

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

- ◆ The Fiscal Drift
- ◆ Capitalism in Crisis
- ◆ Parties without Policies
- ◆ The Food Security Bill
- ◆ Abolishing Driving Licences
- ◆ Indian Ocean Initiative
- A Chinese Trap

*A distinguished Indian
And a greater human being
Has left us*

*He entertained
Even while informing us
Of the joy of living
And made us smile
In Adversity*

*He was a cartoonist and
A social historian
Who, as his biographer
Gerard Da Cunha observed,
Had the ability to
"make things palatable, and even captivating,
with his razor sharp wit and sarcasm,
Even when Mario was scathing,
he was endearing
and that made him special"*

Thank you Mario Miranda!



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Freedom First

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Between Ourselves...

Fifty odd years ago a notorious Plan was hatched called the Second Five Year Plan. The Plan's principal commandment: the State shall occupy the commanding heights of the economy. This led to two disasters – the first was the near pauperisation of India crushed by the weight of the State; the second led to massive corruption.

Less than three years thereafter some concerned citizens troubled with the direction the country had taken founded a political party to fight the evil commandment. Its first national convention in *Patna* on March 19 and 20, 1960 adopted a document entitled "To Prosperity Through Freedom." It had many sensible things to say. One of them has considerable current relevance. It said: "The Swatantra Party is of the view that, while efficiency of administration is necessary, its integrity is the very essence of good government. *It will therefore endeavour to set up a supreme authority to whom an appeal can be made by individuals who suffer injustice as a result of administrative action such as cannot be remedied otherwise...* in the countries of Scandinavia (there is) the Ombudsman a non-Party man elected by Parliament and invested with wide powers of investigation and access to official papers. He is an officer of very high status and acts on the complaint of any citizen who has a grievance and seeks justice." The word 'Lokpal' had not yet been invented.

India escaped the first disaster with the skin of its teeth thanks to the wisdom of an able prime minister by taking the 'U' turn that Nani Palkhivala had been recommending. But the second was not easy to throw off.

The Swatantra Party perhaps had in mind a person like Anna Hazare who belongs to no party. That he was so widely accepted and acclaimed is not surprising because he is a man of integrity. Sadly he has allowed himself to be manipulated by politicians and ambitious individuals pretentiously calling themselves the civil society. While the ruling coalition responded with customary stupidity, the party in the opposition has ought to derive political mileage and has, in the process, paralysed governance by its obstructive politics putting the institution of parliament itself to ridicule. Meanwhile the economy is well and truly on a self-destruct mode, and this bogus 'party with a difference' as it describes itself is chuckling with delight at the ruling coalition's discomfiture. The cost to the country is going to be very heavy even if the Lokpal Bill becomes law. Party interests have taken priority over the national interest.

Who is responsible? Aren't we? **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

Editor

Founder: Minoos Masani ● **Editor:** S. V. Raju ● **Associate Editor:** R. Srinivasan ● **Advisory Board:** Sharad Bailur, A. V. Gopalakrishnan, Firoze Hirjikaka, Ashok Karnik, Farrokh Mehta, Jehangir Patel, Nitin Raut, Brig. (Retd.) S. C. Sharma, Kunwar Sinha, Sameer Wagle

All correspondence to be addressed to the Publishers: Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF), 3rd Floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001. Phone: +91 (22) 2284 3416 ● Mobile: 9820016392 ● E-mail: freedom@vsnl.com

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From Our Readers

On *Freedom First*

I've been gifted a subscription to your periodical *Freedom First* by my grandfather last year. I've been regularly going through this periodical and frankly speaking I am very impressed and inspired by the kind of thought provoking articles featured in *Freedom First*.

In this day and age when an increasingly large portion of our population is haunted by nonsensical media (both print and TV) as well as dogmatic sermons from their respective ethnic and religious leaders, *Freedom First* is truly a breath of fresh air. Unfortunately though, not many people have the capability to understand and respect the kind of journalism that you have endeavoured in *Freedom First*; but I sincerely hope that more and more people are inspired by your efforts towards making them understand the realization of true and sincere civic ideals that are necessary for all of us to adopt in order to live in a modern society that can be termed "truly civilized"

Keep up the good work. Citizens are looking up to your ideals and looking forward to your work.

A Reader in Gujarat who
chooses to remain anonymous

✱

"Our Constitution Defaced and Defiled"

Explaining the purpose for which *Freedom First* published the article on "The Standing Committees of Parliament" (*Freedom First*, No.534 December 2011), the editor explains *inter alia* (Between Ourselves...) "it (The Constitution of India) has basically stood the test of time – though "defaced and defiled" as Nani Palkhivala famously described it". Those readers who may not be aware of the significance and the intention behind selecting these two words, 'defaced and defiled', pregnant with meaning, refer to the famous book "Our Constitution Defaced and Defiled" written by the well-known jurist Nani Palkhivala more than 35 years ago. Even though Palkhivala's immense contribution to the cause of preserving and protecting the Indian Constitution is well known, many may not be aware of the background which compelled Palkhivala to write this particular book.

Palkhivala hit the headlines in 1973 when the Supreme Court of India delivered its famous historic judgment on the famous case popular as the "Keshavananda Bharati Vs State of Kerala" – a judgment that is considered a milestone in Indian jurisprudence. The verdict recognized the Fundamental Right of the Citizen and decided that Parliament cannot, in the exercise

of its amending power, alter the basic structure or framework of the Constitution. This 'Fundamental Rights case' was the first of its kind in the world and opened a new chapter in jurisprudence. To see that this rare verdict is not lost sight of but safely preserved and used, along with a lurking fear that a future Parliament may attempt to stifle the Fundamental Rights of the Citizens guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, persuaded him to write a detailed book dealing with Fundamental Rights, Basic Rights, Parliamentary Powers, Right to Property, Human Rights and a host of other related subjects, citing several cases and court judgments both in India and outside which was. These form the subject matter of the book "*Our Constitution Defaced and Defiled*" published in December 1974 by Macmillans.

In the introduction to the book, Palkhivala says "We have failed to preserve the integrity of our Constitution against many hasty and ill-considered changes, the fruits of passion and ignorance. Our basic human freedoms have been drastically eroded. .. Our original Constitution provided for stability without stagnation and growth without destruction of human values. The recent Amendments have only achieved stagnation without stability and destruction of human values without growth".

My own conjecture is that Palkhivala might have been inspired to write this book after having read the immortal book "*Commentaries on the Constitution of America*" by the celebrated American Jurist Joseph Story", published in 1839 – a jurist who became Justice of the Supreme Court of America at the young age of 32 years and remained in that position for 34 years. My belief stems from the fact that the book "Our Constitution Defaced and Defiled" starts with the following wonderful quotation from Joseph Story :

"The structure (American Federal Structure) has been erected by architects of consummate skill and fidelity; its foundations are solid; its compartments are beautiful as well as useful; its arrangements are full of wisdom and order; and its defenses are impregnable from without. It has been reared for immortality; if the work of man may justly aspire to such a title. It may, nevertheless, perish in an hour by the folly, or corruption, or negligence of its only keepers, THE PEOPLE. "Republics are created – these are the words which I commend to you for your consideration – by the virtue, public spirit, and intelligence of the citizens. They fall, when the wise are banished from the public councils, because they dare to be honest, and the profligate are rewarded, because they flatter the people, in order to betray them"

It is learnt that this paragraph was quoted by Sri. Sachidananda Sinha in his Inaugural Address as Provisional Chairman of India's Constituent Assembly on 9th December 1946.

B. M. N. MURTHY, Bangalore.
email: bmmurthy@gmail.com

*

The Unseen Slap of the *Aam Admi*

Some years back, a shoe was hurled at President Bush in Baghdad. Nearer home, the present Home Minister P. Chidambaram was a target of shoes. Describe it how? Celebrated targets or celebrity shoes?

On November 24, 2011, an irate man slapped Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar. Condemnations poured in, cutting across the political party divide. Was it a show of the solidarity of the guilty or of defiance that 'I am the power' - no pun intended.

If it is true that in a democracy or a civil society, extremism or violence have no place, equally is the case that corruption and scams are anathema to any society or a democracy. So is it a case of both are right and both are wrong.

The slapgate incident is a symptom of a deep malaise that has corroded our society. It is a symbol of distress angst, helplessness and frustration, however unacceptable, that is reflected and the system provides no easy solution or a way out. It is testing the patience and sufferings of the '*aam aadmi*' without a remedy in sight.

If one slap makes news, has the nation lost count of the many slaps on the *aad aadmi* by the powers that be?

Politicians have become insensitive and there is a total disconnect between the people and their elected representatives. Fed on promises which is ritualistically renewed, election after election, the *aam aadmi* is taken for granted. Are the politicians not responsible for the hate atmosphere? Are the scams, corruption, misgovernance, non-governance, obsession with dynastic rule and ambitions, treating politics as a family enterprise and means of aggrandisement not responsible for the people's frustration. Or is the tolerance of citizens in such situations a certificate of democracy functioning smoothly. Pacifism and non-violence is ingrained in the Indian psyche. Unlike in some Arab and African states, where violent ouster, exile and instant 'justice' are the fate of corrupt monarchs and dictators. Why is it that come elections, grandiose plans are laid out and 'leaders' criss-cross the country to 'discover' the plight of the *aam aadmi*, and dole out

largesse and make promises which are unfailingly observed more in breach than in faith. And come election result day, those elected forget all of their promises till the next election. And that has been going on since 1952. Is there no accountability or responsibility of those elected? For the elected, it is a self welfare than public welfare. Farmers' suicides, female infanticide, inflation, illiteracy, poverty, malnutrition, lack of basic amenities like education, food, water, clean air - are also slaps equally painful as a slap on a politician's face. Does democracy mean that a citizen's duty is to cast a vote and then suffer the arrogance of the elected. That is perhaps the reason the 'unelected and unelectable' are gaining credibility, where the elected have failed.

Will the slapgate serve as a wakeup call? It is not that Indians do not deserve democracy. They do and for that reason, the entire human race. Rather, the question is does Indian democracy deserve the political leadership that we have today? If a slapper of a politician can be punished, who will punish the slapper of the *aam aadmi*?

Nitin G. Raut, Bombay.

*

Of Four Real Leaders

Masani's '*Four Real Leaders*' is very good. It is a treasure trove of insights into the minds of four great leaders - and Masani's unbiased attitude towards his mostly political opponents - except Rajaji in later years.

Ashok Karnik, Mumbai.
Ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in

(For details of this publication please see page 12)

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The Fiscal Drift : 2011-12

Sunil S. Bhandare

It is not a case of benign neglect, but a sense of complete helplessness that makes the Central Government to let the situation drift. What is really amiss is an anchor of astute and decisive political leadership at the helm... the Indian economy is now in a serious fiscal bind. Undoubtedly, what needs to be done to reverse the process is all too well-known, but the question is when, how and who initiates it effectively!

The convergence of decelerating economic performance, loss of buoyancy in tax revenues, erosion of fiscal governance in the wake of compulsions of coalition politics, and populist stance in expenditure management has eventually to reflect in the fiscal health of the economy. It is not a case of benign neglect, but a sense of complete helplessness that makes the Central Government to let the situation drift. What is really amiss is an anchor of astute and decisive political leadership at the helm.

It may be recalled that in the last budget, the Finance Minister (FM) acclaimed the achievements of the Fiscal Responsible Budget Management (FRBM) Act in bringing about fiscal consolidation, and, in turn, contributing positively to the macroeconomic performance of the economy. He also promised that “in the course of the year the Central Government would introduce an amendment to the FRBM Act, laying down the fiscal road map for the next five years”. Accordingly, he envisaged an economically prudent objective of reducing the fiscal deficit to GDP (FD/GDP) ratio progressively from 4.6% in 2011-12 (budget estimates) to 4.1% in 2012-13 and 3.5% in 2013-14, and virtually phasing out the revenue deficit to GDP (RD/GDP) ratio over this period within a framework of Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement.

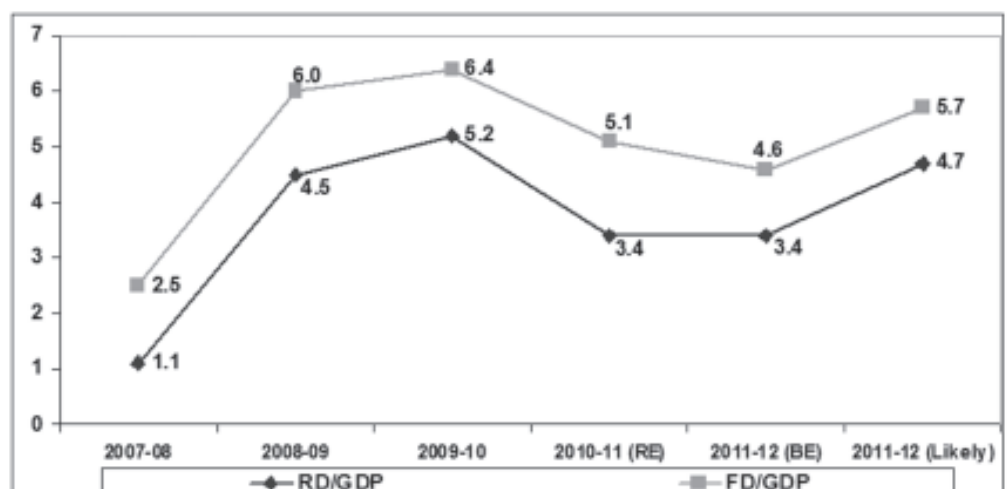
Further, the FM talked about improving the modalities of implementing some of the subsidies with a view to ensuring “greater efficiency, cost effectiveness and better delivery” by moving towards “direct transfer of cash subsidy to people living below the poverty line” in a phased manner. For a very long time, the

Indian Liberal Group as well as many others have been vociferously advocating the urgency of pursuing such a laudable strategy with a view to rationalizing expenditure management.

Equally importantly, from the perspective of the common man and small and marginal farmer what is more beneficial is to have access to and availability of various basic necessities (foodgrains, kerosene, etc) and agricultural inputs (fertilizers) at affordable prices. The government has, indeed, done well in appointing a task force (headed by Nandan Nilekani) to formulate modalities for such direct subsidy transfers for kerosene, LPG and fertilizers, but the progress of its work so far is not known. Given the government’s current predicament in pushing through the reforms agenda, there is considerable skepticism about how the proposed initiatives would become operational by March 2012.

Widening Promise-Performance Gap

In the meantime, there is a huge setback to budgetary management in the current fiscal year so far. Consequently, the prospects of achieving the implicit goal posts of the FRBM Act are increasingly becoming topsy-turvy; indeed, it may not be wrong in presuming that there will be a



postponement in the implementation of almost all the laudable goals of the Act by at least a couple of years, if not more. This means that the economy will be confronted with a substantially larger fiscal imbalance than the budget estimates for 2011-12 (Please see Chart on page 4). Witness some key adverse variances based on events of the first seven months (April-October) of 2011-2012:

First, the last budget envisaged total revenue receipts of Rs.7899 bn for 2011-12, but the actual so far is Rs.3597 bn. representing 46% of total receipts as compared to as much as 66% achieved in the corresponding period of the previous year. The predominant slippage is with respect to mobilization of tax revenues – both direct and indirect taxes. According to the latest estimates of the Revenue Department, the shortfall in direct tax collections would be as much as Rs.250 bn.

Second, there is a virtual collapse of PSUs' disinvestment programme – as against the budget estimate of Rs.400 bn. for 2011-12, the actual is just about Rs.27 bn. or less than 7% of the total.

Third, in contrast, there is going to be a huge expenditure overrun – entirely on account of non-plan, non-development expenditure (subsidies, interest payments, administrative spending, etc). Already, total non-plan expenditure for the current year so far is estimated at around Rs.4792 bn or 59% of the budget estimates for the entire fiscal year. In particular, subsidies are expected to exceed budget estimates by as much as Rs.1000 bn. – up by 70% over the budget estimates. Two supplementary demands for grants have already been approved by Parliament, aggregating gross additional expenditure of about Rs.890 bn. (net about Rs.660 bn.) – a predominant part of which is on account of non-plan expenditure.

Fourth and last, the combination of revenue shortfalls with expenditure excesses will inevitably lead to government being forced to resort to public borrowings exceeding its budget estimates. At the start of the fiscal year, this situation was certainly not bargained for, given its short-term and medium-term adverse consequences.

The current fiscal drift is truly a wake up call!

Sustained improvement in the fiscal year 2010-11 is proving to be short-lived!

Implications for Growth Outlook

Going forward, the government would increasingly be driven by overtly populist strategy – rapidly falling popularity rating and managing coalition partners make this inevitable!

Firstly, in the process, any further fiscal drift would

cause substantial damage to public sector (government) savings, and in turn, to the economy's investible resources.

Secondly, it would erode the capacity of the government sector to leverage private sector investments (say, through the PPP route) as well as capital inflows from abroad.

Thirdly, it would generate liquidity pressures through enhanced public sector borrowings from the market, leading to "crowding out" of private investments.

Fourthly, it would circumscribe RBI's likely policy initiative to reverse the current regime of high interest rates.

Fifthly, the rigidity of high interest policy would continue to affect profitability of the corporate sector and reduce its capacity to generate internal resources (corporate saving).

Finally, the fiscal imbalance also causes pressures on the external balance sheet of the economy and generally threatens to widen the current account deficit by damaging the competitive strength of the economy – and in a sense the prevailing volatility of the exchange rate of the rupee is a reflection of this phenomenon.

The cumulative impact of the unfolding fiscal scenario is to reduce the overall investment in the economy by at least about 3.5 to 4% points of GDP in the current as well as the next fiscal year. Thus, the potential real GDP growth of the economy would suffer a setback by about 0.75 to 1% points. Quantitative dimensions of immediate adverse impact on economic growth apart, the government needs to worry about cascading impact of fiscal drift on qualitative aspect of fiscal governance. Thus, it would be difficult for the Finance Minister to preach the virtues of fiscal consolidation to the States; and it would also be difficult to push forward the agenda of tax reforms, especially the implementation of General Sales Tax.

