

Freedom First

No.460, January-March 2004
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A Liberal Quarterly



Yusuf Meherally

India's Genuine *Bharat Ratna*

India's First 21st Century
General Elections

Falling Standards of
Political Leadership

The Legend of Devrai



Nissim Ezekiel

A Tribute



(1924-2004)

It is sad that since 1996 he was afflicted by Alzheimer's disease.

Nissim had a wide circle of friends, among poets, writers, journalists and social thinkers and other intellectuals. He was a popular Professor of English Literature and retired as the Head of the English Department from the Bombay University. His first collection of poems was published in 1952 under the title "A Time to Change". He was a non-conformist poet. In fact in all fields he worked he was a non-conformist. In his poem "Background Casually" he made fun of himself as "Poet, rascal, clown". His niece Radhika Rao Gupta has described him as one who taught her to love the absurd, the odd, to see the quirky humour in everyday, to laugh without cruelty or condescension at ordinary struggles. His poems break your heart, while making you burst into laughter".

Nissim was a soft spoken gentleman. In 1983 he was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award, In 1988 he was awarded the Padma Shree. He bore all laurels lightly on his shoulders. Nissim was the moving force behind the Indian Chapter of the PEN. He edited the PEN journal. He was always available in the PEN office to guide the young who aspired to succeed as poets, playwrights, essayists, editors and novelists Its acronym is PEN. He was the first editor of *Quest*, and on the editorial board of a number of prestigious journals. He was also editor of *Freedom First* in the early eighties.

Very few people, except his biographer R. Raja Rao know that when Nissim was a student in the Wilson College in the early forties, he came under the influence of the ideas of M. N. Roy. My first encounter with Nissim was as fellow competitor in an inter-

Nissim Ezekiel

collegiate Elocution Competition in 1944-45. I was a firebrand nationalist at that time, but Nissim was a Royist and a member of the erstwhile Radical Democratic Party (RDP) formed by Roy and his colleagues in 1940 on the issue that Indians should support in their own interest the Allies in World War II against the Axis powers.

Later I came under the influence of the ideas of Roy and came in close contact with Nissim. We jointly edited a monthly journal known as "*The Radical Student*" for about two years in 1946-47. At that time the Radicals used to observe 14th of July as the French Revolution Day, as it gave us the watchwords of a revolution "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". I remember Nissim organizing on one occasion a poster exhibition depicting the highlights of the French Revolution.

In December 1948, the RDP dissolved itself on the ground that political parties are engaged in an unscrupulous scramble for power and were therefore not the instruments to bring about revolutionary change in the conditions of the people and promote human freedoms. Roy advised his colleagues to be on their own in whatever field they might work and promote Radical Humanism. Nissim sailed to London for higher studies. On his return he built his own circle. Thereafter he did not take keen interest in the Radical Humanist Movement. But he did not distance himself from the Radical Humanists.

Nissim took interest in Human Rights Organizations as well. He was a life member of the People's Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL) from its inception. He inaugurated the PUCL National Convention held in Bombay in 1992. His inaugural address on "The Strategy of Fighting for Civil Liberties" is published in a volume of "*Selections from PUCL Bulletin*" published in 2003.

Nissim imbibed the spirit of Renaissance, Enlightenment, Human Freedom, Humanism and Democracy that are reflected in his works.

M. A Rane

Freedom First

A LIBERAL QUARTERLY
52ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

Freedom First considers it a privilege to have had the opportunity of participating in the Yusuf Meherally birth centenary celebrations, albeit a little late, by featuring him on our cover. He passed away in 1950 at the young age of 47 victim of a police officer's *lathi* during the freedom struggle. He was, with Minoo Masani, a founding member of the Congress Socialist Party. An outstanding human being he belonged to that vanishing species 'the honest politician.' We salute his memory and have pleasure in presenting to readers of *Freedom First* a glimpse of the man and his achievements. If you wish to know more about this great personality you can read his biography written by Mr. Madhu Dandavate and published by the National Book Trust titled "Yusuf Meherally – Quest for New Horizons."

This issue has been delayed and the number of pages are down to 44 (the lowest since April 1985 after the conversion of the journal from a 16-page monthly to a 48-page quarterly). Advertisement renewals have been tardy with some advertisers yet to renew. We couldn't wait any longer so we decided to bring out the issue with reduced pages. We will be most grateful, if those of you who can, help us secure some advertising support.

Results of the General Elections to the Lok Sabha and several State Assemblies will be out by May 15. We will be holding a discussion on Saturday, May 22, to understand and analyse the outcome for the benefit of *Freedom First* readers. This means that the next issue of *Freedom First*, April-June 2004, will be out between the last week of May and early June. If you wish to participate in the discussion please drop us a postcard or send an email or simply phone us. We shall make sure you are invited. You are also free to write in with your analyses of the election results.

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

...democracy, like love, must come from within;
it cannot be imposed from outside.

Sashi Tharoor, *The Hindu*, February 29

If the first casualty of war is truth, has the first
casualty of the war against terror been tolerance?

Sashi Tharoor, *The Hindu*, February 29

In urban middle class India today examinations
are no longer a test of knowledge. They're a test of the
entire family's ability to withstand stress

Piali Banerjee, *Sunday Times of India*, March 14

Chhatrapati Shivaji was a great patriot and a
devout Hindu but his so called followers in Pune have
proved to be both anti-national and anti-Hindu as they
have destroyed invaluable treasures belonging to the
country

Siddhartha Majumdar, in a letter in
The Statesman, March 11

Like it or not India is headed in the direction of
democratic Capitalism

Gurcharan Das, *Sunday Times of India*, January 25

Dissent in India is dispensable when it comes to
myths, legends and icons. Hot-heads of every persua-
sion survive and thrive on them.

Dileep Padgaonkar, *Sunday Times of India*, January 25

Muslims and Christians in India should not be
labelled as minorities as they have their genetic roots
here.

RSS Chief K.S.Sudarshan,
Sunday Times of India, January 25

..forty years of socialism did little more, in the
name of poverty alleviation, than turn the poor into a
constituency

Tavleen Singh, *The Indian Express*, January 25

Corruption has ceased to be news in India. It is
one of those things which India cannot live with, but
knows no way to live without.

Kuldip Nayar, *The Afternoon Despatch & Courier*,
February 18.

All logical analysis of Indian politics fails because
there is no logic to Indian politics.

Vir Sanghvi, *Sunday Mid Day*, February 22

We have fought enough. We have no option ex-
cept to live in peace with our neighbours. We can change
friends but not neighbours.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee,
The Indian Express, February 26

The very country (USA) which wanted free trade
and maintained that globalisation would bring all round
prosperity, is now worried that minions like India,
China and Brazil might snatch jobs away from the
American youth.

Editorial in *The Hitavada*, Nagpur, January 29

Peace and reconciliation are moral imperatives
and generally beyond the reach of political cowards and
calculating politicians.

Harish Khare, *The Hindu*, January 21

We need both the WSF and WEF, and we also
need a forum to explore the common ground between
the two fora.

Former Finance Minister P.Chidambaram,
Sunday Times of India, January 25



Courtesy: *The Times of India*, Education Times
- Mumbai Edition, January 19, 2004.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Search for a Liberal Alternative

- The Story of a Wasted Workshop

Freedom First partnered the Project for Economic Education and the Indian Liberal Group at a seminar in Mumbai late last year to discuss "What India Needs". The presentations made at this seminar formed the cover feature of the last issue of our journal.¹

What India also needed, and which was not explicitly brought out at that seminar, was the need for a liberal democratic political party. This may have been because, at that point, as late as September last year, there already was a party promoting the philosophy and principles of Liberalism.

And thereby hangs a sorry tale – of a 3-day Workshop in Delhi earlier this year that began with a bang and ended without achieving even a whisper of its original purpose which was to work out "A Liberal Strategy for India: 2004 and Beyond". A noble though ambitious project. The workshop was the brainchild of a highly committed liberal, an idealist, who was convinced that what India needed was a strong united liberal movement. He had been working to bring about such a workshop for a year or more. Having been part of the 'liberal movement' in one form or another for four decades and more, I accepted his invitation to attend the workshop as an 'Observer.' For purposes of this narration I'll refer to him as 'The Convenor'.

There were between ten and twenty invitees round the table at any given time (with participants walking in and out obviously to attend to their personal businesses). They ranged from businessmen, freelance journalists, heads of various NGOs to the leader of a political party. We shall refer to him as 'The Leader'. I must confess I had much to do with persuading 'The Leader' to participate in this workshop – at least I think so, though I am being told by some of my friends that I was 'used'. Perhaps. But I do not regret having done what I did. There was one other person I shall call him the 'The Demolition Man.' His prime purpose appeared to be to ensure that the Workshop did not endanger his own personal political agenda. This became very evident as the workshop progressed.

I must record here that the Convenor's conduct of the Workshop was meticulous. He placed before the Workshop three alternatives to choose from:

1. A Liberal Movement nationwide
2. A new liberal political party
3. Strengthening the existing liberal party.

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



A majority supported the third alternative. Interestingly the 'Demolition Man' favoured a liberal movement as against the other two alternatives. This was on day one. On day two 'The Demolition Man' took a surprising somersault and supported the majority decision taken on day one to strengthen the existing liberal party. In fact he became the most enthusiastic supporter of 'The Leader' who said that his party would have meaning only if it was able to acquire the Election Commission's recognition as a national party. This meant securing 6% of the votes polled in at least four states. When asked if he would have difficulty in getting candidates he said none at all. In fact he would have problem of choice as there would be so many aspirants. But, he said, the real problem was funding.² 'The Demolition Man' quickly rattled off the number of votes polled required to get registration as a national party and egged on 'The Leader' to go right ahead. More sober voices which timidly suggested that it might be wiser to first concentrate on the one state where the 'Leader's' party had some influence was ignored as being of no consequence. I was quick to grasp the 'Demolition Man's' motivation for the sudden somersault and warned 'The Leader'. But he *pooh poohed* my fears.

Thereafter it was brass tacks all the way. Reconstituting the National Executive, the setting up of a National Headquarters at Delhi, funds to be raised for the Party's election campaign and so on. Ideological issues, liberal values etc. took a back seat. 'The Liberal Strategy for 2004 and beyond' was all but forgotten. The anxiety was how to ensure that even a few candidates are elected to the Lok Sabha. 'The Leader' was authorised to negotiate with leaders of other political parties. Having railroaded the workshop into a 'self-destruct' mode the 'Demolition Man' was not gone again at the workshop nor at the Seminar that followed on the fourth day. He had accomplished his purpose. He had no further use for the workshop.

Sadly, an excellent opportunity to strengthen the liberal movement and to offer to the Indian people a credible, principled alternative was lost. This is what India needs - not yet another party whose primary preoccupation is power.

'The Leader' has the right to do what he likes with his party but to claim that his is a liberal party would now be taken with a pinch of salt. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari would often exhort party members that the purpose of the Swatantra Party was not power any how but to compel a change of policies in the right direction. He said that power should chase us rather than the party chasing power. In other words, means are as important as the ends.

A Liberal party sets standards and not become a camp follower of one or another party or front.

Some time after the workshop, 'The Convenor' wrote to me, saying among other things that I should as a follow up to the workshop talk about the revival of the 'spirit of Swatantra' in *Freedom First*. I thought it was a good idea. Given below is an example of the 'spirit of Swatantra' as perceived by that doyen of liberalism the late Minoo Masani.

The party system in India has turned into a farce. The choice before the people is between *tweedledum* and *tweedledee*. This was the ideal time for a party wedded to liberal principles to emerge. The January workshop could have helped accelerate this process. Instead it has turned out to be a non-starter despite the very hard work and dedication of 'The Convenor'.

Freedom First has not lost hope. We shall keep trying until the right kind of people get together and decide its time to form a genuine liberal alternative.

SVR

¹ The full proceedings of this seminar are now available in booklet form. Readers interested in a copy may please write to the Business Manager, *Freedom First*, 3rd floor, Army and Navy Building, Mumbai 400001. Contributors: Mr. A. D. Moddie (Good Governance), Mr. J. K. Mukhopadhyay (Economic Perspective), Professor Nagindas Sanghavi (Political Perspective), Professor. Sadanand Varde (Social Justice Imperatives) plus extensive coverage of the discussions. Printed price Rs.50. **Rs.30 including postage for *Freedom First* readers payable by Money order or Cheque payable only in Mumbai.**

² In fact when 'The Leader' asked very pertinently how many round the table were prepared to put their hands in their pockets, several hands were raised and a few lakhs were promised on the spot and later collected.



The Spirit of Swatantra ...

MASANI INDICTS ORISSA SWATANTRA PARTY

By A Staff Reporter

Mr. M. R. MASANI, former President and one of the founders of the Swatantra Party, this afternoon castigated the Orissa leadership of the party for aligning with Mr. Biju Patnaik in a toppling operation.

I NAUGURATING the two-day session of the Sixth National Convention of the Swatantra Party at Rajaji Nagar here, Mr. Masani regretted that the SVD disease had now "infected our camp in Orissa."

He asked his partymen "to think afresh and boldly and, if necessary, jettison any dogmas and other intellectual baggage that may weigh the party down in order to play its role effectively against follies and mistakes of the socialist establishment."

Mr. Masani said: "We shall have to be prepared to show that we are more radical than the members of the socialist establishment who cling to the dead wood of Marxist dogma and mistake bureaucratic State Capitalism for socialism."

Brushing aside "meaningless labels like right and left," he asked the partymen to work well with all

those who had a genuine concern for poor and a burning passion for social justice.

To the party critics who think that the party had no future, Mr. Masani told them not to take a short-term view. Public opinion is changeable and even fickle. **Stating that the party principles had a future, he said the role of the party in future was not to join hands with others in groupings in an effort to get into office.**

"What is our role? Is it whether by hook or by crook to win the next elections? My own answer is that for us to join in efforts such as those recently started by Mr. Biju Patnaik is counter-productive". The Swatantra Party would have to beware of false starts of nature

COURTESY: *The Weekly Mail*, Madras, April 14, 1973

Tributes to a genuine *Bharat Ratna* on his Birth Centenary

Yusuf Meherally

Some Personal Reminiscences

Kisan Mehta



(23.9.1903 – 2.7.1950)

The first time I met Yusuf Meherally was in the May of 1953 in the hospital compound of Yeravada Central Prison. I was a 'C' class prisoner and Meherally was an 'A' class prisoner. I was arrested while demonstrating in support of a fast undertaken by Gandhiji who was held in confinement at the Aga Khan's palace in Pune, and sentenced to three months' hard labour. Though we were political prisoners, by virtue of our being classified as 'C' class prisoners we were put along with convicted criminals. We would be taken inside the prison barracks after a day's hard work and locked up for the night after a head count. We lived in a room measuring 8ft by 10ft, with one toilet seat to be shared with 5 to 10 convicts. The food supplied to us was terrible. It was so bad that we the political prisoners went on hunger strike. The prison authorities were unmoved, and, to our utter disgust, even the 'A' class prisoners among whom were

Meherally had exhorted me "to live dangerously" and to keep hopes high and expectations low".

such stalwarts Mr. Morarji Desai, Mr. B. G. Kher, Mr. S. K. Patil, Mr. Asoka Mehta and Mr. Yusuf Meherally were unmoved. The strike collapsed on the fourth day.

Disappointed by this total lack of concern by our 'A' class leaders we decided to convey our disappointment by writing to them. The task of writing the letter fell on me. The letter was delivered to Mr. Kher by an obliging warder. Mr. Kher promptly conveyed his reply which was that it was Gandhiji's directive that the *satyagrahis* should follow prison rules when in prison. Kher tore the letter without showing it to any of his fellow 'A' class prisoners. We, the 'C' class prisoners, took this rejection to mean that individuals who claimed to be our leaders were content to enjoy the better facilities they had leaving the rank and file to their fate.

Yusuf Meherally came to know afterwards that the letter from the 'C' class prisoners was addressed to him too. He went to Mr. Kher who informed him on the action he had taken of conveying Gandhiji's directive to the letter writer. He also told Meherally that the letter was signed by one Kisan. That was enough for him to start hunting for that Kisan who had addressed the letter to him. He got his word let be true and was able to meet me in the prison hospital a few days later. It had to be the hospital, as prisoners were not

allowed to visit one another. Meherally so managed things that I was able to be in the hospital.

I still recall that meeting. On entering the hospital compound I spotted Meherally in the crowd and proceeded towards him, and before I could fully introduce myself, he caught me by my hand and pressed me closely as if he was meeting a long lost friend. The feeling of warmth that Yusufbhai passed on to me that moment reverberated like an electric current. He apologised profusely for the lapse of the top leaders to support our demands and additionally conveyed his feeling of guilt as if he alone was responsible for this lapse. All my anger melted away. Meherally became my Yusufbhai from that minute on. Visiting the hospital became an eagerly awaited rendezvous. In fact I had known Yusufbhai from the time I was possibly fourteen. We had participated in *Prabhat pheries*, processions and demonstrations since the time we were kids. We served as errand boys for '*Desh Sevikas*' who were picketing in front of wine shops in Cavel Street now called Kolbhat Lane. I have seen Yusufbhai sob on seeing a volunteer crushed down for having dared to stop a truck carrying foreign textiles. We had seen Meherally's *gumastas* (he was then leader of the *gumastas* union) parading demanding minimum service condition. Kalbadevi-Bhuleshwar-Hanuman

Tributes to a genuine *Bharat Ratna* on his Birth Centenary

Galli were Meherally's arena for fighting social oppression, injustice and inequality as well as for vanquishing the orthodox within the Congress. Meherally had exhorted me "to live dangerously" and to keep hopes high expectations low" while signing my autograph book. For me the meeting in Yeravada prison in my eighteenth year was his discovering me.

