

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

# Freedom First

July 1987  
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## THE NEED FOR A SECOND REPUBLIC

Sharad Joshi



# Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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### Sharad Joshi

Mr. Sharad Joshi was an official of the Government of India and later held office in the United Nations. With this background he could not be a more unlikely candidate to lead India's farmers. And yet he returned home and founded the Shetkari Sanghatana (Farmer's Organisation).

On May 15, Mr. Joshi addressed the alumni of the Leslie Sawhny Programme on the theme of the decay and impending death of the First Indian Republic. Mr. Joshi is convinced that the time has come to think about the Second Indian Republic to be built on the ruins of the first.

Unfortunately Mr. Joshi did not elaborate on the contours and contents of the Second Republic he advocates. As Mr. Masani observed in his *Statesman* column, "someone who has placed this exciting thesis before us owes an obligation to the country to reveal in what respects the Second Indian Republic would differ from the first."



### D.V. Gundappa

*Freedom First* would like to remind readers that this is the centenary year of Gundappa, the great Liberal of the State of Mysore, as it was known in his time. His long life was a record of sacrifice, battle and of service to the community. Almost single handed he elevated an Indian language (Kannada) to become a supple vehicle for the discussion of political and social ideas.

Journalist by profession there was no single public cause in which he did not participate. His willing abnegation and his refusal to desert his immediate constituency, the people of his state, contributed in no small measure to his not being as well known as he doubtless ought to have been outside South India. No Indian liberal, including Raja Ram Mohan Roy or Ranade had the variety of Gundappa. Besides being a pamphleteer and a journalist, he was a playwright, poet and translator. He was a hedonist and believed in life affirmation which meant continuous dialogue with friends spread over hours, enjoying good food, at times even at the cost of his health and the savouring of literature and music. He was catholic enough to enjoy a *risque* story but these were in intimate company.

We are grateful to Gokhale Institute of Public Affairs, Bangalore for their permission to reprint Mr. Gundappa's article.



### Manimala

Ms. Manimala a journalist with the *Naubharat Times* and a women's rights activist was awarded the PUCL's "Journalism for Human Rights" Award for 1986.

*Freedom First* salutes Ms. Manimala for her exemplary service to the cause of liberal humanism and has pleasure in reproducing three of her articles translated from Hindi and distributed at the award ceremony on March 23.

This award honours journalists who dedicate themselves to furthering basic freedoms and human rights in their columns and articles.

Translations. Courtesy the PUCL.

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# WITH MANY VOICES

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

What they manage to do with tea in Andhra is a subject the Tea Board might take up with the Amnesty International.

Bill Aitken, *The Sunday Observer*, April 12

The commonest weakness of absolute rulers is the dynastic urge.

*The Economist* (London), June 8

The question is not whether he (V.P. Singh) is loyal to Rajiv Gandhi. The question is whether he is loyal to the country, loyal to the state, loyal to parliament, loyal to the ideals of the freedom movement.

Madhu Limaye, *The Sunday Observer*, April 19

No Prime Minister in Britain's post-War history has made such an impact on the nation's economy and people's lifestyle as Thatcher has during this decade

*Frontline*, May 80

What is the difference between Gorbachev and Dubcek? Answer: There is no difference but Gorbachev does not know it yet.

*Index on Censorship*, May 1987

Never underestimate the ability of our Opposition to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Jaswant Singh, M.P., *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, May 24

Heaven is where the police are British, the cooks French, the mechanics German, the lovers Italian, and it is all organised by the Swiss.

Hell is where the chefs are British, the mechanics French, the lovers Swiss, the police German, and it is all organised by the Italians.

A printed note circulating among Common Market staff in Luxembourg.  
*Encounter* April 1987

There is a strange virus that seems to make people fall ill the day before or after a holiday.

William Deanly in his book *Why Small Business Fail*

If the government is serious about uplifting women, it can begin by repealing the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act.

*The Indian Post*, May 12

Apart from the motor car a numbered Swiss bank account must be most desirable consumer object in the twentieth century.

Phillip Knightly, *Indian Express*, April 17

But going against the spirit of Secularism and accommodating religious fundamentalists in such matters as Muslim Women's right to maintenance is not the way to foster communal harmony.

*Frontline*, May 30

If Mr. Rajiv Gandhi allows Congress to become a Hindu party, he might win an extra seat or two in a state election; but he risks a future of Meeruts.

*The Economist* (London), May 30

Men do not like to appear to be fighting for bread or even for butter. They like to feel that there is a principle involved.

Sharad Joshi, May 15

What have the Arab States done for us that we have to be so solicitous about hurting their feelings.

C. Subramanian, *Indian Express*, March 28

Indians have more political consciousness per calorie than anybody else in the world. They used to have more patience too, but no longer. They are demanding more rights, more power and some are backing their demands with violence.

*The Economist* (London) May 9

What would we say to the Pakistanis if they said they want to send medical supplies to Meerut? Or to Khalistanis' groups abroad if they claimed the right to send victuals or medicines to their friends in the Punjab?

Khushwant Singh, *Sunday Mid-day* June 14.



# OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

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

- Lewis Carroll



## The Peccadillos of Politicians

All of us are sinners. Some of us indulge in peccadillos and a few others in more venial sins. Politicians being human have their failings – but the political future of the U.S. presidential aspirant Gary Hart is perhaps sealed for ever. This is certainly hypocritical in a country where presidents are known to be no straitlaced saints and adultery is as common as hamburgers. Kennedy was known for his adventures; that his large intake of steroids (which he had to for his very survival) activated his sexual activities unduly is certainly no excuse. Perhaps it was Gladstone who once stated that he had known eight prime ministers, all of whom except two were adulterers.

Asquith, the Liberal prime minister in the mornings at his prime ministerial office was generally slightly tipsy and used to pinch the bottoms of the woman secretaries like one of our senior journalists. Lloyd George, perhaps one of the greatest of modern premiers owed his prime ministership to the acquiescing silent perjury of his wife in not exposing his sexual adventure with a woman which was exposed in the press. It was said that Winston Churchill was exceptional in his devotion to his wife and in his lack of interest in women in general. Recently it has been revealed that one of the best maintained secrets of the second world war was the intimacy of Churchill with an American chorus girl in London!

A politician whose centenary is celebrated this year almost passed off his girl friend as his sister, till the opposition newspapers exposed him and prevented the political-cum-pleasure trip that the "siblings" had planned and, at the last moment in Bombay. We have been more reticent in our approach to our political leaders. While not every chief Minister is a Sukarno, one of our

sinning chief ministers still continues in office, drought and starvation deaths in his state notwithstanding, with ne'er a frown from the Centre. It was one of the more heartening aspects of Indian politics that we do not generally flaunt sexual escapades to finish off our political opponents. In a land where other civilities are so scarce we should be thankful for this small decency!

## Radical Humanist

*Freedom First* salutes the *Radical Humanist* which celebrated its fiftieth birthday on April 4. This is a remarkable event which shamefully went almost unnoticed in our press. When one compares the tenacity of this journal with the demise of the *AICC Economic Review* despite the backing of the ruling party, the fact of survival itself is remarkable. *Radical Humanist* is run on a shoe-string budget, the string almost worn out.

A function held on April 28 to mark the occasion had an audience of exactly 50 members, who with a few notable exceptions were all grey haired and perhaps worshippers at the shrine of M.N.Roy. Tarkateertha Lakshman Shastri Joshi and Dr. Ms Indumati Parikh as well as Mr. M.A.Rane spoke, but the evening was D.B.Karnik's who stole the show with his nostalgic narration of the journal's early years and of the people who struggled to keep it going. Understandably he broke down with emotion for he was associated with the journal from its very first issue.

Opposite the Charni Road Station in those days was the Empire Automobile building. Its steep sixth storey had two

rooms, the front being the office of *Independent India* and the other the residence of M.N. & Ellen Roy. The journal was first published as a weekly (and remained one till 1949). The first issue came out on 4 April 1937. Mr. V.B.Karnik was associated with it from its very inception. The problem was to find the security deposit of Rs 1000/- to be paid to the government. It was S.K.Patil who paid the deposit. It throws so much new light on that much maligned politician.

It was a collective effort requiring the efforts of one and all to produce this penniless journal — but lack of funds was made up by enthusiasm and a core of committed workers. The Karnik brothers would walk 8 kms to collect the advertisement tariff of Rs 30/- for an entire page! Narayan Jain who cooked for the Roys and a saint of a man introduced the ever-in-want V.B.Karnik to J.B.H. Wadia who became a staunch supporter of the venture. No political weekly perhaps carried more regularly than this, advertisements for stunt movies — which J.B.H. produced regularly. D.B.Karnik's meagre earning of Rs.25/- per month from the Karnatak Publishing House was a never failing stand-by for a rainy day — and it rained all weeks! V.B.K's wife's jewellery went up the spout, and never were jewels used for a better cause than in running the journal.

In its days it remained a free symbol of thought and criticism. And its criticism was unsparing and often devastating. Gandhiji who could take many things in his stride, found the journal not at all conducive to him and observed that Roy and his group "could serve the country better by maintaining

silence". He might well have asked himself to give up his belief in non-violence than asking Roy to stop writing!

It was a pity that no mention was made at the function of the late G.D.Parikh who was a pillar of strength to the venture and who was so close to the journal. Dr. Mrs Parikh understandably would not want to praise her husband. But why did the others forget him?

The journal had a chequered career. Very much like the "restless Brahmin", it too went on its peregrinations, had its *avatars* and is now settled in the capital of the country. But it never stopped its publication. Writing was something that no professional Marxist or ex-Marxist could ever desist from. Roy would have kept on scribbling whether the journal existed or not.

But the genius behind the entire venture was that saint of Royism - V.B.Karnik. But for his continuous toil and his enormous gifts of organization, patience and work the journal would have ceased publication long ago. He, along with the enthusiastic young men, the collegians as they then were, kept the journal jogging on its ragged course - taking joyfully to the task of hawking it at railway stations, shouting themselves hoarse. One such young boy was none other than M.A.Rane, now a respectable elder Royist and practising lawyer.

In a country where the educated flee in terror from ideas, keeping alive a journal of ideas and free discussion for half a century is a matter of great satisfaction. It is a further cause for satisfaction for us that in his later years, V.B.Karnik edited *Freedom First* with equal devotion and dedication.

### The Law on Marriage

The Indian Secular Society and Principal S. P. Sathe deserve congratulations for a most commendable effort towards secularising the law relating to marriage in India. The need for a uniform civil code is one of the imperatives in our country and it has to be done in a context free from communal acrimony.

It is interesting to note that the Dowry Prohibition Act as well as the Child Marriage Restraint Act are applicable to all communities; in a century where countries with a Muslim majority have been secularising their civil laws, our legisla-

tion has excluded Muslim women from the purview of Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code which till recently was applicable to all communities. This is indeed a case of reversal from modernity to medievalism.

Professor Sathe and the Indian Secular Society have made final a draft proposal (originally drafted appropriately by two women law specialists, Ms Jaya Sagade and Ms Vijayanti Joshi) "The Indian Marriage and Matrimonial Remedies Act 1986" which they hope will constitute part of a uniform civil code.

While they are eager to secularize they also see its limitations in a context where religion is a dominant social influence. The Act supplements the religious rites of marriage which may be engaged in. Compulsory registration of marriages has been made an important feature.

Besides modernizing and secularizing civil laws the aim also is towards extending the ideals of justice and equality to women. The parts relating to separation and maintenance will help some sections that were helpless in an earlier social and legal situation where the husband could abandon his wife with impunity.

Readers of *Freedom First* will doubtless welcome this draft bill and may want to read and comment on it. It will help the organizers if study circles debate the draft and send their suggestions to the Indian Secular Society, 850/8A, Shivajinagar Pune, 411 004. The cost of the pamphlet is Rs. 10

### Sugarcane and Paddy - Some Lessons

Sugarcane in Maharashtra is cultivated on one percent of the total cultivated area but consumes 60% of the irrigated water of the state. The reduction of water to the sugarcane farmers to eight months of the year by the present Chief Minister for ensuring a more equitable supply has brought in a hornet's nest on his head.

The third successive drought has raised a crisis for the co-operative sugar sector in Maharashtra which has an investment of 1,500 crores of rupees. The number of sick units in 1983 was 19, in 1984 it went up to 24, in 1985 it rose to 34, in 1986 it was 40, and this year it may touch 70." Of the 96 sugar factor-

ies, 86 are in the co-operative sector.

Three cheers for the co-operative movement in Maharashtra - the beneficiaries of the movement are too well-known to need any mention.

For a change, let us look at paddy cultivation in Tanjore over six successive years all of them in conditions of near drought. The area under paddy cultivation has been consistently shrinking since 1983 but the productivity per hectare is increasing as well as the total production in lakhs of tonnes.

This rise has not been due to some freak happenings but by careful husbanding of water, "density of planting, close pest monitoring, scientific fertilizers application, better water management and drainage, plant protection measures, pest surveillance etc."

In short co-operation between the individual farmers and agronomists.

RS

### Charan Singh R.I.P

As former Prime Minister, Choudhury Charan Singh was eligible for, and was given, a State funeral.

The manner in which he toppled, with the understandably enthusiastic support of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Janata Government led by Mr. Morarji Desai blotted a copy book which until the other day was clean. Few can quarrel with the *Indian Express* appraisal that "posterity will regard his conduct as one of the most sickening instances of opportunism in Indian politics".

There is one other wreckage that the Chaudhury Saheb left behind. In 1974 he was able to persuade a gullible Piloo Mody then President of the Swatantra Party to merge with the former's BKD (to form the BLD). The Swatantra Party's National Convention held (conveniently) in Delhi in August 1974 was swamped with delegates from U.P. one of the weakest of the Party's units. The numerous buses bearing U.P. number plates indicated where they came from. The source of the UP hordes that turned the Convention into a farce is easy to guess.

What a pity that this champion of rural India who successfully thwarted Nehru's hopes of collectivising Indian agriculture, allowed his ambition to cloud his judgement in his later years.

SVR



# The Need for a Second Republic

Sharad Joshi



Sharad Joshi

The Indian Republic, born on January 26, 1950, is in agony and possibly, already beyond help. Fairly elaborate life-support systems keep hopes flickering but the people who resolved solemnly, thirty seven years ago to adopt the Constitution of the Republic know, in their hearts, that a misfortune here or there, and even the formal end is not far away.

It had started all so well some forty years back. The nation had been thirsting for a republic through centuries of native despots alternating with ruthless alien plunderers, and over a millenium of internecine wars waged for victory for this or that dynasty or for the glory of this or that Almighty. The last of the alien monarchs, the British, had, for over a hundred years, ruined local industries, depleted our natural resources and left the country poor and miserable. But his methods were such that he had, in the process, to establish law and order under a unified political control, introduce a network, howsoever rudimentary, of transport and communications and foster a community of urban elites, the middle class, familiar with the ways of western society, com-

The tribulations of the first Indian Republic were essentially due to the fact that at the inception of the Republic, India was not an integrated nation. It was divided into so many castes and creeds. It had a colonial dualistic economy. Under these circumstances the Constitution and the Republic were at best objectives to strive for. In the last forty years, the State has worked in the opposite direction and accentuated the dualism in the national economy, in consequence polluting the polity, damaging the structures of the Republic and creating the monster of national disintegration

merce and administration.

## Euphoria

With the end of colonial rule came the nation's 'tryst with destiny'. On 15th August 1947, it appeared that with the infrastructure left by the colonial masters, there could be no limit to what a nation of 300 million could achieve. The resurgent nation possessed a wide variety of natural and human resources; the exploiters had been driven away and nothing stood in the way of peace, prosperity and progress. The enthusiasm was so overwhelming that the people took in their stride the horrendous aftermath of the partition.

In less than three years after Independence, the people adopted a Constitution – a marvel of meticulous scholarship and farsighted statesmanship. A Republic was born. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, fully at home with the ways of the West, established protocols and rituals: Flag-hoisting on the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day, Republic Day parades, the ceremonial arrival of the President at the inauguration of Parliament and so on. They are all, even today duly performed with full fanfare. It is said that the "Beating the Retreat" ceremony to mark the conclusion of the Republic Day celebrations in the Capital represents the most outstanding bag-pipe music in the world including Scotland.