The fiscal consolidation at the Centre is a condition precedent to a more vigorous pursuit of tax reforms as well as other vital features of economic reforms; illustratively, public debt management; financial reforms calling for strengthening of the banking sector; and the launching of the Twelfth Plan itself. In substance, the Indian economy is now in a serious fiscal bind. Undoubtedly, what needs to be done to reverse the process is all too well-known, but the question is when, how and who initiates it effectively!

SUNIL S. BHANDARE is a Consulting Economist based in Mumbai. Email: sunil.bhandare@gmail.com

Capitalism in Crisis

Sharu S. Rangnekar

What is this protest about and why has it spread so widely in the Western World is a mystery to most Indians.

An Anna Hazare-like protest march started on New York's Fleet Street considered the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of capitalism. It has spread to many cities in Europe and Australia. There was a small movement even on Dalal Street in Mumbai but it fizzled out.

What is this protest about and why has it spread so widely in the Western World is a mystery to most Indians.

Competing Systems

At the beginning of the 20th century, three economic systems ruled the roost.

Feudal System comprising dynastic succession where the "elite" group held dominance in the economic world.

Capitalist System based on Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations which stated that a person working for his own self interest, as if by an invisible hand, will lead the society to prosperity.

Communist System which felt that individual ownership of the means of production (which meant not only the factories but also the farms) is responsible for economic hardships. The proletariat (which was Marx's term for the labour class) will have to rebel and rule the economy with the motto: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need". The slogan was "Workers of the World, Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

The Feudal system faded away with the newly emerging middle class taking hold of political power and imposing taxes like the inheritance tax to reduce the economic power of the dynastic group. The industrial revolution that had started in the 18th century became very productive by the beginning of the 20th century to become economically dominant. The various evils that were pointed out by Karl Marx in the working of Capitalism and consequent exploitation of labour were taken care of by labour legislation and the rise of labour unions which

severely restricted the misuse of capitalism. The Communist System initially appealed to many intellectuals. With the success of the Soviet Union (Russia) after the First World War and China after the Second World War more than one third of the world came under communist domination. However, in the 80s the deficiencies of communism were exposed. The brutalities in communist regimes seemed comparable to the worst brutalities shown in the feudal system and economic development drastically slowed down.

I was conducting a programme for a toiletry company in 1985. The training manager informed me that a Russian delegation was visiting them to negotiate an order for Rs.2 Crores worth toothpaste to be exported from India to Russia. At lunch the training manager invited me to a special lunch hosted for the Russian Delegation. I took the opportunity to talk to the chief of the delegation who spoke English quite well. I asked him "I am wondering why you are importing toothpaste from India? With a garage and Rs.5 lakh worth of equipment you can produce Rs.2 crores worth of toothpaste every year." He asked me, "Who will produce it?". I said; "in Russia, the Russian workers will produce the toothpaste." He said. "Russian Workers don't work." I asked him. "What do you mean?". He said, "In Russia everybody has a job. There is no unemployment. The workers work for about 2 hours and then relax." I told him "Such things happen in the Indian Public Sector and even in some Private Sector units, so what we do is to offer incentives which can make the workers work as much as 4 hours a day. He said, "In Russia, not only workers do not work even the incentives do not work." I asked him, What do you mean? He said. "The incentives are given in roubles and the workers say very little is available in roubles. Even cosmetics are imported and have to be bought in the black market with high payment in roubles. Everybody has a tenement. He shares the kitchen and the toilet with 4 other workers though a bigger tenement has to be allotted by the government. He cannot pay roubles to get a bigger tenement. He can buy bicycles with roubles but in order to buy motor cycles he has to get a permit, Cars are given only to politburo members. Admissions to various educational courses are

strictly given on the basis of the results of government tests. Those who don't get admission to high level education have to become workers. You cannot use roubles to give high education to your children - if they do not qualify in government tests. In fact in the communist country people are not allowed to dream - so they are not motivated by incentives". I asked him, "How long will this continue. He said, "I hope it continues till I retire".

But it did not. By 1988 the communist system collapsed and USSR broke into eight pieces hostile to each other and the communist dream of ruling the world was extinguished forever.

Even China moved away from communism and allowed the private sector breaking the basic principle of Marxism that "Individual ownership of means of production should not be allowed because it leads to exploitation of the proletariat for the benefit of the bourgeoisie (Marx's word for the entrepreneurial and managerial class as well as farmers who own the land).

Protest against Capitalism

At that time it was felt that capitalism no longer had competition and the whole world would soon be a capitalist world. But suddenly agitation erupts in Wall Street and spreads across protesting against capitalism. The main grounds for the protest are:

- Big corporations are reducing jobs and outsourcing jobs to poorer countries having lower wages.
- The managers in these organizations are getting fabulous salaries with bonus etc. In fact as the Hindi proverb goes: "*Andha bate Revadi – Apne Apne ko de!*" (The blind man distributes sweets, gives to his own kith and kin.)
- Government machinery is being used to bail out Companies going bankrupt due to the mistakes committed by entrepreneurs and managers. Thus, the taxes taken from the poor are used to benefit the rich.
- At the same time in order to tackle recession countries were reducing employment to minimise costs and increase productivity. This was the basic point that the protestors were protesting against.

However, the agitators are unable to show any alternative. The economic system is in trouble and requires drastic remedies. USA's credit rating is already downgraded. The Euro is in trouble and may collapse if the economic problems of Greece and Italy (and very soon Spain and Portugal) are not taken care of. There again the remedy suggested is to reduce government employment to reduce cost. This solution is obviously not acceptable to the protestors and the agitations are getting more violent.

Periodic downturns and upturns are always expected in capitalism leading to recession and inflation. But the recent depression with inflation (called stagflation) was not expected. Unless this is diagnosed and remedied this conflict and hostility will continue to increase.

Ultimately it will also affect countries like India which were not a part of the original conflict - but are being affected by the economic depression in America, Europe, Japan and Australia. The problem basically started with the easy availability of credit in these countries allowing people to spend more than they earn. Ultimately this led to a low rate of saving. Thus, the national saving rate was 2% (and has now become -2%) in USA and has decreased substantially in other countries. This has led to decrease in investments and decrease in creation of new jobs.

In an inflationary period, the common consumer was invited to spend more than he could afford on the basis of his income. Thus, a person with an income of \$ 200,000 per year was given a housing loan of \$ 2 million. When the income of the person did not increase, he was unable to repay the loan and this led to foreclosures by the banks. For the banks these houses became non-performing assets. The prices came down which led to more defaulters and more foreclosures.

Similarly overspending through credit cards led to overdues and defaulters - again leading to bad debts and non-performing assets. The financial institutes started collapsing in this situation creating a vicious circle. To tackle the crisis, the government reduced spending and the consequent reduction of jobs worsened this situation. The result: capitalism is facing a crisis of credibility.

Capitalism always gave a feeling that the free enterprise system will lead to greater investment and greater employment continuously. Instead keeping investments increasing and employment growing are becoming a challenge for the western economies.

With a high rate of saving (as much as 35%) and conservative lending policies of the banks, India did not face these problems. However, the depression in the West is having an impact because of decrease in imports from India. For now IT, pharmaceuticals, minerals etc., have increased exports to make up for the deficit in other sectors. However, unless the economy in the Western World improves we shall be in a difficult situation in the future.

SHARU S. RANGNEKAR is a well-known Management Consultant. www.sharurangnekar.com.

Licence-Permit Raj's New Avatar

H. R. Babu Satyanarayana

The basic reason for the tragedy at AMRI in Kolkata is 'corruption' and all others are only peripheral reasons.

It was Rajaji who coined the word 'Licence-Permit-Quota Raj'. In Rajaji's view it was the main reason for corruption and probably this corruption was confined to the lower staff and the high rungs of the bureaucracy. Since then India has taken long strides in the country's all round development when in 1991 the Narasimha Rao's government gave a boost by ushering in economic liberalization. As a result the concept of 'Licence Permit Quota' Raj may have receded to the background but many avenues open to corruption are still available.

It may be safely assumed that in its later manifestation politicians became the prime movers and bureaucrats become their shield because by training they were adept at writing notes on files and, as everybody knows, logic cuts both ways. That is how building mega projects and the concept of Special Economic Zones acted as a milch cow to squeeze money from big business houses who knew these would earn them huge profits. The next logical development was that instead of the hassles of subterfuge it was easier to have a direct nexus with corporate giants and criminals waiting in the wings plus the media as the Radia tapes revealed.

No Lessons Learnt

These are well known facts but are repeated here to give a historical background to the latest ghastly fire tragedy at the Advanced Medicare Research Institute (AMRI) hospital in Kolkata in which 87 patients and 4 staff members died. According to media reports since 2001, eight major fire tragedies have resulted in 424 dead. It is as if India is congenitally indifferent to loss of life of ordinary people because it does not touch the moneyed and influential sections of society. The reasons for the tragedy are distressingly the same - lack of fire safety system, basement storage space stacked with inflammable material, electrical short circuits, delays in rescue and putting out fire coupled with narrow roads through which fire tenders cannot move, and to top it all, large crowds that gather as onlookers, and politicians (VIPs) not missing the photo opportunities that such tragedies offer, obstructing rescue work. In several cases the irony is that instructions about following certain safety norms exist but

nobody refers to them until such tragedies happen. For example on March 23, 2010 a major fire in the landmark British-era Stephen Court in the heart of Kolkata's Park Street claimed 43 lives.

Basic Cause is Corruption

The basic reason for this tragedy is 'corruption' and all others are only peripheral reasons. For example the road in front of the hospital is reported to be only 4.5 meters wide. How could any government have permitted such a high building in violation of norms? The height of the building and the width of the road have a relationship which has been violated. This is because the rich can afford to influence the authorities. It is possible the architect and builders may have violated the norms or the architect may not have been consulted. The building is supposed to get a completion certificate and a fire safety norms certificate. As so often happens, such violations are overlooked for a consideration. This may be the case in the present instance also. For example the Managing Director of Bengal Shraichi Housing Development Ltd says; "We take a fire license every year. Something definitely went wrong but I won't agree that we didn't follow fire safety measures." This is directly in contradiction to what has been reported about the storage of inflammable material in the basement. In view of this who can have confidence in the fire license given every year? It is ironical that the hospital got a certificate as 'Best Managed Hospital'

According to reports the hospital people just disappeared. Is this the culture imparted? Then the inspector is deputed to report on a regular basis to check and give an OK certificate. How is it he has overlooked the storage of combustible material in the basement? This can only happen for a consideration. In fact it is the lower staff like these inspectors who on a routine basis get their '*hafta*' For example it is well known that in regard to water supply the lowly employee who manages the valve, controls the water supply.. He is wooed by people of the locality for a consideration. It may be the inspector,

(Cont'd. on page 16)

Parties Without Policies

K. K. Pathak

The present hue and cry against doing away with subsidies on certain items and rejecting the idea of foreign investment in retail business with foolproof safeguards is hardly in the national interest.

Among political parties, national and regional, the Congress alone has national policies. All other parties have no national policies. So far as the BJP is concerned, it claims to be a national party, though its policies are sectarian for national affairs and for international affairs, it has no policies at all, except blind opposition to the policies of the Congress. I need give one glaring example to illustrate my point of view. When the BJP was in power at the Centre, Mr. Jaswant Singh was foreign minister for more than three years. He made good efforts to lay the foundation of a positive and meaningful relations with the United States of America. Before him, Mr. Yashwant Singh was foreign minister without any agenda. Mr. Jaswant Singh gave a definite direction with tacit approval of Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister. Although Mr. Vajpayee was foreign minister in the Morarji Desai cabinet, his understanding of international affairs in our enlightened national interests, was poor enough to dismiss his tenure as that of Mr. Yashwant Singh with Mr. Vajpayee as PM.

Mr. Jaswant Singh conducted our international affairs with a dexterity not shown by any other foreign minister, even in the Congress rule. Mr. Singh's agenda was very clear. His first priority was to isolate Pakistan. For this aim, he initiated dialogues with the USA, culminating in a positive relationship with that country. His third aim was to ignore China as far as possible. Perhaps, he was convinced that neither Pakistan nor China could be a friend to India. The assessment of Mr. Singh was not only pragmatic, but also based on ground realities which India could not afford to ignore. Even as foreign minister, he restarted from the place Dr. Manmohan Singh left in 1996 after remaining finance minister for five years in the Rao Cabinet, clearing the debris of populism resorted to by Nehru and Indira in economic matters.

Dr. Manmohan Singh reversed the direction of economic policies of the Congress to save the nation from going bankrupt. It is very unfortunate that as Prime Minister, Dr. Singh has not been able to do what he should have done in the economic affairs of the country. I have

no or little idea of the constraints, preventing him to take economic policies he initiated as Finance Minister to their logical conclusion. He too had to resort to populism for vote-catching purposes for his party.

As far as I think, Dr. Singh knows it much better than any other economist, either here or abroad, that no national economy could be smoothly run on subsidies. If the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics collapsed in 1989-90, it was the result of subsidies sustaining its economic policies for decades together. The fall of communism in East European countries was mainly due to these subsidies in the name of a Welfare State. Pulling down the rich to improve the condition of the poor is a beggar's policy which cannot distribute affluence in any society, as poverty alone could be distributed in such a scenario.

China's early realisation of the basic economic truths, extending a hand of cooperation with the USA during the Nixon and Reagan eras, made that country's economy more sound than it could have been if the diehard policies of communist ideology were strictly followed by China. The golden opportunity came our way in the early 1970s, but Indira Gandhi thoughtlessly rejected the USA offer of economic cooperation and China made full advantage of the offer made to it, after India arrogantly rejected it.

The present hue and cry against doing away with subsidies on certain items and rejecting the idea of foreign investment in retail business with foolproof safeguards is hardly in the national interest. The so-called nationalist party, the BJP, has rejected the idea lock, stock and barrel on imaginary grounds. As for the regional outfits, which have no economic policies of their own, have also followed suit in a thoughtless manner in the name of opposition for the sake of opposition.

I wish sanity could prevail upon them and give them vision to understand the long-range profits of Dr. Singh's new economic agenda for letting our economy

revive once again for the betterment of the nation as a whole. The Opposition is purely on flimsy grounds with imaginary fears which have no real foundations. May wisdom prevail to let our economy revive after another dose of populism.

I need give one more example of negative thinking in the BJP. Dr. Manmohan Singh's finest and best achievement is the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. People with motivated intentions may give credit of the deal to Mr. Natwar Singh telling a falsehood that Dr. Singh had developed cold feet on the deal. Honestly speaking, no Indian leader had so intimate and personal relations with George Bush Jr. as Dr. Singh had with him. It was due to the personal rapport between Dr. Singh and Mr. George Bush that the USA went as far as to persuade the comity of nations with nuclear teeth not to raise objections to the deal in the name of proliferation. So far as the question of any effective check on proliferation is concerned, neither China nor North Korea nor Pakistan nor even Iran has been prevented to go nuclear despite loud protests. All of them come in the category of rogue states, a potential threat to a nuclear disaster. To my utter surprise, the BJP opposed the deal, despite the fact that when in power,

this party worked for better relations with the USA.

My assessment of the BJP's policies is based on facts put as impartially as possible since no political loyalties are attached to me. I am a no-party man with no political background. But as an impartial and passive spectator of stark opportunism of the BJP, mostly unprincipled and self-contradictory, which makes me believe that the BJP is not at all a national party in the true sense. Numerical strengths in the legislatures is no reasonable proof of a party being national. The real proof lies in pursuing policies without any bias or prejudice against the party in power, in the national interest.

In my considered opinion, the BJP falls short of this simple standard, getting relegated to the position of a party which opposes things for the sake of opposition. It cannot be a national network on any ground whatever. I hope the leaders of the BJP will ponder over the issues I have raised and try to behave with more national responsibility than it has so far done.

K. K. PATHAK is an educationist and a political commentator based in Bharatpur, Rajasthan.

FDI in Multi-brand Retail Good for Rural India

The decision taken by the Union cabinet on November 24, to permit foreign direct investment (FDI) in multi-brand retail chain companies in India with a controlling 51 percent equity shareholding is long overdue. The impact of this historic decision, over which successive governments in New Delhi have been dithering for two decades, is that Western retail chains such as Walmart, Carrefour and Tesco will be permitted to establish supermarkets vending a wide spectrum of goods ranging from farm produce to fast moving consumer goods including garments, footwear and haberdashery. Since these billion-dollar retail giants buy in bulk, they are able to negotiate rock-bottom purchase prices with manufacturers and suppliers, and pass on the economies of scale to consumers. Benefits to consumers apart, the most compelling argument for FDI in multi-brand retail is that Western-style supermarkets tend to stock and sell farm fresh produce and processed foods in a big way, and are big buyers of agricultural produce. Therefore they build storage, logistics, packaging and delivery infrastructure to get high-quality agriculture produce expeditiously and efficiently from farm to urban markets. Curiously, despite the proven benefits of multi-brand mass retail, for almost half a century there's been stiff resistance to it in post-independence India. Rooted in small-is-beautiful romanticism and elitist notions about the health-giving importance of unprocessed farm produce, persistent opposition to modern retail has extracted a terrible price from the nation's neglected rural majority who despite constituting 67 percent of the country's population, contribute a mere 17 percent of India's annual GDP. With amateur middlemen dominating agriculture under the umbrella of the iniquitous Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) Act, 1954 which mandates compulsory auction of horticulture produce through APMCs, it's hardly surprising that 40 percent of horticulture and 10-20 percent of foodgrains produced by rural India is wasted or damaged inflicting a loss of Rs.50,000 crore annually to the Indian economy. Unsurprisingly, the stiffest opposition to FDI in multi-brand retail comes from the Communist Party of India-Marxist with the BJP also raising the bogey of local kirana stores going under against foreign competition.

