

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

January 1987
No 392

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The Face of Indian Communalism

The Minorities

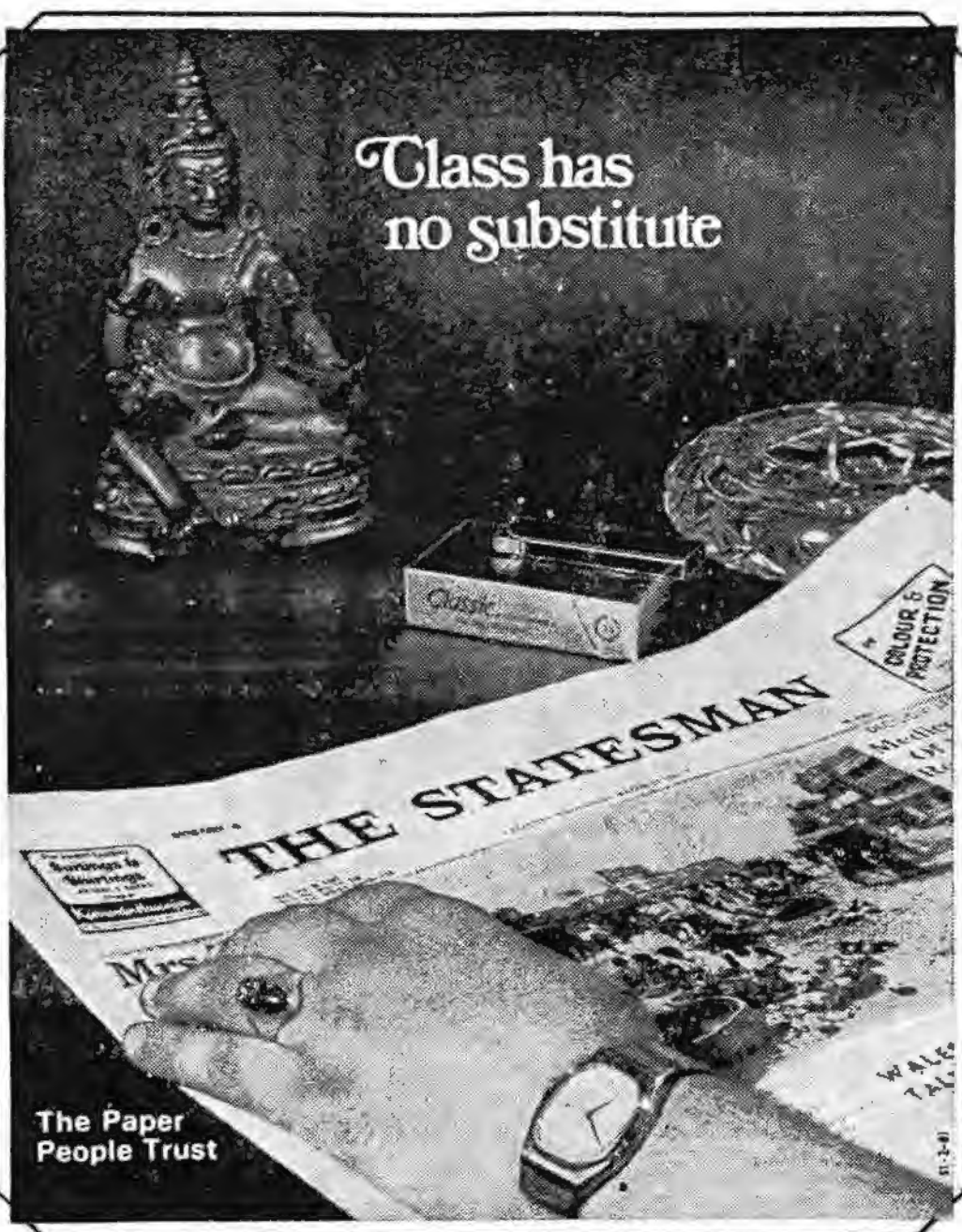
M.V. Kamath
Kamila Tyabji

Dilip Simeon
K.F. Rustomji

Aloo J. Dastur

N.G. Jog reviews
'Eight Lives'

Class has
no substitute



The Paper
People Trust

Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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Tel: 27 39 14

January 1987
No. 392
Price Rs. 5

Dear Reader,

We enter the new year with mixed feelings. On the one hand the government of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has been attempting to get away from the outmoded economic and fiscal policies of its predecessors. It has also established its bonafides in seeking solutions to long-standing problems even if it has shown lack of courage to follow through such solutions due to party considerations.

On the other hand one-party dominance is again on the upswing curve with parties in the opposition refusing to reconcile themselves to the changing times. They have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing.

In the midst of all this the problem that transcends all party considerations (even if politicians seek to derive maximum mileage out of it) is the continuing communal discord. *Freedom First* begins the new year with a discussion of this problem which like a nagging bad tooth asserts itself time and again. Citizens and intellectuals have to face this, analyse and try to find ways of reconciling the claims of ethnicity with that of nationalism. It is not surprising that there are no pat solutions.

We have invited a number of contributors to write on this. They view the problem from the light of their own perspective. The views expressed are their own and not necessarily those of *Freedom First*. In fact we have reservations on some of the analyses made but we believe that unless different views are aired we will be no nearer to a resolution of the problem of 'communalism'.

Our thanks to *The Statesman* for their permission to reproduce Mr. Masani's comments on men and matters.

The Editors

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PLUS: Many Voices; Cabbages & Kings; Book Reviews

We wish our readers a happy new year

Published by J.R. Patel for the Democratic Research Service and printed by him at Parsiana Publications Pvt. Ltd., 300 Perin Nariman Street, Bombay 400 001
Typeset at Ace Forotypesetters, 6, Sailor Building, 3rd floor, (Above Pynes Restaurant), 373 D.N. Road, Bombay 1.

WITH MANY VOICES

*"The deep moans round with many voices. Come, my friends
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world!" — Tennyson*

The only fat people on the streets of Dhaka are policemen.

The Economist, October 18

The Indian litigant is mortal. But Indian litigation is immortal.

V.R. Krishna Iyer, *Indian Express*, October 5

The future (of Indian Cinema) looks bleak. There are at present no new stories, no new stars, and Mr. Bachchan's waistline is thickening.

The Economist, September 30

Aristo Washing Powder prepared by Japanese Process of 21st Century gives Thundering Cleanliness to Clothes.

Advertisement *The Times of India*, November 12

Whatever the 1947 partition has achieved, it has not managed to change the nature of the people of this sub-continent. The same bribery and corruption that exist in India exist in Pakistan.

Sunday Mid-Day, December 7

Doordarshan is in the hands of petty men, indeed dangerous men, who are out to do further damage to the fragile unity of the country.

R. Gopal Krishna, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, October 19

Mr. Sharad Pawar had nowhere else to go but back into the parent Congress Party.

The Times of India, December 5

It is hard to imagine any catastrophe for communism so great as a communist India...

J.K. Galbraith, *The Voice of the Poor*

While the Prime Minister termed the Pakistan handling of the (recent) hijacking 'a bungling' his own government in Parliament referred to the Rajghat fiasco (Oct 2, 86) as security 'lapses'.

Kaiser-e-Hind, November 1986

The contrast between the culture of ancient India and that of modern India seems sufficient to disprove Darwin's theory of evolution upwards.

N.A. Palkhivala, Chairman's statement at the AGM of the Associated Cement Companies, December 17

In the country's present climate, it is foolish to imagine that persons with any self-respect will be made ministers.

Ashok Mitra, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, November 2.

The north is generally bad as far as women are concerned whereas Bengal, Maharashtra and the South are perfectly safe.

Anjolie Ela Menon, *Destination India*, November 1986.

(Social protest in the United States) is a new industry, a new way of making money and accumulating affluence. Three things are necessary to start this business: a pen, a guitar, and a free society as one's professional space.

Leopold Tyramand, *Notebooks of a Dilettante* cited by Paul Hollander, *Encounter*, Pamphlet No. 15

Through the litter of ruined careers to Thorpe, Profumo and Parkinson, adultery ... predominates; the worst offence an English politician can commit is to take a mistress. President Mitterand said that if he had to select a Cabinet with such restrictions placed upon him, he would only have 40 homosexuals left to choose from.

Britan Masters, *The Spectator*, August 30

Whether the TV set deserves the sobriquet "the idiot box" or not, Doordarshan is certainly making idiots of all non-Hindi knowing people

K. Subramaniam, *The Times of India* December 3

Opposition parties — particularly the Janata Party — are very sore over Pawar's action. But their own record in opportunism is not any better. No tears need be shed for them.

K.R. Sundar Rajan, *The Sunday Observer*, December 14

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

"the time has come," the
walrus said,
"to talk of many things:
of shoes-and ships-
and sealing wax-
of cabbages -
and kings-"

- Lewis Carroll



Ecumenical Black Money

Remember Ms. Gandhi consoling us that inflation was a global phenomenon? Rajiv Gandhi too can now say that black money is a global phenomenon. For recently, it has been discovered that it is flourishing in most European countries and all sections of the population from labour in sweatshops to respectable professions engage in it. Half of all the cars that are repaired in West Germany are done by a 'friend' and for cash paid; there are no receipts given nor questions asked. Architects are noted in Britain as being the most active of the moonlighters. Your costs go down one-third if you are prepared not to ask a receipt for the amount paid and for the service rendered.

Italy leads with 20% of all goods and services being in this sector. In France between a million and a million and a half are in this useful pursuit; in West Germany between two to three million. In Belgium there are 300,000 such worthies and Sweden has 750,000. For Yugoslavia no figures are available but it is suspected that one-tenth of the labour is in this on a regular basis.

Working hours have been revised and these seem to work to the advantage of these sections of the population. In many countries of Europe there are flexible hours and not fixed hours of work; by this, one has to put in certain hours every day at work. This works to their convenience for they can moonlight during the day!

Economists and social analysts have come to the view that one can do nothing about it. In fact more and more economists are taking the liberal view that a little black economy may be a tonic with some boosting effect for the national economy.

Lest our leftist friends argue that this is a dialectical process natural to a capitalist economy it may be pointed out that in Hungary at least 70% of the

population is in the moonlighting business. And East European governments are afraid of 'eliminating it and have started to try and channel it in more productive ways.'

"In Search Of Leadership"

There will be unanimous agreement that one of the qualities lacking in many walks of public life in our country is that of leadership. It is surprising that there have not been popular books on this elusive quality in post-independence India. Learned studies are aplenty but those are for fellow-scholars.

Mr. Russi Lala whose works, readers of *Freedom First* will no doubt be familiar with, has written a most readable book on Leadership and he has packed it with instances that are eloquent and instructive. He writes on leadership at all levels not necessarily only at the political level though the book has numerous examples from the political arena. One quality that needed emphasising and which he does is to stress the quality of sympathy that is essential to leadership and which is sadly wanting in several quarters.

A number of line drawings make the book attractive.

It was only appropriate that two leaders each distinguished in his own chosen area, Mr. J.R.D. Tata and Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw should be associated with the release of the book which took place on 25 September 1986.

Freedom First hopes to carry a review of the book in April.

Our Defaulting 'Statesmen'

Caesar's wife must be above suspicion. In conjugal life one must not only not cheat but appear not to do so. One

supposes that politics too is like conjugal life - quarrelling like Kilkenny cats at one moment and making it up the next.

In our country we violate the rules of conjugal life and of politics with impunity. Our feminist friends do their bit to highlight bride burning. But why is it that our friends in politics, our newspaper columnists and others do not raise an issue equally harmful and damaging?

It appears that a sizeable number of parliamentarians and ministers have not paid their municipal, electricity and water dues. The long list of defaulters of 'distinguished statesmen of our country' include such Union Ministers like A.B. Khan Chaudhry who heads the list (owing as he does Rs. 32,492), P. Shiv Shankar, Vengal Rao, M.M. Jacob and Jagdish Tytler.

It is also reported that disclosure of this did not create any ripples in Parliament. The reason for this is not far to seek for, "as many as 318 sitting members in the Lok Sabha ... have chosen to ignore this basic civic obligation." It would appear that members of both the ruling party and those occupying opposition benches have equally to share the blame or the fame which ever way you look at it. Some of us may perhaps remember an eminent politician now no longer with us who declared a few years ago that he forgot to pay his income tax dues? His loss of memory was excused. The present progeny too have forgotten their civic obligations and they too are not visited with the penalties that you and I will have to incur - something I discovered at terrible cost, but I will not reveal this 'state' secret!

RS

The Electorate in No Fool!

The Chief Minister of Karnataka, Mr. Ramkrishna Hegde has warned that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is leading the country towards one-party rule. The immediate provocation was Mr. Sharad Pawar's not-so-surprising return to the Congress (I).

If Mr. Rajiv Gandhi is attempting to take the country in the direction of one-party rule, so did Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Indira Gandhi. And they were rather successful even if, in the process, India continues to be a genuine democracy when compared to many a 'Third World' country.

If Rajiv Gandhi succeeds, blame the politicians belonging to the so-called opposition parties. Don't blame the electorate.

We had two false dawns in 1967 and again in 1977 when there were prospects of a real alternative to the ruling party, emerging. On both occasions, the worthies in the opposition parties flattered only to deceive.

After the electorate reduced Mr. Nehru's majority in Delhi and threw out some of his state governments it was expected that that signalled the end, at long last, of one party dominance. Instead the electorate, for all its pains, got in the states a bunch of quarrelling politicians as shortsighted and as power hungry as the Congress politicians they had voted out of office. The united front governments (the infamous Samyukta Vidhayak Dals or SVD) were pre-occupied in the game of numbers and engineering defections (remember, the *ayaa Rams and the gayaa Rams*?) to keep themselves afloat as long as possible.

Disgusted with the behaviour of the opposition parties the electorate voted the whole pack out. Come 1971 and Mrs. Indira Gandhi coasted to a massive majority leaving the rest of the field far behind.

The arrogance of power and the fear of losing her seat in parliament led Mrs. Gandhi to over-react and she imposed the "emergency". Confident that she continued to have the people's trust she called elections and was soundly beaten.

Once again the parties opposing Mrs. Gandhi were given a chance. The Janata Party (which was better than the SVD experiment of 1967 but really a united front wrongly called 'party') was

voted to office with a massive mandate from the people. What happened thereafter is recent history and hardly needs recapitulation.

Disgusted and disappointed, the electorate brought Mrs. Gandhi back as the lesser of the two evils – for that is what politics in India has been reduced to: a choice between evils. Then came Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and the entry of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. The people, for whatever reason, decided, in their wisdom, to give him a mandate the size of which neither his grandfather nor mother was vouchsafed.

Knowing that the field is clear, with those in opposing parties far behind, Rajiv Gandhi is following the logic of power in seeking to consolidate. His attempt to invite all those who belonged to the Congress tribe to return to the fold is quite legitimate. After all, Sharad Pawar is not the only prodigal. It is an unfortunate fact of Indian political life that a large number of politicians now in various opposition parties were, at one time or another Congressmen. Their going back to the Congress would, in a manner of speaking clear the air and create conditions for a genuine alternative to the Congress. Therefore rather than whine about it, one should get down to exploring the possibility of organising a new political party which is qualitatively different from the one now in power and from the others mouthing one form of socialism or another.

Is such a development possible in the near future? Some months ago a group of well-meaning friends decided that it was time a liberal middle-of-the-road party emerged to take the place of the Swatantra Party that was so thoughtlessly killed by equally well-meaning but naive people some years ago. They held a meeting to which were invited a cross section of the intelligentsia including former members of the Swatantra Party some of who are in the Janata Party or the Bharatiya Janata Party and others who decided to stay away from party politics after the demise of the Swatantra Party at the national level.

A draft statement of the party's objectives was drawn up and it was decided that this should be discussed at a later meeting. But there was one fundamental issue which I suppose ensured that the project would be a non-starter. That was 'power'. The party

should be formed quickly argued some because it has to gear itself for the next elections. In other words the proposed new party was already being viewed as an electioneering machine. That stood for certain principles and policies was accepted as being important but sub-consciously of secondary importance.

Another rock on which the new party idea foundered was on the question of leadership. No, I do not mean that those sitting around the table were promoting their respective claims. That would have been understandable and even welcome. But the question here was of looking for ready-made 'national' leaders. Three or four names were passed around. It would not be fair to mention names. Suffice it to say that of these one is most disinclined to give up his present party affiliation; the second has made his peace with the ruling party; the third is busy tying himself in knots and generally giving a poor account of himself and the last is playing Hamlet.

A new party to carry conviction with the electorate must prove that it is not interested in power *anyhow*; it should be prepared to stand or fall on the strength of what it stands for however unpopular its stance may be on any given issue; it must not only bolster the democratic system but help in setting norms in public morality and decency; it must not, under any circumstances, compromise with religious and obscurantist groups; it must promote pragmatic economic policies shorn of ideological blinkers and a foreign policy that not only safeguards national self-interest but pays more than lip sympathy to human rights *everywhere*. Above all it must carry credibility.

Is such a party possible? Or is it, as some friends describe it, an utopian dream? Those who call it such are in effect saying that the people of India are fools and would not support a party that not only says the right things but is seen to mean them. So used have our people become to political chicanery and dishonesty that it will indeed be a long haul for a party that tries to be honest and truthful. But at the end of the road it would get the people's support and emerge as a genuine national alternative.

Until such time, one-party dominance will continue, for the people will support the devil they are used to rather than the devils who fooled them twice. **SVR**

The Face of Indian Communalism

M.V. Kamath

It would be a mistake to think a communal riot takes place because Aurangzeb proved to be a tyrant some hundreds of years ago or that Mohammad of Gazni sacked Somnath. It is even unlikely that the man who wields the knife and the torch is aware of history. Behind every act of violence is an expression of frustration, however subliminal, of the inability of two streams of culture to merge into one.

In India the word "Communalism" has come to assume a pejorative meaning. One speaks of the 'canker' of communalism meaning thereby something which infects or destroys, corrupts and corrodes. It refers not only to Hindu-Muslim or Hindu-Christian conflict but to tensions between all communities, mostly on a one-to-one basis. Tensions among Hindus intracastewise, however are rare, though, at the turn of the century, they did exist in the south between *Shaivites* and *Vaishnavites*; and there is at least one case on record of a suit going up to the Privy Council on whether a *Vanishnavite* temple elephant should be ritually marked the northern or the southern way.

Tension Points

Tensions between Hindus and Christians, too, are rare though again there have been minor riots in the south in the seventies over the naming of Kanyakumari and access to Vivekananda Rock offshore. The tensions have died down since then and life apparently has been going on smoothly in the disturbed areas.

Caste tensions have existed in Maharashtra for a long time and they flared up in their most virulent form after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by a brahmin from Pune. But that was a temporary phenomenon too, and one does not hear of brahmin-non-brahmin antagonisms flaring into violence.

Caste conflicts in a virulent form exist in parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the formation of caste "senas" armed to the teeth have made the two states a bye-word for social backwardness. Last year there were 1,500 murders in Uttar Pradesh, 682 in Madhya Pradesh and 759 in Bihar, though it is fair to say that not all murders were a result of caste

animosities. One community — the Harijans — seem, however, to have suffered most and there is no end in sight.

Down the decades one never hears of Hindu-Sikh antagonisms and at one time Sikhs were even known as the sword-arm of Hinduism. How they came to consider themselves separate from Hindus and from that stance came to demand a separate Sikh state, is another matter. The situation was exacerbated in the early eighties with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi trying to play one section of the Sikh community against another, resulting, in the end, to the politicising of religion and the polarisation of Sikhs and Hindus into two camps. One thing led to another; unable to undo the mess she had herself created, the Prime Minister was led to order operation Blue Star. What was strictly intended to be a surgical operation with a secular content, turned out to be a necessary but unhappy mistake. The Sikhs perceived this to be an assault on their religion which it was not and never intended to be. Events then unfolded like Greek tragedy. Mrs. Gandhi was murdered. That, in turn, led to ghastly killings in Delhi with Hindus turning against innocent Sikhs. In an orgy the capital had not seen since the ugly killings of 1947. Now, certainly in Punjab, there is a great Sikh/Hindu divide that remains to be bridged.

Who is a Hindu?

Who is a Hindu? How does he react to external social stimuli? Writing in *Mainstream* (2 August 1986) Dr. R.K. Hazari made the point that "it has not been possible to define Hinduism during a few thousand years". "Consequently", he added, "it has also been difficult to positively define who is a Hindu". In India which is the only "home"

of the Hindus (if we ignore Nepal and in some ways parts of Indonesia and Thailand), Hindus are defined negatively. For the purpose of the decennial Census a Hindu is defined by administrative or informal instruction since 1951 as a person other than belonging to the Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Zoroastrian religions, or other than Sikh, Jain or Buddhist. It is interesting in the event, that the Hindu does not have a positive personality. Like the upanishadic definition of God — not this, not this — a Hindu is one who is not anything else. His is a residual image.



Amorphous and non proselytizing

This, by itself, is an extraordinary state of affairs. In the absence of a fixed and unchanging image we have an amorphous and boundless image that is hard to contain. As Girilal Jain (*The Times of India*, 10 September, 1986) put it, "Left to themselves, the Hindus would like to behave as if all differences are unreal or at best superficial ... possessed (as they were) by the passion for proclaiming universal brotherhood as if their own identity does not matter".

Hinduism, as is well-known, did not grow by retail conversion as much by wholesale assimilation. The early Hindus — though they were then not called as such — made no attempt to convert

the numerous tribes they encountered in the course of their settling down in this vast and varied country to their way of thinking. They did not resort to confrontation. That was alien to their way of thinking and functioning. They accepted the tribes as they were, totems, customs and all. Their spread was thus largely painless and non-intimidating. In what subsequently came to be called Hinduism, there was a place for everybody and everything. No custom was condemned, no god dismissed, no group ostracised or killed outright. This had been both Hinduism's strength and weakness. The weakness lies in Hinduism's disparate-ness. Its many castes can go their separate ways. But that, paradoxically, is also its strength. In their very disparity they are one.

A simile comes to mind. A Middle East scholar once remarked that a Turk

was like a stone; if it hit you, it only caused minor irritation. A stone can be pounded – and ultimately destroyed. Sand is the ultimate division. It cannot be smashed further. It takes any number of blows. It merely gives way only to get together again.

Disparate yet Common Tradition

What, in the circumstances, has kept Hindus together? One is Hinduism's flexibility with the *varnas* themselves being fairly open-ended. Another is its common tradition. Disparate as the communities and castes within the Hindu fold are, they look with alarm at any challenge to their freedom to be themselves. Hence the unease when confronted with the proselytising content of Islam and Christianity. The threat to any one caste is perceived as a threat to all.

In feudal and even during early British days, that is to say in pre-industrial India, the lack of quick and easy com-

munication from one part of the country to another and the resultant fossilisation of attitudes prevented concerted action by Hindus as a whole when sectionally confronted with alien forces. Thus, no force did – or would – rush to its succour when Mohammad of Ghazni sacked Somnath. There was, then, the shadow between one community that was culturally one but politically divided. Culture – the Hindu-ness – kept people one. Politics kept them separate. It is only now, late in the twentieth century, after having been buffeted by fundamentalist storms, that Hindus are at last beginning to feel politically as well as culturally one. This has brought its own set of problems.

