

Freedom First

No: 456, January - March 2003
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A Liberal Quarterly

ALL FOR ONE OR EACH FOR HIMSELF?

In Free India:

Only Politicians no Statesmen.

Only Netas no Leaders.

The Gujarat Perspective

9/11, Godhra, Iraq...

Say NO to *Made in China*

The Killing of Lobsang Dhondup

Nani Palkhivala

The Exceptional Indian



(16th January, 1920 - 11th December, 2002)

Mr. Nani Palkhivala was that rare combination of the great and the good, intellectual brilliance blended with humanity and compassion. Mr. Palkhivala was a man who espoused

public causes with unusual commitment and passion. As Princeton University in the citation conferring the Doctor of Laws Degree described him :

“Defender of constitutional liberties, champion of human rights, he has courageously advanced his conviction that expediency in the name of progress, when at the cost of freedom, is no progress at all, but retrogression.”

This vividly depicts the fervour with which he fought for liberty and human rights. In his numerous public writings he reminded his readers that “Bad Governments are a consequence of an indifferent electorate and that every citizen must be prepared to pay to the state not only in taxes but in time and talent”. He practised this axiom himself without demur. He was for over 30 years Chairman of the Leslie Sawhny Programme for Democracy which he inspired and guided under the formidable leadership of Mr. Minoo Masani, to educate and enlighten various sections of society about the basic tenets of democracy.

He was a strong advocate of free enterprise and the market economy. He battled bravely against the inroads made by the State in the legitimate domain of private business. He steered for over three decades the Forum of Free Enterprise with great zeal and energy, touring the country regularly to address large audiences on what was the best path for rapid economic and social development. His contribution in this regard is well encapsulated in the citation given to him by the Lawrence University:

“You have battled stifling economic controls and bureaucratic red tape. You have always believed

that even in a poor and developing country the need for bread is fully compatible with the existence of liberty ...You have give unstintingly of your time and wealth to strengthen the roots of Indian democracy”

Nani was impatient with those who were not prepared to stand up and be counted. Often quoting George Hardy:

“It is never worth a great man’s time to express a majority opinion. By definition there are plenty of others to do so”.

He was a man with a mission. However, what made his mission purposeful was his indomitable courage, great eloquence and mastery of the English language. In January, Dr. P. V. Alexander, the ex-Governor of Maharashtra, described him as one of the two greatest orators of our time the other being Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

Above all what was most endearing about the man was his humanity. He was no idle preacher but abundantly demonstrated this trait through his generosity. This is because he had an abiding faith in spiritualism. Whenever faced with a trying moment in life he used to recollect Shakespeare’s famous words:

There is a divinity which shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will.

I will refer only to one of his many acts of generosity. About four years ago when his health started failing he made a donation of over Rs.2 crores to Shankara Netralaya for the excellent humanitarian work it was doing with the thought – “Let me do it today as tomorrow may be too late”.

He was an extraordinary man who truly exemplified the adage.

“It is not what you get. It is what you give that makes worthwhile the life you live”.

It is his truly selfless and memorable legacy.

Minoo Shroff

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

At a meeting, a friend wondered loudly if we could name one person after independence, who could truly be called a leader or a statesman – someone who would bear comparison with the giants of the freedom movement. None of us could think of anyone in public life. This, and the sad state our country is in, led us to decide to focus on this subject through 2003. This time we look at it from the Gujarat perspective, particularly in the context of the recent elections to the State Assembly and the return of the BJP. In the next two issues of this journal we shall address this question from other perspectives and in the last issue we shall look for hopeful solutions.

Perhaps you have some thoughts of your own on the question why free India has not produced a single outstanding leader or statesman. The word '*Neta*' like the word 'politician' is often used pejoratively. Our country abounds in *Netas* and politicians. But can you find a single leader or statesman. Why not share your thoughts with us.

You can send your contribution by email (preferred) to freedom@vsnl.com or on a floppy disk (Word 95) or by fax 022 22843416. And if none of these are possible just mail your contribution by ordinary post so as to reach us by April 15.

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*

For the BJP there are only two issues that matter - Hindutva and the Babri Mosque. As for the sycophants in the Congress Party, they are only concerned with the Congress President's two issues: Rahul or Priyanka?

Mohan Guruswamy, *Asian Age*, January 10

There is a human rights industry in India that comprises unscrupulous elements who abuse the processes of the law, bear false witness, and fabricate evidence.

Former Punjab Police chief K.P.S.Gill, as told to Jayakrishnan, *indianjournalists@yahoo.com*, December 18, 2002

Liberals, being people of goodwill, find it hard to conceive of implacable enemies. Tolerant Liberals assume that tolerance exists in others. But Osama bin Laden's deeds remind us that some enemies cannot be appeased.

Professor Marcin Krol, dean of history, Warsaw University, *The Economic Times*, January 30

When it comes to human rights, the U.S. counts among its allies Saudi Arabia, where women cannot drive, and every other Arab state where a king sits on the throne.

Mohsin Hamid, a London-based novelist, *TIME*, January 20

I am waiting for the day when they discover the precise gene that causes men to be born male chauvinist pigs - in cowbelt India just not pigs but the purest form of pig, also known as swine.

Publisher Rukun Advani, *The Hindu Magazine*, January 26

To describe Muslim Indians as a "minority" does violence to logic and language. They possibly constitute the largest Islamic community in the world outside of Indonesia. The Canadians have coined a nice term for the indigenous Inuit community that lives in the far north. They refer to these people as the country's "Second Majority".

Journalist B.G.Verghese, delivering the Zakir Husain Lecture, Jamia Millia Islamia, September 26, 2002

Tolerance is not to be confused with passivity, complacency or indifference. Tolerance is an active and positive engagement with human diversity, and it is therefore a key principle of democracy in our multi-ethnic

and multi-cultural societies.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, from an Amnesty International circular dated November 21, 2002

What is Gujarat's *gaurav* (pride) - That we rape Muslim women? That we have slaughtered thousands of Muslim men? Today we are ashamed to say that we are Gujaratis.

Lawyer Sophia Khan, *The Hindu*, December 10

If Advani's Rath Yatra was the foreplay and the destruction of the Babri structure the climax, then Gujarat is its off-spring, a monstrous child of monstrous parents.

Writer and columnist Anil Dharker, *The Hindu Magazine*, December 8, 2002.

The time is near when, in addition to wedding and birthday bashes, we'll have public celebrations (by politicians) of the birth of a son, the admission of a child into college, the first job of an offspring and who knows what other madness.

Communications Specialist Alyque Padamsee, *Sunday Times of India*, January 19

Surprising that VS Naipaul should think that colonialism is a dead issue when he has been exploiting the pressure that colonialism has brought to bear on the identities of the colonized and the ex-colonized to very rich effect.

Editorial comment in *The Statesman*, February 25, 2002

I have always been friendless within the bureaucracy. You can't be polite towards your colleagues and still oppose their corruption.

IAS officer Arun Bhatia, *The Times of India*, October 7, 2002

We have committed enormous crimes in the name of the poor. I am afraid some more are being plotted by the Swadeshi lobby.

Former Finance Minister P.Chidambaram, *The Indian Express*, October 6, 2002

The RSS has nothing to do with spiritual ideas and instead has reduced our spirituality to a collection of bricks which remain bricks even when they are sanctimoniously called Ramshila.

R.K.Dasgupta in his article 'The Temple as a Political Tool', *The Statesman*, February 7

Freedom First

A Re-dedication

This is the first issue of Freedom First, in its 51st year. An appropriate time to re-dedicate ourselves to the philosophy that has driven us in the last 50 years. We would like to take the occasion to re-dedicate ourselves to the values that led to the founding of this journal fifty one years ago.

We reproduce an extensive extract from the first article in the first issue of this journal in June 1952. The article was entitled "The Open Society". It is as valid today as it was in June 1952 when it was written. The context may have been different but the thoughts are not. The enemy of freedom then was totalitarianism or communism. The enemy of freedom today is religious fundamentalism or communalism.

The Open Society

In 1913, the late Mr. Gopal Krishna Gokhale returned from an extensive tour of Europe and told the members of the Servants of India Society that the people of Europe were living under a strain and predicted an early snap down. Since then men have fought two great wars to alleviate, if not to end, the strain, but it has continued to grow and spread and today the whole world is weighed down.

Many complicated problems have emerged in our century and their solutions have not been easy. National antagonisms and class conflicts, economic development and social change have raised issues of such fundamental importance and bristling with such complexities that solutions of some of them have not eased the crisis in any way. Man's spirit feels more depressed down than ever before.

The quest for solution has taken two different roads, one of broadening freedom and responsibility and the other of surrendering initiative and power to an external authority. Culture has generally been spelled in terms of broadening of freedom and deepening of responsibility.

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

Regimentation of thought has been alien to the genius of this ancient land; she has revelled in the luxuriant foliage of the mind, much of this 'tropical growth' being superficial, but the achievement was the climate of tolerance that was realized and the habit of confronting every idea with its critics that was developed and esteemed.

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

In India we have had long experience of intellectual tolerance and of social regimentation. Such regimentation as we have learnt the hard way, has led to stagnation and decay. The National Movement, from the days of Rammohun Roy to those of Tagore and Gandhi, has sought to end the stagnation by strengthening the current of free movement. It is that current that is today threatened with destruction, and it is its unhampered glow that our Movement seeks.

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

The open society is the objective of our Movement. While it wants the sway of freedom in every segment of life, it feels that the realm of the mind that is its heart and home is what it must safeguard with all its might. In this stubborn allegiance to the liberties of the mind, the Movement draws its strength and inspiration from India's glorious traditions. The crusade for the open society has to be a constant widening mind and widening heart and all men who love to think freely and act openly are among its fighters.

Going By Instinct

9/11, Godhra, Iraq...

Osama bin Laden dead, alive, in hell or in Pakistan must be quite satisfied with his 'accomplishment'. His 'achievement' has gone beyond destroying the World Trade Centre. He has been able to inflict considerable damage to the psyche of the US of A.; split the Western Alliance (even if the ostensible reason is Iraq) and above all inflict considerable damage on the US economy in particular and the world's in general.

There is one other and very serious consequence that has emerged out of 9/11. The assault on human rights in the name of this 'war on terrorism'. We have enacted POTA. Other countries including the US and UK have their versions to short circuit the rule of law. Travellers returning from the United States have their stories to tell which reflect a certain kind of racial harassment with special attention paid to people with skins of darker pigmentation. A prominent Indian businessman's narration of what he was subjected to at US airports recently figured in our newspapers.

It is still not clear who or which group was responsible for the Godhra incident. But the dreadful events that followed perhaps would not have happened, at least not on that scale, and so brazenly had it not been for the 'war on terrorism'. This 'war on terrorism' has become a convenient excuse for those who wish to indulge in pogroms of the kind that happened in Gujarat.

And what about Iraq? *Freedom First*, which has never shied away from taking positions that are not politically correct is not entirely convinced that the outcry against the US/UK insistence on attacking Iraq even without UN authority is fully justified. Iraq has flouted with impunity previous Security Council resolutions calling on it to disarm. If they are disarming now and that too slowly and with considerable reluctance, it is because of the continuing pressure of the weapons inspectors and the presence of the armed forces of the US and UK on its borders.

The huge demonstrations in various parts of the world appear well orchestrated. In the days of the cold war the source could often be traced to some communist front organisation or the other funded by Moscow. One wonders who are masterminding and funding the current demonstrations. Surely not all of them could have been spontaneous. In this context the protest by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and some others in Mumbai against the war in Iraq is laughable; as is the action of an actor-politician burning his Nike shoes saying he is boycotting goods of American manufacture. This protest is clearly 'vote bank politics'. If they are sincere then how about a similar demonstration outside the Chinese Consulate in Mumbai against the continuing occupation of Tibet and the ongoing persecution of the hapless Tibetans. And, while they are about it perhaps the self-same actor politician will be pleased to pull out one of his 'Made in China' possessions and burn it publicly. But then the Tibetans don't count for even one vote.

So why bother! On the other hand would these concerned gentlemen be prepared to hold a protest over Saddam Hussein's cruel treatment of his own people!

Saddam Hussein deserves no sympathy. He is another version of Stalin - cruel, brutal and a megalomaniac. He has brutalised his own people submitted them to economic boycott and consequent misery.

This is not to condone or ignore US double standards in their international relations. During the days of the cold war, when any of the East European states rose in revolt against Moscow, Stalin's armies ruthlessly crushed such revolts whether it was in Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia. Desperate appeals for help to the United States from the leaders of the revolt in these East European countries were ignored. There is the sad example of Imre Nagy, Prime Minister of Hungary who dared stand up to the Soviet Union.

His appeals for help from the US and the West fell on deaf ears. He escaped to Yugoslavia where Tito handed him over to the Soviets who had him executed on Stalin's orders. More recently, thousands of demonstrating students were massacred by the People's (sic) Liberation Army at Tianenmen Square. In Tibet millions of Tibetans have perished at the hands of the imperialist Communist Chinese. In all these cases the US of A did nothing. So it is not anger over Saddam's dictatorial rule nor expansionist ambitions nor human rights violations but oil and more that concern President Bush.

How should Liberals view the Iraq situation? Here's a statement that is, again, not political correct but one that deserves serious consideration.

The *Economic Times* of January 30, 2003 carried an article by Poland's Professor Marcin Krol dean of history at Warsaw University. Discussing whether Liberals appease the enemies of freedom, he writes

"Liberals, being people of goodwill, find it hard to conceive of implacable enemies. Tolerant Liberals assume that tolerance exists in others. But Osama bin Laden's deeds reminds us that some enemies cannot be appeased."

Prof Krol concludes his article on the emphatic note that:

"...liberal states should not hesitate to use international law to deal with rogues states and those who threaten a global order based on mutual tolerance. If we believe in liberal values, we must be prepared to defend them - in the words of Malcolm X 'by any means necessary'. The chosen tools may sometimes strain our liberal temperament. So be it. Liberalism at sea? That may be the only option, if liberalism itself is to survive."

SVR

In Free India Only Politicians, No Statesmen Only *Netas*, No Leaders

Gujarat Elections - A Defeat for the Liberal Spirit

Nagindas Sanghavi

This may be a victory for the BJP but a disastrous defeat for Indian Democracy and its liberal spirit that is being shaped so slowly and so painfully.

There is no denial that the electoral verdict of the Assembly elections in Gujarat has become an agitating and even an agonizing issue for the entire nation and its echoes refuse to die into oblivion. No State elections – not even the epoch making one in Kashmir have ever been discussed so widely or with such great intensity as the events in Gujarat.

The euphoria and even the wild enthusiasm which Gujarat has evoked in every corner of the BJP camp - from the Prime Minister down to the rank and file workers - can be easily understood. The Gujarat verdict reverses a long series of disasters for the BJP in several States at the regional as well as local levels. Some of these states were erstwhile strongholds of the BJP and its allies particularly U P, Punjab and Maharashtra. In Gujarat itself, the ruling BJP lost heavily in the elections to the municipalities, the *gram panchayats* and even in the recent by-elections to the Assembly and to the Lok Sabha preceding the Assembly elections. In fact it was to reverse this trend in Gujarat that Mr. Keshubhai Patel was replaced by Mr. Narendra Modi. The Gujarat verdict has relieved the nagging worries of the leaders of the BJP and the deep depression of the street corner activists of the party.

The blatant communal campaigning by the ruling BJP that was so full of venom and hatred for the minorities; the blasphemous denunciations of several constitutional authorities like the Election Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Minorities Commission among others, created a furore among the intellectuals and the political elite. The national leadership of the BJP was hard put to defend the style of functioning adopted by Narendra Modi and his cohorts and its damage controlling exercises failed to convince its critics. The anti-establishment media had gone to town painting the BJP as a dark villain. The media became a victim of its own propaganda, painting a very bleak future for BJP and predicting that the BJP would either just scrape through or even be defeated in the ensuing elections.

The arrogance of the BJP cheerleaders and the unbalanced utterances of the leaders of the VHP – especially Shri Pravin Togadia - shocked and scandalized both the media and the intelligentsia of the country. For several months the BJP high command suffered the charge that their party was either an accomplice or an interested witness to the slaughter of the innocents in Gujarat. They were aware that the

charge of being involved was not entirely untrue and K P S Gill, the retired police officer from the Punjab was deputed to 'control' the Chief Minister for a few weeks. The juvenile outbursts of the VHP leaders did nothing to salvage the ugly image of the BJP. The ghosts of Gujarat haunted their top leaders at national and international forums. The world press badgered them with irrefutable facts and the logical conclusions drawn from these facts.

However, the electoral verdict in Gujarat has shocked the victors and the vanquished alike - both proclaiming the result to be 'a landslide' victory for Narendra Modi - with the BJP capturing 127 seats i.e., 70% of the 182 seats in the Assembly.

But a careful look at the figures of the BJP's position in the Assembly in the last four elections in Gujarat, reveals a more balanced picture. A study of these figures shows that the 2002 verdict, far from being a landslide victory, is merely a marginal one. It is definitely not a turning point but merely an echo of previous victories as the following table will show. For the sake of clarity the figures are confined to the two major contestants of 2002.

Friends as well as enemies of

In Free India - Only Politicians, No Statesmen. Only *Netas*, No Leaders

Narendra Modi are barking up the wrong tree when they praise or condemn the so-called 'crushing' victory of the hard core Hindutva in Gujarat. The euphoria in the BJP ranks as also as the depressive nightmares in the opposition camp are just hallucinations. There is nothing much in the verdict to write home about. The earth shaking campaign of Mr. Modi brought the BJP a mere six seats more than the number reached by Keshubhai Patel after a quieter campaign in 1995. That year the BJP secured 66% of seats and this year Modi secured 70%. To say that Modi's victory as a 'landslide' is, in my view an exaggeration.

Let us go a little behind these figures. In 1995, the three stalwarts of the BJP - Keshubhai Patel, Shankersinh Vaghela and Narendra Modi worked hard and long to pull down the edifice of the Congress which had been considerably weakened not by the BJP but by Chimanbhai Patel and his lacklustre successor Chhabildas Mehta. Between 1990 and 1995, Chimanbhai Patel kept jumping in and out of Parties - from the Janata Party to the Janata Dal to the Janata Dal [S] to the Janata Dal [G] to a ministry supported by the Congress from outside and finally joining the Congress. In order to keep himself in power, he had to trim his sails to the changing winds and currents of the political scenario at the national level.

In 1995, the BJP did secure a landslide victory when its seats

jumped from 67 to 121, and its vote share from 27% to 42.5%. But the party organization of the BJP was not strong enough to withstand this victory shock and the resultant power struggle that ensued. Within a year the BJP was in shambles and was trifurcated. Narendra Modi was humiliated - in fact he broke down in the presence of his party's MLAs and was kicked out and away from Gujarat for the next six years. Shankersinh Vaghela's group pressed hard for a share in the power. When they were kept at bay, they formed a distinct group known as the Khajuria group, because Vaghela, afraid of defections from his group, took his MLAs and hid them in the town of Khajuraho known for its erotic temple sculptures. Under their pressure, Keshubhai Patel was forced to resign but Vaghela also had to stand aside. Suresh Mehta became the chief minister. But Vaghela was insatiable and the compromise broke down and the BJP passed through very hard times. Vajpayee and Advani were heckled at public meetings organized by the party. At one such meeting supporters of Vaghela were thrashed, and one of their MLAs, Atmaram Patel, was stripped of his dhoti while Narendra Modi looked on approvingly. The BJP was vertically split, Mehta was forced to resign and after a brief interregnum, Vaghela formed his ministry with the Congress supporting it from outside. He ruled for a year but failing to deliver the pound of flesh demanded by the Congress, was denounced by the Congress for his brazen corruption

he put a puppet of his own on the throne. He had to go for mid-term election in 1998.

