

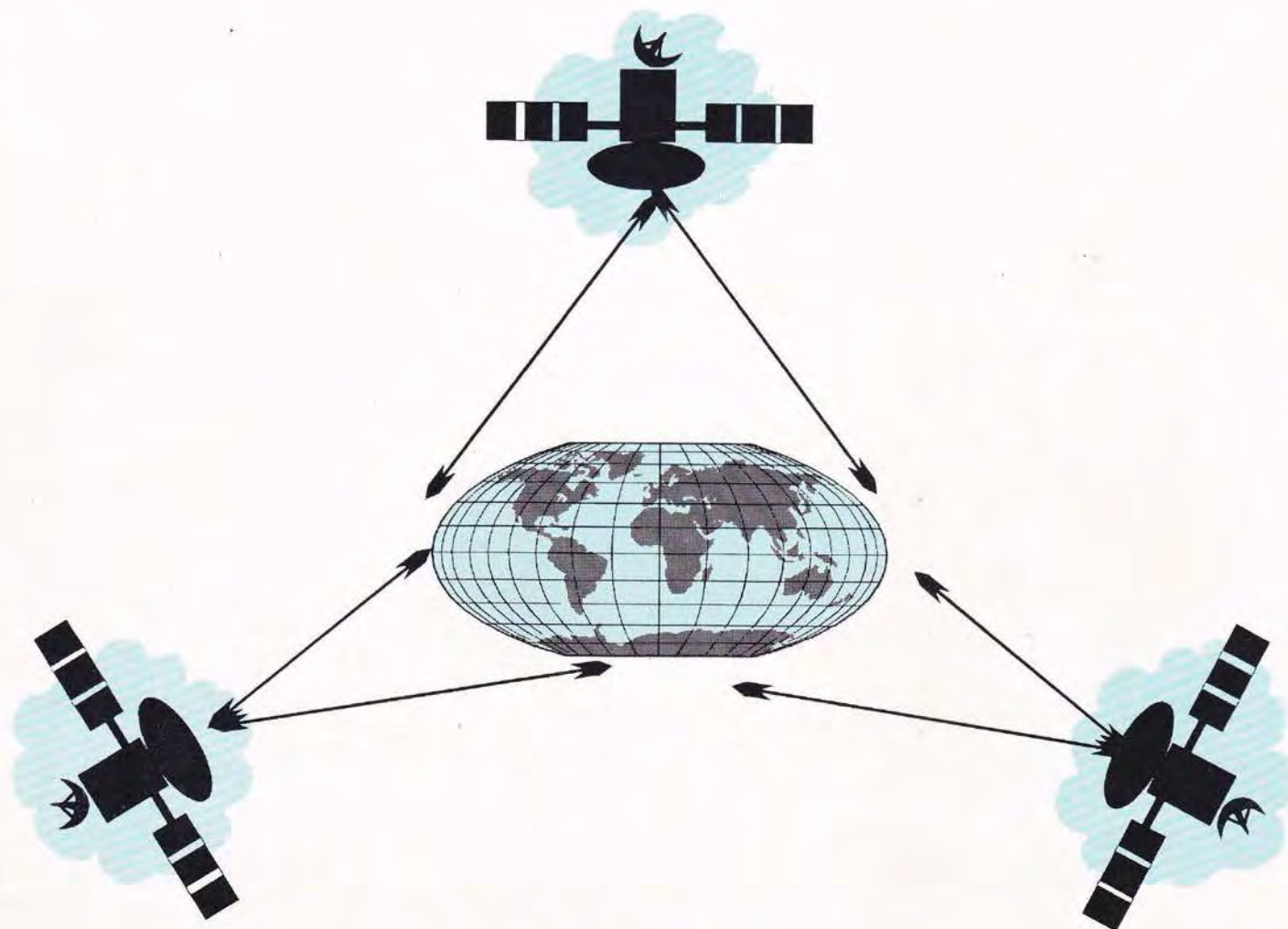
A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

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44TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

The Communications Revolution



On Predicting Earthquakes

India's Strategic Options

H. M. Seervai

A Man of Great Courage and Great Intellect

On 26th January, 1996, H. M. Seervai, then in his 90th year, quietly and peacefully passed away. It is no coincidence that Seervai passed away on Republic Day, for in the minds of lawyers and laymen alike, he was closely identified with the Constitution of India. His monumental work on the Constitution of India, has been considered a classic, both in India and abroad, ever since it was first published in 1967.

Hormasji Maneckji Seervai was born in Bombay on 5th December 1906. Seervai was born into a priestly Parsi Zoroastrian family, and at the age of eight years, after a rigorous preparation, he was ordained a priest in a Fire Temple in Bombay. The pivotal tenet of Zoroastrianism is that the good life consists of a perpetual fight of Good against Evil, and the good Zoroastrian is always ready for this battle and wages it ceaselessly. Seervai has led such a life.

Educated at the Bharda New High School, he joined the Elphinstone College in 1922, graduating in 1926 in Philosophy. He was a Dakshina Fellow of the College, and for almost 40 years, a Trustee of the College, of which he was extremely proud.

H. M. Seervai joined the Bar in 1929. He joined the Chamber of Sir Jamshedji Kanga, a doyen of the Bombay Bar, and was his junior for well over 20 years.

In a career spanning over 65 years at the Bar, he appeared in innumerable celebrated cases. Among them:

Keshav Singh's Case (1964): The Presidential reference under Article 143 regarding the constitutional clash between the legislature and the judiciary, where he appeared for the U. P. legislature.

Keshavananda Bharati's Case (1973): The Fundamental Rights Case,



before the largest bench of 13 judges of the Supreme Court, where appearing for the State of Kerala, he led the arguments for the States regarding the right of Parliament to amend the Constitution.

The Judges Transfer Case (1981): where he challenged the right of the Government to transfer judges without their consent.

Seervai was appointed Advocate General of Bombay on 1st July, 1957, and held that post for over 17 years, during which time, he devoted himself solely and exclusively to Government work. His term of 17 years as Advocate General is a record in Maharashtra.

Though he never cared for Honours and Awards and never did anything to obtain them, the highest Awards and Honours came Seervai's way. Amongst the most prestigious Awards and Honours that Seervai received were Padma Vibhushan (1972) for his monumental book on the Constitutional Law of India (now in its 4th edition) and for the signal services unstintingly rendered to the legal profession in India, Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy (1981); the only Indian to be a FBA in the field of law; The Dadabhai Naoroji Award

(1980); Living Legend of the Law (1994): Awarded by the International Bar Association.

Apart from the law, Seervai had an abiding and life long love for literature, poetry, art and music. His greatest love was for poetry and he had over the years learnt to recite hundreds of poems for his own pleasure and that of others.

A student of philosophy and a philosopher in life, Seervai was a founder member of the Philosophical Society of Bombay, founded by his revered professor from Elphinstone College, J. C. P. Dandrade.

A staunch civil libertarian, he was, for over 20 years and more, active in the civil liberties movement, being president of the PUCL, Bombay, for 10 years from 1983 to 1993.

Seervai lived a complete life, devoting his time and energy in equal measure to law, literature and his family.

He was a man of great courage and great intellect. But if one had to single out one outstanding quality and characteristic of the man, one would have to speak of his absolute and inflexible honesty and integrity. For Seervai, Truth was sacred, and he never swerved from the path of Truth and Righteousness. He despised the glib phrase "The ends justify the means". Seervai used to say: "Once you swerve from the path of truth, you are on your way down the slippery slope". For Seervai passionately believed, quoting Sir Walter Scott: "Without courage there cannot be truth, and without truth, there can be no other virtue".

He shunned publicity, pomp and fanfare. At heart, Seervai was a simple man who loved his family, his work and the simple joys of life poetry, literature, music and art.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

We in India are in the middle of a communications revolution - a revolution which began in Europe, the western world, the oil-rich middle east and the far east in the late 'seventies and the early 'eighties. India, the victim of statist dogma and in the vice-like grip of those who had a vested interest in its backwardness, is, as usual, a decade behind. Bankruptcy compelled the ruling party to liberalise, and liberalisation brought with it globalisation. If India was to globalise (to survive), then it needed to modernise its communications.

While economics and the compulsions of international commerce may have compelled us to rapidly modernise our communications systems, it has helped the citizens of this country to unshackle themselves from the suffocating monopoly enjoyed by AIR and Doordarshan under the tutelage of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. No politician or political party was really interested in granting real autonomy to the electronic media. Even Mr. L. K. Advani, who made loud promises in the election campaign in 1977, following the emergency to free the media, was most reluctant to do so when he became the minister of information and broadcasting. Thanks to technology, it is no longer necessary to depend on politicians' promises.

But a relatively free media with competing channels is not an unmixed blessing. The papers submitted at a seminar in Cochin last December, discussed the impact of the multichannel media on society on the one hand, and on the government-owned Doordarshan on the other. Some of these papers are published in this issue as part of the cover story.

We have, as usual, sought to interest our readers in subjects covering a wide spectrum, ranging from the communications revolution to predicting earthquakes and understanding communist China.

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*

There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded.

Princess Diana, *Times of India*, November 22, 1995.

Congressmen have got so used to having their cake and eating it too that they cannot even imagine any shift in diet.

M. J. Akbar, *Asian Age*, November 26, 1995.

I used to think that, if there was reincarnation, I wanted to come back as the President or the Pope. But now I want to be the bond market. You can intimidate everybody.

James Carville, Director of President Clinton's election campaign, *The Economist*, October 7, 1995.

If Delhi's politicians start posing for photographs in the company of *maulvis*, that can mean only one thing: election time...

M. J. Akbar, *Asian Age*, December 17, 1995.

All political parties are neck deep in making money. You name them, they are all equally involved.

Biju Patnaik, *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

We treat our monuments like urinals.

Prem Subramaniam, *The Times of India*, February 4, 1996.

The hawala scandal proves, ultimately, that behind the speeches and manifestos, all political parties and politicians are equal, their needs are equal, even if amounts vary. It's just that some politicians get caught and others don't.

India Today, February 15, 1996.

Politicians in our country should clean themselves before trying to cleanse others. Hypocrisy is the sole word to define all this.

Vivek Sivara in a letter in *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

Courage among such senior Congress leaders is synonymous with only one thing: a call to Sonia Gandhi to come and save their skins.

M. J. Akbar, *Asian Age*, February 18, 1996.

My Hindutva is nationalism and under that I have the right to abuse Pakistanis.

Bal Thackeray, *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

If festivals are an indication of a society's culture, we are in big trouble. Our festivals are excuses for drunkenness, debauchery, lust, temporary madness, all of it condoned by the culture.

A columnist in *The Metropolis*, March 2, 1996.

There is an increasing tendency to see Indian culture in highly conservative terms - wanting to save it from the "pollution" of western ideas ... But in our heterogeneity and in our openness lies our pride, not our disgrace.

Amartya Sen, economist, delivering the Satyajit Ray Memorial Lecture in Calcutta, *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

Religion sells.

L. K. Advani, *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

Collecting money has never been a problem with me.

Biju Patnaik, *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

There is no certainty in the law any more. We Indians have an unfortunate habit of substituting our own predilections for the law.

Nani Palkhivala, *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

The Court has lent its seal of judicial imprimatur to our ideology of Hindutva.

BJP chief L. K. Advani, *India Today*, January 15, 1996.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

New Light on Mother Teresa

One of the significant things of contemporary times is that there is nothing sacred and every icon, every figure has its detractors. Gandhi's personal image has been put under the microscope and there is no great figure that has not been shown to have clay feet. Whether it is all to the good or otherwise is not something beyond debate.

The latest public holy figure to be subjected to such treatment is the venerable Mother Teresa around whom a publicity industry had developed for quite a decade and her waxed image sold to a believing world in the attractive and lucid prose of Malcolm Muggeridge.

A new book ironically called *The Missionary Position* (nothing to do with intimate matters) published by Harper Collins, tears the holy veil of the Mother and reveals an unpleasant and cruel face.

In 1994, the editor of *The Lancet*, Dr. Robin Fox paid a visit to Calcutta to report on Mother Teresa's medical centre. Initially sympathetic to her work, he was soon shocked to see the primitive conditions strengthened by a dogmatic obstinacy. "Mother Teresa prefers providence to planning; her rules are designed to prevent any drift towards materialism ... Finally, how competent are the sisters at managing pain? ... I was disturbed to learn that the formulary includes no strong analgesics..." In spite of nearly half a century of well publicised work and enormous money pouring in, yet the centre is grim and cold as charity. In the Home for the Dying, the scene reminds one of Belsen and the stretcher beds and shaved heads were in keeping with the treatment - no pain killers

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

except aspirin and Brufen in lucky instances. No drips and needles used continually with just a rinse in cold running water - it appears they had no time for the luxury of sterilising these. Patients who can be cured are never taken to a nearby hospital where a routine test and normally administered medicines would put them right.

People who have been working for years and are prepared to testify to their experiences point out that the speciality of Mother Teresa's homes whether they be in Calcutta, Los Angeles or New York is not only Holy Poverty but unholy avoidable physical suffering. In a San Francisco Home which looks after homeless people afflicted with HIV, there is no permission given to them to either watch TV, smoke or drink or even have friends nearby even when they are near heaven's gates. Watching Olympics is to fall under the trap of Satan.

Again in San Francisco, where the women inmates were gifted "a three storey convent with many large rooms ... they lost no time in disposing of the unwanted furnishing. They removed the benches from the chapel and pulled up all the carpentry... They pushed thick mattresses out of the windows and removed all the sofas, chairs and curtains..." Several of the inmates in the extreme cold and damp contracted TB.

In another home for the sick poor in New York, provision was made for an elevator at the cost of the city. But



the Holy Mother would not hear of an elevator and the project was abandoned - for the government bye-laws required the installing of an elevator.

All these are reprehensible if true. Even more is the attempt made by the Mother and her followers in baptizing the near dying. They are asked whether they wanted "a ticket to Heaven". On a yes, the sister would apply a wet towel to the forehead in the pretense of cooling the temperature of the aspirant to heaven and muttering the necessary religious words would baptise him or her.

The ugliness and the evil of it all was revealed by the Mother herself during an interview. She described a person who was in the last agonies of cancer and suffering unbearable pain. With a smile, Mother Teresa told the camera what she told the terminal patient: "You are suffering like Christ on the Cross. So Jesus must be kissing you". Unconscious of the account to which this irony might be charged, she then told of the sufferer's reply: "Then please tell him to stop kissing me".

When she herself was suffering from heart trouble, she took refuge in some of the most expensive medical centres in Europe in preference to the kiss of Christ.

RS

The Movement for Tibetan Freedom

Tibetans commemorate 10th March every year, wherever they are, to remind themselves and the world that those Tibetans who have died for the cause of the freedom of the Tibetan people had not died in vain, that their death is a just and worthy sacrifice for the birth of a free and independent Tibet.

On 10th March 1959, Tibetans rose against the might of China and declared their desire for freedom and independence for the whole of Tibet. This movement was initiated by the common Tibetan people. China was able to quickly suppress the uprising, but not the spirit of the Tibetan people for freedom from tyranny and injustice.

No International Support

China invaded Tibet in 1949/50. Whatever resistance the tiny Tibetan army put up against the battle-hardened People's Liberation Army, flushed with victory over the nationalist Chinese and over the Americans in the Korean peninsula, the Tibetan Army was no match for China's fighting machine. Tibet appealed for international assistance, but no help was forthcoming. Forced to face China alone, Tibet was compelled to sign the infamous 17-point treaty, in which she was coerced by China to sign away her sovereignty in 1951. For a period of nine years, Buddhist Tibet and communist China co-existed uneasily.

Armed Resistance

But increasing Chinese repression in north-eastern and eastern Tibet forced Tibetans in that region to flee to the countryside and take up armed resistance, which soon engulfed the whole of Tibet. The cycle of repression and resistance in Amdo and Kham forced thousands of Tibetans to flee to the comparative safety of central Tibet and to Lhasa. The resentment over China's arrogant treatment of the Tibetan government and people was further fuelled by tales brought by refugees from eastern Tibet of destruction of monasteries and the killing of Tibetan lamas and monks. Soon the smouldering Tibetan discontent burst into open defiance of China, as tens of thousands of ordinary Tibetans spilled into the streets of Lhasa on 10th March, 1959, demanding Tibetan independence.

The 10th March Uprising

The 10th March, 1959 uprising was a spontaneous movement of the Tibetan people aimed at ridding Tibet of Chinese tyranny and occupation. Angered by the diplomacy of the Tibetan government to appease China in order to avoid further shedding of

Tibetan blood, inspired by the Khamba resistance movement to confront China head on, the smouldering resentment of the Tibetan people burst into one last ditch effort to strike for Tibetan freedom. On 12th March, the women of Tibet took to the streets of Lhasa.

It took the People's Liberation Army a little over three days to wipe out the uprising in Lhasa, but not the resistance movement which mushroomed all over Tibet. *In all, according to China's own estimate, about 87,000 Tibetans were killed in central Tibet alone, in their campaign to re-assert the People's Liberation Army's occupation of Tibet.*

Government-in-Exile

The 10th March uprising resulted in the flight of the Dalai Lama, the members of his government and about 80,000 Tibetans into India, Nepal and Bhutan. In India, the Dalai Lama re-established the Tibetan government, a government not recognised by

any nation in the world but regarded as the legitimate government of Tibet by both Tibetans in and outside Tibet. From its base in Dharamshala, a north Indian town on the foothills of the Himalayas, the Tibetan government, under the leadership of the Dalai Lama, has developed, an effective, non-violent resistance movement to China's continuing occupation of Tibet, a struggle which now encompasses a world-wide movement for the freedom of the Tibetan people.



Monks running for cover, Lhasa, March 1989.
Pictures Courtesy: *Freedom in Exile*.



Escape into exile.

The Spirit for Freedom

It took China only three days to suppress the 1959 uprising, but China has not been able to suppress the spirit of that uprising which continues to burn ever more brightly in the hearts of every Tibetan in the world. Since 1959 more than 1.2 million Tibetans have died as a result of the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Tibetans commemorate 10th March every year, wherever they are, to remind themselves and the world that those Tibetans who have died for the cause of freedom of the Tibetan people have not died in vain, that their death is a just and worthy sacrifice for the birth of a free and independent Tibet.

The Communications Revolution

Changing the Way We Live

S. V. Raju

When I was in my early teens, I recollect the wonderment with which I used to watch someone typing away on a manual typewriter, fingers flying and the eyes not on the keyboard, but on the sheet of paper which he was copying. I vowed that one day I would emulate that feat. I was told that speed was possible because of the 'touch system'. Typing and shorthand institutes proliferated, much as we have computer institutes today. A few years later, came electric typewriters which made typing so much more easy - subject of course, to the vagaries of electric power supply. This was soon followed by electronic typewriters with memory and not too long thereafter, by computers.