Reasons Behind Riots

This is not to say that Hindus are functioning, at last under the umbrella of a unified religion. Far from it. Indeed that is the burden of some complaints

We represent in India all the principal religions of the earth, and it is a matter of deep humiliation to confess that we are a house divided against itself, that we Hindus and Mussalmans are flying at one another.

MAHATMA GANDHI,

GANDHI VERSUS THE EMPIRE, 1932



that Hindus in one part of the country remain unmoved by the woes of Hindus in another part. Some Hindus have even gone to the extent of saying that in their own country they are becoming second-rate citizens! They still do not act in unison. Tensions thus tend to be localised. Riots in Bhiwandi remain confined to Bhiwandi. They do not even spread to Bombay. It would therefore be incorrect to say that we have a "communal" problem. What we have is a 'sectoral' problem and *that* is a wholly different thing. Sectoral problems arise when, in any one given sector, economic interests of two communities clash, as they tend to do. An analysis of the 1982 riots in Baroda has brought out the interesting observation by a commentator (*Indian Express*, 3 January

1983) that they were anything but communal. According to him, "leading citizens from both the communities in Baroda insist that all the 17 riots during the 14 months before December 12, 1982 were triggered by bootleggers from both sides and were definitely not communal". Involved in the riots were both Hindu and Muslim bootleggers with their gambling dens and their political links. The Hindu bootleggers were from the Bhoi community, a Marathi-speaking Scheduled Caste. Fishing was their profession and they depended on Muslims and Marathas for the sale of their fish. But bootlegging was the mainstay of the poor Muslims, and it was a demonstrably paying, if risky, proposition. The Bhois understandably started to offer competition. The rivalry

between the Bhois and the poor Muslims was economic, not social and certainly not communal.

The question may well be asked: but why did poor Muslims go in for bootlegging? The answer should be self-evident: because they were poor, because they had no leadership, because they had no education and because their young had no entry into respectable jobs. It should come as no surprise that in the 1985-86 competitive examinations for the civil services there was not a single Muslim name among the top one hundred. Like water flowing to a lower level, people (of whatever caste or religion) tend to move into professions that are easy to get into. Interestingly enough Muslims feel the

lash of communalism when they tend to rise on the economic ladder and thus pose a challenge to an entrenched class or caste. That, at any rate, has been the verdict on the Bhiwandi riots. It is an unhealthy situation that the Muslims find themselves in.

It would not be telling the whole truth to say that basically all communal riots are economic in origin, though many demonstrably are. Some, surely, are a hang-over from the past and memories of Islamic hegemony of over 900 years. The collective humiliation is sometimes strongly recalled over some of the most insignificant issues. In Meerut, for instance, the fight over a *peepul* tree first led to the murder of a Hindu priest. What existed under the tree originally: a *mandir* or a *mazar*? After more than a dozen people killed and a loss of some Rs.10 crores, the issue has not yet been settled and is probably awaiting another riot over another minor incident before wisdom dawns.

Triumphs of Irrationality

The Hindu psyche has still to adjust itself to the reality of being master of its own land after nearly eleven centuries. The past frequently and unpleasantly intrudes into the present and the disturbed psyche erupts into irrational violence. Between 1968 and 1978 there have been 3,218 communal 'incidents' with a high of 519 in 1969 and a low of 169 in the emergency year of 1976. In 1979 there were 304 clashes in which 261 were killed. In 1980 there were 427 clashes in which there were 375 killed. In 1981 there were 319 clashes resulting in 196 dead and in 1982 there were 474 clashes with 238 dead. Judging by their numbers (both killed and wounded) it would appear that the majority of those killed were Muslims, but whether this was because the initiative was taken by Hindus or because Muslims being usually confined to known localities were more easily identified and therefore subject to majority wrath, it is hard to say.

Sparks are easily lit. A Hindu religious procession passing through a predominantly Muslim locality or thoroughfare becomes a source of tension. The 'main reason' behind riots in Malegaon (June 1983) has been attributed to, of all things, 'eve-teasing'. Whether there would have been a riot if the teaser happened to belong to the same caste or

community as the teased is another matter. In Uttar Pradesh recently, an entire Harijan village was set on fire because a Harijan allegedly wanted to marry a girl from a higher caste. *Izzat*, or considerations pertaining to caste honour and alleged slights gratuitously offered by one community to another have led to riots. Bursting of crackers outside a Mosque to celebrate India's victory in the Prudential Cup Cricket Tournament led to 'incidents' in Malegaon, again. There is no end to the nature of "slights", real or seen to be so and no way of saying how they will be perceived, and acted upon. Irrationality too often wins the day.

The Hindu-Muslim Divide

There is no way in which history can be rewritten or the excesses of the past wished away. But it would be a mistake to think a communal riot takes place in a given locality because Aurangzeb proved to be a tyrant some hundreds of years ago or that Mohammad of Ghazni sacked Somanth (many in his army, incidentally, were Hindus and the primary aim seemed to be loot as much as breaking the idol). It is even unlikely that the man who wields the knife and the torch is aware of history. That said, it needs hardly to be added that behind every act of violence is an expression of frustration, however subliminal, of the inability of two streams of culture to merge into one.

And yet, this is only a part of the story. It is that Muslims *en masse* have kept out of the Indian mainstream. It is well to remember that when Sir Syed Ahmed campaigned against the then Congress in the early part of the century he was campaigning not against Hindus *per se* as against what he felt the likelihood of Bengalis dominating the socio-economic scene of India at that period. When he addressed the British India Association (not, by any chance, a Muslim organisation but almost a private club of rich taluqdars, both Muslim and Hindu) in Lucknow, he put it straight to his audience whether as men of noble birth they would like to be dominated by Bengali commoners. And the organisation he set up to fight the Congress was called Patriotic Association open alike to Hindus and Muslims of noble birth, which, of course, meant taluqdars and other rich men and powerful landlords. The rich then were not about to surrender their perks and privileges to the Congress *Koi hais*.

The tragedy is that memories of the distant past are incontrovertibly mixed with memories of the immediate past, namely, the formation of Pakistan. For many Hindus it has been as if, in the very act of getting rid of the British, the Muslims have had the last laugh in their refusal to remain the ruled in a land they themselves had once ruled. It does not matter that vast areas of India were never – or only intermittently – ruled by Muslims. It also does not matter that very often the administration was entirely in the hands of Hindus – the Muslims then were too small a minority to keep the Hindus out of the government of areas under their domination.

"The Muslim Dilemma"

Why have Muslims refused to identify themselves wholly with the Hindus? Prof. R. Suntheralingam in his book *Indian Nationalism* has one explanation to offer. "The Muslim dilemma" according to him, "over Indian nationalism was far from being a case of quirk behaviour; in a fundamental sense it attests to the revolutionary ideas embedded in the doctrine of nationalism and the general realisation amongst the Muslims that the triumph of this ideology would reduce them to a state of permanent political subjugation by the more numerous Hindus. Ideas such as popular sovereignty, democratic representation and majority rule which were invoked in the name of nationalism were deeply disturbing to a minority which for a millenium or more had resisted the syncretic pulls of Hinduism and had lived in a state of estrangement from the Hindus". Somewhere down the line, Muslims have to outgrow this psyche if communal peace is to prevail in the land.

What, meanwhile, should be done? Efforts can be made to rewrite history in a more meaningful way, to get Muslims out of the trough of economic despair and to make them true partners in the progress of the country. It is an uphill but entirely worthwhile task to undertake. In some ways Pakistan is the key. The day that Pakistan becomes a member of a larger confederation of countries within the Indian sub-continent and looks India-wards in a spirit of friendship and brotherhood would mark the beginning of the end of communalism. It is possible. And it is inevitable. Above all, it is necessary.

M.V. KAMATH is a well-known Columnist

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The Roots of National (Dis) Integration

Kamila Tyabji

It was 1968. I had just returned to India, after 29 years abroad, and was trying to get the Women's India Trust off the ground. It was an attempt to set to work some of India's millions of unemployed women. I was organising a stitching class at Taloja, a village 30 miles out of Bombay.

The class started functioning, and some twelve women, some Hindu, some Muslim, undertook to attend it at the house of the village Headman. For a while everything seemed fine. But one day, about five weeks later, going up for my usual bi-weekly visit, I found the venue of the class had been changed; now, only the Hindu women were there.

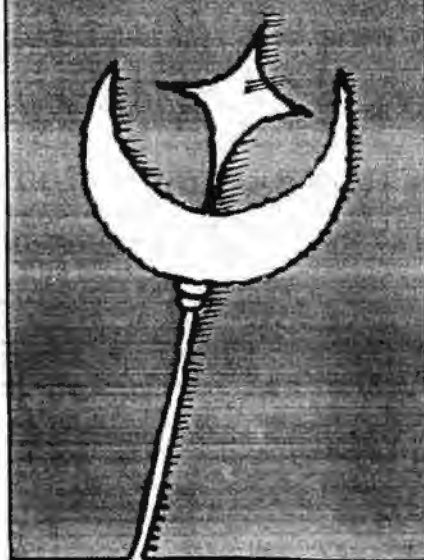
Taloja is not a large place, and has only one main street. It was not difficult to locate the houses of the women who had dropped out – so I went along to see them and to find out what had happened. Oh, I was told, after a certain amount of prevarication, you can't expect us to go to the Hindu *mohalla* for the classes! This, even though they were all very keen to learn and earn. And how far away was this 'Hindu *mohalla*'? Just across an eight-foot street!

To me this was an eye-opener. I had grown up during the independence movement, believing that communal divisions were only superficialities – bred by an alien government's divide and rule policies. I had lived for many years in England, and during the last of these had been intensely involved in Indian activities, particularly during the Sino-Indian engagement. In all this time, the thought of differences between Hindus and Muslims had never occurred to me. Even in retrospect I could not perceive anything remotely strange in that it was I who had been elected as first chairperson of the Women's India Association of the U.K.; and it was I who was made Chairperson of the fund-raising activities of the India Defence Fund Committee in 1965; – and I was a Muslim!

Much has happened since then. Women's India Trust, started in Panvel

and its surrounding villages, was moved to Bombay and flourished there and then expanded and went back again in a much bigger way to Panvel, in the course of which I saw instances of communalism in many varied forms. It is shocking, it is unbelievable, it is bestial. But if you look at its essence, communalism, or racism as it would be called elsewhere, is nothing but the fear we all have of something new or different. We try to rationalise the divide between the various communities in many ways. We attribute it to economic differences, to different cultures, to different laws and customs, to different eating habits and to differing religious observances; but when it comes down to the basics, human beings just do not understand habits and behaviour they are not used to – and the more conventional and restricted their lives, the less they understand.

In its essence, communalism or racism as it would be called elsewhere, is nothing but the fear we all have of something new or different.



What can be done about this? We have had a Minorities Commission for some years now, we now have a National Integration Committee as well. We have had endless seminars and discussions. But alas! few concrete results have come out of any of these. Meanwhile communalism seems to be daily gaining fresh strength.

There is one thing, however, which we have not tried, and which I believe could possibly, at least in the long term, do a great deal of good. *Why have we allowed our schools, from the very earliest age, to divide children from each other?* Why do we, right from the K.G. upwards, let Marathis go to one school and Gujaratis to another, Urdu speaking children to a third?

Part of this, of course, is due to our education policy: we have accepted the thesis that education should be in a child's mother tongue. But even if this is accepted, it is universally recognised that the years from one to five are the most impressionable in a child's life – and also that children learn languages with great ease. Could we not see that primary and pre-primary schools are multi-lingual; where children are separated only when it comes to classes for learning their own particular language? There is no dearth of experimental schools which have been run in such a fashion; and where even higher classes are organised in different language streams, but in the same premises, with common recreational and other facilities, so that students have plenty of opportunities to intermingle. The Godrej School at Vikroli is one such school, and so is WIT's own K.G. class at Panvel. And there is also the example of many different countries where children compulsorily learn three languages from the earliest age.

Education in India is mostly run by the State. Could the State not insist that the same building in a village should house all the different language schools needed in that locality? And insist further that all classes and facilities that can

possibly be shared are used in common?

Perhaps if we had such a system, we would not have Indians growing up who have never had friendships or relationships with persons of other communities; relationships with those who speak other languages and have other ways of doing things. Perhaps if we tried some such avenues, some of the rigidity of thought which is the inevitable re-

sult of a closely circumscribed life, would be lessened. Perhaps if we experimented on such lines, the unity in diversity we so proudly boast about, might have a chance to blossom and flower.

India is a country which has more experience of both the joys and pangs of multi-racial living than any other. It has prided itself on its tolerance, and its ability to absorb new values and new

thoughts. Let us try and act so as to make this rich experience of 'living together' not something just confined to a fortunate few, but the common heritage of our people everywhere. Only then will we really earn the right to say 'Bharat Mata ki Jai!'

Ms. KAMILA TYABJI is a Barrister from the Middle Temple and Founder of the Women's India Trust.

Communalism : A Symptom of Fascism

Dilip Simeon

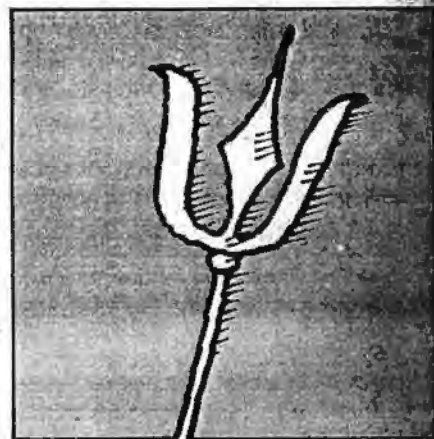
Communalism is the Indian form of fascist populism and racist nationalism. In place of humanistic rationality and tolerant patriotism, it substitutes religious frenzy, emotionalism, irrationality and concepts of nationality based on bogus entities such as the communally defined 'interests'

In the first week of November '86, sometime on the morning of the second anniversary of the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984, a curious gathering could be observed at the memorial to the Unknown Soldier at India Gate, New Delhi. A few score widows, orphans, and other relatives of the victims of that carnage were harangued on the theme of national integration by an assortment of opposition politicians, who asked the crowd to take an oath of loyalty to the nation. Although the subject of justice for the victims was raised, it was apparent, (as it has been, for some time) that the parties represented there were not likely to bend their energies furiously in that direction and that their statements on this score were mere sops to the emotions of their listeners. This little event symbolises the hypocrisy, opportunism, and moral bankruptcy of important sections of political leadership in India today. Here were completely innocent people, vote banks of the Congress for the most part, bearing no responsibility whatever for the 'Punjab tangle', with no interest in either Chandigarh or river waters, suddenly hurled

into a cauldron of agony and humiliation because they were conveniently available hate-objects for certain communally inspired criminals. Today, they continue to be manipulated by politicians, none of whom has any strategy for coping with communalism, save the sanctimonious recitation of banal slogans.

Such is the perversion of our social conscience that even the concept of innocence has been communalised. Many highly literate people, for instance, would smell in the above paragraph, nothing short of a brief for 'Khalistani' terrorism. In truth, the Indian polity faces a crucial litmus test for all its liberal democratic pretensions. If sections of the state and politicians can instigate mass murder on a scale unprecedented since Partition, and thereafter conspire to throw a veil of silence over the whole event and pretend as if the current bout of terror in the country is merely a law and order problem then we must conclude that the attitudes of our policy and opinion makers are characterised not only by communal-

ism but by the grossest stupidity and self-deception as well.



Let us cast a quick glance at the several manifestations of current communal attitudes. Thus, today it appears axiomatic that while Sikh and Muslim 'fundamentalism' are anti-national, Hindu communalism is synonymous with nationalism. Those who talk of Khalistan and Pakistan are traitors, but those who demand Hindu Rashtra are pat-

riots. Since Hindu Rashtra is not the philosophy of all Hindus, any more than Khalistan and Pakistan motivates all Sikhs and Muslims, how is it that Hindu communalism is allowed to gain currency as a nationalist ideology and spread hatred and contempt for millions of Indian citizens? To take another example, is it not well-known that Sikh fundamentalism was encouraged by various 'respectable' parties in order to outdo the Akalis — themselves adepts at making a lucrative business of the SGPC and Sikhism? Or that the Bombay Shiv Sena acquired popularity by whipping up hatred against South Indians, was strengthened by overt and covert alliances with the BJP and the Congress and now has changed its tune to *Hindu Rashtravad* and 'Practical Socialism'? (shades of Hitler and Mussolini here). Do we remember the former Chief Minister of the Punjab who made the claim that a couple of horses in his possession were the descendants of the steed of Guru Gobind? Or the Chief Minister of Maharashtra who acted out a ridiculous farce over the recovery of the fictitious 'Sword of Chhatrapati Shivaji' from the British Museum? Major national parties have been involved in the Ram Janmbhumi episode. (One might well ask the actors of that drama why a place sacred to both Hindus and Muslims could not have become a symbol of love and amity — quite apart from the question of how any place can be identified as the birthplace of a mythical figure 900,000 years ago, as has been claimed.) Imagine the possibilities of a global movement for the recovery of the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, razed to the ground in the Brahmanical reaction against Buddhism more than a millennium ago, upon which spot the reconstructed edifice is now run by Brahmin pandits. Just this year, a day before Muharram, a prominent national daily published on its front page, under banner headlines, a photo of the Mathura *Idgah*, with the ridiculous claim that this was erected over the birthplace of Lord Krishna. We are often blind to the implications of favourite public stances. When reservations for 'lower' castes are attacked on grounds of 'merit', does this not imply, even if obliquely, that 'merit' resides in the upper castes? Do the critics of reservations, campaign with the same zeal for an equitable education for the children of the so-

called untouchables? For that matter, does it lie in the mouth of the VHP and the RSS to bemoan the fate of Muslim women when they remain strangely silent about the legal and social plight of Hindu women, even when they are burnt alive for dowry? To go a step further, is it not a time honoured tradition in India that the perpetrators of communal outrages are beyond the reach of the law? How then can the Indian literati raise a hue and cry for a uniform civil code when they know that *in practice* there is not even a uniform criminal code in existence?

The list could go on endlessly, but the matter of the Mishra Commission of Inquiry into the events of November 1984 is a crowning example of communalism in high places. To begin with, its mandate required it merely to investigate the allegation of conspiracy, leaving aside the far more important question of identifying and punishing the guilty. But by setting it up as part of an agreement with the avowedly communal Akali Dal demonstrated that the seniormost political leaders of India are ignorant of their own prejudices. If all citizens of India have equal rights under the Constitution, and if murder is punishable under the Penal Code regardless of the religion of the victim, how could the Government have behaved as if the constitutional rights of thousands of Delhi residents were the political property of the Akali Dal just because they wore turbans? Thirdly, the Mishra Commission excluded from its deliberations the PUCL and PUDR, the very organisations which had raised the issue of culpability in the first place. The judge saw fit, however, to allow a lawyer representing the Arya Samaj to participate, along with the representatives of three fictitious organisations whose aim turned out to be the production of bogus evidence on mass produced affidavits purporting to assert the 'spontaneity' of the massacre; and the intimidation of witnesses.

Finally, the Government has chosen to suppress the Report although inspired 'leaks' have somehow convinced certain politicians that they have been 'exonerated'. The whole process has reeked of political and judicial malfeasance, and has broadcast the message that victims of communal outrages have no constitutional or human rights in India. It has fanned the flames of

Tolerant India

SIR—Despite your article on communal violence in India (November 1st), the great majority of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others live peacefully together. Here in southern India, there are many examples of different religious bodies actually sharing each other's places of worship.

In the heart of Madras city (population now around 6m) there is a Muslim shrine where Hindu and Christian women (including high-caste Brahmin women) bring their babies to be blessed by the mullah. A few blocks farther on is a Catholic church crowded, especially on Fridays, by Hindus and Muslims, as well as Christians. On the holy Muslim day of Muhurram, Muslims in Madras have the hereditary right to use the sacred waters of the temple pool of the beautiful Hindu Kapaleeswara temple, in the heart of the city.

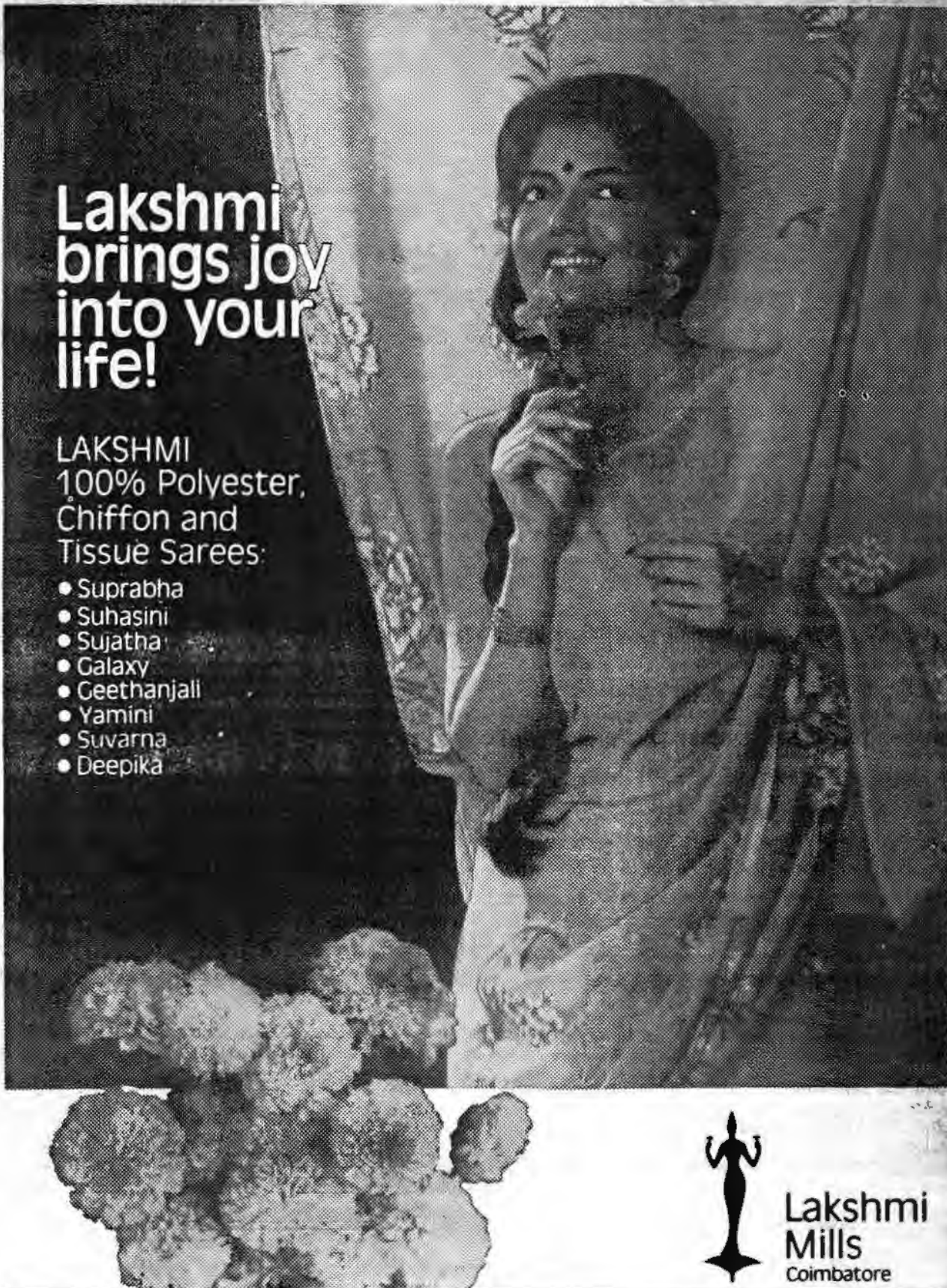
Because of a legend that a crippled Muslim boy saw a vision of the blessed Virgin Mary, and was consequently cured, thousands of Muslims from the Middle East and Malaysia join Hindus and Christians at the annual festival of the Vailankanni Roman Catholic church, farther south. In neighbouring Karnataka state a joint Hindu-Muslim object of worship in the Baba Budan mountains is presided over by a Muslim priest, who administers to multitudes of Hindu pilgrims as well as to Muslims. The list is endless.

