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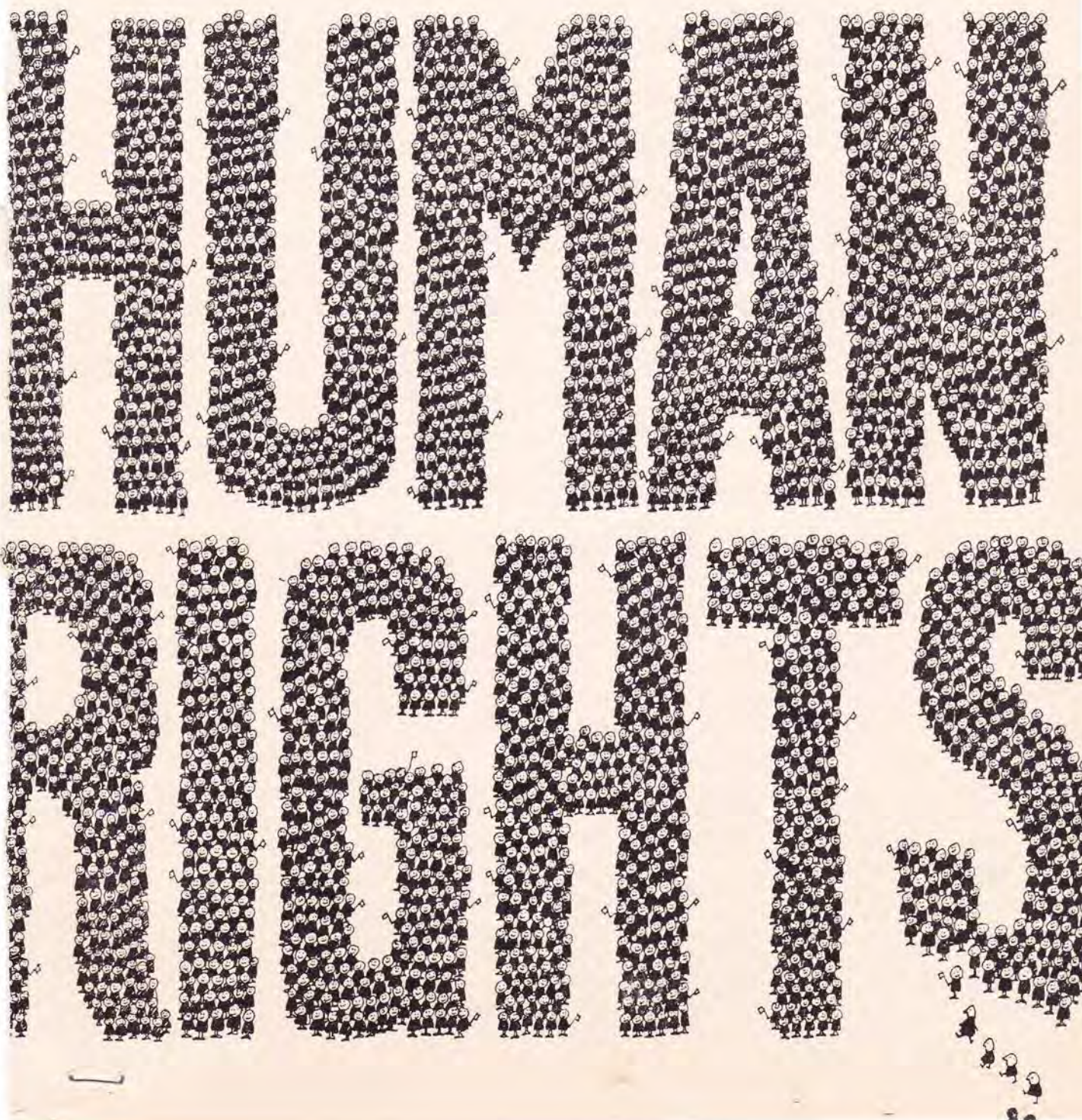
# freedom first

314

A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL IDEAS

JANUARY 1979

Special Number





# God Give Us Men!

God give us Men! A time like this demands  
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and  
ready hands;

Men whom the lust of office does not kill;  
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;  
Men who possess opinions and a will;  
Men who have honour; men who will not lie;  
Men who can stand before a demagogue  
And damn his treacherous flatteries without  
winking!

Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog  
In public duty and in private thinking.

Josiah Gilbert Holland  
(1819-81)

# freedom first

314

A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL IDEAS

JANUARY 1979

Price : Rs. 3

EDITORS : S. V. RAJU

GEETA DOCTOR

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## FOR THIS WE STAND

The Democratic Research Service which publishes FREEDOM FIRST was established as far back as November 1950 with the blessings of the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at a time when anti-democratic forces posed a clear and present danger to our infant democracy and our free institutions faced the threat of internal subversion.

If eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, both the DRS and its journal FREEDOM FIRST can justly claim a small share in maintaining vigil as one of the sentinals of liberty in this country.

Month after month for the last twenty seven years, FREEDOM FIRST has consistently espoused the cause of freedom and individual liberty making its columns available to the democratic dissenter. While we are not aligned to any political party, we are not, by any means, neutral. We have in the past, and will continue in the future to be aligned on the side of a free society, free of cant, dogma and hypocrisy of any kind.

We are, as our masthead proclaims, a journal of Liberal ideas — not "Liberalism." Liberal ideas cannot be contained in any "ism".

The Liberal, we aver, is the true revolutionary. For, he alone is dedicated to the concept that the individual is everything and the State is there only to serve him.

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While acknowledging that in this age of technology and change, a modern State has a more positive role to play far beyond the concept of the night watchman, the liberal is ever watchful that the State does not, in the process, usurp the rights of man.

FREEDOM FIRST is happy to have had the opportunity to have had its mettle tested during the 19-month bogus Emergency. Our refusal to submit to arbitrary censorship is now a matter of public record. True to its name FREEDOM FIRST was indeed the first to seek legal action against the censor's attempt to muzzle its voice.

The so-called Emergency was in a way a blessing in disguise. For, it helped expose the false dichotomy of bread or freedom, and educate millions of our countrymen and particularly those enmeshed in the cobwebs of dogma that it has to be bread **with** freedom.

Two years ago, this month, our people, in unmistakable terms opted for freedom and liberty. But human memory being what it is there is already talk, bordering on the nostalgic, for a return to the days of "discipline" and "order". The Liberal is second to none in his desire for discipline and order — but under conditions of human rights and dignity. Hence this Special Number on Human Rights.

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## —THE URGE FOR FREEDOM

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1948, spoke of the recognition of the "inherent dignity" and the "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" as the foundation of freedom in the modern world. That noble declaration, however, was symbolic of the aspirations of man rather than an accurate description of his condition in large parts of the contemporary world. But it also indicated how far man had travelled through the centuries in the international affirmation of the rights of the individual. The document crystallized the philosophy of freedom as it was proclaimed in the revolutions of the eighteenth century but it also went further in affirming the social and economic rights of the individual. Ironically enough, it was on this broader perspective of rights that opinions have sharply differed, specially in the underdeveloped countries with masses of people steeped in misery and squalor.

### Developing Countries and Human Rights

The constitutions of many of these countries embodied an impressive array of rights but they seemed far removed from the social and economic realities and the experience of ordinary men and women. A recurring thought among the leaders of Asia and Africa centres round the question : What do rights mean to starving people? In this view, economic development is more important than the so-called civil and political rights which benefit only a minority of the population. Consequently these rights could be abridged or abrogated in the implementation of economic and social programmes designed to benefit the people at large.

The fallacy of counterposing bread and freedom has been shown in almost every instance where freedom has been suppressed on the pretext of either banishing poverty or of improving the lot of the poor. A little reflection would show that the condition of the masses have improved in many western countries only after they acquired the rights of free speech and association and were able

to organize and fight those who exploited and oppressed them. The history of England in the nineteenth century is an elaboration of this historical fact. The poor and the down-trodden need rights in a more fundamental sense than the rich who can take care of themselves. Moreover, those who are exploited do not fight their battles alone for there are always men of conscience and leaders of opinion, social critics and reformers who throw themselves in the struggle for equality. They can also align with hoplitical parties and movements which support their cause. But they can do this only if the laws of the land recognize and protect the civil and political rights of the citizens.

There is a profound truth in the fact that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who dedicated his life to the service of the scheduled castes and was chairman of the Drafting Committee of India's Constitution was also the most powerful exponent of individual freedom. He insisted on placing the individual at the centre of the constitutional and political system of the country. In her study of Dr. Ambedkar's leadership, Eleanor Zelliot has shown how he preferred to fight for the rights of the Mahars through the courts rather than encourage militancy in the streets. Every achievement had to be legalized and given legitimacy in the struggle for the rights of equality and freedom.

In the West, the stress was largely on political and civil rights ; in the underdeveloped countries of the world the emphasis has shifted understandably to economic and social rights. But rights, whether political or economic, are inextricably intertwined. It is therefore futile to grade rights in order of importance or to speak of some rights as more important than others. India's experience of the emergency has shown how every sign of dissent could be suppressed by taking over printing presses or imposing savage fines on printers.

### Are Rights a Luxury?

The argument that rights are a luxury — a Western import into India — is untenable because the urge for freedom in the modern world is becoming universal. When India embodied the ideals

of liberty, equality and fraternity in the Constitution, Professor Ernest Barker rightly observed that India's Preamble to the Constitution showed that these ideals were no longer Western. But this does not imply any wide-spread agreement on either the importance of rights or on the ways of protecting them against arbitrary governmental action. Some of the strands in the prevailing views on rights can be identified. Firstly, there are those who believe that in a developing country like India, "Rights" belong to a minority of the population and can therefore be abridged in implementing social and economic programmes ostensibly designed to improve the social and economic condition of the masses. This is the argument most frequently advanced by those who hold that the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution are more important than Fundamental Rights. This, in fact, is the position after the Forty-second Amendment. Secondly, there is the view that rights are fundamental and cannot be abridged by governments. This was the view of the framers of the Constitution who explicitly prohibited the State from making any law which took away or abridged the fundamental rights of citizens. Thirdly while the Constitution provided for protection of rights through the judiciary it would be undesirable if the courts fail to take into account the economic realities of a developing country.

### The situation in India

Most educated Indians accept democracy but reserve the right to define it in their own way. One often notices that the philosophy of rights is not well-integrated with the notion of democracy which many people have. This is the main reason why Indian democracy proves too fragile making it easy for Mrs. Gandhi to impose her dictatorial rule on the land on the ground that she was after all doing it in the interest of the millions of downtrodden people. That argument was sold to the people effortlessly through the Twenty-point Programme and most educated Indians swallowed it hook, line and sinker.

### Are Rights Universal?

Thus, despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights there is yet no universal agreement on the relevance of rights in the context of the poverty of developing countries and rights have therefore often been regarded as being suitable only to affluent Western countries. Once rights are

down-graded the next step in rationalizing violations of human rights becomes easy. Every attack on freedom finds its supporters who defend it on grounds of "historical necessity". If rights are treated as "Western," then, by implication, the ethical standards and norms by which we judge the conduct of governments become relative. We have a problem here. How does one condemn flagrant violations of human rights without universal norms of ethics and morality? This is one of the problems which Peter L. Berger, Professor of Sociology at Rutgers, tried to solve in his thoughtful article, "Are Human Rights Universal?" in *Commentary*, September 1977.\* He suggested the separation of the Western rights of liberty and equality from others which flow from the nature of man and his destiny. The violations of human rights like the massacre of people by governments, or the use of torture or the enslavement of people through bonded or forced labour, he argued, could be condemned by a "consensus far wider than that of Western civilization." "That consensus", Berger added, "emerges from all the major world cultures, especially in their religious foundations — and it is a consensus all the more impressive in view of the vast (and partly irreconcilable) differences among the world religions in their understanding of reality and of human destiny."

Professor Berger's solution is interesting but is one which bristles with immense practical difficulties for the simple reason that it would be possible to justify many social inequalities and violations of human rights on the basis of scriptural texts which have come down to us through the centuries and have suffered distortion through interpolation. The defenders of a universal ethic would necessarily have to interpret the texts to suit their own purpose; at the practical level of implementation these "modernizers" will inevitably collide with the traditional interpreters who appear to the manes as the genuine authorities in scriptural matters. At a seminar held recently in India (November 1978) to discuss Professor Berger's thesis, one of the participants rightly pointed out that attempts to interpret religion for political purposes, however noble, may well spark off riots and result in problems of law and order, specially in theocratic States. Berger restated his position by arguing that he was not advocating a search into the historical religions but into the "broad stream of religious consciousness." But how this search for a universal ethic in the religious experience of mankind appears to the true believers in the vari-

\* See page 61

ous faiths is a matter on which sharply divergent views are possible.

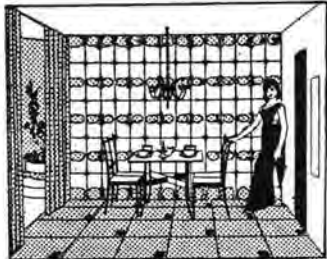
### Modernization and Human Rights

Berger's article also linked up human rights with the vastly complicated process of modernization. He argued that in pre-modern societies political power was restrained by religious authority, custom and tradition and also by the inability of government to penetrate every nook and corner of society. Modernization weakens the traditional restraints and the only alternative is, therefore to have the restrictions which are built into constitutional government. Thus, in his view, human rights and democratic government are related. Only a democratic government can provide the institutional checks on the exercise of arbitrary power. On this Berger is on strong ground; the only point I would add is that the traditional restraints on kings in ancient times were not always effective and there were no real checks on the decisions of the ruler. Much has been said about Dharma as a restraining force on kings but tyranny rather than enlightened rule stands out in the perspective of ancient Indian history. Moreover, Dharma meant not only duties but also the preservation of a social order which was structured on inequalities as the ancient legal codes clearly indicate. Thus authoritarian rule was the order of the day long before the process of modernization began. The problem is not one of filling up a vacuum created by modernization and replacing traditional "checks" by modern democratic checks as Berger argues, but of clarifying the meaning of democracy to people for whom it is still an alien concept. The fuzzy notions of democracy which many people have makes it easy for dictators to rule with the pretension of being democratic. In such circumstances, even the institutional checks of a democratic government may cease to function.

There is one other aspect of the modernization process and its effect on human rights.

In societies like that of India, people need to be liberated from the bondage of traditional social arrangements which result in their exploitation by

dominant castes and groups. The threat to human dignity and freedom comes also from the power of such entrenched groups. When a government undertakes vast programmes of economic development, the services it offers are cornered by the powerful and the wealthy sections of the rural population. This has been the main reason for the increasing inequalities of development. The rich not only become richer and more powerful but are able to challenge any attack on their citadels of power. Those who are economically dependent on them are powerless to fight for their rights, even when they are made aware of them. Paradoxically enough, this represents the back-lash of the old order although modernization may ultimately strengthen the revolutionary forces which dissolve the traditional structures of traditional societies. But this does not by itself ensure that people will succeed in the universalization of rights. Modernization also strengthens governments and places tremendous power in the hands of officials and politicians. A new power structure is built up with bureaucratic secrecy and inadequate legislative control, presenting a perpetual threat to the freedom of man.



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— Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, January 29, 1925



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## — THE TRAMPLED OF THE EARTH

At least for some in India the 1975-77 experience meant an altering of their view of the world. Until then they were inclined to divide the world into the socialist east and the capitalist west, one half preferring the former, the other half the latter, or into the rich north and the poor south. Now, having tasted life under the emergency, they divide nations into those enjoying human rights and others, whether leftist or rightist, without these rights.

Reading about an unfree land and trying to imagine what life may be like in it can move and horrify us, but it does not make us feel oppressed. Spending some days as a tourist in a dictatorship is not much more instructive. The tourist can easily miss what the subject goes through. It is the wearer, not the observer, who knows where the shoe pinches, or that it pinches at all.

When the authoritarian shoe was forced on us we found that it pinched, and pinched badly. Until then our knowledge of the pangs of servitude was similar to the understanding that a man who has never had to miss or delay a meal has of the pangs of hunger.

Quite a few in India opposed the oppression, and when in March 1977 the majority saw that they could act to end it, they acted decisively. Why the chance to act was offered to them is not yet absolutely clear. The person who can clarify why elections were ordered has not yet done so; any explanation that she may at some point choose to give will have to be carefully cross-checked with other evidence.

When a true account is forthcoming, it will, I believe, be found that the gaze, often critical, of other nations played a part in her decision to have elections. The press of the world described our subjection in language that ranged from that of polite surprise to one of severe condemnation.

Some governments acted too, though of course far more discreetly. Regret and disfavour was shown by cancelling governmental and state visits to India and in indirect remarks by govern-

ment spokesmen. Party leaders not in office could afford to be less cautious; they spoke out in many a country in Europe.

West Germany, Britain, the Scandinavian lands and Austria — and Australia in another part of the world — were among the countries where the cause of Indian democracy received support. This support came from people and journals of different political hues, from Labourites and Tories, from Socialists, Liberals and Christian Democrats. It was heartening to find that internal political differences and considerations could be laid aside in expressing concern for human rights in India.

I have dwelt on the fact and nature of the help we received in order to draw two simple conclusions, namely, that we too must help nations witnessing a reduction in human rights, and that this help must be extended without leftist or rightist bias.

Ideological bias is a strong factor in our land, as it is elsewhere. Yet it is noteworthy that individuals and groups in some countries have recently found it possible to speak out against oppression wherever demonstrated — in Chile or in Ethiopia, in Iran or in Cambodia.

So far, in India, not many voices have been raised against violation of human rights elsewhere; and the few that are heard are selective. It is either a leftist or a rightist country that is condemned, not both together. There is room for non-partisan fairminded activists in this field, and it may not be too much to hope, following the emergency experience, that they will emerge. What can justly be called our indifference to the deprivation of civil liberties outside India ought to become a thing of the past.

We have to watch the trend as well as the quantum of a country's human rights. In comparative terms, India during the emergency was freer than quite a few other lands; but we received more of the world's attention than they because the world had become accustomed to an open India.

Iran today has to be compared against Iran yesterday. The same applies to Cambodia, or South Africa, or any other country.

Cambodia is probably the country that has the world's worst human rights record. As a poor Asian land that was once a colony of a European power it has an affinity with India. Its Buddhism and its famed Hindu temples at Angkor Wat are additional ties.

Since April 1975 a million people are stated to have unnaturally perished there as a result of the policies of its government. All its towns are empty. A Penguin book, "Cambodia Year Zero", attempts to describe its condition. It is not yet as far as I know, available in India, but deserves to be.

The author, a French priest called Francois Ponchaud, for ten years a resident in Cambodia, says the following:

"In the beginning I was not opposed to the Khmer (Cambodian) revolution: having lived with the peasants there from 1965 to 1970 I was painfully aware of their exploitation ... From 1970 to 1975 I shared the lives of the poor in the suburbs of Phnom Penh under the Lon Nol regime .... I welcomed the revolutionaries' victory as the only possible means of bringing Cambodia out of its misery.

"Now, after making a careful and full study, I am compelled to conclude, against my will, that the Khmer revolution is irrefutably the bloodiest of our century."

And not a word yet from any leading Indian newspaper about it. No students have marched over it, and no organisation for democracy or civil liberties has passed a resolution. Be ashamed, India!

Sadly, Mr Morarji Desai appears to hold the view that a nation's struggle is its own affair. "We never asked for help from outside during the emergency," he has said. The statement may be true for himself; many others of us, however, did ask, and will ask again should the need arise.

Governments, it is true, have to think of the consequences of speaking about the internal affairs of other countries; they have to reckon with the power or the powerful alignments of a nation practising horrors on its own people. But they become less than human if they make an absolute rule of silence in such matters.

Not that it is impossible to understand a government that feels at times that it cannot comment. But on such occasions it should plead prudence, not pronounce a principle that sounds callous.

Let me, all the same, return to the citizen. He has to set an example to our Government in concern for this earth's trampled ones.

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If India fails, Asia dies. It has been aptly called the nursery of many blended cultures and civilizations. Let India be and remain the hope of all the exploited races of the earth, whether in Asia, Africa or any part of the world."

Mahatma Gandhi, Delhi Diary



## — RELEVANCE OF GANDHI

This morning, when the day started somewhat inclemently, a friend said to me: "You see even Nature is weeping not because Gandhiji is dead but because we shall make hypocritical speeches today praising him and then forget him tomorrow!"

When I did my English literature in college, I was taught that this poetic licence claim that Nature weeps with us is called the 'pathetic fallacy'. My friend this morning was no poet, but even so we have to concede that he had a point. On occasions like the Gandhi centenary year or Gandhi Jayanti, one feels more poignantly the gap between profession and practice, the ritual homage and then the turning of the back. We had a Gandhi Centenary Year in 1969-70. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the "Frontier Gandhi", happened to visit India at that time to be with us on the occasion and, when he saw what he did in India, he made the following remark: "How soon we have forgotten Gandhiji. I am pained to find that the country and the people whom Gandhiji served so long had forgotten him so soon". And when an Indian leader, Prof. N. G. Ranga, visited him in Jalalabad on his way to Europe in connection with the Gandhi Centenary celebrations, Khan Ghaffar Khan told him: "The foreigners will laugh at you when you preach to them about Gandhi, because they know about the violence, hatred and absence of sympathy for the human being in India". This is not an unfair judgement that the "Frontier Gandhi" passed on what he saw in 1969-70.

### State Capitalism

Professor Hugh Tinker, a well-known liberal writer about India, says similarly: "If Gandhi had survived the one hundred and one years he expected to live once, he would, I think, have been saddened but not unduly surprised by the India of 1969. India has attempted to go forward by means of centralised State Socialism. India has piled politicking on top of politics. India has discarded non-violence and strayed perilously near to violence and there is no doubt that, in the last 25 to 35 years, Gandhiji has been relegated to the background except on occasions like this".

So we Indians have a right to be proud of the fact that we had Gandhiji with us. We also have reason to be ashamed that we have made so little use of this wonderful leader and prophet we had amongst us.

Now, is the position really different today from what it was in 1969-70, when Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Prof. Hugh Tinker made these somewhat acid remarks?

Well, one thing happened. In February/March 1977, the Janata Party's Manifesto was full of Gandhiji and to that extent we can claim that Gandhiji came back into the centre of the picture. But if one studies what has happened in the last eighteen months since that Manifesto was published, one will have to concede sadly that that was a flash in the pan. It meant very little and in the end we have gone back to our bad old ways, to the path which has brought India to its present plight. Basically, one has to confess that the pattern of the present Government in Delhi is no different from what it was under Jawaharlal Nehru, a pattern of State Capitalist monopoly, excessive controls which Gandhiji abhorred, nationalisation of industry and even trade. If you think that is not fair, please turn to the newspapers and magazines and read the speeches of certain ministers like Mr. George Fernandes, ending with his latest statements or Mr. Mohan Dharia, who threatened to nationalise even the small bania, and leaders of the party outside the cabinet like Mr. Chandra Shekhar and Mr. Madhu Limaye. To me therefore it is very clear that a large party of those who took Gandhiji's name in vain to win an election in March 1977 have shown that they have very little real regard for what Gandhiji believed in. In fact, they have turned their backs on Gandhiji and gone back to Karl Marx, their real mentor.

There are people even in the Establishment who see this. Mr. Charan Singh said not long ago, quite rightly, "there can be no hyphen between Gandhi and Nehru. One must choose between

them". Well, obviously the gentlemen I mentioned have made the other choice but they would not like to be driven to admit to that choice.

The Prime Minister said in his broadcast in October, 1978; "For years we have seemed to carry on in ignorance of and indifference to all Gandhiji stood for when he was with us". So this charge that we have betrayed Gandhi is not a subjective one.

In fact, we have been more unkind to Gandhiji than to Godse. There is a poem by Oscar Wilde called "The Ballard of Reading Jail", in which he writes about people who kill.

The coward does it with a kiss,  
The brave man with a sword.

The question therefore arises, in spite of all this turning our backs on Gandhi as a nation, about which there can be no doubt, is Gandhi relevant today?

Gandhiji is relevant today. In fact he is more relevant today than he ever was, not only in India but also internationally. When I say he is relevant what I mean is there is a great deal we can learn from him, that today particularly there are many things which he talked of, which we had forgotten, to which we must turn back again.

### Is Gandhi really back?

The other day on television Cliff Richard who the young generation adore as a singer, and who is also a practising Christian made a remark about Jesus while he sang, on his way through India to Bangladesh. "Jesus was relevant because, if he had not been relevant, his box office would have closed when he died". Cliff Richard's claim was that Jesus' 'box office' is very much open and is doing very brisk business. It was an interesting thing to say, and this applies to Gandhiji also. If Gandhiji was not relevant, then his 'box office' would also have closed when he died.

But it is not so, for in the last few years more books have been written about Gandhiji, both in India and abroad, than ever before and even before this trend started there were 400 biographies of Gandhiji already in existence.

Gandhiji is coming back into the centre of the picture. The reaction of the young people in the West, particularly in the United States, who are

sick of affluence, who are sick of material prosperity is that this is not enough. Prosperity is very good, but is not the whole answer to a man's need. "Man does not live by bread alone". Therefore these young people turn, sometimes in very crude ways, away from the established order in an attempt to smash it. Even the hippies in their own way are a revolt against the affluence and the materialism of the life that they know. Many of them come from rich families. So in their own way the young people of the West are protesting against what Gandhiji also could have told them would not be enough.

Similarly, the failure of Marxism and Communism in Russia, in China and wherever it has been tried, also makes people turn in the direction of Gandhi.

Solzhenitsyn, if you read his speeches and articles, is very greatly touched by Gandhi. Djilas, the great Yugoslav Communist, who suffered for his courage, says in "The Unperfect Society", he has turned away from Marx to Gandhi. Louis Fischer had earlier turned from Stalin to Gandhi.