Take radios. I remember the names that made waves then. HMV radios, for instance, or National Ecko or GEC. Radiograms were the rage then - radios with gramophones. And they came in elegant wooden cabinets - the status symbols that occupied the pride of place in the drawing rooms of the well-heeled in the 'forties and the 'fifties. The bigger the better. But they were simple gadgets which were not sold with manuals initiating the buyer into the secrets of the equipment's operation. Those were also the times when All India Radio's 9 pm news had a generally large listening public and much appreciated, particularly if the broadcaster was Melville DeMellow or Surajit Sen - even if the news invariably started, as it does even today with the words, 'The Prime Minister Mr. Nehru or Mrs. Gandhi...' depending on who was the Prime Minister then. And

one waited for Wednesdays (or was it Fridays) when 'Binaca Geet Mala' was on the air, courtesy Radio Ceylon and listen to the top tunes.

From Valves to Transistors

Valve radios gave way to transistors and that's when the revolution in communications started gathering momentum. Big was no longer better. Small was beautiful. And the little transistor radio with the little battery cells, opened up wider horizons for the villager who could now keep himself informed of news from the outside

communications were concerned, was the express telegram followed by express delivery of letters, services offered by the post office for a small additional charge. The telegrams were sent generally by Morse code and later by teleprinter. These teleprinters of ungainly size initially (the ones made in India were truly monstrous in appearance) became more and more sophisticated until they disappeared with the appearance of the fax (short term for facsimile) machine.

Telephones

Telephones may have been the fastest then, but because of poor manually operated exchanges with poorer cables, one had to literally shout into the receiver to be heard at the other end. It was honestly believed that the louder one shouted the surer one was that the message was being received. One need not so exercise one's vocal chords any more thanks to sophisticated digital telephone exchanges and more versatile cables including state-of-the-art cables called optic fibres capable of carrying a wide variety of communications.

Cordless telephones released the receiver from having to be near a fixed connection but within a limited radius. Mobile phones also called cellular phones have eliminated even this restriction and pagers enable us to be in constant touch wherever we may be. It is not a rare sight any more to see people in motor cars driving with a phone on the one hand and the steering wheel on the other on Mumbai's roads. That this is yet another traffic



world, (illiteracy no longer being a handicap) or enjoy good music while reclining on a charpoy with the surroundings lit by nothing more than a hurricane lantern - as his village had not yet been electrified.

While telephones were then the fastest mode of voice communication, the fastest, insofar as written



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hazard which the much harassed pedestrian has to contend, with is another matter.

A signboard that is a familiar sight in cities, towns and even some villages is the one with black or red letters on a yellow background which reads: "STD/ISD/PCO/FAX". Little nondescript shops or, in some cases, make-shift shelters contain some very sophisticated telephone equipment which not only enable you to speak to persons thousands of kilometers away in a matter of seconds but also equipment that record and determine the cost of the call.

Another signboard that is a common sight throughout the country is this one again in black letters on a yellow background announcing: "ZFROX" OR "XEROX" to indicate that the shop or kiosk in question does photocopying. The term "XEROX" or "ZEROX" is derived from the name of the US company which invented the copy machine. Since then, photocopying has become synonymous with xeroxing - just as some years ago, vanaspathi (or vegetable oil) was synonymous with 'DALDA' a products of Tata Oil Mills Limited. Something similar happened to describe copy machines with a pioneering brand name becoming a generic one.

Of Chips & Satellites

There was a time when forests of TV antennae dotted the terraces of buildings; later these were replaced by a single antenna which connected all TV sets in a building. Today the antenna has been replaced by the Dish. These saucer-like equipment on the terraces of buildings facing a variety of directions are the windows to the world. These saucers are receiving signals from various satellites beaming programmes on different channels.

How satellites are able to do this is the subject of the next article by Mr. T. H. Chowdary.

These technological marvels are possible thanks to the chip. Chips are made from silicon. Silicon is found in sand. Chips are semi-conductors that is conductors that can be regulated to suit specific needs.

The Chip also known as the micro-processor is what has made the modern computers what they are. Computers in turn helped put satellites in orbit and satellites enabled communications across the world and gave birth to the many channels on televisions and to international networking with computers in the remotest parts able to carry on dialogues and share information. The number of 'nets' specialising in specific areas is already very high and growing. In fact 'networking' is already a common word and who hasn't heard of 'Internet'. But not many really know what 'internet' means.

Internet*

What is 'Internet'? "Describing the Internet is like describing a city: You can talk about the landscape, the streets, the stores, the government, the people, the weather or a combination of all of them...The Internet ...is not a program, it's not a piece of

hardware, it's not software, it's not even a system. Instead it is a place where you can get information, make information available (for free or for sale), and where you can meet people.

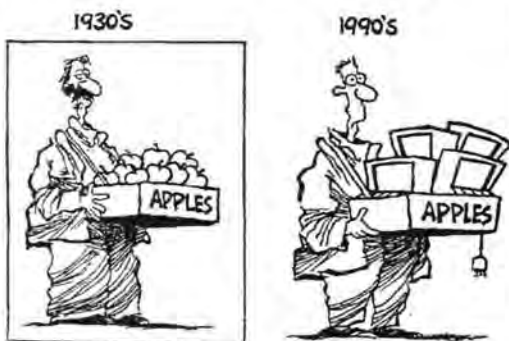
"Essentially, the Internet is a network of computers that offer access to people and information. Over 10 million people use the Internet, and that number is expected to increase to over 100 million within a few years.

"When you speak of 'the Internet', then you can think of it as a combination of the network, the people who use it, all of the programs used to get information, and the information itself. People from all over the world can access the Internet, and more than 10 million do so daily. Most of these people only use one feature of the Internet - mail what many call E-Mail or Electronic Mail".*

The communications revolution is changing the way we live. It is a truly universal revolution embracing everyone and everything. Therefore beginning with this issue we shall feature a regular column which we shall call "The Communications Revolution". Our objective is not only to inform but to de-mystify the language that the revolution has spawned and is spawning.

Readers will soon realise as they read this and successive columns in subsequent issues how ridiculous will become concepts like national sovereignty and how silly will be the continuation of passports for travel across national boundaries. We the citizens of the world are truly moving towards one world whether our politicians like it or not.

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Courtesy : Newsweek.



The Communications Revolution

Communications Satellites

Revolutionary Developments and Trivialising Uses

T. H. Chowdary

Communication Satellites with continuing developments in their life, capability, availability and affordability are contributing to the evolution of a global village of homo-sapiens on this planet. Some governments, India included, in their false view of what is right and wrong, are not able to fully utilise their potential for the immense good of their citizens.

Little did Alfred Nobel think that his invention of the explosive TNT would be used to maim and kill people. He believed it would be used to blast rocks. When Alva Edison invented electricity generation and the light bulb, he confidently said "we will make electricity so cheap that only the rich can afford to burn candles". Today, candles are burnt in the eerie dining rooms of five-star hotels and electricity generation threatens to blight forests, degrade environment and the bad generation burns motors and appliances. At the launch of the service in 1963 of the communications satellite, TELSTAR the great historian Arnold Toynbee expressed the profound wish,

"To get to know each other on a worldwide scale is the human race's most urgent need today. And once this mutual familiarity is established, there is some hope that we may all become aware of the common humanity underlying the differences in our local manners and customs."

But to-day the very communications satellites are stirring nightmares of cultural disaster by broadcasting TV into drawing and bed-rooms, converting the latter into 24 hour cinema theatres. Scientific discoveries and inventions, technological and engineering marvels, the products of the most intelligent and spiritual masters are being turned into baneful and blighting instruments against society instead

of beneficial tools for the welfare and ennoblement of human beings by the invisible forces of the market and in unapprehensible public "preference" or demand. We shall discuss the communications satellites evolution from profundity into profaneness.

The Science of Satellites

Way back in 1945 Arthur Clarke (who is settled in Sri Lanka) had, in an article in the magazine, "Wireless World" proposed the launching of radio equipments into space, putting it in the equatorial orbit, at a height of 36,500 kms. and keeping it moving around the earth in a circular path at a speed of about 11,000 kms. an hour. Such an object would take 24 hours to make one revolution round the earth, which also takes 24 hours to spin round itself. It would therefore appear stationary, with respect to objects on earth. Moreover, its vision, radio-wise, would cover one-third the surface area of earth. It would be like a mass-less, invisible 36,500 kms. high tower, supporting radio receiving, transmitting and radiation gear. Such objects have come to be known as communications satellites; satellites because they go round the earth. The radio equipment in the satellites gets powered by solar energy. Light weight, high power density batteries supply energy during the short period of solar eclipse. The satellite is bombarded into "solar wind" and so changes its location or aspect, both of which affect the radio

signal strengths on the ground. To be proof against this disturbance, the satellites carry thrusters which use liquid hyrazine as fuel. The location and aspect are measured from ground stations (tracking and telemetry) which, on detection of deviations, give radio commands to the thrusters to fire in particular direction and the jets issuing restore the satellite to the specified orbital location and aspect. When the fuel is expended, the satellite's life is over and another is to be lofted to replace it.

Developments in the Last 30 years :

- * The increasing power of rockets and re-usable earth returning rockets carrying space shuttles have been able to increase the payload in the satellites, meaning more transponders and less cost per satellite. Besides the USA, Russia and France, China, Japan and Israel have emerged as competing launchers, and competition is bringing the launch costs down.
- * More packing density for electronics means, room for more fuel and so the satellite life has increased from 5 years to 12 and beyond.
- * More power in the satellite means smaller earth stations and less costly equipments.
- * The radiation elements (antennae) in the satellite can concentrate power into target areas i.e. directivity increases signal strength and coverage areas can be ground-



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determined.

- * As a result, the earth station size could come down from 32m to 1.8m (and to 60 cm in higher frequency bands of 11 and 14 GHZ (KU BAND).

- * Different polarisations (circular, elliptical, vertical and horizontal) have increased the number of channels from a given carrier.

- * Radio carriers in higher bands, 11/14 GHZ are doubling and tripling the number of channels per satellite.

- * One satellite which was able to give 240 telephone circuits in 1965, is now able to give 120,000 circuits.

- * In place of one TV channel, digital compression is giving 4 TV Channels.

- * The satellite telephone circuit costs have come down to one-thirtieth of what they were in 1965.

- * Several countries are having their own satellites for domestic use. USA has 32, India has 3, others are Indonesia, China, Thailand, Russia, UK, Korea, France, Germany, Spain, Brazil, Australia, UK, Canada; there are regional groupings like APASAT, EUTELSAT and BOLIVAR.

- * The geo-stationary orbit is getting crowded; there could be about 240 satellites at any time. some positions like those over the Pacific Ocean are useless as there are few people in the area.

- * International law is evolving for the allocation of "parking" space for satellites in space.

- * Leaving the crowded G.E.O. (Geo stationary Earth Orbit) several companies are going to launch hundreds of satellites in the next 2 to 5 years into L.E.O. and M.E.O. (low earth

and medium earth orbits). They provide telephone and data channels from brief-case size user instruments from anywhere on the globe. These will compete with earth-based telephone systems.

- * No areas, whether desert or mainland; marsh or tendral, sea or forest, island or ship-at-sea or air-craft in the sky is inaccessible.
- * Prices are falling; size is reducing; weight is becoming less.

- * Service can be created in hours, not weeks or months.

- * Reliability of 99.98%.

- * Telecommunications from intercontinental to domestic.

- * Broadcasting to cable-head ends and direct to home.

- * Spying and surveillance for operations like military, anti-smuggling, anti-drug; anti-poaching etc.

- * Remote sensing for earth resources - minerals, oils, ground water, forests, oases, deserts, soil, snow, fires, schools of fish, etc.

- * Meteorology; cyclones; storms; floods.

- * Geographical Positioning System (GPS) for trucks, rail-cars, tankers.

- * Location and rescue; SARSAT and COSPAS Surveillance and Rescue Satellite Systems.

- * Tele-schooling, medicine and health care (ANIK Satellites of Canada for the Eskimos).

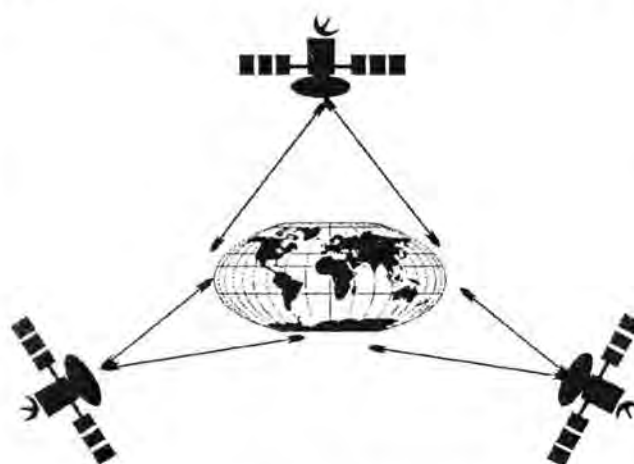
- * News-gathering, remote printing and publishing.

- * Nation-wide, within-the-company, interactive video-conferencing through roof top earth stations.

India's Opportunities and Risks

Just as we cannot stop foreign countries from broadcasting radio programs, whatever be their content, to India, we are not able to stop TV broadcasts into India into our homes. Our worry is that unlike radio, TV is

3 Satellites, each covering 1/3rd of the Earth's surface



- 1 36,500 Km. in circular orbit above the equatorial plane.
- 1 Rotating at 11,000 km./hr. round the earth.
- 1 Each would appear to be stationery in space - massless, invisible towers.

- * Now satellites are being used not only for linking terrestrial TV and radio broadcasting stations for program distribution to Cable TV head-ends but also for direct broadcast to home receivers. Earlier, only audio programs could be radio-broadcast. Now, TV programs also can be broadcast just like the radio broadcasts of BBC, VOA, Radio Australia or AIR.

Variety of Uses :

Several are the uses to which communication satellites are being put to. The main drivers for use are:

- * Cost of communication is insensitive to distance. It is the same whether over 100 kms or 10,000 kms.



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very powerful, engaging our ears and eyes and capturing our minds, the content becomes very important. Unfortunately, most programming is "film" and cheap entertainment, pandering to the lowliest of tastes. Shooting, violence, murder, arson, vandalism, sex, fun, frolic, cheap language and vulgar gestures and indecent

	1965	1992
No. of Circuits	240	120,000 (x 50)
Life	1.5 Yrs.	15 Yrs.
Band Width	50 MHz	3,300 MHz

words and songs are the stuff of our cinemas.

We decry the invasion of foreign programming to be culturally subversive of Indian tradition, tastes and values. And to counter it, we are only substituting Indian bodies and colours and local languages. Our drawing, living and bedrooms have become 24 hour cinema houses, showing pictures 24 hours a day. No more do only parents and elders go to pictures occasionally and unaccompanied by children to cinema houses. The child sees pictures right from birth. The disgusting content of TV on the scores of channels is the same. India has already acquired 47 TV channels broadcasting 750 hours of programs per week. Half are foreign produced programmes. And an overwhelming majority of these are for entertainment. Do we need so much entertainment and be satisfied with little information and education? This is where, due to the cupidity of commercial man, the beneficent inventions of the great degenerate to be instruments of trivialisation of men and corruption of his mind. The harmful effects of the 24 hour cinema on the young and the

old alike are frightful.

- * Children come to be conditioned to believe that the filmy scenes about violence, terror, sex, fun, frolic, cheating, murder, arson, smuggling, hatred, etc. are the natural state of society.
- * Reading and thinking and conversing and play give way to idleness and insatiable urge to see more of the filmy stuff.
- * Ability to concentrate and socialise diminishes.
- * Guests and friends are unwelcome and socialising even within the family reduces.

Assuming that interference such as banning is not desirable, it appears that viewing can be restricted by

- * making most entertainment programmes on the basis of pay per view. This is technically possible;
- * telecasting entertainment programmes only during certain times, just like cinemas. This depends on voluntary restraint;
- * ensuring that State TV avoids filmy stuff. The tax payer's money should be spent for dissemination of information, education and culture. State TV should have half a dozen channels, each for a different subject generally - geography and environment; history and culture; science and engineering; economics and development; civics and political issues; the outside world etc.;
- * examining advertising on TV. Indian advertisers spent Rs.1,150 crores on TV in the period October 1994 to September 1995. These advertisements are inducing consumerism and are leading to the destruction of saving habits among Indians. Consumerism would lead to indebtedness and craving for goods and services in excess of our needs.

It would then be possible to train and prevail upon children to see wholesome programs on the home-screen.

The Government of India's restriction on Indian Satellite TV broadcasters from uplinking to satellites on Indian soil is totally senseless. They are taking their programs on video cassettes or on telecom channels to foreign (Srilanka, Nepal, Russia, Hongkong) earth stations and are uplinking from there. They are able to buy transponders or space segment from foreign-owned satellites (including the co-operative INTELSAT) and beam the programs on Indian national territory. These are leading to avoidable foreign exchange losses and extra expenses. Government ought to allow uplinking from Indian earth stations and end self-inflicted expenses and foreign exchange outflow.

The INSAT part of ISRO's business must be corporated and eventually privatised. We are losing opportunities to be an international provider of satellite transponders for foreign users while Thailand, Hongkong, China, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, (and very soon, Malaysia) etc. are buying satellites in the world markets, getting them launched by launcher companies and selling the space segments. I understand that two former heads of ISRO have pleaded for the corporatisation of the INSAT business but for undisclosed reasons, the proposal is not accepted. Government's policies are ostrich-like:

- * Indian programs are uplinked but not from Indian soil.
- * Space segment is available from foreign sources but not from Indian resources.
- * For long, we did not allow commercial advertisements on radio and TV, but they were all along available from Radio Sri Lanka and such foreign sources to Indian listeners



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and viewers.

- * The present ban on uplinking and denying space-segment from Indian soil and INSAT, respectively are senseless and must be ended.

Similarly, information collected by Indian Remote Sensing is invaluable and could be sold to Indian and foreign users. Besides, as the Supreme Court has already ruled, radio frequency spectrum should be de-monopolised, freed from Government's sole use and sold to people's enterprises for proper

use in a transparent manner.

Conclusion

To conclude, communication Satellites with continuing developments in their life, capability, availability and affordability are contributing to the evolution of a global village of homo-sapiens on this planet. Some Governments, India included, in their false view of what is right and wrong, are not able to fully utilise their potential for the immense good of their citizens. Some commercial exploiters are put-

ting them to culturally degrading use and senseless government actions and inactions are leading to self-inflicted wounds. There is need to sensitize government and public policy makers and sanitise the commercial exploiters of human tendency to be entertained without being ennobled.

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Doordarshan : Responding to Competition

Amita Malik

Does anybody remember what Doordarshan used to be like before the so called satellite invasion?

Does anybody remember what Doordarshan used to be like before the so called satellite invasion?

Well, I remember the earliest days, when its very amateurishness made it natural and friendly. At first it was educational TV for secondary schools, mainly of interest to educationists and people like me watched it mainly in the classrooms to see if they made any difference to the children. But when Indira Gandhi became Minister for Information and Broadcasting after her father's death, we had our first taste of entertainment TV, three hours in the evening. I stood near the wall of what used to be The Films Division auditorium on Janpath, in some dilapidated American barracks, and watched this modest launch with the exuberant and curious crowds of Delhi. Pratima Puri, the epitome of the gracious, civilized Indian woman, started reading her lines and then blushed becomingly in "black and white". "Sorry, I have forgotten what I had to say, I'll look it up" she said, with endearing naturalness, a quality which, down the years, has more or less vanished from Indian TV.

