

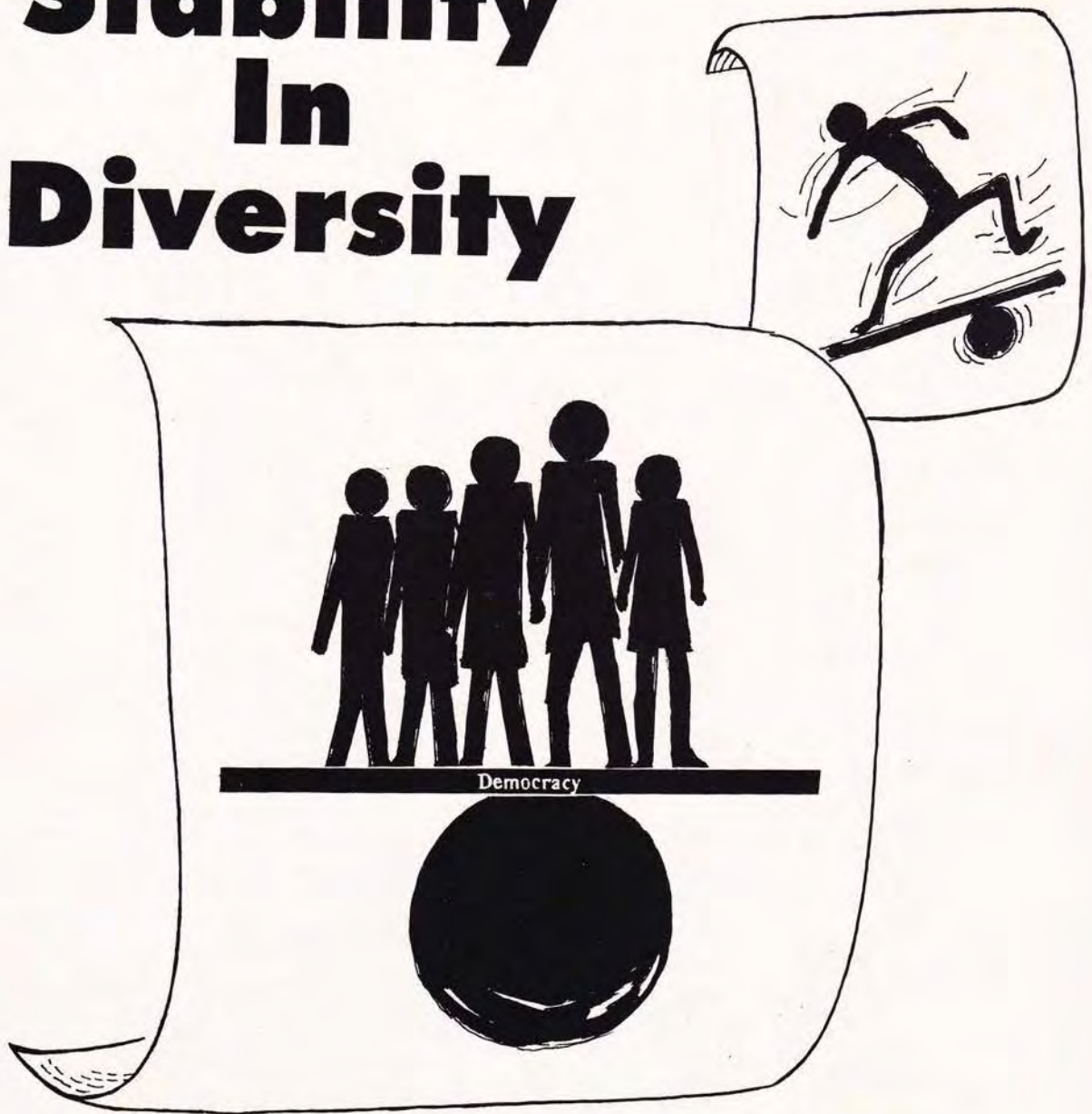
A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

January-
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46TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Stability In Diversity



Maharishi D.K.Karve

Congress of the Liberal International

An Appeal from
COMMON CAUSE

AN ORGANISATION FOR VENTILATING COMMON PROBLEMS OF THE PEOPLE
A-31, West End, New Delhi 110 021.

PEOPLE HAVE WOKEN UP!

Mr. H. D. Shourie, Director of COMMON CAUSE addressed the following letter to the General Secretaries of 41 political parties in this country. He requests the public to write similar letters to at least 17, if not all 42 parties, listed on this page.

We are writing this letter to all political parties. Through it, we are conveying the anguish and concern of our people at the debasement of politics that has come about in the country. The word "politician" has become an object of ridicule and condemnation. Politicians, in general, with few honourable exceptions, have become synonymous with self-serving, unprincipled humbugs interested only in feathering their own nests and, at most, concerned only about power and their party, utterly disregarding of the interests of the country and the people.

This country of vast potential has been reduced by the politicians to being the ninth most corrupt in the world, its major cities among the eighth most polluted, with rampant poverty everywhere, disgraceful illiteracy and facing the severe disaster of population explosion. We have lost face in the comity of nations and have had to hang our head in shame at what we have demonstrated to the world in recent months.

People have now resolved to cleanse the garbage from politics. They will not allow those to get elected who are devoid of principles, who have criminal records, who have a reputation of self-serving, whose names are associated with corruption, who don't carry any record of selfless and competent service, and those who they feel cannot be expected to help lift the country out of the present morass. People have woken up. They want only those persons in politics who are motivated by the urge to serve the interests of the country, and not merely the party.

We appeal to political parties to put before themselves the objective of raising the standards of the country and solving the problems of the people, and to not merely look for ways of manoeuvring for power. Parties should look only for those who have competence to assess laws, who have an image of selfless public service, who are wedded to work for the welfare of the people.

People will not vote for any person who has a criminal record, who has been involved in any allegation of corruption, who gives the impression of indulging in excessive expenditure for winning election, who has been involved in fracturing and manoeuvring of political parties, and who in general has an unimpressive record of public service.

We hope that political parties will recognise these requirements and rise to the occasion at this momentous juncture.

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Communist Party of India (Marxists) New Delhi 110 001.	All Party Hill Leader's Conference (Armison Mark Group) Meghalaya 794 002.	Hill State People's Democratic Party Shillong 793 002. Meghalaya.	Muslim League Kerala Calicut 32.	Shivsena Mumbai 400 028.
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Samata Party New Delhi 110 001.	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Chennai 600 018.	Kerala Congress (M) Kottayam.	Public Demands Implementation Convention Shillong 6.	Telugu Desam Hyderabad 500 029.
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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

By the time this issue reaches your hands, you may have voted in the 12th General Elections to the Lok Sabha. We are fairly certain that many of you would have been perplexed on who to vote for. The issues highlighted by most political parties are not quite the priorities of the voters, opinion polls notwithstanding. One party which has shoved under the carpet divisive issues (for the time being at least) has trotted out the excuse that what the country needs is political stability. Yet stability by itself did little to provide even the basic necessities to the common man particularly the forgotten ones in the hinterland of the big cities. Another talks about the free market and how it alone is capable of delivering the goods, sweeping under its carpet the fact that 40 years of statism reduced the nation to beggary and bankruptcy and whose leaders made it official policy to penalise those who exceeded production targets.

What the voter wants is not rhetoric but some credible assurance that there will be law and order, clean drinking water, primary education and basic health care; and the opportunity to make an honest living.

Regional parties with their ear to the ground are more likely to heed the common man than national parties with 'helicopter views'.

The last issue carried a tribute to Acharya Atre. This time it is Maharshi Karve. There could not have been two more dissimilar persons but both were dissenters who were not prepared to accept the *status quo* and did something about changing it.

As we go to press comes the sad news of the passing away of Mr. Aziz Madni. Azizbhai was a valued member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. We convey our deepest condolence to Begum Abida Madni. We shall carry our tribute to him in the next issue.

Editor

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WITH MANY VOICES

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

Strength recognises and respects strength. For India technology is strength.

Bharat Ratna Mr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam,
The Express Magazine, December 28

Nehruism means the taxing of productive groups for subsidising parasites.

M. D. Nalapat, *The Times of India*, January 8

Stability does not help us. We are looking at an unstable polity. That helps us consolidate our position. To feed on the carcass of other political parties.

Kanshi Ram, President of the Bahujan Samaj Party,
Outlook, December 22,1997

India has finally done it in the 50th year of its independence: From Kashmir to Kerala, the country is now united in the flames of communal violence.

A. S. Paneerselvan and Venu Menon,
Outlook, December 22,1997

For 40 years we have played the game according to the rules. But if you have to fight those who play foul what are you supposed to do.

BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee, *India Today*, January 5

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral doth protest too much. He protests, curiously enough not his resolve to do something, but his inability to do anything.

Editorial in *The Indian Express*, November 12,1997

Increasingly the feeling you get with official data is that you are dealing with sand, not rock.

Professor D. K. Srivastava of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, *India Today*, November 24,1997

Whatever people might claim about their religious beliefs, the majority of them are, in their daily practice, non-believers.

The Dalai Lama, *The Times of India*, December 25,1997

It is now the midpoint of the miracle fiscal year. What have we to show for it? Asia's best finance minister. And Asia's worse economic performance.

Mani Shankar Aiyar, *India Today*, November 17,1997

The South Korean model no longer works.

An 'Indonesian intellectual' quoted by
The Economist, January 17

If you do get back, see to it that those who got us into this mess get their due.

Lt. Col. Rikh to Brigadier Dalvi, quoted by Major General A. K. Verma in his book *'Rivers of Silence'* (on the war with China in 1962) and cited in
The Indian Express, December 14,1997

Good girls go to heaven. I go anywhere - that's my philosophy.

Nilakshi Sengupta, a Lintas Executive,
India Today, January 12

With friends like Arjun Singh, Sonia Gandhi needs no enemies.

Sunil Sethi, *The Times of India*, January 2

Max Weber, a German sociologist, defined the state as an entity that has a monopoly over legal violence. India proves that the converse is also true: if criminals cannot be punished by the law, in effect they become the state.

The Economist, September 27, 1997

Some day, Paswan will leave the Railway Ministry - but he will leave it bleeding.

Editorial in *India Today*, October 13, 1997

Revolution no longer flows from the barrel of the gun. It now flows through the lens of the television camera.

Abid Hussain, *Business World*, December 2,1997

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

A Scholarly Hoax

One of the most perceptive studies of the Emergency was a Penguin book by David Selbourne called *Eye to India*. Later this Oxford don published books on political philosophy. Recently, he published a book called *The City of Light*, which is a translation of a book of travel written by Jacob d'Ancona, a thirteenth century Italian jew. This is a book "describing his journey to China in 1217 four years before Marco Polo." The manuscript of the book was made available to David Selbourne in 1990 at Urbino and the donor's condition for giving it to him was that his name should not be publicized and the location of the manuscript should remain unknown.

A number of academic specialists in the United States cast doubts on the veracity of the account as well as on the book itself. Though the jews then preferred to write in Hebrew the book was in medieval Italian. The author gave both Hebrew and Christian dates a thing never done by the jews. The barrage of scholarly criticism made the publishers abandon the project in the United States but it was published in the United Kingdom. The book is now dismissed as a hoax. "Jacopo's preoccupation with sex and gender issues has a strangely contemporary odour; we are entertained to descriptions of striptease, genital organs, male and female homosexuality, and oddest of all, a thirteenth-century Chinese feminist whose doctrines are a hotch potch of Julie Burchill and Madame Mao."

The language of the book parts of which are presented in an Appendix, the numerous anachronisms, stylistic mistakes (for instance the Bible quoted in Italian which no jew then would do) and the terms used all conclusively prove that the book is an elaborate scholarly hoax "sailing

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



under the wrong colours". It is Selbourne's fiction masquerading as a translation of an arcane text.

Readers who are interested can get a more detailed expose in the *Times Literary Supplement (TLS)*, November 14, 1997, pages 15-16.

Republic Day Honours, 1998

The United Front government deserves to be congratulated for restoring the prestige of the national awards ranging from Bharat Ratna to Padma Shri with this year's awards. For the first time in quick succession two non-political figures, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam and Smt. M. S. Subbalakshmi have been honoured with the Bharat Ratna. Of the thirty people so decorated, twenty four are politicians and statesmen - though Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Shri C. Rajagopalachari were also distinguished men of letters. Bhagwan Das and Mahamahopadhyay Kane were the scholars, one an activist in the world of religious culture and the other an academic in the best sense of the term. Maharishi D. S. Karve and Mother Teresa were social workers of eminence. Mr. J. R. D. Tata, an industrialist *non pareil*. Each of them richly deserved the honour and there can be no debate on it unlike those on politicians like MGR whose government was dismissed and the Bharat Ratna awarded posthumously as a sop. Nobel prize winner Sir C.

V. Raman and Sir M. Visweswarayya were the two scientists to receive the Bharat Ratna earlier and we had to wait for many decades for a similar honour to a scientist.

M. S. Subbalakshmi

M. S. Subbalakshmi is a national figure and has remained a marvel in the world of music. Many columnists as different as Ramachandra Guha and Sharda Prasad had suggested her name for the award. Even regional newspapers in small towns like the *Dainik Bhaskar* not only splashed the news in banner headlines but wrote a knowledgeable editorial on MS and her music. *Freedom First* too had paid tribute to the remarkable couple of T. Sadasivam and MS a few issues back.

To Subbalakshmi honours are no new thing. She has had awards, prizes and honours pouring on her and she has taken them in her stride with an equanimity that is striking. Had this award been announced when her husband was alive it would have thrilled the couple. Subbalakshmi brought music to the masses and has transported millions of the uninitiated to elevated realms of delight. Her career has been unique for she captured a world that was dominated exclusively by the male who scorned at women's capacity to participate in public concerts.

RS

Dr. Krishnabai Nimbkar

Dr. Krishnabai Nimbkar was a *Freedom First* subscriber that is how we came to know she had passed away - when her copy of the journal was returned with the word "died". Enquiries later revealed that she passed away in May 1997 in Los Angeles at her daughter's residence.

It will be a matter of deep regret for me that I did not make her acquaintance earlier than when I contacted her in 1993 in connection with a seminar Mr. Masani and I were planning on the topic: 'The Business of Government'. Replying to our invitation Dr. Nimbkar wrote *inter alia*: "Since the seminar is in Pune, it will not be difficult for me to attend it, even if just to associate myself with

the effort. At the present time, (I will be 87 in October) I am seriously considering retiring from all active public work. So, I do not know the quality of contribution I can make by take part in the Seminar! However India must live." That last phrase "However India must live" could well have been her epitaph.

Dr. Nimbkar a medical doctor was a freedom fighter in the real sense of the term. She courted jail twice in 1931 and 1938. After freedom she did development work among rural women which led to the establishment of the Bharatiya Gramin Mahila Sangh. Later she served in the Central Social Welfare Board and was deputed by the Planning Commission to study Rural Extension Service programmes

in the USA, Canada and Japan.

Disillusioned with Congress politics she became a political dissenter without entering active politics. In the early eighties, she set up a Joint Council of Citizens in Pune. She wrote: "I began to get involved in the citizen's movement in Pune with the belief that to make democracy stronger, vocal, self respecting and effective enough to be able to question authoritarianism and demand accountability from the establishment, a strong citizen movement is the only panacea..."

Freedom First salutes her memory. A great individual, a great liberal.

SVR

14TH IHEU WORLD CONGRESS

The 14th World Humanist Congress of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) will be held in Mumbai from January 10 to 14 1999. The theme of the Congress: "Humanism for Human Development and Happiness".

A National Congress Committee consisting of all the IHEU member-organisations in India as well as members of the South Asia Humanist Network has been constituted under the presidentship of Justice (Retd.) V.M. Tarkunde.

The IHEU which is the apex federative body of humanist, rationalist, secularist and freethinkers' organisations around the world has consultative NGO status with the United Nations (New York, Geneva and Vienna), the UNICEF and the Council of Europe. The IHEU also maintains operational relations with UNESCO.

The IHEU defends democratic principles and the scientific method and repudiates all authoritarian attitudes. The IHEU promotes the application of reason and reasonableness in solving human problems.

The IHEU which was founded in 1952 at Amsterdam has nine member-organisations in India. It has its headquarters in London which is headed by an Indian Executive Director.

Carl Sagan, Richard Dawkins, Indumati Parikh, Bertrand Russell, V. M. Tarkunde, Andrei Sakharov, Francis Crick, are some of the well-known humanists associated with national humanist organisations in their own countries.

Among the issues expected to be discussed at the World Congress are: Humanism in the current world; youth and humanism; moral education; education for democracy; problems of women; an earth endangered by violence, production of armaments and by fundamentalism.

The Indian Radical Humanist Association (IRHA), the principal host organisation for the Congress is inspired by the ideas of M. N. Roy who was IHEU's founder vice-president.

Readers of Freedom First who wish to enrol as delegates should get in touch with Dr. Indumati Parikh, c/o Centre for the Study of Social Change, Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya, MMGS Marg, Mumbai 400014.