And yet, 37 years later, we find the Republic very tenuously hanging by a few fragile strings. How has this come to pass?

In essence, the Indian Republic represented a configuration of the States of

the Union, serviced by a number of counter – balancing institutions viz. the Presidency, the Judiciary, the Executive, the Legislature. The totality of the system is committed to the protection of fundamental rights as also to progress on stipulated guidelines. Each of these institutions represents an important element of the whole. Any attempt made by one of them to make inroads into the authority of any of the others is certain to disturb the balance, and work ultimately to the detriment of the Republic.

## Delhi's Fiefdom

What has happened in the last forty years? Simply put, the structures of the Republic have been irreparably damaged. How?

The states of the Union have ceased to be the basic units of the Republic. President's Rule has been imposed nearly a hundred times, more often than not for partisan reasons. The Centre has been making increasingly bold forages into the non-union list in the Constitution. The purse strings are held firmly by the Centre and the expanding size and proportion of discretionary funds have put the states literally at the mercy of New Delhi. The chief ministers of states (ruled by the party in power in Delhi) are of course designated from above; but even junior ministers in state cabinets have to be okayed. The issue of 'tickets' for the assembly elections is regulated at the highest echelons. The Indian Airlines flights to and from Delhi are packed with state ministers and officials on their routine pilgrimage. States have ceased to be the basic components of the Republic. They have be-

come a part of the fiefdom controlled from Delhi

The Executive has been subjugated and it offered no resistance at all. The mental and moral qualities of the old ICS could not of course be expected in the IAS of the post-independence era. We now have the bureaucratic rat race, the attempt to up the colleague; not only that but the threat of transfer if some officer appears to be outstanding; to humiliate him publicly or privately; and feathering the service conditions of the lower grades. And we have the whole bureaucracy competing among itself to double up in order not only to carry out the desires of the ruling party but even to anticipate the wishes of the rulers; and of course, the undreamt opportunities opened up by the licence-permit raj for side-incomes took care of the civil servant.

The total subjugation of the judiciary was neither possible nor desirable even from the point of view of the usurpers and was not even attempted. But the judiciary was effectively muzzled all the same. The comparatively unattractive service conditions of the judges even at the highest levels, partisan manipulation at the time of initial appointments, promotions and transfers as also the ever dangling carrot of post-retirement possibilities of prestigious posts have been producing an increasingly larger bevy of judges over-anxious to bend themselves double in meeting and even anticipating the conveniences of the rulers. This is enough not only to make the judiciary subservient but even mediocre. The judgements have become verbose, prolix and even shoddy. The Mishra Commission's report is a patent example.

### Parliament Weakened

The Indian Parliament was conceived of as the paramount forum of deliberation and decision-making. Today it is the meeting place of political and licence-permit horse traders. They gather there in between visits to the ministries for obtaining favours for themselves or their constituents. The real decisions are taken elsewhere. Parliament, after the Anti-Defection Act has become a quasi-automatic stamping machine for ratifying such decisions. For some time the Union Cabinet acted as the decision-making forum. But the Planning Commission owing allegiance

to the Prime Minister made serious inroads into the authority of the Cabinet. After Nehru, the erosion of the planning function witnessed a concomitant strengthening of the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The proportion of the cadre of civil servants in this prestigious group has been steadily declining to the advantage of personal friends and buddies of the present Prime Minister. The ministers, generally ineffective, have become irrelevant. Those who betray any signs of capacity or ambition are quickly disposed of.

This is the extent to which measures have been taken systematically to concentrate the entire power in the hands of one single person — the Prime Minister.

This is the extent to which republican institutions and structures have been vitiated and subjugated. Their place has been taken by the hobby-horses of the ruling prime minister — socialist pattern of society twenty point programmes of different vintages, science and technology and the approach of the 21st century. The totality of political power is now concentrated in the hands of the prime minister whose accession to power is in effect by dynastic succession. The system as it is effectively working is totally unrelated to the grand design of the authors of the Constitution.

This is one aspect of the Republic which I think is dying.

The second aspect even more important (for the structure even if damaged can be repaired) is that the spirit of the Republic appears to be eroding very fast.

In 1950, we all appeared to be persuaded that our destinies lay together and that we had to live together. The fissures that have appeared in the spirit of the Republic are far more tragic. The very integrity of the nation appears questioned by various fratricidal conflicts. Punjab, with its daily quota of macabre killings is obviously the gravest of them all. The Nagas have been dissatisfied for years. The brave Gorkhas are following suit. The valiant Sikhs — saviours of the Nation on numerous occasions in history — have been estranged. The 1947 partition, it was hoped would permanently resolve the festering Hindu-Muslim rift. Unfortunately the current wave of communal riots recall in their frequency and ferocity the horrendous 1940s. For tiny par-

cels of land that can satisfy no hunger and reservations of jobs that mean nothing to the vast majority of the unemployed, brothers are at each other's throats.

This disintegration crisis has created a scare in the minds of people at large. A sort of schizophrenia.

### Dualistic Structure

People suddenly develop great hopes. A few years back the large majority of citizens believed that the Prime Minister was a messiah sent from above; that he had all the good qualities and that he was certainly bound to lead the nation to a great epoch to come. Equally unreasonably people have developed a sort of pessimism that everything is going to pieces. These are the symptoms not of a healthy mind but of a schizophrenic.

In 1984 we needed a leader and since no leader was forthcoming we endowed Rajiv Gandhi with the possession of qualities which we thought he ought to have.

Not only have the republican structures collapsed it is the spirit of unity which is withering away.

I will produce a third evidence to show that the Republic is on its way out and is dying. In 1950 when the people gave the Constitution unto themselves there was a specific reference made to equality of opportunity and to economic and social justice. I would like to quote some figures. In 1951, a year after the inauguration of the Republic, the per capita net product in the agricultural sector stood at Rs. 405 (at 1970-71 prices) as against Rs. 593 in the non-agricultural sector. The corresponding figures in 1983 were Rs. 415 and Rs. 1216 respectively. The ratio between the products of the non-agricultural and the agricultural sector products moved from 1.46 to 2.93. At current prices, the per capita net domestic product in 1981 stood, in the agricultural sector at Rs. 859 as against Rs. 4930 in the organised non-agricultural sector. The per capita income in the latter sector is six times as high as that in the agricultural sector.

This Republic in the last forty years has been deliberately trying to vitiate the terms of trade against a major sector — the basic foundation of the Republic. The assurance that we will try for social and economic justice and that we will



assure equality of opportunity, has been blatantly disregarded.

To summarise:

1. The institutions have been eroded.
2. The spirit of the Republic, its unity is disappearing; and
3. We are not a single unified nation at all but that we are actually working a dualistic structure where one part of the country is exploiting the other. A relatively small part is exploiting a larger part.

## What Went Wrong

What is the reason? What went wrong? Most politicians, many leaders and many thinkers say that it is because of the moral decline of the people. That somehow people are less patriotic now; their moral standards have gone low; that they are less honest than they used to be. These, according to them, are the reasons why our institutions are collapsing.

The history of Indian parochial conflicts shows that they flare up principally in periods of stagnation, regression and despair and disappear during periods of dynamism, growth and hope

I have my serious doubts about this line of thinking. Can one talk of moral decadence in a country which only forty to fifty years back created martyrs like Bhagat Singh and Babu Genu? When a nation could produce freedom fighters on this scale and in this number can the criticism of moral decadence be applied to that country? Is moral decadence the basic cause, the prime mover? I have my serious doubts.

Reasoning on moral and ethereal terms is the last resort of those who fear to admit the more earthly and proximate causes. One does not need to enter the eternal philosophical debate about the primacy of matter as against idea. Suffice it to say that economic factors provide a sufficiently cogent explanation for the present malaise to render introduction of any other element

entirely superfluous. Art Buchwald once observed that the American people were interested in the Watergate scandal only while meat prices were soaring. Whenever the prices showed an inclination to come down they were prepared to forgive the Nixon administration almost anything. The history of Indian parochial conflicts shows that they flare up principally in periods of stagnation, regression and despair and disappear during periods of dynamism, growth and hope.

## National Stagnation

Thus it was, that under the leadership of the Mahatma, the nation could transcend untouchability, injustice to women, communal hatred, linguistic chauvinism and urban exploitation to forge a common front against the colonial exploiter. Not that they always succeeded. But he did succeed in putting the parochials on the defensive and in fact on the run with the help of, not Rebeiros but Rajajis. The latter, for example, kept the Madras province in the forefront of the propagation of Hindi as the national language. The 'Hindi Hatao' movement came much later under spurious Gandhis.

Sir Choturam's is another example. The pre-independence Punjab consisted of the Muslim dominated west, the Sikh-majority Punjab of today and the Hindu Haryana and Himachal Pradesh — three communities which collided with each other for centuries together. Their conflicts led to one communal holocaust followed by a partition of the country and appear to threaten a second. But, for a very glorious though brief period, Sir Choturam and his Unionist Party rallied the farmers of all the three communities on an economic platform and kept the Muslim league, the Akalis and even the Congress at bay. It was only after the death of Sir Choturam that Jinnah could open the first office of the Muslim League in The Punjab.

## Economism vs. Parochialism

Why did the economism of even giants like Mahatma Gandhi and Sir Choturam fail in the face of parochial chicanery? It is probably a consequence of civilisation. Men do not like to appear to be fighting for bread or even for butter. They like to feel that there is a principle involved. It is only after so persuading themselves, that men get pre-

pared to die and, even more important, to kill. Caste, language, religion and region provide ready-made principles for which men can be made willingly to die and brutally to kill. It is perhaps, related to the primary urge to seek security in community. May be the fraternity of an economic class has identity of interests but not the means and structures for securing them. The fact remains that time and time again honest economic movements have had to beat a retreat before contrived and even dishonest parochial onslaughts.

Many a movement engendered essentially by economic considerations has degenerated and finally gone down in history as cultist and parochial. Battles between the different feudal warlords, contending the right to plunder the surrounding peasantry, have been recorded by historians as religious wars. The struggle of the Moplas in Kerala, deprived of their rights in the land to the benefit of the priests, very soon became communal conflicts. The struggles against the Hindu landlords waged in Sind and East Bengal by the landless — preponderantly Muslim — were purely economic in character. But they were eventually hijacked to create a Pakistan where the grandchildren of the original participants live as miserably as ever. The genuine grievance of a Maratha unemployed youth in Bombay is tapped by regional patriots blaspheming even the great Shivaji. The hunger pangs of the Gujarati youth are similarly turned to their advantage by the pro or anti-reservationists. Brothers get at each other's throats trying to snatch from each other's hands more than their just share because there is just not enough to go round. The funny thing is they need to shriek slogans of caste and religion rather than beg pitously for bread.

## The Hindu-Muslim Problem

The Hindu-Muslim problem will for ever remain festering, unless it is recognised that, unlike their urban leaders, the common Muslims constitute, side by side with the Dalit masses, the most deprived people in the country. In fact, they converted to the new religion, in the first place, because of their deprivation. The conversion gave them a dignity and pride but no economic relief. The resolution of the Muslim problem presupposes improvement in the situation of the landless labourers and of the village artisan. In the absence of such a

dynamic context, the common Muslim, understandably will stick stubbornly even to the most obsolete tenet of his faith, since it gave him, for the first time, a sense of dignity. It is, indeed unfortunate that Muslims as a community have rarely found a leader who could articulate their economic problems.

#### The Dalit Question

The Dalits are in an analogous situation with some differences. Their alienation with the mainstream of Hinduism is less complete though rapidly snowballing. Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism succeeded only partially in conferring on them a sense of fierce pride *a la* Islam. Further there are no big Dalit industrialists or merchant-princes. Their top consists of politicians generally profligate and a few officials, beneficiaries of the reservations policy. The Dalit leadership, as much as the Muslim one, have a vested interest in their flocks remaining both alienated and backward and thus providing fuel to their mills. If the present squeeze on agriculture and the artisan persists, these two major blocks of backwardness are likely to be forged together in an axis potentially catastrophic for national integrity. The early

signs of such an alliance have been visible for some time now.

#### Punjab Imbroglio

The agrarian character of the Sikh question is even more explicit. It fell to the lot of the farmers in the north-west to stand up against the invading marauders and the native plunderers whose armies were crisscrossing the region until the British came. Sikhism was the spiritual expression of that independent peasant movement. In the course of the prolonged warfares, the peasants in the frontline Western Punjab finally succumbed and sided with the invaders and accepted Islam. Those in the rear remained with the native plunderer-princes and retained their ancient religion. In the Punjab of today, Hindus remain confined to trade, moneylending and other non-agrarian activities. Historically and politically in conflict with the Muslims as he was, the Sikh peasant developed a close social relationship with the Hindus in spite of the economic antagonism.

It is in this context that certain enigmas in history get clarified eg. the early affinity between the Sikhs and the British regime; opposition by the Lala

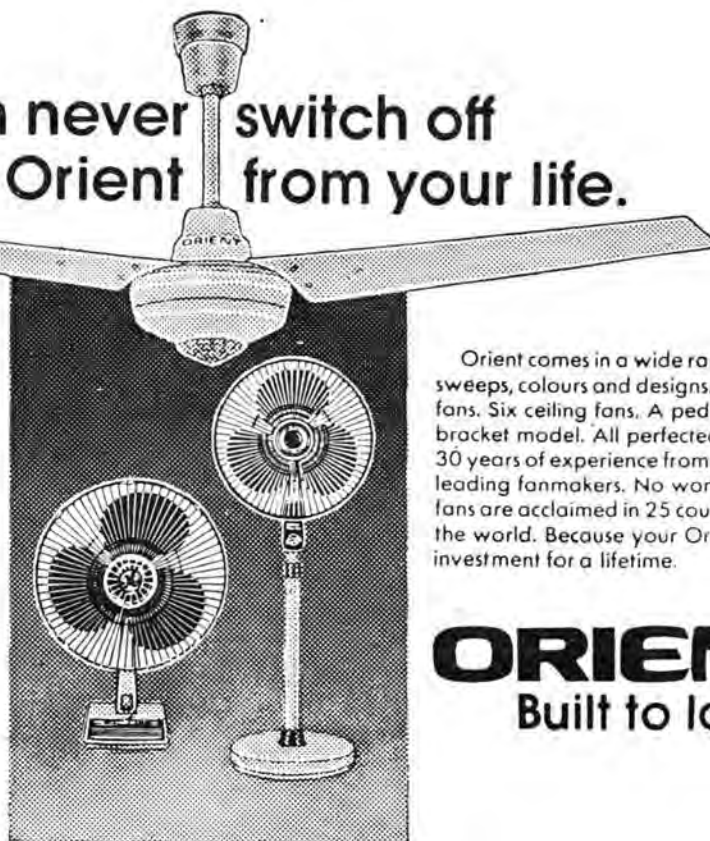
Lajpatrai-led Congress to the Land Alienation Act the piloting of which made Sir Choturam the instant hero of the Punjab peasants of divergent creeds. Partition and its aftermath brought the Hindus and the Sikhs so close together as to seem indistinguishable. But the liquidation of the Muslim problem took away one major prop of Hindu-Sikh unity. The contradictions in their economic interests were bound to burst out in the open sooner or later.

It came about later than sooner. The green revolution brought about a technical transformation of agriculture in the Punjab. It was principally the contribution of the Punjab farmer that made the country get out of its chronic food-shortages and reach self-sufficiency. Paradoxically, as a consequence of the anti-farmer price policies of the Centre, the economic benefits of the green revolution devolved on the traders and on the consumers rather than on the farmers. Traders were largely Hindus and the farmers happened to be Sikhs. This is the basic stuff of the Punjab imbroglio.

