

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

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Anything *Karega* for Power

Minoo Masani, R. Swaminathan,
F.A. Mechery & Maneesha Tikekar,
Gayatri Narayanan, Louella Lobo Prabhu

Will Democracy Survive in India?

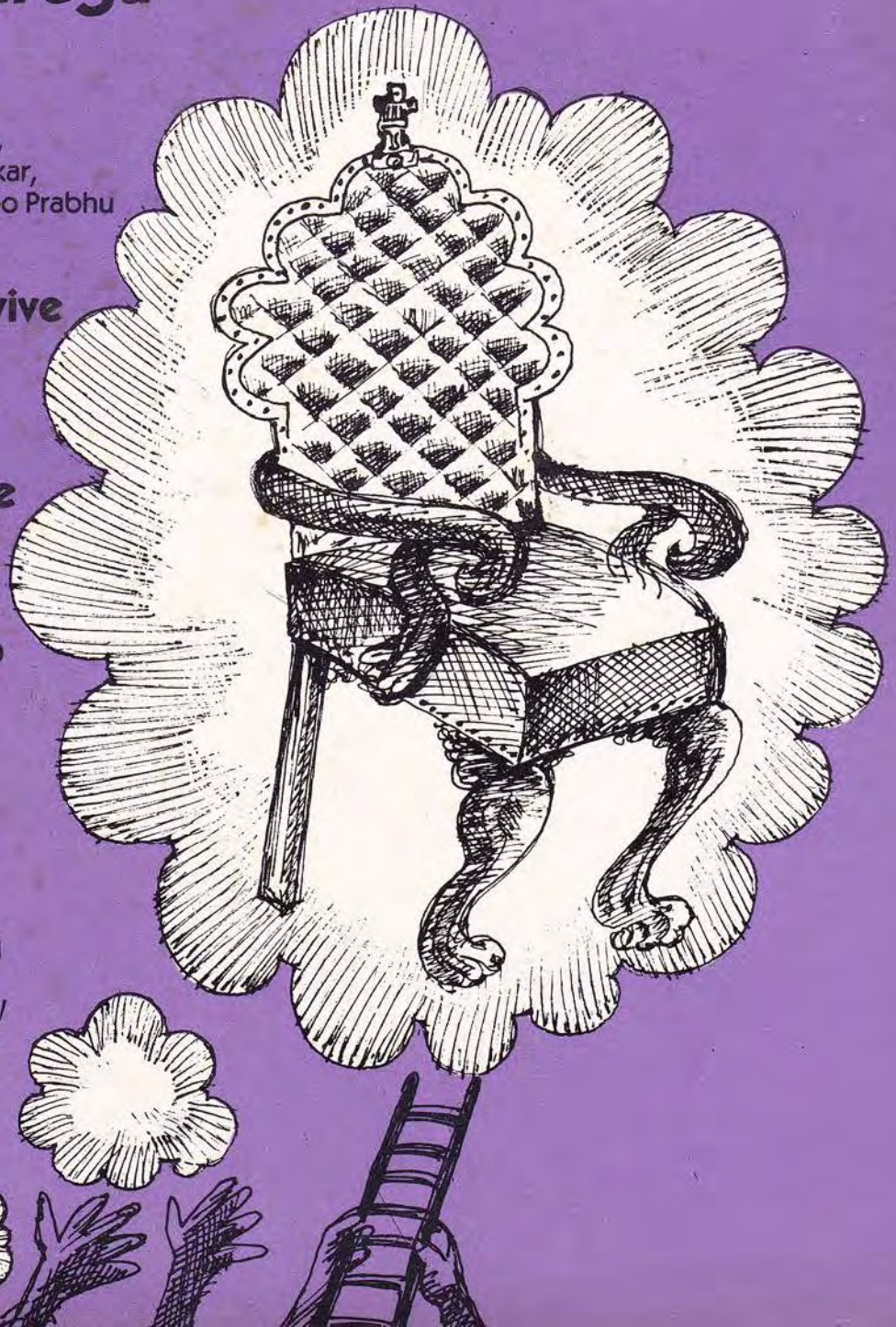
B.R. Ambedkar

Dharma in Public Life

C. Subramaniam

Will South Africa Go 'The African Way'?

Padma Srinivasan



SAARC Year of the Girl Child



The Girl Child in India

So deeply entrenched is the ideology of son preference, that a mother not only hopes and prays for a boy but actually fears the birth of a daughter...

*as the turiyan leaf trembles with a gust of wind
my heart trembles at the thought
that I may give birth to a daughter.**

Traditionally, the midwife is paid more if the baby is a boy. The birth of a son is cause for great rejoicing — with drumming, singing and public proclamations — that of a girl is an occasion, not uncommonly, for disappointment, or at best indifference. A woman in a North Indian song laments —

*Listen, O Sukhma, what a tradition has started
Drums are played at the birth of a boy
But at my birth only a brassplate was beaten.**

The girl child not only has the right to survive, but also the right to be free of malnutrition, ignorance, disease and poverty. Unless the girl becomes a priority in health, nutrition and education policies, the goals of 'Health for All', universal elementary education, justice and an egalitarian social order, will remain unrealizable and rhetorical.

For girls who are still growing up, it is not yet too late to make good the deprivations that have historically been the lot of one-half of our population. A comprehensive movement has to be activated to transform the cultural values and institutions that negatively affect girl children. Such an enterprise must necessarily be underscored by sincere effort, social commitment and political will. We must act now; we can no longer silently consent to generation upon generation of our daughters growing into physically, intellectually, and socially disinherited adults.

*From *The Inner World: a psycho-analytic study of childhood and society in India* by S. Kakar, Delhi: OUP, 1978.

Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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The idea for the title of this quarter's theme comes from a popular TV Commercial for 'Go Cool Ice Cream' where men are shown jumping about and women preening themselves. In the world of political reality they are not merely jumping but actually putting up obstacles — the objective: to seek power and then retain it. Incidentally 'Karega' for the non-Hindi-knowing means 'will do' 'Will Do Anything for Power.'

We, as a people have touched rock bottom. We are corrupt, palm greasing is the norm. An honest person apart from being a bloody nuisance is considered a menace to society. It is no longer possible for the meritorious to achieve anything — be it admission to higher institutions of education or get a job — whether in the public or private sector — purely on the strength of merit. Forty three years of the 'permit-licence-quota raj' has destroyed the moral and ethical fibre of the nation. Age old inter-religious and inter-caste animosities have been resurrected by so-called 'leaders' in the pursuit of power and pelf. All this is common knowledge.

And yet we as a people are doing little to resist and reverse this slide into decay other than passing cynical comments. Have we, as a people, become robots to be manipulated by every upstart politician — and there are dozens emerging every day, mostly from among the dregs of our society — in the pursuit of his or her personal gain?

We have, it would appear stopped thinking and lapsed into fatalism accepting our fate as inevitable. Where there are protests they are either in support of some religion or caste or linguistic consideration. There is little or no evidence of anger at bureaucratic and political misrule; at economic policies discarded the world over but thriving in our land because controls mean power. As the popular *cliche* goes there is light at the end of the tunnel. But our tunnel seems to be never-ending and the light nowhere discernible.

And yet as thinking people we cannot allow ourselves to be led by our noses indefinitely. The initiative for this will have to come from those outside the pale of politics — and politicians — from the common people.

We shall pursue this line of enquiry in our subsequent issues.

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Freedom First wishes its readers a Happy New Year

WITH MANY VOICES

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

The National Front government's main achievement has been to prove that India can only be ruled by the Congress(I) and the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

Tavleen Singh, *Indian Express*, November 11

Many, especially among the urban intelligentsia recall bitterly that Mr. (V.P.) Singh never uttered a truer word than when he said that he would be a "disaster" as Prime Minister.

B.G. Verghese, *Indian Express*, November 11

What things are unclean? Beer, wine, faeces, menstrual blood, non-muslim men and women, the flesh of sodomised camels.

The Little Green Book of Ayatollah Khomeini, quoted in *The Spectator*, June 9

The backward classes are now being traded like commodities by the political vultures. Politicians of all shades and sizes are trying to make morsels of their miserable existence.

Poornima Dixit, *Indian Express*, November, 1990

Indian bureaucracy is by any test already the worst in the world, and the thought of it getting even worse is too depressing to think of.

Bernard Levin, *The Statesman*

(Marxist politics in China is) the art of interpreting non-existing inscriptions written in invisible ink on a blank page.

Simon Keys, *New York Review of Books*, October 11

Life begins at 65, and I shall be working for the future.

Margaret Thatcher, *Time*, December 10

We are a diverse plural nation and the sooner we accept this the better.

Girish Karnad, *The Sunday Times of India*, December 30

We are beginning to be an unstable nation and our salvation lies in decentralisation.

Girish Karnad, *The Sunday Times of India*, December 30

If the political leadership is wise, it will seek to begin the exercise of reordering federal-states relations sooner rather than later. Such an exercise would help in resolving the problems of Punjab, Kashmir and Assam.

S. Nihal Singh, *The Week*, December 30

Politicians are villains. We are bad, but you (the Indian people) are equally bad.

Syed Shahabuddin, quoted in *Sunday*, December 16

We leaders mess up things, but I'm sure people will keep us on the right track.

Rajiv Gandhi, *India Today*, November 15

We know how to throw out leaders and even to choose new ones; but once the choice has been made, our politicians do not know what to do with the power they have won.

Sudhir Mulji, *Business India*, November 12

Nature provides a free lunch, but only if we control our appetites.

William D. Ruckelshaus, *World Link*, July 1990

The most persistent tendency in India has been to have too much government and too little administration; too many laws and too little justice; too many public servants and too little public service; too many controls and too little welfare.

Mani L. Pillaiwala, Jawaharlar Nehru Memorial Lecture, Trinity College Cambridge, November 7

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



How is it Your Business' Mr. Government?

Not being a businessman or an industrialist I do not know what the implications are of a recent notification issued by the Government of India under the Companies Act 1956.

According to the notification no sole selling agents can be appointed by companies for a period of five years from September 1990 in respect of companies engaged in the sugar, vanaspati, cement and paper industries.

I wonder why the State should get involved in what is essentially a commercial decision. It is for the company concerned to decide whether it wants a sole selling agent, or a hundred selling agents. If I start a venture producing something that has demand, I would resent government telling me how I should run my business.

This is precisely what Indian businessmen and entrepreneurs face today. At every turn they have to cope with a bewildering number of regulations. The State need not help but need it put up hurdles?

All talk of "liberalisation" is so much hogwash until such time as the bureaucrats and their very temporary masters keep their prying fingers out of such matters. Meanwhile what they ought to be doing — providing efficient and clean government — is not given a second thought. But then if they were to attend to their own business how will they make their pile on the side?

SVR

The Journal of Democracy

With changes sweeping over Eastern

Europe, with State Socialism totally discredited and political changes of a fundamental nature being presaged in South Africa, students of democracy and democratic movements, as well as intelligent citizens need more time to ponder over the future of our priceless human heritage. Much of what is happening is developing at a feverish pace; the print media churns out information at an equally feverish rate. All this confounds the ordinary reader of newspapers who may be tempted to throw up his hands in despair at not being able to make much sense of all these.

It is in this context that the launching of the *Journal of Democracy* becomes extremely significant to all of us, who are well-wishers of democratic civilization. With democracy becoming almost a global movement the need to clarify the fundamental principles, analyse developments, comprehend the challenges, and above all try to guide through the welter of developments are desiderata.

The journal in the three issues that have appeared so far has judiciously combined articles on democratic theory with analyses of political developments. Most professional journals generally tend to be unreadable but the *Journal of Democracy* steers clear of all jargon. Each issue carries reviews of significantly important books; equally important are the contemporary documents from different countries reasserting fundamentals and publicizing the stand of democratic action groups. Also, each issue has a section giving a timetable of forthcoming elections in the different countries.

Published by the National Endow-

ment for Democracy (P.O.Box 3000, Dept. J D Denville, New Jersey USA 07834), the annual subscription is US\$24 plus mailing charges.

Our filthy cities

I wonder whether our Bombay friends have noticed a new phenomenon. In all these fifty-five years and more of living in the city, never have I seen more choked gutters than what assail us now. Overflowing gutters and heaped refuse have been part of our recent glorious urban heritage. But these till now were generally on the fringes of slums, markets and confined to a few corners. Unfortunately the last few years have witnessed almost all the storm drains, the gutters, the rain water pipes of buildings giving way and the streets at short distances covered with slime, dirt and filth. This is a new deterioration and eloquent testimony to the total failure of the civic administration in not even attending to its primary duties. I suspect the villains of the piece are the roadside vendors of eatables who turn the streets into eating establishments and throw all the junk into the gutters. The authorities obviously wink at this. Never in our time have we seen so many people eating in such numbers on the streets. Every time you eat in these places, you do your bit to make our city a wee bit dirtier, filthier and perhaps lethal too. Also it must be emphasized that all the storm water drains and the sewers need a thorough cleaning.

These are not in the generally run-down parts of Bombay but in the midst of the buzzing, throbbing centres of business and trade. Almost every few yards you find a gutter overflowing.

RS

Do We Deserve Our Prime Ministers?

Minoo Masani

For me, every day that Mr. V.P. Singh remained Prime Minister of India was something of a misery. The man has proved an utter disgrace and for me, it was a humiliation that such a man was my country's Prime Minister.

I am not referring to Mr. V.P. Singh's demagogic economic policies. That his conception of social justice should happen to be the same as that of Karl Marx as interpreted by Mao tse Tung and Stalin, was bad enough but his obstinacy in sticking to the Mandal report because he thought it would provide him with a vote-bank of Harijans and Backward Class people was worse. But most shocking was his lack of sensitivity and humanity in the utter lack of sympathy and concern that he showed over the brutality of the Delhi police towards the flower of Indian youth who quite rightly were protesting against reservations which would destroy the unity of the country, lead to further deterioration in the quality of our bureaucracy and do the Backward Classes no good whatsoever, except provide them with a crutch or an opiate with which to remain backward. Only those who live in Delhi or have seen *Newstrack* for the month of October 1990, can realise the horror of what happened and Mr. Singh's complete immunity from the normal reaction shows the man to be quite heartless.

Even Rajiv Gandhi is Preferable

Readers are aware that I am no admirer of Rajiv Gandhi, but must now confess to my realisation that my two desires about the results of the 1989 general elections though fulfilled viz. that Rajiv Gandhi should be ousted from Prime Ministership and that the new Parliament should be a hung one, have not yielded the desired result. That is because I had not bargained for Mr. V.P. Singh and the damage he could do to the country. In the circumstances if Rajiv Gandhi had become Prime Minister and dropped this evil policy of Reservations, I would not have been heartbroken.

If the changeover last year from Rajiv Gandhi to V.P. Singh as Prime Minister was generally described as falling from the frying pan into the fire, how is the present change of Prime Minister from V.P. Singh to Chandra Shekhar to be described?

My own answer is that it is too early to say. We should keep an open mind on this subject. After all, the Indian people have so often been disappointed that one would like to think that it is time to have a pleasant surprise for a change.

However two recent developments show that the new rulers in Delhi, have still not understood that the Constitution we framed for India was a federal one.

The Constitution is Federal

The first is the change of Governors. What on earth has the government in Delhi to do with the Governors of states? These are Heads of the state concerned and not stooges of the Prime Minister in Delhi, as they have been since Jawaharlal Nehru destroyed the federal structure of the Constitution in his love for power. The Resolutions of the Governors' Conference and the Sarkaria Commission Report have evidently made no dent on the power bosses in New Delhi.

The second development which proves my point is the idiotic arrest of Sikh leaders who were foregathering to attend a conference in Delhi.

Sahib Resolution. There is nothing wrong with the Resolution. What is wrong is the attitude of Delhi. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution is the only foundation on which the Punjab problem can be solved. Once the right of the Sikhs to Home Rule envisaged in that Resolution is granted, I am sure they will agree to have Khalistan within the Indian Union. If Gorbachov can offer sovereign independence to the states of the Soviet Union and suggest renaming the USSR 'the Union of Sovereign Republics', why can't we do the same. The answer is that we do not have a

Gorbachov in Delhi. Small minds and big countries go ill together.

Prime Ministers may come and go but they are all enemies of autonomy and federalism because they want to rule India from Delhi on the telephone. They are welcome to try but they will only succeed in breaking up the Union of India by their stupid effort to monopolise power.

Why Politicians Oppose Elections

Incidentally it is interesting that except for the BJP, all other political parties opposed the dissolution of Parliament and the holding of fresh elections. Why? In answer to this enquiry from a BBC correspondent, an Indian politician answered "because elections are so expensive". Nonsense. They do not have to be expensive. In England they are very reasonable. They have become expensive in India because many Members of Parliament regard an election to Parliament as an investment. When asked, they are apt to say: 'I spent so many lakhs on the last election. I must have time to make up this amount by the sale of licenses and permits which I can only do in five years in order to invest the money in the next elections.' Faced with this lack of honesty on the part of the Members of Parliament what should the President have done after V.P. Singh resigned? He should have dissolved Parliament and appointed a caretaker government as suggested by Rajaji, to restore order in the country's affairs and to eschew all controversial measures like Reservations. Such a caretaker government should have been composed of distinguished citizens who belong to no party, like Mr. Justice H.R. Khanna and Mr. Justice B. Lentin and distinguished administrators like Mr. S.S. Tinaikar. It is only after such a caretaker government had brought the country out of the mess in which it is at present, that fresh elections have any meaning.

Prime Minister — Anyone?

R. Swaminathan

If I was asked to describe in one sentence the single biggest political malady that has afflicted this country for a decade or so now, I would say it was that the politics of this country has thrown up leaders who want to become prime minister without knowing why.

As far as I know the question has never been put to them. But almost every prime minister-elect has declared his prime objective which is marked by the tiresome glibness of platitudes — to eradicate poverty from this country, to uplift the disadvantaged segments of the people and secure social justice for them. A noble ideal. Except that it is wrong because it is unattainable and the means are inadequate and inappropriate. No one can be made un-poor against their will. A welfare state ought to invest in people not subsidise the bone lazy who have been persuaded by the now decrepit political Left that the world owes them a living.

President's Desperate Choice

The same question slightly modified can be raised about the President's decision: why did he offer the prime ministership to Chandrashekhar? My conjecture is that the President was desperately casting about for someone, anyone, to be prime minister until the next general election. Anyone but V.P. Singh as caretaker! In accepting the offer (or, if you like, in staking his claim for the office) Chandrashekhar has done the nation a great service. He has saved the nation the caretakership of V.P. Singh. That ought to count in his favour when he asks for votes for his fledgling party at the next election.

But when will the next election be? The general thinking in the country is, when Rajiv Gandhi wants it. Not really. It will be when Chandrashekhar wants it.

Right now the BJP is riding the crest of the popular wave. And therefore it is ready for elections. For this very reason Rajiv Gandhi is not. He wants to wait out the wave. If Chandrashekhar succeeds in keeping the BJP balanced against the Congress(I) with just the trace of an

edge to the BJP, he can last as long as he likes as Prime Minister subject, of course, to what is left of the life of the present Lower House. If in a fit of rashness Rajiv Gandhi topples Chandrashekhar he would attract the stigma of perfidy which would imperil his already uncertain prospects at the poll.

A Cheap Triumph for the Congress(I)

Arguably, it would have been superior tactic if the Congress(I) had supported V.P. Singh in parliament against the BJP. It would have given V.P. Singh that much more rope. It would have dented the impressiveness of the BJP strength in parliament. It would have put the Congress(I) unmistakably in the camp of the 'secularists'. And it would have manifested the Congress(I)'s readiness to go that extra mile to save the country the chaos of a turbulent election. It would all have added up to telling evidence of the Congress(I) as a mature and sober political party serving the nation whether in office as government or in the opposition. And as the Congress(I) was going about patting itself and being patted on the back, the National Front government and the BJP would have been fighting each other and destroying themselves leaving the field clear for the Congress(I). But the Congress(I) couldn't resist the temptation to pull down V.P. Singh. It was a cheap triumph, if that. An inept prime minister in office confers an immense electoral advantage on the opposition.

The BJP/Congress(I)-V.P. Singh equation is rather like the British Labour Party - Mrs. Thatcher equation though Mrs. Thatcher, far from being inept, was England's greatest peace time prime minister of this century and in her last appearance in Parliament as PM "mopped the floor of the House of Commons with the Labour opposition". But the longer Mrs. Thatcher continued as PM the surer the chances of a Labour victory in the next elections in England. So the Conservatives wanted to change their leader. They found one,

John Major, who would follow Mrs. Thatcher's policies but less stridently. Instead of Mrs. Thatcher's "no, no, no" it will be John Major's "yes...but". This firm and businesslike change of leader is going to weigh with British voters even as a similar change in Japan's ruling party weighed with Japanese voters in favour of Tokshi Kaifu. Change of party leadership at unmistakable signs of public dissatisfaction is deference shown to the electorate which appreciates the gesture.

The politics of this country has thrown up leaders who want to become prime minister without knowing why. As far as I know the question has never been put to them. But almost every prime minister-elect has declared his prime objective which is marked by the tiresome glibness of platitudes. Political leaders don't know why they want power. What they tell us is so much crap.

