The Criminal Procedure Code which deals with unlawful assembly states that unlawful assembly can be dispersed with the use of force under the orders of the Executive Magistrate. If he is not available, then under the orders of the Station House officer, who could be an Inspector, a Sub-Inspector or even a Head Constable. Forces which have police officers or are designated as police officers will be covered by CrPC Sect. 129 which empowers them to disperse unlawful assembly through the use of force. The CRPF have the powers of arrest, seizure, interrogation and use of force for dispersal of unlawful assembly. Immunity is granted under Art.132 of the CrPC that any police officer acting under this Act cannot be prosecuted without the permission of the Central Government. This is similar to the immunity enjoyed by the Army under the AFSPA. Perhaps, the only difference is that the army fights a little more vigorously than the CRPF.

On the other hand, said Mr. Satish Sahney formerly Mumbai's Police Commissioner, the CRPF is never supposed to act independently. The basic laws of the land i.e. the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) are applicable to the police. In fact, an officer of the police station must always be there. What has gone wrong is that the enormity of the deployment has made the people a little irresponsible and prone to cover up. Consequently the CRPF has suffered. It should never be done.

AFSPA and the CrPC

Many of the powers authorized under the AFSPA are provided for in CrPC clarified former Special Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat V. Balachandran. Under the CrPC, force to be used is at the discretion of the officer-in-charge of the police station, whereas under AFSPA the Army can open fire even causing death. If there is a judicial enquiry, the Army is protected but not the police. In the CrPC, a person arrested has to be produced within 24 hours before a magistrate, whereas the AFSPA requires the suspect to be handed over to the nearest police station, with the least possible delay. It is rightly mentioned that we deploy the army when everything else fails.

We should consider withdrawing the application of AFSPA in areas where violence has declined. It is not desirable to get the army into controversy and should be withdrawn when not required. For a detailed explanation see box on page 12.

On the other hand sweeping powers are necessary when minimum force becomes ineffective and where it is necessary by law to ensure safety of the silent majority opined lawyer Nitin Raut, adding that the AFSPA is not alien to the Constitution. This law deals with a situation of exceptional grave circumstances, where the normal civil police force is incapable of handling the situation. Media and vested interests have demonized this Act and in effect also demonized the army. Article 21 of the Constitution lays down that nobody can be deprived of the Right to Life except by due process of law. The fundamental rights have certain restrictions on them. It is not a license to create violence or to indulge in terrorist activities or to attack the police or the armed forces. Even throwing stones hurts and kills and firing on people who throw stones is justified.

He added that the Delhi High Court and the Guwahati High Court have upheld the constitutional validity of this Act. Article 22 which states that a person arrested should be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours of his arrest is consistent with Section 5 of the AFSPA requiring a person taken into custody to be handed over to the nearest police station with the least possible delay. In remote areas there is no police station nearby and exceptions have to be accepted. Section 45 of the CrPC protects the police from prosecution in the discharge of their duties. There is nothing new in protection to the army under Section 6 of the AFSPA. International law accepts collateral damage in a terrorist operation. Civilians who give protection to the terrorists can be killed. Civilian

quarters where militants take refuge can be blown up.

Let there be an impartial agency to examine the allegations against foreign funded NGOs. The human rights organizations are serving our national interests, said noted Environmentalist Shyam Chainani. The allegations should be checked carefully. It will be to our own benefit. Our soldiers are also Indian citizens, so are our officers. Please let us not tamper with their reputation. He offered a some suggestions: Firstly, let the Army lawyers from the Advocate General's branch or otherwise be deputed to defend soldiers accused of wrong acts instead of leaving them to the mercy of civilian lawyers. Secondly, institute fast track courts for such cases. Thirdly, do not cover up false encounters. If a soldier acts like the US Seal who mistakenly shot an aid worker in good faith, it is accepted. If it is done in bad faith, legal action must follow.