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Stability in Diversity

The Relevance of Participatory Democracy

Lionel Fernandes

For faith in the democratic process to take root, it is necessary that the political system be fully open, transparent and responsive. It should create conditions whereby the masses feel that their security, dignity and livelihood are assured and that there is a perceptible improvement in the quality of life from election to election.

Any democracy worth the name must be participatory, as a non-participatory democracy is a contradiction in terms. In every true democratic set-up, the people are expected to take an active part in deciding what is good for the community as a whole and in implementing what is decided upon. The implementation of decisions is followed by the next step of evaluating the results of those decisions and taking corrective measures where necessary. True, democracy is an ongoing process requiring continuous involvement on the part of the common citizens. Unfortunately, in practice, it has come to mean casting a ballot periodically and suffering the consequences thereafter. Democracy has become a ritualized affair producing results that are banal, to put it mildly. What has gone wrong?

Basic Components of Democracy

In the first place, we must realise that a vibrant democracy presupposes certain vital inputs that we often take for granted. One such input is alertness. Unless the people are continually on the 'qui vive' and are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, the public issues at stake and the calibre of their so-called leaders and representatives, they are likely to be taken for a ride by the latter.

Another input is concern. By this, we mean a genuine feeling of belonging to the polity and of sharing

in its weal and woe. One may be very well aware of what is going on but still be aloof, uninvolved and unconcerned. If the mass of people are thus disaffected, it is time to bid farewell to democracy.

A third requirement is sensitivity whereby one's awareness and concern are fine-tuned to specific situations in which one descends from the general to the particular, and is ready to take part in concrete actions to uphold democratic norms.

A fourth requirement is openness to ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are different from one's own, as we live in a plural society where people of different ethnic origins live side by side. For democracy to succeed, tolerance of and respect for behaviour patterns different from the ones that we are accustomed to are necessary.

A fifth requirement is honesty whereby there is consistency in what we think, speak and do. There is no double-think, double-speak and double-act, as this makes consensus and solidarity impossible to achieve and sustain.

A sixth requirement is courage to take a public stand that conforms to the norms and values we profess to hold in private. Many individuals are very categorical in asserting principles in private but fight shy of abiding by them in public. This dichotomy does not augur well for democracy.

The absence or weak presence of these six inputs or requirements constitutes what we perceive as impediments to participatory democracy. It is, therefore, necessary to reflect on the state of our Indian society today and draw some salutary lessons for toning up our democratic life in this Golden Jubilee Year of our Independence.

Awareness

To begin with the first requirement stated above, viz. alertness or awareness, we need to ask ourselves whether our people are sufficiently aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Here the answer has, unfortunately, to be largely negative. Awareness of human rights generally, and of civic and political rights in particular, is quite nebulous. Thus, it is not surprising that abuse of these rights by the police, by the security forces, by vigilant groups, by riotous mobs, by militants and so on, is frequent and widespread. In the absence of quick and credible remedial action, there is a growing feeling of anomie and cynicism which are detrimental to democratic culture. Awareness of responsibilities is even less evident than of rights. What one gets out of the system is of paramount concern rather than what one can contribute to it. Thus, we notice a woeful lack of civic sense and of social responsibility among the bulk of our people, though there are exceptions here and there. An anarchic approach to social, civic

and political issues seems to prevail and surely democracy cannot flourish in such a milieu.

As for people's awareness of the worth and performance of their leaders and representatives, one is relieved to note that while sycophancy is far from dead, people are less and less willing to tolerate corruption and arbitrariness on the part of the public authorities, and are coming out openly to demand greater accountability and efficiency from them. The common man might be illiterate, but he is no fool. This has been demonstrated time and again in local, state and national elections, when our citizens have shown their innate perspicacity and sound common sense. This trait augurs well for democracy and should be fostered assiduously.

Concern and Sensitivity

As for concern and sensitivity, we find these in short supply in large sections of our national community. Loyalties tend to be parochial, based on language, caste and creed. There is little of civic culture that expresses a sense of belonging to a wider society, transcending denominational barriers. Thus, there is no sense of outrage when injustices are perpetrated against women, tribals, dalits, minorities and other weaker sections, or when national monuments are vandalised, resources frittered away, environment ravaged or public trust abused. There is a pervasive sense of indifference to the social evils that jeopardise nationhood. Participatory democracy cannot be based on such shaky foundations.

A vigorous campaign needs to be launched at all levels and on all fronts, beginning with grassroot agents of socialisation, and liaising with those at higher levels, to en-

sure that masses of citizens are sensitized to the imperatives of social justice and harmony, without which there can be no participatory democracy worth the name. Families, kinship groups, educational institutions, professional associations and communications media, in tandem with civic authorities, political parties and public-spirited individuals and groups must work to create a new civic culture that will breathe fresh life into moribund institutions and conventions.

Openness

In the highly plural society that is India today, openness to diverse moves and organisational patterns is a way of life that reinforces the democratic temper of acceptance and tolerance. Most of the time, most of our people know how to synthesise unity from diversity. But there are moments of aberration when, under instigation from vested interests and revanchist elements, entire sections can go berserk and turn on each other "like monsters of the deep". There should be inbuilt safeguards against these atavistic throwbacks. A collective mindset imbued with human empathy and scientific objectivity needs to be fashioned, and this is the prime task facing all agents of socialisation. Else, participatory democracy will remain a mirage, well into the next millennium.

Honesty

As for honesty being a vital input for participatory democracy, we find that notwithstanding the noble dictum that "truth alone prevails" (*Satyameva Jayate*), public probity is in increasing short supply in our land of '*Sanskriti*' (refinement) and '*Maryada*' (decorum). Public office is viewed, not as a sacred trust to be held for the common good, but as a vehicle for self-aggrandisement and a spoils

system. Public morality degenerates into rhetorical posturing and upstaging one's rivals. No sanctity attaches to electoral promises or policy pronouncements. Public memory being proverbially short, many a volte-face can be executed with impunity *a' la* Enron. Values and norms are short-circuited to enable unscrupulous characters to survive and thrive, while honest people are sought to be sidelined, if not penalised. The net result is a travesty of government of the people, for the people and by the people. As the saying goes, honesty is the best policy. A major lacuna in our educational curriculum needs to be filled, and that is the absence of a substantial input of value-education. Individual, social and professional ethics needs to be inculcated in all citizens from the early and most impressionable years, or else habits of integrity will stand little chance of being ingrained. A hemorrhage of values bodes ill for participatory democracy.

Courage

Finally, turning to courage as a vital ingredient, of participatory democracy, we find that this quality, while not totally absent, is not evident in abundant measure and needs to be cultivated from early schooling onwards. Discipline should not degenerate into unthinking conformism nor deference to subservience. Initiative and creative thinking, frankness no less than discretion when speaking out one's mind, steadfastness of purpose and willingness to give credit where it is due – all these aspects of courage need nurturing. They deepen, strengthen and enrich participatory democracy and greatly limit the scope of sycophancy and the personality cult which are the bane of any democratic policy. The ability to laugh at oneself, to call the bluff

of the establishment and to admit one's mistakes are also aspects of civic courage which nourish democratic culture. Leaders of stature cannot be expected to emerge from a society of moral pygmies though there are always exceptions to prove the rule.

Structural Domain of Democracy

Besides the above mentioned impediments to participatory democracy which belong to the 'psychological realm', we need to identify other impediments belonging to the 'structural realm' with both national and international dimensions. The structural realm comprises both social formations and political institutions which mould and condition people's ways of thinking, relating to each other and behaving generally. In a very real sense which is not always evident, structures of the mind are related to structures of society. In some sort of circular dialectic, they spring from each other, reflect each other and reinforce each other. Both sets of structures need to be critically evaluated, reformed and restructured where necessary, simultaneously.

From one angle, a social structure like the caste system could only take shape where a caste mentality was widely prevalent. A hierarchical way of thinking, relating and acting was institutionalised in caste rankings and got entrenched over centuries.

From another angle, inequitable social formations had acquired such a staying power that the individual had to come to terms with them by a process of internalisation, if only for survival. Thus, after the manner of the 'chicken and egg' syndrome, psychic structures gave rise to social structures and social structures were in turn internalised and so reinforced psychic structures.

Form Without Substance

It follows that educational action in the psychological realm and socio-political action in the structural realm are required in close co-ordination so as to remove the impediments to participatory democracy. Psycho-sociological structures that have been in existence during centuries of feudalism and colonialism cannot be demolished in half a century of national independence. Mere recourse to external devices and instrumentalities such as periodic elections, parliamentary debates, government resolutions, statutory enactments and constitutional amendments without an on-going 'revolution of the spirit' will not deliver the goods of participatory democracy. The outer trappings must not be mistaken for the real thing. Many of our public bodies are functioning in a merely ritualistic and stereotypical manner. They are either elite-friendly or mafia-friendly, but not people-friendly. The common man does not feel comfortable dealing with any branch of the government, whether executive, legislative or judicial, whether at local, state or national level. Social and political workers often develop their own networks of vested interests and the common man is constrained to turn to them as a last resort. Thus, disillusionment with the political system sets in and a chasm opens up between the rulers and the ruled. How can participatory democracy flourish in such an environment?

Impact of Globalisation

For faith in the democratic process to take root, it is necessary that the political system be fully open, transparent and responsive. It should create conditions whereby the masses feel that their security, dignity and livelihood are assured and that there is a perceptible im-

provement in the quality of life from election to election. An additional challenge comes from the international dimension of the political system in an era of so-called liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. If a policy of liberalisation means in practice that more and more people can participate in creating and enjoying wealth rather than a decreasing percentage of the population hogging an ever increasing proportion of the national cake, then it is welcome. If privatisation, on the other hand, means that what properly belongs to the public domain and should be the concern of the public authorities, is sought to be, often surreptitiously, made over to private interests, and thus passes from social transparency to social opacity, with a net loss to the community as a whole, then it must be opposed.

Where the standard of living of large sections of the people is lowered as a result of conditionalities imposed on a country by the International Monetary Fund under its Structural Adjustment Programme, participatory democracy becomes a charade, as a weakened and demoralised populace cannot be expected to participate enthusiastically in a system that debases them at the behest of a foreign agency. In this connection, one needs to nail the spurious argument that in every reform, 'there will be some winners and some losers'. If the people as a whole lose some in the short or medium term and gain more in the long term, well and good. But if a few are the net gainers and the many the net losers, there could not be a more cynical argument in circulation. Ironically – and mercifully – acute distress can also galvanise a people into action to repudiate unhelpful and inequitable governmental poli-

cies whether inspired from inside or outside the country. And spontaneous participation in street-democracy may be a necessary prelude to the restoration of a system that is genuinely responsive to popular needs and interests.

Revitalizing Democracy

To sum up, for participatory democracy to be definitely established, attitudinal change is a must, no less than institutional reform. Political authority needs to be

demystified and viewed in a business-like, instrumental perspective. Political leaders must be cut down to size and not portrayed as larger than life. The voluntary sector needs to be strengthened and less reliance placed on governmental agencies and political parties. The media spotlight must be turned on all aspects of public life and all forms of impropriety exposed relentlessly. The constructively critical voice of the people must be heard above the din of political battle. Pre-election

and post-election voters' committees should scrutinize the programmes of political parties and their performance when in office or in the opposition and should conduct an on-going political audit of the elected representatives. These measures bid fair to revitalize our democracy and make it a fully participatory and vibrant affair.

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For Whom Shall I Vote

The only issue before any constituency in the present elections is ... not any issue of policy but only this - is this candidate a trustworthy man of character? All other things said or written only serve to confuse the real issue. The only question before every voter is whether the man or woman asking for the vote is a person of reliable character. If he or she is a self-seeker, the person should be unhesitatingly rejected.

In my view, it is very important that all voters should see this - that in this general election, the issue is only character. The nation's work will be carried on well if we return men and women of character. It will be ruined if we return self-seeking persons or people of doubtful character.

We ought to realise that we are setting up a body of persons to whom we give the fullest authority to shape and control the life of the people. It is well known how large the scope of State authority now is and how greatly it enters into the daily lives of all the people, rich and poor. It is as serious as the choice of a doctor for a sick person or a nurse for a child.

We want a body of men and women of unblemished character above all else. A certain amount of ruthlessness is called for to reject men of local influence whose character is not above board. But voting is secret and right voting a holy duty. It is not difficult to judge about integrity and it is equally easy to refrain from supporting anyone of whose integrity one is not sure. The total choice of the people cannot but depend on the wisdom and courage of the individual voter who exercises his franchise in secret and by himself. One cannot and should not accept the total result to make up for one's own lapse, but must make his firm contribution in the right direction.

It may be argued that character may be a requisite for those who wield executive authority, but for a seat in Parliament or in a State legislature, representative capacity, that is, popularity in the concerned constituency is the qualification required, not character. What can dishonesty or unscrupulousness do in Parliament or local legislature? Indeed much can be done. Dishonesty and unscrupulousness can achieve most unexpected things to the detriment of national interests.

Character is the main issue before the people in these elections, whatever the constituency and whoever the candidate. None of the leaders of the principal political parties in the field will be sorry if any of their candidates is defeated whose integrity or unselfishness of character is not accepted. Experience and punishment teach lessons which other means do not convey. Reverses in such cases are a blessing in disguise to the parties concerned and will go to release pressures which they now find themselves unable to cope with.

C. Rajagopalachari, *Swarajya*, January 26, 1957

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Stability in Diversity

Will Coalitions Work?

Nagindas Sanghavi

The actual contours of future coalition ministries are not yet clear, but the coalitional nature of the emerging Indian politics is being conceded by all major participants in the political process.

The short-lived and inglorious regimes of two coalition ministries at the Union level does not seem to have dampened the enthusiasm of those who have pinned their faith in the emerging era of coalitional politics into which India is said to have irretrievably entered. Led by the Prime Minister himself, they confidently assert that now there is no turning away from hung parliaments and assemblies and that we better mentally prepare ourselves for another round of coalition ministries which may or may not be composed of different constituents. The electoral experience of the last decade as also the projections of various opinion polls seem to confirm such a prognosis as the following table illustrates:

Party	1989	1991	1996	1998 (projected)
Congress	197 (39.5%)	232 (36.5%)	139 (28%)	140-150 (29%)
B.J.P.	85 (11.4%)	120 (20.8%)	161 (20.3%)	215-220 (27%)
Janata Dal	143 (17.8%)	59 (11.84%)	46 (8.08%)	35 (7%)

Change of Political System

The regional parties which collectively had polled 12.6% of the votes and 51 seats in 1991 have more than doubled their performance (151 seats and 24.64% votes) in 1996. Though both the Congress and the BJP confidently proclaim they will form the next ministry on their own strength, the prevailing scenario has compelled both to frantically hunt for allies at the State level by going around with a begging bowl in their hands and dancing

to the tunes set by the various regional outfits.

Such a sorry spectacle confirms that neither the BJP nor the Congress feel confident of securing a majority of seats in the next Lok Sabha to be able to form a single party ministry. The actual contours of future coalition ministries are not yet clear, but the coalitional nature of the emerging Indian politics is being conceded by all major participants in the political process.

While counting the trees in the form of the performance of various political parties, we must not miss the woods and overlook the totality of India's political landscape. What is happening all around us is a great transformation of our party system. The single party dominance syndrome which prevailed for four decades is being replaced by a more democratic and more useful multiple political party system.

Nothing can prevent or hide the continuous but zigzag decline of the Congress party, while its alternate, the BJP is growing, but at an agonisingly slow rate. In such a period of transition and uncertainty, there is hardly any escape from coalitions if the democratic structure is to be maintained intact.

The controversies about the viability and the desirability of coalition governments in a developing country like India have been

repeated *ad nauseam* since the period of instability and confusion in the sixties (1967-70). The arguments become all the more acerbic as the inherent pluralism of Indian society as embodied in the regional parties and regional aspirations started asserting itself.

Foreign Vs. Indian Coalitions

The coalitions in India are sought to be adjudged and evaluated in the context of similar structures in Europe and in some of the Asian countries like Israel and Japan. Such comparisons yield very little useful data and are both odious and invalid, on account of the basic differences in the political situations obtaining in India and elsewhere. In other countries, coalitions are the products of more or less well established and strongly rooted political party systems. The parties come together either before or after the elections to secure and share power and seek to co-operate with the stronger parties; whereas, in India, coalitions often aim at keeping a stronger or more bated party (Congress or BJP, as the case may be) at bay and negate the poll verdict by depriving it of political power to which it is entitled. In other words, the positive nature of coalitions in the multi-party states of Europe ensures stability and efficiency! In India, the negative nature of coalitions inspired by either anti-Congressism or anti-BJPism causes frustrations in the stronger parties which are forced to languish in the Opposition, when they ought to be seated in the Treasury benches. Coalition partners, often bitterly

hostile to one another, have come together only on the basis of hatred, and have no love lost for other participating units, nor is there any real meeting of minds or agreement about policies and programmes, leading to infighting among the partners. Having achieved the purpose of keeping the hated enemy out of power, there is nothing more left to be done except mutual bickering and even open dogfights.