So, Gandhi belongs to the world and, if we have let him down in India, there may be some hope in the fact that the rest of the world may prove to be more loyal and faithful to him.

### Two lessons to learn

Now, there are two ways in which one can think of Gandhi's relevance and learn from him. One of these is his policies, his principles, his way of life. The other perhaps, more important still, is the precepts about conduct which he gave to us. How we should behave as individuals?

Let us take the less important first — the policies or the way of life of Mahatma Gandhi. Now, Gandhiji was no believer in a readymade, distant Utopia. He was not an economic determinist like Karl Marx who could claim to tell what was going to happen, and then prove to be hopelessly wrong. Gandhiji was fond of quoting that Christian hymn:

"Not for me the distant scene  
One step enough for me"

It was a kind of pragmatism, feeling one's way, because you were not arrogant enough to think that you know the answers to all problems. Gandhiji was a great experimenter with Truth, as he called it, or with human beings or human society and he did

not worry only about India. He was no nationalist. In the thirties, the **Congress Socialist** weekly, had a series of articles by Nirmal Kumar Bose entitled "Is Gandhi a Nationalist?" The answer that the author gave was "No, he was no nationalist". Bapu\* once was asked whether he had read the articles and he said "Yes, I have read them". I said "Do you agree with him?" He Said : "Oh yes, very much so. I am not a nationalist, I only happen to be in India, so I experiment with India. If I was in some other part of the world, I would have experimented with the human beings there with the same love." In fact that was what he did in South Africa earlier. So he was an experimenter and did not have the dogmatism claiming that he knew the answers. For instance as far back as 1929 he said; "We do not know our distant goal ..... It will be determined not by our definitions but by our acts, voluntary and involuntary. If we are wise, we will take care of the present and the future will take care of itself." Now this was the key note of much that he said. Gandhiji had a talisman. He of course cared for the Daridranarayan, for the poor.

### A Wonderful Test

He gave Indians a wonderful test "If ever you are in doubt, think of the face of the poorest man you have ever seen and consider what effect the step that you contemplate will have on him. What will it mean to him? Will it enhance his human personality and his dignity?" So his heart was with the poor, but he was wise enough to know that the service of the poor did not warrant wrong methods and wrong paths. For instance, he was completely against State Socialism. He had no use for the Government being used as an instrument for doing justice to the poor. He was very wary of the State because he knew what danger the State could do in the latter part of the Twentieth Century. So he was for a Welfare Society, but not for the Welfare State, which many years later Jayaprakash described as a "creeping paralysis". He rejected the Welfare State, but accepted the welfare community — the difference being that, in one, the Government moves in on behalf of the poor, and then we know what happens, and in the other the people themselves create a society based on love and brotherhood. It was for the second that Gandhiji stood. He rejected the first.

Recently a new book called "Gandhi Today" has been published. In that Gandhiji is quoted: "If the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be

caught in the coils of violence itself. The State represents violence in a concentrated, organised form. It can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence, I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship." Or again: "What I would personally prefer would be not a centralisation of power in the hands of the government, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship; as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is much less injurious than the violence of the State". Therefore, Gandhiji rejected socialism with nationalisation and all its trappings.

Gandhiji made it very clear that he had no use for Socialism and warned against nationalisation. By destroying private ownership and property and giving power to the Government, we would create a tyranny worse than we had ever known. According to him the path of social justice meant that people who work in a factory, the Managers, the Supervisors and workers should own the machines. But their ownership should be an ownership as trustees for the community. They must run the factory and the machine not in their own personal interests but in the interests of the community as a whole. That was in 1934.

In 1955, when I visited Tito's Yugoslavia and talked to the so-called communists in Yugoslavia, they told me: "The Stalinist pattern in the USSR is no Marxism, no socialism, because State Capitalism is reactionary". According to them, there should be a competitive society in the service of the consumer. Factories should be run by managers and workers who compete with each other in the service of the consumer to produce the articles that they need at the cheapest price and the best quality. The person who had last told me all this was Gandhiji in 1934. What they were professing to practise in Yugoslavia in 1955 was what I had thought was old fashioned reactionary stuff in 1934. But how right Gandhiji was! He was 25 years ahead of his time and the young socialists did not know it. So Gandhiji believed in a decentralised society where power was distributed throughout the country and not collected in the hands of a few people.

### The Village is the Key

Some years ago, the Banks were nationalised as a "progressive" step. Well, let us see what Gandhiji thought about it. Louis Fischer wrote a book "A Week with Gandhi". There he quotes Gandhiji as saying to him: "You see the centre of

\* Gandhiji was affectionately addressed by his associates as Bapu.



power now in New Delhi or in Calcutta and Bombay, in the big cities, I would have it distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages of India. That will mean that there is no power. In other words, I want the seven hundred thousand dollars now invested in the Imperial Bank of India (now the State Bank of India) withdrawn and distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages in India equally. Then each village will have its little dollar which cannot be lost". Now, this was symbolic. Gandhiji did not mean that each should be given one rupee, or a village be given a dollar, but he did mean that this concentration of economic power in the hands of the Government, the Finance Minister, the Reserve Bank, should be broken and power devolved on the poorest of our people throughout the countryside. In other words, the countryside must come to its own.

He used to say about the people of the cities rather sarcastically. 'We of the cities will do everything for the people of the villages except one thing — get off their backs'.

Gandhiji believed that, in place of State Capitalism or Socialism, the people who have the factories, who have the wealth, who have the shops, should gradually convert themselves into trustees for the community.

### Limited Government

He said once: "I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear because, though apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress." He emphasised the self-dependence of the individual.

Abraham Lincoln, another great man, said similarly: "Do not try to do for the people what they can do better for themselves." It was the same message as Gandhiji's.

So Gandhiji believed in limited government, not the kind of government that dabbles in everything, but a government limited to its own legitimate purpose of maintaining law and order which the present government does not do, defending the country from aggression, providing the infrastructure on which economic life can be raised. Today's government tries to manufacture everything and fails miserably in the process. Now that

is what Gandhiji was against and he said repeatedly which we have forgotten: "That government is best that governs the least". "Render unto Ceaser what is Ceaser's and to God what is God's"

Today Ceaser has taken most of what belongs to God or the individual conscience.

Naturally, therefore, Gandhiji rejected communism. He rejected Soviet Russia categorically. When he was told that in Russia a better society was being evolved, he said: "Some may say there is ruthlessness in Russia but that it is exercised for the lowest and the poorest and is good for that reason. For me it has very little good in it".

Jayaprakash Narayan, after many years, renounced Marxism and turned to Gandhi. He said in 1945 (at a meeting over which I presided in Cama Hall in Bombay) that he judged a society by the kind of human being that comes out of it and not by its professions. The kind of people who come out of Soviet Russia like Vyshinsky and Molotov did not appear to him to be products of a socialist society.

So those who really believe in Gandhi can have nothing in common with what Mr. Chandrashekar, Mr. George Fernandes and Mr. Madhu Limaye are saying. To that extent we are in grave danger of going even further away from the path of Mahatma Gandhi if these men get more influence and power than what they already have.

### Ends and Means

The more important thing about Gandhiji's teachings was not his political line, because most of us are not in politics and there is very little we can do about it, but what he said we as individuals could do and practise — his injunctions about conduct. Gandhiji was very keen on personal conduct and character. Let us see on that plane what are the things we can learn from him? What are the injunctions we have neglected? Probably the most important thing about them is the relation between ends and means, the interlinking of ends and means. There is a very common shallow saying: "end justify the means". That is, if the end is good, then murder, lying, deceit, treachery, everything is legitimate in the pursuit of that noble idea. The communists practice it, the communists believe that this is correct for them. Bourgeois ethics are to be mocked at. Lenin preached all this quite frankly — that the communists have a right

to practice all these crimes because that way they would bring about a fair and decent society. Now, Gandhiji saw the fallacy in this that by these methods, however clean your objective may be, it will get soiled by the method. So the interlinking of ends and means. Now, what does it mean? All say it is very good, but none practise it. It means that there are no short cuts to what one wants however revolutionary or progressive the objective be.

Now, let us take one example. In the Janata Party's election declaration, it was said that they would not accept any defectors. That was very good, but in the months after the elections were won, literally hundreds of defectors from Mrs. Gandhi's party and others were taken in with open arms by the Janata Party so as to make their majority more broad based and to keep Indira Gandhi out. This is exactly what Gandhiji did not believe in. What has followed could have been foreseen. It has only accelerated the back-clash in favour of Mrs. Gandhi. In other words, the moral superiority of those who defeated Mrs. Gandhi in the elections has been lost.

During World War II Stalin once asked Churchill (Churchill was saying that the Pope wouldn't like something): "How many divisions has the Pope got?" Stalin did not understand moral power.

Gandhiji, secondly, was no pacifist. He admired courage, he had no use for the coward. Gandhiji wanted the people to resist violence non-violently, but he did not preach non-resistance. He preached resistance to evil, but without violence. But when people said: "Gandhiji, would you prefer violent resistance or non-resistance?" he said, he preferred violent resistance. If a man cannot fight non-violently, let him fight with arms, but let him not run away. What does this mean? That Gandhiji put courage before non-violence. This was a very big compromise for a man who loved non-violence.

So courage was in his view a very important element. It is not often realised that he regarded fear as a very craven and base thing that must be expelled from the human heart. In that he was at one with two very great men — George Bernard Shaw, who regarded fear the greatest evil in the world, and Bertrand Russell. Russell once said: "If I were about to be executed and allowed only twenty minutes in which to make a farewell

address, what would I say? I think I should concentrate on one issue, namely, the importance of eliminating fear. A great many of the defects from which adults suffer are due to permissible mistakes in their education and the most important of these mistakes is in the inculcation of fear".

### Meaning of Satyagraha

Gandhi was a great social revolutionary and believed that even one man had the right to oppose a bad law, a law that is immoral or oppressive. But he said that the man must have the courage of his convictions and face the consequences. He mustn't run away.

There was an Ashramite in one of Gandhiji's ashrams who got attached to a lady who was also in the ashram. But they couldn't get married because the lady was already married. She had a very rotten person as a husband who used to be away most of the time, but put in an appearance every now and then. The law says if your husband/wife does not turn up for seven years, you can marry again on the presumption that he or she is dead. But this wretched man used to turn up every two or three years. So they couldn't get married. So the man and woman in despair went to Gandhiji and told him of their problem. One would have thought that Gandhiji would have advised one of them to go to Cape Comorin and the other to Kashmir. He did not do so, though he believed in Brahmacharya. He always accepted everyone's right to his own logic. He said: "Get married". When they pointed out this would be illegal, he said they should have the courage of their conviction and go to jail and when they come out again, live together again. Gandhiji himself blessed the wedding.

Gandhiji wanted social reform but not by passing laws through Parliament. He did not believe a law can make people good. He knew you could not make people good by passing laws but by inspiring them with courage, the courage of their convictions, their courage to stand, or go to jail for what they believe, come out and not run away. Satyagraha means the courage of the individual to stand up against a wrong or immoral law.

### A Choice of Evils?

There was another important precept which we forget: "Do not choose the lesser evil, resist

all evil." Louis Fischer in his magnificent book "The Great Challenge" has a whole chapter on it. He calls it "Double Rejection." Reject this evil and reject that evil, don't ask which of the two is a lesser evil, and jump on that path as most of us do. There is no lesser evil.

There are people who say: "Compared to Mrs. Gandhi, Janata is the lesser evil." Probably it is, as we all know what we went through in 1975-77. "So don't say anything about Janata, because that will bring Mrs. Gandhi back", we are told. Now that is where Gandhiji would have parted company immediately saying you are choosing the lesser evil and making it a bigger evil. Because you are strengthening Mrs. Gandhi in her efforts to come back. We have seen this happening in the last twelve months. Therefore do not protect the lesser evil from the bigger. Because that way you are doing harm to the lesser evil and benefiting the bigger evil.

There is another thing that he preached that we don't do. "Turn the searchlight inwards" or, as the M.R.A. people put it, "when one finger points at somebody, three fingers point back at you." If you look at public life today, can you see anyone turning the searchlight inward? Or can we only see people pointing fingers at the other fellow. Yet many of them claim to be followers of Gandhiji.

### Punctuality

Another virtue that Gandhiji had which was not very much noticed was his punctuality. We are an unpunctual nation. Now, Gandhiji was a rare exception and one thing we learnt from him, small as it is, is punctuality. He had a big alarm clock, a kitchen alarm clock, with a bell on top. He had one of these in front of him. He kept his appointments to the minute. If he gave you 11 O'Clock, you went in at 11 O'Clock, but if you asked for half an hour and at 11-30 you had not finished, Gandhiji would interrupt you half-way through a

sentence and say: "Your time is over, there is somebody waiting. 11-30 is his time, that is his time, not yours." Then your face would fall because you had not finished the task for which you had gone all the way to meet him. He would say: "Don't worry, go to Mahadevbhai, get in the queue and get another appointment later on and come back again." You went out, the next man came in on time. You went to Mahadevbhai. So you returned later and then came the balm that soothed the morning's wound when you were interrupted half-way through a sentence. Gandhiji would say: "When I interrupted you this morning, you were saying" and he would quote that half-sentence and would say: "now please continue."

Finally flexibility. Gandhiji used to say: "Consistency is the virtue of the ass." He was not at all ashamed of admitting that he was wrong. We all make mistakes every day. Some of us admit them while others pretend we don't. Jayaprakash admitted his. Louis Fischer did it, Solzhenitsyn has done it. But there are people who won't admit they have ever made a mistake.

Now he said about that: "I have never made a fetish of consistency.... A careful eye would notice a gradual and imperceptible evolution. I have grown from truth to truth." And at another time he said: "I am not at all concerned with appearing to be inconsistent. In my search after truth, I have discarded many ideas and learnt many things.... When anybody finds any inconsistency between two writings of mine and you can, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject."

We do not have to be political leaders, we do not have to be Ministers or Party leaders to practise some of these things. The smallest of us, the most humble amongst us, has something to learn from what Gandhi taught which we can practise. This teaching has today become more relevant than ever, both in India and abroad.



## **POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

Economic rights are as much a part of human rights as political rights. It is a matter of deep regret, however, that many democratic countries concentrate on the latter to the neglect of the former. A feeling is growing, therefore, that democracy can provide only political rights and not economic rights, a feeling which is informal to its survival and growth.

In developed democratic countries citizens now enjoy both political as well as economic rights. It is not, however, the case in developing countries who have chosen the democratic way of life. Their citizens enjoy political but not economic rights. They have the right to vote and to free speech and press, but not the right to work and to get minimum necessities of life. In the absence of the latter they do not attach much importance to the former in the hope of getting the latter. It is never fulfilled, but such an attitude of mind makes it difficult for democracy to strike deep roots in those countries.

That is why in June 1975 democracy was subverted in India without much difficulty. Though it was restored nineteen months later it will remain insecure and unstable as long as effective steps are not taken to ensure economic rights.

### **Denial of Rights**

The right to live and to have the minimum requirements of life is the most fundamental of human rights. These include food, shelter and clothing. In a society that is not primitive they include nutrition, health measures and education. Mr. Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, defined his concept of that fundamental human right in an interview that he gave to the "New York Times" in April 1975: "Among the most fundamental human rights are the rights to minimum acceptable levels of nutrition, health and education." He regretted that "hundreds of millions of people in developing countries, through no fault of their own, are denied these rights today."

India is one of those developing countries where those basic human rights are denied to large masses of the people. And curiously enough

in India this number is only increasing rather than decreasing in spite of the notable progress that she has made in economic development. According to an estimate of the Planning Commission, "the percentage of the population below the poverty line in 1977-78 may be projected at 48 percent in rural areas and 41 percent in urban areas." Other estimates place the percentage higher. But even at the lowest percentage the number of persons who fall below the poverty line is 290 million. This is a colossal figure. What interest can this large mass of people have in a system that keeps them in that abject state of poverty?

Equally alarming is the position with regard to unemployment and underemployment. No definite figures are available as there is no country-wide system for the registration of the unemployed or underemployed. Figures have to be estimated on the basis of information collected through National Sample Surveys. The Planning Commission has arrived at an estimate of 20.6 million person years of unemployment in March 1978. This figure is, according to it, "staggeringly large and larger than in any country in the world for which any unemployment statistics are available." The problem is rendered more difficult by the prevalence of large-scale underemployment. The dire poverty that exists in the country is mainly due to this widespread unemployment and underemployment. Those who are the victims of this evil can have little regard for the values of a society which condemns them to a life of misery and facility.

The most disturbing feature of this is that it contains a significant number of educated unemployed who are capable of contemplating and organising concerted action to put an end to the injustice unwarrantably heaped upon them. The action may be of a leftist or rightist variety. But, whatever the variety, it will be aimed at subverting the existing democratic structure. Indian society as it exists today faces this grave danger.

### **Political Rights Not Enough**

It should be clear, therefore, that provision of political rights is not enough. They must be ac-

accompanied by economic rights and the State should be so organised as would facilitate immediate and vigorous action for the eradication of poverty and gross economic and social inequalities. One of the authors of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, was aware of this. In a memorandum presented to the Constituent Assembly in March 1947 he stated: "Old-time constitutional lawyers believed that the scope and function of Constitutional Law was to prescribe the shape and form of the political structure of the society. They never realised that it was equally essential to prescribe the shape and form of the economic structure of society, if democracy is to live up to its principle of one man one value. All countries which are late-comers in the field of constitution-making should not copy the faults of other countries. They should profit by the experience of their predecessors." Dr. Ambedkar did not succeed in persuading the Constitutional Assembly to profit by the experience to which he had drawn attention, as it was still under the influence of "old-time constitutional lawyers." The Constitution laid down only "the political structure" and left "the economic structure" to evolve by itself.

Aware of the dangers that would flow from the failure of the Constituent Assembly to accept his suggestion, Dr. Ambedkar warned: "Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy." He pointed out how "on the 26th of January 1950" we were entering "a life of contradictions," as "in politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality." Asking, "how long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life?" he advised, "we must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up."

#### **Fresh Thinking Needed**

Thirty years have passed since then and no steps have been initiated to remove "the contradictions" to which Dr. Ambedkar had drawn attention. He had suggested the economic structure of "State Socialism". The years that have passed have exposed many drawbacks and shortcomings of that structure. A few years after the promulgation of the Constitution, Pandit Nehru adopted it more or less. In his hands it became State Capitalism re-

sulting in widening of economic inequalities. As commonly put, the rich became richer and the poor poorer. It is necessary, therefore, to think of another more appropriate system. However, the necessity of urgent action to abolish unemployment, to reduce poverty and to establish equality cannot be denied.

The need has become all the more urgent in the new political situation that has developed with the re-emergence of authoritarian forces and their attempt to strengthen themselves by taking advantage of the poverty and ignorance of the masses. The leaders of the Janata Party have from time to time made many brave statements about ending unemployment and eradicating poverty, but in concrete terms nothing has been done so far to improve the economic condition of the people. It is true that political rights have been restored, but economic rights remain as far away as ever before. The large masses will not develop a stake in the democratic system as long as the system allows them to be oppressed and exploited. Human rights and democratic freedoms will have no meaning for them as long as they are not translated in terms of work and food. That is the big challenge that India faces in the new year.

**The Bank  
that moves out  
to people and  
places.**



**Central Bank of India**

## —THE GREAT DEMOCRATISER

At one time or another in the story of homo sapiens, thoughtful men and women have invested in Education in the belief that it holds the key to opportunity. H. G. Wells was among the more dramatic examples of a man born in relative poverty who scaled the heights through an always-active brain, that received a fillip from wise science teachers at a crucial stage of his life. For years after, Wells believed that education was the single most potent instrument of healthy change, the solution to socio-economic inequality; that it would guarantee effective democracy, eliminate war and ensure a constructive peace in which all men could grow to their full stature.

Wells died a disillusioned man. When we have made all allowances for the disproportionate optimism of his early and middle years, and the disproportionate pessimism of his dying years, the fact remains that this deep-thinking man who had risen through the exercise of natural gifts, fortified by a scientific education, died with a mind at the 'end of its tether' sceptical of the power of education by itself to rationalise and democratise men.

This is an appropriate point of departure for Indians considering just how much, education can do to equalise opportunity for our 610 millions. And by Education, I mean a life-long process, formal and non-formal, in learning-and-teaching that we can place within the reach of children, adolescents and adults for use during the growing and working years, for sustenance in the twilight of old age.

### Article 45 of the Constitution

It is of the first importance in equalising opportunity to get ALL Indian children between the ages of 6 and 14 into school as soon as possible, and to keep them there with the object of making them permanently literate and of enabling them to learn, for life, for themselves. The relevant Directive Principle of the Indian Constitution (Article 45) that seeks to do this must be fulfilled once and for all. And it is not beyond our capacity to fulfil it. We were to 'endeavour' to give all our children between 6 and 14 free and compulsory

education within 10 years of promulgation of the Constitution i.e. by 1960. By 1978, we have not been able to get our mounting child population of 6—14 (about 90 million) into school. And unless we achieve this (or something comparable in non-formal education) it will be hard to achieve equality of opportunity at later and more complicated stages of the educational ladder.

### Resolving Socio-Economic Muddle

But perhaps we should examine what equality of opportunity Article 45, if fulfilled, would actually confer. It is clear that all children between 6 and 14 should be in school. If we cannot get them there, we must resort to non-formal methods that work effectively. We can do both, formal and non-formal learning, simultaneously. And to this there would appear to be no alternative, for there are thousands of girls and boys (in that order) in the rural areas who, primarily for socio-economic reasons, have not been persuaded to come to school and to stay there till 14. The reasons are varied: parental economic pressures in village homes; bad teaching in village schools; out-dated and irrelevant curricula; psychologically unsatisfactory learning situations — all of which collectively explains why so many children in the 6-14 age-group have either not been to school at all, or, if they have been, have dropped out before 14 (more generally before 11) and so have relapsed into illiteracy.

Education in terms of the Directive would promote equal opportunity if the schools in rural India were at least as 'good' as the average schools of Indian small towns and big cities. Schools in villages and towns may be required to serve different purposes, but the basic minimum requires as a sub-structure for further education is not really so different. This basic sub-structure can, within the State system of education, be roughly equal if the teachers are about equally 'good', if the learning materials are made relevant and comparable, if the children's health and feeding are equally supervised with the recognition that only reasonably healthy and adequately fed children can learn effectively.



The basic elements of elementary education must be achieved with permanent functional literacy, numeracy and the elements of citizenship secured beyond loss by 14. The fact is, however, that even in this minimal way, the urban and rural areas are not equally served and therefore that the rural child has enormous leeway to make up before he achieves that all-round awareness of modern life, which his city small town counterparts have achieved by 14.

What follows from this? We have to do much more to improve rural schools for age-group 6-14, and we have to supplement reasonably good elementary education with structured non-formal education for the children's parents, and particularly for their mothers.

Can this be done? Yes, it can be done if we bear the following in mind :

- (i) Investment in rural elementary education and in adult non-formal education must in India go hand-in-hand, and must be larger than any other single educational investment. In this respect the newly launched National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) is a step in the right direction.
- (ii) The inducements to teachers, and particularly women teachers for the 6-14 students in rural areas, in cash and kind, must be made more effective than they are at present.
- (iii) It is well to recognise that, if we restrict ourselves to education, it will take decades and not just years to approximate to equality of opportunity. This is the sobering truth that underlies all educational expectation at every stage of the process. It takes time to realise the fruits of education. We can of course do much more than we are doing at present to reduce the time gap between illiteracy and literacy, between neo-literacy and awareness, awareness and education. But work as hard as we may, if we rely exclusively on educational processes as we know them in India today, we cannot expect to equalise opportunity for a long time to come. Only when education is seen as part of a larger, many-sided socio-economic revolution, in which

rural India and the submerged parts of urban India are provided with living and working conditions in which health and learning flourish, can opportunities actually be equalised. And even so, we have to move in new directions with all possible speed.

### New Directions

For centuries we have misguidedly believed that teaching is the heart of the education process, and that without the classroom teacher, there can be no effective learning. It is one of the triumphs of the second half of the 20th Century that it has recovered from this superstition. It is still probably true that the teacher, if good, is the single most effective instrument of learning, but it is also true that most teachers are not good, and that the right emphasis is on learning rather than teaching. We have therefore to look for substitutes for the teacher. Fortunately, the second half of the 20th Century has experienced a major revolution in science, technology and the mass media, and the fruits of the technological revolution have reached education and have made it powerful potential for democratisation.

### What Technology Can Do

The object of technology is increased efficiency or a larger quantity at a cheaper rate. The plastic cup, not Cellini's goblet, is the symbol of a scientific and technological age. The plastic cup will hold liquid as well as, if not as long as Cellini's masterpiece. And it can do so, while it lasts, for millions of previously cupless people the world over. But though efficiency is a legitimate aim for those engaged in transmitting information, it can provide only a single answer to questions. When questions have many answers, or we are trying to learn something other than the answers, such as appreciation, principles, understanding, the machine is up against highly recalcitrant material. With technology, says Hutchins, you can pinpoint the facts of the philosopher's life, but you cannot find the right answer to the question of what he means to the history of man.

Sir Eric Ashby of Ghana fame once said : "Technology is inseparable from a money economy. It assumes a competitive society. It assumes obedience to the clock. It assumes that the individual can detach himself from the matrix of his family and village and exercise his individuality. All these

assumptions are anathema to traditional African society". And in some measure, they are anathema to rural Indian society. There are limits to what technology can do to make education a democratiser, but think what technology has already done to promote democracy through education!