Throughout all this political upheavals, the loyalty of the Gujarat voters towards the main stream BJP remained unshaken. Even under such adverse circumstances, with Modi in exile and Vaghela in the enemy's ranks, Keshubhai returned to power with a convincing 64% of seats and 45% of votes to his credit. Despite much more favourable circumstances- a united party, a discredited and divided opposition and an electorate inflamed by the Godhra and post Godhra landscape - Mr. Modi has only slightly improved upon that performance in. It is a very creditable performance no doubt but it is not an extraordinary performance. Nevertheless, Mr. Modi has secured not only a strong and stable majority in the Assembly but also a clear and decisive majority of votes that very few leaders have been able to achieve for their party.

But then Gujarat was always a straight fight between the Congress and the BJP, and all other parties occupied only a marginal space. The Congress ideologues in Gujarat have denounced smaller parties like the NCP and the Socialists for jumping into the fray and dividing the anti-BJP votes in at least 20 constituencies. But they have overlooked the fact that they themselves rejected the overtures from the very same parties for electoral alliances so as to ensure one to one fight contests.

The BJP vote may have increased the percentage of votes polled by 5% but as has the Congress vote gone up by 4%. Mr. Vaghela who fought as a separate entity has now merged his forces with the

Parties	1990		1995		1998		2002	
	Seats	votes	Seats	votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes
BJP	67	27%	121	42.5%	117	45%	127	51%
CONG	33	31%	45	33%	53	35%	51	39%

and despotic style of functioning. Vaghela was forced to quit but

Congress. It is interesting and important for Gujarat that both the major parties have gained voters' support at the cost of smaller parties and Independents who have lost heavily. These smaller parties lost 80% of their seats - their number went down from 12 to 2. In the absence of more details, it is not possible to study the shifting loyalties of the voters because the areas of victories and defeats for both BJP and Congress have shifted though the overall balance of power remains more or less unchanged.

The shock that the media and the observers have experienced is largely due to the expectations and calculations projected by the media and which have proved to be baseless. For weeks on end, experts and sephologists hammered on their empty pronouncements ornamented with so called survey and figures, which made even some of the BJP leaders nervous and worried. After the verdict the tables have turned against the media. With plenty of egg on their face the media is now apologetic and jittery but it has not shown the courage and honesty to confess that it failed to recognise stark ground realities. In politics facts do not matter so much as perceptions. A few fatal blunders by the Congress High Command also helped in ensuring a victory for BJP. The decision to fight alone was the first. The thoughtless decision to hand over the party organization to its erstwhile enemy Vaghela was the second mistake. As the master architect of the BJP in Gujarat, Vaghela has been denouncing Congress leaders for over 20 years. In such a context it was naive to expect a new recruit to the Congress party, that Vaghela was to be respected by the veterans and trusted by Congress activists. Thirdly, the

Congress High Command decided to fight the Gujarat electoral battle by proxy. Instead of entrusting the campaign to its local cadres, its local contacts and depending on local know-how, an outsider like Kamalnath was put in charge of the Gujarat elections. He knew next to nothing of the ground reality in Gujarat and was forced to admit that he never realized the strength of Hindutva in Gujarat.

What else is Gujarat? Gujarat is a recognized communal riots-prone-zone. Gujarat supplied the largest contingent of the *Karsevaks* who demolished the Babri Masjid in 1992. Gujarat is the only state in India where the BJP single handedly captured power in 1995 and has maintained its hegemony in spite of the very poor track record of six of its ministries, three elections and frequent impositions of Governor's Rule. But Kamalnath is not honest even in his confession. The Congress party, under his guidance, hoping to defeat the BJP with its own weapons adopted a soft Hindutva posture. They invited several so called *Sants* and *Mahants* to campaign for them. Afraid to ruffle communal feelings, they scrupulously kept their own muslim members away from their party platforms. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi launched her lecture tour from a temple and she touched the feet of several Hindu and Jain priests. All such gimmicks recoiled heavily on the party. This behaviour created dismay and it lost the Party several supporters without gaining anything in return. The choice of Congress candidates was governed by nepotism and flattery rather than merit. The relatives of the veterans got 15 'tickets' and 11 of them lost because they had hardly any support in their constituencies. Even a

staunch Congress leader like Jinabhai Darji canvassed for non-Congress candidates on account of such faulty distribution of tickets.

The verdict has been pronounced and *vox populi vox Dei*. But the far more important question is where do we go from here? What will be the impact of the BJP's Gujarat victory on the votaries of Hindutva and on their communally sensitive programmes?. Nine states in India will be electing their

The *Fuhrer* is Here

A few months back, a German friend of mine was here to visit me. His name was Martin D'costa. He was a 27 year old documentary film maker. He was here to document the life of young Indians. By the time he came down to Trivandrum, he had travelled across the country meeting and interviewing young people. One common refrain, he said, he heard from the youngsters he talked to, cutting across cultural, class, caste and linguistic barriers was that India needed a '*strong leader*', some one who can lead the country with an iron hand.

He was surprised and shocked too as he was from Germany, descendent of a people who dreamed likewise of having a '*strong leader*'. He knew all too well the hidden meaning of that desire. India is ready to welcome fascism in a big way. India is waiting for its '*Fuhrer*'.

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In Free India - Only Politicians, No Statesmen. Only *Netas*, No Leaders

Assemblies during the ensuing year and Lok Sabha elections are due in 2004. Will Gujarat with all its horrible riots and mutual hatreds, overshadow the political debates in the near future? The BJP-VHP combination and more especially the lunatic fringe in both these organizations will naturally insist on repeating Gujarat with all its terrible implications everywhere in India. Shri L.K. Advani in his address to his party stalwarts has raked up the issue of the Ram temple

at Ayodhya. But we should not allow our imagination to run riot. History might be repeating itself but politics rarely does. In politics a week is a long time and a month is another age. Each State in India has its own peculiarities and no two States are alike. Shri Vajpayee put his finger on the spot when he declared that Gujarat cannot be repeated because Godhra cannot happen again. But the temptation to return to its roots is very strong for the BJP rank and file and the tail may wag the dog

forcing the hands of the high command to concede what is seen as the winning formula evolved in Gujarat. This may be a victory for the BJP but a disastrous defeat for Indian Democracy and its liberal spirit that is being shaped so slowly and so painfully.

PROFESSOR NAGINDAS SANGHAVI, retired professor of political science, is a political analyst and a respected columnist in the Gujarati press.

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A Wake Up Call From Gujarat

S. V. Vaidya

Despite the growth of modern and progressive thought in Hindu society why are Hindu parents still hostile to accepting a Muslim '*Damaad*' (son-in-law) but somehow reconcile to a Christian one chosen for them by their daughter.

The autopsy of the Gujarat elections has thrown up diverse causes of the perceived death of secularism. While the Congress has traced the cause to 'fear and shock' the media has attributed it to a strong dose of communal poisoning. And both have taken upon themselves to save the nine other patients nervously awaiting their fate later next year at the 'operation theatre'. The BJP on the contrary has discovered that the patient has, in fact, revived with the elixir of Hindutva.

Yes, Gujarat is causing grave anxiety to some as to where the hitherto docile Hindu mindset is heading. Does it herald a Hindu version of the Taliban? The manifestation of Hindu aggressiveness in the recent years does demand a frank analysis.

One has to delve into

medieval history to trace the roots of this transformation in the Hindu psyche. Why do several Hindus distrust the Muslims? Despite the growth of modern and progressive thought in Hindu society why are Hindu parents still hostile to accepting a Muslim '*Damaad*' (son-in-law) but somehow reconcile to a Christian one chosen for them by their daughter. Informal dialogues with several ordinary people on these and many related matters are diagnostic.

The reasons are manifold and not far to seek. The Muslims ruled the major part of this subcontinent for nearly 700 years till the advent of the British. History does not attribute much benevolence to their rule. While Islam got the patronage of Muslim rulers Christianity prospered under the British Raj. Islam spread through conquest, violence, demolition of temples and,

in fact all means other than persuasion. Compared with this the Church was very suave, tactful and persuasive. The Muslim rulers cared little for social reforms, within Muslim society or the Hindu masses, which the British did and enforced. The church devoted its attention considerably to social service and modern education. The Muslim report card is blank in this respect. Hindus were taxed, subjugated and their society and their culture threatened in their own land under Muslim rule. The growth of Sikhism in the north and the Maratha resistance in the south amply manifest this. How does one expect them to have happy memories about Muslims?

Now just compare the social reforms graph of the two communities. It is unargued that Hindu society was blessed with several social reformers (Maharshi

Karve and Rammohan Roy to mention only two) at various stages of history. They braved social ostricisation to doggedly pursue their noble ideals. How much can Islam boast of on this score, in India, or for that matter all over the Muslim world? Very little! Even Sufi culture was not allowed to strike deep roots in the Indian Muslim society. Ultimately a learned scholar like Dr. Rafiq Zakaria had to prescribe modernisation of Islam to fight the post 9/11 global anti-Muslim wave. If only Islamic reformers and rulers had stubbornly prevailed over their mullahs and moulvis to carry this noble religion along with the times the communal atmosphere in the country would have been harmonious. Akbar's was a glorious effort in this direction but a monumental failure.

The politicians must share the blame squarely for this tragic situation. Far from blending the diverse components into a happy people they used the Muslims as a mere pawn in their vote bank politics instead of encouraging their social and economic uplift. The Muslim elite, too failed in their duty. On the contrary they hogged all the benefits, arising from minority appeasement resorted to by the political masters, leaving the poor Muslim masses to sink deeper in the quagmire of social decadence. Events like the Shah Bano case successively offended the Hindu mind. The self styled secularists, be it in the media or politics made him feel guilty whenever he voiced his genuine concerns on the subject. The Hindu feels he is taken for granted. The growth of right extremism and the transformation of the Hindu mindset can be traced to this sense of let down.

An average Hindu mulls over all this. He is conscious of the exclusive Islamic world where no other religion is allowed to be propagated and ethnic cleansing in our neighbouring countries drives Hindus to the only shelter, India, that they can have on this planet. Continued political opportunism of the Congress had to make way for an alternative the BJP and other rightist outfits naturally provided. If India has to effectively bear the cross of secularism despite being surrounded by Islamic fundamentalist states surely the Indian Muslims have to lend a strong shoulder. They did so admirably during the freedom struggle. But thereafter? It is to the credit of Muslim masses that amidst all this 99.999% do indeed treat India as their home but their peace and wellbeing is held to ransom by terrorists, most of whom are Muslims from across the borders and others local inspired by them.

Try as they can the Hindus find it difficult to jettison this baggage of history. It is sad that this load has only increased. The Partition of India made the Muslims further suspect in the eyes of the Hindu. The massacre of Pandits in Kashmir and communal riots all over widen the divide further. Secularists and liberal Muslims rarely visit Kashmir or the refugee camps to wipe their tears. The media confines itself to its routine and minimal coverage but shouts no end at every communal riot elsewhere.

It is against this background that we have to view the transformation of the Hindu mindset. Today they feel cheated by the politicians, their sentiments ignored and even insulted by the

media. They nurse a grievance that the Muslims are getting the best of both the worlds (i.e. exclusiveness of the Islamic countries and liberal life of the secular ones) while the Hindus feel like poor relations in their own, only and the last shelter i.e. India. Thus driven back to the wall the social and religious dynamics of the Hindus gets activated when provoked, with savageness they would themselves feel ashamed of later when the fires of provocation and revenge subside. It is not rationalising their conduct but lamenting on the circumstances that have driven them to this pass.

History shows and experience confirms that many instances of brutal Hindu retaliation (for example Ahmedabad: 1969, Mumbai: 1993 and now Godhra) followed provocative acts of varying degrees (like desecration of temples, rape, etc) by some misguided or manipulated Muslim lumpens. What was needed in such cases was prompt and effective diffusion of this anger. The Muslim clergy and the liberal but silent and sober Muslims neither took the initiative of condemning it promptly nor entered into immediate pacifying and damage control dialogues with the Hindu leaders. They reacted only after a brutal revenge had taken a heavy toll of innocent lives. And when a group of well meaning Muslims did come out with pacifying and conciliatory efforts the media did not give adequate coverage because that news does not sell! This is not my comment, prominent Muslims themselves have complained.

All is still not lost. Even warring nations leave enough scope for track-II diplomacy. Why not try that approach (unless already in

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progress) vis-a-vis respectable leaders of both communities? Keep politicians out and saner, sensible elements in. It is high time the Muslim elite, moderates, scholars and intellectuals come to the forefront

to launch this crusade in collaboration with their Hindu, Sikh and Christian counterparts. They would be doing a great service to the nation.

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Gujarat – Defeat of Secularism?

Ashok Karnik

Secularists are politicians too but they should keep politics out of secular causes.

The Gujarat Assembly election results came as a shock to opposition parties and the intelligentsia outside Gujarat. Notwithstanding the excuses trotted out to explain away BJP's landslide victory, it needs to be conceded that Narendra Modi proved his critics wrong. An ogre who was sought to be tried in the International Court for genocide and was accused of being a modern day Hitler became a hero to the people of Gujarat. An electoral victory does not absolve anybody of crimes but one must concede that there was a difference of perception between the people of Gujarat and those outside.

The secular opinion-makers (national media, Congress and the Left parties) put Modi on public trial and the people gave their verdict. It is necessary to accept the verdict and see where those genuinely concerned about secularism went wrong. No point in arguing that even Hitler won elections and was once popular. That amounts to an evasion of reality and refusal to learn from Gujarat.

Inevitability of Secularism

Secularism remains undefined. In the West, its limited meaning is that state and religion are

separate and that religion does not dictate state policy. For a multi-religious society like India, this was an ideal prescription, particularly after rejecting the two-nation theory. India could not and rightly did not fall in the trap of becoming a Hindu *rajya*, as it would have justified the two-nation theory. However, secularism was never explained. In the confusion, everybody claims to be secular. Islam which does not even accept that there should be a dividing line between state and religion has followers who claim to be secular; the RSS/VHP obfuscate matters by arguing that Hindu culture is different from Hindu religion and missionaries continue to believe in conversions (voluntary) while accepting that all religions are equal. A secularist cannot argue against any of these contentions because he does not know exactly where he stands. The state could have refused to deal with religion *per se*. Religion should have been left to the private domain but the Indian state got entangled in the concept of minority rights, minority protection etc. and what should have been restricted to 'non-discrimination' became an issue of 'rights'. The recognition of their own rights by the majority is an unwelcome but logical consequence. Gujarat is perhaps the beginning of such an

assertion.

Initially, secularism did not face opposition in India since there was no contradiction between the majority religion and secularism. The '*Sarva dharma samabhav*' professed by Hinduism seemed to jell well with secularism. That is why even after the holocaust of partition when lakhs of Hindu refugees came to India, secularism was not seriously challenged. The Hindu parties failed to get a toe-hold in Indian polity.

Challenges to Secularism

Secularism has had to contend with two historically antagonistic religions in India. This is a politically incorrect statement to make as it is considered diplomatic to talk of an age old brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims. The freedom struggle, no doubt, brought the two communities together but Jinnah's dream shattered that relationship. Mahatma Gandhi and later Pandit Nehru valiantly tried to nurture the brotherhood but India's periodic wars with Pakistan and frequent communal riots reopened old wounds. The Indian state had managed to remain true to secular ideals and brush under the carpet the occasional communal rumblings.

Since the 1990s, the communal scene has changed dramatically. Pak-inspired terrorist activities are no longer a sporadic disturbance; it is a daily stab wound. The success of the mujahideen against the USSR in Afghanistan and its subsequent Talibanisation, Islamic uprisings in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya and the rise of the Al Quaida with the active assistance of Pakistan have lent a new dimension to Pakistan's claims to J&K. The influx of *jehadis* from Pakistan and their daily depredation in the name of Islam, have given rise to impotent rage in India, particularly since the Indian state has found no adequate counter to *jihad*. The rage is often directed against the hapless, local co-religionists of the *jehadis*. The lunatic fringe in the VHP misses no opportunity to point a finger at the 'anti-nationals'. No wonder the rhetoric of the VHP strikes a chord in the minds of the Hindus. Secularists are thus working against a tide of intolerance. They have to find new answers to new problems instead of chanting the worn out mantra of anti-communalism.

Wrong Tactics

It can be argued that one electoral defeat should not lead to a paradigm shift *vis a vis* secularism. It is not the defeat in Gujarat that matters so much, it is the wrong image of secularism projected in Gujarat that is disturbing. Secularism is a wonderful precept but good ideas implemented badly are useless. Of concern is the mind-set which was created in Gujarat against secularism and which can get replicated elsewhere if care is not taken. The problem lies in winning people over to *secularism* at a time when *secularism* is being thrown away.

Unfortunately, secularists

have failed to understand the sentiment behind the majority community's uneasiness. Their knee-jerk reaction is to treat every expression of the majority community's concern as communalism. Secularism has come to mean 'protection of the minorities against majority repression'. Thus unwittingly secularists have got themselves labeled as anti-Hindu. This is wholly unjust but that is the perception among the Hindus. Look at Gujarat for evidence. The VHP is cashing in on this sentiment to debunk secularism. The Togadias and Singhals are talking of burying secularism.

The opposition parties are wearing the mantle of secularism. Their fight against the NDA government is projected as a fight against communalism and for secularism. One never knows where their political interests end and concerns over secularism begin. The genuine, non-political secularist has got lost in the political melee. In Gujarat, the secularists lost because they failed to step aside from the political battle. Secularists are politicians too but they should keep politics out of secular causes.

Remedies

Secularists should redefine their role in the light of Gujarat. Their aim should be to reduce communal passions and bring the warring groups together on the basis that religion is a personal matter and should not come in the way of public order. Secularists are emotionally triggered to dwell into causes of communal riots to catch the guilty, prosecute them and send them to jail. This is the job for the police not for the secularists. In a communal riot, both parties are often guilty. The difference is of degree. It is foolhardy

to support one group against the other. Let the political parties play that game, not the secularists, as the latter have a more lasting role to play. However, the secularist wants to be the complainant, investigator, prosecutor and judge. This happened in the post-Godhra riots. In the anxiety to bring Modi and the BJP to book, attempts were made to play down the horror of Godhra. Theories were touted that *Ram Sevaks* had molested a woman, quarreled with tea-vendors *et al.* Some even professed that the VHP had itself planned Godhra. This kind of rush to judgement was fatal to the secular cause. The issue turned from 'who was guilty to who was the saviour of Hindus'. Vilification of Modi got translated into attack on Hindus. Secularists got isolated. Worse, they lost credibility.

This is not the defeat of secularism; this is the defeat of the practice of secularism. Henceforth, secularists could do well not to be judgemental, not act as tools of political parties. Secularism is too precious to be left to politicians. It will come under greater attack as Pakistan-inspired terrorism continues. The VHP will become more aggressive. Muslims will become sullenly hostile towards the majority community as they needlessly come under increasing scrutiny. Secularists will have to play a crucial role in averting the disaster of the anti-Pakistan sentiment becoming an anti-Muslim tide.

MR. ASHOK KARNIK is a retired government servant and currently a freelance writer.

That religion which forbids humanitarian behaviour between men is not a religion but a penalty.

B. R. Ambedkar

He is free who lives as he chooses.

– Epictetus



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Holding A Candle To Hate

A. D. Moddie

On this Republic Day, greatly daring, can millions of us in India and this sub-continent hold the candle of questions to hate, after the harsh history of a millennia?

Part 1

It has been said that the best contribution to difficult problems – as are Jihadi Islam and militant Hindutva – is to throw light on them. A good way of throwing light on both these problems threatening India with more painful partitions in minds and our lives, is to pose clarifying questions to both communal extremes and to the public of India. More so, when India has to make critical democratic choices for its 21st century tryst with destiny in a new globalising competitive world, and the rise of Jihadi Islam in India's external environment in South Asia.