Excerpted from Dilip Thakore's editorial in *Education India*, December 2011.

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

FDI In Retail

1. Foreign Direct Investment in multi-brand retail was a long awaited step the UPA II ultimately took (November 2011). After being dysfunctional for two years, the Government acted for once but the action had to be aborted; the decision was kept in abeyance because of opposition from UPA's allies (Trinamul Congress-TMC- and DMK) as well as the opposition parties. The PM appeared to be firm initially but gave in as is his wont these days. He had to back off particularly because of the obduracy of Mamata Banerjee (TMC). The opponents had objections ranging from possible death of the small trader/grocer to entry of rejected foreign goods through the back door. The ghost of East India Company bothered the BJP while the Marxist fear of economic imperialism haunted the Left. As if politicians were not enough, Anna Hazare and Baba Ramdev jumped in to the fray and opposed the FDI proposal – not that they have any expertise in the matter; but anything is good enough to attack the Government these days irrespective of the merits of the case. Parliament was not allowed to function for 9 days as if the issue was a matter of life or death. Why did the Government bring up the issue at this juncture as it did not require Parliament's sanction? Was it only because the Government wanted to show that it was not really dysfunctional as was being made out?

1. The measure was meant to be implemented in 52 cities, leaving the bulk of our population out. This was only an enabling provision as States are the authority to issue licenses to retail outlets; those who were opposed to the measure were free to deny licenses. The anxiety that the small trader would be badly hit has no basis in experience. The same fear was expressed when malls shot up everywhere. Nothing happened to the grocer or the corner vegetable vendor. They continue to thrive and in fact, malls are facing problems. The experience in countries where such retail is permitted is totally different. Pop-Mom stores have not disappeared, producers have got better value for their produce and consumers have got better deals. Wal-Mart or TESCO or METRO would compete in building infrastructure by opening warehouses and cold storages which would prevent fruits and vegetables from rotting and help the farmers add to their sales. The issue was not important enough to block the Parliament. It was only a small step. The arrival or non-arrival of foreign traders would not make much difference to the economy. It is the obdurate attitude that is disturbing. As APJ Abdul Kalam said, "We are afflicted by the disease of fear and danger. History is not made by cowards." The opposition to all new projects is based not on knowledge but on fear as to what might happen. Prudence is one thing and cowardice another.

Web Control

2. Kapil Sibal's argumentative streak sometimes lands him in trouble as he barges in where angels fear to tread. His self-confidence (intellectual arrogance) has taken him on the path of confrontation with the World Wide Web – an unbeatable, elusive entity. Sibal found that the contents of some social networks like Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Orkut etc. hosted by Google, Yahoo and a host of other providers had uploaded material of defamatory nature and of the kind which could even incite communal violence. He asked these providers to remove the objectionable contents but there was inadequate response. Sibal, therefore, decided to formulate guidelines to consider how such unacceptable material could be blocked from the websites. Was Sibal more agitated because the objectionable material pertained to Sonia Gandhi or because it could inflame communal passions? The question can be left alone as defamatory references about anybody are objectionable, be it Sonia Gandhi or anybody else. There is no doubt that very often what is

2. Kapil Sibal is not wholly wrong since the need to stop the abuse of 'freedom of expression' is a common grievance all over the world. The Indian IT Rules cover this aspect as it requires the platform providers to take action within 36 hours to remove the offending content after receiving a complaint. The web sites have their own terms and conditions to control the contents; nudity, pornography, defamatory references and illegal material are not permitted. The only problem is when the complainant's (Government of India -GOI- in this case) interpretation of what is objectionable does not tally with that of the platform provider. What is objectionable from one's view point is not necessarily illegal. Google has refused to act on GOI's complaint and asked for a court order declaring the contents as illegal. Thus there is needless confrontation between the GOI and WWW. India does not want to fall in the category of China and Iran who censor the web content. India's image as a vibrant democracy should not suffer because of Sibal's hasty show of pride.

uploaded crosses the boundaries of civility and the first and immature reaction is to ban them. Sibal makes it clear that he does not want to impose censorship; he is merely seeking cooperation from the web platforms to control their misuse. It is a mere play of words as coming from a Minister, the threat of action is more than implied.

Some things can be killed by ignoring them, even if one is vehemently opposed to such exhibition of poor taste. Let the WWW thrive; attempts to control it are significantly unsuccessful as China has found. 'Tilting at windmills' aptly describes the effort!

Administrative Paralysis Or Politics of Inaction?

3. The Central Government is truly locked in a trance with the PM reigning in *absentia*, the Supreme Leader and the Heir Apparent afraid to take a public stand on any issue and the Chief Trouble Shooter, Pranabda, getting exhausted with overtime work. No action is the safest course of action at Delhi. The financial capital Mumbai is not far behind in inaction. In fact, Business Schools all over should include inaction as a choice of action in their curriculum and invite Ministers from Delhi and Mumbai as guest faculty. The CM of Maharashtra would be an eminent speaker and he could expound on the merit of inaction on a minor civic matter of a fly-over at Peddar Road. A simple example of how a comparatively minor project was effectively mishandled for years to prevent annoying somebody! It is not a project which would transform the national economy or anything of that sort. A simple matter of reducing traffic congestion!

The priority issue, from the opposition's point of view, is to embarrass the government as much as possible, and ensure that parliament gets no chance to review the proposal (FDI - retail trade) and decide on it purely on the basis of merits. No chance now or in the near future.

S. Viswam, Janata, December 4, 2011

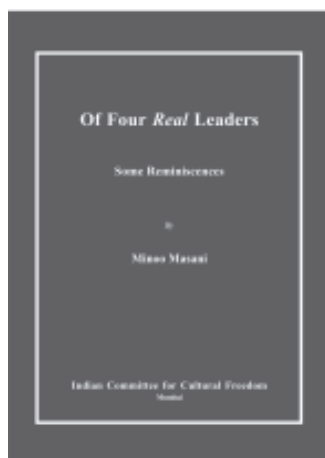
3. The basic rule is that if you do not act, you displease no one but if you act, there is a price to pay. In other words, why invite trouble when things are moving - although haltingly. The traffic at the busy junction at Haji Ali in Mumbai is getting jammed for decades but any action to decongest it is fraught with opposition. Ambitious projects like a 4 km long fly-over to solve the problem are under consideration for years but it is found that it is wise to do nothing. Alternative proposals like a new road to be built along the yet to be reclaimed seacoast, two or more small fly-overs instead of one big one are floated to make a show of great deliberation which keeps everybody engaged without raising Cain. The trick is to keep all these balloons afloat without selecting any one for action. The lesson in 'inaction' would be valuable for future administrators. They will learn how to avoid trouble while looking very busy in problem solving. The Business Schools would otherwise recommend examination of all projects within months and a decision within a time frame to start one project or another. Action is their by-word but they have not heard of the political wisdom of inaction. The project costs may multiply but that would be somebody else's baby after a few years! Today's survival is more important than tomorrow's success!

Readers are invited to send their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in

Just released!

Of Four Real Leaders

By Minoo Masani



Minoo Masani died on May 27, 1998. Four years earlier in December 1994 he wrote what was to be his last booklet "Reminiscences of Four Great Figures." For reasons explained in the booklet, it was printed only this month and released at a seminar on Leadership marking his 106th birth anniversary.

The reminiscences are frank, even irreverent, first person accounts of his encounters with the "Four Great Figures: Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari and Jayaprakash Narayan. The booklet also carries his article entitled "Two Styles of Leadership" published in a *Freedom First* special issue on Leadership in January 1980. Though written 21 years ago, it almost seems like he wrote it as a foreword for his "Reminiscences.

In today's world there is an almost universal, almost fatalistic acceptance of the poor quality of 'leaders' not only in public life and politics but in almost every field of human endeavour with no discernible evidence of the likely emergence of the kind of leadership thrown up by the freedom movement or even in the early years after independence.

Price Rs.50/-. Add Rs.30 if you wish to receive the booklet by courier.

Payment by cheque (cheque to be drawn in favour of ICCF) or money order to Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Bldg. 148 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001. If payment by cheque please ensure that it is payable at par in Mumbai.

How About Abolishing Driving Licences?

Sharad Bailur

There is just one single rule of the road in India. Whoever gets his nose in first is the king of the road. As for the rest – they are not man enough. (I am told “macho” is the word in fashion these days).

The procedure adopted by the normal ‘law abiding’ citizen in India to secure a driving licence to drive a car is as follows:

1. Go to a driving school and get enrolled. Some documents are needed.
2. Learn *how to manipulate a vehicle* on the road and weave in and out of what goes for traffic on our roads. Develop at least four more pairs of eyes on the sides and back of your head.
3. Learn how to avoid killing people, *if possible*.
4. After a week or two of this learning in which the trainer sits by your side with a trainer clutch and brake pedal that he operates, you are told to try and “get some practice”, on the learner’s licence which he has arranged for you in the meantime with the documents that you submitted at (1) above.
5. Go to the office of the Road Transport authority with other “trainees” on an appointed day for your “test”. This is little more than a ritual.
6. Most often the official of the RTO will ask you to start the car and drive a few yards forward. After that he will approve your licence.
7. Collect your licence from your driving school the next day. Of course the cost of the licence is a pittance. The cost of what is paid to the driving school for the licence is some ten times as much. Explanation: The driving test official has been bribed to grant you your licence without making a fuss.

This is the normal procedure for getting a licence. Much of what is mentioned above is true of anyone who wants a driving licence irrespective of the type of car or truck that he wants to drive. Not once above have I mentioned the need to learn strict obedience to traffic rules and the care to be taken in vehicle maintenance or learning the art of “defensive driving”. This is because these concepts are alien to India.

In an earlier article I had extolled the virtues of the RTO Mysore West resulting from the increased awareness

of the anti-corruption Anna Hazare movement. It turns out I was wrong. I had tried to acquire a licence without going through a driving school. That is why I was turned down. If I had gone through a driving school I would have had to pay Rs 1200 instead of the Rs 240 that I was asked to pay. My action in not going through the driving school meant that the entire bribe that the RTO staff would have been lubricated with had been knocked out. And the RTO Mysore West was not going to let that much money – almost Rs 1000 in illegitimate earnings be lost to it. Hence no licence. Getting a licence was essential however. Therefore going through a driving school became imperative. The driving school operator told me that of the Rs 1000 I paid him, Rs 700 went into bribes to everyone at the RTO the rates of which were fixed. No wonder the entire system worked like a well oiled machine. Abolish the bribes via Anna Hazare and the Lokpal and the RTO will grind to a halt in less than a day.

The Directional Indicator

There are certain “rules” that have been invented by illiterate truck drivers that go against the rule book. For instance if a car or truck wishes to overtake you, what do you do? Ninety-nine percent of drivers will tell you that you should turn on your right directional indicator. This indicates that you will turn right. So in other countries that drive on the left side of the road, the car behind you will not overtake you in the expectation that you will turn right. Not in India though. Here it means go ahead and overtake me. How do I know that it does not mean that the car ahead will turn right? I don’t. I overtake you. If meanwhile you do swerve to the right, we shall both die. That is why there are traffic rules. How many times have I overtaken the car in front when he has used his right indicator? Umpteen times. Nothing happened. But all it will take is just one accident to kill me as well as the driver of the car in front. The RTO *never* tells you that this rule is wrong. He couldn’t care less. After all it is you and I who will die, not him. Any way he did not invent the new rule. So he does not see the need to disinvent it either. Meanwhile thousands of accidents kill drivers that try to overtake on a misdirecting indicator.

What is the actual rule? If you wish to allow the car behind you to overtake you, turn on your left indicator. This indicates one of two things: Either you are going to stop ahead on the left side of the road, or you are going to turn left. By implication you are also indicating that you will not turn right. Therefore the car behind has free passage to your right to overtake you. This rule is safe and unequivocal. I used it and strangely enough most drivers behind me understand it at once. That they never use it themselves is another matter.

Yielding to the Right

Notice the kind of rash driving that takes place, the slaloming from lane to lane, the motorcycles and cars coming in on the wrong side of the road? Notice the number of pile-ups? Clearly broadening and three-laning roads and putting up central dividers is barely scratching the surface. There is just one single rule of the road in India. Whoever gets his nose in first is the king of the road. As for the rest – they are not man enough. (I am told “macho” is the word in fashion these days). They can take their comeuppance. Unfortunately even women drivers follow these aggressive driving habits. Result? Women drivers die as frequently as men on the road.

Rectifying the Situation:

An article in *DNA* suggests major changes in the Motor Vehicles Act. Written by Rajendra Aklekar, it has the following extremely sensible suggestions:

“According to the latest statistics, there were 609 accidents in Mumbai in 2010, which claimed 637 lives. In 2009, there were 607 fatal accidents in Mumbai, killing 628 people. Road accident is one of the top nine reasons for deaths in the country. In Maharashtra, around 11,000 people die in road accidents every year.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had formed five groups based on four Es of road safety - education, enforcement, engineering (roads as well as vehicles) and emergency care. The groups have come up with solutions to curb the increasing number of deaths on roads. “Road safety is a complex issue of national concern, considering its magnitude and gravity and the consequent negative impact on the economy, public health and the general welfare of the people,” said a senior official.

The working group on enforcement said the penalty structure of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988 had become redundant and fines were not a deterrent. “Penalties and fines for traffic offences should be increased. While revising the penalties, a clause

needs to be inserted in the Amendment Act that every three years there should be a revision of fine based on consumer price index, the group said. The working group on education has recommended formulating a national road safety policy and supporting laws. “Fifty percent of fines collected should be spent for road safety activities,” it said. The working group on engineering (roads) has called for a review of standards / guidelines and evolving guidelines with safety focus for National Highways and State Highways and developing Manuals on Traffic Control Devices. “Engineers involved in planning, design, construction and operation of highways must be trained in road safety,” it suggested. There should be major improvements in vehicle designs and standardisation of bus, truck bodies and trailers to increase safety, said the working group on engineering (vehicles). “For effective planning and execution, there should be National Accident Research Centre (mother organisation) and data collection at State Accident Research Centres (daughter organisations),” it said. The group for emergency care suggested review and audit of the existing schemes such as National Highway Trauma Care Project and deployment of a Pan-India Pre-Hospital Emergency Medical Care Network to ensure a primary crash response time of eight to 10 minutes. “Setting up of Regional Referral Trauma Centres across the country supported by a heli-ambulance network to ensure speedy care to the severely injured is the need of the hour,” it added.”

Abolish Driving Licences

Another step that might help in abolishing corruption among RTOs and their offices and staff: Abolish driving licences. This sounds radical but in issuing licences the authorities are missing the wood of adherence to road rules, for the trees of individual skill in manipulating vehicles, if necessary without regard to road rules.

Driving a vehicle is considered a privilege to be paid for – hence the licence. It is more important that those who use the road follow the rules to avoid accidents than that they have a ‘privilege’. Besides there is an implied suggestion that holding a driver’s licence somehow invests the licence holder with an identity. In essence the law about driving licences is a law for individuals – not a law for society. All laws for individuals are dangerous. Since a licence is essentially a form of prevention – ‘thou shalt not’ drive unless approved by way of a licence, it is a

(Cont’d. on page 25)

Food Security Bill 2011

Designed to Ensure a Fiasco

Sharad Joshi

Corruption breeds and proliferates in areas of shortages wherever there are power centres. The food security mechanism proposed by the Bill would be an ideal fertile ground for breeding corruption.

The economics of 'Aam Aadmi' or the theories of 'Inclusive Growth' like the philosophies of most civil society organizations are precariously based on resolutions adopted by international conferences conferring rights on people where none existed and which cannot be sustainable or legally enforceable. These theories are watered down descendents of the old-world theories of communism and socialism. They appeared in an earlier generation as welfare economics before their incarnation as theories of 'inclusive growth'. Dr. Amartya Sen's work advocating action programmes for elimination of famines and right to education that won the Nobel prize is the only respectable economic justification of the theories of 'inclusive growth'. Amartya Sen's work was hardly a work in Economics and many wondered if it deserved to be bestowed a Nobel prize in Economics. Theories of 'inclusive growth' confer right to information, education and freedom from hunger created by various international resolutions. The other source of inspiration for the civil society platforms is the hilariously humorous book, serialized on TV 'Yes Prime Minister'.

Schemes of Food Security come from a United Nations' resolution adopted at Rome whereby the heads of States affirmed the right of every one to have physical and economical access to safe and nutritious food consistent with the right to adequate food as the fundamental right of every one to be free from hunger.

The scheme proposed in the Food Security Bill 2011 gives an outline of a scheme to provide certain quantities of food grains or ready meals to the deserving handicapped people.

The food grains are supposed to be supplied through the well established pipeline of the Public Distribution System (PDS). The PDS is a notoriously leaky system from which lakhs of tonnes of food

grains are pilfered or otherwise disappear regularly. The most ardent advocates of the PDS come from the states that are notorious for the extent of pilferage.

Swatantra Bharat Paksha (SBP), the only liberal political outfit in the country, has proposed, in its manifesto, a system of 'food coupons' to be mailed to members of the target population, that can be exchanged for food grains in the open market. Encouraged by C. Rajagopalachari's decision as the Chief Minister of the old Madras State, to lift foodgrains rationing in the state gave courage to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the then Central Minister for Civil Supplies, to strongly argue for the abolition of the rationing system as early as 1950. There is no improvement in the situation of pilferage and corruption in the PDS system. One wonders why the UPA government considered it necessary to use the same pipeline without giving attention to alternative methods of achieving the same objective.

Corruption breeds and proliferates in areas of shortages wherever there are power centres. The food security mechanism proposed by the Bill would be an ideal fertile ground for breeding corruption. MG-NERAGA was foreseen as one such fertile ground for corruption. Unfortunately, these apprehensions have been proved



right. It is obvious that the food security mechanism will provide great opportunities for Anna Hazare type opponents of corruption and through strategic use of the Right to Information.

