

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

IN MEMORY OF “NIRBHAYA”

Freedom First believes in an open society based on 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; we reject any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

Saat^{Ka} Jadoo

Union
DOUBLE
Deposit Scheme



Ek lagayein, Duguna paayein.

Double your fixed deposit amount in just 7 years and 7 months.
Interest @ 9.25% p.a.

- For senior citizens amount doubles in just 7 years and 3 months
- Interest rate for senior citizens @ 9.75% p.a. • Maximum Deposit Rs. 15 Lakh

यूनियन बैंक
ऑफ़ इंडिया
अच्छे लोग, अच्छा बैंक



Union Bank
of India
Good people to bank with

Helpline Nos.: 1800 22 2244 (Toll free no.) | 022 2575 1500 (Chargeable)
022 2571 9600 (For NRIs) | www.unionbankofindia.co.in

Conditions apply

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

Number 548 – February 2013

Advisory Board:

Mr. Sharad Bailur
Mr. A. V. Gopalakrishnan
Mr. Firoze Hirjikaka
Mr. Ashok Karnik
Mr. Farrokh Mehta
Mr. Jehangir Patel
Mr. Nitin G. Raut
Brig. S. C. Sharma (retd.)
Mr. Kunwar Sinha
Mr. Sameer Wagle

Editor:

S. V. Raju

Associate Editor:

Prof. R. Srinivasan

Editorial Team:

Dr. Rca Godbole
Ms. Hina Manerikar
Dr. Jyoti Marwah
Mr. Nitin Raut

Cover Design:

Vivek Raju

Administration, Accounts,

Subscription, Circulation:

Ms. Kashmira Rao

Contact:

Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom
3rd floor, Army & Navy Building
148, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Mumbai 400001
Telefax. 022 22843416 /66396366
Editor's Cell: 9820016392

Subscription:

Annual: Rs.200: Two years Rs.350

Three years: Rs.500

Overseas: Annual only US\$20 / £10.

Cheques/DDs in favour of ICCF

Email: freedomfirst1952@gmail.com

Web: www.freedomfirst.in

Published by J. R. Patel for the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and printed by him at Union Press, 13 Homji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400001. Tel. 22660357, 22665526. Typeset at Shubham Print & Web, 59, Dr. V. B. Gandhi Marg, 1st floor, Fort, Mumbai 400001. Tel. 22842619.

Between Ourselves...

The gruesome assault and killing of “Nirbhaya”, the medical student, in a bus in Delhi, drew national anger on an unprecedented scale. The processions and demonstrations were spontaneous. They thronged in their thousands the area in and around parliament house and the presidential palace known as Rashtrapati Bhavan. They demanded justice, nothing less than the death sentence for the rapists. They also demanded security for our women. They have returned to their homes perhaps nursing a broken hand or a leg or have a bad cold doused as they were by water cannon perhaps in the authorities’ belief that by so doing they would extinguish the anguish and the anger of the protestors; Obviously the President of India did not hear their cries or even if he did, he did not consider it necessary to come out of his palace to console the grief-stricken crowd. But this is not the style of the Indira Congress whose member he was, forgetting the fact that as President he is India’s First Citizen.

The Anna Hazare movement against corruption was well organised but collapsed. But the protest against the killing of an Indian Citizen after being physically abused was genuine. And this government, we are saddled with, did not know how to deal with them.

Sad as the occasion is, it is a welcome sign that this spontaneous eruption of anger indicates that we the people of India have had enough and we are no longer willing to tolerate the all pervasive lawlessness enveloping the country. “I want to live”, cried “Nirbhaya” and the people responded to her cry with a resounding, ‘We want to Live’.

We dedicate this issue of *Freedom First* to her Memory.

Editor

In this Issue

From Our Readers	4
<i>The Delhi Gang Rape Case</i>	
● Rapes and Apes	Kusum Chopra 5
● The Gruesome Assault	H. R. Babu Satyanarayana 7
● No Lessons Learnt	Firoze Hirjikaka 9
<i>The Economy:</i>	
● Advocating the Farmers’ Interest	Y. Sivaji 11
● The Twelfth Five Year Plan	Sunil S. Bhandare 13
● Industrial Chaos - II	Kashinath Divecha 16
<i>Point Counter Point</i>	Ashok Karnik 19
The Gujarat Assembly Elections	Arun Modi 21
The Parliament, Politics and Policy Paralysis	Ranga Kota 23
<i>Cornucopia</i>	Firoze Hirjikaka 25
<i>Book Review</i>	
Bankrupt: Why Banking is Broken, How it can be transformed by Carol Realini, Reviewed by	Suman Oak 28
<i>Educating Adults</i>	
● The Right to Education Act (8)	Suresh Sharma 30
● What Women College Students Think of Assault on Women?	N. S. Venkataraman 31
● Rangoli	B. M. N. Murthy 33
<i>Nostalgia:</i>	
<i>Freedom First</i> This month in February 1956	facing page 34

From Our Readers

FDI in Retail

The following information is from an article by M. J. Akbar on FDI in retail in *The Times of India*, 9 December 2012.

American onion farmers had been squeezed into despair by Walmart, which was selling their product at nine times the purchase price.

Walmart was amongst those responsible for the fire at Bangladesh Tarzeen Fashions Factory. Low cost shirts was preferred to higher cost of workers safety.

Regarding FDI in pensions and insurance the financial sector does not require any technology upgrade. We are being told that FDI will bring in much needed foreign capital. As a layman, I have a simple question: A trader will make profits and send the profits back home. He can also withdraw the capital at any time. He will take out USD 110 against bringing in USD 100. Any relief in foreign exchange is temporary. Moreover we are exposing ourselves to the vagaries of overseas markets. About ten years ago, there was a movement to emphasize the high sense of ethics in US financial institutions and the advantages of US audit rules. The malpractices unearthed there have surpassed the faults of the Indian system. The unique point of these two sectors is that small equity controls large amount of finance. Is it the reason why US companies are keen to invest in these sectors?

Brig. Suresh Sharma (ret'd), Navi Mumbai.
brigscs@gmail.com

*

“When Generals Failed”

The book review of “When Generals Failed” (*Freedom First* No.547 Jan.2013) doesn't give details of the failures of the Generals. If we read Brigadier Dalvi's 'Himalayan Blunder' and Gen. Prasad's 'Fall of Tawang', we get the impression that the Indian Army was not at all prepared for the war. If these accounts are not correct then somebody should write an account of the preparedness of the army and how the war could have been won. No such account has come forward, even fifty years after the war. So how is it proper to blame the Generals? The real fault of the Generals was that, in the feudal mindset prevalent in the country, no General had the courage to challenge the political leadership for ruining the army.

Blame is left at Mullick's door. Did Mullick say that the Chinese were building roads up to the borders and assembling troops for picnics? If Mullick said that China

would not go to war with India why was it taken as gospel truth? Had Mullick said that if Nehru would declare in Parliament that he had ordered the Army to throw out the Chinese, the Chinese would not react? The unbelievable manner in which the Indian political leadership behaved in the matter of defending Indian borders has no parallel in the world.

The Indian Government was practically a one man show viz. Jawaharlal Nehru. He did what doesn't happen anywhere else in the world. When the war started, General Kaul was ill in Delhi, thousands of kilometres away from the scene of action. Kaul's had been an out of turn promotion – twice. Can somebody explain why? Nehru hid from the country the fact that China had built the Aksai Chin road and had encroached upon five thousand square miles of Indian Territory *and still declared China as a friend. He declared in Parliament that he had asked the Army to throw away the Chinese from Thagla in Arunachal Pradesh when the army had not been prepared for a war at all. He called Panchsheel the cornerstone of Indo-Chinese friendship which was appropriately called 'Five Nonsense' by Acharya Kripalani.*

It was not China, but Jawaharlal Nehru who had stabbed India in the back. We should have courage to speak the truth at least fifty years after the war.

Ajay B. Agrawal, Mumbai.
agrawal3@hotmail.com

*

Pakistan is Not a Normal State

The beheading of the Indian army jawan by Pakistani military is not a new phenomenon as it has done similar ghastly things earlier during the Kargil war. It is due to the indoctrination of hatred towards India in the military and in the text books in Pakistan. India's response has been very pathetic. The home minister says that CBMs will continue and there is no rethink on visa pact. The only way such atrocities could be prevented is by a 'tit for tat' policy.

“Pakistan must act as a normal state”, writes Ahmed Rashid, the well-known Pakistani journalist and the author of the book, *Pakistan on the Brink, The future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan* (2012), “rather than a paranoid, insecure, ISI-driven entity whose operational norms are to use extremists and diplomatic blackmail”. He adds, “To function as a normal state, Pakistanis

(Cont'd. on page 24)

The Delhi Gang Rape Case

Rapes and Apes

Kusum Chopra

*Are we looking for a society which accords us due respect and upholds
a level playing field between man and woman?*

If it were to take us a whole ten days to start thinking of how to tackle a disaster in this era of weapons of mass destruction, the globe would be totally destroyed before any remedial action is taken! That is the spectacle in India just now. Almost a fortnight after the gruesome gang rape in Delhi, after the poor girl has been flown out of the country, a sane voice has finally spoken.¹

Gautam Patel, a lawyer in his column in the *Ahmedabad Mirror* (28.12.2012), has listed the various sections of the law on rape which need amendment and then implementation, rather than the death penalty being touted. That penalty, in all probability, will never happen, given the judicial system of our times that lets off the rapists in no time. He covers a whole range, from criminal assault to outrage 'modesty' (what is that, if not another male/patriarchal concept?), adultery which only men are entitled to, along with the right to react when cuckolded, the issue of consent; under what circumstances will a woman or a girl say yes to rape, a gun pointed at her head or a knife at her neck perhaps, marital rape, custodial rape and that of underage girls, even infants! And the case of the rape of a sex worker who is deemed habituated to sex, which reminds us of that infamous case in which the judge, who accepted this 'habituated to sex' argument in the case of a young runaway, was asked what would be his sentence for the rapist who may rape his wife who was already 'habituated to sex' after years of marriage!

Abhishek Singhvi, another VIP lawyer, an MP and former chairman of the parliamentary committee for law and justice recommends speedier appointment of more judges to deal with all the demands for fast track courts, the stalling of frivolous litigation by making the loser pay full costs to the winner; in short, clearing of the Aegean stables of justice. Will the rape issue do better than the no-show of the Anna Hazare movement? The question is: which comes first, amending the laws and implementing them or clearing the judicial backlog of judges and cases? The chicken or the egg?

Derailing of the Case

From day one, everyone was out there making

¹ This piece was written before the girl lost her fight against death.

statements about the gruesome bus gang-rape, demanding action from the government, the harshest possible punishment from a fast track court, and sensitizing the police, intensive patrolling instead of VIP security duties and a database of bus personnel. Somewhere along the line, the plot was lost, just as had happened in Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption drive. The protestors were largely working women and college students, every-day-of-their-lives victims of eve teasing and much more, finally venting their wrath and their fears. But no responsible person warned them of what would happen And it happened.

Result: infiltration, silly slogans and random persons throwing stones at police vans and then water cannon and tear gas and the whole protest was derailed, just like that of Hazare's, by elements not only irrelevant but actually anti the motive of the protest. How shameless a people are we? How we love to boast of our venerable ancient pious heritage! Yet amidst concerns over whether the rape victim will survive at all, a channel telecast a horrific film which was, I am told, a big hit. The theme song says "kudiyan nu thag le" and the story is of how one 'macho' guy sold four girls down a drain. After seeing such films which make it sound so easy and girls so stupid, is it any wonder that guys feel they can get away with rape and murder? This was followed by another gang rape right there in Delhi itself, along with a notice that since one of the rapists in the first case is technically a minor, he'll get off even though he is said to be the most vicious of them all!

It Begins at Home

Anti-Rape protest leaders, wake up and smell the coffee. Are we looking for protection from *neta*-wormed governments and *babus* that fathers, brothers and husbands do not give us? Or are we looking for a society which accords us due respect and upholds a level playing field between man and woman? Why ask others to do something about an issue that begins in the home? As parents, do we give equal treatment and respect to daughters and sons? Or do we, like the majority in the country, pander to the sons ... 'ladka hai. sharam to chalti hai'. That my dear friends, is where it all starts and then continues to plague sisters and cousins, then in school and college until they become hardened criminals or women

teasers and rapists. Amidst all those candle marches and TV protests, what is needed is some deliberation over the answers that are in the hands of the people.

Media's Role

Amidst all the 'rape, rape' noise in the news and TV, what are we missing? The voices of not only political leaders, but also social ones, the Big League Ladies, the film stars whose portrayals create the format for the rapes, both male and female and sane suggestions on what should be done and can actually be done, instead of merely ranting and sloganeering. None of the 'A' list heroines, scrambling for the next item song with suggestive Fevicol, Iodex, Chameli and Munni, and their fraternity in Big Biz, are (not surprisingly) out of the protest picture. Every TV channel worth its salt has a daily crime serial. A good majority of the episodes depict crimes against women in all their amazing variety. How much do these daily doses plus their promos infect the mind, showing viewers how things can be done, rather than scaring them away, given the rest of the social input from other media?

Our Delhi girl wants to live. More power to her. It is up to all of us to respect her life and her privacy, no matter what direction this mass upsurge takes. Interspersed with medical progress of the young woman were details of the young woman's family and her statements to the authorities. One can safely assume that half of Delhi now knows who she was. What of the perpetrators of the crime? For the media, it is so much easier to camp in the hospital to dig out juicy details, rather than chase up those culprits. Only one, the Sunday issue of *The Indian Express* carried a story on them with a paragraph each on their backgrounds. What about more with their photos, along

with those of the slum and their parents! and those of their associates so that they may be recognised in public as RAPISTS. When this is done on a regular basis and a couple of their sisters or cousins face rejection in the marriage stakes for being related to a RAPIST, family pressure from *maa-baap, chacha, mama, taya, dadi, bua, mausi* could work better on other would-be RAPISTS than all the moral studies and policing in the world. Society needs to start reinforcing those old rules that prevailed in our childhood, to make a better world for our grandchildren.

One is teaching our boys to respect all human beings, men and women. Another is to instil in the minds of our girls that their femininity does not lie exclusively between their legs. There is this huge stigma attached to a 'rape victim'. Why? Is all her femininity merely between her legs, not in her head or her heart? This is a difficult concept, but it must be mastered and taught to women so that they stop fearing that 'stigma' of rape. RAPE must not be the dreadful capital letters that dominate their lives forever, whether the rapist is an unknown person, a known one or a family member. So while waiting for the government to decide what actions fall rationally within the regime of official diktat, let us as parents and grandparents, take a pledge to teach our boys that they have to respect women, whosoever they may be, mothers, sisters, maids or just a woman on the street; age, caste, creed no bar. Take that pledge and stick to it, thru thick and thin. After all do we want to go back to the license and *danda raaj*?

