

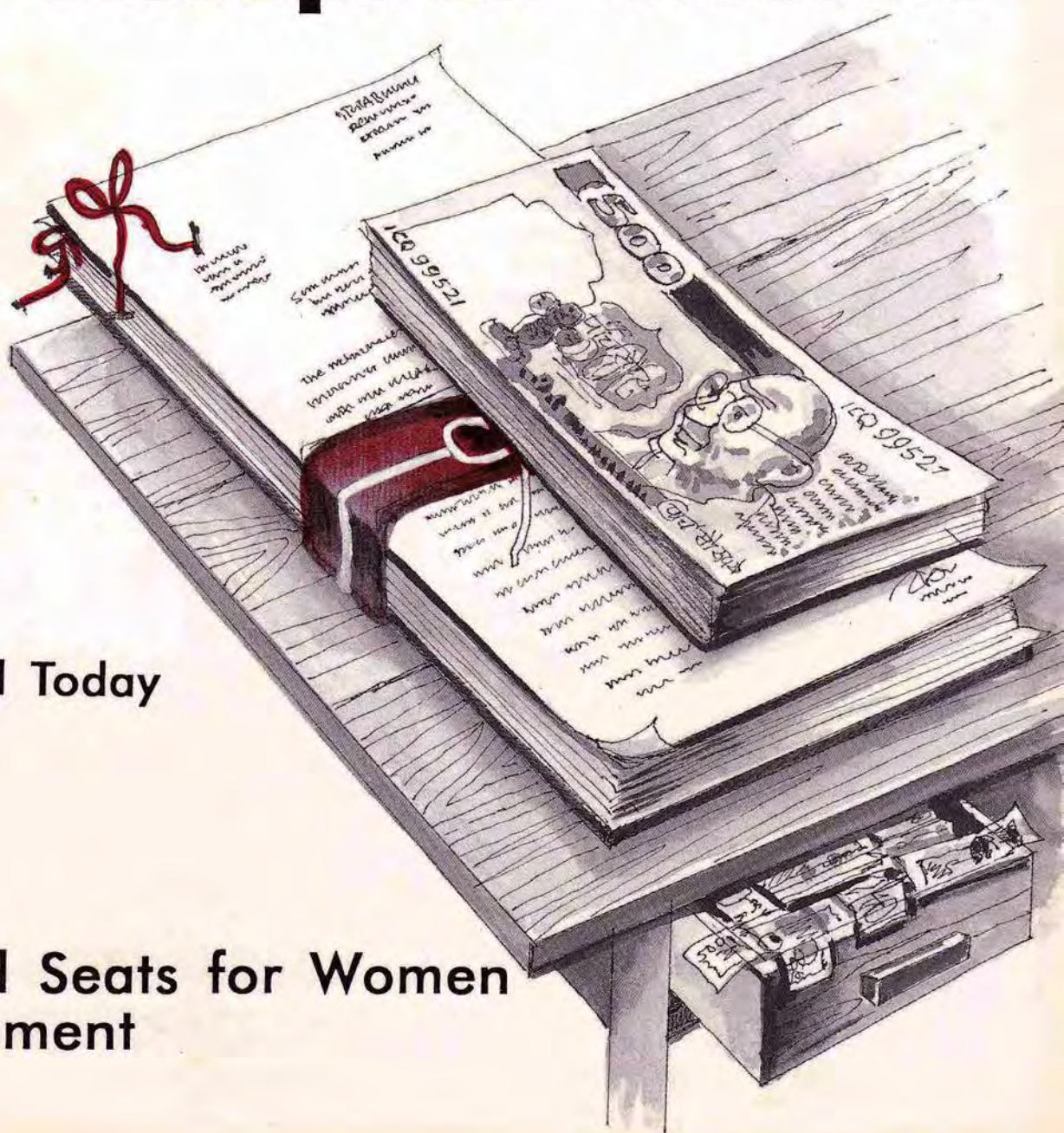
A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

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45TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Crusade



The World Today

Reserved Seats for Women
in Parliament

Women Freedom Fighters of Tibet

Tsering Tsomo

Tibetan women inside Tibet continue to play a high profile role in the struggle against China's illegal occupation of our country. Consequently, they suffer particular brutality at the hands of the Chinese authority.

Sherab Ngawang, formerly a novice nun from Michungri nunnery, was reportedly the youngest prisoner in Tibet. Twelve years old, Sherab was arrested in February 1992 for taking part in a political demonstration. Sherab Ngawang was formally sentenced by the 're-education through reform' committee to three years in Trisam Detention Centre. She was 15 when she completed her sentence and died three months later on May 15, 1995 as a result of injuries sustained from beatings during her detention ...

Gyaltsen Pelsang was 13 at the time of her arrest on June 14, 1993. A novice nun from Garu nunnery, Gyaltsen Pelsang was released after 19 months and 27 days in detention on February 9, 1995. She was placed in detention without any trial ...

Of the 16 demonstrations that took place in February 1995, nine of the incidents were mainly initiated and led by nuns.

February 1995 alone saw nuns from Chubsang, Gyabdrag, Shungseb, Shar Bumpa, Michungri, Toelung Chimelung, Terdom, Tsethang Sangag and Nyemo nunneries arrested for staging demonstrations or distributing leaflets calling for Tibet's independence.

Besides nuns, many laywomen have also been arrested in recent crackdowns. Chungla, a 27-year old businesswoman,

was arrested in April 1995 at the Nepal border town of Dram and sentenced for three months and 26 days. She was not formally charged and never knew the reason why she was imprisoned.

In July 1995, five women, all prominent members of their local Tibetan Women's Association, were arrested for raising their voices against China's denial of religious freedom to Tibetans. They were detained at Tashikyitset, Shigatse.

Among the detained and imprisoned, there are many young girls. Between 1994 and 1995, at least seven Tibetan girls under the age of 18 were held in prisons and detention centres in Tibet. Since 1989, 71 Tibetan children under the age of 18 have been detained for peacefully demonstrating or expressing their opinions. For example, Ngawang Sangdrol, aged 15, was sentenced to three years in prison for taking part in demonstrations in October 1992. She later received an additional three-year sentence for singing nationalist songs in prison.

Cases of deaths in custody rose alarmingly in the past two years. In 1994-95 alone there were five reports of Tibetan prisoners of conscience dying due to maltreatment or torture in prison or shortly after leaving prison. Three of the five deaths were female political prisoners of conscience. Since 1987, at least 14 prisoners of conscience have died in police custody.

The frequent reports of deaths and brutality against prisoners of conscience testify to the widespread use of torture in prisons in Tibet. In Drapchi, political prisoners have been severely beaten, shackled, held for long periods in solitary

confinement and tortured. People are also often tortured and ill-treated during detention or when held on suspicion or during raids on monasteries and nunneries. China's *Procuratorial Daily* itself reported the case of a Tibetan woman, Tenzin Wangmo, during a night-long torture session in January 1995 when she was tied up, beaten and abused. She suffered injuries to the legs, buttocks and wrists.

Amnesty International reports that women prisoners of conscience are particularly vulnerable to torture or ill-treatment. TIN also reports that the majority of female prisoners were sexually assaulted via torture techniques and received no medical treatment for their injuries.

In his communication to Chinese officials, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, was particularly concerned about the beating of juvenile prisoners in Tibet. Specific mention was made of the cases of Tenzin Dekyong, a 16-year-old novice nun from Michungri nunnery arrested in March 1993 who was allegedly beaten and taken to Gutsa Detention Centre; Sherab Ngawang, 15, who died in May 1995 of injuries sustained during torture; and Pema Oeser, a 16-year-old novice from Nagar nunnery who, along with other nuns, was beaten after being arrested on 17th August 1994. In his report to the Chinese government, the Special Rapporteur on Torture indicated that he was also particularly concerned that juveniles were held together with adult prisoners in Gutsa Detention Centre and not separated in the juvenile section of the facility.

Tsering Tsomo is the President of the Tibetan Women's Association. This is an extract from a longer article that appeared in the Tibetan Bulletin. Readers interested in the full version may write to us for a copy.



Tibet's Joan of Arc

A remarkable woman to emerge from the 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet is Serong Kunsang, who led a demonstration of Tibetan women in front of the Potala Palace on 12 March that year. Rinchen Dolma Taring, the author of *Daughter of Tibet*, describes her as a Tibetan Joan of Arc. She was the eldest daughter of the brother of Tsarong Dasang Dandul, the strongman of Tibet during the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama. She was also the mother of six children.

By her spirit and courage, Serong Kunsang galvanised the women demonstrators who shouted slogans like "China must quit Tibet" and "Tibet is independent".

The demonstrators then marched to the Lhasa-based consulates of India, Nepal and Bhutan, requesting international support for the struggle of the Tibetan people.

"I am very proud of my mother's efforts on behalf of Tibet. Even my children are proud of her", said Tseyang, the daughter of Serong Kunsang, who now lives in Dharamsala.

Serong Kunsang was executed by the Chinese authorities, sometime before the Cultural Revolution.

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Cover & Layout
M. G. Talwadekar

Publishers
Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom*
3rd Floor, Army & Navy Building,
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Phone: +91 (22) 284 34 16

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

Freedom First holds in high regard persons like G. R. Kairnar, Anna Hazare and Mrs. Sheela Kini. So long as there are persons with their kind of courage and mettle, we as a people can deal with gangsters, criminals-turned-politicians (and vice-versa), corrupt officials and even cultural, social or religious vigilantes.

But the problem with us, hero-worshipping Indians that we are, is our penchant to elevate such people into cult figures, paying hypocritical obeisance even while learning nothing from them. Simultaneously, these courageous men and women attract around them political and other kinds of societal vultures whose sole purpose is to exploit their new found heroes' popularity for personal ends. When this happens, the cutting edge of the Khairnars and Hazares is blunted, and with it their ability to compel change. Their movements stumble while the targets of such movements remain largely unscathed and, ironically, emerging with redoubled vigour! Dr. Shyam Ashtekar has examined in some detail Anna Hazare's anti-corruption campaign and analyses why the campaign appears to have lost its lustre.

In a similar vein, we carry an analysis of the proposal for reservation of seats for women in parliament and suggesting some changes that will make the proposal serve its purpose which, ostensibly, is to ensure that women who form nearly 48 per cent of the population get fair representation in the Lok Sabha.

We are happy to carry a report on the Congress of the Liberal International held in Noordwijk, Netherlands last June. We applaud their resolution on "The World Today" - an admirable exposition of Liberalism's concern for human rights and individual dignity worldwide.

RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscribers will be receiving reminders to renew their subscriptions. To reduce administrative work (working as we do on less than a shoestring budget!), we have changed over to subscriptions based on the calendar year. You could help us by renewing for three years at the special rate of Rs.125. This will also entitle you to a free copy of *Minoo Masani 90* on a nominal additional payment of Rs.10.00 to cover packing and postage.

Editor

January-March 1997
No.432

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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*

What good fortune that India doesn't live all in Delhi nor will ever have to!

Ashok Vajpeyi, *The Times of India*, January 8.

I have to protect the interests of 50,000 workers in Indian Airlines. In how many sectors can I allow foreign equity? If I allow it in the airlines, then I will have to permit it in media as well.

C. M. Ibrahim, Union Minister for Civil Aviation and Information & Broadcasting, *The Times of India*, January 8.

We intend to invite bids for privatisation of DD-3. I am not averse to a foreign company picking up 49 per cent of DD-3.

C. M. Ibrahim, Union Minister for Civil Aviation and Information & Broadcasting, *The Times of India*, January 8.

My alliance with the BJP is purely for electoral reasons, it's purely tactical adjustment. And I do not think there is any Left or Right in India. Those are European concepts.

Samata Party leader George Fernandes, *The Afternoon*, December 30, 1996.

The only Gandhi that Congressmen now remember is Indira Gandhi, and the only Gandhi they believe will deliver the vote is Sonia Gandhi.

M. J. Akbar, *The Afternoon*, December 31, 1996.

Sonia Gandhi is the only rallying point for all Congress forces.

G. K. Moopnar, President of the splinter Tamil Manila Congress, *Outlook*, February 12.

Bad people are elected by good people who never vote.

T. N. Seshan, former Chief Election Commissioner, *MID-DAY*, December 26, 1996.

Let's face it. The composition of Parliament has undergone a change from the times when MPs used to be statesmen.

Renuka Chowdhury MP, *The Asian Age*, August 14, 1996.

We are globalizing everything, except our minds and hearts.

Gandhi Peace Prize Winner Ahangamaye Tudor, *The Times of India*, January 7.

India is no longer the toast of the investors abroad. Investors abroad are too polite to tell us that they are bored with our explanations for delays and indecisions.

S. Venkataramanan, *The Times of India*, December 22, 1996.

He (Atal Behari Vajpayee) once said that I was in the wrong party. I can say the same thing about him!

CPM Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, *Outlook*, February 5.

If I close my eyes and think about the problems of the country, the Press writes that I am sleeping.

Prime Minister Deve Gowda, *Asian Age*, January 6.

The very nature of the arrangement in New Delhi produces neither wholesome governance, nor sound economic development; the advantage continues to rest with crooked entrepreneurs.

Harish Khare, *The Hindu*, January 1.

If official institutions invoke pessimism, the academies are no better. Great universities have collapsed. They get grants but do no work.

Rajeev Dhavan, *The Hindu*, January 3.

There are a lot of things, these days which ministers and bureaucrats should not be doing.

Editorial in *The Economist*, February 1.

Communism died in 1989. To millions of East Europeans, however hard their present lives, that must seem a fair statement. To 6m Hong Kongers, however prosperous their present lives, it will seem plain wrong.

Editorial in *The Economist*, February 1.

This country has hit rock bottom. We are all to blame. Instead of blaming each other let's admit we have failed this country.

Prime Minister Deve Gowda, *India Today*, February 15.

In the Middle Ages, the rich tried to buy immortality by building cathedrals. These days they set up business schools instead.

An Economist 'leader' cited in *The Times of India*, August 1, 1996.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

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



Assaults on Indian Womanhood

We have not forgotten the disturbances that took place in Bangalore over the bash that the Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd. organised. The protestors who were concerned about the assault on Indian womanhood did not appear to have been concerned with a more insidious *swadeshi* dishonour not only upon Indian women, but upon the trampling of the basic rights of women.

In Rajasthan, it is reported that during the past three years, instances of atrocities on women have registered a thirty percent increase. All the accused in the Bhanwari Devi Rape Case in Bhateri (in Dausa village), have been acquitted.

Still more ominous for the future of women and their rights has been the acquittal of all the thirty-two people involved in the Roop Kanwar case. The case dragged for nine years, and was tried in a court situated in an area where Rajputs predominated and feelings ran high. The appeal to shift the venue to a more neutral area was not heeded. And it is interesting that in the cabinet of Shekhawat, there are two ministers who are strongly pro-sati - Rajendra Singh Rathore and Devi Singh Bhati.

It has been alleged that the government did not build up its case as it should have. Also, the court itself did not take into account the testimonies of three people who were prime witnesses to the happenings and who were connected with the ritual burning. These, if considered, would have altered the outcome of the case. The government has appealed against the decision.

Another development is even

more disturbing and fraught with serious consequences for the future of Indian women. This is the celebration of Rani Sati and the Sahasra Chandni Mahayagna in Jhunjhunu. In this small town, there are 24 sati temples and there have been 40 instances of sati in the district after India became independent. There was a plan to instal a gold gilded cupola on the crown of the 400-year-old temple. There are twelve little temples commemorating other satists.

For the *yagna* itself, items of illumination worth ten lakhs of rupees were brought. The timely plaint of the *Mahila Atyachar Virodhi Jan Andolan* to the Rajasthan High Court stopped the celebrations. The Yagna was not celebrated within the temple premises. The temple itself receives donations, making it a very rich institution, though the exact holdings are not public knowledge. Donations pour in from Marwaris from Calcutta and Mumbai. The Sati temple trust runs a school for girls where the girls daily 'have to sing prayers in praise of sati ... Boys in an adjoining college ... expressed overwhelming support for sati worship...' This is some education indeed. The puja at the temple has all the éclat associated with temple festivals. 'Women devotees come in their bridal finery to pray for the long lives of their husbands'!

Women in Rajasthan, as in other parts of the country, have a long battle ahead of them, whether they are represented in Parliament or not.

RS

The Janata Dal's "Secularism"

While the Janata Dal's addiction to caste politics is well known (what else is Mandalism other than a revival of caste consciousness), they are now busy encouraging communal politics, despite their professions of secularism. How else does one interpret the visit to Kozhikode by prime minister Deve Gowda. According to a report in *The Pioneer* (December 23), the specific destination of the prime minister was a "muslim enclave called Markazu Safaquathi Sunniyya". The ostensible reason was to lay the foundation stone for a hospital complex to be erected by a Sunni organisation.

According to *The Pioneer* report, there is a split in the Sunni movement in Kerala, and the faction that is now on the ascendant has the support of Mr. C. M. Ibrahim. The report adds that though Mr. C. M. Ibrahim is a Karnataka-based muslim, he has deep roots in Malabar, and is a close associate of Kanthapuram Abubacker Musliar, the Sunni leader, whose faction's fortunes are looking up and who is emerging as an alternative power centre to the Muslim League whose fortunes, according to the report, are waning.

Curiously, marxist communists, better known as the CPI(M) are "uncomfortable" with the Janata Dal's flirtation with the Sunnis, which could be one reason why Kerala's (marxist communist) chief minister E. K. Nayanar kept away from the functions arranged for the prime minister.

Why should comrade Nayanar be

"uncomfortable". Not so many years ago, wasn't it his leader Namboodiripad, who as chief minister carved out the Malappuram district, to gain Muslim support?

The VIP Nuisance

The dargah committee managing the affairs of the holy shrine of Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti at Ajmer has taken a very salutary decision. It has decided not to cooperate anymore with the district administration in matters relating to visits of foreign dignitaries and VIPs to the holy shrine. The committee is unhappy with the timings chosen for such VIP visitations, interfering as they did with the namaz prayers. The immediate provocation being the visits of Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Haseena Wazed and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah.

This, of course, is not an isolated phenomenon. Such disturbances caused by VIPs at most places of worship eg. at Tirupathi or at the Shirdi Sai Baba mandir are common. All in the name of security and special privileges. Do the gods approve of these special favours? God only knows!

Another kind of VIP nuisance that causes real harassment to VOPs (Very Ordinary Persons) like you and me is when the vehicle we are travelling in is held up to let some VIP or the other pass by. We therefore compliment a sub-court in Kozhikode, Kerala, which in December last year restrained the city police and district administration from emptying the streets to facilitate the visit of prime minister H. D. Deve Gowda. The sub-court was ruling on a public interest litigation filed by Prof. A. Achyuthan, a noted environmentalist of Kozhikode, who according to a report in *The Times of India* of December 22 "contended that blocking the arterial Mavoor road passing by the Calicut Medical College Hospital and many utility institutions from 1 pm till night would avoidable misery to ailing persons."

On the other hand, is this report by *The Afternoon* reporter, Mark Manuel (August 28, '96): "Eleven o'clock last

week Tuesday night, Prime Minister Deve Gowda's motorcade majestically swept past us on Peddar Road. Twenty-eight vehicles in all, we counted, twenty six cream coloured Ambassadors with orange lights flashing and sirens wailing, an ambulance and a police van. A dozen of our traffic policemen on their trustworthy Enfields piloted the motorcade, flashing past us in a khaki and white blur. It seemed to us that half of Mumbai's police force had been turned out of their beds to see the PM safely from the airport to Raj Bhavan. And the other half were patrolling the roads, some perched on building terraces, as if to challenge possible snipers, all doing *bandobast* duty. The traffic in both directions had of course been brought to an unceremonious halt, and any motorist who dared to honk in impatience was met with a fierce look from the nearest policeman."

And we end this edition of 'VIP Nuisance' with a report that appeared in *The Asian Age* (November 24), New Delhi, Nov.23: The First Lady of Mongolia, Ms. Tsevelmma, was allegedly 'mistreated' by Prime Minister Deve Gowda's security personnel on Saturday morning at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences here, where she is undergoing treatment. Special Protection Group commandos accompanying the Prime Minister allegedly forced Ms. Tsevelmma out of a lift in AIIMS to make way for Mr. Gowda, who was visiting an ailing acquaintance...

"Nurses and doctors of the hospital ...were kept waiting outside the hospital gate for over an hour, which led to the outpatient department starting an hour late".