Programmed learning that we use in correspondence courses, can now dispense with a large number of teachers, and also with the expensive brick-and-mortar of traditional colleges and even higher secondary schools. It can enable the student to proceed in learning at his own pace. Motion pictures and television can present the lectures of good teachers in place of those of poor teachers. Radio can bring Laurence Olivier's and John Gielgud's speech to the understanding by millions of Shakespeare. Reproduction of any process, artistic or scientific, can be brought into the classroom. Thus, an experiment performed under ideal conditions in a laboratory, can be filmed and watched by successive thousands, replacing one performed under imperfect conditions, that can be seen by only a dozen students at a time. The classroom itself can be abolished if we choose, and all teaching can be carried on individually in the home or in a small group wherever people find it convenient to assemble. Microfilms and computers eliminate space and time from operations which would otherwise demand years of travel or calculation. Thus, if the State steps in with technology to relieve the poor home of its disadvantages, the poor child and adolescent and adult can learn at par with their rich counterparts. We can now conquer some of the inequalities of opportunity through the wise use of educational technology.

An element in the technological revolution that has come to stay, and can help to erase inequality is the good textbook, and the paperback produced by the million that now compose the poor man's library. Refinements of printing and paper apart, the hard core of books is now common property. Knowledge is disseminated on a scale so wide that no one who can read, need ever be ignorant again.

However, technology has to be controlled, for the net result of replacing the human teacher by the machine is that we may tend to diminish the attention given to reasoning and judgement. We may reduce discussion since machines do not talk back as human beings do. Unless we watch ourselves, we are in danger of having mass education with all its weaknesses.

### Equalising Opportunity Through Scholarships

The 20th Century has taught us how to apply technology to education. It has helped us to recognise, as never before, the need for a country-wide network of freeships and scholarships from elementary to post-graduate education, as a basic and permanent way to equalise opportunity in the long-term. Here again, we must not overestimate what such a network can achieve. Large nationwide schemes of scholarships, whether based on merit or merit-cum-means, are tied up with the examination system in which, by and large, the urban areas and the traditionally educated have an obvious advantage over the rural and the traditionally unlettered areas. Good schools, including the public schools, the progressive schools, the affluent private schools of small towns and big cities, have mastered examination techniques over tens of years, and are clearly at an advantage in the race to prosperity based on good examination results. Only through the merit-cum-means network can this built-in advantage be minimised. It is evident that the rich have supported good schools for their own children and that to admit a handful of poor scholars to these schools does not solve the problem of eradicating inequality. Rich schools must therefore increasingly offer at least 25% of their seats to poor scholars. It is possible to do this by building up Endowment Funds specifically for the purpose. Over 80% of the British students who go up to Oxford and Cambridge have some State aid to enable them to get there and stay there. That these universities are now dominated by the meritocracy, when only 40 years ago they were largely the preserve of the educated elite, is evidence that a deliberate programme of scholarships can bring about progressive democratisation. The Tamil Nadu experiment of a rich school's adopting a poor school in its neighbourhood, is also worth extending to areas in which such experiments are unknown.

### Reason and Sophistication in Learning

It is easier to erase inequalities in some kinds of learning than in others. Where learning is based on reason as in science and mathematics, young children given the opportunity to come into good schools free, and to be in contact with good teachers, can do what Wells did, quickly and permanently. It has been observed that class distinction and the culture of educated homes makes little essential difference to the purely ratiocinative ability. The National Science Talent Search

Scheme, that identifies such talent early and then nurses it to post-graduate level, has demonstrated this beyond doubt. But even the Science Talent Search Scheme cannot identify all potential scientific talent. The speed with which the "Angry Young Men" of Britain in the post-war World demonstrated that equality could be achieved through expertise in the Humanities, may seem to argue that we, too, can equalise opportunity through education in this area. We can, but much more slowly than in science and mathematics. The development of language and literature as disciplines argues good homes as well as good schools, for how much time do children spend in school? "A good home", says the wise Robert Hutchins, "is one in which there are books, conversation, a respect for learning. The lack of ability among the poor that is everywhere lamented, is a consequence of conditions under which they are brought up. The school cannot compete with or remedy these conditions. All it can do is to palliate its worst effects". There is great force in this mature comment, and we could learn from it. It would explain, for instance, why for decades, the professional upper middle classes have dominated the all-India services and the liberal professions; why they are so much more articulate in speech and writing than the rural areas or the submerged urban areas with their barren homes and their total lack of sophistication. The school can in any case no longer do the work of democratising by itself; it must be assisted by the home, and where the home cannot assist it, the State has to step in by applying technology to the entire area of the arts and the fine arts in non-formal ways.

Can education democratise India? Can it equalise the gross inequalities that still exist? Education can do something to reduce these inequalities and, in wise administrative hands, can do much. It can create motivation; can stimulate the ex-

pectation of newly educated children and adolescents and adults; and so can generate that initiative and enterprise which does destroy inequality. But by itself it cannot guarantee a society in which inequality will disappear and not reappear. Only as part of a many-sided, all-out planned attack on socio-economic conditions in every part of India, can it open doors that have been closed to millions for centuries. Only when used as part of this kaleidoscopic revolution will it be able to do what Lunacharsky so passionately desired for the have-nots of 1917 Russia: to "fill our pockets of the future with morning light".

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*N. A. Palkhivala, delivering the Convocation Address of the Bangalore University, January 15, 1972*



## —THE RIGHT TO TEACH

Lecturer: 'Last time I explained to you the nature of Astronomy. Can you tell me the difference between Astronomy and Astrology?'

(No answer. A little giggling and whispering in some quarters.)

Lecturer: 'Come on, can't you answer that? You there?'

Embarrassing silence.

Lecturer (coaxingly): 'Come now. Somebody should be able to say.'

(Hesitating attempts to be vocal on the part of two bold souls.)

Lecturer (almost begging): 'Yes? Yes? Please say it; it doesn't matter if you are wrong. Just try.'

First Student: 'Astronomy — predictions made of celestial bodies on human beings.'

Lecturer (rather disappointed): 'No. Not quite. You are thinking of Astrology. What is Astrology? Can you say?'

Second Student: 'Astrology like palmistry.'

Lecturer (encouragingly): 'Yes, quite right. In what way?'

(No answer. The flow has dried up.)

Lecturer (resignedly): 'All right. I'll explain it again.'

This is the drama of Higher Education being enacted in our country. It is typical of the scene that is played several times a day in thousands of college classrooms. In many places, of course, the drama is not enacted at all because the theatres remain closed for a large part of the year. While well-known educationists, who attend seminars, sit on committees and remain 'so aloof, so far away' from the scene of action, grandly advise teachers to cultivate in their students 'an urge for perfection', to 'train the mind for . . . speculation into the realm of the unknown', to 'produce motivation . . . for sustained intellectual effort', and while the press now and again urges 'those directly involved in higher education' to 'ensure that standards not merely go up but also stay there'<sup>2</sup> — while these pious sentiments and hopes are ubiquitously expressed, the college teacher has been facing, increasingly, a situation that frustrates his efforts, dulls his initiative, destroys his ideals and, not infrequently, shatters his character.

### The Students

The students who take the ordinary Arts, Science and other similar courses are ill-prepared for 'higher education'. They have done none of the reading which is a prerequisite for higher intellectual work, because most of them come from homes and schools where the right attitude to, and

the love of, knowledge has never been inculcated. They have not been trained in **how** to read a book or journal article, or how to make notes from what they read. Many of them do not know the difference between the contents and the index of a book. With the English language they have not been on speaking terms for a long time, and since this language is, and is likely for many years to remain, the medium of instruction in a large number of universities, this is a major obstacle in the communication and comprehension of ideas.

Entering college so poorly equipped, there is no real incentive to improve, because the motives for taking 'higher' education are entirely unacademic: getting a job and some sort of social status and contracting a suitable marriage.

The teacher, then, daily confronts students who are totally unconcerned about their subjects and avow their unattachment openly. Naturally, they find all lectures boring. There was a time when the lecturers had the dubious satisfaction of addressing large classes, but today all that has changed. Many students do not attend regularly and some do not attend at all and nobody is able

<sup>1</sup> *Examination Reform*, UGC, 1973

<sup>2</sup> 'The Times of India', 5-6-1978

to say whether they are still on the rolls. The teacher of a particular subject often addresses nomadic groups which shift from day to day. To those who are basically not interested in scholarship it is impossible for the best of teachers to make the subject interesting. Hence, even teaching-aids like recordings, pictures, films and other gimmicks often fail to cause even a mild flutter.

### Theory and Practice

In theory, home assignments are to be regularly done and a certain number of class tests have to be taken. In practice, they are either not done or done perfunctorily, because, on the one hand, the students have never been taught to do independent work and, on the other, there are no sanctions to force them to make the effort now. There is a rule on paper that the principal must be satisfied with the student's performance in the college before he can be sent up for his university finals. But most principals would seem to be easily satisfied nowadays, particularly in view of the fact that the universities take such a cavalier attitude towards the attendance and performance of the students in the college. The college terminal examinations are paper tigers, and since 1974 the Bombay University has advised college managements to make them 'voluntary' (in the sense that, though the colleges must go on giving them, the students need not take them or, if they take them and do badly, this fact must be quietly ignored). Many students do not take them; many submit blank papers; many fill the pages with rubbish. Those who assess the papers in the colleges have never had it so good.

For years there has been talk of compulsory class tests and home assignments and adding the marks given to the final examination marks. The Bombay University introduced some years ago the Internal Assessment Scheme for the post-graduate degree whereby 60% of the marks would be reserved for such work. The students thought differently on the matter, protested violently and the University, desiring peace on the campus, made the scheme 'voluntary'. The majority of students, unused to the technique of doing home assignments and of studying continuously throughout the year, decide to play safe and stick to the 100-mark examination paper rather than risk 60 marks on class tests and home assignments. Where the university has failed so conspicuously the colleges could hardly hope to succeed. Proposals about the

semester system have provoked similar reactions from several student bodies.

I have spoken chiefly about what goes on in our metropolis, but we are not unique, and similar stories are heard at all the educational conferences, seminar, consultations, colloquiums and workshops that are held from time to time in our country. The discussion always falls into three parts: Everybody deplores the fact that our students do not take their studies seriously; everybody vigorously suggests methods to rectify the situation; most persons regretfully admit that the methods cannot be implemented.

### Methods of Examination

A very large number of our students do not take their studies seriously because they do not know *how* to study. Studying to them means learning by heart without understanding what they are memorising, and since this is a painful exercise, they postpone it as long as possible. Our absurd examination system helps to perpetuate this mistaken concept of studying. The style of the question-paper allows a student to pass — even get a good class if he is lucky — by doing an intensive bit of last minute mugging up. By seeing earlier papers one can make a shrewd guess as to the likely questions. At a recent examination the candidates protested because exactly the same questions as the previous year's were asked and they had not expected them to be repeated so soon. They thought it a dirty trick! A new kind of examination with far greater emphasis on an intelligent grasp of the subject is long overdue but not within sight. Our academics are very conservative and established concepts die hard. The open-book examination (tried out with success in some quarters) would be a right step, but, in order to be effective, the paper-setters would have to work long and hard. Most of them would protest loudly.

It has been widely felt for years that standards in higher education, as in other fields, have been falling<sup>3</sup> and that 'colleges, universities and overall regulatory bodies like the UGC' should do something to 'raise' them 'to the point where ... these standards will not easily tumble down'<sup>4</sup>. Our con-

<sup>3</sup> 'They are not falling,' said a professor of English and now a vice-chancellor of a northern university, 'they are only deteriorating.'

<sup>4</sup> *The Times of India*, 5-6-1978

cept of improvement, however, takes only one form: overloading — either adding more topics in a subject or more subjects in a course. What is really needed is just the opposite: a reduction in the topics and the subjects and an addition of periods per subject, so that teachers with initiative and imagination (and some remnants of idealism) could think out and introduce methods whereby some interest could be generated in our students and their grasp of the subjects made firmer. But this kind of addition would require more teachers, and the Government, bent on cutting down costs, would not take kindly to this idea. It would rather increase the lecture-load of our already over-loaded "beasts of burden". As things stand today, it would be cruel to expect teachers to show initiative and imagination in their work. Further, the detailed and rigid syllabi in most of our universities offer little scope for innovations of any kind. The country should be grateful for the donkey-work that most of them continue to do.

### The Change-over in 1977

In switching to the three-year degree course in 1977 the Bombay University had an excellent chance to introduce radical innovations. It has thrown that chance away.

First, detailed syllabi in the orthodox style are being framed in all subjects, giving a teacher hardly any opportunity to teach what he really wants to teach and feels himself competent at. In respectable foreign universities teachers decide their own courses. We (perhaps with some reason) have little faith in our teachers. Certain measures could, however, be adopted to ensure that individual courses were not too eccentric. But we have sacrificed much-needed flexibility for stereotyped uniformity.

Secondly, the number of subjects in the three-year course is proportionately greater than in the old course. This will only subject our students to more intellectual indigestion than before. Delicate stomachs require a sparse but wholesome diet, not a feast. Introducing even better types of courses without first carefully preparing the students for them is suicidal. The recent Foundation Course fiasco needs a separate essay, but one reason why it occurred was that the students were not prepared for that sort of course and took fright.

Thirdly, the planning has been faulty. The courses in each subject should have been so graded

that the student, starting with fairly simple material and helped along by the teacher during the first year, would, in the third year, be able to study his subject in depth, with his teacher as an almost equal partner in a joint intellectual adventure such as (according to an oft-repeated cliché) higher education is supposed to be. There is, however, no qualitative difference between the subjects of the first, second and third years. The student will not ascend slowly and surely along an inclined plane; he will simply be crushed under the weight of more and more subjects.

A small group of teachers submitted to the University long before 1977 a carefully planned scheme for the three-year integrated B.A. course in their subject, only to be told that, for the present, the University was planning only for the first of the three years! It did not even get down to that, short-sighted as it was. The Ad Hoc Boards of various subjects suddenly woke up and found to their surprise that June 1977 was almost upon them. Some hurried meetings, and behold! the courses were ready. The famous Foundation Courses, however, had to be postponed by a year. You might think that things would have been better arranged for the second year. There was an almost exact repeat performance.

It is a trite saying that rights imply duties. It is equally true — and certainly in any high quality work — that duties imply rights. If higher education is to be (as so often declared) a joint adventure where teacher and student explore their subject together, the teacher has a right to expect certain conditions which would make it possible for him to function effectively, just as the student has a corresponding right to have teachers who know their subjects and are able to teach.

### The Position of the College Teacher

What does a competent college teacher have a right to expect? He has a right to expect that his students are willing to join the 'adventure' and to perform the tasks given to them — doing regular reading and home-assignments, and taking class tests and college examinations seriously. He has a right to expect that those students who do **not** take their work seriously should not be treated by the college managements and by the university as if they do. He has a right to expect in the students a certain basic intellectual equipment or, in its absence, to be given some opportunity to try



and make good that deficiency. He has a right to expect that the university would give strong backing to the colleges when they act justly and firmly. He has a right to expect that he would be given ample scope to make his teaching maximally effective. He has a right to expect that some time and leisure would be available to him to improve his own mind and add to his knowledge of the subject. He has a right, finally, to expect some security of service, so that he does not have to shiver indefinitely on the brink of being declared 'surplus' like an economic commodity.

Every one of these rights is denied to him. Most colleges have long ago thrown up their hands in despair and adopted the common motto: 'What can we do?' The universities, with their own pro-

blems on their hands, echo this cheerful sentiment! Passing the buck is a favourite pastime at all academic levels. The 'overall regulatory bodies like the UGC' and, behind them all, the Government, have so tied up academic and qualitative considerations with financial and quantitative ones, that the former always seem to come off worse.

Under these conditions, many competent teachers have abandoned the academic adventure and turned to (at least financially) more rewarding work. Others have compromised their ideals — such as they were — and resolved to trudge along without hope or interest in what they have to do. Only the brave (like in the Gold Rush) push on, hoping — foolishly — that things will improve one day. Will they?

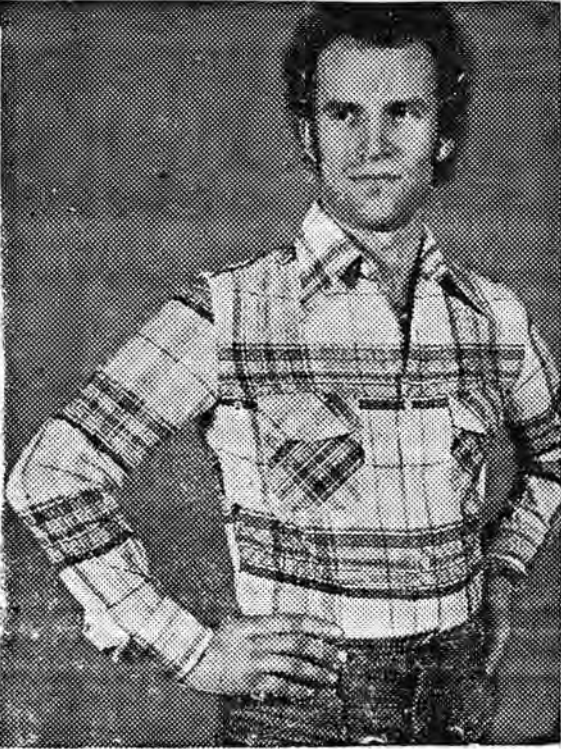
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## —DALIT PANTHERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

If there is any section in India which has been denied human rights, it is the untouchables. They are mentioned as Scheduled Castes in the Indian Constitution. Gandhiji in expiation of the sins of Hindu religion, called them the Sons of God — Harijan. The adoring nomenclature hardly fits in either with tradition or with their status in Society. By tradition they have been untouchables. Hindu religion kept them in a lowly, despicable state of life. They have been treated for centuries almost as slaves, without mercy and without the slightest qualms of conscience being felt by the upper castes for the treatment meted out to them. The treatment has all along been most inhuman and degrading. It continues to be so inspite of the Constitution declaring the practice of untouchability as a crime. In fact it lacks even the most minimum human considerations let alone any consideration of rights. The irony of the situation is that the people who are called Harijans and for whom rights have been granted by the Constitution, have still to live a life of tears without any protection either from the society or from law. There is no law for them, because the lawless elements in the society belonging to the upper castes trample the laws with impunity. The untouchables are not safe; their women are not safe; their property can be burned and destroyed in broad daylight, and if human consideration could be considered as the criterion, one may only point out that even after thirty years of independence the untouchables are forbidden even to draw water from the common well in the village.

Under these circumstances, if the radical elements among the untouchables who proclaim themselves as Dalit Panthers, raise a banner or revolt and revenge, can anybody with a sense of justice in his heart, term them as anti-social and criminal? Indeed the Dalit Panthers are not merely angry young men. They are rebels, revolutionaries who if at all they have the power and strength would take revenge by destroying the society itself. One can compare them to the Black Panthers in U.S. Possibly they have called themselves Dalit Panthers after the American Black Panthers. There is a similarity between the two in thought and words. In course of time it may

also be reflected in their deeds if the conditions under which they live do not improve radically.

### The Dalit Panther View

No words of sympathy can satisfy the untouchables, much less the Dalit Panthers. The latter abhor the endearing term Harijan. They hate all those leaders who hypocritically shed tears for them. They have no faith in the professions of all the leaders of the right as well as the left variety. Neither do they believe in the constitutional guarantees, because they have been witness to the realities, that an untouchable remains an untouchable abhorred by the society, ill-treated by it and trampled upon by fellow citizens with no possibility of any justice being done to him nor any punishment given to his tormentors.

Untouchability has not been a new phenomenon. It has been the practice of the Hindu society, sanctioned by religion itself. Its roots lie in the system of Chaturvarna (Four Castes) which gives the lowest place in society to a section of the people who do not deserve even to be touched by the so-called higher castes. In this system, the Brahmins were the most dominant caste. In Maharashtra their domination reached the most inhuman level during the reign of the Peshwas, who compelled the untouchables from walking on the streets, lest the Brahmins' purity be polluted. It is surprising that Gandhiji who pledged himself to the removal of untouchability, believed in the caste system which perpetuated untouchability. In view of this contradiction in thought the Dalit Panthers consider the professions of Gandhiji as hollow. Similar is their feeling towards most of the social reformers who pleaded for the removal of untouchability.

### Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

If there is one man whom the Dalit Panthers appreciate and almost worship, he is the late Dr. Ambedkar. But for his efforts and his valiant fight against untouchability, the cause of the untouchables would not have come out before the world in such glaring light. Dr. Ambedkar was a liberal in thought and believed in abiding by constitutional

methods. But even he had to resort to satyagraha when he found that his pleadings were of no avail before the obdurate practices of the caste Hindus. One such satyagraha was for sharing the waters of a common tank. He had to practice satyagraha for temple entry. In course of time Ambedkar lost his interest in temples as well as Hindu gods. He turned his attention to winning special rights for the untouchables in respect of representation in the legislatures and jobs in services. Once when the British Prime Minister wanted to give separate electorates to the untouchables, Gandhiji in righteous indignation against the proposal, declared a fast unto death. His contention was that separate electorates might alienate the untouchables from the Hindu community. His fast was an attempt to bring pressure on Ambedkar, not to accept the proposal. Dr. Ambedkar had to yield in order to save the life of the Mahatma and the famous Poona Pact was evolved. The pact became infamous in respect of untouchables, as in the ensuing elections Dr. Ambedkar and his followers were defeated and the proteges of the Mahatma and the Congress Party got the upper hand through Caste Hindu votes. The Poona Pact proved to be a stab in the back of the untouchables and the results of the pact convinced Dr. Ambedkar that the Caste Hindus would never do justice to untouchables.

The fight of the untouchables has all along been an unequal one. As a matter of fact the whole Hindu community tried to perpetuate untouchability through devious means. Insults, segregations, nefarious practices, social boycott, bonded slavery have been the lot of the untouchables. By way of illustration, one may refer to the Mahar Watan which existed in Maharashtra till as late as 1960. The Watan provided a pittance to the untouchables in lieu of the services to be rendered to the whole community in a village. It was virtual slavery because any and every man in the village could insist on the untouchables to do the most menial job in public places and private houses. Dr. Ambedkar had brought a Bill in the Bombay Assembly for its abolition as far back as 1937, but it could not get through. It was only in 1960, when the State of Maharashtra came into existence that Mr. Y. B. Chavan, then Chief Minister, successfully saw through the bill for the abolition of the Watan.

The real problem about untouchability is that all the pious resolutions about its abolition are never implemented in practice. There is a lot of gap between profession and practice, which the

rebels amongst the untouchables resent. The very fact that Ambedkar had to give up Hindu religion clearly shows that he had lost all faith in the teachings and practice of Hindu religion. It was indeed a protest against all Hindu religionists. Gandhiji was afraid at the time of the communal award that the untouchables would be estranged from the Hindu religion if separate electorates were accepted. But a day arose when Ambedkar had to forsake the Hindu religion itself. His action could be considered as an eternal condemnation of the Hindu religion.

### A Problem of Human Conscience

The Dalit Panthers are being forced now to repudiate not only the Indian Constitution but even the Indian statehood. If the assaults and atrocities on them continue, the Dalit Panthers feel like taking their case to the U.N., demanding guarantees for human rights. What we are witnessing today in many parts of the country is sheer callousness on the part of the majority of the Caste Hindus. Society has failed in its duty towards the untouchable. The Government is apparently helpless. So the untouchables and particularly the Dalit Panthers have begun girding up their loins to resist the onslaughts of the Caste Hindus. They hold themselves aloof from the rest of the community. They do not want to associate themselves with the other helpless, hapless sections of the society. They distinguish themselves as active resisters of untouchability. They admit the existence of other down-trodden people. But the Dalit Panthers point out that other down-trodden people, besides themselves, may have to fight for only economic demands. But the untouchables have to fight for their economic betterment as well as for social equality. With the untouchable it is a question of demanding human rights, human treatment. Their question is pertinent: When atrocities are committed on the untouchables do not the down-trodden people also join those who commit these atrocities? What of the riots in chawls of Bombay? Did not the down-trodden among the people join in stoning? It is indeed a problem of human conscience and the Dalit Panthers are convinced that the conscience of the society as a whole has not revolted against the atrocities. Hence they do not want to widen the sphere of their struggle by allying themselves with the struggles of other down-trodden people. They want themselves to be recognised as the sole, uncompromising resisters to untouchability and to all the inhuman atrocities perpetrated on them.



Much water has flown down the rivers since the days of Ambedkar. It is now more than twenty-two years after his death. In his days he carried on a relentless struggle against untouchability. But his ways and methods were conciliatory in spite of the struggles, the language of his criticism was restrained, sober, he argued his case without venom, and he carried on all his discussions, and gave all his discourses on a higher, thoughtful level. The present-day spokesmen have not the patience of Dr. Ambedkar, particularly the Dalit Panthers who speak the language full of vitriol. It is indeed a volcano that is burning in their hearts, erupting through their spoken and written words. One cannot understand their language much less appreciate it unless he merges with the atmosphere in which they live. It is an entirely different world in which they live. During the last few years a new form of literature has emerged — Dalit Literature. It is not literature written in sympathy with the Dalits. It is a literature of the Dalits themselves, written by them, in their own language, with their own uninhibited vocabulary. Whatever one may feel about this in one's own ideas of sophistication

and civilized existence, the fact cannot be denied that this literature is an expression of wounds of torture, and humiliation, heaped upon this community for centuries together. It is because of this the prose and poetry emanating from the Dalits is living dynamite and highly thought-provoking. As the ideas and expressions come from the heart, the literature is also endowed with natural beauty and uncommon grace. For the Dalit writers however content is more important than form or expression. The content is obviously full of instigation to resist and incitement to revolt.

It is time that Hindu society awakens itself to the danger ahead. The resistance and revolt is already on the way. One of their poets, J. V. Pawar, has given a warning to the Hindu society. He says in one of his poems "Just count how many jails and barracks will be needed? Just think how you could control the rising sea? Do not imprison the freedom-loving birds who have drunk the nectar of equality. Beware: the birds might as well leap into the open air along with the prison house."