KUSUM CHOPRA, familiar to long-time readers of *Freedom First*, returns after a longish spell of absence. She is a novelist and a journalist. Email: kusumchopra@yahoo.com.

Next Time, Don't Walk Away

The best police force cannot be a substitute for a caring and vigilant citizens

Madhu Purnima Kishwar

The testimony of the friend of the Delhi gang rape victim on Zee News held up a disturbing mirror to our society. The gross callousness, cowardice and voyeurism displayed by the bystanders, as well as the cars and autos that passed by the badly injured gang rape victim and her friend, proves the truth of the popular saying: "*yatha raja, tatha praja* (the quality of the rulers determines the quality of the subjects)".

However, in a democracy – even a flawed one like ours – citizens cannot disown their responsibility and wait for rulers to set things right. A democracy gives you some scope to turn this saying on its head: "*yatha praja,*

tatha raja (the quality of the subjects determines the quality of the rulers)".

A common reason given by people for not coming to the rescue of victims of violence or road accidents is that the police not only harasses such do-gooders, but also tries to implicate them in the accident. As perverse as the police is in India, my experience tells me that the police know the difference between honest and crooked citizens. The real problem arises when the police are already on the scene but neither doing the needful nor

(Cont'd. on page 20)

The Delhi Gang Rape Case

The Gruesome Assault

H. R. Babu Satyanarayana

“It was a terrible business, but tragically what is needed is not merely the punishment of those who committed this awful crime but the change of a whole culture. It begs profound questions about the culture of your dear country that has allowed such things to continue despite generations of democracy – it is a huge liberal challenge.”

Lord John Alderdice FRCPsych, Convenor of the Liberal Democratic Parliamentary Party, House of Lords, London, in a message to the editor.

When a 23 year old paramedical student, accompanied by her friend, boarded a Delhi bus on the night of 16th Dec 2012, they could not have imagined the cruel fate awaited them. What followed was too gruesome to describe for the lady was gang raped and has been widely reported not only in the national but in the international media. When her friend tried to intervene to prevent the heinous act he was hit on his head by a metal rod to silence him. After indulging in their act of animal lust and committing unimaginable sexual depravity they mercilessly threw them out of the bus after stripping them naked leaving them grievously hurt exposed to the shivering cold of December night. Their bodies lay on the National Highway 8. What followed tells a shameful story of inhumanity of the authorities and of fellow human beings. Being on the main highway, a lot of vehicles were passing by but nobody stopped to help despite their cries for help. The girl's male companion said that they lay naked and profusely bleeding in the cold night for two hours before the police arrived and another half an hour was wasted discussing police jurisdictional issues before both of them were moved to the hospital.

The Protest

The news created shock resulting in spontaneous and unprecedented protests mostly by young women and men and even housewives on the steps leading to the Rashtrapathi Bhawan. The protest spread like wild fire to many places in India. The protests continued through the nights holding candle light demonstrations. The protests were peaceful except for the cry of 'we want justice'. The remarkable feature of the protest was the hard-to-imagine

solidarity even though there were no leaders. Obviously, the government was unnerved. Hundreds of police who were deployed put up barricades to drive out the protesters from India Gate.

The police initially tried using water cannons to control the peaceful protesters and later lobbing teargas shells. Then all of a sudden *lathi* charge was resorted to on the plea that some *goonda* elements tried to exploit the situation. An impartial inquiry will reveal who, if at all, were responsible and their real motive. It appears the police needed an excuse to escalate it to justify the severity of methods used. The use of the Rapid Action Force which is deployed in a situation of grave danger is a pointer that the government lost its nerve and by its own action precipitated a peaceful situation turning needlessly ugly. Video clippings clearly show that the *lathi* charge was without provocation. This situation recalls the incident of the hunger strike by Baba Ramdev at Ramlila grounds when the police resorted to a midnight *lathi* charge on a sleeping crowd.

The Rape Victim Succumbs

While the peaceful protest and night vigils continued unabated and the government tried its best to break it, the 23 year student exhibited remarkable fighting spirit for survival. Capital punishment and speedy trial were high on the list of retribution. Voices were raised for a special session of the Parliament including by the leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha. However, the UPA government steadfastly opposing it referred the issue to a Committee of three members headed by the former Chief Justice J. S. Verma to revise existing rape laws. The Commission which is inviting suggestions from the public has to submit its report in a month.

While the media and people were putting pressure on the government, true to form, the UPA government, apprehensive that in the event of the victim's death the protesters may turn berserk and controlling them would be a problem, arranged to shift the victim, under a shroud of secrecy, from Safdarjung Hospital where she was undergoing treatment to Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Hospital on 26th of December 2012. Tragically she died on the 29th and the body was brought back in the early hours of 30th again in extreme secrecy and cremated. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and President of the

Congress Mrs. Sonia Gandhi were present when the body was received. Of course there will be a debate on whether shifting the patient was a wise one in the light of the fact that medial expertise in India is not in any way inferior to other countries and that the team of Indian doctors were successfully monitoring her for the past 13 days.

Outrageous Reactions

What was even more bizarre is the reactions of various personalities from politicians to holy men freely giving vent to their views, politicizing, transferring responsibility or justifying the rape. Some politicians put their foot into their mouths instead of keeping their cool when needled by the media making a spectacle of themselves. High on the list was the utterances of the Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde who when asked by media on his refusal to meet the protesters equated the protesters with Maoists. When his attention was drawn to the government not rising to protect the people when needed, he said, "Tomorrow a hundred Adivasis can be killed in Chhattisgarh or Gadchiroli, Can the government be there?" Sheila Dikshit, the chief minister of Delhi got into a blame game with Delhi police disowning her responsibility for law and order. Neeraj Kumar, the police commissioner, said that there is always collateral damage in a crackdown. Of course he took credit for arresting the guilty and tear-gassed students. During a TV discussion one of the participants referred to how the former President Pratibha Patil had commuted the death sentences of several who had indulged in heinous crimes and suggested filing a PIL against her. Add to this the reported shocking statement of Guru Asaram Bapu that the victim was equally responsible for the ghastly crime! Understandably, it has evoked wide spread revulsion but Asaram remains unfazed. The RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has come up with his own theory. He says that rapes happen in India and not in Bharat, meaning that it is essentially an urban phenomenon exposed to western culture. However, statistics reveal that the number of rapes in rural Bharat is much higher than in urban India. The statement of Bishwajit Mukherjee, son of the President of India, takes the cake for his statement that described the women protesters as "beautiful women 'dented and painted' going to discotheque holding candle light protests!"

In the wake of the rape and the unprecedented protests and wide publicity it received, the media is full of reports of rape cases in other parts of the country. The affected families where convictions have already taken place are raking up old cases to demand more severe punishment and even the death penalty. In a different way it has empowered women, for the victims are no longer afraid of coming out in the open. The sense of alienation

and shame is slowly melting away with the realisation that society is now much more understanding and sympathetic.

Who is Accountable?

Why do incidents of rapes occur? Can it be prevented or controlled? Rapes take place not only in India, but all over the world. If one gleans through reports in the media, several reasons are attributed to this heinous act, including values and beliefs in society and how the latest technology has virtually turned the world into a global village. It would be naïve to think that our own lives remain isolated or uninfluenced by the impact of other cultures. It is inherent human nature to copy, imitate and experiment. Probably, in a broader sense, increasing visibility of women in all professions which has empowered them has given rise to an unsettling impact on men. There are lot of theories making the rounds as to why atrocities on women are growing by leaps and bounds.

The bottom line probably is that those who commit rapes do not fear the law. Secondly in a large number of cases the police do not readily lodge an FIR even in such cases. In fact the police are accused of being hand in glove with rapists for monetary consideration. Even if a FIR is filed the investigation is slipshod. If people of influence are involved, then one can forget it. The next hurdle is at the level of the judiciary. The cases drag on interminably. The government has been indifferent to suggestions for judicial reforms. The Law Commission has already made several recommendations on the subject, many of which are not implemented. In its 172-page report the Commission had recommended time-bound investigations and trial of cases of rape. Add to this the fact that quite a few of our MPs have rape and other serious criminal charges against them and remain beyond the pale of law. Naturally, this psyche has a trickle-down effect. In effect, it means a failure of governance and clearly the fault lies at the door of the government. Former Lokayukta of Karnataka, Sri Santosh Hegde, rightly observed while replying to a TV anchor, that rapes indicate a failure of all organs of governance. Meanwhile, an in-camera trial is on, and let us hope that something good emerges out of this tragedy.

H. R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA is a freelance writer based in Mysore. Email: what_options@yahoo.co.in.

With reference to the Delhi rape victim.....

Alluding to the suffering of the victim, Malala remarked: "The rapists dumped her on the road. The Government dumped her in Singapore. What's the difference?"

Malala Yousafzai

From an article in *Tribune* by Parthasarathy.
<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2013/20130116/edit.htm#4>

The Delhi Gang Rape Case

No Lessons Learnt

Firoze Hirjikaka

The desire for vengeance is a basic human instinct, but in this case it is not the solution, it is closure.

Rape is unbridled brutality. Rape is repulsive. Rape is rampant cowardice because the perpetrator is generally pitted against a defenceless victim. Rape is the outrageous loot of a woman's dignity, her essence, her very humanity. The physical torment of rape may last for a few hours, even minutes, but the emotional scars last for a lifetime. Rape is not for sex; there are many more risk-free ways to achieve the same climax. Rape is about control; the power to terrify, to degrade and to dehumanize the victim.

Take the case of the Delhi gang rape that has ignited and horrified the collective conscience of a nation. It is my surmise that the rapists did not initially intend for the incident to end the way it did. The guys in the bus saw a woman walking with a man late at night and the chauvinistic mindset so typical of the Indian male sprang to the conclusion that she was 'asking for it' and therefore fair game. And when she stepped into their bus, it was an opportunity too good to pass up. I doubt if their original intention was to cause serious bodily injury. They probably meant to have their fun and then throw the girl off the bus. But then the girl started to fight back. She actually bit the hand of the gang leader. This triggered the in-built arrogance of this class of people. This act of defiance by one they regarded as a 'loose' woman was unforgivable; and they went berserk. In their depraved minds, shoving an iron rod into her vagina was a symbolic and just retribution.

Tipping Point

By itself, the rape, horrific as it was, was hardly an extraordinary event in the nation's capital. After all, Delhi had long since acquired the unsavoury reputation of being the most dangerous city in India for young women. But somehow this proved to be the tipping point. The hitherto indifferent middle class rose up in anger. This anger did not manifest itself in the usual candlelight vigils, or crowds against corruption that have a very short shelf life. When the television cameras leave, they leave too. This crowd was different. They refused to go away. The politicians cajoled them and promised the moon if they dispersed; they stayed. The police bashed them with *lathis* and doused them with water cannons; they stayed. The Empress herself and her heir apparent personally met a

sanitized bunch of them, confident that their charm and disarming style would work their usual magic; it did not. Even our invisible Prime Minister roused himself to mumble a few bland sentences on televisions; they were completely unmoved.

The politicians were totally bewildered and in a state of near panic. This was something they had no experience of. They were clueless about how to deal with it. The opportunistic opposition parties tried to render lip service to the students by berating the Congress; and were sent packing with their tails between their legs. The Chief Minister of Delhi tried to score brownie points by taking on cudgels against the Police Commissioner, who she perceived as the focus of the crowd's anger. It didn't work because the students were equally disgusted with both of them. They tried to curry favour by affording the rape victim with the kind of medical attention usually reserved for VVIPs. They even flew her to Singapore at State expense, but her internal injuries were too severe and she didn't survive. The perceived gratitude of the masses for this magnanimity did not materialize. They were rapidly running out of options.

The Solution

In one respect, the furious public threw the authorities a lifeline. A large proportion started baying for the blood of the rapists. Cries of "death penalty" and "chemical castration" grew ever shriller. This was one area where the authorities could accommodate them without too many consequences for themselves. They promised fast track courts and the severest punishment for the perpetrators. The desire for vengeance is a basic human instinct, but in this case it is not the solution, it is closure. In our justice system, there is a very long interval between arrest and penalty, if it reaches that stage at all. The conviction rate in criminal cases is abysmal. Even worse, the sympathies of the law enforcers are more often with the perpetrators than with the victims. In their warped way of thinking, "good" girls stay at home; do not go out unescorted and certainly not after dark. Women who do not conform to these medieval norms deserve what they get.

What the crowd was *not* clamouring about are

reforms that will make a real difference. They are allowing their blood lust to cloud their judgement; and the authorities are cheering them on for reasons described above. If they want to make a real difference, they should insist on and see to the finish two vital measures. The first is the reduction in the exorbitant police protection to self styled VIPs and VVIPs. It is outrageous that almost a third of Delhi's police force is reserved for protecting these modern maharajas. Releasing more policemen to perform their primary function of protecting the public is the need of the hour. However, even this will not be truly effective until the police force is removed from the clutches of manipulative politicians. That is why forcing parliament to pass the long pending Police Reform bill is imperative. Forcing the government to push through these measures will be no easy task, trust me.

As a form of appeasement, the ministers *et al* may agree to a token reduction in their security. However, they will resist enacting the police reforms with all the wiles and platitudes they are so expert at. Don't forget, control over the police is not only a source of power, but also of lucrative unofficial income. The common excuse for inefficient policing is that there are thousands of sanctioned but vacant posts. Isn't this an anachronism in a land with millions of unemployed youth, that there should be vacancies for jobs which offer lifetime employment, not to mention steady side income? Positions in the force are valuable commodities that can be bought and sold. Which politician is going to give up that power?

There is also the fundamental issue of changing the misogynistic mindset of the police, particularly at the lower level. This will be a very long term prospect, since the cops live in a society which celebrates the male and is very reluctant to regard women as equals. Since persuasion is unlikely to work in the foreseeable future, the only effective alternative is penalties. It should be made clear to lower rank constables and sub-inspectors that failure to take effective cognizance of rape and molestation complaints will invite automatic transfers or suspensions.

As I write this, the battle continues between the governors and the governed, but I fear it may prove to be an unequal contest. The government is worried, but not too much. It knows that in the final analysis, it holds all the aces. Even with the best of intentions, the protests will not be sustained. The compulsions of daily life will inevitably intrude. And what can the people achieve in concrete terms? They cannot shame the government because Indian politicians are shameless. They can wait for two years to vote the current dispensation out of office, but they will merely be replacing it with another lot who are equally venal, corrupt and divorced from true democratic ideals. The tragedy of India is that there is little to choose among our political parties. They are all cut from the same rotten cloth. Their common mantra is 'me first', the people second and the country last. All we can do is weep.

FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer, a blogger and a freelance writer. He is a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email:leonardo8_99@yahoo.com

Freedom First

3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001.