Make Them Pay

Consumer activist Shirish Deshpande is quite right when he says that employees of the Indian Oil Corporation [IOC] must be made to pay compensation to passengers emplaning at Mumbai, Aurangabad and Nagpur, for causing them inconvenience. On December 14, 1996, employees of the IOC went on a flash strike, refusing to refuel domestic and inter-

national flights at these airports in protest against the arrest of some of their colleagues in Aurangabad on charges of pilfering diesel from a tanker. The sessions court and high court are reported to have refused bail to these officials.

As a result of the flash strike several flights were cancelled and many others delayed. Shirish Deshpande points out that it also amounted to an attempt to intimidate the judiciary and judicial processes. Says Shirish Deshpande in his column in *The Times of India's Bombay Times*, "I am not against trade unions or even against the strike as a last resort. But we must respond in a united manner and within the legal framework to reckless and irresponsible strikes by employees and officers which amount to harassment of consumers."

"We need to evolve a case law in India whereby such irresponsible striking employees /officers and their union would be made to pay exemplary compensation to all those who suffer hardships and inconvenience on account of their irresponsible and illegal strikes", he concludes.

And so it must be with employees belonging to the BEST Workers Union, who on January 6 went on a sudden mass casual leave (a euphemism for a flash strike) in support of their demand for higher wages. 63 buses were damaged and 19 drivers, 3 conductors and 3 passengers were injured during this "mass casual leave". This happened when negotiations with the union were according to a BEST spokesman, "in an advanced stage". A fit case for the BEST, injured workers and passengers to demand compensation from the union.

What's in a Name?

Wonder how many non-Delhiwallahs know that Connaught Circus and Connaught Place have new names. But they can make a shrewd guess as to what the new names are likely to be. The Circus is now called Indira Chowk and the Place is Rajiv Chowk. A rather hard hitting editorial in *The Times of India* observes: "Of all

the recent sycophantic acts of the "Nehru-Gandhi" circus, the most deplorable is the renaming of Connaught Place and Circus... the Gandhi family sycophants have become so desperate for glory, and as long as the sound of money that the family is reputed to still control keeps jingling, and, there is some electoral currency to be encashed from the family's name, the circus will go on. But why should history be rewritten for that reason." Why indeed.

In Bombay, a popular road name disappears because a BJP office bearer living in a house on that road was shot dead by gangsters in 1994. It is now Ramdas Nayak Road. According to a report in the *Bombay Times*, "it was the late Ramdas Nayak who had objected to the renaming of two nearby roads - Perry Road and Carter Road - when he was alive. No one could immediately recall what the new names of these two roads are. Not surprising.

Talking of name changing, a friend telephoned me soon after reading a

report that the Frontier Mail had been renamed Golden Temple Mail. "Now that the Frontier Mail's name has been changed, I guarantee that this train will run efficiently and be very punctual!", said he with ill-concealed irony.

The Privilegedentsia

With the mood of the judiciary being what it is in the supreme court and the various courts in India, which the press has labelled 'judicial activism', politicians and criminals may not expect too much consideration. But politicians, particularly those in power can be expected to use their 'pull' to ensure a 'soft landing' for their criminal bedfellows.

Such is the fortunate circumstance of Mr. C. M. Sadiq. He is the brother, no less, of Mr. C. M. Ibrahim, the union minister for civil aviation and information & broadcasting. Mr. Sadiq, who, according to a press report, was remanded to judicial custody till December 26, is not according to this report, "cooling his heels in a dingy

prison cell. Instead he has been ensconced in a comfortable VVIP ward at Bowring hospital". Mr. Sadiq is one of four accused in a 11-year-old robbery case.

The *Times of India* correspondent who visited the hospital reports: "This reporter was not stopped by any of the 'five police guards' when he went to meet Sadiq, who was relaxing after a sumptuous home-made lunch and chatting with some Janata Dal party workers'.

Wonder where Mr. Sadiq is now and trust he is in good health and spirits. Maybe one of our Bangalore readers might care to update us?

"Indian Super Spy" in Kathmandu

On a recent visit to Kathmandu, I chanced on the following report filed by the political correspondent of *People's Review* which describes itself as "A Political & Business Weekly" in its issue dated September 26, 1996.

"Political observers here have been intrigued, to put it very mildly, by the presence in Kathmandu, soon after the ratification of the Mahakali treaty by parliament, of Rajan Roy, chief of RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), India's clandestine intelligence agency and covert instrument of Indian foreign policy.

"Appropriately enough, the RAW Director's visit has not been disclosed by the official media which otherwise never fails to inform readers/listeners of the to-ings and fro-ings of important officials, particularly from India."

The report amused me because we are so used to hearing the doings of the "foreign hand", a favourite phrase of former home minister, S. B. Chavan to explain almost anything untoward that happened in India.

I thought the CIA and the KGB were the "super spies". It was nice to know that in the eyes of some, our very own RAW (which bloomed during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Emergency and was her creation, in fact) was in the super spy category.

SVR

The Indian (Santa Claus) Bank

The recent appeal of the Union Finance Minister to depositors of the crisis-ridden Indian Bank should be evaluated against ground realities.

Despite efforts at whitewashing, the picture, as emerging from various reports, remains that politicians were using Indian Bank as a Santa Claus to distribute largesse to their followers with a management apparently over-anxious to please them. Hence, the massive losses of Rs.1,333 crores which wiped out the capital and reserves. To argue that non-performing assets of Rs.927 crores are to be excluded from this figure is to say that bad debts are to be treated as commercially productive loans.

The proposal for a special advisory committee for evaluating non-performing assets appears to be a device to circumvent audit objections in writing off these bad loans. The Reserve Bank, which slept over the misdoings in the bank, in spite of having a director on the Board, has failed in its functions as a statutory supervisory authority.

A public inquiry into Indian Bank affairs, on the lines of the Chagla Inquiry Committee in the L.I.C., Mundhra deal, should be held, and the parties in the Bank, management and employees, politicians, defaulting borrowers, finance ministry and R.B.I. officials should be subjected to a scrutiny of their conduct.

Instead of trying to shore up a bankrupt bank, Indian Bank should be taken into liquidation, and as with the Bank of Karad, its buildings and other physical assets put on the auction block and sold to the highest bidder.

Depositors would do well to note that having played ducks and drakes with their funds, the politicians and bureaucrats are now busy protecting themselves from the consequences of their actions. In the light of this, prudent depositors may as well safeguard their own interest by stopping to patronise a bank in which depositor interests are obviously very low on the agenda.

M. R. Pai

Gowda and the Press

S. S. Bankeshwar

The criticism, by a distinguished editor of one of our papers, that Prime Minister Gowda was behaving like a petulant child about to be deprived of his lollypop and taking umbrage at practically every question asked by him, is perfectly justified. Gowda's one constant refrain has been that he has become Prime Minister by the grace and blessing of God and not because of the grace of the press. This reminds us of that tyrant, Idi Amin, who used to boast that he had become the President of Uganda, by the grace of Allah.

Being a 'simple' and 'humble' farmer, he is not time-conscious. In fact, he has no sense of time; he should take a crash course on time management. He has no consideration for the precious time of others. Let me give an example. I had sought an interview with Deve Gowda, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka, in February 1995, with a letter of introduction from Shri Minoo Masani. Our 'humble' and 'simple' Gowda had not heard of Shri Minoo Masani!

Nevertheless, Gowda condescended to grant me an interview one evening at 7 at his Home Office in Bangalore, and even sent a car to fetch me. He did not turn up till 10 p.m., then apologised and invited me again the next day for breakfast at 6 a.m.. Again, he did not turn up till 10 a.m. He then said that he had no time to discuss any policy or issue or problem. I wonder why he called at all, if he had no time to discuss anything! I wasted 7 hours for this 'non-interview'! What he said in this 'interview' was not worthy of reporting to the press at all.

In fact, I had sent my questionnaire to Gowda three days in advance for him to study. It was all about Karnataka's economic development. Gowda told me that he would send his replies to me by courier service. When I did not receive his replies even after a month, I sent a reminder to him. His Press Secretary, Shri Jayasheel Rao sent me a telegram promptly that Gowda's replies had been just sent to me by courier. Nearly two years have passed, and I have yet to receive Gowda's replies! The experience

of other journalists who have interviewed Gowda so far is similar to mine.

No journalist worth his salt would like to interview Gowda for the second time. It is impossible to engage him in any serious discussion on any subject. He never looks straight into your eyes. Any subject beyond his Hardanahalli politics bores him to death and hence he falls fast asleep at all important meetings, conferences and seminars, national or international, and not because he is a workaholic. Pandit Nehru was a workaholic, but he never fell asleep at any meetings or conferences.

Gowda mistakenly equates his ignorance with humility and simplicity. He has, in fact, raised his ignorance to a cardinal virtue! With all his ignorance, he still thinks that he knows the problems of our country and our people and that he can solve them.

If Rajaji used to disarm journalists by his wit, repartees and wisdom, Morarji Desai by his counter questions, Gowda disarms them by his confessions or flaunting his ignorance as the great virtue of a simple and humble farmer.

What are Gowda's confessions? That he does not know Hindi and is a poor speaker in English; that his knowledge of politics has been limited to Karnataka till recently; that he is new to national politics; that he does not know much about India's history or geography; that he is neither a statesman, a diplomat, an administrator, a scholar, an intellectual, a linguist or an orator, nor a political scientist, an economist, a writer, an author, a journalist, or an expert in any field and that he does not understand such technical terms like fiscal deficit, budget deficit, inflation, etc. The list is endless!

Gandhiji was a simple and humble leader. But he never made a fetish of his humility or simplicity.

There is a Kannada saying: "Yoga idilere, Yogyate bekilla" (If one's stars are good, no ability, capacity or brains are needed to rise to power or wealth). Prime

Minister Gowda is a perfect example of this Kannada saying.

Prime Minister Gowda, of late, is trying to emulate the late Shri Morarji Desai, by asking counter questions. For example, when asked how long it would take to announce his economic package, he asked the counter question: Why are you worried about the time frame? When asked about the proposed hike in prices, he again asked the counter question: Why are you so worried about the time frame? When asked about the stability of his government, he again asked the counter question: Why are you so worried? How does it concern you?

Yes, Mr. Gowda, you may not be worried about anything, but all responsible and enlightened citizens of our country are deeply concerned and rightly worried about the stability of your government, the proposed hike in oil prices again, the rise in retail prices of all consumer goods by over 25% in the last six months, the deteriorating law and order situation in our country, the slowing down of our economy, fall in our export earnings, the growing nepotism in the name of social justice and widespread corruption, proposals to clip the wings of the CBI, moves to curb judicial activism, failure to attract foreign capital, slump in our Stock Exchange market, causing huge losses to small investors, increasing activities of Pakistan's ISI in our country. The list is endless. The economic crisis we are facing today is worse than the one we faced in 1991. Yet, our Gowda is asking us why we should be worried!

MR. S. S. BANKESHWAR is Feature Editor of Research Feature News Service.

Question: A boat consisting of Deve Gowda, Sitaram Kesri, Narasimha Rao, V. P. Singh, Laloo Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sukh Ram, Jayalalitha, Chandraswamy, etc. capsized. Who survived?

Answer: Our Nation.

Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Crusade

Shyam Ashtekar

Corruption springs from government policies and from politics. If someone has so serious an objective as elimination of corruption, he must recognise its basic causes and tackle those. Otherwise corruption is as ancient as the hills and dales. Hazare's agitation has failed to answer these questions.

The early part of the winter of 1996 in Maharashtra proved to be disastrous for the barely two-year-old-alliance government. Its foundations have been violently shaken by the anti-government feelings generated by Anna Hazare's anti-corruption drive. Hazare, a well-known social worker in the field of rural watershed programme and *Adarsha Gaon Yojana* (Ideal Village Scheme) is a respected figure in Maharashtra's social life. Winner of several awards including the Padma-shree and Padmabhushan, he has been a nominee of the state government on a number of rural development committees.

The erstwhile Congress government in the state has also experienced his ire - his fast at Alandi, for instance. And now the Shivsena-BJP coalition government in Maharashtra which, when in opposition, actively supported Hazare against the Congress now find themselves at the receiving end. At the time of writing, the first phase of his agitation is well nigh over and there are plans to take it farther on a wider scale, perhaps even to the national level. For instance Mr. Seshan is already on the scene with him though (at the time of writing) he has yet to determine the nature of his association with Hazare's movement.

Start of the Movement

The Marathi press has covered Anna Hazare's movement in much greater detail than English language newspapers. For those who may not have had the opportunity of reading the numerous reports, comments and analyses of the movement in the Marathi press here is a brief summary.

Hazare, an important member of the *Adarsha Gaon Yojana* of Maharashtra -



Anna Hazare

a government scheme based on the successful Ralegaon Siddhi model which Hazare pioneered in the late 'seventies - was much disturbed by official corruption in the social forestry schemes of the earlier Congress regime. He soon discovered the present Shivsena-BJP regime equally slow and disinterested in dealing with corruption-related complaints relating to the irrigation and agriculture ministries of the state that he had forwarded in October '96 to the Shivsena chief and to the chief minister.

Shivsena Invitation

As an important leader of rural development projects and a member of the Council for the Advancement of Appropriate Rural Technology (CAPART), Hazare received many complaints from villagers and development activists. Hazare's files were bursting with complaints. He alleged that the government was sleeping over the issue of corruption. Shortly before Dussera, Shivsena chief Balasaheb Thackeray offered to invite Hazare to join the Shivsena's annual mass rally

at Mumbai's Shivaji Park. Hazare welcomed the offer but the invitation never came. The reason why he had welcomed the offer to participate in Thackeray's rally was to enlist the Shivsena chief's support in his anti-corruption drive.

Three-Man Committee

Finding himself sidelined a disappointed Hazare resigned from various government committees. He also gave up the office space and house in Pune provided by the government. The chief minister met him at his village in Ralegaon Siddhi and urged him patience and requested him to retain his membership of the various committees. At a public gathering in his village Hazare reiterated his determination to carry on his fight against corruption come what may. He shared the evidence he had against two ministers with the chief minister. The coalition partners sensing the storm in the air set up a three-member committee comprising of Shivsena chief Balasaheb Thackeray, Pramod Mahajan the BJP general secretary, and Anna Hazare.

This committee proved to be a non-starter. All three not being officially a part of the state government's apparatus, did not have the legal competence to look into administrative matters relating to the government. Hazare was chagrined to find that the committee evaporated even before it materialized. It was then that he started going to the press with his complaints of corruption without actually naming the ministers.

Hazare Goes Public

Thus far Hazare had conducted



Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Crusade

his campaign on a low key. He felt that the time had come to go high profile and he decided to adopt the Gandhian tactic of going on a hunger strike and take a vow of silence for a few days. This had an impact on the popular mood. Many tried to persuade him to give up the fast but Hazare did not relent.

Slanging Match

Then, one of the coalition ministers, Narayan Rane fired a salvo at Hazare by publicly questioning Hazare's right to "judge ministers". This sparked off a confrontation which the chief minister had been at pains to avoid so far. Hazare retaliated by publicly revealing the names of the two ministers as being Sutar (Shivsena) and Shivankar (BJP). Sutar struck back by questioning Hazare's credentials. Hazare declared that he had nothing to hide. But this slanging match put the opposing parties on a collision course. Hazare demanded the expulsion of the two ministers. Provoked by this demand Thackeray described Hazare as a lunatic. When Hazare was accused of accumulating property through development works he publicly declared his assets and, much to the embarrassment of the latter, dared the Shivsena chief to do so similarly.

Chief minister Manohar Joshi who had tried to keep the dialogue with Hazare going during the latter's hunger strike found a suitable mediator in Mr. Avinash Dharmadhikari, a former IAS officer turned social activist and known for his integrity and honesty. But Dharmadhikari soon found it impossible to continue with the state government and joined hands

with Hazare who was gaining increasing public sympathy and press support.

BJP's Embarrassment

The BJP which had charged the Congress with corruption and had made clean administration its main election plank found itself in a very difficult and embarrassing position. So did its mentor the RSS. Both found themselves in a compromising position in full public gaze. The BJP's rank and file were in confusion what with their having to declare their determination to end corruption even while opposing Hazare's anti-corruption crusade!

Demand Rejected

While on the one hand Ralegaon Siddhi drew thousands of people from all over Maharashtra, the state government distanced itself from Hazare's agitation. It expressed its inability to consider his demands which, in its view, amounted to the creation of a parallel structure alongside a constitutional government. It was during such an *impasse* that Hazare ended his fast.

Impact of Public Meetings

After the fast, Hazare embarked on a statewide tour with public meetings at Pune, Nasik, Aurangabad, Amravati, Nagpur and Mumbai. These meetings attracted large crowds. This writer attended one such meeting at Nasik, but did not have the endurance to sit till it was Hazare's turn to speak since most of the speakers delivered long and boring speeches. Although the agitation was unwilling to associate with political personalities, almost all the people on the dais were members of either socialist or communist parties. The only notable speech was by Dharmadhikari (who has a BJP connection). At some of these meetings one noticed shady characters sharing the dais.

The public meetings caused unu-

sual fear among ministers hailing from the regions concerned and the local press took full advantage to take generous swipes at these ministers. Nasik newspapers for instance carried evidence of property acquired by the minister for social welfare hailing from that district.

Whatever the level of evidence, the meetings caused an immense wave of public opinion against the ministers and a government that people had elected barely two years ago. Had it been election time, this would have cost the regime dearly. Many newspapers publicly thanked the agitation for their unique role in caging the raging tiger (the Shivsena emblem) and plucking out its claws and teeth with nothing more than just bare hands.

Groundswell of Support

There never was a well planned strategy to begin with. It was sparked off with minister Narayan Rane's salvo against Hazare. But as the campaign gathered momentum Hazare's charter of demands expanded by asking for the elimination of corruption from government dealings. Public opinion, which was already moving away from the alliance government in the last few months found his cause worthy and the press campaigned against the regime controlled by Balasaheb Thackeray. The alleged murder of Ramesh Kini, a Mumbai resident holding a flat in a prime area and the Michael Jackson extravaganza pouring in quick funds for a Shivsena trust had already injured public feelings except diehard supporters of the alliance. Hazare gave them the right opportunity and forum. Hazare appeared invincible for the simple reason that the ruling powers fear taking on an unarmed old man who commanded public respect. The Shivsena *tigers* raged and roared but this was simply not their meat. A mighty alliance of brain and brawn, the BJP and Shivsena, was cowering

Democracy is only an experiment in government, and it has the obvious disadvantage of merely counting votes instead of weighing them.

Deng Ing



Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Crusade

in front of this man. In less than two years of getting into power in a state long ruled by the Congress party, the alliance faced a downhill course.

The Demands and the Response

Hazare's initial demand for the removal of two ministers was partially met by divesting them of their portfolios but not actually removing them from the cabinet. The alliance government maintained that this was done as a mark of respect for Hazare and despite the fact these were only complaints without proof.

Realising that this amounted to very little, Hazare demanded the setting up of committees in every block, district and at the state level to keep vigil on the administration. The chief minister responded by setting up a committee at the state level, but refused to make it a three member team as suggested by Hazare who had wanted any two from a list of four he had drawn up (J. F. Rebeiro, B. G. Deshmukh, B. Lentin & M. L. Pendse) be made members of the committee. The state remained firm in its decision to set up a one man committee consisting of retired justice Puranik. The latter lost no time in putting his foot in his mouth saying that the setting up of the committee was evidence enough of the government's resolve to fight corruption. This statement was widely criticized and embarrassed the already harried alliance government no end.

Hazare had also demanded block and district level committees and the nomination of people named by him on the committees. This was unacceptable to the government and even many outside considered this demand rather unreasonable. Even the press chose not to highlight this issue but concentrated on demolishing the alliance's credibility. In the light of this Hazare declared that the agitation would go ahead with its intention and form such committees all over the state.

They even started making lists.

Minister Hunting

People had lodged numerous complaints with Hazare against various ministers and departments and many of them were genuine. Even the chief minister admitted that 90 percent of these complaints were genuine. Some complaints relating to ministers found place in newspaper headlines. These included two BJP ministers - Nitin Gadkari and Gopinath Munde the deputy chief minister..

Details apart, the manner and substance of the complaints were far from perfect and not in the true Gandhian tradition. The press reported Gadkari's name one day and carried Hazare's statement the next day that he had not mentioned any name. In turn Gadkari managed to put full page advertisements in some dailies refuting the charges. (That the expenditure incurred on these advertisements itself became an issue for public debate is another matter). It is the view of this writer that the Marathi press acted rather irresponsibly in this episode. Libel laws being what they are, no one in his right mind can take on newspapers and prove them wrong. There is every chance of losing out both in and out of court. Bad publicity sticks and has damaged many a career. The charges against the ministers fired from the dais were in the nature of allegations but were printed as solid proofs. May be they were truthful, but trial should have preceded publicity. On the other hand Hazare had a point when he complained that the government was pushing all complaints under the carpet and therefore he had no other option but to publish the material.