The SBP manifesto, apart from recommending 'food coupon' system, has also strongly recommended the Gurudwara langers as the only system that has worked effectively for the poor and the dispossessed. The Civil Supplies Ministry should bring out cogently the reasons why it considers that the 'PDS-cum-public kitchen' system that it proposes, is an improvement over the 'Langer-cum-food coupons' system proposed by the other political parties.

- Schedule I to the Bill permits payment of sums in cash not exceeding 50% of the minimum support price of wheat and coarse grains and derived minimum support price of rice. The minimum support price that ought to be taken into account should also include majoration proposed by Dr. Swaminathan of 50% over and above the minimum support price. This would confer better benefit on the beneficiaries of the food security system and create a right for the farmers to a similar majoration.
- Schedule II to the Bill gives a statement of calorie values and protein content of the cooked meals. Professors V. M. Dandekar and Neelkanth Rathi had estimated that the minimum requirement of calories in urban areas is 2100 while that in villages is 2400. The whole scheme does not make any differentiation between the endowments in urban areas and in villages.
- One important question arises is, the position of foodgrains godowns at present notwithstanding, can India sustain such a major programme of food and meals distribution?
- The Debt Relief and Loan Waiver Scheme, 2008 did not deal with the arrears of farm electricity bills. As a consequence, power is being cut off on the directives of state governments, as in Maharashtra, at points far away from the consuming villages. To add to the trouble of the farmers, fossil fuel prices are skyrocketing all the time without any benefit for the producers of ethanol and bio-diesel.
- The advancement of minor mechanization has been very sluggish and the labour supply is drying out largely because of the MG-NERAGA scheme.
- Schedule IV to the Bill should make a special provision that the government will encourage schemes for better

utilisation of water and remove all hurdles in the production and more extensive use of bio-fuels.

- It is also necessary to make a provision that MG-NERAGA will employ only such persons as cannot find any employment in the local agricultural fields.

Unless such measures are incorporated, agriculture will continue to be unremunerative and, therefore, unattractive. As a consequence, food production will dwindle and the national pool will be far from sufficient for meeting the needs of the food security scheme.

In Schedule I, instead of talking of minimum support price in a vacuum it would be more appropriate to speak specifically of market prices where there is no ostensible and overt attempt to manipulate market forces.

The target population of the Food Security scheme, have nowhere been clearly defined. It would appear that various committees have pushed the BPL line upwards and downwards to suit the political economic requirements of the day. This was clearly brought out by the enormous hostility generated by the affidavit filed by the National Planning Commission in the Supreme Court stating that the poverty line is as low as Rs.32/- per day per person in the urban area and Rs.26/- per day per person in the rural area. For once, the government should stop deciding the level of the poverty line according to the economic and political conveniences of the day. This will permit determination of the exact size of the target population and also work out the financial and foodgrains requirements of the proposed Food Security scheme.

SHARAD JOSHI, former MP (Rajya Sabha); Founder, Shetkari Sanghatana, and National President, Swatantra Bharat Paksha. Email: sharadjoshi.mah@gmail.com.

Licence-Permit Raj's New Avatar (cont'd. from page 8)

linesman, or an engineer who gives the certificate, but make no mistake, the money is pooled by all of them and goes all the way to the top. So the 'License-Permit Quota Raj has been replaced by many such avenues under the new economic dispensation. Hence these types of fire hazards will continue to happen if the cancer of corruption is not controlled. That was the reason why Anna Hazare was insisting on a strong Lokpal Bill where the Class C&D government employees are included.

H. R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA is a freelance writer based in Mysore. Email: what_options@yahoo.com



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

The Slap That Shook India

The attack in Delhi was perpetrated by a publicity seeking young man, reported to be mentally unstable.

Recently Sharad Pawar was addressing a press conference in Delhi. Suddenly a young Sardar lunged forward and slapped him. Actually it was more a light tap on the cheek, but judging by the hysterical reaction and blanket coverage by the print and electronic media, you could be forgiven for mistaking it as a slap that was heard across India. Almost on cue, “activists from Pawar’s NCP descended on the streets of Mumbai, stopping traffic, pelting stones, burning buses and indulging in general mayhem. The real shame was that this type of aftermath has become almost routine after the slightest incident.

It is utterly reprehensible that political parties will take advantage of any provocation to unleash their hooligans on Mumbai’s streets. In the first place, Pawar was merely slapped. He did not sustain any grievous bodily injury. So there is no need to project him as a martyr.

Secondly, the attack in Delhi was perpetrated by a

publicity seeking young man, reported to be mentally unstable. It does not have the slightest connection to Mumbai. So what is the justification for acts of vandalism and seriously inconveniencing the citizens of Mumbai. We’re they in any way responsible for what happened in Delhi?

The sad reality is that all political parties rely on lumpen elements to swell their ranks. The workers and so-called activists are nothing but common hooligans and street thugs. It is hardly surprising that they welcome any opportunity to create chaos and mayhem. The excuse trotted out that the sentiments of the people have been hurt is pure balderdash. Hooligans have no sentiments. Their only purpose is to loot and destroy. In a just society, the political leaders would be held accountable and made to compensate the people for the damage and inconvenience caused. But that will never happen in our fair land. We get the leaders we deserve.

No Virgins For Taslima

One narrow minded bigot sent a complaint to 60 police stations across Mumbai, calling for her immediate arrest.

The Islamic concept of paradise is a beautiful garden where each man fortunate enough to reach there can help himself to 72 vestal virgins. Martyrs are included in this category and, unfortunately, this has become a recruiting tool for militants and suicide bombers. But that is another issue.

Recently, the irrepressible Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen sent out an irrelevant Tweet about Muslim women deserving to have sex with 72 virgin men - an obvious parody on the male version of paradise. Almost predictably, all hell broke loose and Nasreen was threatened with dire consequences – not to mention the certainty of eternal damnation. One narrow minded bigot sent a complaint to 60 police stations across Mumbai, calling for her immediate arrest.

This over the top reaction illustrates a common failing of a large section of Indian society. I am talking about a near-total absence of a sense of humour. Taslima’s light hearted Tweet, obviously made in jest, became a rallying point for self-styled moralists, defenders-of-the-faith and general busybodies. They fail to see the irony in accusing someone of “disturbing public sentiment”, when it is they themselves who are the chief instigators. They are the ones who deserve to be locked up for fanning the flames of communal intolerance. They are making a *cause célèbre* of an innocuous statement that was read by only a handful of Taslima’s Tweet followers before they chose to broadcast it. If there was any justice, the media should have ignored the matter with the contempt it deserved – but that would be asking for too much.

The only way to move a politician’s bottom is to hit him on the nose with a base (ball) bat.

H. Jarvis, (the father of Proposition 13), *The Daily Telegraph*, October 8, 1979.

Cited in ‘Many Voices’, **Freedom First** No.324, November 1979. (Note: On June 6th, 1978, nearly two-thirds of California’s voters passed Proposition 13, reducing property tax rates on homes, businesses and farms by about 57%).

Oh God!

Son of God so frail and helpless that He requires protection from us mere mortals?

“Who’s there” is a low budget, no-stars horror movie by Ejaz Ahmed. I doubt if Ahmed himself expected great things from this film, at most hoping it would do fair business in non-metro cities and small towns. Now, thanks to the ruckus raised by some Christian organizations, he stands to make a killing.

The unwitting cause of this unexpected windfall is a “blasphemous” film poster depicting an individual presumed to be Jesus being stabbed on the Cross; and another poster with the Cross of Jesus upside down and daggers falling on it. Taking mortal affront, groups like the Catholic Secular Forum and the Association of Concerned Catholics have managed to get the film makers charged (exhaustively) with (1) hurting religious sentiments (2) malicious common intention (3) insulting religious beliefs and a few others. Now that this insignificant movie has become a cause *célèbre*, its curiosity value has increased tremendously; and Ahmed and his partners will soon be laughing all the way to the bank.

The Parsis and Christians are widely regarded as the two most liberal communities in India. Therefore it saddens me to see responsible Christian organizations succumbing to the kind of parochial paranoia that outfits

like the VHP are known for. So the makers of a C-grade film sought to garner cheap publicity by displaying some provocative posters. And now a section of Christian society has created a storm by getting the producers arrested; with the result that a mediocre film that would have sunk without a trace will become an overnight sensation. I despair of these pompous guardians who declare themselves to be the sole arbiters of what “hurts the religious sentiments” of a section of society. All they achieve is give a clarion call to assorted hooligans to come out on the streets and cause mayhem. It never occurs to them to let the “people” themselves decide what “hurts their religious sentiments.”

In this case, aren’t these worthies merely abetting the film makers in their nefarious design? Besides, is the Son of God so frail and helpless that He requires protection from us mere mortals? I would appeal to my Christian friends not to start down the slippery slope of communal intolerance, because then it is very difficult to climb back up.

FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer, a blogger and freelance writer. He is a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First. Email: leonardo8_@yahoo.com

Freedom First

3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001.
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The Art of Moving On

Learn to let go of the departed ...

Charulata Ravi Kumar

As I turned the news pages a recent Saturday, I was numbed by the picture of a very dear friend telling me we would never have coffee together again. Since then, I have scrolled his number on my mobile several times. Just to see it and revisit his memories. I then scrolled down to another friend's number. She left us two years ago. And as I scrolled down more numbers of departed friends, I realised what each one of them was trying to teach me. Let go.

Most of us hold on to such straws in the hope that our attachment to what's dear to us will remain forever. We fear and dislike death to the point of denial, making it difficult to deal with loss. But loss is inevitable. Birth and death, failure and success, loss and gain — all must be embraced with equal grace. Because they are equal parts of nature. It's the law. The truth. Our philosophies teach us so. We Indians know so. Why then, don't we have the courage to face this? Why is life portrayed as joyful, and death not spoken of? Why do we hoard and not let go? It's what makes us weak and, in turn, we pass on our fears to the next generation.

But is it possible to prepare for a future that will bring forth both sides of life, bright and dark? It is tough, but possible, if we cultivate the art of letting go. Consider these suggestions on how to overcome the pain of loss.

1. Let go of the fear of death. Death is not dark. Death is not sorrow. Death is a step forward to another life. Yes, we will miss our dear ones. We have grown up watching people cry around the dead. So we cry too. And so will our children. Their memories begin to haunt us rather than inspire us. Are we crying partly because we see our inevitable end? Perhaps our days of mourning need to be spent more in silence than in outbursts. This would help in introspection.
2. Let go of your bonds with material things. The material things around us are symbolic only of our life's milestones. As we drive through life, we should learn to leave the milestones where they are. We need to reach the destination and drive on; not pick up the stones as mementos. But alongside, we must learn to give. Making this a way of life from the early days would help us be inspired by memories, declutter our homes and expand our mindspace. Many of us choose spring cleaning as the occasion to get rid of old

clothes and toys. And where best to dump them but at orphanages! Real letting-go would happen if we chose important festivals to give away things in good condition with the joy of sharing, not for clearing.

3. Let go of the constant need for physical proximity. Throughout our lives, we must learn to let go of siblings as they get married, of parents as they die, of friends as they part and of lovers as we break up. Each is the end of a beautiful chapter that leads to another to complete the whole story of our lives.
4. Let go of your inhibitions. Brought up on values that our parents hold dear, we create taboos passed down as heirlooms. Only a free mind that asks questions will have the strength to face pain. But more important than the open answers to these questions is what will break the pain barriers with ease. Now when my son quizzes me on life and death, I give him real answers in a way that he can comprehend. It is often our inability to explain or the inhibition to change traditional views that are impediments.
5. Learn to let go of possessiveness. Our fear of losing our friends, partners, children is but an expression of our need to control and feel our powers over them. It's perhaps the most difficult but the most important of all detachments we need to practice. Over the years, I have found that my strongest bonds are with those where no rules were ever imposed. No judgments made. No expectations held.
6. We must teach our children too to let go of dependencies, of sorrows, of fears and of hurt. Teach her to give away all her ribbons to her sister. Teach him to give away that chocolate to the little street angel. Teach her the art of giving away good toys and clothes to the orphanage. And as you teach them, teach yourself too.

As for me, I strive to hold on to my dear friends' thoughts in my heart, and learn to let go of their numbers from my phone.

MS. CHARULATA RAVI KUMAR is CEO, Product of the Year.

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N O T E S

Why Freedom First?

Among wide circles of the Indian intelligentsia the false dichotomy of “Bread or Freedom?” is regrettably in evidence. The prevalence of this false choice in unexpected quarters was evidenced not long ago by a statement made in Parliament where “Freedom Firsters” were accused of wishing to subordinate the claims of social advance to those of liberty.

An excellent answer to such inconsequential thinking is provided by Ignazio Silone, the Italian socialist writer, in an article entitled *The Choice of Comrades* in the December issue of *Encounter*.

“To judge men,” writes Silone, “it is no longer enough to see if they have calloused hands; one must look into their eyes. There is no mistaking the look of Cain. Do we side with the inmates of the slave labour camps or with their gaolers? This dilemma we can no longer evade, because the executioners themselves are forcing it on us. Threateningly they demand: “Are you with us or against us?” We must call a spade a spade. We are certainly not going to sacrifice the poor to the cause of freedom, nor freedom to the poor, or rather to the usurping bureaucrats who have climbed on the shoulders of the poor.”

It will be a happy day for this country when the conviction goes deep into our hearts that neither social advance nor social justice nor an equalitarian society can possibly exist unless they are rooted in the fullest freedom. Not bread *or* freedom, but bread *by* and *through* freedom is the only reality.

*

‘Undesirable’ and ‘Objectionable’

While the film industry is complaining against the rigours of existing censorship, there are some moral zealots in the country who want it to be intensified in order to prevent the production and exhibition of “undesirable” films. The zealots had a field day in the Rajya Sabha when it discussed Mrs. Munshi’s non-official resolution recommending to the Government action by legislation or otherwise to prohibit the exhibition of undesirable films.

It is unfortunate that the Minister for Information and Broadcasting also joined the chorus and lent the weight of his authority to the cry for the banning of “undesirable” films. Curiously enough neither the Minister

nor the other supporters of the resolution specified in clear terms what according to them was an “undesirable” film.

It is this difficulty to define what is “undesirable” – and the definition is bound to vary from individual to individual – that places arbitrary power in the hands of bureaucrats, once they are invested with the authority of prohibiting anything that they consider “undesirable.” Tastes, standards of propriety and ideas regarding moral or immoral behaviour differ so widely from person to person and time to time that any arbitrary rules that may be laid down are bound to affect the freedom of the artiste, the director and the producer and lead to a serious deterioration in quality.

The argument put forward in support of the resolution was that “undesirable” films corrupt the morals of youth. This is an eternal argument urged by elderly men and women against enjoyments and diversions fancied by the young. If the argument is accepted, all enjoyment will have to be banished and life converted into a dreary routine of work and sleep.

The fact of the matter is that laws and executive orders will not stop the production or exhibition of undesirable or objectionable films and dramas. Refinement of public taste is the only remedy against them and public taste cannot be refined by legislation or the activities of censors.

*

Defamation of Public Servants

In spite of the widespread opposition that it had evoked the Government of India have enacted the clause in the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill making special provisions for the prosecution of journalists defaming public servants. It is true that the clause as finally adopted is an improvement on the original proposal which contemplated making defamation of public servants a cognisable offence. The assurances given by the Home Minister will also go a long way towards mitigating the rigour of the clause. And yet the provision does not cease to be objectionable. The clause has constituted public servants into a special privileged class and rendered it more difficult for the Press to subject them to public criticism. Public criticism of the actions and policies of the Government and Ministers and other public servants is essential for the proper functioning of democracy. Public servants need not be afraid of it if they are honest and efficient. To stifle it by throwing around them the protective armour of a State prosecution is a grave disservice to the cause of democracy.

The British Riots of August 2011

Christie Davies

A Polish immigrant working the till in a Poundshop who was forced to leap down sixteen feet from the window of her home that had been set on fire by the rioters... said 'If you want nice clothes or a new TV you don't smash up windows to loot them, you work to pay for them'.

Between the 6th and 10th August 2011 Britain was hit by a wave of riots that began in Tottenham, and then spread to other parts of London and to other towns, particularly in the Midlands and Lancashire. The rioters had no purposes and the riots had no political meaning. They were a mere orgy of violence and looting by the members of Britain's disorganized underclass. They set fire to shops, homes and buses, attacked and robbed passersby. Yet senior BBC presenters and reporters insisted on referring to them as protesters. What does that tell you about our 'objective' BBC? Curiously the use of the word protesters defined the rioters as being mainly black, something the BBC otherwise wanted to avoid pointing out. Why would white rioters want to protest about the death of a black gangster and drug-dealer at the hands of the police?

The under-class that riots and wrecks was well known in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain, and especially in London. The eradication of the 'dangerous classes' was the great Victorian achievement. In the inter-war years, a time of great unemployment and deprivation, levels of both violent and acquisitive crime were lower than they had ever been before and far lower than today. From the mid-1950s onwards, under the stimulus of secularisation, the elephantiasis of state welfare and the growth of a culture of excuses and entitlements, crime, illegitimacy and drug and alcohol abuse have soared to new heights. The underclass is back. Britain's moral downfall began not in hard times, nor ones of rising inequality but during the prosperous late 1950s and 1960s. Crime is also a product of 'social' justice that undermined ideas of justice based on individuals being held responsible for their actions. The riots are an extension of routine everyday violence, the burning of buses an extension of the regular evening harassment of bus drivers and the looting is burglary on a larger scale. Likewise the illicit excitements of petty drug dealing were replaced with those of rioting. Riots are inconvenient for drug dealers because there are too many police around and so those higher up the chain instructed the petty dealers to loot to order instead.

In speaking of 'protesters' the BBC admitted what it simultaneously sought to deny: namely that a high proportion of the rioters were black, something that had been equally true of the riots of 1981, 1995 and 2005. White ruffians joined in because they too enjoy the excitement of rioting and the gains of looting; but the core of the rioters were drawn from the black members of the underclass. The North East of England, an area of high unemployment, and with a criminal underclass but with a relatively small black population, did not have any riots.