So, where does it all leave the Congress(I) and the BJP? Without a government to be alternative to. It would be ludicrous for either, especially the Congress(I), to project itself as the alternative to Chandrashekhar's merely months old, miniscule party. The Congress(I) will have to fall back upon its past record or flog the dead horse, the NF government. Some very embarrassing questions are going to be asked about the Congress(I)'s past record. If the record was all that good why did it lose the last elections? If it is now a chastened party why did it put Chandrashekhar in when it could have asked for

a mandate from the people? Congress(I) whiz kids have some furious thinking to do.

Chandrashekhar's Self-confidence

The BJP can bank on its not having a past record. Which makes it rather a dark horse. What has it got to offer? It is often referred to, especially by foreign media correspondents, as "right wing". But "right" has lost all its significance in the absence of any surviving "left" that can be mentioned in polite society. The latest development is that the Communist Party of England with some 6000 members has voted to change its name and structure as "the Bolshevik era has ended in disaster". Marxism will no longer be its official dogma and there will be no party line for members to toe. The English communists will hereafter espouse such causes as feminism and environmentalism. The party's new name will be decided later.

In a recent interview to the BBC, Chandrashekhar sounded very relaxed, almost unconcerned, about the durability of his government. "If the Congress doesn't support me" he said, "there will be no government. Why should I bother about it?". In the meantime he has a job to do. His freedom from anxiety gives him an impressive self-assurance which the citizens find reassuring.

To revert to the thesis I started off with. Political leaders don't know why they want power. What they tell us is so much crap which, however, Barbara Crossette of the *New York Times* flatteringly (mis)interprets as "a vision or programme for India". She also describes V.P. Singh's Mandal move as "affirmative action plan for the disadvantaged". She, obviously, has no use for that piece of profound classical wis-

dom to sift things from the sound they make. The sound that things make in a foreign language is particularly suspect. Chandrashekhar has a task facing him. As of now he has, mercifully, no 'vision or programme for India' to sell.

The political leaders' interest in administration doesn't stretch much beyond finding jobs for their cronies. In reply to a query on Bofors Chandrashekhar reportedly said it was a job for an inspector of police. Quite. But the Prime Minister ought to keep himself informed of the way this inspector was going about his job. Was he doing his best? If not, could something be done

to help him? If the inspector's best was not good enough why wasn't he replaced? Decentralization of authority, like the devolution of power, to be fruitful must be constantly under threat of review. Administration of modern India must be different from that of the medieval Indian empires. Delhi no longer *door hai*. With the advancement in the technology of communication, of storage of prodigious information and its retrieval instantly at the tap of a key it should not tax the competence of the government or strain the resources of the country to keep a tab on the performance of government departments, State and Central, and of public sector undertakings in any corner of the country. This information except sensitive information of national security must be available to anyone who seeks it. That is the beginning of open government.

Rural-Urban Interdependence

Politics is very largely an exercise in beating political rivals to 'the corridors of power'. The party that reaches these corridors has 'arrived'. There are no further 'miles to go'. But reaching there requires prodigious effort, painstaking canvassing of supporters — the carving out of constituencies. Religious affiliation, communal, sectarian and linguistic affinity are some readymade constituencies that politicians exploit. One constituency that has become very prominent in recent times is rural India. It would be tedious to examine here the views freely aired about the uplift of rural India. But the basic fallacy here is the notion that the interests of rural India are independent of (in fact, incompatible with) the interests of urban India. This is far from the truth. In Tudor England the rise of a new rich middle class brought the foundation of the prosperity of rural England. The rural folk of England turned to their advantage the commercial and industrial boom of the times. On this G.M. Trevelyan the distinguished historian of England writes:

...under the Tudors and Stuarts the crafts and manufactures were increasingly carried on, not in the corporate town but in the country. Many villages and hamlets manufactured for the national and international market. *The medieval isolation of the peasant* (italics mine) was broken down, and he came in contact in his own village

with men of various occupations dealing much with distant shires. Community of trade drew the whole nation together, sharpening the wits and broadening the outlook of the villager...

Towards a Government by Discussion

To take a peep into the future, one has a feeling that these present aberrations of Indian politics would rectify themselves. How it will happen and how long it will take to happen are at the moment far from clear. What, however, is rather more clear is that MPs of the future are going to insist on greater participation in government not in the sense of interference in the administration (of which they are now accused) but in the sense of a greater say in policy decisions, especially in respect of controversial policies which might rock the government and unacceptably cut short the life of an elected parliament. The paramount obligation of the party in power to itself and to the country is to stay the course. In normal times without any overt national crisis facing it no government has any excuse to fall and bring down the party with it. (All that talk of principles being more important than 'the chair' is, again, crap. It is widely thought in the country that V.P. Singh's Mandal move was to build himself a power base against Devi Lal's peasants and his gory dealing with the Ayodhya *rath yatra* and the *kar seva* was to clip the expanding wings of the BJP and, hopefully, to secure for himself the Muslim vote-bank.)

At present the MPs who disagree with the government are dubbed dissidents and forced to defect (which fear actually discourages honest differences). In future, I think, political parties and the government will have to look at this question of dissidence and defection. With 'charismatic' party leaders an extinct species now, it will no longer be automatically assumed that the leader carries the bulk of the party with him in any controversy. So every time the question arises the dissidents will have to be identified — the MPs who disagree or the Prime Minister who is self-willed and opinionated and errs. This will keep the party and the government on an even keel and serve democracy which in one definition is government by discussion.

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The Legitimacy of 'Arithmetical Democracy'

F.A. Mechery and Maneesha Tikekar

The Chandrashekar Government has a legal case on the basis of arithmetic and procedure. But norms of political legitimacy and propriety go far beyond matters of arithmetic or mere legalism

A new Prime Minister in a democracy raises new hopes. Either fresh with a new mandate from the people after an election, or having tided over a crisis and making a vigorous beginning, a new Government is expected to tackle problems on a relatively clean slate. But it is doubtful whether this can be said about India's new Prime Minister. In fact on November 16, 1990 when it was sworn to power many an eyebrow was raised on its propriety and legitimacy apart from speculation on how long it would last.

A Congress(I) Victory

Chandrashekar may head a Janata Dal(S) Government but the real victor is the Congress(I). On the appointment of Chandrashekar as Prime Minister jubilation in the Congress camp was so evident that it appeared as though Rajiv Gandhi was making a return to Office. In a House of 522 the Chandrashekar's party, the JD(S), had 60 members supported by 195 members of the Congress(I), and 16 members of other groups that had earlier electorally

thus barely making up a majority to stake a claim. The Government has a legal case on the basis of arithmetic and procedure. But norms of political legitimacy and propriety go far beyond matters of arithmetic or mere legalism.

When the V.P.Singh Government was voted out of power on November 7, 1990, Chandrashekar had already walked out of the Janata Dal with 25 members which however made no difference to the outcome of the voting in Parliament. The fate of the V.P.Singh Government was a foregone conclusion from the day the BJP publicly announced its

withdrawal of support. The Congress(I) support was indicated to Chandrashekar even as V.P.Singh's future was dangling in precarious balance. Yet the President of India observed constitutional propriety by inviting Rajiv Gandhi to form the Government as the leader of the single largest party in the Lok Sabha. Predictably, he declined the offer. The Congress(I) had three options: To form the government; to go in for fresh elections; or to support the dissenters from the Janata Dal and help them form a Government. The Congress(I) would not form the Government for want of a clear mandate, nor was it ready to immediately face the electorate. The third option was its safest bet. It was a shrewd, calculated move which would keep the Congress(I) in the limelight and also allow it time to prepare for the next elections.

Between November 7 and November 17 there was a trickle of members from the Janata Dal into the Chandrashekar camp. A deal was struck between the JD(S) and the Congress(I) and Chandrashekar staked his claim.

Congress(I) Calculations

What could be the bargain? Speculations abound why the Congress(I) agreed to carry the Chandrashekar Government on its shoulder. Getting the investigations into the Bofors scandal and the submarine deal shelved indefinitely is an explanation. Chandrashekar has not publicly committed anything, but while referring to Bofors he remarked that a nation cannot go on harping about corruption all the time. But there are other reasons for the Congress(I) decision. The Congress(I) does not want an election at a time when the

Hindu vote might swing towards the BJP and the Muslim towards V.P.Singh. The Congress(I) wants to wait, but it cannot allow its own image to be sullied by the misdeeds of the Government it supports. Hence a piece-meal approach — an indefinite lease of life to the Chandrashekar Government to start with. When the Government presents its first budget the crisis may well begin. If the Government then falls, elections will follow in May thus giving the Congress(I) breathing time.

There was no question of the Congress(I) joining a Government which would mean foreclosing its option on the one side and haggling for Prime Ministership on the other. By engineering a split in the Janata Dal, the Congress(I) further narrowed V.P.Singh's power base already eroded by Devi Lal.

Defeating the Anti-Defection Law

Governments will come and go, but certain precedents stick for a long time to come. Thus a matter of serious concern to the polity is the moral and political

group of 25 MPs including Chandrashekar, Maneka Gandhi and Harmohan Dhawan were expelled by V.P.Singh on November 5 for anti-party activities. The Lok Sabha Speaker declared them "unattached". The next group of 30 including Devi Lal were not expelled, but voted against V.P.Singh on November 7 and qualified as defectors under the definition of the law. The Speaker did not take notice of this and the issue was further compounded by the appointment of some of the defectors as ministers. A third group consisting of V.C.Shukla, Bhagey Govardhan and

Sarwar Hussain voted in support of V.P.Singh on November 7, but defied the party on November 16. They became defectors, but by then their number was already swelling. A class by himself is Shakeel ur Rehman who voted in support of V.P.Singh on November 7 and again on November 16 and was therefore not a defector, but joined the Chandrashekhar Cabinet on November 21!

So, between November 7 and November 16 the number of defectors notched sixty, thus crossing the one-third mark which makes defection legal. But is defection a gradual process over a period of time? The illegality of the phenomenon was there for all to see at its various stages. To allow defection in small doses and to swell the number to the required one-third, adding up all odds and ends, using liberally official patronage and crumbs of office to attract defections; and then to allow them all to evade the consequences under the law militates against not only the letter and spirit of the anti-defection law but of parliamentary propriety and traditions as well. The minority government of V.P.Singh gave way to the minuscule government of Chandrashekhar. This was managed by the Congress(I) but it was a betrayal and a serious damage to the anti-defection law, which was largely a Congress(I) creation. The numbers game is more simple now; 21 members of Chandrashekhar's party of 63 can safely break away and bring down the government. One would be justified in thinking that some members of the lumpen party in power are capable of doing this with no inhibition at all!

It took over a decade to pass the law on defections. It was first introduced in May 1973 and after several reconsider-

was finally enacted in April 1985. The need for putting an end to the sordid spectacle of changing loyalties on the floor of the House was sought to be ended with this measure. The law had many shortcomings. The eminent jurist N.A.Palkhivala criticised it for making legislators "soulless and conscienceless entities". But the desperate remedy was felt necessary. Whatever be the defect of the law, to ignore it when it is on the statute book is to violate the principle of the rule of law and to condemn the sovereign power of parliament. The magnitude of the lapse made it an idle

question to speculate as to who the guilty are.

No Legitimacy

While the new Government is blessed with arithmetical and "procedural" legality it cannot claim to be consecrated with legitimacy. Exercise of legitimate authority is far from a mechanical follow up of procedures. Obedience to the State does not flow from any divine myth, but from the tacit acceptance of the credentials of the government. The vast majority of the people acquiesce in the law taking for granted the legitimacy of government. When government is seen as no more than a bunch of professional defectors clinging together in a fellowship for promoting mutual survival and nothing else, none can expect this fellowship of doubtful legitimacy to command any respect.

For a second time a non-Congress experiment has failed at the Centre. A change of the party in power does not by itself mean a healthy development in the party system. If the Janata Party rule showed that a few disparate groups cannot form a "union of hostility to Congress" and make it a political party, the Janata Dal interlude showed that a minority government cannot be propped up for long by two or more mutually hostile groups from the outside. The need for a clear mandate for a ruling party is a *sine qua non* of a working democracy. Governments can now fall with no issue at stake, and can come to power with no manifesto or cause.

Non-accountability a Strength!

The *ad hoc* nature of the present government puts it in an unenviable position in that it will not be able to take decisions of the government will be blamed on itself, while its achievements, if any, will be credited to the Congress(I). When a government functions in a vacuum its actions will have to be accounted for by devious explanations. India's foreign relations will suffer due to the lack of credibility of the present Government. Foreign aid appears to flow hesitatingly, and capital might shy away, at least for the time being.

Ironically, the *ad hoc* nature of the Government may prove to be its peculiar strength. The Chandrashekhar Government has no promises to keep to the

electorate or to parliament. It sought no mandate, won no election and hence has no obligations; neither has it the compulsions of the ballot box looming ahead. Its prospects at an election whether now or a year hence are nothing worth thinking about, unless Chandrashekhar succeeds in breaking the Congress(I) and carries off a part of it for himself. With such blessed freedom from accountability, it can turn foolhardy for the good and tackle fearlessly fundamental issues such as the problems in the Punjab, Kashmir and the North East; the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue or more mundane but nonetheless real issues like inflation and price rise. Bold decisions are theoretically possible, for the Government has nothing to lose, at least nothing further, except power, which anyway, cannot be saved for long. The freedom from accountability that comes from the absence of any democratic restraint, popular, institutional or ethical can be enjoyed to take any firm action and perish in the process. The question whether it will affect the political ambitions of the individual members need not worry anyone, for, in the Indian experience that does not seem to happen.

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Should We Despair?

It's only you and I who cry for our country. You and I, and many others like us who have a stake in this country of ours, which is at least as great as that of the Delhi firm of Messrs Advani, Gandhi, Singh and Chandrashekhar, and yet with as much at stake as they, we are powerless to control those who jockey for power and, in the end, will lead us.

Should we then give in to despair? How often that mood has threatened to engulf us: nothing changes whatever we do, so why do anything? And then you remember what someone once said: evil triumphs when good men decide to do nothing.

Perhaps the little fights we fight may not be so futile after all. Perhaps the good men and women — and the good in all men and women — will soon look at this hatred around us and react with such resolution that even our cynical and calculating leaders will find it profitable to be good after all.

Anil Dharker, *The Independent* Dec. 30

The Mandal Commission – An Assessment

The proposal to implement sections of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission has had not only tragic dimensions for the entire community but has left a permanent scar upon the land. One doubts if even the newspapers covered themselves with glory — they were as much emotionally involved as the public. It can be argued that almost all of them become partisan. Another shocking experience is the dimension of personal violence, either self-imposed or perpetrated by others. It was not the ancients alone who witnessed slaves butchered to give a Roman holiday. There have been definite cases of murder and one scarcely had any inkling of the bitterness that the average youth nurse deeply in them. For we know that some young people were set on fire deliberately.

By abandoning their social responsibilities at this dark hour, almost all our leaders betrayed the people. Not one of them took upon himself the onus of instilling some sanity in the land. Irretrievably have the days gone when Jawaharlal would jump into a violent murderous mob to stop the butchering. Or of Gandhiji walking into the very centre of a communal storm. Not only did V.P. Singh and his government lose their legitimacy but what was on parade was the basic hypocrisy of our political parties.

This shows one of the basic weaknesses of electoral democracy. Parties are not prepared to espouse "unpopular" positions. Immediate electoral calculations are the only thing that advocates policies knowing fully well that they cannot be implemented.

For the time being the Court has come to the rescue of our government and it is quite likely that buying time is important to assuage tempers. As another article explains, the Commission recommended many things to set right ancient wrongs. But V.P. Singh picked up what was most convenient and easy for him to do i.e. impose reservations in government employment. The other things that were more difficult to implement were given the go by. This distorted the public perception of

the Commission's Report. The unspoken parts are the kernel of the Commission.

The argument that there should be no reservations at all either in education or in administrative positions is no longer being taken seriously. Even the most advanced of the economies, the USA is compelled to resort to some form of reservations. The other argument, that we consider the economic cut off point, that the government should try to regulate admissions to educational institutions and to the bureaucracy on grounds of economic well-being so that the better-to-do among the backward classes automatically get disqualified, will be administratively impossible to implement. We will have to accept that a quantum of injustice and unfairness will percolate into any of these arrangements.

There is both a positive and a negative side to the policy of positive discrimination which need to be looked into. One has yet to assess the benefits of protective discrimination in our educational system. Scheduled castes and tribes who have been given the benefits both in education and in the services are yet to make their mark though a few have done extremely well. The question is whether they would not have done well on their own. The growing vested interest in the perpetuation of backwardness cannot be denied. The better among them have cornered the benefits, the poorer ones are still in a servile

attitude. Making reservations to tag the easy way, the beneficiaries insist upon soft options and are not prepared to meet challenges but demand still more privileges. It is said that brahmins in ancient days were privileged, for many things came their way unsought; a similar thing has happened to scheduled caste members today; now the backward classes too want their share.

Among the charges made are that there would be a collapse in standards of excellence, academic and administrative; that a country cannot afford to sacrifice merit in a competitive world where there is no quarter given for

mediocrity; that the Commission introduces caste considerations when the general movement should be gradually to do away with caste; and that there should be other considerations such as the economic criteria.

Those who defend the Mandal Commission have several arguments. They argue that the upper castes have dominated both higher education, the professions and the civil service during the past half a century and more. If there has been deterioration it has been under their control, for the depressed classes do not occupy the higher echelons at all in the bureaucracy. The presumption seems to be that all members of the upper castes, by some magic, are automatically brilliant and highly endowed and lower castes are proportionately characterised by low IQs. Obviously, Nature has been very partial in its gifts and benefactions. The demand is for less than half of the positions in the bureaucratic structure. The other half can have all the competence and excellence; since the upper castes are very clever and bright, and 50% of the positions in a large country is still a large number, there is no danger of our being adversely affected by international competition. The northern states where the upper castes have monopolised the bureaucracy are no models of efficient administration. The Southern states have experimented with reservations and, comparatively, are none the worse for it.

In the U.S. as well as in other countries, what is called, representative bureaucracy. They are not only alarmed at bureaucratic positions being cornered by small ethnic groups but are making efforts to correct the imbalance by encouraging the disadvantaged to join the civil service.

Lastly, it is also argued that unless members of the lower castes occupy positions in the bureaucracy there will be no conviction carried to the disadvantaged that the government is their own. As of now the *sarkar* is still far too distant to the *dalits* and the disadvan-

taged. Also the present incumbents in power have no empathy for the problems of the under-privileged.

The issue of reservation in the Mandal Commission that came to the foreground bristles with a number of difficulties. One of them is sociological. Who is to determine which caste is backward and where? Different geographical entities have customarily different criteria of backwardness. The same caste which is advanced in one state is characterised as backward in another. There will be pressure used in the different states for each caste to be categorised as backward. The near total disruption that took place in Tamil Nadu with the Vanniyars claiming a backward status is too recent to need any reiteration. Similar outbursts in other states can bring about nation-wide anarchy.

Again, this movement indicates the new demands that will soon be pressed upon the government by a new alignment of castes. Castes that have done well at the rural level, in agriculture and related areas will now begin to demand

urban privileges; Devi Lal's descendants indicate the new temper that sweeps the land. There will be demands for positions in the civil service, admissions to higher education etc. To enforce their demands they will resort to the same old methods of browbeating used against them earlier. Considering their number it is doubtful if any democratic polity will be able to resist this for long, and yet maintain democratic norms and rationality in public choice. This will strain, to the utmost, the qualities of statesmanship of our leaders.

A long-term effect of all these will be a renewed attempt by the upper privileged castes to escape their tribulations by migration both internal and external. Internally they will be compelled to take up professions like computer software and hardware, electronics and other areas where there is still autonomy. There has already been a shift during the last thirty years to industry, business, law, business management. They are almost saturated now. Areas like engineering, medicine will gradually get

Ideologically, the country has come to a point of divide on the Mandal Commission. Both sides have valid points to stress, more or less underplayed by the other.

depleted of these sections and be filled by those coming from the reserved category. Those outside this category will prefer external migration to countries like Australia.

Ideologically, the country has come to a point of divide on the Mandal Commission. Both sides have valid points to stress, more or less underplayed by the other. The dialogue has to continue and the hope is that some sort of temporary resolution will be found. And one should remember that in society and in politics all resolutions are at best temporary.

Contributed

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The Mandal Report — Some Reservations

Gayatri Narayanan

Time and again the government of the day has moved in the direction of any socio-economic change mainly to reap immediate political benefits from such 'radical' policy decisions. V.P. Singh's decision to implement the Mandal recommendation runs true to this generalization

After leaving behind a tragic trail of death and destruction, the heat and the storm that followed the erstwhile National Front government's decision to implement the recommendation of the Mandal Commission reserving 27 percent jobs in Central Government and public sector undertakings for the Backward Classes appears to have settled, atleast on the surface. Perhaps we can now discuss in a calmer atmosphere some relevant and related questions.