It is, I know unfashionable to write anything pleasant about contemporary India, but compare that, if you please, with the carnage Christian wreaks upon Christian in Northern Ireland. Imagine, if you can, a Baptist minister celebrating mass in St Peter's. And from the days when I was a small choirboy in Britain I have vivid recollections of low church worshippers stalking indignantly out of church in the middle of the service because a visiting high-church clergyman made the sign of the cross!

Madras

HARRY MILLER

Letter in *The Economist* (London)
November 29



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separatist sentiment in the Punjab and elsewhere by convincing lakhs of citizens that they will be deprived of justice because of their faith. And all that the opposition can think of doing is to make widows and orphans swear oaths of allegiance to the nation.

The symptoms are apparent, but how does one diagnose the disease? It is impossible, within the limited space available on this occasion, to tackle this question thoroughly, so I will merely share my confusion with readers very briefly, with commitment to continue the debate in these columns (if the editors see fit) or elsewhere.

Among some secularists there exists the notion that communalism is a 'false consciousness' – a bad idea, as it were. The suffix 'ism', apparently, buttresses such a misconception. However, can we treat 'socialism' and 'republicanism' as if they were mere doctrines? After all, these words represent social movements as well as political philosophies. Apartheid, thus, is an example of a form of communalism empowered as a social system. Although there is no such thing as a spontaneously existing 'Hindu', 'Muslim' or 'Sikh' political interest, there do exist political projects and movements working to create such interests. The 'community', as defined by communalists is a pseudo-universalist coalition, a category sought to be imposed on the far more basic entities known as the 'biradaries'. The communal project in India has had notable successes, including Partition and the stable existence of Hindu Rashtravadi organisations.

Another fallacy is that communalism is historically the antithesis of nationalism. At work here is a misunderstanding of nationalism which is rarely as virtuous an outlook as we might like it to be. Nationalism in Germany, for example, was social-democratic before 1848, Prussian-autocratic in the latter half of the nineteenth century, liberal democratic in the aftermath of the First World War, and racist-imperialist in Hitler's interpretation. Diverse forms of nationalism are produced by different social groups and political trends. Hindu *Rashtravad*, for example, long predated the appearance decades before the Muslim League was born. It represented the sentiments of a section of the revivalist upper-caste literati and performed the function of dividing the

rising tide of peasant based 'low' caste, non-Brahmin and social-democratic movements within the groundswell of Indian nationalism. Bankim Chattopadhyaya was a prominent ideologue of this trend, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak an equally well-known practitioner. The former changed from being a critic of Brahmanism in the 1870's (in the book entitled 'Samya') into one of the founders of the doctrine of Hindu *Rashtra* in his famous 'Anandamath' (published in 1883). The latter, whose Brahmanical elitism and conservatism are well documented, invented the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals with the express intent of fusing together revivalist and patriotic sentiments under his leadership. The nationalism of the ulema (Muslim 'priests') of the Deoband seminary (established 1867), was equally revivalist and rooted in notions of religious exclusivity. Thus, late nineteenth century 'extremism', as well as the patriotism of the Arya Samajis, Khilafatists, Tilakites, Akalis and Muslim Leaguers, all represented the inextricable link between nationalism and proto-communal attitudes. And all of these trends did not necessarily imply geopolitical separation; the Deoband tradition, for example, bitterly opposed the Pakistan movement and some of its leaders even referred to Jinnah as not the 'Quaid', but the Kafir-i-Azam. But ideologically, they were all equally communal – they sought to identify Indians in terms of their own purist and elitist conceptions, and then to control these entities for political ends.

It is important to remember that classical Indian traditions contain not only Brahmanical orthodoxy but also the 'shramanic' (ascetic) trends and movements. Buddhism and Jainism, certain Bhakti cults, the philosophies of Nanak, Kabir, Tukaram and the sufis, all represent this other current, which in their origins stressed the vernacular over the Sanskrit, universalism over casteism, faith in the goodness and power of the Absolute, howsoever defined, over blind superstition. These movements were almost always quelled or co-opted, but their existence demonstrates that all that is Indian was never purely Brahmanic. The tension between priestly, state-oriented orthodoxy and shramanic heterodoxy carried over into the Indo-Islamic tradition as well – the legalistic ulema were noted for their antipathy towards the sufi mystics. In more recent

times, the non-Brahmin and Satyashodak movements of Madras and Maharashtra (EVR Naicker and Jyotirao Phule), the radical peasants movements in various parts of the country, the social-democratic currents within the Congress during the national movement, and the socialism of Bhagat Singh all serve to remind us that the Indian people were capable of persisting with the shramanic tradition. When we speak of revivalism, therefore, we must keep in mind that there were many different things to revive, and that the choices made by the stalwarts of the national movement were not accidental. Hindu *Rashtravad* sought to revive the Brahmanic tradition and construct a political monolith (the Hindu Nation) by assimilating long-dead heterodoxies into itself – Tilak could equate past Indian greatness with the Sanatan Dharma and the Dark Ages with the rise of Buddhism, and simultaneously claim that Buddhism was but 'reformed' Hinduism. Thus a dominant stream of Indian nationalism created a myth of the 'Hindu' past, and sought to interpret this past not in the language of Kabir, Nanak, Tukaram, Chaitanya or the sufis, but in terms of Brahmanical orthodoxy and the Aryan theory of race (the same set of ideas which inspired racist philosophers like Gobineau in the late nineteenth century, and the Nazi attitudes in the twentieth). This is way for many Indian intellectuals patriotism went hand in hand with social conservatism in matters concerning women, caste society education, etc.

The term 'Hindu communalism', is, strictly speaking, a misnomer. It presupposes the existence of an entity which some authoritarian politicians seek to create. It would make more sense to call it Brahmanical fascism. This does not imply that all brahmins are fascists, any more than locating anti-semitism in the classical Catholic tradition implies that all Christians are haters of Jews. The term can be used politically rather than sociologically. Brahmanism has always been associated with myth-making, superstition, ritual, knowledge-brokerage, and sycophancy towards power-structures. These features remain in the various hues of communal politics. That the communalists made themselves extremely useful to the colonial state can be thoroughly demonstrated, though perhaps not in this article. But just in passing, when next Mr.

Shourie castigates the communists for their role in 1942, someone could remind him that 'Veer' Savarkar, that same year, was calling upon all patriotic Hindus to join the colonial armed forces so as to learn the skills needed for the construction of Hindu Rashtra. (See his speech to the All India Hindu Mahasabha Session, Kanpur, 1942). So blinded has Brahmanism in modern times been by its own jealous elitism, that it is congenitally incapable of seeing that Akhand Bharat and Hindu Rashtra are mutually exclusive concepts, and that interpreting the neutral terms of liberal democracy (such as 'rule of majorities') in communal categories was bound to instigate separatism among large sections of the Indian population. Engrossed in its own ritualistic loyalties and doctrines, the Left contributed to the confusion by collapsing together the communal and the 'nationalities' question in 1942, possibly the worst ideological disaster in its chequered history. The congress was unable to resist the tide because of the pervasiveness of communal atti-

tudes within its own ranks. Partition was thus as much occasioned by Brahmanical fascism and the popularity of its language among the politically privileged sections of the population (remember that adult suffrage did not exist prior to Independence) as by the schemings of a retreating British Empire and the recalcitrance of the Muslim League.

Communalism is the Indian form of fascist populism and racist nationalism. In place of humanistic rationality and a tolerant patriotism, it substitutes religious frenzy, emotionalism, irrationality and concepts of nationality based on bogus entities such as the communally defined 'interests'. It locates an internal enemy (just as Hitler located the Jews), and makes it the target of mass hatred bordering on genocidal mania. The instigators of such hatred then become the proprietors of militant communal organizations. It legitimises the murder of innocent people as part of a notion of retributive justice, and formalises the links between politicians and criminals. And it uses democratic institutions and

civil liberties to capture fragments of state power with the aim of subverting and destroying democracy itself. Communalists of all brands are patriarchal, suffer from militaristic delusions, and propagate illiberal social attitudes.

A society and state in crisis can easily turn to communal movements and ideologies to reconstruct itself in an authoritarian mould. This is especially so in a country where fascism has been flaunting itself as patriotism for the better part of the century. The tragic fate of democracy in the so-called Muslim homeland, Pakistan, should teach us a lesson. A new, social-democratic form of nationalism, based upon the age-old shramatic and syncretic traditions of the Indian people and the urge for a more egalitarian society is the only antidote for the nightmare of Partition.

PROF. DILIP SIMEON teaches History at Ramjas College, Delhi University.

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Who Are the Fanatics?

K.F. Rustamji

In the course of my connection with policing extending over nearly fifty years, I have handled several communal riots — seen first-hand the depredations committed during them, and although I have seen and met thousands of miscreants, I have never come across a genuine fanatic. Somehow the killers of today are people who have no faith in their religion.

A five time *namazi*, the man who performs *arti* every day, the man who believes in God and decency, is never found in today's street battles. Even at the back, instigating it, he seldom appears. He has very seldom been identified as a killer. The men who are killers have no faith in their religion, but a deep, obstinate, fiendish sort of hatred of the other side. It is not Islam or Hinduism that incites murder. It is only the desire to damage, to loot, to hurt someone from the other side, to progress some political gain. It is a new subversive sort of faith that is arising out of the antagonisms of living today, and its main exponents are the young.

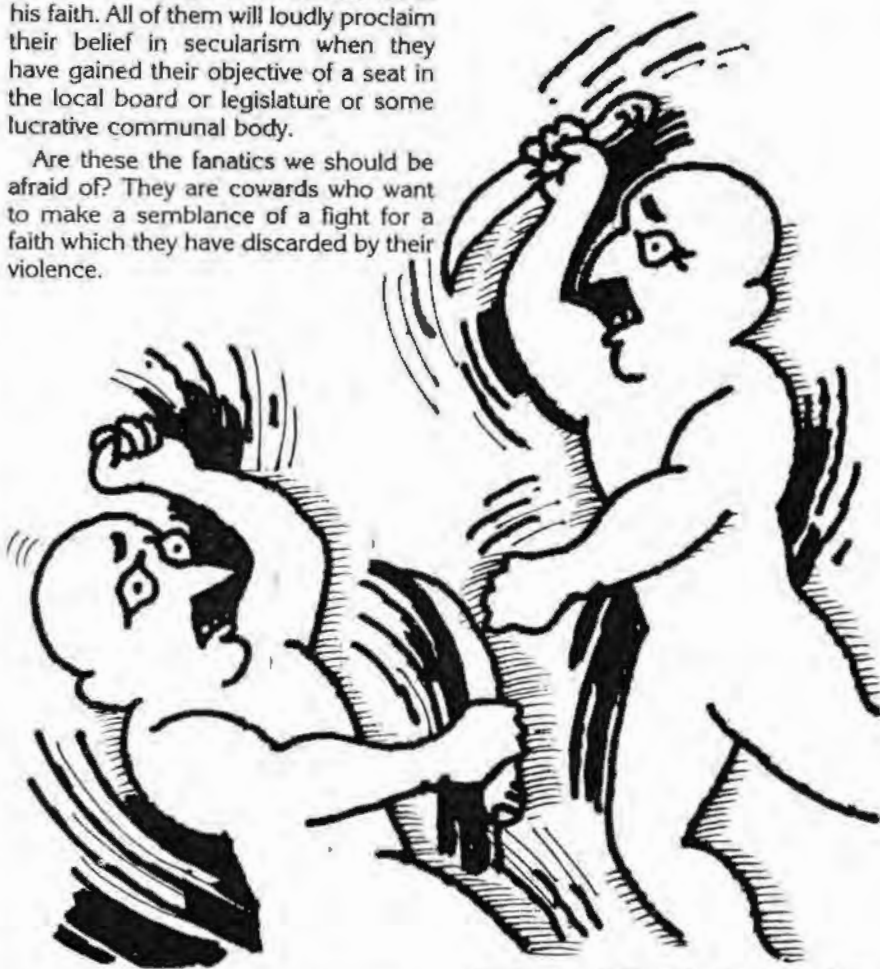
Even the clever lawyer, the crafty businessman who starts a riot to destroy a rival, or the editor who incites the trouble — are not religious men. In a sense they are cheats who utilise religion to band the crowd together and whip it up into hatred against others. The worst types are those who organize a riot to oust a government on the ground that it cannot maintain law and order.

Another misapprehension which is common is that the Muslims want to attack the Hindus and the police. In actual fact it is the fear of the police and fear of the large majority community that makes them gather together for self-defence. To raise their spirits they shout "Allah ho Akbar", which is replied to with firing, and scores of innocent lives are extinguished, because all the bridges of understanding with the Muslims are steadily being destroyed.

Every person who deals with rioting, whether politician, administrator or policeman, has the wrong conviction that he is dealing with leaders who are

fanatics. None of them is a follower of his faith. All of them will loudly proclaim their belief in secularism when they have gained their objective of a seat in the local board or legislature or some lucrative communal body.

Are these the fanatics we should be afraid of? They are cowards who want to make a semblance of a fight for a faith which they have discarded by their violence.



The obduracy of the Mushawarat to keep possession of an unused mosque also seems to me to lack a sense of realism. Is this a cause for which the lives of thousands of poor Muslims should be endangered? Should we give priority to this one dispute and go on adding fuel to the fire all the time with pamphlets and disquieting accounts in the Urdu press? Does this not raise the suspicion that someone from outside is using the Muslims?

Is confrontation more important than the poverty which is grinding the lower income Muslims into the dust, and is now imperilling their safety as well? What about jobs, loans, protection from the governmental agencies which scrounge on the weak? It is a crime in

my view to instigate the Muslims to become enemies of the state.

The communal thinking being injected into our politics is doing a great deal of harm to all of us. The Hindus are being made to feel weak and ineffective in their homeland, and all the solid gains made by them — economic, political and social — in recent years, are forgotten. The Muslims are said to be pampered, when they are going down economically at a rapid rate. Yet, such is the perversity of communalists, they want to push them into a confrontation course, to secure leadership — a course which secured Pakistan, but brought ruin to the Muslims everywhere in the sub-continent.

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Are the Minorities Too Much With Us?

Aloo.J. Dastur

Minorities are a little too much with us. The Constituent Assembly was exercised about them and an elaborate section on rights was incorporated into the Constitution of India. Successive Prime Ministers have been concerned not only about the religious communities but language minorities too. A further dimension was added when Nehru appointed the Kaka Kalelkar Commission to enquire into the question of social and economic backwardness. The Commission identified 2399 castes/classes. Mrs Indira Gandhi appointed the Backward Classes Commission under the chairmanship of B.P. Mandal to look into social, economic and educational backwardness and it, in its turn, listed 3743 castes/classes. Thus within less than 25 years the number increased by almost 1400.

Minorities and other Commissions.

Moraji Desai appointed the Minorities Commission and Indira Gandhi on her return to power while continuing with it, also appointed a high power Panel on Minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and weaker sections. As if all these Commissions and panels on a national scale were not enough a few states have appointed their own minority commissions — Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat each has its own Minorities Board. Add to this the National Integration Council and the picture of over-concern for minorities and backward classes is complete.

To what purpose these Commissions and Committees? Our faith in them is pathetic. They have succeeded in whetting minority appetites, not satisfying them. Some past and present members of the Minorities Commission have been advocating its replacement by a Human Rights Commission. It is a legitimate sequence, but the Commission as such has yet a significant role to play. One of its functions is to conduct research on avoiding minority discrimination. This in itself is not enough.



The modern democratic state has come to accept the fact that minorities are as much its citizens as the majority; that they are born as free and equal citizens and have the same rights to life liberty and the pursuit of happiness.



What it needs to tackle is the minority psyche. We have merely been dealing with superficial issues, not tried to go into the depths. We have talked about integration and pursued policies and programmes that keep us partitioned into several minorities.

Majority and Minority Obligations

No discussion on the minorities can ignore the majority and here the majority are Hindus. The overt concern about minorities has caused a backlash among the Hindus. They have begun to feel a threat to their numbers. They believe they have been losing by conversion to other religions. Always split into castes, Commissions and Committees have now split them further into the socially, economically and educationally backward categories. To safeguard 'their' rights against the raucous claims of the minorities and perhaps to meet the challenge of the ecumenical spread of the Christians and Muslims, the Hindus have now started their *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*. There is also the *Virat*

Hindu Sabha and recently, amidst great joy and enthusiasm, we witnessed the *Ekamata Yatra*.

The most recent and shocking is the claim of the Ramakrishna Mission that it is a minority institution and should enjoy the facilities provided for such institutions. Can anything be more grotesque? The claim makes a caricature of all the nobility of thought and greatness of beliefs which Swami Vivekananda spread here and abroad and which came to be crystallised in the Mission.

As far as one can see, the Hindus being 84 percent of the humanity that is India, need not, cannot, be apprehensive of their future. The ultra conservative among them oppose family planning in the irrational belief that Muslims and Catholics both who are opposed on religious grounds to family planning will multiply and demographically overwhelm them.

At another level, a complex issue arises. How do we judge or identify minorities — is it only the overall numbers in the country taken as a whole? What of the Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh? Minorities in their respective states, are they entitled to enjoy the facilities of minority rights? These questions were put to the Minority Commission, but no answers are forthcoming. Yet, with minority consciousness deepening there is just a possibility that we can put off answers only at our peril.

The majority by virtue of being the majority has its own obligations and responsibilities. It is not by imitating recalcitrant minorities in their irrationality or obscurantism that it discharges its duties but by inculcating a sense of confidence in the minorities that they too belong here; that they have a place in the Indian Sun. This puts the majority on trial. It must cultivate a broader out-

look, a sense of generosity towards the minorities with whom it shares deprivations, poverty and unemployment. Such awareness should make the poor and the disinherited come together in the common cause of the removal of degradation from individual and group life.

It is astonishing that the minorities have increasingly sought to keep themselves apart and aloof. This is true especially of the Muslims who watched with dismay their own desertion by leaders they had trusted and who went to pastures new. The rump that was left behind did not measure up to lead them in the changed circumstances; it chose to move in the narrow murky groove of Muslim separatism. Nor did the ruling party instil confidence in them. Rather it chose to utilise them as electoral tools. So it is with the scheduled castes who are another vote bank. Both have responded well by supporting the Congress at election time except in 1977 when they plumped in a big way for the Janata Party.

Uniform Civil Code

In another direction the Congress leadership has served the minorities ill. Arti-

cle 44 lays down that the state shall strive for a Uniform Civil Code. Here is a reform long overdue. The position of women in different personal laws varies, but whatever may be the original injunctions about equality and equal rights among men and women the position in our own day is invidious; women suffer legal disabilities. Nehru at the time of the first general election in 1951-1952, had boldly stated "my Government will stand or fall by the Hindu Code Bill"

After obtaining a massive majority from the electorate his Government neither stood nor fell by the Hindu Code Bill. Nehru beat a partial retreat against the rising tide of Hindu orthodoxy even within his own party and made changes in traditional Hindu Law through the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act and the Succession and Inheritance Act. It was well-known that there were differences between the President and Prime Minister on the issue and the Prime Minister had his way. The Hindu woman was the beneficiary. She came into her own and stood forth as an individual in her own right. She was no longer only a daughter, wife or mother. Nehru had

affirmed in Parliament that the honour and dignity of the Hindu Woman were dear to his heart.

Lost Opportunities

What of the honour and dignity of Muslim women? Was the Prime Minister indifferent towards them? Not quite, but there was no political or moral compulsion to do anything about it. When the Hindu Bills were being discussed in Parliament several members including some Congress members urged the introduction of a Uniform Civil Code. The Prime Minister shied away. He was sensitive to Muslim reaction and orthodoxy. Towards the end of his career he thought of doing something about it but then Vice President Zakir Hussain told him to let the community decide and Nehru yielded. Two opportunities had been stepped by; a third came with the emergency when there were strident calls from the ruling party to declare the supremacy of the Directive Principles over Fundamental Rights. When a massive amendment to the Constitution was brought forth in Parliament there was no mention of Article 44 — the State shall strive to introduce



THE MYSTIC 'AUM' AS IT WOULD APPEAR TODAY IN DEVNAGARI

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a Uniform Civil Code. Once again politics prevailed over moral duty.

We might consider the injunction that since it touches the Muslims, they should decide on the Uniform Civil Code. Here the legitimate question is *who* among the Muslims? A few self-styled, self-appointed leaders? Will Muslim men decide or will Muslim women have any say? These are pertinent questions. While the former want the *status quo* to continue the latter are prepared and ready for change. Educated Muslim women are certainly for reform. They realise the indignity of being a second or third wife. They are sensitive to the plight of wives discarded in the spoken divorce—*talaq*—and their miseries. The amendment of Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code is a great boon to these unfortunate women and judicial pronouncements are bringing some succour to these hapless women and their children. The recent Shah Banu case and the Supreme Court judgement have rubbed Muslim orthodox in the raw.

The obscurantists are being encouraged by the government's non-committal attitude to their actions. A few *Jamats* have usurped to themselves the state's authority to punish their followers. A few months ago the Beerna Palli *Jamaat* in Kerala sentenced a woman to 101 lashes for alleged adultery and consumption of liquor. There is a common code in the country. Adoption of such power by any religious group constitutes a parallel authority which no state should tolerate. Similarly among Dawoodi Bohras the obnoxious practice of social ostracism prevails. The Head Priest claims the right to call for a social boycott of an individual or a family and gullible followers accept the verdict. Reformers and rationalists among them are the unfortunate victims. Can any government particularly one led by a modern young man and imbued with the scientific temper accept such ignominy and disregard of the prevailing laws?

Enlightened Muslims themselves are advocating a Uniform Civil Code. Badruddin Tyabji, administrator and diplomat put forth an unchallengeable argument:

"So far as the question of considering the revision of the provisions of Muslim personal law as an evolutionary process and not as some-

thing fixed and immutable is concerned, I am whole heartedly in favour of it.

The objective of having a Common Civil Code, as I see it is not to steam-roller Indian society, and least of all, its diverse religious and cultural traditions and ethos into an amorphous grey pulp. It is rather to help them to survive and flourish, by eliminating causes of discord and conflict between the whole country and all its inhabitants, regardless of age, sex and environment and leading to a better life that is opening out to us in the new material era of life on this planet."