Deliberate Attempts to Defame the Indian Army

I am the only person here at this seminar, who was in Hiroshima on the 6th of March 1946, recalled Maj.Gen. D'Souza. Was that a human rights violation? Was there any action taken against the pilots who dropped the bomb? In war, can you draw that line that the human rights people want? When I spoke at the IIT on nuclear war, a group of women got up and accused me of being a murderer. They referred to the rape of women in Kupwara in Kashmir. I arranged their visit to Kupwara. After a month they came back and said with folded hands "Sir, we are very sorry. Those women were put up to make this charge." So let's be rational about these things.

The army has five tasks: Protect the integrity of international borders, internal security which includes counter terrorism, disaster relief, UN Peace-keeping assignments and protection of the environment. Internal security is very much a part of the army's role. I have just come from NEFA. My own battalion that I raised 48 years ago was facing the Chinese. In winter, the battalion come down, and employed in counter insurgency operations. Once the responsibility of internal security has been handed over to the army, they must be left to deal with it. In the old days a magistrate used to accompany the armed forces column. The army had to obtain a signed requisition from him before taking any action. The army is trained to use minimum force. I have served for ten years in Kashmir. We have never used more force than was necessary. But if the insurgents go into a civilian house, we have to take action.

Human and civil rights activist and Advocate

Armed Forces Special Powers Act

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 (AFSPA) was first applied to the North Eastern states of Assam and Manipur and was amended in 1972 to extend to all the seven states in the north- eastern region of India. It was applied to Jammu & Kashmir by the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1990. These draconian laws have been criticized on several grounds: (1) by state governments alleging greater central intervention in State matters, (2) by local political parties (3) by human rights activists for the unfettered power to the Central government not allowed under normal laws and (4) for contravening several international human rights conventions [Universal Declaration of Human Rights - "UDHR", The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- "ICCPR", The Convention Against Torture, The UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, The UN Body of Principles for Protection of All Persons Under any form of Detention, and The UN Principles on Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal and summary executions]. Also the Act in North East which was supposed to have been a temporary measure has been in existence for 52 years against the claims of normalcy in this region.

A comparison between AFSPA and Criminal Procedure Code 1973 would reveal how enlarged these powers are. It would also show that even normal law provides enough protection to the Armed Forces against prosecution meaning that a special law is really not required. It should also be borne in mind that anti-terrorist action in these disturbed areas is not exclusively done by the Armed Forces but also by State or Central Police forces who are given protection only under normal law:

1. Protection:

Code Of Criminal Procedure 1973

45. *Protection of members of the Armed Forces from arrest.*- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in sections 41 to 44 (both inclusive), no member of the Armed Forces of the Union shall be arrested for anything done or purported to be done by him in the discharge of his official duties except after obtaining the consent of the Central Government.

132. *Protection against prosecution for acts done under preceding sections.* - (1) No prosecution against any person for any act purporting to be done under section

129, section 130 or section 131 shall be instituted in any Criminal Court except -

- (a) *with the sanction of the Central Government where such person is an officer or member of the armed forces;*
- (b) *with the sanction of the state government in any other case.*

2. Use of force:

While the Criminal Procedure Code uses the expression "*but in so doing he shall use as little force, and do as little injury to person and property, as may be consistent with dispersing the assembly*" AFSPA uses the expression "*fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death*".

3. Arrest & Production before a Magistrate:

While AFSPA lays down that the arrested person should be "*made over to the officer-incharge of the nearest police station with the least possible delay*" the Criminal Procedure Code says "*Person arrested not to be detained more than twenty-four hours.- No police officer shall detain in custody a person arrested without warrant for a longer period than under all the circumstances of the case is reasonable, and such period shall not, in the absence of a special order of a Magistrate under section 167, exceed twenty-four hours exclusive of the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the Magistrate's Court.*" Several cases have been quoted in which the Army had failed to produce arrested persons for several days-in fact months taking advantage of the clause "with least possible delay". In one case (Luithukla v. Rishang Keishing, (1988) 2 GLR 159) the person concerned was arrested 5 years ago. Under normal preventive law and under Article 22 of the Constitution preventive detention can be only up to 3 months to be reviewed by an Advisory Board if needed to be detained more. In several cases Central Government sanction to prosecute was not given.