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## BROADCASTING IN THE THIRD WORLD

Third World countries, proclaiming their support for Human Rights, now want a 'new world information order' in place of the existing 'neo-colonial' pattern which allows a few developed nations to control the flow of information between countries. This concern for a better balanced flow of information would carry greater conviction if, within Third World countries, the flow of information was not so tightly controlled and manipulated by their governments. Broadcasting, which could do much to promote the rights of the common people is, in fact, used in most of these countries for the benefit of the 'leaders' and their supporters as this article shows. Equality, like charity, should begin at home.

Is there such an entity as the Third World? And as far as broadcasting is concerned can there be anything in common between huge, prosperous countries like Brazil or Nigeria and poor ones like Bangla Desh or Malawi? Differences in economic conditions notwithstanding, there are remarkable similarities in the broadcasting systems of developing societies, which constitute the Third World, and this is not surprising because the authoritarian political systems in most of these countries must result in similar broadcasting systems.

All countries classified as developing by UNCTAD have, by now, some form of radio broadcasting though TV is still of marginal significance. It is interesting that the stated objectives of radio and TV services are the same throughout the Third World from Lima to Teheran to Kuala Lumpur. Broadly, these are the integration of society, the development of the economy and the diffusion of culture.

In almost all these countries broadcasting was introduced when they were still under foreign rule. The Dutch brought it to Indonesia, the British to India and other British possessions, the French and Portuguese to their colonies, and so forth. When these countries became independent it was natural that they continued to shape their broadcasting systems on the models developed by their erstwhile rulers.\* It is extraordinary that these models survive more or less intact to this day. Where there was no colonial relationship, as in Iran or Thailand, the pattern of broadcasting was suggested by commercial interests which took the initiative to introduce radio and TV.

In the few Asian and African countries where broadcasting was reorganised after independence, the British model of the autonomous broadcasting corporation was tried out but had soon to be abandoned and now, all over the Third World, there has been a retreat from the Western pattern of

broadcasting in which the system has an element of autonomy from the Government of the day. It could not be otherwise because democratic institutions in multi-party democracies are the basis for the formation of autonomous public service broadcasting corporations in countries in which the population is literate and already accustomed to mass media like newspapers. In the politically unstable conditions which developed after independence, sometimes ending in military dictatorships or in one-party authoritarian systems, the autonomous corporation could hardly exist, especially with largely illiterate populations living in primitive villages. State control, state ownership and state financing became the rule all over Asia and Africa except in the Philippines, South Korea, Lebanon and Thailand where the American system of commercial broadcasting prevails. In Latin America there is a mixed system with the State ownership of one or two stations alongside the private operation of others.

### Propaganda for Government

Wherever the state controls or runs the broadcasting service its primary function is considered to be publicity and propaganda for the government. It is used to promote government policies, to ensure loyalty to the "leader" and to oppose doctrines which are considered dangerous to the security of the nation — which really means the government. The Minister for Information and Broadcasting is often an active member of the political caucus or party in power. In Algeria, for example, the head of the radio news division is answerable, not to the Director General of Broadcasting, but to the head of state. During the Emergency in India the

\* Such take-over by developing countries of forms of broadcasting introduced by their rulers prevented the development of organisations better related to the wholly different social and political systems prevalent in the Third World. This accounts, partly, for the failure, by and large, to make good use of the media.



Minister for Information and Broadcasting used to send for the texts of news bulletins for censorship and approval before broadcast. In most of the Third World countries information has to be pre-censored, and stations are required to transmit official news. Authority has to be treated with deference, "friendly" countries have to be praised, "enemy" nations vilified. That such doctored news fails to achieve its purpose is not admitted in spite of the examples available for all to see. In Thailand where, in 1973, the credibility of the radio suffered greatly after the student demonstrations, it was because these were not referred to at all in the radio news. Another example is from Iran where, until very recently, the activities of the Shah and his family were the lead stories in all radio and TV news bulletins.

In all developing societies freedom of broadcasting is considered incompatible with the objectives of government which needs political stability uninterrupted by political opposition.\* Inevitably this leads to the suppression of dissent and criticism.

State control of broadcasting must result in the recruitment of civil servants to run it as has occurred in almost all the countries. As a UNESCO team commented, after a survey in Africa, "it makes little difference to them whether they are in broadcasting or in the Public Works Department ..... These are men and women meant for civil service careers and can never look on broadcasting as a profession." The dependent relationship of an employee detracts from that sense of responsibility for one's actions which is a characteristic of a professional.

Even in those countries where private enterprise operates the service, its continuance depends on non-interference in the political affairs of the country and even uncritical support of the government in power. This is very different from the American pattern in which radio and TV commentators are as critical of the Establishment as the press.

Government control and ownership determines the system of financing broadcasting. In about two thirds of the countries of the Third World broadcasting is publicly financed, in one third there is a small element of advertising, particularly for TV services which require a great deal more money both for capital and operational expenditure than poor developing countries could find from their public revenues. Public finance means official con-

trol of the broadcasting budget. Government officials scrutinize every detail of expenditure and interfere in the making of programme decisions. Finance through advertising has its own disadvantages: advertisers want to reach the large urban audiences with money to spend. This provides little impetus to expand the coverage beyond the cities.

Even when broadcasting is financed from public revenues, Radio and TV receivers are concentrated in the urban areas. The actual number of sets per thousand of the population, given in the table below, is much lower in the rural areas than in the urban. For example, in India out of about 20 million radio receivers, 15 million are in the cities and 5 million in the villages where over 70% of our people live. This is because the receiver is too expensive for the poor of the Third World and also because governments concentrate coverage in those areas where it is likely to bring the greatest political return in the short term.

|               | No. of Radio<br>Receivers<br>per thousand | No. of TV<br>Receivers<br>per thousand |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Africa        | 68                                        | 6                                      |
| South America | 275                                       | 89                                     |
| Asia          | 49                                        | 6                                      |
| USA           | 1813                                      | 530                                    |
| USSR          | 200                                       | 200                                    |

In Indonesia, Tanzania and several other developing countries reception is still unsatisfactory in substantial parts of the national territory. Even in India we still cover only 80% of our territory.

It is against this background that we must assess the validity of the claim made by Third World countries that broadcasting is being used for promoting the welfare of the people and their progress.\*\*

\* In many of these countries political supporters are appointed, in preference to professional broadcasters, to responsible positions in broadcasting, with serious consequences for the efficiency and credibility of the medium. The cult of the personality of the "leader" and the reinforcement of his authority are also considered essential.

\*\* If that were indeed the case there would have been some effort to formulate policies for relating the media to the development goals of each society, the creation of new political institutions, economic growth, improvement in health and nutrition, family planning, better education, and so forth. In fact in most of these countries there is no broadcasting policy at all, except an unquestioned support of the government.

Around 1950 when most newly independent countries started their broadcasting services, social scientists in the USA and Europe, supported by the specialised agencies of the UN and of the major foundations, spread the idea that broadcasting would achieve many of the national goals for modernisation and progress. Third World countries were assisted to start a wide variety of experiments in using broadcasting for national development. Soon contradictions and difficulties were noticed. For example, the goal of national integration demands the popularization of a national language. Most of these countries are plagued by a multiplicity of languages and dialects. But the goal of modernization and social change demands the use of local languages and dialects for programmes which must be acceptable and comprehensible to uneducated and even illiterate rural communities. Modernization and change are most needed for rural areas but for political reasons, as mentioned earlier, it is the urban parts which are served at the expense of the rural sector.

It soon became apparent that the limited programmes for rural areas could achieve nothing by themselves. It is only when they support and endorse the message carried by extension and village level workers, teachers, and others that they can be useful. This calls for coordination and organisation of a high order which, alas, is sadly lacking in Third World countries, particularly at the district and village level. In Iran, for example, there is hardly any co-ordination between broadcasters and the conscripted members of the health corps or literacy corps. In India too the efforts to coordinate the broadcast of rural programmes with the work of extension services have met with very limited success. So it is in all the developing societies in most of which the programmes for rural communities are short in duration, and inadequately financed.

Because the rural poor cannot buy radio sets, community listening has been tried in several countries but the Indian experience of difficulties of maintenance and repair of community sets has been the experience elsewhere. Generally, throughout the Third World 40 to 50% of the sets are out of order at any given time. In addition the absence of systematic audience research, particularly in the rural areas, makes it impossible to assess the impact of the campaigns for development — whether in adult education, in family planning, or anything else.

The hopes pinned on broadcasts for schools have been disappointing for similar reasons — the failure to ensure adequate and reliable reception, poor programme production, and the lack of integrated planning. Expensive equipment has been imported by some countries without prior planning for its use. A successful school broadcasting system involves many things — the efficient technical transmission of programmes, skilful production of programmes, responsive teachers at the receiving end, a proper maintenance system, an effective feedback system, an appropriate training programme for teachers and producers, and finally an efficient organisation that supervises all these items. No Third World country has been able to achieve this.

When we look at TV, the claim that the service is for the welfare of the common people is even more hollow. In most countries TV services were introduced for reasons other than development. In Cyprus the British authorities introduced TV to keep people off the streets. In Thailand it was brought in before any Asian country because of the Thai love of entertainment, and colour TV was introduced later to cover the Miss Thailand beauty contest. In Indonesia it was introduced in 1962 to cover the Asian Games. In Iran TV coverage was extended to broadcast the coronation of the Empress Farah. In 1953 President Rojas of Columbia ordered the establishment of a TV system to mark the first anniversary of his dictatorship. President Idi Amin of Uganda installed **colour** TV at a cost of \$ 6 million for covering the meeting of the Organisation of African Unity in Kampala which also coincided with his most recent wedding in 1975.

It therefore is no surprise that services started for such reasons should be confined to the cities; further, the governments of developing societies do not have the resources to extend the coverage to the countryside — particularly when it is not electrified as in most such countries. Even the limited, urban-oriented TV services suffer from lack of adequate finance. This forces most of them to broadcast programmes which can be inexpensively produced and to import foreign programmes which are available cheaply. On an average 55% of the total output is imported, in some countries as high as 70%; in India it is only about 25%. The widespread use of American serials is criticised as evidence of neo-colonialism by the very countries which use them. There is nothing to prevent



governments of developing countries from imposing limits on such imports, and, if they must introduce TV, to restrict the hours of broadcast to what can be managed with their own resources.\*

It is not only money that is in short supply; there is also the problem of talent. In most developing societies there is no infrastructure in the arts of theatre and film from which TV writers and producers are drawn in the developed countries.

This outline of the shortcomings of broadcasting services in the Third World would suggest that if these countries are serious about using broadcasting for the good of their people, the organisation, management, finance, staffing and programming must all be appropriate for the education and entertainment of poor rural communities with which there are no other means of communication, and indeed no better means, provided the media are used to play an appropriate role in a development campaign.

Professional broadcasters, communication experts and researchers have by now come to the conclusion that in the Third World it is necessary to use appropriate technology and use the limited resources in money and manpower to the best effect by concentrating on a few limited well defined goals, giving priority to rural audiences which need broadcasting most. This means giving priority to radio. The technology is simple and not beyond the resources or capacity of Third World countries. TV, on the other hand, is too expensive — ten times more expensive — and complicated for developing countries to sustain. Many of them produce radio sets, some like India also radio transmission equipment. Most of them have at least some persons to repair and maintain radio sets.

Even developed societies with well established TV services are now turning to radio for communication of local interest as distinct from huge centralised radio and TV networks which cater for the whole country. Community radio, in which the people themselves participate with the help of recordings, is the only medium for carrying the message of development to illiterate and poverty stricken villages as a few experiments in Latin America and Africa have shown.

But though local radio is what the people of the Third World need, their governments want none of it. They want highly centralised and

officially controlled systems which they can manipulate. Afraid of losing their authority, they have no intention of allowing the people to have a say in what should go out on the air waves. Besides, local radio has no glamour. TV, and now TV through satellites, is the latest status symbol for poor countries, much as a national airline was some years ago. It is both tragic and comic that countries with masses of illiterate, under-nourished people, who do not even have clean drinking water in their villages, should think of using satellites to communicate with their people.

Ofcourse satellite communication has certain advantages in certain situations but to declare that it is more economical than other means of communication, without carrying out extensive cost-effective studies, is typical of the irrational attitudes of such countries. They first decide that they want a satellite for political prestige, or for military reasons, or to dazzle their unsophisticated citizens, and then they look round for excuses for the inordinate extravagance involved. India is no exception.

India is, however, a little better off than most Third World countries for a variety of reasons. First of all we had the good fortune to have at the head of our broadcasting service, in its early days, a few men of outstanding ability whose influence is still felt in many directions. Then we had an infrastructure superior to that of most developing countries, in respect of transport, communication and industry. Our literature and culture were much more developed than those of many developing societies which became independent in the last two or three decades, and we have a system of government which, with all its drawbacks, has finally evolved into a two-party democracy in which no monarch or "leader" or party can exercise absolute power — at least, we hope, not for very long. With all these advantages our broadcasting service could have taken its place among the more developed systems. As it is we have to console ourselves that in the Third World it is a little better than most.

\* TV programmes are very expensive to produce the average cost of a good programme is estimated by the BBC at \$30,000 per hour. A service of five or six hours a day would require a budget of several million dollars. No wonder then that most countries which start TV services for political reasons resort to importing light entertainment which is available at very low cost. An American programme like "Ironside" which costs \$200,000 to an American TV station would cost only \$200 to Thailand or Iran.



35, 36, 37, 38

## — IS THE PRESS IN INDIA REALLY FREE ?

"When you were only asked to bend", said Mr. Advani, the new Information Minister, "you chose to crawl". The taunt addressed to the Indian Press in general was well deserved. It would not however be true to suggest that the Press collapsed suddenly on the declaration of the Emergency. It was a long softening-up process which began as far back as 1969, but that is history. Suffice it to say that with the connivance and support of Indian newspapermen and Indian newspapers, Mrs. Gandhi was able to impose on this country a vicious and totally mindless censorship. She had the effrontery to suggest that a Code of Ethics had been framed by journalists themselves and which she, as a good citizen (sic), was trying to enforce. There were in her camp and on the periphery Indian journalists and newspapermen who set themselves up as "interpreters" and "defenders" of the Emergency and who tried to persuade those of us who resisted that it was futile to do so and the interests of our newspapers required that we be "reasonable", "flexible" and show "some understanding of the situation" in which the country was placed. The climate of fear did not follow the Emergency. Fear was in the hearts of Indian journalists and newspapermen like other citizens well before 25th June, 1975. Indeed, one could say that if it had not been for this pre-existing climate of fear Mrs. Gandhi could not have got away with what she did.

### The Advent of the Janata Government

The new government were off the mark very quickly to dismantle the more obvious shackles that kept the Indian Press in thrall. Censorship was given up, the highly objectionable Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Act, which had been given constitutional protection, was summarily removed from the statute book. Newspapers were once again free to report parliamentary proceedings freely and fully. These actions earned the respect of the Press, both within the country and overseas, and the government, elected on a mandate of restoring civil liberties and basic human rights, got full credit for going about their business in right earnest. The International Press Institute complimented the government in full measure on the steps they had taken.

It is now exactly 19 months since the new government came to power, equal in point of time to the duration of the Emergency. It is also long enough to take stock of the situation and try and ascertain where exactly the Press stands in the Indian situation today. Mr. Advani also said that the Press did not "even rattle their chains, let alone try to break them". Are there any chains that still bind the Press today? The answer must, with great regret, be that there are a number of such chains and it is no satisfaction that some have been fashioned by the government and that too with the connivance of journalists and newspapers themselves.

### Control of the Press

It was a very perceptive British commentator who said during the Emergency: "Make no mistake about it. Control of the Press is central to Mrs. Gandhi's dictatorship". Central to the control of the Press was control of the news agencies. The PTI and UNI, the two principal news agencies, were forcibly merged into one — Samachar. The boards of both organisations were bullied into opting for a "voluntary merger". The trade union organisations of journalists and non-journalist employees passed resolutions supporting the merger and the formation of Samachar. Newspapermen helped government out of the dilemma of how to set up Samachar by suggesting that a cooperative society be organised and this society merely act on behalf of PTI and UNI under delegated authority. The society, Samachar, was then handed over to the highly articulate Special Envoy of the then Prime Minister, with the connivance of newspapermen, and the result was entirely predictable. Samachar sank so low as to lose all credibility. It reached one of its lowest depths when it sent out a long story in November 1976; the objective was to declare that elections were redundant and that the people did not want them. The story referred to a "nation-wide survey" made by "crews of Samachar reporters trekking the towns and villages in high hills and flat plains who took the pulse of hundreds of men and women from the heights of Kashmir to the coasts of Kerala, from salubrious Shillong to sun-baked Bikaner, where they inter-

viewed countless people from different strata of society in all corners of India" and came to the conclusion that "the country did not want elections and wanted to consolidate the gains of the Emergency". Apparently not so long afterwards, the unanimous vote of the Indian people as discovered by Samachar was set aside and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered elections. It is conduct of this nature that must have prompted Justice Tulzapurkar, who now adorns the Supreme Court, to question in a memorable judgment in the Bombay High Court, whether "freedoms were being reserved for the cringing and the craven".

### The Press and Credibility

Credibility was a major casualty. The sole news agency, Samachar, had no credibility. All India Radio lost what little credibility it had and directed at the instance of the then Prime Minister. Mrs. Gandhi, addressing a meeting of Station Directors of All India Radio in September 1975, disposed of this question of credibility very quickly. She declared, "Quite honestly, I do not know what it (credibility) means. Who has credibility? The newspapers, who day in and day out print falsehoods?" The double talk and double think proceeded apace. Very soon, at the non-aligned conference held in New Delhi, the then government put its collective prestige to a report published for the benefit of the participants where it was stated, "While the government authority in India keeps itself scrupulously away from the functioning of the Press, the initiative taken by it has considerably helped the growth of the Press, spatially and in depth. The Press in India has been the beneficiary of several official measures and its freedom of operation has been singularly free from any type of interference."

By that time, Mrs. Gandhi had tried unsuccessfully to browbeat "The Statesman" and the "Indian Express" into submission and to try and destroy a number of publications which stood their ground and hit back when necessary. Among them were Raj Mohan Gandhi's "Himmat", N G Goray's "Janata", Thatthe's "Sadhana". A D Gorwala's "Opinion" and Minoo Masani's "Freedom First".

It is time to get back to the news agencies. Having got Samachar firmly under its belt, the government then proceeded to organise a conference of non-aligned nations and took the lead in evolving a non-aligned news pool. There is not much wrong with the concept of a news pool. The idea is based on the assumption, which is generally

valid, that countries in our part of the world, which share many common problems, would benefit by an exchange of information about each other and which would not necessarily be of interest to the rest of the world. For example, a breakthrough in rice cultivation in, say, Taiwan or Indonesia would be of very great interest to the countries in the region, including India, but would not necessarily attract the same amount of interest in Washington or London or Paris or, for that matter, Moscow. It, therefore, makes some sense that these agencies should pool their information and exchange news files.

The problem however with the concept of the news pool is credibility. Like Samachar, news agencies of many "developing" countries are under the thumb of their respective governments and it is forgotten that exchange of propaganda is not the same as exchange of news. The chairman of the non-aligned news pool's coordinating committee, D. R. Mankekar, is on record as wanting the news pool first and credibility next. If fundamentals are to be relegated in this fashion, it is safe to predict that the news pool will never gain credibility. After all these years of work, the news pool has made little or no impact, which must be of surprise only to the politicians.

In the light of the record of Mrs. Gandhi's government, it is worthwhile to examine where the present government stands, judging by its actions and not by its professions.

### The Janata Attitude to a Free Press

There has been considerable dragging of feet in restoring the PTI and UNI to full scale functioning. Financial commitments undertaken by the government have either not been implemented or have been implemented in a niggardly fashion. Radio and Television still do not pay their full subscriptions to the news agencies. As regards the news pool, we tend to hold on to it very zealously and, instead of questioning the whole basis of the way in which the pool is operating, we have contented ourselves with replacing Mr. Mohammed Yunus by Mr. Mankekar as chairman of its coordinating committee. On the question of the UNESCO Draft Declaration on Communications Policies,\* we seem to treat it as a problem of foreign policy and not a problem affecting the media. Even

\* Inspired largely by the Soviets, the Declaration provides the philosophical justification for governments so minded to influence, if not control outright, their press on a continuing basis.



on foreign policy considerations, there is a case for an agonising reappraisal of our attitude. In the first place, the free Press everywhere has universally damned the current Draft. The Press in India has said much the same thing. Governments of countries with a free Press have had no alternative but to take a strong line against the Declaration. At the time of writing there is no hope that the Declaration will be adopted. Here was a golden opportunity for India, with its recent past very prominently before it, to take the lead but the opportunities in Paris are being frittered away. We repeat parrot-like the standard arguments against the free Press in the rest of the world. We make no attempt to understand the undoubted shortcomings at the professional level. For example, we should be emphasising the need for technological facilities which would make communications between countries in our part of the world cheaper and quicker and more reliable; we should be improving our editorial skills so that we can make proper use of the new technological facilities that are available. Instead, we persist in trying to find short-cuts where none exist, and continue to mistake slogan-mongering for policy. Thus the echoes from the past — "Third World solidarity" and "bias and prejudice of the Western Press".

### Economic Pressures

A financially strong newspaper is not necessarily a good and independent newspaper, but the converse is not true. A good independent newspaper expressing strong views is not a possibility if it is not financially viable. Mrs Gandhi understood this very well. She issued instructions during the Emergency that not only government departments but the large number of public sector corporations and autonomous bodies should not advertise in "The Statesman" and the "Indian Express". Three secret circulars were issued to this effect. When challenged in court by "The Statesman", her government disclosed a mother memorandum from which the three circulars flowed. This Memorandum presumed to give the government the authority to fix the advertising rates for newspapers, to decide which newspapers were to be used for which advertising campaign, and how much advertising was to be given to each newspaper. This memorandum, signed by K. N. Prashad, V. C. Shukla's "hatchet man" in the Information Ministry, was the government's charter to financially cripple the 'inconvenient' newspapers. After the Emergency, Mr. Prashad went but his memorandum remained. For a whole

year, I personally tried to convince the new government that this memorandum was unworthy of its intentions and should be given up. While reassuring noises were heard, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry worked overtime to go much farther than Mrs. Gandhi and actually fix the advertisement rates for different newspapers. To Mr Advani belongs the distinction of being the first Information Minister to insert in the government's Advertising Policy itself the reference to a rate structure for advertisement. The so-called rate structure has not been disclosed and nobody knows whether it exists. One is only left to face its consequences.

In the case of "The Statesman" the rate presumed to be fixed by the government is approximately two-thirds of the rate established in market for the past two years. At the same time under government encouragement all expenses — in particular, labour costs — have risen steeply. As an exercise in irresponsible populism, it may earn a few votes today but nobody is convinced that this implies any real commitment to a free Press. Finally, after a year's efforts "The Statesman" and the "Ananda Bazar Patrika" took the issue to court. Without a hearing the Prashad Memorandum was withdrawn, but the matter is still sub judice. The latest is that at "The Statesman's" instance, the evidence given by the new government before the Estimates Committee of Parliament has been called for by the court to enable it to decide the issues raised in the petition properly. It is "The Statesman's" contention that the evidence when produced will directly contradict statements made on behalf of the government in a sworn affidavit in court. It is no answer to suggest that bureaucrats everywhere wish to hang on to powers they have acquired without bothering too much about whether the powers have been properly acquired or not. Surely, this is where purposeful political direction is necessary, otherwise we would not need Ministers.

One item in the terms of reference of the new Press Commission that has been set up deserves notice. It is to enquire into a basis for the selling prices of newspapers. This is curious. Newspapers are one commodity which have no element of profit in the selling price. Selling price is well below the cost of production. Further, there is a built-in incentive for newspapers to keep the price as low as possible in order to increase circulation and thus increase advertisement revenue, the



primary source of income of any newspaper. Besides, the earlier attempt to fix the price-page schedule was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in the Sakal Papers case. Those concerned for basic liberties in this country may well wonder whether the government has solved all the country's problems and should now only persist in a matter which the law says is impermissible.

### Conclusion

When we add to this more echoes of the past like dissatisfaction with ownership patterns and threats of diffusion and delinking, one wonders whether the difference in the attitude of the present government compared to its predecessor is only one of methods and not of objectives. One must be fair and say that it is unrealistic to expect any executive government anywhere to be fond of the Press because if the Press is doing its duty it will irritate, question and put in their place both politicians and bureaucrats when they step out of line. No executive government can be expected to jump for joy when it is criticised in newspapers. Therefore, one must expect continuing efforts by governments everywhere to seek to retain levers of influence, if not outright control, over the Press. It is the duty of the Press to stand firm and to resist both inducements and threats. The Press in India seems to have learned at least a few lessons

from the Emergency, and it should be the endeavour of all men of goodwill to see that this process is continued. As the remaining chains on the Indian Press are broken, one hopes that Mr Advani of all people will not be the one to complain or resist.

*With Best Wishes*

*From*

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"The Press is not only an instrument of disseminating information but is also a powerful medium of moulding public opinion by propaganda. True democracy can only thrive in a free clearing house of competing ideologies and philosophies — political, economic and social — and in this the Press has an important role to play. The day this clearing house closes down would toll the death-knell of democracy. It is not the function of the Censor acting under the Censorship Order to make all newspapers and periodicals trim their sails to one wind or to tow along in a single file or to speak in chorus with one voice. It is not for him to exercise his statutory powers to force public opinion in a single mould or to turn the Press into an instrument for brainwashing the public. Under the Censorship Order the Censor is appointed the nurse-maid of democracy not its grave-digger. Dissent from the opinions and views held by the majority and criticism and disapproval of measures initiated by a party in power make for a healthy political climate, and it is not for the Censor to inject into this the lifelessness of forced conformity. Merely because dissent, disapproval or criticism is expressed in strong language is no ground for banning its publication."