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The Sikh farmer has two grievances. There are areas in Punjab which for want of irrigation facilities are unable to participate in the green revolution, and hence, the demand for additional water supply. Secondly, they want their toil in the fields to be rewarded, either by reducing costs or augmenting prices. Since 1970, principally under the secular and non-political banner of the Bharat Kisan Union (or its predecessor, the Kheti-Badi Union — BKU —), the farmers waged a number of agitations for these objectives. The following the BKU commanded amongst the farmers was beyond compare more massive than that of the Akalis. The Akalis have been trying in vain to plagiarise the BKU demands and programmes. Thus it was that the Anandpur Sahib resolution mentioned not only a demand for decentralisation of power but also demands relating to remunerative agricultural prices and canal waters.

The fact that Punjab produces most of the foodgrain surplus while its prices are fixed by the consumer states has hurt the farmers there since decades. During World War II, Lord Wavell had fixed, in consultation with the other provinces, the procurement price of wheat at Rs. 7 per maund. Sir Choturam had fearlessly stated that in fixing wheat prices the only opinion that mattered was that of the producer in the Punjab and that he would ask the Punjab farmers to burn down their crops rather than sell them for less than Rs. 10/- a maund. Even the alien Viceroy had seen the force behind this argument. Decentralisation is a peasant and not a Sikh demand.

That the Akalis and then the extremists were able to take advantage of the simmering discontent amongst the farmers will go down in history to the eternal discredit of whoever held the reins of power. There was a time when the Punjab problem could have been defused. As late as March 1984, the BKU had rallied over eighty thousand farmers for picketing the Raj Bhavan at Chandigarh. If at that time the Central Government had agreed to restructure the Agricultural Prices Commission and fix the support price of wheat at Rs. 190 per quintal, the communalists would have been totally shorn of whatever little support they enjoyed in the countryside. Financially, it would not have cost the Government even a fraction of what the Punjab is costing them now. It would

have cost them much less than even the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission.

But it was not to be. What followed instead was epic tragedy — making the Sikhs get down from buses and trains to prevent them from entering Delhi during the Asiad; Operation Blue Star; killing of so many innocents; the assassination of the Prime Minister; and the puerile response of the nation in massively electing the son and thus throwing another challenge at bruised egos.

The opposition in India always had the character of a motley crowd of impractical dreamers, allergic to power, content to win verbal duels with their own colleagues. Controlling them presented no problem.

Step by step, the nation is inching forward to disaster. The Punjab case is now in the emergency ward and some political action should probably have precedence. It is extremely unlikely that the Sikhs would ever be able to rejoin the mainstream of the nation under a Nehru-Gandhi. Abdication by Rajiv Gandhi of what he obtained taking advantage of a delicate situation would appear to be the precondition of any resolution of the Punjab tangle. But that by itself would not be sufficient. The solution of the problems of the Punjab peasantry alone would provide a lasting solution.

The conflicts threatening the integrity of the nation are not accidents or products of human cupidity. They represent so many pending revolutions in eruption. The caste-based Hindu society survived and prospered by the economic exploitation of the so-called lower castes and professions. The peasants, the Dalits, the Adivasis, the Sikhs, the Muslims all represent so many economic sins of the caste society clamouring for expiation. The freedom struggle provided a common target and a hope-giver by the Mahatma

that the post-independence era would be different. The British thus provided unwittingly the last framework of unity. Independence, when it came, brought no difference. The caste policies continued though in a slightly altered form. The economic injuries have festered over forty years and gangrened. Nothing short of a total overhaul of economic policies is going to mark even the beginning of the healing process. Evidently what went wrong with the 'tryst with destiny' is that the nation remained absent at the rendezvous.

### New Leadership

The neo-colonial economic policies of the Indian elite have not only created the integration crisis but have, much worse, done away with the political leadership and the will to combat it. If the people are dumbstricken, their leaders who carry the formal responsibility for this state of affairs are merrily unconcerned. One has the lurking suspicion that they prefer and probably enjoy the new role of the *gendarme* with the accompanying unlimited power and the total freedom from accountability. In a silent, gradual and almost bloodless coup, the political system has been taken over by a combination of two categories of people, both products of the post-independence era. First, the urban front consisting of the slumlords, the smugglers, construction racketeers and the beneficiaries of the license-permit raj; second, their rural counterparts, the Co-opbarons of varying sizes. In brief, a collusion of the urban *Dadas* and the rural *Goondas* is lording over the polity, left and right.

The opposition in India always had the character of a motley crowd of impractical dreamers, allergic to power, content to win verbal duels with their own colleagues. Controlling them presented no problem. The successive splits in the ruling party and the brief accession of 'Janata' to power in 1977, made it even easier to bring them under the influence of the 'Congress culture' and hence of the *Dada-Goonda* combination.

The real thing that interests the combination, however, is power and influence at all levels. Control of the slums, bootlegging and '*matka*' operations require complete control over the local police station and a 'committed' judiciary. The construction gang can manipulate floor/space indices only with the State Government firmly under control.



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Power has not only to be acquired but retained and retained indefinitely. Unfortunately, in any minimally democratic system, there prevails, inevitably, an element of uncertainty. It may all of a sudden throw up upstarts like a Shastri or produce a 1977. The combination cannot afford to have any uncertainty. '*Aayaram-Gayaram*' methods of sticking to power, tried for a while, is all said and done, humiliating and unreliable. A controlled democracy, a populist, vainglorious regime, which derives its ostensible democratic legitimacy from dynastic succession rather than performance suits the convenience of the combination. Add to it a scared apathetic people subject to mass-frenzies, and the combination has its dish. Dynastic continuity and national schizophrenia are the very sustenance of the *Dada-Goondas*.

The last elections furnished the combination with the opening it had been hoping to get for a long, long time. The people called upon to exercise their franchise while in a state of psychological trauma accorded a massive mandate, in the absence of any alternative, to the heir-apparent. This amounted to cutting off the nation's nose to spite the extremists. The latter got a readymade hate-symbol and the nation a Prime Minister, prisoner of his ancestors' past. The poor ex-Avro-flier had no alternative but to drag in the only base he had — the 'Doon school', 'Baba-log', 'Jet-set' managerial class, consisting of the princes (old and new) and merchants of celluloid dreams. Talk of 'modern technology' and the coming 'Twenty-first Century' suddenly became not only 'In' but 'the thing' — not only amongst the intellectual and the powerful but even amongst the beautiful.

Power is a very heady wine, and absolute power devolving out of the blue can really turn even basically sober heads. The managerial executives till yesterday of the Indian branches of multinationals, suddenly started believing that they have the master-key for resolving the problems of the country. In their re-

spective businesses they had experience of the suffocating straitjacket of government regulations, taxation and planning. They had dreamt for long of demolishing these official constraints. Suddenly awakening one day in seats of paramount power with a full formal democratic mandate albeit obtained under duress, they set to work to realise their plans — supply side economics.

There is only one serpent in this paradise of the new rulers. The 'Baba-log' are painfully aware that the 'ideas' they are taking out of their briefcases have no mandate as they were not even mentioned in their election platform. They know equally well that their economics is unlikely to receive any thing like popular sanction, on its own merits as it goes contrary to the basic interests of all excepting their miniscule fraternity and to the very precepts of the independence movement. The 'trauma' mandate could not last for ever and they would need a sure-fire device of ensuring extension.

This was the kind of situation the '*Goonda-Dada*' combination had been hoping for but had not quite obtained during any of the previous regimes. It moved in now to reinforce its hold on these 'babes in the wood' and without any of the earlier restraints and inhibitions, are relentlessly and shamelessly indulging in sheer plunder. The synthetic fibre-safari clad elite have finally and totally usurped the revolution that the freedom movement was under another Gandhi. The plunderers of the middle ages shouted slogans of victory to their respective deities, to give their crimes a pious cover. Their modern counterparts are required only to proclaim their eternal allegiance to the prince of the 'baba-log' and declare that the petty princeling is a 'divine miracle', 'established world leader' and what not. The combination has veritably taken over. The prince, in the chosen company of his bosom buddies is amusing himself launching paper boats of accords and legislative fiats and economic gimmickry, vastly enjoying the perquisites of power he did nothing to earn.

### Constitution Not At Fault

And all the time the nation is inexorably moving towards the precipice. Three hundred years after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, Delhi has come full circle, Frankly, there is very little hope, that the Republic can be saved

and the spirit of 1950 restored. Things might possibly become worse before they start improving. But, just in case we get a second chance, what are the pitfalls and mistakes we should avoid?

It would be wrong to try and find fault with the Constitution. Many an imperfect Constitution has worked because the people were, in their own enlightened self-interest, keen on making it work. Our Constitution may not be perfect, but that is not the reason why the Republic has failed. As Dr. Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution said

"I feel that the Constitution is workable. It is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace and in war. Indeed, if I may say so, if things go wrong under the new Constitution, the reason would not be that we had a bad Constitution. What we would have to say is that man was vile."

Did the Republic fail because man was vile? Only partly. A vibrant republic can exist only in a truly independent and integrated nation. On 15th August, 1947, India became neither. For the vast majority of the people, on that day, one parasitical exploitative system was replaced by another and not even a better or a less cruel one. The Constitution, as enacted in 1950, represented a dream to realise rather than a reality. It could have worked, if and only if we behaved like one people. A dualist economy and a republican democratic constitution cannot coexist. The first thing we shall need next time is the ability to think of the economic interests of the nation as a whole. The criterion established by Mahatma Gandhi would have to become the supreme law: a policy measure would be approved if, and only if, it is likely to bring about some amelioration of the life of the most deprived of our compatriots.

### Second Republic

India is of continental proportions and diverse population. Most of its population lives in places that are not accessible throughout the year. It has the largest mass of the poor, the deprived, the illiterate, the afflicted, the humiliated. The rulers had better give up their tendency to compare themselves with their counterparts in the more developed countries. India just does not possess the infrastructure



necessary for a centralised government. The transport and communications network is very rudimentary and controlled mostly by the 'Indian' elites. Any centralisation of power, therefore, essentially benefits that class.

Decision making will have to be as near the operative level or the grass-roots level as possible. Ideally the Union should deal with the minimum possible number of subjects viz. defence, external political affairs, currency, inter-state coordination, etc. The states as the basic components of the union should deal with most of the matters at present dealt with by the centre. A major part of the development work will be carried out at the district and lower levels. 'Decentralisation' is a wrong word to use. Rationalisation of the decision-making locations will be a more appropriate way of putting it. The Constitution will have to be made genuinely federal in character.

We may be a nation of hero worshippers. We may have also been lucky in

being bestowed with leaders who guided the destinies of the nation for scores of years. But this kind of dependence makes us vulnerable not only to the dangers of dictatorship, sycophancy and corruption but to the activities of extremists who represent an increasing tribe. A Prime Minister cannot have better protection than the fact that he is easily dispensable and replaceable. Two tenures is the maximum that should be permitted to the Prime Minister of a country as difficult to rule as India. A consortium of ministers who would hold the prime ministership by rotation for a year each would have a very healthy effect on our politics and politicians.

The new State would have to be made truly secular in the dictionary sense of the word. The State and its representatives, in their public life, should be required to display skepticism towards all religious dogma. A temple going Prime Minister is detrimental

to the healthy polity of a nation like ours.

In conclusion, it transpires that the tribulations of the first Indian Republic were essentially due to the fact that at the inception of the Republic, India was not an integrated nation. It was divided into so many castes and creeds. It had a colonial dualistic economy. Under these circumstances the Constitution and the Republic were at best objectives to strive for. In the last forty years, the State has worked in the opposite direction and accentuated the dualism in the national economy, in consequence polluting the polity, damaging the structures of the Republic and creating the monster of national disintegration. The people will need to, in the words of Mahatma Phule, try and "create an integrated nation to" to be able to get rid of poverty and then constitute on that foundation a genuine Republic.

Based on a speech delivered to the alumni of the Leslie Sawhry Programme on May 15, 1987

## Tibet — "Only a Political Solution is the Answer"

His Holiness  
The Dalai Lama.

The past four decades, which witnessed the invasion and consequent occupation of Tibet by Communist China, have been the most difficult and tragic period in the long history of our country. Yet we responded positively when the new leadership in Peking showed interest in having direct contact with us in the late seventies. Unfortunately, it seems there is no desire on the part of the Chinese to resolve the issue on the basis of mutual respect and for mutual benefit. The mass arrests of Tibetans in 1983, official encouragement to large-scale Chinese immigration into Tibet contrary to their earlier promises to withdraw the bulk of Chinese civilian population, continued denial of political rights to our people, and the presence of Chinese military and intelligence personnel in Tibet are creating obstacles for better understanding and the possibility for a mutually satisfactory solution.

The Tibetan people have bravely withstood the unparalleled atrocities committed upon them. They have remained steadfast and strong. Their courage and determination are remarkable — a tribute indeed to the

indomitable spirit of Man. And today when we commemorate the 28th anniversary of our National Uprising we once again remember the brave Tibetan people.

Today, there is greater danger than ever before to the survival of our people, our religion, culture and our country.

Firstly, the so-called religious freedom in Tibet today amounts to permitting our people to worship and practice religion in a merely ritualistic and devotional way. There are both direct and indirect restrictions on the teaching and study of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism is thus being reduced to a blind faith which is exactly how the Communist Chinese view and define religion.

Secondly, although economic and other conditions have been eased slightly, in reality young Tibetans are neither provided with adequate facilities nor are they encouraged in their educational development. Bad habits like drinking and gambling are allowed to spread in the society despite the knowledge of their harmful effects. Deliberate obstacles are

being placed before those who are academically inclined. There is thus every danger of Tibetans being turned into a backward and illiterate community devoid of any real culture and education.

Thirdly, the large-scale Chinese influx is threatening to transform Tibet into a Chinese territory.

It is a mistake to presume that mere economic concessions and liberalizations can satisfy our people. The issue of Tibet is fundamentally political with international ramifications and as such only a political solution can provide a meaningful answer.

In the past, too, Tibet had played an important role as a neutral buffer contributing to the stability of the region. This historical precedence provides the basis for working out a solution to the issue of Tibet for the benefit of all parties concerned. The demilitarisation of Tibet and its transformation into a zone of peace should be the first step.

Extracted from the official statement of His Holiness The Dalai Lama on the occasion of the 28th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.



# The President's Powers

Minoo Masani

The *Times of India* published on 29th March an article by me entitled "The Roots of the President-Prime Minister Clash". I had quoted the relevant articles of the Constitution and established that the Constitution adopted by the Constituent Assembly, of which I was a member, had given the President of the Republic the role of being one of the checks and balances to the power of the Prime Minister of the day. While I have received several letters and telephone calls saying how pleased those concerned were with my article, the columns of the *Times of India* have carried three or four articles and letters arguing that I was wrong and that the President of the Republic is a dummy and has no power at all to act on his own.

What puzzles me is how intelligent people can possibly argue, as they have done, that the President can do nothing at all except on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of the day.

## Powers of the President

The Constitution as enacted in 1950 provides :

- 74(1) There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions.
- 75(1) The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- (2) The Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.
111. When a Bill has been passed by the Houses of Parliament, it shall be presented to the President; and the President shall declare either that he assents to the Bill, or that he withholds assent therefrom;

Provide that the President may, as soon as possible after the presentation to him of a Bill for assent, return the Bill if it is not a Money Bill to the Houses with a message requesting that

Democracy is not majority rule. The tyranny of a brute majority can be as undemocratic and oppressive as the tyranny of a minority or an individual.

they will reconsider the Bill or any specified provisions thereof and, in particular, will consider the desirability of introducing any such amendments as he may recommend in his message, and when a Bill is so returned, the Houses shall reconsider the Bill accordingly, and if the Bill is passed again by the Houses with or without amendment and presented to the President for assent, the President shall not withhold assent therefrom."

In the light of this clear language, I find it hard to understand the plea made to me except to assume that the Constituent Assembly was made up of nincompoops without any knowledge of the English language. While I do not object to this aspersion in so far as I am concerned, I cannot let it pass in relation to eminent men and women like Dr. Ambedkar, Dr.K.M.Munshi, Dr.Gopalaswami Iyengar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr.Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer, Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit and Mrs. Hansa Mehta.