South Asia has half the poorest of the world. Poverty and extremist cults are not unconnected. Hopefully thousands of self-given answers will throw some light in the dark corners of our hearts, and on our harsh relationships. Which then will impact public affairs and the state in a new democracy now tearing itself with the knives of its psycho-social history. When an educationist was asked about the malaise in education, he said, "We have the answers, but we have forgotten the questions". Like William Blake, let us "cleanse the face of my spirit by self-examination".

Perhaps we may then see a lessening of hate and alienation, and hopefully a dissolving of the ghetto

walls of the mind and of daily dwelling. When that happens, most may happily find that self-interest (material, cultural, religious), the interest of fruitful politics, and the ultimate security interests of India, our homeland, will be seen to synthesize rather than separate.

First, the candle light of sensible questions must be addressed to Indian Muslims, as the millenia of Jehadic history since Mahmud Ghazni to the Partition of India – and now the Terror of Al Qaida and Fundamentalism – has created this searing of souls, which once knew the healing of Sufism and Bhakti, and the synthesizing faith of Kabir and Nanak.

Question One. Like Abdul Kalam Azad, perhaps the greatest Indian Muslim of the 20th century, and later the likes of Rafiq Zakaria and Shabana Azmi, have you now learnt since the holocaust days of Partition – and the second holocaust of Bangladeshi Muslims at the hands of Pakistan generals – that the biggest damage to Indian Muslims (and also to Bangladeshi Muslims), was the Partition of India by the creators of Pakistan? And that the same Pakistan is now a failed state, with an ISI/Al Qaida doctrine of jehadic hate and killing, a dangerous combine with nuclear arms, and far from the compassion of the Prophet? The same Prophet who said, "The pen of the scholar (i.e. knowledge and understanding) is more

precious than the blood of the martyr." And remember that tragic mistake when four-fifths of the Muslims of India unwisely voted for Pakistan only in the last five years before 1947; but four-fifths, the poorer part, ironically stayed on in India. The irrational politics of the foolhardy.

Question Two. Do you wish to perpetuate the insensitive ideology of earlier Muslim League leaders – since brazenly continued by 'fatwa'-issuing Imams in favour of terrorist Al Qaida – the deep historical hurt to Hindus in the plunder and destruction of temples since Mahmud Ghazni at Somnath to the Tughlaks and Malik Kafur down to Tanjore in South India; quite apart from the historical quibbling over the disused Babri Masjid? Are you, in an India striving to be secular, sensitive to centuries of discriminatory 'jizya' tax on non-Muslims, an economic inducement to conversion by millions? If you in Islam, in and outside of India, have suffered the psycho-political hurt of the fall of Islamic power and self-esteem of the Mughals earlier, and the Caliphate of the Ottoman Empire later (in neither of which the Hindus played a role but made common cause); and if Islam has been hurt by the domination of the West since the fall of Islamic power e.g. in Palestine, Iran & Iraq now; can you be no less sensitive to the loss of political power and self-esteem by the Hindus of Bharat over the last

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millenia? When they recovered power in 1947, the same Hindus offered you equal citizenship under the Indian Constitution, despite the rivers of fire of the Partition.

Question Three. If you have felt discriminated against since 1947, and if the majority of Muslim men and women are still poor and illiterate, how far has it been due to (a) the refusal of your political and cleric leaders, pre and post-1947, to help Muslims come into, and cope with the modern world with the process called "development"; (b) heeding reactionary, fanatic *mullas* and *imams*; (c) both in (a) and (b) just making a 'fatwa' vote-bank of you with the false fear of 'Islam in danger', when the real danger was their unwise, political leadership and self aggrandisement? Witness 22 families and a handful of generals as the new sultans of Pakistan since 1947, now a failed state torn by obscurantist fundamentalism away from the realities and progress of the rest of the world, and against even Jinnah's wishes. Why does the modern world have to look in vain for a democratic, developed, stable Islamic state, with the richest oil resources of the world?

Question Four. Have some of you carried the seeds of Pakistan in your hearts, and been provokers of communal riots since 1946-47? Some supported the pseudo-secularism of the Congress as vote banks, but did you advance secularism in your own community, in the *madrasas*, and in the Muslim Law Board? How have you allowed this Law Board to usurp the right to speak for all Indian Muslims in past decades?

Question Five. Where do you want yourselves and your children to go

in future? You are not wanted in Pakistan. Do you wish to live in separate ghettos with Pakistan mind sets, or do you wish to be as much an Indian community as any other, equal citizens of India, and a lead community against ISI sponsored Al Qaida terrorism, before the situation becomes Qurratulain Hyder's "*Aug Ka Darya*"? Indian Muslims must make up their minds before the 2003-04 elections, without being any party's vote bank.

Part 2

If the earlier questions addressed to Indian Muslims point to their harsh, tragic, and irrational past, the questions to the *Hindutva* school are addressed equally to their harsh, tragic, and irrational present and future.

Question One. What is the meaning and substance of the vague term "cultural nationalism", not even defined in Govadia's "*Saffron Book*". It is nebulous. Culture is in a separate sphere from politics. The nationalism of the 19th century is being fundamentally modified by the internationalism, the human rights and environmental values, the "Universal Responsibility" concept of the most eminent and respected Dalai Lama himself. Look what happened to Gandhiji's unclear 'Ram Raj'. One fails to find a single *Hindutva* intellectual who has publicly formulated 'cultural nationalism' as a coherent concept. Between the random musings of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the rather different one-liners of Narendra Modi and Togadia, one is left wondering if the contemporary *Hindutva* mind has lost the basic tenets of Hindu liberal culture and philosophy, and become schizophrenic, sharing the

culture of hate of its arch enemy, the Islamic Fundamentalists. They hardly realise they are sharing Jinnah's fallacious doctrine of fear when, pre-1947, he told Indian Muslims there was no future for them with a "80 percent Hindu majority". In the entire last millenium there has never been a coherent political constituency of an 80 percent Hindu majority. The political face of India has shown it earlier and now, Politically, India is a country of minorities.

Till a coherent *Hindutva* mind clarifies "cultural nationalism", let us fall back briefly on the views of three distinguished Hindu Indians. The greatest mind of the 1947 nationalists, C. Rajagopalachari said that just as the culture of ancient Greece was bound up with a sense of beauty, and of Rome by a sense of order and law; the culture of India, based on the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita "is built around the central idea of self-control". "It is what distinguishes culture from state regulation". ("*True Freedom*", 1953). In "*The Neurosis of the Indian Intelligentsia*" (1953), Dr. Sampurnanand reminds us, "It is true, everyone speaks of Indian culture, claiming that no one other than himself understands what the word means"; seen today also. What he said of Indian communists then, could be applicable to Indian secularists, *Hindutva*, and Islamic fundamentalists now: "There is every reason to believe that the Indian communist has borrowed lavishly the neurosis, along with the ideology, of his mentors abroad". A section of *Hindutva* appears to have been influenced by Hitlerian fascists in mind sets, attitudes, fanatical violence, and taking the law into their hands, even as cultural Fuhrers.

The Shiv Sena too has its *fatwa* Fuhrer, the concept borrowed from the totalitarianism of Islamic fundamentalists and Nazism. Significantly, Sampurnanand adds, "What makes our burden so heavy is that we are not spiritually equipped to bear it." A serious matter for *Hindutva*. A third, more contemporary fall back in present intellectual confusion about "cultural nationalism" is the Nobel Laureate, Dr. Amartya Sen. In "Not Frog, But Falcon" (TOI, 10.1.03), he believes India's culture since ancient times was "Our ability to be simultaneously receptive and creative"; and giving examples from ancient Indian science, mathematics, inter-cultural interchanges with China and South Asia. "India has been in the middle of global interactive exchanges for centuries".... "We do not need to seek our pride in the fanciful world of a flourishing well-frog".

Question Two. How far can *Hindutva* coherently and credibly compare its notion of "Cultural Nationalism" with these three great modern and practical minds, in Rajaji's "self control"; in Sampurnanand's "lack of spiritual equipment", and in Sen's "receptive, creative" intercultural exchanges?

Question Three. Beyond its politics, what have been *Hindutva's* real contributions to the understanding and appreciation of Indian culture true and proper in the last decades, apart from strident chauvinism? Where are its Vivekanandas, its Rajagopalacharis, its Radhakrishnans, its Sampurnanands, its Amartya Sens?

Question Four. Does the term "*Rashtra*" mean the same as the

Indian state in the Indian Constitution? The BJP-led NDA government has quoted this same Constitution to Kashmiris and Nagas. If not, what differences? State socialism or state capitalism is dying in India and abroad. It's secularism has been de-legitimised by the Congress party and others who introduced it.

Flowing from question three is *question four*. If *Hindutva* propounds, "Justice to all and appeasement of none", where does it stand with the abolition of all reservations for posts and legislatures, and unsustainable subsidies for various sections of the people? Can the public of India see a clear policy on appeasement, reservations and subsidies?

Also flowing from the Constitution, *question five*. What is the place of non-Hindu Indians in the '*Rashtra*' of '*Hindutva*', especially when they are citizens of India, when they are in India's Defense and public services, and when they make their contributions to India's development and progress in various fields? Does *Hindutva* wish to reframe the Constitution for these, in what significant areas, and how?

Question Six. Why has not the vast *Hindutva* body taken firm steps: (a) to cleanse the holy Ganga & Jamuna; (b) to cleanse the holiest of its temple towns, Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Varanasi, Gaya, Pandharpur etc. of the criminal culture of priests and sadhus with guns, land grabbing, brazen extortion, and the flesh trade? (For details, see *The Week*, 19-1-2003). Don't these places represent the heart of Hindu tradition, mythology, religion and culture? Why is not a finger lifted by any

Hindu official or politician to enforce the law in these places, ensure "justice for all and no appeasement" of its unholy priestly gang against millions of genuine devotees? This is worse than a few recent raids by terrorists on three temples. It is T. S. Elliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" of Hinduism.

Question Seven. Can *Hindutva* ask itself to what extent does it carry the transferred hate of Mahmud Ghazni and Pakistan to India's own citizens in the minority communities? Is it fair, or even in India's security and economic interests? This is an honest introspective question, not just a question for public denial.

Question Eight. In the conflict over education and text books, minor factual errors apart, where are the fundamental historical theses wrong? The omission of the history of caste is surely a fundamental error of India's social history. The omission of the assassination of Gandhi, the leader of the freedom movement pre-1947 is an important and unjustifiable omission of a globally known fact. What is our duty to India's children, chauvinism or historical integrity? Only fascist and communist history textbooks substituted propaganda for true history. Instead of a number of *ad hoc* controversies, at the cost of India's children's education, can there be objective criteria to include or omit issues and facts of Indian or any history; or, for that matter, any educational subject. Can such criteria be publicly debated to move towards national consensus?

Question Nine, a blank so far. To what extent does *Hindutva* bear the broadly evolving national foreign policy of India since 1991: (a)



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towards the U.N. and its agencies, especially WTO, ILO, UNESCO, (b) Islamic states in Asia and Africa, (c) neighbourhood countries as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, China, N. Korea and ASEAN, (d) the Vatican and the Christian countries of the

West? What are *Hindutva's* long-term strategic policies for military and economic security? Is there a thin line, if any, between "cultural nationalism" and internal and external politics. Both culture and nationalism have wider implications

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in public affairs.

MR. A. D. MODDIE as an IAS officer has held senior positions, and after retirement held senior executive position. He is a well-known author and commentator.

Bridging the Communal Divide: 1

Cyrus Guzder

Frankly the only ideology now must be an uncompromising support of the Constitution of India inasmuch as we are all citizens with equal rights before the law.

What has happened in Gujarat is sought to be explained by saying that the Muslims have been harassing us for so long, that these killings are a fitting reply.

Such a feeling is extremely difficult to counter as long as our existing foreign policy with Pakistan remains one of confrontation. It was under Vajpayee's foreign ministership in the early days of Janata Party rule in 1977, that Jagat Mehta was sent to Karachi to restore diplomatic relations with Pakistan, then in shambles. It is ironical that our relations with Pakistan are back to where they were in the 'seventies under a government headed by Mr. Vajpayee. If we continue to revel in the idea that we have to punch the Pakistanis in the nose, it becomes extremely difficult simultaneously to conduct a process of reconciliation with Muslims within India.

You may ask what have relations with Pakistan to do with relations with Muslims in India? There are many underlying currents when the *Sangh parivar* says anything about Muslims. The fundamental underlying current is

that the *Sangh Parivar* continues to propagate their belief that the Muslims in India continue to subscribe to the two-nation theory. The *Parivar* says that when the Muslims wanted their nation they broke us up and drove us out of what is Pakistan today. Now that they have got their nation so why don't all Muslims go there?. This implies that we must be in continuous confrontation with Pakistan. Such an attitude does not make any sense. We are geographical neighbours and we can't change geography; and Pakistan is an extremely important ally of the United States, the world's largest power. We cannot ignore this fact either.

We have a Muslim population as large as Pakistan's. So my submission is quite simply that if we believe in civil society and we want to live in harmony with all the people in our own country which includes over a 100 million Muslims, what is the point of carrying on an ideological warfare against the Muslim nation next door because that only washes back into Indian politics. It only helps Mr. Togadia and his friends to bring back the Mandir on the BJP's agenda. The

BJP may say no Mandir as the Supreme Court says no. This is the forked tongue. The point is the BJP is least interested in building a Mandir over there. On the other hand putting the Mandir back on their agenda is a wonderful way to spark off communal riots when and where they are needed.

It is really easy in this country to keep tensions simmering by saying we want to go to war with Pakistan, raise all kinds of issues even create fresh ones, don't bring people to justice so that on the one hand we say we taught them a lesson and on the other say thank God we redeemed our self respect. It is very easy in this situation to continue the strife. Hence I say in the larger context, we have to work both internally and externally.

For some reason, we have lost the idea of what we are as Indians. We are all citizens of this country. Frankly the only ideology must now be an uncompromising support of the Constitution of India inasmuch as we are all citizens with equal rights before the law. And, I think that if we were to adopt this uncompromising ideology a large

In Free India - Only Politicians, No Statesmen. Only *Netas*, No Leaders

number of other actions would follow. For example we should have been the first to condemn Godhra; we should have been the first to condemn the procession of the VHP which took place the next day; we should have been the first to confront the *fatwa* just as we should have been able to confront Rajiv Gandhi's response to the Shah Banoo judgement. Time and again we have lost opportunities. And therefore it is no surprise that people feel that the liberal Hindu is actually anti-Hindu. And we can both rebut fundamental Hinduism as well as the unfortunate Hindu social prescriptions of the *Manu Smriti* if

we agree to abide by the single idea that when a public injustice is done then we have to move heaven and earth to demand redress. Why weren't those Shiv Sena activists who burnt down Mr. Singhanian's hospital in Thane ever brought to book? It was a brazen act of arson. A fine charitable hospital was destroyed. Though initially Mr. Singhanian had the courage to speak out he finally gave up because nobody in his own business community let alone in the city supported him.

What we need to do individually and not necessarily wait

to form ourselves into groups is to say the right thing at the right time. What we simply need to do is that however small we are there must continuously be an attempt to react every time there is an injustice against an individual or against a community or against a class in which the fundamental equality of individuals before the law is undermined. We need to react as individuals each time and every time.

MR. CYRUS GUZDER is a leading business executive and an ardent conservationist.

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Bridging the Communal Divide: 2

Satish Sahney

We must start addressing the youth. Today's youth is more amenable to reason

The demolition of the Babri Mosque and the riots in Mumbai in December 92 and January 93 had embittered the Muslim community to such an extent that when the serial bomb blasts shook the city in March 1993 they felt avenged. When a group of people or a particular community feels threatened or insecure it develops the ghetto mentality. This phenomenon was witnessed in Mumbai after the riots and same thing is reported to have occurred in Ahmedabad. Areas have been demarcated, some exclusively Muslim and others exclusively Hindu. In such spaces, which are inhabited by just one community impelled by the instinct of self

preservation, suspicion, and mistrust of others are bred and sustained. The Hindu-Muslim communal divide in this country is going to spread all over if the fundamentalists, both Hindu and Muslim are not checked which appears to be the case. I therefore have two submissions to make for dealing with the situation: First, we must start addressing the youth. Today's youth is more amenable to reason and therefore, we must be prepared to answer all questions they have to ask. There should be no evasive answers. It is unfortunate that a constant dialogue with the youth of our country on such vital issues is wanting. Sadly, it does not

take place even at the teacher-student level.

Second, we must avoid the use of the word 'Secular'. It is being interpreted as anti-Hindu by those who are against the concept of secularism. Instead we must exhort the youth to respect our Constitution and the principles enshrined in it. It must be impressed upon them that the safety and well being of every citizen of this country is possible only when we as a nation abide by the Constitution and the Rule of Law.

MR. SATISH SAHNEY is a former Commissioner of Police and current Director of the Nehru Centre.

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Nani Palkhivala

An outstanding jurist, redoubtable champion of freedom
and above all a great humanist.

In 1972-73, the full Bench of thirteen judges of the Supreme Court of India heard with rapt attention a handsome lawyer argue for five months before them that the Constitution of India, which guaranteed fundamental freedoms to the people, was supreme, and Parliament had no power to abridge those rights. The judges peppered him with questions. A jam-packed court, corridors overflowing with members of the Bar and people who had come from far-away places just to hear the lawyer argue, was thrilled to hear him quote in reply chapter and verse from the U.S., Irish, Canadian, Australian and other democratic constitutions of the world.

Finally came the judgement in April 1973 in *Keshavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala*, popularly known as the *Fundamental Rights case*. The historic pronouncement was that though Parliament could amend the Constitution, it had no right to alter its basic structure.

The doyen of Indian journalists, Durga Das, congratulated the lawyer: "You have salvaged something precious from the wreck of the constitutional structure which politicians have razed to the ground". This "something precious" – the sanctity of the 'basic structure of the Constitution' – saved India from going fully down the totalitarian way during the dark days of the Emergency (1975-77) imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Soon after the proclamation of Emergency on 25th June 1975, the Government of India sought to get the judgement reversed, in an

atmosphere of covert terrorization of the judiciary, rigorous press censorship, and mass arrests without trial, so as to pave the way for the suspension of fundamental freedoms and establishment of a totalitarian state. Once again, braving the rulers' wrath, this lawyer came to the defence of the citizen. His six-page propositions before the Supreme Court and arguments extending over two days were so convincing that the Bench was dissolved and the Court

dropped the matter altogether. Commented a judge: "Never before in the history of the Court has there been a performance like that. With his passionate plea for human freedoms and irrefutable logic, he convinced the Court that the earlier *Keshavananda Bharathi case* judgement should not be reversed".

This man who saved the Indian Constitution for generations unborn, was Nani Ardeshir Palkhivala (popularly 'Nani'). His

Nani Palkhivala

In Memoriam

With the death of Nani Palkhivala, at the age of 82, there ends an era in Indian jurisprudence. Endowed with a razor sharp intellect and a profound knowledge of the law, he applied his gifts to many cases, some of which were public interest litigation. His forte was the Constitution and its many clauses. His arguments on Constitutional matters were veritable marathons. His junior, Soli Sorabjee writes that despite his legal genius, he was a team player, and looked carefully at the briefs prepared for him. On one occasion, he disagreed with a point made by Soli Sorabjee, but must have studied it, in the interim before he appeared in Court. He made extensive use of the argument, on which, earlier, he had a doubt. The ability to call information from many sources, and to acknowledge a mistake, (tacitly or implicitly), are rare qualities. He was also interested in finance, and for a number of years, his speeches after the Finance Minister's Bill were a public sensation. Of course, they had less relevance when the Finance Policy itself, changed. Sadly, like my husband, and Minoo Masani, his twilight was a long one, both of body and mind. His brother and niece, (his wife had passed away a year earlier), were beside him, at the end. Minoo has a widow. My husband had the consolation of having me, our only daughter, and two grandchildren, guiding his passage, to that world from whose born, no traveller returns to tell the tale. I mention them in one breath, as they belonged to a particular generation, and were essentially Liberals in their philosophy. "Now cracks a noble heart. Good bye, sweet friends, and flights of angels sing thee three, to thy rest".