Recognising that waiting for a consensus to be reached within the Muslim community is asking for the moon, Mr. Tyabji makes an interesting suggestion for advancing towards this objective in a less direct way by placing before the public

"an ideal set or code of laws and regulations to which they would be at complete liberty to subscribe, or if they so choose, to abstain from and continue to be governed by their existing laws and codes. The Civil Marriage-Act is a good example of such legislation; whoever wishes to take advantage of its provisions is at liberty to do so. There is no compulsion either way. Why should such a Common Civil Code not be drafted with the active participation and guidance of all those who see and feel the need for it?"

Justice For Muslim Women

Another suggestion, not his, is that since marriage among Muslims is a contract, the woman's status and rightful share in *Mehr* should be clearly stated at the time of marriage. This will safeguard the woman and her rights. Perhaps only the educated can take advantage here. The vast majority in our land are not even literate enough to know what a contract is or what rights they can claim. This argument equally holds true for the optional Civil Code, now being talked about.

Talaq is an obnoxious and iniquitous practice and a modern government worthy of its name and secularism should ban it. The victims are too many and it is just and fair that our courts are taking a liberal view and favouring women by upholding their right to maintenance. It is only proper that Mus-

lim women should in law be brought on a par with other women. But it is a long way to go and women themselves will ultimately have to push the pace.

In different parts of the country small but significant groups are coming together to mould public opinion. The Muslim Satyashadak Mandal of Poona is doing excellent work among the Muslims, though it does not have any big names to throw about. It is educating Muslim men and women in loyalty to the country, in seeking to follow rational paths and do away with anti-social practices. In Kerala, the Travancore Muslim Women's Association is a body of highly educated women. It again is working for the benefit of Muslim women. The most recent is *Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-Pasaud-Muslimineen*, a newly founded organisation to bring progressive Muslims on a common platform. They seem to have got their priorities right. They desire to reach out to the Muslims at the Taluka level and educate them on the socio-economic problems facing the community.

Racial, religious or linguistic minorities everywhere must accept that they are permanent minorities. This realisation is not a realisation of doom. On the contrary, the modern, democratic state, has come to accept the fact that minorities are as much its citizens as the majority; that they are born as free and equal citizens and have the same rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. For political and employment purposes, for education and training, all citizens are equal and can have hopes and ambitions consistent with their abilities. The minority's consciousness of being discriminated against, has to be treated with care and understanding. Justice must not only be done, it must be known to be done. Minorities, on their part, must not sulk but decide to take their proper place in the community to which they belong and the nation to which they owe their loyalty.

Dr. Aloo J Dastur was a member of the Minorities Commission.

In matters of conscience the law of the majority has no place. To bend a minority to the will of the majority is a species of unpardonable violence.

Mahatma Gandhi

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THE MASANI VIEWPOINT

One Cheer for Rajiv Gandhi

Kudos to the Prime Minister for some very sensible remarks made by him on October 28. Speaking in Delhi he announced that in future "no sick industry would be taken over by the Government and that the current proposals for such nationalisation would be scrutinised thoroughly".

It is high time that the idiotic subsidising of inefficient units at the tax payers' expense which has gone on through the years is stopped. While it is true, as Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said, that "the poor are being made to suffer in the name of socialism, which has become a much abused word," it is not true that in other countries that practise socialism sick mills are kept alive at the community's expense. In Yugoslavia, for instance, the sick unit that makes a loss is shut down completely, leaving the workers to find other employment. The Prime Minister was right when he questioned the wisdom of taking over private sick units for protecting jobs and pointed out that "the same money, invested in a new unit, would generate much more employment."

It is to be hoped that the Prime Minister will see to it that this announcement of his is respected both in letter and spirit. Too many times so far have the members of the "new class", who profit from all these regressive policies, managed to fob him off. Can it be that the fraudulent nature of the 'Mahanagar Telephone Nigam' described below is a compromise that the "new class" of bureaucrats have devised between the Prime Minister's wishes and their own inclinations?

The "Maha" Fraud

The Bombay Telephones have never been in a worse mess than they are today. Business activity, IAC services and many other aspects of daily life have been adversely affected by the fact that perhaps a majority of the Bombay phones do not connect any more. Wrong numbers plague both those who make

the calls and those who receive them.

Unless the telephone services are privatised as in the U.K. and the U.S.A., where the I.T.T. does an excellent job which we might well emulate, I see no hope for Indian Telephones.

As far as I can see, there are two insuperable problems. One is that there is no autonomy for the running of the telephone services and that the "Mahanagar Telephone Nigam" is a fraud on the public. Every member of the Board, including the Chairman, is a Government official and there is not a single non-official representative on it. One can imagine the measure of autonomy such a Corporation enjoys!

The other problem is that of the staff and labour. For many weeks, the situation in Bombay was further aggravated by the 'go-slow' in which the lower levels of telephone services were indulging. The employees threatened to go on strike from November 10 but mercifully the Union Government at last awakened to its responsibilities and banned the strike. It has been announced that the violation of this ban would be punished with imprisonment. The result is that the go-slow ended. So let us be grateful for small mercies.

Many employees of the Bombay telephone services are inefficient and lazy. They are under-employed. If a proper work study were undertaken, I suspect some 15,000 would be found to be surplus. They have been kept in their jobs simply because the Union Government has not got the guts to stop this waste of public money. The lower levels are also corrupt. The linesmen extract bribes from the subscribers in order to keep the telephones in order, which is their obligation. Unfortunately, many members of the public in Bombay give in to their pressure and bribe these employees, with the result that the higher officials who are honest are unable to enforce discipline and protect those who do not give bribes to these employees. It is a sad state of affairs and no single official,

however honest, can possibly put things right.

The Wages of Appeasement

In case prime minister Rajiv Gandhi thought that he could placate the Muslim fundamentalists by the unfortunate Bill that he bullied Parliament to pass some months back, the reaction to his suggestion that there should be a voluntary uniform civil code giving every Indian citizen option to choose between his or her personal law and the uniform civil code, shows, he made a sad mistake. Now that the drafting of such a code is on the anvil, Mr. Banatwalla of the Muslim League has already lodged a protest against the move. Evidently the Muslim League now seeks to impose a veto on the choice of a Hindu, Christian, Parsi or a Jew to make such a choice! This is what comes of appeasement. It always breeds aggression, and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's appeasement of the Muslim fundamentalists last year has bred aggression as it was bound to do. The chickens are now coming home to roost.

The Indian Press is not Doordarshan

Speaking in Nagpur on October 2 at a function celebrating the jubilee of the local English daily *Hitavada* founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi thought the occasion a suitable one for launching a frontal attack on the national dailies of India. Contrary to all the evidence of history, he charged "the big Indian dailies in the country were never with the Indian freedom movement in pre-independence days." I can assure him he is wrong because I happened to be around at that time which through no fault of his, he cannot claim. What is worse, he accused the press of misusing its freedom and described it as "terribly irresponsible". The Prime Minister added that the coverage of national events in the Indian press would be seen as "yellow journalism in the de-

veloped part of the world".

It is difficult to divine the cause of this outburst. It is to be hoped that this is not part of a campaign to popularise the so-called "New Information Order" that the dictators of the Third World favour. Mr. Dhiren Bhagat has described in the *Afternoon* of September 26 how the "new information order" operated at the time of the so-called NAM summit in Harare. According to him, "at the NAM summit in Harare strangers to the New Information Order were given a free introductory lesson". He then goes on to retail a series of authoritarian actions vis-a-vis the press, both foreign and local, on the part of the Zimbabwean authorities.

Following on the one-day closure on July 1, 1986, by the publishers covering 240 dailies, accounting for the overwhelming part of India's total circulation of newspapers, expressing resentment over Government's hostile policies to the press, the Prime Minister's attack on the press is ominous and cannot be ignored.

The veteran journalists Mr. Moolgaokar quite rightly points out that, if anybody can be accused of being terribly irresponsible, it is Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Gadgil, his erstwhile Minister, who have shamelessly misused their autocratic control over A.I.R. and Doordarshan.

The other veteran journalist who has commented on this incident is Mr. K.R. Sundar Rajan, one of the heroes of the so-called "Emergency". He quite rightly holds the view that, in the absence of parliamentary opposition, the press has an adversary role to play and observes: "I felt greatly relieved when Rajiv Gandhi fired off a few missiles at the press. I cannot understand why many journalists are angry with him because of this. What we in the press should be worried about is a friendly, cosy relationship between newspapers and politicians. The healthiest mutual response between the press and the government is one of adversaries."

Trade Union Indiscipline

If hard work and dependability are not to be rewarded, why should any-

one in India indulge in these virtues? One of the reasons this country is lagging behind others is the inability of our authorities to enforce any kind of economic or social discipline and face whatever unpopularity may be involved.

As I dictate this note, I have just recovered from the huffing and puffing which accompanies a steep climb. My office is on the third floor but it is a high building and it is equivalent to six flights of stairs.

Reason? The liftmen of this building have gone on a sympathetic strike with employees of the landlords who are a business firm and whose own menial staff has gone on strike.

Why? Because, forsooth, the police have arrested a man on suspicion of theft in that building, which is nearly a mile from my own office. Does this mean that workers cannot be arrested for crimes they may have committed and that they should be above the law? It is possible that these wretched men were intimidated by their Trade Union bosses, as is customary in Bombay, and threatened with violence if they did not join this wild-cat strike. It is time that grown-up workers stand up for their rights and do not submit to Union goondalism.

State Indiscipline

It is a great pity that the Sarkaria Commission's Report will not now be available till the end of this year. The Commission was to have reported by the end of June but have unfortunately delayed their Report because the State Governments of Punjab, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Manipur and Rajasthan could not be bothered to reply to the Commission's questionnaire in spite of being given more than ample time and several reminders. The Commission could very easily have given their report without waiting for all these laggards who do not seem to be interested. The Courts of Law do not wait for errant litigants before passing their judgement. The extension of the Commission's term is one more example of indiscipline being encouraged by the authorities. This kind of pampering is on a par with the en-

couragement given to illegal strikes and the Pay Commission's latest report.

Biting The Hand that Feeds

Mahatma Gandhi had always argued that once advocates of any cause, even if a good one, took to violence in its furtherance, violence would become a habit and the cause would be forgotten. This has now happened visibly in the case of the Tamil terrorists in Sri Lanka. Not only have they murdered leaders of rival terrorist groups, but they have now started attacking and murdering their own compatriots in Tamil Nadu.

On November 1, one of these groups of 'Tigers' killed a Harijan boy and injured six others in the city of Madras. This was the result of a little altercation which took place between these 'Tigers' and some inoffensive civilians in the city. It is good to know that all ten members of this gang have been arrested by the Madras police and remanded to custody, on a charge of murder. Several leaders of the 'Tigers' were placed under house arrest.

This is not the first time this kind of incident has happened. Is it not high time that the people of Tamil Nadu stopped giving aid and comfort to these traitors to their own country, Sri Lanka, and is it not time that the Union Government puts its foot down and stops Tamil Nadu from becoming a sanctuary for these terrorists? It is the least that we in India owe, consistent with international law and our obligations to our neighbours.

The latest proposals of the Sri Lanka Government, which provide for provincial autonomy as far-reaching as those in the Indian Constitution, should surely be the last concession that India expects to extort from Sri Lanka. If the terrorists refuse to accept these terms, India should stop mollicoddling them and help the Sri Lanka Government to restore law and order. President Jayawardhene has already, quite rightly, issued an ultimatum to the terrorists on November 4 asking them to accept the autonomy that has now been offered or to face the consequences.

Loan Melas

Louella Lobo Prabhu

It is interesting to analyse ministerial and other pronouncements on the subject of *Loan Melas*. In the vital matter of their political colouring, the minister and the K.P.C.C. president have been singing, different tunes, in divergent voices. The *Indian Express* of October 29, (Bangalore edition), front-paged Mr. Oscar Fernandes's stout defence of the involvement of Congress-I workers in the *mela*: "There is nothing wrong in Congress-I workers educating the public on getting loans from the Banks". On the other hand, *Deccan Herald* of November 4, also in a front page item, reported Mr. Poojary as saying: "Social and political workers have no say whatsoever, in the identification of the beneficiaries". In reality, the point at issue, is not the education of the public on the benefits available, but alleged favoured treatment to nominees identified by Congress-I workers.

Subverting Banking Principles

Mr. Poojary's other remarks reproduced in the same report are a *phillipic* to outdo every other oration. He "regretted that some bank employees were insisting on knowing the applicants' capacity to repay the loans. The loans were designed to help the weaker sections take up economic activity and generate income. As such, where is the question of repayment capacity?" Nonetheless, the question of repayment capacity remains very relevant, as the differences between an outright grant, and a loan, is that the latter is to be repaid, while the former is free. It would be much better if the amount now disbursed as loans, is in fact converted into a grant, for, bank credit thus abused sanctions a disastrous subversion of the whole principle underlying banking. This is, that money is held in trust for depositors. The latter, place their hard-earned savings in a bank, wanting both security of the principal and interest on it for abstaining from current consumption, to make their investment. In turn the banker must advance such money, to those who will repay the loan with interest. (Barring natural calamities), when the stipulation that money must

be repaid is waived from any borrower, the bedrock principle of banking is attacked. At least no such destruction of an institution and its rationale is exhibited in outright grants, except that government may have to create the fig-leaf of a norm, for its selection of nominees. No doubt, grants also come from public money. But these involve the direct and indirect taxes of all, plus the overtime activity of the currency-printing press. If it is the banking system based on depositors' money which must be mulcted, then looking into repayment capacity is an essential exercise.

It is again repayment-capacity, which flaws the minister's argument that thousands of crores are similarly locked up in sick units, or a single loan, to a major defaulting industrialist with the right clout. First of all, another's wrong does not make a right. Second, the sick units and defaulting industrialists, are aware they have to pay back what they borrowed, and must fill up lengthy forms stating what their assets are. These are capable of being impounded for failure to pay after the due process of law has run its course.

Cooperate or Be Transferred

The Minister has publicly threatened to transfer non-cooperative officers to desolate stations in Assam and Punjab. In a letter which might have been statistical or serious, Mr. K. Ramachandra in the *Indian Express* of November 1, wrote that most banks are Government of India undertakings, and the government is that of the ruling Congress-I to which the Minister belongs. So in effect, he is the boss with the right to hire, or transfer employees as he wishes. Mr. Ramachandra is perhaps unaware that ministers technically aid and advise the President, and do not exercise executive powers in their own right. A Government order emanates in the name of the Secretary concerned on behalf of the Governor or the President. A Minister cannot directly hire, fire or transfer an employee.

Finally, Mr. Poojary has proclaimed that by having *melas* in public he has reduced corruption, as everything is

done in public. This is arguable. In the confusion worse confounded of these *melas* there could be, and probably is, corruption at every stage: in the identification of the borrowers; the 'cut' by the middleman who processes the form; perhaps the political functionary who recommends it, and eventually, may be even in the very identity of the borrower, who claims the payment voucher.

Mr. Janardhan Poojary's voluminous fulminations on the many-sided topic of loan *melas*, leave several unanswered questions. The first is the authenticity of the programme as a measure of poverty-relief. Even if it is conceded that Mr. Poojary is a genuine, if somewhat misguided messiah of the masses, there is no excuse for giving the exercise a Congress-I colouring. As always, in this benighted polity of ours, the fine line of demarcation between the party and government is flagrantly breached, notably, in the Minister's invariable presence at *melas* and their timings — the last big one being to coincide with Mrs. Gandhi's death anniversary.

Expensive Tamashas

If the programme is one by the government for the good of all, and not just for the advancement of the party, a different procedure would have been followed. Banks would be given a deadline by which to process loan papers with the appropriate targets of the amounts to be disbursed, and number of persons to be covered. These payments would be made on banks' premises on working days, and during working hours, with an attempt to explain the terms and conditions of the loan. The format of the *mela*, or *tamasha*, evolved by the minister is the exact opposite of these norms. In the atmosphere of a market-day, there is a further devaluation of any seriousness in banking transactions. The amounts spent in bringing the loanees to the *mela* (even at the sanctioned rate of Rs.15/- per person); arrangements on-site; prior publicity and the like, involve an expenditure of Rs.15 to 20 lakhs on each *mela*. It is surprising that the Reserve Bank of India has not only kept

quiet about loans which are not meant to be loans at all, but also about waste of public funds in organising the *melas*. Even if writing off loans to the very poor can be justified, the trappings of the *lamasha*, cannot.

Which raises one more curious mistake. Those who disagree with the Minister's ideas and implementation, blame him personally for the loan-*mela* phenomenon. In fact, though he does seem to project himself as their progenitor, the government of Rajiv Gandhi must share the full responsibility for the concept and its execution. Mr. Gandhi's disagreements with Mr. V.P. Singh have sometimes been aired. He has never yet been reported to have dissented from Mr. Poojary's way of doing things. Apparently, he approves of the programme — and its politicisation.

Yet Another Inflationary Factor

Those who like to look at the brighter side of things, may argue that any credit injection into the economy, though not immediately productive, may be vicariously so. Mr. Ramchandra's letter, already quoted, pointed out that printers, photographers, and xerox-machine owners processing the loan *mela* forms were the first to profit from

it. Doubtless, saree shop salesmen; liquor-booth licences, and purveyors of other consumables also have a bonanza after every *mela*, generating a fair volume of economic activity. This defence is only speciously attractive. New, hot purchasing-power chasing scarce goods, without any real increase in production, can also trigger off local inflation, after every *mela*. Final result: one more major inflationary factor at the macro level, for the several thousand crores thus distributed or diverted.

Finally, some fundamental questions must be asked. Will the people be grateful for the patronage received? The few without political clout who did manage to get a loan, but have to pay it back, may find themselves resenting their longterm indebtedness, particularly if they are making payment at 12% not at 4%. Favoured nominees of the Congress-I reneging on the loan doubtless regard the gift as their due. The many who do not receive anything, (for not even Mr. Poojary can cover all), will wonder why they were excluded from this bonanza. They may well manifest their spleen when the opportunity comes.

Banking is Not Charity

The benefit to the Congress Party not

being so great as it may appear, the Minister might do well to consider whether it is really wise to destabilise the whole banking system for the dubious gains of electoral success. The fact is that no one values what is obtained free. It is the things they sweat for, that people really cherish. Let government by all means help the poor, with outright subsidies, even with loans. But let the beneficiaries be properly identified. They do not necessarily need conventional assets in cold cash or possession. They do need at least character and a local reputation. Such people should not be hard to identify, if the identification is a calm, unhurried and objective operation. Such persons, however small and however poor, will take pride in repaying their amounts, knowing it is a rolling fund, which will in turn help others. Banking can move from assessment of assets to assessment of people. But if it is *Banking*, not capricious charity or selective patronage, the people should have both the capacity and the firm intention to repay.

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Towards a National Self-Critique

Lionel Fernandes

It is a form of escapism for us in the twentieth century to hark back to the sixteenth or seventeenth century in search of heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses who we may invoke to bail us out of the present difficulties and for the solution of which no sixteenth century formula is available or ever will be.

Every nation, like every individual, has its blind spots, its twilight areas, its strains of neurosis, and our nation being no exception, it is of interest to examine those aspects of our national life in which these come to the fore more manifestly.

On the Domestic Front

On the domestic front, one could begin with the phenomenon of the glorification of local and regional historical figures, be they warriors or rulers or leaders in one or other capacity. These figures were certainly rallying points for large sections of the people in generations gone by. They played their role in history as circumstances and their own genius dictated. For this, due credit must be given to them. But all this must be done in a strictly historical perspective. The danger lies in extrapolating the exploits or achievements of those historical figures from the past where they belong, to the present where they do not and cannot. Nobody questions the greatness of Shivaji, of Rana Pratap, of Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore and of a galaxy of eminent men and women who have made their mark in history in various fields besides the political and the military. But their greatness consists precisely in their involvement with and relevance to their times and fortunes, not ours.

It is a form of escapism for us in the twentieth century to hark back to the sixteenth or seventeenth century in search of heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses whom we may invoke to bail us out of the present difficulties, a fair proportion of which are of our own making, and for the solution to which no sixteenth century formula is available or ever will be. The folly of hero-worship consists precisely in this, that masses of people are hypnotized into believing that by erecting statues and

monuments and by garlanding or illuminating them with pious regularity, the demons of the present can be exorcised, and a bygone greatness (often assumed) recaptured. Obsession with the past can stymie the present and blight the future.

The "Golden Age" Myth

There has never existed a golden age in the past in the sense that a peak of all-round human achievement was reached at a specific point in history and that everything has been deterioration and degeneration ever since. One can speak of periods of greater progress and prosperity relative to other periods but no 'absolute' can be singled out as a paragon for all time to come.

A further distortion resulting from hero-worship is the projection of regional characters with local ambitions as national figures endowed with such wisdom and breadth of vision as are more characteristic of a cosmopolitan age and culture. In a pluralist society like ours spread over the vast regions of a subcontinent, it is inevitable that perceptions in regard to heroes (and villains) would vary greatly as among the various regional communities or sub-nationalities depending on their varied historical experiences. The emancipator of Maharashtra could well be the scourge of Bengal. It would be impossible to gratify one regional community without antagonizing another and in certain critical situations even triggering off an atavistic backlash. Various brands of regional chauvinism, revanchism and irredentism lie smouldering not very deep below the surface of national life and it requires not much provocation to bring them up in violent eruption.

Pandering to Sub-National Interests

To feed sub-national rivalries on past glories, whether real or fictitious, is a dangerous game which no sober

national leadership could afford to play. It could spell the ruin of national integration, but many present-day politicians do not seem to care. It is of paramount importance, therefore, to see that national and local history is written and interpreted in as unbiased and constructive a manner as possible and that the curricula and textbooks prescribed for the youth at all stages of the educational process do justice not only to past generations but also to the present one. It is of no use to glorify the Rajputs, the Marathas or Sikhs and to denigrate the Moghuls, as though nationalism would be the better promoted thereby. In fact this very example may well illustrate one of the ironies of history viz. that while indigenous chieftains and princes were busy fighting one another and carving up territories to hold sway over, it was foreign invaders who paradoxically played a major role in unifying large parts of the subcontinent on a scale that no native ruler succeeded in doing. A revolt against Moghul rule could thus be viewed as a body-blow to sub-continental unity and integrity and as a fillip to forces of destabilisation! History is indeed replete with ironies!

Another bizarre variant of hero-worship is the practice of making 'martyrs' or *shaheeds* of people who, however well-meaning, professed and practised what, in today's parlance is known as terrorism plain and simple. It would be odious to mention names in this connection, nor is it necessary to do so as these are known to all and sundry. One might condone simple folk who are not conversant with the niceties of political analysis for singing the praises of these so-called martyrs and freedom-fighters, but one cannot excuse political leaders and analysts for doing so in the face of better judgement. How can a responsible national leader lay a wreath at Rajghat and then

proceed to do the same at Husseiniwala? The non-violent Father of the Nation had no truck whatever with violence in any form and under any pretext. Not even the objective of freedom from foreign rule could, in his view, justify resort to violence. On more than one occasion, he undertook a fast to expiate the violence perpetrated by some of his followers; and he did not hesitate to call off important national movements when there was any deviation from the path of *satyagraha*, as happened after the Chauri Chaura incident. And here in our day, we have national leaders who swear by the Gandhian heritage pandering to local chauvinisms that are at variance with the rudiments of that heritage! And all this at a time when the most vicious forms of *shaheed-dom* have resurrected themselves like a Frankenstein to attack the very vitals of the nation!