All I can say is that we cannot claim to be a democracy if we have such controversial provisions in our statute book for so long.

V. Balachandran
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Nadirshaw Dhondy was against the withdrawal of the AFSPA. He pointed out that the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act is specifically meant to monitor foreign funds for NGOs. The Government has not come out with any white paper on foreign funds received by NGOs. Nobody has been able to find this information in spite of many RTI applications. Secondly, let's have an office of the Ombudsman, with an ombudsman the problem will get sorted out.

Manipur is probably the only state where insurgency persists and if the suggestion made by Brig. Salunke that the Indian Army should accept the withdrawal of the AFSPA for a period of six months and watch the situation is accepted, it will only result in the return of terrorism. The situation in J&K could worsen due to the porous border with Pakistan. I feel the crux of the solution lies on the one hand for the police and the paramilitary forces to coordinate better to become more effective and for our political leaders to look for a political, social and economic solution.

Col. Surendra Nath a Kashmiri by birth who fought the insurgency said that in 19 years he had not seen any arrest by a JCO or an NCO. On the other hand in the last five years four officers and three seniors have been psychologically affected and had to be sent home. There is no protection to the armed forces personnel. He himself was falsely implicated in a case of a missing person and spent Rs.5 lacs to fight the case in the High Court and was finally vindicated.

Intervening in the discussion Brig. Suresh Sharma was emphatic that acts done in bad faith must be punished. That people, who make false complaints should be prosecuted. The individual against whom the complaint has been lodged does not have the financial resources or the time to take such action. Shekhar Gupta the *Indian Express* editor told a Pakistani journalist that in India, the

army derived its authority under AFSPA. The Pakistani journalist commented "I wish we had a similar law so that we don't have to declare martial law."

Citing an example Brig. Thyagarajan said that a few army drivers were attacked by a mob in Srinagar. The Commanding Officer who happened to be there used force to restore order. For this he was unfairly punished. It is not easy in a place like Srinagar where they want the Act to be removed and loyalties are changing by the minute. In Kashmir, CRPF has been deployed but the irrational demand is to withdraw both the army and AFSPA.

Responding to Brig. Sharma's plea that people who face prosecution arising from such false complaints and asserting that such people should be prosecuted Nadirshaw Dhondy advised that there was an organization in India called Indian Society of Victimology headed by former CBI Director-General R. K. Raghavan. He advised those who felt victimized to get in touch with this organization dedicated to help defend such victims.

There was a general acceptance at the seminar that the AFSPA is inescapable even while holding the view that the army should be kept away from policing civil conflicts, unless it becomes absolutely necessary, to safeguard the country's security. The question of human rights has always bothered the army, as also the inconvenience which it causes, said Maj. Gen. Dutt summing up the discussions. He said there is no doubt that various stops, check and search operations are a nuisance. Even if the army were to leave, the same procedure has to be followed by the CRPF or police. Military action is secondary to administrative and political action. The job of the army is to restore law and order and apply constant pressure on the militants, thus forcing them to come to the negotiating table. When that happens the army can be withdrawn, leaving the politicians and the civil administration to resolve the problem.

***Freedom First* is grateful to Brig. Suresh Sharma and Brig. A. Thyagarajan for editing the transcript of the proceedings of the seminar – Editor.**

Seminar Participants

V. Balachandran ● Arvind Banavaliker ● Cdr. C. S. Dandekar ● Shyam Chainani ● Maj.Gen. E. D'Souza ● Maj.Gen. D. R. Dutt ● Advocate Nadirshaw Dhondy ● Lt.Gen. Prakash Gokarn ● Col. R. S. Joshi ● C. S. Kallianpur ● A. V. Karnik ● Jyoti Marwah ● Abhijit Nayak ● Col. Surendra Nath ● V. S. Palekar ● Brig. D. Prakash ● Zaina Poonawalla ● S. V. Raju ● Kashmira Rao ● D. S. Ranga Rao ● Nitin Raut ● Brig. S. D. Saloke ● Satish Sahney ● Brig. S. C. Sharma ● R. Srinivasan ● Brig. A. Thyagarajan ● Col. Amarjit Singh Wadhawan