Personal Attacks

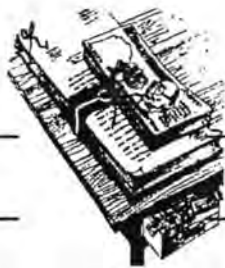
In the case of deputy chief minister Gopinath Munde, it was even worse. He became a victim of personal attacks. Hazare let the press lap up a

Quota Raj

Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda's promise at a Dalit rally to consider extending job reservations to the private sector is a pernicious pursuit that would pervert the principles of social justice, vitiate industrial productivity and maim the market. This is competitive chauvinism at its worst, for which Mr. Gowda seems to have an unhealthy propensity, unmindful of its consequences for the economy and growth of the market. The attempt to create reservation ghettos of every conceivable hue in electoral politics, education, employment and the economy is dangerously divisive and can only serve to retard development if the market and business are subordinated to the dubious logic of social justice as a fetish. As important as the laws of demand and supply are the prerogatives of business to employ skilled personnel on the grounds of their requirements of competence. The management and profitability made possible by human resources that fit these. Any other criteria, particularly if they are dictated by external and extraneous considerations, ought to be rendered irrelevant. ...

The non-performance of bulk of the public sector which has been now forced to privatise ought to have taught the lesson that industry and business need to be separated from such assaults. To enable the disprivileged and depressed sections to acquire education and entrepreneurial skills to survive in a market economy is a more rational route to advance the cause of the underclass and the economy instead of pitting one against the other, as is being done by the United Front government.

(From an editorial from *The Times of India*, November 23, 1996).



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piece of paper carrying the last page of a sale deed some woman had entered into with a builder for purchasing a Rs.3.5 lakh priced flat. The deed mentioned *Gopinath* as the husband's name and the surname Munde was replaced with Patil. This was brandished as proof against Munde - the charge being that Munde had bought the flat for her. What has this to do with corruption? Even if the lady in question had bought it with her own hard earned money, (she is a folk artist) can she not put her full name which because she is married includes her husband's name? And *Gopinath* is not a name copyrighted by the deputy chief minister. More importantly, both she and the deputy chief minister squarely denied the connection. Finally, even if Hazare had a connection in mind, private matters ought to stay the way they are and no one has the right to invade the privacy of individuals. This unfortunate episode occurred just when Hazare's agitation was gaining acceptance in the social and intellectual circles of Maharashtra. By this kind of accusation not only were personal lives damaged but the credibility of the agitation itself suffered. Of what use is an agitation for values in public life if it did not care for basic human values?

Moreover the *Gopinath* episode diverted attention from the main thrust of Hazare's campaign for probity in public life because the issue of corruption was forgotten for the time being while the press and the people continued to speculate as to who was the real husband? Meanwhile the lady in question must have undergone tremendous agony for no fault of hers.

Insofar as deputy chief minister Munde was concerned, there was an

Among a people generally corrupt, liberty cannot long exist.

Edmund Burke

element of poetic justice. When he was in the opposition, Munde had charged Sharad Pawar, the then Congress chief minister, with corruption and for receiving pay offs from Enron the US multinational putting up a major power plant in Maharashtra. Munde and his government had to eat their words in court later as they could produce no evidence to support their charges.

Personalities and VIPs

Hazare himself has been quite close to governments present and past. He was hailed by the present government when he had, while they were the opposition, trained his guns on the erstwhile Congress government. But when they took office the alliance found him a thorn in their side. Their attempt to tarnish him with the corruption brush failed miserably. Hazare's simple lifestyle appealed to people. He was able to activate the *Sadhushakti* icon in the Indian psyche.

G. R. Khairnar

G. R. Khairnar, anti-corruption campaigner in the mid and late 'eighties and early 'nineties has kept his distance from the agitation.



G. R. Khairnar, assistant municipal commissioner. Although he never produced the kind of proof he had promised, one cannot but admire him for the enormous risk he took on himself and his family inviting the wrath not only of corrupt politicians but their criminal associates particularly in the construction

business in Mumbai. He was critical of Hazare's agitation right from the beginning publicly expressing his disapproval of Hazare's closeness to the rulers. Hazare also found it more convenient to keep Khairnar at a distance. In other words, two upright individuals and both crusaders against corruption did not find it possible to join forces.

Is this agitation getting too personalized? Hazare's demands lack substance. Committees are not in themselves a substantive demand; governments generally do not find it too difficult to concede such a demand. In the absence of a larger perspective and by adopting a personalized approach, things may start going wrong sooner than expected.

Khairnar banned from Addressing Rally

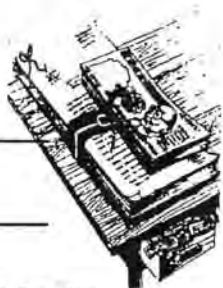
The police in Karjat prevented the expelled deputy municipal commissioner, Mr. G. R. Khairnar from addressing a public rally in the township last night. The rally was organised by a local anti-corruption group.

As Mr. Khairnar entered the resort township in a jeep along with Mrs. Ahilya Rangnekar, the former CPI(M) MP, late last evening, a police team intercepted and handed over a magisterial order banning his entry for public or personal work till January 9, 1997.

Mrs. Rangnekar was, however, allowed to reach the rally venue, where Mr. Khairnar later claimed lathi-wielding Shiv Sainiks stood guard. Mrs. Rangnekar later alleged Sainiks did not allow rally organisers to erect a dais and use loudspeakers.

Talking to this newspaper today, Mr. Khairnar alleged that the Sena chief, Mr. Bal Thackeray, put pressure on the police in Karjat, where he owns a farm, not to allow him to address the public rally.

The Times of India, December 26, 1996.



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Political Parties

The agitation was keen to steer clear of political parties and the attendant liabilities. But this is easier said than done. Avinash Dharmadhikari himself had BJP connections. The point is not who was from which party, but that all belonged to some party or the other. Hazare later declared that all those who wished to join the agitation (now named as *Bhrashtachar Virodhi Nidhi*) would have to give up their political party affiliation. Hazare's agitation quickly caught the attention of political parties opposed to the coalition government. Congress leaders in the state went so far as to declare that they intended to take the issue to the streets. Hazare was quick to remind them that he had to struggle against their regime too on similar issues. Members of other parties like the socialist-dominated Janata Dal and the communists who too had got on to the dais found that their presence was not objected to because they cannot be accused of corruption on the scale of the Congress and the Shivsena-BJP alliance. Perhaps Hazare realised that if he was to drive them away not many would be left to do the campaigning.

And here lies the problem. The Janata Dal and the communist parties are parties that support statism. Hence even if not directly involved in the rot, the policies they advocate are responsible for the licence-permit-quota raj and the welfare state that has been the breeding ground for large scale corruption. It must not also be forgotten that it is these parties that have made the historical blunder of pushing Indian politics back into caste conflicts and reservation slots - another fertile opportunity for corruption.

Incomplete Agenda

This brings home the truth of the statement that the agitation was framed with a short term agenda and is devoid of a larger perspective. It has lent itself

to the allegation that the agitation is against individuals rather than a system that has made corruption all pervasive - from rail reservations to gun purchases. Hazare's agitation is blissfully unaware of the fundamental rot that results when the state does everything. Successive regimes have injected the statist poison in our national life with the state assuming the responsibility of a womb to tomb caretaker of its people. So they not only undertake a programme for antenatal care, but provide free schooling, higher education, subsidized rations, *Zunka Bhakri* (a popular meal), provide jobs, pensions, free houses, free rice, subsidized travel, fertilizers, etc. It also builds all roads and dams, extends huge subsidies to industries, acquires land and evicts farmers, holds Michael Jackson shows and cultural fairs, helps writers and awards favours, feeds children in *Balwadis* and schools, distributes sewing machines and pumpsets, helps couples engage in intercaste marriages and so on. In short it does everything except ensure law and order and speedy justice!

A grand scheme on a grand scale indeed! The problem is it does everything badly and at much higher costs than what people can do it in.

If these do not function the way people want, we have NGOs (non-governmental organisations) who can do it for you. So there are schemes for everything and an army of middlemen to help you do them without much hassle. If government institutes have failed to absorb you, you can try being an NGO. Everyone must make something from government money. That is what development is all about.

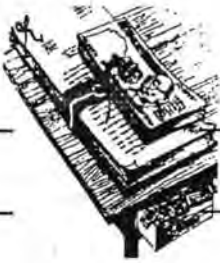
Corruption springs from government policies and from politics. If someone has so serious an objective as elimination of corruption, he must recognise its basic causes and tackle those. Otherwise corruption is as

ancient as the hills and dales. Hazare's agitation has failed to answer these questions.

Complacency on Basic Issues

What is perhaps intriguing is the loss of seriousness in public debate on corruption. Most speeches and articles end up suggesting one or another type of committee. Hazare has gone to the extent of preparing his own list of activists all over the state. Apart from how good these names are, there is the wider issue of the infallibility of persons against the relative infallibility of a system. It is tempting to refer here to the RSS. The RSS did have character-building as the main plank. Even the wildest critics of the RSS cannot accuse the pre-Ayodhya RSS gurus of abetting financial corruption leave alone indulging in it. What happened when they found themselves manning ministries? The 'pulses' scam of the Maharashtra government is connected with the BJP and not the Shivsena and the minister concerned was a woman. While teaching children and the impressionable mind such values as the virtues of character is not to be scoffed at it is poor immunity against the powerful virus of corruption in the corridors of a regime that pretends to be a paternalistic government but is in reality a looter and plunderer.

Hazare himself admitted on one occasion that even in the *Adarsh Gaon Yojna*, in 60 out of 300 villages selected, there were cases of faulty work and use of sub-standard materials which pointed to corrupt practices. This is not intended to cast any aspersion on Hazare personally but the fact remains that despite the best of intentions a project headed by Hazare himself has not been able to escape the charge of corruption. CAPART (to which reference has been made earlier) a funding agency, set up by the government, prepared its own list of corrupt NGOs (NGOs mind you, not ordinary



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mortals). Hazare is an office bearer of CAPART's managing council. Wherever there is a government scheme, a scam is also taking shape under the same prescription. Hazare himself is undoubtedly clean but the philosophy of development propounded by him and the likes of him itself fosters corruption. Several anti-poverty schemes (the EGS, IRDP, *Jawahar Rojgar Yojna*, etc.) have been regular channels for corruption.

Gandhian Approach?

Mahatma Gandhi was a die-hard anti-statist and believed in *Gram swaraj*. He asked the looters to get off the backs of the poor and staunchly advocated the self-development of village communities. In the days of globalization such physical isolation of villages is perhaps impossible except in remote god-forgotten villages. But the issue of autonomy still remains supreme. In a nutshell, it is economic freedom to deal with the external world on an equal relationship and to share with them on fair terms of trade. The NGO community talking of developing the villages believes that funds from Mumbai, Delhi (and overseas) are the only way to fund village development (and, in the process their own institutes. This approach, however pious it may appear to the urban intellectuals and social workers, cannot fund the lakhs of villages that desperately need attention and Hazare's three hundred *ideal* villages are not even one percent of Maharashtra's villages. Such mechanisms are nothing but a statist approach to development and certainly un-Gandhian in that sense. In this sense Nehru was a wrecker of Gandhiji's

economics.

Fasts and clean cloth therefore do not add up to a Gandhian system of developmental thought. His economics and politics had villages as the center and not the state. This is what Gandhiji had to say on the relationship between the villages and the state. In an editorial in the *Harijan* he wrote:

"Any village can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the present (British) government, whose sole connection with the villages is the extraction of village revenue".

The post-independence governments are no different from the British. There is ample evidence of underdevelopment and negative subsidies that have pauperized our villages even more than what the British accomplished.

Unfortunately many people equate social work done in villages as something Gandhian. This said, it must be admitted that Hazare spoke and did many things in Gandhian non-violent fashion (except again, the allegation about the tamasha artist's buying a flat and connecting it to Mr. Munde).

Larger Vision Needed

The existing system of governance can easily frame most of us into one or the other form of corrupt practice. High and unrealistic income tax rates, red tapism and a complex raj of rules and regulations, caste based reservations in government jobs, lack of transparency and a *welfare* government trying to appropriate all the earnings of people and distribute the loot through its *netaji-baboo* raj will not disappear by such campaigns. It needs a larger political vision and a more sustained campaign. Unfortunately Maharashtra (like the rest of India) has never come to terms with such issues.

Tackling Corruption

Hazare's campaign can touch the core of corruption only marginally since many transactions involve willing parties and there is no one to complain; because it is mostly government money to be shared. Take for instance road making, a major activity of the government. A Gujarat MLA once told us once that only about 25-30% of the allotted money is actually spent on road making; the rest goes to contractors, elected leaders, engineers, accountants, clerks and so on. If they were to spend most of the allotted money then the roads would last too long. Hence everyone has to guard against such an eventuality. If not there will be little to do in the next year. It is the same for many public works. Look at *sarkari* buildings and one does not need further study. Or take school teachers who are paid hefty salaries compared to the unorganized sector, but look at the quality of *sarkari* education. Village nurses get paid equally well but not more than 20% childbirths get trained assistance. Most villages still depend on neighbours. Hazare has involved himself in schemes that he believes will do better through NGOs than when they are run by government. This is far from truth.

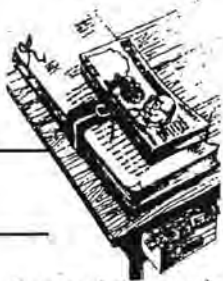
Any anti-corruption programme has to take a reasonable position on pruning the state apparatus and reducing areas of government action. This is one sure way of reducing the quantum of corruption. For unavoidable government functions, there can be vigilance committees - but should they be elected or appointed is a crucial question in a democratic set up - which is what the coalition government happened to ask in this case. Short cuts will lead us nowhere.

Effective Decentralization

Effective decentralization, including more autonomy for states and more (smaller) states not to mention panchayat raj, allowing people to earn

It is difficult to tell when a government officer gobbles up money just as it is difficult to say when a fish in water drinks water and when it does not.

Maxim Gorky



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through free and fair trade, reducing the tax slice to the thinnest possible level, and allowing people to spend and invest their earnings in the best possible manner of their choice is the real meaning of non-statist development. This is the only way to minimize corruption since it effectively reduces the number of opportunities for non-productive elements getting a share. High taxes and anti-farmer pricing tactics are the ways of an exploitative state and in a larger sense of the ruling class. Development with government funds is in a manner of speaking a ready recipe for corruption. It is the statist model that, as the twentieth century comes to an end, has proved to be a colossal failure. Unfortunately Hazare cannot get too far away from the statist model of development and the NGOs surrounding him will never allow such a thing to happen.

Sadly, Maharashtra has never shown a maturity of purpose when more comprehensive ideas were presented. Both the exemplary courage of G. R. Khairnar and the ascetic lifestyle of Hazare are not the real solution to the problem of minimising corruption.

The Roots of the Problem

Hazare dealt a body blow to the credibility of the *Hindutva* brigade and its election prospects (in fact, the alliance suffered heavy losses in the recent statewide municipal elections, losing out even in the Konkan). This is good news for freedom lovers in Maharashtra whose government is occupied by people who have little use for or faith in democracy. Hazare also demolished, even if it was for a fortnight, the fear created by muscle power and extortion gangs.

But will his campaign against corruption succeed? It is the view of this writer that it has little chance of success. A friend who is a part of the Hazare agitation explained to this

writer that agitations enter the fray from some corner, make their way to the center of the problem taking many zigzag turns. While nothing will please liberals more if it should happen this way, there is urgent need to work towards a polity where we have a strong government that ensures the rule of law, a government that minds its business and in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow.

Even while paying our tribute to courageous men like Khairnar and Hazare, it is essential for them to realize that what they have been fighting against are the inevitable offshoots of the philosophy of statism and until that is not tackled corruption on the scale we have been witnessing will continue to plague our land. A statist society and a scam-ridden one are two sides of the same coin.

Postscript

The newspapers of 2nd February reported a truce between the Chief Minister and Hazare. The latter is back on the State Government's committee of the *Adarsha Gaon Yojana*. Anna Hazare is now prepared to co-operate in the setting up of local anti-corruption committees. An earlier report on 1st February speculated that while T. N. Seshan shares Hazare's ideals, he does not share the path Hazare has chosen. Meanwhile, according to other reports in the press, Hazare's new involvement is with the anti-Enron agitation led by Medha Patkar.

Hazare is reported to have said that the fight against corruption would continue, and that this fight was not against the state government, but against corruption *per se*, a statement welcomed by the Chief Minister, who has stated that he will support Hazare's anti-corruption agenda!

We are left to guess as to what must have led to these developments. Was it a clever move by the Chief Minister or did it indicate Hazare's disinclination to stay out of government-led development politics? Or, is his new stance prompted by the lack of organisational support or the fact that Seshan and some others are distancing themselves from him.

Whatever be the reasons, the fact remains that his (Hazare's) recent statements

have severely eroded his credibility as a campaigner, though not his rather pious, anti-corruption motives. Procedures and committees will replace his campaign which will soon be history. Hazare and his followers will be surrounded by the make believe world of rural development.

Politically, this turnaround will have a significant fallout, since Hazare's movement had strengthened anti-ruling class feelings (both for the parties and the bureaucracy) for a few weeks. By pocketing the movement, the chief minister has pulled off a *coup* of sorts against his opponents in the Congress and other parties. In the context of the forthcoming local bodies elections, this is significant. But the charges against the ministers remain and the public is likely to write off Hazare, rather than accept his truce as its own.

And here is a lesson we are learning for the second time, the first being JP's movement. JP's movement was on a much bigger scale and looked more genuine and virtually created history. Yet most of the corrupt managed to retain or return to power and corruption continues. Statism and state control are very much present though at times appearing weak and strong at other times.

Every now and then a Khairnar or a Hazare or a Seshan takes shots at corruption and the corrupt. Has it helped?

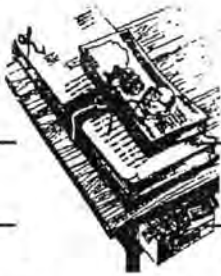
The tragedy is that both Balasaheb Thackeray and chief minister Manohar Joshi are lambasting Hazare in their own styles. And poor Anna Hazare finds himself in the unenviable position of being trapped in a web of political manoeuvres.

DR. SHYAM ASHTEKAR is actively engaged in rural primary health care services.

Isometimes wonder whether both religion and mathematics are tied to politics. About 1,500 years ago, someone wrote "the small crooks go to prison, while the big crooks run our cities, states and countries".

When government was formed in the USA, Thomas Jefferson wrote to a friend, "this form of government will last only until the politicians learn how to buy votes with public money". Sad, but true!

C. A. Reddi,
Madras.



Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Crusade

The Man and his Work

Arun Shourie

Hazare's life has a romance about it. From an impoverished family, in debt as other families in Ralegaon Siddhi, he is compelled by want of funds to abandon studies when he is in just the seventh standard. Our defeat in 1962 at the hands of the Chinese, fires him to serve our country. He enlists in the army as a truck driver. Ferrying material at the front in the 1965 war with Pakistan, he barely escapes with a head wound as his colleagues are killed and grievously injured because of strafing by a Pakistani plane. The conviction grows in him that he must have been saved for a purpose.

He begins reflecting on his life. He eventually goes into deep depression, so common in such cases. He resolves on suicide. His sister is to be married, the need to help the family in this leads him to postpone killing himself. He has been sent to Delhi from Ambala where his unit is posted to deliver something. At the station, he purchases a book by Swami Vivekananda. He learns: "You cannot run away from your life". He learns: "The purpose of life is to serve others". The swami becomes his buoy. He works another ten years in the army, serving in one distant place after another which is in turmoil, the North-East, Kashmir and the rest. As soon as is eligible, he seeks early retirement, and resolves to serve the people of his village, Ralegaon Siddhi.

