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Freedom First

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The Changing Face of Indian Politics



**Making a Mockery
of Indian Democracy**

Kicking the Statist-Drug Habit

Edward Shils

July 1910 - January 1995

When we at *Freedom First* heard of the passing away of Edward Shils, we recalled the last written communication we received from him almost nine years earlier which was quintessential Shils. While planning the festschrift for *Freedom First* founder, Minoo Masani (a volume of essays in his honour on his eightieth birthday entitled *Freedom and Dissent*) through an oversight we overlooked inviting Edward Shils a close associate of Masani in the International Congress for Cultural Freedom, to contribute to the volume. Acknowledging the volume we mailed him, Mr. Shils very gently reprimanded us for not being asked to contribute. He said he would have been most delighted to have paid his tribute to his friend Minoo Masani.

To celebrate the life of the intellectual and to remind the people of how central the role of the intelligentsia is to all societies, developed and developing, was a passion with Shils. His monograph *The Indian Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity* was, in its time, one of the most discussed books. It encapsulated three things that Shils was very concerned about: tradition, modernization and intellectuals. He wrote with great empathy on the intellectuals of modern Asia and Africa. He had great hopes of their contribution to the modernization of old societies.

It is this interest in intellectuals that made him examine closely one of the most feverishly active zones of Indian intellectual life - Bengal. It is said that his interest in the region, language and literature was intense enough to make him attempt to learn the language of Tagore - though this might well be apocryphal.

The University of Chicago of whose

Committee of Social Thought he was a senior member still has a Department of Bengali Studies which is the most distinguished in the West and Shils could not have escaped the strange attraction of this great regional culture. He managed to get the poet Sudhin Gupta to spend a few months in the University to give him the leisure and the ambience to write his autobiography. The incomplete *World of Thought* is one of the delights of anglo-Bengali writing.

The attraction of Bengal and its intellectuals to the closed world of dogmatic marxism disturbed Shils who saw marxist dogma as one of the greatest threats to a free society. Along with Masani and other leading intellectuals in the movement for cultural freedom Shils was accused of being an agent of the US in its battle against the communist system. Far from being defensive Shils declined to be apologetic about his participation in the movement to promote cultural freedom.

His interest in development and modernisation made him particularly sensitive to intellectuals in the third world being trapped by communist dogma. But he was equally concerned with the witch hunting of suspected communists and fellow travellers in the United States. His *Torment of Secrecy* contrasting the British and American public attitudes towards political power still makes fascinating reading.

As a sociologist the importance of tradition in the nation-state and its institutions interested Shils and he explored its significance. One of his most interesting essays was on the British monarchy. But his deep commitment to the Enlightenment and to European traditions made him, de-



Edward Shils (centre) seen with Irving Kristol (right) and Robie Macauley.

spite his familiarity with the third world, a stranger to the tenaciousness of the deep seated cultural pluralism of third world traditions so different from that of the European.

He set great value on higher education and the impact education and research would have in strengthening the foundations of civic and human culture.

The magazine *Minerva* which he founded and edited has remained one of the most valuable of journals devoted to the problems of higher education. Equally significant was his devotion to the University of Chicago. Testimony to this statement is his volume *Remembering the University of Chicago* to commemorate the centenary of the University of Chicago. The centenary volume is a collection of essays on the numerous distinguished faculty members, scientists, economists and sociologists who elevated that university to be among the best in the world.

Edward Shils was the recipient of numerous honours. Chief among them was the Balzan Prize which he was awarded in 1983. Considered the equivalent of the Nobel Prize the honour is given for achievement in subjects not covered by the Nobel.

Freedom First salutes a great intellectual and a true soldier in the struggle for freedom and individual dignity.

R. Srinivasan

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A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

Freedom First has been going through a difficult phase. A Government of Maharashtra notice called on our publishers the Democratic Research Service (DRS) to vacate the premises on the fourth floor of Maneckji Wadia Building on December 30. This was based on a court order upheld by the Supreme Court in respect of all requisitioned premises. We were occupying premises requisitioned by Mr. Morarji Desai in 1952 on instructions from Sardar Patel who had in that year asked Minoo Masani to organise an effort to inform people on the realities of the communist movement and to educate people on the virtues of democracy.

Our legal adviser suggested we comply with the government order. Consequently, the DRS decided to ask its sister organisation the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) to take back *Freedom First* so that continuity of publication was ensured. As for the DRS, it would deliberate the nature of its future work.

On 30th December 1994, *Freedom First* moved to the premises of its original publishers, the ICCF. The ICCF office had to be renovated to enable *Freedom First* to function from that office. As a result, for the greater part of January, we were without an office. All our papers, records, mailing lists, books and magazines were in packed cartons during this time. Normalcy has still to be fully restored. Due to these reasons, the January-March, 1995 issue was delayed even more than in the past few months. Whatever the reason, we apologise to our readers for the delayed publication of issue number 424.

There appears to be a feeling developing among some of our supporters that as the new policies of the Government of India are in line with our own advocacy of a free economy, *Freedom First's* objectives have been achieved. It follows therefore, they argue, that there is no need for a journal like ours to continue. We have sought to respond to this with our editorial on pages 3 and 4 entitled "*Freedom First - Its Continuing Relevance*". We invite you to write in your views.

We are deeply indebted to Prof. S. V. Kogekar for responding to our invitation to write on Indian politics today. By a coincidence, Dr. Dubhashi who recently retired as Vice Chancellor of Goa University and our good friend Mangesh Kulkarni also sent in articles on Indian politics. Considering the state of Indian politics today we felt that we couldn't do better than to start the first issue for 1995 with a discussion of what Prof. Kogekar aptly describes as the changing face of Indian politics. We also thought it was the right time to republish extracts from a much acclaimed Rajaji Birthday lecture by Minoo Masani entitled "Too Much Politics, Too little Citizenship".

While we shall try and put the printing schedule of *Freedom First* back on track, we desperately need your support and co-operation in introducing the journal to a much wider readership and your help in securing advertising support.

The cost of paper has literally shot up and our move to the new premises with the need to renovate the office has cost us a packet. All our reserve funds saved over the years have disappeared. Without your support we cannot survive. With your support, we can move mountains!

A belated happy new year to all of you.

Editor

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WITH MANY VOICES

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

We want to be the next Asian Tiger. But we cannot even become the Asian Cat at this rate.

Mr. S. M. Muneer, President of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry, *Indian Express*, December 22, 1994

An investor in the power sector still has to take 117 clearances at various levels, although the government claims that only 17 permits have to be obtained.

Mr. Cyril Shroff, a merchant banker in the *The Times of India*, December 12, 1994

Purchase of this (Barbie) doll and similar toys is forbidden by Islam because Barbie's strong resemblance to a mature woman could warp children's sexuality.

Sheikh Khaled Al Madikour, Kuwait, in *Time*, September 12, 1994

Can I eat freedom? Can I buy firewood with it this Christmas?

Gheorge Tataru, a factory worker in Romania, cited in *The Times of India*, December 22, 1994

So many in my Party are on the take that few can point a finger at others.

A senior Congress partyman referring to corruption in his party, *The Times of India*, December 22, 1994

We hold office, not power.

Dr. Nelson Mandela cited in *The Statesman*, February 4, 1995

There is an unfortunate shortage of democracies in the Islamic world.

Brian Crozier, *National Review*, December 19, 1994

For the first time in the last 150 years, we have a hopelessly weak Centre.

Kewal Verma, *Business Standard*, March 1, 1995.

Scratch a Pakistani industrialist and you'll find a man who made his first wad of money from the drugs or arms trade. Or so goes the local business lore.

Ahmed Rashid, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 9, 1995

If the statistics and accounts are at all accurate, we can expect Russia to become something like Italy after World War II.

Mark Hopkins, *The New Leader*, September 12, 1994

If a committed group like the PLO could move into the democratic arena, I don't see why the LTTE can't. It's difficult, but even the best of guerillas must tire of fighting and war.

Sri Lanka President Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, *Time*, December 19, 1994.

In developing countries, the chances of dying from social neglect (malnutrition and preventable diseases) is 33 times greater than the chances of dying in a war from external aggression. Yet, poor nations have 19 soldiers for every one doctor.

Comment in *Humanscape*, February 1995.

Many of the utterances of Mahatma Gandhi on Kashmir, if repeated by somebody else today, may be condemned by Hindu chauvinists as anti-national.

Balraj Puri in *Occasional Papers on HUMAN RIGHTS*, No.12, October-November 1995

The government between North Block and South Block, manages to block everything in the country.

Mr. N. Vaghul, Chairman, ICICI, during a speech to the Rotary Club of Bombay, *The Gateway* November 8, 1994



"And if granted absolute power,
I promise not to abuse it. Trust me."

Reprinted courtesy Frank Cotham.

FREEDOM FIRST - THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE

Freedom First began publication in June 1952. Then a 16-page monthly its masthead read: "Organ of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom". 40 months later *Freedom First* was taken over by the Democratic Research Service. Now, 40 years later *Freedom First* reverts as a publication of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF).

The Open Society

The editorial in the inaugural issue of *Freedom First* (June 1952) entitled "The Open Society", spelt out the journal's *raison d'être*:

"In India, for centuries, thought has been free, forever filled with the desire of the sky. Patterns of behaviour have been fixed; caste-bound society circumscribed man's actions, but his thought has soared freely. Thought has enjoyed an autonomy that few authorities have dared to encroach upon. Such a mental climate led to two advantages: (i) every idea had to confront its critics and free debate between them went on, and (ii) ideas were judged for their intrinsic worth, they often changed not the course of thought alone but of events too. Openness to ideas, refusal to discredit ideas by discovering some 'interests' behind them and aversion to shifting controversies from the plane of ideas to the plane of interests were the hall-marks of our intellectual life.

"That the voice of dissent should have free scope was a deep seated conviction. In describing the working of Buddhist assemblies, Dr. Radhakumud Mukerji writes in his *Hindu Civilization*: Silence on Resolution put was taken as consent thereto; members in favour of it were asked 'to be silent' and 'anyone against it to speak.' This shows not merely a predilection for tolerance but the conviction that a proposition gains by the freedom given to its critics and challengers.

A Heritage of Tolerance

"Regimentation of thought has been alien to the genius of this ancient land; she has revelled in luxuriant foliation of the mind, much of this 'tropical growth' being superficial, but a part of it has proved to be of abiding worth. A glorious achievement was the climate of tolerance that was realised and the habit of confronting every idea with its critics that was developed and esteemed.

"An open society is one wherein not only thought is free but behaviour is unbound and 'ideational' that is capable of responding to the press and pull of ideas. In India ideas did not always alter the contours of conduct but its impact on others' ideas was ceaseless. Ideas have freely impregnated and enriched one another. Such is our

heritage of broad tolerance.

The Movement for Cultural Freedom has no fixed nostrums for the ills of our people. But it is convinced that the sickness of society cannot be cured outside a climate of freedom. To work for an open society, to keep the windows of mind and heart open, is the main purpose, the driving impulse of the Movement. All choices are tentative and therefore the framework of free debate is the only condition that assures that wrong choices will be set right. To preserve that framework and not to impose any choice is the purpose of the Movement. Against strident voices of regimentation, forces of freedom have to rally not for the success of some sect or a cause, but for retaining for the people the freedom to choose and to change."

This was and continues to be the intellectual underpinning of *Freedom First*

Tradition Maintained

39 months later, when the ICCF decided that what it needed was a journal devoted to the arts and culture, the publication of the journal was taken over by the Democratic Research Service. The change would enable *Freedom First* to consider 'more practical, political, social, economic and ideological issues' which were then major issues in the struggle against international communism. Reaffirming its basic postulates the editorial in *Freedom First* No. 39 of August 1955, explained:

"There will be no change in the purpose or policy of *Freedom First*. It will continue to be as before the stout champion of freedom and democracy and the stern critic of all forms of totalitarianism. ***Freedom First* has established a tradition of bold and independent thinking and of fearless and dispassionate criticism. From that tradition, of which we are proud, there will be no departure.**

"The view is current in certain quarters that freedom and democracy are a luxury which an economically backward country like ours cannot afford. *Freedom First* rejects that view. It is convinced that there can be no economic advancement without freedom. Freedom is as essential for economic welfare as it is for the development of the human personality. *Freedom First* will therefore reject all so-called shortcuts to economic welfare which encroach upon freedom and insist upon freedom being accepted as the first and foremost value. The choice between bread and freedom is a false one. There is no bread where freedom is lost. Bread and freedom - bread in short through freedom - is our slogan."

Forty years later beginning with this the January-

March 1995 issue (No.424), *Freedom First* becomes once again a publication of the ICCF. The immediate reason is the fact that the Democratic Research Service which is housed in requisitioned premises is under notice to vacate. While a Maharashtra Government ordinance has extended the last date for surrendering the premises to December 31,1997, the DRS decided to stay with its decision to return *Freedom First* to the ICCF for a far more basic reason.

International communism is dead. The Soviet Union is no more. Communist China and assorted countries ruled by communist parties have adopted the economic systems of the 'decadent' West. The communist 'fifth column' has almost disappeared. A major objective of the DRS - to expose communist conspiracies and educate public opinion on the real nature of the international communist movement directed from Moscow - no longer exists.

Almost everything that the DRS said about the Soviet Union and its fifth column in non-communist countries including India has been amply borne out by facts revealed by Russian sources themselves after the break-up of the Soviet Union. One has only to leaf through past issues of *Freedom First* over the last forty three years to test the veracity of this assertion.

Why *Freedom First* Must Continue

But the task of *Freedom First* is far from over.

It is our belief that the new economic policy adopted by the party in power is based not on conviction but dictated by the fact that forty years of statist policies bankrupted the country. Not only the ruling party but all other parties in the country do not really believe in an open economy because it would rob them of the great advantage of combining economic power with political power. They look upon liberalisation as a necessary evil to be discarded at the first opportunity. It is also open knowledge that it was the IMF and the World Bank that put considerable pressure on the government to move towards a market economy.

It is therefore quite likely that the moment the economic situation eases this or successive governments of whatever hue will in their pursuit of power gladly adopt populist measures rather than pursue with any degree of honesty, policies calculated to ensure the success of an open economy so crucial to improving the standard of life of our people.

Freedom First will, irrespective of the colour of the party in power keep plugging away the crucial need to ensure that the liberalisation process is carried to its logical conclusion.

Copyright with Human Rights

At the same time an open economy can no longer be considered an insurance against dictatorship by the state - be it by a party or an individual. Communist China is the

most notorious example of the sad fact that a free economy need not necessarily imply a free society. Even sadder is the fact that for all their grandiose talk of the primacy of individual rights the United States prefers copyright to human rights - the modern version of the bread or freedom syndrome so sedulously promoted by the communists in the earlier part of this century. The Americans are quite prepared to turn a blind eye to Tienanmen Square or the brutal suppression of the Tibetan people for a mess of pottage that Peking's dictators dangle before businessmen from the United States or the West.

Freedom First rejects the proposition of copyright or human rights. *Freedom First* believes in copyright with human rights.

While totalitarian communism is no longer the clear and present danger a new threat as insidious if not more has emerged. It is the threat of religious fundamentalism. While almost every religion has its quota of fanatics, it is obvious that the most serious threat to genuine secularism and to international peace comes from Islamic fundamentalism.

This has led to a backlash from the lunatic fringe in every other religion. We have our own homegrown varieties of saffron brigades who have appointed themselves as saviours of a religion that could well do without them and whose reputation for tolerance and catholicity of outlook have been badly tarnished. Ayodhya, Babri Masjid and the Bombay bombings are frightening warnings of what will happen to our country if religious bigotry, revivalism and narrow chauvinism are not fought in the realm of ideas and marginalised if not eliminated.

The Communications Revolution

While the revolution in the communication and transportation technologies have made the world a truly global village efforts continue to restrict and control the free flow of information within and across national boundaries. Cultural vigilantes abound not only in Islamic countries but in our own where freedom of expression is sought to be curbed by resorting to threats of physical violence. The case of the film 'Bombay' is the most recent example. The ban on dish antennas in Iran is another. We need to act before the sadhus and the mullahs gain control.

Eternal vigilance is indeed the price of liberty. *Freedom First* promises to be ever vigilant in the continuing struggle to preserve human rights in a free society.

As we enter a new publication year under the banner of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom we cannot do better than to reiterate the promise we made in August 1955:

"*Freedom First* has established a tradition of bold and independent thinking and of fearless and dispassionate criticism. From that tradition, of which we are proud there will be no departure."

It will be freedom first - and always.

The Changing Face of Indian Politics

S. V. Kogekar

Between Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her successor, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, they demolished the old political apparatus of the Congress and let loose forces which have caused alarm and anxiety about the future of Indian democracy. Parties in opposition to the Congress have also not followed a different and more reassuring path. The malaise is thus all pervading.

Indian politics in the pre-independence period was marked by a spirit of service and self-sacrifice on the part of those who took part in it. Politics was for them an uphill task directed to building up the confidence of a fallen people in their own ability to overthrow foreign rule by sustained and united action. Those who led the people in their struggle for self rule - which was then what politics was all about - had to rouse the people not only to fight for independence but also to fight the enemy within in the form of backwardness in social and economic life. The fight against the evils of caste, superstition and ignorance was an integral part of political activity undertaken without the prospect of self-advancement in any way.

The road was long and paved with hardships. The possibility that the struggle would outlive those engaged in it could often dampen their enthusiasm. Yet the struggle had to go on and called for a vast reserve of inner strength and conviction about its necessity. Differences in approaches to and methods of conducting the struggle were, no doubt expressed and even vehemently asserted. Controversies arose and were engaged in with messianic zeal. But all this was a part of the political game played for the sake of the country without any thought or prospect of personal gain.

When, in course of time, the struggle took the form of a mass movement, it also threw up a leadership which put the country before everything else and suffered long periods in prison or underwent hardships and faced privations of various

kinds for standing firmly by their nationalistic convictions and beliefs.

When India attained Independence in 1947, the Indian National Congress which had spearheaded the mass movement for freedom from alien rule became the natural successor to the British rulers of the country. It had a leadership of high quality in respect of intelligence, organising ability and commitment to the uplift of the downtrodden. It enjoyed tremendous popular support in the task of national reconstruction to which it was expected to address itself.

Politics now entered a new phase where it was closely linked to power. Power could now be acquired on the basis of popular support expressed through periodical elections and used to make and implement policies and decisions of government. Political power also gave control over such resources of the country as the government was able to muster. The use of these resources for development or for the distribution of favours and patronage was now in the hands of those who wielded authority under the Constitution.

The 'Congress System'

For about twenty years after Independence the Congress party enjoyed a virtual monopoly of power over the country. Though the new Constitution adopted in November 1949 had provided for a federal system of government, the existence of the same party viz. the Congress, in power at the federal centre as also in the constituent states made the relations between the two a matter of internal adjustment within the party.

The party leadership consisting of towering personalities was keen on establishing a consensus on major issues by settling differences or competing claims in an amicable way. The rank and file could thus be made to feel that they were an integral part of the governing apparatus.

The Congress was ideologically also not very rigid in the enunciation of its aims, objects and means, though it was vaguely supposed to follow the 'socialist pattern'. It could therefore accommodate a variety of views under its ideological umbrella. It adhered to the principle of intra-party democracy and encouraged the building up of the party organisation from the village level upto the state and national levels. Party office-bearers were elected by their constituted bodies in periodical elections within the party except at the highest level viz. the working committee, which was left to be formed by nomination by the party President as in the pre-independence era.

The party placed considerable emphasis on social transformations on the basis of equality. The new Constitution barred discrimination on grounds of caste, race, religion, sex or place of birth. The only exception made was in the case of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the Anglo-Indian community in respect of state employment originally restricted to a period of ten years. The pre-Independence Congress had through its constructive programme placed the ideal of a casteless society before itself and the same ideal was recognised as valid in the initial stages of Independence. It was only thus that a common citizen-

ship owing common allegiance to the Indian Union could be realized.

The main reason why the 'Congress System' as it has been called, could work was the sense of discipline which permeated the party organisation. Functionalism or personal ambitions of members could be contained and not allowed to disrupt the party by reason of the moral authority wielded by the towering persons at its head. The party did indeed face severe crises during the period as, for instance, on the question of reorganisation of states on a linguistic basis. But it was able to arrive at a workable consensus over a period of time. This picture did not however last beyond the first twenty years of the post-Independence period.