Like many stratified societies, the stratification systems in our own country, resulted in indefensible social inequalities. Attempts made in the decades before freedom were not effective in setting right the grievous social wrongs.

In the quest for an egalitarian order we have resorted to numerous constitutional devices to alleviate the miserable conditions of the weaker sections. The existence of such measures in an unequal society would lead to injustice led to the adoption of special measures especially in the field of education and recruitment in government and quasi-government organisations.

It was believed that the benefits of the reservations policy were not being put to optimum use and there was room for a good deal of improvement.

The Constitution of India expressly provided for the reservation of posts in the country's public administration for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes while making only a general mention of similar promotional mea-

sures for what it called 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs). Job reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is a specific constitutional obligation on the part of the State but it is not so for the 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs). In other words there was no specific quota prescribed. This is what the V.P. Singh Government did when accepting the Mandal Commission's recommendation of a 27 per cent reservation for those who were left out. And, in the process, opened the Pandora's Box leading to widespread violence and their (the National Front's) loss of power.

While, earlier, these questions were being debated in an atmosphere of relative calm, the V.P. Singh government's decision to implement that part of the Mandal Report relating to quotas for OBCs shattered the peace. The simmering discontent among those outside the pale of 'reservations' already unhappy over the deprivation of jobs in government and public sector undertakings and admission in colleges and universities, exploded in an altogether unexpected manner.

More Than Mere Reservations

Unfortunately the fact that the Mandal Report was much more than prescribing quotas went largely unnoticed. In fact the Report itself observed:

"It is not at all our contention that by offering a few thousand jobs to Other Backward Classes' candidates we shall be able to make 52 per cent of the Indian population go forward."

In its seven volume Report submitted 10 years ago, the Second Backward Classes Commission or the Mandal Commission as it has come to be known, suggested several other measures to improve the conditions of the backward sections of Indian society. These include structural changes in the educational system; the launching of intensive and time-bound adult education programmes in areas with a high concentration of OBCs; progressive land reform legislation etc.

It is unfortunate that V.P. Singh over-emphasised just one of the Commission's recommendations viz. reservations to the exclusion of all others. To put the report in proper perspective, it would be useful to look at some of its more reasonable and non-controversial suggestions.

In this article an attempt is made to set right this imbalance and to enable readers to reach a more objective assessment of the Mandal Commission's work.

Educational Concessions

This is what the Commission had to say on 'educational concessions available to OBCs':

"Our educational system is elitist in character, results in a high degree of wastage and is least suited to the requirements of an over-populated and developing country. It is a legacy of British rule which was severely criticised during the independence struggle, and yet, it has not undergone any structural changes though

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it is least suited to the needs of backward classes. Yet they are forced to run the rat race with others as no options are available to them. Various state governments are giving a number of educational concessions to OBC students like exemption of tuition fees, free supply of books and clothes, mid-day meals, special hostel facilities, stipends, etc. The concessions are all right as far as they go. But they do not go far enough. What is required is perhaps not so much the provision of additional funds as the framing of integrated schemes for creating the proper environment and incentives for serious and purposeful studies".

Technical & Financial Assistance

The Mandal Report observes that the low income levels of the OBCs is also explained by their "negligible share in the industrial and business life of the country". A number of backward communities following hereditary occupations have suffered heavily as a result of industrialisation. Mechanised production has pauperised them and nothing much has been done to improve their lot. It therefore suggests the need to make available to such members of 'village vocational communities' suitable institutional finance and technical assistance to help them set up small scale industries of their own. Also, recommended are cooperative societies of these occupational groups.

Land Legislation

"Reservations in government employment and educational institutions, as also, all possible financial assistance will remain mere palliatives unless the problem of backwardness is tackled at its root", says the Report. A radical reform in the existing production relations is the most important single step that can be taken for the welfare and upliftment of the Backward Classes. In the agricultural sector, this kind of a change is overdue and is feasible. "State governments should, therefore, be directed to enact and implement progressive land legislation so as to effect basic structural changes in the existing production relations in the countryside".

Backward Classes Development Corporations

The Commission recommends the setting up of Backward Classes Development

Affirmative Action, Indian Style

Your servant has been accumulating a file on affirmative action in India, partly because the late news stories about it have been uniquely gripping, partly because he was curious to see how well Thomas Sowell's five "laws" were holding up on the subcontinent. Sowell is an economist now based at the Hoover Institution who has occasionally contributed to *Fortune*. His five laws — actually generalizations based on a study of affirmative action in many different countries — are specified in *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective*, a volume published earlier this year.

No. 1: Affirmative action always starts out being identified as temporary but invariably refuses to go away. This has plainly happened in India, whose most important form of affirmative action is preferential treatment in government employment. The system was adopted by India in the Forties and was supposed to have expired in the Fifties. In the Nineties it is still very much alive: Prime Minister V.P. Singh was recently trying to get half of all government jobs set aside for preferred groups.

No. 2: Within the preferred groups, those who are at least disadvantaged to begin with end up as the major beneficiaries. This has been resoundingly true in India, where preference is based on caste membership rather than race, and where there is enormous economic and educational variability within castes.

No. 3: Affirmative action fosters group polarization and conflict. This is happening with a vengeance in India, where caste competition is now being manifested in murders, creation of private caste armies, and a recent horrifying wave of public self-immolations by upper-caste Indian students who had come to despair of ever finding government jobs. In part because of the violent backlash against expanded preferences, Singh recently had to resign.

No. 4: Affirmative action invariably leads to fraudulent claims to membership in the preferred groups. From a recent *Washington Post* news story datelined Pauna, India: "Because of all the confusion (in identifying caste members by physical appearance), city counterfeiters do a brisk business in false lower-caste certificates that allow upper-caste applicants to take advantage of job or education quotas."

No. 5: Affirmative action generates an avalanche of literature about the purpose of preference, and hardly a word about its success or failure in reducing inequality. All we can say is, we cannot find the word in any of the reports on India that crossed our desk recently. Or in any of the reports on America that have been crossing it for decades.

Daniel Seligman, *Fortune*, March 12, 1990

Corporations at the Central and state levels to implement various socio-educational and economic measures for their advancement. It also suggests that areas of concentration of OBCs be reserved and separate committees set up with a view to giving better representation to certain very backward sections of OBCs. It also recommends that all development programmes "specially designed for Other Backward Classes should be financed by the central government in the same manner and to the same extent as done in the case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes".

A relevant question that needs to be examined is the nature of socio-economic changes that have been achieved in government policies and enactments since independence.

Political Motivation

In our system, the state is generally accepted as the most important agent of change. Time and again the government of the day has moved in the direction of... mainly to reap immediate political benefits from such 'radical' policy decisions. V.P. Singh's decision to implement the Mandal recommendation runs true to this generalization. In its election manifesto, the National Front had promised the implementation of the 'Mandal Report'. This was part of a long tiresome manifesto. But does anyone take manifestoes seriously? The announcement came as a complete surprise. It is widely accepted that V.P. Singh's initiative was mainly to checkmate Devi Lal's moves to mobilize the backward communities.

Not so very long ago the much publicised *Garibi Hatao* programme, the casually scribbled 'stray thoughts' of a powerful Prime Minister which later took the form of many 'progressive' and 'revolutionary' measures like the nationalisation of major banks and the abolition of privy purses have all been political exercises, intended to consolidate power than to ameliorate or resolve social or economic inequities. The more insecure a leader is, the greater the largesse offered. Apart from Indira Gandhi and now V.P. Singh are such 'luminaries' as MGR and NTR whose 'generosity' at the expense of the public exchequer bankrupted the economies of their states. These are mainly directed at potential vote banks. With such motivations can one seriously expect economic and social change?

Even societies that are affluent and have some commitment to improve the lot of the under-privileged have found unexpected obstacles in achieving their goals. Andre Beteille's observations in this regard are significant. He argues that certain problems persist "in the commitment of the Indian Constitution to two different principles that both relate to equality: namely the principle of equal opportunities and the principle of redress." According to Beteille, even under the best circumstances it is difficult "to evolve a coherent policy that will maintain a satisfactory balance between the two." "...The policy of massive numerical quotas", he says, "is a perverse application of the principle of redress. The principle is not confined only to job quotas in public employment. It can be understood in terms of many kinds of affirmative action like substantial investment on a preferential basis, to raise the levels of health, housing and elementary education among

public jobs are not the best means to reduce social and economic deprivations." But measures like the one announced by the V.P. Singh government are the undesirable fruits of populism where the decision-maker shows anxiety for quick electoral dividends rather than a desire to grapple with harsh realities.

Students' Violent Response

Another issue related to the Mandal Report which arouses concern and raises questions is the extreme reaction to the government's announcement to

implement the Report. The unexpected and gruesome reactions were not only unprecedented but the acts of violence were shocking. North India was rocked by violent student agitations. Students protested through road blockades, burning of public and private property and paralysing transport systems. These by themselves are not new so far as agitations in free India go. What really numbed the nation was the wave of self-immolations which rocked the entire northern belt. This kind of extreme response is rather surprising in what we have known of student protests in the past.

If one looks back and examines a variety of national and social movements in the last fifty years, one is impressed by the 'selfless and heroic role' played by the students. During the freedom struggle, responding to the call of the Mahatma to boycott British education, a large number of promising students came out of schools and colleges. Similar was the response of the younger generation to the 'Quit India' call of 1942. Many students actively participated in the struggle in a spirit of supreme sacrifice. During the Emergency, imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, a large number of students went underground and many courted arrest to save Indian democracy. Many of them committed themselves to active social work, to grass roots movements inspired by Jayaprakash Narayan. While responding to Gandhiji and JP, none of these students expected or demanded anything for themselves from the country or society. In fact they sacrificed everything with no thought for the morrow — they were the very stuff of which nations are made.

Loss of Ideals?

But in the recent agitations, what we witnessed was a total lack of sympathy for the cause of the upliftment of the weaker sections. Has it anything to do with a possible change in the priorities and orientations of the younger generation? Have they become more materialistic, and consumeristic? Are they shedding all sense of idealism and are they becoming crassly selfish? If they are guided by the principles of justice, why is it that we do not see them in the forefront of so many struggles against different forms of injustice in our society?

The extreme step of self-immolation indulged in by many young students resembles the drastic decision taken by hundreds of young brides in our country to end their lives unable to bear the torture, harassment and humiliation after marriage mainly centering around dowry. We wonder how psychologists would explain violent reaction in the one case and passive acceptance in the other? An explanation is necessary because in the wake of the Mandal Commission agitations incidents of self-immolation by students have not been isolated. Is it that our young men and women have lost the grit to face up to situations?

It is quite likely that the students have a genuine case. And yet, why did they abandon all rational ways of mobilizing public opinion? Why did they not resort to such methods as the publication of pamphlets, public meetings, peaceful demonstrations and lobbying legislators? The manner of the students' anti-Mandal agitation was not only self-destructive but indicated a total lack of faith in peaceful democratic protest. Self-immolation is an extreme measure, the ultimate weapon when all else fails. What is equally disturbing is the sad fact that not all of those who burned themselves were in their teens. Some were school children.

We need to take a hard look at the unrest that will develop at the lower social strata of society consequent to the burying of the Report, the rhetoric of 'Mandalism' that will be used by political parties, and the poor state in which the constituencies of the Report will continue to be in the years to come.

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On the Way

"We can understand reservations at the appointment stage when a person is about to join the force. But is it really necessary for promotions, and that too as many as four or five? Why can't they (those in the reserved category) compete on merit? Then we can have a better educated and more capable force," an officer pointed out.

The system of annual confidential reports (ACR) written by superiors becomes useless under the circumstances. While those from the reserved category advance despite adverse ACRs those from the general category have few chances, even if their ACR is perfect.

The Times of India, Dec. 29

The Ayodhya Non-Issue

— An Avoidable Confrontation

Louella Lobo Prabhu

When one examines the record of all the political parties, it is, strangely enough, the "Left" parties seemingly wedded to Marxist atheism, which come off best in their dealings with the minorities. Not difficult to explain as they think in terms of 'class' not 'community' wars.

Had it been in alive, the Swatantra Party would have looked at the issue with a liberal and secular outlook, allowing the local people of Ayodhya and religious heads of a forward-looking variety, to devise a non-political solution.

The present Prime Minister, Mr. Chandrashekhar, it must be said to his credit, has a good record in support of human rights and civil liberties and paid for his beliefs in Mrs. Indira Gandhi's prison during the so-called Emergency, unlike his predecessor, V.P. Singh who was a pillar of Mrs. Gandhi's establishment.

As of now (I write this on November 28), Mr. Chandrashekhar has asked Mr. Ashok Singhal the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader to provide archaeological evidence that a Ram temple did exist before the Masjid came up. Actually, a Committee of eminent Indian scholars, from a prestigious northern university, has confirmed that the literature abounding on Babar and his reign, makes no reference to the destruction of any temple over which a mosque was superimposed. But the fact remains that the solution lies beyond both archaeology and law. Meanwhile, the muslim minority in India appears terrorised and there are reports of muslim retaliation on Hindu temples in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

For what it is worth, it is necessary to examine the 'Hindu' and the 'Muslim' case.

Reality on the Ground

As possession is nine-tenths of the law, there is, at present, a Mosque on the premises and the law penalises

interference with places of religious worship. Title in law, traced back to original ownership would be a never-ending process, in respect of this, or any other shrine or artefact (for example, the Elgin marbles, saved by the British and preserved by them but which the Greeks now claim). If the Mosque is touched on the ground that it was once a Hindu temple, a Krishna's-*than* will be the next on the line — which will stretch *ad infinitum*. Finally, as the disputed structure is over a 100 years old, it qualifies as an archaeological monument which cannot be touched anyway. This is the purely legal aspect of the 'Muslim' case.

The Hindu Case

Though "Ram" belongs to the realm of religious mythology and ancient literature, he is no doubt an integral part of the Hindu psyche. This psyche was not traumatised by the presence of the Babri Masjid for a couple of hundred years till politics resurrected long forgotten feuds, and made it an issue. Legally, it may be said for the Hindus, that the Mosque ceased to be one, indeed by Islamic traditions, was never one, since a mosque cannot come up in places where 'idol' worship has taken

place. Regular *namaz* for the prescribed period has not taken place.

Thus both sides have strong cases. The question arises: who should give way to whom? The Hindu majority constituting 80% of India's population or the 10% Muslim minority. The Hindus can rightly claim that they have exercised far greater tolerance towards the minorities in secular India, than what the Hindus have received in theocratic Pakistan.

The majority community must ask itself whether there is need to be tyrannised by minority fears forever. The minority should ask itself whether it is unable to make a gesture towards a majority which has been, in the main, generous. Unfortunately the leadership on both sides is in extremist hands.

A Non-Issue

Since God is everywhere, an invisible presence not rooted to any one spot on earth, it is a pity that a non-issue has become the tinder box of communal confrontation. While it is odious to attribute motives, it does seem as though Mr. L.K. Advani hitherto a very low-key personality sought to combat Mr. V.P. Singh's casteist divide through resurgent Hindu chauvinism — false to the ethos of the Bhagavad Gita: "In whatsoever form you worship me, that form I shall approve."

It is not as if Mr. Advani's 'Rathayatra' does not seem as emotive. Even the crowds which cheered Mr. Advani's 'Rathayatra' are a fraction of the population.

Either the leaders on both sides should draw back from the brink of the precipice, or, if and when elections come, the people should show that the genius of Hinduism is its capacity to co-exist with other faiths — even assimilating them into its own fold!

MRS. LOUELLA LOBO PRABHU is Associate Editor of *Insight* and a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

If God Would Speak

Were Ram or Mohammed alive today,
under the name of religion, I believe
this is what they would say:

*I am the unmoved mover, but you man
To bring infinity within your ken,
Assign to me a name, a face, or place
Omnipresence confining to one space.
Cathedral, temple, mosque or wayside
shrine,
Of every faith, and every size are mine
Do not use me religious wars to start;
My favourite dwelling is the human
heart:
One broad enough to comprehend I can
Be worshipped best in the breathless
of man.*

(Louella Lobo Prabhu)



Will Democracy Survive in India ?

B.R. Ambedkar

In the Centenary Year of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, *Freedom First* joins others in saluting his memory and in recalling his invaluable contribution to the social and political evolution of the country. Single-handed, in the teeth of vehement opposition he fought for the rights of the downtrodden and wrenched for them concessions — in reality their right as human beings to live in dignity. Equally important was his Herculean labour in drafting the Constitution of free India. It remains a monument to his commitment to a liberal, humane society.

Freedom First believes that in these troubled days when anarchy seems to have been let loose in our land, we cannot do better than reiterate the words of Dr. Ambedkar at the close of the Constituent Assembly's deliberations on November 25, 1949. What is published here is only an extract. We hope to publish the other parts of his speech in future issues.

His words were important then, but never have they been more important than now. The new generation would do well to ponder over them, and the old recollect the anguish that was behind Dr. Ambedkar's pronouncements.

...On 26th January 1950, India will be an independent country. What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again? This is the first thought that comes to my mind. It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she lose it a second time? It is this thought which makes me most anxious for the future. What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people. In the invasion of Sind by Mahommed-Bin-Kasim, the military commanders of King Dahar accepted bribes from the agents of Mahommed-Bin-Kasim and refused to fight on the side of their King. It was Jaichand who invited Mahommed Ghoris to invade India and fight against Prithvi Raj and promised him the help of himself and the Solanki Kings. When Shivaji was fighting for the liberation of Hindus, the other Maratha noblemen and the Rajput kings were fighting the battle on the side of Moghul Emperors. When the British were trying to destroy the Sikh nation, Gurb Singh, their principal commander, sat silent and did not help to save the Sikh kingdom. In 1857, when a large part of India had declared a war of independence against the British, the Sikhs stood and watched the event as silent spectators.

Will History Repeat Itself?

Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety. This anxiety is deepened by the realization of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds we are going to have many political parties with diverse and

opposing political creeds. Will Indians place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country? I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost for ever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood.

India's Democratic Traditions

On the 26th of January 1950, India would be a democratic country in the sense that India from that day would have a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The same thought comes to my mind. What would happen to her democratic Constitution? Will she be able to maintain it or will she lose it again? This is the second thought that comes to my mind and makes me as anxious as the first.

It is not that India did not know what is Democracy. There was a time when India was studded with republics, and even where there were monarchies, they were not absolute. It is not that India did not know Parliaments or Parliamentary Procedure. A study of the Buddhist *Bikshu Sanghas* discloses that not only there were Parliaments — for the *Sanghas* were nothing but Parliaments — but the *Sanghas* knew and observed all the rules of parliamentary procedure known to modern times. They had rules regarding seating arrangements, rules regarding motions, resolutions, quorum, whip, counting of votes, voting by ballot, censure motion, regularization, *res judicata* etc.

Although these rules of parliamentary procedure were applied by Buddha to the meeting of the *Sanghas*, he must have borrowed them from the rules of the political assemblies functioning in the country in his time.

This democratic system India lost. Will she lose it a second time? I do not know. But it is quite possible in a country like India — where democracy from its long disuse must be regarded as something quite new — there is danger of democracy giving place to dictatorship. It is quite possible for this new born democracy to retain its form but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there is a landslide, the danger of the second possibility becoming actuality is much greater.

If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgment we must do is to hold fast the constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and *satyagraha*. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us.

The Danger of Hero Worship

The second thing we must do is to observe the caution which John Stuart

Mill has given to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy, namely, not "to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions". There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered life-long services to the country. But there are limits to gratefulness. As has been well said by the Irish patriot Daniel O'Connell, no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty. This caution is far more necessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country. For in India, *Bhakti* or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world. *Bhakti* in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, *Bhakti* or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.

The Content of Real Democracy

The third thing we must do is not to

be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in India. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in

India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty.

Social Equality

On the 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradiction? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political



Never say no to life
Raymond's

democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.

Fraternity

The second thing we are wanting in is recognition of the principle of fraternity. What does fraternity mean? Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians — of Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life. It is a difficult thing to achieve. How difficult it is can be realized from the story related by James Bryce in his volume on American Commonwealth about the United States of America.

The story is — I propose to recount it in the words of Bryce himself — that—

Some years ago the American Protestant Episcopal Church was occupied at its triennial Convention in revising its liturgy. It was thought desirable to introduce among the short sentence prayers a prayer for the whole people, and an eminent New England divine proposed the words 'O Lord, bless our nation'. Accepted one afternoon, on the spur of the moment, the sentence was brought up next day for reconsideration, when so many objections were raised by the laity to the word 'nation' as importing too definite a recognition of national unity, that it was dropped and instead there were adopted the words 'O Lord, bless these United States'.

Is India a 'Nation'?

There was so little solidarity in the U.S.A. at the time when this incident occurred that the people of America did not think that they were a nation. If the people of the United States could not

think of themselves as a nation, how difficult it is for Indians to think that they are a nation. I remember the days when politically minded Indians resented the expression "the people of India". They preferred the expression "the Indian nation." I am of opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realize that we are not as yet a nation in the social and psychological sense of the word, the better for us. For then only we shall realize the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think of ways and means of realizing the goal. The

realization of this goal is going to be very difficult — far more difficult than it has been in the United States. The United States has no caste problem. In India there are castes. These castes are anti-national : in the first place because they bring about separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. For fraternity can be a fact only when there is a nation. Without fraternity, equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of paint.