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Open Letter to Wen Jiabao

Tenzin Tsundue

This was published on 14 December 2010 during Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to India

Dear Mr Wen Jiabao,

I welcome you to India. Although I am not a citizen of this country, I was born and raised here in exile. India is the only home I've known. I belong to the second generation of Tibetan refugees "the children of Tibetans who escaped Chinese aggression in Tibet from 1959 by following in the footsteps of their leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

During your last India visit, on 10 April 2005 – while you were busy addressing a group of Indian scientists on the ground floor of the Indian Institute of Science building in Bangalore – the media mob suddenly rushed out of the hall, leaving you speaking quite alone. Someone had climbed up the heritage building to the bell tower, unfurling a Free Tibet banner and bellowing slogans. That was me.

Today I am writing this Open Letter to you. Even half a decade ago I knew that among the more liberal leaders in China you were one. Recently, your call for reforms to bring greater freedom and democracy to China reverberated across the international community. You already have a following among the ambitious and educated youth in your own country.

I have been following the epic struggle of Chinese writers, poets, film-makers and activists who have been relentlessly and bravely working for democracy and human rights in China. Many of them have been arrested or repeatedly harassed on charges of 'sedition' and 'selling State secrets'. China's first Nobel Peace Prize winner, Liu Xiaobo, is the best stellar example. He is a peace warrior, a new world hero. When Liu first demonstrated on Tiananmen Square in 1989, I was a schoolboy. I grew up admiring all those Chinese students, teachers, intellectuals and labourers who sacrificed their lives and freedom by calling for reforms and universal rights to free speech which the free world takes for granted. They chose to give up their lives but never be cowed into suffering social conformity and silence.

These children of modern China truly are the guardians of the future People's Republic. While

appreciating and benefiting by the economic development in your country, they never stop working to push the limits of civil society's universal norms. These courageous young people have inspired and awakened a whole new generation of youth in the world who otherwise take freedom and democracy for granted.

The world would be easier doing business with a prosperous new China which adheres to the principles of Beijing's constitution and legal framework. At the moment the free world is either intimidated by your formidable military prowess, or is in need of your dazzling financial reserves accumulated by selling cheap Chinese (slave) labour to western corporations, not to mention the rampant exploitation of mineral deposits and other natural resources reaped from occupied countries like Southern Mongolia, Eastern Turkestan (which you label Xinjiang) and Tibet. Tibet is a major component of the larger problem of China.

In your 'settlement of nomads projects', thousands of Tibetan nomads have been coerced into selling their huge herds of yaks and sheep and been settled in matchbox concrete housing in the middle of nowhere – just as American Indians were herded into restricted 'reservations' in the United States a century or so ago. Proud Tibetan nomads, who roamed free and enjoyed a rich culture and sustainable way of life throughout history, today watch impotently as their traditional pastures are dug up for mining, military airports, or road and railways infrastructure. Nomad boys are washing dishes in Chinese roadside take-aways while young nomad girls are quickly pulled into prostitution.

This year, when the earthquake struck the Jeikudo area of Yushu, you were the first Chinese leader to be there among the Tibetan population. You have seen for yourself that Yushu is the watershed of some of Asia's most important rivers. Rivers rising in Tibet providing the downstream flows to the Indus, Satlej and Brahmaputra, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze and yellow river feed more than one and a half billion of the population of South Asia and China. But these rivers are now being dammed at many stages downstream - especially along the mighty Yarlung Tsangpo that flows into India as the Brahmaputra. Siltation

on these rivers causes them to change course. Is Beijing oblivious to the fact that catastrophic flooding, already being suffered downstream from the Tibetan Plateau, is bound to adversely affect the geo-politics of South Asia and its citizens?