Phone: (022) 2284 3416 • email: freedom@vsnl.com

SUBSCRIPTION FORM (In Block Letters Please)

NAME : _____

ADDRESS : _____

_____ PIN

PHONE / MOBILE NUMBER :

EMAIL : _____

SUBSCRIPTIONS PAYABLE BY CHEQUE / DD **DRAWN IN FAVOUR OF ICCF** AND PAYABLE AT PAR IN MUMBAI.
IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE THEN PLEASE ADD BANK CHARGES RS.50 FOR OUTSTATION CHEQUES WITHIN
INDIA. SUBSCRIPTIONS CAN ALSO BE PAID BY MONEY ORDER

Subscription

Within India & SAARC countries

☐ 1 Year : Rs.200

☐ 2 Years : Rs.350

☐ 3 Years : Rs.500

Overseas

(By Second Class Airmail)

Annual: \$20 / £ 10

The Economy

Advocating the Farmers' Interest

Some Guidelines for the Union Budget 2013-14

Y. Sivaji

As part of the Finance Minister's pre-budget consultations with stake-holders, Dr. Y. Sivaji former member of parliament participated in the Pre-Budget meeting with the Farmers' interest Group on 2nd Jan 2013 in New Delhi. After thanking the Union Finance Minister, Mr. P. Chidambaram for giving him the opportunity to represent farmers' problems, Dr. Sivaji said he would "touch upon only a few aspects of the multi-faceted crisis brewing in the agricultural sector".

The Rural Perspective



Survey after survey in the recent past has revealed that farmers in the countryside would not like their wards to take to farming because it has become a losing proposition. While the costs of production have been spiraling year after year, there has been no commensurate increase in the prices of agricultural produce. In the past, only big landlords migrated to urban areas. Now, small and marginal farmers and agricultural laborers have begun to desert villages in search of greener patches in urban areas.

Unless the great divide between the incomes of urban and rural people is reduced through innovative policies, the continuous exodus of rural people to urban areas will merely result in proliferation of slums in urban areas and spawn many more "Munirkas" in every town and city. "Munirka" has become notorious all over the country because the perpetrators of the gang rape of a Delhi student which created a national stir hailed from a ghetto there.

The migration of people from rural areas can be arrested if the Government makes concerted efforts to improve infrastructure in rural areas and ensures remunerative and not minimum support prices for agricultural produce. People in rural areas lack connectivity, good healthcare and educational facilities and opportunities for employment. Both the Central and State Governments have to step up expenditure on improving rural infrastructure.

Simultaneously, the Governments should take steps to make agriculture a paying proposition. In the wake of

liberalization, the Government has shed its control on the prices of seeds, most fertilizers and pesticides. It has little control over wages. As a result, the costs of production have been mounting continuously. The farmer, however, is not in a position to dictate the price of his produce because of the operation of cruel market forces.

The Government does announce minimum support prices for most agricultural crops prior to the planting season. And the MSPs are applicable throughout the country, although the soil and climatic conditions in a vast country like India vary from region to region.

I suggest constitution of a Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices in each State so that the State commission can fix MSPs considering local conditions. State Governments should ensure that the farmer gets the price fixed by the State commission. Problems that arise between the announcement of the MSP and the produce coming to the market also need to be addressed. A host of circumstances like an increase in input prices and adverse weather impact the cost of production in between. The Government should consider an indexation system for the MSP as is done in calculating the DA according to the spiraling cost of living.

The Union Government has rightly pursued a policy of liberalization and unshackled industry from the license-permit raj. It has, however, not liberalized the agriculture sector. Both the Central and State Governments continue to ban free movement of agricultural produce and deny

the farmer the right to sell his produce wherever he gets a better price. The Government of India frequently puts curbs on exports and ensures the prices of agricultural produce do not go up in the domestic market ostensibly to safeguard the interests of the so-called common man in the case of food grains or industrialists in the case of produce like cotton. The State Governments continue restrictions on free movement of food grains even within the State. Again, whenever the prices of agricultural produce go up because of calamities like floods and cyclone or drought, the Union Government permits duty-free imports and denies the farmer the opportunity of benefiting from higher prices. The farmer is thus at the receiving end whether he reaps a bumper harvest or a poor harvest. How can the nation progress if the farmer is denied a remunerative price? No wonder, he does not want his children to take to farming.

The flip-flop export and import policies of the Government of India are not merely undermining importers' faith in India as a dependable supplier but also harming farmers' interests. Again, the timing of the policies also adversely affects farmers. For instance, a decision on exports is taken long after the farmer markets his produce. With globalization, even though Indian farmers are exposed to the volatility in the world market and the cyclical macroeconomic changes, often the burden of falling international prices immediately falls on the farmers and the gains of increasing international prices are cornered by the middle men. Instruments available in this regard are blunt due to cob web of complex market structure. On the other hand reliable information and the database required for policy intervention is dated and grossly inadequate. Greater attention is to be paid to the emerging economies of Africa and Asia to boost our agriculture exports as the economic environment with our traditional trading partners is not very conducive. There is a growing disconnect between the growth in agriculture and that of farmers incomes. The gap between the prices at farm gate and the consumer is widening.

While the Union Government is keen on facilitating FDI in multi-brand retail, although it is not going to have a big or immediate impact on farmers' fortunes, we fail to understand the rationale in not allowing FDI in agro processing industries like tobacco

I appeal to the Government to launch a concerted drive to improve production of pulses and oilseeds and make the country self-sufficient. At a time when the country is facing current account deficit, we are forced to spend precious foreign exchange on import of huge quantities of pulses and vegetable oils. With little incentive we can encourage our farmers to make our country self sufficient.

We should give a serious thought to deal with the mountains of foodgrains of the FCI. All the statutory taxes and cesses on food grains procured and distributed by the Government should be abolished since it is a welfare activity. I suggest that the Union Government promote decentralized procurement by States. The FCI has become a leviathan incurring huge expenditure on storage and transport of food grains. Almost one-third of the produce it procures is exposed to rain and other hazards as it does not have sufficient storage capacity. Decentralized procurement will bring down costs and minimize losses in storage.

With limitations on the returns of agriculture produce, there is need to promote livestock, Fisheries, forestry, horticulture and floriculture.

Finally, I suggest that the Government of India devise an index to gauge the impact of thousands of crores of rupees it spends on rural development, agriculture and welfare activities on the lines of the UNDP's human development index:

- Create Agricultural Price Commission in each state and Indexation of Agriculture Price system.
- Decentralise procurement of food grains and abolish all statutory taxes and cesses on procurement of state agencies.
- Lift the restrictions on storage , processing and movement of agricultural produce.
- Formulate consistent policy of agri exports by ending export control raj.
- Allow FDI in agro processing Industries with emphasis to locate agro industries in rural areas.
- Promote allied activities to supplement farmers' income
- Encourage mechanisation coupled with research and development to suit the local needs and to reduce the drudgery in the agriculture sector.
- The skills among the rural folk should be improved to augment their productive capacity.
- Crop loans should be interest free.
- Introduce Agriculture in the curriculum at school level and reservations for rural students in professional colleges.
- The health of rural population should be taken care of.
- Cattle and crop should be covered by regular insurance.

DR. Y. SIVAJI is a former member of the Rajya Sabha and an indefatigable activist and spokesman for rural India.

The Twelfth Five Year Plan

Understanding its Strategic Framework

Sunil S. Bhandare

“The immediate challenge is to reverse the observed deceleration in growth by reviving investment as quickly as possible...From a longer-term perspective the Plan must put in place policies that can leverage the many strengths of the economy to bring it back to its real growth potential”... Twelfth Plan Document, Volume I

After about ten months of the *de facto* launching of the Twelfth Plan (2012-17) in April 2012, a final version of its document [TPD], running into three volumes in all, was formally approved at the National Development Council’s meeting in New Delhi recently. Barring a few discordant voices from a couple of Chief Ministers, there was, by and large, a tacit endorsement of the Twelfth Plan’s strategic framework. In effect, the plan now becomes effective and operational both at the Centre and States’ level.

However, for a variety of reasons, the very first year of the Twelfth Plan has already been lost. The current economic situation by no means can be considered as congenial or salubrious thanks to a sharp slow-down in overall economic growth particularly in the agriculture and industrial sectors. Inflation levels have remained stubbornly high despite the Reserve Banks’s rigorous high interest rates policy. There is a visible contraction of exports and accentuation of the current account deficit to GDP ratio. The management of governments’ fiscal deficits, especially of the Central Government, remains a matter of concern. Various stumbling blocks concerning land acquisition, environmental clearances and rising financing costs have

caused enormous delays in infrastructure investment. Further, investment confidence of the private sector has receded and many major investment projects have either been abandoned or held back. And, to cap it all, international credit rating agencies are holding out a persistent threat of ratings downgrade.

Compulsions of Three Alternatives

Consequently, it has become imperative for the TPD to anticipate three alternative growth scenarios – an exercise undertaken perhaps for the first time in our planning history. The central TPD objective is to strive for an average *annual real GDP growth rate – now scaled down to 8%* from the earlier target of 8.2%. This happens to be the best case or what is termed as “*strong inclusive growth*” scenario. This outcome is predicated on infusion of “many virtuous circles” through implementation of vigorous policy reforms. However, in the current context what is proposed by way of strident policy reforms seems to be an almost impossible task.

The TPD therefore outlines two other possibilities. Scenario two is “*insufficient action*” envisaging average annual real GDP growth rate to decline between to 6 to

Sectoral Growth Rates and Key Determinants of Real GDP Growth Performance

(% annual growth rate)	Eleventh Plan (2007-12)	Twelfth Plan (2012-17)	(Ratios as % of GDP)	Eleventh Plan (2007-12)	Twelfth Plan (2012-17)
Agriculture	3.3	4.0	Domestic Saving	33.1	34.2
Industry	6.6	8.1	Capital Inflows	2.7	2.9
Services	9.8	9.2	Investment*	35.8	37.1
Real GDP	7.9	8.2	ICOR	4.53:1	4.64:1

Source: Twelfth Plan, Volume I; Chapter 2. **Notes:** (1) There are many determinants of economic growth, but ultimately it is governed by the economy’s capacity to save, attract foreign capital & use such investment finance efficiently – that is through better ICOR; *(2) Some divergence is found in the data on “investment rate” & “finance for investment” in the Plan document – the latter is as shown in this table, which is about 2% points lower than the former; and (3) ICOR is a derived figure by dividing investment ratio by real GDP growth rate. Even a modest 12 to 15% better capital utilization can ensure real GDP growth rate to rise up to 9%, if the economy can also sustain investment ratio of about 37% in the Twelfth Plan.

6.5% and in the process, hurting inclusiveness. In this framework, the planners expect that though a broad direction of policy may be endorsed, its implementation would be found hugely wanting. In *scenario three*, the TPD is extremely pessimistic in its outlook and perceives the likelihood of a '*policy logjam*' – the kind of situation which we have already witnessed over the last two years, though somewhat mitigated in the last quarter of 2012 with a flurry of policy action. Nevertheless under this framework, the annual average real GDP growth rate would drift between 5 to 5.5% posing serious setback to inclusiveness objective.

Sectoral Growth Rates and Key Determinants of Real GDP Growth Performance

We believe that in the current stage of India's economic development, it is imperative for all the stakeholders to consider an average annual real GDP growth rate of 8% as a critical minimum. What is in fact being proposed is virtually the same rate of growth as has been achieved in the Eleventh Plan (see table on page 33). Indeed, those at the helm of our political system – cutting across party lines – must pledge to abide by this goalpost, as and when their representatives are elected either to the Parliament or to the State Assembly. Let there be a concerted building up of national consensus around this objective and framing of the required common minimum program for this purpose even if this may sound utopian in the context of the current fractured and combative polity.

There are huge downside risks in our failure to secure such critical minimum economic growth. For example, if the real GDP growth drops by two percentage points compared to this critical minimum level, there would be a substantial fall in new employment generation – estimated roughly about 2.5 million annually. Given the annual addition to India's labour force of about 12 million – all of them educated and uneducated youth – there would be a huge setback, causing a further unsustainable increase in unemployment rate, currently hovering between 6 and 7 percent. Likewise, such reduced growth rate would mean fewer (1.5 million) people being lifted annually above the poverty line. The falling growth rate would also have several other adverse consequences including loss of tax buoyancy and further fiscal drift; declining attractiveness of India for FDI inflows; and India's large corporate sector exploring more growth opportunities abroad than within the country.

Reality Check and Focus on Governance

The Planning Commission does recognize harsh realities relating to India's current policy environment. What stands out is the fact that TPD derives its

substantive strategic framework after an extensive consultative process spread over the last two or three years. This reality check implies: (1) spotting several strategic leverage points, where successful action could trigger many supportive reactions; (2) garnering the dynamism of the private sector (organized corporate sector, MSMEs, individuals, etc.), which now accounts for over 70% of total investment; and how to address the constraints faced by it for achieving better results; (3) that striving towards capacity building and governance reforms will improve implementation of government programs and increase accountability in the public sector; and (4) building broad consensus of various stakeholders comprising different layers of our federal structure, private sector and citizens' groups on key policy issues.

Based on this, the TPD articulates its vision of '*Faster, Sustainable, and More Inclusive Growth*'. Obviously, the key element in this framework is how to achieve rapid growth of the GDP that generates expansion in output, income and employment. The TPD suggests that inclusiveness can be achieved through (a) faster growth in agriculture, especially in rain-fed areas where most of the poor live; (b) faster growth in the manufacturing sector, including MSME, which generally have higher intensity to spread employment and income earning opportunities; and (c) programs which either deliver benefits directly to the poor and the excluded groups or increase their ability to access employment and income opportunities. Evidently, the emphasis of TPD is on various current social sector initiatives like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meals, National Rural Health Mission, etc.

Viewed from a liberal position, what is striking is that the TPD has brought to the forefront the critical importance of good governance to translate plan outlays/ programs into significant outcomes on the ground. Witness what it states in its exclusive chapter on this aspect "... without good governance, resources that are allocated are not efficiently utilised; management of public service delivery is sub-optimal; efficiency of public expenditure is affected; and finally, it impacts the effective management of natural resources which are sovereign wealth under sovereign ownership". It points out three different ways to tackle the problem of governance, namely, (a) systemic improvements contributing to effectiveness of government's Plan expenditure on new programmes; (b) improvements in customer satisfaction on the delivery of services by government agencies; and (c) measures to combat corruption.

The TPD sets out a whole gamut of policy

prescriptions covering, among other areas, suggestions for strengthening local institutions, mobilisation of the voluntary sector, restructuring centrally sponsored schemes, setting up of an independent evaluation office, administrative and civil services reforms, and creation of a regulatory structure. If all such propositions are to be transformed into actionable agenda, then perhaps the next five year span of the Twelfth Plan would not be enough. This, once again, highlights the imperatives of building up a national consensus at least on the issue of effective governance, which really has the potential to transform India's ambition of achieving high economic growth into reality.