Yusufbhai's daily routine in Yeravada prison as an outpatient was to reach out to each and every ailing inpatient, to utter soothing words and give sometimes a quarter of a soap cake, a pinch of tooth powder and, if available, a book. It was exhilarating to watch him face the patients, not always friendly, and see them cooling down in the waves of love that Yusufbhai

directed at all who met him.

The time spent in the prison hospital was a godsend as it provided me the opportunity to observe very closely a highly sensitive soul. But this rare privilege of being with Yusufbhai couldn't last for ever. I was a convict with a set sentence and he was a detenu with an unspecified period of detention and we never knew as to when and in what circumstances we would meet again. He told me one day "Kisan, you will be free soon and I will not be seeing you as frequently as we do now. You should write letters to me but your letters signed as Kisan will never reach me. I can receive letters from my relations hence you should sign as Kasam in your letters. I will also address you as Kasam". I realized instantly that

there was absolutely no difference between Kisan and Kasam or between a Hindu and a Muslim. Both were human beings capable equally of showering love on other living beings. It was Yusufbhai who implanted this capability of developing love into me and many others who came to know him.

One day a post card from Yusufbhai informed me that he was being brought to Bombay for medical treatment. He asked me to get into his second class compartment at Dadar and to be with him upto Byculla railway station where the prison guards would detain him for handing over to the Arthur Road Central prison guards. I located him at Dadar encircled by prison guards. However I was shocked to see him totally broken in health. He could not stand up or move without support.

I knew from the time of our Yeravada meetings that Yusufbhai was keeping indifferent health however I was not prepared for a total collapse in the intervening period. He informed me that the government had decided to transfer him to Bombay as Poona did not have proper facilities for treating his ailment. Before I could respond he said that his younger brother Ahmed was to meet us at Byculla station however no hint on the seriousness of his ailment should be given to him. "Tell Ahmed that I am suffering from backache or some sort of sciatica" he instructed me. Much against my conscience I helped him to maintain this unreal façade only to support Yusufbhai in his plan of not wishing to hurt his family members.

His condition took a turn for the worse and he was rushed to Bombay's municipal hospital the

The True Satyagrahi

The train steamed into Byculla Station. Ahmed and his family came running to us, because they knew they would not get much time before Yusufbhai is rushed out to the Arthur Road Prison. However, it so happened that nobody from the Arthur Road Prison showed up and the Yeravada escorts would not escort him beyond the Railway Station limits. After all their authority to look after the prisoner ended at the station. We waited in vain for the local prison guards to show up and take charge of the prisoner who was the popular Mayor of Bombay only the previous year.

Yusufbhai asked me to go to the Arthur Road Prison to fetch its security guards. After depositing the Yusufbhai entourage in the Irani Restaurant - Regal Stores and Restaurant and Bakery - outside the station, I proceeded to the prison. The officer at the prison desk refused to listen to me and to depute anybody to the Byculla Station as he had no orders to that effect. The question was as to where and how to pass the night which would assure the Yeravada guards that the prisoner would not vanish while providing to Yusufbhai the badly required rest before he enters Bombay's notorious landmark, the Arthur Road Prison.

We suggested that the guards and Yusufbhai could be taken to Yusufbhai's residence and handed over to the Arthur Road Prison authorities the next day. The Yeravada guards knew Meherally well enough to trust him and we reached Yusufbhai's house past midnight. The guards shared Yusufbhai's room for the night! Next morning fresh pleas were made to the Arthur Road Prison officers to take charge of the special prisoner who did not want to do anything that would affect the career of the escorting Yeravada guards. Yusufbhai was brought to Byculla Station the next day at the expected arrival time of a Poona train when the handing over and taking over ceremonies took place and with this, the mess in the entire episode was buried without the higher authorities getting any inkling of the lapses.

Kisan Mehta

KEM Hospital. Even in his delirium we could hear him describing the beauty of the snow clad peaks of the Himalayas sustaining the sub-continent; the grandeur of the thousand year old temples and mosques; the serenity of the rivers that nurtured the life and majesty of the seas that washed the country's shores for millions of years. The masterpieces of Ajanta and Ellora, Belur and Halebid, Barhat and Bagh were being described in a running commentary as if the beholder was viewing the exhibits along with the listeners.

As part of the freedom struggle I conceived the idea of an Indian National Exhibition to depict the exploitation by an alien ruler of different aspects of Indian life. The office of the Indian National Congress had just been reopened at Jinnah Hall. S. K. Patil asked me to present the exhibition comprising 23 sections including the political uprising of the Indian people beginning with the 1857 war of independence. Everything was progressing very smoothly when

things changed all of a sudden. Patil, during a visit to the Exhibition office found posters depicting Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan and with this his interest in the exhibition vanished because they were socialists. My explanation to him that these leaders had been included because of their role in the Quit India movement which had inspired thousands of youngsters did not impress him. He managed to have the exhibition deferred indefinitely.

From his sick bed Yusufbhai heard of this and got together a few friends who contributed funds to hold the exhibition elsewhere. He persuaded Raja Rao and Dixit who owned the Chetana Restaurant to host the exhibition. Chetana Restaurant had by then become a haunt for progressive thinkers and writers. It was a place where Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan and other socialists met whenever they were in Bombay. The exhibition was inaugurated by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay. She opened a packet gifted by Yusufbhai

and it was a catalogue of the exhibition - a four page publication carrying the Konarak wheel, an introduction by Yusufbhai and a list of pictorial being exhibited. He explained the genesis of the exhibition and ended by saying that that the exhibition was the creation of a young college student Kisan Mehta who felt during his stay in the Yeravada Central Prison that the glorious history of India's struggle for freedom needed to be presented to the people in the correct perspective. And all this he did from his sick bed. I had no inkling that he was preparing such a catalogue. Nowhere in the catalogue was there any reference to Yusufbhai's own role in ensuring that the exhibition was held. This was typical of his habit of extolling his friends while keeping himself in the background.

This was the man that we lost on that sad day in 1950 when he breathed his last!

MR. KISAN MEHTA, former Municipal Corporator and founder of the Save Bombay Committee.

Yusuf Meherally

Freedom Fighter *Par Excellence*

G. S. Bhargava

Jinnah was very angry that disregarding his advice, Meherally, participated in politics. "Young man, your life is ruined", shouted Jinnah at him. "No, Mr. Jinnah a life is not so easily ruined". Yusuf retorted with his characteristic optimism.

Lord Byron said that he got up one morning and found himself great. Though Meherally is too modest to put forth any such claim, he too overnight shot into prominence. One single day, February 8, 1928, put him on the pinnacle of popularity; his name was on the lips

of everybody; his reputation reached the four corners of the country. Not that there was spade work before it but, as in the case of Byron's lyrical genius, the recognition was so sudden and complete.

On that day, he had not only dared to shout "go back, Simon!" (a

slogan of his own creation, which echoed in every nook and corner of India) to the face of the all-mighty, British plenipotentiary, but had also defied the injunctions of his political superiors who counselled inaction. His impetuosity and dare-devilry, the extreme originality of his ideas,

Tributes to a genuine *Bharat Ratna* on his Birth Centenary

struck even Gandhiji, who complimented him. In a primitive world, he would have become a legend, an Ajax defying the lightning of despotism. Poets would have made of his heroics songs for a nation. The tale of his perils and patriotism would have been the model to inspire and inform children.

Born in late 1903, Meherally was only twenty-four at the time of the Simon Commission's visit. His father, Jaffer Meherally, was a prosperous businessman and the children were brought up in the typical, aristocratic way. Fifty years earlier, his great grandfather, built India's first textile mill in Bombay and laid the foundation stone for the country's light industry. The transition from feudal to capitalist economy was fairly set; factories and slums were multiplying in the urban areas.

Their family was traditionally pro-British and all the upper class prejudices were handed down from generation to generation, as a part of ancestral bequest. When Yusuf went to jail in 1930, several of his elders said it was a disgrace to the family that one of its members was a "law-breaker".

The first nine years of his life were spent in Calcutta, then the

storm-centre of *Vande Mataram* and anti-Bengal-partition agitations. But only after Gandhiji arrived on the Indian political scene and took the country spell-bound, did he enter active politics. At the age of ten, Yusuf returned to Bombay, his birth place. He then joined the St. Xavier's High School. While still in the high school, he studied the revolutionary movements of the different countries and was impressed by the role youth had played in them. He read Mazzini and Garibaldi and closely followed the Russian and Chinese (Sun-Yat-sen's) revolutions. The successful boycott of the Milner Mission in Egypt and the birth and growth of the Sinn Fein Movement in Ireland, interested him deeply.

In Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Movement, he found a parallel to these liberation struggles, but its abrupt and inconclusive end on grounds of alleged excesses at Chauri Chaura, dismayed and puzzled him. He shared the depression which set in among the youth after the calling-off of the movement. He thought that if a group of young people, intellectually well-equipped and properly trained, dedicated themselves to the cause of the country, the revolution could be led to a successful conclusion. This idea found fruition in the Bombay

Provincial Youth League which was inaugurated in February 1928.

The Youth Conference opened a new era in the country's political history; for the first time, youth was canalised for national action. About 1700 delegates from all over the province attended the conference, which was presided over by K. F. Nariman. Meherally was the moving spirit behind the organisation.

The most important decision of the conference was to organise an effective boycott of the Simon Commission and a detailed, though ambitious, programme was chalked out for the same. Though this decision was in consonance with the principle of the Congress decision, yet in the matter of procedure, it went a long way ahead. And here lay the rub.

The Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberal Party were all united on the principle of boycott of the Commission. At that time, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was the President of the Bombay Congress, Jinnah the President of the League, Jayakar was in charge of the Mahasabha and Setalvad was guiding the destinies of the Liberals. These luminaries met and formed a joint committee to conduct the boycott, which, according to them, should merely mean a public meeting where speeches would be delivered and resolutions passed. To the Youth League, with Meherally at its helm, this seemed the most ineffectual way of boycott. The Government, with their sycophants, had planned receptions to Simon and his colleagues, and such inaction on the part of the public would lend colour to the got-up show.

February 3, 1928, dawned a decisive day in the history of

A True Gandhian

After India was freed Yusuf was less bitter about the Britishers and appreciated their sense of justice.

Bertram Wolfe teased Meherally about the 'British Sense of Justice' which had kept him so long in jail. Yusuf answered in deep earnest: "Even while they oppressed us, they were uncomfortable about it. A hunger strike in a British Jail could get me the Bible and your book to read. In Hitler's or Stalin's jails it would have gotten me before a firing squad. Gandhi's whole code of non-violent resistance to the evil of foreign rule was predicated on the unspoken assumption that the English had a better nature to which we could appeal" Yusuf argued.

Cited in *Yusuf Meherally: Quest for New Horizons*, p.104, by Madhu Dandavate

Tributes to a genuine *Bharat Ratna* on his Birth Centenary

Bombay. The Youth Leaguers planned an ambitious expedition on boats to meet the Commission on the sea itself, but it leaked out and the police took precautions to scotch it. They also wanted a *hartal* in the city but without Congress sanction it would not materialise. But undaunted, a band of 400 resolute young men led by Yusuf, formed into a procession and marched to the harbour, before day-break. It was another Charge of the Light Brigade except for the fact that the commander as well as the followers consciously believed in what they were doing. There, they staged one of the most heroic and resolute demonstrations the country had ever witnessed. They were thrice lathi-charged but did not budge an inch. Meherally himself was cruelly manhandled by an over-zealous police sergeant. None of the Congress leaders, who later claimed kudos and voters for the incident, cared to attend it. The news of the demonstration and the lathi-charge, exaggerated as usual, spread like wild fire and shops and establishments observed spontaneous *hartal*. The bulk of the students were with the Youth League and so naturally abstained from classes. Thus, a good part of the Youth League's boycott programme came to be implemented in spite of the non-association of the Congress with it.

Meherally was the hero of the day. The following incident speaks of the popular esteem he had won that morning. After the lathi-charge, Yusuf was returning home, his bruised, bandaged hand in a sling when he was accosted on the way by a youthful passer-by. "Were you hurt in the morning's lathi-charge," he asked. "Yes", Yusuf replied. "Our leader, Meherally, was also badly

injured. He is in the hospital", the stranger informed Yusuf. Suppressing his laughter, Yusuf retorted: "That is all exaggeration, he was not so much hurt." The man got angry and cursed the apostasy of Yusuf. Later, in the evening's public meeting, when he was revealed as Meherally himself, the confounded stranger came to him and apologised.

That year, Yusuf lost his father and as the eldest of the four children, he had to take up the family responsibility. His father originally wanted him to be a barrister and arranged with Mr. Jinnah to take him as his apprentice. But Yusuf's ambition was from the beginning to be a full-time political worker. The sudden death of his father created difficulties. As the head of the family he had to start earning to maintain the old family standards. But he did not want to give up politics, especially at that time and so brought about a revolutionary change in the domestic standards so that they could live within their means.

He had by that time qualified himself for the Bar. Relations and friends like Nariman were pressing

him to apply for the advocate's *sanad*. He was reluctant but at last gave in. Here again, his anti-Simon demonstration came in the way. At the instance of Nariman, Yusuf launched prosecution against the police sergeant who assaulted him on February 3, 1928. The case lasted nine months and the lower court fined the sergeant. On appeal, the High Court quashed the conviction and acquitted him. But, because he launched proceedings against a police officer, Yusuf was refused enrolment as an advocate. His is the only case in the whole of India, where a qualified lawyer was refused *sanad* by the High Court for political reasons.

When acquainted of this, Jinnah was very angry that disregarding his advice, Meherally, participated in politics. "Young man, your life is ruined", shouted Jinnah at him. "No, Mr. Jinnah a life is not so easily ruined". Yusuf retorted with his characteristic optimism. He actually welcomed the refusal because it supplied him with an excuse for full-time political work. The history of the two subsequent decades has vindicated Meherally!

A Short but Full Life

Yusuf died a young man of forty-seven, very live and very much needed. It was a police lathi which had caused injury to Yusuf's heart, from which he was never really to recover. In 1943, when he was released from prison, the doctors had given him up. His friends rushed to try and save him, and for days he lay hovering between life and death under an oxygen mask. Gradually, he recovered, but only enough to continue to exist. Though bubbling with energy and a desire to do things, he had to spend the next seven years mostly in bed. Even from there he continued to function and take a hand in the running of the Socialist Party.

Yusuf never married. He lived with his brother and his family. But he never lacked friends, and was loved for his warmth and his charm. One hardly ever found anyone saying anything unfriendly about him. Wedded to politics, Yusuf's real love was books, particularly on history and art. Though his life was short and in later years, he was ailing, he achieved more than a normal man would during a full span of three score years and ten.

Minoo Masani in "Against the Tide"

Tributes to a genuine *Bharat Ratna* on his Birth Centenary

After all, there is an aspect of life which Mr. Jinnah and his like cannot appreciate.

During the 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement, when processions and public meetings were disallowed, as today, these volunteers did marvellous work in keeping up the morale of the people. During the Salt Satyagraha, Yusuf and his associates gave a terrible fight to the bureaucracy. The local Congress higher-ups courted imprisonment and went to jail. The whole movement was run by him. He also saw Gandhiji twice during the Dandi March and got his sanction for his plan of work. At that time, he published in his *Vanguard*, which was suppressed just after that, an interview with Gandhiji which proved unique.

He was first arrested in 1930 and sentenced to four months' imprisonment. Again in 1932, he was charged with conspiracy and sentenced to two years. It was then, inside the 'C' class of Nasik prison, that he established close contacts with his Socialist colleagues. He is one of the founder-members of the Congress Socialist Party.

He was again arrested in connection with the Individual Satyagraha in 1940, and was released the next year. That year, he presided over the All India Students' Conference at Patna. Later, during a tour of Punjab, he was again arrested on a charge of having defied a prohibitory order. In this connection, he was in Lahore jail for nearly a year where he wrote his satirical masterpiece *My Trip to Pakistan*. Politics and personalities of Punjab were dealt with in such great detail that even long residents of the province had something to learn from it.

While still in Lahore jail, he was elected the Mayor of Bombay. His mayoralty again was unique not for got-up receptions and publicity stunts but for real constructive work and civic service. He was at that time the General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party and accepted the mayoral office, only on the express condition that he would be allowed to devote himself to Party work as usual. He created a new precedent by personally attending to citizen's complaints on civic matters; he initiated the system of quick despatch of files and put down official slackness with an iron hand. On the question of A.R.P. finances he literally made history. His predecessor in office, with the support of the majority Congress party, sanctioned 24 lakhs of Municipal money towards the Government A.R.P. scheme. But Meherally, as Mayor, refused to pay even a pie. He met the Governor in this connection and frankly told him that the people had no faith in the Government and that they were afraid the British would withdraw from India also, as they did from Burma and Malaya. So, he argued, the defence organisation of the people should be in the hands of those who would remain on the scene whoever might come. This led to the organisation of the People's Volunteer Brigade. Bombay is the only city in India where the Municipality was allowed to run the A.R.P.

Just before August 8, 1942, Meherally conducted a C.S.P. camp at Poona, where was discussed a comprehensive plan of revolt. But, somehow, the police got the whole information in advanced and wrecked the plan. On August 9, 1942, he was arrested and detained. It was during this period, that he got the heart attack, which finally

claimed his life. The authorities offered to give special facilities for treatment at St. George Hospital, but he demanded that two other ailing colleagues of his should also get the same facilities. They refused and he remained in prison. In 1943, when he was released, he was already collapsing and the doctors gave up all hope. For seven days, he was lying unconscious in the general ward of the J. J. Hospital, this darling of Bombay's thousands. In 1947, he left for America for treatment and returned in November 1948, considerably improved.

Among his publications, the two volumes of "*Leaders of India*" (biographical sketches of national leaders) have run into six editions. As a biographer, he is unsurpassed. Study of personalities and their impact on history has come to him naturally.

This was written in November, 1949.