The 2008 uprising in Tibet was brutally suppressed by a People's Liberation Army crackdown. Today, Tibet is a militarized zone where people live under constant fear and suspicion. Despite the persecution of Tibetans and Uighurs, China is one country which is not threatened by terrorists. Even as you and your business delegation arrive in India for this State visit, we come out onto the roads to stage our peaceful, non-violent protests. But will airliners be hijacked? Will suicide bombers attempt to assassinate a world leader? No.

Our activist ethics and restraint hold firm because we still haven't lost faith in non-violence and its adherence by our leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. And yet his proposal to accept 'genuine autonomy within the People's Republic of China' has been rejected outright by China. While you are here in India for three days, why don't you make the time to sit down and talk with him?

There was a time in 1960s when elder generation Tibetans were concerned about the future of Tibet. Today,

the struggle is led by young Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet. We are electing our new Prime Minister and 44 members of the parliament in exile next year. The more educated, skilled, wealthy with international contacts the Tibetan youngsters grow up with the more they burn with the angst for sense of belonging. The fact that we are not citizens of any country - living in uncertainty - the struggle means much more to us than our parents and grandparents! Therefore among the youngsters the demand for independence is stronger. The recent change in education policy in Tibet replaced Tibetan textbooks by Chinese ones. This further united our resolve that only independence can guarantee the survival of our people and nation. The 60 years of Sino-India relations is the statement of 60 years of Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Mr. Prime Minister, you will be retiring in 2012. As you have a saying in Chinese "ren zhi jian si qi yan ye shan" (the man at his death tells the truth) it's time the true wishes of the Chinese people be expressed. And there is no one who can do that more effectively than you, Mr Prime Minister.

Tenzin Tsundue
Dharamsala, India. 14 December, 2010.

Mr. Tenzin Tsundue is a Tibetan writer and activist based in Dharamsala, India.

A Mother's Sacrifice during the China Earthquake.

After the Earthquake had subsided, when the rescuers reached the ruins of a young woman's house, they saw her dead body through the cracks. But her pose was somehow strange that she knelt on her knees like a person who was worshiping; her body was leaning forward, and her two hands were supporting her body. The collapsed house had crushed her back and her head.

With difficulty, the leader of the rescuer team put his hand through a narrow gap on the wall to reach the woman's body. The cold and stiff body told him that she had passed away for sure.

He and the rest of the team left this house and were going to search the next collapsed building. For some reason, the team leader was driven by a compelling force to go back to the ruined house of the dead woman. Again, he knelt down and used his hand through the narrow cracks to search the little space under the dead body. Suddenly, he screamed with excitement, "A child! There is a child!"

The whole team worked together; carefully they removed the piles of ruined objects around the dead woman. There was a 3-month old little boy wrapped in a flowery blanket under his mother's dead body. Obviously, the woman had made an ultimate sacrifice for saving her son. When her house was falling, she used her body to make a cover to protect her son. The little boy was still sleeping peacefully when the team leader picked him up.

The medical doctor came quickly to examine the little boy. After he opened the blanket, he saw a cell phone inside the blanket. There was a text message on the screen. It said, "If you can survive, you must remember that I love you." This cell phone was passed around from one hand to another. Everybody that read the message wept. "If you can survive, you must remember that I love you." Such is the mother's love for her child!

From the Net: contributed by reader Asrarul Haque

Freedom First

Freedom First speaks for the silent majority - the majority that wants to be left in peace to pursue its goal of improving its quality of life, but has been suffering in silence, the indignities heaped on it by insensitive governments who have abrogated to themselves the right to decide what is good for the people. In the process, the whole country has been turned into a cesspool of corruption. Public morality and character have reached an all-time low.

Freedom First affirms that much of the unrest and ferment in our society is a direct result of excessive State intervention in the day-to-day lives of our people. While the people's initiative has been stifled, the economy is in shambles. The Journal believes that while India needs a strong government that ensures the rule of law what India does not need is a meddlesome government – the system so far that has led to impoverishment, insecurity and instability.

Freedom First therefore stands for minimum government and maximum freedom, tempered by a sense of individual responsibility, in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow.

Freedom First rejects any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another, be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

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