Savings-Investment Scenario

A word about the saving-investment matrix before concluding this article: Very clearly, the economy's growth performance is inextricably dependent on its capacity to mobilize domestic saving and channelize it into investment, including leveraging of foreign savings. The third dimension in this growth-investment equation is productivity/efficiency in the use of capital. Using an economist's jargon, this relationship is popularly known as incremental capital output ratio (ICOR), which measures how much additional capital is required for producing one more unit of output. Thus growth performance is determined by the rate of investment and its ICOR value. ICOR is always a derived figure and cannot be pre-determined with any degree of precision.

The table above has set out the projected saving-investment ratios for the Twelfth Plan vis-à-vis the Eleventh Plan's estimated performance. Incidentally, one of the most significant gains of India's economic reforms, especially after the implementation of earlier fiscal responsibility legislation, was the progressive improvement in India's savings-investment performance till about 2007-08. In turn, this enhanced our potential growth profile. But since then pressures have built up on domestic savings ratio. Thus, the household sector's capacity to save is eroded thanks to (a) a slackening real GDP growth; and (b) a stubbornly high inflation rate causing loss in the real purchasing power.

Secondly, the private corporate sector is witnessing substantial profit margin squeeze, affecting its capacity to expand internal funds generation. Third, the fiscal drift and pressures on profitability of public sector enterprises have caused a large reduction in government's savings. Restoration of normalcy in the savings ratios in all these three sectors would require reversal of such causative factors in the early stage of the Twelfth Plan period.

Summing up, development planning in India has numerous facets, and the TPD brings them out eloquently. Perhaps for the first time several new features have been incorporated like Innovation, Governance, Urbanisation, etc. – not just as talking points, but as substantive issues, which would shape the future direction of India growth story. In this article, we have sought to unveil only some of the key parameters and policy issues underlying the Twelfth Plan strategy.

The current economic uncertainties, global and domestic, have considerably impacted the Twelfth Plan's strategy formulation. But such predicament should not cloud our longer-term development perspectives. Planning in such uncertain times should stimulate planners to hone their analytical skills and sharpen their policy tools. Indeed, the Planning Commission is now much better placed to articulate the challenges of salvaging India growth story to the governments both at the Center and the States, political parties of all hues and people at large. Good planning and its better implementation through better governance *per se* would change the dimensions of outcomes, and perhaps would contribute an incremental 1 to 1.5 percentage growth rate over and above what the TPD envisages as "strong inclusive growth". Could there be such a turning point happening in 2013-14? Wait and watch ...

SUNIL S. BHANDARE is a Consulting Economist based in Mumbai. Email: sunil.bhandare@gmail.com

Sources: (1) *Global Employment Trends 2012 – Preventing a Deeper Job Crisis (ILO Report)*; (2) *European Commission – the Latest Statistics Data Base*; and (3) *The Report of the Working Group on Employment, Planning and Policy for Twelfth Five Year Plan*.

Planning the Swatantra Way

The Swatantra Party believes in non-authoritarian and wholly consultative planning; also in planning within available resources. That is to say, Government must be primarily concerned with planning its own functions within the limits of solvency; and insofar as planning for the development and the economic growth of the country outside the sphere of the infrastructure of Public (Service) Utilities and Public (Physical) Utilities is concerned, this should be done almost entirely in consultation with industry and organised labour.

**N. Dandekar ICS, Joint Secretary, Swatantra Party.
Excerpted from his article in the Swatantra Souvenir 1966**

Industrial Chaos - II

Lack of Industrial Relations Skills

Kashinath A. Divecha

Employers and unions must have desire to arrive at mutually satisfactory solutions to the problems that crop up day in and day out

The adversarial and confrontational position adopted by both, employers and workers, has resulted in turmoil and chaos in our industrial sector. In this regard, we have to point the finger at our outmoded laws. Specifically, two laws, namely, the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 and the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970 could be faulted. Both these laws deal with relationship between the employers and the workers. They were framed when the socialistic fervour was the creed. With the advent of liberalization, however, these laws are constricting the possibility of much needed introduction of technological improvement in our industrial operations. Nonetheless, the enterprises have to perforce bring in technological improvement because they are required to face global competition in respect of quality of products, price levels, and efficiency in delivery and so on.

While on the one hand the introduction of technology is inevitable, on the other it is equally true that it replaces, or reduces dependence on, human power. For this reason it is difficult for the Trade Union Movement to adjust with the changing times. But it must accept the reality and carry on with their activities.

Labour Not a Commodity

At the same time, the employers and managements should also realize that with the engagement of HR professionals these days, the so-called human resource within the factory, establishment, office or the work unit is 'managed', if not mismanaged, but there is no endeavour to 'establish or maintain relations' with the employees. Similarly, the enactment, 'The Minimum Wages Act, 1948' brought on statute book to lay down the bottom limit below which wages cannot be paid to workers is scrupulously followed, the only problem being its implementation is as if it is "The *Maximum*' Wages Act even by profit making and prosperous establishments!! To put the whole scenario differently, it is probably the modern trend that when divorce is easy and quick; no efforts need be wasted to go through the rigmarole of reconciliation.

In fact, with majority of the workforce in most of

the factories, plants and workplaces being engaged through contractors and on contract, there is no felt need to maintain, let alone nurture, relations with the constantly changing set of workers, who can be discharged the day their term of contract is over as if workers are replaceable like spare parts. This is the norm at present times in respect of engagement, or rather disengagement, of workers and employees. Such disdainful treatment clearly amounts to violation of one of the fundamental principles espoused and adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), namely, "*Labour is not a commodity*".

Mushroom Growth

Where the employers and managements have ensured fair play, it is to the credit of the established unions that they have responded positively. But for these unions, the chaotic situations would be so widespread that eruptions of conflicts could create problems everywhere for both, employers and workers.

In this context, the reference made to 'established' unions repeatedly is deliberate. A simple glance at the following table should prove to be enlightening.

Registered Trade Unions in India 1927-28 to 2000		
Year	No. of Registered Trade Unions	No. of Registered Trade Unions Submitting Annual Returns with Percentage
1927-28	29	28 = 96.5 %
1940-41	727	483 = 66.4 %
1950-51	3766	2002 = 53.1 %
1960-61	11312	6813 = 60.2 %
1970	20879	8337 = 39.9 %
1980	35750	4426 = 12.4 %
1990	52016	8828 = 16.9 %
2000	65286	7224 = 11.06 %

(Source: Trade Union Movement in India – A Brief History, Vasant Gupte, 2004)

As can be seen, the above figures are more than a decade old. May be the latest figures could turn out to be mind-boggling. That apart, the above figures show the unions – not the workers – in absolutely poor light. With only 7,224 unions out of 65,286 unions registered, that is, mere 11 per cent unions submitting returns; the state of affairs of our trade union movement is pathetic, to say the least. Further, after independence the number of unions being registered is going up continuously, but an overwhelming majority of them obviously seem to be pocket organizations of petty satraps and the like, registered probably to acquire legal status, and may be for purposes other than organizing and serving workers as such.

Without meaning any disrespect and with due apologies to all the senior leaders of the Indian Trade Union Movement, who have devoted their lifetime in the service of trade unions and for betterment of workers, it needs to be emphasized that as the above figures indicate the Indian Trade Union Movement was vibrant and thriving till 1960s. But thereafter with the mushroom growth of trade unions, only 11 per cent of them represent the Indian Trade Union Movement, the rest of them being parasites.

Unfortunately, the story of political parties is no different. It seems there are more than a hundred parties registered with the Election Commission at present. In fact, there were about 250 parties all over India according to the survey published by *Freedom First* some years back. Majority of such parties are believed to be respectable masks for hiding all sorts of dubious networking, if this term could be used.

The problem of mushroom growth of parasitical institutions demands strong and equitable laws for institutions. But then, it also raises the question of sincerity of our so-called lawmakers, who refuse to bring in provisions for legal action against delinquency of parasitic institutions.

Dual Role of Government

While the laws do not provide remedies to deal with misbehaviour of such delinquent institutions, with government also having displayed its helplessness to take action over such institutions, it was pathetic, if not funny, to witness the Maharashtra Government assuming to introduce strong measures for arresting striking workers and banning strikes. That is, where workers resort to legitimate protest openly, the government is bold enough to crush it, but where the parasitic institutions ignore their legal responsibilities, it has no remedy.

In regard to banning of strikes, let us revisit our

own history to find out how we have been dealing with our workers and employees and their unions. Only one example should suffice. It would be interesting to recall and go as far back as 1960 when central government employees resorted to countrywide strike action. Though it cannot be said that they achieved their objective, they had succeeded in displaying their collective might for the first time. It is unfortunate that the then government could not distinguish between its own twin identities – one as of course, the government, and the other as an employer.

In fact, during the discussion in parliament on 8th and 9th August 1960 on this issue of government employees strike, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had argued in favour of restricting the right to protest of government employees on the plea that the authority of the government could not be questioned. But, it was late Mr. Minoo Masani, who maintained that in respect of civil servants, that is, government employees, one cannot deny a man the right to deny his labour unless he is given the right to judicial process. In respect of industrial workers however he stressed that he did not want the banning of strikes.

In other words, the government/civil servants and industrial workers being distinct categories, the right of government employees to strike may be restricted by allowing them recourse to judicial process to deal with their problems. So far as the industrial workers are concerned, their right to strike should not be and cannot be taken away inasmuch as their right to protest is guaranteed. And, therefore, the attempt of the Maharashtra Government to ban strikes is nothing but futile and feeble attempt to display authority.

Conclusion

Having noted the mushroom growth of trade unions and its impact on the industrial activity generally, and on workers specifically, it would be enlightening to know what was envisioned in the “Statement of Policy on Labour” by Swatantra Party more than half-a-century ago.

“Strong and responsible trade unions are an integral part of a democratic industrial order. Workers must be encouraged and helped to build their own unions and through them to bargain collectively with their employers regarding the terms and conditions of their employment...Most of them are managed by outsiders and many of them are playthings in the hands of political parties. The Party is keen that trade unions should grow as independent organizations of workers controlled and managed by themselves.”

In regard to the pathetic state of affairs within our

trade union movement, where as low as only 11 per cent of unions are submitting Annual Reports, late Mr. S. R. Mohan Das, an authority on industrial relations in India had stated that, "All the above factors reveal that we do not have a Trade Union Movement but only a generalized 'labour movement'. What a performing society needs is not just a 'movement' but well-established and self-reliant organizations which are financially strong, possess capable manpower and have long-term business goals. All these are absent in the labour movement in India which is very weak and has to rely on the umbrellas or bailing out provided by political parties or the government." Yet in regard to established unions, Mr. Mohan Das had this to say, "Wherever unions have been pragmatic and have understood the inevitability of the technological advance and improvement, the ramifications of liberalization of the economy and the economic imperatives of working the industry, they have worked out very good economic packages of severance, tighter manning, etc. for their members, providing them adequate cushioning when out of job as well as options for independent occupations." (From his article "Trade Unions & Economic Restructuring", in the Souvenir published on the occasion of Centenary Celebrations of National Union of Seafarers of India, 1996)

Having gone through the entire gamut of relationships involving workers, their unions, employers of all hues as also government as authority and as employer, it will be realized that the turbulent episodes in Maruti, Air India and Kingfisher Airlines are merely symptomatic of the actual problems in our industrial scenario at present, which cannot be resolved by blaming only the workers and employees and their unions inasmuch as the fault lies also with the managements and employers for their failure to deal equitably with their own workers and employees. Both employers and unions must have the desire and ability to sit across the table to arrive at mutually satisfactory solutions to the problems that crop up day in and day out regularly at the workplace, wherein lies the very reason for their coming together.

Ultimately, it is the lack of industrial relations skills on both sides that is the problem, which cannot be surmounted by arresting workers or their leaders, and banning strikes. It would be appropriate to conclude, we can grasp the deep meaning of wise words of U.S. President, Abraham Lincoln – "Labour created Capital".

KASHINATH A. DIVECHA, retired trade unionist and social activist, Mumbai. hansatel@mtnl.net.in



VIRAT INDUSTRIES LTD.

(An ISO 9001:2008 Company)

**A Leading Manufacturer & Exporter of
EXCELLENT QUALITY SOCKS**

Our Export Markets include UK, Switzerland and U.A.E.

Our main customers are John Lewis, Ted Baker and Jaeger in the UK, Migros in Switzerland and Shoemart in UAE.

We produce Mens, Ladies and Childrens Dress and Sports Socks.

We also produce speciality Football and Rugby Socks.

For more information, you may visit our website: www.viratindustries.com

Corporate Head Office:

605, Veena Killedar Industrial Estate
10/14 Pais Street, Byculla (West)
Mumbai 400 011 (India)
Tel: (022) 3294 4131 or 3294 4217 /
Fax: (022) 2306 0486
Email: sales@viratindustries.com

Regd. Office & Factory:

A-1/2, GIDC Industrial Estate
Kabilpore
Navsari 396 424
Tel: (91-2637) 265 011 or 22 / 325805
Email: factory@viratindustries.com

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.

Women in Peril

1. The Delhi gang rape culminating in murder (December 2012) shocked the nation and made us ashamed of ourselves. A country boasting of thousands of years of civilization was gravely insulted. Let the RSS Chief blame Western culture. The truth is unpalatable to the guardians of our culture! Women are an object of use in India, to be maltreated and discarded. The response of the Government was to barricade itself from those in distress. Its attitude to girls and boys protesting against rape showed lack of empathy and the protesters were water cannoned and lathi-charged. The Government did announce urgent steps to make the law more stringent and have fast track courts to try such cases. However, the malaise is much deeper. The entire society suffers from gender bias. There are several reasons for this state of affairs:

a) There is no fear of the police. Political leaders with criminal record trot around triumphantly, turning laws upside down b) Judiciary does not deliver justice. There is a rape in India every 21 minutes and 73% accused escape punishment. c) Punishment, if ever imposed, is so meager as to be ineffective. The criminal justice system has collapsed. Then there is gratuitous advice to girls not to wear skimpy clothes or move out at night. Such advice is insulting, even if well-intentioned, as it tries to cover up the State's inability to provide security to women. Next, women may be advised to wear burqa! The Jamaat-e-Islami wants ban on co-education. What can one say about the President's son's obnoxious reference to 'dented and painted' protesters? And then spiritual leaders (?) like Asaram Bapu spout opinions that add to our shame and anger.

(Thinking is no substitute for action and in India, we are lost in thought and talk)

1. The government failed to respond appropriately to the protesters' anger. Instead of treating the protesters as partners in grief, the Government treated them as enemies. There is growing demand for death penalty for rape. On the other hand, there is talk about abolition of capital punishment as it is deemed to be inhuman and uncivilised. Very lofty thinking but a rapist is more an animal than a human being and needs to be put away like a rabid dog. The argument whether death penalty is a deterrent is misplaced; animals do not get deterred by consequences, whether it is death or life in jail. Pure and simple: a rapist is unacceptable to this society. Death penalty may be provided in law but it is ultimately the courts that will decide the sentence in view of Supreme Court's advice on death penalty. Then there is the case of a juvenile who appeared to be the initiator of the rape-murder but cannot be punished because of his age. Commissions and Committees have been appointed but these have reputation of producing nothing. The only way is to include the society in this endeavour: NGOs could be asked to post volunteers at vulnerable places at night in coordination with the police. Private Security Agencies that have large number of trained personnel should be asked to augment the police strength. Home Guards, NCC cadets (around college campuses), all should be roped in to help. Legal Aid Centers can be opened for women in distress. Let everybody know that it is their responsibility too to protect their sisters and daughters. The problem is that there is no moral or legal enforcer to ensure that the animals in the society are kept under control. Without this effort, all our progress means nothing.