*

... in Tottenham, so-called community leaders are still blaming the police and calling the death of gunman Duggan at the hands of the police murder. In 1981 when Michael Bailey, a black youth who had been stabbed by three other black youths, died while being checked by the police, the incident led to a riot. In 1985 the death of Cynthia Jarrett from a heart attack during a police raid became the excuse for the Broadwater Farm riot. Even now the 'Tottenham Defence Campaign' is dragging up the names of the four black individuals who have died while in contact with the police during the last quarter of a century. Yet Duggan died as a by-product of Operation Trident, a police initiative to prevent black on black killings. In the three years between 2007 and 2010 there were 39 such murders of blacks by blacks and 890 shootings, usually involving gangs. It does rather dwarf the four deaths still being protested about, none of which were murder. Only 12 per cent of London's population are black yet in 2009-10 67 per cent of those proceeded against for gun crime were black males. It is impossible to sympathise with the complaint that the 'institutionally racist' police are more likely to stop and search blacks than whites or Asians. How else can Operation Trident be carried out, an operation designed to save black lives? It is time to tear up the McPherson report and treat its conclusions with scorn.

*

As the Lord Chief Justice declared, rioters and looters should be more severely punished than those committing similar crimes in normal times. His ruling was a severe, if indirect, rebuke to the Director of Public

Prosecutions, Keir Starmer, who had wanted the judges to stick to the 'sentencing guidelines' and eschew severity. Starmer ought to resign.

Perhaps the most foolish comments on the sentences were those of Ken Livingstone who complained that those sentenced after the riots would have been more leniently treated if they had come from privileged backgrounds. He has clearly forgotten the Garden House Riot of the 13th February 1970 when Cambridge University students, protesting against the government of the Greek colonels, smashed up a hotel, attacked guests and the police and felled Professor Charles Goodhart with a brick. That most wise and measured judge, Melford Stevenson, sent six of the students to prison and two to Borstal. Jack Straw, then President of the National Union of Students, accused him of discriminating against students! Rioting is a crime not just against individual victims but against us all. Whether it is a riot by the dregs of society enjoying themselves or by elite students convinced of some political cause, it should be met with the heaviest of penalties.

What 'nice' conservatives fail to see is the extent to which even stable liberal democratic societies need force to maintain order. Policing in Britain is by consent but that consent is necessarily punctuated by outbursts of coercion. Even in the best of societies, with low crime rates, public order is fragile. Should the police go on strike, as they did in Liverpool in 1919, in Melbourne, Australia in 1923 or in Montreal in 1969, public order soon breaks down and looting starts. When I was a child, my grandmother's brother, who was living in Liverpool in 1919 during the police strike, liked telling an anecdote about an old woman who had looted a shop, hid the goods up an alleyway and gone back for more. When she returned, she found that someone else had made off with her stash. 'You can't trust anyone these days, can you?' she said angrily. After the recent riots I no longer find the story so funny. We would also all like to forget the extensive looting that occurred during the blitz in World War 11, when not only professional thieves but ordinary citizens and even auxiliary firemen looted, not just from bonded warehouses but from the homes of those who had been bombed out. Those who slept in the air-raid shelters might wake to find their pockets had been picked, their possessions stolen and their homes burgled. Thieves would even remove the wedding rings of the dead. This was our finest hour, a time of patriotic solidarity. Even so, once the threat of detection and punishment was seriously attenuated, the ordinary social controls proved inadequate.

During the 2011 riots every politician used the language of condemnation but some tried to make cheap points about how cuts in government expenditure were

to blame. One Labour MP managed to drag in the rise in university fees, as if this would have persuaded the semi-literate to riot. More worrying still was the continual 'blathering' about how deprivation and racism had 'caused' the riots. Deprivation does not cause crime; young males are hardly the most deprived group in society. Those who commit crimes make individual moral choices for which they alone are responsible. Yet they still like excuses that enable them to suppress the qualms of their residual consciences. The excuses are provided by those who preach equality and social justice. What was particularly depressing about the interviews with rioters was the extent to which they expressed no remorse or even regret but excused their actions in social-worker speak. 'We are no worse than MPs and bankers with their fingers in the till', 'there are no opportunities and jobs for us'. Yet in London and the South East, at least, there are jobs to be had. The jobs are taken by new immigrants who are willing to work hard. The situation was summed up by a Polish immigrant working the till in a Poundshop who was forced to leap down sixteen feet from the window of her home that had been set on fire by the rioters. The woman, who could have died, said 'If you want nice clothes or a new TV you don't smash up windows to loot them, you work to pay for them'. It was an accurate reproach not just to the Croydon looters but to all in London who claim they cannot find work.

Inequality does not produce riots; rather the ranting and whining rhetoric about social justice that provides the rioters with excuses in advance. It was not the exercise of police power that set things off but the sense by the rioters that those who lead and control the police are irresolute. They were irresolute because they are not willing to rebut their critics on the left. It is time to bring back the nasty party.

CHRISTIE DAVIES is the author of *The Strange Death of Moral Britain and of Jokes and Targets*. This is an extensive excerpt from the author's article entitled *Riotious Assembly*. Courtesy: *The Salisbury Review* - Winter 2011.

Courtesy: Christie Davies and *The Salisbury Review*.

'Arab Spring' springs a surprise?

"...Look across the Arab world today and political Islam has jumped to the fore.

Egypt offers the most dramatic example. The relatively mild mannered Muslim Brotherhood, the best organised of the Arab movements espousing an ideology that bases its message on the texts of Islam, is winning the three-stage election to Egypt's parliament by a wider margin than pundits predicted with 46% of the seats so far.

- *The Economist*, December 10, 2011"

Indian Ocean Initiative : A Chinese Trap

Nitin G. Raut

A Beijing report in the *Hindustan Times* (11.8.2011) captioned “China signals desire for talks on Indian Ocean” suggests that India should initiate a dialogue on the Indian Ocean. This unsolicited indulgence towards India is rather perplexing on the face of it given the Red Dragon’s global ambitions.

Why should a nation which has made unwarranted claims to Arunachal Pradesh, occupied the Aksai Chin region of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, refused Visas to Indian citizens from Arunachal Pradesh or Indian Army Generals serving in J&K, or provocatively stapling Visas on Passports of Indian citizens residing in J&K and has formed an anti-Indian axis with Pakistan against India, become suddenly so gratuitously indulgent towards India?

In its quest for superpower status China has, in recent years been rapidly adding military muscle to its economic power. It is planning to make the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean its sphere of maritime influence. Failing to convince the U.S. for a trade-off of the Indian Ocean conceding the Pacific as U.S.’s sphere of influence, China is formulating a tactical response to offset the dominant presence of the U.S. Navy in the Indian Ocean; more so considering the growing strategic cooperation between the Indian and U.S. Navies.

China has already obtained port facilities in Sri Lanka and in Myanmar where it has an electronic eavesdropping station and is possibly trying to build a rail link with Myanmar. In Pakistan, China is building a deep sea naval port in Gwadar, which is ostensibly an alternative port to the Karachi naval base, which during the 1971 Indo-Pak war was successfully blockaded by the Indian Navy thereby immobilizing Pakistan’s naval operations as it had then no second naval base to launch a counter attack. However it would be naïve to believe that Gwadar is meant only for the Pakistan Navy.

In terms of sheer geo-strategic conditions and logistics China’s naval forays in the Indian Ocean are severely handicapped. In the absence of direct access to the Indian Ocean, the straits of Malacca are the only maritime route to the Indian Ocean for the Chinese Navy. In the event of a naval confrontation it would be a logistical nightmare for the Chinese Navy to keep the lines open for supplies of ammunition, fuel, food and reinforcements to its naval armada in the Indian Ocean.

Gwadar is China’s long term answer to acquiring a base in the Indian Ocean with a railway line linking it with China. It will facilitate military supplies and provide a land route for an oil pipe line to China given Gwadar’s proximity to the Gulf from where China sources the bulk of its energy needs. The proposed rail link and oil pipe line will pass through the restive Muslim majority Xinjiang province and the so-called ‘Tibet Autonomous Region. Both regions are politically volatile. China’s plans could go awry in the event of an uprising by the Uighurs or the Tibetans

In August 2011 China has, by design, unveiled its plan to launch an aircraft carrier now being refurbished in its Dalian Port. Although this unnamed carrier is unlikely to match the US it nevertheless signals China’s intention to show its flag in the Indian Ocean where India is its only regional rival, Seychelles.

India has aircraft carrier management and operational experience of nearly fifty years with the “Vikrant” having joined the Indian Navy in 1960. The “Viraat” is ageing. But India’s failure to upgrade our naval aircrafts and ships is going to give China a lead as even the delivery of “Gorshkov” is much behind schedule.

In an age of rapid technological advances, failure to deploy state of the art weapons on time or upgrade them continuously outdates the system. The cavalier approach in acquiring modern weapons is inexplicable.

On one hand China pressurizes India on Arunachal Pradesh and on the other eggs on India for an initiative in the Indian Ocean to create an imbalance of power and put India’s strategic policy makers on the horns of a dilemma. It is intended to undermine India’s military cooperation with the U.S. and lull India into a sense of complacency - an unlikely possibility despite our sluggish pace in acquiring arms..

Our failure to deal firmly with separatist activities and Maoist and Naxalite insurgencies is undermining our national security already weakened by the compulsions

of' 'coalition dharma'.

China's policy is not for ensuring peace and stability but rather to use diplomacy to subjugate or control nations bordering it or which are perceived to be within its growing sphere of dominance. In this context it is encouraging to note that both Vietnam and Philippines have resisted China's bullying tactics.

The UPA II government would do well to pay heed to the Indian Army's plan to have a 100,000 strong Mountain Strike Corps in Arunachal Pradesh and ensure that India's borders with China are fortified in terms of manpower coupled with armaments and infrastructure. China with Pakistan as its willing Trojan horse is willing to do everything to frustrate India from becoming an Asian Power.

India has still not put a structured Chief of Defence Staff command in place that will serve as an integrated nodal point for military preparedness.

China is orchestrating the Indian Ocean Initiative to its own advantage and India should avoid the trap at all costs. It is in this context that China's 'unofficial' (read official) and unsolicited suggestion has to be perceived. India cannot be complacent or believe that China's belligerency is mellowing or is recognizing the Indian Ocean as India's sphere of influence. It is a scary reminder of how the then Prime Minister Nehru deluded himself into believing that China has accepted the Panchsheel Doctrine propounded at the Bandung Conference of non-aligned nations until China struck in 1962. The belated moan by our then President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan of 'our credulity and negligence' was no solace.

Far from responding to China's suggestion, India should spearhead a multilateral economic formation in which the natural corollary is multilateral/Pan Asian/regional security arrangements with Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan and Sri Lanka, backed by strategic operational support, from the U.S. Navy. Should China, given its ambitions of being a global power seek to stir trouble in the Indian Ocean, such multilateral formation would stand as a bulwark' against its hegemonistic designs.

The oceanic seabeds which hold massive reserves of oil and gas are new hotbeds of power rivalry for nations competing to dominate the control and exploitation of oceanic black gold. Hence China's umbrage to the India-Vietnam deal on oil exploration in the South China Sea. The U.S. support to the littoral nations of South China Sea like Vietnam and the Philippines who are rightfully asserting their claim to oceanic treasures has angered the

Chinese. China perceives the Indian Ocean as its extended turf for maritime domination. Realizing its limitations China has launched a calibrated diplomatic move to induce India to take the Indian Ocean Initiative. For China it will be a strategic interregnum until such time as it builds up a strong blue water navy to challenge the U.S. in the Indian Ocean. China is the problem and not the solution for maritime security in the Indian Ocean.

Given the size, populations, rising economies and military strengths, competition rather than cooperation will be the hallmark. Rivalry is inherent. The manner in which India initially buckled and assured that the Indian President or the Prime Minister would not attend the Global Buddhist congregation held from November 27-30, 2011 in New Delhi is an indicator of China's imperious policy. That thereafter it upped the ante and wanted India to scrap the congregation and bar the Dalai Lama from attending was the condition it laid before resumption of border talks. That India refused to be bullied even at the cost of border talks stalling reflects India's lack of political will or uneasiness in confronting China head on until compelled to retain its self respect.

It would be a fatal blunder to presume that the Chinese "overture" for the Indian Ocean Initiative is a thaw in the Himalayan chill. It is a deceptive lull before war clouds emerge on the horizon.

NITIN G. RAUT is an advocate practicing in the Bombay High Court and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*.

How About Abolishing Driving Licences?

(Continued from page 14)

door through which a privileged few are allowed, and a route to corruption. Not only are these so-called bribe taking officials useless, they are corrupt and, more importantly, dangerous. Useless, because they do not know their jobs. Those that do, do not do their jobs. Corrupt, because there is not a single RTO official anywhere in India who does not accept bribes for issuing licences. Dangerous, because apart from not knowing the rules themselves, they contribute to allowing on the road those who are potential killers, who do not know the rules.

The RTO's job should be limited to checking vehicles for non-functioning head and tail lights, bald tyres, emission norms, registration and number plates and overloading. Tough. But the alternative, abetted by corruption, is increasing murder by negligence on the road.

SHARAD BAILUR, a retired banker, author, freelance journalist and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: sharad.bailur@gmail.com

QUEST – A Historical Perspective

R. Srinivasan

This essay by Professor R. Srinivasan, Associate Editor Freedom First, was published in the collection of essays, stories and poems in the anthology The Best of Quest.

The role of journals both serious and of lighter intellectual baggage in the making of public opinion is well known and often commented upon. Along with newspapers and weeklies they have remained indispensable in the creation, guidance and the direction of public opinion.

This has been attested in the modern histories of England, France and other countries. The eighteenth century was the age of weeklies and many of them have been associated with some of the most illustrious figures of English literature, Addison, Steele, Defoe, and Dr. Johnson. However by the nineteenth century they were to occupy a stellar place. It is well known that the *Edinburgh Review* not only initiated a new era in literary criticism, but also in the creation, dissemination and the propagation of ideas generally championing the Whig cause. In opposition to this was the *Quarterly Review* which was conservative and it could be savage and biting. “Who killed John Keats? “I” said the *Quarterly*.” Jeremy Bentham saw the need for a journal to popularise his philosophy of Liberalism and he started the *Westminster Review* with which James Mill and John Stuart Mill were closely linked. Later dawned the *Fortnightly Review* and *Macmillan’s Magazine* and John Morley had close connections with both these and edited the first. Some of our then young men of the Congress were familiar with the *Fortnightly Review* and *Nineteenth Century* and they went to political school through its pages. Students of literature are familiar with the American *DIAL*, the literary organ of the Transcendentalists mainly because the names of Emerson and Thoreau have been linked with it. *The North American Review* too was not unfamiliar to the earlier contemporaries of Ranade and Lord Acton occasionally wrote for its pages.

In our country the *Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha* and the *Madras Review* in the South, each in its distinctive way carried discussions of social and political issues. The *Madras Review* was more academic while the *Quarterly Journal* touched upon more immediate social issues. Another important journal was the *Madras Christian College Magazine* which had no equals in its day and which moulded learned opinion in

the Madras Presidency. Some of the contributions to this later collected as books were to be important intellectually and partially had to do with the beginning of the Dravidian Renaissance.

While these were addressed to an elite audience, three journals were to be deeply pervasive in their lifetime through the first half of the twentieth century – *The Indian Review*, the *Modern Review* and the *Hindustan Review*. Each had the distinct stamp of its editors. G.A. Natesan, the Liberal who edited the *Indian Review* was catholic to give publicity to Mahatma Gandhi and his work. The *Modern Review* was as much political as it was cultural and sociological and its editor Ramananda Chatterjee opened up new aesthetic, literary and political vistas for an all India public which got in its exposure to fine arts, history and literature. It popularised Tagore by publishing his works, had reproductions of Indian paintings, was fiercely nationalist and conducted political debates and contemporary happenings in its “notes”. The *Hindustan Review* had a narrower ambit and was more political though not exclusively so. It too had pages for many other things besides. Between them they covered a very wide canvas indeed.

However, nationalism and the struggle for freedom dominated the pages of the journals and other issues were subordinated to it. With the dawn of freedom and in the setting of an Indian political system they lost their primary thrust. With the spread of higher education and the awakening of new sensibilities a different mood dawned over our land.

India with its linguistic diversity naturally found its intellectual moorings with language journals and almost every language had its own characteristic journal and some of the most eminent figures started, nurtured and contributed to these. A few of the names are *Prabhakar* (Marathi), *Samvad Koumudi* (Bengali), *Swadesamitran* (Tamil), *Vivekavardhani* (Telugu), *Prabhudha* (Kannada), *Desabhimani* (Malayalam) etc. What was mentioned of the British periodicals is equally true of these and there was no figure of eminence who did not write

for these. Mention has to be made of *Kesari* in Marathi which was a lonely star in the national firmament.

Compared to these *Quest* had a modest presence and remained a dim star but had its own place among the discriminating intellectuals. Like Stendhal's works, it was addressed to the happy few and commanded fierce loyalties and its contributors remained the very select of the Indian intellectual world.

New challenges began to emerge and the old verities that freedom would usher in the millennium were now questioned and many among the educated were attracted by the siren voice of the communist utopia. Ideology, particularly of the leftist variety was to be seen as having great potentialities. Even earlier to independence, socialism had its own votaries and some of the dedicated members of the Indian National Congress were equally committed to ushering in the new utopia. The realities of Soviet communism were not widely known and the thirties of the twentieth century were not decades of widespread understanding of "a new civilisation." With the winning of independence, and the drafting of a constitution, attractions of a planned society and of Soviet type planning, and similar terms became fashionable and popular. *Freedom First* was started mainly to expose the perils of these popular nostrums and the Democratic Research Service did an excellent job of exposure of those when there was no institution in India to warn Cassandra-like of the dangers that lurked beneath the benign phrases.