Weakening of Institutions

In the general elections of 1967, the Congress system suffered its first major reverse. It barely retained its power at the Centre, but it lost it in several states where non-Congress governments were voted to power. It then began to decline in its hold on the people - a trend which was accelerated by the split in the organisation in 1969 brought about by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The weakening of the old institutions and modes of operations of the Congress party which started from that time continued under Mrs. Gandhi's successor Rajiv Gandhi. Indeed between the two of them they demolished the old political apparatus of the Congress and let loose forces which have caused alarm and anxiety about the future of Indian democracy. Parties in opposition to the Congress have also not followed a different and more reassuring path. The malaise is thus all pervading.

Power Replaces 'Ideology'

The first casualty in this process of decline of the old system was 'ideology' which was given a go-by and 'power' became the sole objective of politics. The desire to be in power led to the use of that power for continuing to remain in power. It

entailed the establishment of a personal hegemony and combating the forces of opposition within the party by any means. This was achieved by centralising all authority in the hands of the leadership at the Centre at the cost of regional or state leadership which was overruled or otherwise subverted by constant interference in regional or local matters. The selection of party candidates in various elections to state legislatures for instance, was finalised only with the approval of the central leadership mainly on the basis of their loyalty to that leadership. The confidence of the leadership at the state or regional level in its capacity to build up the party strength from within was undermined in the process. Party functionaries were nominated rather than elected and thus owed their positions to the favours of the top leaders rather than to the support gathered from members at their respective levels. The pyramid of the party structure was thus inverted and gradually became unstable.

Personal Rule

Rajiv Gandhi tried his hand at a re-organisation of the party structure when he succeeded Mrs. Gandhi by announcing democratic elections to party posts. But by then the rot had spread so deep and wide that the announcement only resulted in the enrolment of bogus members by the aspiring candidates. The proposal was finally given up and the young leader continued the practice of nomination as before. The tactics and strategy of centralisation and personalisation of power perfected by his mother were pursued by the young prime minister even more vigorously than before. He shuffled his council of ministers a record number of times and kept all the incumbents on tenterhooks during their tenure of office. The idea apparently was to prevent any one else making a mark in any office or department of government.

In the absence of a well thought out and widely accepted ideology which could serve as a cohesive force within the party and as a basis for

securing electoral support from the people at large, resort was taken to the adoption of populist measures and slogans which promised everything to everybody. In a country with a vast and growing population pressing on the limited resources at its disposal such populist programmes only increased the people's expectations from the state. The state is looked upon as the provider of all things without any corresponding duty on the part of the masses who hope to benefit from it. The State is thus expected to provide education, employment, perquisites and privileges of all kinds. Those who promise these become popular and expect to encash their popularity in terms of electoral victories, knowing full well that it is impossible to fulfill these promises. But the politician is rarely concerned with the long-term effects of populist promises. He is mainly concerned with immediate or short term gains in terms of acquiring power.

Criminalisation of Politics

Populism and corruption seem to go in hand in hand. In the absence of ideological or moral constraints, power is viewed as the instrument of securing control over resources for the benefit of those in power and their relations, friends and supporters. Acquisition of money by all means available is taken to be the legitimate function of politicians. They can increase their clout on this basis and also secure electoral support by following corrupt practices. Obliging unsocial elements like smugglers, black-marketeers, etc. in return for the use of their money and muscle power in elections has become the accepted *modus operandi* in electoral politics. Not only that but the criminal elements have been emboldened to enter the political arena and secure respectability by getting elected to legislative bodies with the blessings of the professional politicians and their parties.

The Role of Vote Banks

Another alarming feature of the new phase of our politics is the em-

phasis laid on the creation of "vote banks" based on caste or communal loyalties. Votes of such groups are solicited in bulk by offering inducements and concessions which are entirely inconsistent with the secular character of the State and often militate against the enforcement of the rule of law. Caste has become an important element in the selection of candidates for election to various bodies.

This is quite in contrast to the pre-Independence emphasis on the abolition of caste divisions. The irony of the matter is that parties which had loudly proclaimed their opposition to caste-based politics have themselves helped to promote casteism by accepting it as a basis for reservations in educational institutions and in public employment. Far from abolishing caste, they have ensured its perpetuation. Instead of consolidating, this has virtually legitimised the fragmentation of society into rival, competing groups - a phenomenon fraught with grave consequences to the idea of national integration and harmony.

Sociologically speaking, a welfare state such as ours where the task of providing social security and emergency assistance is being taken over by the State to the extent it can, caste ceases to have the traditional function attributed to it in this behalf. It is therefore natural that its social importance should decline in course of time. But with the populist measure of linking caste with reservations as mentioned above, a fresh lease of life is being given to caste in Indian society. It has already acquired importance as the rallying point for the respective groups of people for political action at the local and state levels of government. This is a glaring example of the shortsightedness of present-day political leaders who are prepared to damage the long-term interests of the country associated with the so-called vote banks.

Dynastic Politics

The neglect of ideology has led

to yet another dangerous trend in our politics viz. dynastic loyalties as a factor in political advancement. This is equivalent to introducing the principle of hereditary monarchy in the governance of a democratic republic. The idea of considering the loyalty factor for elevation to party offices, ministerships, etc. is no doubt mooted by those who have been left out of such posts. The danger lies in the sympathetic response that this argument secures from others. It encourages the tendency to seek political favours from particular members of a family and puts a premium on sycophancy. Indirectly it robs the people of the right to choose their rulers and places it in the hands of dynastic patrons won over by such sycophancy by self-seeking aspirants to power or position.

Outside the Congress fold, the new regional parties which have emerged in certain states have hardly shown a way out of this situation. The Telugu Desam party in Andhra Pradesh or the AIDMK in Tamil Nadu owe their electoral triumphs to the popularity of their leaders based on their captivating roles on the silver screen and not on their political acumen or work. N. T. Rama Rao, M. G. Ramachandran and his successor Miss Jayalalitha have been popular film personalities who later on took to politics. Their parties lack a broad based organisation and function as the personal estates of their leaders. Populism is their strength and financial profligacy their method of attracting a following. They have not bothered to spell out a long-term strategy of action designed to brighten about social or economic development of their States. Their success is bound to be short-lived as frustration and disillusionment spreads among the people in due course.

Organisationally better placed are the communists and their fellow-travellers of the Left. But their following on a sizable scale is limited to West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala. Even among these States it is nowhere as assured as in West Bengal. In West Bengal the leftist govern-

ment has succeeded in giving the people a stable and responsive government after an initial period of turmoil and trouble with the erstwhile Congress organisation in the state. The Communist Party in West Bengal is said to be a disciplined one with the government and political wings functioning in unison. The Party has shed its ideological rigidity somewhat so as to promote the industrial development of the state even through private enterprise. The debacle of the communist system in Eastern Europe and Russia must have no doubt, influenced the thinking of the party leadership on this matter.

The Janata Dal

The Janata Dal which at one time posed as the alternative to the Congress at the Centre and in some of the States overshot the mark in attempting to create a vote bank for itself by resurrecting the Mandal Commission report on the extension of reservation to the other backward castes. The resulting popular agitation by both the opponents and supporters of the Mandal proposals, finally led to the downfall of its government at the Centre when the BJP withdrew its earlier support to it. The party still rules in a few states like Bihar and Orissa in each of which it is playing a subservient role to the powerful chief ministers there. Recently it has come to power in the State of Karnataka where the preceding Congress party government was totally discredited by corruption and continuous dissidence and squabbles within its ranks. How the party uses its power there is yet to be seen. But on the basis of its previous record the party does not inspire confidence either in its organisational ability or its pursuit of policies designed to provide a stable and progressive government.

The Bharatiya Janata Party

The Bharatiya Janata Party which is also claiming to be an alternative to the Congress party at the Centre has an impressive organisation with its membership bound together by discipline and dedication. But its

ideology is at variance with the secular character of the State. The Ayodhya episode is directly linked to its policies and programmes. Its government in U.P. was directly responsible for the demolition of the Babri masjid. In the subsequent elections it lost its power in that state and in two other states as well. It is a party which seems to be incapable of looking forward and with the predominance of the urban middle classes among its supporters its appeal is considerably restricted. Its alliance with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra - an organisation which does not make any secret of its admiration for the Nazi dictatorship system - makes it all the more suspect in the eyes of the rural masses.

The Bahujan Samaj Party

A recent addition to the Indian political parties with a considerable following in the most populous state of U.P. is the Bahujan Samaj Party which is out and out caste based. Its aim is to fight the dominance of the upper caste in various spheres of life and to improve the conditions of the large numbers who constitute the lower castes by means of the acquisition of political power. Like the regional parties in South India this party is what its leader Kanshi Ram perceives it to be. At present it has made common cause with the Samajwadi Party of Mulayam Singh Yadav, the present Chief Minister of U.P. whose government also draws support from the Congress party though for quite different reasons. It is considered doubtful if the Bahujan Samaj Party can muster wide support of the electorate in the country. Its organisational ability is also not rated very highly.

It should be clear from the above description of the current political scene in the country that nowhere among the different political parties is a serious attempt being made to build up party strength on the basis of a viable ideology coupled with an institutional structure which could provide for sustained and disciplined action. Where the organisational possibilities are bright, the ideological

appeal is weak and *vice versa*. At bottom this is due to the proneness of politicians to engage in factional fights and pursue personal ambitions for power and all that comes with it. Even a well-meaning government will find it impossible to secure the co-operation of the people in implementing its policies and decisions in the absence of a united political backing from the party.

It is sad to see that almost all parties have resorted to populism as a means of attracting votes. Whether it is the supply of rice at Rs. 2/- per kilo, free electricity and waiver of loans for agriculturists, free supply of foodgrains upto a certain limit, mid-day meals at nominal rates or monthly allowances for the unemployed youth - all such programmes involve a huge financial burden on the State. The State revenues being limited, it is obvious that such expenditure would eat into the provision for other developmental or maintenance requirements. In the long run this would entail a reduction in the productive capacity of the community, a reduction in employment and in welfare activities. In the short run the people are lulled into a false sense of well-being which makes them even less prepared to work hard than before. In the context of the liberalisation of the economy and the exposure to global competition in the market such an attitude cannot but prove disastrous to the health of the State.

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A minimal but strong State has three benefits: it will reduce the size and awesomeness of the State; it will make the State more efficient in areas where intervention is essential; and it will force citizens to take greater direct responsibility for their fellows and their communities instead of leaving things to government.

Abid Hussain

The Indian Economy's Sons-in-Law

The demand by a former Prime Minister to withdraw special security cover given to him in view of the cost factor should occasion public rethinking on this matter.

In theory, in a democracy the worth of all politicians put together is less than the cost of a bullet. However, this is no argument to deny them reasonable security. First, they are exposing themselves to great risk in public life, and humanitarian consideration for their families entitles them to security. Secondly, from a public viewpoint, it is cheaper to spend on security than undergo the cost of political turmoil or an election. Unfortunately, the present system of armed guards and flashing red lights on car tops has become a symbol of status for politicians, and it is confused with security. Determined assassins can penetrate through such security. What is really required is a strong backup of intelligence services, which, however, does not seem to have been given the importance it deserves.

Where costs should be reduced is not on security but in the areas of hidden perquisites enjoyed by politicians. For instance, by exercise of their rule-making power, they get for themselves treatment in costly medical set-ups abroad and air passages for themselves and accompanying entourage, while equally good facilities are available in India. This, notwithstanding slogans of simplicity and concern for the poor. In a number of other ways, the politicians live as self-appointed sons-in-law of the Indian economy.

While it is a great gain for the Indian Republic that the sights of our politicians seem to be shifting from caste-consciousness to cost-consciousness, the starting place for such an exercise is to dismantle the huge perquisitive society, the cost of which is effectively hidden from the public eye, but contributes to significant government expenditure and consequent inflationary pressures.

M. R. Pai

The Purpose of Politics

P. R. Dubhashi

Even though people now join politics and political parties in the pursuit of power, it need not mean the end of decencies and proprieties let alone higher values in political life. Politics need not necessarily be dirty. Nor can we do away with politics even though in moments of disgust we may wish to do so.

Recent years have seen a rapid disenchantment with politics and the political process in the minds of the Indian people. The behaviour of politicians and political parties has been mainly responsible for such a loss of credibility. People hardly see any connection between politics and the welfare of the people. They have come to believe in the dictum that "politics is the last resort of scoundrels". People have watched with dismay the nexus between unscrupulous builders and businessmen on the one side and politicians on the other which has led to the criminalisation of politics. They have seen persons who were penniless with hardly any ostensible means of livelihood entering the arena of politics and suddenly getting affluent with all the symbols of affluence such as real estate, consumer durables, high cost education for their children and ostentatious display during their wedding ceremonies. Indeed, cynics have started describing politics as the best profession for rapid acquisition of affluence and status in life, needing no qualifications or honest work.

Degeneration of Indian Politics

This rapid fall in the image of politics and politicians is particularly striking against the background of politics in India before independence. In those days politics stood for the highest standards of idealism as exemplified by men like Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel. They were the best amongst the Indians who could have led affluent and comfortable lives but chose the path of sacrifice in the service of

the people. It, therefore, becomes necessary for all thinking Indians to ponder over the rapid degeneration of Indian politics in less than fifty years after freedom.

Not that Indians do not realise the change in the political environment after independence. In pre-independence India, the only goal of politics was to fight an alien power for the attainment of freedom. After independence, politics was naturally oriented towards success in elections and the formation of government, whether at the centre or in the states.

However, this need not necessarily have meant the euthanasia of higher values in politics and amongst politicians. Even though people now join politics and political parties in the pursuit of power, it need not mean the end of decencies and proprieties let alone higher values in political life. Politics need not necessarily be dirty. Nor can we do away with politics even though in moments of disgust we may wish to do so.

The Political Process

It is recognised in all countries that politics has a role in the satisfactory management of public affairs. Alternative arrangements of public affairs often go in the name of different political ideologies. Political parties are supposed to be built round competing ideologies - liberal *versus* conservative, rightist *versus* leftist, socialist *versus* capitalist or, as in recent years, economic development *versus* preservation of the environment. In pursuance of their ideologies, parties formulate their manifestoes

on the basis of which they go to the people for votes. On attainment of power, they introduce policies and programmes to give concrete shape to their ideologies. Political parties endeavour to attract people towards their ideologies, aggregate them into their vote banks and draw on their support for ensuring the success of their ideologies, policies and programmes. They do not own the machinery of the government, but use it when in power for the implementation of their programmes. There is nothing abhorrent in this political process, though it involves struggle for the attainment of power and the removal of rival parties from power. Such political tussles might create a certain amount of tension between people belonging to different political parties, but tension is a part of life. There is nothing inherently wrong about the pursuit of power provided the pursuit of power is also in pursuit of the progress of the nation.

The Loss of Commitment

Unfortunately, as years passed by after independence, the ideological underpinning of political parties grew weaker and weaker. Ideological coherence was lost, and ideological understanding and commitment amongst the ordinary workers and even amongst their leaders progressively diminished and ultimately vanished. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union ideological issues lost much of their strength or relevance in the world as a whole. In India it gave a body blow to the last vestiges of the socialist pattern of society initiated as an ideological basis

of the Congress party by Jawaharlal Nehru. Long before that, however, ideology for political parties became an external facade, a slogan, a pretence with little relation to the reality of the behaviour of political parties. Radical measures like nationalisation of banks were initiated more as part of a battle against political adversaries rather than out of genuine ideological conviction. Political parties started picking up issues to attract vote banks rather than as part of a coherent ideological approach to economic and social problems. For the purpose of gaining political power, political parties and leaders adopted different postures such as the '*Garibi Hatao*' posture adopted by Indira Gandhi, the 'Mandal Card' played by V. P. Singh to neutralise Devi Lal, and the '*Mandir Rathiyatra*' of L. K. Advani to whip up Hindu sentiments to gather political support.

Worse than the ambiguities in the nature of the ideological commitments of political parties, was the feeling which grew amongst the people that parties did not have a genuine commitment either to any ideology or even to the progress of the nation as a whole.

If the results of elections are any guide, the Indian people hardly seem to appreciate radical postures and approaches in dealing with national problems. The people seem to want political power to be used in a responsible manner and in the interest of the nation. However, politicians and political parties tend to forget this lesson and political manipulations and gimmicks get the better of the pursuit of national interest. In disgust, people sometime wish to throw away, lock, stock and barrel politics and politicians. But politics and politicians cannot be done away with. They exist in all countries. However, if politics cannot be ended it should be mended. There should be rules of the game which all political parties should follow.

Some Lessons for Parties

Firstly, all parties should remember that the national interest stands

above everything else. It is true that the nation does not form a homogeneous whole. To be sure, society consists of many sections differentiated on economic and social considerations. Parties cannot forget that society as a whole is larger than any particular section of that society, and if the political behaviour of a party were to swing in any extreme direction, people are likely to disown it. Above all, the electorate however illiterate and ill informed it may be, has shown that it stands for stability, decency, and fairness. It does not seem to like a party coming to power and behaving in an irresponsible and unscrupulous manner to promote purely sectional interests or to spread disinformation.

Secondly, a clear distinction has to be maintained between the government and the party. A party forming a government cannot use the machinery of the government to further its own interest. After years of subjugation to the communist party, governments in the countries of the erstwhile USSR and China have come to see the point that it is of paramount importance to keep the two separate and the basic fact that the machinery of government should be independent and serve the people.

Thirdly, no party should take up any cause that excites the emotions of the people and causes a breakdown of law and order. Huge rallies and processions to intimidate the government; state sponsored *bandhs* and *gheraoes* have no place in an orderly democratic polity. It is strange to see a government in power declaring a *bandh*. And when the High Court is attacked by *bandh* volunteers of the party in power, twenty individual officers are proceeded against but the government and parties in power are left scot free! It is equally strange to see a Chief Minister inviting people to take the law into their own hands and beat up public servants on suspicion of corruption or a Minister inviting them to beat tax-gathering officials!

Fourthly, the primacy of the public interest will have to be maintained

by all those who occupy the seats of power in government. Corruption and nepotism in any form should be dealt with separately by those in government. No public position should ever be used to serve personal and private purposes. Politicians in power may have the ultimate authority to sanction huge defence or fertiliser contracts or sanction huge expenditure on public works. But no part of the money should be siphoned off to political parties or to secret accounts of those in authority. Nor should appointments be made to public positions except on merit, according to prescribed qualifications and procedures and through independent recruitment agencies like Public Service Commissions.

Code of Conduct

Thus keeping the nation's fabric intact, maintaining the distinction between government and party, maintaining law and order, upholding the public interest, and limiting tendencies towards populism at the cost of the state should be essential elements in the code of conduct of all political parties and such a code of conduct must find its place in the Constitution itself. The Chief Election Commissioner Shri T. N. Seshan by enforcing the provisions of the Constitution and Representation of the People's Act has made the electoral code of conduct mandatory for all the political parties but a code of conduct must go beyond the conduct of elections and should characterise politics, the political process and governance of the country for all time. It is only when such a code of conduct becomes a basic feature of the Indian Constitution can the faith of the common man be restored in the politics of the country.

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A large government is not necessarily a strong and efficient State; rather, the reverse is usually the case. In India, government is everywhere: it performs too many functions, few of which it performs well and it passes too many laws, few of which it can truly enforce.

Abid Hussain

Limits to Politics

Mangesh Kulkarni

Many jump to the conclusion that society can be cleaned simply by ridding it of politics. This view is both naive and deceptive.

The caption of this essay involves an obvious allusion to a report entitled *The Limits to Growth*, published in 1972 by a group of intellectuals known as the Club of Rome. The report jolted the world into an awareness of the need to reconsider the conventional wisdom that saw economic growth as an end in itself. It pointed out that the quest for unlimited growth would exhaust the carrying capacity of the earth through pollution and resource-depletion. The importance and urgency of placing certain clearly defined limits on the pursuit of growth, has since been widely accepted.

Many great thinkers from Aristotle to Arendt, have viewed politics as an activity which is absolutely essential to safeguard human survival and well-being. But like growth, politics can also become counter-productive if it is pursued indiscriminately as an end in itself. This point hardly needs to be laboured in a country like ours, which daily witnesses political excesses of various kinds. Correspondingly, the desire for a respite from politics, is widespread in our society. But can we set limits to politics?

Defining Politics

Before answering this question, it is necessary to define the term 'politics'. In ordinary parlance, politics is often equated with the activities of the government and with the various attempts to capture it. However, this is a narrow conception of politics. It is the ceaseless struggle of individuals and groups for a larger share of the community's scarce resources, which

gives rise to politics. Politics is the medium through which the conflicting interests arising out of this struggle, are sought to be regulated and reconciled. Successful reconciliation leading to social stability and peace, is attempted by various means such as norms, laws and institutions. Viewed as such a process of mediation, politics involves not merely the government and parties, but also a wide range of interest groups, people's movements and knowledge apparatus.