Equality and Fraternity — The Cornerstone

These are my reflections about the tasks that lie ahead of us. They may not be very pleasant to some. But there can be no gainsaying that political power in this country has too long been the monopoly of a few and the many are not only beasts of burden, but also beasts of prey. This monopoly has not merely deprived them of their chance of betterment, it has sapped them of what may be called the significance of life. These down-trodden classes are tired of being governed. They are impatient to govern themselves. This urge of self-realization in the down-trodden classes must not be allowed to devolve into a class struggle or class war. It would lead to a division of the house. That would indeed be a day of disaster. For, as has been well said by Abraham Lincoln, a house divided against itself cannot stand very long. Therefore the sooner room is made for the realization of their aspiration, the better for the few, the better for the country, the better for the maintenance of its independence and the better for the continuance of its democratic structure. This

done by the establishment of equality and fraternity in all spheres of life. That is why I have laid so much stress on them.

I do not wish to weary the House any further. Independence is no doubt a matter of joy. But let us not forget that this independence has thrown on us great responsibilities. By independence, we have lost the excuse of blaming the British for anything going wrong. If hereafter things go wrong, we will have nobody to blame except ourselves. There is great danger of things going wrong. Times are fast changing. People

including our own are being moved by new ideologies. They are getting tired of Government by the people. They are prepared to have Government for the people and are indifferent whether it is Government of the people and by the people. If we wish to preserve the Constitution in which we have sought to enshrine the principle of Government of the people, for the people and by the people, let us resolve not to be tardy in the recognition of the evils that lie across our path and which induce people to prefer Government for the people to Government by the people, nor to be weak in our initiative to remove them. That is the only way to serve the country. I know of no better.

Crumbling Values in Education

In the July-September issue, under the caption "The Fallout of a Crumbling Educational Structure", various authors have given their views on the falling standard of values in our educational system, and how to remedy this, ending with Will Durant's 'Advice to Youth'. While there can be no doubt on the merits of what has been stated in these articles, I wish to add a slightly different connotation to this.

In my days, I don't remember seeing any book or article of Dos and Don'ts on how to behave, as our character and values were based more on example, than on advice. At home, we followed the examples set by our parents, at school by our teachers, at college by our professors, and at work by our superiors. About four years ago, while giving a talk on business ethics and value systems at a management institute, one of my students asked me if he could ask a very pertinent question.

This was the period when the Bombay and Pune universities were rocked by what was then known as the 'marks scandal', in which, even the Chief Minister and the Governor were involved. The question posed by the student was: "Sir, what is the use of your telling us to

cheats, my teacher cheats, my professor cheats, my registrar cheats, my vice-chancellor cheats, my chief minister cheats, and even my Governor cheats."

The point I am trying to make is that, one cannot entirely blame the students for what is happening in their educational institutions, as unlike what was in my days, they have no examples to follow. I can do no better, than to quote a well-known saying of the army: 'There are no good or bad soldiers, there are only good or bad officers.'

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Kanthapura — Fifty Years Later

Even Moorthy, the village Gandhi cannot enter the pariah quarter without inner struggle and revulsion. He sips, but once, from the cup of milk placed before him as before a God, and expiates for this sacrilege by taking a bath, changing his clothes, and sipping Ganges water.

Raja Rao's KANTHAPURA was first published in 1938, about half a century ago and has been recognised as a landmark in Indian English literature. The historical political background of the novel is the Indian nationalist movement, Salt *Satyagraha* and the memorable Dandi March of Gandhi and his followers in March 1930. It not only conveys the generous enthusiasm that moved the nation in that eventful year but also provides an intimate and revealing portrait of Indian life, especially in the countryside. Years have not reduced the interest or relevance of the novel. It is true that our villages have changed since then but the age-old ethos of village life continues essentially unchanged.

Kanthapura's 'Gandhi'

It is only on the surface that KANTHAPURA is a political novel. The nationalist movement is of the country but it is reflected in the village with its local tones, within the framework of its tradition, culture and popular religion. The message of Gandhi was brought to the village by Moorthy who, like so many young men of the time, left the city college and returned to his village home after making a bonfire of his foreign clothes and foreign books. Though he had never met Gandhi, he had visions of the Mahatma which totally transformed him. Range Gowda, the redoubtable village *patil*, accepts him as 'Our Gandhi' and the village folk concur overwhelmingly. To the women of the village he is the 'small Mountain' while Gandhi is the 'Big Mountain'. Under his leadership the men and women of the village become Congress volunteers and take to ritual spinning.

The notorious Skeffington Estate is the first scene of action — the picketing of liquor shops. The violence which marred this essentially peaceful action



compelled Moorthy to undertake, like Gandhi, a three-day fast in the temple precincts for self-purification, prayer and meditation. He experienced during this fast several visions, of which the most notable was that of the Mahatma. His being became suffused with love for all — even for Bade Khan, the policeman who had so brutally assaulted him.

On the third day of the fast love swelled up in him like a flood and he felt 'blanketed with the pariah and the cur'. As the fast concluded, Moorthy felt 'lighter in limb and lighter in soul' and proceeded to preach the 'Don't touch-the-Government-campaign' — picketing of liquor shops and non-payment of taxes. He was joined by the men and women of the village with increased enthusiasm. The Government answered with ruthless force and served peremptory notices of revenue dues on the villagers. They, however, remained unmoved by the notices and threats of the Government. Even the Skeffington Estate workers now began joining the movement if only to escape from the planter's tyranny. The *satyagrahis* were

mercilessly beaten and dispersed and Moorthy was sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Non-Cooperation Movement

As a true follower of Gandhi he refused to accept the services of a lawyer for his defence. But suddenly the Mahatma called off the Non-Cooperation movement following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on 5th March, 1931 and all *satyagrahis* were freed from prison on the even of the second Round Table Conference. The erstwhile *satyagrahis* were now to conduct themselves as dutiful citizens and cooperate with the government. Gandhi was to attend the conference to help in solving the national problem. This sudden turn of events was disappointing to many. Moorthy, too, became disillusioned and sceptical about the outcome of the conference — 'the red men know how to deceive the saint and he would allow himself to be cheated.' It also became clear that political freedom alone was not enough for the country. "...as long as there will be iron gates and barbed wires round the Skeffington Coffee Estate, the city cars that roll up the Bebbur Mound, and the gas lights and the coolie cars, there will always be pariah and poverty."

The disillusioned Moorthy turned to Nehru, the Bharata to the Mahatma, an 'equal-distributionist' and therefore Moorthy becomes Nehru's followers.

Not all of Moorthy's followers were of one mind about *satyagraha*, nor were all of Gandhi's followers, for that matter. It was only the leader's personality that held them all together. The pariah group would prefer *satyagraha* without jail — how else would their land be cultivated? Gandhi's promise of *Rama Rajya* was 'chimerical in the present *Kali Yuga*'. Range Gowda, too, is an eminently practical Gandhian. He has

both a golden tongue and a leather tongue and would much prefer *satyagraha sans ahimsa!* The orthodox sections feared that Gandhism would lead to a veritable deluge of pollution; some of them, however, hoped for an early and unpolluted death. After me, the deluge, they would say. As women were drawn into the non-cooperation movement, domestic cooperation and harmony suffered and men frequently lost their temper and grew violent with their partners!

But the essence of the matter is expressed by the simple villagers of Kanthapura: "No, sister, no, nothing can ever be the same again. You will say we have lost this, you will say we have lost that. Kenchamma, forgive us, but there is something that has entered our hearts, an abundance like the Himavathy on Gauri's night."

Social Relationships

KANTHAPURA is a living picture of village life and society in the early decades of this century with an amazing wealth of minute detail. To those who are unfamiliar with village life and idiom the very names of characters would sound strange and distant. Names such as Range Gowda, Chenna, Surappa, etc., are specifically local. Tagging on epithets to proper names is a familiar village habit. 'Pock-marked Sidda', for instance, makes Sidda a more intimate figure. Some expressions are literal translations from Kannada and make the narrative real and picturesque but to a non-Kannada reader they would be incomprehensible and totally un-english.

Kanthapura is a typical small village with four and twenty houses and with a few Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, potters, weavers and *sudras*. The Brahmin quarters are central, prominent. So are some of the well to do from other communities. The potters quarter consisting of only five houses was proof of the decline of traditional industry. The Mangalore tiles had displaced the cruder ones of the village potters and most of them had turned to agriculture or to city labour. Money economy was still far off. Even to one owning seven acres of wet land twelve acres of dry land a rupee was quite a fortune, a twenty-fifth of one's revenue. The pariah quarter of the village was its black spot. The pariahs bore their lot without bitterness or com-

plaint. It is revealing that they have to take the oath of *satyagraha* and spinning on the steps of the temple courtyard while the rest do so before the deity in the temple. Range Gowda, the village fuehrer, shouts to them: "Here in the temple or there in the courtyard, it is the same god you vow before, so go along."

Even Moorthy, the village Gandhi cannot enter the pariah quarter without inner struggle and revulsion. He sips, but once, from the cup of milk placed before him as before a God, and expiates for this sacrilege by taking a bath, changing his clothes, and sipping Ganges water. He cannot even enter his house through the front door or eat in the dining hall. As the narrator puts it, "After all a brahmin is a brahmin."

Religion and Orthodoxy

To the men and women of Kanthapura religion is their very life and Kenchamma is their ever watchful protective deity. It is by her grace that good harvests are reaped and cholera and small pox are cured. Even *satyagraha* could not be launched without her blessing. The women believed that her tender love would turn the policeman's *lathis* into butter and silken thread. The *Harikatha* or religious discourse was a regular feature of village life and attracted everyone. Jayaramachar could deftly turn the discourse into a veiled but powerful instrument of anti-British propaganda. Ramakrishnayya's expositions of *Vedanta* were for the more philosophically minded. The faith of the people was simple and innocent. A shooting star meant the departure of a noble soul. The winking of the right eye assured Chennayya of a good harvest. The clucking of a lizard must be answered by muttering 'Krishna, Krishna.' Dasappa died of snake bite although he had an eagle mark on his hand. He had wilfully provoked Father Naga days back but the cobra's memory was sharp and the offender was unerringly spotted and bitten. Even barber Ramachandra's chants proved powerless against its venom.

Kanthapura's Decline

Bhatta is a striking character in the novel. He is the rock of conservatism and orthodoxy, a combination of brahmin piety and Jewish calculation. He can with equal skill get things done in the Sub-Registrar's office and settle busi-

ness with the city lawyer. He is thorough in his knowledge of the tips to be paid to the clerks, peons and door-keepers in the Sub-Registrar's office. He also knows the status and fee of every city lawyer. He helps the needy villager with money on mortgage of land and personally attends to the completion of the transaction in the Government offices, collecting an extra charge for his services. Ultimately the land becomes Bhatta's property as the loan is never returned. It is thus that he has become the biggest landlord in the village. Even then, he was better than Rama Chetty and Subba Chetty who were the real ruin of the village. His only grievance against Moorthy was his fraternisation with the untouchables. He opposed Moorthy with the powerful support of Swamiji, the religious head but failed as was expected. Bhatta had Moorthy excommunicated by the Swamiji and Moorthy's mother died broken hearted. To her the excommunication was the very extinction of the family. Her death symbolizes the end of the old order of family values. Ultimately he sold away all his property to the Bombay men and left for holy Banaras. He had good prospects there, too. "In Kashi, for every hymn and hiccup you could get a rupee."

In the end Kanthapura is totally changed — "there's neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura." It has now passed into the hands of the Bombay financiers. The village characters are all dispersed and have shifted towards town and city. Patil Range Gowda, the symbol of village power and dignity, unearths stealthily the jewels which he had hidden underground during the recent disturbed times, drinks three handfuls of Himavathy river and bids farewell to the dear village, his heart breaking like a drum. The reader too would share his sadness, especially if he has grown in a village, breathed its simplicity and innocence and lived through its occasional excitements.

PROF. G.N. SARMA, Professor of Political Science (Retd), Marathwada University, Aurangabad.

My idea of an agreeable person is a person who agrees with me.

— George Bernard Shaw

*I am asking the educated man
or woman who reads this: Do
you love the common folk of
our land, the men and women
who swarm in town and
village? Do you love the
languages they speak? Do you
love their ways and manners?
Do you love the religion they
believe in, not looking upon it
as ignorance but as better
wisdom than your own? All
this love sums up to patriotism.*

Rajaji



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Dharma in Public Life

C. Subramaniam

The 1990 Rajaji Birthday Lecture under the auspices of The Rajaji Foundation was delivered by His Excellency C. Subramaniam, Governor of Maharashtra on December 7. The following is the text of the lecture.

As I stand before you to pay homage to the memory of my revered Guru, Rajaji, different facets of his multi-faceted and versatile genius flash in bold relief through the mirror of memory, transporting me to a bygone presence of saintly affection and reassuring protection, of gentle tutelage and steadfast adherence to principles, of courage of conviction and scintillating brilliance, of incomparable eloquence and penetrating insight, of erudite scholarship and far-seeing vision.

Gandhiji's 'Conscience-keeper'

Acknowledged by Gandhiji as his "conscience keeper", Rajaji was ranked next only to the Father of the Nation in political sagacity and maturity. An ardent patriot, a great thinker, able administrator, skilled debator, prolific writer, astute parliamentarian, social reformer, statesman of international acclaim and a man of destiny who believed in the greatness of God and the majesty of His Moral Law. Possessing rare aplomb and strong convictions, he never bothered about the applause of the multitude, and when the national interest demanded, did not hesitate to swim against popular currents. All his life he fought increasingly for the enthronement of moral and ethical values in public life. His motto was "When one sees a great evil, one must fight it. Otherwise, there is no purpose in life." No price was too heavy, nor any sacrifice too great for him, when it came to a question of principles.

At the age of forty, when full of promise for worldly advancement, he did not hesitate to give up his flourishing law practice and withdraw his children from school to join Gandhiji in the freedom struggle. So also after independence, to his great sorrow, when he saw "landslides of moral standards like mountains toppling down during earthquakes" and callousness and greed replace all sensibility and restraint — all ideas of *Swadharma*, he did not hesitate to break away from valued friendships and time-honoured camaraderie causing distress and adverse comments. His undying love for the country and its people helped him undergo such great sacrifices. In his own words:

"But should we not defend our freedom, should we not defend democracy, should we not defend *Dharma*?...When the morality of the nation and its elite is being undermined and threatened with destruction, there is no question of any alternative or surrender to superior force. We must fight and protect the soul of the nation from being overwhelmed and destroyed. It is the duty of each citizen to resist it to the utmost without waiting for others or counting the cost. For if the nation's morality is lost, there will be nothing thereafter to save."

Gandhiji and Rajaji had identical beliefs in fundamental matters. Both had deep and abiding faith in God, (the term standing for the finest conception of power working for universal good) and in *Dharma*, also in the widest sense. Gandhiji used to say, "He who fights for a sense of *Dharma* never desponds...The man who purifies himself and gives up all for the sake of others will enjoy greater power than even an emperor". The life, sacrifice and battles of Rajaji exemplified Gandhiji's words in full measure.

The Central Idea in Indian Culture

India is the motherland of the Spirit. Beginning from the Vedic Age, it has had a continuous life, developing the power of the Spirit. Indian culture based on this is the only hope for mankind. Before the dawn of history, this culture had developed the Central Idea of *Dharma*. It underscored an unalterable faith in human endeavour, self restraint (*samyama*) and self-discipline (*tapas*). Emphasis was laid on individual experience and *becoming* rather than on belief and the scriptural word. Fulfilment was attained only when a man shed his limitations and became divine in this life. Running through a diversity of religious beliefs and social injunctions was the emphasis on the observance of the great vows — "*mahauratas*" — of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence and non-possession as the essential steps in man's advance towards the life of the Spirit.

Human behaviour and outlook had therefore to be harmonised and regulated by the ethical and spiritual values calculated to lead to his goal. The Central Idea in Indian culture, coming to us through the ages, regulates our characteristic way of life; it is sustained by the Message, of which the Gita is the great scripture; expounding the truth contained in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*; the great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, elaborate expositions thereon; and the lives and teachings of Dayanand, Ramakrishna, Gandhiji, Aurobindo, Rajaji and Vinoba Bhave are but modern incarnations of the Message. To read, to understand and to live up to the Message is to follow the path of the Spirit. India's culture is eternal in the sense that its Central Idea has persisted through time. But it is ever fresh; the values shaped by the Idea can be revitalised age after age to suit the needs of changing times.

The *Rig Veda* gives the most ancient utterance which inspired Indian culture and religion down the centuries: "Truth is one, sages call it by various names." Lord Krishna proclaimed in Gita this oneness: "Through whatever paths men come unto me, I receive them through those very paths; all paths, O Arjuna, lead unto me only".

The Unifying Force of 'Dharma'

Man cannot advance on the long road of his spiritual growth without disciplining his urges for organic satisfaction. He had to bring a certain measure of stabilisation in his inner life through such discipline that is incorporated in the concept of *Dharma*, or ethical sense, which is inseparable from any

ordered human society. Bereft of them, man becomes reduced to a beast, says Indian wisdom: *dharmena hinah pasubhih samanah*. *Dharma* as the principle of integration of man with man in society, does not mean religion in the sense of creed, doctrine, or ritual, nor any scheme of other-worldly salvation. A mere accumulation of bricks does not constitute a building. It needs cement to unite brick with brick to make for its integrated structure. Similarly, a mere aggregation of men does not constitute society. *Dharma* is the value that unites man to man to form the integrated organisation which is society. *Dharma* stresses the idea of a mutuality and inter-dependence of man in society. Man needs the context of other human beings for his very humanization.

Indian philosophy refers to *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* as the *trivarga*, the inseparable group of three, and treats them as Swami Ranganathananda put it "as the warp and woof of ordered human society" and presents *moksha*, the absolute freedom of the spirit, as the fourth *purusartha*, as an optional trans-social pursuit for those who desire to realise one's true nature. For all the rest, the *moksha* experience comes within the limitations of the social context, as *Dharma*. It is *Dharma* which enables a human being to express himself in acts of service and makes him *incapable* of exploiting other human beings.

The philosophy which enables a person to rise above his individuality and sustain him in the field of public activity is called *Yoga* by the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Lord Krishna exhorted Arjuna to be a *Yogi* to ensure the happiness and welfare of millions of people. What is the nature of *Yoga*? The *Gita* says "*Yogah karmasu kausalam*" — "*Yoga is efficiency in actions*". In *Chhandogya Upanishad*, efficiency is defined in a beautiful passage:

"Whatsoever is done with knowledge, with conviction, and with deep thinking, that alone becomes supremely efficient."

Three Components of Efficiency

The first component of efficiency is *vidya* i.e. knowledge of things or the technical know-how of a particular subject. Then comes *sraddha* i.e. faith in oneself and in the cause for which one is working. Last comes *Upanishad*, i.e. deep thinking about a subject so that you can get the best out of it. *Vidya*, *Sraddha*, and *Upanishad* — these three things are necessary to increase efficiency in any particular field.

Sraddha is very important. In India, this want of *Sraddha*, or the loss of seriousness has given rise to a cynical attitude in public life. At everything of value, we scoff. Such cynicism is worse than death.

Finally, one must cultivate *Upanishad* or thoughtfulness. Man progressed through thinking; and all cultures are products of thought. All modern cultures are the products of profound scientific, social and political thinking. Therefore less talk, more thought and more work should be the motto of all in public life. Swami Vivekananda also called for less talk and more work which alone can elevate the nation. By talking less, we stimulate thinking on the one hand, and action on the other. Unfortunately what we observe these days in public life, is exactly the opposite.

If we want to energize our administration and give the people what is their due by way of economic betterment, education, social development, good culture, and the like, we have to change ourselves. We must become the instruments of the nation and not mere instruments of self-will or self-purpose. This public spirit is generally lacking in our society. Along with it, the spirit of service must also be developed. Millions of people have been living in darkness and under oppression, social as well as political, for centuries together. Today, for the first time, we have established a state with the avowed intention of bringing happiness and cheer to millions of our people. This is embodied in our Constitution and it is the responsibility of the nation to fulfil it.

The Message of The Gita

In the words of Swami Ranganathananda: "*Yoga transforms a man into a new type of human being, who possesses a heroic attitude, and not the petty attitude of mere profit and loss. When I have the heroic attitude, I shall work for the good of all. This is the real spiritual growth of a person. The sooner our people understand that religion does not mean just a few rituals and chantings or running after magic and miracles, the better it will be. Religion means spiritual growth and the building up of character, which makes a man go beyond his organic limitations. This is the Yoga which Sri Krishna teaches in the Bhagavad-Gita.*"

Work efficiency and personality-efficiency — these two must grow side by side. These two together constitute the *Yoga* of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. All men in public life should become true *Yogis* by being productive units of society. This human growth in quality is very important today. This comes from true education and not from institutional education. You educate yourself and raise yourself, as Sri Krishna says in the sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

"You raise yourself by yourself, don't let yourself down; for, you alone are your own friend, and you alone are your own enemy."