However the thrust of *Freedom First* was political and one needed a magazine of ideas to boldly experiment new ideas, explore alternatives and examine the social and intellectual verities of developing an open society. It is this that *Quest* engaged itself in. There was no journal

similar to it in its ambit and its exploratory curiosity of different points of view within the ambit of an open society indeed remained without parallel. It was to be an exercise in the adventure of ideas. Literature, cultural and philosophical explorations, social science enquiries serious discussion of books, elucidation and critical appraisal of literature in Indian languages were all grist to its mill. It tried to encompass all these as well as explore ideas and ideologies seriously and systematically. It tried to do many of the things that the journals referred to in an earlier paragraph had done in a different cultural milieu. However what was needed in a country of the vast geographical dimensions and cultural varieties and the temporal differences that our country encompassed was a variety of journals which would discuss, disagree and express differences as well as consensus and engage in intellectual engagements all in a competitive joust of ideas. Unfortunately, there were not many journals similar or dissimilar that *Quest* could debate alongside with. To that extent our country was poorer. However in the regional languages particularly in Marathi and Bengali the situation has remained very different, very vibrant and very creative.

An anthology of writings that appeared in 1966 after the first ten years of *Quest* was edited by Abu Sayeed Ayyub and Amlan Datta – *Ten Years of Quest*. It proved to be indeed an anthology unique when published. The present collection *The Best of Quest* would hopefully bring to a new generation of readers some knowledge of the superlatively good things that were in its pages and will doubtless introduce them to an intellectual climate that has passed us by.

DR. R. SRINIVASAN, retired Professor of Political Science, University of Mumbai, and associate editor of *Freedom First*.

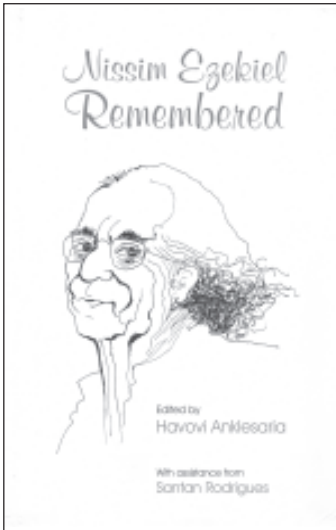
Liberty is a good to be improved, and not an evil to be lessened

The Swatantra Party stands not for abstract and metaphysical or geometric freedom, but for that liberty which Edmund Burke expounded in the following memorable words addressed to the sheriffs of Bristol, his constituency:

"Government a practical thing, made for the happiness of mankind, and not to furnish but a spectacle of uniformity to gratify the schemes of visionary politicians. The extreme of liberty (which is its abstract perfection, but its real fault) obtains nowhere and as well all know, in every point which relates either to our duties or satisfaction in life, is destructive both to virtue and enjoyment. Liberty must be limited in order to be possessed. The degree of restraint it is impossible in any case to settle precisely. But it ought to be the constant aim of every wise public counsel to find out by cautious experiment and rational cool endeavours, with how little, not how much of this restraint, the community can subsist. Liberty is a good to be improved, and not an evil to be lessened. It is not only a private blessing of the first order, but the vital spring and energy of the State itself, which has just so much life and vigour as there is liberty in it."

- Rajaji in Swarajya, November 18, 1961.

BOOK REVIEWS



NISSIM EZEKIEL REMEMBERED edited by Havovi Anklesaria with assistance from Santan Rodrigues ● Sahitya Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 110001 ● 2008 ● (pages xxxii + 603) ● Rs. 275

Reviewed by S. V. Raju, editor, *Freedom First*. jurasv@gmail.com

We received this well produced volume way back in 2009. I take the blame for the long time taken in reviewing it in *Freedom First*. For excuses: firstly we were searching for a reviewer who did not figure as a contributor to this volume; secondly a sneaking desire to review it myself after

reading a couple of reviews which dwelt on Nissim as a poet, his poems and writings mainly literary criticism, or the short story but little mention of his non-literary, non-poetic interests. Therefore being neither a poet nor a writer of any consequence I have tried to muster some courage to present this review, with only a passing reference to his literary pursuits; of a man I had the pleasure of knowing and sometimes working with, for almost four decades as an associate on the Executive Committee of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and of course *Freedom First*.

Nissim Ezekiel was a poet and writer and a distinguished faculty member of the Department of Literature, Mumbai University. Yet not many prefixed the “professor” when addressing or writing to him. Somehow the title just did not sound right. It did not do justice to a person called Nissim Ezekiel! He was more than a professor. In fact he was what he was perceived to be by his many friends (and admirers though I don’t think he would have approved of this word). To us at the ICCF, he was simply Nissim. He was the spirit behind the literary journal *Quest*, its founder-editor; and even after he ceased being its editor and stayed on as an adviser, *Quest* and Nissim were synonymous!

I knew a lot more about Nissim’s politics, as a publicist crusading against communism and as an editor of *Freedom First* and some of his forays beyond the world of poetry and literature. Havovi Anklesaria, the editor, has managed to provide space for such forays in her “commemoration volume” for this “Indian Writer in

English” as the publishers describe him on the publishers’ page.

This 600-page volume is fairly comprehensive. It does not claim to be biographical. As the author clarifies in her introduction, “This volume is...compiled in the spirit of a commemoration, but envisaged as a reader. It is as much a memoir as about how we choose to remember. It begins with a poem by Adil Jussawalla, a most unusual recollection, composed specially for this tribute and reflecting with remarkable subtlety, the undercurrents of this book. Also included are personal reminiscences by friends and colleagues, selections of Ezekiel’s poetry, plays, a short story, essays, art and book reviews. The book concludes with academic/critical comment on his literary achievements.” Havovi’s 7-page introduction is a breezy run through the life and times of Nissim Ezekiel as he saw them!

Not surprisingly the volume actually tells us more about the man than a formal biography could or even the chronology of milestones that precedes the introduction. They are merely as a lawyer would say, ‘bare’ facts. The book is divided into 9 sections. The first two are on Nissim titled “Nissim Lightly and Other Pieces” and “Personally Speaking: a series of interviews” with literary figures like Imtiaz and Anil Dharkar, Saleem Peeradina, Zubin Driver and Noorul Hassan. The remaining 7 are a selection from Nissim works: “Many Poems, two Plays, and a Short Story. The Creative Writer as Critic and other Essays. On Writers and Books. Book Reviews. Arts and Artists. The Politics of Discontent: the *Freedom First* Years; and This and That”. A rich fare indeed!

For purposes of this review I shall content myself with the section on Nissim’s “*Freedom First*” years. This was between February 1980 and July 1983. When in 1978 Minoo Masani was appointed Chairman of the National Minorities Commission he handed over the editorship of *Freedom First* to Geeta Doctor and me. We edited it till January 1980 when both of us stepped down – Geeta left Mumbai to take up permanent residence in Chennai and I took up a job in the Middle-East. We could do this because Nissim, was there to help[us out and agreed to take over as editor. The January 1980 edition of *Freedom*

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First, not only carried Nissim's essay "Who Leads the Arts?", (reproduced in this anthology (page 355) but also his plans for *Freedom First* - his editorial policy as the journal's Managing Editor.

He writo, *inter alia*:

"As the new Managing Editor of *Freedom First* my main responsibility is to maintain its standards and to confirm its central convictions...

"I would like *Freedom First* to remain essentially political. Its value depends on its politics. At the same time, issues concerning literature and the art will be often discussed...

"I have been a subscriber of *Freedom First* from the beginning and an occasional contributor to the present day. I would naturally like to see a new great growth in the number of its readers and the extent as well as the power of its influence...

"So far as specific ideas and viewpoints of the journal are concerned, they have been sharply defined in every number so far and I hope to keep them so. At the same time time, I would like to make room for new viewpoints and ideas, in consonance with the liberal spirit, to provide a platform for a variety of opinions, with the same or similar basic aims, to accommodate different kinds of personality and temperament within the common love of freedom.

"To place freedom first does not entail the absurdity of committing suicide to satisfy its enemies. This is not a service to freedom but a parody of it. In fact, one of its unpleasant duties is to identify the enemies of freedom, to expose their masks, sophistries and manoeuvres...

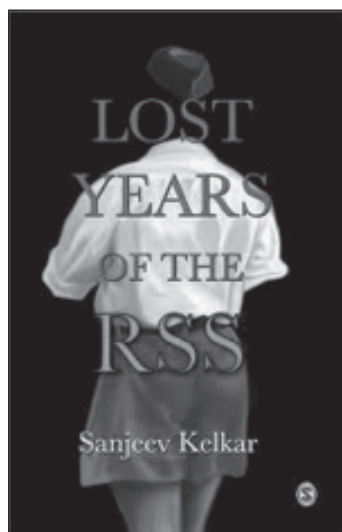
"Ideally, *Freedom First* should attract large numbers

of readers who may not be fully in agreement with its political comments on men and events in this country and in other countries. They should still feel a greater affinity with its ideas than to those to which it is opposed. If I can create that sense of affinity, I shall be satisfied, to some extent. *Freedom First* does not seek "conversion" to its point of view from every reader but only understanding and sympathy...

"*Freedom First* has been politically unique in many ways, and that is one of its major attractions. I shall try to keep it unique."

Referring to the *Freedom First* section Havovi writes: "The *Freedom First* editorials are comments on contemporary national and international political events and reflect social and political interests without an orthodoxy." True but then the journal itself did not get trapped in any kind of orthodoxy. Often *Freedom First* dared to walk alone and this suited Nissim who in the last sentence of his statement of policy before taking over as editor asserted the uniqueness of *Freedom First*. The fact is he loved freedom and posited it in everything he wrote, be it poetry or prose. It is in this context that this reviewer is of the view that the seven editorial comments published in this commemoration volume are well chosen and illustrative of the fact that Nissim Ezekiel, the *ICCF*, *Quest* and *Freedom First* blended well and truly.

For its price (Rs.275) "Nissim Ezekiel Remembered" is a steal. It is indeed a collector's item and ought to find place in our libraries, personal or public. Having reviewed this book and a load off my shoulder as a consequence, I look forward to read other sections of the book at leisure, savouring its contents put together so well by Havovi Anklesaria with the assistance of Santan Rogrigues, who sadly passed away before the book saw the light of day.



LOST YEARS OF THE RSS by Sanjeev Kelkar • Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, B1/I-1 Mohan Coop Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110044 • 2011 • Pages 354 • Rs.350

Reviewed by Brig. S. C. Sharma (retd.) Adviser to the telecom industry, a freelance writer. and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: brigscs@gmail.com

The book discusses the major turning points in the 82-year old history of the RSS. The first three heads of RSS, Dr. Hedgewar its founder, Golwalkar and Deoras, had the same ideological premises

but differed the means to achieve the goal.

Dr. Hedgewar, a staunch nationalist, was disturbed by the fact that a small number of the British had managed to rule over India and attributed it to the failings of Hindu society. He founded RSS in 1925 to organize Hindus into a united force. After the death of Lokamanya Tilak, Gandhi assumed the leadership of the Congress. In order to get

Muslims to participate in the freedom struggle, he supported the Khilafat movement which had no relevance to Indian Muslims. He praised the killers of Swami Shradhanand and declared Allah-o-Akbar to be superior to *Vande Mataram*. Hedgewar's reaction was to build up an organization committed to the unity of Hindu society but he continued to support the Independence movement led by the Congress.

The idea of a Hindu nation excluding the Muslims from the concept of nation was introduced by his successor, Golwalkar who was influenced by Savarkar. Golwalkar took over the reins in June 1940 after the death of Hedgewar. He criticized the Muslims for thinking of themselves as conquering invaders wanting to win back the power they had lost. He abjured politics and by so doing the RSS isolated itself from political and economic turmoil. They followed the tradition of medieval saints who helped the Hindus to retain to their faith neglected the far more important issues like invasion by foreigners. He predicted the failure of the 1942 movement and kept away from it.

The murder of Gandhiji led to a ban on the RSS. Sardar Patel lifted the ban on 12 July 1949 when Golwalkar threatened to enter politics. The Congress never tired of criticizing RSS for non-participation in the 1942 movement never criticized the Muslim League and the Leftists who also had kept away from the Movement. The organization remained a vague entity to the people and led to the perception of being secretive and dangerous.

Five thousand RSS volunteers had shed their blood in the Punjab to save the non-Muslims during the riots that followed Independence. It was acknowledged by Sardar Patel and many displaced people from West Pakistan. The dismal performance of the Jan Sangh, the political face of the RSS, in the first elections in spite of this sacrifice had a demoralizing effect on the organization. The reason perhaps was due to the failure to declare a clear economic policy. Comments of RSS on economic issues are too general and lack maturity even today.

In June 1973, Deoras became the head of RSS. In his first press meeting he clarified that the RSS was responsible for the thousand strong kindergarten schools [Saraswati Shishu Mandirs]. He had no time for traditional rituals. He worked for the welfare of dalits and scheduled tribes. The Vivekananda Centre supported by the RSS has established a large number of schools in the tribal region.

Deoras took part in the anti-corruption movement launched by Jayaprakash Narayan in the seventies driving Indira Gandhi paranoid. RSS along with 27 organizations

was banned on the declaration of her Emergency on 25 June 1975. Deoras and a large number of RSS volunteers were arrested. Deoras called it an opportunity and correctly predicted the time frame of two years for the crisis. The RSS continued to work underground. Achyutrao Patwardhan asked socialists to take the help of the RSS whose underground organization was intact. The Emergency was lifted on 21 March 1977 and elections ordered. The author has narrated the reasons for the internal differences within the Janata Party which enabled Indira Gandhi win the next elections in 1979.

Nani Palkhivala and Jayaprakash Narayan acknowledged the contribution of the RSS in the struggle against the Emergency but the public and allies ignored it. The RSS failed to give publicity to their work. Deoras wanted to bring Muslims into the RSS fold but gave up due to opposition by the old guard. Entry of Muslims into RSS could not have helped the cause of unity of Hindu society. His outstanding contribution was undertaking social work and education, particularly in the tribal region.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was formed because, after Mahatma Gandhi's murder, the Congress and the socialists closed their doors to the RSS. Deoras realized perhaps too late that political power was necessary to take forward their objectives. The death of Deendayal Upadhyaya their ideologue deprived the BJP of scholarship and reduced it to a party reacting to Indira Gandhi. Their advocacy of Gandhian socialism did not appeal to the people. Their performance in the 1984 elections was dismal.

In Kerala, there was mass conversion of the dalits to Christianity. Efforts by the RSS resulted in some of them reconverting to Hinduism. The author blames the media for not giving adequate publicity to RSS activities. Typical is the case of the resistance rendered by the RSS in 1971 to manage the refugee camps in West Bengal for refugees pouring in from what was then East Pakistan. The West Bengal Government had declined to give any help. General Jacob has acknowledged the invaluable contribution of the RSS to manage the camps, dig trenches and repatriate refugees. There is a need for introspection to discover the reasons for this apathy by the media.

In his address to RSS workers in Nagpur in 1985, Deoras plainly accepted that their work had had no effect on the society as a whole. He organized *Rathayatras*, birthday celebrations of Dr Hedgewar and Dr Ambedkar and a Mukti Andolan for Ram Mandir. These actions brought Hinduism to the centre stage and resulted in the demolition of Babri Masjid. Bricks and *kar sewaks* came from all the states and the first brick for the mandir was laid by a dalit. Deoras was not averse to build a masjid

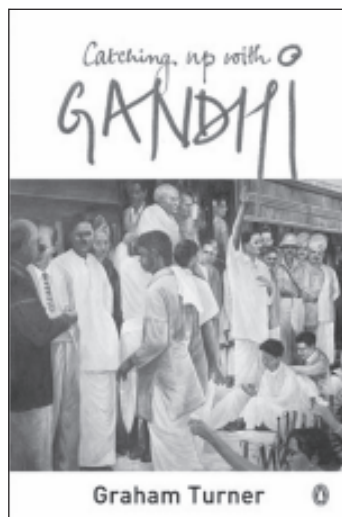
too but the VHP had become a strong force and the idea of masjid was given up. He wanted the Muslims to realize the pain which Hindus must have felt when their temples were demolished. Deoras health was deteriorating due to fifty years of diabetes and he passed away in June 1996. Advani observed that Deoras “taught us how to keep a balance between principles and their application.”

The collective consciousness got eroded due to the indifference of the Vajpayee Government and VHP’s insistence on their own narrow interpretation of Hindutva. The author opines that the aged leaders of BJP and RSS failed to react to national and international events. BJP should have attacked the Communist Party after the collapse of USSR, particularly when Golwalkar had criticized them for their loyalty to a foreign state. Vajpayee is believed to have thought in a manner akin to that of Nehru. He gave no support to NGOs run by RSS while those managed by missionaries continued to get grants for similar work

in the area of health care.

The RSS and Parivar have to reinvent themselves to survive. They have a sprawling network of thousands of organizations of service projects and volunteers committed to the love of the country. They are not born anti-Americans. The organization needs to be more democratic and evolve a pragmatic economic policy. The author is clearly against violence in the name of religion. RSS has been wrongly accused by the press and vested interests. The enormous energy of the *Parivar* needs to be harnessed in the correct direction.

The book is a convincing narration of the RSS ideology of commitment to welfare of the nation and keeping away from violence. It has identified the weaknesses of the organization. No steps, however, have been suggested to overcome these weaknesses.



CATCHING UP WITH GANDHI by Graham Turner ● Penguin ● Year 2010 ● Pages 344 ● Price Rs.350

GREAT SOUL MAHATMA GANDHI – HIS STRUGGLE WITH INDIA by Joseph Lelyveld ● Harper Collins Publishers ● Year 2011 ● Pages 452 ● Price Rs.699

Reviewed by Dr. P. R. Dubhashi, IAS (Retd.), formerly Secretary to Government of India and Vice Chancellor, Goa University. Currently, Chairman, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Pune Kendra. e-mail dubhashi@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in).