If my critics are right, the absurd situation follows that, when the Constitution says that the Prime Minister and Cabinet hold office "during the pleasure of the President" what we meant was that they would hold office at their own pleasure! Can we imagine any Prime Minister going to the President and saying : "Sir, I advice you to dismiss me and my cabinet"? Similarly, if the President cannot withhold his assent from a Bill and return it to Parliament on his own, he would have to call the Prime Minister, who has taken the trouble to pass the Bill through the two Houses of Parliament, and ask the

Prime Minister to advice him to withhold assent from the same Bill!

The question that arises is why is it so difficult for many people in this country to accept the language of the Constitution? Obviously it goes against some basic prejudice of theirs. Having puzzled over this, I have come to the conclusion that there is considerable disagreement about the meaning of the word 'democracy'. My understanding is that democracy is the rule of the people by the people and that, where there is difference of opinion, the view of the majority should normally prevail provided it shows consideration for minorities and the individual citizen.

## Democracy is not Majority Rule

In other words, *democracy is not majority rule*. The tyranny of a brute majority can be as undemocratic and oppressive as the tyranny of a minority or an individual. Hitler came to power on the strength of a "one man one vote" majority and then proceeded to destroy every vestige of democracy in Germany. The Black African dictators claim to be elected by a majority. This has provoked an eminent anthropologist

## Our Revered Legislators

They are amazing, the members of our legislature. There's really no other word to describe their resilience, doggedness, their total disregard of social as well as political propriety and values and quite simply, their hide-like skins. We have MLA's who can neither read nor write - let alone having any idea of even elementary politics - even some who are positively retarded. There are MLAs who have been accused, in public or in court, of forgery, rape, theft, murder, kidnapping and illicit liquor brewing - no criminal activity is apparently beyond their ken or is any longer taboo.

Aside, March 1, 1987.

ist like Elspeth Huxley to observe dryly : "one man, one vote, once!"

What I am saying is fairly well understood on both sides of the Atlantic where it is known as the doctrine of 'countervailing power'. There are, however, in our part of the world too many people of the view that the rule of Sinhalese over Tamils is democratic, that the rule of Blacks over the Whites in South Africa would be democratic and, by the same token, Hindu rule over Muslims is democratic.

With all respect, I must disagree. In countries that are homogeneous and the majority shifts from election to election, majority rule becomes tolerable, but in polyglot countries like ours, where there is a permanent religious, linguistic or racial majority based on birth which can never shift, majority rule can be undemocratic. In such conditions, democracy calls for the sharing of

power, checks and balances and a truly pluralistic society.

The Constitution of the Swiss Confederation which is made up of German speaking, French speaking and Italian speaking Swiss, is based on this principle by providing that the Cabinet or the Executive is elected from time to time by *proportional representation* so that all sizeable minorities form part of the Government along with the majority.

I know this is heresy for many people in India and the infamous Forty-second Amendment to the Constitution, which Mrs. Gandhi rushed through Parliament during the Emergency, supports their view. But this Amendment should be struck down as *ultra vires* the Constitution. It is a crying shame that the Janata Government, which came to power in 1978 with this as part of its manifesto, failed to repeal that amendment in toto.

All this is not at all theoretical in to-

day's situation. The Union Government of the day has lost its moral legitimacy and Parliament has ceased to represent the people of India. In this situation, Dicey's wise words become relevant :

"There are certainly combinations of circumstances under which the Crown has the right to dismiss a Ministry who command a parliamentary majority and to dissolve the Parliament by which the Ministry are supported....The reason why the House can in accordance with the Constitution be deprived of power and of existence is that an occasion has arisen in which there is fair reason to suppose that the opinion of the House is not the opinion of the electors."

COURTESY: *The Statesman*

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## A.D. GORWALA HONOURED

The Leslie Sawhny Programme takes pride and considers it a privilege to honour Mr. A.D. Gorwala, highly respected administrator, fearless editor, journalist and publicist and felicitous author and a master of English prose.

Named after the Zoroastrian Angel of Righteousness, this dedicated administrator and editor has gone through life as a kind of Happy Warrior - fighting for honesty, integrity and common sense. In fact Mr. Gorwala has become a legend in his own lifetime. He was one of the most outstanding members of the Indian Civil Service, an administrator in the highest 'Platonic' tradition, a man of highest integrity, perspicacity and devotion to public interest, embodying principles, values and conduct by which administrators anywhere in the world may measure themselves.

Mr. Gorwala's innings as editor and publicist began immediately after his retirement from the civil service. His devotion to public good and writing did not allow him to retire till recently, when his age and physical disability took its toll. Through his highly regarded journal *Opinion*, he upheld values and norms in public life and criticised the high and mighty without fear or favour. This was evident in the way he fought censorship during the dark days of Emergency.

Yet, everyone who knows him would testify to his innate humility, charm, chivalry, grace and sense of humour, a rare and totally integrated personality which is barely comprehensible to our generation living in chaotic and morally unstable times. His very presence is a source of strength and inspiration.

Though he is too eminent a person to be given any Award, the LSP would like to cite him as a patriot-citizen par excellence, worthy of emulation, deep respect and gratitude, one, who truly symbolised, in flesh and spirit, the basic tenets of his Faith, "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds."

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# Liberalism in India

D.V. Gundappa



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Liberalism is the attitude of faith in the free working of the intelligence and conscience of man as a means to improvement in human conditions and of opposition to all that tends to obstruct or interfere with that freedom. Thus it is concerned with safeguarding liberty in its inevitable encounters with authority.

## Dimensions of Liberalism

For liberty to exist, there must be no obstacle to the self-fulfilment of each man in society – to the unfolding of his faculties, the growth of his personality, the satisfaction of his aspirations, the expression of all that is of value in him, the full blossoming of his soul. In order that every member of the community may be able to use and enjoy liberty, it is necessary that there should be an agreed agency to regulate the conduct of each member at points where he is likely to come in contact with others. That regulative agency is authority. Authority arises out of law and works in the service of law, which embodies the general will of the community.

Authority, devised to protect liberty — to maintain everybody's liberty against everybody else's in their contacts —

Liberalism is a refusal to accept the dictatorship of a person or group or institution, and a preference for reasoned persuasion based upon respect for the individual's intelligence and goodwill in affairs of common concern. The liberal holds that in every field of living and acting, the individual and the minority have certain rights which are inviolable.

may in that process overstep its boundaries and prove an obstruction on the path of liberty. Since authority has behind it the resources of the entire community, liberty, which has no such support, has to be on guard at all times.

Authority may put liberty in peril in many ways. Chief among them are three :1) In the domain of politics, authority acting for the state may step into the sphere of the individual's private life or enforce a law endorsed by a majority against the wishes of a minority. 2) In the country's economy, authority may take sides with monopoly and privilege against the requirements of common welfare. 3) In the twilight realm of religion, authority, speaking through church or congregation, may deny to conscience, independence of reasoning and freedom of judgement.

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The liberal movement did not develop in India, as in Europe, in response to the challenge of aggression of king or magnate or ecclesiast. India's history records no instance of any such excessive abuse of authority by state or religion as could provoke a serious conflict in the community. There were undeniably other difficulties — wars, epidemics, famines, criminal gangs; but no complaints of a systematic violation of established rights or invasion into spheres of private life and property by authority. The rule of Dharma or the traditionally accepted Law of Righteousness was obeyed without question by king and commoner alike; nor were there any inventions of science to disturb the people's loyalty to inherited faith or to upset the age-old balance of economic forces. If the ancient Hindu kingdoms were not able to face the onslaughts of foreign invasion, the causes for their weakness should be sought elsewhere than in the mutual workings of liberty and authority among the people. The fortunes of war are no test of the soundness of a state's civil constitution; and democracy fares no better than autocracy in a trial of arms and tactics.

## Indian Genesis of Liberalism

India's liberalism in the modern period may best be described as a re-articulation of certain instincts which had been embedded for ages in the people's mind; it was not a copying of a fashion of Europe. The re-articulation was undoubtedly called forth by the new knowledge, enlightenment, political institutions and social patterns which Britain brought with her. A re-evaluation of India's ancient heritage in ideals and institutions and practices in the light of the newly arrived cargo of civilization



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from a far-off shore was only natural, as was also a general desire to improve and renovate. Liberalism in India was thus a resurrection of *Dharma*, as will be shown presently.

### Dharma and Liberalism

India's epic poem, the *Mahabharata*, contains a convincing simile which illustrates the manner in which both liberty and authority may coexist in a good polity, "People live together in a good State," it says, "like brothers under their father's roof, each feeling perfectly at ease and yet obeying an unspoken rule of self-restraint – enjoying a freedom that is not reckless and accepting a discipline which has no harshness in it."

The ancient Hindus saw liberty and authority as correlates. The two were to them two sides of the same coin – the current coin of *Dharma*. *Dharma* is Truth (*Satya* or the enduring Inner Fact) working itself out in everybody and in relation to everybody. *Dharma* comprehends three concepts in the main, as may be seen from the common usage of the phrase among the Hindus even at the present time:

1) *Dharma* is a thing's own nature, its aptitude, its characteristic quality or attribute, its peculiar virtue. The thing should first of all be itself; that is, it should perform the particular function for which it was designed in the life of society. From this it follows that any discipline or way of life which makes for the preservation and efficiency of the distinctive merit or service of a person is his *Dharma*. Freedom, being a condition of both spontaneity and completeness in one's self-fulfillment, is an ingredient of *Dharma*.

2) *Dharma* is that which sustains the life of the world. It is righteousness and justice, which are essential to peace and order. It is a scheme of conduct based upon the recognition of one's kinship with all that lives. In essence, all living beings are but particles or aspects of the same Infinite Power that is immanent in the universe. From this arises a sense of mutual relationship among all, and a recognition of the need for harmony and order in their behaviour. So arises the need for a law to regulate life by formulating the requirements of justice and defining rights and duties. Authority, the child of law and the servant of justice, the ensurer of right and the

impeller of duty, is thus an ingredient of *Dharma*.

3) *Dharma* is the practice of self-renunciation with a view to the highest self-fulfillment. This consists in the gradual replacing of natural egoism by world-wide altruism. The most enduring and the most essential part of man is the soul, the basic life-principle. The soul is, so to say, the manifestation-centre of the Infinite Principle of Universal Being. The highest destiny for the soul is to come to a realization of its true nature as a spark of the ever-present infinite. The road to it is through the education of the soul in subordinating sense-hunger to the needs of spiritual growth. The mind should be trained to transcend the barriers of the fleshy self and flow into the currents of life in utter self-forgetfulness, identifying itself with ever wider realms of being and becoming. Institutions like the family and the caste, the nation and the state, are schools of spiritual education. They put us more in sympathy with others and encourage self-denial and devotion to the general good. Philanthropy and charity are not adornments copied from without, but flowers opening out from within the heart and expressing an inner faith in the spiritual oneness of world-life. Unselfish and unconditional love of one's fellow-beings – which brings the individual to merge himself in the universal, and thus stand above both liberty and authority – is also an ingredient of *Dharma*.

This threefold content of the concept of *Dharma* is derived from the appreciation of the inherent duality of human nature. Man is a compound of soul and body, of sense-promptings and spiritual dreamings, of the earth-bound and the star-beckoned. He finds happiness sometimes in selfishness and sometimes in sharing life with others. But at bottom he is a spirit; and the crowning felicity for him is to experience existence as though it were but the play of a wavelet on the bosom of the ocean of Universal Being. This felicity is attained by means of a constant discrimination between the grosser and the finer values of life and the gradual conquest of the carnal and sublimation of the spiritual. It is a course of self-discipline both long and difficult, and life in society is the training ground for it. In that school the lesson must be learned by each according to his capacities, so that

he may adjust between the self-regarding and the world-regarding points of life. Liberty belongs mainly to the self-regarding and authority mainly to the world-regarding attitude. Both alike are parts of the schooling which the soul needs for achieving its higher destiny; citizenship, which comprises both, is thus a discipline of *Dharma*.

Such is the Hindu's philosophy of the good and the way to it. Modern liberalism is to him the renaissance of certain elements of it, rather than an exotic plant imported anew into his garden. Roots of the philosophy of liberty and authority, individual development and social order, lay in the depths of antiquity, beneath the debris of a thousand years of alien conquest and domination; and the sap in them quickened at the touch of the new enlightenment introduced by Britain.



Rammohan Roy

### Rammohan Roy and Ranade

For the origins of the modern phase, we have to go to Rammohan Roy who lived 120 years ago (1774-1833). This was the epoch of the French Revolution, the age of Bentham and of Wordsworth, when "to be young (as Rammohan was) was very heaven" and when "Reason seemed the most to assert her rights, when most intent on making of herself a prime enchantress" (Wordsworth). Rammohan was learned in Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and many other languages. He had travelled in Europe and lived in England. He believed in the religion of his forefathers, and cultivated a truly cosmopolitan outlook. He pleaded for the spread of "English education" and a knowledge of the modern natural sciences among his

countrymen. He championed the cause of freedom for the press and rights of women to property and education. He stood for the reform of social abuses like compulsory *Suttee* (widow burning) and for mutual understanding and tolerance among religions. His political vision is reflected in what he said in 1832 about the advantages of the settlement of Europeans in India:

Some apprehend that if the population of India were raised to wealth, intelligence and public spirit by the accession and by the example of numerous respectable European settlers, the mixed community so formed would revolt, as the United States of America formerly did, against the power of Great Britain and would ultimately establish independence. It must be observed that the Americans were driven to rebellion by misgovernment; otherwise they would not have revolted and separated themselves from England....The mixed community of India, in like manner, so long as they are treated liberally and governed in an enlightened manner, will feel no disposition to cut off its connection with England....Yet if events should occur to effect a separation, still a friendly and highly advantageous commercial intercourse may be kept up between the two free countries.

It was Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1900), who gave Indian liberalism its distinctive physiognomy. He was a scholar and thinker of creative power. There was no field of his people's life that escaped his attention. Literary renaissance, historical research, industrial and commercial regeneration, education, religious and social reform, government and administration, citizenship and public life — all these he made the subjects of his study. It was study conducted with a scientist's objectivity and thoroughness and a poet's perceptivity and vision. For forty years he worked at educating his countrymen and showing them how to rebuild their life and recover their place in the world. He was described as "Our Socrates." He found enthusiastic collaborators among his contemporaries in all parts of India. The most illustrious among them was Dadabhai Naoroji, the founder and father of the freedom movement. Among others were Bhandarkar and Vidyasagar, scholars; Veeresalingam, the Voltaire of Andhra; Chandavarkar



Mahadev Govind Ranade

and Telang and Mani Iyer, jurists; Malabari and Subrahmanyam, publicists. The categories of reconstructive effort to which they devoted themselves were principally in the fields of education, economic development, improvement of women's status, the uplifting of depressed and backward classes, promotion of good will and respect among the various religious communities and sects, and political reform.

The new liberalism was thus concerned with all departments of the country's life, and was more a general attitude and way of looking at things than a set of fixed and immutable formulas. It stood for the free play of human intelligence. Reference has already been made to the Hindu's basic article of faith that in every human being there is an inherent potential disposition towards righteousness and benevolence. The purpose of the state is to sublimate and canalize those tendencies making for the restraint of self-love and for self-expansion into world-life. That is the discipline of democracy. A good thing, however good, is not to be imposed on anyone by authority. It should be made acceptable to him by its appeal to informed and rational intelligence. This is the heart of liberalism. Ranade was the teacher who illustrated it most convincingly, asserting the superiority of the claims of inner intelligence to the dictates of outer authority. In the manifesto he wrote for the Deccan Sabha (1896) he said:

"The spirit of liberalism implies freedom from prejudice and steady devotion to all that seeks to do justice between man and man, giving to the rulers the loyalty that is due to the law they are bound to administer, but securing

at the same time to the ruled the equality which is their right under the law. Moderation implies the condition of never vainly aspiring after impossible or too remote ideals, but striving each day to take the next step in the order of natural growth, by doing the work that lies nearest to the hand, in a spirit of compromise and fairness. After all, political activities are chiefly of value, not for the particular results achieved, but for the process of political education which is secured by exciting interest in public matters and promoting the self-reliance of citizenship. This is no doubt a slow process, but all growth of new habits must be slow to be real."