Indo-Pak Tango

2. There are brave-hearts in both India and Pakistan, trying to bring about improvement in relations between the two countries. They have tried for years to initiate Confidence Building Measures, like people to people relations, liberalised visa regulations, conflict resolution conferences, track two diplomacy and came up with suggestions to solve intractable problems like Sir Creek and Siachen. They met mostly with ridicule as their suggestions did not meet

2. Pakistan is indeed going through difficult times but it would be wrong to assume that India has the responsibility to sustain the present dispensation in Pakistan. India should show tolerance but Pakistani representatives behave as if it is their holy duty to snub every approach made by this country. Rehman Malik, Pakistan's Interior Minister, during his visit to India (mid-December) lost no opportunity to rub India on the wrong side. He claimed

with harsher realities. Theirs is a thankless job. The difficult task has been made more difficult by the often crude and offensive behaviour of Pak Ministers and officials. Pakistan finds it convenient to go into denial mode when it is caught in an embarrassing situation, be it the 26/11 affair, the Kargil War or torture of Indian soldiers (Kargil) or the latest incident on the LOC (January 8). India is expected to understand the helplessness of the Pak Government and not press the issues too far. It is argued by the 'Aman ki Asha' protagonists that democracy in Pakistan is too fragile to withstand pressure from outside and, therefore, India should take a more sympathetic and tolerant stand on various vexatious issues. It is true that survival of democracy in Pakistan is in India's interest but is it not up to Pakistan to give up its anti-India stance? Unfortunately, that stance helps it placate the extremists threatening its polity and has become its survival modicum.

that the 26/11 attackers were possibly Indians and Abu Jundal was a double agent, there was no evidence against Hafeez Saeed in the 26/11 case, 26/11 was a failure of Indian Intelligence and Capt. Kalia, who was tortured by the Pak army (Kargil) could have died of bad weather. Instead of being diplomatic, he thought it fit to create bitterness. Pak leaders behave badly during visits to India not because they are uncouth but because it is their strategy to hit out at India for the benefit of the audience at home. Some 'Asha' supporters claim that such visits would pave way for a better tomorrow. That is wishful thinking. LOC violations and brutality to dead Indian soldiers (January 8) hardly indicate any desire for talks. After all, international relations are built, not on the basis of kindness of heart but on the twin pillars of national interests and reciprocity.

The Modi Juggernaut

3. The Gujarat election result (December 20) was on anticipated lines as Modi swept the polls. Earlier, there were self-serving predictions that Modi's bluff would be called this time around as Patels were deserting him, his development model was all propaganda and rural voters were disillusioned with him. To the dismay of his critics, Modi emerged unscathed. The critics immediately shifted the goal posts to point out how unfit he would be as Prime Ministerial candidate, how the RSS was against him because of his personality cult, how he was incapable of accepting any political rival and the BJP itself was divided over him. More importantly, minorities continued to live in fear under Modi. In short, Modi continued to be the ogre he was. Nothing good could be seen in his victory as it was dubbed as a sleight of hand; people were coerced into voting for Modi. Chidambaram even discovered that it was in fact a victory for the Congress.

3. Has the time come to review the intellectuals' visceral rejection of Modi? It is true that an electoral victory should not be considered a verdict on a man's culpability. However, should a ten year old history of suspected mis-governance blind us to something good the man might have actually achieved? For the last 10 years, all attempts have been made to pin Modi down; SITs supervised by the Supreme Court, a Commission of Inquiry and dozens of NGOs have put Modi through a wringer and come out with nothing. How do we move forward? Instead of harping on old suspicions and allegations, can something be done to exorcise the ghost? There is no point in denying that the man has indeed lifted Gujarat to a new high. He may or may not have the national stature to be PM aspirant. That is his party's problem. Can unbiased observers accept certain realities and attempt to reassess Modi?

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

Readers who do not have the facility of a computer can also post (mail) their points of view on serious issues of the day to "Point Counter Point", c/o Freedom First, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001.

Next Time, Don't Walk Away (Cont'd. from page 6)

letting citizens help the victim.

My first encounter with the voyeuristic *tamashbeen* mentality of citizens was when I was eight or nine...a car moving at high speed hit a young man with such force that he was sent flying in the air before he crashed to the ground. People picked him up from the street to prevent him getting run over by other cars, but did not go beyond dumping the profusely bleeding and badly injured man in the verandah of CP's

inner circle. They just stood and watched as though it was a scene out of a movie. I suggested to my aunt that we take him to a hospital in a taxi but she pulled me away, saying it was not good to get involved in such situations. I was too young to have my say on that day.

This is an excerpt from an article by Madhu Kishwar. in *The Indian Express* on January 16, 2013 (See link: For the full text see link:<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/next-time-don-t-walk-away/1059969/0>).

The Gujarat Assembly Elections

Arun Modi

The UPA coalition government at the Centre is perceived as weak, soft, talentless and directionless. The Congress propaganda had nothing but abuse for Modi. The more abuse he got, the more votes he gained. Modi was aware of this.

Just before the Gujarat Election Day in Baroda, travelling in a auto-rickshaw, I asked the driver what he thought the verdict was going to be. His answer was “of course Narendra Modi, who else?” His argument was simple: We have had no riots in the last 10 years. “Saheb, with riots both communities suffer, we lose ten to twelve days of our income, we survive on a day to day basis, we cannot afford such disturbances”. The implication - Modi ensured that law and order was maintained for people to go about doing their normal work without hindrance.

Congress propaganda lost credibility. When Manmohan Singh comes to Gujarat and tells the people that development talk in Gujarat is all hype, will people, who have experienced the fruits of development, believe him? When Congress spokesmen claim that when Congress ruled the state (the last for one year in 1994/95) there was 28% growth it is simply ridiculed. When Sonia Gandhi told the people of Gujarat that the ‘108 Ambulance Service’ was run with Central funds, Modi asks how come other states ruled by the Congress have not been able to implement the scheme with the same success. Is it a crime if Gujarat has fruitfully utilized central funds?

The fiasco of photographs issued by the Congress as part of their propaganda only accentuated their loss of credibility. It was discovered that the photograph of the farmer complaining about water scarcity was a farmer from Rajasthan and in Rajasthan! The malnourished child shown in the picture was that of a child from Sri Lanka! The Congress is also reported to have collected Rs.11 crores (by charging Rs.50 for an application form) for their ‘ghar nu ghar’ (housing for the poor scheme). A promise that the Congress if elected could not have fulfilled.’

Their propaganda that Muslims feel unsafe in Gujarat carried no weight with the voters of both communities. The Muslims too want to live in peace and carry on with their day to day life. Since the 1970s Gujarat had communal riots every year except for in 1991. There is an interesting story behind that one year. P. C. Pande, then Vadodara Police Commissioner, in a discussion with me opined that since Ashok Bhogilal, the Pradesh Congress

Treasurer was murdered that year by a Shiv Sena worker, Raju Risaldar, he did not anticipate any communal riots even though Moharram and Ganesh Visarjan fell on the same day that year. The conclusion is obvious. Bharuch district has 25% Muslim population and Vagra taluka has 44% Muslim population, yet this taluka elected a BJP candidate. Was this out of fear? Most of the well-off Muslims probably realize that their interest will be best served with Modi in power. They do not expect much from the Congress. They do not appear to have any more – to have an assured Muslim vote bank..

Modi made the most by appealing to the Gujaratis’ pride. The rise of the Telegu Desam Party of Andhra Pradesh was attributed to the insult suffered by Congress Chief Minister, Anjaiah, at the hands of Rajiv Gandhi. It was reported that Rajiv Gandhi made Anjaiah wait for a couple of days to grant him a meeting! Similar treatment was meted out to Amarsinh Chowdhury, a former Congress Chief Minister of Gujarat. The people of Gujarat have not forgotten that insult. Therefore, when Modi is able to stand up to, not only the BJP’s central leadership, but also the RSS, Bajrang Dal and VHP (Viswa Hindu Parishad), people see in him a strength that past Chief Ministers lacked. And that is probably why RSS and VHP have turned against Modi. One had seen similar chutzpa in another former Chief Minister, Chimanbhai Patel who stood up to the Congress high command. He returned to power in 1990 as head of the Janata Dal– Bharatiya Janata Party coalition. After the leadership of Chimanbhai Patel, people see a decisive and not a divisive leader in Modi. He is seen as standing up against Delhi’s bullying. Gujaratis were sick of the subservience to Delhi.

Central UPA government is perceived as weak, soft, talentless and directionless. Congress propaganda had nothing but abuse for Modi. The more the abuse he got, the more votes he gained. Modi was aware of this. In his post-win speech he said, “People throw stones at me, and I use the stones to build a ladder.” He did not bring in religion and caste into his electoral language. Keshubhai on the other hand did, and the voters rejected him. The Congress has been trying its best to pin him down but have not succeeded so far.

A friend, who holds a job in Ankleshwar, had to support his two farmer brothers in his village in Bhavnagar district, when they could till the land only during the monsoon, but now they take three crops a year, thanks to the water from Sardar Sarovar dam. Now his brothers are asking him to give up his job and join them in farming which is more lucrative! If such people hear from the Congress, and even Keshubhai, that farmers have not benefitted from the Sardar Sarovar, how will their propaganda hold water? Gujarat is today leading in solar power generation. But since this technology requires large stretches of land, which is a scarce commodity, Modi thought up the idea of constructing Solar panels over the dam's canals. He had this done over one kilometer of the canal as an experiment. After finding this successful, he has invited private entrepreneurs to use the full canal length. He comes up with novel ways to solve problems.

An example of his 'authoritarian streak': the "108 ambulance service" was initially started in Andhra Pradesh by Ramalingum Raju of Satyam (much before the Satyam scandal broke out). He was looking for avenues to expand and narrowed down to Gujarat. He met the Health Secretary and made his power point presentation. Since government decisions take a long time, Raju left after the presentation to take a flight back. The Health Secretary met Modi immediately and explained the scheme. After getting some details from her, he asked to meet Raju. On learning that he was already on his way back, he made the Secretary call him on his mobile and ask him to return immediately. Another hour of discussion and the decision was made. No cabinet meetings to pass resolutions, no discussion with colleagues. This was his 'authoritarian' style of functioning.

Modi has a hands-on style of functioning and keeps tab on development all over the State. He started the practice of having a monthly meeting with the Collectors of all the districts. But when he found that they were wasting a couple of days travelling to attend meetings at Gandhinagar he had video conferencing arranged in all the districts. Bhagyesh Jha, a collector narrated to me his experience. Modi would ask questions on the work being done in the district. When Modi found that the Collector was depending on his aides sitting next to him, he asked Jha to send all his aides out of the room and then told Jha that this was just 'not done'. He wanted the Collector to be fully conversant with all the work in his district and he should not be dependent on his aides to provide him information. He wound up that meeting giving the Collector time to familiarize himself with his work before returning for the next meeting a fortnight later. Modi is computer savvy and endowed with a sharp memory. If the Collector's

answer differed at the next meeting, he immediately pointed it out. He keeps the IAS cadre on its toes.

On finding that primary schools were unable to impart even basic education to students, Modi arranged for the training of Education Inspectors, who certified the quality of primary education in rural areas, - first time ever in the State. A 56-year old Inspector, attending the program is reported to have been so overwhelmed, that he publicly announced that he had come with a two-page list of grievances to narrate, but after this program he had torn up those pages and has resolved that he was now going to work before retirement, in a manner in which he had not done all his working life.

After learning of the Central Government's plans for Japanese projects in the DMIC (Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor), which were going to cross the State of Gujarat, he met the Japanese leadership and convinced them that they should organize Japanese language classes in Gujarat for their benefit to make it easier for their engineers when they are ready to enter Gujarat. The Japanese were of course delighted. Modi asked the Ahmedabad Management Association to organize these courses, and that too with Japanese funding. So when the time comes and such people with knowledge of Japanese are required, it will be Gujarat that will supply this manpower.

Modi is available on line and personally looks into problems of the people, no matter how small it may seem for a Chief Minister to attend to. A widow's tenant had defaulted in paying his rent. Someone suggested she write to Modi. Though not convinced, she did. After about a week, the police visited the place and made their enquiries. The tenant being an influential BJP worker, the police did not take any action. She was advised to write again. This time the tenant came and paid the arrears as well as an advance for the next year. The tenant made the widow talk to Modi on the phone as he was instructed to do.

The talk about Modi as the Prime Ministerial candidate is more a media hype. He has tactfully never said so himself. He always keeps harping on the 6 crore Gujaratis. He is intelligent enough to know that NDA may not come to power on its own or even as a coalition, so there is no question of his being PM in 2014. He will probably wait till 2019 to try.

ARUN MODI is a Chartered Electrical Engineer and a Management Consultant. Based in Vadodara (Baroda) he is a Member of the Indian Liberal Group. E-mail: arunkumar_modi@rediffmail.com.

The Parliament, Politics and Policy Paralysis

Ranga Kota

If Parliament cannot take up, discuss and pass economic legislations, what we get is a prolonged policy paralysis of the kind we accuse the present UPA government of.

The just ended winter session of Parliament could manage to pass just six bills, one of which, the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2012, has been received with a sigh of relief in banking and corporate circles. The UPA government readied a slew of important bills to push through parliament in this session with the idea of demonstrating to the public at large that it was on an accelerated mode on the reform agenda. The major part of the session, however, was consumed by two controversial issues, one relating to the Government's decision in September 2012 to allow FDI up to 51% in Indian front end retail with a host of conditions and the second relating to the bill on the quota for promotions in government jobs for the SC/ST.

The bill on FDI in retail was more symbolic than substantive. It became more of an ideological issue and was exploited by the divided polity to the fullest extent. The TMC withdrew support to the UPA government. The BJP and the Left forced the government to a debate with a vote in both houses of parliament. Despite odds, the government managed to survive the vote and come out with a bit of enhanced spirit. The drama was almost a repeat of the one in 2008 when the CPM withdrew support to the government on the proposed Indo-US nuclear accord, forcing the latter to seek a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha.

Hostage to Coalitions

After the vote on FDI in retail, there was hope that some pending important economic bills would be passed by the Houses in the small window left. But the controversial bill of providing a quota for promotions in government jobs for SC/ST took precedence in both Houses and generated a drama akin to the one associated with the introduction and passing of the women's reservation bill in the Rajya Sabha in 2010. While all Parties, except the SP, professed support in public for this Constitutional amendment bill, they were hoping the SP to do a repeat of its act in 2010 when the women's reservation bill, which sailed through the Rajya Sabha amidst deployment of marshals, could make no headway in the Lok Sabha thanks to some muscle flexing by the SP. That is what precisely happened.