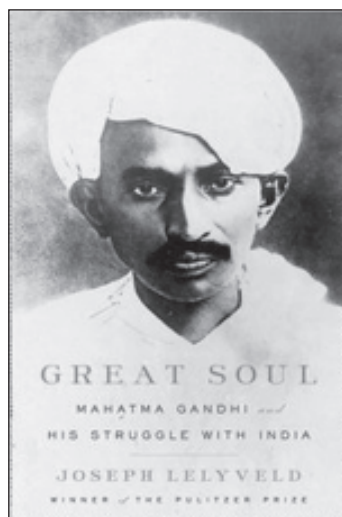
More than sixty years after Mahatma Gandhi has left the scene, two of his biographies have appeared – one by Graham Turner a British journalist and the other by Joseph Lelyveld’s, a journalist in America. Do they tell us anything remarkable to enable a significant reassessment of his life and achievement?

The special feature of Turner’s book is that while writing his account of the Mahatma’s life, he visited the places where Mahatma Gandhi lived and worked and was accompanied by

his grandson, the well known author Rajmohan Gandhi.

The special feature of both the books is a detailed account of his life in South Africa where he worked as a young lawyer but over the next two decade emerged as the Mahatma in the making by standing alone at the beginning for self respect in the face of a racial, arrogant and tyrannic white rulers and creating a sense of self respect amongst Indians whether businessmen or indentured labour and mobilizing them to launch a non-violent struggle for their legitimate rights.

Not all Indians know that Gandhi had established himself as a successful and prosperous lawyer. But he gave up the comforts of family life for the sake of his people and their self respect and rights. He set up two farms – Phoenix Farm near Durban and Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg where inmates lived a community life irrespective of caste, religion or race. Thus all the building blocks of his struggle were ready before he appeared on the India scene where within a few years he emerged as the undisputed leader of the struggle for freedom in which masses of people from all parts of India, participated sacrificing their personal lives. The key note of his struggle



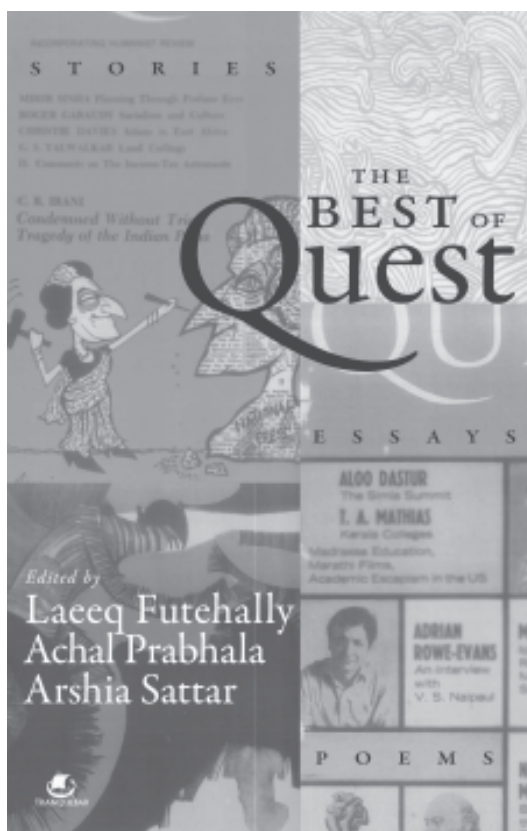
was the need to build the unity of the Indian people overcoming all sectoral cleavages such as religion and caste. That is why Hindu-Muslim unity and abolition untouchability were the two causes for which he stood all his life and ultimately became the victim of a rabid Hindu assassin who felt Gandhiji was the cause of Hindu interests being sacrificed at the alter of Muslim interests.

Though the Lelyveld's title of the book is 'Great Soul', the real objective seems to be to belittle and malign the great soul indicated partially by the subtitle of the book 'Struggle with India' drawing attention to his life long struggle against insanitary habits of the Indian people, against untouchability and casteism two despicable features which prevented Hindu unity and advocating Hindu Muslim unity which Gandhiji felt had to be the bedrock of the united national struggle for freedom.

Lelyveld finds fault with Gandhiji for being concerned only with the cause of Indians in Africa and not the native Africans themselves, as though Gandhi himself had anything to do with the woes of Africans! The author while finding fault with Gandhiji, has not a word to condemn the racial arrogance which trampled the native Africans. He has even accused Gandhi of calling

Africans, 'Kafers'. He forgets that in the initial years Gandhiji was just a young lawyer who had come for some professional work and could not be expected to comprehend all aspects of racial tyranny and take up all causes at the same time. What is important was Gandhiji was the first to create a sense of awareness among the people whose freedom was forcibly snatched away and who lay prostrate before the naked exercise of power by the whites. He was also the one who developed techniques of resistance by unarmed people – non-violence and "*satyagraha*" against the militarily powerful white rulers. Lelyveld loses no opportunity to slight and malign Gandhiji. In the language and style of erstwhile Viceroys of India like Gen. Wavell and Lord Willingdon, he calls Gandhi an opportunist, sly and cunning. One does not have to read his biography only to suffer such malicious utterances..

It is a pity that apart from many of the white race who have given favourable reviews of the book, our own Amartya Sen thought it fit to say the following. "A deeply insightful analysis of the intriguing political leader of our time – a marvellous book'. The use of the terms 'marvellous' is entirely unbecoming for a book aimed at tarnishing and slighting the 'great soul'.



The Best of Quest

Edited by Layeeq Futehally, Achal Prbhala and Arshia Sattar

"This is a landmark volume that illuminates the political and social history of independent India as no other book can or will.

"Drawn from the pages of the pioneering periodical *Quest*, it features writers famous and obscure, Indian and foreign, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and atheist. They include poets like Agha Shahid Ali and Nissim Ezekiel. Sociologists like Ashis Nandy and Sudhir Kakar, polemicists like Dilip Chitre and peerless Hamid Dalwai.

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Introducing Adult Education Institute

The Adult Education Institute (AEI) was founded in April 1970. The Founding Trustees were: The late Mr. N. Dandekar, of the Indian Civil Service, and a Member of the Lok Sabha; the late Mr. Minoo Masani, freedom fighter, author and Member of the Lok Sabha; Dr. R. C. Cooper, Chartered Accountant (who later retired as Trustee and settled overseas).

The present trustees are: Mr. Naozer Aga, businessman; Mr. S. V. Raju author and social activist; Mr. S. Ramachandran former Municipal Corporator (BMC) and social activist; Dr. R. Srinivasan, retired professor of political science, Mumbai University; Mr. Moreswar V. Temurde, advocate, formerly MLA and Deputy Speaker, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly

The AEI, has over the last 41 years covered a wide spectrum activities. These include

- **Distribution of Textbooks to College Students:** This programme, between the years 1971 and 2002 benefited 5694 students in the Science, Engineering, Medical faculties involving an expenditure of over Rs. Two Lakhs.
- **Adult Literacy / Sewing Classes:** Adult literacy classes were conducted either on our own or through the Bombay City Social Education Committee mainly in Mumbai's slums. The adult literacy classes were accompanied by women's empowerment programmes.
- **Classes for educating workers in the principles of**
 - (a) genuine Trade Unionism free from control by political parties and managed by workers themselves,
 - (b) production-oriented trade unionism.
- **On the eve of the Assembly Elections** educating citizens on their rights and responsibilities as voters.
- **Study classes** to understand various aspects of our economic and social life including seminars on such subjects as Economic Development, Centre-State relations, the policy of Reservations etc.
- **Networked with other voluntary organizations in pursuance of common objectives such as the** Coordinating Committee of Independent Trade Unions (CCITU); Bombay City Social Education Committee; Streehitakarini; Backward and other Minority Classes Employees Federation (BAMCEF); Western Railway Employees Union; Rajaji Foundation and Peoples Foundation.

With the introduction of economic reforms in 1991, India's rate of growth of the economy accelerated. The reforms present a great opportunity for the Indian people to achieve a better standard of life for themselves and their children. Globalisation and the need to be competitive in world markets have brought about revolutionary technological changes the most important of all being the revolution in communications. These have also opened up job opportunities even while displacing many employed in the traditional industries.

The AEI views these developments both as a challenge and an opportunity. True to its name the AEI believes in the concept of empowerment through education; education not merely in terms of adult literacy but also expanding the knowledge base of society and enhancing skills and latent talent.

We intend, through the pages of this section, to share with readers issues relating to the role of citizens in civil society; the need to extend the economics of growth to rural India particularly on matters relating to health care and primary education. There is need to communicate the implications of a parliamentary form of governance as against the *maa-baap sarkar* mentality which still has a grip on rural India not to mention outdated caste divisions and gender discrimination to mention just two; and the crucial issues relating conservation of the environment. Above all how do we derive maximum advantage from the Demographic Dividend!



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India's Growing Leadership 'Deficit'

Readers may recall that we had, in the December number of Freedom First, published the keynote address delivered by Professor Sheryar Ookerjee, author and retired Professor of Philosophy, Wilson College, Mumbai on "India's Growing Leadership 'Deficit'" (pages 5 and 6). The seminar was organized by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, publishers of Freedom First in association with the Adult Education Institute. Ms. Meera Sanyal, president of Liberalsindia for Good Governance, the Indian liberal group, chaired the seminar.

Before we present you with a report of who said what we would like to take you back to an editorial in *this journal* as far back as January 1980 dealing with "The Crisis and Challenge of Leadership in Modern Society" which said:

"As India enters the decade of the eighties faced by the stupendous problems of nation-building, crisis is writ large in every direction and everywhere it is a crisis of character, a crisis of leadership.

" 'In the times to come' said Mahatma Gandhi, 'the people will not judge us by the creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogans we shout, but by our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character.'

"Gandhiji was the embodiment of that ideal; he led and inspired many others who were true leaders in their own light.

"That period of our history is now part of memory and may soon cease to be even that!

"A nation cannot live wholly on its past; it must work for the present and the future.

Much depends on the character of leadership and on having a leadership with character!

"Will India rise to face this crisis of leadership in her national life? This, it will be conceded, is a challenging thought and *Freedom First* decided to explore it".

It is in this context, that in association with Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, we organised this seminar on November 19 and present you with a report of who said what. We thank Dr.Jyoti Marwah for not only participating in this seminar but also enabling her colleague on the faculty and 8 students from her college to take

part in the discussions. We begin with a summary of the proceedings, by the Chairperson Mr. Meera Sanyal.

India Needs Statesman not Politicians focused on the Next Election

"Professor Ookerjee, an authority on the philosophies of Plato and Chanakya, presented the keynote address on Leadership. The participants comprised young students, working professionals and seasoned, retired citizens. In the lively debate that ensued speakers strongly endorsed Professor Ookerjee's description of the qualities of a leader namely courage; resolution; boldness; justice; passion; knowledge; and above all a sense of shame!

"Discussing the leadership deficit in our country, the participants agreed that the need of the hour was for statesmen who think of what is good for the country in the long term, and not of politicians focusing on the next election. Poor leaders had created a lack of trust and credibility. However several speakers believed that the situation was improving. If leadership was power – that power was shifting. People have taken power through the judiciary and civil society movements and their awareness will, hopefully, compel today's 'leaders' to become less shameless. As one speaker remarked "the mind concentrates beautifully in a crisis!" The rise of the middle class will produce a new generation of leaders, and the deficit we are facing is a temporary demand and supply issue which will take some time to clear, but will inevitably do so.

"The younger participants shared their desire to be involved in the process of leadership and governance. The seniors drawing on their

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experience pointed out that that leadership evolves just as courage evolves. As pointed out by Professor Ookerjee though leaders can't be produced, they can be inspired and while leadership can't be taught it can be learnt.

"A disciplined and professional education is a good first step (noting that many leaders of the Freedom struggle were lawyers). Be "other regarding" rather than "self regarding" and act (register as voters, file RTI applications) rather than sit on the side lines and complain! However it was the advice of a young student that captured the imagination of all and was perhaps the best advice for the leaders in our current Parliament.

"Speak in such a way that others like to listen, and listen in such a way that others like to speak"

"All in all, a debate that gives one hope that the deficit of leadership in our country will be bridged in the not too distant future, for nature abhors a vacuum and this is a country filled with talent".

We had invited those who had participated in the discussion to send us brief excerpts of their intervention. Here are some who responded.

You get the leaders you deserve

You get the leaders you deserve. When one finger points to leaders, the other four fingers point to you. This means you can be the leader. Indian mythology teaches that it is destiny that controls a man's life. Hence it is destiny or fate that is responsible for the leadership deficit. Mythology (the Gita) teaches us that whenever there is socio-political anarchy God takes birth (avatar) to set things right. Such teachings made people inactive in the blind belief that when evil raises its head God Almighty will take birth on earth and destroy that evil. Revolt against this notion. Remember that self help is the best help; God helps those who help themselves. There is no free lunch. Everything has its price. Environment and circumstances are responsible for the emergence of leadership. During the pre-independence days the aim was to get independence from British Raj... After independence the objects of almost all leaders are to get power, position and wealth by hook or by crook. Today politics has become a profession, just like any other profession. If we can we must change this. – **Dr. Amitabh**

Right Leadership

The civil society movement that India witnessed in the wake of corruption is the result of something more than just the demand for a Lokpal Bill. It was a vehement and desperate plea for good and transparent leadership in leaders with credentials.

The middle class swore not to disperse till the grant of the Lokpal as designed by them. However, this was rebuffed by the parliamentarians on the ground that people cannot make laws outside parliament. Well yes, we agree but does it not call for introspection. Is this called a prerogative and if so who delivered this prerogative to the parliamentarians, surely not the Constitution. Leaders must be answerable for the full tenure of their representation and it is a good way to keep them fastened to their commitment. It's time that we look for ways to refresh the thinking of those who lead and govern on our behalf. This would mean refresher courses in the philosophies of Voltaire, Locke, Rousseau and the like so as to re-align their approaches and principles to constitutionalism. Rousseau emphasized that human beings no longer owed obedience to any government that failed to protect rights and liberties of the people and that they are born with certain natural rights and liberties and are also justified to revolt against a tyrannical government. According to Locke government must serve and protect the interest and liberties of the people. It is unfortunate that it is the people who serve and exist for the interest of those in power as these leaders consider it their right to remain privileged and pampered.

Is the Indian Parliament above the people? 'Breach of Privilege' needs to be re-defined in the changing scenario of failing ethics, morality, values and inability to keep promises. So the question is of 'Breach of Faith' and not 'Privilege' and it is the prerogative of the people to question this breach. Being double faced and being called so is no abuse but guilt can be the cause for the resultant discomfort and objection. I can only justify this self-composing behaviour on grounds that though we have borrowed widely from the constitutions of the world - tradition has the better of us as we cling to the *Kutniti* of Kautilya. Why not Ashoka's *Dhamma*? That could be a more sustainable solution to our problems. We may then find the right leadership in the 21st century. – **Dr. Jyoti Marwah**

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My vision of the ideal leader

You are a 'leader' if you have a following of those who believe you, trust you and can depend on you. How often do we hear, "he or she is a born leader?" There are certain characteristics and special features in some people that naturally propel them into a position of being looked upon as a leader. The leadership qualities needed to make a good leader may vary in different set ups such as companies, sports teams, professional institutes, schools, colleges, politics or could be situations which demand urgent action due to the need for emergency operation. A good leader has an exemplary character. It is of utmost importance that a leader must be transparent, trustworthy, and enthusiastic about his work and does follow a fair course of action. People respond willingly to a person with passion and dedication. Leaders need to be a source of inspiration to motivate his or her followers to look upon him or her as their confidante. Although the role of a leader may differ in given situations, but he is one who is the anchor and sustaining spirit of the team for which he needs to have vision and sinews of strength and vigour. Therefore, I sincerely believe that the leader of my visualization is one who is passionate about service to mankind with captivating manners and good communication skills. Such abilities will instil in him or her the capability to manage his team members impartially and evaluate their contributions with justice. I pray and look forward to the day when my vision may become a reality. – **Tanvi Ibrahim Patankar ICLES' MJ College, Vashi, Navi Mumbai**

The type of leader India needs

Leadership is of various types: one is of the municipal level where the horizon is low. A leader at this level can think of problems of roads, sign boards and problems with rickshaws and taxis. He has no concept or time for larger issues of state or national level. The second type can think of the next election and how he can get re-elected next. The third category of a leader can think of what will be good for the country on the long haul. It is said that a politician does things that will get him re-elected while a statesman does things that will help his country. We need leaders of the third type.

Then there was reference to the Anna phenomenon.

Anna's popularity is because of his selflessness;

he has nothing to gain from what he is doing. Anna has no administrative or legal expertise but when he talks of corruption, the issue appeals to everybody. His Jan Lokpal idea might have flaws but it is a genuine attempt to deal with corruption; hence its countrywide acceptance. His emergence as a national level leader is fully deserved. – **Ashok Karnik**

Leadership does not have to be dynastic

Others can work their way up from the grass roots. Leadership is mostly perceived as political because that impacts us the most. In other spheres too one needs good leadership because it will help the society in general. The reason leaders of yore were good was because they had a focus - to free India. Now the focus is only on power, self aggrandizement and bringing in the family.

Media also helps in promoting persons selectively and by the ignoring good work done by many because they are not in the good books of the powers that be. I am hopeful; it will change if more youngsters, with education and vision come forward to join, specially, the political arena. Industry will be OK as many are using professionals. – **Jamna Varadhachary**

The RTI – Facilitating leadership

The simplest and most common citizen-friendly tool or weapon today is the RTI Act – I believe that the real test of the efficacy of RTI lies in the applicant making effective use of the information once obtained, to set right the systemic defects or identify corrupt practices by putting to use/operation essentially the very same data/inputs from the authority concerned when the possibility of their challenging its veracity is rendered impossible.