The Indian Experience

Coalitions in India, therefore, ought to be admeasured and evaluated by standards evolved out of our own political experience. Empirical data needed for building up conceptual methods are easily available, because we have had a number of coalition ministries in different states, starting with PEPSU (1952) and Andhra (1954). In fact, even before the country was formally declared independent, the Cabinet Mission had imposed a coalition Council headed by Nehru and comprising four political parties and several other individuals. But the Indian experience with coalitions is limited, intermittent and diverse. Several states in India (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Kashmir) have never had coalition ministries. Even in states like Bengal and Kerala, claiming the longest and richest coalition experience, single party rule has often intervened. In some states like Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Gujarat, coalition governments have displayed a fair degree of efficiency and stability, while in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, coalition ministries have led to political instability, administrative chaos and moral degradation all around. But such varied, limited and casual experiences, even if varied, are not enough to come to any final conclusions and we will have to await more data before

pronouncing definite opinions on coalition politics in India. Take, for example, the issue of stability. Most coalition ministries could not complete the term available to it constitutionally. At the same time, Jyoti Basu's ministries in Bengal (1977-1998) and Achyutha Menon's regime in Kerala (1970-76) surpassed the record of several Congress ministries on the stability count.

Achievements

The fledgling coalitional politics in India already has a record of very significant achievements to their credit. Composite ministries of several small opposition parties (1967-70, 1989-91, 1996-98) could act as a cushion against the crumbling edifice of the Congress party and helped in strengthening democratic forces by making readily available an alternative when the dominant party was rejected by the voters. Such coalitions have helped in breaking the fall of the transition from one party rule to a multi-party system, and they created confidence amongst the people who could experiment by entrusting political power to any party at any time.

Secondly, coalition ministries provided opportunities to several parties and leaders to get first-hand experience of administrative machinery and governmental processes. Many of them matured so fast and so well that when the Congress party was swept off the board in the post-emergency elections of 1977, the non-Congress leaders could prove their mettle at the Union as well as at the state levels. The disintegration of the Janata ministry (1977-80) was due to political malaise and not due to any administrative shortcomings.

Parties Transformed

But the greatest and the most epoch making achievement of the coalitional experience is that it has

transformed the nature and the approach of several political parties in India. The so-called parties of revolution had started mellowing from 1957 onwards, but the process was carried forward by the coalitional experience. The communist party and its several offshoots were forced to give up the path of violent and futile uprisings, which they had tried out (1949-51) and finally become full-fledged participants in the process of democratic functioning – a system which they had, for more than thirty years, denounced as a mere bourgeoisie claptrap to ensnare and exploit the toiling masses. It is interesting to note that the coalition ministries in Bengal led by the CPM played a prominent part in crushing the Naxalite agitation – which movement now flourishes in the areas where single party Congress rule has prevailed for a long time.

The coalition ministries which emerged for the first time at the Union level have benefited to a very large extent from the prolonged experience and familiarity with the management of the United Front ministries in the states. The fourteen (later thirteen) party United Front survived several crises and was ultimately driven out of power, not on account of any internal dissensions, but on account of the power obsessed leaders of the supporting party. In other words, the political instability being witnessed now is not a failure of the coalitional experiment but the weakness of a minority ministry which had piggybacked to power on the support of a party which like the Bourbons of France has forgotten nothing and learnt nothing.

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Stability in Diversity

A Contrary View

Deepak

Coalitional politics has emerged because divisive influences that beset the nation are getting stronger as political parties appeal to concerns which have no connection with the governance of the nation as a whole or even states as a whole, even if they go to the polls on the lines laid down in the Representation of the People Act.

There have been repeated attempts by prominent people over the last two decades to push through different kinds of reform in the electoral process for various reasons. And it now appears that while there have always been good reasons to change the electoral system, the matter is finally coming to a boil and something will need to be done if the country is to be given a sense of direction in the second half century of its life as an independent nation.

The first three decades of independent India were characterised by the dominance of the Congress Party, which held undisputed sway at the centre and in the states. With the waning of its popularity, there should have been at least one strong alternative party, which should have developed enough to take over the reins. This has not happened. While the Bharatiya Janata Party is yet to show that it can hold power at the Centre unaided, the others have been either breaking up or entirely new parties are being formed, both at the centre and in the states.

It is in the result of this development that we see the spectacle of a thirteen party coalition at the Centre, supported from the "outside" by the Congress, in which the fractured will of the people is reflected in such an uncertain manner. The coalition is unable to take decisions or is compelled to post-

pone them in the hope that the need for them will go away. This, at a time when major changes in economic policy demand a clear sense of direction and purpose. The aberration of a minority Congress party block, capable of bringing down a minority government, itself riven with factions, means that the democratic will of the people is being subverted by developments over which the people have no control. Something needs to be done to remedy this situation.

Unstable Premises

There have been numerous scholarly articles in the press from senior politicians, journalists and even constitutional experts about the inevitability of the arrival of coalition politics in the working of our democracy. It has been said, in all seriousness, that such a vast and diverse nation is bound to have a large number of parties reflecting different points of view. The ethos of wishing to accommodate all points of view to reach a very Indian consensual political equilibrium demands that we should work with and not against coalition politics at the centre and in the states. That, therefore, coalition politics is now here to stay. As is clear, the country continues to run. What then is the problem? After all, countries like Italy and Japan have been running coalition governments for decades. Why not us? Besides, we have the steel frame of the IAS to continue

with everyday governance.

On the surface, all these arguments appear to have appeal. Underneath, however, the premises on which they stand are rotten. India is not Italy. The divisive nature of our religions, cultures, languages, caste and creed barriers, the general lack of education among the representatives whom we send to parliament, the fact that we have encouraged all this over the last fifty years and the sheer size of the country, effectively convert governance into an exercise of elephantine drunkenness, even without a coalition government at the Centre. Coalition politics merely ensures that the government is on the verge of passing out at any moment, throughout its short tenure. And the tenure hangs by a thread. Take the Gujral coalition. Sitaram Kesri had merely to think of picking up a handkerchief and the coalition catches double pneumonia. No decision on any matter can be taken.

Conflicting politics just does not permit this. If taken, the decision is based on considerations that have nothing to do with the main cause which called for the decision in the first place. A decision, for instance, on whether water should be allowed to flow from one state to another has nothing to do with the total quantity of water and the needs of the respective states. It acquires caste connotations, or

possibly, political ones, depending upon which bunch of parties is running which state. The months it took to cobble together an agreement on the need to increase the price of petrol, at a time when the oil pool deficit was ballooning, is another instance.

Second Best Choice

The splintering of parties is seen by many as a sign of the growing political maturity of the country, and its dawning ability to run itself, even if parties with differing points of view are involved. This high-minded piece of rubbish needs to be put at rest. The very fact that splinter groups cannot even think up new names for themselves, let alone work together, is a strong indication that the splintering is not on ideological lines. It is merely a clash of personalities. Hence the new political dictum: The smaller the splinter group, the longer its name. There is no real ideological input in the working of any political group. Their main interest is to be as close to the seat of power as possible, and to grab what they can along with all the others like so many vultures at a kill.

It is true that no one group has overwhelming power, and that a kind of uneasy truce exists among the warring factions in a coalition. A coalition government, by definition therefore, cannot do much harm. But the knives remain out, and are perpetually being sharpened. As a result, each group is too busy looking over its shoulder at what the others are up to, to do any useful work for the nation. This kind of political ballet may work for a country like Italy, because it does not have a problem with physical size, population, cultural or religious diversity, infrastructure, economic development or education. Besides,

when such coalition politics does not work in Italy, its politics rapidly deteriorates into absolutism. It is therefore not just workable in Italy – it is imperative that it does. The alternative is the absolutist rule of fascists like Benito Mussolini. Irrespective of the country, coalitions in a democratic set up can therefore only be a second best choice if for no other reason than that they cannot ensure concerted action. Coalitions are merely aberrations in the modern democratic process – not a normal part of it.

Our needs are different. We do not need governments incapable of doing harm. We need governments which will lead the country out of harm done already. The acceptance of, and *post facto* admiration for, coalition politics comes of a bankruptcy of ideas on how to restore the situation to a non-coalition polity. It is not because coalition politics is in itself worthy of admiration. Portentous declamations on the value of coalition governments coming from well-known names acquire a spurious aura of wisdom because of their origin, even if whatever is said is just plain silly. The aura of wisdom ensures that the opinions are less likely to be contested.

Is There A Choice?

What then is the choice? Or more properly, do we have a choice? At first sight, it would appear that we are destined to continue down the same road till the situation makes for a completely powerless central government at which point the states will break out into open civil war to secure their own interests at the cost of the nation. In fact, this prospect, dreadful as it is, is more probable than any other, unless saner counsels prevail and immediate action is taken to remedy the situ-

ation. If the situation as it is at present, is allowed to fester and get gradually worse, there is little hope that the nation will reach the year 2020 as a single entity.

But there may just be remedy. It must be remembered that the basic structure of the Constitution cannot and should not be tampered with. This means that the liberal democratic framework of governance must continue and the fundamental rights must continue to be honoured. This in itself imposes limitations on the kinds of reform that can be considered to prevent the continuance of, or the new emergence of, coalitional politics and governance. The Constitution is not the cause of the emergence of coalitional politics. Coalitional politics has emerged because divisive influences that beset the nation are getting stronger as political parties appeal to concerns which have no connection with the governance of the nation as a whole or even states as a whole, even if they go to the polls on the lines laid down in the Representation of the People's Act.

It would seem, therefore, that the electoral process and the Act could do with a bit of reform. The reform cannot be too radical. For instance, any suggestion that adult suffrage should henceforth be abolished and replaced by a suffrage of the educated would go against the basic structure of the Constitution much though Mr. Nani Palkhivala may like the idea. Similarly, the process of recognition of political parties who can contest elections cannot be changed too radically. The freedom to form new political parties cannot be withdrawn. The freedom to vote for a number of parties as exercised by

voters today also cannot be withdrawn even if it is precisely this that leads to the mess of pottage that we see at the Centre today. So what kind of reform are we talking about?

Electoral Reform

If only to discourage the emergence of a multiplicity of parties we should consider making the election to the government at the centre a two step process. In the first step, we could have elections in which all parties would have the right to contest. It should be the parties that would contest; not candidates. On a national level, each party will have secured a certain percentage of the total vote. It is likely that no party gets more than fifty percent of the vote. No matter. The two parties that secure the two highest vote percentages could then be asked to put up candidates for all the Lok Sabha seats. The other parties would stand automatically disqualified. This will ensure that the Lok Sabha has the absolute majority of one party and the concerted opposition of the other. It will also discourage the formation of splinter parties since they have no hope of coming anywhere in the run off. At the same time, no one can say that their political rights have been denied because if they do wish to form a party to contest the election, they can do so in the first round. They can even contest as independents in the first round.

This will require an amendment of the Representation of the People Act. The two step run off election could then be extended to state elections as well and possibly to even municipal elections. In this manner, the cult of the coalition, the splinter party and the

purchaseable independent member can be given the quietus.

Time for Mature Action

If the composition of the next Lok Sabha approximates the one it is replacing, the suggested amendment to the Representation of the People Act would go against the interests of the majority of the people who are likely to be members of the new Lok Sabha irrespective of which party or group they belong. About the only members who may consider themselves reasonably safe are members of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress. It will call for an uncommon act of political wisdom for the BJP and the Congress to work together to push through such an amendment to the

Act to ensure their own futures. This possibility may seem remote but stranger happenings occur routinely on the floor of the House, because one thing definitely unites both the BJP and the Congress – the love of power. The horrific vision of a nation in another twenty years, at odds with itself, broken apart by the stupid politics of the late twentieth century, should be incentive enough to sharpen the survival instincts of these two parties. If they do not act with maturity now, they may be permanently disqualifying themselves from any role in India's future in the twenty-first century.

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Special Privileges of MPs

The function of MPs in a democracy is not to disburse LPG and phone connections, but to legislate for the country, to elect a government or to watch it in opposition and act as a conveyor belt of public opinion.

While waitlisted members of the public were cooling their heels, the Minister for Communication informed the Lok Sabha on 25th July 1997 that "telephone connections recommended by MPs were installed expeditiously on priority". The dubious nature of some of these allocations can be gauged from the information that in Delhi, while 985 such priority connections were given between January to June 1996, 185 cases were pending on account of non-receipt of registration particulars from the customers".

It is also essential to discontinue the scheme of allotment of vehicles to MPs from the Central Vehicles Department. For instance, during 1996, 143 jeeps were sold at Rs.38,899/- each, while in the open auction, they would undoubtedly have fetched more money for the Exchequer.

There is a demand for codification of privileges. MPs should be paid a tax free salary of say Rs.1 lakh a month, and for functional facilities like house and phone, they should pay at the prevailing market price. Possibly the suggestion of a British MP, some years ago, can also be adopted: Give MPs a bonus if they are able to produce a surplus budget!

M. R. Pai

Stability in Diversity

Reorienting Indian Federalism

Santishree D. N. B. Pandit

The emergence of coalitions at the Centre with regional parties has brought about a paradigm shift in Indian politics reflecting the fractured nature of the electorate and the realignment of forces at the social and political levels.

India has had, for a very long time, "a republican monarchy" where the leadership of the single dominant party, also came from a single family. The emergence of coalitions at the Centre with regional parties has brought about a paradigm shift in Indian politics reflecting the fractured nature of the electorate and the realignment of forces at the social and political levels. It is this shift in the political system that has brought to the fore, once again, the debate on Indian federalism.

Territorial Federalism

The Indian Constitution has established territorial federalism – a dual polity with the Union at the Centre and the states at the periphery. But the paramountcy rests with the Centre. Articles 3 and 4 empower Parliament to redraw the political map of India. As a result, the Centre can unilaterally change the boundaries of a state, even to the extent of giving away territory to a foreign power. For instance, India gave away Barubari to the then East Pakistan without consulting the gov-

ernment of West Bengal or the Kachativu islands to Sri Lanka without consulting the government of Tamil Nadu. These, however, should be considered as aberrations. Generally states have been consulted. As Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee explained: "The Union is not a league of states, united in a loose relationship; nor are the states the agencies of the Union, deriving powers from it. Both the Union and the states are created by the Constitution; both derive their respective authority from the Constitution. The one is not subordinate to the other. In its field, the autonomy of one is to co-ordinate with that of the other".

It is apparent that Indian federalism has a strong unitary bias. This is clear from the provisions of articles 352, 356 and 360. Schedule VII also distributes powers which clearly favour the Centre. Are these provisions necessary fifty years after independence, especially Article 356 which has been perhaps the most misused Article, irrespective of the party in power at the Centre.

It has become a political weapon to remove unwanted state governments, especially those of a party different to the party or parties in power at the Centre. This has been so from the dismissal of the communist government of E. M. S. Namboodripad in Kerala in 1959 on the pretext that law and order had deteriorated, to the recent refusal of the Governor of Uttar Pradesh to allow the strength of the parties to be tested on the floor of the Assembly. State governments fear for their survival if the Centre is determined to remove them with the help of pliable governors – a commodity in plentiful supply.

Both the Rajamannar Committee set up by the Tamil Nadu government and the Sarkaria Commission set up by the Centre have been extremely critical of Article 356 and see its deletion as strengthening federalism. At the same time, making it flexible enough to convert into an unitary system in an emergency. Most amendments to the Constitution have been unilateral actions of the Centre. These alongwith the Centre's financial powers exercised through the Planning Commission where states are mere recipients of central munificence, make the states vulnerable.

A New Federalism

Political realities and not constitutional wisdom is changing all this. A coalition government dependent at the Centre on regional parties like the TDP, DMK and ACP

THE NEHRU-GANDHI LEGACY

Between Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, we can account for about 40 of our 50 years of independent rule. During this supposedly glorious chapter in our history, our economy grew at an annual average of about 3 per cent. Nehruvian socialism, the family's economic philosophy, meant the state ran everything from hotels and our only television network to power stations and public transport. This left little time to deal with education, healthcare and public sanitation, subjects usually in the realm of government.

The result is there for everyone to see. India remains one of the poorest, most illiterate countries in the world.

Tavleen Singh, *India Today*, January 12, 1998.

for support, has resulted in their active participation in national governance. The Inter-State Council has been revived, thus bringing into focus the co-operative aspect of Indian federalism. At a recent meeting of this Council, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, whose party was a constituent of the United Front, called for amendments to those provisions in the Constitution which he felt were "anti federal". They include imposition of President's rule in the states; the appointment and role of governors; mal-distribution of legislative powers; central veto of State Bills; and the lopsided allocation of resources.

The era of one party dominance has ended. No longer are states *satraps* of the Centre; on the other hand, state leaders have become kingmakers at the national level. It is necessary not only to reorient federalism but to re-engineer it. In this context, the DMK experience is relevant.