Limitations of Politics

Having defined politics, it must be pointed out that a certain notion of limits is inherent in it. It is ineffectual both in situations of total unanimity and total disagreement. In a consensual community, politics will become redundant and will be replaced by administration. No such community exists at present. The other extreme, where a community is torn by conflict, raw violence will drive politics out. The recent Rwandan tragedy proves this point. Only limited disagreement or conflict can be resolved by political means. Moreover, one of the most basic functions of politics lies in preventing the escalation of disagreement and conflict beyond a certain limit.

Selfishness, the thirst for power, intrigue, factionalism and unholy alliances or compromises cannot be entirely eliminated from politics. It is this which explains the pejorative connotation the term 'politics' has acquired in popular parlance. Many therefore jump to the conclusion that society can be cleaned simply by rid-

ding it of politics. This view is both naive and deceptive. The vices enumerated above, frequently come to the fore in politics, but their roots lie deep in human nature itself. However, even some great thinkers have dreamt of banishing politics from human affairs. In Plato's ideal society, the freeplay of politics is replaced by the benevolent dictatorship of the Guardians trained in philosophy, while in Marx's vision of a communist society, it is replaced by benign anarchy. The utopian character of such schemes is plainly evident.

Politics' Parameters

Most traditional societies set limits to politics by restricting the scope of the political domain. Custom rather than legislation governed the life of the community, and the majority of the populace lacked a voice in the management of public affairs. This is neither possible nor desirable in the complex and dynamic mass societies of the modern world. The forces of science and technology, education, industrialisation and urbanisation cut at the roots of custom, while the democratic aspirations of the awakened masses tear down the ramparts erected by dictatorial and apartheid regimes. Recent events in the former Soviet Union and its East European satellites, as also in South Africa, testify to the validity of this proposition.

All this is not to say that politics in today's mass societies is condemned to venality. Various tried and tested devices are available, which help keep the province of politics relatively clean. The rule of law, civil liberties, separa-

tion of powers, and representative government, are among the most important of such devices. Several of these have been incorporated in our political system. But as the Emergency interlude proves, they cannot be taken for granted. Constant efforts are required to maintain and strengthen them. The mass media and organisations involved in safeguarding human rights, can play a particularly strategic role in this process. It is in this context that the freeing of radio and television from government control acquires its importance.

Religion and Politics

Many societies have sought to limit politics by resorting to some form of theocracy. In such societies, scriptural injunctions and the *fatwas* of the ruling clergy, seem to offer easy substitutes for the contentious and complex processes of secular politics. But this seeming ease is generally secured at the cost of justice and freedom. The Islamic regime of Iran is a recent example. This is not to deny that religion can play a constructive role in politics. The contribution of the Church in the movement against the communist dictatorship in Poland, is a case in point. Such an intervention is possible only where religious leaders join hands with other progressive socio-political forces. Considering the hijacking of religion by reactionary forces in our country, especially in the last few years, it would be highly unrealistic to expect it to play such a positive role in the near future.

Enter the Technocrats

It is necessary to take a closer look at two means of limiting politics, which have become increasingly popular in our country over the last ten years: technocracy and the market economy. Enthusiasm for these devices is particularly evident in India's burgeoning and influential middle classes. What is important is that even the Government has come to accept the legitimacy of these devices, and has been enlarging their scope.

Technocracy involves the handing over of the formulation and implementation of public policies to experts. It is assumed that the technocrats can and will scientifically solve society's problems by using their expertise. This approach came to the fore during Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministership. Among Rajiv's most trusted aides was the U.S. returned technocrat Sam Pitroda, and a characteristic feature of his style of governance, were the 'technology missions' designed to deliver the goods in a speedy and scientific fashion. At present the values of both technocracy and the free market are personified by the Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh.

While the application of science and technology to the political domain, is not in itself objectionable, it needs to be borne in mind that most political problems do not lend themselves to scientific resolution. This is because they involve questions of normative dissonance and conflict of interests. Moreover, it must be realised that technocrats are not selfless, and often seek to promote their own narrow interests at the expense of the common good. It is by now clear that the emphasis on high dams in the country's irrigation policy, has on the one hand, led to the displacement of the vulnerable strata of our society, and on the other, served the interests of the engineers in the bureaucracy.

Politics and the Free Market

The current favourite economic strategy of limiting politics, is geared to the inclusion of more and more sectors of social life into the purview of the free market. The market functions according to criteria such as demand and supply, profitability and productivity, relegating politics to the background. The defeat of communism in the world arena, as well as the sclerosis of Nehruvian socialism at home, have made this option an attractive one. Partly for this reason and partly owing to pressures exercised by the IMF and the World Bank, India has begun a seemingly irreversible march in the direction of

a free market economy.

In this context, what needs to be emphasised is that our country has yet to fulfil certain basic prerequisites for the successful functioning of a robust market economy: land reform, universal literacy and an appropriate work culture. Consequently, the benefits of the free market are likely to accrue to the middle and upper classes, leaving the poor masses high and dry. The creation of a social safety net can at best provide marginal relief. The resulting unrest, further compounded by a hasty process of globalisation, which could increase the country's vulnerability to global corporate capital's hegemonic designs, may land India in an unenviable situation.

Social Market Economy

The importance of freeing the market, both to roll back the bloated political-bureaucratic apparatus within its proper limits, and to creatively harness the entrepreneurial resources of the nation, can hardly be gainsaid. But ours must be a social market economy, geared more to welfare than to profit. It must be seen as a vital component of a vibrant civil society constituted by a dense network of private and voluntary associations. Only through the interplay of such a civil society and a democratically structured state, can the limits to politics be established within the framework of human governance.

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Too much Politics, Too little Citizenship

M. R. Masani

What are the causes for the decay in our public life? One is the reluctance of our politicians to be in opposition. The second is that the party has become an end in itself. The third is the cult of personality - our preoccupation with men rather than with measures; and fourth is the fact of an illiterate electorate.

We know the state of our parliamentary democracy. There is indiscipline and, as I sit in Parliament, I find an increasing irrelevance in the discussions to what is really of concern to this country. Indeed, if I may venture to say so as a Congress Party member of the old Indian Legislative Assembly under the British from 1945 to 1947-48, I would be inclined to say that, by and large, members of the present Parliament are less effective than were members of the Indian Legislative Assembly before Independence.

The state of our political parties is visible for all of you to see. They are disintegrating, particularly the Congress Party, because, having been in Government, it has decayed the most. But the so-called "United Front" Governments in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal, all of whom have now been thrown out by the people, hardly did any better and as you know this has given the Opposition parties a bad name throughout the country. All parties seem to me to be running down. Their credibility has been badly impaired by their own misbehaviour. Mr. Jayprakash Narayan said in Colombo two or three days back that "most people in politics in India were getting fed up with politics and among the people at large, there is general disenchantment with politics". I think this is not an inaccurate statement.

I have come, just now, from a brief visit to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in connection with the current General Elections there, which are mis-called by our press "mid-term" elections. I think I can say that there is widespread lack of interest in the elections among the people. No party seems to enthuse them at all. They are allergic to all of them now. Last year, they were only allergic to the Congress. Now they are allergic to all of us and, with a shrug of the shoulder, say: "What choice is there? All of them are pretty bad". No doubt, people will go and vote in the end because of caste and money and other considerations. But let us not kid ourselves. To create a Government behind which the people will stand seems to be now beyond achievement in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Punjab. So, whatever happens is going to be neither stable nor constructive. *The Hindu* of the 19th December told an interesting story of a politician in Bihar going to canvass support in his constituency; among those whom he went to was Mr. Bhagwant Mahto, a farmer of Dadupur, a village 100 kilometres south-east of Patna. When the candidate went to ask for support, Mr. Mahto, the cultivator, said to him (the Mahtos are Backward Class people): "We don't want to vote for anyone. You politicians are all selfish people. We were being bled white by greedy and extortionate officials and little do you care what happens to us". This, if

I may say so, symbolises the common man's attitude to the parties in the States where there are General Elections going on.

Now this was not unforeseeable. I was interested to hear the message received from Prof. Mavlankar of the Harold Laski Institute in Ahmedabad. I gave a lecture at this Institute in July 1962 entitled "Party Politics in India" which has been published by the Institute. There, when I turn the pages, I find an earnest warning given by me to my own Party and to other political parties to beware of where they were going. I said then:

"When political power and economic patronage are concentrated in the hands of the ruling party, as they are at present, only an Opposition party which is accepted as morally superior by the people at large can hope to make the grade. In the absence of such moral superiority, all talk about the corruption of the ruling party and all promises to provide good government will meet with scepticism. I am convinced that, if these components are not there, no amount of money, no amount of local influence, no caste support, not even a beautiful manifesto and clever speeches will enlist the support of the electorate in 1967.

"I am aware that there are intelligent people, honest in their own personal lives, who think, that, in a backward country like ours, condoning indiscipline, disloyalty, casteism and

Extracted from Mr. Masani's Fourth Rajaji Birthday Lecture delivered in Bangalore in January 1969 under the auspices of the Gokhale Institute of Public Opinion.

mishandling of funds help in building a party. Now, quite apart from any moral considerations, I am deeply convinced that such an approach is pragmatically unwise and unsound. Such people claim to be realists, but to me it appears that this is cynicism masquerading as realism. No democratic party or movement was built on cynicism. Democratic causes are furthered by faith in the goodness of people and their intelligence.

"By vocation, I happen to be a management consultant, and I venture to think that efficient and clean management is as essential to the growth of a political party as it is to that of a business enterprise."

I went on to forecast what was coming - the state of disbelief and cynicism. And I said: If we do not stop misbehaving like this, the day is not far distant when people will turn away from us and seek escape from us.

That day has now come. That is why recently, writing about my own Party, I put the question: "Last Hope or Lost Hope?" You are perhaps aware, some of you, of the stand that I have taken in defence of disciplined and ethical functioning in my own Party. Of all the press comments that were published both in my favour and critical of me, I was most amused when on 7th June, 1968, someone wrote an article in the *Free Press Journal*:

"The Madras decision of the National Executive of the Swatantra Party should make it plain to Mr. Masani how much he is out of date and out of tune. Mr. Masani has explained that the party should endeavour to build itself on rational, scientific lines based on ethics, discipline and good faith. He can now see how limited reason, science, ethics, discipline and good faith are in dealing with politics. Reason belongs to the 18th century, science is of the 19th century. In the latter part of the 20th century, politics need not be burdened with antiquated limitations of this kind. Politics is now one of ganging up, of tactics and expediency, of vested interests and unscrupulous adven-

turism, of grab and drive, *bundhs* and *gheraos*, loot and shoot on all sides".

Well here, with a sense of humour, is the comment of a shrewd observer.

Causes of Decay

What are the causes of the decay in our public life? I think I would analyse it under three or four major heads. One is the reluctance to be in opposition. Everyone wants to be in power or office today or tomorrow. Normally, parliamentary democracy functions in countries where 40 percent of the country's politicians are prepared to be in opposition at any given time. About 60 percent are in office, about 40 percent in Opposition. This is the law of democratic politics. But not in India. In India, 90 percent of the politicians must be in office at any given time! This, I suppose, was the basic reason why the Congress Party rejected Gandhiji's advice on the achievement of Independence, when he suggested that the Congress retire from political life, become a constructive organisation and that two parties be formed - a radical one under Jawaharlal Nehru, a conservative one under Vallabhbhai Patel. Both sides rejected the advice because both wanted to be in office at the same time.

A second basic factor is that the party, which is a means to an end, has become an end to itself. Not only "my country right or wrong", but "my party right or wrong". Politics is about power, but power is not an end in itself. Power is for the purpose of carrying out your principles and your policies. Now, it has become power for its own sake; office for its own sake. Nothing is more painful to me than to watch my friends in office today - old friends of the Congress Party to which I once belonged.

Now, the party, as I said, is an instrument to be used; to be dropped when it ceases to be effective. Prof. Tawney, when he was offered a title by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, whom he considered to be a turncoat, wrote back to him: "My party has a right to

expect anything of me except that I dishonour myself". Mr. Winston Churchill, another great democrat, said that the first duty of a Member of Parliament is to his conscience; the second is to his constituency, and the third to his party. Today in India, we find the order reversed.

A third reason for the decay of our politics is the cult of personality - the preoccupation with men rather than with measures, with personalities rather than with principles. "Will Mr. Kamaraj Nadar get into the cabinet?" is a question I am asked more often by my fellow intelligentsia than any other question concerning this country. But what does it matter whether Mr. Kamaraj Nadar is in the Cabinet or not? Do you think it will make two annas' worth of difference to the life of the common man in India?

Lastly, there is the fact of an illiterate electorate - not that illiterate people are stupid, but illiterate people are difficult to communicate with, since they can't read, your manifesto doesn't touch them, you can't write to them. You can meet only a few persons, you can attend a few public meetings. The radio is under Government control, T.V. will be under Government control. The channels of communication, the conveyor belt, is missing. This, of course, makes for the quality of the politician being what it is.

Now, we as a people have some very strong points. We have love of religion, love of the family, and the home, love of the land, patience, contentment, perhaps even resignation with our individual lot, a high degree of intelligence, strong individualism - these are very fine traits of the Indian character.

Learning to say 'No'

On the other hand, we have also several weaknesses that are reflected in our public life today. The first and foremost is lack of courage. I don't mean physical courage. Our Armed Forces have proved that they have physical courage. I am referring to

intellectual and moral courage - the willingness to be in a small and hopeless minority, the readiness to be unpopular. There is an old English verse: "They are slaves who dare not be. In the right with two or three". There are very few people in India who are prepared to be "in the right with two or three" or even with twenty or thirty. Gandhiji had sensed this. That is why he used to say: "India has to learn to say 'no'". In other words, he found an absence of what is called "the non-conformist conscience" - the man who says: "I am right and I shall stand by it even if the whole world does not agree with me". Gandhiji would have said if he were alive today - India has still to learn to say 'no'. The result is that our Congress MPs say one thing on the floor of Parliament, another thing in the lobby, and a third thing in the Central Hall. 'Leave me out. Don't involve me', is the common slogan of businessmen, intellectuals, politicians, even Cabinet Ministers. Our successful politicians as a result are frightened, cowardly men, frightened of their own followers, frightened of public opinion or what they think is public opinion.

"Tailism"

Lenin, who was a great master of politics, described this as 'tailism'. You catch the tail of the donkey and the donkey leads you instead of your leading the animal. Most of the leaders of our political parties are now 'tailists'. They are not real leaders. That is why there is a bankruptcy of leadership all round today on both sides - in government and in opposition.

Then there is lack of discipline as part of our national character. This is the failure of character-building in homes and schools. You know the old saying about the battle of Waterloo having been won on the playing fields of Eton. There are very few playing fields of Eton where our young men and women can be trained to win the battles of the future. So we have indiscipline, a lack of restraint which is endemic. Examples of this are irresponsible breeding - 1,300 babies born

every hour in a country that is short of food; one in twenty of our railway passengers travelling without tickets; and nothing being done about it. The other day, the Railway Minister complained that 10 to 40 per cent of the railway revenues are stolen by people who travel without tickets. Then we have the *gherao*, the shirking of work, laziness and finally a lack of consideration for others - unpunctuality, undependability in honouring our various commitments.

These are not handicaps that we can put right by passing laws or changing over from one form of government to another. These are very deep-rooted defects and call for much deeper remedies.

Politics Everywhere

We find that our public life today is politicised to an inordinate extent. I won't talk about economics because you know all about it - how controls and permit-licence *raj* have throttled initiative in every walk of economic life. But let us talk about other matters like education. Often the Opposition parties are blamed for going to the students and rousing them to indiscipline. That is true, I think of the Communists, it is true of the SSP, it is true of the Jan Sangh. But who started it? *The Hindustan Times* of 3rd November 1968 carried this report:

"The Allahabad University Teachers' Association yesterday opposed the nomination of Government officials and politicians to the executive councils of Uttar Pradesh universities. In a statement here, the Association said that such nominations 'impair the free and autonomous character of these bodies and are unlikely to help them in their deliberations which are essentially of an academic nature'".

I was very glad that on the 9th of January this year, one of the finest academicians in our country, Mr. Uma Shankar Joshi, Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat University, warned that "pressures of politicians were bound

to make confusion worse confounded. He said the difficulty with politicians was that they were inspired more by ulterior motives than the good of the people".

The same is the case with the question of language, the medium of education, a thing that should be left to parents and teachers and pupils. There again the Government tries to intervene and the politician tries to lay down the law. What business have Government or Parliament to interfere with the medium of instruction of other aspects of education? I am very glad to say that in November 1967, when a resolution was brought in Parliament by Mr. Triguna Sen trying to force a linguistic solution in regard to the medium of education, Mr. Dandekar and I, on behalf of our Party, tabled an amendment which we pressed which said that the Lok Sabha is of opinion that "(a) consistent with the Fundamental Rights of parents, it is desirable to leave to the parents both the choice of schools and colleges and also the medium of instruction for the education of their children, and (b) consistent with the principles of academic autonomy and freedom, it is desirable that each University should be the judge concerning the medium or media of instruction, and therefore no further action be taken by the Government of India in so far as the medium of instruction in Universities is concerned". If this plea had been listened to, much of the later disharmony on this issue could have abated.

The same with sports. As you know, when the question of sending a team to Mexico came up, the Minister got up in Parliament and said they had advised the Indian Olympic Association not to send a team, with a threat that the Government would not give any money if the advice was not listened to.

In literature and the arts, there is widespread patronage. Artistes, writers and musicians are sought to be bought up by the Establishment. This is done through the so-called Akademies and the Council of Cul-

tural Relations. Large numbers of artistes and writers are now becoming hacks writing on Government orders, losing their independence in the process for a mess of pottage. One of our honest writers, and there are still a few of them, is Mr. Nirad Choudhary. He wrote on 5th January 1969 in an article in the *Times of India*:

"Where do contemporary Indian writers stand in the light of these ideals? I cannot say they are not involved in current affairs. On the contrary, I would assert they are only too much involved in them, which means that they are wrongly involved. Most of them are doing their best to have a share of the loot of public money that has become the vocation of the upper middle class since Independence. All of them are enlisting or trying to enlist in the horde of Pindaris that the present ruling order of India is. The writers in this army will not indeed be Amir Khans or Chittus but they aspire to become quite prosperous thugs".

A lot of our legislation impinges on the freedom of conscience. The old adage - "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's" has been forgotten until the Chief Justice of India finds it necessary to object. On the 24th of October, 1968, the Chief Justice of India, Mr. Hidayatullah, called for a little restraint in executive action and less meddling by legislatures in laws. He said:

"Too much of laws is a drudgery. Every year a number of Acts were passed and amendments adopted to existing legislation. We who administer justice feel unnerved that we do not keep pace with these new laws and amendments. With less laws, less executive orders and less litigation, society could be happier."

Meddlesome but Weak

Now the interesting thing is that while we have a Government that meddles in everything and politicians who poke their fingers into everyone

else's pie, we do not have a strong but a miserably weak Government.

As I said earlier, it is the absence of a public philosophy which renders a sense of direction impossible. Recently a lecturer in Delhi University described this in a long article in one of the papers under the title "Mrs. Gandhi's Strategy of Static Balance". This article went over a full page of the newspaper and it came to the conclusion that the Prime Minister does not want to commit herself to anything. She believes in making of drift a venture, she wants to keep people in doubt and at loggerheads and to remain Prime Minister.

The Hindustan Standard, in its 1st January review of the past year, said: "On the whole, 1968 was a year of indecision for the Centre". The *Indian Express* editorially said six days later: "It is not unusual to see small flinching from big decisions, but what one is witnessing in New Delhi is a multitude of small men flinching too often from even small decisions". And it went on to say: "Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Our Neros only sleep".

There are two painful examples of this refusal to decide in the economic sphere which are known to you. One was the refusal to accept a very fine offer made by the Tennaco Company of America for the drilling of offshore oil on the West Coast of India. The other, which you know about and which is still a continuing sore, is the way in which a magnificent project which would have brought fertilizers to the peasants of India has been dealt with - the Tata Fertilizer project in Mithapur, I don't think I will be wrong in saying that the treatment of this project has been criminally irresponsible because it has lost the country already crores of rupees of foreign exchange and wealth. Mr. Tata has estimated that, during every hour that passes without a decision and one year and a quarter have already passed, during every one of those hours, including the hour during which I am speaking, the country loses one lakh of rupees in foreign exchange alone. By now, we have lost

crores and crores of rupees. As a Japanese economist has pointed out, while in a country like Malaysia it takes two years to start a factory, in India it takes two years to get a permit.