A person uses the RTI Act to get information itself indicates qualities of leadership particularly when the person concerned is seeking information on issues that impact the people and is for the public good. An important quality that marks out a good leader is being well informed. It is not necessary for a leader to be a know-all. The extensive use of the RTI to elicit information is itself indicative of the fact that there are a number of public spirited persons with potential of emerging as leaders. – **Nagesh Kini**

Good Managers need not necessarily be good leaders

Professor Ookerjee mentioned that leaders have to

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evolve. You cannot straightaway be a commander of 5000 troops. You have to start with a smaller group and gradually assume larger responsibility. This is equally true for other fields like academics or politics. We all agree on the requirement of a leader to be honest; but being honest alone is not enough. He should also have integrity of purpose and have the ability and resolve to ensure that his group members are honest. Lastly, there is a difference between a manager and a leader. For example, Robert McNamara, the former US Defense Secretary, was perhaps the best manager of all times but a poor leader. – **Brig. Suresh C. Sharma (retd.)**

Leadership cannot be taught it has to come from the soul

“Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them.” India has been a country of gurus like Chanakya and such gurus have sought to inculcate leadership qualities among the students. Qualities like courage, discipline, justice can be taught by our teachers but there are some inner qualities which cannot be taught but have to come from our soul. Leaders cannot be prepared, there is no recipe for making leaders, and they need to evolve. Now in this modern era, efficient management requires persons with leadership qualities. Here the question arises could the ignored one be a leader? And the answer is yes! Ignored individuals can become good leaders who can develop these qualities gradually with perseverance.

In several fields like politics or the private sector there is a deficit of good leadership in India and this is because of a false sense of pride and selfish interest. A qualified person can be a leader, someone has said that.

In my personal view, it is time that politician should be substituted by a bureaucratic set up, wherein they will have a free hand to display their professional approach in governance. I am convinced that it will lead to a better managed nation. If nothing else let us give this alternative an option. Many would oppose this idea but I am sure that it's not that bad as the prevalent corruption which is destroying the basic fabric of our country. We should accept the changing concept of leadership in the modern era and accept the fact that a leader does not become one only by display of muscle power but is dedicated for the good of all in the nation. Hope we can build a nation of Tagore's dream – A heaven of freedom. – **Pooja Ghorpode ICLES' MJ College, Vashi**

We often hear of social media being equated with tools and platforms for social change. But it's really much more than that. If you're adopting these technologies and behaviour in your company, it's not just about the shiny new toys, it's fundamentally about culture change and above all it's more about good leadership. BBC News provides an example of transformational leadership at work, and also of the inter-relationship between leadership, vision and creativity. Broadly speaking the task of leadership in the media sector contains many inherent paradoxes. Without doubt, in view of the current climate of ongoing disorder, good leaders will be needed to be entrepreneurial and constantly attuned to environmental change. They will provide their organizations with a credible but inspiring sense of direction. Their strategy will synthesize intuition, experience and expertise, involve an active search for new opportunities and, in the current climate, generate dramatic leaps forward in the face of uncertainty. Before I rest my case, I will say a word or two also about the promotional role of journalism. This role is not to promote government or political parties we like but to promote social change for example, promoting ethnic tolerance, gender equality, health, education and, the dissemination of healthy political ideas. I think that is very important and requires the right kind of leadership. – **Omkar Ajit Gadre, ICLES' MJ College, Vashi, Navi Mumbai**

The Genesis of Leadership

The gene is responsible for the entire outcome of an individual in the society which he gains from his parents. Similarly, leadership is a quality, which an individual receives from his parents through genes. This quality of leadership keeps on moving from generation to generation through the means of genes and hence called genesis of leadership. This process of evolving leadership quality in a leader is natural. Leadership quality can also be evolved but it is a step by step process. The concept of saying that “there is no recipe to evolve leadership quality in a leader.” is extremely negative because the extracurricular and co-curricular activities conducted in schools and colleges helps the upcoming young generation to develop their leadership quality by providing them various opportunities and platforms.

Other than the educational institutions, the government and the local authorities should organize and conduct various events and platforms for the youngsters

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in order to evolve their talent at the grassroots level, which will somewhere or the other help in evolving leadership quality. Leadership quality can be greatly evolved from the young age itself if an individual has ability to speak and listen. Because, as it is rightly said “Speak in such a way that people listen to you and listen in such a way that people like to speak to you. – **Suresh Yadav, F.Y.B.Sc., ICLES’ M. J. College, Vashi, Navi Mumbai**

In quest of an Ideal leader

John W. Gardner, was of the belief that, leaders cannot be thought of apart from the historic context in which they arise, the setting in which they function and, the system over which they preside. They are an integral part of the system, subject to the forces that affects the system.

Leadership is “organising a group of people to achieve a common goal “. The leader may or may not have any formal authority; however he or she may have traits of leadership in terms of behaviour, vision, values, charisma and intelligence. Alternately possession of certain traits does not make one a leader. Traits may be a part of the picture but it is not the entire picture.

Environmental and social conditions can reinforce patterns that influence a leader’s personality; a good example of this is the cultural expectation within the United States for males to be more competitive and aggressive, which often influences their behaviour as leaders

Clearly understanding what traits and characteristics are exhibited by effective leaders allows us not only to match the right leader with the right situation but also to discover benchmarks for what we need to look for if we want to be (or train) the best leaders we can.

In India, we are still clamouring to give our self the leadership that the early 20th century had brought to forth, Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon were individuals in their own capacity but they remain to be the greatest leaders of their time and will ever remain ingrained in the sands of time. – **Dhanashree Vasant Patil, M.A. Part II, History, ICLES’ Motilal Jhunjhunwala College, Vashi**

Learning from History what makes for a Leader

Leadership is the art of influencing, motivating,

inspiring and transforming people not only towards achieving organizational goals, but also one’s personal life.

We have thousands of leaders, but our country lacks ‘true leaders’. A true leader must possess certain qualities, and these are etiquette, punctuality, courtesy, life-long learning skills, ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty and the most important of all to believe in people and in yourself. In a real sense, a leader is one who believes in justice and is just.

A leader should not feel the need to vehemently impress the fact that he or she is a leader; instead the spirit in which he or she works will give the person concerned recognition as a leader. Learning from History, the example of Jalal-ud-din Mohammed Akbar remains an exemplary example of leadership. He eliminated all discrimination on grounds of religion, caste or creed and propounded *Din-e-Ilahi* to cement together the people of his empire. He may have had a political design in doing so, but it was an effective way of consolidating his newly built empire. Akbar’s policy of *Sulh-i-kul* brought a new wave of thinking when he developed his Rajput policy for unifying his empire. It was unfortunate that the British introduced the policy of Divide and Rule and contemporary India succumbed to this evil and suffers till today. Our quest for leaders with such an unbiased approach to politics continues. – **Ms. Khan Ambreen Mohammed Aslam, Faculty, Department of History, ICLES’ Motilal Jhunjhunwala College, of Arts, Science and Commerce, Vashi.**

Participants

Dr. Amitabh • Sunil S. Bhandare • Commander (Retd.) C. S. Dandekar • Durbha Das • Omkar Ajit Gadre • Pooja J. Ghorpade • L. N. Godbole • A. V. Gopalakrishnan • Firoze Hirjikaka • C. A. Kallianpur • Ashok Karnik • Julpisha Kazi • Ambreen Khan • Nagesh Kini • Dr. Jyoti Marwah • Sheela Masani • Prof. Sheryar Ookerjee • Jehangir Patel • Dhanashree V. Patil • D. R. Pendse • S. V. Raju • Kashmira Rao • Didhiti Saha • Ashish Sanyal • Meera Sanyal • Brig. (Retd.) Suresh C. Sharma • Professor R. Srinivasan • Jamna Varadachari • Roxanne Wadia • Suresh Yadav • Pooja Y.

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Should the Koodankulam Nuclear Plant Be Abandoned?

What do Tamil Students Think?

Nandini Voice for The Deprived, a Chennai based NGO conducted an essay competition for college students in Tamil Nadu on the Koodankulam nuclear plant. Koodankulam is located in the Tirunelveli District. Construction began in 1997.

This report comes to us from Mr. N. S. Venkataraman, Trustee, Nandini Voice For The Deprived, Chennai. Email: nsvenkatchennai@gmail.com; Website: www.nandinivoice.org

The objective of the competition was to provide an opportunity to the college students to express their views on the subject and forward their views to the Government of India and to the Government of Tamil Nadu for their consideration.

It is gratifying to note that most of the students have attempted to study the issue in an objective way. 112 college students participated. 65% were female students. 77% said that the Koodankulam plant should be commissioned and 23% opined that it should be abandoned.

Prize winners

The following ten students were the prize-winners:

Ms. G. Krithi, Jeppiar Engineering College, Chennai ● Ms. Pooja Sathyanarayanan, JBAS College for Women, Chennai ● Ms. S. Divya, Government Arts College, Salem ● Ms. Kavitha, Joe, Suresh Engineering College, Tirunelveli ● Ms. G. K. Padma, Annammal College of Education for Women, Thoothukudi ● Mr. S. Mohammed Shygal Akram, National College of Engineering, Tirunelveli ● Mr. R. Pradeep, Velammal Engineering College, Chennai ● Mr. S. Benon, PSG College of Technology, Coimbatore ● Mr. V. Bhaskaran, Madras University ● Mr. B. Vijayarajan, P. S. R. Engineering College, Sivakasi.

The 77% who are in favour of the Plant being Commissioned

- ❖ India has no options other than nuclear power in view of the huge scarcity of coal, fuel oil and natural gas and their rising international price. While non-conventional energy such as solar and wind power should be utilized to the maximum, they would not be adequate considering the increasing demand for power in the country.
- ❖ Given the serious shortage of power in Tamil Nadu, there is great urgency to commission this nuclear power plant to avoid production losses of several crores of rupees.
- ❖ Many suspicions of the protesting local people such as fisheries getting affected, threat of tsunami and cyclones, radiation effects etc. have been pointed out as unfounded by senior Indian nuclear scientists and by Dr. Abdul Kalam himself, a renowned scientist and a humanist. But, the leaders of the protest movement are not listening and the poor innocent people who sit in agitation cannot understand science and technology issues and depend on the leaders of the protest movement for guidance.
- ❖ There is no justification to doubt the credibility and claims of Indian nuclear scientists who have repeatedly said that they are prepared explain the safety aspects of the project to whoever approaches them. Further, any remote possibility of an accident such as in aircraft or on roads have not prevented people from using such mode of transport. Every precaution has to be taken to avoid possibilities of such accidents.
- ❖ Many arguments advanced against the project are based on suspicions, pessimistic view and lack of understanding of the recent technology developments. Further, the leaders of the present movement give an impression that they are sworn opponents of nuclear power. There is certainly a political undertone in the protest movement.

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- ❖ It is unacceptable for religious outfits to take part in such agitations, which essentially are the concern of science and technology.
- ❖ Most of the protestors at the site are people from lower income group who are innocent and who do not have the advantage of a good educational background. Many of them are elderly people living in old age homes or school students still in their teens and relatives of fishermen. The leaders of the protest movement persuade such people to take part in the protest because of their local contacts and proximity to the local people..

23% want the Project to be abandoned

- ❖ The local people are the stake holders and even if the majority of the people in Tamil Nadu would want the project, it should not be implemented when the local stakeholders object.
- ❖ There have been accidents in nuclear plants around the world which cannot be ignored by local people. In the unfortunate event of such accidents occurring in Koodankulam area (even if the chances are rare and nearly unlikely) , the consequences would be very severe for the local population
- ❖ Human life is more important than issues of economic and industrial development and such development factors cannot get priority when safety concerns for human beings are involved, and particularly when localstake holders are not convinced.
- ❖ The scientists are not able to convince the local people convincingly, may be due to their lack of training in communication skills.
- ❖ By taking a “silent stand”, the Tamil Nadu government has given the impression that it favours abandoning Koodankulam project. In recent times, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has not spoken in approval of the project despite the huge controversy it has generated. In the wake of such a stand by the Tamil Nadu government, Koodankulam project should not be implemented.



"And, basically, that's all that needs to be done to save the euro."

Courtesy: The Salisbury Review, Winter-2011

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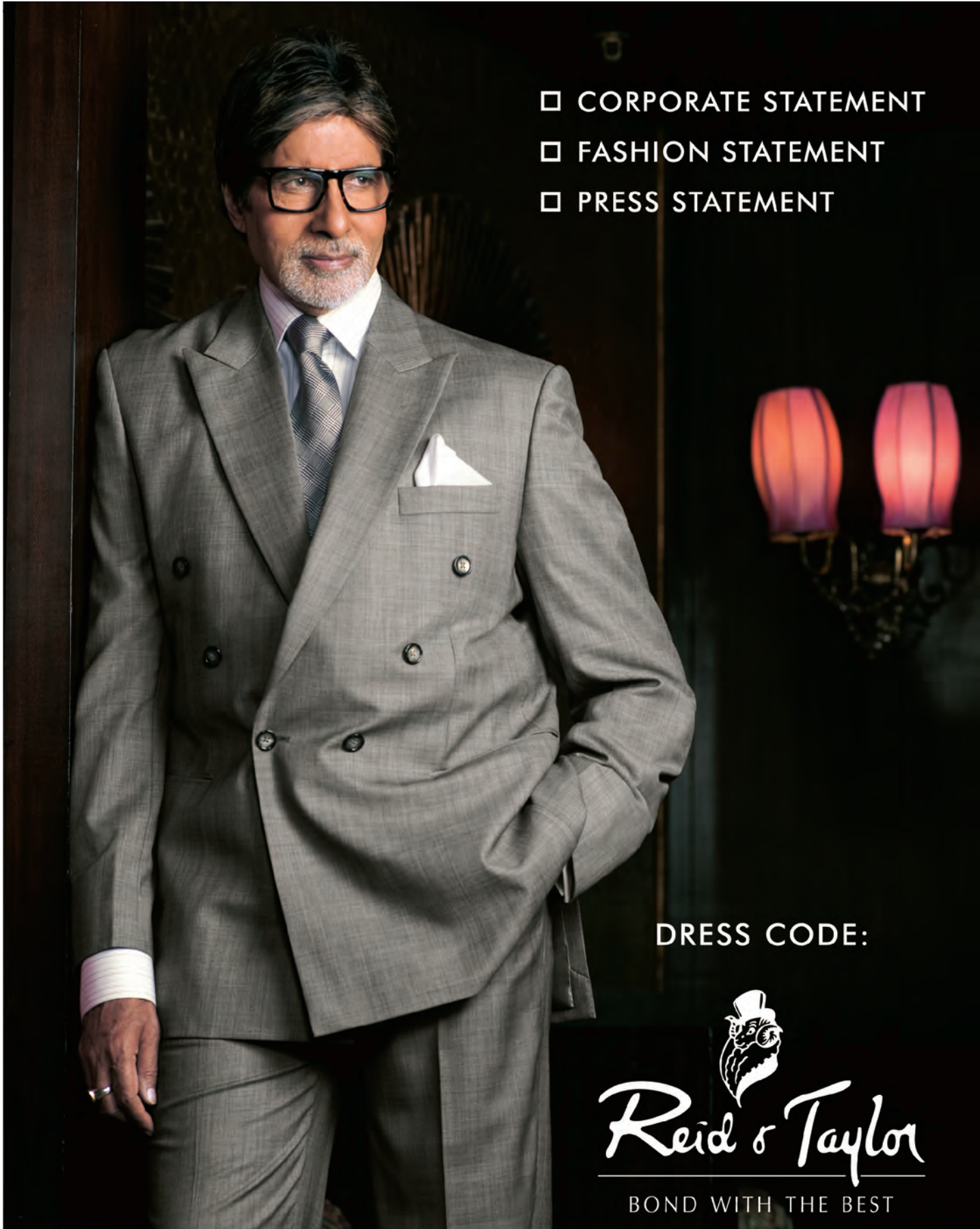
Freedom First, which began publication 59 years ago, was founded by the late Minoo Masani, author and MP, at a time when free India was just five years old, World War II had ended and the Cold War had begun. As a participant in India's freedom struggle he shared the vision of the leaders who had led us to freedom that, with independence, our country would launch towards the winning of a new world - the creation of a new society, secular in its foundation, ensuring liberty of thought, belief and action and the realization of economic and social justice for all the citizens of the free republic.

This vision ***Freedom First***, has steadfastly adhered to, even when it was politically incorrect or 'unpopular' to speak up for liberal values not to mention liberal economics. Our primary aim has been and continues to be to inform, analyse and educate our readers whether in the context of the not so recent past be it on the real nature of Soviet Communism, its inhuman treatment of dissent; of the fifth column that it created in the form of communist parties organised internationally including India; issues of governance; the onset of corruption as the licence-permit-quota-raj tightened its stranglehold on the economy; the Planning Commission which was patterned on the Soviet Gosplan and which inevitably led to wrong priorities e.g. the emphasis on heavy industry to the neglect of rural India in general and agriculture in particular; a lopsided foreign policy in the guise of non-alignment; and the growing trend towards too much government and too little citizenship. The list can go on.

We propose to digitise the entire set of 530-plus copies of ***Freedom First*** (1952 -2011) reflecting the times they were written by men known for their integrity and competence. We are also digitising ***Quest***, a bi-monthly journal of enquiry, criticism and ideas, which was also published by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) between the years 1956 and 1976. Outstanding litterateurs, poets, writers and academics were its editors and contributors. ***Quest*** had to shut down in 1976 during the 'Emergency' due to difficulties with the Censors. Between the two, digitising involves over 19,000 printed pages of ***Freedom First*** and 2000 pages of ***Quest***.

We look forward to your support in the funding of this project. Cheques made out in favour of "ICCF" will be gratefully accepted. Our address: The Hon. Secretary, Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001. Phone: 022 22843416, 022 66396366. Cell: Hon. Secretary- 9820016392; email: freedom@vsnl.com.

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