Secularism : A Moral Question

A Muslim may claim that Quran is the only perfect revelation from God and that everyone should know that. A Hindu has a right to say that Hinduism is the greatest religion in the world, a Christian may say that Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross is required for salvation of any human. None of these assertions, by themselves, make anyone non-secular or communal. That is their assessment of what constitutes truth.

What makes a person or a political party non-secular or communal is the belief that other religions should not be allowed to be freely proclaimed, in order to preserve their own majority religion. The examples of such a non-secular view are seen in some Islamic nations and some political parties in India wanting a Hindu Rashtra (Hindutva). The question of secularism is not just a political preference. It is a moral question.

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India's First 21st Century General Elections

- A Turning Point?

A. D. Moddie

The 2004 elections may well be India's Turning Point for the new century, but continuing to be haunted by the triple ghosts of mounting population, the cancer of ubiquitous 'sauda' and increasing ungovernability, with even the CBI now asking for security!

After half a century of (a) the Patelian state in the initial integration of modern India; (b) in the next decade of the hopeful Nehruvian state; (c) in the later meltdown of multiple political parties; 600 million Indians are now facing hard choices as split personalities, in the first general election of the 21st century. The historic Patelian state – now taken for granted – was the making of modern India, after the Partition of British Imperial India. The Nehruvian state began as the great white hope of the Third World, and ended as a failed State, with economic collapse in 1991. Its outstanding achievements were a liberal constitution and universal franchise of the largest democracy in the world, a large industrial base crippled by 'sirkari' socialism, and the Green Revolution. Its most conspicuous characteristic, a planned economy ended in the collapse of that economy in 1991, with no money in the treasury and heavy Indian and foreign indebtedness, compelling the sale of the family's gold. Then followed a decade of the sprouting of unmanageable political parties and an ungovernable 'sauda' cancered state, bedevilled by the Janata undergrowth of opportunist politicians without stable parties.

Now India goes to its first general election in the 21st century, with more than half its population

under 30; with coalition politics as a compulsion and no single national party as Nehru's Congress; with the prospect of a 'shine' after the collapse of 1991; with new geopolitics in Asia and the world, with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, terrorism, and insurrections all around and within. And a new appetite for the Consumer Society. The public has forsaken Nehruvian socialism and Gandhian asceticism, but politicians of all hues still want their featherbeds of power and patronage at the cost of the taxpayer, the bribe-extorted citizen, and the honest official. 'Garibi' is a secondary theme. The main chorus is for 'makaan, pani, bijli', and jobs. People everywhere, of all classes and castes now want a better life, a place in the sun of consumer markets, schools and hospitals. In short, a better life at all levels of income, a more intense battle for bigger slices of the cake.

To get these, the simple question now is, for which party and leaders do we vote? We are now a maturer democracy, not taken in by election promises or charisma. Jammu and Kashmir set the example by voting for moderation and peace and better livelihood; not guns and jehadic violence. The voters survey the political horizon, and find hard choices of all kinds of political parties in different stages of maturity, immaturity, and sheer opportunism. About a third of the legislative

members of these parties have unseemly, unsocial records. Yet parties promote criminal men, and can't find enough good women, especially in the feudal cow belt. The voter himself is a split personality, a caste/ethnic man, a materialist aspirer, subject to cinematic charisma.

So what is the nature of the major political parties before the hard choices of 600 million schizophrenic voters in April 2004?

The most conspicuous, under the most acceptable PM, is the BJP, with its NDA caravan of over 20 parties. Although coalitions are usually in a flux in pre-election times, the BJP has established a record of being the first major party to offer India a stable coalition management for one term; no small achievement in Indian political volatility to match Sensex volatility. It has risen from the frenzy of Ayodhya a decade ago, to the maturity of a calm settlement either in or out of the court. It has risen from communal revivalism to a sense of the national interest in a wide range of foreign, defence, infrastructure and economic policies; even though it can be faulted in many economic sectors, e.g. civil aviation, telecommunications, deregulation of petroleum prices, and agriculture. It has risen from sentimental *swadeshi* to a real-politik in international relations, political and economic. It

The Secret of Freedom is Courage.



ESTD - 1910

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is throwing up a bright second line succession. The "feel good" temper – a lucky coincidence of factors – has compelled it to rush to the polls prematurely. And Atal Bihari Vajpayee has outgrown the accusation of the 'Mukat'; though the BJP still trails clouds of a communal fascist Shiv Sena, and similar aggressive elements in the VHP and Bajrang Dal, its violent rear guards. The transition of the BJP from Hindu politics to national politics, especially if it wins 250 or more seats in the Lok Sabha, will be a crucial test of its maturity process. Only time will tell. Power is headier than alcohol.

And what of the aging aunt with political rheumatism, the Congress? It seems to have come from Indira's hard 'real politik' to multiple illusion politics. It continues its splitting tendencies with the TNC, NCP, and now in Karunakaranitis. It has belatedly recognised the inevitability of coalition politics in a country where no party commands a majority. Till recently, it suffered from the illusion of going it alone, and of still boasting a 'High Command'. In its own mind, the dynastic asset seems to be its only vote-getting and cohesive asset, a fading crown, which this election will put to its final test in a post-Nehru area. Who knows how far that too has an illusionary aspect. As a result, it seems not to have either a strong political frontline, or a good next generation succession. As a motor it is low on horse power, high on hopes fading with time. There are clever courtiers who lack the power to win constituencies. Its leader attracts sympathy after two ghastly family assassinations, rather than confidence in either the political management of the country, or its good governance. And it has probed its secular credentials after Nehru. Votes for the Congress – a big question mark of this election – is likely to be

either an anti-BJP/Parivar vote, or a sympathy vote. Not a vote of confidence in good governance and power management in a country fast approaching ungovernability on a sub-continental scale.

What is left of the Left legacy, and its political chances? Its ideology has been overtaken by the passing of the USSR, and the moderation of Mao's China. Its economics is a dated dodo, with West Bengal being an example of its economic dodoism, despite land reforms. West Bengal is a failed state in the last thirty years, living up to its slogan "*Cholbe na*" (This will not do). Its work ethic and its enterprise have been destroyed. The Left has even compromised its secularism with alliances with the Muslim League in Kerala. It keeps some recognition continuing by being a Jack-in-the-box of a mythical secular mix of ineffective Janata-deceased and other parties. And there is no such box now. Although, collectively, the Left has been stronger than any single regional party, the election of 2004 may indicate its strength and role in the 21st century context. It may be its Waterloo.

Then there are the regional parties, consequential at the polls as power centers for regional, caste, ethnic loyalties; and in many cases psychic discontents against the Centre's neglect, oblivious of their own misgovernance. The cases of Laloo-land and Mayawati-land are good examples of the latter. The TDP, Samajwadi and Shiv Sena parties are the strongest and stablest in this category. Tamilnadu's Dravidian tradition has split with DMK, AIADMK and other MK's. The Akali Dal has a long communal tradition of its own. In regional parties in the North East. All these regional parties have strong individual leaderships, with precarious

succession problems. These parties reflect (a) strong caste/ethnic loyalties, and (b) opportunism to share power at the Centre. To that extent, they serve as coalition bridges between states and Centre to strengthen the Indian polity as a whole.

So India's 600 million voters will have the perplexing problem of choosing between past performance, future credibility and durability; together with local caste, ethnic loyalties. It reflects the spectrum of a politically schizophrenic electorate; torn between communal, caste, linguistic instincts, on one side, and the desire for a modern world of markets, goods and services, on the other. A huge potential engine driven by drivers with foot on brakes, more than accelerators, as with speed breakers and traffic lights on Indian streets.

The 2004 elections may well be India's Turning Point for the new century, but continuing to be haunted by the triple ghosts of mounting population, the cancer of ubiquitous 'sauda' and increasing ungovernability, with even the CBI now asking for security!

MR. A. D. MODDIE was a member of the first batch of the IAS (1947-48); a representative of Industry to governments. Author of the well-known book 'The Brahmanical Culture and Modernity', until recently Chairman of the Central Himalayan Eco-development Group.

The President's Vote

Can India's President vote and register his political affiliation, albeit secret? Is he not in his august office above Parties and Politics?

Was Mr. Narayanan right in lighting this dubious alley?

What do readers think?

N. Dharmeshwaran

An Open Letter to Sharad Joshi

Your New Friends Oppose the Swatantra Dream

Manuwant Choudhary

Dear Mr. Joshi,

I have the deepest regard for you personally and the farmers movement in Maharashtra that you have been leading but its a shame that you have now chosen to join the National Democratic Alliance. Last week when we watched you on national television sitting next to Pramod Mahajan I felt you did ultimately fall to the opportunistic politics that we hoped to oppose.

Almost a decade ago I was a witness to the conference at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Bombay on whether India needs a new political party. And an old man whom we all respect, Minoo Masani, walked amidst standing applause to support the formation of the Swatantra Bharat Party to work towards giving the Indian voter a real choice – a choice not just to bring about a liberal polity and economics in the country but also to fight against corruption and communal politics in India. Its mission was to restore democracy.

I supported you then when even the man chairing the meet Ram Jethmalani (Shiv Sena MP) was against the idea of a new political party. I supported you because we share a dream. I may not be from Maharashtra and am not a member of the Shetkari Sanghatana but what brought us together was this dream of a better India. My family in Bihar was among the staunch supporters of the Swatantra Party as long as it existed. But I wasn't born then. I grew up when the party was gone. But I grew up playing with the star symbols lying in the basement. I grew up reading parliament speeches of Swatantra veterans like Masani, Rani Gayatri Devi, N.G. Ranga...And after school when I came to Bombay to St. Xavier's College it was my dream to meet Mr. Minoo Masani. And when I did meet him .. the Soviet Union had disintegrated ... and Masani was right. I met Masani many times. We even made an attempt to revive the Indian Liberal Group ten years ago but gave up when we realised that most of the original members were dead and gone or too old.

And then India was liberalised. Masani was right yet again. But he called it liberalisation through bankruptcy and wrote an open letter to his young friends

to start a peoples' movement for liberalisation. Thanks to Mr. S. V. Raju's efforts...the Indian Liberal Group is very much a reality. What I would like to share with you is this. I met and interviewed Masani many times and every time I put this question to him whether India can ever have a Swatantra Party again, he told me Indians deserve better so what the party stood for must happen. Maybe, the people will be different, the party name may not be there and even the flag and symbols could change. New faces, a new party to give India the direction she needed. And everytime I asked Mr. Masani whom he thought could do it he always said the Indian farmers can do it. Sharad Joshi can do it. So I supported you. I admired your guts to field 200 candidates in Maharashtra even when the Election Commission did not give you a symbol. I admired you when only two Shetkari Sanghatana members won but they sat in the opposition for a full five year term instead of being lured by the BJP-Shiv Sena government.

So when I saw you last week succumbing to the BJP gameplan for your own short-term interests it saddened me. It saddened me for India.

Although I know India is too great a country but she has suffered tremendously. At a time when she needs men and women who care for her and at a time when she needs leadership the most, you have chosen to join a communal alliance. An alliance responsible for the communal riots in Gujarat and the Rani temple movement.

What you forgot is that you are not just a Shetkari Sanghatana leader but you also chose to be the torch bearer of India's greatest party – Swatantra. There is just one test to know whether you made the right or wrong decision. Find a quiet place and ask yourself whether the great Swatantra leaders would have joined the NDA as it is today? Mr. Joshi, Don't Spoil The Party, Swatantra Still Inspires.

Yours Sincerely,

Manuwant Choudhary

Falling Standards of Political Leadership

The following statement was made by former Prime Minister Chandrashekhar in an exclusive interview to R. Rajagopalan

The speculation about an early Lok Sabha election has aroused a confused and pathetically opportunistic response among the important political players in the country. It projects sad pictures of their shifting stands on crucial issues. It shows how they can easily change their opinions to serve their immediate political purpose, ignoring their own past assertions on the same issues. It is sad to note that no one seems to be immune from this tendency.

The Press has reported a statement of the Prime Minister to the effect that there is little difference between *Swadeshi* and *Videshi* today. How easily he can forget his own assertions on this issue is just a pointer to the fact that even on such vital issues important persons can attempt to give new interpretations to universally accepted ideas. One can well imagine the discomfort among the *Swadeshi Jagaran Manch* adherents of his own *Sangh Parivar*.

The leader of the opposition's equally widely reported telephone conversation with the DMK leader, M. Karunanidhi, has caused Justice Milap Chand Jain who headed the Commission to probe into all aspects of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination to exclaim in anguish: "This warming up of the Congress to DMK is a surprising development. The Congress appears to have a change of heart. If the DMK resumes support to the cause of Tamil Eelam as it did earlier, things may become difficult again." After all it was his report indicting

Karunanidhi and his party that caused the Congress to bring down the United Front government because it refused to expel the DMK from the coalition. Sonia Gandhi's publicly expressed anguish caused the Congress to precipitate the collapse of the United Front.

I can well understand Justice Jain's anguish, as I personally had to take his queries in the course of the Commission's hearings, where despite my repeated requests to let some things be, he persisted in a certain line of enquiry. I don't know about Shri Karunanidhi, but his close ally Shri Vaiko of the MDMK who has been detained under POTA for allegedly supporting the LTTE has not changed his position and he will now be on the same side as the Congress. How can Justice Jain be expected to realize the present political compulsions of the Congress President?

This trend cannot be fully visualized without going into the reported statement of the NDA convenor, my friend George Fernandes, on his meeting with Mulayam Singh a few days back. He has sought to justify his actions by citing the views of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia whose thinking permeated the political scene in the 1960's. George seems to have forgotten the totally changed political scenario today. He is now pleading for the *status quo* and not for change. But typically he wants to be part of the opposition while remaining in the ruling RSS dominated alignment. I hope he has not forgotten how the Janata government

was destabilized by his somersault on the floor of the House. Perhaps he does not remember that this single incident was responsible for the return of the Congress at the Centre?

Many more such examples can be given but that does not in anyway mitigate the enormity of falling standards in the behaviour of our political leadership. George has done one good thing subsequently by clarifying that Shri Mulayam Singh is in no way inclined to join the NDA. The Shiv Sena

Satyendra Dubey

It is most appropriate that *Freedom First* has in its Oct-Dec 2003 issue highlighted the murder of Satyendra Dubey. He was an honest man who paid the ultimate price for honesty. The stranglehold of the mafia in Bihar is such that no honest officer is safe. Bihar represents the depth of degradation in the political-bureaucratic-criminal nexus which is spreading like cancer everywhere. DIG Ojha was sent packing by government of Bihar when he expressed his views about criminalisation of politics. It appears even the central government has become a mute spectator while political parties of various hues are vying to have alliance with Laloo's RJD in cynical disregard of political morality.

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supremo in his own style has exposed the Deputy Prime Minister's move to clear the path for Sharad Pawar to join the NDA by simultaneously creating a strong barrier to it by demanding the exclusion of Chaggan Bhujbal in the proposed alliance in Maharashtra! One cannot comment with certainty about the role of the NCP leader in this mini-drama, as to whether he was a party to this exercise or it was only the over enthusiasm of L.K. Advani and Pramod Mahajan?

Clearly the imminence of the Lok Sabha elections are causing many political contortions and thus only further exposing politicians to more general contempt. Like the Prime Minister I also do not like the language used by the Chief Election Commissioner to describe politicians as a whole. But it is this sort of single minded pursuit of political

power without any sense of self esteem that has caused politics and politicians to be held in such low esteem by the thinking public.

Our country still faces many problems. Our positions on these issues could still be a basis for political unity among various parties. For instance, it is now being made out that the economy is doing well because it is said to be growing at 8 percent. But how can anyone believe this is so when it is also clear that about 350 million people go hungry every day? This number is not decreasing.

We are being told our economy is being transformed and that we are no longer an agricultural economy. But how can it be anything else when over 65 percent of the population is still dependent

on agriculture for sustenance? Despite this reality we see that public investment in agriculture and irrigation has come to a near halt. There are many such issues that can bring persons and parties opposed to the NDA together. The performance of the NDA in managing our national security, foreign affairs, economy, and social policies give plenty of cause for a common platform. But our politicians must realize that politics is about policies first and personal ambitions thereafter.

MR. CHANDRASHEKHAR was Prime Minister of the Government of India for a brief period in the eighties.

MR. R. RAJAGOPALAN is Chief of the Delhi Bureau of *Vaaritha*, the largest circulated Telugu daily. Rajagopalan writes a column for *Freedom First* 'Rajagopalan's Parliament Watch'. He is a member of the Indian Liberal Group.

The Paradox of our Time

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbour. We conquered outer space

but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or

to just hit delete.

Remember, spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever. Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side. Remember to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent. Remember to say "I love you" to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you. Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again. Give time to love, give time to speak, and give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

(From the Internet. Contributed by Mr. Ashok Karnik)

Pad (Carrion)

A Short Story

Amitabh

This short story by Dr. Amitabh brings home to the reader the humiliating life of the Mahar community until Dr. Ambedkar came along. Dr. Amitabh tells us that the eating of carrion ceased when Dr. Ambedkar led his people to embrace Buddhism. - Ed.

'Pad came ... Pad came!'

The clarion call rent the air, and men and women, rubbing the sleep off their eyes, rushed out of their mud hovels like hens fluttering out of their coops when the shutters are opened. Those sleeping out in the yards were quick on their feet. They were all ears. Dawn was breaking into the first glow. With their tin pots filled with water some were heading towards the scrub for their morning ablutions when they heard the cry.

'Who says there's a carrion?' said the old woman Bulkai.

'Don't know!' Rodba replied.

'Who says there's a carrion - could be a lie to hassle us!' commented Nagai, another old woman.

'Come on, who says ...' Bulkai shrieked.

'Oh, that Dhondya, Dagdya's son ...'

'What does he say, how does he know?'

'He just came from the scrub. He met Pandya Padewar and his son, they were dragging the carrion to the scrub', said Warlya.