Negation by Delay

Prof. Parkinson, about whom you know, is a very acute observer of the contemporary political scene not only in India but throughout the world and it is interesting that some time ago he wrote on his subject and invented a new law which he calls Parkinson's Law of Delay. He writes:

"It is many years now since the existence was proved of the abominable 'no man'. In every organisation it is now recognised there are men who say 'no' to every proposal partly to avoid taking responsibility, partly to save themselves from the work which a positive decision might involve. To say 'yes'.

There is nothing static, however, in our changing world and recently research has tended to show that the abominable 'no man' is being replaced by the Prohibitive Procrastinator. Instead of saying 'no', the Prohibitive Procrastinator says 'in due course', these words foreshadowing Negation by Delay. The theory of Negation by Delay depends upon establishing a rough idea of what amount of delay will equal negation. If we suppose that a drowning man calls for help, evoking the reply 'in due course', a judicious pause of five minutes may substitute, for all practical purposes, a negative response. Why? Because the delay is greater than the non-swimmer's expectation of life. Delays are thus deliberately designed forms of denial and are extended to cover the life expectation of the person whose proposal is being pigeon-holed. Delay is the deadliest form of Denial. This is Parkinson's Law of Delay."

(to be continued)

This is an appropriate time for a re-publication (for the benefit of our younger readers in particular) of a talk by Mr. Minoo Masani, which is as relevant today as it was when he delivered it 25 years ago. We have edited it to delete references to the then current topics. In view of its length, we publish it in two instalments. - Ed.

Kicking the Statist Drug Habit

Sharad Joshi

In de-statising, as in hard-drug de-addiction, the acceptance that the "economic State" is bad and fatal must be total - no equivocation, no double-speak. The State does no good in industry and commerce; it solves no problems because it is itself the problem.

The moving away from a 'statist' to a 'market-oriented' system has been compared to all sorts of operations.

One comparison has been with the weaning away of a baby from breast feeding. This is obviously inappropriate because the socialist state is no loving mother and the sap it fed is more akin to the ogress Pootana offering her poison breast to the infant Krishna. In the epic story, Krishna sucks the ogress to death. That may be the fate of the socialist state in due course of time. But right now the nation-child shows no inclination to start on more solid diet. In fact, it has a fatal partiality for the feed and appears to want more of the same. The feeder-nurse in turn, is keen that she be fed sumptuously whether she suckles the baby or not, and, indeed, even if she has no baby left to nurture.

In cutting a dog's tail - a simile used by Milton Freidman which brings out in a picturesque way the folly in some cases, of the much venerated virtues of moderation and caution - it is kinder and better to be brutal and finish the job in one single stroke rather than do so piece-by-piece.

But the Freidman simile barely touches the core of the problem. In the case of the socialist state the part to be amputated is not organic and the dog was not born with it. It was an adjunct artificially sewed on to the dog in the first place. A more fitting analogy would be the restoration of a regenerative organ unfortunately severed.

Liberalisation has also been compared with a baby learning to stand

on its feet or little birdies learning to fly. But these are instances of everyday miracles brought about through the active collaboration between a pupil anxious to learn and a mother revelling in the accomplishments of her baby. That is hardly the case in socialist communities forced to liberalise. Here the baby is resisting the exercise and a possessive mother is encouraging its reluctance. Neither the parent nor the baby is interested in the change.

The resistance of Chinese women to the unbinding of their feet is a fairly close parallel to the predicament of people giving up the illusion of a fairy godmother state. A more apt analogy would be of Chinese men required to give up opiate drugs or of programmes of de-addiction.

A statist environment acts exactly like a drug on individuals and nations - an illusion of well-being even while there is a rapid deterioration of health and mental faculties; a weakening of the will, the sapping of all initiative accompanied by inertia and the urge for ever-increasing doses of state intervention culminating in the inevitable fatality. Nations are reduced to being communities of zombies hooked to the drug of socialism developing both a psychological and physical dependence on pernicious state intervention. Not only are they unwilling to kick the habit but are also convinced that it's the best thing going. They refuse to quit even when they become aware that they are inexorably drifting to disaster.

The treatment for statism is again very similar to the one prescribed for de-addiction.

De-addiction is no ham-handed act of pushing people into padded cells to face the terrible withdrawal pangs. Nor is it soft-hearted mollycoddling of the patient in the hope of obtaining his endorsement and vote. Of course, it requires medicinal help, loving care and patient prodding to move into an alternative life-style. But the treatment has to begin with the strict enforcement of discipline to ensure instant and total denial of access to the drug.

The treatment must also begin with a clear acceptance of the fact that the drug addiction is bad and with a firm resolve to quit. In the case of minor vices like tobacco, the addict himself can, with serious difficulty though, decide to kick the habit. A smoker must quit as of the present moment, throwing away, if need be, the half-consumed cigarette in hand. The decision to quit at some appropriate moment in the future, preferably waiting for some auspicious date or time is no decision at all. The time to quit is now or never.

The hard-drug addicts have no such power of will left. They actively resist abstinence and are prepared to go to any extent - heinous crimes not excluded - to procure drugs. Firmness of resolve has to be supported from the outside - parents and/or therapists. These latter should be determined to save the patient despite himself, despite his piteous supplications for the drug just once. They should remain unmoved by the heart-rending withdrawal symptoms - paranoia, hallucinosis, delirium tremens, dementia alternating with euphoria, amnesia etc. of the victim. Soft hearted doctors are no good;

there is no 'middle-path' to de-addiction, no soft options.

In de-statising, as in hard-drug de-addiction, the acceptance that the economic state is bad and fatal must be total - no equivocation, no double-speak. The State does no good in industry and commerce; it solves no problems because, it is itself the problem.

That needs to be the conviction of at least those in charge of the treatment since the patient has no will power left to extricate himself from the illusion of protection and safety-nets he has got accustomed to under the previous regime. If the government itself has any doubts about the desirability of de-addiction from the license-permit control system and retains some love for the old lifestyle there is little hope they will be able to enforce with any rigour the discipline of the market. If the finance minister and the prime minister get disheartened by the withdrawal symptoms suffered by bureaucrats and crony-capitalists who had had pleasure trips aplenty under the old regime and are inclined to offer comfort and solace, 'operation destatisation' is doomed to failure.

Each case of a community hooked to statism stands by itself just as each case of drug addiction is unique. Each addict represents a case apart depending upon his etiology, genes, bio-chemistry, psychology, personality, and social environment. Each case needs individual care. So it is with statism addicts.

Countries with a long liberal tradition and history who have had the misfortune of getting hit by the 'socialist' state recover very rapidly. On the other hand nations that were under the subjugation of alien powers and/or native despots over long periods are less motivated. The predominance of religious and feudal institutions makes people more vulnerable to statism. Absence of traditions makes nations even more vulnerable.

In any de-addiction treatment,

abrupt and decisive cessation of drug intake has to be accompanied by a judicious prescription of sedatives and tranquilisers, maintenance of nutritional levels, treatment of physical complications like infection of self-injection sores, deterrent drug therapy after recovery from withdrawal symptoms, treatment of psychological symptoms and sustained efforts at social rehabilitation. At each step the threat of a relapse looms large and hence return to the old days has to be constantly guarded against. Smell of burnt bridges - the most heady perfume of them all - is the essence of any de-addiction therapy.

Societies that have remained under restrictive regimes suffer from the fear psychosis that everything will go wrong if there is no government to control and monitor society. They generally suffer from what can be described as a scarcity scare that somehow things will disappear from the market and are therefore prone to stockpiling at the slightest pretext. The license-permit-quota raj engenders black markets, parallel economies, corruption, mafia, a general break-down of law and order to the point of criminalisation of politics and politicisation of crime.

The work-ethic is an early casualty of government intervention. Waste, inefficiency, scrounging and red tape cry for attention. Nations isolated behind socialist curtains - iron, bamboo or khadi - have a psychological difficulty in mixing freely with the comity of nations and need patient prodding and encouragement. They tend to be touchy about their past and their egos can be easily hurt with the consequent risk of relapse.

De-statisation is de-addiction because the state here is the drug.

MR. SHARAD JOSHI is the founder of the well-known farmers' movement, the Shetkari Sanghatana, and President of the Swatantra Bharat party.

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STRENGTH
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Making a Mockery of Indian Democracy

S. V. Raju

That socialists have the possibility of organising themselves as political parties while those having problems of conscience in declaring adherence to socialism should be stopped from organising themselves into a political party is wholly discriminatory and hence, clearly a breach of the fundamental right of association.

While socialism is passing into the history books as a once-noble ideal that degenerated into an instrument of tyranny in most parts of the world, it continues to bedevil Indian polity. Even while we have jettisoned a good deal of the licence permit quota raj which in India is the visible symbol of socialism, the word continues to disfigure the Indian Constitution and is making a mockery of Indian democracy.

Not many are aware that a political party cannot register itself with the Election Commission unless it swears allegiance to socialism along with secularism and democracy. In other words, as the law stands today only a socialist party can participate in the Indian political process.

When and how did this happen? In 1976, the preamble to the Constitution of India was amended. The words "Sovereign Democratic Republic" were amended to read "Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic". The amendment was adopted during the last days of the infamous emergency under Mrs. Indira Gandhi in highly controlled conditions when most leaders of opposition parties were in prison and civil liberties suspended.

Based on the amended preamble, Parliament passed in 1989, an amendment to the Representation of the People Act which introduced the concept of registration of parties for allotment of symbols and the entitlement to other facilities such as free copies of electoral rolls etc. A new section was added to the Representation of the People Act - Section 29(A). This new section stipulates among other things that a political party seeking registration should

swear allegiance to the Constitution of India in general and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy in particular. Every party candidate filing his nomination paper has also to so swear. Curiously an independent candidate has only to swear general allegiance to the Constitution without having to spell it out in terms of his or her allegiance to socialism.

The Swatantra Party founded by Rajaji and Masani is a party wedded to liberal democracy and is opposed to socialism in all its forms and manifestations. The party was founded in 1959 much before the enactment of 29(A).

The Swatantra Party split in 1974 when a section of the Party led by Mr. Piloo Mody decided to merge with the U.P. based Bharatiya Kranti Dal led by Charan Singh and Raj Narain.

The story of the split and the continuance of the Swatantra Party are told by this writer in *Freedom First* of September 1974 (No.268)

Soon after the notification by the Election Commission the Maharashtra Swatantra Party asked for registration. In its letter it specifically stated its inability to swear by socialism but had no difficulty in swearing loyalty to democracy and secularism. The reply on more than one occasion was truly bureaucratic. 'Please complete the registration form as stipulated by Section 29(A).' Denied registration and in the context of the then impending elections to the Maharashtra Assembly, the Party sought justice from the Bombay High Court. A Writ Petition was filed on December 15, 1994. The Petition was

heard but its prayer for interim relief (to be allowed a common symbol to participate in the elections pending the Court's decision) was denied. The Petition is likely to come up sometime in April. The Division Bench of the Bombay High Court while rejecting the prayer for interim relief however agreed to expedite the hearing.

The following is an extract from the writ petition. The Party is represented by Mr. Rajiv Patil and Mr. Sharad Bobde.

"The stipulations of Section 29(A) create problems of conscience and principles which the petitioner No.1 (The Swatantra Party) does not wish to circumvent by prevarication and falsehood as has been done by other parties in the country. For example, the extreme leftist revolutionary parties have apparently constituted themselves by a memorandum which contains a provision to the effect that they bear allegiance to the principle of democracy; crassly communal parties have sworn allegiance to secularism and the ruling party despite its declared objective of liberalisation and globalisation has pledged or at any rate continues to pledge its allegiance to the principle of socialism. Section 29(A) poses no problem that cannot be overcome by recourse to pliable conscience. There is no provision for any verification of the truth of the memoranda or regulations nor is there any instance of registration being denied to or withdrawn from any party on the basis of proven falsehood of the provisions in the memorandum of association of any party. The petitioner No.1 party has no wish to resort to such unconscionable procedure followed quasi-

universally.

"The petitioner No.1 has no difficulty whatsoever in confirming its allegiance to the principles of democracy and secularism as also to uphold the territorial integrity of the Republic. It encounters insurmountable difficulty in declaring allegiance to the principle of socialism. The term socialism has not been defined in the Constitution of India or in the said Act. The requirement to declare allegiance to a tenet so shrouded in vagueness can serve no possible purpose. If the provisions contained in the Constitution represent, in the view of the authors of the stipulation, the essential content of socialism, the specific requirement of the Section 29(A) is unnecessary since the oath of allegiance to the Constitution as by law established would more than cover the requirement.

"On the other hand, if the dispositions of the Constitution of India are entirely socialistic but are a little less or a little more, there would arise a contradiction between the declaration of allegiance to the Constitution and that to the principle of socialism.

"The petitioners submit that, it is significant that the Third Schedule to the Constitution which contains the texts of oaths to be taken by candidates to the election of Lok Sabha and of the State legislatures has not been modified following the amendment to the Preamble to the Constitution and of the amendment to the Act. The texts of oaths required to be taken by individual candidates continue to be limited to swearing true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established without any reference to the principle of socialism. The oath of allegiance to the principle of socialism is insisted upon only in the case of associations of persons wishing to be registered as a political party. The petitioners further submit that the provisions of the Act which deal with qualification and disqualification for membership to Legislature does not impose any such

precondition. Nor do the provisions which lay down the requirements of a valid nomination lay down any such precondition. The effect of the relevant provisions of the Act is that whereas individual candidates i.e. those not set up by a registered political party may contest elections without having to bear any allegiance to the principles of socialism, parties which seek registration for the same purpose are required to do so. It is submitted that for the purposes of the said Act, namely to confer and regulate the right to contest election, there is no intelligible differentia between political parties and individual candidates. The provision i.e. Section 29(A) which only requires political parties to bear allegiance to the principles of socialism is wholly discriminatory and void being in violation of Article 14 of the Constitution of India. That socialists have the possibility of organising themselves as political parties while those having problems of conscience in declaring adherence to socialism should be stopped from organising themselves into a political party is wholly discriminatory and hence, clearly in breach of the fundamental right of association.

"The petitioners' grievance is not against the amendment to the Preamble incorporating therein a reference to socialism. The Constitution contains many dispositions not all of which need be uniformly acceptable to any given individual or association of individuals. What is essential is that a citizen must have the right and the possibility at par with any other citizen to act and to canvass by constitutional means, for changing the dispositions of the Constitution in accordance with his inclinations howsoever unreasonable they may look to others at a given point of time. Section 29(A) of the Act prevents committed and sincere non-socialists from agitating as an organised force in favour of getting the Constitution modified in their favour by entering the Legislature - State Assemblies as also Parliament - and influencing the persuasions of

the other members of the Parliament.

Thus, without going into the question of the precise definition of the term socialism, the right of a non-socialist citizen to hold his personal views and be entitled to all the privileges enjoyed by the socialist fellow-citizens cannot be denied. In particular his access to the legislative body as an individual and as a party cannot be hindered by denying him the privileges of registration as political party.

"The term 'socialism' has been applied to a large spectrum of theories over the last two centuries. Saint Simonism based on compassion for the less fortunate and suffering fraternity; Owenism as a serious attempt at organisation of the weaker sections into economically viable units; Fabianism with its mighty intellectual prestige provided by G. B. Shaw, Sidney and Beatrice Webb; Guild Socialism advocated by G. D. H. Cole; Welfarism providing a misplaced justification for equal distribution of wealth; the European type of liberal, democratic, welfarist socialism; the Keynesian model entrusting the responsibility of ensuring fuller levels of employment and investment; third world states resorting to planning as an instrument of accelerating growth and equality; the Soviet type of bolshevik scientific socialism based on dialectical materialism, historical determinism, class conflict, the theory of surplus value aimed at industrialisation, nationalization, planning and dictatorship of the proletariat; and last but not the least, the Maoist, Guevarist, Castroist, Royist, etc. provide only part of the spectrum of ideas that have been identified with the word socialism. By virtue of the vast expanse and the political and economic power of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the use of the word socialist in the nomenclature of the Soviet bloc countries, the word is now understood to mean, in popular parlance, a system associated with the Soviet model. Other schools of socialist thought are identified by the appendage of qualifications like democratic, chris-

tian, liberal. The term socialism used without qualifications is interpreted to refer to the system of thought propagated by Marx and Engels and supplemented by the lesser prophets like Lenin and Stalin.

The Concise Oxford dictionary defines the word socialism as a political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the community as a whole should own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange; a policy or practice based on this theory. It is quite clear that the word socialism in its unmixed form means much more and much less than a system based on justice, liberty, equality and fraternity that is envisaged in the Constitution of India. It, therefore, follows that the oath of allegiance to both the Constitution of India and to socialism are in good part mutually contradictory.

"The petitioners submit that, certain traits of the mainstream theory of socialism are clearly opposed if not repugnant to the basic principles and structure of the Constitution of India; for example, class-contradiction, atheism, dictatorship of the proletariat.

"An argument may be made that the term socialism is so vague that no individual should have any difficulty in adhering to it or should feel any need to dissociate himself from it. The obvious corollary is that the declaration of allegiance to the principle of socialism is unnecessary. Further, the argument is far from true. The essential part of all brands of socialism is the notion of the paramountcy of society over an individual; of social decision-making over individual behaviour. This concept of paramountcy stands in ruins today. It is now accepted quasi-universally that mankind has, till date, not invented anything better than the market mechanism for arriving at the best decisions for society as a whole, that holistic social decision-making is a masquerade for a few individuals hijacking the system to their advantage, that individuals are

unique and hence unequal, that individuals pursuing fulfillment of their unique personality interact amongst each other to produce the most desirable results and that there are no Masters neither spiritual nor economic with superior lights.

"In most countries of the world the socialists are collapsing under the weight of their own non-viability. Even the Government of India has admitted the errors of its socialist past and professes to be pursuing the path of market oriented economics. It makes little sense in this era to deny non-socialists the possibility of organising themselves as a party in order to be able to contest political elections.

"The position of the Petitioners is thus diametrically opposed to the basic minimum of the world view, economics, sociology and politics that is associated with the term socialist. The petitioners are, therefore, approaching this Hon'ble Court to seek relief from being forced to change their convictions or to have recourse to deceit in order to be able to exercise the basic democratic human rights embodied in the fundamental rights of being able to form a party with a view to contesting elections.

"Section 29(A) makes a hostile and invidious discrimination between political parties which bear allegiance to the principles of socialism and those that do not. It is submitted that for the purpose of registration of political parties i.e. for the purpose of contesting elections and conferring certain rights and privileges and imposing certain liabilities in relation thereto, there is no intelligible differential between the two kinds of political parties. It is further submitted that for the election law, the differences in beliefs or political philosophies which parties may hold cannot become a ground for discriminating between them so as to confer certain privileges only on parties holding one set of beliefs as long as the beliefs do not contradict or adversely affect the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order.

'Change the Law' says Mr. Seshan

On January 11, Mr. Moreshwar Temurde the Convenor of the Swatantra Bharat Party in Maharashtra and I called on Mr. T. N. Seshan the Chief Election Commissioner, in New Delhi. The purpose of our visit - to make one final effort to persuade the Election Commissioner to consider an interim allotment of a symbol to the newly formed Swatantra Bharat Party.

This party's application for registration had been turned down on the technical ground that the application had not been made within 30 days of the formation of the party as required. This in itself is a very arbitrary rule. If a party does not ask for registration within thirty days, it is permanently debarred from the electoral process.

We asked Mr. Seshan if he would consider an application within the stipulated time period if we declined to swear allegiance to socialism. 'Let us not waste our time in speculation' was his immediate response, but when we persisted, he said that he does not make the law, he only implements the law. Any organisation seeking registration must fulfil all requirements under Section 23A including the bit about allegiance to socialism.

When we pointed out the fact that the law meant that only socialist parties could participate in the electoral process, he shrugged his shoulders and pointed out that the amendment to the Representation of People's Act was passed by Parliament in 1989 *without a single dissenting vote*. There was only one solution:

'Change the law' said Mr. Seshan.

The writ petition filed by the Swatantra Party is an effort to do precisely that.