In 1962, the DMK gave up its demand for secession and accepted regional autonomy. It is to the credit of the Indian federal system that regional groups did not get pushed to the wall but found that their cultural aspirations could be accommodated within the Union. This made it possible for the DMK to drop its demand for secession and settle for regional autonomy. A demand for autonomy when not considered objectively, by a hegemonic state turns into a demand for secession as happened with the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

In 1971, the DMK government constituted a high level committee on centre-state relations under the chairmanship of Chief Justice P. V. Rajamannar. It was the first time a state government constituted a

committee to look into issues of federalism from the viewpoint of the states. The Rajamannar Committee's report was very comprehensive. Based on its recommendations, the State Assembly passed a resolution on State autonomy in 1974. It was only nine years later, in 1983, that the Union Government set up the Sarkaria Commission to look into centre-state relations.

Centre-State Consultation

Bodies like the National Development Council and the Inter-State Council as apex bodies which facilitate consultations between the Centre and the States should be given constitutional status. Decisions taken at these bodies should be binding on the Union Government. (See box)

Finance and Planning

The recommendations made by the Sarkaria Commission in this regard should be reviewed by a high level committee. The flow of

financial resources to the states from all sources should be adequate, equitable, assured and proved on an objective criteria. As recommended by the Tenth Finance Commission, the divisible pool for mandatory sharing of taxes between the Centre and the States should include the entire tax revenues of the Union Government.

Most of the regional parties are in agreement with these ideas which will strengthen Indian federalism. The Akali Dal had passed the Anantpur Sahib Resolution demanding regional autonomy, crucial in a diverse country which is multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic. Decentralisation will go a long way in India becoming a federal polity with unitary features, rather than a unitary system with some federal features.

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Towards A Real Federal India

At the Inter State Council meeting held on 15th October 1997, the DMK took the stand that there was need to re-engineer federalism by strengthening the states. The core issues which need reorienting in the view of the DMK are:

Legislative Relations

The constitution of a high level committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the entries in Lists I, II and III of the Seventh Schedule with the objective of promoting the autonomy of states. It should also ensure sufficient safeguards in Articles 200 and 201 so as to guarantee that the President's assent to state bills are conveyed within specified time limits.

Administrative Reforms

The repeal of Articles 256, 257 and 365 which give sweeping powers to the Centre to issue directions to the states and to invoke emergency provisions of the Constitution.

Governors

The need for specific norms, conventions and safeguards with regard to the qualifications for the appointment of Governors, their method of appointment, tenure, guidelines for the exercise of their powers and restraints on the use of discretionary powers.

Article 356

Article 356 is the most abused Article in the Indian Constitution and has been misused as a political weapon. This article is seen as a contradiction in a federal Constitution and should be deleted.

SDNB Pandit.

Stability in Diversity

The President's Powers

Minoo Masani



Mr. S. S. Bankeshwar interviewed Mr. Masani 15 years ago. The following is an extract from that interview. The issue of the President's powers assumes relevance and importance in the context of the emergence of coalition politics. If Mr. Masani's views on the powers of the President of India are accepted then there need be no fears of instability arising from frequent changes of government. Governments may come and go but the President of India as Head of State will ensure that the administration of the country carries on.

Question: According to Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, the President of India is powerless against the Union Cabinet's rejection of the President's advice. He has either to surrender to the Cabinet's decision or quit. Is the President of India necessarily a rubber stamp?

MRM: There is general myopia on this subject. I was a member of the Constituent Assembly. If you carefully study our Constitution, you will find that the President of India is not a titular head like the British crown. Our President is half-way between the British Crown and the American President. He is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He does not have to accept the advice of the Cabinet of the day. Our first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, saw this but unfortunately, neither he nor those who followed him had the charisma or the courage to stand up against the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and put them in their place.

A President who does not want to follow the advice of the Prime Minister has neither to resign nor give in. He can just dismiss the Prime Minister, choose another, and ask him to face fresh general elections under our Constitution. I hate to say it, but it is the lack of character and guts and not the laws, which have prevented our Presidents from exercising their powers. I would, therefore, say that our Presidents

have let down their office. Our Constitution is very clear.

Article 74(1) of the Constitution says that the Council of Ministers should "aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions". Article 75 goes on to provide that the Prime Minister would be appointed by the President and the ministers would hold office "during the pleasure of the President". According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, the word "to aid" means "to

Is the President a Rubber Stamp? If you carefully study our Constitution, you will find that the President of India is not a titular head like the British crown.

help" and the word "to advise" means "to offer counsel to". The essence of advice is that it leaves the person advised free to accept or reject it.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad had raised the issue publicly. Addressing the Indian Law Institute on November 28, 1960, he said "There is no provision in the Constitution which in so many words lays down that the President shall be bound to act in accordance with the advice of his ministers". He criticised attempts "to invoke and incorporate into our written Constitution (by interpretation) the

conventions of the British Constitution which is an unwritten Constitution".

Question: What is your approach to the question of autonomy of the States? How far will you go in meeting the growing demand for autonomy without endangering the unity of our country?

MRM: We in the Constituent Assembly decided on the federal structure of government, because all of us were convinced that the unitary form of government would mean the disruption of our country. India is too big and diverse for a unitary government. Therefore, we thought that a federal form, with autonomy for the States, would ensure the unity of our country. I am sympathetic to the demands of our States for greater autonomy because I want to preserve the unity of our country. The negation of limited autonomy to our States will break up the Union of India.

Question: S. M. Joshi said, the other day, in an interview that our sensitive border States be given more autonomy. Any comments?

MRM: SM has got historical justice on his side. Not every State of India is as much a part of India as the other. I would say that Kashmir or Mizoram or Nagaland is not a part of India, in the sense that Maharashtra or Orissa or Madhya

Pradesh, etc. is a part of India. Ofcourse, Kashmir, Mizoram and Nagaland are legally parts of India, but they feel slightly different from India. Since we want to keep them with us, the same measure of autonomy to all States would, therefore, be rather unfair. We have to keep them with us by love and winning their hearts, and not by hitting them on the head.

Question: *In spite of all our faults, democracy has survived in India. Has it survived because democracy is in our blood or because we inherited the British liberal traditions for over hundred years?*

MRM: A little bit of both, I would say. In India, there was always a democratic tradition. In ancient India, the city state was an autonomous unit. The Hindu Rajah of the classical times was elected and he was not a Rajah by heredity. But in recent centuries, the Rajah became feudal and authoritarian.

Then the British came with their liberal democracy and revived that ancient tradition. Our Constitution, in the framing of which I also had a small part, is in large measure a reflection of what we learned from Britain. The Mother of Parliaments was also a model to which we looked, as mentioned in our Constitution, for conventions. I would, therefore, say that a great deal of credit must go to the British values which were implanted in India.

Unfortunately, in the last 30 years, those values are getting weaker and weaker. In other words, we are slowly relapsing into oriental despotism. I am very much against this and we should all try to combat this menace. The British left with us a very fine concept of the Rule of Law. There is less respect for the Rule of Law today. They left behind a fine, efficient and honest civil service. That is also disappear-

ing. Parliamentary democracy is nominally still there, though it was suspended during the Emergency. The President on the one side and the courts on the other, are still two checks on the brute majority in Parliament. A dummy President, therefore, is no good in preserving and protecting our parliamentary democracy.

Genuine Consensus

Question: *There is an increasing tendency among our political parties to choose their leaders by consensus*

and not by election. Is not consensus a fraud and a sham?

MRM: That would be a bit too severe. A genuine consensus is not a bad thing. If it is not genuine, it is, as you say, an attempt to avoid an election. Consensus then becomes a fraud and a sham. In India, consensus is often fabricated and forced, which is bad. But we cannot generalise and condemn all consensus.

MR. S. S. BANKESHWAR is a freelance journalist and a member of *Freedom First's* Advisory Board.

Humour on the Internet

Application Form to a Political Party

1. Name of the Candidate
2. Address of Candidate (if not currently in jail)
3. Father's Name
4. Nationality
5. Political Party (List atleast the last five parties, in chronological order)
6. Reasons for leaving last party (circle one or more)
 - (a) Defected (b) Expelled
 - (c) Bought out (d) None of the above
 - (e) All of the above.
7. Reasons for contesting elections (circle one or more) (If you choose "d", attach Certificate of Sanity from a Government Certified Psychiatrist)
 - (a) To make money.
 - (b) To escape court trial
 - (c) To grossly misuse power
 - (d) To serve the public
 - (e) I have no clue.
8. How many years of public service experience do you possess
 - (a) 1-2 years (b) 2-6 years
 - (c) 6-15 years (d) 15+ years
9. Give details of any criminal cases pending against you (Use as many additional sheets as you want)
10. How many years have you spent in jail? (Do not confuse with Question 8)
 - (a) 1-2 years (b) 2-6 years
 - (c) 6-15 years (d) 15+ years
11. Are you involved in any financial scams?
 - (a) Yes (b) Of course
 - (c) Definitely (d) I deny it all
 - (e) See a foreign hand
12. What is your annual corruption income? (Convert all your \$ earnings from Hawala etc. to Rupee, while answering)
 - (a) 100-150 crores
 - (b) 500-1,000 crores
 - (c) Overflow ..
13. Do you have any developmental plans in mind?
 - (a) No (b) No.
 - (c) No (d) No.
14. Describe in the space, your achievements

Stability in Diversity

Economic Growth Amidst an Unstable Political Economy

Jiban K. Mukhopadhyay

The question that is often asked is whether frequent changes in governments and frequent general elections, with changes in economic strategies arising from changing coalition partners, will not pull the growth rate downwards.

For three long decades ending 1979-80, India's GDP grew at a lacklustre 3.5% per year. The half-hearted liberalisation of the 1980s saw the rate move up to 5.5% per annum. Then came the critical year of 1991, when market oriented reforms were introduced, unshackling the economy from over-regimentation and over-regulation. Economic growth surged forward to a rate of growth of about 6.5% during the five year period ending 1996-97, with the last three years witnessing an average annual growth of 7%.

As a result, growth per capita moved up from a meagre 1.5% till the 1970s to 3.5% during the 1980s and to over 5% during the post liberalisation years.

Sustainability of 7% Growth Rate

However, if we wish to double the per capita GDP in 10 years, a record achieved by China, a country comparable with India both in terms of vastness and complexity, it has to grow at 7.2%. This implies that the overall GDP has to grow at an annual rate of over 9% per year. Unfortunately, the growth of GDP may come down to around 5.5% in the current year 1997-98. In the light of this, the question arises whether the average annual rate of growth of 7% can be sustained.

Considering the strong fun-

damentals generated in the economy in several areas like the relatively low rate of inflation, low rate of interest, availability of lendable resources, high foreign exchange reserves, increasing flow of foreign investment (both direct and portfolio), low current account deficit, the overall restructuring and opening of the industrial, financial and external economic sectors, it would appear that the economy has sufficient potential to sustain a 7% rate of growth.

The Instability Factor

The 11th Lok Sabha came into being in May 1996. After a mere 13 days in office, the BJP and its allies gave way to a 13-party United Front coalition government which stayed in power in two phases - from May 1996 to April 1997, and the second under a new Prime Minister from April 1997 to November 1997. The United Front, a motley group of diverse political parties, has, it must be admitted not performed too badly, even if on many crucial economic issues, it took longer to take decisions. Considering the composition of the United Front, what came as an unexpected surprise was the Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

The CMP document transformed apprehensions into appreciation and applause from one and all, except, naturally, the BJP. "Nightmare turns into pleasant

dreams", "Welcome statement of intent", "Sincere and futuristic", "A rainbow agenda", were some of the accolades for the CMP. It augured well for coalition governance. But, this possible turning point in Indian polity fell by the roadside when the Congress Party withdrew support on two different occasions, each time on flimsy grounds. Given the composition of the Lok Sabha, the 12th General Elections became inevitable.

The UF Experiment

What are the lessons of the UF experiment?

Despite their many weaknesses, the two short-lived UF coalition governments not only continued with the process of economic reforms inherited from the previous government, but, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Finance Minister, Mr. P. Chidambaram, the UF took the reforms forward with what was described as a "dream budget 1997-98", wherein corporate and personal income tax rates were brought down to their lowest level since Independence; interest rates were de-regulated, banking and financial and industrial sector reforms initiated; there was liberalisation of much needed foreign direct and portfolio investments, clear-cut action plans were mooted to improve the infrastructure sectors; and a reduction in and rationalisation of, indirect taxes.

Unfortunately, there are several unfinished items on the agenda, some of which the UF government could have completed. For example, it initiated action to introduce several major economic legislation like the Foreign Exchange Management Act (replacing the outdated and obstructive FERA); the Income Tax Amendment Act; the Companies Act, the Sick Industries Amendment Act, Money Laundering (Prevention) Act, Power Transmission Enactment, Coal Mining Act and the Urban Land Ceiling Act. Besides, it also wanted to set up 14 much-needed Control and States Electricity Regulatory Commissions, initiate action towards liberalisation of civil aviation policies, increase efforts towards privatization, initiate reforms in the agricultural and social sector, industrial and labour relations.

Despite on-going internal feuds, had the UF government continued in office for its full term, many of these initiatives would have been implemented. That would have helped the challenging task of achieving a high rate of growth for the Indian economy. But that was not to be. The Congress, which ruled the country since Independence till 1996, except for two years (1977-79) and for less than a year during 1989-90, was restless out of power and brought the UF government down.

The Nehruvian Prescription

The 47 year rule of the Congress started with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, he was followed by his daughter and his grandson. For nearly half a century, India had a dynastic democratic system, if one could call it that.

It is well-known that the Nehruvian policy was an odd mixture of a mixed economy with Soviet-type command economy.

These socialist initiatives were perversely enhanced by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, with large scale nationalisation moves. The period epitomized the permit-licence-Quota-Raj, with all its attendant disastrous consequences.

The period of the Nehru-Gandhi Rule was a virtual State dictatorship, wherein economics was based on the "Principle of the five Ws": who manufactures what, at which place, sells to whom and at what price. The application of a socialism of the Indian variety led to the miserable annual rate of growth 1.5%. What could have been worse than this?

When Narasimha Rao came to power on June, 1991, the Indian economy, particularly the external sector, faced a critical situation. In fact, two short-lived governments (one led by V. P. Singh and the other by Chandrasekhar, both now great critics of reforms!), prior to Rao's had already approached the IMF for exceptional funding and over 40% of the IMF loan of about \$54 billion had already arrived. The Rao government eventually implemented the policy of market oriented reforms. It generated the hope of achieving a sustained higher growth rate of over 7%.

Impact of Coalitions

Simple arithmetic will tell us that anything that grows at a compound rate of 7.2% doubles in ten years. To achieve a 7.2% rate of growth of per capita income will require the overall GDP to grow at over 9%. This still is a far cry. But the potential has been achieved for a sustainable high growth of GDP. At the same time, let us remember that even after doubling our incomes, we would just have managed to catch up with Sri Lanka!

Contrary to popular notions

that coalitions means political instability, which in turn retards the growth rate, one could have hoped to attain the relatively high 7% rate of growth of the economy over a period of time under the UF's coalition regime. But now the question that is often asked is whether frequent changes in governments and frequent general elections, with changes in economic strategies arising from changing coalition partners, would not pull the growth rate downwards.

A New Phase

The fall of the UF government on two occasions was due to trivial reasons rather than to fundamental ones. With the 12th General Election, the present UF is likely to take on a new shape. Will the new Parliament be hung and will the new government be a coalition, whether of the BJP and its allies or a combination of Congress and UF partners? Whatever the combination, it is clear that Indian polity has entered a phase where it will be governed not by a single party with a simple majority, but by a coalition of parties, largely regional. In fact, the numbers of national parties are shrinking - the fraying Congress, the medieval BJP, the fragmenting Janata Dal, and the CPI(M) and CPI, with their skewed presence in some parts of the country.

Whatever the frustrations of the people, the fact remains that a UF government, despite being beset by internal dissensions, went on with the task of progressing the economic reforms on the basis of a broad consensus and reflecting ground level aspirations a great deal more (thanks to the pressures of regional parties like the DMK, the TDP, the AGP). This silver lining cannot be ignored, for it is leading towards real decentralisation of governance. The federalisation of the country,

a massive collage of diverse communities, languages, religions, style of living and sub-cultures is crucial for India's growth uniformly. Observing this reality in the right perspective, it would be correct to conclude that such coalition governments will, through trial and error, enable the emergence of a true federal form of government.

Sure enough, this will take time. Meanwhile, there is apprehension that the achievement of high

and sustainable growth, with due emphasis on the components of growth in terms of low inflation, more employment, and higher sectoral distribution of growth from agriculture, industry and services could be a temporary casualty. In effect, at least one percent of GDP growth will have to be surrendered because of the current political instability.

What the communist Chinese could achieve in respect of a 7%

growth rate would perhaps remain for a long time a dream to be achieved in India. But the consolation is that we have, relatively speaking, a "free" society with an "active" legal system, an alert press and electronic media, and a liberal democratic tradition. On the other hand such democratic achievements will take a long time to emerge in China.