This is the call of Lord Krishna in the *Gita*. "Arise and Awake" should be our *mantra* for positive public action.

In the words of Gandhiji, "The *Gita* provides you with a code of conduct. Whenever you are in doubt, trouble, depression or despair you will turn to the code and the compendium." For those of us who are not scholarly enough to interpret and understand the *Gita*, Mahatmaji's life stands before us as a shining guide and example. Hence to comprehend the import of *Dharma* in public life, one has to turn to Gandhiji's life and teachings.

Leadership by Example

In politics, leadership is an important factor not only at the top level but leadership at various levels. Particularly those who occupy high positions in politics have to discharge a grave responsibility by being examples for others to follow. Why was Mahatmaji able to inspire millions of his countrymen and also earn the respect of the rest of the world? It was mainly because of his purity of character and not just preaching to others, but practising what he preached. If there is any weakness in the character of the leadership, it gets reflected in the followers and large masses of the people are influenced by the norms set by the leaders.

Today we find ourselves in a very unhappy position in the country with a good deal of indiscipline in every walk of life including educational institutions. What is the main reason for this? It is because of the bad example set up by the elected leaders in parliament and state legislatures. The indiscipline that marks the proceedings of parliament and legislatures are matters of great concern. Not only pandemonium is created obstructing the proceedings of the legislatures but also acts of violence among the members inside the legislatures are becoming common and an almost every day occurrence. Nobody is prepared to observe the rules of the game. Then how can we expect the masses of the people to observe discipline and respect the laws and regulations.

It is time that legislators come to recognise and live up to their responsibilities as community leaders in a free democratic society. They have to be a source of inspiration to others. So long as they do not observe discipline in the House they cannot expect discipline among the students and workers. As Lord Krishna says in the *Gita* :

"Whichever may be the way of life that a superior man adopts, that very one is followed by other people too. What he might make his guiding principle, the world too behaves according to the same."

Why So Much Corruption?

There is an atmosphere of corruption pervading the whole country today. Corruption is becoming a way of life. This is largely due to the bad example set by the leaders. Even when there is suspicion of corruption at the top level then the whole system gets corrupted. That is why the saying, "Caesar's wife should be above suspicion" — it is for setting an example for other women. In the profession of politics, leaders have a grave responsibility in setting an ideal and example for others to follow — otherwise the whole political system is bound to get polluted affecting all sectors of national activity. Gandhiji had insisted that the "voluntary service of others demands the best of which one is capable and must take precedence over service of self". Service before self is a motto applicable to all public workers whether in the political or social fields. But today the politicians have gone down in the public estimate because they are considered to be more as self-seeking individuals than as public spirited workers. During the freedom struggle days there was a temper of sacrifice, service and self-discipline among the

politicians but now these have been replaced by power, profit and pleasure as the motivating force. In revitalising the political forces in the country this needs foremost attention.

Rajaji viewed political corruption not merely as the bringing of voters — that also takes place — but the corruption in kind which consists of ministers and members of the ruling party offering special political services to the constituencies they are moving in. This is not a general offer of service, social service and so on which may be incorporated in the electoral manifesto of parties, but specific appeals to particular constituencies thus : 'If you give us votes, we shall dig a well for you, erect a school for you or get a road paved to your village.' It is this kind of general corruption in our political life that makes possible the corruption of officials.

Emphasising the need to limit the jurisdiction of ministers in regard to administration in the parliamentary system of government, Rajaji said that ministers should confine themselves to formulation of policies, and the whole business of administration, the whole business of implementing these policies be left to the permanent civil service. If ministers go on interfering with the day-to-day administration, the officials lose all interest in administration. Both the officials and ministers get more and more opportunities for practising corruption. Giving an example Rajaji said : "There are Ministers of Housing who take upon themselves the business of allotting houses and those who want houses have to apply to the Minister and dance attendance in the ante-rooms of Ministers in order to get an allotment, while they have an accommodation officer who is charged with the duty of allotting houses. When there is this confusion between the jurisdiction of Ministers and officials, there is bound to be interference, there is bound to be succumbing to pressure. There is bound to be succumbing to temptation."

In his opinion, officials working under a government formed by political parties have not learned to exercise the independence which their opposite numbers in Britain do. In India, members of the permanent service in charge of day-to-day administration, have found it necessary, in their interests, to ascertain the wishes of the ministers even in matters of discretion vested in the administrative machinery. From this naturally follows complaints of political corruption. Rajaji pleaded for an independent Board to be in supreme charge of the licence-permit-quota administration to reduce this political corruption.

Politicians require integrity of character more than any other section of the community. In view of the all pervading influence of politics in the present day life of the people, lack of character amongst the politicians pollutes all other activities. Gandhiji set very high standards in dealing with public funds. He was meticulous in keeping proper accounts for every rupee collected and spent. The most regrettable feature in political life today is the way in which political funds are collected and spent. In the name of election funds, huge sums are collected especially by those in power for which they are not accountable to anybody, even to the political party to which they belong. This has been the main source of corruption which is corroding the entire nation. Unless acceptable codes of conduct are evolved in regard to the collection of party funds and maintenance of correct accounts for these funds it will be impossible to drive out corruption. Since the main source of power namely politics get corrupted, it pollutes the entire moral fabric of the nation.

The Importance of Public Morality

As Gandhiji confessed, "I felt compelled to come into the political field because I found I could not do even social work without touching politics. I feel that political work must be looked upon in terms of social and moral progress. In a

democracy no fact of life is untouched by politics." Politics is a profession to serve the people through the exercise of political power. Unless this power is exercised with efficiency and impartiality, society is bound to suffer. Particularly those who occupy positions of power should have the ability to function effectively in the discharge of their functions.

Writing in *Young India* as early as 1930, Gandhiji expounded the meaning of *Swaraj*. "My *Swaraj* is to keep intact the genius of our civilization ... The very essence of our civilization is that we give paramount place to morality in all our affairs, public or private." Gandhiji conducted the entire freedom movement on these principles of *Dharma*, *Satya* and *Ahimsa*. He held that all religions are different roads converging on the same. Communal disharmony was his creed.

Religious tolerance was always the mast-head of our ancient civilisation from Emperor Asoka to the later kings. Swami Vivekananda thrilled the whole world by declaring at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, "I am proud to belong to a religion which taught the world both toleration and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true." It is indeed unfortunate that of late some elements have cast aside these fundamental tenets of our heritage and whipped up communal feelings, violence and disputes in the name of religion and thereby setting the clock back considerably. The viruses of casteism, fundamentalism and regionalism are gnawing at the roots of our society. It is a pity that misguided elements in our society are repudiating the very precepts of our civilisation and creating a wedge in our unity in diversity. It is not too late to remedy the situation by retracing the steps and vindicate the sacrifices of the leaders of the freedom movement and our founding fathers.

Rajaji's Dream

The only way to bring orderly political progress is to have a Gandhian code of conduct of politicians and political parties firmly rooted in our concept of *Dharma*. If one is asked as to what four decades of self government have taught us, one must admit ruefully in the words of T.S. Eliot, "We had the experience, but missed the meaning."

The person who did not miss the meaning was Rajaji who foresaw the effect of freedom when he made the following entry in his prison diary as early as January 24, 1922.

"Elections and their corruptions, injustice and the power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration, will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration.

The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination.

Hope lies only in universal education by which right conduct, fear of God and love will be developed among the citizens from childhood.

It is only if we succeed in this that *Swaraj* will mean happiness. Otherwise it will mean the grinding injustices and tyranny of wealth. What a beautiful world it would be, if everybody were just and God-fearing and realized the happiness of loving others! Yet there is more practical hope for the ultimate consummation of this ideal in India than elsewhere."

The dream of Rajaji is yet to be fulfilled. It is the duty of every one in public life to strive his utmost to redeem this hope.

India was always endowed with the gift of producing great leaders in its hour of need — leaders who possessed the ability to galvanise millions to great heights. Gandhiji and Rajaji were two such noble leaders who, through their sacrifices brought about freedom and gave their very best to sustain it. In present day politics *Dharma* stands at the crossroads, waiting for a leader who will re-enthroned it and inculcate its spirit among all public men. Will our nation flower again on the basis of our ancient *Dharma*, adapted to the changing conditions of the present day world? Let politics become a noble profession to achieve noble ends to benefit society.

Religion and Nation-Building

Rajaji

Every one of the great religions of the world was intended by the revered founders and teachers thereof to be for all humanity and not only for the people of the limited part of the world where it arose. Great religions were not invented as slogans or devices for national upheaval, though they may be subsequently used in that manner. They were intended for all the peoples of the world irrespective of political or other borders. Our *Praanaayaama mantra* and our *Gayatri mantra* are universal in their content, encompassing the whole of life on earth and above the earth, and in the visible universe. There is not a single mantra of importance in Hindu scripture which narrows the outlook to within the national borders.

Nationalism may become a necessity under certain conditions but Religion should be a check on such nationalism,

and not distorted for use as an augmentative force.

A religion may be intended by its prophets for the whole of humanity and they may therefore want it to spread all over the world, but on the wrong basis that it contains the whole truth and that it alone contains the truth. This is the outlook of Christianity and Islam as they were developed by their adherents. The Hindu seers, unlike the saints of other lands, saw that many roads may lead to God and that there was no contradiction in the differing ways chalked out by various sages and seers. Hinduism from the earliest times respected all the great religions of the world, as they came one after another in contact with the people of India from abroad, or as they arose out of the spiritual wisdom and energy of the people of India themselves. The Hindus therefore were taught not only tolerance,

but something more positive — respect and veneration for other religions and saints, prophets and teachers of other religions. Hindu rulers gave full freedom and protection to such people who came to India with their own ways of life and worship and desired to live and worship as they had been taught to do.

The question, what place Religion occupies in the building up of India, can easily be misunderstood. If the question is with reference to the building up of India as a national State, aggressively poised against neighbours or others, or defensively poised against external onslaught, then I would say Religion has no place except the negative one — necessary although negative — of acting as a check on excessive nationalism to the detriment of universal brotherhood and harmony.

An excerpt from *Swarajya*, Nov. 14, 1964

Will South Africa Go the 'African Way' ?

Padma Srinivasan



Nelson Mandela

In South Africa the unbelievable has happened at last. The end of apartheid is at hand.

But this task of dismantling apartheid is far from easy, because apartheid has not been just a *part* of the political system, but the *whole* of it. It is more than just a matter of repealing a body of iniquitous laws. Apartheid has permeated the very texture of South African life, so that, it seems to be synonymous with the term 'South Africa' itself. So, what can the word 'change' mean in such a situation? What would be its extent? And one wonders at what point of time would you say: 'The old polity is now dead!' In other words, will the end of South Africa be recognised by the coming of black majority rule, however bourgeois, or by the establishment of an Azanian Republic of some sort, or by the ending of White rule alongwith its essentially capitalist economy.

Here is a problem of definition — a definition of the new State of Azania. Everybody agrees that white racism must go and that there should be racial liberation. But is *racial* liberation alone enough? In the general preoccupation with racial liberation, one should not forget that there must be democracy —

real democracy with real power-sharing — for all who live in South Africa's deeply divided society.

The Question of Sharing Power

And this is where the challenge lies — in the question of *sharing power*. Now that the governmental structure is about to be changed there seems to be a great reluctance on the part of the African National Congress (ANC) to share power with black minority groups like the Zulus. In recent months Nelson Mandela has been globe-trotting on an image-building spree, in which he has capitalised on the plain fact of having been in prison for the best part of three decades. It seems odd that one can be lionized for doing nothing. He has won an aura of martyrdom for himself so that he can ride the election wave to majority, ANC rule. The aura could help him, even as it helped Kenyatta to use his towering image to clamp his dictatorship upon a unitary, single-party state in which the white capitalists and landowners are as comfortable as ever.

In Kenya and in Zimbabwe the white minorities have been comfortably accommodated. The economic and political have-nots among the poor blacks will continue, as ever, to eke out a miserable existence, *sans* hope and *sans* rights. Their only sense of satisfaction would derive, as in the neighbouring African states, from the fact that their oppressors are black and not white. The new state can appear very prestigious and attractive with its majoritarian elections and multi-racial political institutions. There can be complete liberation in visible public life from racism, but without any economic justice at all for the black have-nots and without any political justice at all (in the sense of power-sharing) for black minorities.

Now all this is not mere pessimism based on facile conclusions drawn from the experience of other African states. The gloomy possibilities outlined above have sound bases. South African society is so deeply divided that only a federal political structure will ensure justice for



Gatsha Buthelezi

all groups; in other words the state must not be unitary and monolithic. The system of representation must be proportional and not majoritarian. Again, there must be plurality of parties rather than the African favourite — the Single Party. The stock joke in the new states of Africa has been 'one-man-one-vote-once.' And, let us bear in mind that the ANC is committed to the Single Party System.

Consociationalism

Given South Africa's plural society, one has to ensure that *democracy* does not become a casualty. For this a new constitutional framework is necessary. The credit for thinking up creative solutions for African societies, most of which are divided deeply along ethnic lines, goes to Arend Lijphart. He alone has dared to dream up a pattern for robust democracy in South Africa. He has laboured long and after thirty years his dream may, after all, be practicable. He calls his model 'Consociationalism'. He says that South Africa needs what he calls "consociational Engineering." And he recommended the following framework to ensure democracy in South Africa:

- i) Executive power-sharing among

the representatives of all significant groups;

ii) A high degree of internal autonomy for groups that wish to have it;

iii) Proportional representation and proportional allocation of civil service positions and public funds; and

iv) A minority veto on the most vital issues.

Lijphart urges that the *only* alternative to consociationalism is majoritarianism, which is undemocratic and unworkable in plural societies. The majoritarian system is a winner-take-all affair.

Mandela's Reluctance

Consociationalism can come about only when groups and their leaders have a will to come together and to discuss and work out the power-sharing through compromises. So, there must be a will to gather around the conference table. Ten months after Mandela's release, such a will is still not evident. What South Africa needs now is the politics of accommodation not the politics of violence. Yet, accommodation has eluded the black leaders in South Africa in recent months. The ANC, as a major party, has clung to its self-interest, and Mandela has been manoeuvring out of meeting the Zulu leader, Gatsha Buthelezi. While the ANC has been unwilling to settle down to the politics of accommodation, Buthelezi has been constant-

ly urging the importance of consociationalism, as this involves real power-sharing, besides proportional representation and multi-partyism. But the ANC is committed to single-partyism, which in the rest of Africa has gone hand-in-hand with the most extreme forms of dictatorship.

Buthelezi the Moderate

Buthelezi has been urging fellow Africans to abandon their commitment to the 'one-man-one-vote' system as this is not practical politics in South Africa. On the economic front he has been in favour of any strategy which will improve the living conditions of the blacks. Unlike most other revolutionary movements, Buthelezi's Inkatha movement has even been in favour of capitalism, if this can help economic growth. He says that one must first of all consider the needs of the people first — "the fact that they must eat, the fact that they must be clothed, the fact that they must have money to educate their children." Buthelezi is an astute political strategist who believes in trying out different moves. But basically, he is a Moderate with a penchant for consociationalism. Among the obstacles he faces is the general notion that he is just the leader of a minor ethnic group, while the ANC looms large, with Mandela sweeping through the horizons of distant lands.

Again, the ANC's firm commitment to armed struggle, even after Mandela's release, will make it seem heroic. The common man will find it easier to understand the ANC ideology especially its call for unity. This is exactly what happened in Kenya soon after independence. By constantly stressing the theme of 'Unity', Kenyatta was able to build up the monolithic structure of his despotism. In South Africa, Buthelezi has been urging the ANC to abandon its "all or nothing politics." But in South Africa, as in the rest of the continent, the stakes are high.

Desegregation by itself is not Enough

The fight for power is on, for it has to be now or never. And the Zulus know it. The mere desegregation of public facilities does not interest the blacks any more now, for they are after bigger prizes like the vote and ultimate power. There is a mushrooming of political parties. The Inkatha of the Zulus are determined that they will not be forced by the ANC to remain in the political wilderness. And so the violence, which, with black against black, seems like a civil war, goes on. Buthelezi has been urging that the protection of the rights of minorities is crucial to a successful transition to democracy.

Recognising African Pluralism

In South Africa, we find that the peo-

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi

South Africa is in the throes of fundamental change. The prospect of dismantling apartheid and transferring power to the Black majority has led to a power struggle among the blacks. The clashes are mainly between the Xhosas in the African National Congress (ANC) and the Zulus in the Inkatha.

In the last few months alone more people have died than during the 17-month-long Soweto uprising of the mid-1970s. All this bloodshed since February 1990 could have been avoided if Nelson Mandela had risen to the occasion and accepted the Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi's offer to meet and discuss the problems involved in equitable power-sharing among all major ethnic groups. But Mandela, who is too much of a politician to rise above partisan interests, has all along been dodging a meeting with Buthelezi. There has either been a sham willingness to talk, or some excuse that Buthelezi is col-

laborating with the Whites and the Security Forces.

Meanwhile Mandela lost no time in gathering the kudos of world acclaim for having been in prison for twenty-seven years as if he alone had struck a blow at the evil of apartheid. At home, unable to assert his leadership of the ANC, he made wildly contradicting statements. It is noteworthy that he indulged in conciliatory rhetoric towards the Whites, even promising them a place in the sun. And, throughout the months since Mandela's release, Buthelezi has been hopeful of the politics of accommodation and power-sharing.

As the leader of a powerful movement and a political party which claims 1.6 million paid up members, Buthelezi has been constrained to make it brutally clear that no lasting peace is possible in South Africa without his participation at the negotiation table beside Mandela and De Klerk. For, the ANC is merely a majority party and does not embrace all

the Blacks of South Africa. Buthelezi has been astute enough to see that justice will not accrue to all ethnic groups within South Africa's deeply divided society, except under the new constitutional framework, viz. consociationalism, advocated by Arend Lijphart.

Chief Buthelezi was aware that consociationalism has not yet been incorporated into government sponsored formulas for constitutional reform. Hence, as Chief Minister of the Kwazulu Homeland, he took the political initiative and established a Commission under Arend Lijphart and Heribert Adam to study the feasibility of this new formula for Kwazulu and Natal. The two volumes of the Buthelezi Commission were ready in October 1981.

Buthelezi is a leader with a statesman-like vision and has been constantly engaged in working at constructive constitutional and political programmes, to ensure political and economic justice in South Africa.

Padma Srinivasan

ple are deeply divided by race and tribe. This sort of a situation also obtains in most other states of Africa. For such plural societies it is best to have coalition government, such as consociationalism provides, and not polarized government. If the government is divided into majority and minority, the minority is excluded from the decision-making process for a very long time. For South Africa, we can only hope that violence will yield to calmer days in which a national debate on the constitutional framework of the future can begin. Black Africans have an ancient tradition of political debate and democratic discussion. They have also had an ancient passion for political experimentation reaching back to thousands of years. Let us hope that the common people may yet be able to build a real democracy in South Africa. De Klerk with his statesman-like courage has given the black people the opportunity to fashion a new future for themselves.

It was the popular groups in all walks of life who formed the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. The UDF

embraced more than six hundred affiliate organizations and two million adherents, all determined to boycott the constitutional proposals of the previous Botha regime. Here was a spontaneous alliance of workers, poor peasants, traders, students and professionals, trade-unionists, clergymen, lawyers and journalists. The UDF was a loose national federation of membership groups based on the principles of mass participation, democratic accountability and ideological pluralism. What emerges most clearly from such a mass initiative from the common people is the immense vitality of associational life. Africans have been great organizers. And if we grant that it is not by elites alone that a new polity is brought into being, it would appear that South Africa's future lies in the realm of civil society itself, with its ancient norms and political culture. So, the answer lies not with men like Mandela but with the common African people.

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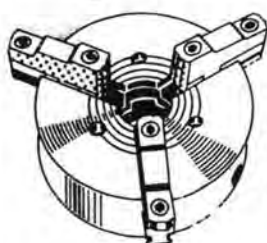


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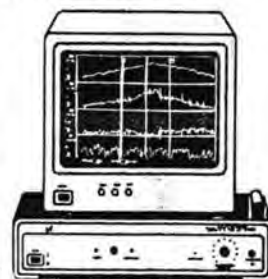
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Apologising to the Dalai Lama

I was privileged to be in the chair at a meeting addressed by the Dalai Lama in Bombay the other day. His visit to Bombay showed what a large number of supporters he has in this city.

I took the opportunity to apologise to The Dalai Lama for the disgraceful manner in which the Government of India had treated his country when it was over-run by the Chinese communist imperialists in 1949. One would have expected the Government of India to rush to the rescue of our peace-loving and friendly neighbour, but on the contrary, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, to the shame of this country, instructed the Jam Saheb who was India's representative in the UN, not to support Tibet's appeal for help from the UN against this aggression. For this crime, we Indians cannot apologise enough to The Dalai Lama and to the people of Tibet.