Because Indian TV started with an unique identity which it is just losing.

Early Enthusiasm

But, and this is a very important BUT, there was a bunch of enthusiastic youngsters at the beginning in Doordarshan. They had very little, and at times, dated, equipment, but some of them were wisely sent to countries like Germany and the U.K. for short courses, and with this basic training, they worked wonders with the aid of improvisation and initiative. Many of them, together with their top officials, had come from radio, but they had a professional background which helped when they crossed over to TV. During those years, producers like Shiv Sharma, Sashi Kapur (both were lost later to the exigencies of administration which left little time for creative work or guidance to the next generation) produced talks and discussions which were quite worth watching, particularly in the field of culture and the arts, cinema and the media. Producers like Sai Paranjypte and Shukla Das won international prizes and moved out to the bigger and less cramped world of advertising and

feature films. Where they rapidly made a mark.

Government Mouthpieces

The next great test was the Emergency. Overnight, an already government-run department with all its bureaucratic hang-ups, became uncomfortably reminiscent of the Eastern European media, dominated by the stringent constraints of the USSR style of broadcasting. Indira Gandhi, asked at a Station Directors' Conference about credibility, snorted: "Credibility? What is credibility? AIR and Doordarshan are government departments and will remain government departments." And that was that. Mr. Sangama, immediately on taking over, has made a statement that AIR and DD are mouthpieces of the government.

SITE

Ironically enough, it was during the Emergency that one of the most exciting experiments in satellite broadcasting and in Indian TV took place. I was in a village near Jaipur to watch the launch of SITE and the Rajasthani



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women had turned out in their most beautiful ghagras and tinkling jewellery for the occasion. But my illusions about rustic innocence were rudely shattered when, after Indira Gandhi's speech, a woman turned to me and asked: "And now shall we see Rajesh Khanna?"

DD - Cinema's Handmaiden

I am afraid I did not find this funny. Nor did I find it funny that when I went to another small village to watch SITE with the villagers, I found that the village teacher, in whose school the community set was located, had firmly locked the schoolroom. He said that the sarpanch had told him to lock it as the children would fiddle with the TV set. I am recounting these two experiences to illustrate why DD, in spite of its formidable terrestrial reach, has not yet found the right answer to the satellite challenge. First, India being the only country in the world where the cinema, instead of retreating before TV, made it its willing slave, had reached a stage even in 1975 where even a rustic woman looked on Doordarshan as an inlet for commercial cinema. Secondly, the fact of the sarpanch locking up the TV set shows what little follow-up government has done with such vital experiments and how bureaucracy, at every level, always seems to know best, and assumes a Big Brother role which has been the bane of Indian TV. Doordarshan's obsession with the commercial cinema has not only ruined the taste of the viewer, but stifled the development of television theatre in its own right. The great age of soaps and the Ramayan and Mahabharat has, alas, not helped in the development of the sort of plays dealing with contemporary life which Pakistan and Bangladesh TV have developed and, indeed, captured the imagination of the Indian viewer, starved of good TV plays and telefilms from its own stations.

I have given this long and perhaps,

a familiar set of facts and comments because it leads up to my main point: That the development of foreign satellite TV has made Indian TV sit up, since it had not so far faced any competition or challenge in the way that radio did. Smug in its monopoly, DD sat back on its haunches to begin with, and then offered some characteristic, but not necessarily correct, answers of its own. In that context the satellite challenge has been all to the good.

The foreign stations are either of the sober kind, like the BBC, which woke up Indian viewers to what constitutes news in a democratic set-up and how professionally it should be done. The coverage of the Gulf War, which CNN reported like a live cricket match and brought the war right into the living rooms of Indians, was another shattering eye opener. This was the greatest serious challenge, in the field of news. Doordarshan did not panic, cradled in its righteous belief that, as the voice of the government, its duty was done once it reported what the Prime Minister had said, every trivial speech of the current Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and shown some foreign dignity shaking hands with the President.

Doordarshan's most recent shocking lapses, where it failed to report in time or adequately the tragic deaths resulting from the collapse of a stadium in Nagpur and gave cursory coverage to the bomb blasts in Connaught Place, right in the heart of the capital, have proved that it has not moved much beyond the day when Indira Gandhi was assassinated and the Indian media did not report her death until 6.00 p.m. although I heard it on the BBC less than two hours after her death, in its 11.30 bulletin. Lack of genuine news, badly drafted and badly read bulletins made DD no match for the highly professional satellite news bulletins available. Their increasing

attention to Indian news, whether we agree with the way it is covered or not, is a challenge DD yet has to meet. But that can only come if the norms for freedom of information which the Supreme Court has laid down are ever implemented.

Doordarshan's new policy of handing over news bulletins to experienced people like Prannoy Roy, Ramesh Sharma, S. P. Singh and other independent outsiders is partially vitiated by the way their news is subject to unimaginative and over-cautious nit-picking by Information Officers drafted from the Press Information Bureau who are hardly of a calibre to sit in judgement on these highly responsible and established purveyors of news.

Doordarshan's Panicked

I said DD has not yet panicked about news. But where it has really panicked is in the world of entertainment. Not only has it picked up the worst type of film-based programme in which the Hindi satellite channel, Zee TV specialises, but in recent weeks it has stopped so low as to plagiarise some of Zee TV's most popular shows, such as Commander (as Marshall) and some of its film-songs-based programmes, using the same anchors. Then, after some early mumblings about how Indian culture itself, which has withstood centuries of cultural and military invasion was being debased, and spouting venom on pop programmes like MTV, Doordarshan itself now telecasts a sanitized version of MTV for three hours a day. As for its own film-based programmes, just watching the trailer of Superhit Muqabla, one of DD's most popular programmes shows that there is enough obscenity in the songs and dances of the Indian commercial cinema to take on MTV for years. Doordarshan's answer to Zee and V Channels has been an open policy of: If you can't lick them, join them. And it has not exactly sent



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Doordarshan's prestige or credibility soaring, although it might have done that to its revenues. It is a cowardly answer to the satellite invasion and a hypocritical way of preserving our culture, which will be preserved without DD's aid, on its own resilience and strength.

Poor Quality

The continuing sad fate and the poor planning of quality television in India as an answer to the satellite invasion, has been amply demonstrated by the way its "intellectual" Channel 3 was aborted by an overnight fiat from the PMO's Office which resulted in its cancellation the day it was to start with glittering advance publicity. So much for Indian democracy which, according to the PMO's thinking, would have suffered havoc by telecasting the news live by the self-same Prannoy Roy and others who have been commandeered to restore DD's flagging image in the field of news reporting and newscasting.

Channel 3 itself, hindered by lack of funds, lack of high quality producers, lack of experienced anchors and a constant fear of being scrapped, is limping along bravely. Because it is an act of faith by and for a handful of idealists, myself included, which knows that there are standards of excellence in this country just waiting to be tapped. But while political interference, nepotism, that bugbear of bureaucracy, and, its main weakness, seniority and not merit rule the roost, Doordarshan's future still looks very bleak.

Satellite Invasion

As far as coping with the fast-increasing satellite invasion is concerned, Doordarshan's future lies in consolidating its considerable resources by not joining the commercial rat race but evolving a new type of programme which attracts viewers by being different, by being exciting and offering full scope to creative talent and a style which is an amalgam of the best ideas

from abroad, integrated into the Indian context in a manner which puts our technical resources and country-wide talent to the best possible use, while keeping in mind the fact that quality does not mean only Channel 3 and the educated, urban elite, but that vast sea of humanity in our rural areas and city slums for whom television, used the right way, can be one of the best means of salvation.

Let DD's requiem not be that its often-proclaimed aim: Education, Information and Entertainment is not reversed for ever, as it is now. And let it not bury, its motto Truth Shall Prevail, which is floated at the same time as Ravi Shankar's theme music based on one of our most sung national songs: *Sare Jahan Se Achha, Hindustan Hamara*.

MS. AMITA MALIK is the well known media columnist.

Children and The New Information Environment

Over the last five years television in India has been transformed. It has moved from the single-channelled, largely indigenously fed, state-controlled network that it was, to now offering double-digit options which give the Indian viewer unprecedented access to a deluge of domestic and foreign programming.

Television is being relied upon more and more heavily as the primary source of entertainment and information by millions of families in India. The result: Indians with easy access to TV are watching the small screen much more than ever before and a whole new generation of TV children is coming into existence. For them, television is as

influential as a parent or a school, and in cases where children do not have access to the basics of life such as decent food, clothing, shelter and education, it is an even more important influence.

Study on Impact of TV

A recent study of the impact of TV and TV advertising on children in Delhi (shortly to appear in book form) calls for initiating a debate on the future of TV and the role that India wishes to see the medium play in influencing values, attitudes and aspirations. The study presents a broad spectrum of response from children of differing socio-economic backgrounds to TV and the advertising that it carries. It also provides an in-depth analysis of TV adver-

tising, policy, and advertising codes keeping in mind that children form a large and very vulnerable section of the TV audience and are more likely therefore to be influenced by its teachings. Television teaches. While the ubiquitous character of the learning derived by children and even adult audiences from television through informative, commercial and also entertainment programmes may be somewhat difficult to quantify in short term research, there is little doubt now that television provides a world view, sets a social and economic agenda and thereby impacts on the way people understand their own and other people's realities.

Although advertisers and media



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people commonly refer to the generic "Indian child", our research indicates that this labelling is inappropriate. Field-work conducted with over children in the country's capital city reveals that the radically different environments and realities of children from affluent, middle income and poor homes affects the way in which they negotiate TV information.

TV Commercials

The study focused mainly on the TV commercial, what children learn from TV advertisements, and how this learning affects their vision of themselves, of their world and alters their value patterns. It also paid in-depth attention to the changing television environment in the country and particularly Delhi and discusses new TV habits and the resultant changes visible in social and familial interaction.

Television, is, for instance, encouraging separation within the family. In 1993, we found already over 35 per cent of our respondents owned more than one TV set. Just under ten per cent said their families had three TV sets. We also came across children whose families had between 4 and 9 TV sets. Of a group of 34 sixth standard children in one up-market school, 21 told us that they had personal TV sets in their own bedrooms. The norm that was being established was for different generations of family members to have separate TVs so that programming of their choice could be enjoyed without a tussle. Family routines were consequently being redefined. We were witnessing the creation of what might be described as the 'silent family' in which individual interaction with a TV set was replacing sharing and conversation between family members.

What Attracts Children

The study examined the kind of programming that attracts children, for this provides a clue to the nature and quantum of advertising, they are exposed to since Doordarshan exhibits what we have referred to as 'chaos, clutter

and clusters' in its advertising patterns. This leads, on the one hand, to a jumble of unconnected advertisements appearing together and, on the other, to as many as 36 ads being aired during a one-hour programming slot (linked to a very popular programme such as Chitrahaar) while other programmes carry barely any ads. Our findings show that children tend to watch a lot of adult programming given the dearth of adequate and quality programming for children.

The study presents an analysis of TV advertisements being shown by Doordarshan and children's responses to advertising. Is television contributing to the rise of consumerism? The book discusses the role that TV and TV advertising are playing in preparing the market for new consumption patterns and how children, as future consumers, are being oriented towards rapidly changing life-styles, values and aspirations.

Survey

Ninety-five per cent of our respondents belonged to TV owning families. We found as we delved more deeply, visiting several children at their homes, that the TV set has come to acquire an unprecedented priority that puts ownership of a TV over education, safe water, decent food and other basics of life. Migrant labourers at a construction site in Delhi told us that though, in these days of inflation, their daily wages were scarcely enough for one decent meal, they all contributed towards hiring a TV and a VCR on their weekly holiday. So whereas they could not afford a TV set of their own, it had become the norm to watch up to 10 hours of TV and films over the small screen on a somewhat regular basis.

At the other end of the spectrum some children from very affluent families had the option of taking a dip in their private swimming pools rather than sitting cooped up with a TV set. Others

from the same economic background spent time taking music, martial arts and dance lessons or seriously following a hobby or sport and many of course had TV sets in their own bedrooms and could use them as they wished. Our survey showed that children from upper class backgrounds watched TV the least whereas children from middle class homes watched the most.

Allowing TV to 'happen'

As our economy seeks integration with the world market, the nation had thrown its doors open to new media technologies. Major transnational TV networks have come to occupy the equatorial orbit whereby India is now in the footprints of their satellites while others are vying for a slice of the huge market represented by us. The changes that this has initiated are bound to have a complex impact on the Indian TV viewer for whom TV was by and large a very dull, lifeless and conservative medium till a few years ago (barring the all-time favourite - the Hindi film which Doordarshan has always used as a bait for its viewers). Unlike other countries in which the European nations are among the most active, India has allowed TV to 'happen'. Exercised over the threat to local culture, identity and values, some nations have watched the forward march of transnational television with dismay and promulgated legislation to restrain the quantum of foreign broadcasting in their countries. France for example limits foreign broadcasting to 30% of total broadcast time and encourages local initiative and talent on French TV.

Less Affluent Attracted

One of the significant findings of our research was that the changes on television have implied a sudden 'displacement' of less affluent viewers who no longer identify with the imagery, the people, the scenarios, the language, dress, and life-styles of characters on television.

Several parents living in crowded



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and unkempt slums in Delhi told us that they do not know and understand the India they see on TV. Hopelessly frustrated they admitted that they now encourage their children to watch TV hoping that it will prepare them for the world that they have to grow into.

Indeed the text of most TV advertisements completely excludes such people and chooses instead to portray affluent to comfortable and well-equipped homes inhabited by the modern (westernized) Indian who is more likely to step over cultural and other barriers to become a consumer of the first-world kind. Eventually, of course, as advertisers extend their reach and begin to target the rural millions, advertising may well undergo changes and begin to use symbols that are more culturally acceptable. But for the present the sense of alienation and insecurity felt by those who are being left out is palpable. At the same time children from such backgrounds appear to be jumping stages of development, skirting around their lack of schooling to acquire visual literacy skills which their parents never developed.

Advertisers' Major Focus

Children are a major focus of advertisers and in April-May 1992 an estimated 35% of all TV ads were using children to attract consumer interest and an almost equally large number targeted the child viewer directly. Advertisers in India have made no bones about their strategy of 'catching 'em young' aimed at instilling brand loyalty in the minds of the very young children. But the even more significant service they are doing for their clients is preparing children to become good consumers in a society riddled not just with economic prob-

lems but also with social and cultural patterns that defy the entry of modern gadgets such as washing machines. Not surprisingly a number of advertisements incorporate elements of fantasy, magic and hyperbole to grab the attention of children.

Children are believers and go by what the adult world tells them. For most of them TV is a magical window to the world and they take much of it at face value. Most children are far from immune to the influences of television. Whereas some Indian children have so much of everything that they can afford to turn their noses up even at the one and only doll advertised on TV (Barbie) for other children she has become the symbol of a dream world which bears no resemblance whatsoever to the life they know, and they yearn desperately to own her. Such children unable to satisfy their materialistic urges are becoming keen consumers and watch out for the latest soap, detergent and cosmetic hoping to try something new from the wide range of consumer products flooding the market, in lieu of the cycles, toys or games that their parents cannot afford. Others are already receiving Maruti cars at 15, three years ahead of the minimum age for obtaining a drivers licence.

Many parents are finding it difficult to balance their tendency to use the TV as an effective baby sitter with their inability to satisfy the growing demands of their children.

According to our findings, almost 75 per cent of the children in the 8-15 age group said that they wanted to own products advertised on TV. Asked to name their top ten favourite ads their lists did not include a single toy, game, sweet or food product and instead named detergents and even airline advertisements.

Recommendations

The recommendations that flow out

of this study call first of all for an active, critical evaluation of TV and advertising from the viewpoint of our children and the social and economic constraints that many of them have to live with. Unfortunately TV is viewed as a given - sacrosanct and unchangeable, by many viewers. They feel it's a 'take it or leave it' option and hardly anyone is willing to choose the latter for a variety of reasons among which is the growing fear that you'll get left behind and miss out on something that others are imbibing.

Our recommendations also call for a stringent appraisal of TV advertising within the context of the code on advertising which has a special section designed to protect the child viewer. We draw attention to several ads which could be detrimental to children either because they encourage them to act in an unsafe manner or because they propound questionable values. Some ads also misrepresent information and children end up severely disappointed when products do not conform to their TV images.

The conscious evaluation of TV and the information and ideas it puts across is essential both at home and in school along with a more formal analysis and debate involving experts and government officials who can influence policy. Detailed suggestions have been offered to help children make better use of their TV time and to create alternatives to TV, of which currently there are very few. Ultimately we are concerned with the need to develop and search for a more realistic and recognisable character for Indian TV so that it does not become a clone of international broadcasting presenting a world from which the average Indian viewer stands apart.

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CHEAPER THAN CANDLES

We will produce electricity so cheap that only the rich can afford to burn candles.

- Thomas Alva Edison.



A Son's Tribute

Zareer Masani

The most important and lasting lesson I learned from my father is this. It does not matter at all if you are in a minority of one. What does matter is that you stand up and be counted, whatever the cost.

The great advantage of living to be ninety is that one can see even the most long-term prophecies fulfilled in one's lifetime. My father was twelve when the Bolshevik Revolution swept Russia. Like many young Indians, he welcomed it as a challenge to Western imperialism. Later, in the 1930s, he was one of the first to reject Stalin's autocracy. Later still, throughout the Cold War, he argued, against all odds, that Communism was the truly reactionary force in the world, and that it was doomed to failure because it was fundamentally contradictory to human nature. But I doubt if he ever really believed that he would live to see its downfall.

My own upbringing as the product of a Parsi-Hindu marriage was entirely secular and agnostic. But there was a religion in which I was baptised early in life, and that was anti-communism. As a child, I soon became aware that my father judged all people and events according to their place in his crusade against Communism. "He (or she) is a bloody Commie", was the worst thing he could say about anyone; and conversely, being pro-American or pro-free enterprise was the greatest praise you could earn.

At a time when socialism and pro-Russian sentiments were all the fashion in post-independence India, my father barred himself from public office by fighting the Indian cold war almost single-handed. At first I accepted his anti-communism without question. I remember shocking my friends by writing an article in a Bombay college magazine in praise of the extreme anti-communism of Senator Barry Gold-

water, the American presidential candidate. Later at Oxford I rebelled against my childhood faith and was won over to the campaign against the Vietnam War. For the next two decades, I remained a socialist, critical of the Soviet Union, but sympathetic to most left-wing causes.

During that time, my father and I had many heated arguments. But however much we argued, I doubt if he ever really heard my arguments. His favourite put-down was "If you're not a socialist at 20, you have no heart. But if you're still a socialist at 40, you have no head." That was his strength: his utterly unshakeable conviction that he was right. It was also, arguably, his weakness. Had he listened a bit more and met some of his opponents halfway, he might have made more allies against the Red Peril and hastened the fall of its apologists in India.

Today, as a Congress government implements the liberal policies for which Minoo Masani and the Swatantra Party fought in the 1960s, he must feel both satisfaction and disappointment about being thirty years before his time. It is also sad that the new liberalisers of

today lack the administrative energy and organisational ability which my father could have brought to the job had he been even ten years younger.