That was twenty years ago. The village is about 85 kilometres from Pune. It lies in the drought-prone area of Maharashtra, with rainfall of about 15 inches a year. Every two or three years, the rains fall - for the last two years, for instance, there has been less than six inches of rain. The soil is of poor quality, the land undulating so

that water runs off quickly. The total land of the village is about 2200 acres. Of this, about 1700 acres is arable, the rest being on hill slopes. Twenty years ago, only about 70 to 80 acres of it was irrigated through wells. The village was destitute: about a fifth of the families ate just once a day; half to two-thirds borrowed grain from other villages and had to repay it with additions the subsequent season; there was little work in the village - people had begun to go outside to earn a pittance breaking stones; family after family was in debt, a major proportion of the land had been mortgaged to moneylenders. With no other source of income, people had taken to manufacturing liquor; there were 35 to 40 liquor stills. Drunkenness had become common. And with it feuds and crime, especially against women.

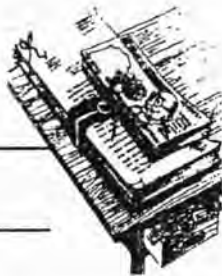
The village had a temple around the samadhi of "Yadavbaba" - its state spoke of the condition of the village; it had broken down, the wood from it had been used as firewood in the liquor stills. Other than liquor, tobacco burnt up a good part of the meagre earnings of the people - the sale of tobacco products was around 60,000 rupees at the time. Few of the wells of the village were still usable - and these were major sources of disease and illnesses; 90 percent of the families were stricken by abdominal ailments, child mortality was high. It was to this village that Anna Hazare returned.

Today, there is not one liquor still, indeed liquor itself has been banished from the village - the people having taken a vow not to touch the stuff. To say nothing of liquor, not one shop in the village sells cigarettes, not even the humble beedi; in 1987, the entire village resolved to rid itself of tobacco

and the addiction to it; all the tobacco and tobacco products in the village shops were purchased and burnt in place of wood at Holi. "The real thing to burn is this sack of our addictions, not wood", the people had learnt from Hazare.

Water is systematically harvested today - by percolation tanks, by check dams, by wells being recharged. The results are what others would scarcely dream of. Of the 1700 odd acres of arable land, 1100 to 1200 acres are still under irrigation. Where the village got its single crop only if the rains did not pass it by altogether, today three crops are grown. The village in which a fifth of the families got no more than one meal a day, now markets vegetables, gram, milk. As for water itself, while because of the drought of the last two years, every village in the neighbourhood waits for the government tanker to bring drinking water, Ralegaon has enough not just for everyone in the village but also for the hundreds who troop into the village every day to see the wonder which has been wrought there.

Heart-stopping though these achievements are, they are but a tip. Even more fundamental than them is the way life and relationships within the village have been transformed - they have been transformed out of recognition. Twenty years ago, on all accounts, the village was riven by the usual disputes, compounded as these were by poverty, by addictions. Today, every family contributes voluntary labour of one adult every week; almost everything new that one sees has been built and accomplished by community labour. Buildings worth over 35 lakhs have been constructed, including a school of 18 rooms and a Yadavbaba Hostel which accommo-



Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Crusade

dates 150 students. A technical school is in the works. Between 3 to 4 lakh trees have been planted. Families and individuals have adopted these and they look after them on their own - the trees are not, and have never been fenced. And the reason for that too is modern as can be. In the same way that the village took a vow to eschew addictions, it resolved to end grazing - all animals are stall fed.

Community effort has been used in particular to lift the poorest, especially Harijans. Many of them had lands on the slopes of the hillocks around the village. These lands could not be irrigated. The Harijans were deep in debt. By community effort, the productivity of the lands was raised, and the debts were paid off: do you know of any of these fellows who keep shouting in the name of the dalits having done anything even remotely similar?

The temple was the first thing to be repaired. Today, it is the hub of every activity of the village - Anna Hazare himself lives in a little room to one side of this temple, and it was here that he conducted his fast. The temple, wood from which had been taken for firing the liquor stills, today houses a "Grain Bank" - any family in need can borrow grain from this Bank: it must repay it of course, and with a little "interest", for the village has decided that things obtained free are not valued, that in fact they put us into injurious habits. The "Bank" started in the same way as other things that became possible with the growth of community spirit: the village resolved that every family which had surplus grain should contribute, and the assessment was done by the villagers themselves. There has not been one case of a family having "defaulted" on the "loan" for they all know that they are borrowing from themselves.

For the last 17 years, the village has been marrying its boys and girls in community marriages. These are held every three or four months. Youth volunteers assist the parents in preparing estimates, in shopping, in making sure that no family is fleeced by demands for dowry etc. Parents contribute just Rs.1300 to 1400 for the marriage and the meals etc. The village has bought on its own account items which are needed each time: shamianas, utensils, the loudspeakers. Couples of all castes and creeds are married together: there is no distinction. Each ceremony is kept to the simplest, though the precise ritual to be followed is tailored to suit the traditions of each family.

Water which has been harvested by community efforts is utilised also by community decisions. For years now, farmers have been grouped into groups of 10 to 25 farmers each. Each of these groups has been registered as water supply cooperative society. Each farmer has been issued a ration card for the water. He gets water only on his turn. The amount he gets is strictly in accordance with his quota. A water tax is charged. No one defaults, for he knows that the community will not allow him to do so.

The village now produces crops worth Rupees 50 to 60 lakhs. Where people of this village used to trudge long distances to get work breaking stones, now the village is often short of hands. Where a large proportion of the families were in debt, their lands mortgaged to the money lenders, the village has been rated at the top in regard to small savings in Ahmednagar district.

Where there was no schooling worth the name, not only is there a school, what is taught there has been overhauled. Those who get degrees, Anna Hazare says, leave our villages,

those who acquire a specialisation, leave our country. And so instead of gearing up the students for a "degree-factory", the school is viewed as a *Jeevan Shiksha Mandir*, as a temple that prepares them for life.

ARUN SHOURIE is a well known author and columnist.

"FOR WHOM SHOULD MY HUSBAND DIE FOR?"

My husband has been putting his life on the line for the past 15 years so that his compatriots can live in peace. It has been ingrained in his morals that he should not hesitate to sacrifice his life when the question of facing India is one of life or death. He braved the sub-zero temperatures of the Siachen Glacier, protected the sanctity of the Line of Control, faced the bullets of militants in the Kashmir valley and Punjab, even battled floods to save entrapped citizens and fought someone else's war in Sri Lanka. He does whatever is ordered because he was told in the training academy that the safety and honour of his country come first, always and every time.

He is selflessly serving a nation where innumerable Sukh Rams, Jayalalithas, Butas, Raos, Chandraswamis and their likes prey on the flesh and blood of poor Indians. The Indian policy makers do not have enough money to amass gold, silver, cash, plots, houses and other things for their own use through the urea scam, Bofors scam, television scam, hawala scam, this scam, that scam. My husband is helpless; he cannot even protest the delay in the finalisation of the Fifth Pay Commission's report.

Please tell me for whom should my husband die? For Mr. Narasimha Rao? For Ms. Jayalalitha? For Mr. L.K. Advani? For Mr. Veerappa Moily? For Mr. Sukh Ram or Mr. Chandraswami? As the wife of an unknown soldier, I am confused

Agra

H. S. DIMPLE

(A letter in *The Times of India*, December 26, 1996)

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Reserved Seats for Women in Parliament

The experience of the implementation of reservations for women in panchayat raj institutions in Maharashtra has not been favourable. Almost everywhere, parties have fielded the relatives of established male leaders.

We put this essay before the public as representatives of the single organisation India that has struggled during the last ten years to establish the political presence of Indian rural women. The Shetkari Mahila Aghadi was founded in November 1986 as a result of a decision taken by the largest farmers' organisation in India, the Shetkari Sanghatana. Its programmes and campaigns were formulated and debated in a series of *shibirs* held all over Maharashtra and finalised in the massive Chandwad rally of 2 lakh women and men farmers.

One of the most controversial and important resolutions at Chandwad was for women's empowerment. However, we did not ask for quotas. We vowed, with the support of the Shetkari Sanghatana, to put up 100% women's panels for forthcoming zilla parishad elections in Maharashtra, and challenged all political parties, especially the left, democratic and dalit parties, to join us in alliance. Two months later, the Samagra Mahila Aghadi was created to give shape to this alliance.

Poor Representation

The campaign for 100% women's panels in local panchayati raj institutions came at a time when women's political role was almost non-existent. In spite of their heroic participation in the freedom movement, independence, in fact, did not result in any major political gains for women. They have been excluded from political power in democratic, self-governing India. In free India's Parliament, women had a mere 4.7% of seats in the first Lok Sabha; this sank to 3.5% in 1980, and rose again to 7.9% in 1984. This has been the highest level of representation in the Lok Sabha. Even today, in a "united front" government that

claims to be a Lok Sabha of farmers and OBCs, the representation of women is just 7.2%. The situation in the state assemblies is even worse.

In the institutions of panchayati raj, from the zilla parishads to gram panchayats, a token presence in each panchayat meant only being called upon to give "thumb-stamp" to decisions taken by males. Even when Indira Gandhi was almost alone in the world as a woman head of state (incidentally, proving that women could be as autocratic as men), women at the village level remained bound to their homes, unable even to sit in the village square. Village politics in independent India was becoming a playground for village *goondas* and local bosses, and women's dependence left them helpless in the face of violence and thuggery.

Spontaneous Struggles

It was not that women were satisfied with their bondage. The upsurge of a new women's movement in India after 1972 showed that both rural and urban toiling women had aspirations as much as the more famous feminism of the North. Women in isolated villages, acting spontaneously, began to undertake struggles for local political power. This could be seen in Satara district in Indoli (1985) and in Palshi (1986) where 100% women panels were organised. But without the backing of a wider and powerful organisation, these struggles went unheeded.

The feminist organisations had little mass base. And political parties, disturbed by the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi's emphasis on women, apparently had little base among women! This was why the most frequent complaint we heard from them was "where will we find the women?". To say that

there were no eligible and capable women in constituencies of 10,000 was an insult: what party leaders really meant was that they had almost no women among their cadres and were unwilling to let new "untrusted" women come in.

Quotas by Themselves Not Enough

Fixed quotas in legislatures exist only in a few countries like Nepal, the Philippines and the erstwhile Soviet Union. Although none of these have proved to be great success stories for the political participation of women, we insist on following the same route. Scandinavian and other European countries arrived at a relatively high level of female representation without reservations. These countries have moved in the direction of equal participation in a steady and enduring fashion. Women in these countries are especially active in local institutions of governance. In Sweden, according to 1994 figures, 48 per cent of those elected to country councils and 41 per cent of municipal council members were women. This broadbased participation at the lower levels provides a good training ground for intervention at the top.

Unless women join political parties in large numbers and are allowed to play an active role in the decision-making process, they will remain marginalised despite 33 per cent reservation. Women find the political atmosphere particularly inhospitable.

Lack of inner party democracy, rampant corruption, the tradition of party posts and election tickets being bestowed by the 'high command' on sycophants instead of allocation on the basis of internal elections in the party, have allowed *goondas* and thugs to dominate our political scene. Most self-respecting women therefore shun electoral politics. Powerful male politicians are likely to use the absence of active female politicians as an excuse to corner the 33 per cent reservation quota for their wives and daughters.

(Madhu Kishwar, editor of *Manushi*, in *The Times of India*),

An Open Letter to Members of Parliament

Reserved Constituencies for Women The Rotational System

We have serious doubts about any system of reservation being an instrument of ensuring social justice to any community. It is our conviction that reservation is particularly inappropriate to correct gender injustice. The actual experience in most states has confirmed our apprehension. Reservation of seats for women has resulted in the womenfolk of the established leaders parading as representatives of women, with no improvement in performance and no reduction in corruption. In fact, this kind of reservation has given rise to resentment amongst those who normally sympathize with the women's cause. Reservations for women is being pushed by women from the creamy layer consisting of professional politicians and activists of funded non-government organisations.

This appeal is being issued not for reconsideration of the proposal for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, but for reconsideration of the manner of its implementation. We are convinced that the system of rotation for determining the constituencies reserved for women candidates in any particular election will be calamitous to both the women's cause and to the nation.

The rotational system consists of drawing by lot 1/3 of the total number of constituencies that will be reserved for women, excluding constituencies that were reserved on the occasion of the last election. The system has serious consequences:

- (1) The constituencies drawn need not necessarily match those where the most meritorious women candidates belong. Good candidates in the prime of their activities might find themselves deprived of the possibility of contesting elections.
- (2) It would become extremely difficult (barring those who are exceptionally charismatic or otherwise advantaged women) to get elected from unreserved constituencies.
- (3) As a combined consequence of (1) and (2) above, it would become impossible for any women to get elected twice to the Lok Sabha or to any State Assembly.
- (4) This will be largely true for men as well who may not, in fifty percent of the cases, be able to contest elections from the same constituency on more than one occasion.
- (5) This will adversely affect the servicing of the constituency since women legislators will realise that they cannot contest from the same constituency in the next elections and men legislators would know that chances of their contesting from the same constituency is a 50:50 chance.

- (6) In cases of resignation, death or incapacity of the incumbent legislator or dissolution of the House, followed by a mid-term election, the advantage of being a reserved constituency might not be equally available to all constituencies.
- (7) Only 1/3rd of the voters will be able to exercise a vote in favour of women.

We fear that these consequences of the rotational system have not been properly understood or examined. We are sure that these consequences would prove disastrous for the national economy as also the polity.

The evil effects of the rotational system could be avoided if a system of three-seat constituencies is introduced. Three of the existing constituencies will be combined to form a single constituency. Each voter would have three votes, at least one of which must be used for a woman candidate. The two candidates winning the two highest number of votes in each three seat constituency will be declared as elected for two general seats, irrespective of their gender. The third seat will go to the woman candidate who wins the maximum number of votes from amongst women candidates, not taking into account the winners of the two general seats.

This system is free of all the defects of the rotational system. It suffers from the minor handicap that the constituencies will become unwieldy. The extensiveness of the constituencies might in fact prove to be a blessing in disguise, since the merit of the candidates rather than the propaganda carried out in the immediate pre-election period will play a more significant part in the choice of the voters. The multi-seat constituency system will also permit voters to spread out their votes amongst different candidates and parties in a manner that will better correspond to their scale of preference. The present system permits the voter to accept or reject a candidate/party, without any possibility of taking an intermediate position.

We request all members of parliament, irrespective of their party affiliation, to reflect carefully on the dangers of the rotational system and opt for a multi-seat constituency system if it is finally decided to introduce a system of gender reservation in the State Legislatures as also the Lok Sabha.

Sd/-Ms. Saroja Kashikar, Wardha, President, SMA,
Ms. Suman Agarwal, Sewagram,
Ms. Vimla Patil, Amravati, and
Dr. Gail Omvedt, Kasegaon.

In the end, it was the Congress that was clever enough to take up the theme of women's political empowerment. But in doing so, they sought to sidetrack the self-motivated, energizing and empowering voluntary effort by a scheme of reservations. Rajiv Gandhi, in deep political trouble by 1988, proposed a new *Panchayat Raj* bill to try to regain his rural base, hence he offered 33% reservations for women.

Compulsions

Initially, there was a great hostility to quotas even from the 'left'. While Congress leaders like Sharad Pawar were going around trying to convince village level party men of the necessity of giving space for women, eminent journals such as the *Economic and Political Weekly* were publishing articles describing how reservations would only allow dominant male politicians to control the poor. Even leading women of the 'left' were not enthusiastic about reservations in the beginning. The Status of Women Commission report, published in 1974,

reported that they discussed but rejected the idea. But women activities of political parties were disgusted with the barriers they found themselves running into and were inspired by the energy and enthusiasm of the women's movement. When they began to argue that reservations were a "necessity" in order to get any political representation, they were speaking to a large extent, out of their own life's experiences; their own parties had so often sidelined women, that it was clear to them that without compulsion, the men of these parties would not move aside.

In Maharashtra itself, by the time the zilla parishad elections were finally held in 1990, 30% reservations of seats had been declared for women. The Shetkari Mahila Aghadi's efforts to form a broad alliance failed. The women of the farmers' movement therefore decided to contest the elections on their own, with the support of the Shetkari Sanghatana and put up candidates not only in the

constituencies that were then reserved but in many others as well. A significant number of candidates put up by the SMA emerged victorious but not enough to make a major impact at a time when the Congress was making a determined effort to make a political comeback. Nevertheless, the whole campaign for women's empowerment through organising 100% women's panels had a major transforming effect on many of the women and men who took part in it. Several 100% panels were put up and elected in gram panchayat elections by the SMA and the Shetkari Sanghatana, and for the first time in India, quite a few villages emerged with all-women village councils.

Women as Proxies

The experience of the implementation of reservations for women in panchayat raj institutions in Maharashtra has not been favourable. Almost everywhere, parties have fielded the relatives of established male leaders. There has been no impact on efficiency nor on the levels of corruption in the villages, district councils or municipality. And, at a larger level, the transformation of a voluntary, committed effort by both men and women to promote women's participation in politics turned into a hand-out by the state in the form of reservations. This had an adverse effect as the entire women's movement began thinking of reservations as a form of "empowerment".

With this background, it was quite natural that in the 1996 election campaign nearly all political parties promised women reserved seats in Parliament. The majority of women in rural or urban areas who were brought into the debate about reservations were also enthusiastic about the idea, partly because they would like to see women come forward in politics, but doubt the possibility of their being able to do it on their own.

It was in this atmosphere that the the 1996 Constitution amendment was introduced in the Lok Sabha.

Issued by the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi

Communist Dialectics

They may have been the most vocal in demanding the "immediate" passage of the controversial Bill providing 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, but the Left parties are not too enamoured to starting off the process at home.

This was clearly summed up by the general secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), Mr. A. B. Bardan: "What purpose will be served (through the party reserving Lok Sabha seats for women)? If we field a woman candidate in a non-reserved seat, she may well lose and we lose a seat. The others will gain the advantage. Whereas if she contests against other women candidates, at least a woman MP will be elected".

However, he adds, that the party is "rather unhappy" over the stalling of the Bill in Parliament, and promises it "100 per cent commitment" in the future as well. On the other hand, he accepts, that there is the reality that "giving fair" representation to women is not part of the political culture of our country".

It faces real problems in finding

enough women leaders. For instance, the party's 31-member National Executive, has at present just three women members.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) is not too well placed either in this aspect. Its highest body, the polit bureau, for example, has no woman member, and its central committee (CC), with over 70 members, has women members who can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

However, a CC member argues that coming into such policy making bodies is a "qualitative process" and cannot be considered in simple numerical terms.

He stressed that the reservations in Parliament and assemblies is required to rectify a social anomaly, whereas within the party, there is already the "consciousness" and "every effort is made to encourage women to come forward, but cannot consider a revolutionary organisation in these terms".

(Mr. Anirudh Bhattacharyya in *The Pioneer*, December 26, 1996)

If a genuine transformation of the life of the people has to be aimed at, creative enthusiasm for the ethico-spiritual order-dharma must be revitalised. We must acquire the habit of living and acting in the presence of God.

- Sri K. M. Munshi.



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Religious Extremism and Ethnic Rivalries

Taslima Nasrin

Democratic governments recognise military dictatorships for short run political interests. Secular states make friends with autocracies as well as theocracies. They tolerate even completely inhuman behaviour of fundamentalists. Such double standards practised by so called democratic and secular states at home and abroad give the fundamentalists a sort of legitimacy.

At first, I was wondering whether I should participate in a conference of authors and intellectuals of such a high stature.*

I am quite insignificant in comparison. But then, I thought over it and decided to join, for two reasons. First, I was threatened by the religious fundamentalists. They have decreed a *fatwah* (religious sanction) against me and set a price on my head. Even now, you have only to mention my name to provoke their angry reaction. Not only that, I am a criminal according to the government of my country too. The reason is that I have exposed the fault and injustice of the society and the government of my country, particularly their failure to protect the rights of the religious minority. The government there has banned my book, and issued an arrest warrant against me for committing blasphemy. I was forced to go underground. I managed to keep hiding for sixty long days with the help of my friends. At last, the pressure created by the international human rights movement forced our government to grant me bail and let me leave the country. I have not been able to go back home. My future remains uncertain. So I thought, I had some right to this Congress of humanists.

Secondly, though I have been far from my country and my own people for more than two years, I still remain true to my own ideals. I still believe in humanism, and not in any religion. I do not pray to any God for ending

my sufferings. I still have confidence in myself. And I can assure you that my ideological fight against religious fundamentalism will continue.

Personal Experience

I am an atheist. Although I am not a specialist in a study of religion, it is more my personal experience that has made me an atheist. I was born in a Muslim family. When I



Taslima Nasrin

grew up, I was shocked to learn that some of my neighbours were not the real owners of their houses. The actual owners had been forced to leave their homeland by the partition of India in 1947, a partition on the basis of religion. There is the land of the Hindus, across the border. The violent and fratricidal partition forced many Hindu families out of my country to seek refuge in the Hindu majority country on the other side of the border. On the other hand, many Muslim families came over to my country. I heard that it was religion that led to all these disasters. When I was young, I could not understand what type of religion that was.