You had the gift of strong advocacy,
Which lighted the content of any plea.
The gift of eloquence in a large measure,
Was granted you and this we also treasure.
The twilight of your passing was so sad,
-may your days in another world be glad.

Louella Lobo Prabhu

greatness as a lawyer is summed up in the words of Justice H. R. Khanna of the Supreme Court: "If a count were to be made of the ten topmost lawyers of the world, I have no doubt that Mr. Palkhivala's name would find a prominent mention therein'. The late Prime Minister Morarji Desai described him to Barun Gupta, the famous journalist, as 'the country's finest intellectual'. Rajaji described him as "God's gift to India".

Mr. Nani A. Palkhivala, who passed away on 11th December 2002 was for the past four decades one of the dominant figures in India's public life. An outstanding jurist, redoubtable champion of freedom and above all a great humanist.

Born on 16th January 1920, Mr. Palkhivala had a brilliant academic career. He stood first class

first in both his LL.B. (1943) exams as also in the Advocate (Original Side) Examination of the Bombay High Court.

Mr. Palkhivala was associated with the Forum of Free Enterprise ever since he appeared on the Forum's platform in December 1957. He was President of the Forum from November 1968 till February 2000 when he resigned due to health reasons. He was President-Emeritus of the Forum from February 2000 till his death. He eloquently espoused the cause for a more rational and equitable tax regime.

Mr. Palkhivala first spoke on the Union Budget in March 1958. His talks on the subject became an annual feature in Mumbai and other places till he last spoke on the subject in March 1994. His expositions on the budget were immensely popular and attracted attendance in excess

of 1,00,000, which is a record for a meeting on an economic subject anywhere in the world.

He was India's Ambassador to the U.S.A. from 1977 to 1979. While in the U.S. as India's Ambassador, he delivered more than 170 speeches in different cities which included speeches at over 50 Universities.

In 1997 Mr. Palkhivala was conferred the Dadabhai Naoroji Memorial Award for advancing the interests of India by his contribution towards public education in economic affairs and constitutional law. In January 1998 he was honoured by the Government of India with the second highest Civilian Award - Padma Vibhushan. The Mumbai University also conferred upon him with a honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.).



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Remembering Palkhivala

Manuwant Choudhary

I never personally interviewed Palkhivala. I didn't have any questions for him. I trusted him.

Early this December in Hyderabad, attending the first national convention of the Indian Liberal Group, I met Mr. Minoo Shroff, president of the Forum of Free Enterprise, and Mr. S. Diwakara, secretary of the Forum. Mr. Diwakara knew me as a reporter with the *Afternoon Despatch & Courier*. And the first thing I asked him was 'How is Palkhivala?' He replied, 'He can't recognise us now'.

When I returned to Patna I got news of Mr. Palkhivala's death.

Nani A. Palkhivala was among the last living souls I admired. He shaped my life in many ways.

Browsing through books in my school library at St. Paul's, Darjeeling, I came across, "We, The People". It changed my life.

So when I came to Bombay as a student at St. Xavier's College, it was my dream to attend Palkhivala's budget speech. Liberalisation hadn't happened. India was bankrupt in 1990. And taxation was high.

So standing in the Fort area suddenly I see hundreds of office-goers in their simple shirts, trousers and briefcases all in their quick steps heading in just one direction – the Brabourne Stadium – the venue of Palkhivala's annual budget speech.

His budget speeches turned him into a legend in his lifetime. From addressing 800 people at Green's Hotel, Apollo Bunder, in 1958, his venue kept changing each year as the crowds swelled until it moved into the Brabourne Stadium

and with more than a lakh people listening.

Not knowing anything about a budget, I sat on the lawns and Palkhivala from a stage talked about the budget, how much money it was taking away from the common man's pockets, how much poorer the country was going to be. His voice still rings, "I want a clock to be put in every town and city of this country which will not give the time but the external and internal debt of the country. Do you know every second the external and internal debt of India goes up by 16,000 rupees".

Later when I became a journalist talking to Palkhivala became routine. I would call him up for even small things like what book he was reading and he would oblige. Or even for the opinion column he would readily express himself and wouldn't mind his photograph placed next to ordinary men, a column which some Bombay celebrities would prefer to avoid.

Or when there were more serious issues, Palkhivala's voice over the telephone was always earnest, passionate and even emotional. Sometimes on issues concerning the country I could hear him choke with emotion.

After the demolition of the Babri Masjid, it was Nani Palkhivala who promoted a solution better known as the Wahiuddin Formula where the Muslims would agree to give up the Ayodhya site while the Hindu hardliners would in turn give a written promise that this bloody movement would stop at Ayodhya. I remember at the Y. B. Chavan

auditorium organised by Madhu Mehta's Hindustani Andolan, there were religious leaders from all religions as well as Maulana Wahiuddin Khan. When the Muslim religious leader was spelling his peace formula, a group of hardline Hindus could be seen getting restless – their aim was to disturb the meeting. They began shouting at the Maulana and just when I expected the scene to turn ugly, Palkhivala stepped in talking straight to the fanatical crowd, "Do you even know who you're shouting at? You're insulting the soul of India. Do you know anything about your own religion? Come and see me and I'll tell you more about the Bhagwad Gita than you will ever know". The Hindu fanatics just sat in their seats. Quiet. Such was his power of character.

I never personally interviewed Palkhivala. I didn't have any questions for him. I trusted him.

Who wouldn't? A legal luminary whose most famous book, "We, The People", dedicated to the people of India with the following lines:

"To My Countrymen
Who gave unto themselves the
Constitution
But not the ability to keep it,
Who inherited a resplendent
heritage
But not the wisdom to cherish it,
Who suffer and endure in
patience
Without the perception of their
potential"

MR. MANUWANT CHOUDHARY is a reporter with NDTV.

V. B. Karnik - The 'Secular' Saint

Centenary Tributes

Arvind A. Deshpande



Though a total rationalist and agnostic, V. B. Karnik could be aptly described as a 'secular saint', if a saint means a noble person, full of the milk of human kindness, incorruptible, transparent, never hurting even an adversary and always thinking of the poor, the oppressed and the disadvantaged. He reminded me of that legendary *Mahabharata* character, Mahatma Vidura. Like Vidura, Mr. Karnik had no wealth, no authority nor power, but innate humanism and goodness, and yet, those who had wealth or power respected him and sought his advice and opinion. I have personally heard, in private, Jayaprakash Narayan, Minoo Masani, Asoka Mehta, Philip Spratt and many other stalwarts praising Mr. Karnik and according highest consideration to his views. What a contrast to our present leaders?

I would only like to refer here to the final phase (1952 and thereafter) of his dedicated life, which was missed out in the speeches made at the public meeting held on January 7, 2003 in Mumbai. This phase, when he was associated with the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, *Freedom First*, Democratic Research Service (DRS), China Study Centre, *Quest*, Labour

Education Service, and the Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training For Democracy (LSP), was perhaps the most constructive and intellectually satisfying phase of his life. Mr. Karnik struck me as that rare combination of the thinking of Comrade M. N. Roy, Hon'ble G. K. Gokhale and Gandhiji (with whom he shared that compassion for and empathy with the poor masses). He was a Gandhian in another sense, in that he would praise the ruling party if it did something good for the people but criticise it for its lawless and corrupt acts.

I had the good fortune to know him closely and be associated in the work of the LSP, and the DRS from 1968 till his passing away. My old school teacher from Gwalior introduced me, around 1960, to the ICCF, *Quest* and *Encounter*. Then in 1962 when I started calling on Mr. Karnik quite often, the first thing he asked for was voluntary help in the election campaign he had organised for Acharya J. B. Kripalani against Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon. Every thing Mr. Karnik told us about China proved true.

In the face of the most scurrilous attack on the ICCF on him as an Americanist, anti-communist etc., I never saw him once losing his cool or saying anything harsh against his critics. His most valuable writing on politics, international relations, problems of democracy, and the role of trade unions, to mention a few, was done in this last phase. Minoo Masani often used to tell me to seek Brother (as he called him) Karnik's opinion. The time I spent at the DRS monthly dinner meetings, at Prof. A. B. Shah's place and at my home with Mr. Karnik and at the LSP seminars were intellectually most enlightening.

Mr. Karnik firmly supported the movement for the right to die with dignity.

What a noble soul to know. His memory will be cherished by us, who had the privilege of being close to him.

MR. ARVIND A. DESHPANDE is the Honorary Secretary of the Leslie Sawhny Programme.

India's Independence Day

This has reference to the article on the inappropriateness of the term Independence Day (*Freedom First*, No. 454, July-September, 2002).

I would like to bring to the notice of readers an apocryphal but most likely point on the choice of midnight for the celebration of Independence Day. We do not celebrate Republic Day at midnight, why then Independence Day?

It appears that the date for India's Independence fixed by the British government was 16th August. Very late in the day, the pundits discovered that it was on a Tuesday, considered inauspicious though the day itself is called *Mangalvar*!

The rational, scientific tempered Pandit Nehru was unable to pacify the pundits. So he requested the British to change the date. Nothing doing, said Whitehall. Orders passed are orders passed.

He could not change it to August 16 but to pacify the orthodoxy, the function was fixed for the midnight of August 15. Officially August 16 had started but according to Hindu reckoning, Tuesday, August 16 would come only with sunrise. Hence freedom at midnight!

N. Dharmeshwaran, Guduvancherry, Tamil Nadu.

V. B. Karnik

His Life, Labour and Ideals

R. Srinivasan

During the centenary year of Shri V. B. Karnik, it is good to recall a book* recounting the life, labour and the ideals that made him one of the unforgettable men of his times and who was to leave a deep impress in all those who came close to him whatever their political hue. For it can be said of him as of Balasaheb Kher, that they were *ajatasatru*, one who has no enemies who were ever born. This book, small in size, is rich in contents and reveals aspects of this remarkable man which could not have been dreamt of even by those who were very close to him - as for instance the group that is associated with the Democratic Research Service (DRS) and the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF). Reticent to a fault, he rarely talked of himself or retailed anecdotes.

In a long life crowded with memorable events, he traversed a wide range of experiences and had the unique satisfaction of witnessing many of his ideals turning into realities, as for instance the independence of his country and trade unions coming of age. But there was the frightening prospect of the communists directed from Moscow taking control of the politics of the country. M. N. Roy and his followers knew of the tactics and it fell to Karnik to educate a new generation and the old which was naïve in matters relating to communism and its true intentions.

This he did ceaselessly through the pages of *Freedom First*, then an organ of the Democratic Research Service established mainly to expose the wiles of the Communist

Party of India. The DRS was to regularly publish pamphlets and arrange discussion groups. He did not live to witness one of the most traumatic events of the twentieth century - the collapse of Communism as a political and economic system. However, he was to witness the beginning of the dissolution of the tyrannical system on which he wrote with deep concern and sometimes with a subdued passion.

V. B. Karnik was born in Thane and brought up at Dadar in Mumbai, in the shadow of the Portuguese Church where young boys played in the thick shadow of coconut groves; when one had to take bullock carts from the Dadar Station, where outside the station, one saw the bullocks chewing the cud and the cartdrivers waiting for their customers. Near his home there were a few scattered cottages and Agar Bazaar even then was the market for the local people. Gradually new structures came up. It was the days of the B.B. & C.I. and the G.I.P. Railways. The famous King George High School was in the vicinity accommodated in rented bungalows; V. B. Karnik was to join and pass his matriculation examination from the school. An unexpected illness before the final examination made him lose the prizes which would have been his otherwise, for he was always very good in his studies.

An important decision of his father was that he should go to college in Poona in the Deccan College where the environs would help him recover his health and an independent hostel life would help him develop a sense of confidence. This was perhaps a right decision

for the brief college days were indeed most fruitful. The open green spaces around the college offered opportunities for discussion with fellow students lasting long hours. These were to be unfortunately too brief for Karnik to fully savour college life; for he gave up studies at the call of the Mahatma to boycott educational institutions. A number of fellow students who were with him in this were to rise to unexpected heights later in life as did the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court P. B. Gajendragadkar. Karnik later joined the law classes run by the Kesari Trust to enable matriculates to qualify as vakils. He benefitted immensely, using the excellent library of the Trust to read widely and deeply and won the MacLeod Prize. He also managed to graduate with distinction from the Tilak Mahavidyapeeth.

His father decided to settle down in Pune and this was a fortunate development. His house *Anandi geha* became a centre where people from all walks of life came and had discussions; a number of literateurs were regular visitors. Madkholkar, the literary figure was a close friend and he in turn introduced numerous poets to the household. The most famous of the poets was Madhav Julian; the newly started Ravi Karan Mandali the most distinguished of the Pune Literary Circles saw the young Karnik lapping up new literary waves. Contact with the finest literary minds of Pune and the *conversazione* opened up new literary sensibilities. Earlier, he was exposed to political ideas and ideals, social reform and the importance of social regeneration; and these were to remain important all through his public career.

* V. B. KARNIK, by his brother D. B. Karnik, published by Shrividya Prakashan, Pune 411 030 in 1986.

For half a century and more, the city of his early days became his *karma bhoomi* and he was active in a number of causes while practicing law at the same time. His law practice gradually became also a public service. He continued to be active on matters relating to social reforms as when the Bombay Youth Congress Committee warmly supported publicly two instances of inter-community marriages (Hindu-Muslim). In this he was continuing an earlier Pune commitment recalling the work of G. G. Agarkar. Such open support naturally was to invite the wrath of conservative sections as happened with Achyutrao Kolhatkar, the famous journalist, who had once broken his lance with the redoubtable Lokamanya. He also started law classes in Bombay to help the young to qualify.

An important change was his defending Comrades Randive and Deshpande against the government in two cases in 1929. Earlier, on the occasion of two important city-wide strikes of the textile workers led by Nimbkar, Dange and Mirajkar, saw Karnik render legal assistance to these leaders. These gave him invaluable experience in the conducting of cases and understanding of the issues involved. Importantly, it made Karnik see the importance and centrality of trade unions in a modernizing society. He was to immerse himself deeply in this.

A moot question was whether trade unions should align themselves with political parties or go their independent way. While they had to form large national bodies there were distinct disadvantages of too close an identity with any one political party. This was the position taken by N. M. Joshi, the great pioneer of the trade union movement, whom Karnik regarded as a mentor. Like Joshi, Karnik was to emphasize the education and training of trade unionists, including political education. He also legally defended

R. D. Karve, the great promoter and publicist of sex education. Karve found himself charged with several cases filed by the government on grounds of obscenity and Karnik was to defend him.

His promotion and active help in the formation of the Dock Workers' Union, the Maritime Workers' Union, the Salt Pan Workers' Union, the Railwaymen's Union, not to omit the Textile Workers' Union have remained remarkable achievements. Here he had able colleagues, each specializing in one or two unions. Dr. Shetty, Maniben Kara, S. R. Kulkarni, Charles Mascarenhas, with many of whom, he developed deep and abiding friendship, as for instance with Maniben Kara who shared his deep loyalty to M. N. Roy; this friendship was to last over half a century. He saw to it that she was sent to Delhi to the Central Legislature as representative of the workers while simultaneously being active in the railwaymen's union.

An extremely important development that took place was the coming of M. N. Roy and his stay incognito in Bombay. To Karnik and his colleagues, many of whom were leftist-oriented, this association was momentous for none had the wide experience that M. N. Roy had, which was spread over three continents and who had an intimate knowledge of revolutionary politics. The discussions that used to continue into the late night, were to be an education of another significant sort and the Bombay group was exposed to extremely novel ideas of revolution, theories of politics, European experiences in organising socialist parties and movements etc. What was earlier a hub of activities of different kinds of social, political matters now took a different form, the national movement and politics in India was totally transformed in their eyes and there was no doubt that a new spirit had

been injected in the Indian political scene. Roy was totally disillusioned with the machinations of Stalin and Roy's decision to enter the Indian National Congress and to influence the Party was in distinct contravention of the Comintern's directive. The attempts of Roy (later) to inject a sense of western modernity and class consciousness in the Congress failed, though in certain sections it was to have influence.

With the arrest of M. N. Roy, a number of leading trade unionists publicly condemned the act, were arrested and it fell to Karnik to prepare their defence. Dr. Shetty, Charles Mascarenhas, Maniben Kara were to be victims as was S. M. Joshi later. Throughout the years M. N. Roy was in jail, V. B. Karnik kept in touch with him through letters and had one of his books published under a pseudonym (*China in Revolt*). He tried to gather legal opinion for reducing the period of Roy's imprisonment.

Once Roy was released, he started a weekly *Independent India* and Karnik was the *de facto* editor of this; lack of finance was to dog the steps of the weekly and Karnik's enormous sacrifices were well-known to those close to Karnik. He promoted Roy's ideas untiringly and was whole-heartedly with him in promoting his party and later in disbanding it.

His was an extremely soft spoken demanour, remarkable for his equanimity, his openness, and his strong egalitarian disposition, his total liberation from all temptations to hold offices. He was indeed a unique figure in modern India – in fact a saint in the world of trade unions. His life recalls the sincerity of the caliber of people like Gokhale but who preferred to hide their candle under a bushel.

DR. R. SRINIVASAN is retired professor of political science and Associate Editor of *Freedom First*.



THE SOCIETY FOR THE RIGHT TO DIE WITH DIGNITY

Affiliated to the World Federation of the Right to Die Societies

Editor: Dr. Aparna Bagwe

NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2003

Dr. B. N. Colabawalla, R.I.P.



It is with a heavy heart that we report the passing away on September 23, 2002 of Dr. B. N. Colabawalla (FRCS, FAMS), Chairman of the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity (SRDD).

A urological surgeon of great repute, Dr. Colabawalla was one of the pioneers in establishing the speciality of Urology in India - establishing and heading the first

Department of Urology at St. George's Hospital, Bombay, in 1961. He served as Secretary and later President of the Urology section of the Association of Surgeons of India, which later became the Urological Society of India, and also helped found the *Indian Journal of Urology* and was Chairman of its editorial board. He was awarded the Urology Gold Medal to honour his pioneering contribution to this specialised branch of medicine. He was the first Indian to be elected a full member of the British Association of Urological Surgeons and the Urological Society of Australasia. He also served on the editorial board of the *British Journal of Urology*.

Dr. Colabawalla was actively involved in the Renal Transplantation Programme of Jaslok Hospital, which he joined in 1972. Anticipating the problems that could arise from such a programme, he helped found - and was Founder Secretary - of the National Kidney Foundation of India. An uncompromising opponent of the unethical practice of the trade and commerce in kidneys, he played a key role in persuading the Government of India to enact the Human Organ Transplant Act. Towards this end, he wrote several papers and expounded his views on this topic on T.V. and radio.

A multi-faceted personality, Dr. Colabawalla was a Rotarian for 30 years, and President of the Rotary Club of Bombay in its Golden Jubilee year. Before his death, he had been a Trustee of Rotary Club Charities Trust. He had a strong feeling for Humanism and was a member of the Foundation for Humanization. He had also recently been elected to the Delphi Society of Athens, Greece.

But to all of us at the SRDD, Dr. Colabawalla was these and much more. He tirelessly propagated his philosophy of a person's "right to die with dignity" that rested on the pillars of free will, freedom of choice, right of self-

determination and maintaining the autonomy and dignity of the individual. As cited in his memoirs, the seminal experience that had left a permanent mark on his subconscious mind and made him embrace the concept of the "right to die with dignity" in later life, was being a hapless spectator of his mother's suffering in the terminal stage of chronic kidney disease. And, more importantly, receiving a negative response from the doctors treating his mother to his question: 'Isn't there a humane way of ending her misery?' The heart-wrenching scenario of terminal illness and accompanying pain would recur time and again throughout his life, seen this time from the doctor's angle, making him think deeply about the moral and ethical means for a way out of the dilemma - both for the patient and the doctor.