In one respect, he remains a century ahead of even the present reformers. And that is his internationalism, his total rejection of national chauvinism, his championship of minorities, and his belief in true federalism, including the right to secession - under his influence, I remember, in the darkest days of the 1965 war with Pakistan, being the only non-Muslim in my Bombay college who spoke out vigorously for the right of Kashmir to self-determination. Of course, my chauvinistic colleagues shouted me down and called me a "traitor"; but that only egged me on.

The most important and lasting lesson I learned from my father is this. It does not matter at all if you are in a minority of one. What does matter is that you stand up and be counted, whatever the cost. And that is the ultimate guarantee of freedom, whether for an individual or a nation.

MR. ZAREER MASANI is a current affairs producer with the BBC in London.

"A Rare Felicitation"

Minoo Masani is a name which is unlikely to strike a bell in most people today, but a quarter of a century ago, it was certainly a name to reckon with. A member of the Congress Socialist Party in the 1930s, he severed his links with it in 1939 though it took time for him to change his adherence from the socialist creed to liberalism. He semi-retired from politics after the electoral disaster of 1971, only to join hands with the Janata Party's anti-Indira crusade. In 1952, he founded *Freedom First*, a journal of liberal ideas. More

recently, in 1981, Masani made waves with the movement for the right to die with dignity, and then as the chairman of the Minorities Commission. To honour Masani on his 90th birthday, *Freedom First* has published extracts from Masani's writings, tracing the evolution of his political and economic thinking. The most fascinating is his prescient essay on the mixed economy, originally published in 1947. A rare felicitation.

Business Today, January 6, 1996.



Walk Alone

Khushwant Singh

The most moving song of Gurudev Tagore is 'Ekla Chalo' (Walk Alone): Have the courage to make your own decisions and if no one agrees with you, tread the lonely path. If you are in the right, people will, sooner or later, discover the truth and join you.

The Urdu poet Majrooh Sultanpuri said the same in a memorable couplet: 'Main akela hee chala tha Janib-i-Manzil magar Loge Saath antey gaye aur kaarvaan banita gayaa.' (I trod the lonely path towards my goal But people kept joining me and it turned into a caravan.)

I know no better example of a man who had the courage to think for himself and no matter what others thought of him, took the solitary road in full faith that others would realise they were going in the wrong direction and join him, than Minoo Masani who turned 90 three months ago.

I had the privilege of knowing the Masani family.

I briefly met his father Sir Rustom a year before he died; I served under his sister Mehra for two years when she was head of foreign broadcasts of All India Radio.

I continue to be friendly with his ex-wife Shakuntala (nee Srivastava) and their son Zareer now settled in England; and his present Sikh wife Sheela.

I saw a lot more of Minoo when he lived in Delhi and the years I lived in Mumbai, than I do now.

But I keep in touch with his activities through his magazine, *Freedom First*.

Why do I admire Minoo Masani?

I don't know another politician who is as clear-headed on his analysis of world events and Indian politics, and at the same time can foresee the shape of things to come, as he is.

He is a living example of his own belief. "If you are not a socialist at 20, you have no heart, but if you are still a socialist at 40, you have no head."

MR. KHUSHWANT SINGH in *Mid-Day*, February 3, 1996.

A TRIBUTE TO THE FOUNDER OF FREEDOM FIRST



On November 20, 1995, Mr. Minoo Masani, member of the Constituent Assembly, a Parliamentarian par excellence and a doyen of the Liberal Movement in India, completed 90 years of age.

To mark the occasion, *Freedom First*, founded by him, has published a special number entitled *Minoo Masani - 90* as its tribute to his contribution to India's public life.

The special number contains major writings by him in the last 50 years, beginning with extracts from *Our India*, the book that was a runaway success; his rejection of socialism as back as the late 1940s; highlights from some of his speeches in the Lok Sabha in the 1960s; articles of a seminal nature written by him tackling basic issues facing the country and ending with extracts from his last book *We Indians* which, in a way, is a sequel to *Our India*.

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Delusions of Progress

J. B. D'Souza

What of our law-makers' jaunts to foreign lands to study how well our embassies use Hindi? Air India's income rises thereby, but as tax payers we pay the bill. All such spending contributes to GDP. In what way does it add to the nation's prosperity?

Between the early fifties and the early nineties India's per capita National Income doubled from a low Rs. 1127 to a low Rs.2240 (in 1980 prices). Just in the last 20 years South Korea raised its per capita GDP more than four times. Our doubling in 40 years was the glorious achievement of the policies our governments imposed on us when we shook off the British yoke. Could this mean that most of us are twice as well off as we (or our parents) were when we won freedom?

The GNI/GDP Concept

In recent times social scientists have been less and less comfortable with the wide acceptance of gross national income (GNI) or gross domestic product (GDP) as an infallible index of a nation's condition and the consequent concentration on income growth as a policy goal. The GNI/GDP concept is largely indifferent to the people's health, to their literacy level, to disparity in income distribution. It is essentially little more than "a measure of market activity of money changing hands. It makes no distinction whatsoever between the desirable and the undesirable, or costs and gain. On top of that, it looks only at the portion of reality that economists choose to acknowledge — in the part involved in monetary transactions. The crucial economic functions performed in the household and the volunteer sectors go entirely unreckoned." So wrote a group of public policy analysts at a San Francisco think tank in a perceptive report last year.

Human Development

In a 1993 UN ranking of 173 countries on a 'human development'

scale there were only 39 that fared worst than we did. A 1970 list of 108 countries showed 28 of them below us. Apart from national income, the human development concept involves life expectancy and educational attainment, specially the literacy level - useful indicators of the quality of life in a society. The UN began to measure human development some six years ago, recognising at last the importance of development of the people, **for** the people, **by** the people. It defined human development as 'investing in human capabilities, whether in education or health or skills, so that they can work productively and creatively ... ensuring that economic growth is distributed widely and fairly giving everyone a chance to participate.'

Such good thoughts notwithstanding, the human development index (HDI) takes very little account of disparity in income distribution or of people's participation, although it does improve on GNI/GDP as a measure of the people's welfare and quality of living.

The failings of GNI/GDP, and, of course, of the HDI too, prompted the San Francisco analysts to devise a genuine progress indicator (GPI) as a closer approximation to a nation's true condition. Dealing chiefly with America they write -

The GDP would tell us that life has gotten progressively better since the early 1950s - that young adults are entering a better economic world than their parents did. A GDP per American has more than doubled over that time. The

GPI shows a very different picture. An upward curve from the early 50s till about 1970, *but a gradual decline of roughly 45% since then.* This strongly suggests that the cost of increased economic activity - at least the kind we are locked into now - have begun to outweigh the benefits resulting in growth that is actually uneconomic. Specifically, the GPI reveals that much of what we now call growth or GDP is really one of three things in disguise: fixing blunders and social decay from the past, borrowing resources from the future, or shifting functions from the traditional realm of household and community to the realm of the monetized economy.

Basic Deficiencies

The GDP's deficiencies are basic. They stem from the restriction of economics to concepts that can be properly measured. Which means that if something is hard to count, then it doesn't count. That rules the economic contribution of households and communities, where homes are run, where children and older people are cared for. In contrast, the earnings of pimps and prostitutes contribute to the current GDP count. The GPI attempts to evaluate in money terms and include the vital work that housewives do, and the household economy in general.

GDP figures ignore disparities as well. So does the HDI as we saw earlier. Brazil's index of human development

would fall 14% if it were adjusted to reflect extreme disparities in income. So would India's. Which, of course, we should have expected, given that even in relatively prosperous Maharashtra nearly half the population struggles below the poverty line.

Another attack by the San Francisco researchers (and a consequent adjustment) is on defensive expenditure. 'Close to 50% of Americans consider themselves overweight. When one considers the \$ 32 billion diet industry, the GDP becomes truly bizarre. It counts the food that people wish they didn't eat, and then the billions they spend to lose the additional pounds that result.'

Money spent on repairs after car accidents falls into a similar category. It is a curious contribution to the nation's progress.

Largest Distortion

An even more perverse inclusion in GDP, the largest distortion perhaps, is the income people earn from destroying the environment and using up resources that cannot be renewed. Today the factories in Chembur (the fertiliser factory and the refineries) that generously emit harmful effluents contribute doubly to GDP — once in the production process and again when the government spends crores to clean up the mess. The GDP calculations also

grabs the extra medical bills that result from RCF and refinery generosity. Quite as freakish is the component in GDP that arise from the depletion of our natural resources. The widespread destruction of our forests by the timber industry must have helped impressively to double India's 1950 per capita GDP to today's level. The forest contractors' profits saw to that. The new concept makes deductions for damage to human health and water and air pollution and for resource depletion.

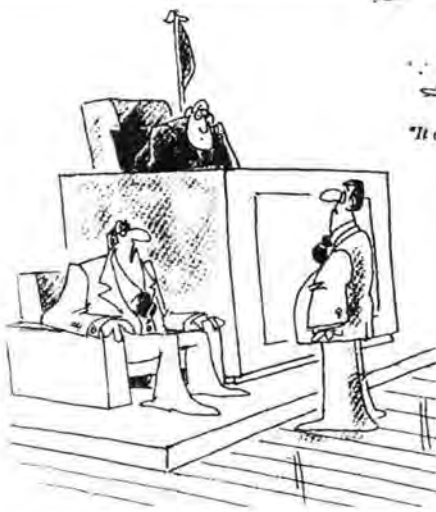
The GDP's shrillest distortions probably are in the handling of crime. It counts as progress the money people spend deterring crime and repairing the damage it causes. GPI subtracts these costs, as also hospital bills and property losses arising from crime and the security devices people buy to prevent it.

In India the vast sums we waste protecting relatively worthless lives of Very Important Persons and Not so Important persons, the enormous and fast-growing expenditure on compound fencing and round-the-lock police guards — all this too must drop out of our reckoning of GDP to make it a realistic measure of progress.

And what of the largely wasteful travel of industrialists and their lackeys, as well as of innumerable government officials to and from Delhi to turn the wheels of the licence-permit system or what is left of it? What of our law-makers' jaunts to foreign lands to study how well our embassies use Hindi? Air India's income rises thereby, but as tax payers we pay the bill. All such spending contributes to GDP. In what way does it add to the nation's prosperity?

Finally, if Indian economists switched from reliance on GNI/GDP to a truer index of our condition, how much would survive of the image of progress our governments have projected?

MR. J. B. D'SOUZA is a retired civil servant. Held such positions as the Municipal Commissioner and Chief Secretary to the Government of Maharashtra.



"I'll have you know I paid a lot of money to get on the ethics committee."

Courtesy: National Review.

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Populism - The Bane of the Indian Economy

Ranga Kota

Who cares for the country's economic future if his own political survival is at stake. Competitive populism may be the bane of our economy, but it seems to be a boon for our politicians.

The discomfort about the Enron power project that grips Mr. Manohar Joshi, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra*, is a logical consequence of competitive populism. Competitive populism is the 'state-of-the-art' political gimmick of any party that hopes to acquire political power. Mr. Joshi should have known, even before he planned his foreign tour to market Maharashtra in the United States, that foreign investors were keenly watching the fate of the Enron project - the final decision would at least in the short run, affect the flow of investments into this country. If Mr. Joshi chooses to disregard the previous government's commitments, foreign investors can hardly be blamed if they decide not to take Mr. Joshi's marketing attempts seriously. This explains Mr. Joshi's verbal gymnastics to say 'yes' and 'no' at the same time. He is talking to two publics at the same time - to the Indian he is saying that he will abide by the election promise of the Shiv Sena-BJP combine to cancel the Enron contract; and to the US public saying 'don't worry, be happy, we will work things out in such a way that the Enron deal is saved'. In the process, he has only succeeded in confusing everyone.

A Difficult Tiger to Ride

Mr. Joshi is not alone in realising that competitive populism is a difficult tiger to ride. Mr. Rama Rao, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, is an even a greater champion of this new political weapon. Thanks to his reckless promise to give rice at Rupees two per kg. on the one hand, and to impose total prohibition in the State, on the other, he has deprived his state of investable resources to the tune of Rs.2,000 crores.

In the very first year of his rule, he is feeling the after-effects of competitive populism, but will not admit the folly of his policy for fear of losing face.

The roots of competitive populism can be traced to Mrs. Indira Gandhi's flurry of measures, including the nationalisation of banks following the first split in the Indian National Congress which she engineered in the late sixties in her bid to outwit the old guard or the syndicate as it was then known. Despite this, the whole of the seventies had not seen much of political one-upmanship in the dangerous game of competitive populism. Political parties were few and had relatively well defined economic agendas which gave little room for the kind of adventurism we see today.

The seeds of competitive populism were firmly planted in the 'eighties with the launching of the highly popular mid-day meals scheme by film star turned chief minister of Tamil Nadu, M. G. Ramachandran, soon followed by the launching by yet another film star turned chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr. N. T. Rama Rao, of the Rs. two per kg. rice scheme. Both these gentlemen of the silver screen and leaders of two powerful regional parties concocted a heady brew of parochialism and economic populism of a kind never advocated before.

The economic costs of this variety of competitive populism turned out to be enormous, and over the years got institutionalised in the form of subsidies, write offs, and plain give-aways inflicting a very heavy burden on the exchequer.

Fertiliser Subsidy

This year, the government will be

spending close to Rs.6,000 crores on fertiliser subsidy alone. It could be argued that initially there were some sound rational reasons for the fertiliser subsidy. The success of India's green revolution which began in the seventies was critically dependent on the adoption of new technologies, which relied heavily on the use of synthetic fertilisers. In those years, all the new technologies were viewed with suspicion, more so if the investments were very high.

Fertilisers were expensive and there was need to offer them at a price which could motivate large numbers of farmers to use them. At the same time, the government wanted to promote the manufacture of fertilisers in the cooperative and private sectors. Considering that the manufacturing costs were higher than the price at which the fertilisers could be sold (the price was fixed by the government), manufacturers were assured a guaranteed post-tax return of 12% at a capacity utilisation of 80%. The fertiliser projects that were cleared in the Rajiv Gandhi regime had bloated capital costs, since they were assured of committed returns. We had the strange case of Nagarjuna Fertilisers whose manufacturing costs were three times that of GSFC or SPIC. Unfortunately, but perhaps not surprisingly, the very people who are questioning the inflated costs of the Enron project and the provision for assured returns, never raised this very same issue in respect of any of the private sector fertiliser projects whose economics were equally suspect. The fertiliser subsidy was so firmly embedded in the psyche of our politicians that they were oblivious of the economic costs that the fertiliser

*This was written in July 1995.

subsidy inflicts on the economy, in terms of ballooning fiscal deficits and consequent inflation.

Our minister in charge of fertilisers not only assures the farming community that the fertiliser subsidy would not be withdrawn, but goes on to promise to revive three junk public sector fertiliser projects whose obituary was written almost two years ago. The fertiliser subsidy continues, despite evidence that it never benefited the marginal and dry land farmers who outnumber in large measure, the big and medium wet land farmers who do not need the subsidy anyway.

Power Subsidy

Equally distressing are the ridiculously low power tariffs in the rural sector. Several state governments do not charge any tariff up to 5 hp in rural areas and even for higher levels of energy consumption, the tariffs are so low that they do not even cover the cost of generation and distribution of power. As long as the consumption of power in the rural areas was a small portion of the total power consumed, it did not matter; but with the increasing use of power in the rural sector, the power subsidy to the farming community is virtually driving the State Electricity Boards (SEBs) to bankruptcy. Every political party for the sake of political power is willing to grant electric power to the farming community at virtually no cost. SEBs have no money for investments and the World Bank insists on a minimum of 3% return on investments. This, no SEB can commit, given the present tariff structure. The power scenario is indeed very gloomy.

The fact that the generation capacity added in the last four years has been very small has led experts to predict a near collapse in the power situation by the turn of this century. A major restructuring of SEBs calls for rationalising tariffs to the farming community, which no political party is prepared to address.

Loans Waiver

The third area of competitive populism concerns loans to farmers. Mr. Devi Lal, the champion of the

farming community had set the disastrous trend of waiving of loans to farmers upto a specified limit. This virtually ensured the bankruptcy of rural lending institutions. This dangerous trend is still to be arrested and every political party seeks to outdo the other. The recent standoff between the Karnataka government and NABARD on the waiver of interest on defaulted loans, only underscores the power of populism. Mr. Balram Jakhar, the ruling party's champion of farmers, wants to accord industry status to agriculture without taxing them. The well-to-do farming community is so used to free lunches that they would keep demanding a better and better menu, the costs of which will compel the cutting down of investments in the farm sector so crucial for the long term viability of Indian agriculture.

It is a measure of populism that makes agriculture (which accounts for almost 30% of GDP) contribute so little to the revenues of state governments. Competitive populism will ensure that things only get worse from the economic point of view.

Having heard so many good things about competitive markets and the competitive economy, our politicians cannot be blamed if they equate competitive populism with the other two! Perhaps such is the measure of the understanding of a large number of politicians who are going to guide the destiny of this nation. Who cares for the country's economic future if his own political survival is at stake. Competitive populism may be the bane of our economy, but it seems to be a boon for our politicians.

MR. RANGA KOTA is a company executive and a commentator on business and the economy.

*The fruit laden tree always
bends low. The truly great are
always humble.*

Sri Ramakrishna.

THE FUTURE OF PREVAILING RELIGIONS

Vinoba Bhave, a great follower of Mahatma Gandhi, was not an atheist, nor was he narrow-minded and selfish like the "Hindutvaites" who make use of their religion to exploit the masses and rouse hatred against other religious communities especially against Muslims and Christians.

He was also a philosopher and a leading scholar of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In his commentary on the *Gita* (*Geeta Pravachan*), while commenting on the stanza "अप्राहि आत्मानं धर्मं परधर्मो ह्यनी वरा स्व-धर्मो हि भला मृत्यु परधर्मं भयंकरः॥" he clearly states that in this stanza, the term 'Dharma' is not used in the popular sense of Hindu religion, Muslim religion or the Christian religion but it has been used in the broad sense. Everyone has one's own religion i.e. one's natural disposition and that one should not abandon one's natural disposition and imitate the disposition of others which is dangerous. Here परधर्म means disposition other than one's own. But most people interpret religion as Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc. in duly adoring their own religion and hating other religions. Consequently they create havoc in society which often results in enormous loss of life and distribution of property.

Hence the prevailing religions are not a 'must' for mankind and persons with liberal ideas all over the world are not followers of any prevailing religion but remain a progressive minority. Though they are a minority at present, with the spread of knowledge and with the lapse of time, their number is bound to increase slowly and steadily in the future.

C. Y. Dharap.
Maharashtra.

Methinks the Males Doth Protest Overmuch

Kusum Chopra

What is a Uniform Civil Code? Does it imply: Equal rights for all the citizens of the country? Hindu rights for all men; or judging by most of the noise being made, Muslim marriage rights for all men and the freeing of Hindu men from the onerous yoke of the Hindu Marriage Act which banned polygamy?

In a covering note forwarding the article, Ms. Chopra writes:

You may recall sending me a frantic letter from a reader objecting to my calling Gandhi a bania. Was it prophetic? Undoubtedly, the gentleman must have suffered from apoplexy over the subsequent controversy when Ashok Row Kavi seconded the sentiments over the TV networks and sparked off an uproar, from which even the Gandhi offspring have later backed off.*

It is however unfortunate that the reader has entirely misread the point of my offering ... that a broader perspective needs to be cultivated, at the national and personal level. Was the point that obscure?