The news of the carrion spread like wildfire throughout the Mahars' shanty town. Everyone was talking about it, asking the other, 'Is it true?'

'What beast is that?'

'How do I know?'

'O Dhondya, do you know what beast ...' Dagdya asked Dhondya.

'It's Timaji Patil's cow - the sacred one! Pandya said so as he was dragging it away', said Dhondya.

The news set the whole shanty town in hectic motion accompanied by shrieks and shouts. Old Bulkai said to Rodba, 'What are you waiting for, come on, be quick, there won't be anything left for us!'

'Look, I have to go to the toilet first'.

'Oh, can't it wait? Forget about it on a day like this!'

She collected two knives and took the only tin trough she had, the one with a hole plugged with a rag. She pushed a reluctant Rodba in front of her. Both of them started towards the gum trees. Rodba took his tinpot filled with water.

Old Nagai noticed them and yelled at her son, Dajya, swearing at him and pushing him towards the gum trees. Seeing that he was not quick enough for her she took the basket and scurried towards the gum trees, stooped in the back as she was. She blabbered all the way. Now Dhondya and Dagdya stirred. They sharpened their knives on stone, brandishing them like sabres, testing the sharpness on their own fingers. When their knives were sharp enough, they started towards the scrub with their palm-leaf baskets. One after another, the whole colony was now on the march - Wariya, Chindhya, Chindhi, Ughdya, Godi, Lahanya, Barkya - everyone, with whatever containers they could find: basins and baskets, creels and crans,

troughs and trugs, tall aluminium pots, flat plates woven out of palm leaves, earthen pots, Udhya's son, Kisnya, was the smartest; he reached there first, ready with his knife and trough.

Vithi had a large brood: three sons, three daughters, the youngest still a suckling. Her asthmatic husband coughed and coughed. He couldn't hold any job so she had to feed all of them somehow. Children came in quick succession - the next as soon as the previous one was weaned - there was no break. She was utterly fed up, but was there a way out?

They all sailed in the same boat; on whose shoulder could she cry?

'Nilya, Nilya,' Vithi called out to the eldest. He didn't seem to take any notice. She pulled the rag cover off him. Her movement ripped the already frayed rag. That further angered her. She pulled Nilya up into a sitting position. He flopped back amongst the covers, his eyes still closed. He had been reading 'Mooknayak' till late night in the light of the kerosene lamp. But she had to wake him up. She gripped him under the arms and made him stand up. Then she splashed a bowlful of water over his eyes. He grumbled and swore at her, screaming, 'Why me, why wake me up so early!' But who had the time to put up with his tantrums? Someone had to go and fetch a potful of flesh that would feed the family for the next few days. Nilya tried to shirk the job - he moaned and groaned. So she brought

a heavy arm down and thumped him hard, pushed the tall metal pot, with a hole plugged with a rag, into his one hand and the knife into the other. She shouted her threat, 'Go get a potful or there'll be no food for you ... I'll hang you by your toes.

On the scrub under the gum trees were gathered all the Mahars from the shanty town. Each carried a knife and some kind of container. Some made do with a broken piece of a mud pot or a rag. Some didn't have even that, so they would have to carry the meat in the folds of the dhoti or sari they were wearing.

Pandu wedged the carcass of the cow between the two gum trees. He and his son Somya started skinning the carcass with their knives. Everyone scrambled nearer, either standing or squatting on their haunches. Pandu wasn't going to let anyone touch the carcass until he had skinned it carefully and taken his share of the meat. He was careful. No cuts, no tears; he must have a nice, clean, complete coat of the hide. With his professional skill he was skinning the beast with the careful but confident strokes of his knife – the four legs first, then the tail, the bottom and the neck. Then he skinned the belly and the back. His hands were covered with blood. He had no shirt on; his dhoti hitched round his waist was smudged with blood. No time to bother about all that! For the whole of last month there had been nothing, nothing at all. This was a long awaited chance and he didn't want anything to go wrong.

Surrounding him they raised a din, sharpened knives in their hands, and took position, ready to strike. Kites and vultures perched on the gum trees. Some hovered in the

air, fighting in flight. Their wings fluttered. Their shrill sounds shrieked in the air. Crows cried. Almost all the dogs in the village gathered. They barked and growled, some waited expectantly with their legs tucked under, some haunched on their hind legs, craning their necks, with tongues lolling and dribbling. They pushed themselves as near as they could. Whenever someone noticed that they were too close, he would chase them away with a stone.

At last the skinning was over. Pandya and Somya cut open the belly carefully. The blood spouted in a stream and showered those around. Somya held his trough near the spout and collected some. Warlya pushed his trough, he got some too. Somya now took out the innards and plopped them down. Then he cut out the liver, put it into his second trough, took out the lungs and the heart as well. That filled both his troughs.

Then he sliced off a thick steak from the ham and heaped it onto the trough which was already filled to the brim. He covered his troughs with the neatly folded hide, put away both his knives, looked around to make sure he had not left anything behind and walked away with the troughs on his head.

As soon as Pandya and Somya were out, others, like sanguine Rajput warriors, pounced upon the prey, raising a full-throated battle cry. Baija, Old Bulkai, Rodba, Shirpat, Barkya, Warlya, Chindhya, Bhimi, Chingi, Chindhi, Namya, Tukya, Kisnya, young and old, all marched forth, flashing their knives. Everyone had an eye on the thick thighs and buttocks. They

pulled and tugged at the carcass. Tens of knives were sawing at the chest at once. Whatever piece, small or big, they could manage, they cut and put into their containers. The knives slashed and sliced, chunks and crumbs of meat were piled into the hampers and baskets. It was a free-for-all. It was no use brawling, yet abuse was bandied around freely, along with pushing and shoving. 'Oh, stop it! Watch it! Stop pushing, you, pick from where you are!'

'Why bicker, no one's stopping you from cutting'.

'O Barkya, give me a small piece, come, put a piece into my basket, Kisnya!' Old Nagai was pleading and begging on her knees, occasionally swearing at someone. Nobody gave a damn. They were too busy with their hands and mouths. In the fierce competition the old and the weak were out.

In the circumstances, there was no way the birds and the beasts could get anywhere near. Vultures, kites and crows were squawking, screeching, fluttering their wings; mangy dogs were howling, barking in protest, wagging their tails ingratiatingly; what else could they do?

Nilya, far from nimble, didn't even know which piece to go for and how to cut it. Yet pick he must, fill the tall pot, for he was under threat. Alternatively he would have to beg from door to door or, worse still, just go hungry. If he were to collect more maybe ... he began to daydream ... a big earthen pot filled with meat, salted, cut up, dried in the sun just as in Hanya's house. Nilya's mum roasting a couple of pieces on open fire, just for him! and then Nilya

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munching them, savouring the dry meat – Hanya need not brag any more!

Nilya, a knife in one hand and his tall metal pot with a hole plugged with a rag in another, was standing with sleep heavy on his eyelids. He couldn't reach the carrion, for there was such a scramble. Wherever there was a little gap he tried to push inside but someone would shove him, he would lose his balance and fall down. He would get up, only to be pushed off again and again. It just wasn't possible for him to do anything.

Kisnya had his trough overflowing. He looked up at Nilya standing there empty-handed and felt sorry for him. With his knife he cut off a few chunks of good thick meat and threw them at Nilya, 'Come on, Nilya, take them, put them into your trough, you son of a bitch'. The pieces fell into the dust.

Old Bulkai bent over to reach for them. Kisnya snarled at her, 'Move aside, you old hag, let Nilya have them'. Nilya picked them up from the dust, shook off the dirt and put them into his pot. Kisnya pushed the crowd aside to make room for Nilya, but the heaving crowd closed the gap before Nilya could plant his foot inside. He was thrown inside.

The carcass was a mere skeleton of bones now. All the meat had been scraped off the bones. They were all covered in blood as if they had played Holi. Their hair was red. Their limbs were red. The dirty rags they wore were red. From top to toe they were all dyed in the same colour – red.

Then they started to trail back home, with freshly butchered red meat still dripping blood in their troughs and trays, bowls and basket, pots and pans, rags and panniers. Excited and contented, towards their homes they marched.

The kites, vultures, and crows now sprang into action. The dogs, alerted, attacked the skeleton. The crows hovered over the heads of the people going home and swooped down on the troughs they carried on their heads. The kites and the vultures, emboldened by the sight, dipped from the gum trees onto the troughs and baskets. They watched from above the walking meat cargo and flocks and flocks of them converged onto the target. Crows carried off pieces in their beaks, kites and vultures in their claws. With these they flew to the gum trees to savour the catch. The men and women, used to such attacks, held onto their baskets and troughs tightly with one hand and with the other brandished their knives and twigs picked on the way to ward them off.

Nilya chased off the dogs and threw stones at the curs that dared bark at him. If he threw stones at the kites and the vultures they flew off only to return the next moment. Nilya searched for meat he could saw off with his knife, but it was a tough job. Holding his breath and clenching his teeth, he scoured whatever he could. Shooing the dogs away, he hacked off pieces and put them into his pot. Tense all over, he worked hard. The ribs had little meat on them and the chunks that Kisnya had given him were the only good meat, the rest was all bones. But he wasn't wise enough to understand that. Suddenly a crow darted and poked at the cow's eyes. While trying to shoo him off Nilya saw the cow's tongue lolling down. Surprisingly nobody had noticed it – may be the cow had kindly saved it for him, he flattered himself. With all his might he cut it off and put it into his pot. Two dogs were fighting over a thigh bone and in the tug of war they dropped the bone. Nilya hurled a stone at them and as they scampered off he picked up the bone. There was a bit of meat on it, so he put it into his pot. Contented that he had more

than enough, he got up and put his knife away. Carrying the pot on his head, he started walking towards home.

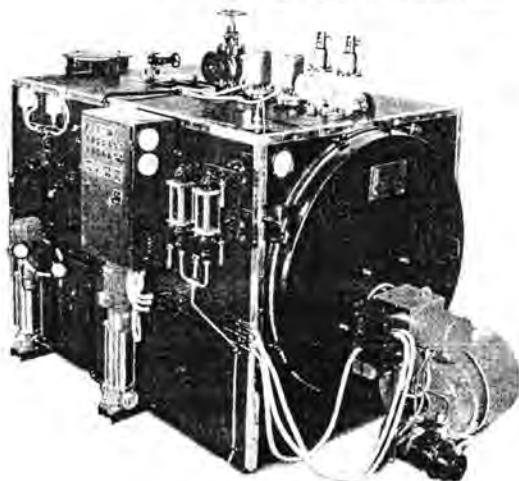
The birds and the beasts stirred again. Crows pounced on his trough. Nilya picked up a twig and brandished it over his head. Kites and vultures were quick to join the crows; one of them swooped down. In trying to chase them off with his twig Nilya started losing his grip on the pot. So he threw the twig away and with a firmer grip with both his hands he held the pot tightly. He quickened his steps. Now the dogs were at his heels, barking. As he ran, he tried to ward off the dogs and the birds. Suddenly he stepped on a bramble bush. He fell over and the thorns pricked him. As he was trying to recover his balance, the vultures came down heavily and the tightly gripped pot on his head fell off. The meat pieces scattered into the dust. Dogs pounced on them. Crows clamoured for them and managed to snatch a few. Vultures and kites carried away a couple of them. A dog made off with the bone it had lost to Nilya before. Nilya, still unable to get up from the brambles, threw stones at them and tried to shoo them away. But the dogs took away the bones. Nilya's feet were bleeding with the thorn-pricks. He couldn't move his legs. But he had to rescue his pot, with whatever was left in it. The dogs might dare to carry off the pot as well! Nilya pushed himself towards the pot, he stood the pot upright. He seemed to forget the pain and his bleeding feet as he collected the bones covered with dust and heaped them into his pot.

The birds are still hovering over his head, swooping and pecking, the dogs are barking. But Nilya is busy filling up his pot.

(Translated from the Marathi by Ashu Damle)

DR. AMITABH is a renowned Marathi short story writer and social worker.

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Reflections Serious and Facetious

Louella Lobo Prabhu

The Power of an Idea

The couple, Salman Rushdie and his partner, Padma Lakshmi passed through India recently. A group of fundamentalist Muslims, tried hard to tar and feather them. They did not succeed. Padma Lakshmi, in fact, was amused, rather than angry. She found the common people quite warm, and that they identified more with her, than with Salman. This seems to suggest, that very well educated people and simple folk are tolerant. It is the half-educated who are violent bigots.

In Pune, whose society has been exposed to many kinds of foreign culture, a recent biography of Shivaji was banned by the government, after mobs went on the rampage, against the bookshop and the library, where it had been prominently displayed. There was only one possibly offensive sentence in the book. One wonders,

who read it from cover to cover?

Out of seven fairly innocuous films which went to the Censor Board, headed by film-maker Anupam Kher, only two got "U" Certificates. The producers of the remaining five which got "A" were not displeased. It helps to sell the film better. Nothing can suppress the power of an idea. There was a time when Hitler's "Mein Kampf" transmogrified German society. Today, a few dusty copies may be lying in shops and are taught to students of History, Economics and Politics. It, and "Das Kapital" are no longer the living Bibles of the youth. Finally, when Pontius Pilate was brought the news that Jesus was entombed and his Philosophy with him, he uttered the prophetic words ... "I Wonder".

A Surprise Winner for this Year's Booker Award

Many times, the Nobel and the Booker Awards pick on absolute outsiders, and this year's one of them. His *nom de plume* is D.B.C. Pierre, and his real name Peter Finlay. He is a self-confessed drug addict, who is not sure whether he has kicked the habit permanently.

The very title of his book is "Vernon God Little". It does not make much sense, but four out of five judges commended the book for its corruscating black comedy, based on low life in America, provoked by the recent massacres in the United States. The three alphabets which make up *nom de plume*, stand for Dirty but clean Peter, as much a contradiction as the title of his book.

He says he was driven to write, after he had reached a dead end in his life. He told the press, that the prize money would only partially cover his sea of debt, when he was regularly on drugs. He has also plundered his friends for handouts, and not paid them back. The Booker could not have made a worse choice of the prize winner, if the character and life of the author are taken into account. But Oscar Wilde wrote, that there are no moral or immoral books – just good and bad books. Perhaps the Committee had this in mind, when they picked out this book, and its author for this year's prize, four out of five judges voting in its favour, after less than one hour.

The Railway Budget

Despite having thrown the British out of India, India still hangs on to many British institutions. Thus, though the revenue of some Ministries like Petrochemicals, show a larger revenue than the Railways, they are lumped together and probably passed by a voice vote, at the end of a session. The Railways have a special budget, which precedes the General Budget, and is indicative of the trend the latter will take. It, however, seems unfair, that a lame-duck government should be able to pass anything it likes, to enhance its poll performance.

This year's Railway Budget was preceded by farce. Members of the Congress rushed into the well of the House, because the Speaker had not mentioned Gandhiji in his speech. It was a full twenty minutes before the Minister could present his proposals.

Paraphrasing Coleridge, the list of the Budget was "Goodies, goodies, all the way, and not a rupee to pay aida (water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink)". The goodies are many.

New superfast trains, linking 17 cities with the

Capital; Railway Protection Force to take over additional responsibility for safety and security. Technology mission on rail safety, unreserved ticketing to be extended. Incentive scheme of frequent travellers. Expected growth in freight traffic 20 million tonnes and an additional 3% passengers.

The last two are the only clues as to how the promises will be redeemed. Instead of 17 new trains, it would have been better to upgrade tracks and bridges. More recent accidents have been caused by these lacunae. But then, they don't constitute the inputs for a pre-poll Budget.

Tragedy at the Haj

It was sad, indeed tragic, to learn that 244 people were killed, and virtually the same number injured during the Haj Celebrations. They were trampled and accidentally stoned to death, at that point when a pillar representing the devil, was being symbolically stoned. Two dead, and two injured are from India. Though the stones were supposed to be symbolic, they were not symbolic in their physical impact. This is not the first time such hassle has taken place. It has happened at least four times, in the '90s. Or it may be considered whether it needs to form an essential part of the ritual.

India must be the only secular nation in the world, which subsidises the 'hajjis'. Either this should not be done at all, or, in fairness, it should be extended to Christians who wish to visit Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Rome.

Comes the bigger question. Why people seem to suffer multiple deaths on mass pilgrimages, when they are going to be closer to their maker. Hopefully, they die to receive heavenly life promised to them, in their respective Holy Books.

Havel Vaclav wins the Gandhi Memorial Peace Prize

Topping a distinguished set of previous winners, Havel Vaclav is this year's winner of the Gandhi Peace Prize. It had a most eminent jury. The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India, ex-President Venkatraman and ex-Prime Minister I. K. Gujral. They were all unanimous in their verdict. The President gave the award before a circle of the *glitterati*. The award was most significant, because Vaclav is no longer a reigning Head of State. He brought the New Czechoslovakia into being, though, with his inspiring poems and plays. When the then Soviet government

imposed a ban on his publications, he ran an underground newspaper. He is in fact a later-day version of General de Gaulle, who kept the Free French Resistance flying, during the darkest days of the Second World War.

Advani used the occasion to polemicise India's peace initiatives as a leader of the SAARC and Asian zones. President Kalam raised the discussion to the level of peace, as the basic platform of a good life in a vibrating and pulsating democracy.

Concerning Religious Matters

Dr. Ambedkar, in 1956, renounced Hinduism, and embraced the Buddhist faith. On the same date in Bangalore, recently, there was a huge gathering of Dalits, of whom 5000 formally renounced Hinduism, and converted to Buddhism. They felt, that despite government's affirmative action, the stigma of caste still prevails. There were 22 oaths, they had to take. It was a solemn and yet a festive occasion. The point is, whether they really and truly embrace Buddhism, or whether they have converted for the benefit of their status in society. If the latter is true, the screen of genuine conversion is missing.