In the 1980s, he had the opportunity to listen to the late Mr. Minoo Masani, Founder of the Right to Die with Dignity Society in Mumbai, and was strongly attracted to this movement. He immediately joined the SRDD, began working actively for the society, and was later brought into its executive committee. Upon Mr. Masani's retirement, Dr. Colabawalla was elected Chairman of the Society - a position that he held over the past decade. During this period, he was invited to attend a meeting of the 'Appleton Consensus - International Guidelines for Decision to Forego Life Prolonging Medical Treatment' and was one of the signatories of the Report. He attended several International Conferences of the World Federation of the Right to Die Societies, and had served as a Director on the Board of the Federation for two years.

During his stewardship of SRDD, Dr. Colabawalla nurtured SRDD with great devotion and against all odds - notwithstanding failing health and personal tragedy. Thanks to his able leadership and wide reach, the objectives of SRDD became known to a large number of individuals and groups. Over the past decade he strove to convey, to decision makers and laymen alike, that what the SRDD sought to promote was not a license for 'mercy killing' but the enactment of legal provisions that would allow a person with a terminal illness to die in peace and with dignity.

A fitting tribute to Dr. Colabawalla would be for all of us at SRDD to strive hard to see that this humane philosophy that he had espoused throughout his life continues to reach more and more thinking people.

- Editor.

A Beautiful life - and a Beautiful death

(In this moving account David Beresford, long opposed to the idea of euthanasia, tells how his partner's mother chose to end her life after a long and painful battle against bone-marrow cancer.)

A brave woman was cremated at the weekend in Holland, in the small town of Groningen, mourned by many, unnoticed by most. She was the mother of my partner, Ellen.

We didn't know each other particularly well, Tina Elmendorp and I; her English was not very good and my Dutch is non-existent. Several years ago, when she was visiting us in South Africa, I determined to sit her down and question her about her wartime experiences. I knew she had lived through the battle of Arnhem - of 'A Bridge Too Far' fame - and had been pregnant with Ellen at the time. But I was startled when I asked whether she had ever feared for her life under German occupation and she replied thoughtfully that there was a period, when she was hiding a Dutch pilot who had escaped from Berlin, that had been frightening. When I mentioned this to Ellen, she was also startled. It turned out that Tina had never mentioned it to any members of her family. It was, I suppose, something I should have borne in mind when she announced she wanted euthanasia. I thought she would never go through with it.

It was her right, of course, under Dutch law. She was 92 years old; she has been battling against bone marrow cancer - one of the most painful forms of the disease - for years with the help of an oxygen tank and morphine. Her three daughters - settled in Germany, South Africa and the US - were taking turns in nursing her.

I have long been philosophically opposed to euthanasia. My main objection is based on the same grounds as my opposition to the death penalty: it dilutes the general taboo on the taking of human life. To my mind it is no coincidence that Franz Stangl, commander of the Treblinka concentration camp, was effectively trained for the job on the Nazi euthanasia programme. But in this case my objections were more personal and I wrote to her explaining why her decision troubled me.

I had no objection to the idea of her taking her own life. As the poet John Donne wrote almost 400 years ago: 'Whenever any affliction assails me, I have the keys of my prison in mine own hand, and no remedy presents itself so soon to my heart, as mine own sword.' I told her that, after 10 years of Parkinson's disease, the remedy had on occasion 'presented itself' to me as well. My main concern was for her daughters and the trauma they would experience in watching her go through with it. I nurse what I regard as a healthy scepticism towards the medical profession and was worried the doctors were not doing enough to deal with the pain. At the back of my mind was also the long held suspicion that Socrates's noble end was something of a myth and that Seneca's botched job with the hemlock was a more likely scenario when it came to doing away with oneself.

Tina wrote back, saying that she had enjoyed a 'beautiful life' with her children and grand children. She had

told her doctor and her daughters that she would 'try her best', but that the time would probably come when she could no longer get out of her chair and the pain was such that she would no longer wish to live. That time had now arrived.

The mail is slow in these parts, so I only received the letter as I was writing this. But she made her decision clear by telling her family she had decided it would happen on Monday 13 January at 2 pm and that she would drink the fatal mixture, rather than having the alternative of an injection. The doctor wanted it to be a Monday. He only carried out a euthanasia about once in two years and always found it emotionally draining. Mondays were the easiest days to take off. As required by Dutch law, a doctor specially trained to handle euthanasia cases, who was a stranger to the family, had visited her the week before, to make sure there was nothing more that could be done to alleviate her condition.

The family had a champagne party with her the night before and Tina made a speech. She was proud of the speech, noting in her diary that the champagne had helped her speak well. The doctor arrived on time the next day. Her children and grandchildren were beside the bed. The doctor asked her formally if she wanted to go ahead. Sometimes patients change their mind at this stage, but not Tina. The youngest daughter handed her the cup. She drank it without hesitation, but as was her habit with tea and coffee, left some dregs. The doctor, knowing of cases where this was enough to make the dose less than fatal and necessitating a lethal injection - often with traumatic effect on the family - asked her to drink up. It took about 15 minutes to work, as the doctor had said.

The funeral was scheduled for Saturday. She had insisted that she should spend the intervening days in her own bedroom, in her own bed, rather than in a coffin or a funeral parlour. Undertakers came to the house and put a refrigerated slab under her body so that she could stay. The week was like something out of a novel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez: the old matriarch lying, marble-like, upstairs with her faithful dog, Ilya, next to her; downstairs the family having dinners with lots of talking, laughing, crying, eating, drinking - just the way the old lady, who loved good company, would have wanted it. The funeral was well attended. The eldest of the three daughters, Marianne, read out the lovely lines of desolation from W. H. Auden's love poem 'Stop All The Clocks', slightly amended:

She was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that life would last for ever: I was wrong.

Ingrid, the youngest daughter, described the qualities her mother had always shown: her sense of curiosity, the attention she showed others, her persistence, her

uncomplaining nature. 'She never moaned. I have tried it out for the week since she died and it is not easy.'

'I miss so much not being able to tell her how well it all went,' Ellen told the mourners. Euthanasia was a scary thought and everybody had been dreading it. 'But she made it easy for us. In spite of her pain and weakness, she managed to conduct her own death in such a way that we could find peace with it,' she said. 'It was clear that her decision had given her back her old pride and dignity: she was now in control - not the illness, not death, and not even us. She was once again the strong, wise mother of before. She took her decision and - just like when she would travel to see us - her suitcase was packed a week before. She had organised everything down to the last detail.'

When Tina was waiting for the doctor she turned to the four grandchildren and asked: 'Aren't you bored? Don't you want to make it nicer, go and get some cakes or something?' She had been a teacher and lecturer all her working life. Her last words after swallowing the barbiturate cocktail were: 'Thank you all.' Within 30 seconds she was unconscious and within 15 minutes she was dead.

I suppose I did know, at least subconsciously, that she would go through with it. Why else would I have ended that letter to her by quoting some more lines by John Donne. They were in English, of course. But there can be no words more appropriate to the death of a brave woman in whatever country: 'Death be not proud.'

Courtesy: The Observer, Sunday, January 26, 2003.

Net News and Views!

The Huntington's Tragedy

By Faye Girsh, Sr Vice President, Hemlock.

Associated Press (6/11/02): Carol Carr, 63, shot to death her two sons, 42 and 41, who were in a nursing home since January in the last stages of Huntington's disease. "They were like babies" one relative said. A brother, now in the early stages of the disease, found them with bedsores lying in their own urine. Mrs. Carr had nursed them at home for many years, dressing and bathing them and watching their gradual decline. Her husband had died of the same disease in 1995.

Huntington's Disease (HD) is a fatal, devastating, degenerative brain disorder for which there is no effective treatment or cure. A person's ability to think, talk, walk or reason is diminished until they are totally dependent on others for care. A genetic disorder, more than a quarter of a million Americans have HD or at risk of inheriting it. Early symptoms include depression, mood swings, forgetfulness, clumsiness, twitching, and poor coordination. Later short-term memory and concentration diminish and involuntary movements of the head, trunk and limbs increase. Walking, speaking and swallowing abilities deteriorate. Death comes from choking, infection or heart failure. Symptoms start between ages 30 and 45; it affects both sexes and all races. Each child of a person with HD has a 50-50 chance of inheriting the gene; having the gene guarantees the illness. A test can tell if the gene is present but not when the symptoms will begin. HD, like many other diseases such as Alzheimer's and Lou Gehrig's Disease have a gradual onset. In HD, particularly, it is predictable.

To avoid slipping into a quality of life that is unacceptable and taking the chance that your caregiver may not know your wishes, it is imperative in these situations to:

- Designate a health care proxy who will aggressively ensure that your (legal) wishes are carried out.
- Know that you can refuse any unwanted medical treatment and ask for comfort care only. Your proxy can do this for you if you can't. Your wishes should be made clear in your advance directive and to all caregivers and loved ones.
- Know the options for ending your life while you are still mentally and physically competent. Your death should not be violent or traumatizing to others.

What will happen to Mrs. Carr is not clear. She has been

charged with murder. She may be offered a plea bargain, she may be tried and acquitted, or she may serve a long sentence as some other family members have who ended a loved one's life out of desperation. Compassionate Homicide should be a provision in the law but is not. Family members should not bear this burden of ending a loved one's suffering; other avenues in the law must be explored to avoid these tragedies.

This article originally appeared in the summer issue of End-of-Life Choices, Hemlock's quarterly magazine. <http://www.hemlock.org>

Mother who killed ailing sons enters guilty plea to assisting suicide

By Jeffry Scott.

The Atlanta Journal (1/30/03): For seven months she sat in jail, anguished at having killed two sons suffering with Huntington's disease. But Carol Carr could not call it murder, even when prosecutors did. Today the 63-year-old mother of three entered a Spalding County courtroom and became the first person in Georgia to plead guilty to assisted suicide. Spalding Superior Court Judge Ben Miller accepted the plea agreement and sentenced Carr to 10 years, with five years to serve in prison. Under parole board guidelines, Carr would be eligible for parole after 20 months. She has been in jail without bond since June, leaving about 13 months before parole eligibility.

"Carol Carr could not bring herself to walk into that courtroom and say, 'I murdered my children,'" said her lawyer, Lee Sexton. "All she did was keep a promise to them to end their suffering." During the hearing, psychologist Catherine Boyer testified that Carr had also attempted to assist her sons in suicide on Christmas day, 1998, by giving them an overdose of a tranquilizer, but was unsuccessful.

A Spalding County grand jury had accused Carr of murdering Randy Scott, 42, and Andy Scott, 41, as they lay bedridden in a Griffin nursing home. Both were in the late stages of years-long battles with Huntington's, a hereditary disease that robs its victims of mobility and the ability to speak. On the night of June 8, prosecutors contend, Carr visited her sons, gave them chocolate

milk, then shot each behind the ear with a 25-caliber semiautomatic pistol. She waited for police in the lobby of the Sunbridge Care and Rehabilitation center.

In her first court appearance, two days after the slayings, Carr sobbed, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry." Carr has said nothing else publicly since she has been in jail, so it is unclear whether her comments meant she was remorseful over the death of her sons or regretted killing them. Lt. Joe Estenes, a Griffin police detective who interviewed Carr after the shootings, said at the time that he believed the mother acted out of compassion. "The investigation shows it's a mercy killing. We don't believe it was premeditated. But the law doesn't differentiate between a mercy killing and premeditated killing," he said.

Carr's surviving son, James Scott, 38, deferred comment Tuesday on his mother's pending plea. Scott on at least two occasions expected his mother to be released on bond. But she wasn't. A judge ruled she wasn't mentally stable and was a threat to herself and others if released. In June, she was released for a few hours under the supervision of sheriff's deputies to attend her sons' funeral. Over the last seven months, Carr and her surviving son have been at the center of a national debate over "mercy killings." Scott — who is in the early stages of Huntington's — led a rally for his mother's release outside the Spalding County courthouse. He has become a spokesman for the fight against Huntington's, which has afflicted the Scott family for at least three generations. His grandmother died of the disease, and his father's brother, George Scott, committed suicide because of it. James Scott's brothers, Randy and Andy, are buried next to their father, Hoyt, who died of Huntington's in 1995 after suffering for two decades. Under today's plea agreement, when Carr gets out of jail, she cannot live with James Scott or be his primary caretaker.

Bid to legalise assisted suicide

The BBC NEWS, London: Terminally ill people should be given a greater choice over the end of their lives including the right to ask for help to die, says an English peer Lord Joel Joffe - a retired human rights lawyer who defended Nelson Mandela in the 1963 Rivonia trial. Lord Joffe wants the right to assisted suicide enshrined on the statute book, and is introducing a private members bill in the wake of the Diane Pretty and Reginald Crew cases. Mr Crew - who suffered from motor neurone disease - had to fly to Switzerland for an assisted death. Mrs Pretty fought a long, hard battle in the courts for the right to choose the timing of her death but died naturally after her legal fight had failed. Lord Joffe said: "The Diane Pretty and Reginald Crew cases highlighted the pressing need to allow terminally ill competent adults greater choice in the manner of their death. This issue has been debated at length in

the media and every poll in the last decade shows over 80% public support in favour of changing the law. The debate must now be brought into Parliament. For public policy reasons the Patient Assisted Dying Bill contains strict safeguards to ensure the vulnerable in society are protected."

Lord Joffe's Assisted Dying Bill provides for a competent adult suffering from a terminal disease or a serious, incurable physical illness to request medical assistance to die. They would have to have two doctors - one a consultant - to confirm their diagnosis. All the alternatives to assisted suicide would have to be considered including hospice and palliative care. And a patient would have to make a written statement declaring their wish to die. That statement would have to be witnessed by a solicitor who was satisfied of the patient's mental competence to understand their decision. In the bill, there is provision to allow doctors opposed to the notion of assisted suicide to opt-out on grounds of conscience. Another clause provides for a "cooling-off" period in the wake of the request to die so a patient can further consider their decision. A record of every instance of assisted dying would be kept by a monitoring commission. The Bill is to receive its first reading on Thursday, 20 February 2003, and has the backing of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society.

Courtesy: Derek Humphry's ERGO! electronic mailing list.
Email: right_to_die@efn.org URL: <http://www.FinalExit.org>

SRDD News

Rich tributes were paid to SRDD Chairman Dr. B. N. Colabawalla at a public condolence meeting held at the MC Ghia Hall in Mumbai on October 3, 2002. Prof. Sadanand Varde chaired the meeting and the other speakers included Dr. N. H. Wadia, Dr. Nagraj Huilgol, Mr. M. A. Rane and Mr. S. V. Raju.

Two meetings of the Executive Committee were held since the last Newsletter. The first of these was on 12th October. At this meeting, the Committee condoled the demise of its Chairman, lauded his efforts to educate the public on the concept of euthanasia and conveyed the Society's heartfelt condolences to Dr. Colabawalla's family. Prof. Sadanand Varde, Vice-Chairman of the Society formally took over his duties as Chairman. Mrs. Pareen Lalkaka's letter of resignation from the General Secretary's position was accepted and Dr. Huilgol was nominated General Secretary in her place. Mr. Sharad Bailur and Dr. Aparna Bagwe were co-opted to the Committee.

The second meeting, held on 19th November, dealt with various housekeeping chores, including setting the agenda for the next General Body meeting. Among the interesting items likely to figure on the agenda are: the formation of a Federation of Exit Societies in India; holding an essay competition for college/university students on the topic - the 'right to die with dignity' to draw the attention of the younger generation to the objectives of the SRDD; and developing a website for the Society.

For more information on the SRDD, write to:

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Suggestions and contributions to this Newsletter are welcome. Please write to the editor Dr. Aparna Bagwe, Scientist, ACTREC, Navi Mumbai at anbagwe@vsnl.com or at the address of the SRDD.

Reflections Serious and Facetious

Louella Lobo Prabhu

B. D. Jatti – Former President of India

The last I saw of B. D. Jatti, was at Mangalore Airport, when he stood meekly in the queue, carrying his own hand baggage. I did a double-take, and whispered to the Airlines Manager, of the V.I.P. in the queue. Thereafter, his departure was eased, and speeded up. It speaks volumes about our political culture, or the lack of it, that someone *out of office*, however old and vulnerable, does not rate good treatment, incognito. For the politician today, being out of office, is like death. His, is, however, a remarkable success story, as he came from a rural background. Having educated himself, he joined the Quit India Movement, and early on, after Independence, served under B. G. Kher in Bombay, and Nijalingappa, in what was then Mysore (not Karnataka). In the Congress' great split of 1971, he did the only palpably immoral act of his career. He sided with Indira Gandhi. To do him justice, he was probably convinced, that she was right.

He reaped the reward of his choice, when he became India's Vice President. When Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed died in office, he was briefly, President. To do him justice again, he did not put any obstacle, in the path of dismantling the "Emergency" structures. On completion of his term, he sank without a trace, though it is said that he was formally engaged in social reform, for which he had created his own organisation. Looking at the whole of his long career, in perspective, it may be said that he rendered the State some service, and took nothing for himself. In today's political scenario, it is a great and rare compliment.

How long your life, and how much you have seen
Your long record of ninety years, is clean.
Looking at the land today in its ferment,
To praise you thus, is a great compliment.

Remembering J.P.

October 2002, is the hundredth Anniversary of Jayaprakash Narayan's birth. Already, the younger generation knows little of Gandhi. It knows nothing of J.P. He himself considered Gandhi to be his mentor, though his Gandhism had socialist bearings. He was a prominent member of the Quit India Movement, and fired the imagination of young people in his time, by making as daring a jail-escape as the Count of Monte Cristo. He shared one thing in common with Gandhi. When Independence came, he sought no reward, by way of ministership at the Centre. He preferred to be a moral force. His second shining term of glory came during the Emergency, when he stood up and was counted. Cast into prison by Indira Gandhi, his ailing kidneys suffered

irreversible damage. He was a supporter of the feminist movement. When his wife, who was a Gandhian, unilaterally decided to adopt celibacy, without his prior approval and consent, he accepted her decision with no bad feelings. He was a facile writer on ideological matters. His books and articles are a sober commentary on doctrines tried, worked, accepted and rejected. His personality was quiet and apolitical. He had no intention to bedazzle the person he was talking to – but he often did so, without any effort. Both during the Emergency, and the Quit India Movement, he moved great masses of people, by his advocacy and the power of example: the exemplary life he lived. What a glorious example to remember!

Amitabh Bachchan : The One-Man Phenomenon

Amitabh Bachchan has reached 60. His wife has brought out a tribute to him, on the occasion. His son, Abhishek has also contributed his insights, about his father. The celebration took place in Tirupati. Amitabh is a one-man phenomenon. In cinema, he has been hero, and 'anti-hero', as well as the angry young man, later the angry old man. Just when it seemed that his star was fading, he reinvented himself on the small screen in the fabulously successful "*Kaun Banega Crorepati*". He had the whole nation hooked. His adversities arose mainly from his stint in politics, when everything he

did, became controversial. The other episode of adversity, was when he tried to host an international beauty contest in Bangalore. The mud flung on him was astonishing, with the feminists all gunning for him, as though the city had not witnessed a beauty pageant before. Yet one more episode of adversity, was, that when in the course of shooting a movie, the stuntman engaged in the fight, punched him brutally. At that time, he was in a phase of popularity, and the nation's prayers were concentrated on him. The same nation, was to execrate him later. He preserved his cool, during his roller-coaster

ride through life. There must be an inner core of steel, in the private man, however ebullient his screen *persona* appears.

Your life's achievements are by no means small;
Indeed, like you, they stand up great and tall,
On screen, in life whatever role you played,

The nuances of greatness, you displayed.
Your inner core of steel enabled you,
To bear life's tragedies --- and triumphs, too.
Your life's achievements deserve support and
praise.
To you, a symbolic wine glass we raise.

Should One Kiss And Tell?