The foregoing may have added to the entertainment of the political class, but the nation lost another parliament session without much to show on economic policy making. The fate of economic policy-making in parliament in the last couple of years was decided by issues of a different kind such as the 2G scam, Lok Pal and Coalgate. If parliament cannot take up, discuss and pass economic legislations, what we get is a prolonged policy paralysis of the kind we accuse the present UPA government of.

One might be tempted to believe that this paralysis is a fault of the present UPA Government. But an objective analysis would suggest that when a coalition government depends on parties of differing economic hues for its survival, it becomes hostage to different constituents of its supporting coalition. It was the Left which vetoed the major changes in banking, insurance and pension in the regime of UPA 1 and in the present regime, the TMC blocked almost all legislations. The parties that block major economic reforms do not represent the majority view but have a disproportionate say in policy-making by virtue of the critical support they provide for the survival of the incumbent regimes. The increased representation of regional parties in parliament requires the coalition governments at the Centre to tune their policies to the agenda of these regional parties. The latter have no pan-India vision; their interest is to get as much dividend as possible for their agenda. Mamata insists on a special Bengal 'Package', Maya wants the quota bill to be passed and Mulayam seeks reservation in jobs for Muslims. They leave very little room for the Federal government to attend to issues of governance and policy-making

Single Party Rule the Answer?

Political parties are becoming more and more populist in their public *avatar*. Chandrababu Naidu who was once a reformist czar has turned populist thanks to the twin defeats he suffered in the State elections in Andhra Pradesh. The BJP, once considered to be a Right of Centre Party in their economic leanings, seems to currently adopt a more populist approach to economic issues. It is difficult to say what forced a change in its ideological moorings. Many believe they would embrace more reforms once they are back in power at the Centre.

We might think that a single party majority government in the Lok Sabha could cure the policy paralysis. But most of the legislations have to negotiate the Rajya Sabha hurdle. The regional parties ruling in the large States will have enough representatives in the upper house to block any legislation they disagree with. Therefore, the party that rules at the Centre should also be in power in many large States to ensure their say in the upper house of the parliament as well. There is very little chance of this happening in the Upper House in the immediate future. Even in the Lok Sabha, a single party government seems difficult in the forthcoming general elections. A coalition of like-minded parties also looks unlikely to materialize at the moment.

Ways to End Policy Paralysis

One way to end policy paralysis is for the leader of the coalition to go ahead with the important bills without worrying about the fall of its government. Congress came out winner on both earlier occasions when it braved its difficult and stubborn allies. When the regional parties realize that their brinkmanship does not deter the government from going ahead with its well-crafted policy, they are more likely to fall in line than force a fall of government because they realise that they may not gain in the next elections if the government falls or if a coalition that does not include them comes to power at the Centre. On the other hand, the leader of the coalition may gain more popular support for his courage and conviction as happened in 2008, when the Congress took a near fatal gamble on the Nuclear accord.

The other way to end this paralysis is by the principal Parties, Congress and BJP, who represent a majority in parliament, taking a bipartisan approach to issues of national interest. They must follow the US example

where the principle opponents manage to overcome their mutual antipathy and work towards a consensus on policy-making. If this is to happen here, the senior Party leaders in the Congress and the BJP, who suffer from immense mutual antipathy, have to make way for the next generation of leaders in their Parties, who could develop a more constructive approach to governance and policy-making. This would also reduce the disproportionate clout of regional parties.

Besides, there is also the need for restoring the sanctity of parliament. The members who disrupt the proceedings and force repeated adjournments of the Houses must be dealt with firmly by the presiding officers. They cannot allow the kind of disruptions the Houses created in the last couple of years. If the Houses do not function, there is very little the government of the day can do in passing important bills, even if they muster the courage or consensus to push important legislations. We have seen strong disapproval of disruptions in the parliament functioning over the last couple of years among the public, the corporate and media circles and this seems to be putting pressure on the Parties to attend to parliamentary business of law-making more seriously. This pressure should continue in the foreseeable future to drive some sense into the heads of law-makers who do not seem to take their profession seriously. If our law-makers do not find the necessary will and the sense of urgency for policy making as a matter of course, an economic crisis of 1991 proportions could well revisit our country soon.

RANGA KOTA is an adviser to Clearsep Technologies (I) Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai and an independent consultant in the Logistics and Supply Chain Area. Email: rkota123@yahoo.co.in

From Our Readers (Cont'd. from page 4)

desperately need a new narrative from their leaders; one does not perpetually blame the evergreen troika of "India, the United States, and Israel" for its own ills. He states that Pakistani military spurns any change in the strategic thinking which undermines its own vast economic interests; its large share of the budget, and its overwhelming influence over the foreign policy. In addition, there is the feudal mind-set of the political elite. All these will lead Pakistan to an ideological dead end, he observes.

Its geo-strategic location, its nuclear weapons, its large population, its terrorist camps and its enfeebled economy and polity makes it more vulnerable than Afghanistan. He says that the Pakistani military is supporting guerrilla war in Kashmir to tie down the Indian

army and the Indian State at a low cost for itself. It has no vision for the progress and prosperity of its people.

The Indian politicians and the intellectual elite have failed to understand the mindset of the Pakistani military and its political elite. Its response to all provocations is feeble which emboldens Pakistan to repeat its ghastly acts. Mikhail Gorbachev liberated Soviet Union with perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (freedom) and saved Russia. There is no such personality in Pakistan who can save the State from the illusions of parity with and hatred of India, and ensure prosperity for its people

**M. D. Kini, Mumbai.
Email: mdkini@kini.org**



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjickaka

Is Facebook Turning us into Neanderthals?

Has it occurred to you that Facebook is killing the art of language?

Previously, if you liked someone, you needed to express it in words. But in Facebook land, all you need to do is to send him/her a mindless poke, or a hug, or a high five, or a button. What's next....pink elephants?

Another conversation killer is that awful entity that goes by the collective title of "forwards". These are those jokes/pictures/slide shows/You Tube videos that keep flooding your email inbox. I liken them to a virus: once they enter your system, they are impossible to get rid of. I'm not saying I don't enjoy an occasional good joke, but not twenty every blessed day. And they are like bloody boomerangs. You dispatch them post haste to "friends", but the darn things keep coming back to you. Apart from having nuisance value, they virtually obliterate the need for personal contact - even electronically - as a means of staying in touch. There are people you haven't had any personal contact in months, but you assuage your conscience by mechanically sending them "forwards". Hey, it shows you're thinking of them, doesn't it? Does it really?

An average emailer will have around 25 persons on his forward list. After a while, do we even remember everyone who's on the list? And what effort does it take to "remember" them? One click of the mouse and you've supposedly done your good deed for the day. Give me a break.

Last but not least are those infuriating emoticons: smiley faces, frowning faces, devilish grins - you name it. There is an emoticon to suit every emotion: no need to put it in words at all. Sometimes I feel mankind is regressing back to ancient civilizations, when language comprised mostly of hieroglyphics and pictures. This is progress?

Let's get on with the program, folks. Where the devil are we going? Man is supposed to be the Almighty's greatest creation. Let us reclaim him before he becomes a mindless automaton.

Goliath Modi

There was no surprise in Modi's victory. The surprise is that he did not win big.

The political pundits (and the BJP) would have told you that Narendra Modi's victory in the recent Gujarat elections was a foregone conclusion and a no-contest. Almost as inevitable, they say, is his inexorable march to the Prime Ministership of India. However, I would like to add a sobering note among all the adulation and hosannas to the lord.

There was no surprise in Modi's victory. The surprise is that he did not win big. Given his near-divine status among Gujaratis, a two-thirds majority was well on the cards. It did not happen. This is even more remarkable when you consider that Modi was pitted against a disorganized and disheartened Congress party beset by internecine rivalries. By all logic, the Congress should have been wiped off the map of Gujarat, but they managed to win a respectable 65 seats. How can one account for this anomaly?

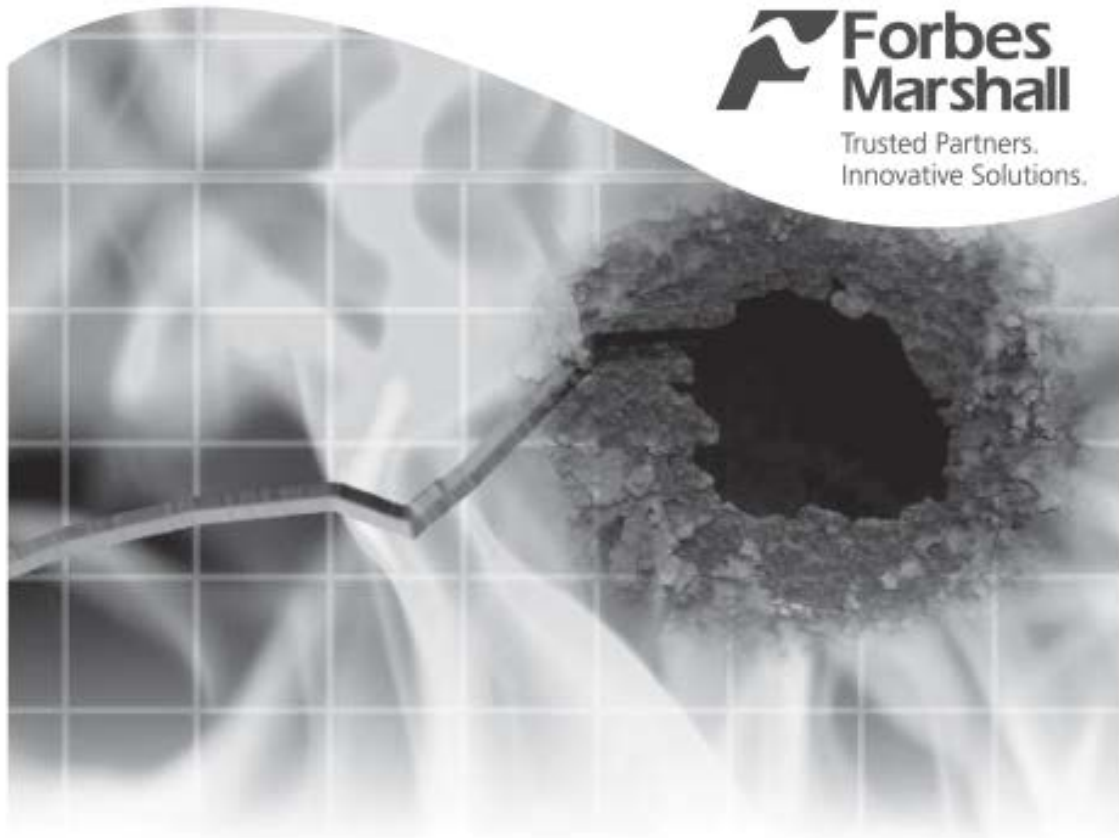
My take is that the Congress won the seats it did not due to merit, but by default; the result of anti-Modi sentiment among a section of Gujaratis. After over a decade

in power, Modi's halo may be starting to tarnish a little. People, particularly in the rural areas, who have not benefited from Gujarat's "economic miracle", are getting the message that Modi is not quite the superman he makes himself out to be. Statistics show that that Gujarat's performance on the Human Development Index is far from stellar. This does not make Gujarat worse than other states, of course. The reality all over the country is that India's economic miracle has failed to reach a substantial portion of its population. The statistic becomes significant because the Modi publicity juggernaut regularly holds him up as a role model that other Chief Ministers can only aspire to.

Without taking away any credit from Modi's impressive developmental record, it would be well to remember that he has had a relatively easy path in pushing through his agenda. Unlike in most other states, there is no opposition worth its name in the state. Even his own ministers are subservient to him. When he decides to build a four-lane highway, for example, he doesn't have to worry about getting around unenthusiastic coalition partners or



Trusted Partners.
Innovative Solutions.



Are Energy costs burning a hole in your profits?

Partner with us for future ready energy efficient solutions.

As a leader in process efficiency and energy conservation, we constantly innovate to provide solutions in Energy, Efficiency and Process Automation using the best technology the world has to offer.

Forbes Marshall brings to you end to end solutions for conserving energy, reducing utility costs and improving process quality.

Our energy audits conducted at hundreds of process plants across the country have identified average potential savings between 10-20% in annual fuel bills. Our Spirax Marshall range of products and systems increase energy efficiency across your steam generation and consumption circuit.

Forbes Marshall provides consultancy services for utility expansion and upgradation.

To know more about how we can help you reduce energy costs, e-mail us at response@forbesmarshall.com.



Energy Conservation | Environment | Process Efficiency

www.forbesmarshall.com

P B # 29, Mumbai Pune Road, Kasarwadi, Pune 411 034, India. Tel. +91 20 27145595, 39858555, Fax. +91 20 27147413
A-34/35, M.I.D.C., H Block, Pimpri, Pune 411 018, India. Tel. +91 20 27442020, 39851100, Fax. +91 20 27442020

Forbes Marshall	Forbes Marshall Arica	Forbes Marshall Codel	Krohne Marshall	Spirax Marshall	Forbes Solar	Forbes Vyncke
-----------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	-----------------	--------------	---------------

getting tied up in rehabilitating villagers who get in the way. He simply sanctions the funds and the project gets done. There is another reason too. In most parts of the country, infrastructure projects go grossly over budget and are left incomplete or shoddily done, because almost a third of the sanctioned funds are siphoned off by corrupt officials. Because of his personal integrity, Modi can demand higher standards from his ministers and bureaucrats, resulting in smoother functioning.

In one sense, Modi is following the China model. Many Indians are envious of our neighbour for far outstripping us in matters of economic growth and

impressive infrastructure. China's leaders have absolute authority. They don't have to bother about the niceties of democracy where the government has to heed the opinions and objections of the people and political opponents. I am sure Modi believes in his version of democracy, but the circumstances in his state are such that he has a virtual *carte blanche*. If he does succeed in becoming Prime Minister, he may be forced to contend with India's messy democracy with its corruption, political self interests and obdurate bureaucracy. It will be interesting to observe how well his Gujarat model works then.

The Mosquito Stings Again

As the bigger country with undoubted military superiority, India does not cover itself with glory by whining to Pakistan and asking them to apologize. Our neighbor has not even acknowledged its role in 26/11

After a longish interval and for reasons not yet clear, firing broke out again along the Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan. The first casualty, though not directly targeted, was a Pakistani soldier. The following day, either by coincidence or design, Pakistan sent across a revenge expedition of soldiers from the Baluchi brigade, an outfit not exactly noted for gentlemanly conduct. They killed two Indian soldiers and mutilated their bodies. Justifiably, the Indian army and the general populace went ballistic.