What is a Uniform Civil Code? Does it imply:

- equal rights for all the citizens of the country?
- Hindu rights for all men or judging by most of the noise being made
- Muslim marriage rights for all men and the freeing of Hindu men from the onerous yoke of the Hindu Marriage Act which banned polygamy? Not that they have turned a monogamous lot since the passing of that Bill. Statistics reveal quite the contrary. According to a 1975 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, during 1931-41, 1941-45, 1951-61, the percentages of polygamous marriages among Hindus stood at 6.79, 7.15 and 5.06 respectively.

The corresponding percentages for Muslims were 7.29, 7.06 and 4.31 respectively while the tribals stole the march at 9.53, 17.53 and 17.98 per cent.

The Matrimonial Stakes

Another survey conducted by the

census authorities in 1961 revealed that the incidence of polygamous marriages was found to be highest among the tribal communities (15.25%), Buddhists 7.97%, Jains 6.72%, Hindus 5.8% and Muslims 5.7%. Clearly, Hindu men have been giving their Muslim brethren a run for their money at the matrimonial stakes, irrespective of legislation and so-called social stigmas.

Social stigmas are an eye-wash, what with second marriages with the permission of the first wife, contract marriages in the form of Gujarat's innovative *Maitri-Karars* and the like, which offer "married status" to the second wife, albeit without any rights. It still remains to be seen whether the new infertility techniques will save very many marriages doomed by low female fertility or by male impotence.

So what does the Uniform Civil Code boil down to? What does it offer the women of India ... what existing yokes does it claim to free them off, what wrongs does it right in divorce, marriage, death, inheritance ... ?

Soon after independence, Hindu inheritance laws were codified to give weightage to the females in the family; despite this codification, dowry continues and the daughter's inheritance in parental property remains as much of a question mark as in the Christian community where the women are still battling for rights accorded to them by even the Courts.

Would the promulgation of a Uniform Civil Code push the conservative elements off centre stage and allow women their rights or otherwise?

Todate, the focus has rather been on the "plight" of Muslim divorcees, especially those victims of the verbal *talak, talak, talak*. In that community, the order of male relatives who are to support the woman has been laid down.

Whether they do so or not may be another matter altogether. But what of our Hindu women, rejected by in-laws and parents alike, to be consigned to the flames, dead or alive? How many Muslim dowry deaths have been recorded to date?

Is the Uniform Civil Code to arrive at any equitable formula for permissible quantum of giving and taking of dowry, whether in the form of presents, *streedhan* or plain and simple dowry? This has persisted despite the Dowry Act, the aftermath of which has been fiery deaths of hundreds of young brides.

Despite the ban on dowry, this essentially Hindu cancer has spread its tentacles into the Muslims and Christian communities already.

Under the Uniform Civil Code, where will dowry go ... which customs will be adopted and promulgated as the Indian Dowry Code; and what then will happen, for instance, to those high-priced auctions of civil service grooms, irrespective of caste or creed? It remains to question whether the Uniform Civil Code will offer a healing touch to the obviously grey areas surrounding divorce in India, ranging from the "No Divorce" of the Catholics which would perhaps be the closest to the hearts of the *Maryada Purshottam* lobbies;

- or the provisions of Manu, which allow divorce under certain

*The gentleman concerned asked that his subscription be cancelled. Please see *Freedom First*, No.422, July-September 1994, page 31.

circumstances, including childlessness

- or the Christians who only penalise female adultery, but not the male variety.

Which one of these will be the All India Divorce passport?

If Indian men are going to claim the right to have a choice of wives in the name of uniform rights, why shouldn't the Indian female claim similar rights, given the quality of manhood which has survived these days?

If the Uniform Civil Code is to be truly uniform, it should be able to offer uniform rights to all the citizens of India, irrespective of caste, creed or sex.

That could also mean that under the new reformed scenarios, the women, like the men of India, will be allowed the right to four legal marriages, just one short of the Mahabharatian five of the legendary Draupadi, who is more of a role model for contemporary Indian

women than the sanctimonious Sita.

What, argue the younger generation, did the copious tears achieve, except the good books of MCPs down the centuries.

After all, even Draupadi followed her husbands into the obscurity of the forests for 14 years... a favourite number of our epic writers apparently; but she was smart enough not to fall into enemy hands and to need to be rescued at great expense to health, life and limb, the pre-historic equivalent of a World War attributed to Draupadi, which renders her none-too-popular with the *Maryada Purshottams*.

When the Indian republic was founded on the premise of bringing under one umbrella all the myriad cultures and sub-cultures in the Indian peninsula, the slogan was "unity in diversity".

Why now this assiduous search for Legal Strait Jackets?

MS. KUSUMCHOPRA is a freelance journalist.

Bigger the Better

How does Narasimha Rao, the "consensus man" tackle contentious issues? The reconstitution of the Delhi Pradesh Congress (I) Committee provides a clue. Till recently, it had as office bearers, a president, a treasurer, two vice-presidents and five general secretaries. Then last fortnight, Rao ordered a shake-up and now the DPCC has 20 general secretaries, 17 vice presidents, 23 joint secretaries, 34 executive members and 26 organising secretaries. Nearly everybody connected with the party setup in Delhi has been given a post to minimise the prospect of dissidents ganging up. But such solutions generate fresh problems. How, for example, is such a large committee expected to arrive at decisions which within a party are expected to be unanimous? A senior local leader provides the answer: "Rao knows large committees can never arrive at a consensus. Finally, they will leave it to him to make the decision". Rao couldn't have asked for more in an election year.

Courtesy: *India Today*, February 15, 1996.

Why did you bother to point out the Great Bear in the sky?

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?

Why did you teach me to gamble on myself, and not on cards?

When I become a father, maybe I'll know why.

And I hope I'll be a father like you.

Papa, pal, the complete man.



Raymond
SINCE 1925

NEXUS EQUITY 1550 J

Society and Politics in South Asia

Maneesha Tikekar

"If democracy is a valued goal in the contemporary Third World, it may be necessary to settle for moderate growth rates. More value may need to be placed on the political rationality of economic policies that appear irrational from the standpoint of economic science."

Humanism, both classical and modern stands for a man-centered philosophy. Man is the measure of all activities. It focuses on the centrality of the individual in all social collectives and believes in the intrinsic value of a human being. It therefore rejects any philosophy that despairs of man, and denies any meaning to human life. In Europe this view of man was powerfully reinforced by the advancement of science, and the secularisation of society. It demands that national prosperity and social progress must not ignore individual welfare and freedom. Quite naturally, therefore, the major concern of humanism is human development.

Value of Human Life

Until recently human development was treated as an integral part of economic development which could be measured through certain critical indices such as per capita income, the rate of GDP, the ratio of savings, and the level of industrialisation. It was believed that national prosperity will automatically bring in individual welfare and well-being. Later, development economists spoke about human capital development through raising the level of literacy, nourishment and life expectancy, which were the indices of a qualitative improvement of life. Apart from economic development and the qualitative improvement of life, integrated human development has a third dimension, that is, the development of the intrinsic value of human life. This involves the creation of a socio-political order based on the values of liberty, equality, justice, rationalism and secularism. It demands accountability of the regime to the people; popular participation at the

decision making level; preservation of human rights; protection against discrimination on irrelevant grounds; a guarantee of the rights of minorities; equal protection under the law and equal access to the benefits of the State.

At the operational level the philosophy of integrated human development would prevent the establishment of a dictatorial or totalitarian state, promote human rights and help establish pro-people governments. It would shun both chauvanistic nationalism and aggressive communalism, establish close relations between ethics and politics and would strive to establish a proper relationship between man and man, man and state, and man and society.

If politics is viewed as a goal attainment activity, the nature and quality of political process go a long way in achieving the goal of integrated human development. Therefore, I seek to briefly review the political process in South Asia with a view to finding out if it has been conducive or detrimental to the achievement of the said goal. The usage of the term South Asia in this presentation is confined to SAARC countries and does not include Afghanistan and Myanmar though, geographically, they are located in South Asia. However, the observations made here are in the context of third world countries which began their experiment with democracy with the end of colonial

rule. In many countries parliamentary democracy that replaced colonial rule was in turn rapidly replaced by military dictatorships or personal autocracy.

Third World Experience

Third world societies in the post colonial period were faced with problems of economic development, modernisation and national integration. Democracy came as a natural choice to them because as Leslie Lipson, the well-known American political scientist observed, democracy protected human dignity, helped in the enrichment of the human personality and consequently raised the civilisational level of the entire society.

Yet, personalism and deinstitutionalisation of politics mark the character of parliamentary democracy in South Asia. It has been observed that



President Tito,



Pandit Nehru,



Kyame Nkrumah

individual Asian leaders play a disproportionately important role in determining the direction of their societies. Mao in China, Kim Il Sung in Korea, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore, Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi in India, Sukarno and Suharto in Indonesia are prominent examples of personalised leadership.

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Their power stems not only from constitutional provisions but from the sheer force of their personality and the sweeping power of patronage they wielded. This personalism becomes more manifest when leadership is inherited within the family which is not uncommon in South Asia.

Nepal

In Nepal, personality-oriented politics has threatened the multiparty democratic system introduced in 1990 that marked the culmination of a people's movement which opposed thirty years of the partyless *panchayat* system established in 1960. An observer of Nepalese politics points out that the restoration of democracy in 1990 merely changed the actors but the drama of underdevelopment remains. The Nepali Congress that came to power in 1990 and was ousted in 1994 was beset by leadership feuds. The politics of self-aggrandizement, political expediency, and organisational hodgepodge inevitably led to the politics of disaster. Nepali politics has been described variously as - conspiracy, mockery, nepotism, favouritism, sycophancy, authoritarianism, abuse of power and authority. Interestingly these terms also adequately describe the nature of politics elsewhere in South Asia.

In Pakistan, these led to a succession of five Prime Ministers, three Presidents and a mid-term election in 1993. The Pakistani experience shows that personality oriented political parties and the projection of individual differences into public affairs have blurred the distinction between personal antagonism and ideological difference. Sharp divisions among politicians and their inability to compromise and mediate political tension have frequently paved the way for military intervention. If Benazir Bhutto pursued vengeful politics, Sharif indulged in the politics of ceaseless agitation. The Bhutto family feuds between mother and daughter, and between brother and sister brought Pakistani democracy to the brink of collapse.

Bangladesh, Maldives & Bhutan

In Bangladesh, it is a feud be-

tween two women successors of two former Presidents, namely Khaleeda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajid. Even in the tiny atoll nation of the Maldives,



Sheikh Hasina

Khaleeda Zia

it is power controlled by an elite drawn from a few influential families who command considerable support among the people that forces President Gayoom to come to terms with them. In the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan, the situation is not different. A scholar of Bhutanese politics has pointed out that members of the National Assembly do not rise above populism and xenophobia. No honest attempt has been made to identify issues affecting the polity. Political reforms are on the King's agenda but the time for their introduction is undecided.

Indian Experience

It is in the context of these fragile Afro-Asian democracies, that the Indian achievement stands out distinctly though the personalisation of politics has taken its own toll of Indian democracy. The national 'emergency' of 1975-77 caused by personality-oriented politics has left a permanent scar on Indian democracy. The political arena in India appears to be divided between 'loyalists' and 'dissenters'. Loyalty is invoked in the name of a leader and not in the sense of commitment to the Constitution or democratic ideals. During Mrs. Gandhi's regime the loyalty game was carried to such an extent as to encourage her sycophants unabashedly to proclaim: 'India is Indira and Indira is India'.

Personality-based Politics

Personality-oriented politics undermines institutions. The fundamental guarantee of a citizen's rights and dignity comes from the

institutionalisation of authority. In fact one measure of political development is the institutionalisation of authority and the extent to which institutions provide for popular participation. Institutions are formed on the basis of regularised procedures which replace the dictates of personal preference or the interests of special groups. The state as an entity acquires a formal-legal role. This in turn leads to the consolidation of the rule of law. On the other hand, many a South Asian leader tends to treat institutions with contempt. They treat the legislature as their backyard and the judiciary as the handmaiden. The politicisation of the judiciary and of the bureaucracy is a common feature of democracy in these countries. Demands for the commitment of judicial and bureaucratic personnel to the philosophy of the Constitution is interpreted as a demand for commitment to the programme of the ruling party, often ending as commitment to the leader himself. Often institutions like the bureaucracy and the judiciary are merely tolerated and serve as facades to camouflage the intentions of the leader.

Due to the increasing personalisation of politics and the decreasing legitimacy of political institutions there is inadequate acceptance of basic rules to govern domestic/civil conflicts. As a result, conflicts have become the order of the day in all South Asian States. In India there is a rise in social conflict; the growth rate of the economy is not upto expectation and institutions find it difficult to cope with social and economic problems. Consequently they are losing their democratic character and are unable to stem the tide of violence. The result is that the state alternates between being helpless and coercive.

In Pakistan, the advent of democracy in the late 1980s coincided with a decay of political institutions, increase in social conflict and economic stagnation. This precipitated instability and Pakistan has been in the throes of a 'crisis of governability' for quite some time.

Nehru's Beliefs

Nehru believed that industrialisation and modernisation would erode the influence of religion, and would gradually replace ethnic and religious loyalties with class identities. He had faith in the ability of economic development to reduce the influence of religious and ethnic leaders on the one hand and in the ability of science and technology on the other, to secularise Indian society. Western scholars like Edward Shils, S. N. Eisenstadt and Talcott Parsons, with their deep academic interest in developments in South Asia shared Nehru's optimism. They believed that the evolution of a cohesive value system in these societies was possible through constant interaction between cultural norms and modern values of the central authority drawing peripheral communities into large national networks.

Problems of Modernisation

Often the South Asian leaders failed to comprehend the fact that modernisation is not a magic wand that would do away with all the ills of their societies. In fact, the modernisation process itself can unleash forces in a traditional society that have remained dormant for centuries. The process of transition from an old society to a new state is not without its price. Modernisation brings about rapid changes in traditional societies. According to social psychologists, societies which undergo rapid economic changes tend to develop extremist and xenophobic movements. People fear a loss of cultural identity and feel threatened by the demands of groups that lived in social and cultural oblivion for centuries. Imbalanced modernisation, which is often the case in South Asia, accentuates the cultural discrimination of minorities and increases their hostility towards the dominant group. Increases in the rate of literacy and education if not matched by the generation of adequate employment could become the root cause for violence, as in the case of Sri Lanka, where it has taken the form of violent ethnic conflict.

Violence and Conflict

With modernisation, political

institutions must expand and be adapted to encourage participation. When the process of development is guided and controlled by the state, the state faces the greatest challenge from those very people who are increasingly politicised by the expansion of democracy and are dissatisfied with the pace of socio-economic change. Lopsided development along with a lack of institutionalisation of democratic norms has rendered South Asian states weak and vulnerable to a variety of social challenges. The state tries to overcome this problem by adopting confrontational postures vis-a-vis various sections of the population ultimately resulting in violent protests and agitation.

Often the national political elite view ethnic and religious identifications as harmful cleavages undermining political integration, development and modernisation. When the legitimate demands of different communities do not find acceptance and accommodation within the system, and the normal aspirations of such groups are not satisfied through routine political processes, they are frustrated and are driven to the wall; hence their resort to violence. And the pity is that the South Asian regimes tend to treat this merely as a problem of law and order.

A Democratic Paradox

The process of nation building emphasises the forces that bring about assimilation of different communities into one system, but at the same time the dynamics of democratic competition often amplify the need for collective expression by ethnic groups. This is a democratic paradox that South Asian politics faces. There is need to integrate diverse populations but the dynamics of democratic competition serve to consolidate ethnic identity. A meaningful nation building process must appreciate local and regional diversities, and sustainable development should be promoted by devising policies appreciative of local social structures and development needs. When both leaders and institutions fail to understand this problem it results in fundamentalist or

separatist politics.

South Asian politics finds it difficult to strike a balance between the national and the regional, the elite and the masses, the modern and the traditional. The resultant anarchy and chaos in the process allows the military-civil bureaucracy to intervene by projecting itself as the saviour of national integrity.

Both Bangladesh and Pakistan slipped into military rule after dismantling the populist regimes of Mujib and Bhutto respectively. Zia-ul-Rahman of Bangladesh and Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan consolidated their power through militarism and Islam - Islam was used more in Pakistan than in Bangladesh. The military-bureaucratic state in both the countries utilised their "power of patronage to coopt significant segments of dominant socio-economic elites and to localize political horizons in a manner reminiscent of the colonial state" writes Ayesha Jalal. The recent histories of Bangladesh and Pakistan have demonstrated just how difficult it is to reverse the phenomenon of military authoritarianism.

Though Sri Lanka has saved herself from direct military rule, increasingly she has become a police state replete with armed security forces at street corners, security checks at government buildings, arrests and detention on a large scale, and extra legal operations in various parts of the country.

Debasing the Socio-Political Process

In India, domestic disturbances of all kinds have resulted in increasing terrorist activities on the one hand and criminalisation of politics on the other. In a society where avenues for socio-economic mobility are limited, politics becomes the single most quick avenue to achieve the same. Survival and ascendance in politics depends upon the extent to which different resources are mobilised and utilised. This leads to a close association between politics and corruption and between a politician and a criminal. When alternate channels of socio-economic mobility are freely available, the stakes in the game of power are lower. In such a situation, the chances of the loser

resorting to extra systemic political mobilisation such as riots or terrorist and criminal activities are also rare. But when the stakes in politics are higher, the incidence of violence is also higher.

The foregoing argument reveals some deep rooted maladies in South Asian democracies - ambivalence and frustration related to modernisation, internal cleavages based on subnational identities, political instability, military prominence in politics, crisis of legitimacy of institutions and authoritarian tendencies among leaders. Such a debasement of the social-political process can hardly be conducive to integrated human development.

In recent years, in these states, the national aggregates of development indices look better but when one moves away from these aggregates a bleaker picture emerges. There exists grinding poverty and mounting debts, polarization of wealth, development projects turning out to be inappropriate and the goal of sustainable development still very far. The dichotomy between wealth and welfare is yet unresolved and the question of priority between growth

and distribution remains unanswered.

A Long-term Process

There is urgent need to reform society and politics in South Asia. Reform will mean changing traditional values and behaviour patterns, the expansion of communications and education, the broadening of loyalties from family, village and community to nation, the separation of religion from civil life, the rationalisation of authority, adoption of achievement standards and more equal distribution of material and human resources. One may find a great deal of wisdom in Atul Kohli's suggestion: "If democracy is a valued goal in the contemporary Third World, it may be necessary to settle for moderate growth rates. More value may need to be placed on the political rationality of economic policies that appear irrational from the standpoint of economic science. Nation-building is a long term process in which the need to create viable political institutions has to be balanced against the demand of economic efficiency".

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Fundamentalism is Not Unique

What are we to make of the strange - we would like to say unholy - alliance between the Vatican and a number of Islamic countries not best known for their moral stance in politics? Is it not a remarkable thing to see emissaries from the Pope visiting representatives of anti-western and anti-Christian dictatorships such as Iran and Libya?