Exiting With Dignity

I got the news of Margaret Thatcher's decision to retire with mixed feelings. I have throughout been a consistent Thatcherite because I believe that Margaret Thatcher has saved Britain from disintegration and collapse. So, the end of her regime makes me rather sad.

On the other hand, I am glad that she has resigned with dignity and not clung like a leech to her Office, like India's last two Prime Ministers.

Britain's Labour government had the same bankrupt culture in which India specialises. Let me quote from the London *Economist* of 17-23 November, to prove my point.

"She, better than any other Member of Parliament, understands and detests the British penchant for free lunches – the belief that money can be spent without being earned, that wages can be raised while output is flat, that somebody else will pay. The British economy will not be transformed until that culture is killed, and nobody has done more to wound it than Mrs. Thatcher herself. On that score alone, she still has work to do."

So Margaret Thatcher's has been no mean achievement. She has been rightly described as Britain's most outstanding peace-time Prime Minister.

All good things come to an end and no Prime Minister can be permanent despite his or her great achievements, as was proved in the case of Winston Churchill

after World War II. As Mrs. Thatcher herself has said 'I am not everlasting'.

People get bored with the same faces and voices and they want a change. This has nothing to do with policies or popularity. Eleven years was long enough and people in Britain would enjoy a change so let them have it.

Union of Sovereign Republics

I had said in this column several months back that Mr. Gorbachov had sensed the fact that the sovereign nation state was an anachronism in this shrinking world and he therefore, suggested that the Soviet Union should be converted into a Union of Sovereign States. This according to the text-book is nonsense but history has overtaken the text-book. As is shown by the fact that the nations of Western Europe have already surrendered part of their sovereignty to the European Community and are now ready to embark on a common currency.

Mr. Gorbachov's dream has now taken shape. According to a draft treaty published on November 15, 1990 between different states of the Soviet Union, it is now proposed to name the USSR 'Union of Sovereign Republics' dropping the silly word 'socialist' which we in this country still prefer to adhere to. Since sovereignty of the Soviet Republic will be limited there is a difference of opinion on this point between Mr. Gorbachov and Mr. Yeltsin, the President of the Russian Republic who wants even more sovereignty than Mr. Gorbachov is prepared to concede.

It is a pity that like other backward countries, we have not still twigged the fact that neither India nor any other country enjoy a complete sovereignty in this world which is now becoming increasingly one. Actually, this is a happy development which should make a solution of the Kashmir problem very easy. Why not offer the people of the valley of Kashmir a sovereign republic but as a member of the Indian Union. This should be acceptable to both sides. But have we got the statesmanship to make such an offer?

Why are We Fighting Shy of the UN Human Rights Committee?

By now we have forgotten that India, like Israel, had refused to co-operate in

the visit of a United Nations team to the valley of Kashmir in February 1990. But Israel can be condemned while we, God's own country, have a right to tell the United Nations to go to hell.

We have now done it again. The Indian government has decided to withdraw from its scheduled appearance before the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Why? Because our record stinks. We have been found guilty of police brutality and torture of prisoners and we seek to push this ugly fact under the carpet. *Satyam Eva Jayate*, my foot.

I quote below from a report received from 'Censorship Press Release' London (October 30, 1990):

"The Indian government delegates were originally due to appear before the UN Human Rights Committee on October 25 and 26, 1990 for a review of its human rights record and the fulfilment of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The review was then put back to November 5 and has now been postponed indefinitely.

"ARTICLE 19, the International Campaign Against Censorship, produced a report 'FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND EXPRESSION IN INDIA' which has also been distributed to the Indian government delegates...

"In a major report being submitted to the United Nations Committee on Human Rights this week, ARTICLE 19, the International Campaign Against Censorship, warns that freedom of expression in India is under serious threat despite recent assurance such as this.

"In its report, ARTICLE 19 concludes that several laws and practices of recent years plus the failure to control or punish the excesses of central and state security forces, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and the Northeast states, have resulted in a continuing restriction of the basic human right of freedom of expression...

The measures recommended by ARTICLE 19 to the Indian government include:

- * Allow both national and foreign journalists freedom of movement and respect their rights to gather and disseminate information.
- * Investigate claims of human

rights violation by central government armed forces and by state police and prosecute and punish those against whom reliable evidence is found to exist.

- * Review all laws which limit the right to freedom of expression with a view to repealing or amending them in line with India's obligation to respect this right as given in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

"Laws which should receive immediate review include the Official Secrets Act of 1923, the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) and sections of the Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code.

Why Bandhs 'Succeed'

The "Bharat Bandh" on October 24 called by the BJP to protest against the arrest of Mr. L.K. Advani provided me with an opportunity to analyse this recurring event.

In Bombay the *bandh* was a complete success. Most shops and offices were closed and most people couldn't come to work. But if anyone thinks this was because of Mr. Advani's arrest, he would be living in dreamland. The reason why most people obeyed the call was that they had no option since buses, trains and taxis were not available to transport them. When I asked my driver who did not turn up for work and my barber and secretary who couldn't come to work, they all three said that they would have gladly come but for the fact that there were no buses or trains to bring them. In other words, the absence of public transport was the real deciding factor which made the *bandh* a success. There was no violence but there was no need for it because shops decided to escape violence by keeping closed. Added to all this, was the Indians' natural bent to laziness. When an angry lady asked me why people did not defy the call for the *bandh* and assert their rights as citizens, my answer was a sarcastic one, that the average Indian's most cherished right was not to work but to stay at home and get his salary for doing no work. What a marked contrast to the Japanese worker on strike who does not stop work but wears an arm band reading "I am on strike".

Isn't it time we did away with this idiotic pretence? Who do we think we are fooling? Think of the financial loss to the country. It is a loss of one day's production from time to time.

An Echo from the Past

Was I amused to receive from a firm of solicitors an intimation that the Supreme Court of India had dismissed an appeal for non-prosecution, of a Bombay High Court's Division Bench judgement in my favour as editor of *Freedom First* during the bogus emergency from 1975 to 1977.

The facts are that some time in 1976, a Division Bench of the Bombay High Court had passed the judgement in my favour, striking down an attempt by Mr. Binod Rao, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's censor and giving me permission to publish certain articles which he had censored in his wisdom as objectionable.

The Prime Minister went in appeal to the Supreme Court but before the Supreme Court could hear the appeal, Mrs. Gandhi was defeated in an election and removed from office.

Mr. Soli Sorabjee, my counsel in the case, became Solicitor General in the Janata Government and I was informed by him that the appeal against the Bombay judgement was being dropped.

That was in 1977. Now in 1990, thirteen years later, I am informed that the Supreme Court has at long last dismissed the appeal. A happy ending for me no doubt, but it illustrates the terrible delays of the law.

A Loss for the Kuwaitis — A Gain for the Palestinians

The report that Saddam Hussein has in a villainous attempt, a genocide of the Kuwaiti people, tried to drive them out of the country and given their homes and properties to Palestinians belonging to the P.L.O. shows the Palestinians in the very dubious role of hyenas in a country with which they have no connection.

Let those who believe that Mr. Yasser Arafat is not a terrorist but is interested in fighting for the Palestinians to obtain their homeland think again and realise that they are backing the wrong horse.

Diplomatic Relations with Israel

I have on earlier occasions in this column referred to the likelihood of diplomatic relations being re-established between Israel and the Soviet Union. I am glad that this has at last happened on 30th September with the publication of a joint communique to that effect in Moscow and Jerusalem. Good. How much longer will it take for the Government of India to get into step?

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Festival of Tibet

— Bombay's Tribute to a Brave People

Tibet came alive in Bombay in late November and early December. The Friends of Tibet, Bombay and the Office of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Secretariat, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, took the initiative in organising the Festival, the first of its kind, to promote an awareness of our northern neighbour now under communist Chinese hegemony.

In a message for the occasion His Holiness The Dalai Lama said:

"For Tibetans India is the land of our spiritual origins and for us Tibetan refugees, it has become our second home. It is our sincere hope that the Tibet Festival will provide an opportunity for the people of Bombay to obtain a clearer picture of the richness of Tibetan culture and the Buddhist religion which imbues it with compassion and tolerance. It is also my hope that the Festival will give an accurate profile of the efforts made by the Tibetan refugees to preserve their culture which is facing the danger of extinction in its own homeland.

Indeed, this was the objective of the exercise — to open a window to look out at a highly developed culture that was being systematically destroyed by Han imperialism in the garb of the 'Peoples' (sic) Republic of China.

This communist 'Peoples' Republic has destroyed over 4000 monasteries, plundered their treasures and rare art objects, sent thousands of Monks into forced labour and beat up, and killed innocent men, women and children — just a few 'achievements' of the Chinese 'Peoples Liberation' Army. Since 1980, 1.7 million Chinese have been settled in the so-called Tibetan Autonomous Region. Soon the Tibetans will become a minority in their own country. Already there are more Chinese than Tibetans in Eastern Tibet and in the towns and cities.

While the Soviet empire has been dismantled and Eastern Europe once again breathes the air of freedom, the communist Chinese continue to keep the lid tight on Tibet, just as they continue to suppress their

Festival of Tibet

Bombay, November 27 — December 3, 1990

Reception Committee

The Festival of Tibet was sponsored by a Reception Committee with Mr. Ramkrishna Bajaj as Chairman and following members:
Mrs. Ishwar Bahl, Mr. B. K. Desai, Mr. Arvind Deshpande, Dr. S. Gorakshkar, Mr. J. N. Guzder, Mrs. Ratna Jhangiani, Prof. J. S. Joshi, Mrs. Roshan Kalapesi, Mr. R. M. Lala, Mr. M. R. Masani, Mrs. Gopi Mehta, Mr. Madhu Mehta, Mr. M. R. Pai, Mr. N. A. Palkhivala, Mr. S. A. A. Pinto, Mr. S. V. Raju, Mr. S. Ramakrishnan, Mr. Nitin G. Raut, Mr. N. K. Somani, Justice Saeed Uraizee.

Programme

Exhibitions

Tibetan Culture: "Where the Mountains are high and the land is pure" at the Prince of Wales Museum.

Tibetan History: 'From Lhasa to Dharamsala' at the Stuttgart Hall, Max Mueller Bhavan.

Dances

Performed by the artistes of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts at the Prithvi Theatre, the Experimental Theatre of the NCPA, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the Prince of Wales Museum, and the Ravindra Natya Mandir.

Medicine

A Symposium on "Health and Life Sciences with special reference to Tibetan Medicine" at the Bombay Hospital Institute of Medical Sciences, addressed by Dr. Wangyal, Personal Physician to The Dalai Lama, Vaid Suresh Chaturvedi and Dr. B. K. Goyal — Dean of the Institute.

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own people — brought home by their brutal suppression at Tienanmen Square.

While, in the long run, Tibet will be free, for there is no stopping the people's urge for freedom, and The Dalai Lama will be able to return to Lhasa, will they return to a homeland only to find that little remains of the pre-1951 Tibet? Will it be habitable when large parts have been turned into a dumping ground for nuclear waste?

The Festival of Tibet therefore offered a generation that knows little of Tibet except the Tibetans they see on Bombay's streets selling woollen wear, a glimpse into their cultural and religious traditions, their arts and crafts; their dance forms. What Bombay's citizens saw was a vibrant people full of zest for life; a highly developed system of medicine (evident from the long queues at the Bombay Hospital to consult Dr. Wangal, The Dalai Lama's personal physician) and the dances performed by 21 artistes of the Tibetan Institute of the Performing Arts at various auditoriums in the city.



His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Reception Committee Chairman Mr. Ramkrishna Bajaj and Mr. S.V. Raju, Festival Coordinator.

The piece-de-resistance was the month-long exhibition of Tibetan culture picturesquely entitled: "Where the Mountains are High and the Land is Pure" at the Prince of Wales Museum set-up by Dr. S. Gorakshkar and his team. Next door to the Museum at the Stuttgart Hall, of the Max Mueller Bhavan was a photo exhibition depicting Tibetan history and politics appropriately entitled 'From Lhasa to Dharmasala'.

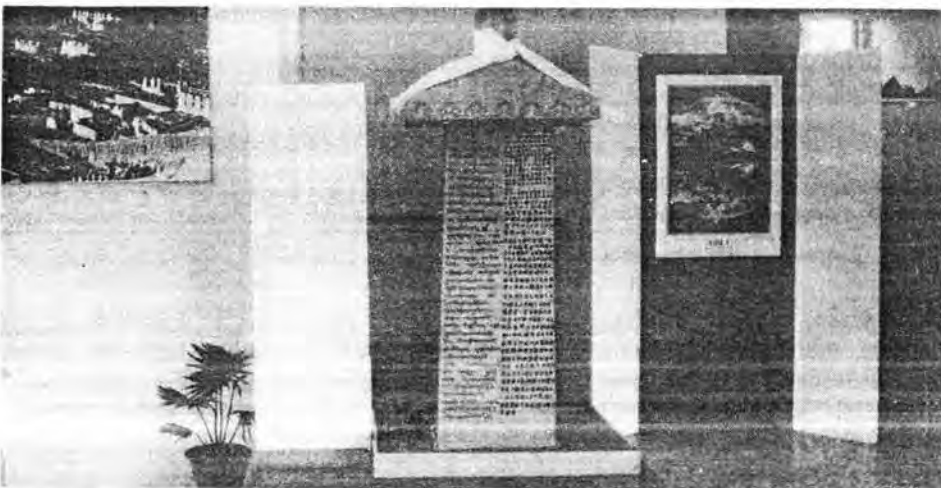
The Dalai Lama's presence in the city to inaugurate the two exhibitions added lustre to the Festival. To meet and talk to him is an unforgettable experience. This spiritual and temporal leader of his people, clad in Monk's robes wins your heart with his transparent sincerity, an infectious sense of humour and profound wisdom. I was among those who had the opportunity to meet him and returned with a sense of spiritual enrichment.

The Festival achieved its objective and, we would like to believe has resulted in greater awareness and understanding of a brave and hardy people struggling to liberate their homeland.

S.V. Raju



A view of a section of exhibition at the Prince of Wales Museum.



Replica of the Stone Pillar in Lhasa recording the 821 AD treaty between Tibet and China acknowledging Tibet's independent status, at the Stuttgart Hall exhibition.

Commemorative Volume

The Reception Committee published a Commemorative Volume to mark the Festival of Tibet. The Volume contains:

The Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech and his Five-Point Peace Plan; an Outline of Tibetan History; the Tibetan People; the Tibetan Language; Religion and Politics; the Present State of Religious Institutions; Tibetan Medicine; and a note on the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts.

Readers interested in a copy may remit Rs 20 (inclusive of postage) to The Democratic Research Service, 4th Floor, 127, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400023.

The Dismal State of Indian Sports

— Some remedies

Satish Oberoi

It is significant that our dismal performance in sports is in proportion to the decline of values and standards in Indian polity. Hence to achieve anything worthwhile in sports, we need to begin in areas outside sports.

Repeated poor performance in international sports events are ritualistically followed by half-hearted efforts to ascertain reasons for our debacle. What is wrong with Indian sports? Why does a country the size of India with a population of over 80 billion perform so miserably in the sports arena?

International sports meets are highly competitive and the performance of the athletes indicate the ability of participating nations to make the best use of men and material and prove their superiority in skills and endurance. It can therefore be assumed that performance in sports events gives a reasonable picture of the state of affairs in the participating country.

Four factors which govern performance of democratic countries in sports are the psychological attitude of the people to sports; the intrinsic nature of the people; the management of sports bodies and the economic conditions in the country.

The Psychological Factor

The psychological factor has an indirect but dominant influence on sports. We, as a nation, are prone to take recourse to easy options for quick gains, a tendency which is growing day by day. This trait is mainly exhibited in the actions of influential people who control the levers of power and of the economy. Their action set the trend for others to follow. Sports demand dedication, sweat and blood. It is unrealistic to expect youth to take to harder options contrary to prevailing trends in the country.

Our society is plagued by corruption, concentration of wealth in a few hands, commercialization of education and non-recognition of merit, to mention a few. There is a growing tendency to

shun open competition. Not surprisingly, these trends have demoralized our youth making them feel insecure about their future and prevent putting their heart and soul into sports.

It is significant that our dismal performance in sports is in proportion to the decline of values and standards in Indian polity. Hence to achieve anything worthwhile in sports, we need to begin in areas *outside* sports. And it has to start by developing character and self-discipline beginning with our 'leaders' in various walks of life setting a personal example.

The Nature of Our People

Turning to the next factor; the intrinsic nature of our people is marked by two weaknesses: lack of an aggressive spirit or 'killer' instinct and a tendency to buckle under pressure. The effect of these traits on our performance is well-known as they have cost us many a championship. These traits were recently exhibited during the anti-Mandal agitation in which young men immolated themselves rather than boldly confront the creators of the problems. These weaknesses not only reflect on our performance in sports but have diluted the contents of democracy. What is needed to overcome these traits, is for strenuous efforts to reorient people's thinking through education, including the removal of religious misconceptions.

Management of Sports Bodies

As in any other field of human endeavour, proper management of sports alone will produce winners. Those managing sports bodies must be selected with care. Some of the desirable qualities in those who manage our sports bodies are: a thorough knowl-

edge of sports (preferably must have represented the country in the sports concerned;); sound administrative qualities; ability to devote time and imbued with a spirit of dedication to bring about qualitative improvement. And, above all, the election of office bearers must be de-politicised.

The office bearers of sports bodies must have access to authorities who process their proposals. In other words, government departments must give importance to communications from sports bodies similar to the ones they accord to those received from legislators or ministers. At present, sports bodies need the patronage of politicians in office to get their proposals speedily cleared. Naturally such politicians take advantage of their position to get themselves nominated or elected to head sports bodies. Their objective is to expand their influence and not the development of sports and sportspersons. Our disastrous performance in international competitions is proof of the incompetence of politicians to deliver the goods. There is therefore an urgent need to clean up our sports bodies and evolve suitable norms to manage their affairs.

The Role of the Armed Forces

In the Beijing Games, India's yachting and rowing teams were among the few that provided the proverbial glimpse of a silver lining in an otherwise embarrassing record of failures. It would therefore be worthwhile examining the reasons why the yachting and rowing teams did better than the rest. Both these teams consisted basically of personnel from the Defence Forces. The Armed Forces environment insulates them to a large extent from the damag-

ing influence of the psychological factor that has been mentioned earlier. Another reason is that the Armed Forces inculcate an aggressive spirit and resist the tendency to buckle under pressure. The Yachting Association and the Rowing Federation, though they have done little to popularize these sports, are managed by knowledgeable people with access to government departments to look after the interests of their sports.

It is clear that no overall improvement in sports will be possible unless we carry out improvements on a national basis keeping these four factors in mind. This in turn means greater efforts to develop character and self-discipline; reorient education, (including removal of religious misconceptions). This is not an impossible task. We need to keep out political vested interests, who are the major beneficiaries of the current state of affairs and who couldn't care less if in the pursuit of their personal ambitions they kill Indian sports.

The Sports Authority of India

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) has set up regional centres for selecting

and training young boys and girls. We can expect these centres to improve the standard of Indian sports, despite the negative factors already mentioned.

However, while the setting up of SAI is a step in the right direction there should not be exclusive reliance on the regional centres alone. SAI should tap the proven horse, the Armed Forces, which continue to provide the country's bulk of sportsmen. However, the Armed Forces have a major limitation in terms of enrolment rules and training schedules so that, by the time the Services' sportsmen peak, they find their age against them. To overcome the problem, it is suggested that the Boys' Battalions of the Corps of Engineers Centres at Pune, Madras and Roorkee be revived, initially for a period of fifteen years. The Boys' Battalions should enrol talented boys around 11 years of age and train them in games of their choice in the Army background. The Army should have no objection if these sportsmen are sanctioned over and above the manpower ceiling imposed by Government.

To sum up, performance in sports in

democratic countries gives a fair indication of a country's health, character, discipline, morale, economy, education and will for excellence. A continuously poor performance is a warning to the nation; the earlier we recognise this nexus the better it will be for us.

COL. SATISH OBEROI (Retd.) is a freelance writer based in Pune.

An election is a system which allows us to decide which politicians we prefer to mess things for us.

It is nice to have five years between the elections. It takes people that long to regain their faith.

If we could use the money political candidates spend on their campaigns, we could cure a lot of the ills they complain about.

You can't fool all the people, but politicians figure that once every five years is good enough.

People are not against political jokers — they just wonder how they get elected.

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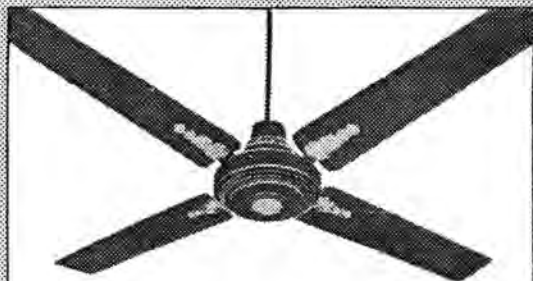
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Zari fringed punkah designed from palm
leaves. For ordinary peoples plain
looking punkha of palm leaves.