Mother Teresa's imminent canonisation has made it to all the papers. Something unusual is being done in her case. Drops of her blood were collected in 1997, at the expressed desire of the Vatican. These will be

encased in a silver box, for the Holy Mother's private chapel. He took a special, personalised interest in putting her on the fast track to sainthood, which normally takes much longer – she needs one more miracle to be canonised. One hopes that it will come in the lifetime of the present Pontiff, who did all the spadework for her canonisation.

The Pope himself completes 25 years of his tenure as Pontiff. While he remains a very charismatic man, a great traveller, and media-friendly, not reclusive, his fundamentalism has not done much for the institution he heads. Many people are turning against the fundamentalist Catholicism he preaches, as he will not compromise any tenet of the faith, when the signs of the times are to be found, in a world fast changing, and desirous that Catholicism should reflect this reality.

A Government Office

Ali Khwaja

It is the office of one particular department, but it may as well have been any other government office. The faces are interchangeable, the files unrecognizable (except to those complacent clerks who are lords and masters of their four walls).

One wall is full of gods of all varieties. There are shelves holding idols and lamps. Burnt out *agarbathis* and decaying flowers bear testimony to the devotion of the devotional. Calendars of three year vintage proudly display myriad gods in gaudy colours. Patches on the wall below each photo bear witness to supplications made every morning and evening.

No, it is not a temple. Not even a *puja* room. A glance on the other walls brings one back to earth. Crude notices in local and English language announce government regulations, many of them outdated. It is the office of one particular department, but it may as well have been any other government office. The faces are interchangeable, the files unrecognizable (except to those complacent clerks who are lords and masters of their four walls).

There is perpetual overcrowding, whether it is of people or of files. And the gods are not lacking in crowding the Eastern wall. The supplicants arrive punctually. The clerks arrive at their own whim and pleasure. And of course, the "*salibs*" arrive with all majesty much beyond their duty hours. No one dares question any person in authority. No one expects any courtesy or justice from them. The masses have become completely indoctrinated into accepting their fate. If their *karma* has brought them to the mercy of the officials, they have to suffer in silence, and pay through their nose

for getting what is their right as citizens.

Almost two hundred years of British rule ended two generations ago. Eighty percent of the present population of the country was born in free India. Free to bow before the "*brown salibs*", the legacy left behind by the British. Free to stand for hours in queues, free to bribe just to get what is rightfully theirs. And free to feel happy that they have not been tortured or exploited beyond their limits.

The Babus are beyond answerability. Even the stray upright senior official cannot set them right. For they have their contacts directly with their political masters. They have learnt the art of keeping all politicians on the right side, for these days power equations change rapidly. There is complete harmony between the politicians and the petty bureaucrats. The privileged seniors belonging to "All India Services" remain ensconced in their ivory towers, pretending that nothing is amiss. They sense the needs of the politicians, and very tactfully keep away from their manipulations. And regardless of their rank, they have a staunch faith that God will protect them, whether they protect the public or not. In fact, the Vidhana Soudha, the seat of power of the Karnataka State Government, has a large inscription boldly engraved on its front facade, reading: "Government Work is God's Work". We leave it to the imagination of readers to

deduce what the Babus interpret this as.

A small minority of bureaucrats and politicians control the fate of the masses. They are least interested in what happens to the common man. Their vision through bifocals is so short-sighted that they cannot see beyond their own noses. Fifty five years after Independence, we continue to be governed by them, and we keep producing newer breeds for every generation. One does not see a dawn beyond this darkness, but one can always pray (with apologies to the immortal Rabindranath Tagore):

"Where the supplicant is without fear ...

... and the head of the common man is held high;

Where knowledge of government regulations is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls of sections and departments;

Where words of the "concerned clerk" come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving to justify their salaries stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary, desert sand of dead habit of files and more files;

Where the mind of the Babus is led forward by Thee into ever widening thought and action -

Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country's government awake".

DR. ALI KHWAJA is an IIT graduate who has moved over to human behaviour and counselling.



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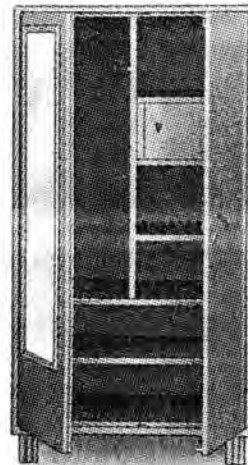
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Terrorism and the Media

Brig. S. C. Sharma

"It has become far more alluring for the frantic few to appear on the world stage of television than remain obscure guerillas of the bush" – J. B. Bell

1. In March 1997, a band of Hanafi Muslim led by the Khaalis Sect took over three buildings in Washington. A TV reporter saw and reported the lifting of food to 11 people hiding on the 5th floor which was broadcasted. The friends of hostage takers saw the TV from outside and informed Khaalis. Luckily, the Police were able to release them before being taken hostage. Such news coverage endangers lives.
2. The crew of a hijacked US aircraft were not so lucky. A radio channel from the Captain had escaped the attention of the hijackers and the Captain continued to pass information about the number and position of the hijackers to the police. A TV reporter came to know about it and the hijackers learnt of the communication from their friends watching TV. They not only closed down the radio but eliminated the Captain as well.
3. The terrorists rely on the media to further their terror motivated goals and the media utilize the terrorists acts as necessary or rewarding news items. At times state-sponsored terrorism seeks a low profile in the media while non-state sponsored terrorists seek high media exposure. Willingly or unwillingly, the media has come to serve the purpose of terrorists. While the relations between the media and terrorism have received increasing examination, solutions are more difficult to find. The media has a duty to the public to keep

them informed of events and educate them. This duty needs to be tempered by the obligations for the public good, particularly when safety of hostages or the larger public good is concerned. To the terrorists, media is a means to demoralize the government and obtain international sympathy or even intervention. Terrorists in China and USSR publish their demands in English.

These consequences are magnified by intimidating the press. It happened in Punjab. Only one paper, *Punjab Kesri* stood firm and the editor paid with his life. Media coverage of terrorist acts has three effects –

- (a) Contagion Effect – Media attention given to terrorist attacks encourages further violence.
- (b) Intimidation – The case in Punjab.
- (c) Immunization Effect – Enhances the public's level of tolerance and accept terror as a way of life.
- (d) Direct contact between media and terrorists hampers negotiations.
- (e) Excessive interviews with families of hostages increase stress.

The combined effect of the above three factors, is to perceive the effect of terror – violence in a magnified way and heighten the public's sense of insecurity and panic.

4. Terrorism is not a law and order

problem. It is a method of waging war. Just as some restraint or even censorship is acceptable in war, the same conditions apply to media coverage of terrorism. It is true that the realistic coverage of the Vietnam war led to the realization by the US people of the truth about violation of human rights and futility of the war. In the recent Iraq war, the US media had relied on information made available by the authorities rather than have their eyes and ears on the ground. When the word 'national security' can be uttered with some legitimacy, the mainstream press is likely to adopt a patriotic pose. The press displays a measure of autonomy to the extent of differences within the elite. Not all reporters are unbiased and this trend was noticeable during the Gulf War.

5. News has become more savage over the last twenty years and ruthless in pursuit of a story. Newsrooms construct misleading stories – even lies out of verifiable facts. When news only tells us what we want to hear, it displays a contempt for audiences. It aims to capture the audience. The media has been harnessed closely to the war effort, usually willingly.
6. We need to evolve guidelines for the media coverage of terrorist acts and movements to promote the best interests of the people.

BRIG. S. C. SHARMA is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

The Legend of Devrai

Prem Vaidya

Life, according to Indian tradition does not regard man as the sole master of the world. Each living thing on this planet – animate or inanimate – has its own part to play according to the law of nature and we greedy men, better follow this dictum well and learn to restore and preserve Nature.

Puneites will remember the first fortnight of the New Year 2004 with mixed feelings. On January 5, the world-renowned Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute was ransacked by vandals in the name Shivaji. Thousands of valuable books were destroyed. And, on the 11th, at a memorable function Mr. Mohan Dharja released the book - *Sacred Groves & Ethnobotany**. The location for the function was well chosen - near Pune, right inside the thick forest - 'Devrai' (Sacred Grove)!

The book is based on the rare research papers of late Shri V. D. Vartak, Ph.D., an eminent botanist and the occasion was to remember him on his second death anniversary. I had occasion to work closely with Dr. Vartak while making a documentary film on DEVRAI. His knowledge about Devrai was mind-boggling.

Since 1975 March 21 has been observed as "World Forest Day" to remind ourselves the importance of preserving our forest cover to save our planet.

It was also the decade 'when the Ozone hole was discovered which was associated with increasing incidents of skin cancer and when large tracts of

Brazilian rainforest went up in smoke,¹ Year-after-year, all over the world, we are facing increasingly warmer summers and decreasing water resources. All over the world 2002 recorded a summer of extremes. In the last several decades global temperature reading has been rising sharply. For the first time climate experts concluded that humans responsible for global warming. The time has come to give this serious thought.

Please remember, whatever material has gone into the composition of our planet has also gone into the composition of human cells. Everything in the cosmos is composed of 'Panch Mahabhut' or five fundamental elements of Nature in various permutations and combinations. They are:

1. Prithvi (Earth)
2. AP (liquid or water)
3. Agni (Energy or fire)
4. Vayu (air)
5. Akash (Ether or sky)

So, what is good for keeping planet Earth healthy is equally good for human being, animals, plant life and all that exists on it. With this holistic view of life, man has to learn to respect his surroundings. The law of nature takes care to balance and maintain a state of equilibrium on this beautiful planet. To do this, it works very hard. For instance to create a layer of one inch of top soil, which is the most important and fertile portion, nature requires about 500 to 1000

years. If you were to dig up a spadeful of forest earth, you would be surprised at the number different creatures and life forms you would find. *The Forest* referred to it as 'The hidden world of the soil.' When scientists examined the top one inch of soil what did they find?

"There was an average of 1,356 living creatures present in each square foot, including 865 mites, 265 sprintails, 22 millipedes, 19 adult beetles and various numbers of 12 other forms. Had an estimate also been made of the microscopic population, it might have ranged up to two billion bacteria and many millions of fungi, protozoan and algae-in a mere teaspoonful of soil."² In India particularly, since ancient times and to this day, the relationship between Earth, man, animal and nature has been held in high esteem by our ancestors. We have the monkey-god Hanuman, an elephant head Ganesha to worship. River Ganga and the mountain Himalaya are dear to us. The Tulsi plant and Banyan tree are sacred to us; even the green grass called 'Durva' is supposed to be an immortal plant for us. These are all a must in many

* For further enquiries and copies of the book, contact: Mr. A. D. Nagpurkar, M/s. Prism Publications, A Divn. of M/s. Timely Management Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd., 15/4, Shivpuri, Near Chembur Naka, S.T. Road, Chembur, Mumbai 400071. Phone: (022) 25295725. Fax: (022) 25242484. Email: ajitn@vsnl.com / tmcs@indiatimes.com / www.timelymanagement.com



Mr. Mohan Dharja releasing the book, *Sacred Groves & Ethnobotany*, on January 11, 2004.

of our day-to-day rituals.

Sir John Marshall in his monumental work 'Mohenjo Daro and the Indus Civilisation' refers to tree-worship as apart of the religion of the people of that time. He had found some seals portraying the tree goddess Apanyani - the Queen of the Forest. Forests in India were considered to be a place of peace and learning for princes and paupers who went in search of knowledge. Krishna and Sudhama lived in the Sandipani Ashram in the midst of thick forests of central India for their education. Lord Buddha was born in the Lumbini groves. Dandakaranya, Khandavavana, Ashokvava, Nimisharanya, Chitrakut, Vrindavan, Panchavati, Madhuvan, Dwait and Kamayka were important forests where ashrams existed as mentioned in the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharat. The Nimishyaranya was famous for the great gathering of many sages in ancient India.

Forests maintain a highly sensitive and delicately balanced ecosystem and are a source of renewable energy. They produce a good variety of products and herbs so essential for human welfare. Forests have to be treated as a national asset" says Chanakya in his *Arthashastra*. It has been given to us by nature, preserved by our ancestors to be passed on to our future generation. The late Dr. Vartak and his associates of the Botany group at the Agarkar Research Institute, Pune, worked dedicatedly and came out with significant findings on more than 1,500 Devrais - Sacred Groves - connected with ancient and medieval times and their present position in Maharashtra. If their research work continues, they estimate the number could grow upto 5,000.

These Devrais are dedicated to various deities who are considered to reign supreme in their groves. They are of both sexes and named accordingly: Anjubai, Kalubai, Sateri, Wagjai, Gangai, Dakhani, Shilka devrais are the few named here which stand for motherly love. Others denote fatherly love like: Bhiroba, Somaji, Jagoab, Mhasoba, Mahadeo, Ramling, Pavdoba, Shankar

and so on. According to Dr. Madhav Gadgil and Dr. Vartak, "Removal of any plant material - even a piece of deadwood - or killing any animal or bird from the sacred grove is taboo." The deities are of simple icon and they are mostly found in the centre of the thick forest or bushes which sometimes can be inaccessible. Manmade construction around them is a rarity. The villagers or the tribes around these Devrais have firmly believe that any untoward action may result in difficulties or even death to those who dare to defile the sacred grove.

According to the villagers at Mangaon in Velhe taluk of Pune the Sacred Grove of the Goddess Janni Balak Ram Jhavde, a wood merchant who defied the sacred rule and felled tree died vomiting blood. The villagers concluded that this was a punishment meted out by the Goddess Jani because of the violation of her sacred abode! Many of these sacred groves are treasure troves of rare herbs that have immense medicinal value. Due to the unshakable faith in the Devrai deities, they have maintained a more or less stable ecosystem in producing and protecting these sacred plants in cyclic rhythms. According to Prof. R. Kanan of Palani in Tamil Nadu, the Palani hill-ock has a presiding deity, Lord Muruga. Around its temple is a dense forest, which has about 3,000 medicinal herbs in the region.

A survey of the Karjat Tribble Block, near Mumbai revealed that the local tribes preserve nature in accordance with an ancient faith. These Sacred Groves are the legacies left to us by our ancestors and help conserve the 'man and nature ratio' in a proper balance. Most of these Devrais have some of the most magnificent specimens of trees, plants and creepers which are becoming rare like 'Behda' (*Terminalia bellerica*), 'Nagakesar' (*Maesua ferea*), 'Tampatra' (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), 'Bok' (*Bischofia javanica*), 'Rudraksha' (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*), 'Hirda' (*Terminalia chebula*), 'Kanjaital' (*Myristica Attenuata*), 'Adulsa' (*Adhatoda*), 'Nirgudi' (*Vitax negundo*)

and 'Davbindu' (*drosera indica*).

Our sages have given details in the *Agnipurana*, in a chapter called 'Pushpadhyaya Kathanam' names of various flowers, fruits and plants to be offered to various deities so that their growth is continued and their utility is also known to generation to come. Apart from the availability of valuable plants, these Devrais are often the only source of water. Geologists have said that the presence of a large number of undisturbed trees makes for good ground-water storage.

During the filming of a documentary, I had visited Pal Devrai near Gargoti village in Kolhapur district. This Devrai covers five hectares of land and the presiding deity is Goknath. This Devrai has a perennial source of water all the year round for the entire village population including their livestock. 'Bok' (*Bischofia javanica*) tree in this Devrai is the indicator of the water source. At a number of places one can see water oozing out from the earth. Dr. Vartak and his team at the Agarkar Research Institute, Pune, have recorded valuable statistics of this Devrai including the girth of the splendid big trees that required five adults to encircle with both arms outstretched for the measurement of the base trunk.

Found in this Devrais are also rare herbs. Several leaves and plants have benefited patients suffering from illnesses ranging from common ailments to crippling ones. One of our ancient sages, Atharvan in a strident call, has cautioned us: "*Dhara rakshati rakshit*" - 'An earth protected protects'. Life, according to Indian tradition does not regard man as the sole master of the world. Each living thing on this planet - animate or inanimate - has its own part to play according to the law of nature and we greedy men, better follow this dictum well and learn to restore and preserve Nature.

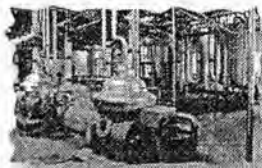
MR. PREM VAIDYA a documentary film maker with the Films Division (since retired) can be contacted at premvaidya@hotmail.com

1 NYT News Service 29.8.2002

2 *Awake*, March 22, 1976

We were there ...

When



'Operation Flood' provided milk for millions in India • When

fertilizer projects triggered the

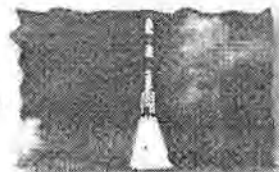


'Green Revolution' • When power

plants



unlocked the energy of the atom • When



India took a giant leap in aerospace • When



our defence services guarded

the nation's honour • When oil platforms tapped the riches below the



ocean bed • When



bridges and highways knit the country

together • When steel plants provided spine and



sinews to industry

• When IT



carried the Indian tricolour around the world



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Why I'll Climb More Scaffolding And Towers

Tenzing Tsundue

What India needs is clarity of thought and action which can be done only by taking into account all facts and truths of the present and the past, and chart a course of action for a great future.

Once, as a child, my parents left me with my grandparents while they went for a movie to the next village. They said I wouldn't be able to walk back home in the night. So I broke the family water pot. My intention was that of a protest rather than to create a swamp in the kitchen.