Controlling Population

A world conference on population, such as that which was held in Cairo last year, is bound to turn on family planning. So is one on and for women, like the one which has just ended in Beijing - at least in part. If we are fighting for a better world for our children and our children's children, both boys and girls, the problem of population has to be addressed. For otherwise the time will surely come, though long after all of us are dead, when the survival of life itself will be threatened by its own proliferation. Progress so far has been concentrated on bettering the human lot, but this betterment has brought with it the seeds of its own destruction. A foresight of this can be seen in the misery caused by overpopulation in many parts of the world. Participants in the conference on population did not have to look farther afield than some parts of Cairo itself, where hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to make their homes in rubbish dumps. The same is true in many other urban centres throughout the third world. China is no exception, although the apparatus of dictatorship was brought into play to clean the capital of much of its human debris during the Beijing Conference.

To most people, family planning means artificial contraception used for birth control, mainly based on physical devices or medicaments. It is an attempt to tame the instinct - the deepest in any form of animal life - for survival of the species. Roman Catholic theology considers that attempt to be evil in itself, and the present pope is determined that there shall be no change in this doctrine. No one doubts that the

vast majority of people in the world, including - we dare to say it - most Roman Catholics, disagree with this.

Before the vast propaganda barrage which accompanied last year's Cairo Conference on Population - repeated to a large extent in the run-up to Beijing - family planning did not include abortion. It is true that this is an issue which has always been on the feminist agenda, but as a matter of women's rights and not of family planning. Abortion may be a way of preventing individual births, but by definition it is not contraception. So how did the two things come to be identified so closely in the publicity surrounding these two conferences?

Abortion and Contraception

The answer is as clear as it is regrettable. Vatican diplomats have always been astute right down the ages. They know that they cannot create a general constituency in public opinion throughout the world against contraception, but there already exists one against abortion. By linking contraception to abortion, they are trying to bring both into equal disrepute. For the Vatican both are equally immoral. Millions across the globe might well agree that abortion is immoral, but not contraception.

The Vatican's opposition to many of the aims of the Cairo and Beijing conferences was perhaps predictable, but the strength of it and the duplicity of it was not. The fundamentalist connection will be appreciated by historians of the papacy, who know well enough that the great values of the universal church have often been overshadowed by the means to reach

the Vatican's current ends. Such historians are well aware that there have been times in history when Rome has allied itself with Islam against fellow-Christians. The time of the Crusades is full of such examples. That was an age in which the hatred between Rome and Byzantium was often greater than between Catholic Jerusalem and Ummayyad Damascus.

Religion for Political Ends

The Crusades are useful in the present debate for another reason too. In an article in these pages (*Swiss Press Review*) exactly a year ago the following sentence appeared: "The Muslim religion is being used by Islamic militants for political ends". The author might have been shocked to imagine that a similar sentence about Christianity might be true so soon afterwards: "The Christian religion is being used by the Vatican for political ends". Yet it is not at all surprising in historical terms. Islam spread from the Arabian peninsula eastward to China and westward to Spain, but it was always by the sword - sometimes allied to diplomacy. The time of the Crusades was only one of many episodes in history in which the Christian religion (both Protestants and Catholic) was also spread by the sword. We have only to think of the early colonisation of Latin America - by the Spaniards on behalf of the Pope.

No one doubts the strength of Pope John Paul's conviction that artificial contraception is wrong. And there should perhaps be less surprise about the fact that he regards any allies as useful against it. It is also understandable that Islamic fundamentalists are glad to find a prestigious ally at the very heart of western civilisation. There

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is no binding prohibition on contraception in either the Bible or the Koran. It is when it is allied to conventional ideas of social behaviour that the trouble starts.

The Example of Egypt

Egypt - where last year's population conference was held - is a perfect example of the dilemma. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, mainly because most of its land area is desert. Although some progress has been made in the greening of the desert, it is as nothing to the improvement in public health - resulting in an increase in population so unbridled that the country is already faced with the catastrophic situation which the rest of the world may be faced with a century or so from now. For millennia the population of the Nile valley was limited by the fact that there was a rough balance between life and death. Progress has changed that.

Successive Egyptian governments - muslim but not fundamentalist - have been well aware of the importance of family planning. Over the last few decades they have been relatively successful in curbing population growth by means of contraception. This success should be measured against the enormous difficulties which stand in the way of changing social habits in a traditional society. For a rural Egyptian the aim of family planning down the ages has always been more children, not less. The greatest misfortune for a man was to have a barren wife - in a day and age when such a condition was incurable. The main reason for this was precisely the fact that so many children died before reaching adulthood. This is no longer the case, but old-established patterns of thought do not die easily. The fact that the improvement in public health serves the same purpose as having many children, but in an entirely different way, has not yet struck a chord in the average Egyptian village.

Fundamentalists have a good name amongst the Cairo poor because of their good works. Much of their support comes to them because of their charitable activities. A starving man who

is given a good meal is not much bothered by the fact that his benefactor may be a murderer in another part of his being. The government is unpopular because it is perceived as doing too little for the poor. If there is some truth in this line of argument at the micro level there is none at all at the macro level. Egypt has become much more prosperous in the last quarter of a century. This is partly because of the trickling down process of an ongoing economic boom and partly because of the government's relative success in curbing population growth. This must go on.

The Same All Over the Third World

We have taken Egypt as an example. The same - with appropriate variations - is true of all the countries of the third world where population growth is threatening to run out of control as public health improves. It is especially true of China, which already embraces one-quarter of the population of the whole world. Controlling the growth of the earth's population is arguably the very greatest problem which we face. Those who dispute this are hiding their heads in the sand. Those who actually fight against it may be accused of much worse. They will be among history's worst villains.

Of course curbing population control is not a boon to Islamic fundamentalists. It is poverty itself, and not its abolition, which serves their purpose best. This is true of all political movements aimed at overthrowing the established order of things. Only be alienating the poor of the Muslim world - who in non-oil countries are always the overwhelming majority - can they hope to win power. And then where will the poor be?

Fundamentalism is a big word. It embraces more than usually meets the eye. It is difficult to refrain from applying it to Vatican policies, where the end justifies the means to the extent of establishing a political alliance with the number one enemies of moderation.

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On Predicting Earthquakes

A. K. R. Hemmady

The absence of a National Earthquake Prediction Panel (EPP) in India is a big handicap for the district authorities in tackling panic and scare caused by earthquake predictions. I refer to a prediction made in early July '95 by a former employee of the Soil Survey Department turned water and earthquake diviner, Mr. Laxman Mahajan, that an earthquake would occur in Sangamner, Maharashtra, between 29th July and 3rd August. This led to an exodus from the town, the mushrooming of tents in open fields, a hike in prices of plastic sheets and tarpaulins, not to mention the usual profiteering in other commodities that inevitably occur on such occasions. The economic tremors were far reaching - when the price of lanterns in Delhi market sky rocketed!

Panel of Experts Needed

The Sangamner trauma could turn out to be a blessing in disguise if it jolts the Maharashtra and Central governments to constitute an EPP. While the Centre is making up its mind, the Maharashtra government should form a panel of experts for earthquake prediction with the Maharashtra Engineering Research Institute (MERI) as co-ordinator. This is an urgent need considering that the Koyna (1967) and Latur (1993) earthquakes occurred in the least expected areas of the peninsular block which was considered to be seismically stable as compared to the Himalayas; and, after these two events, many predictions are being made by quacks and scientists about an earthquake in this or that area of Maharashtra. Apart from making official predictions of earthquakes, the proposed panel could

test all other predictions on the anvil of scientific tell-tale signs to verify their credibility. If that happens, Mr. Mahajan will have achieved what the scientists have been urging the government all along.

The proposed panel could study with profit an important document

forecasting could become political football and that some officials might try to suppress news of an impending 'quake, the panel recommends, that warning which would cause disruption of daily routine when an earthquake threatens, should be issued by elected officials - but only after a public prediction has been made by a panel of scientists set up by

a federal agency". Incidentally, this document is not copyrighted. In contrast, it is said that the report by a government sponsored committee which investigated the Latur earthquake is confidential!

Earthquake Prediction

From 1962 onwards, Japanese scientists were pressing the government to accord legitimacy to scientific earthquake predictions. After the disastrous Niigata earthquake (1964), the government accepted the suggestion and the Japanese Meteorological Department is authorised to make earthquake predictions. Soon after China's severe Hsingai 'quake, Prime Minister Chou-en-Lai visited the affected area in 1966 and launched a national prediction programme with political overtones because it coincided with China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The 'elitist' scientific community was decried for not serving the needs of the people and the 'war on earthquakes' was intended to "demonstrate how scientists can combine with workers, peasants, workers and soldiers to solve a problem of great



Bihar Earthquake, 1934.

entitled "Earthquake Prediction and Public Policy" prepared in 1975 by the National Academy of Sciences, USA, in consultation with a panel of experts headed by sociologist Ralph Turner of the University of California.

Commenting on this document, *Time* magazine in its issue of September 1, 1975, observed: "The study takes strong issue with the politicians and the few scientists who believe that earthquake predictions and warnings would cause panic and economic paralysis, thus resulting in more harm than the tremors themselves. Forecasting would clearly save lives, the panel states, and that is the highest priority ... fearful that

national concern".

In the USA, the great Alaskan earthquake of 1964 prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson, to constitute a Presidential Panel on Earthquake Prediction and the USA's Disaster Relief Act (1974) empowers the Director, United States Geological Survey (USGS) to issue an official warning. The Director, USGS is advised by an Earthquake Prediction Panel. USGS also has a cell which invites and examines the predictions made all over the world to evaluate the percentage of the predictions which have materialised.

Unscientific Predictions in India

The absence of an EPP in India, which could also evaluate scientific predictions, led to a peculiar situation in the seventies. The main Koyna event had occurred on 10th December 1967 preceded by an earlier event of lesser intensity, considered to be a foreshock, on 13th September 1967. Six years later, on 17th October 1973, another quake of the magnitude of 5.2 struck the area. This prompted two renowned scientists of the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), H. K. Gupta and B. K. Rastogi, to publish a paper (1974) in the highly rated scientific journal "*Nature*" to aver: "While it could not be said with surety that the current seismic activity is a forerunner to a relatively high magnitude earthquake in Koyna region, it may be mentioned that there is a definite enhancement in the seismic activity which co-relates with the increased reservoir level". The highlighting of this paper in the press compelled the Government of Maharashtra to seek UNESCO's help to study the problem. Dr. J. B. Auden, who was with the Geological Survey of India earlier, and had himself carried out the geo-technical investigations of the Koyna dam site was the UNESCO expert who came to India in 1975.

Dr. H. N. Srivastava of the Indian Meteorological Department said: "Based on the data supplied to him, he (Dr. Auden) concluded that since 20 months after the event of 1973 had already passed without the occurrence of a more damaging earthquake, the slight increase in seismic activity could be considered to be subsiding gradually with time. Indeed no earthquake has occurred so far even after a lapse of nine years. In this particular instance, a causal connection

between the reservoir loading and earthquake was not ruled out. Thus the interesting inference of NGRI scientists who considered the possibility of the 1973 event as a foreshock of a damaging earthquake, attracted even more attention from scientists and geologists. This forecast, however, did not create any large scale panic in the minds of the public of the small township of Koya, who got accustomed to the numerous felt earthquakes including damaging ones". (*Forecasting Earthquakes*; 1983, National Book Trust).

Soon after the Latur earthquake, two geophysicists, N. J. G. Negi and Krishnabrahman (October '93) predicted a 'quake in Bombay, conveniently remaining silent about its precise timing. They also claimed that while serving the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), they had predicted the Latur earthquake 20 years ago. A warning issued twenty years in advance is of no use to district authorities. The question is, why could they not warn of the impending quake, say one year in advance, to enable the authorities to anticipate the disaster by a disaster management plan? These scientists invoked the well known 'West Coast Fault' as the probable cause of the Bombay 'quake. This fault has been known for a long time, mentioned in text books on geology of India, which I read as a student in the early 'fifties. Till recently, no scientist said that this fault had the potential to cause an earthquake, which it might well possess. The point is that without instrumental monitoring of a fault, to pronounce it guilty is not scientific.

Then there was the prediction (September '94) of a likely fault in the Bhandara area by one Prof. Puranik, but his logic was geologically absurd. The most amusing analysis of the cause of the Latur earthquake is by seismologist, N. K. Agrawal (April '95), who said that the Latur quake was caused by the mushrooming of high-rise buildings in Bombay. It is literally a far-reaching theory - Bombay to Latur. This theory, which I have named 'Building Induced Seismicity', reminds me of a rustic saying in Konkani, "A kick in the rear makes the teeth fall".

Political Indifference

For a long time now, scientists have been requesting the government to

constitute an EPP. In 1978, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) sponsored the first ever symposium in India on earthquake prediction. One of its recommendations was that the government should form an EPP. In 1983, Dr. H. N. Srivastava of the IMD, in his book cited earlier, also pleaded for the formation of a Prediction Council to be coordinated through the Department of Science and Technology or the Geological Survey of India, with members drawn from the IMD, NGRI, BARC, Central Water and Power Research Station and the Universities. These efforts have not been successful because, if my memory serves me right, not one member of any political party raised this issue in Parliament or the State legislature. Perhaps, earthquakes are not on the list of their priorities.

Let a politician comment on the attitude of politicians to earthquakes. In 1971, the United States Geological Survey organised a symposium on Environmental Planning and Geology, to which experts from all walks of life were invited. Addressing the gathering on "Seismic Hazards - A Question of Policy", Senator Alfred E. Alquist said: "The failure of public officials to pursue a vigorous programme designed to minimise the effect of earthquakes in California reflects the head-in-sand attitude of people who accept the earthquake hazard as totally unavoidable". He went on to castigate fellow politicians: "During the last legislative session, we were working on the measure that created the Joint Legislative Committee on Seismic Safety. I tried to influence a few of my colleagues by scheduling a film that showed some of the damage done in the Alaskan earthquake. A total of eight people showed up - myself, one other legislator, about four newspapermen and two staff members. In contrast, the following day, one other committee dealing with the legislation to control pornography, showed a pornographic film, and I might say that it played to packed house. Until now, there has been little concern on the part of either the public or the legislature about earthquake safety".

Mr. A. K. R. Hemmady is a Geologist of repute, who at the time of his retirement, was the Deputy Director General of the Geological Survey of India.

India's Strategic Options

Nitin G. Raut

In the realm of strategic policy, India has never thought out its policy from a long term perspective nor has thought it necessary to keep its options open.

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India's belated tough stand, at the ongoing conference in Geneva in respect of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) lacks the required punch or even a sense of conviction.

Exclusive Club

The indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in April-May 1995 has changed the political scenario and has in effect legitimised the nuclear status of the big nuclear five, viz. USA, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France, by making it an exclusive club. They have thus manoeuvred themselves into a position where they can dictate terms to non-nuclear powers.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty does not impose any fetters on the use and deployment of nuclear weapons by the big five nuclear powers but by trying to bulldoze the CTBT, the big five nuclear powers want to put the seal of finality on their nuclear status. Even at the CTBT conference in Geneva, the big five nuclear powers are strongly resisting any undertaking or assurance of a time bound disarmament programme and the destruction of their nuclear arsenals.

India's Security Needs

The CTBT is, in fact, indifferent to the security needs of countries like India. To the north is communist China, an acknowledged nuclear power which by no means is on friendly terms with India and is in occupation, not only of Tibet, but also parts of Aksai Chin and the north east. To the West is Pakistan, occupying one third part of Jammu

and Kashmir, and China is perpetually supporting Pakistan in the construction of a uranium enrichment plant at Wah cantonment near Rawalpindi. In addition, China is supplying M-11 ballistic missiles to Pakistan. The "one time" waiver of the Pressler Amendment by the US Congress has enabled Pakistan to acquire sophisticated weapons worth US \$ 368 million including F-16 fighter jets and Orions. The Orions based in Karachi are capable of striking the southern most tip of India. Pakistan, in its quest for acquiring nuclear weapons has a clandestine network in Europe to smuggle out nuclear spares and enriched weapon grade uranium.

Islamic Bomb

Pakistan also has the tacit support including financial assistance of oil rich Islamic states like Iran, Saudi Arabia and Libya to finance her "Islamic Bomb". Iran in particular is trying surreptitiously to acquire nuclear materials. The head of Germany's BND intelligence service submitted to the Bundestag in January this year a report stating that Iran is using undercover agents to acquire nuclear materials. The Iranian collaboration with Pakistan on nuclear weapons is a reality and poses a threat to India.

Should India Go Nuclear?

Should India go nuclear? I think, we should. In fact, it should have done

so in the 'sixties or even in the 'seventies. Today, India's options are limited. After the break-up of the USSR, India can no longer count on Soviet military and diplomatic support. On the other hand, with the emergence of independent Muslim states in central Asia, Pakistan continues to be considered as a strategic frontline state for the US.

After the Communist Chinese invasion of India in 1962, the US administration was inclined to tacitly support India going nuclear as a counter balance to Communist China. But such was the overzealousness of Indian Prime Minister Nehru in identifying himself with the non-aligned bloc and proving his anti-imperialist credentials that instead of seizing the opportunity and going nuclear, he compromised vital national security and strategic interests by not doing so.

In a world where national interests are still supreme, India ought to have taken advantage of the cold war and the resultant Soviet support. In a bipolar world, it would have been easier for India then. In retrospect, it appears that the

Pokhran blast was more of a diversionary domestic political gambit of a beleaguered Congress government following a nationwide railway strike. Ironically, taking advantage of the



Lokhran blast, Pakistan with its smarter diplomacy and covert operations, has achieved a dangerous level of nuclear capability. India, on the other hand, having adopted a needlessly high pitched moral posture, cannot, like China or France, defy world opinion and go ahead with its nuclear test.

US Policy Dictates

In today's unipolar world, the US would not like India going nuclear or even developing missiles like 'Agni' and 'Prithvi'. The US State Department's comment that the testing of 'Prithvi' was a "mistake" drew a belated and squeamish response from India's foreign minister who said "We do not consider it (the test firing of Prithvi) a mistake". India ought to have in response outlined its threat perception by aggressive lobbying and launching a diplomatic blitzkrieg on Capitol Hill in Washington. Speaking from New Delhi will not help. India requires to cultivate US Congressmen and impress the US of the mutual strategic interests of the two democracies.

In an era of economic liberalisation, it will be in India's interest to deepen economic relationships with the US not only for investment but as a means for strategic alliance that will increase US stakes in India. It cannot be overlooked that China, by opening its doors to the US for investment in 1978 now totalling US \$ 40 billion as against India's US \$4 billion, has, while acquiring US capital and technology, also secured a strategic alliance.

Human Rights Secondary

It is not without reason that in its economic relationships with China, the US is ready to relegate human rights, genocide in Tibet and the Tiananmen Square issues to the backburner. This has enabled China to manoeuvre its policy without bending backwards or compromising on its nuclear and security interests. Significantly, when Nigeria's military despots hanged Nigerian human rights activist, Akiva, the US promptly recalled its Ambassador to Lagos, a move that was possible because the US has no economic stakes in Nigeria. If India were to play her

economic card wisely and effectively, India can neutralise the Pakistan factor in the US's strategic perception without harming her economic interests. Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Japan, or for that matter even West European nations after the Second World War, have by no means compromised their sovereignty while availing of US economic aid and investment.