The Company regime:
Bardar (Punkah Puller) operated giant
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British India:
Electrical Ceiling fan with 4 wooden
blades and iron body (In vogue, in early
20th century)

Independent India:
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300
Salaam Calcutta : 1690—1990

The 'Credibility' of Civil Libertarians

— A Rejoinder

M.A. Rane.

The piece under the above title by Avikay published in a box in the midst of the excellent summary of the seminar held under the auspices of the Rajaji Foundation under the caption "The Kashmir problem — Time for a People's Initiative" in the October-December 1990 issue of *Freedom First*, runs counter to the report and the conclusions arrived at by the participants at the seminar; the text of the remarks made by Mr. Minoo Masani at the seminar; and an extract from the article by Jayaprakash Narayan published in the *Hindustan Times* of April 20, 1964. Incidentally Jayaprakash Narayan's article was published in full in a previous issue of *Freedom First* and has now been re-published in the November 1990 issue of the *Radical Humanist* (RH) edited by Mr. V.M. Tarkunde.

I wish Avikay had been present at the seminar. I had the good fortune of participating in the seminar as a representative of the Peoples Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL). I am a PUCL activist since I have convictions as a Radical Humanist for the defence of human freedoms and human rights.

The People's Union For Civil Liberties and other sister organisations like the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) founded for the protection and promotion of civil liberties and human rights do not claim infallibility. They are not above criticism and their reports deserve to be critically examined by the citizens. We concede that human rights organisations do not have adequate personnel or resources like the Amnesty International for carrying out investigations into the inroads on human rights in our country. However, we expect that the criticism of reports by civil liberties organisations should be fair and specific giving reasons where the reports have gone wrong.

During my participation in the semi-

nar I had made a pointed reference to the report of the PUCL on Kashmir which received adverse comments in the country particularly from those who claim to be nationalists and from Hindu fundamentalists. The report was also severely criticised in various national journals including the *Indian Express*. Its editorial "From Their Wooden Tower" was apparently written by the paper's then editor Mr. Arun Shourie who was the first General Secretary of the All India PUCL and who is a dear friend of all of us who are still in the PUCL. I pointed out how the report of the PUCL was independently corroborated by several journalists like Ayesha Kagal in *The Times of India* in April and May 1990; by Patwarisingh in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*; by Kashyap Rishi in the *Afternoon*; and reports in the *Indian Express* itself. I had also referred to an investigation carried out by a team sent by the Rashtra Seva Dal (RSD) from Pune and observations made by K.F. Rustumji. I had referred to all these reports at the seminar and pointed out how they corroborated the PUCL's report on the Kashmir situation. In fact, both with respect to the analysis of the Kashmir situation and the proposed solution of the problem there was complete unanimity among the participants at the seminar. The discussions as well as conclusions are very faithfully recorded by *Freedom First*.

Avikay has criticised the reports of the PUCL and the PUDR stating that these organisations which came into existence during the 'emergency' were expected to perform the role of watchdogs and conscience-keepers of the country but that that expectation has been belied due to the "hyper-activity and indiscriminate selection of issues" by these organisations. He has made particular reference to the Kashmir report of the PUCL and has suggested that the PUCL has done disservice to

itself by appearing to be totally one sided and states: "while reading the report one is disturbed by the feeling that very important elements are missing". The criticism is general since Avikay does not give any specific instances of his criticism of the PUCL report.

The main thrust of the PUCL report was to highlight the fact that it is not open to the State to deal with terrorism by breaking its own laws and acting lawlessly. It was also the view of the PUCL that though it is necessary to contain and fight terrorism the organs of the State should not terrorise and punish innocent citizens. The report went on to record grievances of innocent citizens (which incidentally were also recorded by other independent press correspondents and organisations). The people of India should know the grievances of the people of Kashmir. The PUCL report points out that if the State resorts to lawlessness in its fight against terrorism, the results are counter-productive, since such methods alienate the people and only help to swell the ranks of the terrorists. This, in fact, was also the conclusion arrived at by the Rajaji Foundation seminar.

The reports by the PUCL whether on the Naxalites or on the Punjab or on any other individual case of excess either by the police or by para-military forces are made with as much objectivity as possible by teams sent by the PUCL, PUDR and other human rights organisations. They are of the firm view that terrorism and lawlessness on the part of the State, are not only violative of human rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India but are also counter-productive. Subject to these objectives civil liberties organisations are not averse to any fair and specific criticism.

MR. M.A. RANE is a leading Advocate and Vice-President of The People's Union for Civil Liberties, Bombay.

Whose Credibility?

Yogesh Kamdar

Avikay's main grouse against various civil liberties groups (particularly the PUCL and the PUDR) is that "the expectations (from these groups) have been belied, not because of their inactivity but due to hyperactivity and indiscriminate selection of issues". Even Avikay will not dispute the fact that violations of human rights and civil liberties are perpetrated on a frighteningly large scale in India. The perpetrators are many, including the state organs. The victims are invariably the poor and the helpless: women, landless labourers, children, conscientious objectors etc. Of these widespread instances of human rights violations, only a small fraction comes to light; and of this small fraction, only an even smaller fraction can be pursued by the "civil libertarians" due to their severe handicaps in terms of human and material resources. So, where is the hyperactivity? In fact, what this society needs is a further proliferation of civil liberties activity and more intensive and extensive involvement by more and more citizens and groups.

Avikay does not furnish even one example of "indiscriminate selection of issues" by the civil libertarians. Deaths in stage-managed "encounters"; tortures and deaths in police lock-ups; the massacre in Delhi and other places in 1984; bonded labour; atrocities on adivasis, harijans, women, child labour; the muzzling of dissent (including censorship), are the major issues pursued by various human rights and civil liberties groups. Can Avikay point out which one of these is an "indiscriminate selection"?

Avikay further states: "they (the civil libertarians) become mere accusers, predetermined to find fault with the administration". He goes on: "Their reports are a litany of complaints against the police and administration". Further: "The complaints may be genu-

ine but any genuine fact-finding enquiry should present all the facts and not merely selective versions... The methodology gives rise to serious misgivings about findings."

What is the methodology adopted? These fact-finding investigations are carried out by teams of respectable and responsible individuals (retired judges, senior lawyers, journalists, academics, social scientists, etc). A team visits the place, meets the victims and records their statements; eye-witnesses are contacted and their versions recorded. Many a time, sworn affidavits are taken from the victims and eye-witnesses. The facts are cross-checked. The administration is invariably approached for its version, comments or explanations, which are rarely forthcoming, and whenever these are available they are always included in the fact-finding reports. In most instances, serious charges of abuse of power and violations of human rights are further corroborated by other independent investigations carried out by media persons and also by judicial enquiries. Serious charges of violations and abuse of power are made and corroborated by eye-witnesses and/or other independent investigations; yet, neither a denial nor any explanation is offered by those against whom the charges are made. What more does Avikay need for creditability? Or is it that he will not be satisfied unless and until the villains themselves offer confessions?

In response to Avikay's allegation that these reports are "one-sided", one would like to ask: What is the "other side" to gruesome killings of innocents, burning of helpless victims alive, mass rape, the slaughtering of children, etc.?

Avikay's piece reads more like an apologists's feeble attempt to justify the misdeeds. He goes on harping about "background to the complaints", "ground situation", "cause and effect explanations". These are worn out apologies which even the individual terrorists offer. Avikay, in fact, tries to imply that because the terrorists resort to violence, counter-violence by the state is likely to, nay, bound to follow and is justified.

Violence is to be condemned irrespective of who indulges in it. But "state terrorism" has two additional dimensions: How can a democratic state committed to the rule of law allow its agencies to be lawless and un-accountable and, if they are, then what are we defending? And does not state terrorism impart legitimacy to the violence perpetrated by individual terrorists?

It is strange that at a time when authoritarianism and dictatorship of various hues are crumbling all round us, there still are persons who would like us to turn back in time. But what is reassuring is best summed up by Egon Larsen in "A Flame in Barbed Wire – The Story of Amnesty International":

"You may despair at man's inhumanity to man. Is there nothing you can do to help, no weapon to defend your fellow-beings' rights, liberties and lives? To fight the paranoid despots, the corrupt judges, the sadistic goalers? You feel that as an individual, you are helpless against the powers of evil. Is there not any league of men and women who are at least trying to do something about it?"

Oh yes, there is."

MR. YOGESH KAMDAR is an engineer by profession and a civil rights activist.

Decentralized Democracies

Aurelio Arreaza

In most undeveloped countries that boast a democracy the management of the country is so centralized in the executive power that far from promoting well-being, honesty and prosperity, it promotes badness, corruption and misery

I love my country of origin and its people. Yet, I suffer every time I think about them, for I know they are not doing well. I know they are far from living as well and as happily as they could. I know the situation is getting increasingly worse.

After many years of experiencing life in Venezuela I believe that what happens to its people is similar to what happens in many other countries all over the world. They have never been able to get organized or function well because they have not created for themselves a political structure which promotes social well-being and economic prosperity.

Surprisingly, the people of these countries still fail to realize that the only political structure that really promotes social and economic well-being is a real democracy, a decentralized democracy. This is the only system that has permitted some people in the world to become materially and spiritually well-balanced and create prosperous nations.

It is obvious that only the communities that have given themselves decentralized democracies are living and evolving much better than the rest of humanity. No doubt, it is the only system that offers the proper conditions under which human beings can evolve in a natural and positive way.

What is a Decentralized Democracy?

It is a political structure under which the people who live in the different states or provinces that form part of a country have a substantial amount of political and economic independence from the central or federal government.

It is a political structure under which all the communities that form part of a country hold popular elections, at national, state, country and city levels, to select the persons who, during a given period of time, will perform its administrative and legislative functions; thus enjoying the stimulating and transcendent opportunity of being able to decide upon their lives and make social and economic reforms whenever they become necessary.

It is a political structure which permits the people that form part of the different provinces or states of a country, to develop and trade, with substantial freedom, at

national and international levels, their own economic resources; committing from their income a certain amount of taxes to the local and federal governments.

Australia, Canada, Japan, the United States and most Western European countries are good examples of decentralized democracies.

Advantages of Decentralization

A real democracy promotes social well-being and economic prosperity:

1. The principal source of prosperity in any country is the labour of its people, and when these enjoy a substantial amount of political and economic independence they feel better and with the proper amount of control over their lives. As a result they have more incentive to work, to be creative, and to improve in every sense. The usually complicated bureaucracy, corruption and mistakes of the central government hardly affects them.
2. When our opinion counts in relation to what is happening in our communities, state and country, our sense of belonging to that part of the world will increase, and so will our commitment and sense of responsibility toward it.
3. Under a decentralized political structure, where the three branches of government are in proper balance and effectively control each other, we also feel more secure. Laws are not going to change from one day to another at anybody's whim and unexpectedly affect our lives. We can safely plan ahead, for no authoritarian or inept government will abuse or damage the fruits of our energy and good will.
4. Thanks to a stimulating and selective competition the quality of government officials and political parties will improve. When people have to run for office and contend with others in popular elections for every city, country and state position, they are more likely to have a good personal and professional background to back them up. Their

sense of service — to properly serve the community — will also improve.

5. The armed forces, police and other security groups will function with more integrity, willingness to serve and less abuse of authority. As they form part of a fair and rightful system these people feel better and are less exposed to corruption than a centralized government, which ultimately depends on their support, necessarily offers.
6. The abnormal and enormous growth of capital cities is less likely to occur. Thanks to political and economic decentralization, the population and the product of its activity will develop all over the country in a balanced and harmonious way.

Evils of Centralization

In the centralized political structures of "democracies" like the one we have in Venezuela and most of the undeveloped countries that boast a democracy, the above mentioned advantages are almost non-existent. There does not exist a proper balance and an effective control among the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of power. On the contrary, the management of the country is so centralized in the executive power — and consequently so unfair and inefficient — that not only makes it difficult for the population to work properly but deprives it of the motivation to do it. That far from promoting well-being, honesty and prosperity, it promotes badness, corruption and misery.

Nearly all important decisions concerning the development of the different provinces or states are made in the seat of the central government usually by an large, mediocre and corrupt bureaucracy; often wrong decisions which take a long time to make and execute. Thus is disrupted a natural development all over the nation, cultural as well as economic.

Most revenues of the country are controlled, mismanaged, stolen and wasted by several members of the central government, their friends, and their business partners, in the capital city. This community grows to abnormal and inhuman

proportions as many industrial and commercial enterprises establish themselves in and around it, attracting a great number of the impoverished population in search of jobs and fortune. Caracas is a good example, but Mexico City is the most evident and most pathetic one.

Most government officials — federal, state and local — are appointed by officials of higher rank from among their friends or political party, not always taking into consideration their personal or professional merits. Thus many government posts are occupied by individuals that lack the capacity and education to do a good job; lazy uneducated people that lack a sense of service and easily fall to corruption; that instead of serving the community usually abuse it.

Many individuals who form part of the armed forces and other security groups — upon whom really depends the system's stability — lose their sense of purpose, integrity, sense of service, and respect for the people. This is a consequence of being part of a system that promotes so much negativity, and which offers them excessive material rewards to secure their support.

As a result of a system that promotes abuse, corruption, disorder and lawlessness, bureaucracy grows to burdensome, enormous and inefficient proportions. Obviously, the natural selection of the most capable does not happen under a centralized political structure.

But worst of all, under so many negative circumstances, the population loses the natural consideration and respect that human beings owe to each other and the motivation to work properly. Since their opinion does not count and the system is so unfair and inefficient, many others lose their integrity and the willingness to participate in community affairs. Others, eager to get rich as fast as possible help contribute to the corruption of government officials. The political parties, instead of improving themselves and the country's quality of life, slowly create their own destruction.

The situation gradually worsens and the people — increasingly confused and out of balance — continue to lose faith in what they believe to be a democracy.

Towards a Better World

How can any body feel integrated, motivated and secure under a system which does not promote social well-being and economic prosperity?

Yes, these very negative circumstances or similar ones are ruining the Venezuelans, the Mexicans — even worse, for

they suffer the dictatorship of one political party — and many other people that claim to have a democracy. This system cannot work successfully. Instead of supporting, it obstructs the natural positive evolution of human beings. It can only continue to deteriorate and finally give way to an even worse situation: a totalitarian regime.

It is surprising that most political leaders in these countries have not yet realized these simple facts. It is obvious that having decentralized democracies is the main factor that has permitted the industrialized nations to reach such high levels of social and material development.

Hence, if the people and the government of the more advanced countries really want to help other countries reach a balanced and prosperous way of life, they should first have a clear understanding of what is truly happening within those countries. As a result, they will primarily support and promote decentralized democracies with non-violent and unobtrusive methods. They will maintain a definite policy towards the rest of the world, not an ambiguous and selfish one as they have been frequently doing up to now.

A well-intentioned, disinterested and definite international attitude is the only way towards creating a better world. It is the only way to defeat negative political structures and help humanity avoid suffering the indignities, limitations and miseries that come from living under centralized or totalitarian regimes. It is the only way in which the industrialized countries will gain world-wide friendship, support and trust.

Handouts and easy trading of money and arms, in which some of the well-developed nations have been engaged in the last decades with other less developed countries, can only increase corruption, frustration, laziness, violence and chaos all over the world. Artificial economic measures cannot solve a situation that requires from human beings the proper amount of time and effort.

Under a decentralized political and economic structure any population can steadily work, prosper, and soon find balance and well-being. Like most things in nature, human beings have a natural tendency towards creating balance and harmony. To do this they need the freedom and basic order that only a stable and decentralized democracy can provide.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE UNQUIET WOODS by Ramachandra Guha; Oxford University Press; Post Box 31, Bombay 400 039; 1989; pp. 218; Rs. 175



Forests, to many, are a means of livelihood, and the basis of a way of life that for generations revolved around forest produce. To others, they represent opportunity: timber for construction, or pine resin for industrial use. When these competing perceptions of Nature's bounty collide, the result is usually trouble. Ramachandra Guha's *The Unquiet Woods* tells the story of the impoverishment of large parts of the Garhwal Himalayas in Uttar Pradesh, and how large-scale commercial forestry all but unravelled a social fabric that had taken centuries to weave.

Guha traces the development of forestry in the two regions of Uttarakhand (the hill districts of U.P.). Tehri Garhwal was a princely state, where the ruling dynasty went back 1200 years, its authority bolstered by the status of the king as symbolic head of the Badrinath temple. Kumaon was a colonial territory, annexed in 1815 and administered by British bureaucrats. Both had similar social structures; and after the introduction of commercial forestry, nearly identical ecological changes were imposed on them. The differences in local reactions to these changes

(because authority in each case was imposed differently) have been analysed in considerable detail. The conclusions Guha draws — how traditional monarchies provided their subjects a safety valve by way of 'customary rebellion', and the connections between rural protest movements and organised politics — would be more of interest to sociologists. But for the lay reader, the facts are compelling and the story well told, with very little jargon. In spite of the author's tendency to repeat himself (most sociologists, apparently, are similarly afflicted), the book makes fascinating reading.

The economy of Uttarakhand relied heavily on the forest — firewood, thatch grass, medicinal herbs, leaf litter (used as manure), fresh grass for cattle, even (indirectly) water: extensive forest cover ensured that the water table remained high. Religion and folklore ensured the practise of what is now known as ecologically sustainable land use. Communal grazing lands and tree plantations were carefully tended, and their use strictly regulated. Hilltops were often designated as sacred groves where grazing and cutting were banned (such sacred groves are found throughout the country, and in several cases have become the nucleus of wildlife sanctuaries).

British rule was benign at first. Taxes were light, and by and large the villagers were left alone. In the mid 1800s work began on the national railway network. Wood, particularly deodar, was required for sleepers. A forest department was set up in Kumaon in 1864 and a Forest Act proclaimed a year later, which sought to ensure a continuous supply of high-quality timber by restricting the use of forests by the villagers. In 1878, forests were classified into two categories. 'Reserved forests' were closed to villagers to enable the state to grow wood exclusively for its own use. In 'protected forests' they were allowed limited access — but this right of access was discretionary and could be terminated if (and this happened regularly) a 'protec-

ted' area was reclassified as 'reserved'. Over the next twenty years, some 10,000 square kilometres of forests were reserved, and the production of pine resin and turpentine increased dramatically.

The restrictions, particularly those on cattle grazing, struck at the heart of the local economy, and caused widespread resentment. Protests usually took the form of the traditional *Dhandak*, where villagers would appeal directly to the king for redressal. (The king, with his quasi-divine status, was above reproach; his officials were not.) *Dhandaks* were usually peaceful, but as the burdens of forestry grew, so did the violence. Large areas of forests that were being used for timber or resin extraction were torched. A British commissioner of Kumaon called the unrest "a struggle for existence between the villagers and the forest department; the former to live, the latter to show a profit".

The concluding part of the book deals with the *Chipko Andolan*. Forest policy in Uttarakhand remained much the same even after independence, and the floods and landslides in the Alaknanda valley in 1970 (widely attributed to deforestation) sparked off the movement. It started as a fight for the rights of the villagers to their forests, and grew into a campaign to save the Himalayan eco-system from further damage, in the process setting an example to conservation movements throughout the country.

Analyses of British rule in India usually deal with the social, political or economic consequences. Guha's book is probably the first to specifically discuss the relationship between colonialism and ecological decline, and on that count will no doubt be welcomed by sociologists. But it should appeal to a far wider readership; in particular to anyone interested in environmental conservation. *The Unquiet Woods* is a reminder of how closely man is dependent on the environment, and

what could happen if this relationship is changed by administrative fiat rather than in consultation with those who will be most directly affected.

Reviewed by MR. AJAY VARADACHARY,
Assistant Editor, Bombay Natural History
Society.

**INDIA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE : AN
EPIC OF SACRIFICE AND SUFFER-
ING** by G.P. Pradhan; Popular Praka-
shan, Bombay; 1990; pp.235; Rs.150



India's struggle for freedom has inspired many a historian and researcher to pen down, perhaps, the most glorious saga in India's long history. When an active participant decides to narrate the story of the struggle for freedom, it inevitably invites attention and the curiosity of the reader. A freedom fighter and an eminent professor of English from Pune, G.P. Pradhan was awarded a special prize in an All India competition in 1987, (the book does not give any information about the competition) for his book on India's freedom struggle. As one goes through the book one is convinced that the freedom fighter in Pradhan has scored over the teacher in him.

The book lacks the objective analysis of the freedom movement expected of

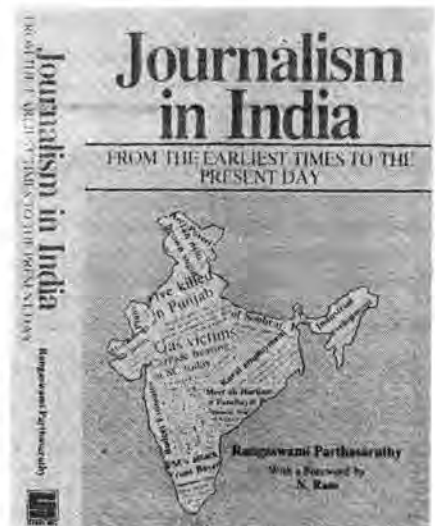
a teacher writing after more than forty years of the events described. The treatment of the subject is rather emotional, abounding in adjectives used generously to describe freedom fighters, the rulers and others e.g. 'villainous game of divide and rule' 'Satanic plan of Nizam' (p.207). Martyrs and revolutionaries are treated with special affection. Their vivid description bears a testimony to the author's reverence for them.