Last month (February 2003), Zhu Rongji, Premier of the People's Republic of China, visited India. For me the Big Brother of my enemy country had come strolling nearby. I wanted to tell him in his face "Get out of my country", and the best way to do that was to scream. I climbed the scaffolding and reached the 14th floor of the Oberoi Towers where Zhu was addressing a conference of Indian diplomats and business tycoons. From there, I unfurled the Tibetan National Flag, a red banner which read 'FREE TIBET', flung in the air 500 leaflets reasoning why the protest, and shouted slogans. In no time, curtains were raised and every window on the entire floor had Chinese faces looking at me. I was proud to wave the Tibetan National flag at them. That one moment is worth it all. Luckily I dropped the idea to slap Zhu in the conference room. Later I wrote this while in police custody:

*'He was tall
arms akimbo
like the Everest
I climbed the Everest
And I was taller
My hands free'*

The Tibetan freedom struggle in exile has been more symbolic than confrontational as in Tibet. In the

past 40 years all we have been able to achieve is presenting the real Tibet as a country where real people of flesh and blood live with same capacity to feel pain and anger. We have been able to demystify Tibet from the clichéd notion of Tibet as *Shangri-La*, where lamas walk two inches off the ground.

But the freedom struggle seems to have stopped growing from the zenith of sympathy we reached when His Holiness the Dalai Lama received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989. Ever since the Tibetan Government-in-Exile started dealing with China from 1979, the Tibetan freedom struggle stopped being a mass movement. Unless it becomes a powerful mass movement, I don't believe the exile government can regain freedom for Tibet – dreaming of dialogue with China. It's been 30 years, and all we received is a set of unacceptable pre-conditions "to consider for talks".

Now, two railway lines are being laid from northeastern Tibet to Lhasa. This will flood Tibet with Chinese and they will drain the resources; the roof of the world will totter under its ecological imbalance. Soon the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Indus, Yangtze and Mekong will flood with blood and corpses. The heavy build-up of arms and nuclear missile bases in Tibet couldn't have been conceived in Beijing to use against unarmed Tibetans.

A general apathy over Tibet and this non-action "non-violent freedom struggle" is slowly killing the movement. Though exotic Tibet sells in the West, there are hardly

any takers when it comes to tackling the real issue. The issue is Independence!

The next twenty years is a crucial period for Tibet. This will see the fate of Tibet decided: life or death. Once the centre disappears the periphery will be thrown into chaos. The "non-violent and peaceful Tibetans" will make one last desperate act to survive as a people, as a civilization. How violent will it be?

The very nature of the Tibetan problem is political, and it has to have a political solution. We are grateful to India for whatever help and support she extended to us, but if the Tibetan problem has to be solved she should support the freedom struggle.

Yesterday India fell for China when Mao Zedong came with "friendship ties", screaming "*Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai*", but later they backstabbed India in 1962. Prime Minister Nehru couldn't withstand the shock. Today Zhu Rongji is extending "economic ties", screaming "*Hindi-Buy-Buy-Chini*".

We have known the Chinese for long as a difficult neighbour. We know we are fighting a losing battle, with the world given up on us. We may perish, but for India it will leave a cancerous wound along its 3,500 km permanent border with China.

Will India wake up to this reality? It is time we worked together for the Independence of Tibet and for a safe and secure border for India.

MR. TENZING TSUNDUE is a Tibetan poet and activist of the Tibetan Freedom Struggle.

Globalisation, Forums, Resistance and Another World!

A Volunteer's Views on the Happenings at the World Social Forum

Ronald Rebello

The World Social Forum though covered widely and prominently in almost every regional, national and international media was ignored by the Indian politicians. Such a gigantic socio-political event, which invoked the participation of over a lakh people from 114 countries, was ignored by them as another rights based jamboree. While the chief minister atleast visited the venue and was gheraoed by the NBA activists the 'Mumbaiker' Bal Thackeray who otherwise comments on anything and everything did not roar about the event knowing fully well that his 'roar' was no match to the cries of those ultra-activists for justice, liberty, equality and a new world free from fundamentalism, patriarchy and imperialism. And what happened to our 'public friendly' or more appropriately 'children friendly' President? What prevented him from even commenting about the event which also prominently focussed on children's rights, child labour, trafficking?

The environment at the WSF venue was a huge litter of pamphlets and plastics. The *Parishar Bhaginis* (environment cleaners) of Stree Mukti Sanghatna worked day and night cleaning the mess. Whether they could participate in the activities for another world was hardly thought about. Likewise, the young boy cleaning the public toilet had no clue as to what was happening for another world. For him his world was to work from morning 8-10 pm with a salary of Rs.1000. In between he would catch a glimpse of the

masses or the cultural dances from the toilet window!

Unlike the toilets at the venue, which were kept clean by the workers, the residents of Bangur Nagar where the 12,000 upcountry delegates were camping, grumbled about the unclean and chocked toilets without water.

Likewise, the air at the WSF was chocked as it had become a smoker's paradise with a large number of men and women smokers. They forgot that another world could have been possible atleast by making it possible for their neighbours to breathe, without diseases caused by polluted air.

Out of the 650 parliamentarians who were expected from around the world for the world parliamentary forum held at the SRP grounds, only around 200-250 turned up. MPs from India, Pakistan, Sweden and UK were present. Prominent among the Indian MPs attending, were Ram Vilas Paswan, Ramdas Athawale, Abu Asim Azmi and R. S. Gavai. Besides, there were MLAs from Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra.

The Tibetan representatives were kept away from participating in the parliamentary forum by the coordinator of the Forum as he had to "conform to the formal position of many participating countries". However an outspoken parliamentarian denounced this openly (which received wide applause) at the end of the first session after

which the Tibetans were called in by the embarrassed organisers.

Our Indian parliamentarians were cool and at their usual best! Like a cow chews his cud coolly, R. S Gavai chewed his tobacco-supari calmly, in style spat it on his hand and threw the remnants on the floor. Parliamentary habit! During lunch time while the MPs of various countries were mixing together our Indian MPs preferred to remain confined along with their cronies. The MLAs from Bengal after lunch enjoyed their siesta with music from the FM radios provided for translation purposes.

The ambience of the venue was quite imperial. The organisers of the WSF who had prohibited the entry of Coca-cola, Pepsi and other multinational fast food joints at the venue, on the principle that these multinationals were exploiting the people and the market, had permitted a special stall serving Coca-cola, Pepsi, Aquafina, Canada Dry for the parliamentary forum! Parliamentarians do not bear the brunt of such companies. So there could be an exception for them!

The Mumbai Resistance Forum (MRF) on the other hand was not so crowded. I visited the first day and the closing day just before their march left for *August Kranti Maidan*. I spoke to some of the stall owners regarding their preference and intention of participating in the MRF rather than the WSF. The stall owners whom I spoke to said that they didn't want to participate in

the WSF as it was funded by dubious organisations outside India with some agenda in mind. When I asked one of the stall owners (international league of peoples struggle) what would be their strategy in achieving justice, equality and a new world they said that it could be only militant. To them, militancy meant neither armed struggle nor bloody revolution, nor it was peace, but a struggle where they could fight back if any one attacked them. They could not define the meaning of militancy! Call it defence or liberation or

revolution. While a couple of other organisations did not agree with the principle of an armed revolution they did not participate in the WSF on the sole principle that it was funded by vested interests with an intention of diverting attention from the real problems. They averred that unlike the WSF organisations who are paper fighters, the participants in MR are field fighters. They also expressed concern that grass root organisations in the WSF were unable to express freely.

The students of the revolutionary student forum (from North East India) stated that they did not participate in the WSF as it was more like a fair without clear objectives. According to them peaceful means were taken for granted at times by the imperialists and exploiters. One of them also emotionally remarked "If a mad dog comes with an intention of biting you, you cannot go and hug him or oppose him by peaceful means. There is no option but to silence him".

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

The World Social Forum is not an organisation, not a united front platform, but ...an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a society centred on the human person. (From the WSF Charter).

The first WSF was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001 and the response was overwhelming. About 20,000 persons from some 500 organisations participated. So, it was decided that the WSF be held annually.

This is the 4th WSF and the theme is "Another World is Possible". This is the biggest, maddest event with some 1,20,000 persons from 120 countries participating. In spite of the multitude, there was great discipline and the *khakee* (the police) simply had nothing to do.

91 years old Capt. Lakshmi Sehgal, associate of Subhash Chandra Bose presided over the inaugural function. The co-president, V. P. Singh, former Prime Minister of India could not come due to illness. The Chairman of the Reception Committee, Dr. Shanti Patel, 83 years old, former Mayor of Mumbai, Member of Parliament and Union Leader made a mistake in his welcome speech. He said during this century we will ensure that we have a better world (obviously he forgot that we were only 3 years into new century and there were 97 years more, when none of us would be present. Who has the patience to wait for 97 years for a better world? We want it today. We want it now.

The other speakers included Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi (Iran), Ahmed Ben Bella (Algeria), Chico Whitaker (Brazil) one of the founders of WSF, Jeremy Corby, anti-

war Labour MP, Mustafa Barghouti (Palestine), Abduk al Rekabhy (Iraq), Arundhati Roy and Shabana Azmi from India. The speeches were not inspiring. Whatever is known was spoken. That America is a big bully, that Israel is building a wall, that IMF, WB, WTO should go. But no one touched on how to do it. There was no keynote address. There was no agenda, no vision, no leadership visible.

Delegates have come from 120 countries. Some 2000 media men have descended to cover the event.

Meeting halls can accommodate minimum 100 persons and maximum 8000. To cater to the delegates, 110 stalls have been put up. Food is as cheap as Rs.20 (1/2 dollar) to as high as Rs.300 (6 dollars). Water bottles were available for sale, but refill is Rs.5, which poor participants and tribals can ill-afford and was inadequate. The total cost for this extravaganza is Rs.10 crores (100 million rupees) and already there is a criticism that this money has come from rich NGOs which get grants from the MNCs.

Simultaneously, Mumbai Resistance is also being held across from the WSF venue. There, about 10,000 delegates have registered. Mumbai Resistance is a motley group of radical thinkers, NGOs working at the grass root levels, communist parties, etc. Police in mufti are keeping watch on them. Mumbai Resistance and the critics say that : (a) WSF is an ineffectual forum; (b) debates lack consensus; (c) no clear strategies or solid alternatives; (d) it can at best be dismissed as a large festival event.(e) It is an ill-focussed talking shop.

Judging by the inaugural function and since I know most of the organisers, speakers (those who spoke today and those to follow), I would agree with the above criticism.

From a brief report by Dr. Leo Rebello on the first day's programme.

The MRF had the participation of the most poor and marginalized. Prominent representations consisted of Dalits from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, people from West Bengal and the North East. There was also a word going around that members of the pro-Khalistan force had come to take part in the MRF forum. The issues at the WSF and the MRF were the same but the strategies differed. The participants at the MRF felt that no one could attach a tag that peaceful means are better than militant means of revolt. It differs from situation to situation, person to person and organisation to organisation. The slogan of the participants in MRF was "destroy imperialist world. Build people's world"

Coming to the common theme

of both the events, the hep word going around since the late 1990s - "Oppose globalisation", will not lead us anywhere. Opposing globalisation today has become a fashion, with people being carried away on the bandwagon. They forget that globalisation is not a new phenomenon but as old as the 15th century when Vasco da Gama came to India, which was the beginning of overseas trade. It is the imperialism and exploitation happening in the process of globalisation that needs to be opposed. While some take a stand of opposing even "humanised globalisation", others oppose "all forms of globalisation". Opposition has become so rigid that people are unaware of the original concepts of globalisation - of governance whereby a democratic world government can be established

leading to globalisation of democracy; globalisation of justice with an international criminal court established for dispensing justice globally; globalisation of world decorum and order through world law and constitution; globalisation of dignity where a person from the region of Afghanistan or the Congo is on par with a person from the region of America!

Let our motto be not to oppose 'all forms' of globalisation but exploitation in the process of globalisation. Let us propose globalisation of governance, peace, justice and dignity as a new world resolution, for another world is possible with this kind of globalisation!

MR. RONALD REBELLO can be contacted at yoursfrankly@rediffmail.com

Indian Citizens of Foreign Origin

Mr. Soli Sorabjee, Attorney General of India, has opined that "an Indian Citizen of Foreign Origin can hold high office". (Meeting in the National Law School of India University, Bangalore on 18th May. His opinion, I am afraid may hold good in certain exceptional cases.

"Many full-born and full-blown Indians can be more unpatriotic than those born otherwise" is not at all a relevant issue here. Whether or not "the person is honourable and trustworthy" can be known only after a test case. But, by that time, there is a possibility of felony, with disastrous consequences to the country, itself.

To my mind, there can be only two exceptions. Firstly, a person may enter this country as a child, grows here, identifies and integrates fully with this country and, finally, seeks citizenship. Secondly, a person may enter this country as a missionary due to love of the country and its people, seek its citizenship without dilly-dallying. There is no harm in considering their case for "first class" citizenship. All others should be denied the "first class".

Consider a person from country 'A' getting citizenship of country 'B'. Suppose, there is a war between the two countries. Will it not be impossible for the person to be more loyal to country 'A' itself. Yes, "it is a matter of heart". In his heart of hearts, he remains a citizen of 'A'. Consciously or otherwise, he will try to help his motherland. At any rate, there will at least be a conflict in his mind leading to divided loyalty. Is it not dangerous

for country 'B'?

Take the case of our ladies who marry late. Already, their mindset is towards their parental home. Hence, invariably, they find it difficult, nay, even impossible to integrate fully with the husband's kith and kin. Divided loyalty! But, then, it is human nature.

Here is the case of a lady - not born in this country - who married a person who happened to be an Indian. Yes, "accident of birth". Only on that account, she entered the country. But, then, she took a couple of years to seek citizenship. That is to say, she was dilly-dallying in deciding the issue - Italy or India? Therefore, there was a conflict in her mind. This cannot be the character of a strong mind. Then, why should we take it for granted that she has her heart fully here?

That is why many countries, like the USA, never confer "first-class" citizenship on persons of foreign origin. As a matter of abundant precaution, we too should adopt the same policy. Even Caesar's wife should be above suspicion. Persons of foreign origin should be, therefore, denied certain high Offices.

I am glad that Mr. Sorabjee has no objection if any person wants to raise the issue. Hence, in fairness to all concerned and in the interest of the State; our President should seek the Supreme Court's opinion

K. N. Krishna Prasad,
Mysore, Karnataka.

Feedback on *Freedom First* No.459

Hindu Economics: Appears to be a belated and inscrutable 'same said goal' by that learned person whose name, if I am right, means: "lover of the country" Are the two learned people, cited in the footnote alive to answer? I do not know why continually column 1 line 1 on page 44 is bracketed with an exclamation mark? I am inclined to do that for that! continual and continuous have got distinct usage and in the context of 'prices' it is correct to use 'continual'

Is Mahathma Gandhi An Alien? I came across a very strange approach from a co-commuter on the Chennai Electric train! We should take it as one more manifestation of the variegated human mind! In effect, he was trying to make out that what impelled Gandhiji, after his England education and law practice in a British dominion, South Africa, to return to India and start the freedom struggle was akin to Chanakya; greatly offended by the shabby treatment meted out to him by the Nanda king, who pulled him away from his seat at a public feast, resulting in his tuft being disarrayed, this brahmin vowed to tie up his tuft only after dislodging the Nanda dynasty. So he did, by training the Gupta clan in statecraft and armed tactics, in their hideout in the woods. The co-commuter would have us believe that it was the parallel disgrace of being thrown out of the train compartment in Africa by arrogant and colour conscious Englishmen that prompted Gandhiji to wage a relentless struggle against them in India! I leave it to the thinking of your esteemed readers.

Feedback On FF458: I have been "transplanted" to Mysore without my consent or even knowledge! Editor Raju kindly note! (*the writer who lives in Guduvancherry in Tamil Nadu and not Mysore - Ed.*)

Ramnath Goenka Doughty Cham-pion Of Press Freedom: Should not the *New Indian Express* Management think of instituting an Award for dauntless journalists or news-papers? Or is there one already which I have regrettably missed to note, I will stand corrected!

Euthanasia Debate: An across the grain view is that this euthansia is another facet of essential human selfishness! While active and affordable, do we care about the sufferings of others? Once we suffer a serious ailment there is none to help and we do not want to endure suffering and call it quits! All philosophy and religious commandments, sin of previous birth *et al* simply vanish!

Creating Scientific Outlook: Hinduism or any other religion, if practised properly, is scientific. Take the Hindu practice of fasting on *Ekadasi*, every fourteen days, and partaking food early the following day-break; As a result of the fasting, the blood sugar would have come down! "The variety of greens cooked and consumed on the *dwadasya* day (after the previous *ekadasi* fast) is called "*Ahathi Kerai*" and is known to be rich in blood sugar!" A Vedic verse says, "Animals with holes in their ear lobes are mammals" Now this puts Man, and the unsuspected Bat and Whale, in the same group! What Science!"

The practice of Brahmins to tie their sacred thread around their right ear lobe, while going to the privy has a very scientific reason behind. It is not just to make sure that the sacredness of the thread is not lost in the toilet. A nerve ending of the vagus network is at that point and when pressure is applied by the knotting of the sacred thread the impulse travels to the larger intestine and makes the passage of

stools easier!

A Theme For 2004: has set me thinking, and I am unable to pinpoint one at the moment. Is it eradication of AIDS by virtuous living or curbing corruption by developing contentedness of mind or a general toning up of our life style at home, in society and the workplace, equivalent to the high level of performance from our cricket team and make us mad at ourselves at our infractions as we do with a missed catch or a badly hit boundary!

N. DHARMESHWARAN can be reached on natesand2001@yahoo.com

A Poem for Computer Users over 40

A Computer was something on TV
From a science fiction show of note
A Window was something you hated to clean
And Ram was the father of a goat.
Meg was the name of my girlfriend
And Gig was a job for the night
Now they all mean different things
And that really Mega Bytes.
An Application was for employment
A Program was a TV show
A Cursor used profanity
A Keyboard was a piano.
A Memory was something that you lost with age
A CD was a bank account
And if you had a 3-inch floppy
You hoped nobody found out.
Compress was something you did to the garbage
Not something you did to a file
And if you Unzipped anything in public
You'd be in jail for a while.
Log On was adding wood to the fire
Hard Drive was a long trip on the road
A Mouse pad was where a mouse lived
And a Backup happened to your commode.
Cut's what you did with a pocket knife
Paste you did with glue
A Web was a spider's home
And a Virus was the flu.
I guess I'll stick to my pad and paper
And the Memory in my head.
I hear nobody's been killed in a Computer crash
But when it happens they wish they were dead.