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The Case for Non-Governance

Three governments have come and gone since the last general elections. And there is no guarantee that the next election will bring one that is more stable. How terrible, people lament, that just when the Indian economy is taking off, it is derailed by the instability of politics?

But is there really a direct link between political stability and economic growth? Our experience during the first five decades of Indian independence should point to quite the opposite conclusion.

The first two decades were decades of rock-solid stability in which one party - and for much of that period, one person - ruled supreme. And yet they weren't decades of particularly high growth. In contrast, the Narasimha Rao government installed in 1991 and the United Front government operated on a razor's edge, and both formulated policies that paved the way for higher, sustainable growth (unlike the growth during the mid-eighties which was built on heavy borrowing). During a large part of their rule, the growth rate was above 5%.

In a democracy, stability means that a party or its leader is able to command the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. This was what happened during Nehru's years at the helm of the Indian government. In effect, the Indian people had abdicated all thinking to him. Had the margins by which he was elected been narrower, Nehru might have been forced to think twice about his economic policies. Certainly, there was no dearth of politicians to argue that socialism would not work. C. Rajagopalchari was one. Yet, the huge majorities by which he won convinced Nehru that the economic policies he was following were right.

Companies which have a monopoly position in the market tend to become arrogant. They begin to believe that they, rather than their customers, know what the customers want. It's the same with political parties and the market for votes. Parties that win with a steamroller majority begin to assume that they, rather than the voters, know what the voters want. Democracy is a natural corrective to such arrogance.

The threat of being voted out of power acts as a powerful brake on politicians' egos. It prevents them from following wrong policies for too long. When they do, they are thrown out. But when people vote one party to power time and again, that party grows just as arrogant as a dictator, like Saddam Hussein, who leads his people to doom in the absence of any threat of being ousted.

It is pertinent that the first retreat from socialism, or India's version of it, began in 1980 after Indira Gandhi returned to power, chastened by her years out of it. That was when she realised that mere populism, without economic results, would not keep her in power for long. Rajiv Gandhi was elected to power with an unprecedented majority. He continued with liberalisation but the growth under him, based as it was on foreign borrowing, was unsustainable. Towards the end of his rule, there was a bout of sustained inflation. The Bofors scandal played a big role in his downfall, but it is probable that if the economy had been in a better shape, people would have ignored Bofors just as Americans ignored the scandals enveloping Bill Clinton. With a smaller majority, Rajiv Gandhi might have felt the need to listen to sane economic advice.

Stability is important for the economy. But what matters is not so much the stability of governments as the stability of the economic policies and of the rule of law. The frequent collapse of governments in both Italy and Thailand does not seem to have done either country much harm. And the stability of government in Bihar and North Korea doesn't seem to have done either place much good.

According to a political saying, that government is best which governs the least. An unstable government is often one in which there is no governance at all. And what can be better than that? Just think how much better the railways will do without a minister who feels obliged to inaugurate a new route every fortnight with not a thought for passengers' safety.

Courtesy: *Business World*, 22 December 1997.

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The Power of Listening

V. C. Viswanathan

**Human beings have a crying need to be heard and understood.
And when that need is denied, people become angry,
frustrated and diminished.**

While hundreds of books have been written on the art and power of public speaking, there is none on the art of listening. Executives eager to climb the ladder of success in their careers invest time and money to hone their speaking skills. A whole industry has grown up on training people in public speaking. A variety of sophisticated audio-visual aids are available today to add impact to one's presentations. The ability to articulate one's ideas and influence other people's thinking and behaviour is, of course, a key requirement for managerial effectiveness.

But communication is not a one-way process. A very articulate person does not automatically become an effective communicator. It requires many other qualities and skills of which listening is perhaps the most important. To be an effective manager, one has to be a good listener. Ineffective listening is at the heart of every problem of inter-personal communication and human relations.

Lee Iacocca, former chairman and CEO of Chrysler Corporation, says in his autobiography, "I only wish I could find an institute that teaches people how to listen. After all, a good manager needs to listen as much as he needs to talk ... You have to be able to listen well if you're going to motivate the people to work for you ... The most fulfilling for me as a manager is to watch someone, the system has labelled as just average or mediocre, really come into his own, all because someone has listened to his problems and

helped him solve them'.

Listening is not easy. It requires considerable effort and a lot of practice to become an effective listener. Unfortunately, the art of listening – which is so basic a necessity for effective living – is not taught at home, school or college. Even business management schools do not teach their students listening skills, although they cannot become effective managers or leaders without being good listeners.

F. J. Roethlisberger, who was, for a number of years, Professor of Human Relations at Harvard Business School, says, 'The biggest block to communication is man's inability to listen intelligently, understandingly and skillfully. This deficiency in the modern world is widespread and appalling. In our universities, as well as elsewhere, too little is being done about it.

No matter how good the speaker, unless the listener's mind is engaged, no communication can take place. So, to be an effective listener, be attentive and do not get distracted by external factors like noise, loud music, the speaker's physical appearance, or manner of speaking. Do not interrupt nor let your mind stray.

The second most important requirement is not to make premature judgments. Listen with empathy to understand the total meaning of what the speaker is trying to convey, both in content and feeling. Unless you are attuned to both the words and feelings, you will not fully understand the

meaning of the message. Most often, the words are less important than the feelings that underlie. The feeling component is usually expressed in non-verbal body language such as voice, facial expression, gestures and postures. So it's important to pay attention and be keenly observant. Listen with your eyes, as much as with your ears.

The third thing is to give positive feedback by letting the speaker know that you are interested in what he is saying. Show understanding, empathy and appreciation. Your eyes and body language will reveal your interest. This kind of active listening stimulates the other person and establishes rapport. Listen with intention to learn, to understand and not to contradict. Do not react emotionally to any point you may disagree with. Do not let your mind race ahead to find arguments to prove the speaker wrong. Defer judgment till you have fully understood and evaluated what is said.

In the management context, listening is empowering. It is a way of expressing care and respect. Listening with understanding has the power to motivate and unleash the enormous untapped, potential that lies within people. Human beings have a crying need to be heard and understood. And when that need is denied, people become angry, frustrated and diminished. Good listening is closely linked to productivity, creativity, innovation, team work and high morale.

Companies are realising the

Maharishi D. K. Karve

(1858-1962)

Usha Thakkar

"Many great men appear great only from a distance, but they do not appear so to those who have intimate contacts with them. I cannot say that about Anna. He belongs to that rare type of men who inspire even greater respect and affection as intimacy with them grows and continues."

- Dr. R. P. (Wrangler) Paranjpye

Dhondu Keshav Karve's life is an inspiring tale of faith, conviction and single-mindedness of purpose. Despite poverty and many hardships, he completed his B.A. in 1884. Instead of taking up a permanent job with the government, he decided to work as a teacher. In 1891, at Gokhale's invitation, he went to Fergusson College at Poona to teach Mathematics. He worked there with the Deccan Education Society for more than twenty years, and after his retirement in 1914, devoted all his energy to the cause of women's education.

His marriage in 1893 to a widow named Godubai, later known as Anandibai, became sensational news in Maharashtra. Commenting on this, the *Maharatta* reported: "Mr. Karve, though never known to have been a blustering reformer, has set a practical example of moral courage which a legion of social quacks have not shown in their whole conduct".

After his marriage, Karve worked towards the establishment of an Association, initially meant for encouragement of widow re-marriage, and later aiming at the removal of obstacles in the path of widows who wished to remarry. In 1896, Karve focussed his attention on the formation of a Widows' Home or 'Anath Balikashram'. He wanted



Maharishi Karve

to keep it away from the Association of Widow Re-marriage, as he did not want the cause of women's education to fuse with that of widow re-marriage.

Mahila Vidyalaya

On 4th March 1907, when Karve started the 'Mahila Vidyalaya' with six students, Major Hunter Steen wrote in *The Times of India* (14th March 1908): "In a small house in Narayan Peth, Poona City, not far from Lakdi Pool, is to be found the tiny beginning, at least on this side of India, of what will one day prove the social regeneration of the country".

From 1935, Karve took interest in opening schools in rural areas of Maharashtra. Later, he established the Samata Sangh to promote social equality. While inaugurating the Social Conference on 18th April 1953, he declared that liberty is meaningless without social equality. Later, he was to receive many honours, doctorates and the highest state award, Bharat Ratna, but all these never had any effect on his simple life and selfless hard work.

Dr. R. P. Paranjpye noted in his introduction to Karve's autobiography that "many great men appear great only from a distance, but they do not appear so to those who have intimate contacts with

them. I cannot say that about Anna. He belongs to that rare type of men who inspire even greater respect and affection as intimacy with them grows and continues."

He understood women by a remarkable identification with their grief. To him, the status of women had to be viewed in relation to the home. Domesticity is not panoramic but a matter of the daily minutiae, feelings and reactions that continue from infancy to death. For a woman whose life revolves around her home, her existence cannot be imagined without it. This was the focal point of Karve's thoughts. He did not envisage a dramatic change in women's then existing status, but he certainly dreamt of a better tomorrow in which they could walk with their heads held high. He observed the lives of women with deep concern and compassion, but focussed his attention on two of their many problems, widow re-marriage and education.

Widow Re-marriage

For Karve, marriage was not a mere ritual, but a bond between a man and a woman who wanted to live together voluntarily. Marriage rituals had to be in consonance with this idea of a voluntary union. In his own marriage, he and his wife rejected the traditional ceremony of "giving away the girl", choosing instead the ceremony of giving oneself to the other.

In spite of this, his ideas of reform did not go so far as to break the structure of Hindu society. Seeing the pitiable condition of widows, his heart bled. He knew that for Hindu women, there was no greater grief than widowhood; yet he saw a silver lining to that cloud – even widowhood could be turned into a tool of social welfare by courageous women, of whom Pandita Ramabai was an example. His views on women did not challenge the core of Hindu traditionalism. He used persuasive arguments to convince society about permitting widow remarriage. Most of them are based on the precepts of “liberal Hinduism”.

Karve narrates his encounter with a woman in Nrusinhwadi, who had been turned down by her family because she had acted against the customs of society. The whereabouts of her husband were not known, and when the village community thought she had deviated from the path of purity, she was thrown out of the house and her family was fined. There is another incident narrated by him of a widow who suffered the consequences of deviating from the path of accepted moral norms. Karve was willing to help her, provided the family permitted her to study later. But that request was refused.

Social Injustices

Karve felt that a woman was rendered helpless by nature. Though in making her waver from morality, the offender is a man, nature and society go against a woman and proclaim her guilty. Nature cannot be changed, but changes can be made in the social framework. It was necessary to think of ways of blunting the edge of the weapons used by society to subjugate women.

Karve realised that it was of supreme importance that widows develop self-confidence. His task was to support women battered by

oppression and suppression. His innate compassion gave him the strength not to lose courage in the cascade of troubles he had to face in the circumstances.

Shaved Heads

Karve understood that a widow's life was full of drudgery and distasteful chores, marked with trial and tribulations. It was natural that she lacked self-confidence. This situation could be improved only by education and the strengthening of her self-image. Armed with this, women would be able to face criticism and social obstacles. Karve knew that the path of widow remarriage was arduous and a beginning had to be made by protests against the custom of shaving the heads of widows. In his autobiography, he mentions how impossible it was to persuade a widow with a shaved head to go in for formal education: because she had shed her self-esteem with her hair. He also narrated the experience of meeting a widow who defied society and chose to stay away from her sons because she refused to have her crown shaved.

Karve used persuasive arguments to convince society about widow remarriage. He started with the argument that if some persons follow celibacy and dedicate themselves to social service, they are rare persons who may be praised. Otherwise marriage is normal for most men and women, and it is normal to want a life partner.

Karve started with the premise that *Grihasthashram* (married life) is normal for men and women. He believed that there should be the same standards of morality for man and woman. If either him or her loses the life partner before beginning adult life, his or her remarriage should be considered a first marriage. A widower should marry a widow, though very often he ends up marrying a younger girl.

The marriage of a man with a girl young enough to be his daughter is an immoral act displaying an animal trait in human beings.

He was aware of the obstacles and especially paucity of finances in his task of promoting widow remarriage. He offered a thousand rupees from his own savings. In his letter in the *Sudharak* of 25th May 1896, he wrote: “As long as I live, I shall myself add to the interest on this amount whatever is required for the maintenance of just one widow, even if I find that financial help does not come forth from other sources”.

Karve took special care not to upset public opinion excessively and to ensure that such marriages were within the caste framework. Also, to see that marriage ceremonies were performed according to ancient rites.

In course of time, the name of this association was changed to *Vidhavavivahapratibandh Nivaraka Mandali* (Association to remove obstacles to widow remarriage).

Change in Priorities

Karve travelled extensively in Western India and even in Madras, to arouse public opinion and to collect funds. He realised that many people were not willing to express their opinions on the subject in writing. Later, he decided not to mix the issue of widow remarriage with education in the *Anath Balikashram* (an institution for orphan girls). Teachers and officials were asked not to express their views before students. He himself decided not to get involved in the widow remarriage of students belonging to the Ashram.

Karve Criticised

This caused a series of adverse reactions. A section of public opinion believed that he was repenting for his earlier views and deeds. In his own words, the position of the

Ashram was like the moderate party in politics (making both government and extremist parties unhappy). Curiously, Karve's Ashram was criticised both as a factory for preparing goods for remarriage and, at the same time, an institution for opposing remarriage.

Karve's zeal for social work was unmatched. In his opinion, Hindus were far behind the world in moral values. If they did not mend their ways, then the world would go ahead and their contribution to culture would be forgotten. Lamenting the dearth of sincere people in public life, he realised that the bulk of the work falls on only a few persons, hence the results are not always of the same standard. The nation could renew its spirit only if thousands of young men and women came forward and identified themselves with social work.

Women's Education

Karve realised that over the centuries, women had effectively moved backwards from liberty to bondage, from respect to humiliation. He did not think that there was a nobler cause than that of women's education. Karve became the open door for women in despair. Naturally, when he changed his priority from widow remarriage to education, he had to face many critical comments.

Clarifying his views on the relation between the issues of remarriage of widows and their education, he wrote, "It is my considered and firm opinion that the cause of the education of widows will prosper only if it is kept entirely aloof from the work which is being done for the re-marriage of widows. The idea of founding a home for widows was first sponsored by the Widow Marriage Association, but after careful consideration, it was decided to have the two movements entirely independent of each other. He was

convinced that the education of women was a cause which demanded his complete attention and dedication.

Karve had to face much criticism because of this change in his stand. A newspaper from Belgaum, *Chikitsak*, published a letter lamenting Karve's stand as being reactionary and regressive. His reply to such criticism: "In my initial work for the cause of the re-marriage of widows, I have humbly and earnestly tried to follow the same path which was adopted by Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar in Calcutta and Vishnushastri Pandit on our side. Today, this work is being ably done by a number of my friends for whom I have the highest respect. I have not, by even so much as a single word or act, done anything to throw obstacles in their path. At the same time, I humbly submit, it is open for anyone to take up the work or the activity which he considers would be most beneficial for the welfare of the society".

A Visionary

Karve was a visionary, but with his feet firmly planted on the ground. His views on women's education were neither revolutionary nor liberal. They were somewhere in-between, aiming to improve the general status of women in society without upsetting the supporters of social customs and traditions. On March 4, 1907 he started a *Mahavidyalaya* for women. Its objectives were stated by him in *Gyan Prakash*. In his opinion, such an institution would prepare educated women capable of taking up the responsibility of *Grihini*—housewife—and also understanding their social responsibilities. The educational curricula would be one giving general education and not designed for those who wanted to pass examinations for government service.

Slowly, the idea should per-

colate to all sections of society that girls should observe celibacy till the age of 12, and ultimately the age of marriage should be 20. Parents desirous of giving free education to their daughters till the age of 20 should give an undertaking that they would not be rushed into marriage. The institution would support needy students. Karve did not discount the possibility that some girls may be different from others, wanting to earn a regular income and dedicate their lives at the same time to public work. There should be facilities to prepare them for the necessary examinations.

Liberal Hinduism

Karve's views on women were based on his belief in liberal Hinduism. For him, it stands for plain living and high thinking, tolerance for different views, castes and religions, and awareness of one's duties. He was never a reactionary. At times he took a stand that was radically different from that of the community. He firmly believed that every man must marry a woman close to his age, and a young girl must not be allowed to fall a prey to his lust. He even went a step further and wrote that the time had come to change our set social ideas that a girl must be married, and that too before attaining puberty. Girls must be educated by the parents, and if the situation demands it, such women would be well prepared to look after themselves and their children.

By his own admission, the four premises that stimulated Karve were: his desire to give such education to women as would generate self-confidence and an awareness of herself as a responsible human being; his conviction that a woman can contribute to the building of the nation by making the family strong; his faith that they would promote the idea of nationalism among children; and his acceptance of the view that if some women deviate

from the traditional path by not marrying, they may do so and still contribute to the welfare of the society and the nation.