The book opens with the 'First National Uprising - 1857'. Pradhan does not critically examine if the uprising was truly 'national'. The fact that the princes and sepoys had their own reasons and interests to launch the uprising has been overlooked. Also, Pradhan deals only with the immediate causes of the revolution. He does not mention the general discontent among the Indians against the East India Company, arising out of the latter's attempt at reforming Hindu society through legislation. Similarly, the rise of nationalism could have been dealt with in a more detailed manner, especially the fact that the positive aspect of British rule itself gave rise to a national consciousness in India. This needs more attention than what has been bestowed by the author.

The merit of the book is its vast coverage of the freedom movement in all its phases in barely 216 pages. Pradhan has highlighted the revolutionary aspects of the freedom movement that is often missed. He mentions the contribution of the revolt of the *adivasis*, *Vahabis* and *Kukas*; the Kakori Conspiracy Case; the Chittagong Armoury Raid; the underground movement, the *Patri Sarkar* in Satara and many other incidents that appear to have been long forgotten by the people. He has also catalogued several heroes and martyrs like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdeo, Rajguru, Rash Bihari Bose, Jatin Mukherjee and lesser knowns like Babu Genu, Mallappa Dhanshetty, Jagannath Shinde and many others. The book will serve as good reading for the younger generation which is now far removed from the events described and has almost forgotten them.

Reviewed by DR (MRS) MANEESHA TIKEKAR;
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**JOURNALISM IN INDIA — FROM
THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE
PRESENT DAY** by Rangaswami Par-
thasarathy; Sterling Publishers Private
Ltd., L-10, Greenpark Extension, New
Delhi; 1989; pp.400; Rs.250.



"There is a great future for Indian journalism" — Mr. Rangaswami Parthasarathy concludes his interesting and informative study of the history of Indian journalism on this optimistic note. It may be presumed, though he does not say so, that the 'great future' he envisages is in terms of the number of newspapers and their circulation. There is something naive about this presumption. For, Indian journalism is not a matter of a few hundred or a few thousand newspapers (used in the wider sense of all publications) in one or two languages. There are more than 20,000 publications in about 90 languages. Indian journalism is thus a complex entity and any generalisation about it is hazardous. Given a graphical representation of the growth profile of all newspapers in every language and region, one may see curves of all shapes.

To take the case of the English daily press, for instance. It may be seen that while its rural penetration and reach is not significant over the years, its urban base is not large enough to accommodate new entrants into the field; in Bombay, no English morning started during the last couple of years, has managed to survive. People's prefer-

ences for one or the other old newspaper may have something to do with this phenomenon. It is also possible that newspapers carrying a variety of advertisements over many pages are in demand. But it needs to be remembered that with no lack of discouragement to the learning of English, the readership of English papers will either decline or rise only marginally. The mortality of periodicals in English is already disconcerting.

Mr. Parthasarathy is not so much concerned with making a critical evaluation of the quality of Indian journalism as with tracing its development over 200 years since John Company days and indicating the broad emerging trends in its functioning. He is more a narrator than an interpreter as his targeted readers are students of journalism. He succeeds admirably in this task. He is at his best when he contrasts the role of the press before and after Independence. His portraits of the 'giants' of the past — G. Subramania Iyer, Motilal Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal, Tilak, Besant, Kasturiranga Iyengar, Sadanand (all founder-editors), Horniman, Arthur Moore, Frank Moraes, Rama Rao and N. Raghunathan (all journalist-editors) — are indeed scintillating cameos that reveal close study and deep understanding of the subjects. His sketches of the 'centenarians' — the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Hindu*, *The Statesman*, *The Times of India*, and *The Tribune* provide a fund of information not available in any extant publication on the Indian press.

Mr. Parthasarathy pays special attention to subjects of vital interest to the press and the people alike — big business ownership of multiple newspapers, freedom of the press, the owner-editor relationship, code of ethics for journalists, irresponsible writing in the name of 'investigative journalism', the functioning of the Press Council and the present conditions and prospects of working journalists. His quotations from the reports of the two Press Commissions (1952-54 and 1980-82) in regard to these subjects are valuable as reference material.

Belonging, as he does, to an older generation of journalists' and with a journalistic experience spread over nearly four decades, Mr. Parthasarathy takes a romantic, as against a realistic,

view of Indian journalism. For him, its history is an 'exciting tale' and a 'saga of adventure, patriotism, sacrifice and dedication to a noble profession'. One is not sure whether it was really so, at any rate for the majority of the working journalists who got into papers that were financially weak and were under constant threat of closure. Journalists of all ranks changed from paper to paper; one of them set up a record by working for 25 papers and another a record of sorts by hopping from one paper to another with totally opposed political aims. There was, no doubt, a spirit of self-sacrifice under Gandhian inspiration but journalists were very often the victims of the whimsicalities of the proprietors. Hiring and firing of all and sundry were the order of the day.

To-day, the conditions of service of working journalists have improved, thanks to the Press Commission and the Wage Board Awards. But formidable problems remain — the nexus of big business with newspapers, the general spirit of competitiveness, the partisan approach to public issues, the general obsession with politics and politicians and a greater concern with personalities than with issues. Mr. Parthasarathy takes adequate note of the increasing vogue of investigative journalism and the writings of columnists. Here again, only a few names are prominent and their writings do not consistently satisfy the exacting standards of truthfulness, accuracy and fairness.

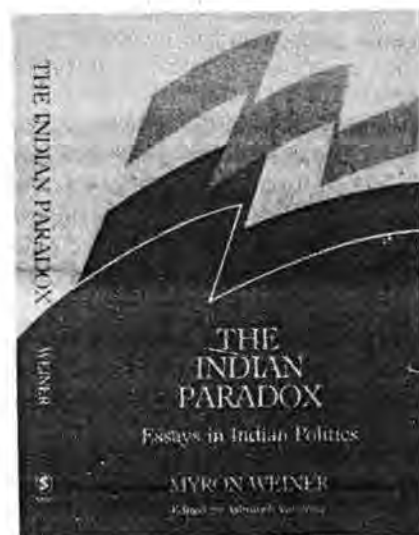
The author devotes considerable space to the question of the freedom of the press — from the East India Company days to the Congress (I) rule of 1984-89. By and large, it is a free press that operates in India with little or no government control. There is, however, an air of unreality about discussions on the freedom of the press in the Indian context. Freedom for whom? For the proprietor? For the editor? For the columnist? Newspaper editors continue to be pawns in the hands of proprietors who, in turn, are attached by political strings to men (or women) in power. The editor of a Bombay weekly found himself the editor of a leading daily in the capital in the eighties because the Prime Minister's son wanted him there. Another editor was taken in at the behest of the Prime Minister and

thrown out when ordered to do so. A third editor got himself selected as a candidate for election by the party in power and threw his independence to the winds. The editor of a newspaper, whom Mr. Parthasarathy describes as the "father of investigative journalism" was in and out of the paper in which he now works after a stint in a rival paper with pro-establishment leanings. Press freedom is indeed a precious possession that needs to be cherished at all times. But in the Indian context one does not know who uses it and to what purpose.

Mr. Parthasarathy's is a useful book of reference to students, journalists and laymen. He should organise his statistical material and, with additions, present it in a better way in future editions. He should specify the books and authors he quotes so that the curious reader may pursue his studies further.

Reviewed by Mr. V. Sivaramakrishnan, formerly of the Indian Economic Service, currently Associate Editor of the *Bhuvan's Journal*.

THE INDIAN PARADOX, ESSAYS IN INDIAN POLITICS by Myron Weiner (edited by Ashutosh Varshney) Sage Publications, New Delhi; 1989; pp.336; Rs. 195



To Myron Weiner, India is obviously a land of paradoxes. There is first of all the paradox of a poverty-stricken country still remaining democratic. Then there is the paradox between monarchi-

cal succession and a democratic system based on universal franchise. But above all the supreme paradoxes, to Weiner, is that we should still be able to retain a democratic political system in spite of the high level of political violence. To Weiner, India is baffling because its democratic system functions in conditions viewed as inhospitable by existing theories of democracy.

The paradox cannot be explained only in terms of the British tutelage (though Myron Weiner cannot help noting the fact that, after all, democracy in the third world has mostly survived in the former British colonies) for then how are we to explain Pakistan's inability to sustain democracy? The key to understanding the Indian paradox is that the country's singular good fortune in being blessed by the presence of an institution like the Indian National Congress which not only played a remarkable integrative role but was also able to accommodate India's baffling plurality. Weiner credits the Congress with remarkable skills. It succeeded in localizing many conflicts. It manipulated the federal system to divert several popular movements and agitations and deflect the wrath of the people from the Centre towards state governments. However in the reviewer's opinion, a moot question is are we all better off today?

Weiner also deals with other aspects of Indian politics and some of the things he has to say are indeed insightful. For instance, he finds that the Indian paradox disproves most Marxist theorising. Thus, agricultural and industrial policies, as he reveals, reflect different combinations of ideas and interests and are not simply an expression of the interests of the same dominant class coalition.

After analysing the democratic elections of 1971, 1977 and 1980, Weiner concludes that the Congress party is decaying. He finds Rajiv Gandhi's India an immobilized democratic/bureaucratic state. To quote him: "Powerful interests within the state bureaucracy and public sector enterprises, a foreign policy establishment that remains cautious and reactive, the inheritance of a weak party organization, and the international environment have thus combined to frustrate a young and politically inexperienced Prime Minister at every turn". According

to Weiner, Rajiv had "for a brief historical moment, an opportunity for significant change. The moment appears to have passed." To Weiner, the Congress of the eighties was a far cry from its resplendent past and he traces the implications of its decay.

Writing in 1983 (Chapter 12) Weiner observes, "The key to the institutional structure still remains the party. So long as India has at least one political party capable of winning a party majority (or forming a stable coalition with others) with a leadership that can effectively manage the factional disputes within the party itself... then the prospects are reasonably good that the institutional framework (read democracy) that has functioned since independence with only a single interlude can be sustained."

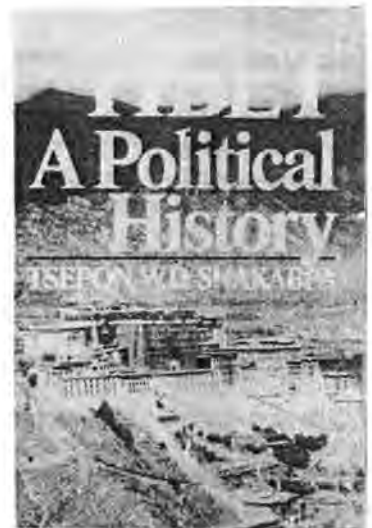
Today, the Congress is out of power but we cannot vouchsafe for a stable coalition government having replaced it. If Weiner is correct and the key to understanding the Indian paradox is indeed the party then the immediate future does appear bleak.

Reviewed by PROF ADI H. DOCTOR, head of the Department of Political Science, Goa University.

TIBET — A POLITICAL HISTORY by Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa; Potala Publications, New York; 1984; pp.369 Price not stated.

Strategic considerations apart, historically, Tibet's importance has been due to its Buddhist religion which attracted adherents from neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Mongolia and China. Though Buddhism was imported from India, the latter country had only scattered, albeit relaxed, contacts with Tibet until the arrival of the British in the sub-continent. On the other hand, the centrality of conflict marks Tibet's relations with China.

Pre-Buddhist Tibet adhered to the Bon faith and it was not until 233 A.D. that Buddhism gained a foothold in Tibet. Interestingly, the institution of kingship predates the Dalai Lama's as the dominant mode of rule. Chinese records even attribute Chinese names to the earliest Tibetan kings who, at times, were so powerful as to secure vassalage from Nepal, Burma and several north Indian kingdoms.



The institution of Dalai Lama emerged in Tibet in the fifteenth century when Tibet enjoyed close relations with Mongolia. The title itself is Mongolian in origin and "Dalai" means ocean indicating wealth of knowledge possessed by or attributed to the Dalai Lama. The first monk to receive the title of Dalai Lama was Sonam Gyatso in recognition of this work in spreading Buddhism in Mongolia.

Chinese intrusion into Tibetan affairs was slow and piecemeal; it manifested itself during the reign of the Manchu Emperor Kang Hsi. Before this development, Tibet was protected by the Qoshot Mongols under Lhazang Khan. The Kang Hsi emperor, who sent large armies twice to Tibet, was responsible for installing the seventh Dalai Lama in the Potala Palace. The Manchu emperor also built a garrison and stationed troops in Lhasa to maintain law and order.

Thereafter, many administrative changes were made by the Chinese in Tibet thereby setting a dangerous precedent. Chinese intervention in Tibet's domestic politics also became a regular feature of Tibetan history and Chinese armies periodically marched into Tibet on various pretexts. A garrison of Chinese troops under two officials (subsequently known as the Ambans) became the permanent representatives of the Manchus in Tibet until the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911. The Manchu success in gaining a foothold in Tibet

was due largely to internal strife within the country and the failure of the Dalai Lamas in administering the temporal affairs of their realm.

In the nineteenth century Tibet fought several wars with Nepal and Ladakh and acquitted itself admirably even though it had primitive weapons and no Chinese assistance. In one treaty signed between Tibet and Ladakh, the Chinese emperor sought to implicate China in the agreement but failed to figure in later Tibetan archives.

British policy towards Tibet was formulated some time in the mid-nineteenth century when they made Ladakh a dependency of Kashmir. Following the measure and other British incursions, the Tibetan government refused to permit the British to build a resthouse near the Tibetan-Sikkimese border. Events reached a climax on March 21, 1888, when a brief skirmish took place in which the Tibetan troops were routed by the disciplined and well-armed British soldiers. In 1903 Lord Curzon sent a British military mission to Tibet under Colonel Francis Younghusband. When the Tibetans objected, clashes took place until the badly-equipped natives were crushed by the invaders.

Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, there were various Chinese intrusions into Tibet as well as Chinese interference in Tibet's internal affairs. The Dalai Lama even visited Peking to stop Chinese harassment of Tibetan monasteries. Overtly, the Chinese agreed to cease meddling in Tibetan affairs but, in reality, their goal was nothing short of invasion of Tibet. When the invasion did not take place in 1910, Tibet complained to the British who, however, remained non-committal.

After the death of the thirteenth Dalai Lama who had succeeded in making Tibet into an independent nation, there was civil strife within the country. During World War II Tibet maintained its neutrality and had scattered contacts with some of the belligerents. On October 7, 1950, China attacked eastern Tibet. But when the issue of the Chinese invasion was in the U.N., India recommended settlement of the dispute

outside that forum thus postponing the Tibetan question.

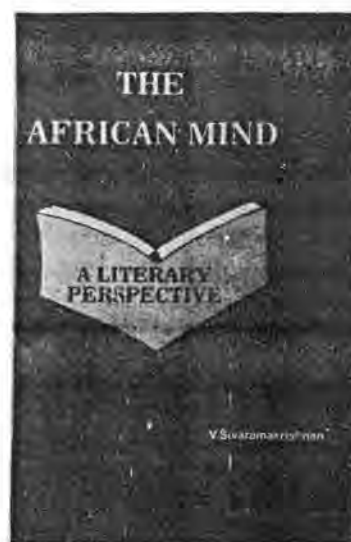
From 1977 onwards the Communist Chinese began building up their forces in Tibet in order to push through radical reforms in Tibet. Chinese propaganda denounced Buddhism and other sacrosanct institutions of Tibetan society provoking widespread resistance by the Tibetan people. On the night of March 17, 1959, the Dalai Lama escaped in disguise to India and sought political asylum.

Tibet - A Political History is a gem of narrative history that details Tibet's case for independence minutely and meticulously. Its author, Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, had first hand experience as Tibet's Secretary of Finance from 1930 to 1950. When the Dalai Lama went into exile, Shakabpa became his official representative in New Delhi until 1966 when he retired to take to scholarship. This book was twenty years in the making and is written in a disarmingly simple style. It is hoped that many Indians will take the trouble to read this book before the reality of Chinese occupation erases all records of Tibet's glorious past.

Reviewed by KAMAL WADHAWA, a freelance Journalist and personal assistant to Mr. Ram Jethmalani

THE AFRICAN MIND by V. Sivaramakrishnan; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan; 1990; pp. 139; Rs. 35

The author of *The African Mind*, is certainly well-acquainted with the work of African writers. V. Sivaramakrishnan was one of the officers of the Indian Economic Service deputed by the Government of India to Tanzania under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation programme during 1979-82. Besides planning Tanzanian industries, Sivaramakrishnan took a remarkably keen interest in the life of people around him, even going so far as to study whatever information was available on African culture. He had necessarily to confine himself to Africans writing in English, or at least to translations of French and Portuguese African writing. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which has through the years



done a great deal of excellent work on comparative literature and culture, published Sivaramakrishnan's essays, sixteen of them in 1981-83. This year, 1990, momentous for India because of Nelson Mandela's visit, was deemed a fitting occasion to release these essays in the form of a book.

That India and Africa have a great deal in common is a well-known fact. But that African writing, particularly the work of Nigerian and Kenyan writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, reflects many of the post-colonial problems that have beset us in this country, is not so well-known. Nelson Mandela has repeatedly acknowledged his debt to Mahatma Gandhi, and it is therefore more than appropriate that Mr. Sivaramakrishnan should dedicate his book on Africa to Mandela who is one of the few true Gandhians left.

Sivaramakrishnan's book confines itself to the culture of the people of the east, south, and west of Africa, perhaps because it is here that literature in English is both prolific and accessible. Through his essays there run some common themes which link up writers widely separated by geography and ethnicity. In earlier years, African writers concentrated on the conflict arising out of colonial domination, and the forcible conversion of Africans to alien religions. Achebe's early novels, for example, describe the self-contained life of a tribe, happy and content simply because it has not been tested by change. This static bliss is swept away

by the intrusion of the white man armed with bible and gun. A crisis of identity and an anguish of isolation is the consequence. This is so, too, in the novels of the Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o. There are also the novels of transition where the things of the white man have come to stay, though the white man himself is preparing to leave. The legacy, as both Achebe and Ngugi demonstrate through their fiction, is neither pleasant nor beneficial. The post-colonial fiction of these writers reveals even more terrible truths, for we now see neo-colonialism in action — exploitation of the black by the black. Corruption and crime in the name of politics rear their ugly heads, supported by devilish military might. Coups are the order of the day, and little else seems to happen, especially in Nigeria.

Faced with this kind of modern tyranny, Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate, uses Yoruba ritual and tradition to set out universal truths. Like Sartre, he is ultimately concerned with one subject — freedom. Believing that "the man dies who keeps silent in the face of tyranny", he has even spent a long and painful spell in prison for speaking out bluntly against the exploitation of his people.

Sivaramakrishnan has brought out other aspects of the African psyche. He shows how African literature directs us to a whole way of life — the place of the mother in the family (this is so, despite the fact that till recently, most African tribes encouraged a man to marry many wives as a sign of his status within the tribe), the love of one's profession, the myriad gods and ancestors, and most of all, the unity of the extended family and of the village-clusters. Included too, are the many aphoristic and picturesque sayings of the various tribes such as the charming Ibo proverb, "A person who has not secured a place on the floor should not begin to look for a mat."

Casting his net very wide indeed, Sivaramakrishnan writes on writers from Ghana such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Nuruddin Fara from Somalia, Amos Tutuola, one of the very early Nigerian writers, Ruhumbika from Tanzania, the Senegalese Sembene Ousmane, and the South African, Alex La Guma, whose *A Walk in the Night*, evokes all the squalor and filth of the South African

Ghetto. While some of the writers like Wole Soyinka, are complex and subtle, using metaphor as he would everyday speech, others like the 'Onitsha' group are naively simple, content to write from a mere narrative point of view. Sivaramakrishnan even extends his vision to include Alex Haley's *Roots*, and V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, providing his readers with a perspective from which to look at Africa both from within and without.

The African Mind is largely an attempt to arouse an interest in the myriad ways of African life, and in this Sivaramakrishnan has certainly succeeded. For the student of African literature, this book reminds one of Ezekiel Mphahlele's words: "Is the South African experience just another 'myth of the wounded Adam?' I do know a lot about the wound. It is not impossible to give artistic expression to the cry and despair to the hope." While one must

not expect academic criticism from a friendly venture such as Sivaramakrishnan's, it must also be pointed out that for the serious reader of African literature, the book is too simplistic in its findings. However, as the Governor of Maharashtra, Shri C. Subramaniam has said in his foreword, the book is certainly an encouragement to read and know much more of African literature, so that "the magic of Nature, beyond the ken of human eye", may send its message ringing into the human consciousness.

Reviewed by DR. USHA HEMMADI, Lecturer in English (Retd.) Elphinstone College and the SNDT Post-Graduate Centre, Bombay.

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