If however India is pressurised into signing the CTBT, India should unequivocally seek US nuclear cover against nuclear attack and also a permanent seat in the proposed expansion of the UN Security Council as a *quid pro quo*.

In the present scenario, it is more likely that the US, having emerged as the undisputed Big Power, will not readily accede to India's terms, but then signing the NPT and the CTBT without such *quid pro quo* will not be in India's interest. In such a dilemma, while refusing to sign the NPT and CTBT, India should move closer to the economic tigers of south east Asia, Taiwan and other Pacific rim states like Japan, Australia and South Korea. Close economic relations with these countries, whose economies are inter-dependent with the US economy, will enable India to offset the disadvantage in the absence of a comprehensive nuclear deterrence. Recently, India secured the status of a full fledged dialogue partner with the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) and India should press home its diplomatic success in this direction.

India ought to gear up its diplomacy to meet the challenges in the post cold war era with an emphasis on economic diplomacy. A pusillanimous approach to Pakistan and its low intensity war in Kashmir have done us more harm and has almost marginalised us in international diplomacy. That is precisely what happened at the Europe-Asia summit in Bangkok. Although India's participation was supported by the United Kingdom, Belgium and Italy, Asian nations like Malaysia and Japan and European nations like France and Germany opposed India's participation

as it would mean excluding Pakistan! By merely reacting to Pakistan's diplomatic onslaught, India has allowed herself to be equated with Pakistan.

The prospects for India do not seem very assuring. On the other hand, India has the resources, the technology and the manpower to assert her position at least in South Asia, given her geopolitical position. It will require deft diplomacy. India should:

- (1) Expand her economic ties with ASEAN and other Pacific rim states;
- (2) build a strong blue water navy by not only acquiring or building two modern aircraft carriers and submarines but also developing her naval bases in the Andamans in the Bay of Bengal and the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian sea. Given the proximity to major oil seal lanes, India ought to show its flag in the Indian Ocean;
- (3) carve out an India sphere of influence by moving closer to Buddhist South East Asia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar along with Indonesia and Malaysia. The futility of SAARC will soon be realised, as Pakistan will always try to checkmate India at any common forum.
- (4) India should curb terrorism and expose Pakistan's role in Jammu & Kashmir. While the continuance of the democratic process has to be ensured, political stability devoid of terrorism has to be projected.

All political parties in India should form a national consensus on vital issues like economic progress and national security.

The options before India are limited, and with the CTBT sought to be enforced by the end of this year, it is imperative that India's diplomacy charts a new course in the post cold war era. Otherwise, what is touted as keeping India's options open by not signing the NPT and the CTBT will in reality be no option at all.

MR. NITIN G. RAUT is an advocate and Hon. Secretary of the Indian Council of World Affairs, Bombay.

Worrying About China

Ian Tickle

The world has started worrying seriously about China. The world has reason to. Nearly one in four people living on the planet live in the People's Republic of China. In other parts of the world, democracy has been spreading in recent years. But not amongst one quarter of the world's population.

The world has started worrying seriously about China. The world has reason to. Nearly one in four people living on the planet live in the People's Republic of China. In other parts of the world democracy has been spreading in recent years. But not amongst one quarter of the world's population.

There is no trace of democratic ethic amongst Peking's present leaders. Indeed recent years have shown that they violently object to democracy. Optimism about China ceased abruptly with the bloody end which was put to the democracy movement in Peking's Tiananmen Square some four years ago. More recently China has objected to moves towards democracy made by Britain's last governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten. It says that all progress towards democracy will be cancelled forthwith when China takes over. Peking also looks with a jaundiced eye on movement towards greater democracy in Taiwan. It has stated that any formal declaration of the island's independence from China could be regarded as a reason for invasion. Greater democracy is regarded in Peking as a step in that direction.

Being Wary of China

It is obvious that the rest of the world - the other three-quarters - has to be wary about China. It is the main task of any national government to

defend its territory and people against anything which could be a threat from abroad. There are some who feel that

the existence of any great power in their vicinity is a potential threat, whatever its present policies. Measures can be taken to prevent China from absorbing neighbouring countries too

easily, but no measures could ever be taken to prevent it doing so if it had that aim seriously in mind. The only thing that can be done in the long run is to make sure that any Chinese government realises that it is not in its interest to do so.

The first thing is that China should always be treated with the greatest respect. And so should its essential interests. Respect has always been of extreme importance to Chinese people. This is something which is not always recognised in western Europe, and even less so in the United States. Congressional posturing against China's human rights records may look good to the American voter, but in Peking it appears as a deep lack of respect for the one quarter of humanity which is China. This does not mean that the human rights record should be ignored, it merely means that useless rhetoric should be avoided. Action which could lead to an improvement in the human rights situation should be taken wherever and whenever possible, but the

principle must always be that of effectiveness.

For years, 'containment' was at the heart of western policy towards the Soviet Union. This was the central principle underlying NATO and the nuclear deterrent. As a policy it turned out to be successful beyond one's wildest dreams. It resulted in the end of the Soviet Union, which broke up into its constituent parts. But as a policy it has now lived its day. Responsible American representatives are insisting that this is not the right word to be used for attitudes to China. They are certainly right to make this point. For any use of it implies that the aim of Western diplomacy should be the disintegration of the Chinese state.

China No Soviet Union

Ever if this were desirable, which it is not, it would be unlikely to occur - or at least not in the same way that it occurred in the Soviet Union. But the Chinese see any suggestion that it might happen as a threat, on the basis of 'the wish is father of the act'. China is a much more integrated country than the Soviet Union ever was even in its heyday. This is essentially because the proportion of ethnic Chinese compared with people of other ethnic groups is far higher than that of Russians in the former Soviet Union. China is China in a sense that the Soviet Union was never Russian - but an amalgam of peoples run by the Russians on purely imperialist lines, first by the Tsars and then by the communists. The break up of the Soviet Union must be seen as an extension of the anti-colonial liberation movement to the last great colo-



"The slaughter of liberty in China"
Courtesy: *The Independent*, June 6, 1989.



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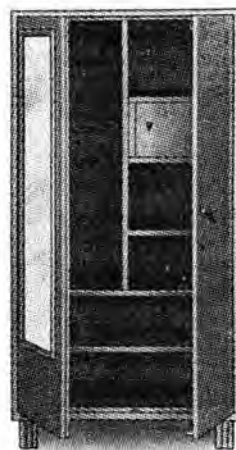
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nial power. None of this is valid for China.

Nevertheless, the Chinese are afraid of internal disintegration. For many periods in its long history the central government had no power outside the city limits of the capital. For centuries China was ruled by warlords, usually declaring verbal loyalty to the centre but in fact doing whatever they liked. Attempts to extend central power to the outermost provinces were rarely successful, although China's period of greatest prosperity invariably coincided with times when rule from the centre did extend throughout the territory.

The Fear of Anarchy

Nor is chaos a matter of ancient history. For much of the first half of this century anarchy reigned in China, together with the mass poverty and hunger inevitably associated with it. The horrors of this period are still in the living memory of older people, and in dealing with China we must never forget the far greater respect for older people there than in the west. In the ruling politburo, for example, there is only one member who is young enough not to have personal experience of anarchy. The rulers of China are on an average older than those of any major country, and for reasons of



respect this is likely to remain the case. Chiang Kai-shek and Mao-Tse-tung both knew that their greatest enemy was not

each other, but the danger of chaos. Perhaps it is their joint legacy that today there is

no threat to the national integrity of China. The idea that anyone should try to raise the spectre of such a threat is absolute anathema to any Chinese ruler. This is why the democracy movement was crushed, and it is also why China's present rulers do not like democracy. For them it is akin to anarchy, a virus associated with a desire to break up their country. The United States is at present thought to be the main propagator of this virus. In consequence, the greatest possible effort should be made to avoid what the Chinese consider outrageous statements anywhere in Washington. It should not be forgotten that because of lack of experience in any aspect of democracy the Chinese do not know about, and in any case would not believe in, the separation of powers. It is impossible to convince people in Peking that there is a genuine difference in scale of importance between what a congressman says and what the president says.

Economic and Political Objectives.

But if 'containment' is not the right word for the right policy towards China, this does not mean that foreign policy makers can turn their back on the problem. There must be a China policy. But it must be one guided by principles such as friendship and good intentions. The aim is not to bring about the end of an 'evil empire', as was the case with the Soviet Union - but rather to help one quarter of humanity to better its lot (the economic objective) and to live in freedom without the threat of anarchy (the political objective).

People in east Asia are worried about some of China's recent moves, which are best described as 'flexing muscles'. It has been taking military measures in a number of areas, and they have understandably upset people. These are measures which hit the headlines and make the populations of neighbouring countries imagine that terrible things might be inflicted upon them in the future. They are also uneasily aware that China is undergoing a period of great political uncertainty due to the succession struggle for the mantle of Deng Xiao-ping, a struggle which cannot come out into the open for reasons of

respect until the ancient of days has actually and not just effectively left the scene. One of the criteria for a modern Chinese leader is the one about who could best defend China's interests on the international scene. But China's interest would never be promoted by war, and measures demonstrating military might are always accompanied by other steps which show that the Chinese leadership thinks before it acts.

China's is an old-fashioned dictatorship, and its rulers have no vocation to rule the world. This means that there is no ideological content to their vision. Like the rulers of other states, their aim is to do what is in their country's interest, and there is a clear vision in Peking that the main aim is sustainable economic growth in an atmosphere of political stability. The main reason why the Soviet Union was seen to be and for much of its existence actually was a dangerous predator was because it claimed that Marxism was the only possible way of government and would for this very reason logically spread to all countries. Its policy was designed to see that the inevitable in these terms actually happened. This element is completely absent from China's policies, and so China can never be seen as the same sort of enemy to all free peoples as was the Soviet Union.

Choosing Its Own Friends

If China is thought to be making belligerent noises, it should perhaps not be forgotten that the United States has long been seen as fulfilling a similar role in a number of parts of the world. The Americans would reply that this was because their actions were misunderstood, but perhaps the Chinese answer would not be so very different. Its leaders are trying to extend their influence in the world by very traditional great power manoeuvring. They are doing things which frighten (and impress) their neighbours on the one hand. On the other hand - slowly and surely - they are building up a network of allies who they help in other parts of the world. The main pillars of this extension of their foreign policy beyond east Asia are Iran and Pakistan

both potentially unstable countries seen as a menace by their neighbours but which are not necessarily so. The Chinese are sending a message that it is not for the west to tell them how they should choose their friends and that if necessary their friends can be used to further policies which are not the same as those of the west. Nobody is happy about the possibility that China might be providing nuclear bomb capacity to Iran and Pakistan. But it strongly denies this and is deeply offended that nobody seems to believe its word. Yet there is no strong evidence to doubt that word. China is a signatory to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, and this important achievement of international diplomacy is as much in the interest of China as of the other signatories.

Classical Diplomacy

All this goes to show that China's leaders understand the fundamental elements of balance of power in the world. These elements are the stuff of European history, and the fact that China's leaders seem to know so much more about it than European and American politicians know about the Chinese past is hardly to the credit of the latter. The Chinese are playing the game that has been played by politicians in Europe over the whole of the last few centuries and which reached its apogee at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. There is an interesting parallel between that period and the one we are traversing today. The statesmen gathered in Vienna were experiencing the aftermath of the greatest imperialist threat which the world as they knew it had ever seen. Like the Soviet Union Napoleon's France was a ruthless and merciless expansionist dictatorship which masqueraded behind the ideals of a revolution which was supposed to be - but was not - based on the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Everything which was done in the half century which followed the defeat of Napoleon was done with an eye to preventing such a thing ever happening again. That was at the heart of the balance of power. Not so much a desire by one country to dominate the others as a desire to prevent any other country

ever being in a position to do so. There is ample reason to suppose that this is the game the Chinese are playing today.

This said, we may assume that the Chinese will respect the rest of the world if it plays the same game. They are unlikely to find it odd that the United States and European countries should take all necessary measures to support their own diplomatic objectives. They will understand that such objectives will include a desire to prevent China being in a position to extend its territory, even though they will not admit that they have any intention of doing so. What they will not accept is policies which they see as being directly against their own integrity.

Traditional Great Power Aims

Bringing Vietnam back into the international fold is a measure which the Chinese understand. Although there is a sense in which it is a traditional enemy of China, it is also a neighbour - and China wants peace with its neighbours. In any case there is a sense in which America's budding friendship with Vietnam can be equated with China's with Iran. The Chinese will understand too that the west wishes to have a good relationship with India, with which China has not been on the best of terms for many years. This is partly because of the Chinese alliance with Pakistan which now dates back over several decades, and partly because of India's close relationship with the former Soviet Union, which Jawaharlal Nehru, the founder of independent India, a great man in so many ways, did not realise was the main imperialist power in the world after the decline and fall of the British Empire.

China no longer has any strategic interest whatever in being India's enemy, and indeed fences are likely to be mended between these two great Asian countries in the near future. The main stumbling block is China's relationship with Pakistan, but this is an element which clouds India's relations with many countries. Nor is China likely to object to the west's continued al-

liance with Japan. This has been a fundamental pillar of western policy in Asia since the end of the Second World War. The Japanese-American alliance was indeed an important factor in the policy of 'containment', but it was directed solely against the Soviet Union. It is many years since China has been conceived as a threat by the United States.

In spite of the importance of NATO the United States is as much a Pacific power as it is an Atlantic one. Its strategic interests in east Asia are as vital to it as its strategic interests in Europe. The Chinese recognise this and accept it provided that the Americans concede as much to them. China's abrasive public diplomacy towards the United States is not at present a characteristic of its diplomacy in east Asia. Its diplomatic language to its neighbours gathered together in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is usually marked by benevolent goodwill (although not without emphasising that China is indeed the region's home-grown great power). At the recent ASEAN Regional Forum held in Brunei ASEAN was joined by 11 other countries including China and the United States, and indeed the event more than any other which was considered important on that occasion was the meeting between US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. This apparently went well in spite of recent angry diplomatic exchanges between the United States and China about the visit to America of the Taiwanese head-of-state, Lee Teng-hui, described by Peking as "the sinner of all millennia".

The fact is that the Chinese have now turned their attention from the southern end of the South China Sea to its northern end. But it is all part of the same policy of persuading its neighbours as well as the United States that it is important enough to have paramount interests in the maritime area, which is at the same time one of the world's great shipping lanes and a repository of as yet ungauged oil and natural gas resources. Defending these paramount interests include claiming the island groups situated in the South

China Sea, including the Spratlys, some of which are claimed by five other states. Earlier this year there was a serious face-off between China and the Philippines about the aptly-named Mischief Reef, one of the many far-spread Spratlys which is clearly in the Philippine maritime economic zone. The Philippines stuck to its guns on this issue, describing it as a matter of major national importance, and at the Brunei meeting Quian Quichen also had a cordial meeting with his Philippine counterpart, Secretary of State Domingo Siazon. An intermediary role was played by Indonesia's foreign minister, Ali Alatas, who recently returned from Peking saying that he discerned a softening of the Chinese stance on the matter. China and the Philippines have now agreed that the whole of the Spratlys issue should be settled through peaceful negotiations based on the United Nations Law of the Sea. If this is really the case, that should be an end of the matter.

The Question of Taiwan

Things are by no means as satisfactory at the northern end of the South China Sea. The major sea lane passes between the northernmost Philippine island of Luzon and the southern tip of Taiwan. But there is also another potential sea lane between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. This has been the scene of occasional skirmishes between Taipei and Peking ever since the communists took over in 1949. There was a series of major international incidents in the 1960s when the Chinese appeared ready to take the two Taiwanese islands of Quemoy and Matsu which are within sight of the mainland coast. To prevent this the islands became the subject of an American guarantee at a time when the United States had sufficient forces in the area to lay down the law.

Although relations between Taiwan and the People's Republic have been quiet for the last few years and Taiwanese have been allowed to travel to China via Hong Kong and other third countries, the basic problem persists. Although Taiwan has long since dropped its claim to be the 'real' ruler of the mainland, Peking does consider

Taiwan to be part of China - and says that it will do so for ever. It insists that all other countries pay homage to its point of view by refusing to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In recent years a blind eye has been turned to other types of relationship, particularly economic ones, but this has always been on the understanding that such relations could be interpreted as part of the whole network of economic relations with the various parts of China, including Hong Kong. Although all has been quiet on this front for some considerable period of time, the situation as understood and constantly expressed in Peking contains a latent threat to the independence of Taiwan which could be activated at any time whenever the moment might be considered by the Chinese leadership to be ripe. This is apparently what is happening now.

The whole problem of Taiwan's status is as sensitive as anything can be in the whole nexus of Chinese foreign policy. As we saw earlier on, China attaches the greatest possible importance to national integrity. Some would use the word 'obsession' to describe this, but the importance of this element is indeed deeply rooted in Chinese history. Hong Kong is considered as part of China and has to be restored. Once this is accepted in principle, the Chinese are prepared to be relatively flexible about the details. British officials probably would not agree that flexible is the right word to describe Chinese policy on this issue. But it is not very long since the problem of Hong Kong appeared to be entirely intractable, and it seemed that it would finally be solved by China cutting the Gordian Knot: the People's Liberation Army would simply march into Hong Kong, as Indonesia did into East Timor. But other counsels prevailed. Britain is now open to the charge of abandoning its citizens to the whims of a ruthless dictatorship, but there is every reason to suppose that Hong Kong's prosperity will be maintained. If the Chinese had marched in, the British could not have defended their colony, but they would have been on high moral ground on the subject of betrayal.

Hong Kong a Model for Taiwan

There is no doubt that in the Chinese mind Hong Kong is a model for Taiwan. Things can stay as they are for a year or two yet, but at the end of the day Taiwan will have to return to the fold. The way this occurs will be up for discussion, and the date may be pushed well into the future. Ambiguity may remain for some considerable time. But for Peking the principle is a life-and-death issue. Taiwan gave up its claim to the whole of China because it had long ago become ridiculous, but it has not dared to declare its independence. The Chinese now say that this could be a *casus belli* - giving them the right to take Taiwan by force. In order to show they mean what they say they recently closed the Taiwan Strait in order to undertake 'missile tests'. These were described by a knowledgeable observer as "an apparent effort to dissuade the leaders of what Peking regards as a renegade province from pursuing their efforts at winning wider international recognition".

China is serious about Taiwan. It may be prepared to let the matter rest a little longer in the haze of ambiguity, but when the chips are down it is a matter of principle. The rest of the world would be well advised to take this for a fact and to refrain from provoking Peking on the matter. A Chinese invasion of Taiwan would not be the walkover that occupation of Hong Kong would have been. It would certainly be a bloody affair. Peking will do everything possible to avoid such a denouement. But this does not mean that it will waver in its determination that Taiwan is an integral part of China on the basis of the familiar argument: always has been, always will be. Given that this is the case, taking it by force must in the eyes of the leadership in Peking - the present one at any rate - remain an option, if the least desirable for all concerned.