Poor Princess Diana. The *paparazzi* chased her in life, and the latest to come out with his memory of her, is her bodyguard! He says that when they were together, and alone, she would entice him, wearing a tiny towel – and a smile. However, the story rings hollow, as she surely must have had one more security guard, in view of her privileged status. How did the amorous pair manage to find the time and place to, make love, without the security guard or guards taking note?

Lord Moran, Churchill's personal physician, started the cult of defaming dead people, who cannot retort, with a defamation suit. He wrote, that in his last years, Churchill became senile, and was addicted to

brandy and cigars. But he was also the man who led Great Britain to victory, in World War II, with his qualities of leadership! He will be remembered, when Lord Moran, is a footnote in his biography.

When the person is dead, and cannot retaliate, it is bad in professional ethics, specifically Medicine, to disclose the weakness of the person he treated. That does not mean that public personalities should not be submitted to the judgement of history – if the exposure is in the public interest. Otherwise, in the event that someone is dead, the Latin saying, "Do not speak ill of the dead", should be the best course of action to be followed.

Concerning People of Wealth

Bill Gates, the Computer King, has assigned 2 billion dollars to India, one segment for an AIDS package – sorely needed as AIDS incidence is on the increase by quantum jumps. Computers in village schools is an exciting idea, but many are without even a teacher or a blackboard. The more fundamental needs might have been addressed first. Of late, wealth has become fashionable, whereas in the '60s, the capitalist was a criminal. Admiration was at least nationally based on the Gandhian norms. In fact, Bill Gates does fit into the Gandhian concept: the social trusteeship of Wealth. Rockefeller, Ford, Paul Mellon belong to the first generation of philanthropists in the U.S. Bill Gates has come into the limelight more recently.

With or without great benefactions to show, the

rich man should be construed a benefactor of society, as he puts a great deal of risk and thought into his ventures. He generates jobs which feed a large number of families. He could be as flamboyant as Vijay Mallya, or as austere as G. D. Birla, Gandhiji's friend. Going back to the Bible itself, Jesus and the Apostles found a gracious home in the home of Lazrus, Martha and Mary, and possibly the the merchant-prince Joseph of Arimathea. The early days of the Industrial Revolution, saw gross abuse of human dignity, till the philanthropist Robert Own introspected on the worker's long working days, and low productivity, deciding to cut down the working days, while enhancing wages. His mills were front-runners in their results. Going back to Bill Gates, he must be thanked for focussing on Bangalore, Karnataka. Here's praying for his venture to succeed.

Social Trusteeship

Beside an Ice-Cream Parlour's gate,
(A place of high renown).
Come many different people –
Cross-section of the town!

They are intent on pleasure:
They have come here to eat.
And are salivating –
Just thinking of their treat.

The treat concluded, they come out.
But with no ears or eyes,

For the hollow-eyed beggar,
Whose voice for small alms-cries.

It's not wrong to indulge yourself,
But when you have, you should,
Give something to those less fortunate:
A coin on both sides, good.

When, I, myself, have reached the gate:
I give him all my change – not much
And though we both, so different are,
For a moment, our two lives touch.

Louella Lobo Prabhu

PROFILES OF INDIAN LIBERALS

Jagannath Shankarshett

The Enlightened Pioneer

V. C. Phadke



Modest liberal, earnest educationist, sane social reformer, gentle feminist, prudent patriot and ardent nationalist

The metropolitan city of Mumbai, now acknowledged as the financial capital of India, owes much to the late Jagannath alias Nana Shankarshett, who sowed the seeds of its all-round progress in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Nana's grandfather Babulshett had to leave his native place Murbad due to religious persecution by the Portuguese and settle at Ghodbunder, a small coastal village in the Thane district of Maharashtra. Nana's father Shankarshett started his trading business in nearby Bombay port where he maintained his own ships and created landed property. Nana, born on 10th February 1803 and nurtured under the strict discipline of his renowned father and two European tutors, acquired good knowledge of English, Sanskrit and other subjects.

Bestowed with a robust personality and sharp intellect, Nana entered public life at the early age of 18 and became a pioneering

educationist who gave first priority to the spread of education in Bombay and Maharashtra. He and his philanthropic friends established the Bombay Native Education Society, renamed as the Board of Education in 1840 and the latter replaced by the Office of the Director of Public Instruction in 1855.

When the then orthodox society was stoutly opposing the opening of schools for girls, Nana encouraged it by donating his house to Reverend Dr. Wilson's female school and enrolled his own daughters there. He also started a school in South Bombay for the children of poor fishermen. Similarly, a school founded in Girgaum in 1857 was named Jagannath Shankarshett School because Nana donated Rs.20,000 to it.

When the highly respected Governor of Bombay, Mountstuart Elphinstone retired in 1827, Nana collected donations worth Rupees four lakhs, inclusive of his own Rs.25,000 for starting Elphinstone School and College. This college established in 1837 produced eminent leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, Cokhale and Tilak. Nana was awarded, as a token of gratitude, the first fellowship of the Bombay University founded on 18th July 1857 because he donated

Rs.30,000 to it for giving scholarship to a student who secures highest marks in Sanskrit at the Matric Examination.

The Students' Literary and Scientific Society established in 1848 received generous assistance from Nana for publishing books in the vernacular. As a member of the Board of Education, Nana conducted an educational survey of the Bombay Presidency and recommended in his report to the Board's President Sir Perry that the Government must give grants to all schools and access to them must be open to all castes and communities including untouchables. He also insisted on giving instructions through the Marathi medium in all subjects including Engineering and Medicine.

With the help of his friend Major Candy, a well-known Sanskrit aficionado, Nana foiled the attempt to close the traditional Sanskrit school in Pune. His suggestion to introduce the study of Sanskrit in all English schools was also accepted.

When Nana's friend Sir Jamshetji Jeejibhoy donated Rs. One lakh for starting the L. I. School of Arts, Nana, a keen lover of arts and culture, became an active member of its Board of Studies. Bombay's Royal Asiatic Society received a donation

of Rs.5,000 from Nana for developing its library. When the Royal Theatre at Grant Road which discriminated against the natives became bankrupt, Nana saved its closure through loans and donations and made it open to all. He made ceaseless efforts for the opening of the J. J. Hospital in 1835 and Grant Medical College in 1845. In spite of the stiff opposition of English barristers, Nana succeeded in opening Law classes under the control of Bombay University.

Nana Shankershetth fought against the policy of denying the post of Justice of Peace to Indians. His petition to the British Parliament against this injustice was supported by his well-wishers in London and the colonial government was compelled to change its policy in 1834. Nana became the first president of the Bombay Association, a political organisation established in 1852 which became a precursor to the Indian National Congress founded in 1885. It dealt with questions of public interest like publishing government bills in the

vernacular and appointing Indians as High Court judges.

Shipping, an ancestral business of the Shankarshett family was made a public concern when Nana started the Bombay Steam Navigation Company in 1847. Nana, as a director, used to look after accounts and audit of that company with a floating capital of Rs. Ten lakhs. He also formed in 1843 the Great Eastern Railway Company and subsequently amalgamated it with the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company established in England. This company which ran the first Asian train between Bombay and Thane on 16th April 1853 honoured Nana with a golden pass for his pioneering work in the field of rail transport. He became the director of some newly formed banks like the Bank of Western India, Central Bank of India, etc. He also founded the Bombay Gas Company and took a leading part in the construction of the Vihar Lake and the supply of piped water. Nana contributed much in cash and kind for forming the Geographical Society

and the Agro Horticulture Society.

A petition, signed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Nana Shankarshett, for a ban on the inhuman practice of *Sati* was sent to the British Parliament in 1823. Eventually the law against *Sati* was passed in 1829 when Lord Bentinck was the Governor-General of India. A scuffle between Hindus and Muslims in 1830 in Bhiwandi town resulted in the desecration of a temple idol and Hindus were unjustly punished by the magistrate. Nana convinced the Governor Robert Grant of the innocence of the Hindus and caused the re-opening of the case leading to the conviction of the Muslim suspects.

This great son of India who was a modest liberal, earnest educationist, sane social reformer, gentle feminist, prudent patriot and ardent nationalist, breathed his last on 31st July 1865.

MR. V. C. PHADKE, retired professor of political science, is a freelance writer and a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

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Minoo Masani

During the debate on the creation of the Unit Trust of India in the Lok Sabha on December 4, 1963

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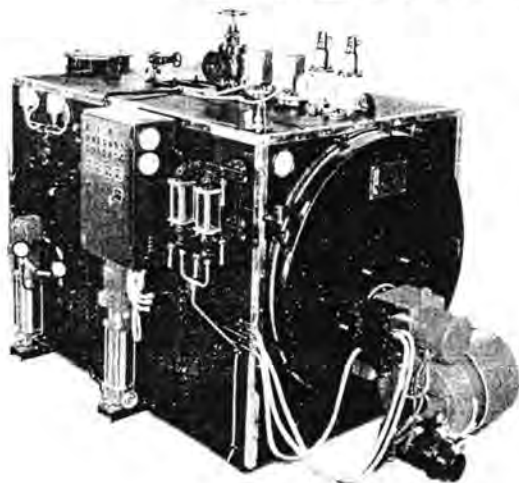
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The Killing of Lobsang Dhondup

How Communist China Deals with Freedom Fighters

Since the occupation of Tibet by Communist China, more than 6000 monasteries have been destroyed, thousands languish in prison; many are missing and over a million people have been killed. Lobsang Dhondup is Communist China's latest victim.

On January 26, 2003, as India celebrated its Republic Day, Tibetan freedom fighter, 29-year old Lobsang Dhondup was executed by a firing squad, after a fraudulent and secret trial in the Sichuan Provincial High People's Court declared him guilty of "attempting to split the motherland and overthrow the state by planting bombs." Needless to say the charges were trumped.

Lobsang Dhondup and Tulku Tenzin Delek, both Buddhist monks were charged with masterminding a bomb blast on April 3, 2002 at Chengdu. They were arrested on April 7 2002.

Tulku Tenzin Delek, a highly respected spiritual figure in Karze has been engaged in campaigns to improve the plight of the Tibetan people and rejuvenate Tibetan culture and language. In a taped message smuggled out of his Chinese jail, Tulku Tenzin Delek said that he had nothing to do with the alleged crime. "Whatever (the authorities) do and say, I am completely innocent...I have always urged people to be kind hearted and caring towards others. Everybody knows what I say and practice."

In December 2002, after a summary trial both men were sentenced to death. Both men

appealed the sentence. After yet another secret and summary trial the sentence was confirmed. Lobsung Dhondup was executed on January 26, while Tulku Tenzin Delek awaits a two-year suspended sentence.

Normally executions in China and elsewhere are a public event, deliberately public to intimidate potential troublemakers. However Lobsang Dhondup was executed without public knowledge to avoid inflaming Tibetan passions.

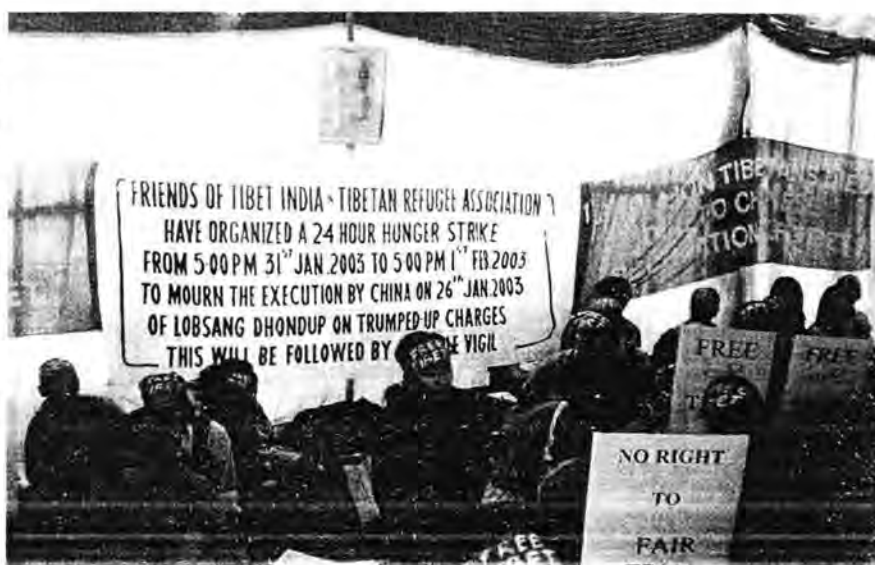
"China's actions cannot go unanswered", said John Hocevar, Executive Director of 'Students for a Free Tibet'. "The Chinese authorities misled the US State Department during the recent US-China human rights dialogue by failing to reveal the sweeping repression and arrests that took place in connection with this case".

According to an *AFP* report

Amnesty International has recorded 27,599 death sentences and more than 18,194 executions between 1990 and the end of 1999 - an average of 40 executions a week.

Amnesty has also expressed concern that Chinese medical doctors were increasingly administering lethal injections to execute criminals. "There are also well-grounded fears that the use of lethal injections may facilitate the removal of organs from executed prisoners for transplantation, a practice which has been well documented in China", the report added.

Since the occupation of Tibet by Communist China, more than 6000 monasteries have been destroyed, thousands languish in prison; many are missing and over a million people have been killed. Lobsang Dhondup is Communist China's latest victim.



Tibetans on a 24-hour hunger strike, protesting against the execution of Lobsang Dhondup by China

Say "No" To 'Made in China'

Tenzin Tsundue

Make sure that you are not buying a product 'Made in China'. Many may wonder why one should not buy an affordable and attractive Chinese product easily available in any Indian shops. And the reasons are many:

The 'one-hour technology' products from China started entering Indian households some years ago. Even though a majority of the products did not succeed in the Indian market due to their 'poor and inferior' quality, the Chinese 'invasion' of our market is still continuing. Dumping of Chinese-made fans, locks, watches, bicycles, radios, batteries etc are slowly replacing our indigenous products and becoming a threat to Indian industry.

The Indian toy industry has more or less been wiped out due to the dumping of cheap Chinese toys - produced mainly by the Chinese Military Industrial Complex of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In the last few years, many manufacturing units in India have been closed down due to this competition, while some companies adopted the next best line of action - by joining the enemy. Some Indian companies have already shifted their production bases from small Indian towns and villages to China, which has resulted in the unemployment of lakhs of workers, pushing them to the brink of starvation. China's slow entry into our textile, food, information technology, automobile and other sectors may result in the collapse of many Indian industries - in both organised and unorganised sectors.

By now, we are very well aware of Pakistan's 'borrowed'

military abilities and the monetary support they receive from China. Transfer of small arms, tanks, nuclear capable M-11 missiles and other technologies to Pakistan to strengthen their 'Holy War' against India and the training and support China gives to the insurgent movements in NE India, should be a matter of great concern to each one of us. Much before India tested her first nuclear device in 1974, China had assigned 12 nuclear scientists, ancillary staff and substantial financial support to assist Pakistan in developing a nuclear weapon to be used against India.

'Made in China' products can be classified into three: 1. Products Made in Forced Labour Camps 2. Products manufactured by the Chinese Military 3. Products Manufactured by the Disenfranchised Labour Force. It is also a well-known fact that the ironically named People's Liberation Army (PLA), party leaders and cadres own over 95% of the Chinese economy - directly or through a variety of proxies.

Business is everything! In 1998, New York Police busted a racket of some senior Chinese officials involved in the sale of transplant organs of executed

prisoners. It is estimated that more than 18 million people work in thousands of forced labour camps across China, which include a good majority of 'political offenders.' With more than 2,300 executions per year, China tops the world and most of the executions take place in front of crowds inside sports stadiums and public squares in the most preferred way - 'a bullet to the back of the head,' - because it does not contaminate the prisoners' organs with poisonous chemicals, as lethal injections do.

Remember! Every time you buy a product 'Made in China,' you are funding and empowering a brutal and corrupt regime in Beijing. We request all of you to boycott Chinese goods to save and protect the striving Indian industry and start a battle against an ever-expanding dictatorship in China. Spread the word. Take a pledge that you will not buy, use or sell a product 'Made In China'.

Sources: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, *The Times of India*, *The Economic Times* and Rangzen Charter

Write to us to know more about this nation-wide campaign:

Friends of Tibet (INDIA),
Post Box 16674, Bandra PO,
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Email: support@friendsoftibet.org.



Tibetan students and Indian supporters unfurled a 100-metre long black banner of protest at Mumbai's Marine Drive on March 10, 2003 - the 44th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.

Misuse of POTA in Tamil Nadu

N. S. Venkataraman

A Reminder of The Days of the 'Emergency'

Amidst considerable misgivings and controversy, the Government of India introduced POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act) specifically assuring the nation that it would ensure that POTA was not misused. The Government of India justified POTA stating that it had become necessary due to the subversive activities of hostile elements who want to destabilise the country. Almost similar reasons were advanced by Mrs. Indira Gandhi when she imposed the infamous emergency.

While the POTA regulations have not been enforced so far by many states in the country, Tamil Nadu, unfortunately, is an exception. The Government of Tamil Nadu arrested Mr. Vaiko an opposition politician and put him in prison under POTA for some frivolous reasons. The gentleman has been cooling his heels in prison for more than six months now in spite of the fact that he is a Member of Parliament and also his party is one of the coalition members in the central government.

POTA has been put to use in Tamil Nadu not against a criminal or a terrorist but against a Member of Parliament, who has neither absconded nor posed any threat to peace in the society. The allegation against Mr. Vaiko is that he spoke at public meetings in support of the Sri Lankan terrorist outfit LTTE, which is a banned organisation in India. Any sane person would wonder as to whether this is an adequate reason for putting a person behind bars under POTA for such

a long time.

One cannot but see an autocratic and vengeful behaviour on the part of the Tamil Nadu government in dealing with Mr. Vaiko. This is a patent case where the application of POTA is both unethical and dishonest. Mr. Vaiko's detention along with a few others, under POTA's provisions has been repeatedly extended by the court on pleas by the State government that the investigations are incomplete. It is difficult to escape the impression that the Government is unable to establish and frame an adequate case against Mr. Vaiko and is still struggling to collect convenient evidence and project charges that would stand judicial scrutiny.

Sadly, the State government has not been hauled or taken to task for taking such a long time in framing charges. Why should someone be arrested if the charges are not ready to be framed, particularly when it happens to be a well known person and a member of Parliament and who is unlikely to abscond?

There are two disturbing factors in this episode, which need to be highlighted. The first is the total ineffectiveness of public opinion and the views expressed in the press against the arrest of Mr. Vaiko. The common people, who should be concerned with the denial of personal freedom of a fellow citizen are unconcerned showing apathy to public affairs. This can only harm civil society.

Despite the obvious injustice

done to Mr. Vaiko, there is little effective protest in the state. It reflects very poorly on the people's commitment to the spirit of freedom and democracy particularly of the citizens of Tamil Nadu.

The second aspect is the fact that ruling party which means the Chief Minister and other Ministers who misuse POTA with impunity and do not think that they owe an explanation to the public. Even though several people have alleged that the use of POTA against Mr. Vaiko is due to political considerations and personal animosities, the Tamil Nadu government does not think that they owe an explanation to anyone.

The Tamil Nadu government is ruled by AIADMK, which is a one person party. It is sad to see that the culture of democracy, liberalism and freedom in Tamil Nadu has become a matter of ridicule, where the Chief Minister, who has the entire party of "dedicated and devoted" MLAs and workers behind her, simply imprisons a person without any justifiable reasons, obviously due to personal anger and prejudices.

This is a dangerous situation that can pave the way for a totalitarian regime, though maintaining an appearance of democracy. If a Government arrests a person under POTA for whatever reasons and does not care to share the reasons with the public, it would mean a situation where nobody is safe in such a state of affairs.

This will lead to conditions where everyone has to necessarily

fear those in the government and refrain from saying or doing things that would be critical of the government or not to the liking of those in power. This would amount to Police Raj where only the policemen and their masters control everything.

If this can happen to a Member of Parliament, what will be the fate of the common people in the state? Who will defend the common man if he runs foul of the all powerful Chief Minister of the state?