The Dark Side of Religion

As I grew up, I came to know some other 'achievements' of religion. True, religion has led to some great things of civilisation - in the areas of painting, sculpture, literature and all

that. But we have seen too many abuses by religion. Can one really forget all those wars and strifes and plunders by religion in Asia, Africa or Latin America? It is after all a fact that a pope tore up the map of the world into pieces and gave a part each to a different imperialist group as a licence to colonise and proselytize the new world. Even Europe was not spared from religious strifes. Islam was also spread in different parts of the world by fire and sword. To me, the dark side of religion was always prominent. For me, the greatest philosophy was to love humanity. To shed blood and to shed tears for religion were equally dreadful for me.

Oppression of Women

Over time, in course of my training in science, I began to learn the power of observation, experiment, analysis and reasoning. My power of observation may have been limited, but I could not accept anything without reasoning. I have heard that there are many statements in the Hindu religious texts that are called *Aptabakya* 'received wisdom'. They are supposed to have been received from some superior authority, an authority that cannot be questioned. There are similar unquestionables in all religions. But I could not accept anything to be unquestionable. When I began to study the Koran, the holy book of Islam, I was surprised to know that "the sun revolves around the earth". I found lots of unreasonable ideas in the Koran. Surely, it was discriminating to women. The women in the Koran were treated as slaves. They are nothing but sexual objects. Naturally, I set aside the Koran and looked around me. I

*Humanist World Congress, Mexico City, November 14-18, 1996.

We owe the text of Ms. Nasrin's speech to *The Atheist*, published from Vijayawada.

found religion equally oppressive in real life. So one day, I had to take up my pen and start writing against the various misdeeds in the name of religion, against all the injustice, unreason, and prejudice sanctioned and promoted by religious institutions. I began to try and expose the crimes of religion, particularly the injustice and oppression against women. In my writings, I began to speak against all these. I have already mentioned the result of that.

Lokayata Tradition

There are some other reasons why I am against religion. It does not often teach people to love another. On the contrary, it often teaches them to hate people of a different faith. Religion also leads people to depend on fate and thus lose self-confidence. It unnecessarily glorifies poverty and sacrifice and thus serves the vested interests of the wealthy few. In all countries, and through all ages, the conscientious people have exposed these unethical aspects of religion and educated people to see religion with the eyes of reason and logic. Let me give an example of *Charvakas* or the philosophers of the *Lokayata* tradition, the materialists of ancient India. They raised many questions about religion, questions that appear simple but are actually very subtle. These materialists did not believe in reincarnation, did not believe in heaven and hell. They were quite vocal against the dominance of the priests. According to scholars, the organised resistance of these priests did not allow the materialists to make much progress. Even their texts have been almost obliterated. There remain only some fragmentary references to what they preached. But some believe that they had a big influence on the common people. Hence perhaps their name: *Lokayata*, which really means (the option or philosophy of) the common people.

The Real Conflict

Today, we are still carrying the same fight against unreason and prejudice. The rise of fundamentalism all over the world shows that the battle remains urgently necessary. In a dis-

cussion at Harvard University, this year, on the rise of religious fundamentalism. I had said that after the end of the cold war, the world faces a new battle between secularism and fundamentalism. As I had said, 'I don't agree with those who think that the conflict is simply between two religions - namely, Christianity and Islam. After all, there are fundamentalists in every religious community. Likewise, I do not agree with those people who think that the crusades of the Middle Ages are going to be repeated soon. Nor do I think that this is a conflict between East and West. To me, this conflict is basically between irrational blind faith and rational logical mind. To me, this is a conflict between modernity and anti-modernism. While some people want to go forward, others are trying to go backwards. It is a conflict between the future and the past, between innovation and tradition, between those who value freedom and those who do not.'

Fundamentalism's Patrons

I had always discussed the reasons behind the rise of religious fundamentalism. I think that the failure of secular democracy on the one hand and of communism on the other to solve the problems of underdevelopment and inequity has facilitated the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Disillusioned and hopeless people are now seeking salvation in the blind forces of faith. Beaten by science, overwhelmed by other civilisations, Islam is now in search of the 'roots'. There is an element of fear in its search. Of course, the responsibility for inciting fundamentalism should not be laid fully on the so called secular leaders of the ex-colonies who have used fundamentalism to serve their own interest. The responsibility should be shared by the democratic and secular states of the developed world. They have also made a lot of compromise with the fundamentalist forces. We have seen how the so-called secular political parties in Bangladesh use the religious sentiments of the people to get votes. But similar instances of rank opportunism have been seen in India and elsewhere too. We have also seen how the powerful western states have declared

protecting human rights to be one of their supreme objectives and then patronised fundamentalism overtly or covertly. Democratic governments recognise military dictatorships for short run political interests. Secular states make friends with autocracies as well as theocracies. They tolerate even completely inhuman behaviour of fundamentalists. Such double standards practised by so called democratic and secular states at home and abroad give the fundamentalists a sort of legitimacy. The governments have to succumb to the fundamentalists' pressure and proscribe books and make arrangements to send an author to prison.

Human Rights Universal

Some authors in the west are coming forward in support of fundamentalists. They are trying to argue that not all the customs in vogue in the third world countries are harmful for women. They find a sort of stability and social peace in the oriental world. They think that even *harems* are not necessarily bad for women, because they provide a degree of autonomy and independence! May I humbly observe that all this is plain hoax. For me, there can be no difference in the concept of human rights between the East and the West. If the veil is bad for the western women, then it is bad for their oriental sisters as well. If the patriarchy is to be fought against in the West, it should be equally fought against in the East. In fact, the fight is more urgent there because most of the women have neither any education nor any economic independence. If modern secular education is good for western women, why should the eastern women be deprived of it. The peace that some authors visualise in the eastern countries is, clearly, the peace of the graveyard.

Why Fundamentalism is Bad

The point is, the fundamentalists cannot be countered without a relentless and uncompromising fight. The struggle should be both theoretical and tactical. Democracy and secularism should be applied in practice and not remain a mere play of words. Fundamentalism is an ideology that diverts

people from the path of natural development of consciousness and undermines their personal rights. I find it impossible to accept fundamentalism as an alternative to secular ideas. My reasons are: First the insistence of the fundamentalists on divine justification for human laws; second, the insistence of fundamentalists upon the superior authority of faith, as opposed to reason; third, the insistence of fundamentalists that the individual does not count, that the individual is immaterial. Group loyalty over individual rights and personal achievements is a peculiar feature of fundamentalism. Fundamentalists believe in a particular way of life; they want to put everybody in their particular straitjackets and dictate what an individual should eat, what an individual should wear, how an individual should live everyday life - everything would be determined by the fundamental authority. Fundamentalists do not believe in individualism, liberty of personal choice, or plurality of thought. Moreover, as they are believers in a particular faith, they believe in propagating only their own ideas (as autocrats generally do). They do not encourage or entertain free debate, they deny others the right to express their own views freely, and they cannot tolerate anything which they perceive as going against their faith. They do not believe in an open society and though they proclaim themselves a moral force, their language is hatred and violence. As true believers, they are out to 'save the soul' of the people of their country by force of arms. Is it possible for a rationalist and humanist to accept this sort of terrible repression? The fight between obscurantism and enlightenment, between rationality and faith is therefore inevitable. But it is to be fought in the realm of ideology, in the field of education, on political platforms and in all the spheres of daily life.

Ethnicism and Nationalism

The self-assertion of various ethnic groups is of course of a different nature. There may be religious elements in ethnic struggles. But there can be many other reasons behind struggles against nation states. In the first place,

we must remember that the ideal of forming a 'nation' from different ethnic groups was often imposed by the colonial rulers, particularly in the oriental world. They were motivated in this partly by administrative considerations. But there was also a failure to build the necessary ideological movement for creating a truly nationalist ethos, a movement in which various groups of people could participate with dignity. Naturally, all these groups could not attain adequate representation in the nationalistic whole. I think the attempt to build a 'nation' in the former Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia or Soviet Union was, at least to some extent, imposed from above. Their nationalism was consequently faulty. Secessionist movements could spread easily, at the first chance indeed, through these faultiness in the nationalist structure. And naturally, these movements grew around the aspirations of different ethnic groups. There can be many reasons behind the sense of alienation of these groups, for example, the step-motherly behaviour of the centre, the dominance of the main ruling groups, uneven development, continuous neglect or attempts to impose cultural hegemony. All these, of course, mark a failure of the democratic process.

Again, the rulers commit a grave mistake when they try to bring the defiant ethnic groups back to the mainstream by treating their agitation as 'law and order problems' and tackling them as such. These movements can be dealt with only on the basis of

equality, justice, equal respect and true independence. It does not mean that the attempt to build nations should be forsaken and the nation states should be broken up into sovereign ethnic units. If we accept the principle of such division generally, very few states of the world will remain undivided. Nation states will break up with subnational and tribal units. The world will go back to the primitive state. This is why the question should be seen sensibly and with consideration and sympathy. The ethnic groups should be given the economic and administrative autonomy they deserve. But also their cultural identity should be carefully preserved. In this age of the onslaught of the so-called global market and global village, the question of cultural hegemony has become extremely important in the context of fighting fundamentalism. It is equally important for the dominant culture in a country to be conscious of the cultural rights of others. When fundamentalists loom large, the West should be careful in handling the culture of Asian, African and Latin American peoples. There is no such thing as a 'superior' or 'inferior' culture, there are only various cultural patterns which make up this beautiful, multicoloured mosaic. Those who are trying to form a nation with different ethnic groups should remember this truth as well.

MS. TASLIMA NASRIN is a wellknown writer and champion of human rights in Bangladesh. *Freedom First* featured Taslima Nasrin as its cover story in its issue of July-September, 1994. Readers who may have missed this issue, may write to us for a copy - *E.d.*

The Book That Provoked the *Fatwa* - and an Arrest Warrant



Lajja, the controversial novel by Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin, is a savage indictment of religious extremism and man's inhumanity to man.

The Duttas - Sudhamoy, Kironmoyee, and their two children, Suranjan and Maya - have lived in Bangladesh all their lives. Despite being part of the country's small Hindu community, that is terrorized at every opportunity by Muslim fundamentalists, they refuse to leave their country, as most of their friends and relatives have done. Sudhamoy, an atheist, believes with a naive mix of optimism and idealism that his motherland will not let him down ... And then, on 6 December 1992, the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in India is demolished by a mob of Hindu fundamentalists. The world condemns the incident, but its fallout is felt most acutely in Bangladesh, where Muslim mobs begin to seek out and attack the Hindus ... The nightmare inevitably arrives at the Duttas' doorstep - and their world begins to fall apart ...

Unrelentingly dark and menacing, the novel exposes the mindless blood-thirstiness of fundamentalism and brilliantly captures the insanity of violence in our times.

Translated from the Bengali by Tutul Gupta.

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We see the protection of universal human rights and the promotion of pluralist democracy as a central part of promoting political stability and good governance.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

This Congress applauds the still continuing international movement towards democracy. However, we condemn the worsening of the human rights situation that has taken place in the past years. Millions of people still have to flee their home, are displaced, are starving or being tortured and killed. Individual life seems to count for less. Liberal values are under threat.

We see the protection of universal human rights and the promotion of pluralist democracy as a central part of promoting political stability and good governance. In many countries in Africa and Asia, democracy has advanced, although enormous problems still have to be overcome. In particular, the transition to democracy in countries such as Malawi and South Africa is encouraging and should serve as an example for neighbouring countries.

At the same time, the Liberal International expresses its concern over the deteriorating political situation in many countries. In Nigeria, opposition members were executed without due process of law, despite pleas from across the world. In China, the arrest and torture of dissidents is a matter of routine. In Iran, religious and political freedoms are outlawed. In East Timor, the suppression of dissent with the illegal occupation by Indonesia continues unabated. In Burma, although Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released, there is no relaxation of military rule. In Guatemala, the murderers of Jorge Carpio have still not been brought to book. In several European

countries, democracy runs the risk of developing into a facade rather than a meaningful reality, such as in Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia and Romania. Democracy is a continuous process of which the holding of elections is only a part. Freedom of assembly, multi-party democracy, independence of the judiciary, transparency and account-



ability, freedom of press and broadcasting expression and independence of the electoral commission and recognition of elections results are universal and equally important preconditions before any state can be described as a genuine democracy.

Despite the remarkable development towards democracy in Latin America in the past decade, we see the continuation of a dictatorship in Cuba. We condemn Cuba's ruthless repression of Concilio Cubano members, whose only crime was an open attempt to exercise their universally recognised right to peaceably assemble to petition their government for a redress of grievances. We call upon the Cuban regime to put its policies to the test in free, fair and pluralist elections, and to allow the peaceful transformation towards becoming a democratic society ruled by respect for human rights as proposed by the moderate opposition.

The record of other Latin American states also causes grave concern. The role of the army in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua needs to be monitored carefully, and democratic, centrist forces deserve all international support. The situation of lawlessness and corruption in many parts of Latin America damages individual, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

We note that five years after the Gulf War, most countries in the region are still ruled undemocratically and many of them violate human rights. The Iraqi government still violates UN Security Council resolutions which concern human rights. This Congress requests the continuation of sanctions until the government of Iraq has implemented all UNSC resolutions.

The congress expresses serious concern on the human rights situation in Sudan, urges the government of Sudan and all parties concerned to give the UN special rapporteur on human rights, access to the country and to cooperate with other UN mechanisms.

In general, this Congress calls upon governments to take action on the following issues:

- We urge states to establish a permanent international tribunal to bring those who committed crimes against humanity or who have violated humanitarian law to justice.
- Governments should integrate foreign, economic development, trade and human rights policies. Governments are therefore urged to increasingly direct development assistance and programmes specifically at improving human rights and democratic development.

* Resolution adopted by the Liberal International Congress in Noordwijk, Netherlands, 5-8 June, 1996.

- Appalled by the rise of violence, racism, anti-Semitism and extremism in both developed and developing countries, we urge governments and political parties everywhere to promote a climate of tolerance and moderation and to condemn extremism in all its forms.
- Noting the continuing gap between the recognition and realisation of human rights and that only 82 countries have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, we urge UN members to ratify existing individual complaint mechanisms for human rights treaties and to add protocols to the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights and to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Capital Punishment is a serious violation of human rights. Therefore, we urge all governments to ban capital punishment.

PEACE AND LIBERTY

The Liberal International welcomes developments towards resolving conflicts in many regions, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Northern Ireland and the Middle East. There can be no justification for terrorism nor for violence where citizens can participate through democratic means in the determination of their future. True and lasting democracy can only be built upon a firm position of the political forces in the democratic centre. Stable democracy is more than an armistice between the extremes. The Liberal International fully supports international military peace keeping forces such as IFOR or within the UN framework. War, political instability and persistent violations of political rights and human rights are among the main causes of an increasing stream of refugees in many parts of the world,

particularly Africa and South East Europe. The Liberal International supports the work of the UNHCR and the governments that shelter refugees. The Liberal International calls for specific attention to the situation of refugees resulting from violations of minority rights.

Middle East Peace Process

The Liberal International Congress expresses its satisfaction with the peace process in the Middle East and calls upon all parties to continue this endeavour to its full completion in order to ensure peace and security for all peoples in the Middle East. The Congress pays tribute to the memory of the late Yitzhak Rabin who fell in the cause of peace. The Congress expresses its appreciation to all those involved in the peace process in the Middle East.

The Liberal International condemns terrorist acts as crimes against human society and as damaging to the peace process in the Middle East. The Liberal International expresses its concern on the growing danger of fundamentalist terrorism aimed against the peace process in the Middle East, and violating basic human rights. The Liberal International calls upon all governments to commit themselves to an unrelenting war against terrorism by encouraging cooperation between their security services, by forbidding financial support to terrorist organisations, by outlawing individuals and organisations which support and preach violence and terror, by banning any kind of relations with states which support, finance, train or offer safe harbour to organisations and individuals engaged in terrorist acts. The Liberal International calls upon all the states concerned to stop their support to Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and the Hizballa terrorist organisations.

The Liberal International calls upon the Palestinian Council soon and fully to implement the declaration of

intent to abolish all paragraphs of the Palestinian National Covenant that call for the destruction of Israel.

Taiwan

In the past year, we have seen increased tension in the Strait of Taiwan. Taiwan is undergoing a remarkable development towards democracy, and an assertion of its own history and culture. The Liberal International expresses support of the right of the people in Taiwan to determine their own destiny, as enshrined in the United Nations' principle of self-determination, and condemns China's use of military coercion and psychological warfare as a tool to interfere in the democratic processes of Taiwan.

Chechnya

The Liberal International deplors the loss of human lives and the suffering of the civilian population caused by the Russian military operations in Chechnya. Only a peaceful solution taking into account the interests of both Russia and the Chechen people can prevent serious jeopardy to the reform process, democratisation and stability of the entire region, and only a democratic Russia can be a close partner of the democratic countries in fora such as the G7 and the Council of Europe. The Liberal International reiterates its support for the Russian democrats, who support Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

Cyprus

For more than two decades of division in Cyprus, no progress has been achieved in the search for a just and viable solution of the Cyprus problem and this *status quo* on Cyprus is unacceptable. All parties involved in the Cyprus question are urged to demonstrate goodwill and work actively towards a lasting and peaceful solution. The Liberal International expresses its strong support for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary

General to resolve the Cyprus problem in a just and viable manner at the earliest possible time.

NUCLEAR INSECURITY

Political instability, particularly caused by the breakdown of the Soviet empire, has resulted in increased nuclear insecurity. This Congress calls upon the nuclear powers and the UN Security Council to tighten restrictions and controls on nuclear proliferation. We also express our concern over the safety risks involved in the operation and decommissioning of nuclear power plants in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere, and we call for an increased role for the IAEA in safeguarding these processes.

Horrified by extraordinarily high levels of civilian casualties in contemporary wars and by the destruction wrought by conventional methods, we call upon the UN member states to strengthen the UN Register of Conventional Armaments so as to work towards a more effective international regulation of the arms trade, and to ban land mines and a new generation of laser weapons. We also call upon the UN member states to cease all nuclear tests and the production of any sort of chemical weapon.

TRADE, DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

The path towards sustainable development is still a long one. Despite declarations in Rio on sustainable development in 1992 and international agreements on measures to halt the deterioration of the atmosphere, the results are not encouraging. Thus all countries must engage themselves more seriously to stop the deterioration of the environment, which often leads to famine and natural catastrophes.

The Liberal International continues to advocate free world trade, which

is to the advantage of developing countries, new democracies and the consumers in developed economies. The building of free trade areas such as CEFTA, NAFTA, MERCOSUR and the EEA can be a positive step towards the evolution of a genuinely global system of free trade. The Liberal International warmly welcomes the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). At the same time, we recognise that many countries have not yet ratified the relevant agreements, and also that we are still far from a new global spirit of free trade. We therefore call for the further creation of free and accessible markets and the lifting of trade barriers particularly by the trading blocs.

The Liberal International expresses its deep concern with the significant increase of people facing poverty. According to World Bank figures, up to 1.5 billion human beings are now living in "absolute poverty". While world leaders on 4 consecutive UN-summits committed themselves to allocate additional resources to solve environmental and social problems, development assistance has been reduced by 20 per cent. On this background, the liberal parties represented on the Congress, appeal to the world's well-off nations to reaffirm their commitment to fight poverty and to work towards a more even distribution of the world's resources.

Much development aid today serves to pay off debts of developing countries to the developed world. We call upon the financial institutions to find creative solutions to this paradox, which is an obstacle to economic and democratic development of many developing countries. That many developing countries are worse off now than they were decades ago is not merely a problem of the quantity of developing assistance, but more of the quality. We repeat our call for a new

direction in North-South relations by putting at the centre of development policies the fight against poverty and impoverishment. For this to succeed, the following measures are essential:

- the respect of human rights and encouragement of democratic development;
- an increase up to 0.7% of GDP for official development aid and a redirection of official development aid towards projects aiming at economic empowerment with special attention to the integration of the informal sectors into the formal sector of the economy, and including projects on nutrition, education and literacy, low-cost housing, basic health, etc. to ensure that the poorest countries, especially in Africa, receive a substantial share of the assistance.
- the promotion of private initiative and small scale enterprises.
- feminisation of poverty calls for special attention for the position of women in the measures taken.
- to end the practice of "tying aid" to purchases from donor countries as these impose higher costs and distort developmental priorities.
- massive programmes to assist the developing countries in reducing their debt-burden and to build the necessary institutions for a democratic society, such as a functioning independent judiciary.