"Self-respect and self-reliance of citizenship" is the core of liberalism. But Ranade was no narrow individualist. It is a mistake to think that the doctrine of *laissez faire* is organic to the liberal creed. The doctrine in its extreme and unqualified form was never a prominent article in the Indian version of liberalism. On the contrary, the Indian liberals always recognized the necessity for a certain measure of state activity to support education, social reform and economic development. Ranade held it to be the duty of the state in India to "take care of national needs in all matters in which individual and cooperative efforts are not likely to be so effective and economical as national effort."

But it should also be said that to recognize the value of state action does not

#### NETA-BABU RAJ

Politicians and civil servants have acquired enormous powers in the name of the people. They have then proceeded to use this power to feather their nests and bestow patronage on their friends and constituents. This has led in India to what Raj Krishna called the neta-babu raj. Socialism has been the slogan used to confer great powers on netas and babus. They have used these powers more like Chambal dacoits than Plato's guardians. When netas and babus are creaming off the economy, others inevitably get only skimmed milk. The position is not very different in many other developing countries. It is true to a limited extent even in old-established democracies.

*Indian Express*, Dec. 15



imply that it should be permitted anywhere and everywhere. State action would be justified only in a context where, the object in view being acceptable to all, non-governmental public agencies have proved themselves inadequate. In other words, state action should be the last resort. It is here that the trend of the political philosophy now prevalent in India is at variance with liberalism. The welfare state can never make good its name if it does not set clear limits to its field of operation.

Gokhale, the disciple of Ranade, continued the mission of liberalism after the passing of the master; and Mr. Srinivasa Sastri was Gokhale's disciple and successor. But Gandhi's advent on the scene was like the appearance of a new planet in the sky. It put all else under an eclipse for some thirty years.



Mahatma Gandhi

#### Gandhi and Gokhale

Gandhi was a disciple of Gokhale, and a true liberal on almost all issues except one. That one issue concerned the method of persuading Britain to leave India. Gandhi saw no hope in relying, as did the old liberals, on the logic of minds and conscience. He decided that Britain must be spoken to in the language she is accustomed to, the language of practical obstruction and dislocation. Hence his recipe of *Satyagraha* or non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience. As to the ultimate objective, the liberal did not differ substantially from Gandhi. Independence was the aim of both, though the liberal questioned Gandhi's haste and his methods. His objections to Gandhi's programme were three:

1) Non-cooperation would not remain non-violent when the masses were drawn into it. And when authority answered with counter-violence, the re-

sult was bound to be a state of undeclared civil war and general chaos. Demoralization and loss of nerve would be the consequence to the people.

2) A course of non-cooperation would undermine the people's habit of obedience to lawful authority – a habit built up through ages and fundamental to civilized living – and so weaken their sensitiveness to the call of order and stability and peace in society.

3) Even though non-cooperation succeeded in bringing independence to the country, that independence could not prove as satisfactory as independence achieved through Dominion status, for independence involves responsibility and responsibility presupposes understanding. Understanding could come only from careful experimentation and gradual experience. People needed time to try their hands and train themselves. Independence not preceded by experience with democratic institutions at interim stages, was certain to create enormous problems.

The first of these three arguments is now a closed chapter of history. Without doubt, Gandhi's countrymen, in his day, justified his confidence in their capacity for non-violence against the foreign power. On the second point also, the verdict is on the whole not against Gandhi. As to the third argument, however, history has yet to reckon with those speculative people who doubt whether the straight line is necessarily the shortest road in human affairs. The circuitous road may seem lengthier on the map, but may prove easier and therefore quicker for the feet. There is time yet for the people of India to prove that they have the requisite capacity for self-education in democratic responsibilities and that their independence is not a premature acquisition.

The liberal programme, while accepted in most respects, was not adhered to in the matter of securing independence for the country. The ameliorative programmes in the fields of education, social reform and industrial enterprise became a part of the common ideology of the country. The liberal political policy which advocated gaining Dominion status through constitutional action was rendered obsolete by the radical dynamism of Gandhi. The British Government had no use for a political party which has ceased to count in



Gopal Krishna Gokhale

the eyes of its own people. Neglected thus by both sides, the Indian liberal party faded away.

Actually, the political ideals of Gandhism have met with no better fate since the attainment of independence. As already observed, Gandhi was a liberal in most respects. He stood for:

- 1) the minimum of government or state-action consistent with the requirements of order and peace;
- 2) a maximum of freedom to the individual;
- 3) simplicity in the machinery of administration, so that it could be easily understood by the common people;
- 4) economy in public expenditure and avoidance of waste and luxury;
- 5) social improvements to be achieved by rousing and setting in motion the ethical and rational sensibilities of the community rather than by compulsive legislation – the "Haves" being persuaded by social pressure to regard themselves as trustees for the well-being of the "Have-Nots";
- 6) a national legislature which would be as far as possible similar to the already established and well-understood autonomous village councils, and a process of legislation simple enough to be intelligible to the common people in all ordinary matters, special devices being provided for questions of a complex nature.

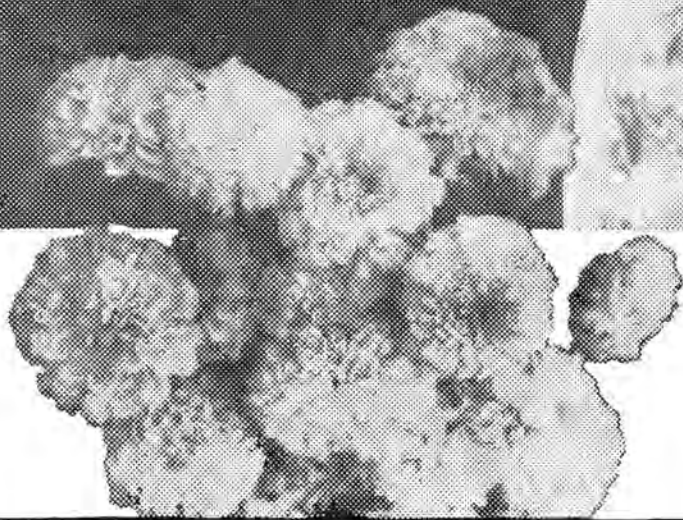
These are not the features of present-day India, with its "socialistic pattern" and planned economy. Gandhi was a man of simple and unsophisticated tastes. His wish for the material prosperity of his country was tempered by a sober recognition of the limitations of its resources and also by a sensitive re-

A black and white photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a saree, holding a flower to her face and smiling. The background is a textured, light-colored fabric.

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gard for the moral health of the people and the dangers to it from unlimited material ambition. Moral and spiritual interests were to him supreme. He would not compromise independence by accepting gifts and loans. His respect for the spirit of man and the freedom of man's individuality was too genuine to permit him to be enthusiastic about the coercive state.

But the liberal need not be upset that a programme of drastic change by state coercion has been impulsively adopted by India's men in power. The liberal's anchorage is in the power of experience to stir and move to action the potentialities for good sense and reason hidden in the history of the race. Experience is a teacher that never fails. The socialists of England, having experimented with nationalisation for a time, are not now as united in clamouring for it; and there is no lack of public warnings in that country that "the creation of the welfare state has damped down the spirit of self-help and independence" among the people. The balance-sheet of an ideology is drawn not from year to year, nor from decade to decade, but from century to century. Propaganda can no doubt work for a while and obliterate long-established ideas and habits. New

fashions may then arise and take the place of traditional loyalties. Everything may seem to wear a new face and have a new glitter. But all of a sudden, from somewhere beneath the surface of things, there may float into view a strange sword of gold, as did the *satyagraha* of Gandhi, thrown up by an inner impulse of the nation; and on closer view, it is identified as just a new shape of an old weapon of the community. That would be the beginning of its return to its *Dharma*, to its predispositions in the direction of the good and the beneficent, according to its own law of being and becoming. It would be the restoration of its long-lost ideals and forgotten values.

The good that India can do in the world is to remain India — to keep to her own *Dharma* — and not to become another Russia or another America. Her scheme of values is different. Not that she cannot acquire things of value from other people. She has much to learn from both Europe and America. It has been India's habit all through history to turn to every corner of the globe for the light of truth and the blessedness of wisdom. But she must be selective in taking things from others; and her selection must be strictly in relation to the ingredients of her nature. All plants

draw nourishment from the soil and the surrounding air; but each plant selects that which is suitable to its particular *Dharma*. Grass, bamboos, fern, orchid, apple, apricot, teak, oak — no two of these take the same things from the environment or in the same proportion. So has each man and each community to look within and find out what is needed for healthy growth and purposeful functioning in the world and then decide what to adopt from the patterns set by all the countries of the world. Aptitude within and purpose without — these should be the guide to selection. Indiscriminate imitation can only make India not a more worthy India, but a hybrid India.

Every human being has in himself, embedded deep down in his mind and his soul, a seed of *Dharma*, a complex body of disposition towards the good and the great. Meddlesome hands may hold the seed down or turn it this way and that, hindering its natural self expression. Liberalism is the art of removing the obstruction and coaxing the plant to grow, providing water for its roots and sunshine for its foliage.

## N.G. Jog — A Tribute



The death of N.G. Jog removes from the world of Indian — especially Bombay — journalism a man of great integrity and talent. His greatest days were in the forties and fifties when he served the (now defunct) *Bombay Chronicle* and later the *National Standard* (which became the *Indian Express*).

Though he retired, as all men in service have to, in time, he continued to write and as Mrs Jog testified, he was anxious to keep up the writing even on his sick bed and almost to the last moment. In his own time he influenced his readers to a greater extent than he knew or thought possible. He had a clean, swift style that evoked admiration and attention and now that he has gone the way of all flesh, those of us who lived in those stirring times can only remember with gratitude, his services to journalism and the country, both of which should be proud of him.

The thirties and forties were the age of nationalists and patriots when both the words had a certain identifiable meaning and relevance. India, it will be remembered, was then not yet free. Defending India's honour

and rights was then an integral part of a journalist's duty and Jog observed it with style and flair. Though he has written several books, he will be best remembered for his work *Judge or Judas?* which was an incisive and measured attack on a vulgar book authored by one Beverley Nichols during the war, intended to show that India had no civilization, that its demand for independence was pretentious and that Britain, under no circumstances, should succumb to the pressure of the Indian nationalists. The book was largely meant for an American audience. It was in the tradition of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* and intended for the same audience. Jog rose to great heights and gave it back as good as India received.

**M.V.Kamath**



# Outrages Against Human Dignity

Manimala

## Demand for Withdrawal of the Piparia Massacre Case

Lok Dal leader Karpuri Thakur, Communist leader Sunil Mukherjee, and Congress (I) leader Krishna Shahi (Union minister of state for Education), Dr C.P. Thakur, D.P. Yadav, Gauri Shankar Rajhans and Ram Bhagat Paswan (all MPs) have requested the Bihar Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey to withdraw the cases against the accused in the Piparia massacre case.

Can they give the reasons for their demand? Did they consult the mothers whose eleven lovely children were cut to pieces and thrown into the Ganges? Did they consult those innocent children who have no future now since their fathers were massacred? Did they consult those wives whose husbands were killed? And above all, were those three horrified children consulted who had seen eleven of their playmates being butchered like animals and who were not able to utter a word for seven days due to the shock received and who could open their mouth only when the Lok Dal leaders hugged them affectionately?

Till the other day the Lok Dal leader Karpuri Thakur was concerned about the future of these children; today he is concerned about the future of the accused, why? After the massacre he had undertaken a *padayatra*, took the children to the Raj Bhawan, demanded a special court, addressed hundreds of meetings. He did a lot. He did every thing publicly and won plaudits.

### Inconvenient Questions

Why, now all of a sudden, is he asking for the release of the accused through an unpublicized letter? Why openness then and secrecy now? Is it because he is doing something underhand? May be there is something more than meets the eye. Now he explains that the demand has been made on behalf of the people, in the best interests of the people. Then why this secrecy?

The letter of Karpuri Thakur raises many more questions. Who are those 'people' who are interested in the release of these killers. The names must be revealed. He has put the criminals

*On January 4, 1984, eleven children between the ages of six and sixteen were kidnapped from a playground in Piparia village in Bihar and massacred. The children belonged to the Yadava caste.*

*It took six days for the DIG of Police Munghyr, to visit the village.*

*Strangely some Bihar politicians who were in the forefront of the demand that no mercy be shown to the accused changed their stand and asked for the release of the criminals concerned.*

*Why? asks Manimala, and exposes the attempt of the "joint front of administrators, politicians and criminals" to thwart the ends of justice:*

and the terror stricken people on the same side in the court of the people. He says he is doing precisely what the people want. The common people always want peace. They wanted peace five years ago, They do so now. They hated violence five years ago, they hate it now. It is the accused who unleashed a chain of killings in the area. And, today they are promising peace and harmony in order to obtain amnesty. Karpuri Thakur can take the killers' promises at their face value. In fact he has been doing so. But, the people will not. It is a fashion with convicts to plead not guilty. Some of them promise a life of order in future. But do they offer any guarantee that their future life will be free from crime? If killers are allowed to conduct the courts of law, the fate of the people living under the shadow of terror can easily be imagined.

Did Karpuri Thakur feel the pulse of the three kids whom he kept in his house for some time? Are they not frightened still? He says the people's good lies in amnesty to the accused. Does he mean the people are safe only under the shadow of terror, violence, and death?

The C.P.I. leader Sunil Mukherjee is anxious about prevailing caste tension in the area. He says there is too much of panic and fear among the people, who sit idle leaving their land uncultivated.

Some two thousand five hundred acres of land. About two lakh people are in ruins. He feels that the withdrawal of cases will solve these problems. Is it so? Is it not likely to intensify the rule of terror in the area?

He also says that people of the area want to settle smaller issues among themselves. Does he mean that the courts are wanted no more? Does he consider killing a smaller issue? Does he want to hand over the question of a trial to the murderers themselves? He sounds innocent when he says that there are criminals in all the three castes. He makes an equally sincere appeal to the government for all three castes. Sunil Mukherjee says that some two lakhs people are affected directly or indirectly by these prosecution cases. Some 400 people have in a signed memorandum demanded withdrawal of the cases. Does it not mean that these 400 signatures can remove the spell of terror cast over two lakh people? Can Sunil Mukherjee give out the identities of these 400 people? Should he not name members of the committee that is said to have been formed at a meeting, so that the people are able to know the defenders of the killers? In Munghyr district three well known criminal gangs are led by Adhik Yadav (now Kailu Yadav), Jai Prakash Singh, and Kajla Dhanuk. It was this gang of Kajla Dhanuk that killed those 11 children. They had gone to the river-side village, fifty of them, to commit the act. Kailu's gang is much bigger. The so-called meeting may have been attended by people under the spell of fear. Can they be allowed to take on the responsibility of maintaining peace in the area? Does it not amount to allowing them to run their own government there?

Sunil Mukherjee has made it clear that punishment to these caste gangs would only intensify caste conflict in the area. The problems in that case could be more complicated. It may create new problems for the state and the government may earn more condemnation.

### Politicians — Criminals Collusion?

The stand taken by Sunil Mukherjee clears many things. Gang leaders belonging to different castes are involved in these criminal cases. Their hearts have not changed. They have decided to come together in order to save themselves. They want to save each other through a mutually agreed proposal. The letter itself says that in case they are unable to defend each other they will be more fierce than now. They are in fact trying to kill two birds with one stone. They want to warn the people as if to say: 'see to it that we are not convicted, or else face more deaths. They even warn the government: 'drop the prosecution cases or be prepared for more condemnation on the law and order situation. The threat is more than implicit.

Letters written by Congress leaders have not come to light yet. Their contents must have been the same. It seems that the leaders belonging to all the three parties have jointly decided to save the criminals. Only because of this have they written identical letters to the government. They have even mentioned each other's letters. Obviously, there must have been immense pressure from their respective party followers.

It seems these leaders owe a great deal to these accused criminals. Now that the cases are drawing close to judgement and there is every likelihood of

these criminals getting their due, the situation has become grim for the leaders. It will be a shame for them if they fail to defend their criminal supporters. And hence, these leaders have done their duty.