What is shocking is that the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister who said that POTA would not be misused have conveniently

kept silent in the case of Mr. Vaiko's arrest in Tamil Nadu. As opposition leaders, they talked eloquently against the dictatorial tendencies of the Government and criticised, very rightly, Mrs. Indira Gandhi for her dictatorial methods and attitude. It is sad that these self-same persons change their views depending on the place where they sit.

POTA is an extraordinary law created for a specific purpose, according to the Government's statements. When an extraordinary law is used, the Government has a duty to take the public into confidence, so as to convince the public that there is no misuse. Any responsible and democratically

conscious government would do so.

The problem in India is that democracy has gone under the control of persons who have no hesitation in adopting undemocratic means to attain power and sustain themselves in power. When persons holding positions as responsible as that of Ministers adopt such attitude, one cannot but conclude that this is a defeat for democracy itself. Such conditions are aided and facilitated by lethargic, disinterested and perhaps self centered citizens.

MR. N. S. VENKATARAMAN is Chief Editor, *Nandini Voice For the Deprived*, Chennai. His email address: nandini@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in or nsvenkat@md4.vsnl.net.in

No, Minister!

For obvious reasons I cannot disclose his name. But the lessons of life that he has taught me will remain embedded forever, and will be my guiding light to tackle any situation. Let us call him Babu Anna.

He was barely out of his teens when he took up a government job. He continued his studies and worked his way up the hard path. He had become known for his efficiency, his presence of mind, and his ability to handle people. And that is when a politician eyed him. This politician (whose name, alas, I must again keep confidential), was an illiterate man of the masses, a champion of the workers, and a sincere person who had the well-being of everyone at heart. His problem was his lack of education, and he needed someone to supplement it. Initially in an informal capacity, and then subsequently as his official assistant, Babu Anna became his crutch and his right hand man.

The politician rose to become a minister, and Babu Anna became the private secretary to the minister. Any lesser mortal would have become drunk with power. It is an open secret that private secretaries are more powerful than the Ministers themselves, and this case was no exception. Even more so since the minister was completely dependent on Babu Anna for all matters concerning the written word. The gentle minister trusted his worthy assistant and would promptly put his scrawling indecipherable signature whenever the latter would thrust a file under his nose. In many ways the secretary was more a minister than the minister himself.

There were occasions when the minister, being a man of the masses, would like to dole out largesse to the masses. There would be a throng of applicants, each wanting some favour or the other. The minister, having seen poverty and deprivation himself, was more than keen to oblige them. The

only hitch was that the minister would promise more than what he could deliver. For after all the minister was a cog in the giant government machinery whose wheels do not move to the whims of one person, however high a position he may hold. And that is where, day after day, Babu Anna had to step in to save the situation.

In almost two decades of loyal service, Babu Anna probably never uttered the words "No, Minister". And yet every time he deftly managed to save the situation, and keep up the image of the honourable Minister. His technique, when I look back at it, was quite simple and yet ingenious. He would immediately show his agreement, however unreasonable or impractical the minister's order was. And he would go on agreeing with the order, praising the applicant, lauding the minister's concern, and in fact suggesting that the person deserved even more. The "even more" in fact would turn out to be something completely different from what the minister had so generously "granted", and much within the framework of bureaucratic rules and regulations. And before anyone could realize the drastic change that has been brought about by the secretary's suggestion, the applicant would be whisked away into the other room to complete the paperwork!

Babu Anna has retired. The minister is no more. Today a new breed of politicians and bureaucrats have taken over the government. The innocence, the simplicity, and the sincerity does not exist any more. The loser is the common man.

DR. ALI KHAWJA is a graduate of IIT Bombay who moved over to human behavior and counselling. He writes books on various aspects of life, counsel for emotional support and career guidance, and train counsellors. and believes in a mission of helping others help themselves.



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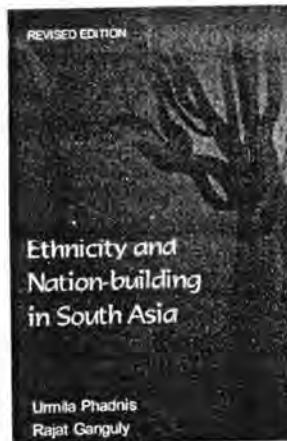


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BOOK REVIEWS



The first of the above two volumes was first published in 1989. Its author, the late Ms. Urmila Phadnis of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, had established her reputation as an industrious and perspicacious scholar by her writings over a long period. On certain subjects like the developments taking place in post-Independence Sri Lanka, she was considered to be an authority whose opinions and analysis of events was widely read and respected. Unfortunately, she passed away in 1991, which year saw the beginning of a new era of economic and political policies affecting the whole of this region. Though the basic factors elaborated by Ms. Phadnis have still not lost their relevance to an understanding of a highly complex social, economic and

ETHNICITY AND NATION-BUILDING IN SOUTH ASIA

By Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly

Year of Publication: 2000. No. of Pages: 467. Price: Rs.300

COMMUNITY AND IDENTITIES – CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES ON CULTURE AND POLITICS IN INDIA

Edited by Surinder S. Jodhka.

Year of Publication: 2001. No. of Pages: 271. Price: Rs.300

Published by

Sage Publications India Private Limited, M-32, Market, Greater Kailash, Part I, New Delhi 110 048.

Reviewed by

Professor S. V. Kogekar, former Principal of Fergusson College, is a political scientist.

political situation in South Asia, note has to be taken of the changes during the past decade. This task has been undertaken in the second edition of the book by Rajat Ganguly who figures as its joint author along with the late Professor Phadnis.

From the title of the book, one might be led to believe that ethnicity, related to the racial/physical attributes of a group, had been the driving force behind the process of nation-building in the South Asian region. But that would be an unrealistically narrow and a highly simplistic formulation for the complex superstructure of the new, that is, post-independence nations of the region. As the authors themselves explain in one place, "the term ethnic and, following from it, ethnicity, have been used in a manner as to make it virtually a *portmanteau concept*" (p.350, italics added). It generally refers to group identity based on a variety of changing factors. It encompasses within its fold culture, pluralism, minority complex, race, language, religion, region, caste, sex, ideology. The only justification for the use of a single factor like ethnicity is that any other word would face the same difficulty when it comes to defining

it so as to place it within the dynamic historical context. Perhaps dropping it altogether would have been easier. But then it would have been deprived of its centrality which the authors find it necessary to emphasise because of a noticeable similarity between the plural states of South Asia. Each of them is faced with the enormous challenge of securing national integration by overcoming ethno-centric turbulences often turning into violent conflicts.

India, for example, had to tackle such problems in Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, and the North-Eastern states, not to mention the initial resistance of the Tamilians. Pakistan similarly had to contend with such problems in the Baluch, Pashtun, Sindhi and Bangladeshi areas in addition to the Mujahirs. Sri Lanka had its Tamils. Bangladesh had to tackle the Chittagong Hill Tribes, while Nepal and Bhutan had the intractable immigration problems in each from the other neighbouring country. Even the Maldives had to defend their integrity against armed rebels of Sri Lankan origin.

An important point which the authors make regarding the process

of nation-building is the impact of political and economic factors in shaping the ethnic conflicts in the region. The developments during the last decade detailed in the second edition by the addition of a postscript further strengthen this point. The broad observation that ethnic movements were really a device for securing a greater share of political and economic power which gave greater access to the resources of the state for self-development is well borne out by the present state of these movements in the countries of the region.

The central leadership in each of these countries can deal with the problems created by ethnicity, as described above, in one or all of the following three ways according to the perception it has of the extent, depth and pliability of the movements concerned. It can use the liberal and inclusive approach of establishing a secular democratic order and demonstrating its determination to support equal rights for all. It can do this by opening opportunities for the disgruntled ethnic groups for power-sharing in both the economic and political spheres within the constitutional framework. Thirdly, where both the above methods fail, resort to coercion may become inevitable. The after-effects of this method have to be carefully weighed before adopting it. The authors very aptly describe the case of the Sikhs in Punjab and the various phases through which it developed and was finally resolved. The same could not happen in the case of Kashmir where the elected government of Dr. Farooq Abdullah could not keep any of the tall promises he made on assuming office as Chief Minister. In the North-East, repeated occurrences of insurgency by militant groups under various names, in Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur regions led to counter-insurgency operations resulting only in

intermittent peace. The carrot and stick approach has in this case shown its own limitations.

In Pakistan, Punjab dominates the state and this is greatly resented by other ethnic groups like Sindhis, Baluchis, etc. The frequent resort to military rule is hardly a long term solution to this problem and the dismemberment of the state by the secession of its eastern wing has shown the limits of containing the ethnic conflict by armed force.

The experience of Sri Lanka is also very well recounted with the use of force from both sides – the Tamils and the Sinhalese and endless negotiations between the two sides.

It should be clear from the above very brief references to the contents of the volume that it presents a fairly comprehensive discussion of the many intricate problems that have arisen and are continuing to dog the steps of the leaders and governments trying to build up their countries as viable nation states. There are also insightful probes into the influences of external regimes as well as of kin groups from the outside in this process. The whole exercise points to the importance of group formation in the political process. It also shows the variety of factors leading to group identity – racist, social, objective, subjective – and the need to build power structures that will accommodate the multitude of groups which constitute society and create a stake for them in a uniform national identity. This inevitably points to a federal, decentralised state apparatus based on the maximum possible autonomy which harnesses the tremendous emotive appeal of ethnic or similar other group identities.

Perhaps this is a good place from which to look at the second of

these two volumes. *Community and Identities* is a collection of twelve essays written by as many writers. As the sub-title of the books tell us, they are contemporary discourses on the subjects of culture and politics in India. The editor has divided the subject into four parts dealing respectively with (1) conceptual questions, (2) caste, class and the politics of community identities, (3) globalisation and the spatial re-articulation of communities, and (4) minorities, women and communities.

In his introduction, the editor emphasises the shift that has taken place in the social sciences in recognising the concept of 'culture' as a 'framework' within which debates are carried out on the most compelling questions of contemporary politics – civil rights, gender, caste, environment or alternative forms of development. He notes that questions which were earlier considered marginal or insignificant have begun to be taken seriously as on the issues of culture and identity. The rise of 'new' social movements during the 'eighties like those of women, farmers, dalits, tribals, etc. have raised demands which cannot be fitted in the 'Nehruvian agenda'.

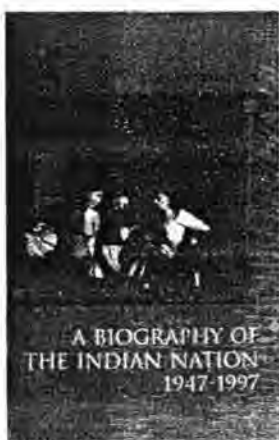
While the first book by Phadnis and Ganguly had a wide sweep encompassing all the seven states of South Asia and it dealt with their substantive problems and actions in the efforts of nation-building, the second book has a limited scope, being confined to India. Its approach also is different. It is oriented towards the emerging problems of methodology in the analysis or description of sociologically important events. As one of the contributors says, in India, the 'community' belongs to the realm of culture, but not to the economy. The state, markets, classes were often

perceived as 'non-communities' and hence less authentic. This may prove to be a handicap in the objective analysis and evaluation of different contemporary social movements.

Methodology is generally a dull subject. When it is presented in a clumsy and/or bombastic style, the reader is discouraged to take it seriously. The most prominent among this genre of essays in the present volume is the third chapter entitled, "In the Tracks of Community and Identity: Deepening the Interrogations" by Sasheej Hegde

of the University of Hyderabad. In contrast, the case studies of the Kapunadu Movement in Andhra Pradesh and the Balispal Movement in Orissa are eminently readable and bring out the fluidity and ambiguity of community identities. Another interesting study derived from the experience of globalisation relates to the Indian diaspora and the attempts to retain a sense of community on the basis of a nostalgic attachment to the values, mores and rituals in the country of their origin. The difference in the attitudes of the first generation immigrants in the U.S.

and the next generation born and brought up in the adopted country is clearly elaborated in another essay. Recent social/political movements relating to 'minority' communities and women's empowerment also figure as illustrations of the essentially dynamic categories within the broad framework of social identities. Like the Curate's egg, the book is good in parts, though, as happens in symposia like this one, the contributions are of extremely uneven quality.



A BIOGRAPHY OF THE INDIAN NATION 1947-1997

Edited by

Ranabir Samaddar

Published by

Sage Publications India Private Ltd., M-32, Market,
Greater Kailash, Part I, New Delhi 110 048.

Year of Publication: 2001. No. of Pages: 342. Price: Rs.495

Reviewed by

Professor Mohit Bhattacharya, formerly Vice-Chancellor, Burdwan University, is a political scientist and a Fellow of the ICSSR, New Delhi.

This is the final volume of a trilogy on post-colonial nationalism, the earlier volumes being *The Marginal Nation: Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal* (1999), and *Whose Asia is it Anyway? Region and Nation in South Asia* (1996). Going by the author's own characterization, the earlier two volumes deal with the "externalities" in post-colonial nation formation and consolidation. By contrast, the present volume deals with the "internalities" of the nation form – 'historical-political account as well as an argument against some of the current accounts of nationalism'.

The focus of the book is on the post-colonial period and its emphasis is on the nation's engagement with society. Within this

broad framework, eight chapters of the book, termed eight "chronicles", narrate the encounters of the Indian nation with rebels, communities, citizens, aliens and the state. The first chapter is a look-back exercise to explain the birth of the nation through the traumatic experience of the Partition. The second and third chapters together document the failed rebellions of peasants and students culminating in what has been called a "passive revolution" *a la* Gramsci. The impediments to national consensus-building have been identified in the fourth chapter, focusing on the two issues of caste and communalism. The regular cycles of 'elections' as legitimating devices have been recorded in some detail in the fifth chapter. Interestingly, the sixth chapter raises

the question of 'citizenship'. The specificity of the Indian situation in his view, demands a new theory of citizenship in replacement of the liberal theory. The seventh chapter deals with the autobiographies of three women – all Bengalis – with the avowed purpose of harmonising the public space with the *home*, the universe of domesticity. The last chapter focuses on the nation at war, as no nation can become one without wars. To quote the author, "the nation at war reverts with amazing ease to being a nation at peace".

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to all the eminent researchers on Indian nationalism – A. R. Desai, Bipan Chandra, Partha Chatterjee, Achin Vanaik and T. V. Satyamurthy. It is his dissatisfaction



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with current political discussions on nationalism that, he argues, has provoked the present study on the nation's biography. Unfortunately, apart from the adequacy-inadequacy dialectic that he poses almost esoterically, the author has not cared much to explain the real reasons for his dissatisfaction with earlier studies.

It seems the present volume does not quite live up to the author's high-pitched expectations, as he desired (ideally) a series that would combine the work of Charles Tilly and Etienne Balibar "to show how this nation-form concentrates authority, exercises symbolic violence, and becomes a field of power that is constantly producing tension and upheaval..."

As the author admits, the eight "chronicles" had their origin in piecemeal exercises, written as separate essays and seminar themes. To piece them together had been an afterthought. Hence, his claim of a "running theme" integrating the disparate pieces remains somewhat

suspect. Surely, there is proof of a valiant effort to weave the papers into an architectural design. Yet, on a close scrutiny, one clearly observes faultlines and jumpiness in the presentations – a laboured (and not too successful) attempt to weave together a number of disparate monographic presentations that do not quite blend. To illustrate the point, chronicle no.6 (The Nation's two subjects) and chronicle no.7 (Nation and the home) hang loosely at the end of the discussion terminating in chronicle no.5.

This is, of course, not to belittle the quality of the presentations as disparate pieces. Each 'chronicle' stands on its own characterised by deft handling and sophisticated analysis. The writings bear unmistakable marks of deep and wide-ranging scholarship and matchless skill to blend theory and practice together. At the same time, theories and conceptual discourses are scattered all over the pieces, possibly because of each being conceived as discrete monographs. For instance, Tilly and Balibar are

mentioned in the preface, but their streams of thought do not inform the writings. Similarly, Gramsci is cited in chronicle 3 (passive revolution), Partha Chatterjee in Chronicle 4, Mouffe in Chronicle 5 and Arendt in Chronicle 6. In fact, the author's addiction to names of authorities has occasionally been a hindrance to the articulation of his own creative thoughts. Possibly, each chapter, because of its discrete character, demanded specific references. Even after such allowance, one would have expected a conceptual frame for the volume as a whole in order that the bits and pieces could be held together within the overarching frame.

Nevertheless, the work of Samaddar is a brilliant piece of scholarship which will remain a guidebook for any researcher who would be undertaking research on any aspect of Indian politics. His is a creative mind that has left its decisive imprint on each 'chronicle', and as a bibliographic source, his work is amazingly rich and wide-ranging.



Freedom, with the passing of the years, transcended the mere freedom of my country and embraced freedom of man everywhere - and from every sort of trammel - above all it meant freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. This freedom has become a passion of life and I shall not see it compromised for bread, for security, for the glory of the state or for anything else.

Jayaprakash Narayan

Extracted from Transforming the Polity; Centenary Readings from Jayaprakash Narayan, selected and introduced by Ajit Bhattacharjee and cited by him in Outlook, October 14, 2002



The author, South Asia Correspondent for Jane's International has refuted ten popularly held views, he calls them myths, on India's defence policy. The first two myths are concerned with the Chinese threat. China is the real enemy. This lack of military preparedness by India is well known and is not a myth. It is wrong to describe China of 1950 as a weak state. She was strong enough to wage a war in Korea against the front ranking world military power, the U.S.A.

The inept handling of the Indo-China border issue by Nehru is well known to all. In 1980, Indira Gandhi approved a 15-year plan for a heavy build up on the Northern border. A confrontation with China in 1987 brought home the risk of waging a war on two fronts. There is a contradiction in the author's analysis. He praises the military leadership for restraint against China in 1987 due to Chinese nuclear capability and then runs down India's nuclear blast as of no consequence. He finds flaws in the Border Peace Agreement with China since it is an agreement on the Line of Actual Control and not on the border. This is the first step and an improvement in the current situation. It is wrong to presume that a border cannot be violated, while the Line of Control can be disregarded. A border can also be shifted through insurgency and the cry of self-determination when it

suits the stronger military and economic power.

The next two chapters demolish the two myths about Kashmir –

- The Simla Agreement can resolve the Kashmir issue; and
- The Army has frustrated Pakistan's proxy war.

The ISI agenda goes beyond Kashmir. We all know that insurgency cannot be overcome by military action alone, but the military component is an essential element for obtaining a favourable position for negotiations. A plea for destroying insurgents bases in POK is attractive but dangerous unless we are prepared for a major war. The risk of nuclear war with Pakistan is minimal and there is a semblance of stability due to parity between the two armies at the operational level. A detailed description of the Siachin conflict along with maps and the difference in the viewpoints of Gen. Chhiber and Gen. Hoon is interesting.

The book covers the acquisition of missiles and nuclear

weapons by Pakistan from China and Korea. Pakistan's flamboyant boasts and threats were put in check by the blunt advice of America's Deputy National Security Advisor, Robert Gates on 20th May 1990 –

"Washington had thoroughly war-gamed the Indo-Pakistan confrontation and Pakistan was a loser in every scenario. In the event of war, Pakistan could expect no help from Washington".

The conduct of nuclear tests by India was done in order to obtain critical data. Pakistan already possessed a tested nuclear device, courtesy China. The author's criticism follows the Western Press belittling the Indian effort. This step was essential to avoid or meet a nuclear blackmail by Pakistan. It is interesting to note that Pakistan has changed the tone from using all available means to "the use of nuclear weapons is not practical".

Not everyone may agree with the author when he describes Sunderji as abrasive and flamboyant.

THE DEFENCE MAKEOVER

10 Myths that Shape India's Image

Edited By

Pravin Sawhney

Published by

Sage Publications India Private Ltd., M-32, Market,
Greater Kailash, Part I, New Delhi 110 048.