We call upon the governments in the G7 to show leadership by encouraging greater transparency of the international financial institutions, whose commitment to good governance should include clear and precise human rights impact assessments as part of development and structural adjustment programs. We insist on the continuous evaluation of the development policies of international institutions

with special regard to their effects on and the involvement of the local population, and the need for diversification of agriculture and industries, especially in least-developed countries.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

One of the regions which is directly affected by the break up of the Soviet Union is Central and Eastern Europe. We call for the creation of a collective security order in which different forms of military, economic and political integration shall play an essential role, and advocate further initiatives to extend full membership of the European Union and NATO to those countries in Central and Eastern

Europe which embrace liberal democracy, full respect for the human rights of all citizens, the rights of national and ethnic minorities and a market economy.

The Liberal International remains committed to "... a world organisation of all nations, great and small, under the same law and equity, and with power to enforce strict observance of all international obligations freely entered into" (Liberal Manifesto, 1947).

An Effective UN

The United Nations however is in a permanent financial crisis. We renew our call for effective measures,

such as the suspension of voting rights, against those countries who consistently do not meet their obligations.

Ultimately, the responsibility for the effectiveness of the UN lies with the member states. However, we also call for a review of the effectiveness of the UN's bureaucracy and a continuous scrutiny of its financial efficiency. Noting the inadequacy of UN human rights mechanisms, we add our voices to those calling for reform of the UN institutions to make them more effective, representative and accountable for the twenty-first century.

A Liberal Manifesto for the 21st Century

Liberal International President Fritz Bolkestein has invited Liberal parties, groups, think tanks, members of Parliament, academics and others to contribute to the drafting of a new Liberal Manifesto. In a letter to Liberal International Patrons and Vice Presidents, Liberal parties and institutes, the Secretary General of the Liberal International writes:

"In April 1947, Liberal delegates from 19 countries met at an international gathering to agree on a Liberal Manifesto, and to found the Liberal International (World Liberal Union). At its 50th Anniversary next year, (1997) the Liberal International will discuss adoption of a new basic document, a Manifesto for the 21st Century. In the words of our President, Fritz Bolkestein, the heritage of the authors of the original Liberal Manifesto "... must not languish. We should cultivate it by carefully updating the body of lessons which past generations of liberal thinkers have left us, in order to find new answers to the problems of our time".

On behalf of the Manifesto-rapporteur, Lord Wallace of Saltaire, I am pleased to invite Liberal parties, groups, think tanks, Members of Parliament, academics and others to contribute to the drafting of the first text. Although the final version will of course be voted by the parties

and groups with Membership status in the Liberal International, we are seeking the widest possible input in the preparatory stages. This includes Liberals who are not (yet) formally associated with our organisation.

That text will be discussed by the Bureau and Executive Committee of the Liberal International, and by our affiliated parties to formulate amendments. The final version will be voted upon at our Anniversary Congress in Oxford, 27-30 November 1997.

As regards the form of the suggestions we receive: naturally it will be easier if we receive clear and concise ideas, rather than complete and lengthy political programmes and books. We prefer to receive short texts in the English language.

Anyone submitting ideas for the new Manifesto, will be kept informed about the further progress of the document.

Contributions should be typed or in clear handwriting. If possible, please send your contribution on disk (3.5" DOS, Windows or Macintosh disks) as well as on paper. Please limit your contributions to 3 pages. For longer documents, please attach a summary."

Liberal Manifesto

Adopted at the founding of the World Liberal Union (now Liberal International) in April 1947.

We, Liberals of nineteen countries assembled at Oxford at a time of disorder, poverty, famine and fear caused by two World Wars;

Convinced that this condition of the world is largely due to the abandonment of liberal principles;

Affirm our faith in this Declaration;

- 1a. Man is first and foremost a being endowed with the power of independent thought and action, and with the ability to distinguish right from wrong.
- 1b. Respect for the human person and for the family is the true basis of society.
- 1c. The State is only the instrument of the community, it should assume no power which conflicts with the fundamental rights of the citizens and with the conditions essential for a responsible and creative life, namely:
 - Personal freedom, guaranteed by the independence of the administration of law and justice;
 - Freedom of worship and liberty of conscience;
 - Freedom of speech and of the press;
 - Freedom to associate or not to associate;
 - Free choice of occupation;
 - The opportunity of a full and varied education, according to ability and irrespective of birth or means;
 - The right to private ownership of property and the right to embark on individual enterprise;
 - Consumer's free choice and the opportunity to reap the full benefit of the productivity of the soil and the industry of man;
 - Security from the hazards of sickness, unemployment, disability and old age;
 - Equality of rights between men and women.
- 1d. These rights and conditions can be secured only by true democracy. True democracy is inseparable from political liberty and is based on the conscious, free and enlightened consent of the majority, expressed through a free and secret ballot, with due respect for the liberties and opinions of minorities.
- 2a. The suppression of economic freedom must lead to the disappearance of political freedom. We oppose such suppression, whether brought about by State ownership or control or by private monopolies, cartels and trusts. We admit State ownership only for those

undertakings which are beyond the scope of private enterprise or in which competition no longer plays its part.

- 2b. The welfare of the community must prevail and must be safeguarded from the abuse of power by sectional interests.
- 2c. A continuous betterment of the conditions of employment, and of the housing and environment of the workers is essential. The rights, duties and interests of labour and capital are complementary; organised consultation and collaboration between employers and employed is vital to the well-being of industry.
3. Service is the necessary complement of freedom and every right involves a corresponding duty. If free institutions are to work effectively, every citizen must have a sense of moral responsibility towards his fellow men and taken an active part in the affairs of the community.
4. War can be abolished and world peace and economic prosperity restored only if all nations fulfil the following conditions:
 - Loyal adherence to a world organisation of all nations, great and small, under the same law and equity, and with power to enforce strict observance of all international obligations freely entered into;
 - Respect for the right of every nation to enjoy the essential human liberties;
 - Respect for the language, faith, laws and customs of national minorities;
 - The free exchange of ideas, news, goods and services between nations, as well as freedom of travel within and between all countries, unhampered by censorship, protective trade barriers and exchange regulations;
 - The development of the backward areas of the world, with the collaboration of their inhabitants, in their true interests and in the interests of the world at large.

We call upon all men and women who are in general agreement with these ideals and principles to join us in an endeavour to win their acceptance throughout the world.



*If there is anything that could overshadow
the close association we had with the great thinkers
of our time, it could only be the close association
they had with us.*



Why settle for anything less?

Are Nation States and Parliaments Irrelevant?

Edward Beaumont

Protection and security of the citizen was the central plank of the social contract bargain: No nation-state can now fully honour it, and most would not dare to tell their taxpayers.

The news most of us read, hear or watch tends to be dominated by events in our own country. Page one, or the first broadcast item, goes on domestic news unless there has been an event of obvious worldwide importance. Moreover, the delivery of information and news, via newspapers and via television and radio stations, is organised on national lines.

Out of Step

Much of the domestic news concerns national politics, politicians, political parties, government and parliament in the nation-state in question. The reason is, of course, historical: our ancestors rioted, marched, and chained themselves to railings to get the vote in one country or the other. Our fathers and grandfathers fought and died for one country or the other. We live and pay taxes there.

This article argues, however, that the national perspective has become out of step, both with what people need and with what is happening, whether the nations like it or not.

Most of the news and broadcasting media have not yet realised what is taking place, since newspapers and TV are still designed for national markets. The price of a foreign newspaper alone is a barrier, whilst my TV set has no buttons for French, German or Swiss stations.

Irrelevance of Parliament

But there are exceptions - people who see further or wider than the average. When the respected political writer, Peter Riddell tells us that "the House of Commons has become largely irrelevant to the main political debate", we should think about it carefully, for it is a statement that would have been unsayable ten years ago or at any time

in the last two hundred years. Suddenly, perhaps, only since the Maastricht Treaty, it is self-evidently true. The "mother of parliaments" and primary legislative chamber in which 50 million Britons are represented by 650 members of parliament might as well be turned into a museum.

Mr. Riddell notes the principle reasons: the underlying decline in the influence of parliament relative to the executive, the rise of European institutions, the increasing power of the judges, and even the role of the media. Parliament is, as he states, "inadequate in performing its allotted roles of scrutiny and legislation". Scrutiny that is, of the executive government, and legislation, in the sense of making good law.

He blames party politics and the career patterns and ambitions of the members of parliament themselves. It is true that in order to get anywhere in politics a member has to put his party first and try to obtain some kind of government or opposition job. Acting in direct response to the wishes of the voters is bad for the member's career. But this just means that most members of parliament are there for the wrong reasons. Was it not enough once to have the privilege of representing the people? No doubt many members misdescribed their reasons to the voters at the time of the election.

Institutions in Decline

Riddell is not alone in saying that parliament has failed. Andrew Marr is the chief political commentator for *The Independent*, a leading London daily. In his book, "Ruling Britannia" (1995), which one suspects that Peter Riddell may also have read, Mr. Marr says that parliament "... fails to legislate or

scrutinise effectively. And yet ... it still insists that it is sovereign, a constitutionally and democratically special place. Here is the central conundrum ... if it is sovereign, indeed absolute, they why is it so weak?"

I think that the national parliament and system of government in Britain, and probably in other countries too - certainly many in Europe and particularly the EU member states, are in a long term and ultimately fatal decline. However, I do not think that party politics or personal ambitions are the reason.

Of course the media are critical, and of course the judges and executive politicians exploit whatever opportunities are offered to them by the fact that parliament is weak. I think these things are some of the responses to the decline of parliament, rather than reasons for it. Even the rise of the European institutions is not a reason for national troubles; rather, the rise of these institutions and the weakness of parliament are both results of the decline of individual nations.

The Rise of the Nation-State

The concepts of nationhood with which we are most familiar go back two hundred years or more. Thomas Hobbes saw individuals, to prevent a state of anarchy existing, surrendering their natural right to self-government to a sovereign in return for some element of protection.

This was an upward-flowing chain looking (then) rather like a development of the feudal system: Individual, local lord, count, king. In Hobbes' time, that was already past. But it is true that throughout the history of mankind, the unit to which these freedoms have been ceded, the unit to which

individuals have looked for their identity, has grown larger and larger. Village, county, nation-state, and now what?

But counts and their counties were made subservient to kings, and kings in turn ceded (under varying degrees of pressure) their sovereign powers to the parliaments of their nations. To be a count now is little more than to hold a quaint old title, one that might help secure a job in a bank perhaps, whilst lordships of English manors are sold to businessmen as a bit of fun. Even sovereigns, without power - heads of so-called constitutional monarchies - take only a few generations to degenerate into tabloid irrelevance.

The Social Contract

Other thinkers developed the nation-state idea: there was a "social contract" between citizen and nation-state, leading to the culture (with which we are so imbued) of the nation as a sovereign and (in exchange for tax money) protector of citizens. From this comes the idea of the sovereignty of parliaments, in the sense that the will of parliament is all-prevailing and cannot be restrained, as an expression of the will of the people - the people of the particular nation-state, that is. Under social contract theory, one never had to think globally, never had to look beyond the boundaries of the nation-state.

Why? Because it was invented in an age of slow communications and low technology, when the nation-state was about as big a unit as could be made to work.

The Horse and the Mountain

The boundaries of the European nations were (with some exceptions, of course) fixed many years ago. They are determined partly by geographical barriers such as seas, or mountain ranges, which restricted or delayed communications in the age of the sailing ship, the cart, and the horse. The fences enclosing cultures, traditions, and languages were thus determined by the fact that most people did not travel far and could only communicate with those around them.

How far could a locally-elected representative travel to a parliament, and still get back to his constituents once in a while to inform them of developments in the capital and to seek their views? Nations of great size which were established before the age of rapid travel have either suffered from inherent instability (Russia) or have been organised as a collection of separate self-governing states (the USA).

What is Happening Now?

It is becoming trite to talk about the communications and technological revolution. But one must. Consider the enormous multinational companies that have grown. The largest of these (such as General Motors) is bigger than a country such as Austria, nearly as large as Switzerland, and only seven times smaller than a relatively large economy such as that of Britain (measured by comparing annual sales of the corporation against the GDP of the nation-state).

Even minor multinational corporations such as Samsung and Unilever are larger than Ireland or New Zealand, while middle-ranking ones such as Royal Dutch/Shell come in at about the size of Denmark or Norway. These organisations are not subservient to any nation-state, since they can migrate their operations to whichever jurisdiction suits them best. Moreover, they have nation-state' governments competing with one another for the opportunities that the companies bring.

When a corporation from Korea which we have never heard of wants to build over a green field in Wales, the British government is prepared to pay US\$ 30,000 (about Rs.10,50,000) for each job being "created", which (assuming that nobody is being misled or acting for the wrong reasons) means that the company has got something good which the government has not! Yet it is the government, not the company, which entered the social contract and which takes money from citizen taxpayers.

Can the Government Defend Us?

What about international non-commercial, or quasi-governmental, organisations? The number of these

have mushroomed from less than forty before 1914 to nearly 400 now - each representing a transfer of some or other functions away from nation-states. And the world of multi-national organisations is changing rapidly, since a whole generation or "system" of them (in very over-simplified terms, those which were established during the Cold War) is collapsing.

Without even mentioning war and its dreadful possibilities (which many people now unwisely treat as unthinkable), and the inability of any nation's armed services to defend its citizens, we now need quite a different sort of multinational organisation to help us deal with the great issues of our time - saving the planet from environmental degradation and from the results of over-population. These issues are not being, will not and cannot be tackled by nation-states.

Protection and security of the citizen was the central plank of the social contract bargain: no nation-state can now fully honour it, and most would not dare to tell their taxpayers.

Bypassing Parliament

Even the ordinary citizens have acquired new freedoms - of communication, of travel, of transferring funds - which allow them to bypass national parliaments. Anyone can be a "market maker" and, if successful in judging events, can force a national government to change direction.

As the veteran British politician, Dennis Healey, said in May 1994 (in the context of Britain withdrawing from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism) "The ability of national governments to decide their exchange rate, interest rate, trade flows, investment, or output has been savagely crippled by market forces ... What I cannot understand is why members of the government worry so much about what Jacques Delors might do when they have seen what George Soros has done, and may do again".

Indeed, it is no longer necessary for an individual to be a billionaire speculator if he wants to declare fiscal independence. Any one can establish

a business partnership with people in other countries via the Internet, and I do not see how any of the countries in which the partners reside can effectively tax the profits. We may expect a situation to develop in which more and more potential tax revenue escapes - that is, is not taxed in any country. This will increase the burden on the remaining taxpayers, and turn those people, when they realise it, into ardent anti-nationalists.

In Europe, the concept of nationhood has not actually served us very well. Nationhood has been the platform from which the worst wars seen yet on the planet have been launched. The creation of the EU can be seen as the result of the nations' failures, and as a sign of their impending redundancy.

When Will the Nations Collapse?

I am not suggesting that parliaments will actually close in the next five or ten years. There remain powerful barriers to this evolution - not least the self interest of those working in the system! National politicians will hang on to their jobs and perks, accepting the international developments, and continuing to build their careers on the travel and the self-importance of it, rather than on representing their voters at home.

A further great barrier is the diversity of legal systems. Nation states evolved their own laws and systems of law. They were a core part of the contract between citizen and state - and as the states evolved differently the legal systems are quite different one from another. They have also given rise to powerful institutions, naturally slow to change and keen to use their power to delay it. The nations, in their death throes, will hang on to these differences as the lawyers themselves hang on to their old privileges and restrictive practices.

This will be a serious problem, as we badly need an effective world-wide justice system, and will not get it. The laws we need will have to be a compromise between the different ones of the nations, and it is vital that we get international enforcement mechanisms

that work, since currently, it is far too easy to evade the law by hopping across the border, adopting a new name, or staying out of reach. Buying a house, collecting a debt, or the consequences of a violent crime or of polluting a river need to be the same in Vermont as in Edinburgh or Istanbul. What an idea!

Tax-raising Powers for the EU?

Significantly, the European Union is still funded by contributions from members states. National politicians would fiercely resist the idea that the EU should be given direct tax-raising powers and that nationally-collected taxes should be correspondingly reduced. Yet it seems a perfectly logical step, and one which would make the EU far more accountable and useful than at present.

Another factor which will delay the collapse of parliaments is that as parliaments lose power and sovereignty to international organisations, politicians will attempt to maintain the same amount of power by taking it from more locally accountable units of government, and having done so, to prevent it from being lost internationally by transferring it to unelected, unaccountable bodies which they think they can manipulate.

In Britain, as an example, the parish lost all of its power to the town and the county too long ago, and the central government in London has, by various means, reduced the powers of the towns and counties, pulling those powers in for itself and for a rapidly growing number of central, unelected authorities (Quasi Autonomous Non Governmental Organisations or QUANGOs). This transfer of power away from the people concerned and towards national politicians and their friends is the exact opposite of what people need.

What are Our Ties, Today?

This is a personal view, and one which could be expected to develop and change from time to time. I think of myself as British, but largely from force of habit, and I see no particular advantage in Britishness. It is not particularly important who I really am.

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The fact that I was born in a small English city is of no special importance to anyone. I no longer live there, and so much of the place has been demolished to make car parks and ring roads that it looks like everywhere else anyway.

My friends are of various nationalities and are widely scattered. Although all of what I might call my family (brothers, sisters, parents, in-laws, uncles, and so on) live in Britain, most of them are far enough away for daily contact to be impracticable. And however scattered we are, verbal and written communication is instant, if we want it.

The Need for Roots

But I do need roots, and I am far more likely to want to identify with the place in which I spend most of my time. The strength of its homeness depends not so much on where it is, but what it is. Where my wife and children are. Where we sleep, eat, laugh and argue.

For many people, work is where they are rooted. Though work now provides much less job security than before, there is usually a social side to it, especially if it involves moving to a new town where one's first friends will be work colleagues. And many people depend for their long term financial security on work and on a work-organised pension arrangement.

I find it hard to imagine thinking of any large city as home. Cities have become too spread out, and though their centres have died, for some reason the prices at the centre have not come down enough to rejuvenate them. I guess, if I lived in a small but still vibrant city, I might identify with it as home. If I lived in a small village (it is not the right word, but "commune" has an unfortunate ring about it in English, and is not a unit in British local administration), that would be my home.

The Need for Home

I actually live in a kind of suburb which is itself homeless, not knowing whether it is or not attached to a nearby town (and if so, which town, the one

to which we pay local tax or the one whose member of parliament asks us to vote for him occasionally). I suspect that it is just another forgotten suburb in a landscape of forgotten suburbs interspersed with fields earmarked for further suburbs.

Surely, I am not alone in thinking that this could not be what I want. And whilst what I want is almost certainly bad for national politicians, it may be good for the world. For I want a system in which I am rewarded for looking at a small place as my home - for staying there, producing and consuming there, rather than travelling and transporting goods around, burning fossil fuels and enlarging the hole above Antarctica. My home can take its place directly in the world, it can be a village in the world, rather than a village in a country in a nation-state in the world.

I would be quite happy to think in terms of world-wide systems of government for the important world-wide issues, such as the management of the ecology of the planet, the absence of nuclear wars, and the harmonisation of legal systems. I do not feel I need a national parliament for this.

Fear of Global Democracy

However, I do expect to get a vote, and I admit that I am very uncomfortable about some of the possibilities of global democracy, such as being outvoted by the Chinese by sheer weight of numbers! Fortunately, I expect it would have to come in at the European level first.

One thing I certainly want is a chance to be able to influence what happens at home. I mean giving village (or commune) residents real decision making powers about what happens there - things like whether more houses should be built on the land the national government says the Navy no longer needs, and if so, whether to build the houses at 50 to the hectare with no cycle tracks, or things like whether businesses owned by local residents should pay lower tax than businesses owned by corporations, or whether the local tax should be spent on caring for the elderly or

on getting young people started in business.

Local Decision-making Needed

Addressing big issues locally would mean that each village or commune would be able to determine its own future, in the world, and in competition with all the other villages or communes, each of which would be able to debate and adopt its own strategies.

Under the current system, I have no real chance to influence these decisions, all of which have been removed to different authorities to be considered separately. And most politicians would look very blank at the idea of such important issues being decided locally.

All I get is a chance once in a while to vote for local politicians who mimic those at the national level, or who sit in some ridiculous regional assembly, or who have powers only to consult, or who can only spend money which the central government either provides or allows the local authority to spend under centrally imposed spending limits.