These are the criminals and their guns that get them the politicians votes during the elections. They must save them. They have entered into a solemn agreement. Each must help the other in the hour of need. After all it is these killers and their guns who help them get the "sanction" of the people in the elections. It is only this joint front that constantly operates against the common people and their interests.

The letters written by the leaders of three different national political parties confirm once and for all that every political party nurses a criminal base for itself. Everyone takes the criminal's help. A sentence in the court would mean an irrecoverable injury to these parties and their leaders.

These gang leaders control their caste votes. The caste is facing a threat to-day. Naturally, they need amnesty. That explains the motive of unity.

### Bihar's New Class

In Bihar there are quite a few areas where a joint front of administrators, politicians, and criminals is playing havoc with the lives of common people. The goons among different castes keep their tribes under perfect control. They often fight and make compromises.

The common person is sandwiched between the warring groups. These tribal gang dictators cash in on the needs of the politicians.

The police are no idlers either. They not only help the criminals but very often connive with them. This fact is now an open secret in the country. The administration, the criminal gangs, and the politicians have made such joint fronts at many places. The officers need politicians, who in turn need both officers and criminal gangs at the time of elections. The officials help them get votes. They even collect money for them. Corrupt officials need political assistance in order to settle their transfer and posting matters. They have every reason to be together in hours of trial and need.

The situation makes for many queer combinations. Criminals, police, and politicians belonging to the same caste make a viable triangle. Then, there are combinations of gang leaders of all castes, officials of all castes, and politicians of all castes, each forming a powerful triangle in its own place, and the people at the bottom of the triangle, are crushed by the all pervading and vicious tentacles of the Establishment. Bihar is in fact groaning under these triangles.

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## The Crime of Motherhood

Sumitra had wanted to assert the universal right of motherhood and she paid the price with her life. She was only sixteen years old.

Patna, June 10. Early morning today a woman named Kalshi threw the body of her dead daughter and her live grand-daughter into the Ganges. She is a resident of Jandaha.

Three years ago Kalshi's husband Bairagi had died in a bus accident on the Mahatma Gandhi Bridge. Ever since she has been living from hand to mouth. Whatever little she had was usurped by other members of the family. She had been able to marry off her only child, Sumitra, last year with great difficulty. After 5 days of marriage her

husband, Gangaram, went off to Calcutta and took up work in some paper mill. Kalshi is not sure where he lives. She only knows that he never came to Sumitra. Sumitra started to eke out her livelihood as a maid-servant. She was living with her mother-in-law and her husband's brother Ramu, who is an agricultural labourer.

### 'Fallen' Woman?

About three months ago the people of this *bustee* came to know that Sumitra was carrying. There was a discussion

and the panchayat concluded that she was a 'fallen' woman. How can a woman whose husband had gone after five days of the marriage dream of being a mother? Sumitra was not present at the panchayat, but her 'condition' haunted it. The big argument was of her being a fallen woman. By continuing to give shelter to a branded woman the entire village would become branded. In the best interest of her people she had to be turned out. That was the second week of April. Kalshi does not remember the exact date.



Word was sent to Sumitra's mother. It took one month, and it was only after two more months that Kalshi could reach Bihta.

Kalshi pleaded with the village elders, with folded hands, touched their feet. She was not asking for much, just one hut for her daughter. Her pleading was in vain. If her daughter was allowed to live in the village it would dishonour them all. Instead, they raised one hundred and fifty rupees for Kalshi to take her daughter away.

Kalshi reached Bihta railway station with her only child and one hundred and fifty rupees. She reached Patna the next day. She wanted to go to Jandaha. But before that Sumitra started having labour pains. It was not possible to go to Jandaha. Kalshi took her to the women's hospital. At the registration counter the clerk asked her Sumitra's husband's name. Sumitra did not give his name and told the clerk that it was somebody else's child. She was not admitted to the hospital. She was writhing with pain. Late at night she delivered a child and breathed her last.

Kalshi put the dead daughter and the live grand daughter in a rickshaw and just before Bansghat she tied a stone to her daughter's dead body and consigned it to the Ganges and then threw her grand daughter also.

### The 'Crime'

She was not only turned out from the village, she was pushed off from this world – just because she had committed the crime of becoming a 'mother'. She was not even permitted to become a mother on a hospital bed. She had to take refuge on the road, and there too she lived only till she became a mother. The mother deserted the child as soon as it was born. Shocked and benumbed the *naani* consigned the dead body of the daughter and her live child to the Ganges. She was crying hysterically that Sumitra had to be thrown into the womb of the Ganges because she had conceived a child in her womb.

If her daughter was allowed to live in the village, it would dishonour them all. Instead they raised one hundred and fifty rupees for Kalshi to take her daughter away.

"Your grand daughter was not dead why did you throw her also into the Ganges?" Kalshi, in reply asked when there was no place in this world for the mother how could the child live on this earth? After some time she got up and went towards Bansghat. She saw burning pyres and broke down again, "I am so unlucky that there was no one to put the sacred fire to my daughter's body" By now it was morning and one after the other dead bodies were being

brought in. The servants at the cremation ground were busy; vultures could be seen in the sky. Suddenly Kalshi got up and started walking towards the bus stand lest somebody had seen and questioned her and informed the police. Sumitra had wanted to assert the universal right of motherhood and she paid the price with her life. She was only sixteen years old.

## I Want to Live

Child Marriage is a crime by law and there is a provision of three months imprisonment and fine. The Sharda Act, 1929 branded the offenders culprits fifty eight years ago. But Ram Singh Vishnoee was crowned with a ministry instead of punishment.

Jaipur, 20 January : Right from the day she expressed a desire to have the liberty of living her own life, death has been staring her in the eyes. She has bled, she has passed out, has had her bones broken again & again. She dies every day. She has lived for more than fourteen months under the shadow of death. She pleaded to the Dy.SP for her right to live. Time and again she pinned her hopes on the woman Minister, Ms Kamla, the legislator, Ms. Pushpa Jain. Time and again she tried to write to the Chief Minister, Harideo Joshi and the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. But she was helpless, forcibly confined under heavy guard.

The name of this twenty year old girl is Indra. She lives in Bilara, Jodhpur. Her father, Ram Singh Vishnoee, is the state Animal Husbandary Minister in the Rajasthan Government. Ram Singh is enraged at Indra just because she does not want to bear the burden of her father's crimes.

### Crimes Against a Daughter

The state minister of Rajasthan Ram Singh committed the first crime against his daughter thirteen years ago. When she was only seven years old, she was married to a child who was younger to her by three years. In 1973 Shri Vishnoee acted in blatant disregard of the law enacted in 1929. Child-marriage is a crime by law and there is a provision

of three months imprisonment and a fine. The Sharda Act, 1929 had branded the offenders culprits fifty six years ago. But Ram Singh Vishnoee was crowned with a ministry instead of punishment.

Ram Singh Vishnoee committed the second crime fifteen months ago. When Indra flatly refused to accept Mohanlal Vishnoee as her husband and to go with him, Ram Singh confined her to a cell for almost one month in October, 1984. He beat her himself and also got others to beat her. She was so brutally thrashed that her whole body was blue and black, she bled profusely, her arm was broken and she was in plaster.

The roads of Bilara are eye witness to the fact that a beleaguered and bleeding Indra had approached the Deputy Superintendent of Police Mr. Ram Vallabh Mukul to beg for her life.

The state Minister of the Rajasthan Government, Mr. Vishnoee committed the third crime by snatching away her liberty with the influence of his political status. None could dare to help her, not even the police. She had gone to the Dy.SP Ram Vallabh to seek protection for her life and to state that she didn't want to go with Mohanlal. The reply she got was "If I help you, your father will get me transferred."

Ram Singh Vishnoee committed the fourth crime against Indra on 24th



November, 1894. That day he forcibly sent Indra with Mohanlal at gun-point. Mohanlal is not her legal husband for the reason that child marriages are illegal and also because the adult Indra refused point-blank to accept him as her husband.

Ram Singh Vishnoee committed the fifth crime, a shameless one, by saying to her daughter, "First go with that boy and then become a prostitute if you like to." Who gave Ram Singh the right to say this to his grown-up daughter? If any one pressurizes a girl to become a prostitute, does he not render himself liable to be convicted under the Immoral Traffic Act?

Ram Singh Vishnoee committed the sixth crime by trying to seek medical help to make her insane. When wounded Indra went to Dr. Razdan for treatment, her father told him to change her heart so that she agrees to go with the boy with whom she was married at the age of seven. He said to the Doctor "Make her insane by giving electric shocks". As it is, he has done his utmost to create conditions that were cruel and severe enough to blight her

mental balance. Is it not a crime to try to turn a healthy person insane by deliberate and dubious efforts?

And Ram Singh committed the seventh, and the most atrocious crime, by trying to kill her himself or to get her killed. Ram Singh has threatened his daughter time and again 'we will kill you in such a manner that none will have any inkling of your murder. People will take it as a case of suicide. ...We will ask your in-laws to get your ears and nose chopped off or to kill you straight way. We won't go to the court.' The criminal design of Ram Singh to butcher Indra and get away with all his offences unscathed is patently clear.

This is not the end. They even tried to strangle and poison her. Having failed in their attempts a number of times, they once tried to make her hang herself. Indra has so far been managing somehow to remain alive but she is constantly under the grip of fear, a well grounded one, that her death is just round the corner. Ram Singh has now started saying "I will bury her and declare that she has fled away".

The Animal Husbandary minister of

Rajasthan Government is treating her daughter worse than an animal. Through physical torture and mental agony he wants her to bear the burden of the crime that he committed against her 13 years ago.

The marriage of a minor girl, the 'Gauna' (second marriage) on gun-point, beating her, fracturing her bones, abetment for suicide, relentless efforts to kill her, confinement for months together, what barbarous attitude towards human life! Is Ram Singh not a criminal under Section 306 (provocation to suicide) and 307 (attempt to murder) of the Indian Penal Code? Why are the people of Bilara, the assembly, the whole society mute spectators of his crimes? Is such blatant usurpation of human and legal rights excusable if committed by a Minister?

Ram Singh Vishnoee resigned on Feb. 7, 1986. Incidentally yet another Rajasthan minister Nana Lal had also to resign because he too married off his minor daughter.

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# THE MASANI VIEWPOINT

## Our Truant MPs

Although the Constitution provides by article 100 (iii) that 'the quorum to constitute a meeting of either house of parliament shall be one-tenth of the total number of Members of the House', which means that the Lok Sabha quorum should be about 54, there has been a most undesirable convention that members should not draw the attention of the Speaker to the fact that there is no quorum in the Lok Sabha. The result of this conspiracy of silence is that a lot of business of the House gets done when there are not even 54 members present out of 540. This makes legislation and other decisions of parliament thoroughly unrepresentative. For instance, the Postal Amendment Bill, to which the President has quite rightly refused to give assent, was passed at a time when there were just 20 members present in the Lok Sabha. What a travesty of parliamentary democracy!

It is good to read in the last few days that members of the Opposition parties have started doing their duty by drawing attention to the absence of a quorum. It is to be hoped that the opposition members will keep this up.

In all legislatures throughout the free world it is the duty of the government Whips to ensure that there is a quorum in the House at any time. There is no reason for the opposition parties to oblige the ruling party with its bloated majority of 400 by excusing failure of the Whips to do their duty.

By Article 368 (ii) the Constitution provides a much higher quorum where a bill which seeks to amend the Constitution is before the House. Not only should such an amendment be voted by not less than two-thirds of those present and voting, but there should be present in the House a majority of the total number of members of the House.

I once took advantage of this provision to stymie Prime Minister's Nehru's attempt, embodied in the 17th Amendment to the Constitu-

tion, to expropriate farmers of any land above the ceiling which they might possess.

By demanding that an immediate vote be taken when the debate came to an end and not be postponed till after the lunch break, which would give the government Whips time to produce in the House the majority of the total membership of the Lok Sabha, I succeeded in persuading the Speaker to take an immediate vote. The Speaker thereupon announced though 2/3rds of the members *present* had voted for the amendment, a majority of the *total* members of the house were not present in the House. He therefore declared the Amendment to be defeated.

Jawaharlal Nehru was so piqued by this frustration of his design that he summoned, at great cost to the country, a special session of parliament before the next session was due, for the sole purpose of adopting this Amendment. The day was fixed and members come up to Delhi but, during the week-end before parliament could meet, Pandit Nehru died.

## Rama Swarup

I am glad to read that the Supreme Court has at last given expression to its sense of justice and humanity by directing that Mr. Rama Swarup, whose release on bail has been ordered by the High Court in Delhi, should as a compromise, be confined to his residence and stay with his family. It is a pity that the Supreme Court did not go further and release Mr. Rama Swarup on bail in view of the fact that he has been held as an under-trial for two years already through the authorities bringing the case within the mischief of the Official Secrets Act.

The same trick was resorted to in the case of Mr. Gurumurthi of the *Indian Express* in whose case too the authorities sought to involve the Official Secrets Act. Fortunately, Mr. Gurumurthi was awarded bail in

spite of this dodge. Mr. Rama Swarup deserves nothing less. But let us be grateful these days for small mercies!

## Squandering the People's Money

Was I disgusted when I heard on television the other evening that our generous government — generous with our money, not theirs! — had sanctioned a Rs. 10 crore credit for Angola. Now, Angola is a state in Africa which is a Soviet satellite, whose communist dictatorship is only kept in power by a large number of Cuban mercenaries supplied to them by their fellow-traveller, Fidel Castro. The discredited Angolan regime is fighting a civil war with freedom fighters led by Savimbi. But for the Cuban mercenaries, Mr. Santos and his Government would have been sent packing to Havana or Moscow long ago. The Indian credit will undoubtedly be used to finance the regime's civil war against its own population. Is this a purpose for which Rs. 10 crores of the hard-earned money of the Indian consumer and farmer should be squandered? But of course, how otherwise could we testify to our attachment to non-alignment!

## The Late Comrade Machel

Isn't it interesting that, though reams of material have appeared in the Indian press about the crash in which the Mozambican President Samora Machel died, not one of them has mentioned that he was a communist. It would appear that it has now become a convention in India never to call a communist a communist. That is supposed to be in bad taste. You can call a Sikh a Sikh, a Socialist a Socialist, a Liberal a Liberal and even a spade a spade, but you must not call a communist a communist because that is supposed to be hitting below the belt. I wish somebody would explain the logic behind this



### Good Intentions, Wrong Methods

It is good to know that the Indian community in South Africa is making notable progress and members of the community are gaining recognition, though somewhat belatedly. Thus, an Indian attorney who was once banned for five years has been appointed a temporary judge of the Natal Supreme Court, being the first non-white to be a member of the supreme judiciary in South Africa. It is to be hoped that Mr. Hassan E. Mall, the gentleman concerned, will be confirmed in his office, thus marking one more step towards the end of apartheid which is slowly crumbling in many ways.

Just as impressive is the appointment of another South African Indian, Dr. B.G. Ranchod, as Ambassador in Brussels, he being again the first non-white Ambassador of South Africa. Dr. Ranchod was interviewed

by *India Today* and his interview appeared in its issue of March 15. It is refreshing to read some sensible home truths, in sharp contrast to the nonsense on the subject that emanate from Delhi.

The title of the interview is "Apartheid Will Not Go By Force". When asked whether he was surprised at his appointment, Dr. Ranchod replied: "The signals were there. In March last year there was a very positive spirit in South Africa. The Government had committed itself to repealing some of the apartheid laws, the pass laws for example, laws affecting Indian immigration. There was a limit on the freedom of movement of Indians within South Africa. In the province of Orange Free State, there was a total ban on Indians owning property. That law has been repealed as well as the prohibition on Indians living in the northern districts

of Natal. In terms of freedom of movement, these were significant changes and it was a hopeful period for us."

Pointing out how further progress can be made, Dr. Ranchod observed that "the best way to effect transition in South Africa is through the courts. It is the one institution that is respected even by the radical groups. You can turn to the Supreme Court in South Africa. Even during the emergency period, the Court has taken a tough line on the behaviour of the police and even governmental decisions."