Author Unknown - From the Internet
Contributed by Mr. Cyrus Guzder



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The Perils of a Criminal Retrial

Nitin G. Raut

Nowhere under the criminal law is it stated that witnesses turning hostile is a ground for retrial.

The acquittal of the accused in the Best Bakery Case (BBC) has stirred up an uproar in a manner as if it was the first time in the history of criminal jurisprudence that witnesses had turned hostile! It led to certain NGOs and the National Human Rights Commission to file a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court under Article 32 of the Constitution of India against the order of acquittal of the accused in the BBC and ask for transfer of cases outside Gujarat even before the time to file the Criminal Appeal had expired.

The Gujarat Government did prefer the Criminal Appeal being the remedy available under the law. The Supreme Court not satisfied with the grounds adopted in the Criminal Appeal directed the State of Gujarat to amend the Criminal Appeal. The same was thereafter duly amended as per the directions and requirements of the Supreme Court. The Gujarat High Court heard the Criminal Appeal and upheld the acquittal of the accused in the BBC. (The full text of the judgement is however not available at the time of going to the Press). There was also an indiscriminate demand for retrial of the BBC made by the NGOs and the NHRC.

Therefore the circumstances under which a retrial can be ordered requires examination.

Under Section 378 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), the High Court is invested with the appellate powers in the event of acquittal. It can also set aside the order of acquittal and order conviction but that can also be done

only on the basis of evidence recorded by the trial court. This is because the trial court is the court which has the benefit of seeing the witness in the witness box. It is thus clear that in the event of acquittal or conviction, there is provision under the law for appeal against the acquittal or conviction.

The question of retrial came in for detailed scrutiny by the Supreme Court while dealing with the revisionary powers of the High Court to order a retrial in *Akalu Ahir and Ors., Appellants vs. Ramdeo, Respondent* (AIR 1973 Supreme Court, 245) Justice I. D. Dua sitting on the Bench presided over by Justice K. K. Mathew, while dealing with the issue of retrial has held that "... normally retrial should not be ordered unless there is some infirmity rendering the trial defective". The Learned Judge observed, "The object of limiting the right of appeal against the order of acquittal to the State Government was to ensure that such appeals are filed only when there has been miscarriage of justice and not when inspired by vindictiveness". Justice Dua has pointedly observed that, "It is only in glaring cases of injustice resulting from some violation of fundamental principles of law by the trial court in the course of trial, that the High Court is empowered to set aside the order of acquittal and direct the retrial of the acquitted accused person" and such power "should be exercised in exceptional cases and with great care and caution. Trials are not to be lightly set aside when such orders expose the accused persons to a fresh trial with all its consequential harassment". There-

fore there are limitations in the Court's jurisdiction to interfere with an order of acquittal and if exercised it should be only in exceptional cases when "there is glaring defect in the procedure or there is a manifest error on the point of law and consequently there has been a flagrant miscarriage of justice". The Court also cautioned that "ordering retrial" should not be an indirect method of converting acquittal into one of conviction.

Thus it can be seen that although retrial is permissible under the Indian criminal justice system, the remedy of retrial is to be exercised rarely if there is manifest error and glaring defect in procedure or there is grave error on point of law and on both grounds there is miscarriage of justice, i.e. the accused who were really guilty were acquitted.

The BBC where the accused are acquitted does not fall within the parameters laid in the aforesaid case and the reasons set out therein.

It should not be forgotten that in an offence under the criminal law at stake is the life and liberty of a person. Under the criminal law the accused is presumed to be innocent till proven guilty. Acquittal fortifies such innocence. Can such a perverse demand for retrial be allowed to turn the process of law on its head by converting acquittal into a conviction. Such motivated demand for retrial will make a mockery of criminal justice. If retrial is ordered, while evidence has been already recorded in the first trial, it will strike at the roots of the Doctrine of Double Jeopardy under Article 20(2)

of the Constitution of India.

Article 20 of the Constitution reads as under:

20(1) No person shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of a law in force at the time of the commission of the act charged as an offence, nor be subject to a penalty greater than that which might have been inflicted under the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence.

(2) No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once.

(3) No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

Under Article 20(2) of the Constitution, no person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once. In short, it expounds the Doctrine of Double Jeopardy viz, that no person shall be tried twice for the same offence after the prosecution and punishment. There is a view held that this Doctrine will not be applicable where there is acquittal, but even if this be so, retrial cannot be the remedy where there is a provision for appeal. Our Constitution thus bars a second trial for the same offence. The protection against double jeopardy is also enshrined in the Constitution of the United States of America. The U.S. Constitution not only prohibits second punishment but also a second trial under the Fifth Amendment.

Even the power of retrial vested with the International Criminal Court under Article 81 is limited in its nature. Article 14(7) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states:

"No one shall be liable to be tried or punished again for an offence for which he has already been *finally* convicted or acquitted in accordance with the law and penal procedure of each country". The key

is "finally" because acquittal by a tried court is not final. Therefore under the Indian criminal law system, there is an appeal provided against acquittal or conviction to the High Court which in effect is a final court of appeal. If any party is aggrieved by the order of the High Court, it is by way of special leave to the Supreme Court which is only a Court of Special Jurisdiction.

In the BBC, the ostensible concern of some NGOs and the English media is a dangerous attempt to subject someone to a vigilante style of public trial without accountability. By launching a media blitzkrieg the trial is sought to be politicised with a distinct ideological slant. In such an eventuality, the likelihood of an innocent being punished by sheer force of events driven by public campaign rather than by judicial process, will sabotage the foundations of the Rule of Law.

In England also, similar campaigns have occurred against acquittals of some Irish Republican Army bombers, completely overlooking the judicial systems and the remedies available thereunder against acquittal or conviction. Therefore judicial systems have to be cautious and circumspect on the issue of retrial demanded by vested interests and media outcry. In England too, it is a considered view that in case of certain acquittals, the Press is responsible for prejudicial reporting which are considered as campaigns to influence judicial process. Therefore a fair trial – the bedrock of any judicial system – is one thing but a retrial is no substitute for a fair trial. It will strike at the root of the basic right of equality before the law.

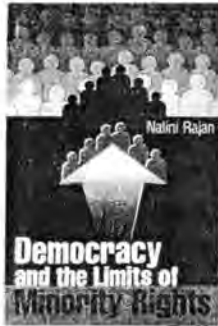
Therefore, the strident demand for retrial of the BBC made by certain NGOs and the NHRC is with utter disregard to the procedure laid down by law or as to the consequences that would follow in

the event of retrial, more so, in a criminal trial. Nowhere under the criminal law is it stated that witnesses turning hostile is a ground for retrial. Such demand for retrial strikes at the root of fundamental rights which forms the core of the "basic structure" of our Constitution.

If this be the position in law, consider the implications of a retrial in the context of cases like the acquittals in the BBC. It will not just open a Pandora's box but will wreck havoc in the dispensation of criminal justice. A bad precedent will be set as any aggrieved party in a criminal case will then be at liberty to demand retrial by retracting the earlier testimony on grounds of alleged threats as is claimed in the BBC or for reasons of some extraneous consideration. A retrial will be a license to a witness smarting under the acquittal of an accused in the first trial to give testimony in a manner as to plug the lacunae in the earlier evidence or give it diametrically contrary evidence resulting in conviction of that accused in a retrial for the very same offence he or she was acquitted earlier. Such witness as in the BBC will become a puppet in the hands of vested interests who selectively activate themselves to justify their political prejudices. Can the testimony of such witnesses be considered credible in the eyes of the law? Can a witness like Zaheera in the BBC, kept in the custody of such NGOs and Page Three coffee shop elites be considered an independent witness? Can criminal justice be dispensed as sought to be manipulated by such NGOs, and the accused be tried for the second time for the same offence although acquitted earlier?

MR. NITIN RAUT is a lawyer and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*.

BOOK REVIEWS



DEMOCRACY AND THE LIMITS OF MINORITY RIGHTS

by Nalini Ranjan

Published by

Sage Publications, 32, M-Block Market, Greater Kailash 1,
New Delhi 110 048

Year of Publication: 2002. No. of pages 236. Price Rs.260

Reviewed by

S. V. Kogekar, political scientist and former principal of
Fergusson College, Pune.

This volume deals with some of the important problems exercising the minds of legal and political experts and academic thinkers and writers in the country today. As the author claims in her Introduction, the central aim of her book is to demonstrate the internal link between human rights and democracy. The latter entity is characterised by the principles of equality and autonomy of individuals within the State.

The author makes it clear that defining human rights is not easy in the absence of objective, demonstrable criteria for the determination of their validity. Setting out the different schools of thought that have addressed themselves to these issues, she reaches the long-established conclusion that a right is 'what thinking makes it so'.

Explaining the importance of democracy in relation to rights in the present Indian context, the author rightly emphasises the need to recognise the limitations of majority rule. Otherwise, under an over-simplified version of 'majoritarianism', minorities may not be able to exercise their legitimate rights and realise their aspirations of self-fulfilment. In order to give minorities their due place as an integral part of the polity, she would prefer the word 'pluralitarian' to 'majoritarian' to describe the nature of modern Indian democracy.

Under the chapter entitled 'Freedom of Conscience or of Choice', the author argues that such freedom should be understood as belonging to individuals rather than to groups, consistently with the criteria of equality and autonomy. Elaborating the theme in the context of the current controversy between 'secularists' and 'traditionalists' viewpoints, she provides an interesting discussion of the ideas of several well-known thinkers on the subject. She makes a further distinction between religious rights and cultural rights such as those relating to language. She suggests that while the former should pertain to individuals and not to groups, the latter should be accorded to groups.

In the following chapter on 'Multiculturalism and Identity Politics', the author discusses the Bharatiya Janata Party's slogan of 'one nation, one culture, one people' in relation to its roots in Western liberal thought based on taking the culturally homogeneous nation-state for granted. Today's world view being quite different, the inevitability of different ethnic and national groups co-existing within a nation has to be accepted. The implications of this contemporary factor are discussed in great detail with reference to the liberal, left and fundamental positions assumed by followers of different ideologies.

Examining the various provisions of our Constitution for

the protection of minority and cultural rights, some under 'fundamental rights' and others elsewhere, such as in Articles 330 to 342 and 370, the author would like the Indian Union to be described as a multi-national, federal State. She also makes a number of suggestions in matters pertaining to the multiplicity of languages which deserve serious consideration.

Under the catching title, 'Is there a Right not to Work?', one chapter is devoted to a somewhat speculative theory of the feasibility of providing a certain minimum of economic welfare to all citizens, irrespective of their wealth or income and leaving it to their choice whether to work for more than this minimum. A number of established notions will have to be discarded in pursuit of this new ideology and it may change the entire perspective of rights and the problems of exploitation, whether based on caste or gender. The author would like to start on this novel ideological enterprise by an attempt to conceptualise the possibility of instituting a universal basic income.

Moving on to a discussion of individual rights in the global context, the author emphasises the immense importance of environmental factors which must be viewed as crossing national boundaries. Here she takes her cue from the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi who stressed pluralism in

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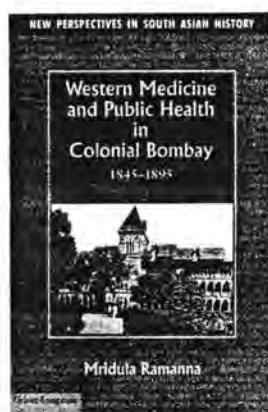
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all fields of life as also in the value systems. She expresses surprise that there is hardly any mention of environmental rights in our Constitution in spite of so many Gandhians in the Constituent Assembly. However, it must be observed that our Constitution is not unique in this respect. The awareness of the need to prevent a degradation of the environment on a global basis is a comparatively recent phenomenon. But we are not far behind others in thinking about the environmental rights of those affected by such projects as the Narmada River dam. No doubt there will be much more analytical, critical and constructive thinking on the subject in the years ahead.

In the seventh and last chapter of the book, the author makes certain suggestions for a revision of the Constitution in order to bring about a greater degree of federalism in the working of our democracy. Very briefly, she would like the Rajya Sabha to be an effective representative of the States on the lines of the U.S. Senate. She also pleads for the setting up of a Presidential Council to which, and not to the Central Cabinet, the President should be responsible. The Governors of States should also be responsible to this Council rather than being mere agents of the Central government.

Whatever the merits of these

suggestions, the reviewer firmly believes that the basic question in the working of our democracy today is not that of structural reforms but of creating a sufficiently wide consensus driving the political functionaries to work honestly for the establishment of a just and equitable economic and social polity. With the feudal mindset of both the rulers and the ruled, that is exhibited everywhere, importance has to be given primarily to educating the people to adopt a rational approach to all questions affecting them. So far as adopting such an approach in the field of human rights is concerned, the book under review may prove to be a valuable contribution to the process of such education.



WESTERN MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN COLONIAL BOMBAY, 1845-1895

by
Mridula Ramanna

Published by

Orient Longman, 3-6-272, Himayat Nagar, Hyderabad 500 029
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Reviewed by

R. Srinivasan, retired professor of Political Science,
Mumbai University, and Associate Editor, *Freedom First*.

The last few decades have witnessed novel approaches to the study of history and the steady stream of monographs and books has totally altered both our perspective and understanding of the subject. Little explored sources have been exploited and new emphases underlined. For instance, oral history, has made us modify our older faith in written records. Women's problems and perspectives again have made us qualify our earlier simplistic understanding of our social structures.

Equally important has been a fairly new field – that of colonial medicine and its domains. A whole new school of historians have made

us aware of totally unknown dimensions of theories and practices of medicine, which has broadened our understanding of disease and individual well-being. Like the railways, modern medicine after initial reservations, was one of the most successful of the contributions of the British rule, notwithstanding the Mahatma's observations. However, there have been criticisms of modern medicine and health measures as contributing to an unfeeling exercise of coercive authority by the colonial powers and a total indifference and contempt for feelings of distrust and opposition to state measures. It certainly was exercised on behalf of an elite that was eager to expand its reach and

callous of the privations of the affected. Tilak and his followers more than a hundred years ago, no less than Foucault and his disciples, have emphasised this aspect of the drive for more power and indifference to the citizenry, particularly the vulnerable.

It should be remembered (and F. Sherwood Taylor's *Century of Science*, 1941, well documents this) that even in the leading cities of England, health, cleanliness and disease in mid-nineteenth century were not far better than in Bombay then. If the J. J. Hospital founded in 1845, only a decade earlier, had measures for improvement in health began in London itself.

This book is a pioneering monograph in the chronicling of the development of medicine, medical practice and public health issues covering half a century from the mid-eighteen forties. It looks at medical development from a regional perspective with special emphasis on Bombay and its environs. While its focus is on the development of medicine and public health, it is also simultaneously an account of Bombay, its elite and public institutions. The rapid development of an Indian medical profession, its high competence, its capacity to hold its own with expatriates, its pioneering moves in the pursuit of its vocation and public health issues from a distinct Indian perspective, its confidence in promoting Indian medical associations, founding of professional bodies all testify to a vibrant medical community rising up to its responsibilities with a commendable spirit. It also narrates the development of public consciousness reflected in newspapers ever alert to criticise the civic authorities and praise them when deemed fit. The period also witnesses the bold stand taken by a number of public figures such as Mandlik offering an alternative position to that of the ruling orthodoxy. Besides chronicling this, the author has delved into the issues of the *Hindi Punch* and extracted contemporary observations and sallies on problems relating to public health and governmental action. Public opinion was equally critical of what they regarded to be the extravagances of the civic corporation. The public was not to patronise the new medical system as it found it too expensive and preferred succour in native remedies than put itself into unknown hands. Superstitious and folk wisdom with little godlings in charge of familiar and unfamiliar maladies also kept them away from what they perceived as new fangled approaches. (After all the *devi* was not angered by the indifference of her children). All these are narrated in the different chapters.

The area later known as Bombay was notorious for its general insalubriousness and authorities were eager for the establishment of hospitals and something like one was founded as early as 1668. Yet a full-fledged hospital had to wait till 1843 when the munificence of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy initiated the proposal of a hospital (started in 1845) and this was to remain the largest in western India. It was the city's hospital and had a deserved reputation.

Bombay was exceptionally fortunate in having a galaxy of both Indian and Western doctors. Andrew Leith, T. G. Weir, John Lumsdaine were important. Hewlett was credited in gradually establishing a model administration of health. Leer had long innings as medical officer and occupied a variety of positions. Charles Merchant who established the Grant Medical College was highly regarded. All these were prolific authors of valuable medical tomes. Indian doctors who graduated from the Grant Medical College by 1851 occupied middle level positions in the medical administration and poor remuneration compelled them to resort to private practice. They studied indigenous medicines too, were active in bringing out journals, authoring papers and forming societies. They were not supercilious to indigenous medical wisdom and where possible they tried to experiment with them. The popularity of vaccination was mainly due to the exemplary service of Dr. Dukhale. Though many Indians preferred private practice, they were also sympathetic to the poor and ran dispensaries for them. Some of the most popular names with the public were those of Sakaram Arjun, Atmaram Pandurang Tarkadkar, the Daji Brothers, Bhatavdekar and Dr. Lishwa.