In his address to the National Social Conference, Karve specified that there are two principles of women's education – use of the mother tongue as medium of expression, and women's functions being distinct from those of men. He did not want to prevent all women from having those opportunities which were available to men in the field of education. According to him, "I do not mean that the way should be rigorously barred against those whose ambition would be to beat men on their own ground and compete with them for prizes and honours in the existing universities. Those who would be in a position by intellectual, physical and financial equipment to do so, would certainly be glorious ornaments to their kind and also to the whole community in the present conditions. But we must recognise that both national and social economy require that women should occupy a station of their own, distinct from that of men. That they are an integral part of the social organism as men, is beyond question, but that the office they have to fill is different, though equal – perhaps greater – in importance, is equally true".

On June 3, 1916, the idea of an Indian Women's University materialised.

For Karve, the work of propagating women's education had to be done with a missionary zeal. He remembered the contribution of the Buddhist nuns in the establishment of Viharas, and pointed out the need for such workers, irrespective of monetary compensation. He himself was the embodiment of this conviction.

Quoting Gokhale, who spoke at a function in a girls' school, Karve referred to the similarity between

educated public opinion on women's high schools and general public opinion regarding women's education. In both cases, at first there was active opposition which, turned into passive, though still hateful opposition, became indifferent and finally moved towards passive sympathy. So one must not lose hope for the future. However, awareness of women's education started simultaneously among Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. The Parsis moved with the times. The Hindus made some headway though a lot remained to be done, but the condition of Muslim women remained the worst.

It is very interesting to analyse Karve's account of efforts for women's education. He noted the work by government agencies like municipalities and local boards in running schools. But he cautioned that people should not depend much on government institutions, but instead create a strong public opinion with the help of newspapers like the *Kesari*. Though Karve was a forthright person, who stood for means as pure as ends, he acknowledged the role of missionaries in the cause of women's education.

Deshkarya & Dharma Karya

Instead of criticising or rejecting Christianity, Karve admitted that its power was generated by the desire to spread it. In his opinion, if it was considered necessary to combat that force, there should be a greater force than that originating from the desire to protect one's own religion. We must have a school near every school run by Christian missionaries. If we fail to do that, the least we can do is to acknowledge their work. Karve also noted the efforts made by self-reliant women's private institutions, run by donations from the rich and the selfless work of some individuals. However, the most powerful instrument for women's education is faith and conviction, a burning desire to

serve the cause of women's education. Karve identified the work of women's education as *Deshkarya* – work for the nation, and *Dharmakarya* – work for religion. Instead of getting discouraged by the challenge of educating 15 crore women, he suggested a simple solution to the problem – that every educated person should educate at least 15 women. Thus, Karve achieved a silent revolution in the field of women's education by framing a curriculum to suit their needs, by introducing a system which was suited to their life and by giving education in their mother-tongue.

A True Revolutionary

Karve's contribution to social reforms is invaluable. The problems of his times were difficult and complex, and his response to them was unquestionably human and spontaneous. He had immense faith in persuasive methods, and though he did not appear to be a radical or an extremist, his work truly brought a revolution in the traditional Indian set-up. Without challenging the traditional role of women, he showed them the way to liberate themselves. He showed them that faith in the cause and honesty to one's self can do wonders. With the help of Karve's ideas, many women found a new meaning in their lives. There never was disharmony between his words and deeds, and this is the reason why this social reformer of towering eminence remained essentially human. Undaunted by difficulties, he was sure that he would achieve success in his work definitely in the next life, if not in this. Such words of faith and selfless work of Karve will inspire social reformers of all times.

DR. USHA THAKKAR is former Head of the Department of Political Science, SNDT Women's University and currently Honorary Director, Institute of Research on Gandhian Thought and Rural Development.



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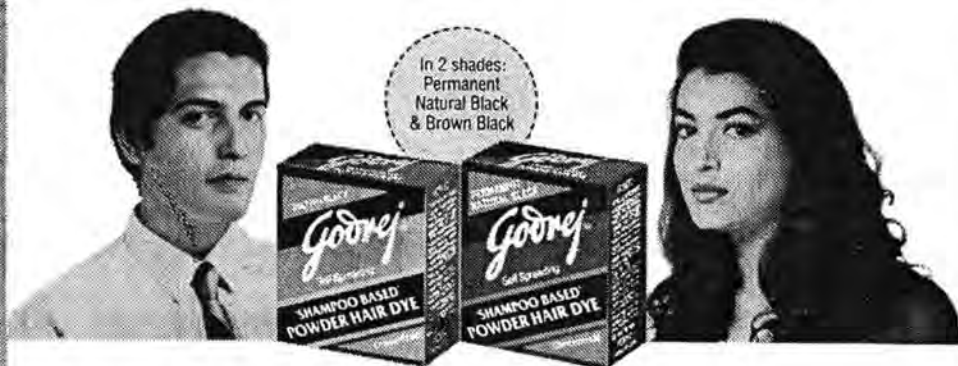
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The Liberal International (LI) is a global network of Liberal parties, politicians and think tanks. The protection of human rights, promotion of free trade and the fight against crime are priorities in the LI's current work.

The Liberal International was founded in Oxford in 1947 and consists of 71 Liberal parties worldwide, twenty of which are in government.

Readers may recall that we had carried in an earlier issue of *Freedom First*, the text of the Liberal Manifesto adopted at the founding of the LI (then known as the World Liberal Union) in April 1947 in Oxford. *Freedom First* founder Mr. Minoo Masani, a Patron of the Liberal International, played his part in the drafting of that Manifesto.

The LI met 50 years later again at Oxford from 27th to 30th November 1997 and adopted a new document which it called "The Liberal Agenda for the 21st Century". It is a document reiterating the pre-eminence of the freedom and dignity of the individual.

The Liberal Agenda for the 21st Century:

The Quality of Liberty in Open Civic Societies

*The Liberal Manifesto, adopted by the 48th Congress of Liberal International on
27-30 November 1997 in Oxford, UK*

Inspired by the founders of the Liberal International who, fifty years ago, launched the Liberal Manifesto, 475 liberals from every continent have returned to Oxford on 27-30 November 1997 to consider liberal responses to the challenges and opportunities that emerge on the threshold of a new millennium.

Over the past 50 years, substantial progress has been made in establishing open societies based upon political and economic liberty. However, there is still a long way to go. New generations have to define liberal priorities in the face of new opportunities and new dangers.

There remain many challenges to Liberalism: from the violation of human rights, from excessive concentrations of power and wealth; from fundamentalist, totalitarian, xenophobic and racist ideologies, from discrimination on grounds of sex, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability; from poverty and ignorance, from the widening gap between rich and poor; from the misuse of new technologies, from the weakening of social ties, from competition for scarce resources, from environmental degradation in an overcrowded world, from organised crime and from

political corruption. Our tasks as Liberals in the 21st Century will be to seek political responses to these new challenges which promote individual liberty and human rights, open societies and economies, and global co-operation.

Our Liberal Values

We reaffirm our commitment to the principles of Liberalism set out in the International Liberal Manifesto of April 1947: that liberty and individual responsibility are the foundations of civilised society; that the state is only the instrument of the citizens it serves; that any action of the state must respect the principles of democratic accountability; that constitutional liberty is based upon the principles of separation of powers; that justice requires that in all criminal prosecution, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, and to a fair verdict free from any political influence; that state control of the economy and private monopolies both threaten political liberty; that rights and duties go together, and that every citizen has a moral responsibility to others in society; and that a peaceful world can only be built upon respect for these principles and upon co-operation among democratic societies. We reaffirm that these principles are valid throughout the world.

Freedom, responsibility, tolerance, social justice and equality of opportunity: these are the central values of Liberalism, and they remain the principles on which an open society must be built. These principles require a careful balance of strong civil societies, democratic government, free markets, and international co-operation.

We believe that the conditions of individual liberty include the rule of law, equal access to a full and varied education, freedom of speech, association, and access to information, equal rights and opportunities for women and men, tolerance of diversity, social inclusion, the promotion of private enterprise and of opportunities for employment. We believe that civil society and constitutional democracy provide the most just and stable basis for political order. We see civil society as constituted by free citizens, living within a framework of established law, with individual rights guaranteed, with the powers of government limited and subject to democratic accountability.

We believe that an economy based on free market rules leads to the most efficient distribution of wealth and resources, encourages innovation, and promotes flexibility.

We believe that close co-operation among democratic societies through global and regional organisations, within the framework of international law, of respect for human rights, the rights of national and ethnic minorities, and of a shared commitment to economic development worldwide, is the necessary foundation for world peace and for economic and environmental sustainability.

The Advance of Liberalism, 1947-97

We welcome the progress made over the past fifty years in putting Liberal principles into practice in a growing number of countries:

- the return of freedom and democracy to the former communist countries in Europe
- the spread of democratic government and the rule of law
- the end of colonialism, with previously-subject peoples gaining the opportunity for self-government
- the retreat of the state from control of national economies, with widespread acceptance that market economies create wealth more effectively and distribute it more widely
- the transformation of education from a privilege for a minority to a life-long process for a rising

proportion of citizens

- growing respect for human rights, both within states and as a subject for international oversight and – where necessary – intervention
- a growing national and international awareness of the human rights of women and children
- the extension of the rules of equality to sexual minorities and the recognition that homosexuality and lesbianism are legitimate expressions of personal proclivities
- the consolidation of an open international economy, within an agreed framework of international regulation
- the strengthening of international law and of global and regional institutions
- increased freedom of information, communication and travel, both within and across national boundaries
- acceptance that shared responsibility within the world community extends to a common obligation to tackle world poverty and to protect the global environment

The Challenge of Our Generation

We recognise that these achievements have been won so far for only a minority of humankind.

The challenges we face in the next fifty years are to build on what has been achieved, to extend the principles of liberalism throughout the world, and to harness the forces of change to consolidate rather than to undermine the development of open societies.

The challenges we face include:

1. The challenge of extending democracy.

Liberal democracy has at last become widely accepted as the global model for political organisation. But only a minority of states are yet properly democratic. Authoritarian regimes, military elites usurping power, abuse of state powers for partisan purposes, criminal elements gaining influence over government, power-seekers exploiting popular hopes and fears, still block the path to liberty. We call on all governments and peoples

- to discriminate in international relations in favour of governments which observe the rules of human rights and democracy;
- to abolish capital punishment all over the

world;

- to strengthen the rule of law and to promote good governance within a genuinely democratic framework;
- to redirect public spending from military expenditure towards investment in social capital, sustainability, and the alleviation of poverty;
- to limit the sale of arms, and to prevent the sale of the means of repression to non-democratic regimes, and to promote the effectiveness of the UN register of conventional arms;
- to combat corruption, organised crime and terrorism;
- to promote media free from undue control or interference by government or dominant companies;
- to instil through education the crucial importance of tolerance to the very existence of a civilised society.

2. **The challenge of violence and of global governance**

In a world filled with violent conflicts, one of the most critical tasks is to find effective means of avoiding violence. An increasingly interdependent world also requires a high standard of international co-operation to promote a secure, sustainable and equitable world order. Transnational crime, intractable disease, environmental pollution and the threat of climate change pose additional challenges for international co-operation. Liberals are committed to strengthen global governance through the United Nations and through regional co-operation. We call on all governments to join in the initiative to establish an international criminal court with jurisdiction over war criminals. Our objective in the 21st century is to build a liberal world order securely based upon the rule of law and backed by appropriate global and regional institutions.

3. **The challenge of improving democracy**

We recognise that democratic practices must be extended further to meet the expectations of more educated societies and to protest against disillusionment with representative government. Citizens deserve better access to information,

more effective parliamentary controls on executive power, wider opportunities to play an active part in public life and to question their governments. The principle of subsidiarity must be fully respected, to give the maximum autonomy to regions and local communities. Effective decentralisation of political power to self-governing communities remains the best way to empower every citizen.

4. **The tension between self-government and human rights**

Self-government, more specifically state sovereignty, can conflict with individual freedom and human rights. Authoritarian regimes abuse the principle of sovereignty to bar intervention to support those who are denied freedom. Liberals insist that human rights are indivisible and universal, and do not depend on citizenship of a specific state, or on membership of a particular ethnic or social group, gender, religion or political party. Adequate sanctions should be found by the international community against governments which refuse to observe the principles of an open international society.

5. **The challenge of poverty and social exclusion**

Poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion blight the lives of men and especially of women, children and the elderly, and present major dangers to civil society. Poverty breeds despair and despair breeds extremism, intolerance and aggression. The central question in the alleviation of poverty is how to provide people with the means to fight poverty themselves, to lift themselves out of poverty. We call for an active policy, creating opportunity for education and employment, assistance for those who cannot help themselves, resting upon a partnership between public and private provision. Public institutions and welfare systems must be as flexible and as locally administered as possible, aiming to promote individual responsibility and respond to individual circumstances.

6. **The challenge of lean government**

The age-old misconception that it is government's business to organise people's happiness is heading for crisis, if not collapse, all over the world. In most industrialised countries, exaggerated and ill-targeted systems of social security and redistribution threaten to break down, and state budgets to impose ever-increasing debt burdens on future generations. In developing

countries, attempts to promote development exclusively or predominantly by government action are bound to fail, through overloading government and stifling private initiative, the only factor that can produce really sustainable development. Liberals recognise that the capacity of government is limited, that 'big government' and the growth of state expenditure are themselves serious threats to a free society, and that limiting the scope of government and retrenchment of government spending must therefore be given priority.

7. The need for a new contract between generations

We recognise the tensions between the immediate pressures of demand and consumption and the long-term interests of community and environment, with which governments as trustees of society must be concerned. We seek a new contract between generations, recognising the benefits which current consumers and citizens have received from earlier investment and the responsibilities they carry to maintain and renew the natural environment, cultural treasures, public assets and social capital for future generations. Prices should reflect the underlying costs of pollution and of the exploitation of the natural resources.

8. The challenge of scientific and technological progress

We welcome the economic and social opportunities presented by new technologies and scientific innovation. But we also recognise the need for public scrutiny of their potential impact, and misuse, and for national and international regulation. The precautionary principle should be the governing principle in all sectors of human activity. This is particularly true for the threat of climate change, which mankind has to address immediately. Binding agreements and time-tables for substantial reductions of the consumption of fossil fuels are urgently needed. Consumption must be kept within the regenerative capacities of the ecosystems. All chemicals, genetically engineered substances and industrial products should be carefully tested before they are commercially utilised. We also welcome the revolution in communications, which offers new opportunities to promote creativity, decentralisation, and individual autonomy and initiative. Liberals insist upon diverse channels of communication, provided through competition in

the open market. Information, networks and other communication structures must be widely accessible, with open systems for producers and consumers and public interest bodies.

9. The challenge of creating open markets

Open societies need open markets. A liberal, open and tolerant society requires a market economy. Political freedom and economic freedom belong together. With the markets of ideas and innovations, with the competition for the best solution, the market economy creates a dynamic progress that provides the best opportunity for an independent life. With the underlying principle of private property and a legal framework to prevent monopolies, open markets generate private initiative and the economic means for social assistance. Bureaucratic regulations of market economics and protectionism are, therefore, barriers for new chances and new jobs in developing countries as well as in the industrialised world. In order to achieve an ecologically and socially sustainable development, the emphasis should be shifted from taxation of labour to taxation of energy and raw material consumption. Without such a change, environmental problems and unemployment will continue to increase.

10. The challenge of world-wide development

Corrupt and authoritarian government, weak states and societies, unemployment, impoverishment, illiteracy, and over-population all contribute to environmental degradation, generate flows of migrants and refugees, and provoke results against political and social order. It is in the long-term self-interest of the developed world to encourage human progress, and assist economic development within poor countries; it is also a moral responsibility. Since open global markets best serve to promote prosperity, within both rich and poor countries, liberals will have to aggressively re-emphasise, and to the best of their ability, implement their firm conviction that free trade, by giving the best opportunities to the economically weak, is the safest way towards overcoming poverty in the world. Resistance to economic protectionism, therefore, remains a key Liberal commitment.

At the dawn of the 21st century, we commit ourselves as Liberals to work together to meet these challenges. We reaffirm the Liberal commitment to place the freedom and dignity of every human being

Primary Education as a Human Right

Resolution adopted by the 48th Congress of the Liberal International

Noting that as we approach the 21st Century, an unacceptably high percentage of young children in the world are denied a proper start in life, suffering exploitation, maltreatment, poverty, emotional and physical deprivation and taking into account that three quarters of all primary school aged children outside primary school are girls.

This Congress recalls the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously on 20th November 1959, and the Resolution declaring 1979 the International Year of the Child, as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 21st December 1976.

This Congress calls for:

1. the universal recognition of primary education as a basic right for both boys and girls, and special efforts have to be taken for the equal rights to primary education for girls.
2. the prioritisation of primary education within the budgets of national governments, to guarantee access for all and the raising of standards;
3. international action, especially by UN authorities, international financial institutions and aid donor countries to earmark more funds to promote primary education and enforce the protection of the rights and enhance the opportunities of children of primary school age.