In his interview Dr. Ranchod challenges the policy of sanctions as not only ineffective but also hurting the Blacks most. Commenting on New Delhi's obsession with sanctions, Dr. Ranchod says: "Its intentions may be good but the methods are wrong."

### Well Done Dr. Wadhwa!

Proof of the fact that "patience and perseverance can overcome mountains" has been provided by Dr. D.C. Wadhwa. As far back as January 16, 1984, Dr. Wadhwa of the Gokhale Institute in Poona, filed a petition in the Supreme Court to stop the chronic misuse of its ordinance making power on the part of the Bihar Government who cheated by adjourning the Legislature quickly enough to avoid having to place any ordinance before it. Thus several Ordinances were kept alive over a period of fourteen years.

Dr. Wadhwa has been rightly congratulated by the Judges of the Supreme Court who accepted his petition by stating that "he has made enormous research and brought the reprehensible practice of the Government of Bihar to the notice of the Supreme Court". They also awarded him Rs. 10,000 damages which, by world standards, is a pittance. At least from now on, thanks to Dr. Wadhwa and his single-minded devotion, the formality of placing Ordinances before State Assemblies will be performed.

While expressing satisfaction at the result of this case, however, it must be

pointed out that, though Chief Justice Bhagwati had ordered this petition to be placed at the head of the list, even so, it has taken the best part of so many months for the matter to come to a hearing.

The root of the evil lies in the fact that the President and the Governors of states, who alone have a right to pass an Ordinance at their own satisfaction and discretion, have surrendered this power to the Prime Minister at the Centre and the Chief Ministers of the States. This misuse of the Ordinance making power needs further to be challenged.

I myself came upon this anomaly when Mrs. Indira Gandhi persuaded her "rubber stamp" President V.V. Giri to enact an Ordinance nationalising the banks in India on a Saturday afternoon when Parliament was due to meet on Monday morning! My friend Balraj Madhok of the Jan Sangh and I jointly filed a petition as Members of Parliament inviting the Supreme Court to declare this Ordinance null and void. We argued that the language of the Constitution was clear that the President had to be personally satisfied of the need for such an Ordinance.

### Gavaskar's Right

A great deal of excitement and controversy was caused in Calcutta recently by Mr. Sunil Gavaskar's expressing his regret at not joining the Indian team for the Calcutta Test for personal reasons. This provoked a violent reaction from many people in Calcutta who objected to Mr. Gavaskar's decision and considered it as hostile to the Calcutta crowd, arising out of some unpleasant incident in the past. Others rushed to Mr. Gavaskar's defence.

It seemed to be that a mountain was being made of a molehill. As a Liberal, I believe in the right to choose and that right includes the right to choose one's wife or husband, one's freedom to travel, the freedom of expression and the right to live and the right to die. It also includes the right to play cricket when one feels like it. Whatever the reasons or motives for Mr. Gavaskar's action might be, I can't for the life of me see how his right to decide whether or not to play in a particular match can be arrogated by others. This is still a free country. It is certainly a fundamental right of an Indian citizen to choose to play in any match or not to play in any match as he desires.

# Impact of Liberalism on Social Values

D. Anjaneyulu

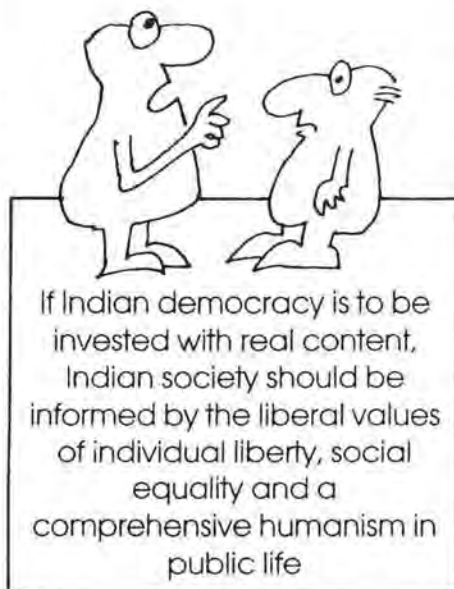
The word 'Liberalism', which may have acquired so many associations, through the years, can be traced back to its origins. It derives from 'liber' (Latin), meaning 'Freeman', and 'Liberates', meaning 'liberty'. 'Liberalism' is the creed, philosophy and movement, which is committed to freedom as a method and policy in government, as an organising principle in society, and as a way of life for the individual and the community. Even the word 'liberal' is used in general parlance to mean "willing to understand and respect the ideas and feelings of others." Which would recall Voltaire's famous words, "I do not agree with what you say, but I defend with all my might your right to say it." It is also used in the sense of "favouring some change, as in political or religious affairs."

## An Attitude of Mind

'Liberalism' is an attitude of mind, no less than a political and social movement. I am particularly concerned here with liberalism with a small 'l', that is, "liberalism" as a general philosophy of life, with its impact on social values in particular. Long after the dwindling of the Liberal Party in England to the position of a negligible minority in the Commons, and the Indian Liberal Federation's dissolution, the spirit of liberalism still has its relevance to our social values. What has kept liberalism as a viable system in the democratic world are some of the elements that made possible an open society and a relatively good life, the basing of values on consent and, of course, the principle that every man, woman and child, has in him or her, a potential which he must have a chance to fulfil.

Even those sophisticated ideologues, with their own distorted vision of a brave world, who imagine that 'liberalism' has been given a decent burial in this country, after independence, can hardly fail to recognize the fact that the spirit of liberalism is fully reflected in the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution, enumerated under six heads.

It is also reflected partially in the Directive Principles of State Policy,



which comprise a variety of provisions. By and large, they seem to bear the impress of Jawaharlal Nehru's idealism, and sound like an exercise in the declaration of good intentions. They point towards the establishment of an egalitarian society, seeking to combine economic growth and industrial progress with social, distributive justice.

## Legislation On Paper

In pursuit of these ideas, we have had a variety of legislative measures — on prohibition, social equality, primary education, land ceilings, environmental hygiene, protection of forests, ecological balance, emotional imbalance, and a hundred other things, slightly less important.

Special mention must be made of the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 (along with the more recent amendment act, making its provisions more stringent), and the earlier Child Marriage Restraint Act (popularly known as the Sarada Act of over fifty years ago). While the latter had taken such a long time to make its presence felt (even now, we read of glaring cases of its violation by many high-placed persons, including ministers of state), the former remains virtually a dead letter on the statute book.

The reason for this, it seems to me, is that liberal ideas, largely transported

from the West, had not taken root in the soil of a society, which continues, in many respects, to be hide-bound by religious tradition and family custom, apart from being stratified by the caste system; and hierarchical, because of the distant but live memories of monarchy and feudalism.

A point worth making here is that legislative provisions and other official measures, by themselves, cannot have their full effect, unless society, as a whole, has been prepared for them by the permeation of liberal ideas of respect for the human personality, social equality, individual liberty and other concomitant values.

Let us, for instance, take the position of women in our society, as they form half of the total population, maybe the better half. (There are some ultra-modern women leaders, who are more agitated about the decreasing male-female ratio in the population than about the crimes against women, coming into light in recent times).

On the basic values of individual freedom and equality of the sexes, which are deliberately ignored or violated in practice, there has been an increasing tendency, either to hark back to religious mythology, in pursuit of a golden age of the forgotten past or to invoke the rigid provisions of religious law, as the last word in justification of their persistent denial.

To cite only two instances, some of the orthodox Hindu friends, who may have no objection to "equality" and "liberty" as abstract concepts, cannot reconcile themselves to the idea of conceding them in practice to their sisters and daughters, on the authority of a maxim attributed to Manu: "*Na Stree Swaatantryam Arhati*" (No woman deserves freedom).

Likewise, some of the orthodox Muslim friends invoke the *Koran* and *Shariat* in defence of any practice which might be in violation of the principles of the secular state (like monogamy and recognition of the human values of equality of the sexes and individual free-



dom of choice in all matters – marriage, divorce, education, choice of profession etc). The argument, usually advanced here, is that Islam is a total way of life, all-comprehensive in its scope, making no concessions to the exercise of values extraneous to it, and *Shariat* cannot be interfered with, as it represents a God-made Law. So are the institutes of Manu, if we are to accept the world of the traditional orthodox Hindu, who swears by them. So, presumably, are all the other religious laws of the world which represent the word of God or the prophet. Anyway, what happens when there is a clash between one's theological tenets, not exactly in matters spiritual, and the public good in a pluralist society, as decided by a secular State, guided by liberal principles?

There has been a lot of controversy on the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, 1986, (since passed by Parliament, after a lot of acrimonious discussion) on a variety of grounds – religious, legal, ethical and so on. Arguments have been advanced for and against it, invoking the authority of religious law, by those who claim to

be experts in it.

### The Humanist Element in Liberalism

My objection to it here is not on religious or legal and legalistic grounds, which may be equally valid or invalid, as the case may be, but on humanistic grounds, which are the most important for a liberal. A liberal is also necessarily a humanist, who proceeds on the basis that man or woman is the measure of all things secular, in matters of man's relations with other men, (leaving him or her entirely to his or her own devices in his or her relations with the Maker).

A man or woman who is an adult, being a free agent in marital relations, is supposed to be responsible for all his acts of commission and omission. In this case, the burden of maintenance of a wife divorced by the act of volition of the husband (whatever be the reason) has been shifted from the husband (as it was under Section 125 of the CR P.C. read with 127 (D) of the same) to the wife's parental family and to the Wakf Board, which can be described as the symbol of an extended family, for religious and charitable purposes, cover-

ing the community, in general.

In other words, the burden or responsibility for the acts and errors of an individual, who is a citizen of the State, is shifted from the individual to the family and then on to the charitable organisation of a religious community. The Indian State, like all modern states, with a modicum of liberal spirit informing them, takes an individual, be it man or woman, not a family, as a unit of its polity for the application of its laws and rules of administration. That is the normal practice in a democracy. One is left guessing whether the family is the unit in a theocracy or a medieval monarchy. From the family to the tribe or the extended family is only a step backward, to reach the apotheosis of a primitive state in its imagined simplicity and perfection.

### Social Reform

It is recognised by students of political science and social anthropology that freedom broadens from precedent to precedent and social progress is marked by a shift of emphasis from status to contract. While the institution of

## FREEDOM FIRST FOUNDATION

Freedom, with social responsibility and the rule of law, is the foundation of civilisation and a precondition for social and cultural progress. Few people however, have an adequate idea and understanding of the meaning and value of freedom and its implication on day-to-day life. Generally, freedom is taken to mean merely the absence of restrictions of whatever one wishes to have or do. It is doubtful whether freedom as a basic value has become a part of our cultural ethos.

There is urgent need to promote the acceptance of the values of freedom and dignity of the individual among our people and specially among the young. The only hope lies in the efforts of voluntary organisations specifically dedicated to the promotion of these values. A long-term programme of sound popular education in the meaning, implications and responsibilities of freedom in all its aspects is necessary.

These considerations, and the desire to make efforts in that direction, have prompted the establishment of the **Freedom First Foundation** as a non-partisan, educational, charitable Trust for the promotion of these values and ideals. The Foundation will organise lectures, seminars, study classes, and other educative and cultural activities, and will publish and/or subsidise the publication of periodicals, books and pamphlets, for the promotion of these aims and objectives.

We appeal to all those who are committed to freedom, democracy and an open society to support the Foundation by sending donations and contributions to the corpus of the Foundation.

The Foundation has been registered under the Public Trust Act and donations of Rs. 250 and above are exempt from tax under Section 80 G(1) of the Income tax Act, 1961.

Cheques should be made payable to the **Freedom First Foundation**, 127, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400 023, and earmarked for its corpus.



marriage itself is regarded as a contract, and not a sacrament in certain religious traditions, the consequences of a breach of that contract, take on the character of a circumstance bearing heavily on a victim of a socio-religious status, rather than that of a free agent who was a party to the contract. It certainly has the effect of putting the vehicle of social progress in the reverse gear, giving the go-by to such liberal principles as might have survived the interference of the State. It is not clear if we are taking a short jump into the twenty-first century or made to take a quantum leap back into the sixth or seventh century. Things are becoming curiously and curiously as in 'Alice in Wonderland'.

It is in this region, of modernising people's minds by the infusion of the liberal spirit that social reform has to play a vital role — in educating public opinion and in influencing the thought of decision-makers. If there was one man who served as a catalyst in this process, it was Raja Rammohan Roy, who had absorbed the distant fruits of the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. His birthday is celebrated by some as the birthday of modern India. In a resourceful synthesis of ideas from the East and the West, he sought to reconcile the end of individual perfection with the ideal of social good. In the words of his perceptive admirer, Dr. Brajendra-nath Seal:

"The East had placed the group above the individual in social organisation, and the individual above all social bonds in the quest of *summum bonum*. The West had stressed the claims of the individual in polity, and of social good in the kingdom of God. The Raja held that individual progress is the touchstone as well as the measuring rod of social progress; but the individual's progress could be secured only by organising and establishing the conditions of social progress."

Social activists, as well as governments which came later, were influenced by the liberal principles of the Raja. The Act (XV) of 1856, which made the marriage of Hindu widows valid, was, in some ways, the most significant piece of social reform legislation, in the latter half of the 19th century. Isvar-chandra Vidyasagar in Bengal, Mahadev Govind Ranade, followed by D.K.Karve in Maharashtra and Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu in South In-

dia, were among those inspired by the personality and precept of Raja Rammohan Roy. They did their best to modernise the Hindu society of the day with the aid of liberal principles.

"*Festina Lente*" ("Hasten Slowly") was the motto, since discarded by the impatient and fashionable leaders of today, but cherished by the social reformers of an earlier day, who were all liberals.

### Social Reform or Political Freedom ?

Closely related to this, in a different historical context, was the issue whether social reform or political freedom took precedence, in the attention of Indians working for the nation's welfare. This was quite a live issue at the time of the birth of the Indian National Congress in Bombay in 1885. After arguments and counter-arguments, it was finally the protagonists of 'political freedom first', who won the day. (In fact, we are reaping the fruits of this legacy even today).

In the Congress itself, this led to the ideological polarisation, in due course, between two school of thought, one that of Liberals and Moderates, associated with Gokhale (a protege of Ranade) who stood for political moderation and social radicalism; and the other under the banner of Tilak who combined political extremism with social conservatism (even reaction). Tilak's political mantle fell on Mahatma Gandhi (who, however, was not that conservative in social matters), who also used his socio-cultural strategy in political action and technique of mass appeal, all the time acknowledging Gokhale as his "political Guru", for reasons best known to himself.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, an ardent admirer of Ranade, who was Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, regretted the decision to demote social reform in favour of political freedom in 1885. We are not unaware of the situation in which political concepts like Democracy, Equality, Liberty and the Rule of Law are just taken for granted, bereft of their true meaning and practical implications. The feeling of caste, for instance, which like Charles II, seems to take "an unconscionable time dying", has, in fact, received a new lease of life in the political field. While political institutions, of respectable antecedents, are borrowed from England and the West, and the leaders in charge go through all the motions, our

social practices are not quite in tune with the spirit of modern democracy, secularism and reason.

Obviously, the impact of liberalism on our social values has not been adequate to the requirements of changing times. Because of the supposed sacredness of the joint family ties in every sphere of life, "nepotism" becomes a commendable social practice rather than an evil to be fought against. Because of the overweening loyalty to caste, the freedom of political choice is belied in practice. If Indian democracy is to be invested with real content, Indian society should be informed by the liberal values of individual liberty, social equality and a comprehensive humanism in public life. Without a fruition of this process, we may be condemned to live a double life, the private one out of step with the public, in a continuing spell of collective schizophrenia.