S. V. Raju

Such a difference, as is sought to be emphasized by Section 29 (A) (5) is without any basis and has no nexus with the purpose of the Act which is avowedly an Act which provides for "the conduct of elections to the Houses of Parliament and to the House or Houses of Legislature of each State, the qualifications and disqualifications for membership of those Houses, the corrupt practices and other offences at or in connection with such elections and the decisions of doubts and disputes arising out of or in connection with such elections".

"The petitioners further submit that for the aforesaid objective of the Act, there is no valid difference in individuals contesting elections and parties doing so. There is thus an arbitrariness and a hostile discrimination writ large in the scheme of the Act in that it enables individual candidates contesting as independents to contest elections even though they do not bear allegiance to the principles of socialism but prevents an

association of such individuals from doing so as a registered political party unless it bears allegiance to the said principles. The petitioners submit that this constitutes an unreasonable and unjustified denial of the advantages of registration only because as an association the said individuals are non-socialists.

"The petitioners submit that the restriction which Section 29(A) imposes on political parties nullifies the very essential and basic feature of the Constitution of India namely democracy and the fundamental right of freedom of association and of thought and expression on citizens for the purpose of preserving democracy.

"It is submitted that the right to amend the Constitution so as not to change its basic structure having being upheld and socialism not being part of the basic structure of the Constitution, the restriction imposed by Section 29(A) has the effect of

virtually denying the right to attempt an amendment of the political philosophy of the Government of the day reflected in the Constitution of India."

The Petition wanted the Court to:

- strike down Sub-Section 5 of Section 29 (A) of the Representation of the People Act 1951 as being ultra vires the Constitution of India to the extent it requires the memorandum and rules and regulations of the association or body desiring registration to contain a specific provision that such an association and body shall bear true faith and allegiance to the principle of socialism; and
- direct the Election Commission to register the Petitioner as a political party under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

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Women from the Roof of the World

Kashmira Rao

The whole affair had the unintended effect of publicising the plight of the Tibetans under Chinese hegemony. As for the behaviour of the Indian establishment, the less said, the better.

ཀླུ་སྤྱི་ལོ་བོད་ཀྱི་བྱང་ཆེད་ཀྱི་ལོ།

INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF
TIBETAN
WOMEN



MARCH 1994-MARCH 1995

March 1994 to March 1995 was observed by the Tibetan community in India and abroad as the International Year of Tibetan Women.

A four-day festival to mark the occasion was held in Bombay between January 21 and 24. The highlights of the festival were a photo exhibition by the well known photo-journalist Vijay Kranti; performances by the Tibetan Institute for the Performing Arts (TIPA), stalls displaying Tibetan crafts, consultation in Tibetan medicine, and cooking demonstration of Tibetan food.

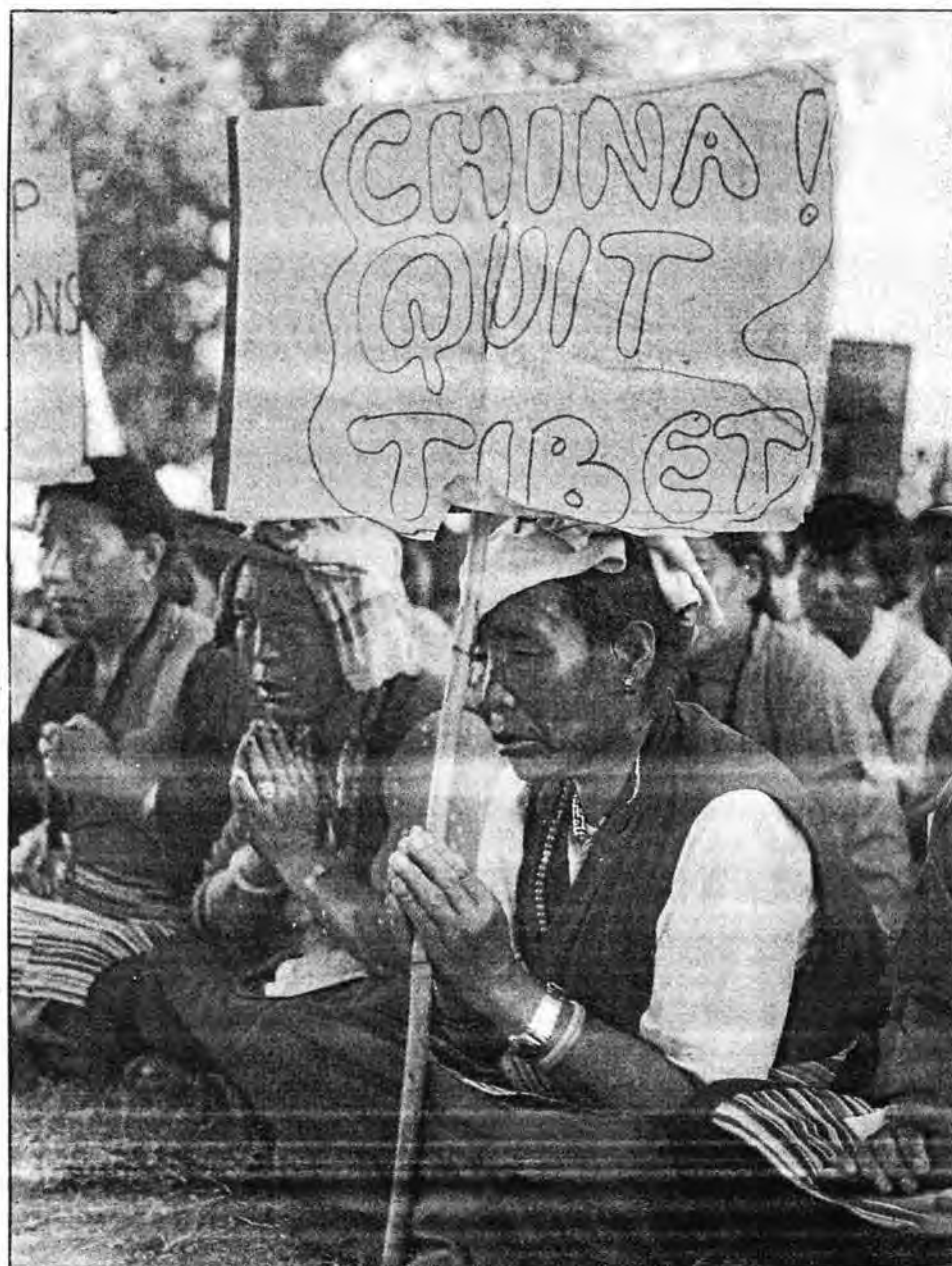
The venue was the SNDT Women's University at Marine Lines. While the exhibition and the stalls were well patronised and drew appreciation from those who visited the exhibition it was a "low profile" event as one news reporter described the festival until a Bombay based communist Chinese diplomat decided to pay a visit to the Festival.

The Consul was obviously not pleased with the photo exhibition. Vijay Kranti has devoted a lot of his energies and film footage on devel-

opments in Tibet. His exhibition on Tibetan women entitled "Woman in Exile" is a classic. As a report in *The Pioneer* put it his "stunning pictures capture the smiles, tears, reverence

and anger, desperation and determination" of the Tibetan women in exile.

Until the visit by the comrade consul there were no problems. The



"Protest through prayers"

The photo which raised the ire of the Chinese Consul

Vice-Chancellor who had permitted the exhibition to be conducted did not interfere with the festival. But after the diplomat's visit it was nit-picking all the way. For instance at every TIPA performance the director of the troupe introduces the audience to various aspects of Tibetan dance and drama. She also explains how the Chinese are interfering with Tibet's cultural traditions.

At one such performance a person presumably an official of the SNDT University was seen vigorously shaking an upraised finger in disapproval



Nuns drawing a sand mandala painting

Chinese Dragon Breathes Fire over Tibet

They live on the Roof of the World. Yet the world refuses to take notice of them.

For most of the Tibetan women who were in Bombay last week to celebrate the International Year of the Tibetan Women, their homeland is just a dream born of bed time stories. But for a handful of nuns among them, who have crossed the proverbial mountains and rivers to escape the Chinese oppression, it is a long-drawn fight against hopelessness.

Twenty-year-old Nawang Pelmo is small-built and soft-spoken. But her mild disposition belies the nationalist fire in her. She escaped to India when the Chinese cracked down on a group of people saying prayers on the mountain the day the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Prize in '91. She was part of a group of 62 - two nuns and the rest monks - who, on the pretext of going on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash, went to western Tibet and then escaped to India.

One of Nawang Pelmo's friends was caught by the Chinese after a protest demonstration and tortured. She jumped out of a first floor window during questioning, hid in the jungle and later managed to escape to India.

Gyaltzen Choetso, 26, also from Gari nunnery, used the same pilgrimage route to escape Chinese repression, but not before spending three prison terms.

When she joined a pro-Independence demonstration along with five others, she was expelled from the nunnery and arrested by the Chinese authorities.

Her hands were tied with a rope behind her back and she was taken to Gutsa prison in Lhasa where she was detained for over a month. For the first one week she was not given any water or food. Occasionally some non-political prisoners passed on some food and that kept her going. They were not given any bedding and the nuns had to sleep on cold Himalayan floors.

The Chinese torture also included tying electric wires to the nuns' fingers, making them stand barefoot on ice during winter and having them stare directly at the sun continuously in summer.

Once three teenagers were caught demonstrating. They were released from custody after they were found to be under-aged.

Ever since the red dragon entered Tibet in '49 and a mass uprising failed ten years later, forcing the Dalai Lama to flee to India, Lhasa has witnessed several Tiananmen Squares that claimed thousands of lives. But barring a Richard Gere here and there, the world has turned a blind eye.

Courtesy: Bombay Times, January 24, '95

when the director referred to the Chinese interference in Tibetan art forms and thanked India for enabling real Tibetan arts and culture to be preserved. She also mentioned that the three nuns performing the invocation dance had been prisoners of the Chinese and had recently escaped and made their way to Dharamshala.

Mr. Phuntsok Ladhaki the TV star who was videofilming the festival was not only warned not to shoot any more but was asked to hand over the video tapes which of course he refused to do.

The whole affair had the unintended effect of publicising the plight of the Tibetans at the hands of the Chinese. As for the behaviour of the Indians it was again a sample of the establishment kowtowing to the Chinese - a state of mind which resulted in *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* becoming in 1962 *Hindi Chini Hai Hai!*

While the Bombay press published reports of the 'incident' it is New Delhi's journalists who deserve to be thanked for proving that outside the establishment there still are people who are prepared to speak out against what undoubtedly was the blatant interference of a foreign diplomat in our affairs.

Members of the National Union of Journalists of India and the Delhi Journalists Association demonstrated

at the Teen Murti roundabout to protest against the Chinese Consul for his role in forcing Mr. Vijay Kranti to close his photo exhibition. In a memorandum to the Chinese Embassy the journalists sought an apology from the Consul: "We fail to understand why a senior diplomat should be ignorant even about the elementary fact that India is a democracy where individuals have a legal right to express themselves freely and without any fear."

MS. KASHMIRA A. RAO was an active participant in the Festival on behalf of the Friends of Tibet, Bombay.



Vijay Kranti

A Free Nation Sans Free Men

Are we so lacking in national self-respect that we can allow ourselves to be ordered about by a petty functionary of the Chinese government? This is what emerges from one or two insufficiently detailed reports tucked away inside newspapers. The Chinese consul-general in Bombay, Qiang Pinxing, is said to have put pressure on the Vice-Chancellor of SNDT University for Women to shut down an exhibition of photographs by photo-journalist Vijay Kranti. It appears that the exhibition, "Woman in Exile", included some photographs of Tibetan women. The Chinese functionary decided that this was not a good thing for Indians to do.

But what about the Vice-Chancellor? Why did she succumb to the Chinese functionary's demand? Did the Chinese functionary put pressure through Central government channels, through the External Affairs Ministry? The news would then have come out more prominently that it has, and the question about whether we are lacking in national self-respect would be even more urgent. Or was the Vice-Chancellor in some way beholden to the Chinese functionary? This would need to be looked into closely by the authorities concerned.

The question - 'are we lacking in national self-respect?' - needs urgent answering in many other respects too. There is a tendency to shy away from giving as good as we get. Our responses are timid when they ought to be clear and precise. Examples are not too difficult to summon. Take, as an instance, Benazir Bhutto's remark some time ago about the possibility of Pakistan-supported militancy in Kashmir erupting into full-scale war between Pakistan and India. That the remark shows her up as more vociferous than wise is beside the point. But Delhi could, at the right time, give

back as good without seeming to be either threatening or alarmed.

The question of how much value we place on national self-respect impinges also on our economic reforms and liberalisation. To judge from reports and opinions available from economic and other commentators the Indian government, in true tradition, favours foreigners and non-resident Indians while placing extra hardship on Indian citizens in India: in true tradition, because leaders in authority here seem, for as long as one can remember, think nothing of denying people even due amenities while fawning on outsiders and corruptively enriching themselves.

Seeing all this, and the way in which authority here fawns on foreigners - as if liberalisation and invitations to foreign investors at any cost were synonymous - is it surprising that a petty functionary of the regime in Beijing was able to have his say and literally order the shutting down of Vijay Kranti's exhibition? Is it at all conceivable that an Indian diplomat in, say Shanghai should effectively put the kind of pressure that the Beijing functionary did in Bombay for the shutting down of an exhibition that displeased Delhi.

The National Union of Journalists has of course done right to protest. But one hopes that the protest is and will continue to be based on the wider issue of upholding national self-respect and not be based merely on the single instance of an exhibition's shut-down because a Beijing functionary required its closure.

Extracts from Mr. Rakesh Puri's column *Midstream*, *The Hindustan Times*

To Celebrate Dissent

Compared to the unfair restrictions under which Tibetans living in India have been placed at various times, the recent incident in Bombay when a section of photographs was removed from an exhibition, may appear insignificant. But there are many reasons why that act of censorship by the authorities of SNDT University, small as it was, should not be brushed under the carpet. The photographs formed part of a larger exhibition organised by Tibetan women as an expression of their lives in India. It is only to be expected that some of the pictures at the exhibition showed Tibetan women protesting about China's occupation of Tibet. The most creditable explanation for why those photographs disappeared from view shortly after the exhibition opened is Chinese disapproval, which was reportedly conveyed to the Vice-Chancellor by the consul-general in Bombay. Here was an act of censorship an insult to the Tibetans and appeasement of Chinese authorities all rolled into one. It deserves to be condemned.

Tibetans have suffered worse than this at the hands of Indian authorities and especially during the visits of Chinese leaders such as Premier Li Peng's in 1992 when hundreds of Tibetans in New Delhi were held to prevent any embarrassment to the dignitary. The Government also fails often to make a distinction between the rights of the Dalai Lama and those of ordinary Tibetans. But there is an important difference between government action and that of SNDT University. When a university cannot uphold a principle such as the freedom of expression, something is terribly amiss. The Indian Government may be able to claim *raisons d'etres* when it tries to avoid offending the sensibilities of foreign governments. Others cannot.

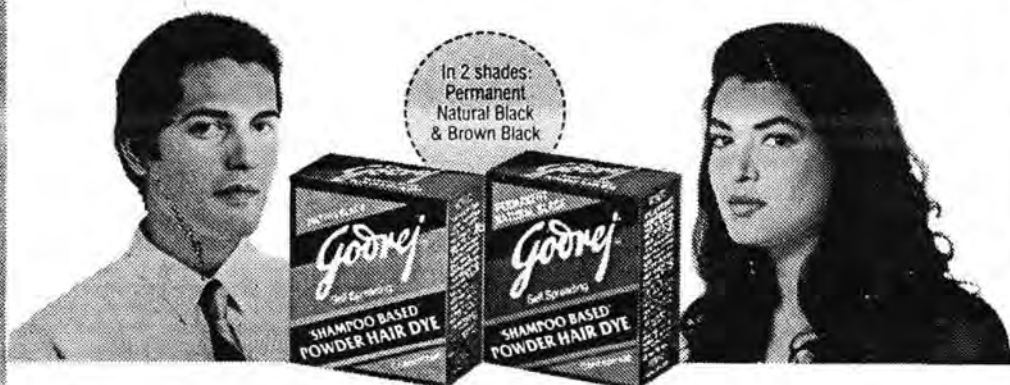
Editorial in the *Indian Express*, Feb. 1, '95.

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What is Wrong with Our Education?

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Unless in the matter of selection of students and appointment of teachers, principals and vice-chancellors, quality alone is allowed to prevail and hatred and prejudice cast aside, there is little chance of right education being imparted and our education returning to its essential role of serving the people of the country. It is only when education is viewed as something rather more important than making a living that we would get the best out of our educational institutions and educational process.

Almost 50 years ago, Dr. C. R. Reddy, an educationist of vision and wide experience addressing an educational conference said: "We usually divide education under primary, secondary and collegiate. Actually education at the primary stage is an elementary affair, at the secondary stage, education is secondary to other concerns and as for the collegiate stage, our education is not high enough, it is not high at all and in fact it is not even education."

Education & Adult Franchise

Skipping half a century, a few days ago, our Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. T. N. Seshan, addressing the students, staff and parents of The Mother's International School, New Delhi, posed the question "What's wrong with our elections?". And the answer "What is right with our elections?". In other words, everything is wrong with our elections.

When we look at a problem like the education of a population approaching 1 billion, we have to take a close as well as a broad look at the prevalent conditions. Our constitution makers, who opted for universal franchise imagined that within a short time there would be universal primary education resulting in a lively literate population ready to understand political issues and competent to vote for the right candidates. Now after several decades of independence and a succession of five year plans, we seem to be worse off than ever before. It is true that spasmodically some efforts are made and some claims advanced about the spread of universal

education and of quality higher education.

Universities Galore

Numbers, percentages the succession of education commissions have made it appear that educational advancement in our country is a creditable affair. Where we had about fifteen universities, we have nearly 200, and more are in the offing. There was a time under the British when the institution of a new university followed the report by a special commission that went round, took evidence and made precise recommendations. Today, without all these "delaying" processes, a powerful Chief Minister can announce the institution of a university during a casual visit to a centre or to placate a section of the electorate on the eve of an election. Universities have come up to appeal to regional, language, gender, sectarian and other local interests. For example, Tamil studies already received due attention in Madras, Annamalai and Madurai universities, when, on the spur of the moment, the late MGR, as if producing a rabbit from a hat, announced the formation of the Tamil University at Thanjavur. Years have passed and its teething troubles are not yet over. And perhaps with a view to appeal specially to the Christian voters as also the fair gender, MGR similarly declared that a women's university would be started named after Mother Teresa and located at salubrious Kodaikanal. Again some years ago, the Andhra Chief Minister declared that three new universities would be started named after Nagarjuna, Kakatiya and Krishna-

devaraya at Guntur, Warangal and Anantapur respectively. There is no need to multiply instances. In our country, it seems to be the easiest thing to start universities for, once it has been brought into being, governments are apt to leave them largely to their own resources or liberal grants from the UGC.

We have now, after several decades of such hectic expansion of colleges and universities, awakened to a very sad state of affairs when colleges and higher educational institutions are obliged to resort to vacation courses and postal courses to augment their income.

Sorry Plight of Village Schools

At the primary stage, the ideal should have been schools with good teachers and attractive surroundings to serve the needs of our sprawling population. Today, a village school even when it has a building doesn't attract students and the building is often more active at night when the drunkards gather there than during the daytime.

I remember that our village school where I did the first four years of my schooling we had two teachers who managed to give sound instruction to the graded pupils in the primary classes. I was able to move from this school to High School and College to complete my school and collegiate education. Our teachers were committed people and did an excellent job identifying themselves with their students' interests. Today my village has an excellent school building, teachers are paid good salaries but pupils either do

not go to school or prefer to study elsewhere than in the school next door and the building is put to all kinds of unbecoming uses. The problem is to attend to primary education as a basic necessity of a democratic government.

Why Education?

When we come to secondary and collegiate education, we are faced by other evils and education suffers a general ignorance. In education, only two things are important, said Dr. MacPhail of the Madras Christian college. Obviously, the first is the pupil. It is because there are pupils, because there are young growing enquiring minds, we establish our schools. The second element in education is not the teacher, not the buildings but God, who is the source of all knowledge and the teacher's role is that of a conduit between God - the home of knowledge and aspirant pupils who thirst for knowledge. This means that a school, college or university must be viewed as the meeting place of aspirant pupils and teacher advisors who can help the aspirants to attain the desired knowledge.