Distortions Caused by Double-Think

The danger of this kind of double-think is that it distorts our perceptions and policies both in domestic and foreign affairs. It leads to a situation in which we give open support to certain forms of armed struggle for liberation abroad while singing the praises of Gandhiji and non-violence at home. Further, we fail to establish a theoretical basis that would stand ethico-political scrutiny for differentiating between various forms of violence. Violence against Israel and South Africa would pass muster, but not against the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan or the Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea! Sikh extremist violence against the Indian State would deserve condemnation but not Tamil Eelam violence against the Sri Lankan State! Pakistan would be berated for allegedly harbouring and training Sikh terrorists while we ourselves would turn the Nelson eye on terrorist activity directed across the Palk Straits from Indian soil!

Double-think is seen in other areas of national policy as well. India has a morbid obsession with the Pakistan arms build-up and nuclear programme while glossing over its own massive arms procurement and weapons manufacturing effort and the fact that with its entry into the nuclear club following the Pokharan nuclear 'implosion' in 1974 it is now a nuclear power in its own right with nuclear weapons capability. Whether from the yardstick of size, logistics, population, resources, econo-

mic infrastructure, scientific-cum-technological base or military capabilities, India has more than an edge over Pakistan and has nothing to fear from it. On the contrary, it is a truncated and insecure Pakistan flanked by a superpower on the one side and a major-power-in-the-making like India on the other that has reason to feel intimidated, whereas it is India that is constantly crying 'wolf' to the amusement (and annoyance) of much of the international community. A concomitant of the above is the fluctuating and meandering Indo-Pakistan relationship which somehow never seems to stabilize on a mutually beneficial basis. When India is ready for a no-war pact, Pakistan is unwilling and vice versa. Double-think does not engender trust.

Apropos the Pakistani arms build-up, it is a truism to state that every sovereign nation has the undisputed prerogative to judge what is in its best national interest. It is not for other nations to determine for it what its security concerns and perceptions of the overall environment should be. Judgements on internal and external security need fall properly within the competence of each national leadership. It is for that leadership to further determine how its military-cum-diplomatic policies will dovetail with its social economic, technological and scientific policies evolved in response to various situational variables. Presumably, that leadership would take into account its budgetary and general resources position in deciding its arms policy, whether nuclear or conventional. If the leadership were to make major errors of judgement in the above important areas, there would be widespread repercussions in various fields and the leadership would be obliged to rectify those errors or make way for a new leadership, as happened in the case of the Argentinian junta following the Falklands war with Britain, or in the case of the Shah of Iran, or — to take examples from Pakistan itself — in the cases of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Bhutto in turn. It is therefore presumptuous of India to pontificate to Pakistan what its arms policy should or should not be; and the argument that the arms build-up of Pakistan obliges India to divert scarce resources from development to armaments is a puerile one.

Foreign Policy Double Standards

Another twilight area in Indian foreign

policy is the staunch advocacy of bilateralism the 'Simla spirit' in dealing with thorny problems with India's immediate neighbours, while discountenancing bilateralism in the dealings of the superpowers and of middle-level regional powers like Israel and South Africa with other states in general and with states in their neighbourhood in particular. This means that where bilateralism is of advantage to India in dealing with neighbours from a position of strength, it is to be preferred to a multilateral or global approach to interstate problem-solving while lip service is routinely paid to the United Nations as the proper forum for resolving such disputes. At the same time, other powers, specifically the western powers and their allies like Israel and South Africa are lectured on the imperative of strengthening the United Nations Organisation by abiding by its resolutions and complying with its sanctions. This means that while India itself really wants to keep the United Nations out of any mediatory role between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, or between India and Bangladesh over the sharing of the Ganga waters, or between India and Sri Lanka over the Tamil refugee problem following the Sinhalese-Tamil confrontation, it insists that the same United Nations intervene effectively in crises areas like Namibia, Nicaragua, the Middle East, Cyprus and so on. The fig-leaf pretext for assuming this posture is that problems that can be solved bilaterally should not be 'internationalised'. But the same yardstick is not universally applied, so much so that India lacks moral credibility in its exhortations to strengthen the United Nations system.

Bilateralism itself is a shifty ground where consistency surrenders to expediency and the weaker power must capitulate to the stronger or seek the assistance of a countervailing power. Take the example of India versus Pakistan on the one hand and India versus China on the other. In the former case, the might of India is too intimidating for Pakistan (particularly after the emergence of Bangladesh) to feel confident that bilateral problems can be resolved peacefully and equitably between the two countries alone. Thus it is imperative for Pakistan to seek the assistance of a major power that can help it to resist pressures from India. This is all the more so since India itself has a particularly close relationship with a Super

Power that has now established its presence right at the doorstep of Pakistan. Furthermore, the only bone of contention between India and Pakistan being the control of the territory in Kashmir, with India in occupation of the major part of that State, it is easy to see that bilateralism can serve no useful purpose where the interests of Pakistan are concerned. In the absence of an effective independent umpire and willingness of both parties to refer their disputes to that umpire and abide by the verdict that is handed down, the law of Might is Right is bound to cloud their mutual dealings.

In the case of India versus Pakistan, therefore, bilateralism works in India's favour. But the relationship with China is a different proposition. China and India being evenly matched, there is no need for China to seek a countervailing power against India. Here again, the only outstanding dispute between the two countries is the border question centring mainly on the control of disputed territory in Aksai Chin, with China being in occupation of much of the area.

In this case, China is in a position of advantage vis-a-vis India. Bilateralism cannot be of much help to India if China chooses to be intransigent. Thus where India is at a disadvantage territorially viz., in Aksai Chin, it puts the border question with China foremost in the list of matters to be negotiated, but where it is in a stronger position territorially as in

Kashmir, it puts the border question on the back burner in its negotiations with Pakistan.

The point that is sought to be made here is that bilateralism by itself cannot ensure international peace and good neighbourliness. It is bound to lead to situations where bigger powers will exercise hegemony over lesser powers and where as a sequel, the lesser powers will be led to seek the assistance of countervailing powers to ensure their independent existence. Thus the game of the 'balance of power' which Indira Gandhi denounced at the time of the Bangladesh war is a necessary corollary to the bilateralism which India itself espouses in its dealings with its neighbours. And while India is critical of the hegemonic ambitions of the major powers, it is quite obviously content with its new-found status as the pre-eminent power in South Asia.

Setting Right the Distortions

Turning the spotlight inwards once more from international to domestic affairs, one notices a glaring contrast in the stand taken by the Indian state in upholding its authority vis-a-vis workers, peasants, landless labourers, tribals, harijans, girijans and other disadvantaged sections of the national community in their struggle to secure more human conditions of existence and the stand taken on the other hand towards fundamentalist, revivalist and obscurantist groups that openly chal-

lenge the authority of the state by advocating illegal practices such as social boycott, levies in the name of religion, fines and penalties such as flogging for so-called religious offences, and even, in extreme cases, armed resistance to the State in the name of religious duty. In the former case, the State comes down heavily on the agitators, viewing their struggles and movements within a narrow law-and-order perspective, while in the latter case it often follows a policy of appeasement and drift and gives the impression of bending over backwards to keep the reactionary groups in good humour. This is no way to strengthen the sinews of the State. It is a sure prescription for social anarchy and political paralysis. No amount of calling out the troops and deploying of para-military forces will enable the civil authority to govern the State effectively if there are basic distortions that are not set right within the socio-political system.

Deliberate and consistent efforts must be made to strengthen secularism and egalitarianism within the State. Only then can there be hope that the bizarre elements surveyed in this article are steadily undermined and eventually banished from our national life and our perspectives on both domestic and foreign affairs.

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Scenario For Disaster

Both politically and economically, we are undoubtedly in a total mess today.

Never since independence has the law and order situation been in such a sorry mess as it is today. The ruling party is itself in shambles, and the opposition parties are in even worse shape. All accords are ending in discords.

The prices of all essential commodities have shot up many-fold in the last twenty-five years. Rice, which used to be 90 p. a kilo, is now Rs. 6.50; Wheat, which used to be 50 p. a kilo, is now around Rs. 4; Coffee has gone up from Rs. 4 a kilo to Rs. 25; Tea from Rs. 5 a kilo to Rs. 45; Kerosene from 50p. a litre to Rs. 2.25; Petrol from 75 p. a litre to Rs. 8; Sugar from Rs. 2 a kilo to Rs. 6.50; Gold from Rs. 165 per 10 grammes to Rs. 2,200; Cement from Rs. 6 per bag to Rs. 60. Those who have preserved their grocers' bills over the years will testify to

these facts.

While incomes have gone up four times, prices have gone up over six times. This is true only in regard to those fortunate employees (a microscopic minority) who get D.A. according to the Consumer Price Index - which is itself bogus). What about those who get fixed D.A. or no D.A. at all? In their case, the gap between income and price rise is not 50% but over 200%.

There is all-round gloom on the economic front today. Interests on borrowings alone is now over Rs. 8,500 crores. Never since independence was the trade gap (Rs. 8,300 crores) so wide as it is today.

What is the way out? More borrowings to service past debts! Devaluation of our rupee to make purchases of our goods more attractive; printing more currency notes. At this rate, we shall go

the way of Latin American countries. When the light of democracy and freedom vanishes, when a prosperous, but microscopic minority lives on an island surrounded by a sea of hunger, unemployment, disease and illiteracy, and when there is total anarchy, the ideal situation is created paving the way for a communist or fascist dictatorship. In a huge country like ours, military dictatorship could be ruled out. Fortunately, our military is not yet politicised. It is, as yet, a very disciplined and patriotic force. Our judiciary too is quite independent and not yet fully politicised. These two forces are the only saving grace to protect our democracy against communist or fascist dictatorship in our country. But how long can even they hold out?

Surnant Bankeshwar

The Killing of Charity

C. Rajagopalachari

When Young Socialists attempted to corner Gandhiji by asking him how with his great compassion for the poor, he could tolerate the rich continuing to be rich and whether he should not make socialism an integral part of his message, he reflected and as was always his way he looked into India's spiritual traditions for an answer. And he found it. According to India's dharma, all the wealth, talents and good luck of which an individual happens to be the possessor, come from God, and he holds them as a trustee for the benefit of those around him—relatives, friends and fellow citizens. All these have a claim on him. The claimants are in ever widening circles around him. Necessarily as the circle widens the help expected is reduced.

Giving is the biggest enjoyment one can extract out of one's possessions. *Tena tyaktena bhunjeethaa* in *Isha Upanishad* was thus interpreted by Gandhiji. There should be no legal compulsion intervening in the working of this moral trusteeship. Giving ceases to be enjoyment if it is subjected to coercion. The individual is bound to those around him as by the brahmastra of mythological warfare. It does not tolerate the super-imposition of any flaxen or other physical rope. Compassion and traditional charity disappear if taxes and laws seek to achieve what the instinct of unity with those round one should achieve. The key to Gandhiji's trusteeship bond between the haves and the have-nots is the voluntary character of the giving, the preservation of the precious illusion of free-will. I say illusion of free-will because of the compulsions of the inner spirit and of public opinion. External physical coercion dispels the free-will because of the compulsions of the inner spirit and of public opinion. External physical coercion dispels the free-will feeling. Taxes and State regulations not only rob us of the means to practise compassion but rob us even of the will to practise it.

The care of the poor which is the moral responsibility of the better off was not neglected in the old days. But we are now living in a different age, and one may feel that care of the needy is now so big that only the Government is

able to handle it. Ralph W. Husted in an address to a Young Men's Forum in America dealt with this point, of course particularly having in mind American conditions:

"I lived through the depression of the 1930s. I saw people go hungry and without enough clothing. But I never saw or read of anyone starving or freezing to death. On the contrary, in the early days of the depression, I saw the greatest voluntary response of people to the needs of their fellowmen that this nation had ever seen. Without being asked by any one, people who had less than enough to satisfy their own needs shared what little they had with those who were in a worse condition. And then something happened. Someone decided that the government could do a better job of feeding and caring for the unemployed, and a vast government programme of handout was launched. What happened? The spirit of charity that brought people to the aid of their fellowmen was destroyed. The Government tried to assume the mantle of Christian charity, the noblest characteristic of mankind. The poor were fed. The unemployed were given work of sorts; but the people of this country were changed. They had lost something. They had surrendered to Government their moral responsibility—the thing that made them men and women—and from that we have not recovered to this day." (Courtesy: *Free-man*)

We have seen in India also that after Government began to levy big taxes to run big expenditure for the poor, the spirit of charity declined and now threatens altogether to disappear. Not only because the Government has publicly undertaken all the responsibility to look after the poor but also because the people who could afford to be charitable are far too heavily taxed.

The duty of individuals as well as of government is to provide opportunities for the poor to work and earn what they need. The care of the physically handicapped is different and should not be confused with policy in respect of the normally fit.

"To make a government requires no great trouble. Settle the seat of power

teach obedience; and the work is done. To give freedom is still more easy. It is not necessary to guide; it only requires to let go the rein. But to form a free government, that is, to temper together these opposite elements, liberty and restraint, in one consistent whole, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind." These are Edmund Burke's words. It is on the basis of the philosophy contained in these words of the great British political philosopher that our Constitution was framed and completed in 1949.

Part IV of our Constitution lays down what the governments that take responsibility from time to time are asked to do; and Part III of the document lays down strict adherence to the essentials required for freedom. To try to fulfil what is laid down in Part IV, or anything else which the Government considers it good to do from time to time, should not be sought to be done ignoring or setting aside what is laid down as fundamental in Part III. To govern without taking away the essential freedoms is what Edmund Burke as well as the framers of our own Constitution visualized and desired. Efficient government with strict adherence to the rights and liberties of citizens in respect of person and property, as conceived by the framers of the Constitution, may be difficult but that is what is to be done. It may be easy to govern by snatching away freedom. It may be easy to let citizens be free to do whatever they like. But this would be anarchy and the other tyranny.

If the activities of Government are limited to what properly belongs to government and the people are allowed, singly or in combination, to produce and trade and do business as free citizens, competing with one another and exercising their best talents, earn and save, and reinvest for further production and profitable business, there will be plenty of opportunity for employment and the spread of general happiness. On the other hand public management means waste and a burden of taxation which means for the people the direct opposite of well-being.

Suvarajya, May 28, 1966

Rajaji – The Titan.

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, Rajaji or CR as he was popularly known was born on December 8, 1879 and died on December 25, 1972. He was a giant among men, a true Seer who had the courage of his convictions and unafraid to speak out the truth as he perceived it. On the occasion of his 108th birthday we pay tribute to his memory. The following is an extract from Mr. Minoo Masani's *Against the Tide*.



On the morning of 23 December 1972, I received a telephone message from Madras that Rajaji's health was causing great concern and he had been shifted to hospital. The moment I got the message, I felt I must go and be with the old man.

I flew to Madras and drove straight to the hospital and was told that Rajaji was sinking and was no longer conscious.

While the doctors had not given up hope altogether, it was obvious that the end was near. I decided to sit by his bedside till it came. For forty-eight hours, the vigil continued, with a small band of Rajaji's devotees and personal friends, several of whom belonged to the family of Sadasivam and Subbalaxmi, who sat and watched and prayed while the doctors fought obstinately a battle that was obviously lost.

During the last few hours, it was interesting to see ministers of the Union Government appear at his bedside. As

soon as Rajaji died, the Government took over all arrangements for a State funeral. It was obvious that Rajaji's own colleagues and followers of the Swatantra Party would be brushed aside. I decided to take the plane back to Bombay that evening rather than mourn Rajaji in the company of those who had fought him and treated his advice with contempt. My fears were justified when, the following day, permission was refused for the display of the Swatantra Party flag and the general arrangements were taken over by those who had no use for Rajaji when he was alive. Now, evidently, he belonged to them.

Looking back at my long though intermittent association with Rajaji through the decades, my mind moves to several confrontations and encounters with Rajaji – my clash with him in 1938 when he was Prime Minister of Madras; his appeal to me to bow to Prime Minister Nehru's wishes at the

meeting of the Congress Party in Parliament in the early '50s; our getting together on the platform at the Bangalore Town Hall in 1959; and the unbroken comradeship which I enjoyed with him from that moment till he died.

From 1959 to 1971, I had the privilege of working closely with him, first as General Secretary of the Swatantra Party and then as its President. That I should draw on his wisdom and experience throughout all those years was only to be expected. That we occasionally differed was also natural. What stands out, however, is the fact that Rajaji was prepared to listen to dissent and to give ground to it when he saw its force. He gave invaluable support and encouragement in all that I did and for this I shall always be grateful.

It was a pleasure to work with somebody whose mind moved as fast and logically as Rajaji's. Quite often, when I was half way through explaining a point, Rajaji would say: "Stop. I think I know what you are going to say." He would then proceed unerringly to complete my argument and give his own comments.

It was not only that he had a sharp razor-edged mind, as it was often described. What was more important was that he was not afraid to follow his reasoning to a logical conclusion. The same applied to the call of his conscience.

His sharp mind was accompanied by a sharp tongue. Rajaji did not suffer fools gladly. Since I happened to share that failing, I for one took kindly to it. Pyarelal, Gandhiji's secretary, who knew him well, was to write about this a year before Rajaji died:

"Rajaji has a sharp tongue but like a polished razor's keen edge it causes the ritual wound with a touch that is scarcely felt or seen. The wound is meant to heal, not hurt. Like a

surgeon's knife it removes the scab without leaving a scar. Rajaji is unsparing but never heartless or cruel. He can be angry but not vindictive."

Like Gandhiji, Rajaji had a wonderful sense of humour. It was sometimes impish but never malicious. The story is told of what happened, when, as Governor-General, he received the Russian Ambassador who had come to present his credentials. When the Ambassador addressed Rajaji as "Your Excellency," Rajaji with a twinkle in his eye, observed:

But I thought you in Russia had discontinued the use of all titles.

"Yes, Your Excellency," the Russian diplomat replied. "But that was at the outset of the Revolution. Then we realised it was a mistake."

"What!" Rajaji innocently exclaimed, "the outset of the Revolution was a mistake?"

Religion and Public Life

The problem of Hindu-Muslim relations is social and cultural rather than political. What is known as communalism is merely a manifestation, in political and economic life, of the operation of certain unexamined traditions and beliefs that still govern the attitudes of a vast majority of Hindus and all but a handful of Muslims. Until these are subjected to a critical inquiry and the chaff is separated from the grain, the Hindu-Muslim problem is not likely to be solved within the framework of liberal institutions.

It is not a question of tolerance and mutual goodwill, still less of adjustment on the political plane. No Indian leader could have been more tolerant and willing to compromise than Gandhi was. Nor could there have been a greater political adjustment than the carving out of a separate state for a minority that defined nationality solely in terms of religion. Nor, again, is it a problem, as the Marxists and socialists of various shades still imagine, pertaining to the 'superstructure' which would automatically be solved once the economic 'foundation' was set right. They may not attach much importance to the fact that Jinnah himself could become the leader of Indian Muslims only after he began talking in the name of 'Islam in danger', and that so long as he was with the

Rajaji was Gandhiji's chosen disciple and interpreter in their earlier years together. Later, they were often to differ on specific issues but never parted company.

Once, summing up the point of his difference with Rajaji, Gandhiji observed:

"The difference between you and me is not great, but (it is) vital though (it seems) small. You want, if you do, power at any price. I have put a limit to the price to be paid. You think if you do that nothing will come if we don't take power. I can say I can afford to wait till it comes at my price for I am making progress however slight it may be."

Commenting on this unusual relationship, Pyarelal wrote:

"His parting company brought him nearer to Gandhiji as a Satyagrahi than any mechanical conformity could have. That is why Gandhiji felt

closer to him when Rajaji differed from and even opposed him than to so many a so-called 'follower'."

When at the age of eighty, Rajaji was convinced that India was being propelled in the wrong direction, he was prepared to sacrifice his well-earned rest. He did so reluctantly, as I happen to know. Perhaps the result of that sacrifice has been disappointing. But it was not he who failed. It was the members of the party who failed him by failing to show the dedication and sincerity of purpose that were required in order to convince the people about efficiency of our principles. The principles he gave the Swatantra Party were flawless. Sooner or later, the people of India, who failed to respond, will have to turn to them if India is to progress.

A.B. Shah

Congress and took pride in being looked upon as a modern liberal, he was not acceptable to the Muslims as their leader. But it seems to me that only retarded adolescence can miss the significance of the miserable failure of Nehru's programme of mass contact among Muslims in order to wean them away from the politics of separatism.

The basic mistake in both the Rama-Rahim approach of Gandhi and the economic approach of Nehru and the Marxists lay in assigning a secondary role to the cultural factor in the analysis of collective behaviour. Gandhi went by a highly refined version of religion as any truly religious man would do. In so doing he overlooked the fact that what distinguishes one religion from another — doctrine, mode of worship, the social relations it prescribes or prohibits and, most important of all, the sense of collective identity it imparts to its followers—is operationally more important than the universal ethical values they may preach in common.

The divisive role of orthodox religion neutralizes its message of peace and brotherhood in a society that is still largely moved by tribal loyalties rather than considerations of reason and human welfare. The attitude it perpetuates through uncritical adherence to outdated dogmas and practices is an obstacle not only to inter-religious harmony and national development but

also to the growth of a modern, liberal culture in the absence of which neither democracy nor a welfare state can for long be sustained. The type of approach, indeed the type of leadership that Gandhi represented can yield lasting results only if the ground is already prepared for it by preceding generations through a critical reappraisal of their social and cultural heritage.

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Philip Spratt

The Man Who Came to Blow up India.

Jamadagni

During the early fifties, it was a book by the well-known Marxist Christopher Caudwel that introduced me to Mr. Philip Spratt, for I was eager to meet the owner of this book.

My friend and I went to the *Mysindia* office and saw a middle aged foreigner come riding on a rickety bicycle, with a few books and newspapers tied to the carrier. We thought that he must be one of the Anglo-Indians living in that huge compound. A few minutes later we were taken to the office and introduced to the editor sitting behind a table heaped with newspapers and manuscripts. He was none other than Mr. Philip Spratt the rider of the rickety bicycle! My heart throbbed when he stood and shook our hands with a gentle smile and offered us seats and with fatherly affection enquired about our welfare. We told him of our interest in Caudwel's works. He asked us to come next day to take other books by Caudwel.

I had already heard and read about Mr. Spratt and his works, his contribution in rejuvenating the communist movement in India, about the Peasants and Workers Party which was mainly his brainchild and his self-defence in the Meerut Conspiracy Case.