The virulent reactions of the Indian public, as well as some television news anchors (notably Arnab Goswami), are predictable if somewhat misguided. They stem from ignorance of ground realities. Of course, all Indians are outraged at the murder and mutilation of the two soldiers. Of course they want retribution. However, apart from heated rhetoric, no one has articulated in practical terms what form that retribution should take. BJP spokesperson Meenakshi Lekhi, for example, even advocated that we teach the Pakistanis a lesson by killing a couple of their soldiers and sending the bodies across the border, presumably with their heads chopped off. The brutal reality is that short of declaring war on our intransigent neighbor,

India's options are somewhat constrained. We can launch a limited counter-attack on Pakistan, with the inherent risk of escalation. We can exert strong diplomatic pressure to provoke international condemnation of Pakistan's brutality. That's about it.

The other point to be borne in mind is that the Pakistanis are not suicidal. Like violent children, they have thrown a tantrum across the border and are taunting the other side with outright denials, but they will back down before they get seriously hurt. What they did to our soldiers is horrific, but it is done. As the bigger country with undoubted military superiority, India does not cover itself in glory by whining to Pakistan and asking them to apologize. Our neighbor has not even acknowledged its role in 26/11. What makes us think they will do so now? If the Pakistan army continues to shell us, we should shell them back with renewed vigor. We have the resources to keep at it far longer than they can. Finally they will get the message that their aggression is not paying any dividends; and they will retreat.

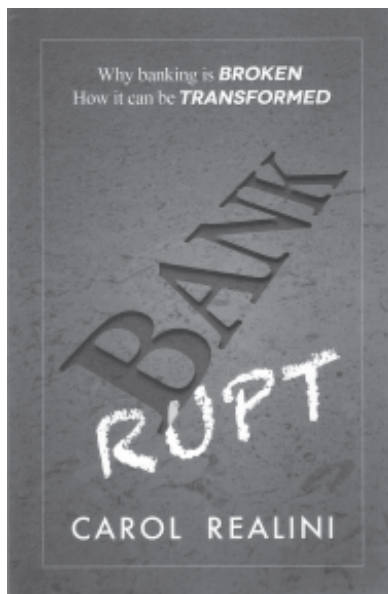
FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer, a blogger and a freelance writer. He is a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: leonardo8_99@yahoo.com.

Dr. Tahirul Qadri Pakistan's Anna Hazare?

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan has turned against Dr. Tahirul Qadri after he had issued a 600-page *fatwa* or edict in the form of a book [on March 2, 2010], condemning terrorism and suicide bombings. As per his edict, "terrorism is terrorism and violence is violence and they don't have any place or justification in the Islamic teachings". Qadri's 600-page *fatwa* had vehemently rejected al-Qaeda's violent ideology and described the Osama-led terrorist outfit as "an old evil with a new name that has not been sufficiently challenged".

Excerpted from *International The News* (Karachi), January 17, 2013.

BOOK REVIEW



BANKRUPT: WHY BANKING IS BROKEN. HOW IT CAN BE TRANSFORMED by Carol Realini • Search Finance Ltd. USA • 2012 • Pages 178 • US\$ 11.16.

Reviewed by Ms. SUMAN OAK, a freelance writer, is a retired lecturer on education, SNDT University, and associated with Streehitakarini, Centre for the Study of Social Change and the Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti.

This book tells a common man 'why banking is broken and how it can be transformed'. To write such a book with a provocative title, while still in the banking business is certainly courageous and as

his fellow citizens and spends time to understand his customers and their needs. The other banker Henry Potter aspires only for short term profits, lectures on the laziness of workers and disdains the idea of working class aspiring to own their homes; he is convinced that "only the fittest should survive and use their wealth to accumulate more wealth while the underclass is good only as a source of labour and cash for the wealthy". George Bailey earns tremendous goodwill from his customers who rush to save his bank from collapse when faced with adversity.

the author mentions at the outset, "her courage comes from her commitment to the idea that all people should have affordable access to banking that empowers their life and work". She also says that like food, home, education and healthcare, banking should be everybody's right.

The author analyzes the causes of this decay in the chapter 'Four Pillars of Decay.' They are: 1. Decline in customer service; 2. Various complex bank fees that she calls 'Death by a Thousand Paper Cuts'; 3. Banks' role in the financial crisis and 4. Recovery from the great recession.

50 years back banking was not as costly as it is today but did not offer any special services either. The large banks of today have plenty of computers, branches, websites, mobile applications and ATMs but have lost the compassion and dedication to their customers that the unsophisticated banks of old had in abundance. The common impression today is, "as prospects we are wooed and as customers we become suspects, even adversaries who must be charged for every imagined transgression".

The customers cannot do much about the decline in customer service as they have no choice. While the service is good in the small banks there is risk in putting money there. On the other hand the service in big banks is bad; only the lowest paid bank employee or an automated robot attends to the common customers.

Ms. Realini sees the present crisis in the US, the Western economies and the world, as an opportunity to have a fresh look at a different kind of banking – banking for the needs of the middle class who have to watch their daily expenses, who empathize with their neighbours, dream of a better future for their children; banking for the small business owners or creators of new businesses with the only equity being their sweat and hard work. All of them don't have to accept the *status quo*.

The second pillar of decay is the number, the amount and the complexity of fees that the banks slap on their customers. A checking account customer (Savings account in India) is charged 49 different fees. When a small account holder looks at his account after a few months, all his savings are gone in various fees and at times even penalties are slapped on him. The checking accounts come with a linked savings account into which a small amount from his checking account is automatically transferred. But there is a catch. Even if there is not enough money in the checking account, the bank keeps on transferring money into savings account, charging the customer with overdraft penalties. The bank does not bother to inform or warn the customer or put his account in hibernation.

She cites the examples of two bankers depicted in the 1946 classic movie 'It's a Wonderful Life.' One is George Bailey whose approach to banking is community oriented, with an eye on the long term growth and prosperity of the community, sees the inherent good in

To discover the root cause of the present sickness of big banks, the author analyzes the forces that prevent

progress and promote the *status quo*. She briefly narrates the history of the development of banking from the colonial days. In those days savings banks maintained only deposits for individual use. There were competing resources; county banks, insurance companies and trusts who loaned money; and merchants, brokers, commercial banks conducted currency exchanges.

Today the United States' ten largest banks hold 54% of the nation's total financial assets. The number of banks declined from 12,500 to 8,000. Deregulation of their banking industry in the late 20th century enabled super banks to move away from the core business of deposits and lending, into that of dubious financial products and risky investments. This combined with the US Congress' effort to expand opportunities of home ownership led to the housing bubble, accompanied by wild speculation and outright fraud.

The banking industry in the US is regulated by a mélange of Federal and State agencies. A state regulator cannot touch a bank that is federally chartered and vice versa. The salary of the CEOs is one more point for criticism. Even as their banks are in crisis they keep getting huge packages. Why shouldn't their bonus depend on a customer satisfaction index or on lowering the number of foreclosures or helping customers save their homes? "*Banks need a Wall Street Steve Jobs*" who worked on a salary of one dollar per year till the company turned round. The close relationship between super banks' boards and federal and state government agencies view any such suggestion as disruptive and a distasteful alternative; they prefer greasing the wheels to keep the rusty machine lumber ahead.

Very soon nearly every human being on the planet will have access to the internet and services through mobile phones. While 85% of people on the earth are connected through mobile phones, only 20% have bank accounts. In 2006 there were one hundred million mobile phones in use in India; by 2012 the number grew nine times to 923 millions. Since the banks cannot afford to cater to the seven hundred million people living in remote rural areas through traditional methods, the micro businesses there cannot afford terminals for card payments, and with rural Indians choosing to deal in cash transactions and preferring the local money lender to the banks, the banking industry can piggyback the telecom facility to reach many more people and in more remote areas. Such revolution is happening in India. According to the author, India's economy is growing and the inclusive growth requires inclusive banking in which poor people from rural and remote areas can participate and profit from it. Although India's big banks like those in the west are reluctant to cater to the farmers

in remote areas, change is taking place.

The Unique Identification (UID) project called *Aadhaar* (a very apt word meaning support) was launched in India in 2009. The *Aadhaar* numbers are stored in a centralized database and are linked to demographic and biometric information about the individuals. Two hundred million have already received *Aadhaar Patra* (cards) and six hundred million more will receive them by 2014. *Aadhaar* is envisaged to be used as a platform for many applications: banking, health care, government payments, small farm subsidies, payment for labour, etc. The system has been designed for scale, security and multi-use. Unfortunately benefits have not accrued to the rural people to the extent one would wish because of ignorance and lack of infrastructure. Ms. Realini predicts that, "when this system is fully rolled out, it will be a generation or two ahead of the US Identity System". Other innovative ideas practiced in India are: basic banking without frills at affordable prices, cheap telecom services, using UID for mobile and electronic disbursement, and virtual secure ATMs for cash. Indian innovators like Prism, Bill Desk and many others are closely working with big organizations like Airtel, Reliance, ICICI, Visa and others. However convincing consumers and retailers to switch from cash to e-payment is extremely difficult and will require innovation in both the product and the business model.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is revising regulations to embrace new models of payments. RBI has created a set of e-money and branchless banking regulations. It has helped create the National Payments Corporation of India (NCPI) to consolidate and integrate the multiple systems existing today into a nationwide, uniform and standard business process for all retail payment systems. This should create an affordable payment mechanism and help develop financial inclusion. "*Just as China is now a world leader in low cost manufacturing, India is poised to become a world leader in retail banking*".

In America 41 state licences are needed to transfer money nationally. It is necessary now to change to one regulator like the RBI in India. 'We should seek out and destroy anti-competitive parties.' If Wal-Mart is allowed to buy a bank they will figure out how to offer basic banking services at affordable price.

This extremely readable book has taught me - an illiterate as far as banking and money matters are concerned - a great deal about the 'global recession and financial meltdown.'

Educating Adults

The Right to Education Act (8)

This is eighth in a series, examining the various aspects of the Right to Education Act (RTE) Act

Quality of Education

Suresh C. Sharma

***"A good teacher can add USD 20,000 to a student's earning in a life time.
For a class of 20 students, it comes to USD 400,000".***

- Thomas Friedman

The quality of education depends upon good teachers and willing students. An effective teacher ensures that the students take interest in learning and gaining knowledge or skills. There is a requirement for a large number of teachers to achieve the objectives of compulsory education. Training the requisite number of teachers is a challenge. 9% of the schools are single teacher units and 20% have teachers without professional qualifications. This comes to a requirement of training 6.7 lac teachers. The problem of lack of trained teachers is more acute in the eastern States. 36% of the sanctioned posts of teachers are vacant. 86% of the teachers failed in the Central Teachers Eligibility Test [CTET] conducted last year. This year, 94% failed in that test. 99% of the B. Ed. qualified candidates for teachers post failed in the CTET test. Instead of improvement, there is deterioration.

This is not surprising since there is a lack of good teachers' training institutes. The Chief Justice Verma Committee appointed by the Supreme Court to examine the quality of teachers training institutes concluded that these institutes were in poor shape. About 90% of them were in private sector and needed large investments, both financially and qualitatively. Out of 291 institutes inspected in Maharashtra, only 34 were considered fit to continue. The panel judged the schools on the basis of open space, built up area, faculty strength, salary and maintenance of funds. Funds are not a problem. The budget allocation has increased by 165% in the last five years. The teacher

student ratio is good at 1:35. Yet, there is no improvement in the success rate of students and the drop out rate has increased. The Mumbai Municipal Committee [BMC] spends Rs. 53,335 per year per student while the private schools spend Rs. 36,000. The success rate of students over five years was 82% in private schools against 58% in BMC schools. The reason for the poor performance is apathy, lack of accountability and mismanagement. In spite of this drawback, 84% of the teachers received good to excellent reports. One million students have shifted from government schools to unaided private schools. BMC is now planning to borrow teachers from private coaching schools. About 53% of students lacked reading skills of second grade.

Overcoming drawbacks

The quality of education system depends on the quality and commitment of teachers and principals. The first step should be to improve the training schools for teachers. Promotion of teachers should be based on an objective evaluation system. Parents should take more interest in the progress of their wards and regularly attend parents-teachers meetings. Technology should be used to impart education which is today not restricted to books and black boards. Parents should limit the time that children spend on TV and computers. A spirit of collaboration should replace the competitive race and students should share work and information.



A Feature Sponsored by

Adult Education Institute,

Registered under the Public Trusts Act N.E-4282

Contact: Email:freedomfirst1952@gmail.com

The present system of 4 years primary and 3 upper primary classes will change to 5 years primary and 3 years upper primary. Existing schools catering to classes upto 4 and 7 will have to be upgraded which will require 29,000 new class rooms. Space crunch will be acute for schools working on a two shift basis. The syllabus too will have to be revised. Not many schools have adequate buildings. Typical is the case of a Zila Parishad school, 107 kms from Mumbai. Students sit in squalor. The boundary wall is

broken and vehicles ply through it. Gutters overflow into the play ground and children are falling sick due to filth. Grants are not adequate for supporting the staff and children sweep the floors. Electric bills are paid by the teachers. Good education facilities cannot be forged overnight, just by enacting laws.

BRIG. SURESH C. SHARMA (retd) is adviser to the telecom industry, and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: brigscs@gmail.com

What Women College Students Think of Assault on Women? Conclusions from a Chennai Debate

Twenty women students from a cross section of colleges in Chennai participated in a debate on Assault on Women on 5th January, 2013. The debate was organised by Nandini Voice for the Deprived, a Chennai based NGO. Here are some of their views.

1. Dress code

Dress code is not an issue and it is evident from the fact that even minor girls are being abused. It has been seen that a number of women subjected to abuse are well dressed and lead conservative lives.

2. Mindset of rapists

The rapists and those who assault women are often mentally imbalanced men due to bad upbringing, as well as a sadistic mindset. Such people can be controlled only by punishing them severely and putting the fear of law in their mind and not by a process of counselling.

3. Alcoholism

The recent increase in alcohol consumption amongst men all over India has significantly contributed to incidents of assault on women. Government has to take some steps to curb alcohol consumption in the country. Consumption of alcohol degrades man and brings out the baser elements in him which affects the security of helpless women.

4. Law

There are several bills pending for several years in Parliament aimed at preventing harassment of women in the workplace. Care has to be taken while framing extreme laws such as hanging, since the system can be subverted to punish the innocent. Such extreme laws would give extreme power to those who may abuse the judicial process. There are several examples of miscarriage of justice in which innocent get punished and discovered much later.

5. Implementation of law

Even existing laws are not strictly implemented largely due to a corrupt police administration as well as interference of politicians and bureaucracy in the functioning of the law enforcing machinery. This indicates lack of adequate governance for which Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers should be held responsible. Security of women cannot be ensured by mere laws alone but should be accompanied by quality governance.

6. Eve-Teasing in public places

Teasing of women in public places disturbs the mental peace of women but this issue is largely ignored by the public and police as if it's of no consequence. However, this is the starting point of harassment of women. Teasing of women anywhere whether at bus stops or office premises should be put down with a heavy hand. This can be done by the police but they often ignore this problem.