It is not that the teacher's role is not important as the conduit between the reservoirs of knowledge at the top of a hill and the needs of the hungry and thirsty in the plains. The teacher's is a key function though a subordinate one. This gives something of a religious or spiritual role to education. That is why the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram said, "Education is a sacerdotaly." In other words, education should not be treated as a trade, as a profession, as a means of acquiring money and power. The whole art of education must be treated as a sacerdotaly, a vocation, a priesthood. In fact, all work, all honest work, must be done in a spirit of dedication, in a spirit of offering to the Divine. There can be no room for strikes and demands and compromises. It is only when education is viewed as something rather more important than making a living that we would get the best out of our educational institutions and educational process.

Key Elements in Education

Sometimes people debate whether education is not just an elitist affair, a privilege of the rich and lucky. And the cause for snobbery. A man who has a degree after his name or a title like Doctor, Professor, *Kulapati* is aptly imagined that he belongs to a superior caste as it were and qualified to look down on others. Actually, education has an elitist element but not of this narrow or egoistic kind. Knowledge has a purifying and liberating quality. The elitist element in education confers not power or cause for pride but provides the clear responsibility to carry the light of knowledge to others to serve the have-nots, the ignorant, the superstitious. There is also in addition to the elitist element, the vocational element in it. Every pupil prefers a course of education, whether at the primary stage or at the secondary and collegiate, training in a vocation that will enable him to earn his livelihood. Enlightenment of course, but also, practical ability to earn an honourable livelihood. Thus education at all stages should not ignore the vocational element but make due provision for it.

Finally in addition to the elitist element and vocational element, education has basically a cultural element. We are living in a fast changing world, the frontiers of the world are shrinking, we seem to have conquered space as well as time and this wide world is shrinking to something of a global village. To live in this modern world wisely as well as with wide awake eyes, the beneficiaries of education should be aware of the cultural cross-currents uniting east and west and north and south and be ready to appreciate a global culture for a global citizenship. Love of one's country however ardent should transcend the local and achieve the universal. Thus it becomes the duty of modern educational institutions to bear in mind the elitist, vocational and the cultural aspects of education.

Education Reduced to a Mockery

On a superficial look, an educa-

tional institution (primary, secondary, collegiate) involves the interests and perceptions of parents, pupils, teachers, teacher-administrators, excepting with primary education *where all of the age group should be imparted education in the three Rs*. Under secondary and higher education, a selective process becomes necessary. Of the pupils who seek admission only those that seem to be capable of meeting the demands of higher education should be chosen. This applies even more to collegiate education. The number of places is limited and not all students of an age group have equal capacity to face successfully the demands of higher education. Today because of a wrong notion that the so-called forward classes have monopolised the blessings of higher education and therefore the time has come to redress the balance by denying admission to the forward classes, selective admissions take place making the worse the better and the qualified to be rejected. In the long run, this must spell disaster to the entire educational process. Instead of enrolling the best available students, reservations and quotas and inducements make a mockery of the educational scene. This is even more alarming at the collegiate level and especially professional college level. The right pupils, the right teachers and the right teacher-administrators give place to misfits. One should ask the question: "Since the teacher I appoint would be shaping the destinies of generations of students, do I want the best teacher available or one who happens to be a member of my caste?" I needn't go into details. In the last few decades the admissions policy with regard to pupils and the wrong-headedness of selecting teachers and teacher-administrators has reduced all education to a mockery, if not worse.

There is then the question of standard at the different levels of education and especially at the university. Scientific knowledge is said to be doubling itself every ten or fewer years and technological advance is an even speedier phenomenon. Western universities are constantly alert to

standards in higher education and select the best pupils and teachers from almost a global pool. In India, with our suffocating rules governing the selection of pupils and teachers academic standards necessarily suffer for we are content generally not to choose the properly equipped. Or we prefer to leave the vacancies unfulfilled. In the result, the syllabus is more a child of our yesterdays than a mirror of the present. A bright student of our syllabi and the bachelor's and master's courses, especially in science called them no more than "garbage". This may be strong language but forcefully reveals the sad state of affairs. If we desire our higher education to be high enough, even to be reasonably high, we have to engineer a whole revolution with objectives and

practical formulations. The pace of change is now verily a global affair and we too should learn to mingle in the current.

Quality the Key

What ails education? Almost everything I should say. 50 years ago, I had just passed my intermediate examination and I was one of the 10 first classes. That was the time when a neighbouring college was adding graduate courses and the principal was eager that the best students should be admitted. He found out the names of the people who had secured first in the intermediate and - impossible to believe it! - drove to my house in my village asking me to join the B.A. class in his college and offered me a liberal fee concession. This was

the situation then and today we have the spectacle of some of our best aspiring students being turned away because they are believed to belong to the privileged class. The supposed sins of the fathers should not be visited upon the children. This applies even more to the choice of teachers and administrators. Unless in the matter of selection of students and appointment of teachers, principals and vice-chancellors, quality alone is allowed to prevail and hatred and prejudice cast aside, there is little chance of right education being imparted and our education returning to its essential role of serving the people of the country.

PROF. K. R. SRINIVASAIYENGAR, an authority on English Literature, is the author of several books. He was Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University.

The Pradeep Shahs Are In - The Kalams Are Out

Ranga Kota

The astronomical compensation (by Indian standards) reportedly offered to Mr. Pradeep Shah, the former chief of CRISIL by a leading foreign financial institution perhaps symbolises the changing profile of the service industry in India. The service industry is scouting for the best talent available and offering compensation packages unthinkable even a few years ago. A large part of the Indian service industry which has still to acquire the maturity associated with that of its counterparts in the West is driven by competent individuals who command a hefty premium in the job market. Besides, the low capital intensive nature of the Indian service industry (other than hotels and aviation) can afford higher personnel costs.

In a country where employment is still a preferred option for the large number of bright boys and girls from middle class families, career choices are often guided by financial rewards and commensurate social status among the peers. Technology and the sciences which were preferred choices in the 'sixties and 'seventies for careers in manufacturing, scientific and technological research, are now seen only as enabling qualifications for entry into management institutions that could land them jobs in the service industry or non-manufacturing jobs in the manufacturing industry. Consequently, science courses at undergraduate colleges no longer hold any attraction for a large section of boys and girls.

There is no point in lamenting this development. The reason is the singular failure of the manufacturing and scientific establishments, both public and private, to provide both the

challenge and monetary compensation to bright technical graduates from the premier institutions. The reluctance of the private sector to invest in R&D seeing no reason for technological upgradations thanks to protected markets for its products; and the politicking and bureaucracy in public sector behemoths and government-controlled R&D establishments, have contributed to killing the attraction for technical jobs. It discouraged individuals who wanted to pursue a career related to their academic background. The frustration associated with lack of challenge and mobility has driven the technocrats to non-manufacturing jobs, with long-term consequences that could be disastrous to Indian technological and manufacturing capabilities. The example of post-war U.K. is before us. The rapid growth of the service industry made British technology and manufacturing second rate to the West and to Japan. We may soon even find it increasingly difficult to compete with other South East Asian nations. The number of Nobel Prizes that went to the U.K. in the last decade in areas of physics, chemistry and medicine can be counted on one's fingers tips.

Some of the best brains in Indian science and technology can be traced to the generation that crossed middle age. The Kalams, the Raos and the Swaminathans are a breed of highly talented and committed technocrats whose contributions led to outstanding success stories in such critical areas as missile technology, space and agriculture. With the current state of affairs it is anybody's guess whether we would be able to produce such outstanding technocrats in the future. Like Raman, Ramanujam, Meghnad

Shah, Bose or Subba Rao before, they may as well become part of history.

Poor technology is at the root of poor quality and productivity that plagues Indian industry and agriculture. Indian wage costs in isolation might look low, but discounted by the productivity, and quality, are not competitive. With increased competition internally and externally and the rapid technological changes in the developed west and in Japan, Indian industry can survive and grow only if it can raise its productivity and quality curves significantly upwards. That can happen only if there is a massive upgradation of technology through absorption from abroad and development in-house. This presupposes committed and high quality technical and manufacturing professionals which industry would find difficult to hire unless the job challenge and compensation matches that offered by high profile non-manufacturing jobs. This also pre-supposes that manufacturing will need significantly less manpower, but which is relatively well paid. With the myopic approach of Indian politicians and trade unions, such a transformation is difficult to assume in the near future. But, we cannot escape the reality that unless the trade-off weighs heavily in favour of technology competent people will continue to shy away from scientific, technical and manufacturing jobs. The wonder kids of today would be increasingly attracted to cutting a deal over a five-star breakfast than slogging in the laboratories and shopfloors. The Pradeep Shahs are in and the Kalams are out. It will have enormous social costs, but that appears to be of no concern till the party is over.

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"I remain, Sir your obedient servant"

N. B. Grant

Hardly anybody pays attention to the requirements of efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of the governmental apparatus. The country is functioning as a democracy, but democratic institutions demanding accountability, have not penetrated the lower levels of government and administration.

In the days of the Raj, and even a few years after Independence, it was mandatory for all government servants, irrespective of their rank and status, to end all communications to the public by the words, "I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant", thereby implying that they were accountable to the public who were their masters, and whom they had sworn to serve. Over the years, this type of salutation has ceased to be used, and the word 'service' has become synonymous with the term 'servant', and has reached a stage when the government servant thinks that, each time he is rendering a service, which is his duty to do, he is doing a big favour and obligation. In short the term 'accountability' has completely disappeared from the vocabulary of the bureaucrat and his political master.

In the Western democracies, the words 'accountability', 'transparency' and 'delivery systems' in the provision of public services and of governance, symbolise the rights which people have been able to extract from their governments. These carry the language and the message of modern day governance. The best example of this I found in Canada, where each department and institution of the government has been made to spell out in detail what services they commit to provide, of what quality and at what time, and what systems each one of them has installed for monitoring the delivery of such services and dealing with any complaints that are received from the people. The Canadian government has promulgated that recipients of its various services are its clients, the customers, and their satisfaction is the *raison-d'être* of existence of the government machinery. Like the private sector enterprises which exist for providing services and which depend entirely on consumer satisfaction for achieving the

objective of their making profit, the governmental machinery is placed under obligation to ensure that while they do not work for profit, they have to give complete satisfaction to those who receive the public services.

The Canadian System

In the Canadian system, the various departments of government have laid down specific standards of service. These are widely publicised and people are given assurance that not only will these standards of service be maintained, but that they will continuously be improved upon, and that any lapse in the maintenance of these standards will not be allowed to be repeated. It is worth looking at some of the standards which have been prescribed by the respective departments of that government. These are really eye-openers for us who have become inured to the inadequacies and faults in the functioning of our institutions and departments.

Their revenue department for instance (the equivalent of our central taxation department) has laid down that

- it will always maintain 100 percent accuracy in communicating demands to the citizens;
- there will be at most 20 minutes wait at any counter of the department for provision of information of services;
- in the matter of telephone enquiries, the department will ensure that out of 100 calls made to it, no more than 30 at any time will result in the busy signal the first time, and once the caller gets through he will be connected to the official concerned within, at most, three minutes;
- there will, at most, be a one day response time for business enquiries,

and not more than 30 days in replying to any letter;
- a client's request for alterations in taxation demands must be finally decided within 28 days.

UK Citizens Charter

Let us now look at some of the commitments which have been made by the government in UK, whose Whitehall type of democracy has been adopted by us. It has issued a White Paper in the shape of a Citizens Charter. This Charter commits the government to a variety of initiatives aimed at making public services more responsive and accountable to their clients, improving the quality of service and involving the people in choices. It prescribes as a policy that competition will be encouraged in the provision of services wherever possible, to spur quality improvement. This will include reliance on market forces through privatisation, contracting out and removing the monopoly status of public services. It has committed that services standards will be published, making the information available on performance in relation to the standards, and providing clients the opportunity to act when services are unacceptable, by introducing effective complaints and redressal procedure as important factors of the entire programme. As an example, in prescribing standards it has been stated that, if a resident, for instance, calls for an ambulance it must reach within 14 minutes where the need is in an urban area, and in 21 minutes if the call is from a rural area. Such specific standards have been prescribed in relation to a large number of services, in areas such as transport, communication, procurement of supplies, etc.

The Indian Situation

We in India are at the threshold of

transformation which the processes of economic development and liberalisation are bringing about; new horizons are opening up. There are inadequacies and difficulties, which we need to effectively and quickly overcome. There are various facets of the government functioning, at the Centre and in the states, that need to be overhauled and improved, if we want to create confidence in foreign investors. The governmental machinery unfortunately is bloated, outsized and flabby. Public grievances are hardly attended to. Points of contact between citizens and the field apparatus of the government have enormously increased, but simultaneously the harassment of people has also increased. Administrative and financial powers have become very centralised. As one travels from the center to the states and to districts and villages, the quality of administration shows distinct deterioration. Hardly anybody pays attention to the requirements of efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of the governmental apparatus. The country is functioning as a democracy, but democratic institutions demanding accountability, have not penetrated the

lower levels of government and administration. There are many ailments of the functioning of democracy and the problems are mostly based on political considerations which hold sway over the legitimate interests of the country.

A P.U.R.C. for India

There has to be greater enforcement of discipline and accountability. Openness in decision making must become the hallmark of the functioning of government and people must be involved in the decision-making processes. These are indicative of the changes that need to be brought about to make the governmental apparatus more responsive to the people and to meet their requirements of services for which they pay and which they demand. There is a paramount need for the evolution of a Citizens Charter for our country. To bring this about, there is need for the enactment of a Public Utility Regulatory Commission (PURC) Act. We understand that although the Ministry of Civil Supplies had initiated a proposal for this, all the consumer service ministries concerned have opposed the proposal. Some of the

salient features of such an act based on similar commissions established in the USA and other Western democracies would be:

- the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) would be a statutory, regulatory, quasi-judicial body, and not an advisory board.
- It will function as a quasi-judicial body in terms of its proceedings; filing a brief and answering interrogatories by the utilities, consumer organisations and their advocates.
- It will file written statements, producing expert evidence and addressing arguments like a regular adversarial proceedings before the quasi judicial body.
- The jurisdiction of the PURC would cover prior approval for fixing and revising tariffs, fares and freights, and no revision in them, whether it be for power, water, telephones or public transport, etc. If the Western democracies have achieved this, there is no reason why we cannot do it in India.

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The Culture of a Business

T. Thomas

As in the case of religious or political groups, among business firms also there are fundamentalist cultures - that is cultures that assiduously try to preserve what is considered to be the true original set of beliefs.

Culture represents the manner in which members of a group (whether it is a society or a business group) regulate their behaviour in order to be in harmony with each other and with other groups in that society. It manifests itself in their pattern of behaviour, forms of art and music, language, customs and practices and in the beliefs that are shared. Most great nations of the world have their distinct cultures based on such factors.

Like nations, business firms also have their distinctive cultures. It is a sum total of the norms, beliefs and values that regulate the behaviour of individuals and groups within any given corporation. Many firms are not even aware of their culture or sensitive to its distinct characteristics. They become aware of it when they have to induct managers from other firms with different cultures or even more acutely when mergers and acquisitions take place and a great deal of cultural adjustment is thrust on them. In some cases adversity persuades companies to look at their culture.

Old established companies like Shell & Unilever have their individual cultures which have evolved over the lives of these corporations and set them apart from each other and from other firms. The culture of a firm is influenced by the culture of the country of its origin as well as the nature of its business. For instance German chemical companies combine the German culture with some characteristics of chemical companies throughout the world. Japanese automobile companies are an amalgam of Japanese business culture with some of the distinct features of the global automobile

industry. American oil companies retain their essentially American culture along with the common practices of the world petroleum industry. British banks and financial institutions combine their quaint British customs with many of the global norms which are shared with their counterparts on Wall Street or in Tokyo.

Indian companies will find it increasingly necessary to combine their peculiarly Indian ways of doing business with the global practices of the businesses they are involved in.

Within this cultural umbrella, each firm seems to evolve something like a genetic code that determines its characteristics and behaviour pattern. Just as different species in nature have responded in varying degrees to Darwinian forces of evolution, business firms which are exposed to changes in environment also respond in varying degrees ranging from total insensitivity to proactive initiatives. The companies that anticipate and respond to change not only survive but thrive. Those who do not, become extinct over time like dinosaurs in the evolution of species. A notable example of business dinosaurs in recent Indian business history have been the Calcutta-based British colonial companies most of whom are either extinct or have declined beyond recognition. They failed to adapt to the changes in post-colonial India.

It is interesting to note that business culture has similar characteristics as the culture of a society:-

(i) Firstly, a culture that is alive and vibrant is one that is con-

stantly evolving and changing whether it is in business or in society. It is not rigid or stagnant. A progressive culture readily evaluates and responds to stimuli which emanate either internally or externally. It does not fear or resist stimuli without evaluation.

(ii) Secondly, it is when cultures adapt and change that great progress occurs in a civilisation or in a company. A historic example of such a change in culture of a society was the Reformation of the Christian Church in Europe under the leadership of Martin Luther. It propelled north western Europe out of the Middle Ages into the modern scientific and industrial era. Religious leaders no more dictated whether the earth was round or flat or (in more recent times) how many children one should have. The dominance of the world by Western Europe and North America over the last four centuries can be attributed to this Reformation of beliefs and cultures in the 16th century.

In contrast, the Southern part of Europe that hung on to fundamentalist beliefs lagged far behind. Religious fundamentalism of the type that existed among them at the time and the fundamentalism of the type we see today in parts of the Middle East have held societies down and prevented their progress. The Indian subcontinent too has its share of fundamentalists in both major religious groups, who if they

came to power, could take us back several decades or centuries. Fortunately most Indians have grown away from religious fundamentalism and recognize the advantages of a secular culture.

The same is true in politics too. It is the fundamentalist attitude of the communist parties in Russia and eastern Europe that held them back and kept them so backward as compared to the rest of Europe. Fortunately this particular brand of political fundamentalism is now fully exposed and discredited and most of the erstwhile Communist countries are now embracing market-oriented policies.

Nearer home, it is the political fundamentalism of the inward looking myopic socialists who ruled our country for four decades before the present one, that kept our economy behind most of the rest of Asia. The willingness to break out of this and to change is already showing results in the economy of India.

- (iii) As in the case of religious or political groups, among business firms also there are fundamentalist cultures - that is cultures that assiduously try to preserve what is considered to be the true original set of beliefs. The fundamentalists try to perpetrate their hold on the organisation by upholding ancient traditions and invoking the name of God or Gandhiji or the founder of the Company as may suit the occasion. They feel secure with what is familiar and feel threatened by any change. These fundamentalist beliefs often include irrational pride in the traditions of the firm although changed circumstances have made such traditions irrelevant if not counter-productive; promotional policies based on old boy network rather than merit; tolerance of mediocre levels of competence; belief in the relative infallibility

of people at the top, etc. Fundamentalism in business firms has not been recognised and written about as much as religious fundamentalism. This is because its manifestations do not include public eruptions of violence or strife. However business fundamentalism does as much damage as political or religious fundamentalism does. It is a very strong regressive influence in business as in society.

It was fundamentalism in several segments of industry both on the part of management and of labour that led to the decline of British industry in general before the Thatcher era. The old textile houses of Bombay are a telling Indian example of decline caused by fundamentalist or "no-change attitude" on the part of management and of labour in that industry.

- (iv) Large social migrations like that of the Aryans into the Indo-Gangetic plains have created hybrid cultures. In a similar way during the last few decades we have seen the emergence of hybrid cultures created by multinational companies. They combine the strong cultural characteristics of a parent company with those of the local market. Like all hybrids, most of them have grown up to be stronger than their original mono-cultural organisations or their narrowly national competitors. Over the next few decades we can hopefully see the emergence of Indian multinationals which could combine the innate shrewdness and hardworking ethics of the Indian culture with the sophistication and strategic vision that characterise the Western business culture. In some ways Indian businesses, because of our inherent multi-ethnicity and greater facility with the use of English language, are in a better position than the Japanese or Brazilians or Koreans to create strong hy-

brid multinational business cultures. Now that the shackles have been removed from Indian industry this possibility is real.

- (v) Changes in culture of a firm as of societies occur when a leader provides stimulation with ideas that challenge tradition. Buddha, Shankaracharya, Martin Luther and Gandhiji did so with society at large. In almost all successful business firms there have been leaders who revived and changed the culture and course of those firms. In most cases such changes are based on retaining and developing what is good in an existing culture and adding to it new elements that will stimulate progress. A total rejection of all that is existing can be devastating. Therefore the skill in reforming the culture of a Company is to identify and retain the pride and honour in what is good while recognising what is to be rejected or modified. At the same time the management of the firm should seek, generate and embrace new ideas and practices that can energise the firm and propel it forward with a new vigour.