*From a judgement by Mr Justice D. P. Madon and Mr Justice M. H. Kania in the Freedom First case.*

## —THE BRITISH CONNECTION

Being neither Indian nor British, I have always puzzled over the very special kind of relationship which used to exist between the British and the Indians; relationship which was marked by considerable ambivalence, which nevertheless was more like that which exists within a family where people may quarrel, sometimes bitterly, but where there is an overall identity of attitudes and a fund of shared values which creates a sense of kinship, usually strong enough to keep the family together.

### India Then

What I first noticed when I came into contact with India were not the similarities or the shared values, but the differences of attitude and the pin-pricks, which each inflicted upon the other. To take just one example of the kind of pin-pricks Indians used to inflict upon non-Indians, I was more than once treated as an Untouchable when I wanted to visit a particular temple in use. My husband, when he was Assistant Collector, had been foolish enough to accept the invitation of the villagers in his sub-division to visit a particular temple and he paid his rupee to the god, only to find that very evening that he was presiding over a village council in which the subject for discussion was whether the temple had been so finally polluted by his contact that it ought to be closed, or whether it should now be thrown open to the village Untouchables, while the caste Hindus built themselves another temple. As against this kind of pin-prick given by Indians to non-Indians, there were, of course, a great many pin-pricks — and I deliberately call them pin-pricks rather than profound insults, because of the magnanimous way they were taken by those at the receiving end — given by the British to the Indians. For example there was the very typical case of a senior Indian Civil Servant, who told me that in his youth when he was probationer, he had been invited to dinner by his British boss and taken along with the other guests to the club after dinner. As there was a dance, the young man thought that he was only doing his duty by inviting his hostess to dance.

He was sharply reprimanded by her husband, who made it quite clear that such inter-racial familiarity was not in order and that young Indians ought to know their place, "Go and play bridge" he said. Such conduct may, at first sight seem unforgivable, however in mitigation it ought to be remembered that at the time that this happened, Indian wives did not dance at all; indeed there can have been hardly any who went out because of a variety of religious, dietary and social reasons. Muslim wives were in purdah, Hindu wives tended to observe the rituals of the pollution which would have been entailed in mixing with British Untouchables. I, myself, many years later, when things were already vastly different, used to object very strongly to going swimming with the kind of Indians who did not bring their wives, because I did not see why I should display myself to a man who regarded this kind of display as improper for his own wife.

### India Now

Nowadays, of course, all of this is totally obsolete. In the past there were Indians with whom one had a great deal of intellectual interests in common, but no real social values that were shared. Today the Indians, who see the World, much in the same way as non-Indians do, do so over the whole range of social behaviour. It does not mean that they cease to be Hindus or Muslims, but it does mean that their religion is private and that, except for dietary restrictions it does not affect their behaviour. Their wives go swimming, dancing or whatever, just the same way as the wives of their western friends do. This is why I call much of the behaviour, which the British used to be guilty of in the old days, pin-pricks rather than deliberately worked out deep-seated insults. Moreover, there is one factor which helps to explain why those pin-pricks, and I could quote many more than just being told not to dance with a European wife, did less damage to the relationship than could have been expected. This is because India has its own caste system with its own taboos and its own hierarchies. Between themselves, Indians had, and some-

times still have, barriers so that they did not think that it was all that outrageous for the British to have barriers of their own.

**Ambivalent Attitudes**

However, there were some Britons whose behaviour could be disproportionately objectionable; there always are dinosaurs. I personally met one such Brontosaurus Indicus at India House in the fall of 1945. It was an unforgettable encounter. I had gone to India House to find out about my passage to join my husband in India. There were half a dozen people waiting to see the relevant official. Except for an elderly gentleman and myself they were all Indian. The old gentleman, who was a retired policeman with some problem about his pension, gallantly took me in hand. After he discovered the purpose of my presence he began to order the rest of the queue about, so that I could get in first. He was obviously surprised and a trifle peeved, because I refused. As we sat next to each other waiting for my turn, he kept talking to me in a grandfatherly fashion. It was obvious that he thought my husband must have a much harder time in the Service than would have been the case in his day, because as he put it "Nowadays, one has to be polite to those dagos, I am even told that they are admitted to our clubs." When I told him that my husband was, in fact, living with an Indian family and that his boss was Indian, he threw up his hands in horror, "What have we come to, this is a terrible, terrible shame, I am so sorry for you my dear." Yet the same old man went on to eulogize his years in India, saying how very happy he had been and what a wonderful place India was, especially how attached he was to his servants, with whom he still kept in touch. He was obviously ambivalent.

One of the reasons, for which some of the Britons who served in India were resentful, was the constant accusation of exploitation that was hurled at them by the Indians. This accusation, which may have been warranted in individual cases was, by and large, most unfair as Indian historians are beginning to reveal now that India has been independant for long enough for them to be able to look at the past without having to be on the defensive.

**Shared Values**

As against those who, like my Brontosaurus Indicus, were not at ease with Indians unless they

be servants, there were a large number of Britons who were exhilarated by India's vast reservoir of culture, who devoted their lives to the recording and the exploration of India's heritage and who had the highest respect and affection for the Indians they met. Anyone who has had the privilege of living in India and of experiencing the tremendous warmth, so characteristic of Indian friendship, still feels, an incurable nostalgia. It is the combination of the appreciation of Indian culture and Indian warmth, which explains why, now that the British are no longer responsible for India, they still feel a special relationship.

**Shared Values**

What is it, I ask myself, which explains why the Indians feel, as far as I can make out, the same about Britain? Why is it that even those, who like my senior Indian Civil Servant told not to dance with his Collector's wife, insist on sending their children to England for their eduction when they could, for example, have sent them to America, where there would be no greater language barrier? The answer is probably two-fold. On the one hand in England itself, there were always many people to open their homes and their hearts to Indians, whether it be Mahatma Gandhi and his friendly ladies or Krishna Menon and all those British freedom lovers, who joined the India League, to take only two examples. The second reason is that Indians have always valued the British tradition of fair play and British devotion to individual freedom which culminates in habeas corpus and Parliamentary democracy.

**The Cementing Factor**

Adherence to these shared values has always provided a basis for mutual self-respect even at the height of the struggle for Freedom, struggle which was always conducted according to the Queensberry rules. I know that, at times, things got a bit rough; for example Pandit Pant's back was injured in a lathi charge, but none of these regrettable incidents did sour relations. In Pandit Pant's case, this is probably because he was one of the best orators, in the Westminster tradition, that India has had; so that although Pandit Pant, who was very Indian in many ways, must have got a great deal of intellectual satisfaction from his English education and from the feeling that he was continuing in a tradition of which he approved. The same was true of Pandit Nehru, who was, as it has been said "a brown Englishman". Nehru was



more at home in Westminster than anywhere else. This explains why he had such an enormous influence on British politics in the '50s. He was an admirable exponent of British values and in him the British found the justification for their past in India. If Nehru had a gift for expressing British values better than Macmillan or Harold Wilson, it was left to Gandhi to embody another aspect of the best British characteristics. Gandhi was a true non-conformist and his adherence to non-violence, to Truth, to fighting those misguided, without ever allowing hate to take over, his willingness to keep the door always open for dialogue, and his humility when in error, created in Britain a genuine admiration and awakened in the hearts of most Britons a warm respect, which Indians did appreciate. Perhaps the most important cement between Britons and Indians was their shared respect for Human Rights.

It is because of all this background of shared values and aspirations that relations between the two protagonists over the colonial table have remained so special. One important factor in preserving this very special relationship, is the fact that at no time did British rule rest really heavily upon Indian shoulders.

I say this advisedly because, having had the experience of dictatorships, real dictatorships, I used to be very struck by the difference in the atmosphere which prevailed in those dictatorships and in India, even at the height of the Quit India Movement, when people were still being arrested.

I had a friend called Sachidanand, a sanyasi with revolutionary beliefs, a Gandhian Marxist follower of Vinoba Bhave. One day he gave me a long spiel about "the dreadful British who had raped freedom etc. etc." He had courted arrest as a schoolboy and had been able to witness "dreadful atrocities". Listening to him and to his horror stories, it was crystal clear that he had never lived in a dictatorship. This explained to me why, des-

pite all the awful things that had happened to him under the British, he was the greatest Anglophile I had met in years. I had considerably difficulty in making him understand what I meant, as it had never crossed his mind through all the years which he spent fighting British imperialism to lower his voice when criticising his rulers or to be afraid of what might happen to him were he to be arrested.

That I was right about the British behaviour in India and its lack of real terror, was proved a couple of years ago by the extraordinary alteration in the behaviour of the Indians I knew in London. Obviously something had changed in India, changed so drastically that for the first time Indians, even in far away London, were behaving like people afraid of what might happen to them if they did not tow the line. Such behaviour is so well known to anyone with experience of dictatorship that it is recognisable at once. I shall give only one example of what I mean. At a very small Indian diplomatic party, where I knew the host intimately, there was an Indian guest, freshly arrived from Delhi. He said that everything was well in India and protested vehemently at my suggestion that there might be some press censorship. Our host strongly supported what he said. When we left I offered to give the visitor a lift. No sooner was he in our car than he began to denounce the excesses of the Emergency. Our host, for his part, rang me the next morning to say that I should not believe what I had been told by his guest. Press censorship was in existence in India so much so that people were afraid to speak up lest what they said was reported against them. It was indeed a sign of his trust in us that he was taking the trouble to warn us.

To conclude these ramblings I want to reiterate my original view of why there is such a special relationship between Britons and Indians, a relationship so real and lasting that it will survive the misguided efforts of the National Front. It is because the British never operated a dictatorship in India.

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They who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

— Benjamin Franklin.

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## — THE YEAR OF THE CHILD

It was lunchtime on the pavement. Eight pairs of hungry eyes looked on as a platter full of coarse brown rice was placed in front of them. Instantly eight hungry mouths and eight pairs of hands scrambled at the edge of the plate. From a distance they looked like a pack of rats. Except that they were children.

"India is one of the few countries to have a national policy for children. The National Policy declares the nation's children as "a supremely important asset", whose "nurture and solicitude are our responsibility."  
(promotional pamphlet on India and the IYC)

At one of the prominent crossroads in Bombay, a woman, obviously mad, sits in the midst of her own excrement. She is pregnant. Charitable organisations who handle such cases confess themselves helpless. They cannot help a person who cannot ask for help. When the woman's child is born they cannot take it away from her without her consent and she has no mind with which to arrive at a consent. Her child is doomed to be born on the streets and probably to die there.

"India has a high level policy making body for matters relating to children and child welfare, namely the National Children's Board with the Prime Minister as its President. With a view to giving high powered policy direction to the observance of IYC, the Board itself has been designated the National Commission for International Year of the Child (IYC)."

A sleek, well fed, adult on a holiday, learning to ride a horse. By his side, holding the bridle and running with the horse is a child of not more than seven years. Soon the adult is having a great time urging the horse to gallop. The child is barefoot and in rags. But he has to charge up the stony path to keep pace. His fee will of course go to the owner of the horse.

"The United Nations has declared 1979 the International year of the child. the aim of this declaration is to focus public attention on the plight

of the child — and to promote active change to improve the quality of childhood."

One could multiply these examples endlessly, examining the pious platitudes on one side and exposing the pitiless reality on the other. Will the two ever meet, will privileged Indians cast aside their prejudice, helplessness and indifference to turn and see a child on the roadside, not as a statistic, a casualty of the inexorable laws of Karma or a deformed stump of humanity fit only for extinction, but as a child deserving and demanding their attention?

Organisations such as the UNICEF do not ask such questions, which are the forerunners of despair, but gamble rather on hope. "Look around" they urge. "Listen. Learn and Act. What are your own major interests? Special skills and opportunities? Talk to friends and neighbours about IYC. Start a discussion group. Write to editors, try to influence legislators in defence of children and their rights. Help to raise funds for better services, for children. Offer your time and talents. Care. And get involved."

What is perhaps needed is a greater sense of urgency, the kind of urgency displayed by a British representative to the U. N. Lord Caradon when he said "Better perhaps be obliterated by the bomb than for countless millions to sink and die in helpless and hopeless squalor." An internationalist who argues that the problems dividing the world are those created by race, poverty and population, which should be regarded as a collective responsibility of mankind notes "Division and degradation go together. The danger so often stated but so seldom grasped is the danger of the gulf growing ever wider ..... before long more than half the world will live in tropical urban slums, and may be half of those who inhabit these stagnant swamps of human degradation will be unemployed. That's where most of the children of the new generation will be brought up, in conditions unfit for animals." Indians who live on the edge of that gulf may substitute caste for race, poverty and population should be familiar enough to them.



If we keep these three enemies in mind it is easier to narrow down the attack. Eliminating caste barriers means getting rid of the mentality that creates divisions, that creates islands of privilege, fortresses of feudal rights, bonds of blood that exclude the mass of humanity, the kind of mental blindness that makes so many Indians 'not see' what is happening just outside their doors because it does not concern them.

The fight against poverty and the crusade to control population are institutionalized facets of Indian life that have been exhibited often. What they need is perhaps a deeper sense of individual involvement and a sense that every little bit counts. This is what UNICEF hopes will be achieved by focussing attention on the year of the child. In India they have designated six main areas through which to channelize their activities. These include Health and Nutrition, Education, Social Welfare, Legislation, Publicity and Fund raising.

To show what can happen when people care we include one happy story. It begins unhappily enough with one more scrap of humanity being tossed unwanted into one of the city's hospitals. The mother is not yet eighteen and of course unmarried. The father is described as a well-to-do "cultivator" from Andhra Pradesh. He has sown his wild oats in the form of a little boy who is called

Mayur by the hospital authorities, from where he is given up for adoption immediately after birth. Mayur's fate in one of these orphanages would most certainly be death by attrition before he is five. Children of two and more are tied down to their cots to make them easier to handle so that they do not appear any older than infants of six months. If they do not die of malnutrition and disease they wither due to lack of affection and human contact.

Mayur is however lucky. He is one of those who has been adopted by a family in the USA, the father of which is an Indian. It has taken him more than six months to get through the adoption procedures which are complex. In this time he has been taken into the foster care of yet another family who have given him all the love he needs and deserves. In spite of his looking different in their midst, with his dark burnished skin the legacy of his Andhra beginnings, he is a happy normal child. By the New Year, Mayur, whose name by the way has changed three times in the process of his adjustment to the various families, recalling the UN's reminder that even a name is a rightful belonging that should be given but is often denied to a child, will be with his permanent adoptive family. Though unknown, their gift to him symbolises the spirit of what needs to be done in the year of the child — giving the gift of life.

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## TWO FREEDOM STRUGGLES

The declaration of Emergency on June 26, 1975, came as a rude shock to many a freedom fighter who cried out almost in anguish, "This is certainly not the freedom we fought for!" After getting over the initial sense of bewilderment, their minds went back to the stirring times of the historic Quit India struggle, when the Mahatma had given the call "Do or Die."

As in 1942, with the declaration of the Emergency, the press was gagged and the voice of the people muzzled; meetings and processions were banned and leaders of the nation and many party workers arrested.

### The Quit India Movement

So far as the Quit India movement was concerned, it was unique and unprecedented; far from being a revolt of an oppressed minority against a tyrannical majority it was a spontaneous upsurge of the whole people — a people's revolution. For the first time since the great revolt of 1857, a vast number of people rose to challenge the British Raj without arms or ammunition but with the firm resolve to march forward on the path of freedom. Explaining this the late Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia said in one of his speeches. "This is no movement: It is a revolution. In a movement, there is victory or defeat; in a revolution, there is victory or death as there is no going back in it."

The call was irresistible. If the Government was ready for tyranny and severe repression, people in their turn were ready for utmost suffering and sacrifice. Thus all sections of society, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, students and teachers, workers and peasants came forward to contribute their mite to the sacrificial fire lit by their leaders at the Gowalia Tank maidan in Bombay.\*

### 1942 and 1975

Though in 1975 people were more fear-stricken than in 1942, and resistance took some time to build up, it would be wrong to conclude

that they approved of the Government or were reluctant to retaliate. Small groups dominated by teachers, students and lawyers functioned in most of the major towns and cities, tried to collect funds for the prisoners and their families and bring out secret news bulletins containing news from overseas journals and newspapers which were critical of the Emergency. In 1942, the major problem that faced us in organising an underground radio-station was that of finances. When we were almost at our wits end an old auntie of mine put us at ease by offering to put all her "Stridhan" including her precious jewellery at our disposal saying "at this sacred moment, no sacrifice is too great for the country." During the emergency there were several families which gave monthly instalments for the prisoners' families. An old businessman, more than 80 years old, used to come on the first of every month to deliver a sealed packet to us in the office of the PUCL (People's Union for Civil Rights). On some of us volunteering to go to him, his reply reminding us of the reply of our auntie in 1942 was: "This visit of mine to your office, far from being a routine visit, is a pilgrimage for me. So, please do not stop me from coming here. Even if I die I will have the satisfaction of dying in the cause of preserving our hard-won freedom, freedom for which I with innumerable other countrymen have contributed our mite. For me this is the second battle for Freedom."

In 1942, appealing to the Government servants not to keep aloof from the movement, Dr. Lohia asked: "Would you like to become good residents of free India which is going to come into being soon or would you like to be enemies of India for ever"? In response not only did loyal government servants resign their posts but one highly placed officer in the Air-Force came to him and assured: "The Air Force ought to have plunged into fire in the very beginning, however, we did not know our duty then. Now we do. You can, therefore, rest assured, the Air Force will be with you when you give the next call."

\* Now known as the 'August Kranti' maidan.

## The Role of the PUCL

In December 1976, we of the PUCL in Bombay were busy planning programmes for students and workers for Republic Day. We had to hold frequent meetings. Not only were contributions from trade-unions and students organisations pouring in but many ingenious suggestions were discussed and detailed instructions worked out. Each time a police officer somehow managed to smuggle himself in at the time of our meetings. Once he came with the intention to arrest all of us. He, however arrived just a minute too late. All the other members had left and I was just leaving. He put several questions about the meeting and our preparations. I replied to all them without giving any clue about our programme for Republic Day. He knew we were planning to print badges and wanted to know the details about their design and distribution. I said the design was left to the artists, and the distribution pattern to the local groups but promised to give him a badge as soon as it was ready. Almost with tears in his eyes, he said: "I came with an order to arrest you and your colleagues. I am going back with the resolve to assist you and your work." He was apologetic about the work he was doing. On being told that we knew he had a family to support and that circumstances compelled him to do his duty, he interrupted saying "It is not I but you and your colleagues who are doing your duty towards the country in this darkest hour of its history. I am merely doing my job. My fullest sympathies are with you, with JP and with leaders of the PUCL. I promise you that I shall give you prior warning as soon as I smell some danger to you or your organisation."

## Underground Activities

In accordance with Mahatma Gandhi's advice to young men to act as citizens of an independent country and to work as live news bulletins, students and youths brought out underground news-bulletins and distributed them freely among the people during the emergency. As in 1942 and the earlier struggles, during the emergency too there was no dearth of underground literature. **Satya Samachar**, **Satya Vani**, **Lok Kranti**, **Lok Jagran**, **Sadhana**, **Satya Bapta**, **Marshal**, **Darpan**, and several others in many regional languages carried the message of resistance all over the country. That their aim was, whether in 1942 or 1975-76, not to spread violence and anarchy but to assert their rights, fight the dictator and preserve democracy, is clear from a statement which a leader in 1942 declared: "The

Ganges will flow with blood but it will be the blood not of the Britisher but of the Indian soldier fighting for the motherland." Similarly **Satya Samachar** explained its policy thus: "In this venture, the emphasis will always be on truth. Our self-imposed code will forbid incitement to violence, to communal passions and to anti-social behaviour; we shall scrupulously avoid character-assassination and tendentious writing. Our constant endeavour will be to remind people that a personal dictatorship is working to perpetuate itself and that they have to fight it. Today's fighter will command tomorrow — not for power but for justice not for politics but for ethics." The slogan given by Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan "**Hamla chahe jaisa hoga, hath hamara nahi uthega.**" However grave the provocation, we shall not raise our hand also underscores the moral basis of the fight.

## The difference between 1942 and 1975

One marked difference between the underground literature of 1942 and that during the Emergency was the coverage given in the foreign press to India and the attempts at resistance as also to efforts made by formal and informal international organisations like 'Friends of India', Amnesty International and others to see that the rights of the Indian people were restored and at least the health of the prisoners preserved.

The horror stories of the British regime emanating from General Dyer's dogged determination to destroy everyone including innocent women and even babies in arms at Jallianwala Bagh or the brutal atrocities, including the rape of innumerable innocent women at Ashti and Chimur in 1942, were disgusting and heart-rending. It was a general belief that no civilised government would ever think of taking recourse to such leonine violence or ruthless repression. Similarly the cases of torture and inhuman atrocities including rape and ill-treatment of pregnant women in different jails of the country during the Emergency reign of terror reported in the underground pamphlet **Torture of Political Prisoners** not merely came as a rude shock to liberty loving people but made them hang down their heads in shame.

One lesson to be learnt from the two struggles is that preserving freedom is as important as winning it and that all those who cherish freedom and justice have to make a firm resolve not to fall a prey to the evil designs of autocrats or surrender to despots but carry on a relentless struggle without rest or respite.



## —WHAT IS THE GRAMMAR OF ANARCHY?

Lord Asquith once described disorder as the grammar of anarchy. Dr. Ambedkar, who piloted the draft Constitution of India in the Constituent Assembly, made the best use of this phrase in order to warn his countrymen about the dangers of having recourse to mass defiance of law and order. "We must," he told the House on November 25, 1949, "abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and Satyagraha..... These methods are nothing but the grammar of anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned the better for us." A firm believer in the rule of law, Dr. Ambedkar was naturally opposed to "the bloody methods of revolution". There is much relevance to these observations because since independence the country has been continually in the grip of violence and disorder in more or lesser degree.

### Ancient India

Ancient India did not develop any well-constructed political philosophy as Greece, for example, did, but Indian writers and commentators on statecraft were severely pragmatic. India is a vast country and its frequent exposure to external invasion and internal disruption forced its political thinkers to support monarchy as the best form of government. Panini, the great grammarian, Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the Court of Chandragupta Maurya, Kautilya, the celebrated author of the much-quoted *Arthashastra*, and a number of other authorities have stated that the country had many states governed by an oligarchy of families whose government derived its sanction from the consent and co-operation of the people. It is perhaps far-fetched to call them republics since representative government in its modern connotation was then unknown. Whatever the true nature of their government, they certainly flourished for more than a thousand years from 600 B.C. onwards.

### Prior to the Coming of the British

From the beginning of its history, India opted for government by kings because it suited the basic human need and military necessity. It was felt that

only a king could protect his people from external aggression and from the blackmailers of peace inside the realm. Manu, the law-giver, supports this arrangement in the following lines:

"When the world was without a king  
and dispersed in fear in all directions,  
the Lord created a king for the  
protection of all."

Protection was, however, not everything; it was indeed the first necessary step towards the attainment of stability and order which alone provided the foundation for justice. It is precisely because kingship was invested with divinity that the orders of the ruler had the decisiveness of an edict. The demerits of despotic monarchy are well-known, but where the rulers were effective internal violence and disorder were reduced to a minimum. The wrong-doer could rely on no legal loopholes or on corrupt politicians in power to escape punishment which was invariably swift and severe.

### The Advent of British Rule

With the advent of British rule, India was introduced for the first time to government by laws as opposed to government by crowned heads. The change from the time-honoured political system was indeed fateful. Indians who had for millennia been accustomed to bow before personified authority, were suddenly ushered into a new era proclaiming the paramountcy of law. Perhaps, the transition would have long remained a puzzle to them if other important steps had not been taken. After the collapse of the Moghul and Maratha Empires, large parts of the country had been reduced into a non-man's land where might prevailed over right in the form of freebooters known as Pindaris and Thugs.

### Initial Achievements of British Rule

Besides sternly hunting down the bandits and inspiring a sense of security among the people, the British brought for the first time, after a protracted convulsive period, the entire country within the frame of a single government whose directives

none ventured to defy. Despite the patent weakness of the educational system introduced by them, the adoption of English as the medium of teaching and learning at the higher level of education was of fateful significance. It became the *lingua franca* of the new class of intellectuals who were able to gain direct access to the immense treasure-house of Western knowledge. They studied with enthusiasm the language of protest against tyranny, so eloquently employed by political thinkers like Bentham, Mill and Montesquieu. They heartily welcomed Mill's assertion that only the government of a people by itself had a meaning and a reality and that "such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist" as a political gospel of inviolable sanctity. Rousseau's crusade against the usurpations of tyranny and Bentham's belief that "the end and aim of a legislator should be the happiness of the people" kindled in the Indian elite new hopes and aspirations about the future of their own motherland. Fair-minded persons cannot deny that Indian nationalism was born in the cradle of the British Raj.

### Law and Liberty

The Raj also established an executive and a judiciary which became noteworthy for their integrity and authority. Law, administered by a hierarchy of courts and enforced by a well-organised executive, became both the foundation and framework of the Indian social order. The doctrine that no person could be arrested or imprisoned without the due process of the law and the concept of personal liberty, enshrined in the writ of *habeas corpus*, were both significant and welcome innovations in the Indian polity.