7. Influence of cinema and television

There is need for stricter censorship of the cinemas, television and media and advertising which often uses the image and body of women in suggestive ways to attract viewership and in the process demeaning the image of women in the society. The mindset of our average countrymen is not yet ready to receive such images without being influenced perversely. The guidelines for the censor board leave room for discretion and the appointment of members to censor board is often based on political considerations.

8. The men should be ashamed and not with the women

While abuse of women is widespread, hardly 30% of the cases are reported. Fearing social humiliation, women generally put up with the problem feeling helpless. This gives men confidence that they can getaway with their reprehensible behaviour and actions. When such things happen, women should come out boldly and report the matter so that the men feel ashamed. The silence of women is a chief source of strength for men to abuse women.

9. Do not excuse juvenile offenders

A person proved to be a rapist has to be punished severely irrespective of his age. Certain crimes should not be given lenient punishment on the basis of age; rape and assault on women should fall in this category.

10. Need for special campaign to spread awareness amongst women

Widespread campaign amongst womenfolk,

particularly in rural areas, should be carried out in a sustained manner about their rights, prevailing laws and regulations that would give them confidence, protect their dignity and fight against those who assault women.

11. Insensitivity of politicians

The presence of those facing charges of rape and assault on women in Legislatures and Parliament is disturbing. The unsavoury comments of several politicians about women in recent times are disconcerting. Those facing charges of rape against women should be debarred from contesting elections if the cases are admitted in court of law.

Reported by Mr. N. S. Venkataraman, Trustee, Nandini Voice for the Deprived. Email: nsvenkatchennai@gmail.com

The New Electronic Technologies

Use with Care!

GPS

A friend had their car broken into while they were at a football game. Their car was parked on the green which was adjacent to the football stadium and specially allotted to football fans. Things stolen from the car included a garage door remote control, some money and a GPS which had been prominently mounted on the dashboard.

When the victims got home, they found that their house had been ransacked and just about everything worth anything had been stolen. The thieves had used the GPS to guide them to the house. They then used the garage remote control to open the garage door and gain entry to the house. The thieves knew the owners were at the football game, they knew what time the game was scheduled to finish and so they knew how much time they had to clean out the house. It appeared that they had brought a truck to empty the house of its contents.

Something to consider if you have a GPS - don't put your home address in it. Put a nearby address (like a store or gas station) so you can still find your way home if you need to, but no one else would know where you live if your GPS were stolen.

MOBILE PHONES

I would never have thought of this....

This lady has now changed her habit of how she lists her names on her mobile phone after her handbag was stolen. Her handbag, which contained her cell phone, credit card, wallet, etc., was stolen. 20 minutes later when she called her hubby from a pay phone telling him what had happened, hubby says "I received your text asking about our Pin number and I've replied a little while ago." When they rushed down to the bank, the bank staff told them all the money was already withdrawn. The thief had actually used the stolen cell phone to text 'hubby' in the contact list and got hold of the pin number. Within 20 minutes he had withdrawn all the money from their bank account.

Moral of the lesson:

Do not disclose the relationship between you and the people in your contact list.

Avoid using names like Home, Honey, Hubby, Sweetheart, Dad, Mom, etc. And very importantly, when sensitive information is being asked through texts, CONFIRM by calling back.

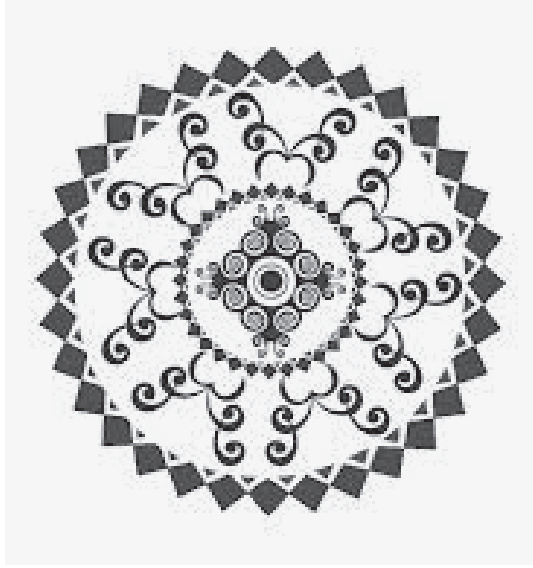
Also, when you're being texted by friends or family to meet them somewhere, be sure to call back to confirm that the message came from them. If you don't reach them, be very careful about going places to meet 'family and friends' who text you.

From the Net. Contributed by Khorshed.

Rangoli

B. M. N. Murthy

The bindu in the rangoli represents the universal soul and all the other lines and other decorative aspects are symbolic of individual human activities that eventually merge with the Supreme. The circle in a rangoli normally represents the heavenly world while the square represents the earth.



Rangoli or Rangavalli as it is known in Sanskrit, is perhaps the oldest Indian traditional arts kept alive by passing the tradition from one generation to another. Ancient Sanskrit texts like ‘Tilakamanjari’, ‘Kadambari’ dwell at length on the aesthetics of rangoli designs and the technique of working them out. The origin of rangoli could be traced back to the *puranic* days. In the *Bhagavatha Purana* we hear of how the Gopis forgot their anguish of separation from Lord Sri Krishna by engaging themselves in drawing artistic, aesthetic and creative patterns of rangoli.

The word rangoli is a derivative of the Sanskrit word ‘rangavalli’ which means ‘a creeper of colours’. The well-known Kannada lexicographer Rev. Kittal defines rangoli as ‘the ornamental lines and figures drawn with various powders on the floor, the walls, in front of the house and on the floor, before an idol’. Essentially an art form using line, colour

and dots, the practice of rangoli had its origin in the ancient traditional practice of welcoming Goddess Lakshmi to the house. It was also used as a symbol to keep the householder away from distress. Even though the purpose of rangoli was the same, different motifs and styles were adopted in different regions. It is a common sight even today to see traditional Hindu women getting up early in the morning, sweeping the threshold and the front approach to the house, sprinkle water and then draw a pattern of rangoli. By doing so, she sanctifies the entrance for the Goddess Lakshmi to cross the threshold, enter the house and bless the household with harmony and happiness. This is essentially the purpose of a rangoli—welcoming the Goddess of wealth to the house. Rangoli has special importance in all the Hindu households on *Shankranthi* and other festivals.

Apart from its decorative and artistic value, rangoli also has spiritual significance. All rangoli designs are born out of a dot or a bindu. The bindu, according to Tantra Shastra, is that point where all living beings unite and merge, when the individual soul merges with the universal soul or the Paramatman. The bindu in the rangoli represents the universal soul and all the other lines and other decorative aspects are symbolic of individual human activities that eventually merge with the Supreme. The circle in a rangoli normally represents the heavenly world while the square represents the earth.

It may be of interest to note that there are certain specially designed rangoli art forms called ‘ashtottara shata nama rangolis’ which conform to the recitation of an ashtottara shata nama

[repeating 108 names of the deity] like that of *Shiva*, *Lakshmi*, and others. The dots of *rangoli* have been so designed that when one starts reciting the first name of the *ashottara* while joining the first two dots and repeats the other names while joining the other dots in order, he would be completing the recitation simultaneously with the last line of the *rangoli* when he comes back to the starting point to complete the form. It is understood that these patterns are adopted in certain temples in Tamil Nadu even today. As *rangoli* is an art heralding auspiciousness, it is customary not to decorate the house with *rangoli* whenever there is an inauspicious event in the house like the occurrence of death and *Shraddha* ceremonies. In good old days, even beggars would avoid seeking alms from those houses, which had no *rangoli* in front of the house.

In Bengal, *rangoli* is known as '*alpana*'. In Shantiniketan near Kolkata, founded by Rabindra Nath Tagore more than 100 years back, the subject of *rangoli* is given particular importance and is taught as a special subject for study. Probably Shantinikethan is the first institution where *rangoli* is taken beyond the realms of tradition and showcased as a highly skilled and decorative art. On festive occasions like Tagore's Birthday, Bengali New Year, Durga Pooja etc., the students and faculty vie with each other in displaying their skill in putting highly artistic *rangoli* designs.

The credit for putting up the biggest *rangoli* in terms of size, time taken and aesthetics, goes to Mrs. Leela Venkataraman of Madurai, who came from a traditional family devoted to the *rangoli* art. She displayed her skill in 1978 by putting up a *rangoli* with 1,05, 625 dots in the form of a square, each side measuring about 40 feet. Each line contained 325 dots and there were 325 such lines one below the other forming a square. It is further learnt that the entire design was made up of only one single line which traversed all through covering all the dots and that it took nearly 20 hours for Mrs. Venkataraman to complete the design. For this remarkable feat, the then Tamil Nadu Government honoured her with the title '*Tamilaga Kola Tilakam*'

[The Crest Jewel of the Art of *rangoli*]. During an interview with the press, Mrs. Venkataraman disclosed that by performing this feat she only fulfilled the desire of her mother. Her mother, an expert in *rangoli*, had taken a vow that before she passed away, she would do a *rangoli* with about one-lakh dots. Unfortunately she passed away without fulfilling her wish. It became the good fortune of the daughter to satisfy her mother's wish and get recognition in the Art of *Rangoli*.

Subsequently, several other *rangoli* artists have tried to excel this record. The Guinness Book of World Records has accorded recognition in 2005 to a *rangoli* design extending to about 50,000 sq. feet at Hosur in Tamil Nadu put up jointly by 50 individuals. It is understood that this record has also been crossed by the Suvama Jyothi Trust, Tamil Nadu, who put up another *rangoli* pattern called '*Akhanda Bharatha*', a joint venture of 750 persons and admeasuring about 1,50,000 square feet.

Even in Karnataka, research is being conducted on the antiquity, origin, development and history of *rangoli*. Dr. Bharathi Maravanthe's colleagues, who criticized her in the early stages for having taken up such a trivial subject for thesis, were taken aback when she was awarded Ph.D. recently by the Dharwar University for her thesis on "*Rangoli*". It is the passion of researchers like Bharathi that has kept our ancient art still alive.

In the '*Sri Lalitha Sahasra Namam*', the 236th name is "*chatuh-shasthi kalamayee*" which means that *Devi Lalithamba* embodies 64 Arts. According to Vatsyayana, author of '*Kamasutra*', *rangoli* has been recognized as one of the 64 Arts. As *rangoli* is considered an embodiment of the *Devi*, it is recognized as a sacred art and has been passed on to us as such from generation to generation from time immemorial.

Mr. B. M. N. Murthy is a retired Chief Engineer, Life Insurance Corporation of India. After his retirement Mr. Murthy has devoted his time to inform "the younger generation of the spiritual wisdom of India, reminding them of the great traditional lineage to which we all belong". Email: bnmnmurthy@gmail.com

N O T E S

Freedom of the Press

Sachin Sen, President of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference, defined freedom of the Press as "freedom *from* and freedom *for* – freedom from compulsion and freedom for making its contribution to the maintenance and development of a free society...

Considered in the light of these observations it is difficult to boast that a free Press exists in this country. Our Press is not free from compulsion. In the first place there are some laws like the Press (Objectionable Matter) Act which limit the freedom of the Press. This law and the amendment of Article 19 of the Constitution, which gave it constitutional validity, have attracted the attention of the International Press Institute, which has characterised it in its just published survey Government Pressures on the Press as "the most flagrant threat of restriction of the freedom of the Press by constitutional means." These restrictions must be withdrawn forthwith if India is ever to have a free Press. The Editors' Conference has asked for the scrapping of the Press (Objectionable Matter Act and all fair-minded persons will support that demand of the Conference.

But much more insidious and dangerous than statutory provisions are the other compulsions which prevent the Indian Press from expressing "reasoned criticism" of the acts and policies of the Government and the ruling party, "reasoned criticism" which according to Dr. Sachin Sen is "the breath of a free Press."- Those compulsions are the desire to be in the good books of the authorities and the fear to displease them...

It is necessary therefore to remember the other point stressed by Dr. Sachin Sen, namely, that free Criticism is the basis of a free society. The Press will not be able to contribute to the maintenance and development of a free society unless it is prepared to assert and exercise its right of free criticism which constitutes the real essence of freedom of the press.

Our Responsibility

As a nation we are a champion of oppressed peoples. It appears, however, that our sensibilities get dulled when the oppression proceeds from a Power which is supposed to be a Workers' State.

Soviet Russia has indulged in many acts of brutality and inhumanity against many nationalities inhabiting that unhappy land. In some cases even genocide has been practised. That is the grave charge levelled against the Soviet regime by the International Kalmuk Brotherhood.

The Kalmuk's were a community of about 300,000 persons. They were an Asian people professing the Buddhist religion. An autonomous republic had been formed for them as an integral part of the Soviet Union. But in December 1943 the Soviet authorities liquidated the autonomous republic and shipped its entire population to Siberia. Since then nothing has been heard of the Kalmuks, except that about a thousand of them were able to escape and have now settled in countries far away from their original home. The same fate befell four other Asian peoples, namely, the Chechens, the Ingushes, the Balkhars and the Crimean Tartars. These five peoples, who have virtually disappeared without a trace, numbered over a million men, women and children.

Having failed in their various attempts to get any information about these peoples from Soviet authorities, the International Kalmuk Brotherhood has appealed to the Prime Ministers of India and Burma to use their good offices to secure the information, now that the goodwill tour of the two Soviet leaders has created such friendly feelings between the two Prime Ministers and the Soviet rulers.

With their professed concern for the welfare of the Asian peoples there is no reason why the Soviet rulers should refuse to give the information, unless of course it is inconvenient for them to divulge it, in which case the people will be justified in drawing their own inferences. And in any case with our desire to help all oppressed peoples there is no reason why we should not intercede on behalf of these unfortunate peoples and ask the Soviet Government to supply the information. That is the least that we should do for them.

What you have just read are excerpts from *Freedom First* No.45 of February 1956. This issue also carries the Inaugural Speech delivered at the Third Annual General Meeting of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom held in Bombay on December 17 and 18, 1955, by Mr. Nicolas Nabokov, the Secretary General of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. He was a music critic and composer of high repute who was born in Russia, which he had to leave early in life as a result of the revolution. You'll find this and more in our archives – www.freedomfirst.in

On the occasion of the 120th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago (September 1893) *Freedom First* pays tribute to this 'Man among Men'.



"Study the history of the whole world and you will see that every high ideal you meet with anywhere had its origin in India. From time immemorial, India has been the mine of precious ideas to human society, giving birth to high ideas herself. She has freely distributed them broadcasting all over the world. This is the land whence, like tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluded the world and this is the land whence more such tides must proceed in order to bring life and vigour into the decaying races of mankind. The debt which the world owes to our motherland is immense."

*- Swami Vivekananda
(1863-1902)*

Photo and Quotation courtesy: Mr. B. M. N. Murthy