International Co-operation in order to combat Organised Crime

The 48th Congress of Liberal International assembled at Oxford from 27th until 30th November 1997 considers that:

1. the maintenance of the rule of law is one of the cornerstones of liberalism;
2. that the rise of organised crime is an intolerable burden to societies all over the world;
3. criminals should not be able to find safe refuge in any country in the world;

Is therefore of the opinion that:

4. all states must contribute to the implementation and maintenance of all international treaties, conventions and resolutions dealing with the subject of crime;
5. co-operation among states is essential in order to bring criminals, especially war and drug criminals, to justice;

6. bringing criminals to justice is not only a moral duty but also an international obligation;
7. crimes against humanity should be dealt with by an international court;

Urges therefore strongly that:

8. all countries should use all international means available to strike out against crime;
9. political and legal considerations should be dealt with separately so that short-term political considerations should not interfere with the execution of the rule of law;
10. the member parties of the Liberal International expedite the foundation of an international court in order to bring those suspected of international crimes to justice.



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OLYMPUS

Amravati

The Buddhist Centre on the Banks of the Krishna

Makarand Paranjape

Two hundred years ago, in 1796, when the landlord of Chintapalli decided to shift his residence to Amaravati, he scarcely realised what he'd dig up. While laying the foundations of a modern township around the ancient Amareshwara temple on the banks of the Krishna, near Guntur, he found that he'd uncovered several ancient mounds. Many of these were full of stone slabs, sculptures, and other artefacts. Perhaps, he was disappointed at not discovering any treasure, but some of the stones did come in handy in the construction of the new town.

News of the landlord's findings travelled to the authorities. In 1797, Colonel Colin Mackenzie travelled to the site and at once realised its importance. What was locally known as Dipaladinne or the Hill of Lamps was actually a very old *Maha-Chaitya*, which once had a height of 20 feet and a diameter of 90 feet. Since then, the site was frequented by colonial archaeologists who, naturally, removed some of its best pieces to the British Museum and sent the rest to the Government Museum, Madras. After independence, there were more excavations. Finally, the Archaeological Survey of India built a museum nearby, augmenting the local findings with antiquities from Alluru, Gummadidurru and Lingarajapalli.

The excavations reveal the great antiquity of Amaravati. The area was probably inhabited by megalith builders as the wide array of early and later stone age tools displayed in the museum shows. A fragment of an Ashokan inscription suggests that the great *chaitya* goes back to the 3rd century B.C. Afterwards, it was augmented again and again

by subsequent rulers. In fact, Amaravati remained an active centre of Buddhism until the 14th century.

The Stupa is the biggest in Andhra



presentation of Rāhula before Buddha.

Pradesh. Even today, going around the circumambulatory path paved with ancient stones conveys a sense of its grandeur. At the height of its glory, this must have been a great monument, with its large dome built on the drum-shaped base, with platforms projecting out in the cardinal directions, circular railings made up of carved pillars, sculptured slabs, and decorations in stucco.

Now, all that remains of this Stupa is just a mound of earth atop a circular brick platform. At regular intervals are implanted broken stone slabs whose surfaces have been worn smooth with time. They are of no sculptural value whatsoever and only add to the desolation of the place. A few old trees inhabited by crows, some stray dogs, curious villagers, and indifferent tourists – that's it. And yet, at sundown, when I return to it on one of the stones slabs, an enormous peace descends upon this open ground.

Inside the museum are several panels with depictions from the *Jataka*

tales. One of them from the *Sibi Jataka* is easily recognisable. King Sibi gives refuge to a pigeon which is trying to escape from a hunter. When reproached by the hunter for depriving him of his rightful quarry, the King agrees to give the hunter the pigeon's weight of his own flesh. However, the bird is heavier than he'd imagined, so the King prepares to give up his life. Just then *Sakra* and *Agni* appear to bless him.

Then, in the Curator's room, an unexpected marvel awaits me. Carefully wrapped in a casket are tiny glass jars. These five crystal containers were discovered in the slots of the bottom slab of the pillars which surrounded the southern platform. They contain tiny gold flowers and – wonders of wonders – pieces of bone. The curator, holding up one of these with a forcep tells me that it is a relic of the great being, the Buddha himself! I am dumbstruck. The backward village, the ruins of the stupa, the unimpressive museum – none of these have prepared me for this. A strange mixture of awe, devotion, and incredulity overpowers me as I pay my respects to relic.

Outside, on our way back to Guntur, one of my more practical companions remarks: "Can you imagine what you could do if you had a relic of, say, Jesus Christ? Why, even with this little bit of the Buddha's bone, you could make the richest temple in India with all the Japanese, Thai and Korean money which will come pouring in. The whole economy of this place would be transformed." Earlier I rued the decline of Amaravati; I am not sure that the vision my friend conjures up is any more appealing. The idea of showcasing, and marketing the precious relic does not fill me with any enthusiasm. Though it is a pity that not many people know about it, perhaps, it is best that Amaravati remains the quiet and neglected town that it is.

COURTESY: DR. MAKARAND PARANJAPE and *The Pioneer*.

Dr. Makarand Paranjape, who is the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT, New Delhi, was a participant at a national seminar entitled 'India - The Next Fifty Years' held in Guntur from November 14 to 16, 1997.

Sir Isaiah Berlin

Sir Isaiah Berlin, who passed away on November 5, 1997 was one of the greatest philosophers, man of ideas, and above all, civilising influences.

I should like to bring to the notice of your readers, one of the most profound theses put forward by Sir Isaiah, relating to the different moral universes we have. There is a significant divide in European culture between Christian morality and pre-Christian Greco-Roman morality.

The value of the Greco-Roman world as pointed out by Sir Isaiah are "courage, vigour, fortitude in adversity, public achievement, order, discipline, happiness, strength, justice and above all, assertion of one's proper claims and the knowledge and power to secure their satisfaction".

Against this moral universe stands Christian morality. He pointed out that the ideals here are "charity, mercy, sacrifice, love of God, forgiveness of enemy, contempt for goods of this world, faith in life hereafter, belief in the salvation of the individual soul being higher in value than any social, political or terrestrial goal or consideration".

In India, the Ramayana and Mahabharata represent the above two universes and the conflict between these universes continues.

It is to the eternal credit of Sir Isaiah Berlin that he pointed out that the real problem that mankind faces is that the State and statecraft which man has himself created (whether as affirmative good or a necessary evil is immaterial), has its own code which is as absolute as the other one. It could even be a moral code. It is to be hoped that the coming generations will read Sir Isaiah.

We could place our earlier leaders like Gokhale, Tilak, Gandhi, J.P., Rajaji, Nehru, Patel in one of the moral universes. But, where do we place some of our leaders of today?

Arvind A. Deshpande.



Sir Isaiah Berlin

In a famous lecture, Sir Isaiah spoke of two kinds of liberty, a "negative" one and a "positive" one. But which was "better"? The humble questioner might seek assurance that negative liberty, defined as freedom from interference, was the better. Not necessarily. It could lead to horrors, Sir Isaiah said, such as the suffering of children in coal mines. But what about positive liberty, doing what is in your own best interests? That could lead to despotism, the crushing of ideas. In the 40 years since his lecture on liberty, Sir Isaiah was asked many times exactly what he meant. He tended to be enigmatic. In his very last interview, published in October 1997 in *Prospect* magazine, he parried a persistent questioner. "They are both perfectly good forms of liberty, which we all pursue", he said. Even more maddening for those seeking simple answers was that Sir Isaiah tended to speak in long sentences with numerous subordinate clauses, at great speed with hints of his native Russian. "Unintelligible in several languages", remarked A. L. Rowse, a contemporary of Sir Isaiah at Oxford. Harold Ross, editor of the *New Yorker* in its great days, once told Sir Isaiah, "I don't understand a word you've said." Still, he published an article by him. Sir Isaiah never lacked an appreciative audience.

He remained a teacher, but saw himself as a historian of social and political ideas. His lectures in Oxford and elsewhere - Harvard, Princeton, among others - on innovative thinkers and their impact on people's lives were well received. But the academic world produces many excellent lecturers. What was it about Sir Isaiah that made him the superstar of academic showbiz? Perhaps not solely his books, probably the most lasting of which are collections of his lectures and essays. He preferred the spoken word. The memories of his friends are mainly of his talk, even though his willingness to unload his ideas, derived from wide reading, could eventually be exhausting to the listener, who would not be encouraged to intervene. A colleague, Maurice Bowra, once remarked that although "like Our Lord and Socrates, he does not publish much, he thinks and says a good deal". He was a useful dinner guest, entertaining the company with stories of this century's immortals, Einstein, Picasso, Freud, and so on, and no one doubted that he had met them.

As in real showbiz, his reputation spread in ever widening circles from an admiring centre. He had 23 honorary doctorates from eminent universities, possibly a record, and many academic awards. As well as being knighted, he received a rarer honour, the Order of Merit, which is limited to 24 people. A writer on western philosophy noted that a cousin of Sir Isaiah was the leader of a Jewish sect, and proclaimed by thousands of his followers to be the Messiah. Sir Isaiah did not match that but, in Oxford terms, he may have come close.

Extracted from *The Economist*, November 15, 1997.

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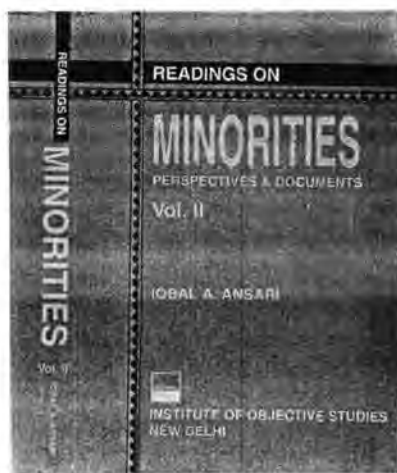
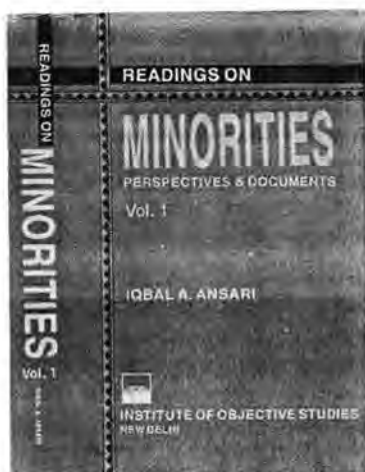
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BOOK REVIEWS

READINGS ON MINORITIES PERSPECTIVES AND DOCUMENTS.
Volume 1 & 2. Edited by Iqbal A. Ansari, Institute of Objective Studies,
New Delhi; 1996; Vol. I pp.412;Rs.395; Vol.2 pp.645;Rs.495



**Reviewed by
Dr. S. P. Sathe**

These two volumes besides providing the reader with important international documents on minorities rights contain thought provoking articles on the subject by eminent persons such as James Fawcett, Claire Palley, Francesco Capotorti, Alan Phillips, Kumar Rupesinghe, Soli Sorabjee, Abdulrahim P. Vijapur, Anwarul Yaquin, Rajni Kothari, V. M. Tarkunde, Iqbal Ansari and S. Z. Abedin. The second volume contains documents evidencing various important events in India that took place during the national movement for independence, debates in the Constituent Assembly of India and provisions of the Indian Constitution containing rights of the minorities.

What are minorities? We do not include in the definition of minorities the political dissenters, who also might be a minority. In a democracy, they get their right to dissent through the guarantee of freedom of speech and expression. A minority is described by Fawcett

as "a group in a country which possesses and has a common will, however conditioned - to preserve certain habits and patterns of life and behaviour which may be ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious, or a combination of them, and which characterize it as a group. Further, such a group may be politically dominant or non-dominant." (p.3, Vol. I). Usually a minority group is (a) numerically smaller than the majority; (b) has a distinct identity and is (c) powerless as compared to the majority.

According to Fawcett, minority is a non-dominant group with a distinct ethnic, cultural or linguistic identity. It may or may not be numerically a minority. The Whites in South Africa were numerically small compared to the Blacks but were dominant and therefore did not need minority protection. A minority needs to be protected because of its powerlessness vis-a-vis the dominant ethnic, religious group. Such a minority requires not

only the equal protection of law, which is doubtless very important but the right to preserve its distinct identity. Separatism is different from separateness. In a plural nationalism, there are vertical as well as horizontal federalisms. Where regions want to retain their identity and yet be part of the national mainstream, they organise a federal government in which the units retain powers and give some power to the Centre. Where various distinct religious, ethnic or linguistic groups want to retain their identities, they organise vertical federalism in which minorities are guaranteed the right to equal protection and also the right to their distinct identities, culture and traditions.

Migration and minorities have always had a cause and effect relationship. Migrations caused peoples' movements from one country to another. People have gone from one country to another in search of safety or better opportunities.

Every country is bound to have a minority or minorities. The editor rightly says that the "Mazzinian view of culturally homogeneous nation-state has really never existed in any part of the world." (xi). The editor cautions the minorities against nurturing separatist feelings and majorities against adopting assimilationist strategies, intolerance and hegemony. Both have to be avoided. "Pluralism in togetherness" would be the ideal to be shared by the majorities and the minorities. The editor therefore observes that what was required was a redefinition of the State, as a multi-ethnic State (xx). The editor observes:

"The study indicates that in those countries where there are neither majoritarian nor secessionist attitudes, where legal-institutional provisions exist for

non-discrimination, proportional voting systems, coalitions, equal access to government services on fair promotional quotas and where army and police are not dominated by majority groups, there is peace and stability and countries where these attitudes and arrangements do not obtain are torn by conflicts."

Two ways of dealing with minority problems are: (1) separation and (2) integration. The right of self determination is usually conceded where a people are living under a colonial or foreign rule and the desire for separation is intense. Since the liberation of the former colonies after the Second World War, demands for separation from parts of the liberated colonies surfaced which threatened their disintegration. The international community has not encouraged such demands unless living together was impossible. Katanga in Congo was a secessionist movement and separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan was a separation. The former was encouraged from outside and the latter was precipitated by the hegemonical attitude of Pakistan's ruling elite. Pakistan's division was not unavoidable. Had the Pakistani Punjabi ruling elite shown enough accommodation for the Bengalis, a composite state of Pakistan could have survived.

The United Nations in its declaration on the granting of Independence to colonial countries and people stated that 'any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the U.N. Charter.' (p.4). It has been held that the imperatives of nation building must take priority over many of the rights formally attributed to ethnic minorities. (23). A distinction is made between a people, however small in number or territory, deemed capable of independence and U.N.

membership and nationalities or minorities living within a larger country. Self determination is accorded to the first but not necessarily to the others (p.24).

Minorities which cannot separate have to live with the majority. A pluralistic state would try its best to create conditions for harmonious co-existence.

Clair Palley discusses various rights guaranteed to the minorities through constitutional provisions and arrangements. He points out federalism, proportional representation, administrative decentralisation as possible devices of integrating the minorities within the mainstream without obliterating their distinct identity. Francesco Copotorti discusses the protection of minorities under various multilateral agreements.

In the second volume, we have articles on the Indian experience, the most notable among them being by the editor himself and by Prof. Rajni Kothari and Justice V.M. Tarkunde. Ansari points out under what circumstances the Muslim members after partition voluntarily gave up the demand for separate electorates. The first past the post system has resulted in the alienation of all minorities. If not separate electorates, we should at least go in for proportional representation. Such electoral reform is overdue. It will reduce the power of those who can win elections by securing a minimum number of votes and assure that one who gets elected has secured not less than 50% of the votes. Gandhi's insistence that separate electorates for the depressed classes would break the unity of Hindu society might have been consistent with his Hindu nationalism. But we have seen that reserved seats have killed the depressed classes movement and made it leaderless. Why did Gandhi not object to separate electorates for Muslims? Ansari observes that

Gandhi and Congress also thought in terms of a majoritarian nationalism and not pluralistic nationalism. Was there not a subtle desire to assimilate the minorities within Hindu nationalism? Their Hindu nationalism, unlike that of the BJP, was not negative as being against somebody but did it not smell of cultural hegemony?

Tarkunde analyses the origin of collectivism which is the root cause of communalism. He points out that communalism of the majority takes the form of ardent nationalism. Such communalism couched in nationalistic overtones has an effect on the people's mind and therefore is accepted as legitimate. Tarkunde rightly says that communalism is an internal enemy residing in the human mind and it is far more difficult to eradicate it than an external enemy like an autocratic ruler (p.50 vol.2). He quotes Dr. Erich Fromm, who in his famous book "Fear of Freedom" analyses the origin of collectivism. According to Fromm, "surrender inside and aggression outside" were the characteristics of fascism which developed in Italy and Germany in the '20s and '30s. (53). Tarkunde examines the policies and practices of the BJP and other Hindutva groups and shows how their majoritarian politics could harm the country and pollute the democratic process. Ansari's discussion of SAARC's Majority Rights Commission is interesting. S. A. Abedi writes on options for Muslim minorities in plural societies.