Democracy at Levels Which Matter

So we don't need national parliaments any more. We need sensible management of the planet, and we need real influence in local affairs. Democracy needs to break away from political parties and from states and function at the levels which matter - the world and the commune.

Many issues once handled by national Parliaments could be decided by instant referendums at the appropriate level (say Europe, or the village). National politicians tend to resist referendums as nothing illustrates their redundancy better.

In Britain, just as Mr. Peter Riddell was writing that their job has become "largely irrelevant", members of parliament were in the process of considering whether to vote themselves a big pay rise. They gave it to themselves, of course.

COURTESY : *Swiss Press Review*

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Are People an Asset or a Resource?

V. C. Viswanathan

Among the more obnoxious expressions that have crept into management lexicon is the phrase "human resources". We normally exploit a resource and 'resource' is generally associated with inanimate objects. Mr. Viswanathan's comments are timely. For a beginning, Mr. Gowda could consider changing the name of the Ministry of Human Resources to the Ministry for Human Development. A name change that would be meaningful and welcome. -Ed.

Are people an asset? Ask any accountant. An asset is something a company buys, owns, sells or uses up. An asset is an inanimate thing that has a price tag which, like a plant or machinery, is acquired, installed, operated, exploited and allowed to depreciate over time, or sold off. A resource, in the colourful words of a writer, is something dug out of the ground, shovelled into a furnace, burned for its energy content, and then swept away.

Make no mistake. If you treat your employees like any other resource or asset, which can be acquired at a price to be used and discarded as you wish, they will respond accordingly; mechanically, sullenly, resentfully and not too helpfully.

Employees are People

Employees are people with intelligence, hopes, dreams, ambitions and aspirations. People don't want to be manipulated. They like to be inspired. Treated as people with respect and goodwill they will gladly, willingly and enthusiastically use their creativity, talents and skills to help you succeed.

"People are not a resource, they are people - in their glory, variety and ability," says Sir Harvey Jones, one of Britain's most admired business leaders and author of several popular books on management. He says, "There is practically no area of business where the difference between rhetoric and reality is greater than in the handling of people".

More than Money

If you want more from your people, you must give more of what it is that they value. The idea that employees want only money is outdated and must be discarded. In any case, in these difficult times, there is hardly ever enough money to buy loyalty or commitment. Companies must learn from some of the most successful, best managed non-profit organisations how to motivate people even when they have limited financial incentives to offer. The satisfaction of being part of a great and noble endeavour, the joy of doing some-

thing worthwhile and important, and the freedom of having a say in how the work is done, all combine to become a compelling motivating factor.

Dignity

Employees want their company and its leaders to treat them with respect, give them dignity, provide meaningful jobs, keep them informed of the company's goals and how it is doing, invite their full participation in decision-making and offer them opportunities to grow and gain control over their work. Any workplace can provide these without adding to financial cost. But it will require a shift in the way work is done and how a company is managed. We will need to change our assumptions about people and the role of management.

*

"Indian management must change". A Comment made in 1947 on this characteristic of Indian management by Shri G. L. Mehta, a former President of FICCI, is still relevant to much of Indian industry, though perhaps less than it was a decade ago. "The borderline between authority and autocracy or discipline and docility still seems to delude us. We lack the rudiments of organisational capacity and are far from having mastered the technique of building up and managing institutions. Our industrial organisations, for example, are, with certain exceptions, still largely in a medieval state and we adopt and follow methods which are individualistic and haphazard".

*

Right Priorities

Speaking at the annual convention of the Institute of Directors, UK, in 1993, Richard Branson, chairman of Virgin Atlantic Airways, said of his recipe for business success, "We give top priority to the interests of our staff; we give second priority to the interests of our customers; and third priority to the interests of our shareholders. Working backwards, the interests of our shareholders depend upon

the high levels of customer satisfaction, which enable us to attract and retain passengers in the face of stiff competition. We know that the customer's satisfaction, which generates all-important word-of-mouth recommendations and fosters repeat purchase, depends in particular upon high standards of service (and this) depends upon happy staff, who are proud of the company they work for. That is why the interests of our people must come first".

Putting People First

One of America's most respected and successful companies is Federal Express, world renowned for its reliable overnight delivery service. It was the first service company to win a Malcolm Baldrige Award for quality. The reason for their outstanding success is their corporate philosophy of putting people first. Every year, Federal Express employees participate in a companywide attitude survey containing 29 questions. The first 10 questions are about the atmosphere in one's immediate work area. Does the manager treat you with respect? Does he listen to your ideas? Does he help you do your job better? Does he show any favouritism towards anyone in the workgroup? The employees are also asked about the general atmosphere in the company and about the management beyond his or her immediate supervisor. The final question is on how well the company has responded in addressing the concerns expressed in the survey done last year. The results of the survey are tabulated by group and each manager is rated on a leadership index, based on the scores obtained.

This shows how serious the company is on practising the philosophy of putting people first. Fred Smith, CEO of Federal Express says, "We discovered a long time ago that customer satisfaction really begins with employee satisfaction. That belief is incorporated in our Corporate Philosophy Statement - People Service Profit".

Mr. V. C. Viswanathan is Advisor, Marketing, JK Industries Ltd.

COURTESY: *The Pioneer*.

TIBET

The Facts - II

The Status of Tibet

Tibet was an independent country in fact and law prior to the Chinese invasion in 1949. Throughout its history, Tibet possessed all the attributes of independent statehood recognised under international law. It has a defined territory, a population inhabiting that territory, a government, and the ability to enter into international relations.

The territory of Tibet largely corresponds to the geological plateau of Tibet, which consists of 2.5 million square kilometres.

The population of Tibet at the time of the Chinese invasion was over six million. That population constituted the people, a distinct race with a long history, rich culture and spiritual tradition.

The government of Tibet was headquartered in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet. It consisted of a Head of State (His Holiness, the Dalai Lama), a Cabinet of Ministers (the Kashag), a National Assembly (the Tsongdu) and an extensive bureaucracy to administer the territory of Tibet.

Tibet had its own legal system, a standing national army, postal system, national currency and conducted international relations and trade.

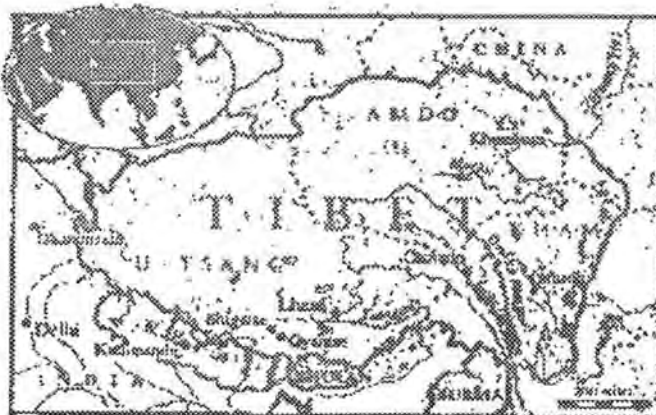
The international relations of Tibet were focussed on the country's neighbours. Tibet maintained diplomatic economic and cultural relations with countries in the region such as Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Mongolia, China, India, and, to a limited extent, with Russia and Japan.

Tibet's independent foreign policy is perhaps most obviously demonstrated by the country's neutrality during World War II. Despite strong pressure from Britain, the U.S.A. and China to allow the passage of military

supplies through Tibet to China when Japan blocked the strategic Burma Road, Tibet held fast to its declared neutrality. The Allies were constrained to respect this.

The Invasion of Tibet

The turning point in Tibet's history came in 1949, when the People's Liberation Army of People's Republic of China first crossed into Tibet. After defeating the small Tibetan army and occupying half the country, the Chinese government imposed the so-called '17-Point agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' on the Tibetan government in May 1951. Because it



was signed under duress, the agreement lacked validity under international law.

As open resistance to the Chinese occupation escalated, particularly in eastern Tibet, the Chinese repression, which included the destruction of religious buildings and the imprisonment of monks and other community leaders, increased dramatically. By 1959, popular uprisings culminated in massive demonstrations in Lhasa. By the time China crushed the uprising, 87,000 Tibetans were dead in the Lhasa region alone, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama had to leave Tibet.

Tibet and India

Tibet's relation with India throughout history had been very close and friendly, especially from the seventh century when Buddhism came there from India. Since then, the people of Tibet looked to India for spiritual guidance. Ancient Tibetan texts refer to India as Arya Bhumi, the Exalted Land. Describing Tibet's relation with

India, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia said, "Tibet has stronger ties with India than China, ties of language and trade and culture, not to speak of the strategic affinities between India and Tibet ..."

For centuries, Tibet served as an effective buffer zone between India and China. But all this changed after the Communist Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet. In 1950, when Tibet's biggest eastern town of Chamdo fell to the Chinese, the Indian Consul in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, sent an urgent message to New Delhi, which, in retrospect, turned out to be prophetic. He wrote, "The Himalayas have ceased to exist. The Chinese have invaded Tibet". He meant that the northern borders of India were no longer secure from external aggressions. In a Lok Sabha debate on May 8, 1959, Acharya Kripalani stated, "We are intimately concerned, because China has destroyed a buffer state. In international politics, when buffer state is destroyed by a powerful nation, that nation is considered to have committed aggression against its neighbours".

India accorded recognition to China in 1949. In 1954, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, while discussing on Panchsheel Agreement with China in the Parliament, wished that India should have accorded this recognition to Tibet instead of China and there would be no Sino-Indian border conflict.

With the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Indian and Chinese troops face each other on the Himalayan border for the first time in history. The first ever bloody war between the two countries was fought in 1962.

When Tibet was free, India had only some 1,500 personnel to police its long borders with Tibet. Today, India is estimated to be spending Rupees 55 to 65 crores per day to guard the same borders against over 300,000 Chinese troops stationed in what the Chinese call 'Tibet Autonomous Region' and which comprises only about half of the Tibetan territory, the other half being merged with adjoining Chinese provinces.

(to be continued)

The Salzburg Seminar

A Laudable Exercise in International Dialogue

Maneesha Tikekar

The Salzburg Seminar is different from the seminars in which one gets to participate normally. One understands this difference only gradually. The thrust of the Seminar is educative and inter-active and not academic in the narrow sense of the term. It provides an opportunity to live in an international community and to have a dialogue across cultures and nationalities.

Seminars are an integral part of the academic world. The term seminar conjures up a stereotype image of an academic activity with several scholarly, heavily footnoted papers being presented, in fact, often hurried through, in packed sessions with little time left for any meaningful discussion. Occasionally, a day's proceedings are followed by a cultural programme. But if you are a local participant, then you are most inclined to skip the last session of the day and return home to avoid the evening rush hour. To organise a two or three day seminar is indeed a herculean task for a university department or any institution of higher education.

Consider for a moment, an eight day seminar in residence in sylvan surroundings and pristine beauty in a small town tucked away in a corner of the Alps in an 18th century palace overlooking a small lake and facing the lower hills of the Alps. This is the famous Salzburg Seminar, a little known (to Indian academicians) but academically innovative programme which completes 50 years of

fruitful work this year.

In fact, the Salzburg Seminar is a permanent organisation which conducts a number of academic programmes in a year. What we know as a seminar is called a Session by the Salzburg Seminar. I had an opportunity to participate in one of its sessions "Conservative Political Movements in Western Industrialised Societies" in November 1996 along with forty two fellows and faculty members from thirty one countries, mostly Europeans with a sprinkling of Asians and Americans.

The Seminar was founded in 1947 by three Harvard Graduates - Clemens

Heller, Richard Campbell and Scott Elledge as a mission to promote a dialogue between young Americans and their European counterparts in the wake of an appallingly destructive second world war. What began as an intercontinental exchange assumed a global dimension soon.

The Seminar identifies and addresses issues of universal concern in its core sessions which are its mainstay. The Seminar also organises a few special sessions, which are different from core sessions in length and structure; and sessions and conferences under the American Studies Centre created in 1994. It offers educational

Readers interested in knowing more about the Salzburg Seminar may contact:

SALZBURG SEMINAR

Schloss Leopoldskron

Box 129

A-5010 Salzburg, Austria.

Tel. 43 662 839830

Fax 43 662 939837

Worldwide Web site home page

on Internet: <http://www.salsem.ac.at>

E-mail to infor@fc.salsem.org.



Schloss Leopoldskron

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programmes in curriculum development in American studies and English language pedagogy. A glance through the themes of the core sessions for the past two years and for 1997 reveals the Seminar's concern to make itself relevant to the changing world order.

The Seminar prides itself in facilitating a meeting, not necessarily of like minds but of inquiring and engaged minds. Truly so. As my experience goes, discussions during the Session were held in a most liberal and cordial atmosphere. Even some of the most ultra-right views expressed during the session were met with and responded to with an open mind by the participants. The fellows (participants) represent academicians, professionals, civil servants, legislators, politicians, political commentators and journalists - combining theoreticians and practitioners, and filling the gap between the academia, government and business.

A core session of the Seminar has generally fifty five to sixty mid-career professionals from around the world. The multi-disciplinary faculty lends its expertise without any compensation. The Salzburg Seminar has had the privilege of having some of the most well-known and respected men and women in their respective fields as faculty. They include among many others, Upendra Baxi, Saul Bellow, Betty Friedan, John Kenneth Galbraith, Nathan Glazer, Mahbub al Haq, Friedrich Hayek, Samuel Huntington, Vaclav Klaus, Arthur Miller, Joseph Nye, I. G. Patel, Leila Seth and Peter Sutherland.

The Seminar is housed in an 18th century palace, Schloss Leopoldskron, on the outskirts of the town. Built between 1736 and 1744 for Archbishop Leopold Firmian, it was restored in the 20th century by Max Reinhardt, renowned theatre director and co-founder of the Salzburg Festival. Its terrace faces a lake whose waters reflect the two Alpine Hills across, and the other side of the Schloss is overlooked by the majestic fortress Hohensalzburg perched atop a hill. The Schloss has the timeless grandeur of the 18th cen-

tury Baroque palace, which offers contemporary conference facilities, audio-visual equipment, computers, E-mail, and simultaneous translation facilities. The Schloss library holds a collection of 10,000 English language books and 130 periodicals. It combines the old world charm and state of the art technology. Computers in the library provide on line catalogue and CD Rom.

In fact, a week spent in classical grandeur at Salzburg is like a dream, and an expensive one at that. The cost of attendance of a core session is mind-boggling for any middle-class Indian. Payment of tuition and the cost of accommodation and meals for 1996 and 1997 is US \$ 4,000, excluding the transportation cost - a real astronomical figure. However, the Salzburg Seminar receives funds and donations from foundations, corporations and government ministries in order to provide scholarship assistance, in full or partial, to Fellows selected for admission. Nearly eighty percent of the Fellows can take advantage of this by writing a letter of request along with the application.

It would be doing gross injustice to the Salzburg Seminar if any account of it is concluded without reference to its food, living arrangements and social activities. The food is simply a gourmet's delight, although a typical Indian palate may find it difficult to relish. Personally, I enjoyed the food immensely, but what I missed for a week was plain water. The mineral water provided had a soda tinge and the tap water, I was told, had a high level of chlorine. The living arrangements in the adjacent Meirhof building, dating from the 17th century, are more than comfortable. The social events include staff parties, receptions, barbeque, concerts, banquet and dance. A four hour time slot on one day during the session is provided for a walking tour of Salzburg. The Seminar prides in combining American informality with Classical European elegance.

The Seminar has an alumni of nearly 17,000 fellows worldwide. An overwhelming majority of the fellows

come from Europe, but in the past few years, participation from Africa and Asia has increased considerably, thanks to the special efforts of F. Bradford Morse who served as the Seminar's sixth President (1986-1991). The Seminar is set to celebrate its 50th year in a big way in 1997. It has planned several activities, which include numerous receptions, colloquia and conferences and a series of regional gatherings in different parts of the world.

The Salzburg Seminar is different from the seminars in which one gets to participate normally. One understands this difference only gradually. The thrust of the Seminar is educative and inter-active and not academic in the narrow sense of the term. It provides an opportunity to live in an international community and to have a dialogue across cultures and nationalities. The primary purpose of the Salzburg Seminar session is to promote exchange of ideas, experience and understanding and to build networks among professionals around the world. And to this end, the Seminar has worked successfully.

MRS. MANEESHA TIKEKAR is with the Department of Politics in the S.I.E.S. College, Mumbai.

While many inroads have been made by consumerism and the so-called globalisation into the interiors of India, slowly and cleverly imposing and expanding the tyranny of uniformity, there remains an India resilient and resistant, facing new challenges with confidence confidence and creativity. The news of all this and all too often glimpses of this furiously complex and amazing spectrum, rooted in local traditions and enjoying spontaneous support and sustenance, do not reach us. But happily facts do not depend for their actuality on our knowledge nor on the absence of it.

Mr. Ashok Vajpeyi, Hindi poet and Chairman of the Bharat Bhavan Trust in *The Times of India*, January 8, 1997.

Debate

Liberalism in India

D. Anjaneyulu

Mr. Sharad Joshi's article on "Liberalism in India" (*Freedom First*, October-December 1996) is a delightful melange of excursions in history and philosophy, economics and politics, with a plethora of value judgments. Some of the conclusions are marked by a charming cocksureness, but frankly unsupported by logical arguments.

Many of the historical statements are vague and imprecise; and philosophical interpretations are unclear, where they are not altogether confused:

The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought described Liberalism as "a political philosophy whose origins lie in the Renaissance and Reformation, which acquired firmer roots in the 18th century and its greatest coherence in the 19th ... liberalism springs from a vision of society as crucially composed of individuals (rather than, for instance, classes), and of their liberty as the primary social good. This liberty is to be defended in such rights as those to free political institutions, religious practice, intellectual and artistic expression".

It is true that the modern English-educated, westernised, city-based Indian intelligentsia were the first, not only to become aware of the values of liberalism, but also to propagate them among the others. It is absurd to argue, by implication, that these values still survive in their natural form in the countryside among the illiterate and semi-illiterate rustic population under the domination of casteist and sub-casteist leaders.

Mr. Sharad Joshi must have had a taste of their benefits during the period of his association with the U.P. Kisan leader, Mr. Tikait. (It may be recalled, with disgust, that it was in the presence and under the initiative of the latter that a young couple, whose

marriage was inter-caste, were openly beheaded before a large crowd, a couple of years ago).

It was thanks to the insistence of Dr. Ambedkar that the individual was accepted as the unit of the society and the State, and not the family, clan, caste or tribe. The present writer, who was born in a village and lived there for the first fifteen years or so (ie. till the completion of his school course), has rather unpleasant memories of his personal identity being smothered by the over-powering images of caste, class, and traditional family occupation. It was only in the city (more cosmopolitan over fifty years than now) that he was able to regain his human individuality and intellectual identity to a considerable extent.

That ancient Indian society was essentially plural (with any number of castes, sub-castes, clans, races, tribes, groups and religious denominations) even more so than the present, may be easily conceded. But there is a vital point to be noted. A plural society is a sociological phenomenon ('Ancient society is very vague - was it pre-Aryan, Aryan or Buddhist?). A liberal society is a socio-cultural evolution. It represents a political-economic philosophy. Both culture (not in an anthropological sense) and civilisation of a positive kind are not totally natural growths; they are partly artificial, being the products of a conscious, concerted effort, as also of a determined, self-discipline and self-restraint.

Coming to the spiritual aspect, pray, what exactly is a 'Vedanta society'? (we hear such of them, organised by god-men and god-women in California and Connecticut). 'Vedanta' literally means 'the end of the Vedas' or the 'Upanishads'. The basic texts of Vedanta are the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the Brahma-sutra, together known as "Prasthanatraya".

The central question considered in the vedantic schools concerns the nature of the Brahman. (*A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy*, by John Grimes).

One begins to wonder whether liberalism, as we understand it, is preoccupied with the nature of the Brahman and the mystic and esoteric relation between the Jivatma (the individual soul) and the Paramatma (the universal soul). 'Liberalism' is very much involved with the material world and its welfare, the greatest good of the greatest number, souls or no souls. Agnostics and atheists (who may or may not believe in the soul) are deeply committed to the rights and responsibilities of the human individual. A sage or a recluse in the forest, who opts himself out of civilised society but sets himself as a spiritual teacher (preceptor or dictator) is not necessarily a liberal.

In Mr. Joshi's views, Gandhi represented a "platform much truer to Hindu thought that upheld some sort of ecumenism - the identity of all faiths". Gandhi's view of Hinduism was very much his own - a personalised interpretation not accepted by any practicing Hindu, who has made a deep enough study of the religious classics concerned. His Rama Rajya has little or nothing to do with the Rama or Ayodha of Valmiki. It was a vague and unverified approximation Sir Thomas More's Utopia, along with maybe Samuel Butler's 'Erewhon'.