The example of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy was taken up by other

philanthropists such as Wadia who urged for a hospital in Kurla in 1856. The government was not eager to defray expenses for the running of hospitals for they wanted the people to be self-reliant rather than depend upon the State. The government, however, often shared the expenses of the hospitals large and small. Private dispensaries too were run. While the senior positions were with the British, the running of the hospitals was then the responsibility of the new batches of graduates of the Grant Medical College. The J. J. Hospital was followed by the Obstetric Institute; later the Cowasji Jehangir Ophthalmic Hospital, still alter the Goculdas Tejpal Hospital. In all these, the native contribution and donation was significantly striking. Besides these, there were others too, one exclusively for the Europeans.

While the first two chapters examine in detail the medical practitioners and the hospitals, Sanitary Policy is treated adequately in the third chapter. The establishment of the Conservancy Board in the city was almost simultaneous to that of the J. J. Hospital. The creation of the Health Department in 1865 found T.G.H. Hewlett as Health Officer whose Herculean task is recounted in detail. Scavenging, clearing of refuse were tackled by the same department. The response of Indian public opinion was both critical and supportive. Criticism was that while European quarters were taken care of in an exemplary manner, the Indian sections were inexcusably neglected, a charge made time and again. The founding of the Tulsi and Tansa water works were two of the important public innovations. The Indian public was critical of what it regarded as extravagance and even an officer of proven competence was criticised. Corruption was alleged against some civic chiefs and the extremely high taxes on houses resented. Time and again, Crawford, the Municipal

Commissioner, was the target of the attack.

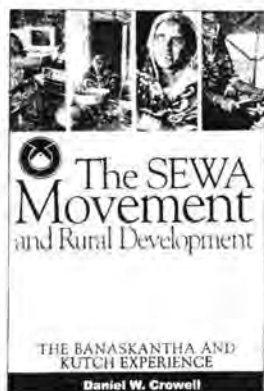
Smallpox and cholera were two diseases that were tackled with determination. While some of the officers such as Hewlett had a commendable role in containing this, there were others such as Cunningham of the IMS who had nostrums ill thought of and were tyrannical in pursuing their ways and this was to last as late as the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Fanciful theories dominated and it took a while to establish the importance of wholesome water supply. Rapid attempts at recording births and deaths were undertaken and the famine of 1876 had its own to contribute to the proliferation of disease what with numerous victims of the famine (already in precarious health) moving to Bombay and

exacerbating the problem. A chapter examines the Contagious Diseases Act designed mainly to protect the health of the armed forces and free them of venereal diseases.

In a country notorious for its neglect of women, it is heartening to read of the attention paid to their health headed by the philanthropist Sorabji Bengali and George Kitteridge. Almost all who mattered in the city contributed to the establishment of the Cama Hospital. Gradually the end of the 19th century saw women successfully completing their medical studies and the dedicated among them (not a small number) ran this institution. Later, other benefactions led to the founding of other exclusive hospitals for women; children's health too was attended to.

The end of the 19th century saw the Indian medical profession coming into its own with professional bodies in the different cities. They were active and a number of Indian doctors opposed the retention of the semi-military character of the Indian Medical Service. They raised funds for sending their representative to London to give evidence to the Welby Commission on public expenditure in India. The British press commended the recommendations made before the Commission by Dr. Bahadurji.

The wide reading that has gone into the writing of the book is evident in almost every page. Many original sources have been obviously used. It is to be hoped that this very useful book will be followed by a sequel.



THE SEWA MOVEMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT THE BANASKANTHA AND KUTCH EXPERIENCE

By Daniel W. Cromwell

Published by

Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., B-42, Panchsheel Enclave,
New Delhi 100 017

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Reviewed by

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Grassroots movements, like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), play an important role in promoting and sustaining empowerment of women in the poorer sections of the society, both at the urban and rural levels. 'SEWA Movement and Rural Development, the Banaskantha and Kutch Experience' by Daniel W. Cromwell is a significant sequel to the work of Kalima Bose, 'Where Women are Leaders', which dealt with the SEWA movement in Ahmedabad. Writing in an anecdotal and flowing style, Cromwell brings out the essentially integrated approach of SEWA to

capacity and organization building, to sustainable development and to provision of employment opportunities to the women in Banaskantha and Kutch.

What becomes increasingly evident as one reads through the text is how SEWA had to adapt and change its original work patterns, as followed in Ahmedabad, to suit the rural conditions. The village women, mostly illiterate and isolated from the ways of the world, were conceptually eons away from the SEWA activists and community organizers. Yet, they had driving demands and

needs, living as they did on the fringes of poverty. They also possessed certain skills, capable of being developed, to promote their economic and social well-being. This book narrates the story of their progressive interaction, participation and identification with the SEWA movement, to the enrichment and satisfaction of both the movement and its promoters as well as these women of Banaskantha and Kutch. Another fact emerging from this study is how SEWA provided effective linkages with the government programmes in its attempt to satisfy the needs of the community

members. It is the coordinated efforts of SEWA and the active participation of the rural women that together brought about many of the successes of the ventures for rural development.

The first five chapters of the book deal with the activities of SEWA in Banaskantha and Kutch with regard to watershed development, reforestation, salt farming, dairy and craft co-operativism, fodder security system, artisan support and rural micro-finance. Each one of these was begun to tackle problems faced by rural women and it was demand driven and need based. Starting with doing an impact study on the Indo-Dutch water supply scheme in Banaskantha in 1989, SEWA became fully involved in the watershed programme, bringing in collective involvement of the villagers concerned. The Banaskantha DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) Mahila SEWA Association's (BDMSA) efforts at rain water harvesting resulted in a year-round supply of water, thereby freeing women from fetching water from very long distances and improving sanitation and hygiene. SEWA's programme for tree production through training women to grow saplings and sell their trees to Gujarat State Women's Development Corporation (GSWDC) ran into obstacles that had to be overcome, like the priority to sell the government forestry saplings rather than those of women's cooperatives and land lease restriction to three years, without guarantee of extension of those leases, while at least a minimum of ten years was needed for the trees to grow. Enabling to get fair price for gum collection and planting of gum trees were undertaken. Women engaged in salt-farming formed cooperatives and with the collateral of group support and SEWA backing, they were able to get bank loans to dig bore-wells and purchase diesel pumps to

increase salt production, without having recourse to moneylenders. Dairy and craft production was promoted by SEWA to provide sustainable employment. Women had been, till then, excluded from membership within the dairy cooperative, though they were significant partners in the dairy production cycle, doing jobs like cleaning the animals, collecting fodder and milk. SEWA succeeded in establishing seven all-women dairy cooperatives, which later went on to get many achievement awards to their credit. Provisions were made for a powdered milk production plant and for obtaining micro-finance for needs like fodder. Along with the integrated rural development programme of the government, SEWA established self-management groups of women to provide for artisan support programmes. This opened wider horizons to many of the women, who had earlier never stepped out of their villages, but now travelled to cities as far as Ahmedabad and Bangalore. Cromwell has given illustrations through individual biographies of women in each of these activities to show the spin-off effects of these efforts at capability building on the personal lives of these women and their families

SEWA backed these activities by making provisions for rural micro-finance to help these women. Providing for banking facilities at the doorsteps of the village women was a significant departure from its Ahmedabad counterpart. This was necessitated by the isolation of several villages from the towns and from each other. Not merely were individual savings and loans made possible, group savings had great implications for entrepreneurial potential. Also because of the group pressure on defaulters, Cromwell writes, the recovery rate for the loans taken was 95%. Micro-finance also facilitated social security schemes and repair and improvements in

housing. The loan for this purpose was available to the women if the house was on their name. In many instances, the husbands agreed to this, realizing the convenience of this arrangement. This had its impact in raising the self-esteem of the women concerned. The SEWA Bank offered a comprehensive range of financial tools to women, thus enabling them to gain stability, confidence and control over their lives.

Cromwell dwells at length, in the subsequent six chapters, on the issues of health and nutrition, promotion of Kutch Craft Association, women's participation in the *panchayat*, the cyclone of 1998 and SEWA's goals for the next millennium. The two issues addressed by SEWA, with regard to health, were the drawbacks in the primary and community healthcare centres that carried out the government healthcare policy and the poor people's unawareness of this failure and hence their lack of demand for improvements in these centres. SEWA worked at facilitating the access of the poor to better healthcare in these centres. Mobile health vans were provided and eye clinics organized, especially for women doing intricate craft work.

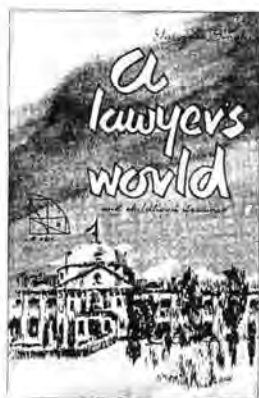
In 1993, BDMSA initiated the Shakti Packet Program of buying provisions for a month for the village households at wholesale rates from the local agricultural produce, with loan from BDMSA. This ensured food quality, availability and affordability to women in these remote villages and was better than the public distribution system, whose fair price shops were located at distant places and also suffered from poorer quality and non-availability of food grains many a time. The Shakti packets became an asset during emergencies like the floods in 1997.

DWCRA programme started by the government in 1979 sought

to provide groups of rural women, specially those below poverty line, with the means to support themselves with income through their own under-utilized skills and entrepreneurial potential. Cromwell describes the transformation brought about by SEWA in Kutch, by using DWCRA as a tool to generate sustainable employment. The Kutch Craft Association spearheaded by SEWA, literally and metaphorically, opened the horizons of these women by breaking down barriers through the use of their own craft skills. This success made the government pay heed to SEWA's recommendations to improve the provisions for marketing and working capital facilities through DWCRA.

The significant contribution of SEWA to rural women through capacity building, social security and collective strength through organization is well brought out in this book. Capacity building enabled the women to minimize their vulnerability, while maximizing their capability. Similarly, social security with its emphasis on progress rather than mere coping with disaster made SEWA's implementation of its policies a constructive one. It is the collective strength through organization that truly empowered these women, providing them with ample opportunities and alternatives to build their lives on a strong foundation of self-esteem and inter-

dependence. This book is an effective and ably presented sociological study that is eminently readable. It provides a much-needed publicity to and knowledge of the empowerment of rural, impoverished women in Banaskantha and Kutch under the aegis of SEWA, a model well deserving of emulation by other community efforts in other regions of India. Daniel W. Cromwell has based his research on personal interactions with the people concerned and direct experience at all levels of SEWA's functioning in the rural areas and he well deserves credit for his efforts in logically penning the work of SEWA towards rural development in Banaskantha and Kutch.



A LAWYER'S WORLD AND CHILDHOOD DREAMS

by
Yatindra Singh

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Allahabad 211 001

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Reviewed by
Professor R. V. Chari, retired professor of commerce and management
and a freelance writer.

This book, written by an advocate, who was later appointed Additional Advocate General for U.P. traces his experiences as a lawyer for nearly three decades. Currently, he is a permanent judge of the Allahabad High Court. The book consists of nine chapters, running into 225 pages and covers a wide gamut of subjects, like the Emergency, re-Instalment of Kalyan Singh as C.M. of U.P., the rights of homosexuals, etc.

In June 1975, the Government of India, headed by Smt. Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister, clamped down Emergency throughout the country. This created a certain kind of panic and fear in the

minds of the people. The author's father, Shri V.K.S. Chaudhary, a senior Advocate of the Allahabad High Court, was the first to be arrested under the Defence of India Rules, and though granted bail, was not released. Instead, a fresh detention order under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act), saw him spend 21 long months in jail. Shri Jagdish Swarup and former Solicitor General of India, Soli Sorabjee appeared for him. The case was won in the High Court, but was lost in the Supreme Court. It must be said to the credit of both that they very ably argued the case, without accepting any fees.

The judgement of the Supreme

Court delivered by Justice Khanna was based on a very old case decided by the House of Lords in 1941. The history of *Habeas Corpus* can be traced to the case of *Liversidge Vs. Anderson* that was contested in the British Court. *Liversidge* was detained under the Defence Regulations-18B, which stated that "...if the Secretary of State has reasonable cause to believe any person to be of hostile origin or association and that by reason thereof it is necessary to exercise control over him, he may make an order against that person directing that he be detained". He challenged his detention for false imprisonment. The case came up before the House of Lords, where the judgement went against him.

However, the dissenting judgement of Lord Atkin, especially the three paragraphs overnight became part of every book on human rights and liberty. Lord Atkin said: "I view with apprehension the attitude of judges who, on a mere question of construction, when face to face with claims involving the liberty of the subject, show themselves more executive-minded than the executive ...". "I protest, even if I do it alone, against a strained construction put upon words, with the effect of giving an uncontrollable power of imprisonment to the minister. To recapitulate, the words have only one meaning in the statements of the common law and in the statutes. They have never been used in the sense now imputed to them ...".

Article 21 of the Constitution of India fully guarantees the right to life and liberty. Under Article 359 of the Constitution, the right to enforce Article 21 stood suspended. The question that was to be decided was whether a writ of *Habeas Corpus* could be maintained. The 44th Constitutional Amendment Act passed unanimously ensures that the right to life and liberty cannot, even during an emergency, be suspended.

In Chapter V of the book, the author discusses the rights of homosexuals. During the 19th and 20th centuries, even talking about such topics was taboo, though it was discussed in private homes and clubs. The famous case that comes to one's mind is that of Oscar Wilde, author of the popular novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and also his play, *The importance of being earnest*. Oscar Wilde, was hauled up before the British Court, for his close and controversial relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. He was accused of being a sodomite. In his trial, he was found guilty and sentenced to two years of hard labour. The judgement was passed in 1895.

The second case dealt with by the author relates to Alan Matheson Turing, an extraordinary mathematician, a pioneer in computer science and the key man in decoding the Nazi Enigma. His home had been burgled by an acquaintance of Arnold Murray, with whom he had sexual relations. When the burglary was reported to the police, he had unwittingly communicated the nature of his relationship with Murray. He was arrested and tried for six sexual offences. This was in 1952. The Court decided to place him on a year's probation on condition that he submitted to organo-therapeutic treatment. Stung to the quick, by such treatment, he extinguished his life by consuming an apple dipped in cyanide solution. At the time of his tragic death, he was only 42 years of age. As compared to such tragic happenings in the 19th and the middle of the 20th century, there is a sea-change in today's moral and cultural values. One has only to go through some of the present day novels to learn about the complete metamorphosis that has taken place in regard to day to day affairs and their effects on the moral values at home and in society. One may cite the recent example of the U.S. Episcopal Church openly consecrating the 56-year old Gene Robinson, a divorced father of two children, as the first Gay bishop, overriding the violent objections and demonstrations from the dissenting clergy as well as its 70 million adherents. Anticipating untoward happenings, the U.S. government has even gone to the extent of giving him police protection.

Chapter VIII furnishes us with the like sketches of some of the prominent personalities which include Srinivasa Ramanujan and Sir Stephen Hawkin.

Srinivasa Ramanujan stood first in the district in his primary examination, but in college, only mathematics became his obsession,

foresaking all other subjects. He could not, therefore, graduate. He joined as a clerk in the Accounts Department of the Madras Government. A casual letter to Prof. G. H. Hardy changed his entire career. Prof. Hardy was taken aback and was very much impressed. A scholarship was offered to enable him to do his mathematical research. He was strictly orthodox and conservative, cooking his own meals. The climate and the work made him ill and he was hospitalised. Prof. Hardy, who came to meet him at the hospital, thought that the visit was inauspicious as the taxi no.1729 was a multiple of 13 (13x133). When he mentioned this to Ramanujan, he corrected him by saying that the number is very auspicious, being the cubes of two sets of numbers, viz. $12^3 \times 1^3$ and $10^3 \times 9^3$. Such was his genius!

Lucidly written and moderately priced, this book should appeal to everyone.

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Let us not forget
Enmity makes mind bitter
Let us not forget
Humanity makes our soul pure
Let us not forget
Hunger drives a person crazy
Let us not forget
Lord created the World
Let us not forget
Poverty gives birth to crime
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First he or she is a human being
Let us not forget

Kamalkumar R. Thadani

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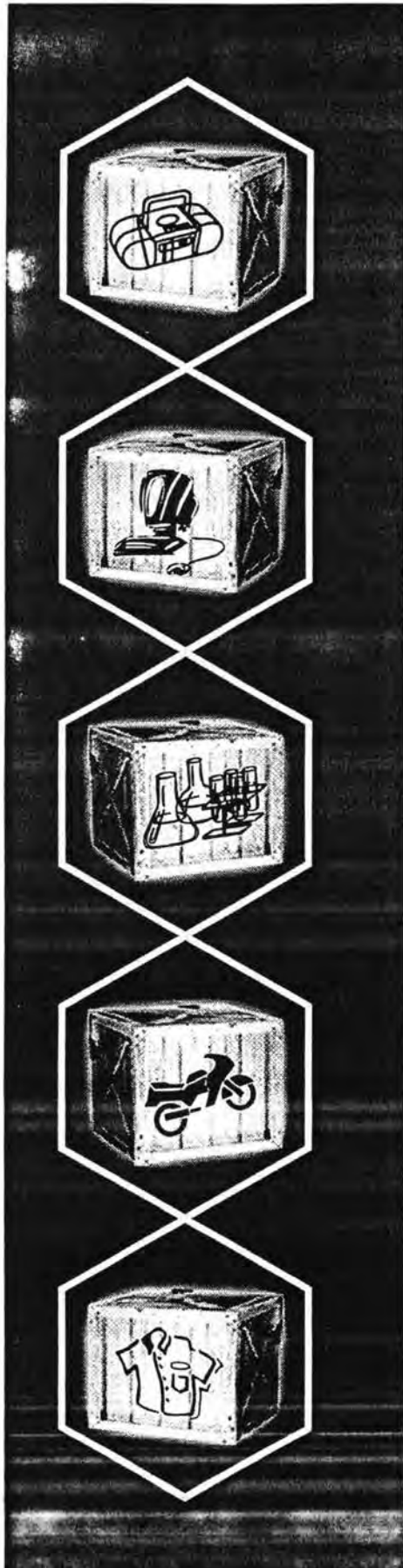
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