MR. T. THOMAS is the Chairman of Glaxo India Ltd. Extracted from his speech delivered at his Company's Annual General Meeting on October 24, 1994.

"Divine-discontent"

Nothing is right merely because it has long been unquestioned, nothing is permanent merely because it has long endured, and nothing is sacred merely because it has been worshipped for generations.

There is no law so universal as the law of change. This is not a static, frozen, motionless world. It is the very nature of our world that it shall evolve and grow; that old ways shall pass and make room for the new.

It is the nature of man always to be dissatisfied with things as they are and to strive always for something new and better. The greatest of all human qualities is this restlessness, this striving which someone called "divine-discontent".

Still a Long Way from Secularism

D. Anjaneyulu

The translation of the secular state idea into a reality requires guts and respect for first principles among the powers that be. These can't be expected of a government, struggling for survival from crisis to crisis, on the basis of high sounding slogans and the low-down in expediency

"Plato knew his onions", asserts Prof. Sheryar Ookerjee in his contribution to the debate on 'Secularism' (*Freedom First*, October-December 1994). I dare say good old Plato might very well have. But those onions, if they can be preserved at all, are of little or no use to us, as they are sure to spoil our rice and curry (vegetarian or non-vegetarian) today.

Metaphors apart, Plato was not particularly logical or rational or even consistent. For the simple reason, that when he wanted poets banned from his Republic, he seems to have hardly realised that he himself was a poet, at least by temperament, unlike Aristotle the logician. Let that pass.

Coming to the Professor's own opinions, he is skating on even more slippery ground. Especially, when he tries to discuss the nature of all religions. He says, among other things: "...it is the very essence of a religion to claim truth for itself. All talk about the different religions being doors to the same room (Radhakrishnan) or rivers flowing into the same sea (Anandamayi) are just thoughtless and inapplicable metaphors".

We can forget all the metaphors (though all human language at a higher level is considered a metaphor or series of metaphors by some students of language) for the time being; and come to the main point, as directly as possible. It would have been better for him not to bring in semi-literate godmen and godwomen (with no precise training in philosophy, epistemology in particular) in this context. Radhakrishnan might have used the metaphor for elucidation, but one has

to go deeper to the original text that had inspired him.

It was a 'sookti' from the Rig Veda, which says: "*Ekam Sat; Vipraah Bahudha Vadanti*" (meaning broadly "Truth, or the essence, is one; only wise menspeak of it in different ways"). There is no metaphor or simile here. The reference, by inference, is, of course, to the religion of the Vedas, which, in due course, became *Arya Dharma*, or Hinduism. There are no rooms and streams here but only scope for different insights and interpretations. Admittedly, it is a typically Hindu attitude to life. Not that other religions accept it. Certainly not the 'historical' religions (based on one founder, one book, and one dogma), which believe in proselytisation.

It was Gibbon (in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"), for some time a Roman Catholic, who observed that monotheistic religions are less tolerant than polytheistic religions. Or words to that effect. Why Plato wanted poets expelled from his 'Republic' is not the central theme in a discussion of secularism in free India. Whether he had the power at all to do that remains a moot point. We, however, read that he himself was exiled for some years. Was it because he was a poet?

Turning from poets to politicians and political activists, we come to Dr. P. R. Dubashi's general statement that "secularism is an attribute of the State and not the description of the society". It is unobjectionable, by and large. He mentions two relevant points: (a) absence of discrimination on grounds of religion; and (b) freedom to pursue

one's own religion and carry out religious practices without let or hindrance. Good enough. But this clarification is inadequate as it does not take the background to the concept into consideration.

Pandit Nehru as Prime Minister, who was deeply influenced by V. K. Krishna Menon in many of his decisions, was credited with a perceptive observation, which was probably his own. He drew attention to the fact that in England, we have a 'religious' state (not a theocracy by any means, but the throne must be occupied only by one who belongs to the Church of England, not a Roman Catholic, Methodist, Calvinist etc.) but the people can be described as being secular. Somewhat similar is the case with the U.S.

The position was and is just the opposite in India, where the society, or at least sections of it, is religious. It wouldn't matter if individuals are religious, or even caste-minded, provided they respect the law of the land.

But the same Nehru had reportedly made another remark that was not only illogical, but fraught with dangerous consequences. He found nothing wrong with "minority communalism", but had serious objections to "majority communalism", which always raised his hackles. And he publicly encouraged the former to the detriment of the latter. But he couldn't imagine that this would, in due course, make the former aggressive, leading to a backlash from the latter, about which everyone now raises a hue and cry.

The Gita is not a book for study and examination as a text-book. It is a book that tells men how to regulate their activities and their minds. It is like a railway-guide. It is a guide-book for the journey of life. We should travel with its help, not commit it to memory.

Merely committing it to memory will not enable us to reach the journey's end.

- Rajaji



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The policy of pro-X, and anti-Y, is not exactly a proper implementation of the imperatives of a secular state. Nor is it based on a correct understanding of the concept of secularism. According to Webster's Dictionary, it means two things:

(1) Worldly spirit, views or the like, especially a system of doctrines and practices that disregards or rejects any form of religious faith or worship; and

(2) The belief that religion and ecclesiastical affairs should not enter into the functions of the state, especially into public education.

With reference to the Constitution of India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Chairman of the Drafting Committee, had this to say, while piloting the Constitution Bill:

"The conception of a secular state is derived from the liberal democratic tradition of the West ... The constitution is supreme in all matters, though a secular state does not mean that we shall not take into consideration the religious sentiments of the people".

Yes, we certainly shall. But we cannot allow the concept of the secular state to be distorted or diluted for fear of offending the religious predilections and allied socio-cultural prejudices of a particular denomination by the state insisting that the law of the land should apply equally to all - the restrictions no less than the benefits.

I totally agree with Dr. Dubashi when he asserts that "this intrusion of religion in politics has greatly strengthened the hold of religion, weakened the concept of equal citizenship and made a mockery of our secular constitution". I also endorse his emphasis on the need for rational behaviour worthy of a mature society.

But this is no easy task. Not so much because our society is too religious for that. But mainly because there is no symmetry, let alone rational sensibility, in our religious attitudes, based on the traditional beliefs and practices of certain de-

nominations. It is not merely a question of tolerance or even natural accommodation, or a contrived stance of "Bhai-Bhaiism". That had been tried with all sincerity and strength of popular appeal by Mahatma Gandhi during the Khilafat movement in the early 'twenties. But it only proved a flash in the pan. Did it help the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity? God knows. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk knew what he was doing, when he threw the young caliph out of the State.

In any case, it was not a secular state or society that Gandhi was aiming at. It was 'Rama Rajya', which has since become a dirty word. Nehru was all the time talking of 'socialism' and 'secularism'. The one was vague and romantic, the other was vague, wobbling and lopsided.

Dr. Dubashi's listing of the requirements of a secular state is done with clarity and candour. It would be an excellent idea "to treat all Indians as citizens", with no distinction of Hindu, Muslim, Christian etc. Equally commendable is the evolution of a common code of laws - constitutional, civil and criminal. It would be ideal to make the visits of heads of state and government and other official dignitaries to religious shrines and places of worship strictly private.

There are quite a few difficulties in the process of implementing these *desiderata*. Not all the obstacles on the way are insurmountable. For one thing, only the Hindus (and to some extent the Parsis and the Christians) are amenable to a common civil code. The Hindu law had been codified by a secular state, as the Hindu, even the most orthodox, keeps his religion as a matter of personal belief and for practice at home, avoiding confrontation with the state.

For the Muslim in India, his personal faith is all-embracing and comes before the compulsions of the state. Let us recall the Shah Bano case in which Rajiv-Gandhi had to amend the Constitution to exempt the community from the operation of the Indian Penal Code. He had the majority but no guts. India was the first to ban the

'Satanic Verses', even before Iran and Pakistan. Did anyone read the book? Why was Taslima Nasreen denied a visa? Here the Government had neither the majority nor the guts.

Translation of the secular State idea into a reality requires guts and respect for first principles among the powers that be. These can't be expected of a government, struggling for survival from crisis to crisis, on the basis of high sounding slogans and the low-down in expediency. It is only to be hoped and prayed for that courage of conviction and integrity of character will have a vital role to play in some future regime of our dreams.

DR. D. ANJANEYULU is an author and journalist. He is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

Why Religions Thrive

Although religions as we see them today took shape much later, the religious tendency as such was born in the insecure conditions of ancient men. Even today whenever uncertainty and insecurity increase, people will suddenly become superstitious and religious. For example, during grave illnesses, during natural calamities, during wars, before examinations, elections or before launching of some big schemes, people will suddenly become religious. Ancient men were puzzled by the happenings around them; they felt scared and insecure. They were ignorant, helpless and miserable. They keenly wanted security, affluence, peace, love, knowledge and happiness. But the ancient men found that complete and eternal fulfilment of all our desires, wants, deficiencies, needs and aspirations is not possible in our empirical world. Hence they posited a supernatural type of heaven where every desire and aspiration is fulfilled for ever. Ancient men also thought of some rituals which were supposed to lead people to heaven. This is how religion took shape. This is how religions are always of a wish-fulfilling and emotionally satisfying type.

Now we can understand as to why the religious objectives (including liberation or heaven) and the methods of attaining them are all unverifiable.

Mr. D. D. Bandiste in *The Secularist*

India's Privileged Parasites

Tavleen Singh

Last week a Cabinet sub-committee decided that he (Mr. Vasant Sathe) did not have to pay the Rs 7 lakhs he owed the Government in rental arrears that he accumulated while he was in illegal occupation of his ministerial bungalow. Can you remember when Sathe was last a minister? I can't. But, he stuck to his ministerial home like a limpet until he finally managed to wheedle a Government job out of Narasimha Rao in order to be able to legalise his squatting. He should be ashamed of himself but, on the other hand, why should he be when everyone else does the same?

Going by the lists that appear, from time to time, in the newspapers, the limpet syndrome is a widespread phenomenon. Famous limpets include Vyjanthimala, Ravi Shankar, the widows of Jagjivan Ram and Darabara Singh, Sonia-sycophant, Ratnakar Pandey and the Congress Party's spokesman V. N. Gadgil.

Why would such rich and famous people need to be so desperate for Government houses, you might ask yourself, puzzled, which is exactly the point that I am trying to make. Even if you are really rich you cannot afford to live as well as a humble MP does in Delhi because if you were to pay commercial rents for the smallest of Government flats it would be around Rs.500,000 a month. They occupy, as has been pointed out before in this column, the most expensive real estate in Delhi, possibly in India and they get it free. It is as if Manhattan in New York and Belgravia in London were to be given free to politicians and bureaucrats. It would never happen because even in the richest countries in the world, it would be considered an outrageous expense but we who count among the poorest of the poor find it quite normal to allow our Government to waste money in this fashion. Just think how much money could be made if we could move our MPs into a hostel and our ministers into a ministerial complex on the President's Estate?

Think of the example it would set. The same thing would start happening in our state capitals. In Bombay, where there is no accommodation at all, the Government has built itself vast, sprawling dairy farms and ugly offices on the seafloor. If they built flats and rented them commercially, they might make enough to pay for Bombay's needs for a year. This is a patently absurd situation and has to stop. But, who will stop it? Not the politicians and bureaucrats because the whole point of coming to power is not have to live like an ordinary Indian and not even us in the Fourth Estate because, alas, our silence has been bought by Government flats.

Almost every senior journalist in India is happily ensconced in Government accommodation for which you, the taxpayers, pay. Is it right, is it fair? And, added up, all this goes towards inflating useless, unproductive Government expenditure. Only when it stops, will the Government think seriously about reconsidering its housing policies that make it impossible for even reasonably rich people, to afford to live in our cities.

For those who believe that it is normal practice, in other countries as well, for politicians and bureaucrats to live off the fat of the land please let me remind you that in the United States, the richest democracy in the world, not even the Vice President is entitled to a government house in Washington. As for such other perks as free electricity, free laptop computers, free petrol, free cars, free security, free travel and free gas connections, the question would simply not arise. Please, as I have said before, let us pay them higher salaries and cut the perks, it would cost us much, much less.

Extracted from Ms. Tavleen Singh's 'Fifth Column' in the *Indian Express*, January 22, 1995.

A National Shame

While I was waiting at Bandra railway station, in Bombay, it was announced that VT bound trains would be leaving late by 20 minutes. In the morning peak hour, the platform was flooded with commuters. As for me, the twenty minutes passed away in less than a minute, because I saw the whole of India today during this short time.

On the platform, besides the swelling commuters, there were many shoe shine boys, vendors and beggars. Being the rainy season, there were also a number of pavement dwellers. Suddenly, a deafening noise "chor, chor, maro, maro" was heard from a Churchgate bound train. It was a case of pick-pocketing, and the sound and fury vanished as the train passed off.

A week and fragile woman in her forties, clad in dirty clothes, with her head resting on one of her shoulders as if she could no longer bear the brunt of life was sitting on the platform. She looked more than her age, obviously badly battered by poverty and desperation.

Next to her was a child of about four years of age. Judging from the similarity in appearance, the kid must have been her daughter. The child was in no way better than the mother in health and dress. She looked irritated and sullen and kept on crying either due to hunger or sickness. The protruding bones all over her body spoke of the remaining few months of her life. When the mother could not longer bear the groaning, she became brittle and explosive and gave the child a slap. This made the child cry louder and faster, shivering in her pale, thin and wrinkled skin. Ultimately, what the poor child got was her own tears of pain and sorrow to drink!

A few feet away from this sorry sight was a teastall where a few commuters were sipping their tea and munching snacks. Stretching out towards them were half-a-dozen begging hands, as if they were being accused of eating in front of hungry stomachs. Were those hands signalling that the day when the poor would snatch away food from the mouth of the rich was not very far away?

It is a national shame that despite its vast human and material resources, 47 years after Independence, India is still plagued by poverty and unemployment. A fall-out of this is the high incidence of social unrest, violence, robbery, beggary, rape, prostitution, murder and drug peddling.

It is high time our politicians read the writing on the wall and concentrate on nation-building activities. If this is not done, and done on a top-priority basis, India will ever remain a paradise for self-seeking politicians and anti-socials and a real hell for the common man.

ANTHONY PARAKAL
Bombay

The Not-My-Fault Age

Ian Tickle

In this month in which we remember the liberation of the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps, fifty years ago, we should remember with greater force than ever that, both in individual life and community life, the not-my-fault excuse must not pass.

Everywhere you go these days you hear people saying it's not my fault. This expression seems to be much more in vogue than in the past. Perhaps it is because, in spite of the death of communism and the end of the cold war, there seems to be more misery and disaster in the world than there used to be. This is an illusion because during the days of communism the misery was there but it was taking place in areas which people in the free world could not see. The whole of the Soviet Union - and to a lesser extent the communist countries of eastern Europe - made up a disaster zone. But it was a zone in which people could not move from place to place, a zone in which nobody knew in any real sense what was going on. It was the mission of organisations and publications like this one to try to draw people's attention to what might be going on behind the iron curtain. But it was an uphill task. We were up against the age-old problem of telling people things they did not want to hear.

The disastrous war in Chechnya provides an apt example of this. Such an event could quite easily have happened in the Soviet Union. There are records of events quite as appalling which nobody outside the walls of the Kremlin other than the people on the spot knew about at the time. Now, however, Russia is a relatively free country - and the whole world knows what is going on. Not only people outside Russia, but people inside it too. There is a plethora of independent television stations in Moscow and throughout

the ex-Soviet Union, and there is no longer any way of concealing the truth from the people.

The age of satellite television has made it virtually impossible to prevent people knowing what is happening anywhere in the world. Anybody who can afford a minimum of equipment can obtain a reception satellite which enables them to receive pictures from CNN, BBC World Service and literally hundreds of television stations. There is no country where such reception is impossible. Authoritarian regimes are at present fighting a last ditch battle to prevent people receiving television programmes by satellite. But they cannot win in the long run. Although at present satellites cannot be concealed from the outside observer new and less visible equipment is on the way. Once reception is possible without any evidence being seen outside the four walls of a dwelling house the thought police will be hampered. Both Nazi and Soviet dictators discovered to their cost that they could not prevent people receiving broadcasts inside their houses.

The result of all this is that there is a feeling of powerlessness against the inevitable which did not exist in the simple old days of the cold war. The idea that what was going on over there was incapable of remedy and we should concentrate on our own sphere has been replaced by a diffuse consciousness that all the ills of the world are at our own back door. This is combined with a feeling of lack of power to provide

remedy that did not exist before. The answer of the powerless human being is to say it's not my fault. But the truth is we cannot escape responsibility. We must never forget John Donne's timeless words: "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee".

The difference between individual and collective behaviour is not as great as is often thought. The person who claims the not-my-fault excuse in personal life is a voter and a member of a community. We are faced with the problem of not-my-fault communities transferring responsibility to not-my-fault countries transferring in turn responsibility to a not-my-fault international community.

As has always been the case in modern times, the solution to this problem is likely to be found in the new world. In two world wars in this century there has emerged from the United States of America a feeling of certitude that the not-my-fault excuse is without validity. On both occasions Americans crossed the ocean to help rid Europe of insane outbreaks of mass killing. In this month in which we remember the liberation of the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps fifty years ago, we should remember with greater force than ever that, both in individual life and community life, the not-my-fault excuse must not pass.

COURTESY: Swiss Press Review.

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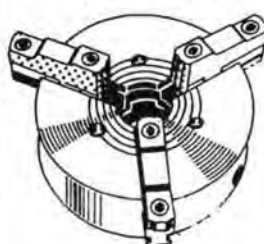


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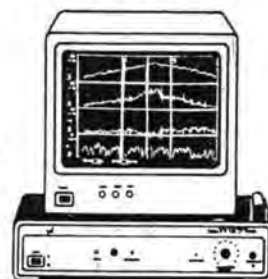
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BOOK REVIEWS

REFORMING THE CONSTITUTION,
edited by Subash C. Kashyap; UBS
Publishers Distributors Ltd., New
Delhi; 1992; pp 376; Rs. 325.

REFORMING THE CONSTITUTION

By

Subash C. Kashyap

UBS Publishers Distributors Ltd.

Reviewed by
Kannamma S. Raman

At a time when the country is going through one of the most stressful periods since independence, the need to think into the future becomes important. It is necessary to open up windows and allow fresh breeze to blow away the stale air that prevades the atmosphere. In view of the fact that the Constitution has been amended 69 times between 1951-92 averaging one amendment every seven months there is need to undertake a wide ranging appraisal of the entire situation in the country and study in depth the changes that need to be made in the Constitution. This will help estimate the difficulties that we are facing and help us strengthen the foundations of democracy in India.

There is no reason to consider the Constitution to be a holy cow that should not be touched 'by imperfect mortal hands once it has been installed'. The question here is not of saving a Constitution but of saving the nation. Further, as Thomas Jefferson remarked, "we consider each generation as a distinct nation, with

a right, by the will of the majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country". More so since we have changed over from a country which professed to be a socialist society to a market-friendly economy. We have to reassess in this context the relevance of chapters like the Directive Principles of State Policy which is basically an amalgamation of principles of Fabian socialism and Gandhian ideals. Moreover, as Subash Kashyap in his well reasoned article points out, most of our constitutional values such as socialism, secularism, democracy, justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, individual dignity and unity and integrity have largely remained mere words on paper and have not been fulfilled in practice. It is because of this that Kashyap's book which analyses constitutional reforms, becomes relevant.

Mr. Subash Kashyap who held the position of Secretary General of the Lok Sabha has been writing and speaking on the theme of constitutional reforms for over two decades and is eminently qualified to undertake such an exercise. He has brought together a galaxy of contributors from diverse occupations such as politicians (Zail Singh, Vasant Sathe, B.K. Nehru, G. S. Rajhans, Brahmananda Reddy); administrators (V. C. Agarwal, Dharma Vira, V. S. Rama Devi); jurists (V. R. Krishna Iyer, N. A. Palkhivala, Soli Sorabjee, L. M. Singhvi); journalists (B. G. Verghese, S. Sahay, Y. C. Halan, Hari Jaisingh) and scholars (C.P. Bhambhri, P. R. Dubashi and J. C. Johari).

The book is in three parts - the first is the editor's introductory chapter which sets the tone for this volume and provides a summary of the recommendations made by the various contributors. Parts II and III are titled 'Constitution at Work' and 'Need and Mechanism for Change' respectively but the basis on which this division has been made is not very explicit. The book contains 36 ar-

ticles plus a foreword by Dr. Karan Singh.