India thus moved into a new world under the aegis of British rule. Britain would have covered herself with imperishable glory if she had adopted policies and actions that were in consonance with the historic changes she had introduced in the Indian system of government. She had not gained control over a tribal country but over a land which had not only risen to the highest altitudes of civilization but had also given to itself a highly efficient system of government. Indians only needed to be given an opportunity to train themselves in the modern version of free institutions with a view to paving the way for them to take over eventually the responsibilities of government. Till the last year of its rule, Whitehall never regarded transfer of power to them as a simple act of justice.

### British Imperialism Bares its Fangs

Lord Curzon (1899-1905) was among the greatest Viceroy of India, but he was, like the other members of the British Establishment, stricken with the incurable malady of imperialism. In his time the Congress was disconcertingly loyal to the British Raj and yet it was the ambition of this arrogant man "to assist it to a peaceful demise". He engineered the partition of Bengal with the ostensible object of promoting administrative convenience and efficiency, the real aim being to weaken the forces of nationalism. His attitude to Indian political aspirations has been well summed up by 'The Oxford History of India': "It was self-government yesterday and self-government tomorrow, but never self-government today." Lord Cromer, another front rank imperialist, stated that the foundation-stone of Indian reform must be the steadfast maintenance of British supremacy in India.

### Indian Nationalism

The choice before Indians was thus either to submit for ever to the status quo with resignation or to forge effective sanctions for the realisation of their goal. From the year of its foundation in 1885 till the advent of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian National Congress pursued with undeviating fidelity the straight and narrow path of constitutionalism, couching its demands in the pliant language of prayer and petition. And yet it drew a blank from Whitehall. Besides failing in its purpose, Congress moderation drew the withering contempt of mettlesome Indians, including Sri Aurobindo Ghosh who dismissed it as "a middle-class organ, selfish and disingenuous in its public action and hollow in its professions of a large and disinterested patriotism." Frustration drove many an ardent young patriot to embrace the fiery cult of armed revolution. They were root-and-branch men, most of them with university education, who believed that the bomb and the revolver alone would bring redemption to their motherland. The fact that the great rebellion of 1857 had failed did not dampen their ardour for action. Their activities certainly unnerved the British Indian bureaucrats but it was naive to expect that Swaraj could be attained merely through desultory violence. The Raj was too firmly entrenched to be dislodged by such methods.

It, therefore, became necessary to forge a weapon which, while eschewing violence, could prove decisive in disarming British hostility to

Indian political demands. Mahatma Gandhi, who had successfully launched the non-co-operation movement in South Africa, mobilized masses of people in this country to go into direct action against the Government. The campaign remained mostly non-violent because of the moral stature of its leader and his passionate faith in the sanctity of means. Besides, his cause transcended narrow regional and sectarian ends. It was indeed the best antidote to sanguinary conflict and ineffective platform oratory. It was extra-constitutional and yet not subversive. "He brought in the moral law to supplement rather than supplant official law, and thus saved India during the British period from large-scale terrorism, massacre, and race-hatred."\*

### Is Gandhism Valid Today?

The question that calls for serious consideration is whether the Gandhian technique of confrontation with Authority is still relevant in free India. There has always been a school of opinion, mostly of liberal persuasion, which holds that this technique ought not to have been employed at all even during the British period because of the illiterate and excitable Indian masses to appreciate its true significance. Their argument is sustained by the happenings in the country since independence: that Satyagraha as an instrument of mass action is most liable to abuse under unscrupulous leadership. Indians before the advent of the British Raj had, it is pointed out, learnt and become inured to lawlessness and violence and their old traits are reappearing in free India.

The logic of this argument cannot be brushed aside lightly, but it is not entirely unanswerable. Defiance of law is certainly not desirable, but that was the only means of enforcing sanctions against an obstinate foreign power. What indeed is more relevant is the enquiry whether the rulers of free India could not by their policies and actions have inspired a genuine respect for law among the masses of people. They certainly could have if the country's free institutions had functioned as they were intended to work. India opted for the Westminster system based on parliamentary democracy but nothing was done for full three decades to develop a sound party system without which no parliamentary government can work efficiently. We had instead a monopoly government resting on prime ministerial absolutism. We are witnessing

to our great misfortune how enormous is the capacity of unbridled power to poison the fountain of national life.

### Post - 1947 Situation

Gross misrule, based on venality, inevitably encouraged economic and political crimes on an unprecedented scale. Since under one-party rule, parliamentary institutions turned into pliant instruments of arbitrary power, it became necessary for leaders like Mr. Jayprakash Narayan to launch protest campaigns. In fact, he had to go a step further and exhort Government servants to draw a line between just and arbitrary orders. General K. M. Cariappa felt constrained to suggest the induction of the defence services personnel into the government of the country to combat the numerous evils that have besieged it. The imposition of dictatorship in 1975 was indeed the inevitable outcome of the failure of the parliamentary system to check the monopoly government and its excesses.

### The Advent of the Janata Party

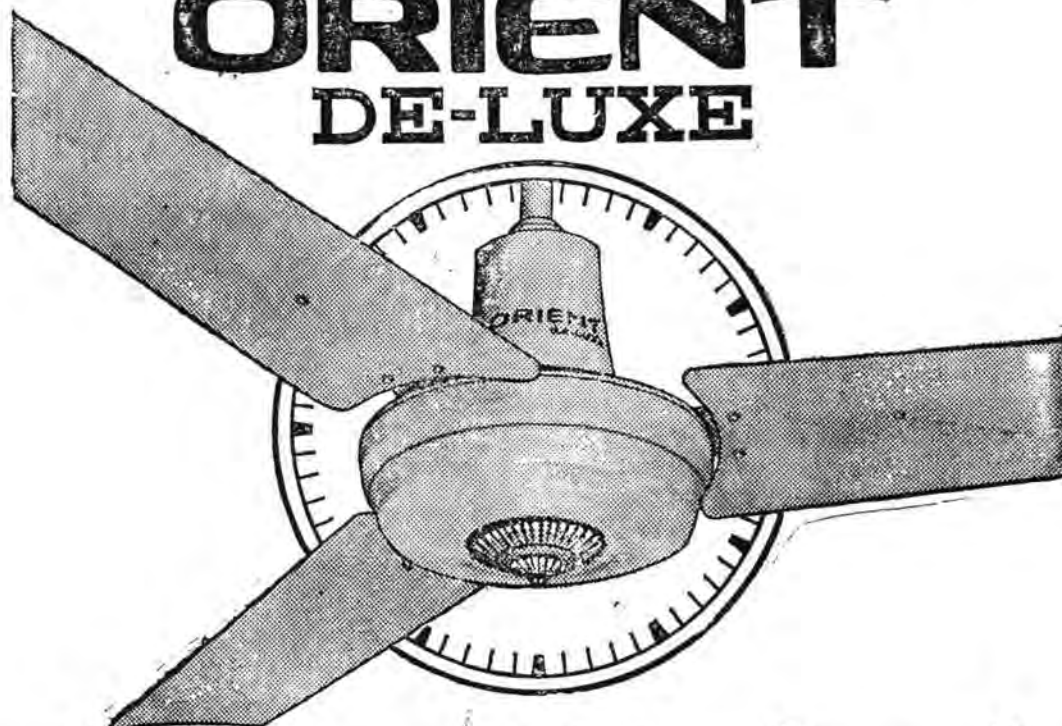
The advent of the Janata Party to power last year has changed the situation. It has inspired hopes in the possibility of evolving, though belatedly, a viable party system. In parliamentary democracy a constitutional Opposition is as important as the Government itself. The basis of democracy becomes both widened and strengthened under a system where two evenly-matched parties compete for power. The knowledge that there is an alternative to it makes the ruling party to become better aware of its responsibilities than when it remains unchallenged.

Viewed in this light, the coming of the Janata party to power must be heartily welcomed. But constitutional requirements are not everything. They certainly cannot stop defiance of law so long as the causes of defiance are not removed. The fate and future of the Janata party will lie entirely in its ability to deliver the goods. Harold Laski once said: "Those who speak of restoring the rule of law forget that respect for law is the condition of its restoration. And respect for law is at least as much a function of what law does as of its formal source."

\* The Oxford History of India.



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## — THE MARCH TOWARDS HUMAN RIGHTS

The idea of human rights, it has been rightly said, has a life and force of its own which governments can nurture or oppose but never extinguish. The improving signs around the world today which indicate that the issue of human rights has touched a responsive chord in a growing number of nations, comes as a cheering prospect to those who hitherto conceived of it as an old, tired and insoluble issue. In the wake of such renewed international enthusiasm, nothing augurs so well as the appearance of a comprehensive volume\* on this sensitive subject which has become, in the words of Walter Lippmann, "the deepest issue of our time".

The 1977 Annual Report of Amnesty International, though published belatedly in India this year, is a mine of information. It admirably catalogues the tribulations and achievements of an organisation which, in response to the yearnings of mankind, has tried, with a considerable degree of success, to impart a new momentum to the contemporary emphasis on human rights. The missionary zeal which permeates the working of this seventeen year-old London-based organisation is unmistakable. So are the qualities of restraint and moderation which have always been the dominant characteristics of the movement's quest for bridging the gap between promise and performance in the protection of human rights.

The Report under review incorporates Amnesty's elaborate documentation of the human rights situation in as many as 117 countries. It describes with painstaking detail gross violations of basic human rights in most of these countries, some of which adopt practices which are, to say the least, shocking. And yet, as Thomas Hammerberg, Chairman of the International Secretariat, says in the Preface, "this survey is far from complete — even taking into account the fact that Amnesty International's work in the field of human rights relates only to prisoners."

### Attitude of Developing Countries to Violations

It is hardly a coincidence that the most flagrant violations of human rights are seen to

occur in countries which are noted for their scant respect for democratic ideals and the free way of life. Of particular interest is the deplorable attitude adopted by the developing countries whose practices and professions in the matter of basic human rights are light-years apart. This sophomoric posturing, which is neither new nor original, is highlighted by the response of India at the U.N. to the charges levelled against the then Government of India for violation of the U.N. Charter during the recent Emergency. In a rejoinder published on June 7, 1976, it was averred with alarming arrogance that "the protection of fundamental human rights is the concern of each sovereign State and is a matter which is essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of member-States of the United Nations."

Nor did it end there. In a tone characteristic of dictatorial regimes, the minions of the erstwhile Government went on to allege that "this sort of gratuitous interference in India's internal affairs is certainly not calculated to serve the best interests of the people of India, but rather to encourage the subversive elements to try once again to destroy the framework of constitutional democracy that the Government of India has been sustaining in a country with a formidable diversity of problems of scaring magnitude."

### A Refreshing Contrast

In contrast the President of the United States, whose genuine concern for the advancement of human rights has generated unprecedented international acclaim, unequivocally asserted at the United Nations on March 17, 1977, that "no member of the United Nations can claim that mistreatment of its citizens is solely its own business. Equally, no member can avoid its responsibilities to review and to speak when torture or unwarranted deprivation of freedom occurs in any part of the world."

It is becoming more and more evident that millions in the world thoughtlessly allow the trampling of their rights. They are the unwitting victims of their own naivete, and sadly enough, the unflinching ease and consistency with which in-

\* *Amnesty International Report 1977*, Vikas Publishing House P. Ltd., 1978, pp. 352, Price: Rs. 95.

dividuals unaware and uninstructed on human rights enforcement, are subjected to gross deprivation of civil liberties. This underscores the imperative need for an immediate banishment of "human rights illiteracy". It is in this sphere of activity that public-spirited bodies like Amnesty International have a pioneering role to play. As Edmund Burke said, "It is not only our duty to make the right known, but to make it prevalent."

### International Hypocrisy

One particularly poignant aspect brought into focus by the Amnesty Report is the glaring international hypocrisy which characterises the attitudes and response of nations to human rights problems. In the words of Hammerberg :

"The information Amnesty International has obtained shows that human rights are violated in a majority of the countries all over the world. All major regions, all political and ideological blocs, are involved — in spite of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" adopted by the United Nations in December 1948. The Declaration states unequivocally that torture is unacceptable — and yet torture persists with the knowledge, and even support, of governments. The Declaration also affirms the right to life and states that no one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment — and yet more than a hundred countries retain the death penalty. This double-standard is even more obvious if one studies the implementation of the legally-binding international covenants on human rights, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1966 and which have now been in force more than a year. Even the governments which have ratified these covenants are breaching them. This is international hypocrisy ; it can only serve to undermine people's respect for international declarations and institutions."

Woefully enough, such disconcerting trends have led many people to endorse, with irresponsible readiness, the cynical view that attempts to contain violations of human rights are an exercise in futility ; that the genie is already out of the bottle. Nothing could be farther from the truth as is amply illustrated by Amnesty's own response to the problem. Far from losing heart, the movement has only redoubled its efforts in the face of failures and discouragement, and this has provided a rich

harvest of freedom for millions throughout the world.

### 1977 Eventful Year

All said and done, 1977 was a particularly eventful year for Amnesty International. For, it was in this year that the movement was awarded the much coveted Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its efforts. Unfortunately, the Report under review, published during the middle of 1977, does not make any mention of this glorious achievement. It is equally inexplicable why the omission has not been rectified in the Indian edition which went to the press as late as 1978. The Indian publishers should also take the blame for their utter indifference to the prohibitive price of the volume which is hardly conducive to imparting a major educational thrust to this vital campaign of making the public increasingly aware of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Another book\* which should be well-received by liberals is the recently published collage of writings by one of the indefatigable crusaders of freedom in India, Dr. (Mrs.) Krishnabai Nimbkar. It is a sad irony of fate that Dr. Nimbkar's name should not find a prominent place in the national roll-call of honour. As Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay rightly points out in her Introduction "There are in this country a great many public workers who, over the decades, have done very commendable service in more than one field, but nevertheless remain unknown and almost obscure. Amongst them would be Dr. Krishnabai Nimbkar, a medical woman by profession, but a committed national worker, with much praiseworthy service to her credit."

However that may be, there is no gainsaying that the issues which have sustained Dr. Nimbkar in her relentless crusade, are of crucial importance and everlasting significance to a nation which is still searching for its identity. Quintessentially, they raise questions of constitutional morality, whose relevance can never be overemphasised.

The present compilation covers the period between 1970-1978, a period which witnessed the

\*\* *A Political Dissenter's Diary* by Dr. (Mrs.) Krishnabai Nimbkar, The International Book Service, Poona, 1978, pp. 350, Price: Rs. 24.



most cataclysmic changes in our body politic, beginning with an exponential decline in basic values, it culminated in the providential revitalisation of a democratic structure which had all but collapsed. Even as early as 1970, public morality was sorely tired; vigour was replaced by velleity and enthusiasm by apprehension in the thinking mind. Tragically, the monumental apathy of the Indian masses failed to quit in the face of vanishing liberty.

### Sanctity of the Constitution

It must be said to Dr. Nimbkar's credit that, unlike the scribes of our era, she had no qualms in tearing to shreds the apparel of hypocrisy which clothed arbitrary power during nearly the whole of the last decade. Her unmistakable concern for preserving the sanctity of the Constitution and its high moral tone is exemplified by her unambiguous condemnation of the derecognition of princes, to cite just one example. The issue involved here was plainly and simply whether the Constitution could be silenced and its mandate sacrificed at the altar of political expediency. Dr. Nimbkar's frantic letters and telegrams to the President, and to eminent public men like Rajaji, Minoo Masani, Naik-Nimbalkar, Karni Singh, Fatesinghrao Gaekwad, Sucheta Kripalani, Madhu Limaya and Jayaprakash Narayan, which constitute an entire chapter of the Diary, make fascinating reading.

### Moral Lapse at the Highest Level

In one letter to Vinoba Bhave dated September 19, 1970, Dr. Nimbkar, referring to the ready acquiescence of President Giri in the colourable actions of the Government, poignantly records, "Many of us feel that a moral lapse at the highest level is a serious thing and it should be rectified as early as possible before other consequences begin to flow from it. Moreover, it is the Gandhi Centenary Year in which everything that Gandhiji stood against are occurring! His moral influence is no more with us. But the people, high and low, it seems, perpetually want a monitor to keep them from even avoidable lapses." In other words, it was a crisis of character that gripped India more than anything else.

In another letter to Mr. Giri in 1973, she prophetically says: "Sir, may I state with all the

force I can command, that this country will, sooner or later, whip up all its strength and stamina, which is by no means small, to pull itself and its people out of the morass into which they have been landed, to do which both the Prime Minister and the President have failed in perhaps a mistaken notion of their indispensability?" The historic verdict of the people in the last general elections bears eloquent testimony to this fact.

### Admonition To The Janata

The other subject to which Dr. Nimbkar addresses herself concern the cancerous constitutional amendments, the concept of Trusteeship, Total Revolution, and the like. The concluding chapter is especially noteworthy for its admonition to the present Government in sonorous terms: "Public memory has not still forgotten the fact of how, because of her intense egoism, Mrs. Gandhi is ultimately on the way to commit political suicide. People now read a similar tendency in the egoism that is presently being exhibited so gracelessly by the Janata Party's top leaders. If the Party leaders do not recover their poise soon and return to sanity in thinking and action, they will only be instrumental in turning their countrymen, young and old, into a nation of cynics and sceptics, with no faith in any idealism whatsoever, and despairing of any hope in the promise of a better life that was held out to them when they voted the Janata Party to power in the 1977 elections."

Whatever the demerits of the book — poor proof-reading is surely one of them — there can be no mistaking the burning sincerity of the author. This is certainly a redeeming feature, for it reiterates the truth in Kenneth Sollitt's unforgettable words:

"The world's progress always has been started by individuals, not by groups. And these individuals have always been non-conformists — people who had a vision of something better than the status quo and had intestinal fortitude enough to fight it — people who bearded Procrustes in his den and did battle with him, instead of letting themselves be cut down to his size. Progress is never made by those who merely follow the crowd, but by those who dare to show the crowd a better way."

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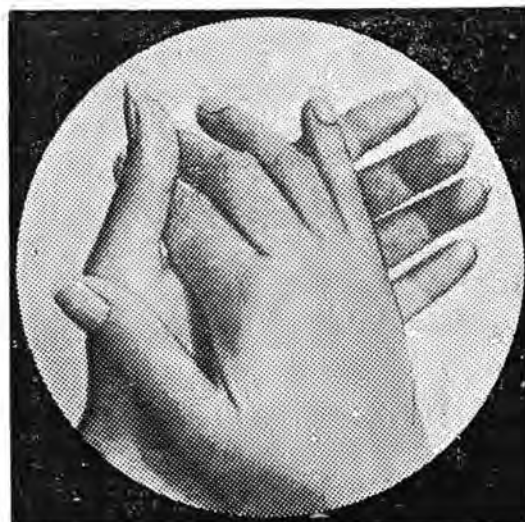
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## —HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER

In an issue on human rights like this one, it will not be out of place to write about the rights and respect we Indians accord to each other.

There are two kinds of rights — those extended to us by the state; and those we allow each other in the course of our daily lives.

We witnessed an abridgement of state-given rights during the Emergency and the public verdict is well-known. But in the way we treat each other — Emergency or no Emergency — the conscience of Indians needs awakening. Even those who were ready to sacrifice and go to jail to assert their rights against the state, may fail to accord to their equals and subordinates the right to dignity they claim for themselves. The way we treat the harijans is just a tenth of the tip of the iceberg that is seen. The hidden nine-tenths is worth exploring.

Broadly speaking human relations are between those above us, equal to us and below us in status.

To those above us, we are, historically a nation of sycophants. Abbe J. A. Dubois, writing on "Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies" in 1816, said that a "very respectful manner of greeting is to extend both hands towards the feet of him whom you wish to honour, or to seize his knees while you throw yourself at his feet. This is a very common mode of greeting between a son and a father, or between a younger and an elder brother, on meeting after a long separation. The same humble attitude is also adopted when asking for pardon or for a favour; and only when the object is attained does the postulant relax his hold on the feet of the person whom he is addressing."

In those days people touched the feet of others "for pardon or for favour". These days the operative word is "favour".

Francois Bernier, a perceptive French traveller, visited the court of the grand Moghul, Aurangzeb. He wrote: "The vice of flattery prevails in all ranks. When a Moghul for instance, has occasion for my services, he comes to tell me by way of preamble and as a matter of course, that

I am the Aristotalls, the Socrates and the Aboilsina Ulzaman, the Aristotle, the Hippocrates, and the Avicenna of the age."

Bernier relates how at first he protested at these comparisons, "but finding that my modesty increased their praise, I determined to accustom my ears to flattery, as I had done to their music."

### Flattery and the Ego

The man who flatters surrenders his own dignity and often his rights. Not everyone treats the oil of flattery with the disdain of Bernier. Indira was partly a victim of the courtiers she had gathered around herself. One sang her praises: "India is Indira and Indira is India" till a fortnight before the famous March Elections. Within weeks of her defeat he ditched her!

When an important personality is surrounded by friends, people compete in praising him. The truth that may help the man at the top is never spoken in front of him. It is reserved for back-biting. We have yet to learn how to respectfully disagree without being disagreeable.

There is a difference between "trying to please" and "giving pleasure". The man who "tries to please" is selective in his behaviour. The man who "gives pleasure", is uniform in his affection and his attitudes to those above, equal to or below him.

### Treating Equals

If I had to point out the greatest difference between the United States and India, I would say it is the way people treat their equals. In America the national ethos is that the country is big enough to give everyone an opportunity and all can grow. In India the ethos is to pull the other person down,



and advance ourselves at the expense of someone else.

Talk to a scientist at a National Laboratory and he will tell you how his superior tries to hold him down. Talk to another and you find the junior is made to do the research and the senior passes off the results in his research paper as his findings! This is our nature. Is it any surprise there is a brain-drain?

Jealousy for equals is an even stronger force than sycophancy towards the superiors. Project it at the Cabinet level and you understand why the Janata leaders fall apart.

A news-item in the "Indian Express" of October 17 speaks of doctors bickering over the Dhanwantri Award. The Express says: "The ayurveds, naturopaths and unani specialists feel not just left out but that they are being treated like poor country cousins." The atmosphere of the Foundation meetings is described as "distinctly Arctic temperaturwise".

As for the way the President of the Foundation treats other members, a member complains: "Sometimes we are made to wait for hours for the President to come and preside over the committee meetings and when we leave, a few of these chaps get together to announce the award". So much for the way one eminent doctor treats his colleagues.

### Those Below Us

The litmus test is the way we treat our subordinates and our domestic servants. True, in some homes they are well treated — and the scarcer they get, the better the treatment they will receive. But how many of us respect their dignity as people?

It is not only the well-to-do that can exploit the poor. The poor can exploit each other even more ruthlessly. The growth of "dadas" and extortionist money-lenders in slum areas is a manifestation of this.

The true test of a nation's attitude is not in the rights enshrined in its constitution and upheld by the courts. It is in the way men treat each other in the course of their daily lives. The essence of it lies in the respect and care we have for each other. The lack of it is reflected in the way our Government, public bodies and even private companies function.

If the Minorities Commission was given no proper quarters or a secretariat, it is because at various levels, nobody cared. A few months after the Chairman resigned in protest, the Prime Minister issued a fiat that members of the Commission should be given the same status as accorded to Cabinet Ministers. But there was no word of apology for the way the members were treated earlier.

Great Generals have shown touching concern for those under them. Wellington was seemingly a bleak Commander-in-Chief but he could be surprisingly solicitous of his men. At dinner one night a guest remarked he had just come from a place where a number of his sick and wounded soldiers lay without shelter, exposed to the cold. Immediately after dinner Wellington ordered his horse. He and his ADC rode 30 miles arriving at midnight to find the officers safely lodged and the sick and wounded soldiers exposed to the weather. He ordered the sick and wounded to be housed and returned to his barracks before dawn. Next evening he told his ADC he had the uncomfortable feeling that the sulky officers may have defied his orders when his back was turned. So Wellington rode again 60 miles to and fro with his ADC. Sure enough, he found the sick were back in the open and the officers reposed comfortably in their quarters. He had the officers arrested for disobedience and cashiered. (Episode from "The Great Duke" by Arthur Bryant, pp. 344-45).

It is for men at the top to set the precedent.

### Respect for Each Other

Without a recognition of the dignity of man, human rights will never be respected. And this recognition is shown in the little ways.

Do we listen to the other person? Or are we ready to cut him short?

In New Delhi, invite a leader to speak at a human rights symposium and he will give a thunderous oration for an hour. But some of them are incapable of listening for five minutes. Others cannot exceed two minutes.

Mrs. Rano Shaiza, tribal MP from Nagaland finds this trait in New Delhi most trying. When she sees the important Ministers briefly for her work for five minutes they lecture to her for three to four minutes. Shortly after she told me this,

she went to a dinner. Sure enough a former Minister hogged the conversation and converted it into a monologue.

The tribals cannot compete with us vocally. They feel alienated and are afraid that if they come closer their voice will be lost. Right of free speech is a great idea but how many permit it in a drawing room?

In its ultimate analysis human rights rest on the respect we have for each other and respect

depends on whether we are interested in the other person or only in ourselves.

Henry Drummond whose work "The Greatest Thing in the World" deals with love, was a shrewd observer of human nature. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. God is love. Therefore love without distinction, without calculation ..... Lavish it upon the poor, where it is easy; especially upon the rich, who often need it most; most of all upon our equals, where it is very difficult, and for whom perhaps we each do least of all."

### A Novel Response

*We wrote to a number of persons inviting their contributions for publication in this Special Number. Some replied stating why they were unable to respond to our request. Some others were good enough to send in their contributions, as their articles in this issue testify. But Evening News of India columnist "Busybee" said 'no' in his own inimitable style. He did so through his column and, in the process, had a dig at us which we enjoyed reading as much as we do his comments on various other issues. With his permission, we reproduce his novel response. Incidentally, both of us plead not guilty to going about in jeans — we never owned a pair all these years!*

—Ed.

### Round and about

One of those Indian periodicals, which took like "The New Statesman" or "Spectator" of London, in format and style, though not in content and value, has invited me to contribute an article.