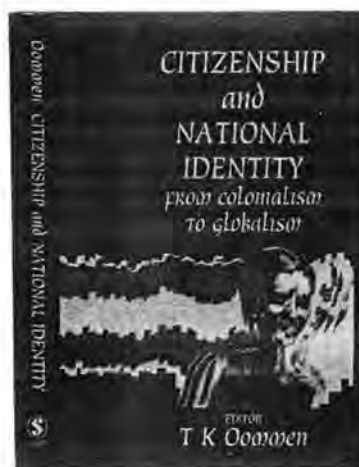
These volumes would doubtless be good acquisitions for a library and also for serious students of human rights.

DR. S. P. SATHE is the Honorary Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Pune.

Cynicism is an unpleasant way of telling the truth.

Lillian Hellman.

CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONAL IDENTITY, edited by T. K. Oommen, Sage Publications, New Delhi; 1997; pp.324; Rs.375



**Reviewed by
Professor Adi Doctor**

The book under review emerges from a thematic session on Citizenship and National Identity organized by the editor of the volume for the 87th annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in August 1992. It comprises a theoretical expose in chapter one, wherein T. K. Oommen seeks to conceptualize the terms citizenship and National Identity (along with such other related terms as Nationality and Ethnicity) and examine their linkage. Disapproving of the loose manner in which many people - statesmen, media persons, civil servants and even academics - use these terms, often interchangeably, Oommen insists that their conceptual clarification is a must for the proper development of social theory in this field.

After examining the views of academics and particularly their tendency to conflate, or use interchangeably, terms like State, National and Ethnic (Ethnic Community), Oommen attempts a re-formulation of these key concepts since "creation of clear concepts is

a pre-requisite for theory building". The nation is a territorial entity to which people have an emotional attachment - they view it as the homeland, thereby, investing the term with a moral significance. As a corollary it follows that nationality is the collective identity which the people of the nation acquire by virtue of identifying with the homeland (nation). Since communication is essential to a nation, Oommen considers a national language (whether ancestral or alien) as essential to a nation.

In contrast to the nation which demands emotional attachment, the State is simply a legally constituted entity which provides its residents protection from internal insecurity and foreign aggression. The State may be socialist or welfare oriented, providing for the social well-being of all residents, and/or democratic providing for participation (directly or indirectly) in governance. In case the State and Nation are co-terminus, Oommen obviously concludes, we have the Nation-State. But he goes on to observe, "most states today are multi-national, poly-ethnic, or a combination of the two; these states are communities of citizens".

The term citizenship attaches to the state (all those legally members of the state are its citizens), while the term national identity attaches to the nation, and, all people who feel attached to a homeland (whether legally existing or not) constitute an ethnic.

It is against this theoretical background that the other essays in this edited volume, take up the task of discussing the linkages between citizenship and national identity in different countries. Alfonso Alfonsi, discussing the case of West Europe tells us that the issue of citizenship and nationality, is, as far as most of West Europe (Belgium, France, Spain, U.K.) goes, still an assumption and not an accomplished fact, with the situa-

tion becoming more complex lately with the emergence on the scene of non-white and non-christian immigrant communities.

Rogers Brubaker, discussing East Europe, informs us, that here, even the attempt at fusing nationality and citizenship was not made. Instead multi-national states were consciously constructed and nurtured. However, the attempt at building a multinational state with a common citizenship failed, partly because of the dominance of the Russian nationality (the great nation chauvinism) and partly because the whole experiment was falsely premised on the belief that ultimately the soviet citizen would become a 'a socialist man' discarding all primordial attachments.

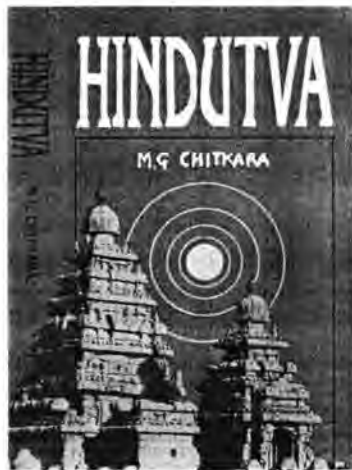
In contrast to the old world, the authors who discuss the new world (US and Latin America), J. N. Rosenau, Elisa P. Reis and Azril Bacal, point out how in these 'Settler majority communities' citizenship perforce had to be the most salient, collective identity, cementing the different ethnicities together. American unity, in short, is perceived in terms of a common civil religion with citizenship based on individual equality. The dominant theme in American nationalism, even today, continues to be the assertion of the rights of non-discrimination against individuals.

In other chapters, different authors discuss the cases of Japan, Africa, Middle East and India. Among these the editor of the volume, T. K. Oommen discussing India, points out how religion being involved as an element in nationality, has undercut the very foundations of an attempt to build a secular polity and citizenship. "While the Hindu militants see the whole of India as their exclusive homeland, Sikh and Muslim militants view parts of India thus." Oommen suggests the obvious solution of 'delegitimizing religion',

but this is more easily said than done. His other suggestion is more constructive and pragmatic viz. keeping a balance between equality and identity in extending citizenship entitlement to all members of the polity irrespective of their religious and other affinities. Such state behaviour, in the long run, will moderate/reduce the tensions and conflicts between nationals and ethnies, and help the Indian state to emerge as an Indian nation.

ADI H. DOCTOR is Visiting Professor of Political Science, Goa University.

HINDUTVA, M. B. Chitkara.
Ashish Publishing Corporation,
New Delhi; 1997; pp. 302; Rs. 500



Reviewed by
Professor G. N. Sarma

In his foreword to this book Dev Padhi, editor, *Himachal Times*, states that the author, "a noted writer and authority on Tibet and Pakistan," has beautifully blended nationalism with secularism and patriotism in *Hindutva* as inseparable constituents.

The substantive part of the book consists of 158 pages divided into 18 brief chapters, some of them clearly dispensable; many of them amount to much beating about the bush. The remaining 144 pages

include five appendices - extracts from the writings of Hindutva apologists and, it would seem strange, one on secular norms by F. S. Nariman; these are followed by others on *Sanatana Dharma* by M. C. Joshi, another from a speech by Golwalkar and four extensive reports from judgements of the supreme court, notably the one on the Manohar Joshi Case.

The question that the book raises is whether a blending of the disparate and contradictory elements "the inseparable constituents" of Hindutva is at all possible, whether the promotion of Hindutva can, or ought to be accepted as a political programme or party objective in a pluralistic society like ours, committed to the ideals of democracy and secularism. That our society is plural has to be accepted as a settled fact of history whether it suits our political predilections or not. It is on this basis that every political party must act towards the creation of a true civic culture.

According to the author 'Hindu' denotes one who inhabits the country that is called India and Indian thus becomes the equivalent of Hindu. This would be unobjectionable if 'Indian' or 'Hindu' can be reduced to an abstraction divested of his beliefs and persuasions and all that the terms emotionally signify. It is not the earliest, conjectural meaning of the term that concerns us but the meaning that it carries in practice.

'Hindu' thus being equated with 'Indian', the next logical step is the assertion of the Hindu majority which, it may be noted, is not conceived in secular terms.

".... the only section of the Indian society which can be considered really important is the Hindu majority.... the word 'Hindu' has covered, and continues to cover, all religions which took birth in India". (146).

From Golwalkar we learn ".... it is the Hindu society which constitutes the nation in this country" (209).

Hindu religion or Hinduism is an inexact term. It has no founder and its chronological origin cannot be established. It is not based on a single text or scripture. It is an overarching spirit under which multiple beliefs and shades of faith have flourished and continue to dwell undisturbed. Hinduism, therefore, cannot form the basis of a theocracy as Islam can for Pakistan.

"Hindu" and Hinduism, being thus disposed of, what remains is "Hindutva", defined as a way of living and not as a religious creed. Hindutva thus becomes the essence of Indian nationalism and patriotism. It is claimed to be secular because it is not attached to Hinduism which is itself no religion in technical parlance. All Indians should therefore fall in line with Hindutva and love their country first and foremost.

The practical implications of this exhortation may be expressed in the author's own words: "There are those among the Muslims whose first loyalty is to their religion and not to the country in which they live. They consider themselves Indian Muslims and not Muslim Indians. That means to their minds fraternal feelings in terms of religions come first and fraternity in terms of patriotism comes later. This is contrary to nationalism." (57).

This line of thinking leads to a serious apprehension: "The census reports have continuously shown that the population of Muslims and Christians is increasing disproportionately compared to the increase in the Hindu population. This could not have assumed political importance but for the tendency of Muslims to create majority areas for themselves

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and thereby inflict another partition on India. Treating Kashmir as a Muslim majority state is like putting religion above nationalism." (58).

The disproportionate birth rate among the Muslim population, it is also feared, creates the disastrous prospect of Hindus becoming strangers in their own land.

Chitkara waxes eloquent on the need for a Hindu Renaissance and summons in his support Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, etc. but it is clear that his view of the Renaissance is distorted by his concept of Hindutva. "It is time," he writes, "that India faithfully follows the dictates of RSS and restores the long lost dynamic equilibrium of Hinduism, reform and reinvigorate it in light of new insights, perceptions, new knowledge...." (63).

Earlier thinkers and philosophers in general visualised the Indian Renaissance as a cultural, spiritual awakening; it was not the dream of political power which activated the movement whereas thinkers of the Hindutva school look upon the Renaissance as the road to power and the ascendancy of the Hindu majority.

Chitkara makes a clever attempt to turn the tables on secularists. According to him "the principle of secularism cannot work in India which is predominantly religious and therefore ought not to be superimposed on the people." On the other hand, if it be laudable goal to make people rise above the narrow confines of religions, the effort should be spread to the present Pakistan as well, because nothing could demonstrate the validity of the principle better than a united India in which Hindus and Muslims could live under the umbrella concept of secularism. Anything less would not be able to clinch the issue." (99).

Chitkara lays emphasis on a

distinctive feature of the Sangh which has helped its continuous growth. It is 'organisation-oriented' instead of being 'personality-oriented'. Hedgewar's farsightedness in this regard was evident when he placed the *Bhagwa Dhwaj* (saffron flag), the eternal emblem of our national culture and traditions, as the supreme idea - the Guru and considered himself as one of the *swayamsevak*s devoted to that Guru." (110).

The ideal of secular, liberal education can have no place in the scheme of *Hindutva*. Liberal education is humanistic and aims at the free and all round growth of the individual in an open society. But, says the author, "Men are to be made - manufactured... It was the genius (*sic*) in Dr. Hedgewar who enriched the system of education embracing discipline, physical fitness and love for the nation and her culture in the form of *shukhas*. He followed what Plato did in his school of education in the late fourth century B.C. (112).

Contrary to what is claimed for the book, it is a reiteration of the familiar arguments for Hindutva and the RSS ideology. The philosophy of liberal secular democracy and free, all round development of personality in an open society are poles apart and can by no means be reconciled or blended. Religion and politics must maintain necessary distance from each other and parties in

a democracy must keep strictly within political limits. As Nariman has exhorted we should give all our attention to Justice Jeevan Reddy's warning: "Under the Constitution, no party or organisation can simultaneously be a political and a religious party. It has to be either. Same would be the position if a party or an organisation acts or behaves by word of mouth, or any other manner to bring about the said effect, it would equally be guilty of an act of unconstitutionality. It would have no right to function as a political party. (176).

PROFESSOR G. N. SARMA retired as Head of the Department of Political Science, Marathwada University, Aurangabad.

Humour on the Internet

Ye INDIA Hai, Sub Chalta Hai

Kaun Jitega ye India Sari
 Sitaram Kesari yaa Atal Bihari
 Shanti leke Kesari khada hai
 Congress tooti, ye akela pada hai
 Hum majority mein na aayenge
 Par Sarkar hum hi banayenge
 BJP ki hai hindu pataka
 'Change' chahiye, to hame do mauka
 Swadeshi raj hum layenge
 'Mandir' waliin banayenge'
 Wo ek nirala Janta Dal hai
 Sada usme uthal-puthal hai
 Sarkar wo hi banayega
 Janta Dal jisko chahega
 Independent khub kamayega
 Lal kile pe hoga sale
 Dam leke, hoga mel
 Wahre politics tera khel
 Kal tui dushmani, aaj hai mel
 Janta ke problem, chalte rahenge
 Ye to dal badalte rahenge
 INDIA ki janta bechari
 Kesari aaye ya Atal Bihari
 Kaha farak kuch padta hai
 Ye India hai, Sub Chalta Hai.

STATISTICAL OUTLINE OF INDIA 1997-98 (TWENTY FOURTH EDITION) compiled and published by the Department of Economics and Statistics (DES), Tata Services Limited; 1998; pp302; Rs.135.



**Reviewed by
S. V. Raju**

Beginning modestly in 1953 with just 53 tables the twenty fourth edition of the Statistical Outline of India (SO) has 283 tables with a fairly comprehensive contents, glossary and an index. The DES team of economists are to be complimented for their efforts in the improvement of the quality of the SO with each successive edition. A feature of the latest SO is a special table entitled "Fifty Years of India's Independence: A Profile of the Indian Economy".

Corporate executives, policy makers, government officials, researchers and students will find the latest edition offering meaningful insights into the changing profile of the Indian economy.

Major Highlights

What are the significant features of the Indian economy? The latest edition reveals that

50 years after Independence:

- Our population has grown by 2.1% per annum, while real per capita income (at 1980-81 prices) increased only by 1.9% per annum; during the period.
- foodgrains production increased from 50.8 mn. tonnes to 198.2 mn. tonnes (or at a compound annual rate of growth (CARG) of 3%;

- industrial production increased by 6.3% (CARG);
- prices increased by 6.6% (CARG);
- the rupee lost its value by 6.4% (CARG); and
- the public debt of the Government of India increased by 12.6% (CARG) from Rs.2,865 crores to Rs.668,819 crores.

the Indian economy is in a transitional phase after the initiation of economic reforms in July 1991. Witness some fluctuations in the performance parameters:

- GDP growth in real terms recovered significantly from 0.8% in 1991-92 to 7% p.a. during 1995-97, but may slow down to 5.5% in the current year;
- industrial growth gained momentum from 0.6% in 1991-92 to 11.8% in 1995-96, but decelerated to 7.2% in 1996-97 and could be about 6% in 1997-98;
- exports (in US Dollars) increased by 20% per year during 1993-96 but the growth rate was down to little over 4% in 1996-97, and at most could grow by 6% in 1997-98;
- despite relative high growth, India's per capita GDP is a meagre \$340 (in 1995) compared to China's \$620, South Korea's \$9,700, not to speak of USA's \$26,980;
- the GDP growth (valued in US Dollars) of 4.6% per year during 1990-95 pales into insignificance when compared with China's 12.8% during the same period;
- in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), India's per capita GDP is \$1,400 (in 1995) against China's \$2,920 and S. Korea's \$11,450. India is the 5th largest economy in the world, with the overall GDP of \$1.14 trillion in terms of PPP;
- investment intentions are promising and projects submitted under Industrial Entrepreneurs Memoranda, numbered 30,674 between

August 1991 and July 1997, involving a massive investment of Rs.571,749 crores and an employment potential of almost 5.3 mn; gross inflow of foreign investment has been \$20.4 bn. during 1991-1997, of which only \$7.2 bn. are FDI. Strikingly, as against India's actual inflow of \$2.6 bn. in 1995, communist China absorbed \$42.3 bn. in the same year;

- the reforms saw the emergence of the so-called Indian middle-class, but just about 29.6 mn. households had an annual income above Rs.45,000 in 1994-95.
- there is only a modest improvement in the standard of living; the private final consumption expenditure on durables in the domestic market increased from Rs.1,507 crores (1.5% of the total) in 1980-81 to Rs. 17,800 crores (2.8%) in 1995-96;
- Inflation, which used to be in double digits in the first half of the 1990s (except 1993-94), has come down to 6.4% in 1996-97 and likely to be just above 5% in 1997-98.

Where does India stand in its global ranking? India is:

- first in ghee & butter, tea and long films production as well as cattle population;
- second in milk production, "pupils at first level" education, population and arable land;
- third in fertiliser (nitro) consumption;
- fifth in cement and potato production;
- sixth in iron ore production and T.V. receivers;
- fourteenth in value-added in manufacturing;
- thirty first in exports;
- forty fifth out of fifty three countries in world competitiveness.

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OUR MISSION

Freedom First speaks for the silent majority - the majority that wants to be left in peace to pursue its goal of improving its quality of life, but has been suffering in silence, the indignities heaped on it by insensitive governments who have abrogated to themselves the right to decide what is good for the people. In the process, the whole country has been turned into a cesspool of corruption. Public morality and character have reached an all-time low.

Freedom First affirms that much of the unrest and ferment in our society is a direct result of excessive State intervention in the day-to-day lives of our people. While the people's initiative has been stifled the economy is in shambles. The Journal believes that while India needs a strong government that ensures the rule of law what India does not need is a meddlesome government - the system so far that has led to impoverishment, insecurity and instability.

Freedom First therefore stands for minimum government and maximum freedom, tempered by a sense of individual responsibility, in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow.

Freedom First rejects any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another, be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

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