Year of Publication: 2002. No. of Pages: 459. Price: Rs.425

Reviewed by

Brig. S. C. Sharma (Retd.), currently working in industry as an advisor
is a freelance writer and a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

Kudos for *Freedom First* !

Hearty congratulations on a very readable and nostalgic 50th Anniversary issue. I share my birthday with *Freedom First* and am proud of it.

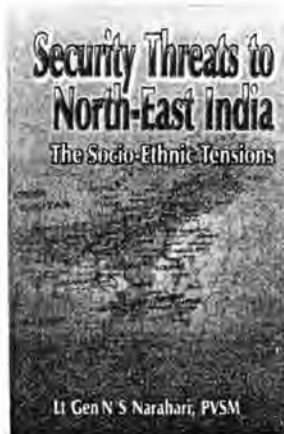
Dr. Ali Khwaja, Bangalore

Received the October-December number of *Freedom First* this morning by courier. Delectable fare in an ambience of freedom!

N. Dharmeshwaran, Guduvancherry, Tamil Nadu

Thank you for the issue of *Freedom First* (455 July-September). Congratulations on your excellent cover story on a frightened Indian. Your observations and exhortations are valid and pertinent.

Ashok Soota



SECURITY THREATS TO NORTH-EAST INDIA The Socio-Ethnic Tensions

By

Lt.Gen. N. S. Narhari, PVSM (Retd.)

Published by

Manas Publications, 4819, Varun House, Mathur Lane,
24, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi 110 002.
Year of Publication: 2002. No. of Pages: 257. Price: Rs.595

Reviewed by

Brig. A. Thyagarajan (Retired), a freelance writer,
engaged in leadership training.

The author has traced the early history of the North-East immigration from 5th century BC onwards, conflicts with neighbouring states and consolidation into the British Empire. The regrouping scheme of the Cabinet Mission could have thrown Assam into Pakistan. The efforts of the then Chief Minister Bardoloi saved Assam. Surprisingly, Nehru supported the regrouping scheme and told the Assam Congress leaders that Assam could not hold up the progress of the rest of India. Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was angry with the leaders of Assam.

Low economic development, unemployment, continued migration from Bangladesh and distrust between the various groups has led to a feeling of discontent and neglect. There is a cry for the ouster of the foreigners. The indigenous Assamese have become a minority in their own state. This discontent led to the formation of the insurgent ULFA organisation who dream of an independent Assam. ULFA managed to collect large sums of money from tea gardens and businessmen. The Mohanta Government had no desire to curtail these activities. ULFA was responsible for a series of political assassinations. The situation led to the dismissal of the AGP ministry and President's rule was imposed in 1990. At the same time, the Army was

called out and ULFA outlawed. The brutalities committed by ULFA had created a wave of disgust among the people. As of now, the back of ULFA militancy has been broken. More than 3000 cadres have surrendered. The author has traced the seeds of agitation and militancy in Assam due to unchecked immigration.

The hostility between the Nagas and Ahoms is more than 400 years old. The missionaries led a hard life, identified themselves with the Nagas and succeeded in spreading Christianity. Today, more than 70% Nagas are Christians. These missionaries have played their part in fanning the seeds of separation. The environment of insurgency has reduced the influence of the Church. The author has traced the progress of negotiations between the Government and dissident Nagas. The Naga leaders condemned insurgency, but continued with their violent agitation. After many hiccups, the state of Nagaland was formed in December 1963, State assembly elections were ordered and moderates ruled the State for 10 years. A section of the underground movement continued to ask for independence and never gave up insurgency. A part of the Central Government grants found their way to the insurgents. The author sees hope in a social revolution. The book has cogently analysed the problems

of rival Naga tribes who are unable to perceive a common Naga state under the Indian Constitution. Some of them have still the notion that during the British regime they were a totally independent entity.

The wave of unrest in Manipur is largely a result of the misrule during 25 years of Chief Commissionership. During three Five Years Plan periods, Rs.40 million were surrendered out of an allotment of Rs.320 million. The residents of Manipur felt that they were paying the price for being loyal Hindus. The erstwhile Maharaja of Manipur was forced to sign the Instrument of Accession on 15th October 1949, when he had been placed under house arrest in Shillong, where he had gone to meet the Governor Mr. Sri Prakash. The general public with the exception of the Congress Party were in favour of Home Rule under the Manipur Constitution. They did not favour accession. That continues to be the position today as well. The Council of Ministers could have been retained. It is of interest that while the Maharaja was guided by a Council of Ministers, the Chief Commissioner had absolute power. Two Chief Commissioners were accused of corruption and one of womanising. This background explains the *raison-d'être* of the unrest. The author recommends rapid economic development and good governance as means to bring

this region into the main political stream. The issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh has to be tackled vigorously and immediately.

On the State of Tripura, the book has brought out the grave threats posed to the tribals who justifiably argue that they are being swamped by the Bengali immigrants.

A number of tribal organisations have tried violence as a means to exterminate the immigrant population, inspite of the popular rule established by the Central government. Tripura has been a scene of grave disturbances which can only be curbed by inducting a large number of para military forces. The author, in the final analysis has summarised the causes of unrest,

and pointers to a future settlement. However, he has made some debatable comments that during the pre-Independent days, India could not fulfill the criteria of a nation. Being a senior Army Commander, he could have commented on the role of the security forces and their effectiveness in combating insurgency.



This is not an easy book to review, and is not for anyone, who wants light reading. The whole structure of the book is ideological and needs to be taken chapter by chapter. It details the history of planning, and legislation in post-Independence India. This view is afforded by the lives, times and thoughts of the characters, selected for portrayal.

One thing between the is common: they all perceived that enlarging the framework of the socialist state, would destroy the Indian economy and the Indian polity as well. They arrived at this conclusion from different backgrounds urban and rural. In some of them, the history of their lives is co-terminus with the history of the freedom struggle. Rajaji fulfilled the prediction made at his birth, that he would hold the highest office in the land. He went on to the top: the office of the Governor General, and India's highest honour, the "Bharat Ratna". The one factor,

in and between these inspiring lives, is, that while the persons in question saw some success, they also gave up great material reward by opposing India's first Prime Minister and his love affair with socialism. This perception from a person with a rural background, is understandable. But coming from urban sophisticates, like Minoo Masani and A. D. Shroff, represent an uncanny foresight about the shape of things to come, in which both the economy and would be shattered; and a clamp down on personal freedom, would follow.

Masani and Rajaji were the most articulate defenders of individual freedom and private enterprise or free competition. Among the lives selected for our reading pleasure, Rajaji's is the most impressive. He managed to attain the highest office, while still retaining dissenting views.

While some of the people profiled entertained dissenting views, they did not suffer too much,

for their fall from grace: "grace" being the favour of India's first Prime Minister. Had he wanted to, Masani could have held the highest offices, but chose to oppose Nehru, in every issue, which involved government takeover of land and private enterprise, ending by forming the Swatantra Party. The party proceeded to stop Nehru in his tracks, and became the first recognised opposition in Parliament (1967-71). Though recognised, it was not "official", because the Swatantra Party in the Lok Sabha fell short of the 50 by 6. The Party had 44 seats. It also formed the government in Orissa, and the main opposition in various states. It collapsed prematurely, after it joined the Opposition-combine of 1971, when Indira Gandhi won the election under the slogan "Garibi Hatao".

In the profiles, two make really deary reading, but those, which try to give a picture of the man behind the ideology come off much better. I particularly liked S. V. Raju on the

PROFILES IN COURAGE – DISSENT ON INDIAN SOCIALISM.

Edited by
Parth J. Shah

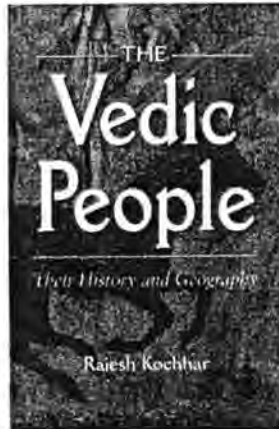
Published by
Parth J. Shah on behalf of Centre for Civil Society
Year of Publication: 2001. No. of Pages: 184. Price: Rs.350

Reviewed by
Dr. (Mrs.) Louella Lobo Prabhu, a leading member of the erstwhile Swatantra Party; Editor, *Insight*. She contributes the column, "Reflections – Serious and Facetious" in *Freedom First*.

life of Minoo Masani and G. Narayanswamy on the life of Rajaji. R. K. Amin, writing on Piloo Mody, gives us some hilarious anecdotes, the only ones in the book. Rajaji's biographer also manages to do a biography at the same time, that he traces Rajaji's ideological reaction to momentous matters. He was often misunderstood, but seems to be the

only southerner, who had a secure place on the Indian national scene. One thing rather disorienting about the books is, that the chapters are not put together in any logical sequence. Perhaps they should have been done chronologically. I also think, that I would have put some other biographies into the book. That is beside the point. One gets a

wonderful re-creation of the Nehru era, its great ideological conflicts and the people who came forward to stop his mad social philosophy, inspired by Russia, without adaptation to Indian conditions. Each person profiled, can receive the accolade, "I stood up and was counted. I made a difference".



This book is an elaboration of the Kosambi Memorial Lecture delivered by the author in October 1992. According to the author, "the book seeks to interpret the historical and geographical content of the Vedas, Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Avesta in a global context with the help of data from such diverse disciplines as archaeology, natural history, metallurgy, astronomy, geology and even genetics".

Of the four Vedas, highly revered by the learned, the Rgveda is the oldest in the age, followed by the Yajurveda and the Samaveda. The Atharveda was not considered for a long time. The Rgveda consists of 10 books or mandalas, with a collection of 1028 hymns or suktas. The Rgveda was composed by many Rshis or saints over a period of time. Prominent amongst these Rshis are Vishwamitra (Mandala III), Vamadeva (Mandala IV), Atri (Mandala V), Bharadwaja (Mandala VI) and Vasishta (Mandala VII). The

core of the Vedas consists of the Samhitas. The Brahmanas, the prose-texts which go along with the Samhitas interpret the various rituals to be performed. The Aranyakas which form a natural transition to the Upanishads - also known as Vedanta - the end part of the Vedas, are devoted to mysticism and symbolism. The Kalpasutras the next class of Vedic texts deal with the performance of the various rituals.

In order to help the reader, a number of help-books or guides have been prepared. In other words, these are commentaries on Rgveda, the most popular being Sakalya's Padapatha and Saunaka's Pratisakhya. The author, however feels that the present day Rgveda does not truly represent the contemporaneous tradition in its entirety. In the words of the author, "it represents only those portions which a particular school decided to preserve".

THE VEDIC PEOPLE

By Rajesh Kocchar

Published by

Orient Longman Ltd., 1/24, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002.

Year of Publication : 2000. Pages: 273. Price Rs.425

Reviewed by

Professor R. V. Chari, retired Professor of Commerce and Management and a freelance writer.

The corpus of the Yajurveda is wider than any other, with two versions - the Shukla Yajurveda and the Krishna Yajurveda. The Krishna Yajurveda is the oldest prose in Sanskrit/Vedic literature. There are as many as six recensions out of which four are in the Krishna Yajurveda and two in Shukla Yajurveda. The Krishna Yajurveda contains a large number of Kalpasutras. The Samaveda, the Veda of the Saman chants, taken out from the Rgveda for rhythmical chanting, is made up entirely of verses. It consists of 1810 individual verses. Its Brahmanas - Pancavimsa and Jaiminiya are the oldest. The stories narrated in the Jaiminiya have a ring of folklore in it. The Samaveda may be considered the oldest treatise on music. The Atharveda is a collection of 730 hymns consisting of 6000 verses divided into 20 books or Kandas. While the major portion of the Atharveda is in verse form, 1/6 of it including two entire books viz. 15

and 16 are in prose. The Atharveda, stated to be the oldest treatise on Indian medicine, is in fact, a collection of charms and spells.

The Puranas are 18 in number. Depending upon the contents and characteristics, they may be classified into three groups, viz. Satvic, Rajasic and Thamasic. The Satvic are Vishnu, Varaha, Bhagawatha, Narada, Padma and Garuda Puranas. The Rajasic are Brahma, Bhavishya, Brahmanda, Brahma Vaivarta, Markandeya and Vamana Puranas. The Thamasic are Agni, Kurma, Linga, Matsya, Shiva and Skanda Puranas. While listing the 18 Puranas on p.28, the author makes a mention of Vayu Purana instead of the Shiva Purana, which is perhaps a typographical error.

The Ramayana, one of the two epics, is in the form of verse, consisting of over 24,000 shlokas divided into 7 Kandas or Cantos. The author feels that originally it consisted of 5 Cantos only, from 2 to 6. Cantos 1 and 7 according to him, were added on later. In fact, the Yuddha Kanta ends with the coronation of Rama as the King, after vanquishing Ravana and getting back Sita. The Mahabharata, the other epic, which runs into 18 parvans with 1,00,000 shlokas, is considered to be the longest poem in the literary history of the world. The

books or parvans are of unequal length, with the Shanti Parvan being the longest with 14,525 shlokas. The Mahabharata has given the world, two of the rarest gems, viz. the Bhagwad Gita and the Vishnu Sahasranama.

Zoroastrianism, the official religion of Iran, flourished from 559 B.C. to 651 A.D. Avesta, the collection of Zoroastrian scriptures, can be divided into three parts, viz. Yasna, Visperad, and Vendidad. The Gathas, a set of 17 hymns composed by Zarathursthra himself, is considered to be the oldest, and is subsumed in the Yasna, which along with the Visperad constitute the liturgy of religious rituals. The Vendidad, a work in prose, details the rules and regulations for maintaining purity.

The Khorda Avesta or the younger Avesta, consists of short prayers recited by the priests. According to Prof. Kochhar, the Avestan language is very closely related to the Rgveda, with minor differences in grammer and etymology. In his well written book, "The Sanskrit Language", T. Burrow says: "It is quite possible to find verses in the oldest portion of Avesta, which by phonetic substitutions according to established laws, can be turned into intelligible Sanskrit." In a

comparative study of Rgvedic language and Avestan, the author furnishes a list of words, indicative of similarities in Sanskrit, Avestan, Persian and Urdu, which is quite informative and revealing.

Three great Iraninan Empires, the first founded by Cyrus of the Achamenian family, who ruled from 559 B.C. to 530 B.C., flourished during the millennium 559 B.C. to 651 A.D. The last king, Darius III, was defeated by Alexander in 331 B.C. In 211 A.D., Ardashir, who was the son of Papak, established the Sasanian Dynasty. At the Battle of Nahavand, in 642 A.D., the last king of the dynasty, Yazdegerd III, was defeated by the invading Arabs, thus ending the reign of Zoroastrianism.

Elsewhere in the book, the author has ably analysed, devoting more than 20 pages, to the origin, route/s taken and ultimate disappearance of the Rgvedic rivers. Indo-Iranian habitat, Indo-European cultures, changes, as well as languages including origin, growth and development, are also competently dealt with in the book.

The book has been well thought out and well-written. Moderately priced at Rs.425/-, neatly bound and printed, the book is strongly recommended for the serious reader.

On Patriotism



Patriotism is not mere passionate love of one's country as it is often confounded with. In those who have undertaken the responsibility of government as well as in those advising or criticizing them, patriotism's largest element must be wisdom rather than the mere passionate love of one's country which is admirable in the common soldier.

C. Rajagopalachari
Swarajya, April 25, 1964



THE BOOK OF PRAYER

Compiled & Edited By
Renuka Narayanan

Published by

Viking, Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., New Delhi 110 017.

Year of Publication: 2001. No. of Pages: 377. Price: Rs.295

Reviewed by

Professor Adi Doctor, Emeritus Professor,
Department of Political Science, Goa University.

The author says in the Preface that the book is meant to be a bedside and travel companion. However it is very much more than this.

A prayer is silent communion with God. Those who seek silent, meditative communion with God could not have stumbled across a better, book than Renuka Narayanan's *The Book of Prayer*. Although the author says in her Preface that the book is meant to be a bedside and travel companion, the book is so compiled that a reader can easily opt for offering a prayer a day to the Almighty, beginning with page 1 titled January 1 and going up to page 365 titled December 31st. The last few pages (p.366 to 377) make up a useful index with the first line of each prayer treated as its title. Although the reader is free to contemplate and meditate over one prayer, each day as per the date, the reader can, after having gone through all the 365 prayers, select a few of his own choice and reflect over them daily or at his leisure and convenience.

Renuka's selection is indeed inspiring and she leaves out no great saint, seer, poet or religion. Thus we have in this personal collection Guru Nanak, the Psalms, Vedas, Upanishads, Zarthusra, Sufi poets like Amir Khusro and even a reproduction of Gandhi's favourite

prayers from his *Ashram Bhajnavali*. An added value to the collection is the fact that where the prayer/song was not originally composed in English, Renuka first gives us the original rendition in the language of its composer (whether Sanskrit, Pali, Pehalvi, Persian, or Hebrew) followed by its English translation. The translations, the author claims, are merely ladders to help us climb closer to the originals. However the English translations are in themselves beautiful and knowing any language other than English is not necessary.

Though titled *A Book of Prayers*, the collection may truly be deemed a secular collection of beautiful poetry and ethical wisdom. The book as such does not fall into the category of a religious text. The most one can say is that it is in keeping with the true Indian ethos of a multi-faith tradition, our age old belief that God or the Supreme Good is one, though we may describe this indescribable entity in many tongues and in many ways.

The lesson I draw from this lovely and painstaking collection is that we must stop telling God (call it Providence or Moral Governance, if you like), how to run his world and accept that he knows what he is doing. This way alone can we shed all manners of stress and distress. Love, forgiveness,

compassion, magnanimity, surrounding to God's will (moral governance) are some of the principal virtues repeatedly stressed in the prayers. The practice of these virtues alone can set up a new virtuous (as opposed to vicious) cycle and make us experience freedom from bondage on earth and the cycle of rebirths.

I reproduce below just one prayer from different sects to be found in Renuka's precious Book of Prayer to illustrate the quality of her invaluable collection.

1. *The Lord's Prayer*: Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.
2. *Upanishad prayer for guidance and salvation*: O God, from untruth lead me to truth: from darkness lead me to light; from death lead me to immortality. Peace. Peace. Peace.
3. *Jain Scripture Dashavaikalika Sutra*: Dharma lies in non-violence, in austerities.
4. *Gandhi's beloved prayer (Mangal Kamana)*: May all be happy, may all be of good health, may all prosper and none be sad, I need no kingdom, nor even heaven - may I wipe out the sorrows of my people: Ye gods grant me this, just this.
5. *A Zarathusti gatha*: O Ahura

Mazda, Supreme One, speak to me about the laws of my faith and my duties, that I may stay on the right path..

6. *Prophet Mohammed on what one should say every time one entered and left a place of worship:* O God, pardon my sins and open to me the gates of thy compassion.
7. *From the Gospel of the Buddha:* Ignorance causes the ruin of the world. Envy and selfishness break off friendships. Hatred is the most violent fever, and, the Buddha is the best physician.
8. *Amir Khusro's prayer to his Guru Hazrat Nizamuddin:* O Dyer, I give my life to you, You have dyed me in you with just one look. O Nijam, I give my life to you, you have made me your

bride with just one look.

9. *A Prayer for Children:* author unknown.

And we pray for those children,
who watch their parents, watch them die,
Whose nightmares come in the daytime,
Who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep.
We pray for the children:
who want to be carried and for those who must,
And for those who will grab the hand
Of anybody kind enough to offer it.

Although the book is representative of prayers from all the major faiths, Renuka could have considered including some Zoroastrian prayers too. The whole book has only one quote from the *Avesta*. I give here two very brief Zoroastrian prayers which Renuka may consider including in a future edition of the book.

Ashem Vohu Vahistem Vasti which means Righteousness is the highest prayer and the famous exhortation to all good Zoroastrians viz. *Manasni, Gavasnhi, Khunasni* which means always remember to live in Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.

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