And I consider it a great honour. For I have always been in a bit of an awe about these intellectual publications and their ultraleftist or rightist readership.

And I have always considered those who contribute to them and read them (normally the same people participate in both activities) as a class apart.

First of all, they look different. They wear flowing kurtas and Indian jeans (never foreign) or pyjamas and carry a cloth bag on their shoulder, invariably filled with the kind of intellectual magazines mentioned above, and they smoke cheap cigarettes and bidis, and spend large portions of their time in the corridors of the University School of Economics (though they are not students there).

And they talk in a language which is very similar to the language in which they write, a sort of intellectual jargon that sounds like a combination of Mr. S. A. Dange and Mr. Minoo Masani.

Half the things they refer to only with the initials, such as EPW (one of their more respected publications), and they discuss the same subjects, whether at one of their committee meetings or at a cocktail party of one of the East European consulates.

As I said, I have always admired them. These young writers who are more concerned with saving themselves, who are always writing memoranda and collecting signatures, and who occasionally lead a mini-morcha in defence of some abstract cause.

And I would be honoured to write for one of their publications. The only problem is that they have asked me to write on human rights and I do not even know what they are.

There is also another problem. The letter inviting me to write says that it will be an article of 2,500 words and I will be paid for it a nominal honorarium of Rs. 100.

And so now I know. If the contributors to these periodicals look so scruffy, it is because of the poor honorariums they get and not because of their ideology.

Busybee  
"Evening News of India"

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## —THE DYNAMICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### **The U.N.O. is born**

Thirty-three years ago occurred an event of tremendous significance to mankind. The United Nations Organisation was created. And in its wake were also brought into existence fervent hopes and aspirations of humanity determined to eliminate the scourge of war and enjoy the blessings of peace.

### **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Another significant event occurred on 10th December, 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly. The Declaration is not merely an important historical document but a veritable testament of mankind. It was adopted without a single dissenting vote. Possibly, the deep implications and the future impact of the Declaration were not fully realised by all the member-States.

Signing of the U. N. Charter and the adoption of the Declaration established the principle that protection of human rights is the collective responsibility of the United Nations. And to that extent, it made a dent in the chain of national authority and tradition at its strongest link. Human rights and freedoms which were traditionally supposed to be the special province of each nation-state and its exclusive responsibility now became matters of international concern and the subject of relations between States. It is implicit in the Charter and the Declaration that human rights are indivisible and transcend geographical barriers and national boundaries. In its essence the Declaration is based on the elementary truth that man is the ultimate reality and his deepest aspirations find most authentic expression in the Declaration which deals with the basic needs of human beings whatever be their race or colour or creed. It is founded on the belief that freedoms of the individual in the State is in an essential complement to the freedom of the State in the world community of nations. The Declaration also stresses "that social justice and the best possible standards of life for all are essential factors in promoting and maintaining the peace of the world."

### **The Impact of the Declaration**

When the Declaration was proclaimed in 1948 the cynics who sneered and even the optimists who despaired that the Declaration fell short of a binding Covenant could hardly have foreseen the impact that it was to have. Assuming that its status is only that of a recommendation under international law, about which there is controversy among lawyers, the Declaration is often quoted and has even been used as basis for decisions, with the result that it is acquiring more and more the character of a rule of law. The Indian Supreme Court in interpreting fundamental rights under the Constitution has often referred to the provisions of the Declaration. For example, in determining whether a person has the fundamental right to travel abroad and return to India, for which a Passport is necessary, the Supreme Court referred to Article 13, sub-clause (2) of the Declaration which provides that "everyone has the right to leave any country including his own and to return to his country." Again in the recent landmark judgements of the Supreme Court dealing with rights of prisoners and jail authorities, the Court relied upon certain provisions of the Declaration.

The great worth of the Declaration has been in the formation of an international conscience. It is the mine from which the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights have sprung. It has also given rise to regional conventions and inspired national constitutions in protecting human rights. Invoked in the United Nations over apartheid in South Africa, and over the restriction of movement of the Soviet wives of foreigners, the Declaration has established the principle that denial of human rights is a matter of international concern, and has gone far to remove Article 2(7) of the U. N. Charter, the domestic jurisdiction clause, as an obstacle to United Nations action though that clause is still a refuge for those wanting to avoid the implementation of provisions of the International Covenants.

Perhaps the greatest political impact of the Declaration has been through the idea of self-

determination which was made the subject of a U. N. Declaration in 1960.

### The Convention of Human Rights

Within a couple of years of the Declaration, the European Convention on Human Rights was signed in November 1950 and came into force from September 1953. The organs created by the Convention are the European Commission and the Court of Human Rights which have their seats in Strasbourg, Germany. The first is competent to take judicial decisions which are binding on the parties to the Convention. The decisions of the European Court make fascinating reading and have definitely contributed to evolving human rights jurisprudence. Could anyone have imagined in 1950 that an European Court would be able to declare void a particular law or action of a sovereign nation such as the U.K., or any other for that matter, on the ground that it was contrary to the Convention?

### December 1966

A definite forward step was taken in December 1966 when the General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Political and Civil Rights. By these instruments, Governments undertook to hold themselves accountable, at home and abroad, for their acts. And by the Optional Protocol, they affirmed the right of the individual to petition the international community for redress of wrongs at the hand of the Government. The most distinguishing feature of these Covenants is that they convey the idea of movement and affirmative action. Whatever their failings as texts, the Covenants are cast in broad perspectives. Great human aims and desires underlie them, which hold together minds widely scattered in geography, culture and ideological loyalties.

### Obstacles to Implementing the Covenants

Yet it would be unrealistic not to realise that a superlative effort is required to overcome different barriers, to break deep-seated constraints of thought and interest and to exercise the rather haunting omnipotence of national sovereignty.

Peculiar problems in different countries because of differences of historical and cultural backgrounds may warrant some reservations but should not deter or delay the broad acceptance of the Covenants. Ratification subject to reservations is better than no ratification at all. National and local institutions have a very important role to play in the protection and promotion of human rights as also the non-governmental organisations. Some of the non-governmental organisations, such as the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International have done valuable work in the field of human rights. Global implementation of human rights may be effected broadly through publicity; judicial process; or international supervision. To be realistic, it must, at the present stage in the advancement of human rights, be recognised that only certain means of global implementation are practicable and priority must be given to them. Publicity is a practical as well as an effective mode of implementation of human rights, and to care, when what is done is against human rights is the condition of making that implementation effective. Publicity for human rights consists in making known to every person at least those minimum standards of treatment to which he or she is entitled; in making known violations of human rights, wherever they may occur; and in continual public debate, serving to rationalise and broaden those standards. The vital part of the Press in the protection and advancement of human rights needs no elaboration. There should be a compulsory study course in international protection of human rights. Education in human rights at school levels should be a matter of higher priority and should form a part of the curriculum. In particular, government officials must be made aware of the nature and importance of human rights and the contribution which observance of human rights inevitably imposes on governmental powers.

This is the thirteenth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. The march towards progress in human rights has never been straight or simple and one must never consider that the struggle is over or that final victory has been achieved.

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Based on a broadcast over All India Radio.

## —ARE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIVERSAL?

The current preoccupation with human rights raises very serious political questions, the most serious of which is whether this new emphasis in American foreign policy signals a turning away from the Kissinger strategy of orderly retreat, or, on the contrary, serves as a smokescreen for the continuation (if not actually the acceleration) of that strategy. When we make statements about human rights, are we simply giving voice to a specific set of biases of our own? Or is there some universally valid standard of morality to which we can appeal in making judgments about countries with different traditions from ours?

Some Americans are morally outraged by the repression and the bribery practiced by the government of South Korea. Other Americans tend to view these actions more benignly because of the putatively greater atrocities practiced by the regime in North Korea. However one may view the moral condition of the Korean peninsula, it seems to me rather clear that both varieties of American outrage sharply raise the question of ethnocentrism: by what right do we condemn Korean authorities, South or North, for not living up to American standards of political morality? After all, neither bribery nor the harsh treatment of political opponents is a startling innovation of Asian statecraft, and both liberal democracy and Marxism, the two ideologies in whose terms the respective Korean states stand either accused or legitimated, are very recent Western exports to that part of the world.

### Unwanted Export?

Similarly, some Americans excuse the repressive policies of left-wing regimes in Asia because these regimes have supposedly established a greater measure of equality, and accuse those taking a different position of ethnocentrism—yet it is hard to think of a more blatantly Western value than equality. Other Americans compare left-wing and right-wing regimes in Asia and conclude that the latter, even if they are repressive, allow for a greater degree of individual freedom—another central Western value. Asian observers may be pardoned for thinking that both bodies of opinion are just a new form of cultural imperialism, and that along with Coca-Cola Americans are now busy

exporting ideological biases to faraway places where they are neither wanted nor relevant.

The question of the universal validity of moral judgments is an old one in the history of human thought. It is, indeed, one of the oldest questions of Western philosophy, going back to the twin sources of Western civilization in ancient Israel and ancient Greece. And the question is just as old in the great religious and philosophical traditions of Asia, as in the passionate quest for the oneness of reality in the religious imagination of India, and the (perhaps more secular) efforts to define the nature of humaneness in Chinese ethical thought. These sources, Western and non-Western, are by no means exhausted, and the issue can still be fruitfully addressed by drawing from them. In the contemporary world, however, that issue has attained an urgency which is new in human history.

The reason for this is to be sought in one main historical factor—the global process of modernization. The “external” effects of modernization are very clear and generally acknowledged: there has been a quantum jump in what anthropologists call “culture contact,” as a result of modern technologies of transportation and communication. This means, quite simply, that everyone today is rubbing shoulders with everyone else (or nearly everyone else). On a practical level, therefore, the necessity has arisen of coming to terms with all sorts of people different from oneself. This, however, includes the necessity of coming to terms with them **morally** as well—that is, coming to terms with standards of conduct that are different from one’s own.

### Impact of Modernisation

Of course, one must make distinctions. Not everyone in the world is rubbing shoulders with everyone else in the same way. The overwhelming majority of people in the contemporary world do not, for example, enjoy the pleasures of international air travel, that emblem **par excellence** of modernization; those who do, constitute a very small and highly privileged group. Still, very few

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people in the world today are truly immune from modernization; the same process that hurls mighty jetliners into the sky invades the villages and rice paddies over which they fly, and it does so in innumerable ways—establishing modern political and economic institutions, setting up government agencies and schools, connecting hitherto separated locals with roads and railways, supplying tons of manufactured products, and (ultimately most important of all) drawing people into the massive physical movement of population that is one of the inevitable consequences of modernization.

But the eternal manifestations of modernization are not the only manifestations; they are accompanied by profound changes of consciousness. One such change is pluralization—the progressive interpenetration of the worlds of meaning in which human beings live. Through most of history most people lived in situations that were not only highly integrated in terms of their governing values and their definitions of reality, but were also quite effectively protected against challenges to those values and definitions of reality. The most effective protection was isolation, or at least segregation, from all those “others” who perceived and valued reality differently. Modernization weakens and often shatters the protective walls around all traditionally integrated worlds of meaning; the “others,” once distant strangers, now become neighbors in a sometimes uncomfortable way.

The discomfort is not only social, but cognitive and moral as well. For each world of meaning, as it is penetrated by other worlds of meaning, becomes *ipso facto* relativized. Some three centuries ago Pascal (who, if there had been international air travel at the time, would have belonged to the privileged class making use of it) could exclaim, with a sense of discovery, that what is truth on one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other. This discovery has by now become commonplace knowledge.

The consequence for morality is simple but revolutionary. When my neighbors make moral judgments different from mine, then the question of the universal validity of moral judgments (theirs or mine) imposes itself urgently. Thus modernization makes reluctant moral philosophers of us all.

### Notions of Human Rights

Modernity originated in Europe. Its basic institutional embodiments are European inventions

— science and technology, bureaucracy, the economic systems of both capitalism and socialism, political democracy as well as the nation-state. So are the basic ideologies that legitimate these institutions—including our contemporary notions of human rights. Such statements as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations are derived, with only minor modifications, from the classical documents written on the subject in the West since the 18th century. Probably the earliest public declaration of human rights was the one passed by the legislature of colonial Virginia. Then followed those immensely influential documents originating on both sides of the Atlantic; the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, the preamble to the American Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution.

In other words, contemporary notions of human rights are historically and intellectually derived from the Enlightenment, a specifically Western phenomenon. (It goes without saying that this phenomenon has its antecedents in much earlier moments of Western history—in the Temple of Jerusalem, in the *agora* of Athens, in the schools of Jewish rabbis, among Roman jurists and medieval moral philosophers.) And this in turn points to the fact that, whether one likes it or not, the process of modernization has everywhere been, at least in part, a process of Westernization as well. Today, almost without exception, even the goriest Oriental despot pays lip-service to the values of human rights—in language borrowed from Thomas Jefferson or Karl Marx.

### The Traditionalists' View

To be sure, there are exceptions to this international Jeffersonian-Marxian consensus—the traditionalists (often called “fundamentalists” in the Western press) who would restore the classical caste system in India or replace the modernizing constitutions of Muslim nation-states by the Shari’a. Most of these traditionalists are unsophisticated; even those who are sophisticated speak in a highly particularistic language which, by its very nature, is opaque to the outsider. Hence, the traditionalist protest against modernity is easily dismissed intellectually (even if it can make a lot of trouble politically). Yet it should not be so quickly dismissed. Even if one has neither cultural affinity nor ideological sympathy with any of the traditionalists’ causes, their perception of the world is instructive and important. For it is the tradition-

alists, with the sharp eye of hostility, who see more clearly than anyone else the linkage of modernization and Westernization.

Most of the political leadership of Asian and African countries, however, and a sizable portion of the intellectuals in those countries, are not traditionalists in this sense. Rather, they subscribe to the viewpoint of "modernization without Westernization"—a viewpoint that has both right-wing and left-wing expressions. On the Left, this viewpoint is at the heart of the Maoist rebellion against Soviet ideological hegemony; it is replicated, *mutatis mutandis*, in other forms of Asian and African socialism. On the Right, it has found an eloquent spokesman in the Shah of Iran, who, with some justification, aspires to a leading role among Muslim rulers seeking a path somewhere between Westernizing modernism and de-modernizing traditionalism; for better or worse, the Shah has been particularly eloquent of late in rejecting the applicability to Iran of a number of Western notions of human rights. And the same viewpoint is a common element in an otherwise wildly heterogeneous bedley of ideologies—the neo-Shintoism of the late Yukio Mishima or the various Third World strands of Gandhism, Arabism, and Negritude.

In regularly dismissing human-rights issues when they are raised by Westerners as irrelevant to their own countries, these leaders and intellectuals force us once again to face the question of how one may make moral judgments with a claim to universal validity. Indeed, they raise the even sharper question of whether the very habit of making universally relevant moral judgments may not be a specifically Western propensity.

### Clarifying the Concept

Most intellectual problems are carried further toward solution by the making of distinctions, and this one is no exception. A crucial distinction to be made here is between those notions of human rights that emerge exclusively from a Western view of the world, and which will only be plausible to those sharing this view, and those notions of human rights that derive their warrant from a wider consensus. To draw this distinction fully and conclusively is beyond my abilities. But steps should be taken towards such a distinction, and need to be taken, if we are to gain clarity on this subject. As a first step I would propose separating those rights that derive from the specifically Western values of liberty and equality from those that pertain to the human condition as such.

The former category undoubtedly includes those rights that have emerged from the Western development of political democracy—the ones which in America are commonly designated as civil liberties and civil rights. Freedom of speech and of the press, the inviolability of the electoral process, equal protection of the law, due process (which includes the peculiarly Western value of impersonality in the administration of justice) — all these (and the list could be easily extended) are rights that find little warrant outside the orbit of Western history.

To this list must be added the economic rights of which the Left is so enamored. The notion that economic justice demands an ever-greater measure of equality is as specifically Western as the notion that liberty is the highest political value; non-Western man, almost everywhere, has been *homo hierarchicus*. And, needless to say, the same list must include those rights recently proclaimed by various cultural revolutionaries in the West — women's rights, the rights of children, or the rights of homosexuals and other deviants.

To many non-Westerners, even today, the West's understanding of political and economic rights is puzzling (which is why, for example, it is very difficult indeed to explain Watergate in Asia); to most non-Westerners, the rights proclaimed by the Western cultural revolutionaries are symptoms of degeneracy or collective madness. At any rate, these rights are plausible only to those who (whether by inheritance or by adoption) stand within a specifically Western view of the world.

Yet the grossest cases called violations of human rights today are of an altogether different kind. Genocide; the massacre of large numbers of innocent people by their own government or by alien conquerors; the deliberate abandonment of entire sections of a population to starvation; the systematic use of terror (including torture) as government policy; the expulsion of large numbers of people from their homes; enslavement through various forms of forced labor; the forced separation of families (including the taking away of children from their parents by actions of government); the deliberate desecration of religious symbols and the persecution of those adhering to them; the destruction of institutions that embody ethnic identity. Each one of these items is routine policy in many countries today.



In condemning these as violations of human rights, we can call upon a consensus far wider than that of Western civilization, a consensus that emerges from all the major world cultures, especially in their religious foundations — and it is a consensus all the more impressive in view of the vast (and partly irreconcilable) differences among the world religions in their understanding of reality and of human destiny.

### Human Rights by other Names

When we condemn the horrors inflicted on the people of Cambodia by their present government, we need not do so by reference to Western values alone. Cambodia is a Buddhist country, and it is Buddhism that has as its highest moral tenet the "respect for all sentient beings." Similarly, the atrocities inflicted on the Chinese people in the course of various Maoist experiments, such as the physical extermination of entire classes of the population or the separation of children from their parents, are not just violations of Western notions of morality (or, as apologists for Maoism in the West like to say, of "bourgeois morality"); rather, they are violations of the entire corpus of ethics of the Chinese tradition, which holds, among other things, that government should be "human-hearted" and that "filial piety" is one of the highest human goods. And if we pass moral judgment on a Muslim ruler (be it in a left-wing or a right-wing regime) for acts of cruelty, we may do so, not alone in the name of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but in the name of the ethical core of Islam itself: every call to prayer, from every minaret from the Maghreb to Java, begins with an invocation of God who is al-rahman al-rahim, whose nature is to be compassionate and who has compassion, and who commands men to be compassionate also.

Drawing a distinction between two sets of rights would, at the very least, help prevent the sorts of intellectual confusion perpetrated by the press in its reports on "violations of human rights," a catchall category ample enough to cover such disparate and disproportionate phenomena as the expulsion of an American journalist from Nigeria, mass murder in Uganda, election irregularities in Pakistan, genocide in Cambodia, and the inability of women in some Muslim countries to obtain a passport without the permission of their fathers or husbands. But more important, a truer understanding of the moral convergence of the human race on the question of **fundamental** human rights is essential if Americans (in or out of government) are to speak credibly on the international scene.

There has to be a distinction between fundamental human rights and rights stemming from specifically Western developments, notably political democracy. This argument needs to be qualified, or extended, in two ways.

There is, first of all, an undeniable empirical correlation, and a high one, between countries that respect fundamental human rights and countries that have institutions of political democracy. Many people in the West would maintain that this correlation shows that essential equivalence of the two sets of rights. This is mistaken. The correlation is rather to be explained sociologically, in terms of the peculiar character of the modern state.

### Restraints — Old and New

In pre-modern societies there existed a variety of restraints on the arbitrary exercise of political power: religious authority, custom, kinship and tribe, and (most important) the sheer inability of government to extend its controls into every remote corner of society. Modernization weakens or destroys these restraints. The modern state (and not just the repressive or the totalitarian version of it) thus exercises historically unprecedented power — with the implication that human rights are more than ever before at the mercy of unrestrained rulers. It was, indeed, precisely in order to impose restraints upon governmental power that modern democratic institutions arose in the West. Consequently, the high empirical correlation between democracy and a respect for human rights is not surprising — which is not the same thing as saying that it is necessary or complete.

A historical illustration may serve here. In ancient China there was an institution known as the imperial censors. These were Confucian scholars attached to the court, whose express task it was to criticize the emperor and his officials for derelictions of duty. It is not necessary to assume that these worthy gentlemen were immune to coercion or corruption in order to say that we have here a classical case of pre-modern restraint on government. We may then ask a sociological question: under modern conditions, what are the possible functional equivalents of the imperial censors? The sociological answer is that such equivalents, very broadly speaking, will resemble the basic institutional arrangements of modern democracy.



The second qualification is this. To say that certain rights are "plausible" only within a specifically Western view of the world is not to say that any moral judgment emanating from the Western tradition is for that reason deprived of universal validity. On the contrary, if the moral discoveries of the Western tradition — prominent among them the ideas of individual liberty and of the fundamental equality of all human beings — are valid for us, they are valid for all mankind. If we believe in the fundamental unity of the human race, we must also believe that the liberty that is a good in America would also, in principle, be a good in Asia.

### A Search for Moral Truth

This, however, is still a long way from the belief that our own specific social and political arrangements exhaust the possible institutionalizations of morality, and that we are therefore entitled (if not mandated) to preach those arrangements

to the rest of the world. Sociological fact is not the same thing as absolute truth. The difference here is not between moral conviction on the one hand and an attitude of relativistic laissez-faire on the other, but between ethnocentrism and a respect for the moral scope — the remarkably consensual moral scope — of all the great human civilizations. And this difference is not just a matter of theoretical perspective; it affects the entire manner in which human rights can be argued on the international scene today, and for that reason has considerable political significance.

The question of ethnocentrism in relation to human rights is a complex one, but this complexity need not be paralyzing. On the contrary, the credibility of Americans speaking out on human rights will increase if they speak soberly and with a proper sense of the universal human search for moral truth.

Minor modifications have been made in the text to meet the current needs of this issue.

*No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man... In reality even those who do not believe in the liberty of the individual believe in their own."*

—MAHATMA GANDHI—



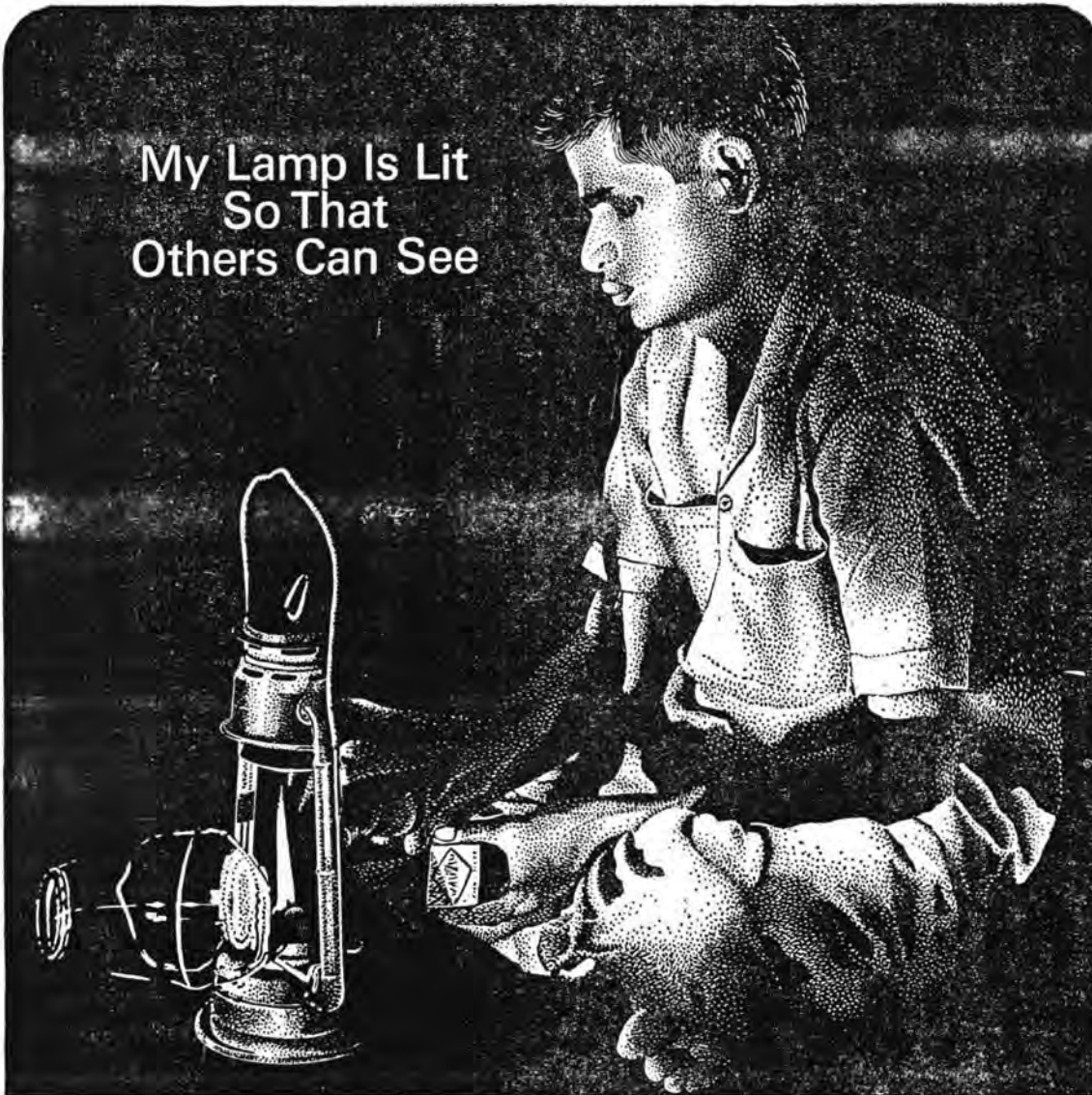
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So That  
Others Can See



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## — A WORLD SPLIT APART

Truth eludes us if we do not concentrate with total attention on its pursuit. And even while it eludes us, the illusion still lingers of knowing it, and that leads to many misunderstandings. Also, truth seldom is pleasant; it is almost invariably bitter. There is some bitterness in my speech today, too. But I want to stress that it comes not from an adversary but from a friend.