So was the case with his ecumenism. It was not acceptable to Muslims, Christians and other non-Christians. Not even to the Hindus, for that matter. The most liberal of Hindus believe not that all religions are identical, but only that their goals are similar, though their paths are different. Gandhi was not able to convince his Muslim friends and followers, even this point, which appears

fairly innocuous and unobjectionable to some of his Hindu disciples.

As for the philosophy of Anarchism ("That government is the best, which governs the least"), it cannot be claimed as the basis for a liberal State and government, which believes in a reasonable degree of social (and economic) organisation. There is nothing like a "Vedanta tradition of liberalism"; only a Vedanta tradition of Idealism and Transcendentalism. It looks as if we are indulging in the pleasant exercise of confusing two different levels of discourse - the spiritual and the material.

It is well known that Rajaji initiated and conducted a powerful campaign against 'the Licence-Permit-Quota' Raj, supported by like-minded intellectuals and political activists all over the country. The party founded by him, in 1959, christened the

Swatantra Party, was not a 'liberal party' by any means. As one who happened to be present at the inaugural meeting (at the Vivekananda College auditorium in Mylapore, Madras), I clearly remember Rajaji saying that he wanted a 'conservative' party in India. Other speakers on the occasion included M. R. Masani, N. G. Ranga, Bhanu Pratap Singh, S. Narayana-swami and many others. But none called it a liberal party.

Not only is it a far-fetched idea but an unreal one to say that Rajaji tried to salvage the remains of Indian polity after the destruction were Nehruvian socialism and revive or resurrect it in the Gandhian spirit. It may be an admirable example of wishful thinking. Rajaji's earnest efforts were to build a prosperous India on the foundations of an economy of free enterprise and peasant-proprietorship. It was quite different from both the other

models - Gandhian and Nehruvian. The short-lived success of his experiment was a great pity.

It was an instance of refreshing candour to admit that now "very few appear to be interested in a liberal polity", which shows that the concept of liberalism and its practice did not obviously have its roots in "ancient India" or its fruits in the "Vedanta Society". Nor did we have all the world's trees in India. But, we have a soil that is conducive to liberal and democratic ideas. To imagine and assert that we had them all is an illusion. To adopt desirable ideas from other systems and graft them to our own is a sign of practical wisdom. "Liberalism" is one of them, and not the least important.

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

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BOOK REVIEWS

INDIA BRIEFING - STAYING THE COURSE edited by Philip Oldenburg, (published in co-operation with the Asia Society); M. E. Sharpe Armonk, New York; 1995; pp.242; price not stated.

INDIA BRIEFING *Staying the Course*

Philip Oldenburg, Editor

Published in Cooperation with The Asia Society
Deborah Field Washburn, Series Editor



M.E. Sharpe
Armonk, New York
London, England

Reviewed by
Prof. Nagindas Sanghavi

This eighth sequential volume of "India Briefing" is an annual tribute to the devotion and the insight with which the Asia Society and more especially Philip Oldenburg have been presenting their overview of Indian affairs. Year after year, issues are selected and competent scholars are persuaded to comment upon them with a wealth of detail and perceptions.

The present volume ends with a chronology of events in 1993-94 and a glossary of terms to make India more intelligible for outsiders. Ainslie Embree who spent quite a few years in India, is no stranger to the Indophile and his piece 'India Reading' seeks to present India in all its rich complexities which have embellished as well embroiled this ancient society. As he very rightly brings out, India is much more imprinted with a cultural synthesis crystallising all the conceivable diversities rather than by political or economic structures. Embree convincingly demonstrates how an old society like India cannot be understood in

the exclusive context of modernity. We need a Janus-like approach wherein a future will have to be analysed and forged from the concepts and values of the past. India can update itself only by an incremental process because the ingrained foundations can neither be scrapped nor overlooked. Some of the more recent publications ought to have replaced the better known but by now outdated volumes in an otherwise excellent list of suggested readings.

Out of the four major contributions which form the corpus of the volume, two are devoted to the problems thrown up by the policy of economic reforms and liberalisation. The jettisoning of socialist dogma and jargon has created a piquant situation for the labour movement in India. Ramaswamy has discussed the problem in great detail with the necessary facts and figures. But the tragedy of the piece is that we are denied the full benefit of his scholarship and labour. Unfortunately, he confines himself to a small organised section though he is well aware of the far more numerous and far more decisive sections of the labour force in India. Ramaswamy informs us of the divisions separating one from the other. Recruited from the vast reservoir of the unemployed and under-employed mass, labour in India has always been divided into unequal parts - a very small but vocal and aggressive section of organised labour led by politically oriented trade unions and a vast mass of mute and docile body of unorganised and inhumanly exploited workers.

The rapid and somewhat diffused industrialisation in post-Independence India has very sharply demarcated them from each other. A fairly large portion of organised labour is employed by the State or by State sponsored corporations. Much of the obstinate opposition to the new economic dispensation comes from minute but very assertive groups unwilling to give up their ill-gotten gains from the public treasury. The silent majority of the working class, on the other hand,

may be impatiently waiting for more jobs and better payments expected from a more competitive economy, where standards are set by multinationals. The organised sector, used to an ethos of indiscipline and higher incomes may not be very happy with the economic reforms, but they do not and cannot speak for Indian labour. This conflict of interest between the two sectors may account for the liquidation of trade unionism in India when labour needs most is guidance and protection.

Meghnad Desai has meticulously examined the possibility of political pressures scuttling the emergent contours of a liberal economy and has cited quite a few examples of such backtracking. The political scenario has changed beyond recognition after this article was written and the danger which he envisaged has become much more evident now. A wobbling ministry may be more easily pressurised into populist measures or at least into avoiding hard decisions. But the expected has not happened, at least not yet. The parallelogram of forces that is India makes it very difficult to go by appearances and surmises. It was a minority government, precariously perched and ever so positioned as to tumble down any moment that initiated the process of liberalisation and successfully negotiated all the initial bottlenecks. Desai seems to be unduly worried about the occasional lurches involved in the tight rope walking from a controlled to a free economy. Such swings may delay but would not necessarily stall the reforms.

After all, there is such a thing as hastening slowly, and it is left to the politicians to lubricate the transition by verbal exercises to preserve the illusion of continuity in the midst of extensive changes. The national mindset developed over a period of forty years will need time as well as a few such turns and twists. The free economy in India will have to be governed by our constitutional commitment to a welfare state and may

not be an exact replica of what one finds abroad. If the achievements of the Rao Ministry are any indication, one need not over worry about politics stalling economic reforms. But the anxieties and the warnings sounded by Desai are too important to be lightly brushed aside.

Two Researchers - John Wood and James Manor - have chosen to concentrate on the middle level political landscape. This is a very refreshing approach, because, so far, the federal government and macrolevel studies have hogged quite some scholastic attention. The change also signifies the growing impact of regional developments on the political scenario at the national level. While Prof. Wood has chosen to treat Gujarat as a microcosm and sought the linkages between national and regional trends and currents, Manor has analysed the technique and methods by which Chief Ministers seek to hold on to the most important power positions in the states.

Wood is very selective and has concentrated on "religious tensions, crime and corruption, caste politics, the environment and ... 1995 State elections". Undoubtedly, these are major issues shaking as well as shaping national and regional political processes. But his thesis of Gujarat being "the vanguard of social, economic and political change" is more an expression of his love for Gujarat than a valid statement.

Gujarat must not be judged from the Gujarati Diaspora all over India and in the western world where they displayed dazzling brilliance. Nearly three-fourths of its area and two-thirds of its population experienced a quantum jump in 1947 when they were catapulted from the seventeenth to the twentieth century and most of them have as yet not quite got over the shock. Apart from a few factual errors - (the most serious being the number of self-immolations given as seventy five (page 36) when it was only one and

that too the victim was set on fire by his companions and it was not suicide but a murder), Wood has succeeded in highlighting a very significant area of research for politicists. Mr. Wood's analysis of communalism and caste integration in Gujarat can provoke a serious debate because on both these counts, there is a sharp difference of opinion. To describe Gujarat as a land of Gandhi and a stronghold of Gandhian pacifism is very common and very irritating. Gandhi blossomed into what he was, not in Gujarat or India, but in England and South Africa and his mindset was more English than Indian. Since the 1960s, Gujarat has been listed by the Government of India, as among the most pro-communal riots zones. Gujarat has a very long record of such riots: Muslim-Parsi riot at Bharuch, 1852; Hindu-Muslim riots at Dholka and Veraval, 1892. To blame the emergence of the BJP for communal tensions would be an inverted syllogism. It is the fury of communal passions that has sustained

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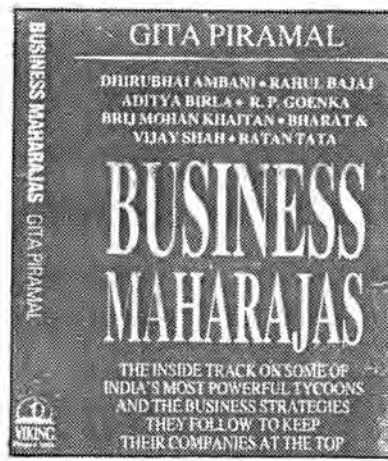
and strengthened that party. Hindu communalism has now grown to Satanic proportions, but the partition and the horrible events that followed cannot be blamed for it. Iron entered the Indian soul as the memory of those days is still green in many quarters.

Prof. Manor's presentations leave a lot of things unsaid because of the way he has chosen his samples. Chenna Reddy of Andhra, Shekhawat of Rajasthan and Sharad Pawar of Maharashtra can hardly be held up as stereotypes of chief ministers in India. Stalwarts like Jyoti Basu or more colourful personalities like Jayalalitha or Laloo Yadav are noticeably absent. The status and style of chief ministers have undergone a sea-change during the last two decades. The period of single party domination (1947-77) converted most chief ministers into puppets with a few honourable exceptions like Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant and Sardar Pratapsingh Kairon. Even senile idiots could rule states for long periods (as happened in Madhya Pradesh). Chief Ministers have been a fertile recruiting ground for the Union ministry and a Dwarka Prasad Mishra or a Kamaraj played a decisive role in the organisational politics of the Congress Party.

But like the Preambles of Constitutions, the best part of the volume does not technically form a part of it. The editor's introduction rambles over a wide area and is suffused with his unobtrusive erudition and an innate empathy rarely found in those who observe India from afar. He is so attuned to the Indian ethos that he instinctively prefers the descriptive symbol of elephant rather than the more usual one of tiger to illustrate the awakening and the determination to illustrate the awakening and the determination which informs today's India. The tiger is a terror; the elephant is loved for his grace and wisdom.

PROF. NAGINDAS SANGHAVI is retired professor of political science.

BUSINESS MAHARAJAS by Gita Piramal; Viking Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., 210, Chiranjiv Tower, 43, Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019; 1996; pp.474; Rs.500



Reviewed by
Sonal Shah

The book, *Business Maharajas*, has, within one month of its release already made it to the list of best non-fiction books. And with good reason. The natural curiosity to gain an insight into some of India's most famous industrialists was bound to make the book a highly marketable one, but its immense readability and the racy style that sustains the interest of the reader throughout is what has propelled it to the bestseller list.

As the jacket indicates, "the eight 'business maharajas' profiled in the book are among Asia's most powerful industrial tycoons. Their combined turnover amounts to a massive Rs.550 billion. Between them, they employ some 6,50,000 people and indirectly affect the lives of millions more. Sip a cup of tea, drive to work, build a house ... and the chances are that in these and a myriad other ways, you are using products that they manufacture or market."

The lengthy biographical essays on Dhirubhai Ambani, Rahul Bajaj, Aditya Birla, Ram Prasad Goenka, Brij Mohan Khaitan, Bharat and Vijay Shah, Ratan Tata, are a study in contrasts. While some, like Dhirubhai Ambani, started life as a petrol pump attend-

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ant, others like Aditya Birla, Rahul Bajaj and Ratan Tata were born with a golden spoon and have inherited much of their empire.

Gita Piramal says she was driven to working on this book by the desire to find out why a company behaves the way it does and to understand the people and the compulsions behind the business events. She justifies the choice of these seven industrial houses and the exclusion of several other famous entrepreneurs that spring to mind, on the criteria that the chosen ones had to be men with a vision for the future. Men, 'who controls business empires set up in the 20th century and are 'leaders in their chosen area of activity'. The focus was also to choose dynamic industrialists from family run businesses and not from professional managers, thus eliminating leaders like Sushim M. Datta of Unilever.

Because all the profiles are under one cover, they provide a fascinating insight into the radically different styles of functioning and approach of the various magnates. Dhirubhai Ambani's flamboyant style, jumping in at the deep end, planning and creating mega projects of world calibre, having production capacities far in excess of local demands is in marked contrast to Aditya Birla's gradual and systematic expansion plan. Birla was so successful through his continuous expansion pattern of upgrading and improving factory output year after year, that it eventually became the staple tenet of his group's corporate philosophy. Birla built some 70 factories in 25 working years in every conceivable field - acrylic fibre, aluminium, chemicals, cement, paper, textiles, to name a few.

Rahul Bajaj, on the other hand, preferred to concentrate on manufacturing two wheelers and not going in for diversification. His cautious determination to 'knit' his organisation into becoming a market leader, has made Bajaj Auto the world's third largest two wheeler company. In contrast, R. P. Goenka has not set up a single industry from scratch, but has acquired his empire through shrewd takeovers and is dubbed as India's takeover king.

Ratan Tata has just been at the helm of the Tata empire for five years, but is already making brisk plans for restructuring the mammoth empire to ensure its continuing its leading position in the coming decades. B. M. Khaitan and Bharat and Vijay Shah are a different class of entrepreneurs. Khaitan has slowly built up his tea estates, so that today, he has the world's largest individual tea empire. While Bharat and Vijay Shah were diamond traders who had the foresight to get into diamond cutting and polishing at the right time to become India's leading diamantaires with factories in India, Thailand, Israel and Belgium. All of them, of course, are highly focussed and motivated, are 'obsessed' by their work and put in long hours at their table.

While reading this book, certain questions arise. Historically, three of the industrial houses portrayed, the Bajajs, the Birlas and the Tatas, grew during the *swadeshi* days of India's freedom struggle. To what extent were they inspired by the *swadeshi* movement? Did it have any bearing on their style of functioning, compared to the others? For how long did the influence remain after Independence? It was also a belief then that Indian industry had a social responsibility of providing employment to large sections of the population and of working for the development of the country. Does this kind of thinking still persist, especially after liberalisation and the tremendous increase in competition, from the MNCs? Secondly, though Mukesh Ambani says that he prefers not to employ foreign graduates and MBAs and prefers to train locally educated young men, and Birlas have sharpened and honed the traditional marwari "paratha" system of accounting to perfection, why has no distinctive Indian style of management emerged?

Gita would do well to utilise all this material she has gathered to write another book, which looks into these and other questions on different aspects of Indian industry.

The book is extremely well re-

searched and provides a wealth of information. Interesting reading, both for those in business and industry and for the layman.

DR. SONAL SHAH has a doctorate in Political Science and is an occasional political commentator.

EARTHQUAKES by A. K. R. Hemmady, National Book Trust, Popular Science Series; 1996; pp.102;Rs.31



Reviewed by
B. B. Nadgir

A few seconds of severe devastating shock - years of painful rehabilitation and reconstruction - helpless survivors look up in futility for a trauma that only time can heal - this is the harsh oft-repeated picture. But will this change? Is there anything one can do to reliably predict earthquakes, or tame them or reduce their power or minimize damage? To understand this, it is necessary that the public, the engineer, the government hierarchy, the politicians, and, above all, the media persons, must first understand the why, when, where and how of earthquakes in simple terms without jargon.

This is what this popular science book by A.K.R. Hemmady aims to

provide, taking the reader through a simple and conversational discourse. It is therefore a most opportune and welcome subject.

After briefly recounting mythological legends about who causes earthquakes, the author guides his audience successfully through a maze of amazing theories to show that earthquakes are one of the ways the unstable earth is constantly adjusting itself in continuing evolutionary squirms through the ages. He admits of numerous loose ends and controversies nagging the ages. He admits of numerous loose ends and controversies nagging past and current theories but their detailed analysis may not be popular. The pioneering researches of the 19th century Geological Survey of India (GSI) in studying earthquakes; the discovery of various wave forms and their propagation; instrumentation for their detection; concepts of seismic epicenter and zoning; isostatic balancing of the earth's crust; roots of mountains; the theory of the liquid core of the earth, to name a few, are lucidly chronicled.

The author introduces Plate Tectonics as today's most acceptable theory on earthquakes, coming at the end of a series of discoveries and theories beginning with the pioneering 19th century discovery by the GSI of continental glaciation in central India which occurred about 270 million years ago. Thus was born the concept of "Gondwanaland" comprising the continents of Africa, South America, Antarctica, Arabia and peninsular India which initially clustered together around the South Pole but later drifted away from one another. This is Wegener's Continental Drift theory. According to this theory, the earth's crust is formed of rigid "plates" about 110 km thick which constantly drift over a semi-molten substrate. The plates move away from each other along the mid-ocean ridges which are formed of submarine volcanic lava effusives and where new crust is continually created. Where plates "approach" one another, one of them buckles down or 'subducts' and the other rides over it to form fold moun-

tain chains or island arcs. In these latter belts where plate movement is restricted, stresses build up along the line of contact. Sudden release of stress accumulated beyond breaking point causes earthquakes.

The Indo-Australian plate comprising India, Australia and a major part of the Indian Ocean is drifting east from the African plate along the Carlsberg midocean ridge and simultaneously northwards away from the Antarctica plate along the "Mid-Indian Rise". The Indian subcontinent - a small part in the Indo-Australian plate - is alone moving north at a higher speed of 5 to 30 cm per year and had crossed the Equator about 55 million years ago. It is still moving and abutting on the Eurasian plate along the Himalayas which is visited by a number of devastating earthquakes.

Strangely, the real significance of the "stable" peninsula relative to the mobile Himalayan belt was passed off despite several recorded earthquakes and the fact that earthquakes within rigid plates were still enigmatic, till the real jolt from the 1967 Koyna earthquake. However, with no direct proof except for some feeble co-relation between shock frequency and reservoir filling, the now fashionable cover of Reservoir Induced Seismicity concept was developed. The Aswan Dam Earthquake in Africa which struck its lake shores 65 km. away from the dam is quoted as an example but is not convincing. For the latest enthusiasts, the reservoir need not belong to the same dam to the extent that according to them an earthquake like that of Khillari in 1993 can be triggered by remote lakes! Perhaps, a multiple correlation of depth of focus of the quakes, the visible or hidden or geophysically interpreted faults and fractures and lineaments, their depth and continuity in single or an echelon vertical planes in the reservoir area and the reservoir filling could be useful.

As Hemmady points out, human lethargy and addiction to traditional building methods is the main culprit behind the damage and fatalities. India is not alone in this, Hemmadpanth

notwithstanding. Need any earthquake visit the Himalayas to ravage dwellings made of loosely piled walls of rounded stones without any foundation on the perpetually downward creeping slopes of loose talus full of voids?

But regardless of how earthquakes are caused can anything be done to save lives and property? Yes, says Hemmady, based on sound proven logic. His description of seismic zoning maps and their updating and measures successfully adopted so far reveal the vital importance of incorporating seismic zone-based safety factors in designs of large structures like dams, sky scrapers and other massive structures, to substantially reduce damage and casualties, if not prevent them. The author deserves thanks for showing another ray of hope - that with continuous and precise measurements of unusual terrestrial phenomena and the commonly known abnormal animal behaviour it may be possible to predict the likely place, time and size of an impending quake and thus initiate advance warning and evacuation. The Chinese have reportedly succeeded. We should, too. Earthquake-resistant structures are also suggested to minimize damage.

This book is a must for all home libraries and deserves wide publicity. Armed with the knowledge the book provides and that quakes are not for quacks, the public must now demand statutory standards and provisions for earthquake-resistant designs and safety factors and promise itself to abide by them unflinchingly and without resistance. However, what with a proverbially short public memory, earthquakes will come, shock, shake and go, but the people will suffer, unwarned and unarmed.

Mr. B. B. NADGIR is Director, Earth Resources Management Centre Pvt. Ltd., Nagpur. Formerly Director, Geological Survey of India and General Manager (Geological Services) in Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd., Nagpur.

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