Comintern Emissary

I would not believe that the man who I saw in front of me was the same Philip Spratt, the one time revolutionary. Age and overwork were evidently telling on him. I recalled a note from H. Williamson DIB to the Home Department (DIB HQ No. 16.(Bol) 27-VIII dated 5.12.34) giving a brief description of Mr. Spratt's revolutionary zeal and activities after his release from jail:

"We know that he intends to give a full report to the 7th International Conference of CI due to be held in Moscow early in 1935 and I have no wish that the Comintern experts should have the benefit of Spratt's

Came out to India in 1926, after valuable work for labour organisations in London. He was prosecuted for sedition in Bombay (1927), for conspiracy in Meerut (1929), sentenced to two years R.I., released (1934) and interned (1934-36)

After odd jobs in Madras (1936-39) he worked for *Mysindia*, Bangalore (1939-65) before joining *Swarajya*, Madras

He became a member of the Radical Democratic Party (1943) and the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (1950).

Publications:

Gandhism An Analysis (1939); India and Constitution Making (1950); Blowing up India (1955); A New Look at Marx (1957); Diamat as Philosophy of Nature (1958); and Hindu Culture and Personality (1966).



advice. I would prefer that he be held in jail, at any rate until the conference is over.

"I hope it is plainly understood that the communism of Spratt is very different now a days from that of M.N. Roy and J.L. Nehru. The two men prefer to call themselves socialists and are prepared to use of constitutional means in their endeavour to create a socialist state and only in the event of failure on those lines, they are prepared to resort to crime and violence to win their ends. Spratt is a full-blooded communist convinced that the hearts of Imperialists and Capitalists cannot be changed except by violence and murder".

Almost all the notes sent by the then Home Department to His Majesty's Government on Philip Spratt are full of his mercurial activities, organising ability, intellectual acumen, and his work as a party strategist.

Philip Spratt landed in Bombay in December 1926, on an assignment from the Comintern to rejuvenate and organise the then half-dead communist party. The British Communist Party was entrusted with the task of sending its most able men to colonial India to carry out this work. Many British Party members like Allison, Hutchison, Bradley, Campbell were sent to India. But none could do the work as Spratt did – the chief accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case.

Educating People

The Spratt I met at the *Mysindia* office in Bangalore commanded high respect, delivering lectures on subjects varying from politics to literature and helping people imbibe a rational and radical outlook. He was associated with many Institutions in Bangalore. Through his association with the public library and the Mythic Society he persuaded them to acquire the latest works

on different subjects by well-known international thinkers. His lectures on liberal thinking, the civic responsibilities of citizens, respect for dissent, and, above all, on human dignity and the freedom to live as one wished without harming the interests of fellow citizens are still fresh in the minds of listeners.

His interest in Hindu culture was amazing. His curiosity to understand the nexus of the Hindu personality was boundless. He would discuss with Sanskrit scholars like Devudu Narasimha Shastry, Seetharama Shastry, Vijayadev and others the real meaning of Indian philosophy and other Indian religions and sought access to more authentic sources than those in English.

As the editor of *Mysindia* he published articles representing varied points of view from the extreme right to the extreme left. I can't forget the controversy on P.M.S. Blackett's book 'Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy' (1948) between Spratt and N.S. Seetharama Shastry which ran for weeks. Finally both agreed to disagree

respecting the other's stand, characteristic of Spratt's respect of dissent. When the first communist government was established in Kerala, Spratt editorially opposed it. But liberal intellectuals like the late Mr. D.V. Gundappa supported it. However, Spratt while remaining firm did not try to impose his opinion on them.

His love for young writers and intellectuals was immense. I know how he encouraged them by correcting their manuscripts and getting them published. Many writers bloomed because of his encouragement.

His contacts at the national and international levels were vast; he used to receive national and international periodicals, which were then not accessible even to the public library. I used to borrow from him many of these. It was on his initiative that the public library and the Kannada Literary Academy began to receive *Encounter*, *Quest*, *Thought*, *Vigil* and *Freedom First*. Also, many of us in Bangalore came in contact with intellectuals like

A.B. Shah, V.B. Karnik, Minoo Masani, Nissim Ezekiel and Tarkateertha Laxmanshastri Joshi through his efforts. Internationally well-known writers, literary critics and philosophers when they visited India, made it a point to come to Bangalore to meet Spratt. Among them were eminent personalities like Stephen Spender, Arthur Koestler, Aghenanda Bharathi, Douglas Hyde, Melvin J. Lasky and Prof. Sydney Hook. Bangalore intellectuals were fortunate to meet, discuss and be in touch with new intellectual trends in the West. Indians intellectuals of the stature of M.N. Roy too came to Bangalore. Even now many remember his lectures at the Intermediate College quadrangle. We learnt of Marx's concept of alienation and of the humanism he conceived, beyond communism. These thought provoking lectures were possible in Bangalore because of Spratt.

"Anti Communist"

Even after he left the CPI, CPI doyens like S.V. Ghate, S.S. Mirajkar, Dharni Goswami and Ajoy Gosh, used to meet Mr. Spratt whenever they came to

Raymond's Suitings

The ^{Best} guide to the well-dressed male



Bangalore though he was officially decalred "anti-communist".

Once when I met S.V. Ghate, I asked "Why do you meet Mr. Spratt who is officially known to be a rabid anti-communist?"

Mr. Ghate replied: "Yes, officially he is anti-communist. But we are human beings. Our friendship and our joint struggles, his contribution to the cause — how can I, forget him?"

In 1956 I worked in the same institution with Spratt. Though so near, we never indulged in unnecessary talks. By this time Spratt was aware of my interests. Whenever magazines or books of interest to me came to him he would lend them to me. Also, he encouraged me to write in English.

Not only I, but numerous writers were helped by him. I know some of them used to give their works for printing at the Hosali press. And it fell to Mr. Spratt's lot not only to correct the manuscripts, but also read the proofs. Yet I never saw him grumble. He used to help one Mr. Parthasarathy who published the *Bangalore Guide*. Mr. Spratt would proof-read this too. Many, who are now academic elites are indebted to him. Prof. H.H. Annai Gowda, started the *Literary Half-Yearly* a journal published by Mysore university, but it was Mr. Spratt, a member of the editorial board, who bore much of the burden.

Generous to a Fault

It was Spratt's nature not to accept payments either in cash or kind for this kind of work. Once Mr. Parthasarathy, mentioned that he would like to thank Mr. Spratt for his assistance. I told him that the seat of his rickety cycle was torn. Perhaps, I suggested, without Spratt's knowledge Mr. Parthasarathy could replace it with a new one and also replace the tyres and tubes of the cycle. And this is precisely what Mr. Parthasarathy did. The seat, tyres and tubes were replaced. Mr. Parthasarathy and I were curiously waiting outside to see Spratt's reaction. Mr. Spratt came, and as usual with a sheet of paper cleaned the seat, and started riding. After a few seconds he got down and checked the seat and tyres. He stood still for a few minutes wondering who could have done this.

On his return to the office he told me of the miraculous transformation of his bicycle and laughed. Then I told him the truth. That evening when Parthasarathy came, Spratt asked him why he

had spent so much money on that rickety bicycle (Spratt was aware of the difficulties in the publication of the *Guide*.) After much hesitation he accepted the gift on condition, that in future such things would not be done.

On the question of spending money I remember another poignant incident. When Mr. Spratt received a cable intimating him of his mother's death, he refused to go to England. "Why did you refuse?" I asked. "You know my children's education is not yet over," said Spratt and argued "instead of spending four to five thousand rupees on travel, the same amount could be spent for educating my children. In any event my visit now will be of no avail to my mother who is already dead."

Mr. Spratt's philanthropy was such that on many a pay-day he would go home empty handed. Mrs. Spratt would come to Mr. D.N. Hosali, the proprietor of *Mysindia* narrate her difficulties and request him to give the salary, not to Spratt but to her. Spratt, realising the consequences of his action, bowed to his wife's wishes. It was she who looked after the children's education, his needs, purchase of books etc.

Mrs. Seetha Spratt, the adopted daughter of Singaravelu Chettiar, the first communist in the Madras Presidency, would bring her husband's tiffin regularly at 3.30 p.m. In her absence one of their sons would do this. Sometimes Spratt, immersed in his work and thoughts, would not notice him for quite some minutes. They too did not like to disturb him. Once his youngest son had to wait for more than twenty minutes, and in fact was getting late to school. I had to draw Spratt's attention twice before he smiled and said "Excuse me boy, I will come", and took the tiffin. Mrs. Spratt and her children were fully aware of his nature and looked after him as though he were a child. Their's was an ideal family. They used to call him Dada with affection, awe and respect. All of them are worthy children of worthy parents.

A Worthy Adopted Son of India

Spratt had already started writing his *magnum opus* "Hindu Culture and Personality". I had the opportunity of discussing a few points. My view is that the Hindu personality is not narcissist but it is nearer to a split personality. The gap between our words and deeds are so wide, our concept of soul being not involved in world activities and our

ideas of *karma* may be some of the root causes for this gap. Also we must try to analyse the development of the Indian psyche and social consciousness in its historical, social-political-economic and ethico-religious contexts.

Since the '60s his health was not good. He was also suffering from asthma. That noble man Rajaji, who knew Spratt welcomed him to *Swarajya* and did a good turn to journalism.

Yes, India adopted him. Really this adopted son of India made a worthy contribution in many fields be it building up the Peasants and the Workers Party, raising working class consciousness, developing rational and radical thinking, struggling for a genuine democratic way of life, working on the need for liberal thinking or inculcating in the people respect for human dignity and freedom and the right of dissent.

I am not competent to probe his political and other literary contributions. Though he retained his British citizenship, this literature graduate of Cambridge who was fluent in Latin, French, German, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Tamil lived and died in India. Mr. Spratt, was a *Manavothama* — who blazed the path for a new liberal, the radical humanist, who alone can eradicate the feeling of alienation in man.

JAMADAGNI is a free-lance journalist

What's In a Name

You can tell the nature of people they say, by the kind of names they like to call their leaders. Just as you can tell a man by the name he gives himself.

In a notification published, in the AIADMK party organ, *Anna*, last month, MGR, signed himself: *Kazhaga Niruvana Thalaivar*, *Kazhaga Podhu Cheyalalar*, *Idhaya Deviam*, *Maanbumigu Mudalvar Doctor* — *Puratchi Thalaivar* — party Chief, Party General Secretary, Heart's Lord, the Eminent Chief Minister, Doctor, Revolutionary Leader M.G. Ramachandran. Well!

Aside, December 1,

FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS

Taken With a Large Dose Of Salt

Bernard Levin

I have always maintained that whether a black cat crossing your path is lucky or unlucky depends on whether you are a man or a mouse

On a recent visit to America, I came across a story in the *New York Times* which awakened memories for me, as it must have done for many readers. But among those who read it, I think I was one of the few, if not the only one to have two sets of memories recalled. The writer of the story was clearly unaware of the circumstances giving rise to the second set, but since the tail seemed to me to be more interesting than the dog, I shall today tell both halves of the story; the moral of the second half will, I think, be of particular interest to those who relish irony, and especially in the realm of politics.

In 1951, there was a strike, in the American state of New Mexico, at a mine where the workers were mainly Mexican-Americans. The strike lasted for more than a year, the strikers wives played a leading part in it and the strikers were successful in getting most of what they had struck for. A little later, a film was made – fictional but based on the real events – called 'The Salt of the Earth'; the double meaning in the title was plainly deliberate. The film was sponsored by a union (the Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers) which at that time was under communist domination, a fact which had led to its expulsion from the American equivalent of the TUC.

No doubt the film portrayed the workers as upright and angelic souls and the mine owners as blackhearted villains, and no doubt the political views of the sponsors were not rigorously excluded from it. And indeed there is no doubt for this was the high tide of McCarthyism and the director, producer and scriptwriter (who took no money for their work on the film) had all been called before the Committee on Un-American Activities: the director was



imprisoned as one of "the Hollywood Ten" for refusing to testify about his political connections: the others involved were blacklisted and found they could get regular film work only if they used pseudonyms. So 'The Salt of the Earth' was also blacklisted, and very few cinemas dared to show it. (The actors, incidentally were amateurs.)

Well, that was an ugly and shaming era in the United States, not to be extenuated or minimized, and gave America's real enemies a great and lasting advantage. But things have changed, for the point of the *New York Times* story was that a video-cassette of the film had just been released, and was apparently selling well. So it seems to be true that the whirligig of time brings in its revenges though in this case

rather too late for those involved in the film.

So much for the first half of my tale, the half that the *New York Times* knew about. Now for Part Two, the rest of the story, which neither the newspaper nor most of its readers were aware of.

At the time the film was made a diplomat friend of mine was *en poste* in Prague. This was only a few years, remember, after the Soviet seizure of Czechoslovakia, and things were happening there far more terrible than the vileness of McCarthyism and the fate of his victims: Stalin's show trial, which wiped out almost the whole of the Czechoslovak Communist leadership, was fresh in many memories. 'The Salt of the Earth' came therefore, as a timely boon for the rulers of Czechoslovakia, who were in a pressing need of something to support their rule; a film which portrayed the iniquities of the United States was just the kind of weapon they needed.

The film was launched in a Prague cinema; it started sluggishly, but soon word of mouth did its work, and queues began to form at the box office. The authorities were doubtless well pleased with such a reinforcement, from America itself, for their own propaganda.

Then, abruptly, without warning or subsequent explanation, the film was withdrawn. For some time it was impossible for anyone to guess the reason, but my diplomat friend eventually heard it. It seemed that the Prague cinema-goers were indeed keen to see the film, and to learn from it a suitable political lesson. But the lesson they learned was not at all the one the authorities wanted to teach. The audiences were virtually unanimous in

admiring the film because it showed the United States in so attractive a light.

Never mind the political message in the film; Czechoslovaks had enough of that at home every day and believed not a word of it. Never mind the meanness and cruelty of the capitalist mine owners; much worse meanness and cruelty constituted Czechoslovakia's lot. Never mind even the heroic stand of the workers. The Prague audiences noticed only three things in the film, all of them far beyond anything they could ever hope for themselves. First, the workers arrived at the mine for picket duty driving their own cars; second, they were allowed to go on strike; third, and most inconceivable, the workers won the strike.

I have always maintained that whether a black cat crossing your path is lucky or unlucky depends on whether you are a man or a mouse. To the quishings of Czechoslovakia it seemed easy to portray America as a brutal enemy; to the people of Czechoslovakia, however, the only brutal enemy they could see on even the clearest of days was the one which had occupied and subjugated their country, which had extinguished every flickering lamp of freedom, and which was silencing, exiling, imprisoning or killing those who dared to resist. Any film shown by such people, with the clear intention of persuading its audiences to accept its political moral, would be instinctively and unanimously

rejected. But in this case those who went to see it found something positively to rejoice in: the twin facts that in the United States the workers were so prosperous that they could even afford their own cars, which showed how materially wealthy were even poor Americans by the standards the Czechoslovaks knew so well in their own lives, and that in the United States not only were strikes permitted but the government did not crush them by force and did not even support the bosses sufficiently to ensure that the workers lost the struggle.

The irony, as I suggested at the outset, is very enjoyable. But it is heartening, too, for it demonstrates something which should not need demonstrating, but manifestly does. It is that oppressive rulers may tell their subjects lies on almost anything and have at any rate some chance of being believed, except when the lies concern their people's own lives. Unless you take the precaution of hypnotising him first, it is no use telling a hungry man that his belly is full, or a man in jail that he is free; he will always know better. What is more, it is not only a waste of breath, it leads to even worse consequences, because if the people know that their rulers are telling them lies on a subject they know about, they will assume that their rulers are also telling them on subjects

which they cannot check for themselves.

And that is not just a theoretical construction. George Theiner, the editor of *Index*, once came back from a visit to Poland with shocking but understandable news; wherever he went, he found support and admiration for the South African government – not because the Poles had become devotees of apartheid, but on the perfectly logical ground that since they knew that everything their rulers said about Poland was a pack of lies, they assumed that everything their rulers said about other countries was equally mendacious. If their government said that South Africa was a country of cruelty, division and tyranny, it must be a land of happiness, harmony and democracy.

That, I agree, is going a trifle far. But who is to blame? The liars, or the lied to? As for *The Salt of the Earth*, who was it who said that the worst that can happen to us is for us to get what we asked for?

COURTESY: *THE TIMES* (London)

In an article in *The Times of India* (11 May, 1986 – "The Swiss Model"), Mr. Masoni argued that for multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic States like South Africa, Sri Lanka and India, the one-man one-vote model has no relevance. What is required is a federal constitution with proportional representation and other built-in safeguards to protect the minorities and ensure power sharing. It is interesting that in an article on August 1, 1986 in the American journal, the *National Review* entitled "South Africa: A Way Out" Brian Crozier has also turned to Switzerland as a model.

South Africa – A Way Out

At the heart of the apartheid problem is the role of the African National Congress (ANC), the oldest of the black African nationalist organisations. The ANC was outlawed in 1960 after the Sharpeville massacre and turned to sabotage and violence through its military wing, *Umkonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation). Already, relations between the ANC and the South African Com-

munist Party (SACP) were close. As is the way with such alliances, the SACP gradually gained control of the older ANC.

African National Congress

To put the problem in perspective, the SACP, created in 1921, was among the first of the many communist parties set up by Lenin's Comintern. It has pur-

sued an unwaveringly pro-Soviet line and has particularly close links with the East German regime. The facts are well documented – for instance, in the Hoover Yearbook on International Communist Affairs.

Put it another way: The relationship between the SACP and the ANC is analogous to that between the North Vietnamese Lao Dong (Communist) party

Brian Crozier

and the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF) during the Vietnam War. And the relationship between the ANC and *Umkonto we Sizwe* corresponds to that between the NLF and the Vietcong.

The international agitation in favour of sanctions plays into the hands of the ANC and its Communist allies. If translated into action, it would increase black poverty and discontent and boost the effectiveness of the ANC's terrorists. Note that those who agitate for sanctions also press for the release of Nelson Mandela, the long-detained ANC leader, and for preferential negotiations between the South African government and the ANC. They also call for a unitary state on the basis of one man, one vote.

Just suppose the South Africans, with their Boer majority, went along supinely with those proposals (as they will not): The end result would be a communist-dominated government in Pretoria. I know of no exceptions to the rule that negotiations with political extremists foreshadow a transfer of power to the extremists. Just two recent examples: the U.S.-Vietnamese negotiations of 1972-73, and the Lancaster House negotiations in London. Who is in power now in Vietnam and Zimbabwe?

The EPG Report

The Government Commonwealth Report on South Africa, published (appropriately for the superstitious) on Friday, the 13th of June, should be looked at in the light of such realities. The report is the collective work of the so-called Eminent Persons Group (EPG for short) appointed by the Commonwealth summit at Nassau, Bahamas, in October 1985. It is a document of truly impressive intellectual dishonesty, shallowness, and naive emotionalism. Appropriately, it has been widely hailed as a piece of collective wisdom that it would be irresponsible to ignore.

The EPG was jointly chaired by Mr. Malcolm Fraser, a former Liberal (i.e. conservative) Prime Minister of Australia, and General Olusegun Obasanjo, a former Nigerian President. Arriving in London from South Africa, Obasanjo remarked that he thought Mrs Thatcher would not like to be known as the British leader who broke up the Commonwealth (in reference to her stated opposition to sanctions). Mr. Fraser, evidently not having noticed what was going on around him, remarked that if

Beware the trap of universal suffrage and majority rule. The former brought Hitler to power in a free vote, and sustains communist regimes. The latter is as unsuited to the African reality as it would be to the Swiss, where old ethnic conflicts were disguised by uniformity of epidermic colour.

Britain refused to impose sanctions, the ANC would come to the view that there was nothing left for it but to fight it out.

Now the ANC's campaign of all-out violence, in full swing for quite some time, has been explicitly endorsed by the ANC's president, Oliver Tambo, and Mrs. Winnie Mandela, wife of the detained leader. One of the pictures, adorning the report was of a benign Malcom Fraser, with one arm around a smiling Mrs. Mandela and the other around a beaming Dame Nita Barrow (an "Eminent Person").

Is Nelson Mandela, or was he, a Communist? Certainly, before his detention, Mandela was on record as praising the South African Communist Party.

Selective Meetings

The EPG managed to gain access to Mandela, courtesy of the South African authorities. (Ever try gaining access to Sakharov?) Three times they met with Winnie Mandela, but only once with Chief Buthelezi, leader of the Zulu nation, nearly four million strong, and by far the biggest black organisation in South Africa, the *Inkatha*, with between 200,000 and 300,000 members. The EPG met with Bishop Tutu, who favours sanctions, but ignored Bishop Mokoena, who opposes them. How many people have heard of Bishop Mokoena? Yet he preaches in the black town of Soweto and speaks for 4.5 million black Christians as president of the Independent Reformed Churches in South Africa.

At this point, we are building up to an interesting paradox: Strategic realism clashes with political reality. Let me explain: Strategic realism means respect-

ing the facts I have mentioned and never losing sight of the long-term risks from the standpoint of the Western Alliance. Political reality includes the attitudes of many (U.S.) Congressmen, British MP's and church leaders, however mistaken or ignorant.

The Two Meanings of Apartheid

Nowhere in their report did the "Eminent Persons" distinguish between the two quite distinct meanings of apartheid. "Petty" apartheid rightly attracts moral indignation, but it has largely been swept away in a series of reforms carried out over the past two or three years. There are now black trade unions and black property rights. Blacks may now marry non-blacks. The pass laws are going, and everybody is to have a new identity card.

The other meaning of apartheid is "separate development". I confess that I see nothing inherently repugnant in it. The Swiss Confederation—with its 23 cantons, nearly three thousand communes, and four linguistic areas—is a near-perfect example of apartheid in practice, and nobody is proposing sanctions against Switzerland.

What the champions of the ANC and of mandatory sanctions clamour for is a transfer of political power from the white minority to the black majority through one man, one vote. It is not, I believe, going to happen, but if white South Africans were forced into a democratic and unitary state, the country would be ungovernable and the ensuing bloodbath would make the current situation look like a zone of peace.

The four black "homelands" that have been given their theoretical independence (Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Transkei, and Venda) have not been recognised internationally as such, yet they are no less independent in fact than, say, Hungary or Czechoslovakia, and more so than Byelorussia and the Ukraine, which have separate national representation in the United Nations.

Beware the trap of universal suffrage and the facile snare of majority rule. The former brought Hitler to power in a free vote, and sustains Communist regimes. The latter is as unsuited to the South African reality as it would be to the Swiss, where old ethnic conflicts

(Continued on next page)

THE RURAL PERSPECTIVE

Squandering People's Money

Bhanu Pratap Singh

Shri Rajiv Gandhi, is reported to have said at a meeting: "What do we mean by socialism? Does it mean nationalization of all and everything, or does it mean we squander people's money. The picture is not very clear to us, as to what we want to do, and where we want to take India". (*The Times of India* Dec. 7)

It is not surprising that the Prime Minister does not know the meaning of socialism. No one does. There have been as many interpretations of socialism, as there have been 'socialist' leaders. But when the captain of the ship says "the picture is not very clear to us, as to what we want to do, and where we want to take India", the passengers should take serious note. His instincts are right: he wants to put a stop to the squandering of public money. But, this is exactly what his government has been doing. In Parliament, the Finance

Minister Shri V.P. Singh is reported to have said that the public sector was a political necessity; another minister Shri V. Sathe, castigated the waste in the public sector in no uncertain terms.