The split in today's world is perceptible even at a hasty glance. Any of our contemporaries can readily identify two world powers, each of them already capable of entirely destroying the other. However, understanding of the split often is limited to this political conception, to the illusion that danger may be abolished through successful diplomatic negotiations or by achieving a balance of armed forces. The truth is that the split is a much profounder and more alienating one, that the rifts are more than one can see at first glance. This deep, manifold split bears the danger of manifold disaster for all of us, in accordance with the ancient truth that a Kingdom—in this case, our Earth—divided against itself cannot stand.

Then there is the concept of the Third World: thus, we already have three worlds. Undoubtedly, however, the number is even greater; we are just too far away to see. Any ancient, deeply rooted, autonomous culture, especially if it is spread over a wide part of the earth's surface, constitutes an autonomous world, full of riddles and surprises to Western thinking. At a minimum, we must include in this category China, India, the Muslim world, and Africa, if indeed we accept the approximation of viewing the latter two as compact units. For one thousand years Russia belonged to such a category, although Western thinking systematically committed the mistake of denying its autonomous character and therefore never understood it, just as today the West does not understand Russia in Communist captivity. It may be that Japan has increasingly become a distant part of the West but Israel, for instance, stands apart from the Western world in that its state system is fundamentally linked to religion.

How short a time ago, relatively, the small new European world was easily seizing colonies everywhere, not only without any real resistance but also usually despising the conquered peoples and denying any possible value in their approach to life. On the face of it, it was an overwhelming success. There were no geographic frontiers to it; Western society expanded in a triumph of human independence and power. Then all of a sudden, in the twentieth century, came the discovery of its fragility and friability. The conquests were short-lived and precarious, and this in turn points to defects in the Western view of the world which led to these conquests. Relations with the former colonial world now have turned to the opposite pole, and the Western world often goes to extremes of obsequiousness, but it is difficult yet to estimate the total size of the bill which former colonial countries will present to the West; it is difficult to predict whether the surrender, not only of its last colonies, but of everything it owns will cover the bill.

But the blindness of superiority continues in spite of all and supports the belief that vast regions everywhere on our planet should develop and mature to the level of present-day Western systems, which in theory are the best and in practice the most attractive. The belief is that all those other worlds are only being temporarily prevented by wicked governments or by heavy crises or by their own barbarity and incomprehension from taking the way of Western pluralistic democracy and adopting the Western way of life. Countries are judged on the basis of their progress in this direction. This is a conception which developed out of Western incomprehension of the essence of other worlds, out of the mistake of measuring them with a Western yardstick. The real picture is quite different.

Anguish about our divided world gave birth to the theory of convergence between leading Western countries and the Soviet Union. It is a soothing theory which overlooks the fact that these worlds are not at all developing into similarity; neither one can be transformed into the other without the use of violence. Besides, con-



vergence inevitably means acceptance of the other side's defects, too, and this is hardly desirable.

### The Loss of Courage

A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world has lost its civic courage, both as a whole and separately. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite, causing an impression that the loss of courage extends to the entire society. Of course there are many courageous individuals, but they have no determining influence on public life. Political and intellectual bureaucrats show depression, passivity, and perplexity in their actions, in their statements, and most of all in their theoretical reflections intended to explain how realistic and reasonable as well as intellectually and even morally warranted it is to base state policies on weakness and cowardice. The decline in courage is ironically emphasized by occasional explosions of anger and inflexibility on the part of those same bureaucrats when dealing with weak governments and weak countries that are not supported by anyone, or with currents which cannot offer any resistance. But they get tongue-tied and paralyzed when they deal with powerful governments and threatening forces, with aggressors and international terrorists.

### Society in the West

When the modern Western states were created, the following principle was proclaimed: governments are meant to serve man, and man lives to be free and to pursue happiness. (See, for example, the American Declaration of Independence).

Now at last, during recent decades, technical and social progress has permitted the realization of such aspirations: the welfare state. Every citizen has been granted the desired freedom and material goods in such quantity and of such quality as to guarantee in theory the achievement of happiness, in the morally inferior sense which has come into being during those same decades. In the process, however, one psychological detail has been overlooked: the constant desire to have still more things and a still better life, and the struggle to obtain them, imprints many Western faces with worry and even depression, though it is customary

to conceal such feelings. Active and tense competition permeates all human thoughts without opening a way to free spiritual development. The individual's independence from many types of state pressure has been guaranteed; the majority of people have been granted well-being to an extent their fathers and grandfathers could not even dream about; it has become possible to raise young people according to this ideal, leading them to physical splendour, happiness, possession of material goods, money, and leisure—to an almost unlimited freedom of enjoyment. So who should now renounce all this? Why and for what should one risk one's precious life in defense of common values, and particularly in such nebulous cases as when the security of one's nation must be defended in a distant country?

Even biology knows that habitual extreme safety and well-being are not advantageous for a living organism. Today, well-being in the life of Western Society has begun to reveal its pernicious mask.

### The "Legal" Scale

Western society has given itself the organization best suited to its purpose, based on the letter of the law. The limits of human rights and righteousness are determined by a system of laws; such limits are very broad. People in the West have acquired considerable skill in using, interpreting, and manipulating law, even though the laws tend to be too complicated for an average person to understand without the help of an expert. Any conflict is solved according to the letter of the law, and this is considered to be the supreme solution. If one is right from a legal point of view, nothing more is required; nobody may mention that one could still be not entirely right, and urge self-restraint, a willingness to renounce such legal rights, sacrifice, and selfless risk: it would sound simply absurd. One almost never sees voluntary self-restraint. Everybody operates at the extreme limit of the legal frames. An oil company is legally blameless when it purchases an invention for a new type of energy in order to prevent its use. A food-product manufacturer is legally blameless when he poisons his product to make it last longer: after all, people are free not to buy it.

A society without any objective legal scale is a terrible one indeed. But a society with no other scale but the legal one is not quite worthy of man

either. A society which is based on the letter of the law and never reaches any higher is scarcely taking advantage of the high level of human possibilities. The letter of the law is too cold and formal to have a beneficial influence on society. Whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relations, there is an atmosphere of moral mediocrity, paralyzing man's noblest impulses. And it will be simply impossible to survive the trials of this threatening century with only the support of a legalistic structure.

### Exacting norms

In today's Western society, the inequality has been revealed between the freedom to do good and the freedom to do evil. A statesman who wants to achieve something important and highly constructive for his country has to move cautiously and even timidly; there are thousands of hasty and irresponsible critics around him, parliament and press keep rebuffing him. As he moves ahead, he has to prove that each single step of his is well-founded and absolutely flawless. Actually, an outstanding and particularly gifted person who has unusual and unexpected initiatives in mind hardly gets a chance to assert himself; from the very beginning, traps will be set out all around him. Thus mediocrity triumphs, with the excuse of restrictions imposed by democracy.

It is feasible and easy everywhere to undermine administrative power, which, in fact, has been drastically weakened in all Western countries. The defense of individual rights has reached such extremes as to make society as a whole defenseless against certain individuals. It is time, in the West, to defend not so much human rights as human obligations.

Destructive and irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space. Society appears to have little defense against the abyss of human decadence, such as, for example, the misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, motion pictures full of pornography, crime, and horror. This is considered to be part of freedom, and theoretically counterbalanced by the young people's right not to look or not to accept. Life organized legalistically has thus shown its inability to defend itself against the corrosion of evil.

### The Legal Framework

And what shall we say about the dark realm of criminality as such? Legal frames (especially

in the United States) are broad enough to encourage not only individual freedom but also certain individual crimes. The culprit can go unpunished or obtain undeserved leniency with the support of thousands of public defenders. When a government starts an earnest fight against terrorism, public opinion immediately accuses it of violating the terrorists' civil rights. There are many such cases.

Such a tilt of freedom in the direction of evil has come about gradually, but it was evidently born primarily out of a humanistic and benevolent concept according to which there is no evil inherent in human nature; the world belongs to mankind and all the defects of life are caused by wrong social systems which must be corrected. Strangely enough, though the best social conditions have been achieved in the West, there still is criminality, and there even is considerably more of it than in the pauperized and lawless Soviet society. There is a huge number of prisoners who are termed criminals, but most of them never committed any crime; they merely tried to defend themselves against a lawless state, resorting to means outside of a legal framework.

The press too, of course, enjoys the widest freedom.\* But what sort of use does it make of this freedom?

Here again, the main concern is to avoid infringing the letter of the law. There is no moral responsibility for deformation or disproportion. What sort of responsibility does a journalist have to his readers, or to history? If he has misled public opinion or the government by inaccurate information or wrong conclusions, do we know of any cases where the same journalist or the same newspaper has publicly recognized and rectified such mistakes? No, it does not happen, because it would damage sales. A nation may be the victim of such a mistake, but the journalist always gets away with it. One may safely assume that he will start writing the opposite with renewed self-assurance.

Because instant and credible information has to be given, it becomes necessary to resort to guesswork, rumours, and suppositions to fill in the voids, and none of them will ever be rectified, they will stay on in the readers' memory. How many hasty, immature, superficial, and misleading judgments are expressed everyday, confusing readers, without any verification? The press can both stimulate public opinion and miseducate it. Thus we may see terrorists turned into heroes, or secret matters

\* The word 'Press' is used here to include all media.



pertaining to one's nation's defense publicly revealed, or we may witness shameless intrusions on the privacy of well-known people under the slogan: "Everyone is entitled to know everything." But this is a false slogan, characteristic of a false era: people also have the right not to know, and it is a much more valuable one. The right not to have their divine souls stuffed with gossip, nonsense, vain talk. A person who works and leads a meaningful life does not need this excessive burdening flow of information.

Hastiness and superficiality are the psychic disease of the twentieth century, and more than anywhere else this disease is reflected in the press. In-depth analysis of a problem is anathema to the press. It stops at sensational formulas.

Such as it is, however, the press has become the greatest power within the Western countries, more powerful than the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. One would then like to ask: By what law has it been elected and to whom is it responsible? In the Communist East, a journalist is frankly appointed as a state official. But who has granted Western journalists their power, for how long a time, and with what prerogatives?

There is yet another surprise for someone coming from the East, where the press is rigorously unified: one gradually discovers a common trend of preferences within the Western press as a whole. It is a fashion; there are generally accepted patterns of judgment and there may be common corporate interests, the sum effect being not competition but unification. Enormous freedom exists for the press—but not for the readership, because newspapers mostly give stress and emphasis to those opinions which do not too sharply contradict their own, or the general trend.

Without any censorship, fashionable trends of thought and ideas in the West are carefully separated from those which are not fashionable; nothing is forbidden, but what is not fashionable will hardly ever find its way into periodicals or books or be heard in colleges. Legally, your researches are free, but they are conditioned by the fashion of the day. There is no open violence such as in the East; however, a selection dictated by fashion and the need to match mass standards frequently prevents independent-minded people from giving their contribution to public life. There is a dangerous tendency to form a herd, shutting off successful development. I have received letters in America from

highly intelligent persons, maybe a teacher in a faraway small college who could do much for the renewal and salvation of his country, but his country cannot hear him because the media are not interested in him. This gives birth to strong mass prejudices, to blindness, which is most dangerous in our dynamic era. There is, for instance, a self-deluding interpretation of the contemporary world situation. It works as a sort of petrified armor around people's minds. Human voices from 17 countries of Eastern Europe and Asia cannot pierce it. It will only be broken by the pitiless crowbar of events.

A fact which cannot be disputed is the weakening of human beings in the West, while in the East they are becoming firmer and stronger. Six decades for our people and three decades for the people of Eastern Europe; during that time we have been through a spiritual training far in advance of Western experience. Life's complexity and mortal weight have produced stronger, deeper, and more interesting characters than those generated by standardized Western well-being. Therefore, if our society were to be transformed into yours, it would mean an improvement in certain aspects, but also a change for the worse on some particularly significant scores. It is true, no doubt, that a society cannot remain in an abyss of lawlessness, as is the case in our country. But it is also demeaning for it to elect such mechanical legalistic smoothness as you have. After suffering decades of violence and oppression, the human soul longs for things higher, warmer, and purer than those offered by today's mass living habits, exemplified by the revolting invasion of publicity, by TV stupor, and by intolerable music.

All this is visible to observers from all the worlds of our planet. The Western way of life is less and less likely to become the leading model.

There are various meaningful warnings which history gives a threatened or perishing society—the decadence of art, for instance, or a lack of great statesmen. There are open and evident warnings, too. The center of your democracy and of your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of a sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then; the social system quite unstable and unhealthy.

But the fight, physical and spiritual, for our planet, a fight of cosmic proportions, is not a vague



matter of the future; it has already started. The forces of Evil have begun their decisive offensive, you can feel their pressure, and yet your screens and publications are full of prescribed smiles and raised glasses. What is the joy about?

Very well-known representatives of the Western society, such as George Kennan, say: We cannot apply moral criteria to politics. Thus we mix good and evil, right and wrong, and make space for the absolute triumph of absolute Evil in the world. On the contrary, only moral criteria can help the West against Communism's well-planned world strategy. There are no other criteria. Practical or occasional considerations of any kind will inevitably be swept away by strategy. After a certain level of the problem has been reached, legalistic thinking induces paralysis; it prevents one from seeing the size and meaning of events.

### Understanding Reality

In spite of the abundance of information, or may be because of it, the West has difficulties in understanding reality such as it is. There have been naive predictions by some American experts who believed that Angola would become the Soviet Union's Vietnam or that Cuban expeditions in Africa would best be stopped by special U.S. courtesy to Cuba. Kennan's advice to his own country—to begin unilateral disarmament—belongs to the same category. If you only knew how the youngest of the Moscow Old Square\* officials laugh at your political wizards! As to Fidel Castro, he frankly scorns the United States, sending his troops to distant adventures from his country right next to yours.

However, the most cruel mistake occurred with the failure to understand the Vietnam War. Some people sincerely wanted all wars to stop just as soon as possible; others believed that there should be room for national, or Communist, self-determination in Vietnam, or in Cambodia, as we see today with particular clarity. But members of the U.S. antiwar movement wound up being involved in the betrayal of Far Eastern nations, in a genocide, and in the suffering today imposed on thirty million people there. Do those convinced pacifists hear the moans coming from there? Do they understand their responsibility today? Or do they prefer not to hear? The American intelligent-

sia lost its nerve, and as a consequence thereof danger has come much closer to the United States. But there is no awareness of this. The shortsighted politicians who signed the hasty Vietnam capitulation seemingly gave America a carefree breathing space; however, a hundredfold Vietnam now looms over you. That small Vietnam had been a warning and an occasion to mobilize the nation's courage. But if a full-fledged America suffered a real defeat from a small Communist half-country, how can the West hope to stand firm in the future?

In the twentieth century Western democracy has not won any major war without help and protection from a powerful Continental ally whose philosophy and ideology it did not question. In World War II against Hitler, instead of winning that war with its own forces, which would certainly have been sufficient, Western democracy cultivated another enemy who would prove worse and more powerful yet: Hitler never had so many resources and so many people, nor did he offer any attractive ideas, or have such a large number of supporters in the West—a potential fifth column—as the Soviet Union does. At present, some Western voices already have spoken of obtaining protection from a third power against aggression in the next world conflict, if there is one; in this case the shield would be China. But I would not wish this on any country in the world. First of all, it is again a doomed alliance with Evil; also, it would grant the United States a respite, but when at a later date China with its billion people would turn around armed with American weapons, America itself would fall prey to a genocide similar to the one perpetrated in Cambodia in our days.

And yet—no weapons, no matter how powerful, can help the West until it overcomes its loss of will-power. In a state of psychological weakness, weapons become a burden for the capitulating side. To defend oneself, one must also be ready to die; there is little such readiness in a society raised in the cult of material well-being. Nothing is left, then, but concessions, attempts to gain time, and betrayal. Thus, at the shameful Belgrade conference, free Western diplomats in their weakness surrendered the line where enslaved members of Helsinki Watch groups are sacrificing their lives.

Western thinking has become conservative: the world situation should stay as it is at any cost, there should be no changes. This debilitating dream of a status quo is the symptom of a society which has come to the end of its development. But one must be blind in order not to see that the oceans

\* The Old Square in Moscow (Staraya Plashchad) is the place where the headquarters of the Central Committee of the CPSU are located it is the real name of what in the West is conventionally referred to as "the Kremlin."

no longer belong to the West, while the land under its domination keeps shrinking. The two so-called world wars (they were by no means on a world scale, not yet) meant the internal self-destruction of the small progressive West, which has thus prepared its own end. The next war (which does not have to be an atomic one) may well bury Western civilization forever.

Facing such a danger, with such historical values, at such a high level of realization of freedom and apparently of devotion to freedom, how is it possible to lose to such an extent the will to defend oneself?

How has this unfavourable relation of forces come about? How did the West decline from its triumphal march to its present sickness? Have there been fatal turns and losses of direction in its development? It does not seem so. The West kept advancing socially in accordance with its proclaimed intentions, with the help of brilliant technological progress. And all of a sudden it found itself in its present state of weakness.

#### Where does the mistake lie?

This means that the mistake must be at the root, at the very basis of human thinking in the past centuries. I refer to the prevailing Western view of the world which was first born during the Renaissance and found its political expression starting in the period of the Enlightenment. It became the basis for government and social science and could be defined as rationalistic humanism or humanistic autonomy: the proclaimed and enforced autonomy of man from any higher force above him. It could also be called anthropocentricity, with man seen as the center of everything that exists.

The turn introduced by the Renaissance evidently was inevitable historically. The Middle Ages had come to a natural end by exhaustion, becoming an intolerable despotic repression of man's physical nature in favor of the spiritual one. Then, however, we turned our backs upon the Spirit and embraced all that is material with excessive and unwarranted zeal. This new way of thinking, which had imposed on us its guidance, did not admit the existence of intrinsic evil in man, nor did it see any higher task than the attainment of happiness on earth. It based modern Western civilization on the dangerous trend toward worshiping man and his material needs. Everything beyond physical well-being and accumulation of material goods, all human requirements and characteristics of a subtler and higher nature,

were left outside the range of attention of the state and the social system, as if human life did not have any higher meaning. That provided access for evil, of which in our days there is a free and constant flow. But freedom does not in the least solve all the problems of human life, and it even adds a number of new ones.

At that, in early democracies, as in American democracy at the time of its birth, all individual human rights were granted because man is God's creature. That is, freedom was given to the individual conditionally, on the assumption of his constant religious responsibility. Such was the heritage of the preceding thousand years. Two hundred years ago—even fifty years ago—it would have seemed quite impossible, in America, that an individual could be granted boundless freedom simply for the satisfaction of his instincts or whims. Subsequently, however, all such limitations were discarded everywhere in the West; a total liberation occurred from the moral heritage of Christian centuries, with their great reserves of mercy and sacrifice. Meanwhile, state systems were becoming increasingly materialistic. The West ended up by truly enforcing human rights, sometimes even excessively, but man's sense of responsibility to God and society grew dimmer and dimmer. In the past few decades, the legalistic, selfish aspect of Western thinking has reached its apogee, and the world is now in a harsh spiritual crisis and a political impasse. All the glorified technological achievements of Progress, including the conquest of outer space, do not redeem the twentieth century's moral poverty, which no one could imagine even as late as in the nineteenth century.

As humanism in its development became more and more materialistic, it made itself increasingly accessible to speculation and manipulation, at first by socialism and then by Communism. So that Karl Marx was able to say in 1844 that "Communism is naturalized humanism."

This statement turned out to be not entirely meaningless. One does see the same stones in the foundations of a despiritualized humanism and of any type of socialism: endless materialism; freedom from religion and religious responsibility, which under Communist regimes reaches the stage of anti-religious dictatorship; concentration on social structures, with a seemingly scientific approach (this is typical of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century and of Marxism). Not by coincidence, all of Communism's meaningless pledges and oaths are about Man, with a capital M, and



his earthly happiness. At first glance it seems an ugly parallel: common traits in the thinking and way of life of today's West and today's East? But such is the logic of materialistic development.

The interrelationship is such, too, that the current of materialism which is farthest Left always ends up being stronger, more attractive, and finally, victorious, because it is more consistent. Humanism without its Christian heritage cannot resist such competition. We watch this process over the past centuries and, especially in the past decades, on a world scale, as the situation becomes increasingly dramatic. Liberalism was inevitably displaced by radicalism, radicalism had to surrender to socialism, and socialism could never resist Communism. The Communist regime in the East could stand and grow, thanks to the enthusiastic support of an enormous number of Western intellectuals who felt a kinship with Communism and refused to see its crimes. When they could no longer ignore them, they tried to justify them. In our Eastern countries, Communism has suffered a complete ideological defeat; it is zero and less than zero. But Western intellectuals still look at it with interest and with empathy, and this is precisely what makes it so immensely difficult for the West to withstand the East.

I am not examining here the disastrous case of a world war and the changes which it would produce in society. As long as we wake up every morning under a peaceful sun, we have to lead an everyday life. There is a disaster, however, which has already been under way for quite some time. I am referring to the calamity of a despiritualized and irreligious humanistic consciousness.

To such consciousness, man is the touchstone in judging and evaluating everything on earth. Imperfect man, who is never free of pride, self-interest, envy, vanity, and dozens of other defects. We are now experiencing the consequences of mistakes which had not been noticed at the beginning of the journey. On the way from the Renaissance to our days we have enriched our experience, but we have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity which used to restrain our passions and our irresponsibility. We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find, out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life. In the East, it is destroyed by the dealings and machinations of the

ruling party. In the West, commercial interests tend to suffocate it. This is the real crisis. The split in the world is less terrible than the fact that the same disease is plaguing its two main sections.

If humanism were right in declaring that man is born to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature. It cannot be unrestrained enjoyment of everyday life. It cannot be the search for the best ways to obtain material goods and then cheerfully get the most out of them. It has to be the fulfillment of a permanent, earnest duty, so that one's life journey may become an experience of moral growth, so that one may leave life a better human being than one started it. It is imperative to review the table of widespread human values. Its present incorrectness is astounding. It is not possible to reduce the assessment of the President's performance to the question of how much money one makes or of unlimited availability of gasoline. Only voluntarily inspired self-restraint can raise man above the stream of materialism.

It would be retrogression to attach oneself today to the ossified formulas of the Enlightenment. Social dogmatism leaves us completely helpless before the trials of our times.

Even if we are spared destruction by war, our lives will have to change if we want to save life from self-destruction. We cannot avoid revising the fundamental definitions of human life and human society. Is it true that man is above everything? Is there no Higher Spirit above him? Is it right that man's life and society's activities have to be determined by material expansion in the first place? Is it permissible to promote such expansion to the detriment of our spiritual integrity?

If the world has not come to its end, it has approached a major turn in history, equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It will exact from us a spiritual upsurge, we shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life where our physical nature will not be cursed as in the Middle Ages, but, even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon as in the Modern Era.

This ascension will be similar to climbing onto the next anthropological stage. No one on earth has any way left but—upward.

Based on the text of Mr. Solzhenitsyn's speech at Harvard, published in the *National Review*.



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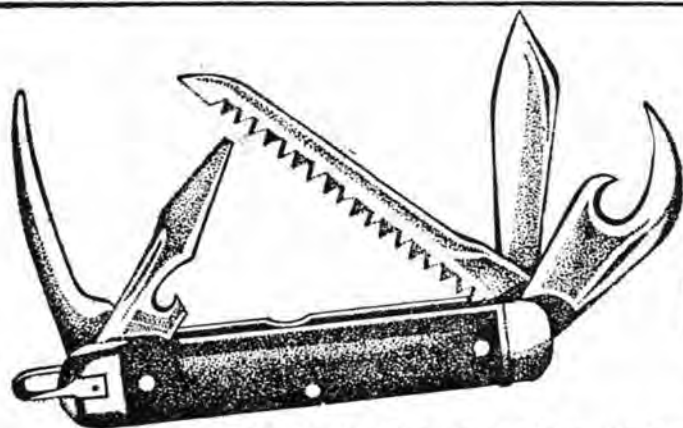
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## SOME HOME TRUTHS

We all ought to know that Swaraj will not at once or, I think, even for a long time to come, be better government or greater happiness for the people. Elections and their corruptions, injustice, and the power and tyranny of wealth and inefficiency of administration will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination.

★

A free way of life would be an impossibility if the fundamental right to acquire, hold and dispose of property, be nullified. Citizens would then be only serfs dependent on the mercy of those in authority.

★

Apathy and indifference characterise public management whereas the profit motive results in vigilance and good husbandry.

★

The individual is the working reality of the nation, not the machine called the State.

★

The State must rule the nation, but the nation should be allowed to live and not die in the process.

★

We should not seek power. Power attained by devious and unworthy ways is a bad thing for the nation. Power that comes unsought and the responsibility which comes with it are real and worthy.

★

The phrase 'public enterprise' is a misnomer. It is State enterprise involving official management and bureaucratic apathy. The 'public' are the people and not the State.

★

What the people of India require is good government and not merely 'stable' government. The stress ought to be on good government which does not seek to make serfs of citizens.

C. Rajagopalachari

# The rights of the child



## Every child has the right

to affection, love, and  
understanding ...

to adequate nutrition and  
medical care ...

to free education ...

to a name and nationality ...

to special care, if handicapped ...

to be among the first to receive  
relief in times of disaster ...

to learn to be a useful member of  
society and to develop individual  
abilities ...

to be brought up in a spirit of  
peace and universal brotherhood ...

to enjoy these rights, regard-  
less of race, colour, sex, religion,  
national, or social origin ...

**U.N. Declaration of the rights of the child**



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