Courtesy: *Swiss Press Review*. Mr. Ian Tickle is its Editor.

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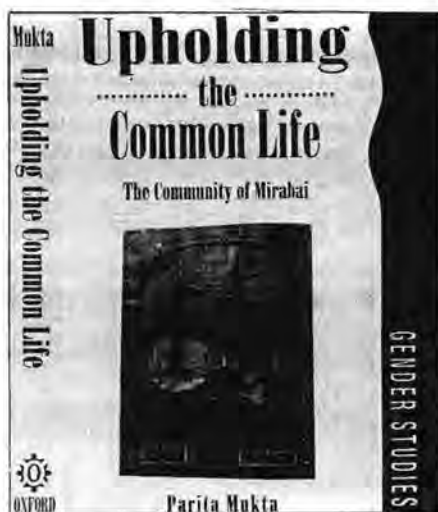


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BOOK REVIEWS

UPHOLDING THE COMMON LIFE
- THE COMMUNITY OF MIRABAI,
Parita Mukta, Oxford University Press,
Delhi; 1994; pp.269;Rs.350.



Reviewed by
Dr. Usha Thakkar

Mira is a household name that resonates with the tranquility of the *Bhakti* tradition in India. Her bhajans are sung with a special kind of fervour evoking spiritual sublimity, and yet what do we know about Mira? How do we have a glimpse of her struggles? How did she survive her challenge to the ruler's authority? Who kept her alive? An analysis (or re-analysis) of Mira and her *bhakti* has been made in this book with a refreshingly original perspective, not limited by the contours of any particular discipline.

The author has based her work on an examination of the historical data available; visits to the sites connected with Mira's name and an attempt to interact with them in daily routines, in homes and work places. The book traverses the time of Mira through the colonial and nationalist period to the present showing the diverse social and cultural meanings which have arisen in different epochs around the figure of Mira.

The conjoining of the figure of Mira to the histories of an elite lit-

erary tradition, to a high Hinduism, and to a high cultural form, were all processes initiated by nineteenth and twentieth century interpreters. Within all these, the Mira of the people, the Mira who lived as a symbol of social emancipation for various classes in Rajasthan and Saurashtra, remained mute. This work, in the author's words, "attempts to return Mira to recognisable communities and solidarities and it attempts to place Mira's history within the history of a collective cultural revolt, and within the context of a collective struggle for social emancipation, thus divesting Mira of the isolation imposed upon her by a large number of writers from Priyadas' time to today".

Mira's history is not documented, her name is not a revered name in Rajasthan (because she challenged the authority of the princely ruler and flaunted the social norms of behaviour of a wife and a widow!) there is little written or recorded which can throw light on her life, philosophy and impact. The author makes the oral sources, *Mira bhajans* the basis of inquiry. The *Mira bhajan* tradition contains within itself, and in its articulation, strong traces of the past, and traces of the way in which this particular tradition came into being, in a sphere of life which is separate from the dominant one.

The words as well as the singers are important to her. To use her words: "In this work, I give shape, form, and content to Mira, not through an analysis of verses delivered from textual collections - but through the place Mira holds within the articulations of very specific peasant and artisan communities in Rajasthan and Gujarat today". From the sensitively handled research, Mira emerges not as a lone *bhakta*, an isolated creator of verses, or a renouncer, but as living within, and contributing to the formation of a community of Mirabai.

In India, kinship and caste provides the basis for community formation.

In addition to these, there is the element of *Bhakti* which also provides a different but important form of community association. It is not based on caste or defined sexual roles, but is based on a conscious choice. This community takes within its fold persons who are not acceptable to (so called) respectable society and who dare to differ from and challenge the mainstream ways of thinking and living. After doing the required examination of *Mirabhajans* (their words and modes of singing), the author finds that those who belong to the community of Mirabai are persons who experience and get a sense of articulation by *Mira bhajans*. These experiences are of those who have been widowed, who have experienced the tying of an unwanted marital knot, of untouchability and of those reduced to seek alms. This community of Mirabai has provided the support necessary for keeping Mira's memory alive. It has given what was denied to her by the Rajput community, and to a lesser extent, denied to her by the established religious traditions.

Mira, the people's Mira, is neither a romantic heroine nor a deified goddess. The core of her life is in her rejection of princely society, and her establishment of a life of affinity with pilgrims and commoners in her pursuit of a relationship with Krishna. The author successfully establishes strong links of *Mira Bhakti* with the dalit communities, the weavers, the leather workers, the sweepers, pastoralists and persons from the agrarian order in Rajasthan and Gujarat. She studies their historical background, economic and cultural traditions, and social values and finds that for the deprived, Mira is a person to oppose feudal and caste norms and to protest against socially imposed marital relationship.

Three main strands emerge out of the community of Mirabai - the attack on Rajput political authority, the defiance of patriarchal norms of marriage, and the attack on the caste system. They acquire different forms

according to geographical and social location. In Mewar and Marwar, it is Mira the rebel, who gives to the community standing up against the feudal expression. In Saurashtra, in the villages and towns around Dwarka, Mira's suffering under the rule of the Rana is acknowledged, and her challenge to it is vindicated - but the central feature of the Saurashtrian *bhajans* is an exploration of the position of Mira the mendicant, Mira the exile.

The author examines the nature of Rajput dharma and other notions connected with it; and rightly points out that women formed an important bulwark in the perpetuation of Rajput dharma. Mira was seen as a threat to the prestige of the whole clan, because she spurned the authority of the husband and the ruler. Our attention is drawn to a very important fact that Mira's *bhakti* must be seen essentially as enunciating the principle of love in an age and society marked by war, vendetta and the rising power of the state.

In a society where marriage was a means of declaring an end to vendetta and of forging political alliances, it is remarkable to find that Mira stood up against the subjection of women to the service of powerful and militaristic patriarchs. She claims a right to her own spiritual relationship and rejects the given social role, hitherto a privilege granted only to the male *bhaktas*. The people's Mira is a struggling being, struggling to forge relationships which break through the barriers of caste and class and a forced marriage relationship. This struggle has been held in the *bhajans* over the years, and it has been articulated and re-articulated through them.

Attempts have been made by the twentieth century interpreters of Mira including Gandhi, coming from within the literati to reconcile the socially ordained relationship (the Rana as husband) with the spiritual relationship (with Krishna as the beloved). Gandhi portrays Mira as someone who through her stoicism won over her oppressor - rather than as a woman who had left her oppressor to find

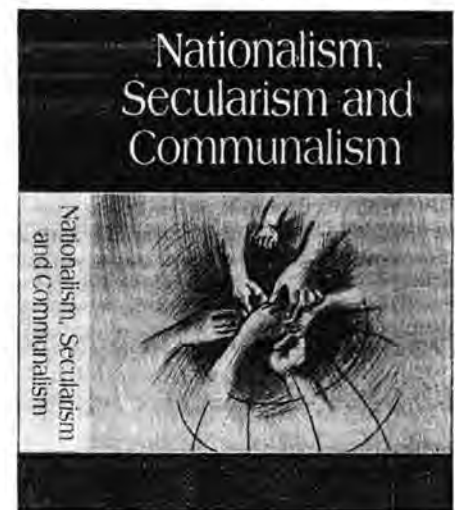
a more meaningful alternative. This was important to him in his attempt to balance both revolt and submission in the days of the freedom struggle. A critique of Gandhi's views on women is presented here by analysing his image of Mira as a figure who reconciled the Rana's authority to the love for Krishna.

The intellectuals, singers, painters, film-makers and other artists have given different dimensions to Mira, creating different pictures of Mira as a beautiful princess, as a romantic woman, as an ideal lover of Krishna. The growth of the mass media and commercial art driven by the logic of profit-making do not care for the inner being but emphasise gross physicality. Mira in films, radio, cassettes and calenders is thus a far cry from the people's Mira. Interestingly, Mira appropriated by artists aligned to national upsurge is also very far from Mira's community. This Mira garbed in white with her head covered and ektara in hand presents a picture of a pure widow of upper caste. This picture is popular with the middle class.

The book stands out as a brilliant piece of research, which is delightfully readable. The author's reference to the original sources, her incisive analysis of some of Mira's *bhajans* (translations by the author) and the data collected by the field work lend depth to the research. The reader would discover with the author a new way of knowing Mira, and would most probably agree with the author that Mira is "alive amidst the bhajniks, unviolated by self or the enemy, travelling, singing in a community drawn from those on the fringes of society. It is a resilient community, which has provided shelter and refuge to all those rejected by dominant society."

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NATIONALISM, SECULARISM, AND COMMUNALISM by Sarto Esteves; South Asia Publications, Delhi 110 052; 1995; pp. 292; Rs. 480.



Reviewed by
Maj.Gen. E. D'Souza

The confused political situation sweeping the country today as it prepares for the forthcoming Lok Sabha Elections, and the posturing for position and seats is basically a straight contest between the forces of *Hindutva* represented by the BJP, and secular parties mainly the Congress, JD and Marxists. One may even venture into the realm of a caste war between the basically high caste composition of the BJP, and the OBCs led by Mulayam Singh Yadav, Kanshi Ram and Laloo Prasad Yadav. Perhaps the greatest threat to India's Secular Constitution which has withstood the test of time is the narrow *Hindutva* outlook of the BJP/Shiv Sena, the political front of the RSS/VHP and its militant wing the Bajrang Dal. The consequences of such a combine coming to power sends danger signals to the Constitution of India and its minorities, more so the 18 million Christians spread thinly over the length and breadth of the country, nowhere in any perceptible strength strong enough to influence the outcome.

Sarto Esteves who needs no introduction to readers of the *Examiner*, *New Leader of Madras*, the *Herald of Calcutta*, *Coastal Observer* and *Secular Citizen* of

Mumbai, *Indian Currents* New Delhi, and *Church Publications* in Goa, has done a great service to the minority community by producing this timely publication, and not a day too soon. That it should be read by all minorities at this critical juncture cannot be doubted, to understand fully the dangers confronting them.

In this well researched book obviously written after painstaking research, and an on-going interest in the political scenarios as evidenced from his penetrative and timely articles and books, Sarto spells out in pathological clarity our bounden responsibility as responsible citizens of India to elect a broad minded secular government whose concern covers all communities and India's many minorities, a government that will ensure that all communities live in peace and harmony. The importance of the community to exercise its franchise in the forthcoming elections is also emphasized.

The author's credibility to write such a serious work is manifest in his true nationalism, total respect for the Constitution which he feels should not be tampered with and his frequent forays into journalism. More than that he is a committed Christian and proud of it. In this book he proves that it is more than possible for the twain, one's faith and Indianness, meet. He has examined and dissected with surgical precision the subtle nuances of nationalism, secularism and communalism, their inter relation in Indian polity, and the linkage to our well framed Constitution which was the effort of basically the majority community. To say that it was drafted to cater expressly for the minorities is disproved, much as the BJP/VHP would like to think. It is obvious from the bibliography in which 70 sources have been tapped, that Sarto has cast his net far and wide to project his arguments and views. His logical approach becomes manifest in the manner he has structured his book, beginning with religion and religious communities, nationalism and Hinduism, Indian secularism, the divisive, destructive and disintegrating nature of communalism as exemplified

by the Babri Masjid demolition and the Bombay riots, political parties and religious ideologies, the ruling party's attitude on religion, caste and the media, the importance to the future of India, its integrity and cohesion as a nation, *Hindurashtra* as advocated by the BJP/RSS/VHP/Bajrang Dal and vandalism, and the need for a civilisation of love.

Here are some random pickings from this valuable work :

- * By no stretch of imagination can one link loyalty, nationalism and patriotism to religion.
- * Minorities are not foreigners as the BJP try to portray.
- * Citizenship of India cannot be linked with religious belief as the BJP combine tries to project to India's illiterate masses.
- * There can be no doubt that plurality represents unity in diversity in India, a fact of history. Christianity came to India in the 4th century; Islam in the 6th century, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism thereafter.

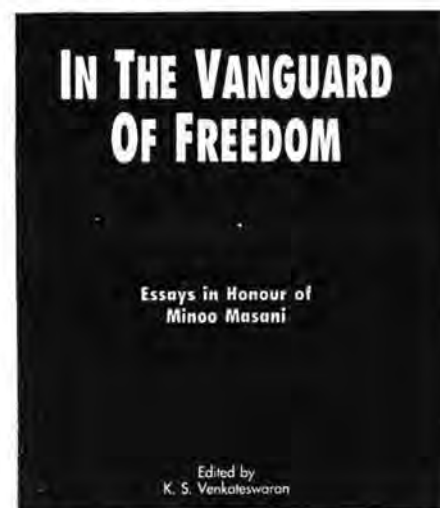
This work is the ideal to get a better understanding of our rights enshrined in the directive principles of the Constitution, the Indian interpretation of the oft misunderstood term 'secularism', some pertinent aspects of the Constitution of India applicable to the minorities, and the madness of communalism as manifest during and after the Ayodhya conflagration.

The language used by the author is readable though there is a tendency to be too repetitive but this is understandable in the author's anxiety to emphasize and highlight the inherent and lurking dangers of communalism and disrespect of our Constitution.

Every committed Indian should invest in this publication to conscientize the electorate on these three aspects of: Nationalism, Secularism and Communalism.

MAJ. GEN. E. D'SOUZA (Retd.) is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

IN THE VANGUARD OF FREEDOM - ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF MINOO MASANI edited by K. S. Venkateswaran, published by the Minoo Masani 90th Birthday Felicitation Committee, Bombay; Tata Press Ltd., 414, Veer Savarkar Marg, Mumbai 25; 1995; pp.123; Rs. 295.



**Reviewed by
Dr. R. Srinivasan**

When Minoo Masani was eighty friends and admirers got together and celebrated the event by presenting him a volume of essays in his honour titled *Freedom and Dissent*. A decade later another distinguished group of fellow labourers in the service of freedom, rights and democracy have remembered the Nestor of Indian politics, and honoured him once again, rededicating themselves to the ideals that Masani has been fighting for a very long period. It is rarely that people in our country not in a position of authority are remembered and felicitated, a tribute not only to the enduring work and presence of Masani but also the deep respect that he draws from people from various walks of life.

A number of friends spread in several countries have joined in writing about their memories of him and on causes dear to him. Cushrow Irani, Soli Sorabjee were close to him and joined him in battling the Emergency, in fighting the obnoxious laws of censorship and in helping to keep the flame of protest that JP had kindled during

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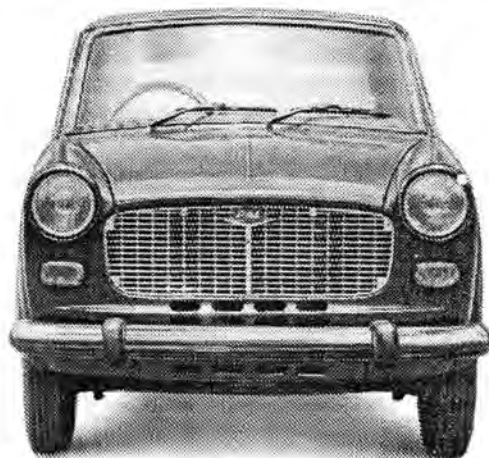
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those dark days. In those troubled months, Masani along with Goenka was at his fighting fit and the accounts remain one of the minor important events in the battle for rights. Both Sorabjee and Irani recount the days with great nostalgia. Unfortunately, the occasion presented to Zareer Masani to write about his father has evoked the briefest piece and we have lost an opportunity to learn more on the paternal and domestic side of Masani. One hopes that he would write a longer account at some future date to satisfy our curiosity of an aspect of Minoo so little known.

It is sad to comment that we have no accounts at all of the Socialist days or even of the days of the Swatantra Party clearly illustrating the evanescence of public memory even of things not very ancient. In both periods Masani played a very important role and we are compelled to depend upon his two volumes of autobiography. Recollections of this period by others would have been valuable.

A number of foreign friends who had made a common cause in fighting against what then was regarded as the spectre of communism and of Soviet designs testify to the great qualities of Masani's commitment to rights and democratic values. Peter Sagar in a most perceptive and studied contribution reiterates the values for which he and his colleagues stood for and which need reiteration.

Ian Tickle in his *Swiss Press Review* fought for the same cause as did Masani in his *Freedom First* and in a brief essay reminds us that the task that they set upon themselves "has not been completed, will never be completed. The destructions of the Soviet Union was but a milestone along a never-ending road." Melvin Lasky reminds us that the exact truth of the culpability of Alger Hiss had to wait for nearly forty years to be established beyond doubt from the archives behind the iron curtain. This extremely fascinating account will unfortunately make little sense to the new generation to whom Hiss will mean nothing, and Whittaker Chambers even less.

Many of the pieces refer to contemporary politics and the unheeding of the Cassandra warnings of Masani. Palkhivala with his customary felicity reminds us of both the enormous potentialities that our country has for economic development and the opportunities that were missed by a leadership in the spell of obfuscating ideologies. We are worried of the entire communication media in the international sphere gradually coming under the vice-like grip of a few conglomerate which will make a people liberated from the incumbus of Soviet Communism to fall a prey to another deoderising soporific and make us all roto-eaters (Leonard R. Sussmann).

The very first contribution by Alan A. Walters raises some uncomfortable questions. Commenting on the phenomenal growth of Hong Kong during the last few decades in terms of economic achievement and the quality of life, Walters wonders if there is a case for right government. "... I believe that democratic institutions immeasurably enrich all our lives. But democracy is no guarantee against dirigiste socialism, tyranny or totalitarianism, nor progress. I contend that those who seek both liberty and prosperity, should ensure that the State's control over economic life is light. To coin a new, if inelegant, adage: "light

is right". When we recall that the other Tiger, Taiwan leads in industrial pollution, in the waters of rivers polluted beyond retrieval that the production of agriculture has plummeted rapidly and that it has become a nation of assembly liners, assembling what is imported we wonder. Also when the leadership in Singapore talks of an Asian version of democracy of rights, and censors newspapers, we wonder whether Masani would like to live in these countries at all.

The editor's essay furthers the theme of Walters by arguing against Gokhale that good government may be preferable to self-government. The presumption is that colonial governments particularly were good. He cites Africa, forgetting that if there are massacres today between tribals, the Germans in South East Africa decimated one quarter of the tribe, that the Belgian Congo was bled white with no control and in Kenya the best lands were taken over for coffee and the natives were compelled to scrounge for food; similarly in South Africa. Many would prefer the statement attributed to Pericles which was subscribed in the *Festschrift* to Masani on his 80th birthday. (See Box below).

MR. R. SRINIVASAN is associate Editor of *Freedom First*.

...It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognised; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition. There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not suspicious of one another nor angry with our neighbour if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant. While we are thus unconstrained in our private intercourse, a spirit of reverence prevades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws, having an especial regard for those which are ordained for the protection of the injured as well as those unwritten laws which bring upon the transgressor of them

the reprobation of the general sentiment ... We are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes, and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness. Wealth we employ, not for talk and ostentation, but when there is a real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it. An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of a policy. The great impedient to action is, in our opinion, not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussions preparatory to action. For we have a peculiar power of thinking before we act, and of acting too, whereas other men are courageous from ignorance but hesitate upon reflection....

Speech of Pericles attributed by Thucydides

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