Over-spending is Socialism

Whatever brand of socialist one may or may not be, there is no escape from the truth, that no family or nation which squanders its resources can ever be prosperous. In India, in the name of socialism, which has come to mean an extension of the public sector, the country's resources have been squandered with increasing gusto. The people neither gain from, nor control the public sector which indeed is the private sector of the ministries concerned.

The old adage: "cut your coat according to your cloth" has never found favour with our governments. Over-spending by governments ac-

quired the meaning that the more the government spends, the nearer we are to the 'socialist' goal. Unlike ordinary citizens, government does not have to earn what it spends. It can increase taxes, overcharge for the goods and services that it provides through its monopolistic enterprises; mortgage the future of the country by taking loans, and also spend through deficit financing the money that is not really there. Successive governments have used all these methods without the least inhibition.

Gobbling Up the People's Income

Taxation as percentage of the national income has increased from 7.1% in 1950-51 to 21.1% in 1985-86. In the last fifteen years prices of coal, power and steel, all produced in the public sector have increased by 7.31, 5.67 and 5.81 times respectively. Other than logs

(Continued from previous page)

were disguised by uniformity of epidermic colour.

A Federal Confederal Mix

The only workable future for South Africa lies in a sensible federal/confederal mix. The existing (1983) constitution provides for a Parliament with three chambers: the House of Assembly, with 178 white members; the House of Representatives, with 85 coloured members; and the House of Delegates, with 45 Asians (mainly Indians). It is relevant to note that whites are thus represented on the basis of one seat for 25,494 voters; the coloureds have one representative for 30,835 voters; and it takes 18,311 Asians to vote one member to the House of Delegates. This averages out to one member of Parliament for every 25,880 members of the non-black communities. The same arithmetic, extended to the mainly urban black population of the Republic of South Africa, would produce a black chamber of 683, outnumbering the other three houses combined by more than 2 to 1. This would be well over the

threshold of ungovernability.

A more realistic formula would be to aim for a black chamber equal in size to the three existing chambers, which would yield a more viable figure of one member of Parliament for some 55,000 members of the black community. Before throwing up hands in horror, consider this arresting anomaly in the Mother of Parliaments: Because of the first-past-the-post constituency system, it takes an average of 33,000 voters to elect one Conservative MP, and 517,000 to send a Social Democratic candidate to Parliament.

Under the existing South African constitution far-reaching powers are vested in the state president, who is elected by an electoral college of the existing chambers. If power-sharing is to have any meaning in a four chamber Parliament, a new body will be needed to advise on key federal subjects: foreign affairs, defence, and finance. Why not call it the "Federal Council"? Why not

elect it on the U.S. Senate principle of a regional vote?

To be practical, this Federal Council should be elected by the legislative assemblies of the self-governing states or, as the case may be, designated by the chief ministers of the independent states.

The President's Council (an existing advisory and arbitrational body) should remain in place, subject to the enlarged Parliament that I am suggesting.

Not the least benefit that a constitution on such lines would bring is that it would dampen the historical antagonisms between the black tribes or nations, which run no less deep than those between the blacks and whites. Indeed, I can think of only one drawback to these proposals: They are too sensible to appeal to the ignorant and the misguided who follow uncritically in the steps of the fanatics.

COURTESY: *National Review*

TABLE I

	Inflation-adjusted Average Income		Percentage Increase (+) or Decrease (-) in 1984-85 over 1970-71
	1970-71	1984-85	
Agricultural workers	1361	1031	(-) 24.2
Non-Agricultural workers	3023	4236	(+) 40.2
Employees of Public Sector Undertakings	5470	7182	(+) 31.3
M.L.As. of Uttar Pradesh	5754	10461	(+) 55.0*

* Only monetary payments have been taken into account. Perks such as railway coupons worth Rs. 25,000/- per annum, two free telephone connections, free bus ride, free electricity & residence have not been taken into account. Most of these were not available in 1970-71

and timber, the price index of no other commodity of common use, has increased faster than of those provided by the public sector. Total liabilities (debts) of the Union Government have increased from Rs. 11,327 crores (54.9% of the national income) in 1965-66 to Rs. 1,38,281 crores (72.6% of the national income) in 1985-86. Deficit financing has increased from Rs. 285 crores (0.71% of the G.D.P) in 1970-71 to Rs. 4,490 crores (1.91% of the G.D.P) in 1985-86. Taking recourse to all methods — taxation, raising administered prices, public loans, and deficit financing — the Union and State governments raised their combined budgetary outlay to Rs. 80,326 crores in 1985-86 which was 42.16 percent of the national income. Twelve years ago in 1973-74 the figure was Rs. 12,244 crores, (24.27 percent of the then national income) In real terms, government spending during the last twelve years has increased at the rate of 9.15 percent per annum, whereas the per capita income during this period has increased by a mere 1.98 percent per annum.

It might be argued that government expenditure, as a percentage of the national income, is fairly high in some western democracies as well. But there is a big difference between government spending in western countries and that of India. In the west, government expenditure is on providing old age pensions, unemployment doles, food stamps, maintenance of good schools and hospitals for the common man, and payment of direct subsidy to farmers. In India, most government ex-

penditure is on establishing and meeting the losses of public sector enterprises, appeasing politicians and its employees in offices and factories.

As the saying goes, the proof the pudding lies in its eating. The result of government spending can be seen in the changing patterns of the economic condition of different sections of the people. In table I above are inflation-adjusted (1970-71 = 100) figures of average incomes (or emoluments) of agricultural workers, non-agricultural workers, employees of public sector undertakings and politicians (M.L.As. of Uttar Pradesh) in 1970-71 and 1984-85.

In deducing the income of agricultural and non-agricultural workers, it has been assumed that the number of agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers were two-ninth and one-ninth of the total population of the country in the respective years. Having thus determined the number of workers in agriculture and the rest of the economy,

national incomes generated in agriculture and the rest of the economy have been divided by the number of workers engaged in both. The assumption made may not be strictly true, but the margin of error, if any, would be too small to vitiate the general conclusion. As regards the emoluments of employees in the public sector enterprises and of the U.P. M.L.As., these have been quoted from the *Economic Survey 1985-86*, and the records of the U.P. Government.

One can see from Table I, that while the average inflation-adjusted income of agriculturists has declined, it has increased in respect of all the others and the extent of increase is related to proximity to the seat of power!

This view is confirmed by the trend of growth of per capita consumption in India, which is presented in Table II:

In a poor country like India, where vast numbers are under-nourished, go about in tatters, and die in their hundreds every year for want of cover during the short spells of cold-wave in north India, what conclusions can one draw from the decline, though marginal, in the per capita consumption of foodgrains and cloth, while the consumption of edible oils, vanaspati and sugar, has gone up. And when one takes into consideration that between 1950 and 1980, the consumption of refrigerators has gone up by 500 times, of scooters by 400, of motor cycles by 250, watches and clocks by 350, and of TV sets (in just five years) by four times, the conclusion is inescapable, that the poor have become poorer, if not in absolute terms, certainly so in a comparative sense, and the rich have become richer. This is the kind of social justice that has been dispensed under our 'socialist' strategy of growth.

TABLE II

Year	Foodgrains (gms per day)	Cloth-Cotton & Man-made (mts. per annum)	Edible oils & Vanaspati (kgms per annum)	Sugar (kgms per annum)
1960-61	468.7	15.0	4.0	4.7
1970-71	468.8	15.8	4.5	7.3
1980-81	453.7	14.7	5.0	7.2
1984-85	463.3	14.5	6.7	10.7
Percentage increase or decrease (-) in 84-85 over 1960-61.	(-) 1.2	(-) 3.3	(+) 67.5	(+) 127.7

The Ultimate Freedom – To Choose to Live or to Die

Arvind A. Deshpande.

The Society for the Right to Die with Dignity (India) played host to the Sixth Biennial Conference of the World Federation of the Right to Die Societies, organised a symposium on November 22 and 23, 1986 on the broad theme: The Right to Live and the Right to Die.

The organisers could not have chosen a more appropriate person to inaugurate the symposium than Sir Edmund Hillary, the first to conquer Mount Everest with Tenzing Norgay and currently High Commissioner of New Zealand in India. Sir Edmund's delightful speech, spiced with wit and humour set the right tone for the discussion of the theme. He emphasized that in his 67 years, despite several personal tragedies, he had not lost the will to live. In fact only those who have lived a full life can face death with dignity and courage. Sir Edmund Hillary concluded: "I believe in living a full life but should I become incapacitated, terminally ill, senile or in great pain and can make no further contributions to society, I do not wish to be kept alive. I would not wish modern medicine and technology to keep prolonging my life. Rather I would say, pull off the plug and let me drift off painlessly."

Holland – The Pathfinder

As President of the World Federation, Mr. Minoo Masani reviewed the progress made by its supporters all over the world. He pointed out that Holland has become the pathfinder in this movement with the United States taking the second place. It must be said to his credit, that a subject which was not even whispered about in our society has been put on our mental map. As he himself observed, the Society has succeeded in raising a controversy on this issue.

In India, there may be general ignorance and apathy amongst educated classes but there is by and large no opposition because the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions sanction euthanasia and the little opposition that does come is from the orthodox catholic church. He emphasized that the move-

ment stands for (a) the right to choose (b) the right to self-determination and (c) the right to be the master of one's own life. He said that if one has to play God then let it be on one's own life. In other words my conscience would be my God.

Paradoxically in India while tradition sanctions the ending of one's life, as exemplified by Saint Dnyaneshwar and more recently by Veer Savarkar, Acharya Vinoba Bhave and a host of others, modern government has legislated against it. The Indian Penal Code, drafted during British rule makes any attempt to commit suicide a punishable offence. The Law Commission had, in 1971, asked for the repeal of section 309. And in 1985 Mr. Justice Rajindar Sachar, Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court pronounced this section as anachronistic and unbecoming of a civilized society. He went further and quashed proceedings in 119 cases of attempted suicide pending before all the lower courts of Delhi. Recently the High Court of Maharashtra went as far as to declare the law under the I.P.C. *ultra vires* of the Constitution. It is to be seen, if the Union Government will now give this judgement constitutional sanction.

The Legal Point of View

The inaugural session was followed by a discussion by the legal panel chaired by Justice Sujata Manohar and in which Justices R.A. Jahagirdar and Rajinder Sachar, Mr. Soli Sorabjee, Mr. Sydney Rosoff and Prof. S.S. Varde participated. Foreign delegates from 12 countries had an opportunity to know of Indian thinking on the subject.

The following points were made:

- 1) While the moral grounds for euthanasia are beyond doubt, a great deal of caution needs to be exercised before framing legislation; particular care has to be taken to guard against the misuse of law by those who still believe in *Sati* or immolation for political or personal ends and attempts to end life by drug



addicts and those under unbearable emotional and psychological pressure;

- 2) The need to back up statistically the urgency for such a law. The need for the medical profession to evolve norms to govern such cases, and
- 3) The need for judicial scrutiny of a doctor's opinion and for the informed consent of patients themselves.

Prof. Sadanand Varde who has introduced a private member's Bill which is now under circulation to elicit public opinion, said that it would be a long time before the Bill can get passed.

The View of Doctors

Perhaps the most important part of the symposium was the session in which the medical panel participated. The speakers included Dr. B.N. Colabawala who chaired the session, Dr. Colin Brewer from the U.K. Dr. Praful Desai and Dr. K.G. Nair. Unfortunately, Prof. Alexander Capron, the eminent Professor of Law, Medicine and Public Policy, University of Southern California who was to be the key-note speaker could not come. His paper was presented by the Rev. Donald McKinney of the United States. It stressed the fundamental right of choice, and recommended that such 'societies' should be called 'societies for the right to decide' rather than for the right to die.

At the discussion on the role of doctors, Dr. Colabawala observed that a

doctor who helps at birth and throughout life, should naturally be the first to help at the time of death. He stressed that the quality of life should be regarded as being just as important as mere biological existence. It is not death that we are afraid of but the mode of dying. Dr. Colin Brewer arguing in favour of a more positive role for doctors said that they should advocate active euthanasia as and when the situation demanded.

Dr. Praful Desai who spoke with conviction appealed to supporters of the movement to avoid the term "mercy killing" because it shocked ordinary people. Death is as dynamic as birth and euthanasia meant normal or 'good' death.

Dr. Nair in a moving speech emphasized the need to educate people; the doctor's ultimate effort should be to seek spiritual union with his patients.

The Ethical Aspect

The symposium concluded with a discussion of the ethical aspect in which Dr. John Beloff, Rev. Somen Das, Derrick Humphry and Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi participated.

In the discussion that followed two principal points that emerged were, that there is no place for the use of the word 'killing' in euthanasia and that people should be educated to live a full life and then be prepared to face death with courage and dignity.

Mr. ARVIND DESHPANDE is Hon. Secretary of the Leslie Sawhny Programme

THE LONGER QUEUE

THERE is this joke making the rounds of Moscow to show the growing disillusionment with Mikhail Gorbachov. Ivan Ivanovich flies into a rage after waiting four hours in a vodka queue and still being nowhere near the front. He takes a knife out of his pocket and announces he is going to the Kremlin to kill Gorbachov.

Within half an hour he is back. "Why did you return so soon? What happened?" his queue companions ask. Ivanovich, as he reclaims his place in the queue, replies: "The queue at the Kremlin was much longer."

The Afternoon

In Memory of Khasa Subba Rao



One of the glories of nationalist journalism was the life and achievements of the late Khasa Subba Rao and it is only fitting that friends and admirers of his should commemorate his 90th birthday by bringing out a tastefully assembled souvenir.

Subba Rao was a worthy intellectual descendent of the great Andhra liberal newspaperman Chintamani, but unlike the older journalist, he remained committed to journalism all his life, which meant willingly embracing insecurity, poverty and frequent peregrinations from one newspaper to another.

He could have settled into a comfortable journalistic groove had he remained in Calcutta with the *Indian Finance*, but he preferred journalism where action was for the likes of him. This made him try his mettle with the *Free Press Journal* for a while. His merciless exposure of the discriminatory treatment meted out to the Indian victims of the earthquake at Quetta shook the conscience of the country. The British government acted and made Sadanand, the editor of the paper, pay Rs.10,000/- as security.

As a nationalist and a participant in the different satyagraha movements, Khasa had his share of suffering. Once he was thrashed so badly by the police that hopes of his very survival were almost given up. He participated in the Quit India movement of 1942 and was jailed.

Independence and integrity were characteristic of Subba Rao which made him resign from the *Indian Express* and start his own weekly

Swatantra. The South had no similar weekly for decades and has had no similar venture since then.

T. Prakasam was his hero and Khasa was the only journalist who reproduced in full, a three hundred minute speech that Prakasam delivered in the Madras Assembly on the occasion of the notorious No Confidence Motion. It was left to Prakasam to reprimand Sri Prakasa, the then Governor of Tamil Nadu for murdering democratic procedures by inviting Rajaji to form a government even though the latter had the support of only a minority in the House. Khasa Subba Rao a champion of Prakasam and a critic of Rajaji was later to be an ardent supporter of Rajaji for upholding the value of purity in public life and more important in practising it. The *Swatantra* and later the *Swarajya* became influential weeklies in upholding the ideals of Rajaji.

This souvenir is valuable. It recapitulates the personality of Subba Rao for a later generation by reproducing a number of recollections of this remarkable journalist and crusader for principles in public life. It also has numerous articles that he wrote but they do appear to belong to an age that has passed by. For Khasa was greater than his writings.

Unfortunately, the souvenir does not have the address of the publisher. Those who are interested may write to: Mr. P.V. Rao, Rock House, 42, Journalist's Colony Road No. 3, Banjara Hills Hyderabad - 500 034.

SOME STRIKING DOCUMENTARIES

S.I. Clerk

A well-produced documentary film is not only informative and educational but also an entertainment – it can be a piece of art. In the recent past I have come across a number of outstanding documentary films. Here are a few of them.

Koyaanisqatsi

Koyaanisqatsi had its All India premiere at the Tata Theatre on 10 September. (Colour, 87 minutes) It is non-verbal. The title is an ancient Hopi Red Indian word meaning 'Life out of Balance.' This Red Indian tribe when its culture was at its zenith foresaw the destruction of human civilization (and of life on earth) by a fiery object from the sky – the nuclear bomb of today. The film begins with the images of primordial Nature, the earth, landscapes and seascapes, all pristine. This is followed by the advent of modern civilization, its factories, machines, huge, cities, jets, spaceships, atom bombs, highways, flyovers, cars, skyscrapers, masses and masses of people on the roads, everything tumbling down, crumbling into dust.

Here is a beautiful poem on celluloid. The visuals leave a strong impact. On a deeper level here is a very serious anti-war piece decrying the war-mongers and hawks. Ron Fricke's photography is brilliant. Direction by Godfrey Reggio is meaningful. And there is the deeply touching background music by the famous composer Philip Glass.

Tulsidas

Tulsidas (Black & White, 21 minutes) a biographical on the famous Hindi poet is striking in its concept, approach and presentation. Apart from a few feet at the beginning and at the end, the entire film consists of still-ink drawings portraying the various incidents and events in the life of Tulsidas from his birth, abandonment, his being brought up by the housemaid and her mother, his education, marriage, worldly renouncing and sainthood. This portrayal is done through exquisite drawings executed by K.K. Hebbar, one of our internationally acclaimed veteran artists. His

lines are sensitive and smooth flowing. They are indeed "Singing lines". The film exploits well this advantage towards a strong visual impact.

There is the background commentary describing the various incidents and events. This mode of expression has paid off well and the film is something out of the ordinary. It is directed by Ranbir Ray. He deserves kudos for a different, imaginative approach and for purposeful assimilation of drawings with the film format.

The Seer who walks alone is a biographical (Colour 57 minutes) on the internationally famous philosopher J. Krishnamurthy. The film covers his life from early childhood, his links with Theosophy and his breaking away from it. There are his public and private talks, interviews, excerpts from his prodigious writings, his philosophy of life. Essentially, he urges each man to discover his salvation within himself. To convey its message the film relies not only on the

audio facet – including the touching background music – but also on some sensitive visuals particularly the dramatic close-ups of the face and the hands. Overall, the film leaves a strong impact. It has been meticulously directed by K. Arvindan. He more than deserves bouquets.

Satyajit Ray

Satyajit Ray brings us to one more biographical (Colour 137 minutes) It is the Films Division's *magnum opus* originally screened at Tata Theatre on 15 September. It centres around the interview of him by Shyam Benegal who has directed the film. It is all about Satyajit Ray's work and its evolution. There are the visuals of Ray shooting in his studio, composing music for his films, talking of his childhood, extracts from his films. To quite an extent the film ignores Ray the man and concentrates more or less only on his work. Some of the questions put to him by the interviewer could have



Warli Painting

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been avoided thus compressing the film which would have intensified its impact. As it is, the film seems to drag a wee bit

Warli Painting

Warli Painting a documentary film recently released by Films Division (17 minutes and in colour) vividly portrays the folk art of Warli tribals who live in the Thane District of Maharashtra. It covers the actual present day life style of these people at work and at play, their natural environment and shows how painting for these people is neither a decoration nor an ornament but a very vital part of their life. Warli painting could be accepted as ritualistic, an ex-

pression of either ancient myths or of present day society.

Traditionally these paintings – linear drawings – are done on the walls in white lines. Today they are also done on paper for the 'Outsiders' – tourists, art galleries and urban art lovers. The film has ignored the exploitation of these tribals by the middlemen and the fact that the Warlis are mass producing these traditional paintings to cash in on the fashion. For these monochromatic white drawings against earth brown background involving as they do a certain stylization and an exotica are found to go well with modern decor. But then mass production has resulted in a lowering of the traditional high standards. This is inevitable. Within these

limitations, the film has certain plus points. Thus, it attempts with a fair amount of success to capture the quintessence of the subject. And it has some striking visuals. It has been directed by V.K. Wankhede.

A documentary (or short) film to be effective must be totally to the point and can ill afford to waste even the minutest footage of the film. In the hands of an involved director, a documentary film of say two or three minutes too can most effectively communicate its message. It all depends on his homework, initiative and a daring spirit.

S.I. CLERK is a regular contributor to
Freedom First

How To Write Letters To The Editor.

Leo Rebello

Open any newspaper or magazine and one is bound to come across a column titled "Letters to the Editor". This column appears under different nomenclatures in different magazines, as for instance, "Mail Bag", "Your Page", "Opinion", "Pen is Mightier than the Sword", etc. Without this column a paper or magazine is incomplete and cannot succeed.

A match-box, albeit small in size, contains enough match-sticks to start an inferno. Similarly, The "Letters column" though it occupies a small space of an issue, plays a vital role. It touches every sphere of activity under the sun and acts as the mouthpiece of society.

Letter Are Taken Seriously

Newspapers result in interaction between reader and editor. Letters to the Editor are an important part of the interaction, for they mirror readers' comments and provide clues which spur the Press to a particular action. Letters can act as a spur to investigative reporting.

Letters to the Editor are marked to appropriate authorities for immediate action. They are discussed in Parliament, State Legislatures and now even the Supreme Court has issued guidelines to turn letters into petitions if they raise issues of a fundamental nature or grave injustice has been done to someone. To that end, a letter to the editor is often more effective than a hundred *morchas*.

Stand Up And Be Counted

Write a foolproof expose of a particular mischief and it is sure to land the person responsible in the dock. For example, you have returned from abroad with gifts for your family and the customs officer on duty "confiscates for his personal use" some of the goodies. Then, in addition to complaining to the authorities concerned in writing, if action is not taken in time, you could also write in the Press for action.

You go to the nationalised banks and get frustrated at the service and the attitude of the staff; at the Railway Booking Counter you find that touts are operating and you are cheated in broad daylight. You go to a hospital and find, while the patient is gasping for life, the doctors and nurses on duty are having a party. Essential commodities are not available, officers at a certain police station are corrupt and connive with anti-social elements instead of helping the citizens. Do not just keep quiet; shoot off a letter, stand up and be counted.

How to Write?

In the composition of a letter on any subject, lucidity is of paramount importance. That which is everybody's business is nobody's business. *Therefore, do not write gibberish, trash, stupid, stale letters.* Write only when you have a purpose and a message. *Above all be brief be bright and be gone!*

Pick up day-to-day issues, that strike you as important. Compile information. List arguments, beginning with the main one. Cut out all adjectives. The ideal letter ought to be between 300 to 500 words. Do not be in a hurry to post the letter. Read. Re-read. Polish your writing. Remember that a successful writer polishes his writings often. Mr. R.K. Karanjia suggests that letters should be within the constraints of three paragraphs, namely, the idea, the argument and the conclusion, which should contain the solution.

If you have a letterhead, that will be impressive. Otherwise, write your name and address boldly at the top. Type the letter, preferably in double space (that helps the weary sub-editor in editing), or legibly hand write it. Avoid pen-names. Give your correct name. If the matter is of importance and one that is going to lead to an avalanche of public opinion and a possible threat to your life, request the editor not to divulge your identity and sign as *pro bono publico* or some other pseudonym of your choice. Nevertheless, give your name. It is important for the record and for future reference. Respectable papers will not disclose the writer's name, if requested to that effect.