The recommendations made by the contributors cover most aspects of the Constitution. Some ask for an entirely new Constitution while others argue that while most of the basic objectives of the Constitution as envisaged by the founding fathers are valid, it is time a few changes are made. There is also the recommendation made by a number of writers that there is need convene a new Constituent Assembly to change our Constitution.

Though one might agree with Thomas Jefferson that each generation has the right to a Constitution of its own, we need to be careful where we tread. Rama Devi, R. Ramachandran, Sahay and others point out that our Constituent Assembly comprised mainly of foreign educated, westernised members and was therefore too elitist to be able to understand the genuine ethos and values of India. Yet, if the moral fibre of the people has deteriorated to the extent which the authors claim it has, how can one expect a new Constituent Assembly to be filled with people of foresight, patriotism and high moral values! Though one might agree with the view that the old Constituent Assembly was not representative enough in nature, the moral character and sense of patriotism of its members was beyond reproach. Is there any guarantee that lumpen elements will not find their way into the new Constituent Assembly? It is in this context that Nani Palkhivala's view that such a suggestion is '... fraught with the greatest danger to the unity and integrity of India' needs to be considered seriously.

Messrs. B. K. Nehru, Vasant Sathe, Dharma Vira and Hari Jaisingh suggest greater decentralisation. There is no doubt that if federalism has to work there should be greater devolution of powers down to the lowest levels. Many of the problems

that we face today are a result of over-centralisation and lack of grassroots democracy. It is also true, as some of the authors have pointed out, that the Indian political and social system has from ancient times, been a synthesis of autonomous villages, towns, and local or regional administrative units and that perhaps this suits India's temperament. After all did not Gandhiji want a federation of seven lakh villages? Yet, at this juncture, we should be very careful about introducing decentralisation. We would do well to remember Ambedkar's warning that rural society tends to be more conservative and illiberal and could be dominated by the traditionally privileged class/caste. He said that villages are nothing but a "... sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow mindedness and communalism". The notion that decentralisation is the panacea for all our problems is highly romantic. Yet we must at the same time recognise that a more meaningful federation is necessary in order to bring those who feel discriminated, back into the mainstream.

It is in this context that the suggestion made by some writers in this volume that the country be divided into fifty or sixty states of almost equal size with equal representation in the Parliament deserves viable consideration. This would protect the legitimate interests and aspirations of diverse social groups and also prevent some of the backward states dominating the governmental process of the country merely by virtue of being more populous. However such an exercise is unlikely to work unless (as C. P. Bhambhri points out) people in power realise that "an all-India loyalty is not in contradiction with plural cultural loyalties of groups based on democratic processes of participation in politics."

An interesting proposal relates to electoral reforms. Messrs. Brahmananda Reddy and Sahay suggest that voters should be granted the "right to reject vote" where they will have the right to reject candidates contesting in a constituency.

At a time when the citizen is often confronted by a Hobson's choice, such a right would give the voter an opportunity to reject candidates with dubious records.

According to the Marathi daily the *Loksatta* (April 8, 1990) at least 50 persons elected to the Bihar Assembly have criminal charges pending against them. In the recent Jalgaon sex scandal, according to a police report, 38 out of the 82 Councillors of the Jalgaon municipality had criminal charges registered against them. If the authors' suggestion is accepted it might encourage people who would otherwise abstain from voting due to a lack of choice to start exercising their right to vote.

Another suggestion that calls for the reader's attention is the one that a candidate should be declared elected only if he secures more than 50% of the votes cast in a constituency. In other words voting on the basis of proportional representation. This could reverse the current situation where the winning candidate has to merely get more votes than the others. The idea of transferable votes presumes a certain level of literacy. Mr. N. A. Palkhivala's proposal that half the Lok Sabha candidates should be elected on the basis of proportional representation is in vogue in countries like Germany. This is a proposal worth considering.

Mr. P. R. Dubhashi and Mr. N. A. Palkhivala commend the German system of 'constructive vote of no-confidence' wherein the government cannot be removed through a no-confidence resolution until and unless another alternative leader capable of gaining the confidence of the House is elected. This would, according to Palkhivala 'reduce to a minimum the detestable toppling game which has been a favourite pastime of some of our politicians in recent years.'

Mr. B. G. Verghese's suggestion of an optional Uniform Civil Code is significant. As he suggests: "a uniform code implies uniform principles or values of 'liberty, equality and

social justice' and not necessarily uniformity of law as such, mandatorily imposed on all, ignoring religious, social and cultural diversity. Hence the need to codify the personal law of all religious groups in India, distill the best in them and put together a uniform civil code which would be optional. Given education and time, a good uniform civil code will win ever-increasing adherents."

Some other noteworthy suggestions include switching over to a presidential system or a mixture of the presidential and parliamentary systems as in France; restricting the role of independents; introducing audit of political parties' accounts; restricting electioneering time to approximately 15 days; reforming the anti-defection law; modifying Article 356; restricting the number of times a member of parliament can seek re-election; stipulating a minimum qualification for those wishing to contest elections and for contesting from more than one constituency; making it compulsory for all ministers to declare their assets; and making the right to work, shelter, education and medicare enforceable fundamental rights. Almost all the authors have asked for a more accurate definition of words and phrases like 'socialism', 'social justice', 'other backward classes', 'failure of constitutional machinery', etc. This is important, since most of the problems we are facing today are due to an inaccurate understanding of such terms.

Several points raised by more than one contributor, though relevant, are repetitive. For instance almost all of them have bemoaned the fact that the Constitution has been amended so often; that Article 356 has been so blatantly misused and that the governor's role has been politicised. This makes the book, at times tedious and monotonous. Besides many of the issues raised are too well known to need an explanation. Perhaps some of the articles which deal only with specialised areas such as S. K. Sinha's article on the Constitution and the Army or Soli Sorabjee's article on the Freedom of Press in the Constitution could

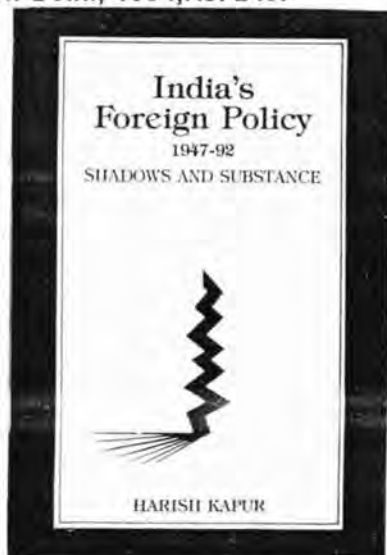
have been omitted, as they do not relate well with the main theme of this volume on constitutional reforms.

Though generally, the book is well compiled and produced, one is baffled by the haphazard manner in which hyphens have been used to break words in an incorrect manner (such encou- rage, predo- minant, responsi- bilities, pheno- menon). Curiously, the hyphen is not used where it ought to be.

Further, there is the occasional inaccuracy, such as Krishna Iyer's statement that nine state governments and legislatures were subverted by the Janata government in 1972 and that the Congress government followed it with a similar action in 1988. The years in question were 1977 and 1980 respectively.

DR. MRS. KANNAMMAS S. RAMAN is a lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Sophia College, Bombay.

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY, 1947-1992; SHADOWS AND SUBSTANCE by Harish Kapur; Sage Publications, New Delhi; 1994; Rs. 245.



**Reviewed by
P. M. Kamath**

Foreign policy making is shrouded in secrecy not only in India but in every other country irrespective of whether it is democratic or authoritarian. But it is more so in India because of the high illiteracy rate and the ruling elite's desire to maintain their monopoly over foreign

policy making. As a result, there are only a handful of authoritative books on the different aspects of Indian foreign policy. Harish Kapur's book is therefore a welcome addition to enable us to expand the horizon of our understanding of India's foreign policy.

The book under review strikes a special *niche* for itself in the limited literature on the subject owing to the unique structure adopted by the author to narrate developments in Indian foreign policy from 1947 to 1992 and identify the substance from the shadow. Books so far have dealt either exclusively with substantive issues in foreign policy or exclusively with the process of foreign policy making. But Professor Kapur has combined the two areas - policy and process - for the benefit of students of Indian foreign policy.

Four major goals of Indian foreign policy as identified by the author are: national security; economic development; maintaining regional supremacy and, while performing a regional role, trying to play an international role that India legitimately deserves to do by virtue of her sheer size and human resources.

Of the four goals, it is the preservation of national integrity and security that is vital for the survival of India as a nation and deserves the attention of every citizen. But the first Prime Minister of Independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru thought that India did not need a defence policy as he did not perceive any external threats. During the height of the cold war, Nehru's view was "that international configuration of international forces was a sufficiently good protective barrier for the maintenance of India's independence" When there was a rising threat to security from China, he aimed to defend the country by implementing the "doctrine of defence by friendship", if such a military doctrine exists. The experience of the October 1962 war with China was a shattering experience - person-

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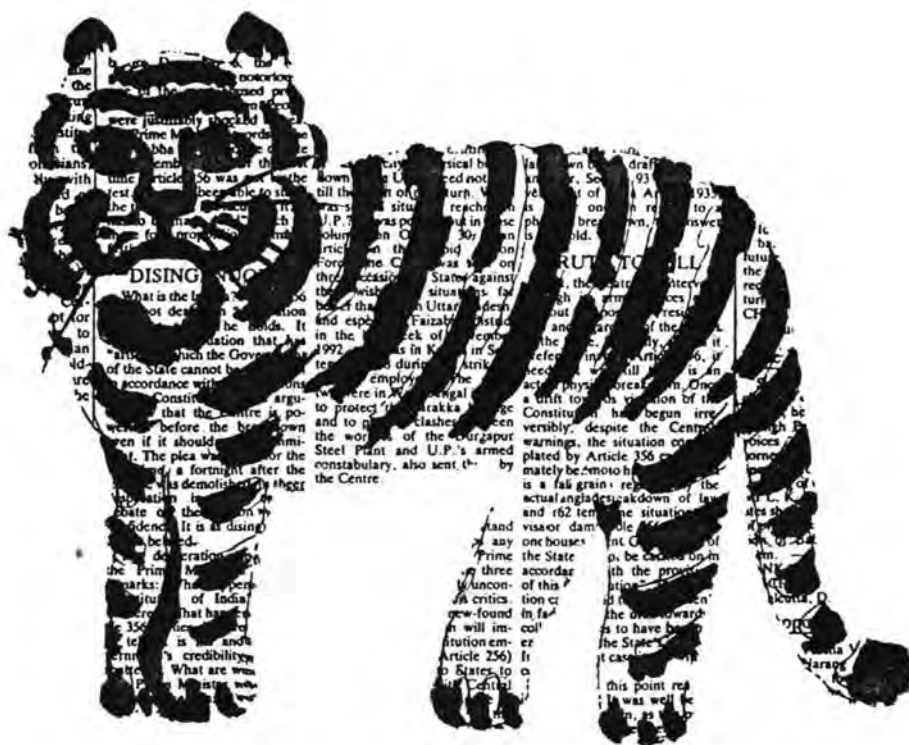
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In a way, yes. In a way, no. There's nothing paper-tigerish about us in our unbiased views, our fearless news coverage and editorial policy.

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ally for Nehru and collectively for the Indian nation.

The public mind - especially of politicians and policy-makers was conditioned by the Nehruvian strategy. Post-Nehru policy makers' options for policy also "had become constricted" with the passage of time. However, since the Nehruvian policy, we have moved to strengthen our external defence by an arms build-up and investments in indigenous research and development. The alliance with the erstwhile Soviet Union in the 1970s and the 1980s has been replaced by a new emerging equation of trust and cooperation with the US. The relations with China are on a cautious upward trend and Russia is also emerging as a friendly neighbour.

On the other hand India in the 1990s faces externally supported internal domestic upheavals. In her quest for security India has been compelled to change her attention from the traditional concept of external security to internal threats arising from the "internal dimension" of security. Today it is a hard reality that the "division of the subcontinent has not given the country the corresponding advantage of greater integration, greater coherence and greater unity". Since the end of the cold war and with the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, Indian determination to dominate South Asian politics has resulted in "the externalization of two internal challenges to the Indian system - secularism and territorial integrity." The foreign aided efforts to destabilize India in Kashmir, the north eastern states and Punjab have been analysed as the security challenges of the 1990s. Hence the real threat today arises from internal security with external implications particularly from international terrorism promoted by Pakistan. That a conventional threat from Pakistan can be met in a few days is shown by the experience of the Bangladesh war.

That problems of security from international terrorism, as in Kash-

mir still continue to weaken Indian security and integrity is demonstrated by the fact that since 1989 three governments have gone through the tunnel to find a solution to the problem without seeing any light. This calls for a broadening of the national security concept. Professor Kapur argues: "... It is no longer easy to separate the internal from the external. They are indelibly meshed together, thus leading to the broadening of the concept of national security".

Professor Kapur raises a very pertinent question: "What about the decision making process? Can we really discern the existence of an elaborate institutionalized system where different inputs contribute varying to the making of decisions in foreign policy, or is India faced with phenomena of real concentration of decisions, the decision maker or makers and the decision making process in the hands of one recognizable authority centred around the Prime Minister and his close advisers?"

Recent developments in Kashmir, where the Home Minister and the Minister of state for internal security were working at cross purposes led the Prime Minister to take charge of Kashmir affairs, is exactly the kind of centralization that Kapur advocates we avoid. Instead it is necessary that India set up a National Security Council in which all issues of national security including those of internal security having a bearing on foreign affairs are discussed before any minister makes a public pronouncement.

This book is not only useful to students and teachers of Indian foreign policy but also to policy makers and the general public as well to understanding the vital role foreign policy plays in our survival as a nation.

PROF. P. M. KAMATH is Professor of International Relations in the Department of Civics and Politics, University of Bombay.

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PUBLIC HEALTH IN BRITISH INDIA: ANGLO INDIAN PREVENTIVE MEDICINE 1859-1914 by Mark Harrison; Foundation Books, 2/19, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002; 1994; pp.324; Rs.395.



Reviewed by
Mridula Ramanna

The history of medicine and public health in British India is a rapidly expanding field of historical investigation. The volume under review is an important contribution to this subject. The author, Mark Harrison, who is with the Wellcome History of Medicine, London has used a wide range of unpublished and published official sources, newspapers and journals. He tackles the subject of public health theoretically and is of the opinion that professional, cultural and administrative factors affected the development of public health in India. Harrison agrees with existing scholarship that the scope and effectiveness of state intervention in the field of health was limited, and holds that the place of preventive medicine, with regard to its role in consolidating British dominion is less central than has been maintained. He emphasises the role of Indians as policy makers at local and municipal levels and refers to the conflicting views of colonial administrators, showing that there was little consensus concerning the objectives of medical policy in India.

Chapter One reviews the origin, structure and service conditions of the IMS (Indian Medical Service). The so-

cial background of IMS recruits is analysed with reference to parental occupations and birth places, showing their lower and middle class origins. Their educational qualifications are also tabulated. Staff shortages, overwork, slowness of promotion, their marginal standing in Anglo Indian society considered as being below the ICS, were problems faced by the IMS. The IMS also faced the competition of Indian practitioners, but the colonial government hesitated to interfere with them, due to political and military considerations. Registration of medical practitioners was not enforced till the 1912 Act.

The role of medicine as a colonial discourse is explored. Colonial medical texts, before 1858, assumed that the Indian environment and diseases in India were unique, and this required a reappraisal of European medical knowledge. But most IMS officers were reluctant to incorporate new scientific ideas. High mortality rates among Europeans persisted, leading to pessimism. The view that "filthy habits" and "degenerate life styles" of Indians were responsible for sanitary problems gathered strength. While it came to be increasingly believed that nothing could be gained from Indian medicine, the British administration was reluctant to interfere with Indian cultural practices after 1857.

Conceptions of empire differed. The author distinguishes the authoritarian paternalistic view of some British officials emphasising Europe's "civilising mission", and the decentralised liberal view, stressing the financial constraints imposed upon government action by shortage of revenue. These different impulses were apparent in the administration of public health, from the central government down to district and municipal commissioners. The civilising impulse expressed itself through sanitary education and the activities of the Dufferin Fund without much success. The smallpox vaccination campaign and the registration of deaths met with some success, particularly in urban areas.

The contradictions within the imperial order were exposed in the debates on the transmission of cholera. To protect Europeans and

European troops, state intervention in public health was necessary but this could spark civil unrest and therefore the government proceeded cautiously resisting demands for more drastic measures. After 1870, the government dissociated itself from expenses on public health, giving that responsibility to provincial and municipal administrations, which were financially ill equipped. Between 1870 and 1890, the government manipulated information and theoretical discussion on the subject so much so that they provided a justification for government's inactivity. In the 1890s, the cholera theory was gradually modified with the acceptance of the comma bacillus.

The significance of public health in the relations between ruler and ruled is discussed in the chapter on 'Quarantine, pilgrimage and colonial trade, 1866-1990'. Quarantine was imposed on Indian pilgrims and the Indian government was severely criticised at international sanitary conferences for its lack of concern for pilgrims travelling to Mecca. This affected the government's strategy of "cooperation" with the Muslim leaders. Another problem was the perception of sanitary control by lower class Muslims, who were more concerned with the cost of the passage to Mecca, while wealthy Muslims were concerned with sanitary problems. Thus tensions within the community were apparent. Tensions also appeared between Hindu and Muslim elites over the controversy surrounding pilgrims during an outbreak of plague and these are regarded as reflecting sectional economic interests and growing political rivalries.

The British fear of provoking the Indian people after 1857 and the need to involve Indians in administration to avoid unrest acted as a brake on authoritarian elements in the British administration and resulted in an official approach, based on cooperation. However those administrators, who subscribed to the authoritarian paternalist conception of British rule in India, contended that financial constraints on central and provincial administration had produced confusion. An influential pressure group in the IMS advocated more extensive

financial and legislative intervention in public health. But the plague epidemic, which Harrison holds more than any other factor, showed both the potential and the limits of western science. One consequence was the establishment of the schools of tropical medicine at Liverpool (1898) and London (1899) and the Plague Research Commission. The epidemic also showed the crucial role that Indian agencies could play in the success of public health. This led to Indians being included in research work and more Indians being recruited to the IMS, after 1905.

The chapter on 'Public Health and Local self-government' examines the active role of Indians as policy makers at local and municipal levels. The contention that the colonial government quashed the reforming initiative of Indian municipal commissioners is not accepted by Harrison, who maintains that the evidence is more complex. The development of sanitary reform depended upon an interaction between government, revenues, the municipal commissioners, the sanitary offices and the Indian population. While financial constraints and anxieties about political effects of state intervention had limited government

action in the 1870s and 1880s, Harrison observes that expenditure on public health increased on the late 1880s. He refers to regional considerations viz. fluctuations in economic activities and the nature of local taxes, as in the case of Bombay and the Punjab, which arrested sanitary development. There was also the hostility of some Indian municipal commissioners to Western concepts of hygiene and sanitary reform. The pace of reform was slow and led to tensions between the Anglo Indian and local populations.

This is explored further through a case study of Calcutta 1866-1899. Public Health was the single largest item of municipal expenditure and proved to be a point of conflict. The author observes that many Europeans and Indian Muslims resented moves towards self government, because of its dominance by Hindus. The mortality rates remained high in Calcutta in those years. For the municipal health policy to succeed, the people's confidence had to be secured. While a constructive deal was sometimes achieved between European officialdom and Indian municipal leaders, it was often obstructed by the prejudice of Calcutta's European population, who tried to undermine the influence of the

Calcutta corporation. This was an expression of European concern over the loss of control over local affairs from the 1870s.

Harrison concludes that preventive medicine was indeed "a tool of empire", but its role in the stabilisation of colonial rule was limited, though it had some success in military hygiene. As an instrument of "social control" medicine was held in check by concern about the political implications of such measures. Contending that no clear pattern emerges regarding Indian responses to Western hygiene and public health. Harrison makes two generalizations: Firstly that suspicion diminished over time and secondly those measures like small-pox vaccination, whose effects were apparent, tended to be popular and yet hostility towards sanitary regulations persisted throughout this period. The use of more vernacular sources could give a proper perspective to Indian attitudes, Micro level studies could also contribute to an understanding of Indian responses, for even here there were regional variations and differences in urban and rural reactions.

MS. MRIDULA RAMANNA is Head of the Dept. of History, S.I.E.S College of Arts & Science, Bombay.

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 Why did you worry if I played in the rain too long?
 Why did you love my poems, my awful poems?
 Why did you take me for long walks?
 Why did you tell me not to run after money?
 Why did my successes make you proud?
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