DR. LEO REBELLO is Chairman of the
Progressive Writers Combine

BOOK REVIEWS

EIGHT LIVES, A STUDY OF THE HINDU-MUSLIM ENCOUNTER by Rajmohan Gandhi; Roli Books International, 5, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi; Pp.176; Rs.125

Most of this study was done under a grant from the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington, D.C. and was first published in the United States by the State University of New York Press, Albany, this year. The Indian edition has appeared soon after.

Despite the creation of Pakistan, which many hoped would finally resolve the Hindu-Muslim problem, the relations between the two communities in India have remained as acrid as ever; witness the recurring riots, notably in Ahmedabad this year. Their ferocity is not the least tempered by our freedom from foreign rule. It seems to have only given a new edge to it!

Is the Hindu-Muslim problem – or encounter as the author has called it – therefore, doomed to remain with us forever? Is there no hope of amity even forty years after our gaining freedom from foreign rule or, to put it another way, after the creation of a homeland for Muslims in Pakistan? Many intellectuals and authors have tried to find an answer to this problem. They have studied, analysed, discussed, probed and dissected it, each in his own way.

Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi has approached it in an original manner through studying the lives of eight prominent Muslims from Sir Sayyad Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) to Dr. Zakir Hussain (1897-1969). Each of these in his own way, directly or indirectly, (except Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Dr. Zakir Hussain) contributed his own quota to the partition of India. But why this selection of only Muslims for this study of the Hindu-Muslim problem? Were not the Hindus – and a third party, our former rulers – in their own way responsible for splitting India?

By throwing his searchlight on eight Muslims only, the author has revealed a latent bias, of which he himself may be supremely unconscious. The eight Muslims can be easily matched by eight Hindus and eight Britishers, who should

have been cumulatively studied for finding a reasonable answer. Even Mahatma Gandhi – the apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity had to agree in a weak moment to the partition of this country.

After sounding this cautionary note, it should be admitted that the author has studied the eight lives with thoroughness and perspicacity. His book is a mine of information for the average reader and will be of interest even to the scholar in the field. Each study is dealt with in its totality and is crafted like a cameo. He stresses the factors that favoured unity – such as the common ethnic roots of both communities and the spiritual influence of the *sufi* – and throws a flood of light on the misleading ardour for unity of the Ali brothers, the self seeking endeavours of a person like Fazlul Huq and last but not the least, the sheer *hauteur* and arrogance of M.A. Jinnah, who is rightly hailed as the father of Pakistan. Without Jinnah, it may be readily admitted, there would have been no Pakistan. But in fairness, it must also be admitted that without Gandhi and Nehru there would have been no Jinnah. That is a harsh truth which many will find hard to admit.

It was Gandhi who with his excessive emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity – to the extent of making the *Khilafat* his own cause who gave a wrong slant to the whole issue from the very beginning. Much later, in 1944, he paid 14 abortive visits to Jinnah, which gave the latter a larger-than-life dimension. So also, Nehru's obstinacy in the nomination of two Congress Muslims to the U.P. Ministry in 1937, which played into the hands of the Muslim League and its suprema. This is plain as pike-staff.

The author has exhaustively studied the eight lives and presented his findings to the reader in an attractive form. His approach is naturally not so much on the personal achievements and failures of his subject as on the extent to which they impinged on the position of the community – the *qaum*. The study neither assumes nor denies Hindu-Muslim compatibility or otherwise. It points out mistakes on both sides and the salient fact that both Hindus and

Muslims, while judging their own community each by its highest ideals, nevertheless judged the other by its lowest deeds. Although Congress leaders always spoke as Indians and not as Hindus, the Muslim League and the majority of Muslims never believed them. They were always afraid of a 25% minority being swept away by the overwhelming majority. Hence they remained ever suspicious of democratic rule and even freedom. To the demand hurled by the Congress in 1942 to the British to "Quit India", was given the League riposte "Cut and quit".

This became the rallying cry of Jinnah and he gave scant consideration to the various other alternatives proposed by the Congress or the British. It became the *idée fixe* of the Quaid-i-Azam although ultimately, he had to accept a truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan. He gave his consent to it not in words but simply by a barely perceptible nod of his head, when Lord Mountbatten put the crucial question to him. The occasion is too well-known to be dilated upon.

The study reveals both the strength and weakness of the Muslim leaders: Sayyid Ahmad Khan's constructive vision, which he showed in the establishment of the M.A.O. College, which was later to become the Aligarh Muslim University; Iqbal's who first hailed *Hindustan Hamara* as *Saare Jahaan Se achcha* but who later rejected Joint Hindu-Muslim electorates and became an advocate of the two-nation theory. Then we come to Maulana Mohammad Ali, an Oxford Graduate, (a fact not widely known) who became a right-hand man of Gandhi and pledged his fealty to Hindu-Muslim unity. But he was later to observe that "as a follower of Islam, I am bound to regard the creed of even a fallen and degraded Mussalman as entitled to a higher place than that of any other non-Muslim irrespective of his high character, even though the person in question be Mahatma Gandhi himself."

The fourth in the author's list list is Jinnah to whom the author devotes the

largest number of pages 42 out of 318. After all, he created Pakistan although he began his political career with the hope of becoming a "Muslim Gokhale" and was hailed by Sarojini Naidu as an exemplar of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. That such a man should become an implacable foe of the Congress, of which he was once a member, because it was a Hindu organisation is one of the great ironies of history. Along with Jinnah we may mention his faithful lieutenant, Liaquat Ali Khan, who was responsible for bringing his master back to India, from the latter's virtual retirement in Britain in the early thirties. He became Pakistan's first Prime Minister and was shot dead by an assassin in October 1951.

Of the remaining three subjects Fazlul Haq was brilliant, erratic and an out-and-out self-server and was condemned by Jinnah as a treacherous person doing incalculable harm to the Muslims of Bengal. A few hailed him as a "Royal Bengal Tiger." His career (1873-1962) encompassed various principles and parties the last one being K.S.P. – the Krishak Peasants and Workers Party – perhaps the only such party known so far in Pakistan.

This leaves only two studies – that of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Zakir Husain. Some may wonder at their inclusion in this book since both were entirely out of tune with the remaining six. Azad was an eminent Muslim scholar, an authority of the Holy Quran, which he translated into Urdu. He was the President of the Congress during the last crucial years of Indo-British negotiations. But to Jinnah he was only a Muslim show-boy of the Congress and he refused to have anything to do with him – even to shake his hands.

Dr. Zakir Husain remained an educationist all his life. He never dabbled in politics of any hue and was respected both by Hindus and Muslims.

The book is well-produced although the latter pages are marked by some misprints – the most glaring being the wrong dates of Dr. Zakir Hussain's lifetime right in the bold heading of the study. It should be 1877-1969, not 1867 1969.

The first chapter "Hindus & Muslims" and the last "Conclusions" make good reading and the reviewer commends them to those, who cannot spare the time or leisure to read the whole book.

N.G. Jog

WOMEN'S OPPRESSION: PATTERNS AND PERSPECTIVES edited by Susheela Kaushik; Shakti Books, New Delhi; 1985; Pp 134; Rs.75

The book under review is the first under a series entitled "Women in Society". As the title suggests the book tries to throw light on why women in every culture have been dominated, restricted and restrained or at best subtly controlled by men. Of course one can always point to specific exceptions. But the general historical pattern is beyond dispute.

Three articles in the book are devoted to an examination of the theoretical basis of women's oppression. Marxists link the oppression of women to the emergence of private property. Engels compared the relationship between a man and women in the family to that of the bourgeois and the proletariat. Radical feminists on the other hand developed the theory of patriarchy to explain the subordination of women. According to them there exists a patriarchal organisation in societies determined essentially by a male hierarchical order that enjoys both economic and political power. Neither Marxism nor radical feminism convincingly explain the origin of women's oppression. Socialist feminists have in recent years attempted to synthesize these two approaches. Socialist feminists posit a dependent relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Patriarchy as we know neither originated with capitalism nor does it end with it. Division of labour based on sex still exists in the Soviet Union, Cuba, China and other socialist societies. Soviet society till today exhibits all the familiar forms of inequality of women such as subordination within the home, acceptance of lower paid jobs and uneven representation in important political offices.

Usha Nayar in her well-documented article on "Cultural roots of Oppression", has analysed the role and status of women's education in India. Women are behind not only in number but the kind of education they receive or opt for is qualitatively different from that of men. They go for courses in arts and humanities limiting their occupational choices and chances. Education seems to fit women for roles that are extensions of their positions within the patriarchal family. She argues that the choice of courses are dictated either by

the actual or expected adult role of women in our society as mothers and wives. Thus the gender-based division of labour in the family perpetuates itself in the labour market. Naturally more women are primary teachers while men are professors, nurses are predominantly female while doctors are male, the male business executive always requires female secretarial assistance.

At the theoretical level, development aims at integrating increasingly wider sections of society in the mainstream of national life. Yet in practice the process and consequences of development have been complex and contradictory, having an unprecedented impact on family life, particularly on women. Some of these specific problems faced by women have been examined by Neera Chandoke in her article "Development Process: Heightening of Oppression – A Case Study of Sub-Saharan Africa". She traces a breakdown of family structure and kinship groups in Africa to the imposing of market relations of production, in a pre-capitalist, non-monetized economy. Here export-oriented sectors of Africa become vast pools of manpower to serve this export sector. This has been at the cost of the development of farms. Often these migrations are transnational. While the migrants are males the governments discouraged migration of women. This ensured a mobile labour force. They became solely responsible for food production. Women-headed households became a distinct feature of African society. In Zambia fifty percent of the households were at one time headed by women. In Lesotho it has been estimated that sixty percent of married women in the country are wives of migrants. Women have been compelled to shoulder the responsibility for food production, child rearing and household activities. Though women play a pivotal role in the production of food they are largely ignored when it comes to providing technical training in this field, or in making important familial decisions even in the absence of men. This was confirmed by seventy-eight percent of women surveyed in Lesotho.

One hopes that the subsequent titles under the series would focus on the women's movement especially in India.

Padmini Murti

COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE
 edited by G.S. Amur and S.K. Desri;
 Somaiya Publications, Bombay; Pp 292; Rs.115

The editors state in the preface that the essays in the volume are presented to Prof. Narasimhaiah as a token of love and regard which scholars have always had for him. Broadly, the essays in the collection fall under the following main categories:

- Analysis of the political thought of great thinkers like Marx and Gandhi on the nature of colonialism and interpretative statements of colonial experience by creative writers like Mulk Raj Anand.
- Exploration of new trends in the literatures of commonwealth countries.
- Studies of individual writers like Naipaul, Achebe, Ruth Jhabvala, Desani and J.G. Farrell.

To take the last point first, Naipaul gets extensively written about. Darshan Singh Maini in his essay "The Complex Fate of V.S. Naipaul" says that the deep sense of alienation of Naipaul has added to the diet of ironies and it has given him (Naipaul) his theme and song. His contention that had Naipaul chosen to write a novel on India it would have carried more truth is highly contestable and we can, with a fair amount of certainty, say that had Mr. Naipaul written a novel on India, it would have been a prejudiced amalgam of malice and alienation. With his rich imagination he would have devastated India comprehensively. Naipaul by reducing his endeavour to only mock India would have also had the flexibility of the characters in his novel to confirm the mockery. "Naipaul never had the intellectual humility and sweetness and intellectual daring to establish a creative rapport" is what Maini states and he is quite correct. Naipaul concentrates on the very periphery and his observations are only on the outermost layers of the Indian psyche. He is obsessed with what he considers the quirks of the Indian temperament in a pseudo-sophisticated *patois*. In his mad obsession with the faecal-end of India, he has not bothered to look upward and around the several sociological shake-ups that India has undergone since independence.

Maini's plea for a little understanding from Naipaul is the distraught cry of an injured mind. Naipaul gloats in his 'Ex-

cremental Vision of India'. With his spiritual and cultural root in England and his sensibility also being English, he cannot live down his biological past. Maini puts his finger on the pulse, when he states that V.S. Naipaul came out to India to authenticate his inner revulsion and horror and to annul the ache of his Indian roots.

Frances Singh in writing of J.G. Farrell's "The Siege of Krishnapur" brings out the inbuilt bias of the English litterateurs in utilizing the so-called sepoy mutiny of 1857, as a tool for the furtherance of English valour and the indomitable courage of their families only to show the Indians as bloodthirsty, uncivilized and unfaithful. J.G. Farrell's attempt and subsequent success in showing the English to be insensitive, smug, artificial, arrogant and snobbish is a welcome break from the stereotypes that we have read about. Not content with this J.G. Farrell also shows the encrustation of Victorian prudery that inhibited Englishmen. "The Siege of Krishnapur" as the author of this essay correctly points out uses the criticism of the English in India as a way of examining and passing judgement on some fundamental Victorian attitudes and beliefs.

Naik's piece on "All about Hatter" delineates the cringing colonial mentality of the Indian natives by the paradigm of a dog named Jenkins and its master. The three characters of Baliram, Bannerji and Hatter are all in various stages of subservience to the colonial culture that afflicts the natives. After making a pile, Baliram renounces the world; his new *avatar* as a spiritual preceptor is obviously a fake as he fathers a son after supposedly renouncing the world. The biting wit and sarcasm of Desani is brought out and is appreciated in full measure by the author. The veneration by Bannerji of the Englishman and his absolute faith in western society are also dealt with meaningfully. There are good studies of Achebe and Jhabvala in this section.

K. Raghavendra Rao's piece, "The Colonial Experience" is a painstaking study to identify what the author a little grandiosely calls the 'Gandhian Model of Colonial Epistemology'. He states that Gandhi's voice was raised in the cause of the oppressed, decades ago before Frantz Fanon and Herbert Marcuse came to be identified as the champions of the downtrodden and the

oppressed. Gandhi resisted the colonialism of one integrated society over another by the very tools of institutionalised force, fraud and violence. To Gandhi, *Swaraj* meant not only a political but an epistemological liberation of one civilization from the other. Gandhi further believed that genuine human epistemology would involve a further liberation of the decolonised structure from its immediate historical trappings towards what Gandhi believed to be the real human condition, a true human civilization, and a truly human epistemology. The author of the essay has clearly transcended the narrow confines of the interpretations of Gandhi's writings and has brought out the eternal quest for humaneness in Gandhian writings.

Also well argued is Gandhi's refusal to imprison Man within a materialistic framework in a narrow sense. Gandhi rightly saw the crux of the social mechanisms involved in the epistemological process of a society was its educational system.

Moin Shakir writing under the title "Marx on Colonialism" admits rightly that Marx attempted to develop a systematic theory of Colonialism. However, the comments and opinions of Marx and Engels on developments in India, Ireland and China and other colonies provide sufficient material to expose the brutal character of colonialism. Marx correctly saw that the monopoly of trade with India under the East India Company as marking the first aristocracy coinciding with the most pronounced reactions against the people.

Marx's analysis of colonialism also included the consideration of bringing British rule to an end. As the author correctly states, "Marx realised that freedom of the people would alone provide an opportunity to reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered by the British bourgeoisie. Marx wrote that emancipation depended on the ousting of the English yoke by the industrial proletariat. Marx has a word of appreciation for the 'Indian Army's Revolt' dubbed by the English as the Sepoy Mutiny. That was the first time that the Muslims and Hindus fought a common foe.

Moin Shakir has marshalled the arguments against colonialism liberally by quoting Marx himself and the essay is

one of the best in the book under review.

"Tea at Tavistock" by Mulk Raj Anand being mainly an autobiographical narration of the young Anand in the exalted literary company of Leonard Woolf and E.M. Forster, is an exercise which borders on the wonderment of a young Indian author in the company of established liberal authors like Woolf and Forster. The little literary pow-wow that follows is one of scoring points and is of interest only in as much as Anand despite his fledgling status does not cede ground and holds his own against the combined intellectual assaults of the other two.

This is a good collection of essays in a different genre competently edited and very well-printed. It should stimulate a lot of thinking on the role of literature in decolonisation.

M.R. Sundareswaran

COMMUNAL RIOTS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA edited by Asghar Ali Engineer; Sangam Books, 1984; pp.331; Rs. 125

The book under review is based on papers read in a seminar organised by the Institute of Islamic Studies Bombay and the Ikhwanus Safa Trust in December 1981 plus other papers and articles on the topic of communal violence in Independent India. The overall attempt is to make scientific analysis of the causes of communal violence which has become so much a part of our life that it has managed to make us utterly insensitive to some of the most inhuman brutalities committed on our fellow beings in the name of religion.

The various papers highlight international and national questions; economic and political factors and local group rivalries which at times appear to be the main causes of communal violence rather than the traditional Hindu-Muslim antagonisms. The theoretical formulations presented in the book are 'backed' by field studies of some major communal riots since the late 'sixties'.

Of more lasting interest are the papers on 'Communal Politics in Jammu and Kashmir State' by Riyaz Punjabi and 'The Problem of Assam: Communal, Regional or Linguistic?' by Asghar Ali Engineer. They cover a systematic analysis with a historical background of Hindu-Muslim relations and how the two communities are today

being deliberately antagonized from each other by self-seeking politicians for their own nefarious ends. In a way this applies to the entire country as pointed out by Zoya Khaliq Hassan in his paper "Communalism and Communal Violence in India" when he states that the democratic process has failed to strengthen caste and communal solidarity and that in fact it has actually weakened them with the politician often actively encouraging religious sentiments.

Syed Shahabuddin in his paper 'Communal Violence - A Challenge to Plurality' feels that perhaps a long term solution could lie in education "based on human values coupled with accelerated economic development, generating social mobility, cutting across existing lines of cleavage in our society on religious, caste, regional or linguistic lines."

One cannot help but get the feeling that the partition of India on communal and religious grounds has, far from solving the problems of the minorities, actually aggravated them. From a larger context, no religion ever preaches violence or hatred towards others whatever their religious beliefs. Marxists affirm that religion is the poor man's opium for it can be transformed into poison by power, politicians and anti-social elements bringing human misery and death in its train. The book concludes by reproducing the "definition and scope of the term 'communal organisation' as suggested by the Minorities Commission." A bibliography and a general index would have added to the value of this book.

S.J. Clerk

SOUVENIR TO MARK THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF THE GANDHI ASHRAM, TIRUCHENGODU, 1985; Tamil Nadu 637201.

The completion of sixty years in the running of any voluntary institution is a memorable event, and particularly so of an *ashram* devoted to the promotion of Khadi, village regeneration and uplift of the weaker sections of society. In 1925, a follower of C. Rajagopalachari, Rattiasabapathy Gounder donated land on which Rajaji founded this *ashram*. From its inception it has been engaged in yeoman service and during the last decade its record has been striking in

that its output in terms of rupees has increased six-fold and in terms of material output four-fold.

The *Souvenir* recalls the founding of the *ashram* and its success. Entirely voluntary in its working its record is particularly striking because modern developments in our country are certainly not conducive to agro-industries and handicrafts.

R. Srinivasan

YUSUF MEHERALLY: QUEST FOR NEW HORIZONS by Madhu Dandavate; Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1986; 146; Rs.95

*Loving and kind in all his ways,
Upright and just to the end of his days;
Sincere and serene in heart and mind,
What a beautiful memory he left behind!*

Indeed, Meherally has left behind a beautiful memory for his friends and admirers! I had the good fortune to know Yusuf Meherally for less than three years, yet, in this short span of my acquaintance with him I can say that he left an indelible impression on my mind! Meherally had a pure heart, a loving disposition, humility and charity, sensitivity of the mind, a generous appreciation of others and a modest opinion of his own self. He kept patience under wrong, self-control when provoked, and when injured, he strove to lift up his soul so high that the offence could not reach him. His short span of life was like a river, with a source, a course and a purpose.

The biography of this great man written by his colleague and friend Prof. Madhu Dandavate, though at a very late stage, is highly welcome, as it is sure to inspire the present generation to be like him who had everything a man should be.

The book bears a preface by his equally worthy friend and colleague Achyut Rao Patwardhan who has given a brief background in which Meherally sought to achieve his objectives, to enable the readers to understand him better. This is followed by more than twenty black and white portraits in which the personality of Meherally lives on as every man's ideal. The rest of the pages in the book are full of a vivid account of Meherally's life from his birth in September 1903 till his death in July

A Life Of Dedication

During my stay in Rio, we were visited by my good friend Yusuf Meherally who came by boat after visiting friends in New York. Unfortunately, while he was in Rio, he had another heart attack which caused us great anxiety. Part of the time he stayed at my residence and part of the time we had to put him in hospital so that he could get better nursing and care. Yusuf was an extremely sociable person and it appeared that he had talked a bit too much while he was on the ship from New York.

The end came in Bombay in July 1950. I remember standing at the foot of the bed in Dr Jehangir Jussawalla's Nursing Home. Jayaprakash and Prabhavati were also there. It left a deep void in me, for I had known him since boyhood.

Yusuf died a young man of forty-seven, very live and very much needed. It was a police *lathi* which had caused injury to Yusuf's heart, from which he was never really to recover. In 1943, when he was released from prison, the doctors had given him up. His friends rushed to try and save him, and for days he lay hovering between life and death under an oxygen mask. Gradually, he recovered, but only enough to continue to exist. Though bubbling with energy and a desire to do things, he had to spend the next seven years mostly in bed. Even from there he continued to function and take a hand in the running of the Socialist Party.

Yusuf never married. He lived with his brother and his family. But he never lacked friends, and was loved for his warmth and his charm. One hardly ever found anyone saying anything unfriendly about him. Wedded to politics, Yusuf's real love was books, particularly on history and art. Though his life was short and in later years he was ailing, he achieved more than a normal man would during a full span of three score years and ten.

From Minoo Masani's *Against the Tide*.

1950. His political life starting from the agitation against the Simon Commission and ending with his insistence on fulfilling his duty as a legislator to move the resolution on Land Army in the Assembly, and that too when he was ailing, and doing which he got a heart attack from which he never recovered, has been detailed in seven chapters; the eighth and the ninth having been devoted to unfaded reminiscences and eloquent letters to his colleagues and friends respectively; and the tenth showing the noble and beautiful blend of his personality.

The author has tried his best to collect minute details and tap every conceivable source to bring out the story of Meherally's scintillating life which was so cruelly snatched away by death at the premature age of forty seven.

Meherally's significant role in the formative stage of the Congress Socialist Party, his mobilization of youth for complete political and economic independence of India, his exploring in depth the economic roots of the communal conflict and offering a socialist solution to the vexed communal problem, his forming of a study syllabus and organising a successful study camp for the workers of the Congress Socialist Party, his struggle against the Imperialist war in which India was dragged without her consent, his encouragement to the youth for participation in the individual satyagraha started by Mahatma Gandhi and the extension of it to a nationwide mass action against British Imperialism, his journey from the prison cell to the prestigious Mayorial chair in the Bombay Municipal Corporation, his starting of the Padma Publications and bringing out the booklet with the caption "Quit India" on the eve of the 1942 struggle, his organising the unorganised *Gumastas* and getting the Shops and Establishment Act enacted and finally, his struggle for Responsible Government in the Princely State of Kutch, all summed up in about sixty pages of the book, bring out his abilities as a dynamic leader who is sincere about his mission.

The book would be invaluable if only the present day youth could follow the example of Meherally's value-oriented life and imbibe the principles for which he lived and died.

Rosbeh Bilimoria

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