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A philosophy of life generally performs a two-fold task. Its speculative part gives man an integrated picture of the universe and Man's place in it. Its normative part is concerned with laying down how man should behave in relation to himself and to his fellow-men. Non-scientific philosophies, including totalitarian ones, have this characteristic in common: they deprive their normative part from their speculative part. In such philosophies metaphysics determine ethics, and cosmology is the source of sociology. They aim at showing that all phenomena in nature and in human society are manifestations of the working of a single universal principle. With Hegel, for example, it is the evolution of the Absolute Idea, and with Marx the laws of dialectics, which alone offer the key to an understanding of reality, and indicate the way in which the individual should act.

In either case, human affairs are intelligible only in the context of a metaphysics of the universe, and human conduct is judged by standards derived from that metaphysics. The danger implicit in all such philosophies is that, practised conscientiously, they must sanctify the total control of the life of the individual by the agency — State, Church or Party — which claims to possess a complete understanding of their metaphysics.

A.B. Shah, *Religion and Indian Democracy*, in *Ten Years of Quest*

*Mile upon mile of evergreen forest. Magnificent escarpes and deep gorges. The wild life sanctuaries of Nagarhole and Bandipur. Rivers and lakes. The grand natural spectacle of Jog Falls. In natural beauty, Karnataka is unparalleled.*

*Little wonder then that this lavish splendour should yield an abundance of natural resources. Some of them like sandalwood uniquely Karnataka's own.*

### From mines ...

Karnataka has the distinction of being the only gold producing state in India. Mining about 2000 kg of the precious metal each year from the Kolar and Hutti Gold Mines. In iron ore, Karnataka ranks fifth in production. The total reserves of nearly 1,000 million tonnes cater to domestic requirements and pull in considerable export earnings as well.



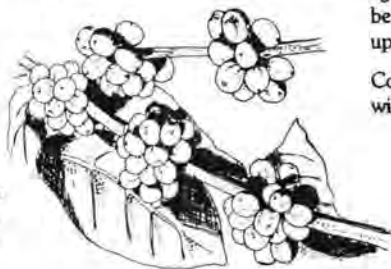
Karnataka also has appreciable deposits of copper, manganese, titanium, vanadium and tungsten. And is the only state besides Orissa that produces the strategic mineral chromite.

### and quarries ...

Superior quality China clay is found all over Karnataka, as are the other kinds of clay.

Limestone reserves to sustain an annual production of 5 million tonnes of cement are also present.

Karnataka is rich in magnetite, dolomite, quartz, kyanite and sillimanite — used extensively in the iron and steel industry. Karnataka granite is world famous and is much in demand for the construction industry at home and abroad.



### to forests ...

Forests are the greatest natural reserves of natural resources. And Karnataka's evergreen canopy ensures a plentiful supply of timbers and soft woods.

Particularly noteworthy is sandalwood, Karnataka's "fragrant gold" which is highly prized the world over.



Teak — the king of timbers — remains unchallenged for strength and beauty. Karnataka's teak cultivation covers over 1.2 lakh hectares and is economically one of the state's most important products. Rosewood from Karnataka is another foreign exchange earner. It is used to make distinctively fine furniture with the most exquisite veneers.

### and plantations

Karnataka is the foremost coffee-producing state in India. With a total of 30,395 estates covering 123,993 hectares of the species Arabica and Robusta. Karnataka's Virginia flue-cured tobacco is also much in demand, for its high quality and low nicotine content. Rubber planting has also been taken up on a massive scale.

Karnataka can justifiably be proud of its natural produce. It is foremost among the states in the production of arecanut and pepper. Second in cardamom and coconut. Fourth in cashew and fifth in fruit production.

Karnataka is an unending vista of scenic beauty which led a French historian to write some 150 years ago "The plains of Karnataka afford the most beautiful habitation that nature has to offer mankind upon this earth".

Come, see and experience it for yourself. Its magic will enchant you forever.



**karnataka  
information**

# Karnataka — Wonderland of scenic beauty, blest with nature's bounty

# Empty Ownership

Economists are intellectual imperialists. They are closely looking into activities that have not been regarded as within their competence. Yet they are shedding light beyond the competence of criminologists on crime, sociologists on social life, not least, political scientists on politics.

Capitalist industry has long been condemned for misleading the public by abusing the English language in advertising its products. The charge has sometimes been well-founded. Some people have been fooled by a copywriter's verbal exuberance or an excess of zeal.

Whatever the sins of commercial advocacy, they are mild in contrast with the degradation of language in political advertising. The difference is not that language is misused less in commerce than in politics, but that the victim who discovers error can usually escape easily from the guilty commercial suppliers to others but the victim of political misdescription cannot, except by the drastic escape of emigration.

'Democracy', 'freedom', 'liberty', 'liberal' and other honoured concepts expressed in words of the English language have been degraded in politics to convey almost the opposite of their generally accepted meanings. A long-suffering concept is now being given a new lease of misuse. 'Ownership' is periodically redefined or redescribed to drain it of economic content yet retain its political value. Ownership is a primeval instinct of mankind, and womankind. Men and women want to own their intimate personal possessions, from clothes to jewellery. They also want to own objects that reflect the extension of their personality, not least their homes. And they want to own property that gives them a sense of security, as in an entitlement to property in all its forms, material or monetary. Some forms of property create the sense of ownership more powerfully than others: a toothbrush not much; Schaudard's overcoat in *La Bohème* evidently much more; land, somehow,

Ownership has effective meaning if it conveys rights of disposal. Property rights without ownership are ineffectual, empty and nominal

'Property' is not an absolute entity: at one extreme it is real and absolute, at the other it is attenuated to a condition in which it is inoperative and nominal.

as Dr Barry Bracewell-Milnes argued in Hobart Paper 93, most of all.

Some politicians have understood the urge to ownership, seen its value or necessity in establishing stable society, and have tried to evolve policies that would give it reality. The Liberals in 1937 created a Committee to report on Ownership for All and they called on economists of the eminence of Lionel Robbins and Arnold Plant to give it intellectual reinforcement and institutional substance. In 1956 the Conservatives, sensing a good idea, adopted it and rechristened it 'a property-owning democracy'. And the Socialists, although they saw individual ownership as an obstacle to government control of economic life, shrewdly retained, 'ownership' in their clarion calls and prefaced it with plausible but question-begging adjectives.

Ownership has effective meaning if it conveys rights of disposal. The property rights without which ownership is ineffectual, empty, nominal, are eight:

- the power to use (or, in the opinion of others, to 'misuse') it at the owner's discretion
- the right to alter it to suit him/her
- the ability to lend it to another
- the right to exchange it for something valued more highly

- the power to hire it
- the right to give it to another
- the right to sell it
- the power to bequeath it.

Not all property embraces the full range of rights. They may be yielded by the owner or limited by law. A homeowner may voluntarily yield to a neighbour a right to pass over his land, and a farmer may be required by law or by-law to give rights of way to the general public. A husband may bequeath to his wife for the remainder of her life a right to the income from property that then passes to an offspring. But the fewer, and the less exclusive, the rights, the less valuable and the less prized the property. 'Property' is not an absolute entity: at one extreme it is real and absolute, at the other it is attenuated to a condition in which it is inoperative and nominal.

The political shift in the concept of property from private to 'public' has been propagated without acknowledging the accompanying transformation in the bundle of property rights. Public ownership has been urged as an advance in the conception and philosophy of property that carried benefits without drawbacks. The claimed benefits were many, although the precedents were few and the evidence contestable. But the advocates have remained intriguingly silent about the drawbacks.

The characteristic forms of property in Britain (and elsewhere) that are said to have grave defects if they are owned privately and substantial strengths if owned publicly vary from coal-pits, railway trains, schools, and hospitals to libraries, museums, art galleries, employment offices, fire stations, day nurseries and many more. Each of the 56 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom is told he/she owns all this property. Yet no single 'owner', who can be regarded as owing an equal 56-millionth part of each coal-pit, railway train, school, hospital, and so on, can exercise any of the property rights that convey the sense of satisfaction, the promotion of personal-



ity or the sense of security of ownership. Each of us owns one 56-millionth part of a publicly-owned railway train. Yet we cannot use it at will, alter it to suit ourselves (by adding curtains to our liking), lend it to a friend, exchange it for a mode of transport we prefer (like a motor car), hire it for gain, give it to a charity, sell it for money to pay for a daughter's wedding or go on a world cruise, or bequeath it to the family.

This is property that the owner cannot use to satisfy himself or those he wishes to benefit, that he cannot improve by his own efforts, and that dies with him. That is not property, but a pretence.

This unreal 'public' property used to be described as nationalised ownership. It is now being called 'social' ownership. It could more accurately be called government ownership since the property right, the decisions on its use and disposal, are in practice exercised by politicians and officials. On the same grounds much 'public' property could properly be regarded as in 'council ownership'. It might possibly be called 'shared' ownership, except that the sharers have no power to vary their shares. It could certainly be called 'limited' ownership, mock ownership, fictitious ownership, or political make-believe ownership.

The change in the ownership of Jaguar Cars is a clear illustration of the difference. It was a 'national' asset when we all owned one 56-millionth part but had no power to do anything with our property rights. It is now owned by 43,000 shareholders with full property rights. The change is from pretended to real ownership. And it is no less a 'national' asset. The 56 million nominal owners were phantoms; the 43,000 private shareholders are real-life owners. And in time more of the phantoms will become owners with power over their property.

*Courtesy: Economic Affairs (London)*

The Communist commissar or manager is not any the less powerful than his capitalist counterpart because he lacks ownership rights. An increasing number of labour economists in England are veering round to the view that "it is the physical problem of control which is of the essence, rather than the metaphysical problem of ownership."

Amlan Datta, *The Concept of Poverty in Ten Years of Quest*

## H.N. Kunzru Birth Centenary



R. Srinivasan

This is the year of the birth centenary of Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru and it is to be hoped that the country will remember and commemorate the memory of this great son of India who for more than half a century contributed so generously of his time and talent to the building of a saner society. The complex social interactions and arrangements that we describe as a nation is like a coral reef; millions contribute continually to its making, and work day and night without resting. Modern Indian nationhood owes not a little to the work of people like Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru and the whole nation is dotted with the institutions that he founded and nurtured with such care, like the Indian Council of World Affairs.

Uttar Pradesh which is famous today for values other than secular nationalism has had the distinction of nurturing several giants of Indian liberalism and they have yet to etch themselves in the public memory. Both Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Hriday Nath remained towering personalities and both came from families where public service was part of the family tradition itself. In Sir Tej's case it was his grandfather who instilled in him the great and abiding values of European liberalism and of service to the state; Pandit Ajodhyanath the more distinguished father of Hriday Nath, was a formidable figure and was the equal of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta or V. Krishnaswamy Iyer and could organise a session of the Congress singlehandedly as he did in Allahabad.

It was the presence of people like Ajodhyanath and Motilal Nehru that made Allahabad a unique centre of secularism in those days. They bestrode the dual work of Islam and Hinduism equally at home in both and commanded the confidence of both the communities.

After a successful academic career he came under the influence

of Gokhale who sent him to the London School of Economics where he obtained his degree. A distinguished member of the Servants of India Society he participated in every social move towards national regeneration whether it be in social reform movements, battling for the liberation of women, for Harijan uplift or the promotion of the Boy Scout movement.

Higher education absorbed his interests and he was closely associated with both the Benares and Allahabad Universities and played no small role in the reconstitution of the Allahabad University. Like liberals elsewhere he remained a champion of primary and vocational education.

Like Sivaswamy Iyer he was aware of the need not to neglect the defence of the country; he tried to build up a rational consensus on foreign affairs and the Indian Council of World Affairs did much to highlight the need for studying the problem of foreign relations and International politics.

Like Liberals of the period he had deep scepticism of the methods of *satyagraha* and non-cooperation that were launched by the Mahatma and the Congress. It was on this issue that the Liberals as a body left the Congress and maintained an independent position.

From 1921 he was member of legislative assemblies with some break for brief periods and on Independence remained a distinguished parliamentary elder, revered for his wisdom, experience and sound commonsense. With other Liberals he shared a passion for the improvement of the condition of Indians in the colonies. Several times he accompanied delegations abroad to press the case for his country.

It may come as a surprise to the present breed of politicians that he refused both the award of the Bharat Ratna and a nominated seat in the Rajya Sabha.

# Lottery as Advice

S. Ambirajan

Happily our *Sarkari* economists are apt to be one-handed with a clear perception of the minds of their masters. Panditji said 'Planning', and they all said 'Aye Aye'! TTK said 'Expenditure Tax': Indiraji said 'Devaluation': Nehru/TTK said 'Import Substitution': and the economists said 'Yes, We are with you.' Now Rajiv says 'Liberalisation': and 'How right he is'!

Ms Louella Lobo Prabhu has made the assertion in an earlier issue of this Journal that, "it is the social scientist who has a more active role to play in moulding the values by which we live". It is a tall order but by the present record, I doubt whether Ms Lobo Prabhu's expectations will ever be fulfilled. First of all, our Social Science has no roots in this soil because modern Social Science is basically a Greco - Roman heritage. The paradigms and models of modern Social Science are too fragile to suit a large part of our society. And secondly, in India, Social Science cannot really thrive because we don't have the requisite climate. A Social Scientist needs unlimited freedom but the freedom he has in India is only the freedom Henry Ford gave to his design engineer: "You can have any colour you like provided it is black"!

Social pressures and the government's unseen hand in ever so many places are such that social scientists have learnt to adjust their views to suit the existing conditions instead of themselves fearlessly trying to develop ideas that could make our country a better place to live. Take the case of a tiny sub-set of the Social Scientists, namely Government Economists and see whether they have in it to "mould the values" and whether their employers have the correct approach to use the Social Scientists.

It had to come. In our world fast moving towards the 21st century propelled by computers and management jargon, it had to come indeed!. Despite the admirable warning given in the eight-hundred year old Greek fable of Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*:

"I refuse to admit, in theory, that anything in this world is impossible; to do so would be to set myself above the power that predestines all human experience. And, in practice, things do

occasionally happen to you and me, as to everybody else, which is so outrageous that we can hardly believe in them ourselves, and which any ordinary person would certainly reject as mere fiction". I was not prepared for the advertisement issued by the Ministry of Finance asking for suggestions from the public with a sumptuous reward of Rs. 5,000/- for bright ideas last year and the advertisement offering Rs.10,000/- to guess what the 1987-88 Budget will be like and for 'Budget suggestions' that have appeared. *Indian Express* 11/1/87). As for last year, one is not sure what ideas were offered or to what use those ideas put; the youthful prize winner was able to secure the foundation Professorship of Economics of the most recent Central University on the strength of this success.

The avid reader of newspaper advertisements would certainly be puzzled. He would like to know what was meant by a 'suggestion'. Supposing he wrote to the Finance Minister: "The administration should be free from corruption", would it be deemed a better suggestion than, say, "Tax all imported snuff at five times the locally made variety"? Supposing the suggestion was to impose yet another and never before conceived impost on the poor of the country, who would be the beneficiaries?

Such methodological puzzles apart, there is the sheer practical problem facing the idea-generators. Can anyone throw out a brilliant idea without all the necessary facts? Even a basic badly printed document like the *Economic Survey* costs Rs.15/- per copy, and our gargantuan bureaucracy rolls out a lot of statistics indeed. Where and how would the average citizen gain access to them? They may be available in Delhi or Calcutta or Bombay, but not certainly in our smaller cities and towns. And as for the countryside, which accounts for ab-

out 75% of our population, the less said the wisest. Or should we suspect that Budget makers themselves operate in the dark?

How about the 'Expertise' within the Governmental apparatus? We have a whole cadre called the Indian Economic Service selected on the basis of a comprehensive public examination and trained in well-known Government approved research institutes; and there are the massive Reserve Bank of India and Yojana Bhavan High Seas teeming with expert leviathans on all conceivable economic problems. We also have a veritable all-knowing Renaissance man advising the Prime Minister. Besides there are the ambidextrous *Satavadhanis* who do research in their sumptuously funded institutes, write Reports to the Government, participate in innumerable Indo-XYZ countries' joint commissions, appear on T.V, visit exotic countries including the periodic pilgrimages to their spiritual homeland of US or UK or USSR or China; and surely their crowns must be bursting with ideas. Finally, we seem to be on such intimate relationship with the boys from IMF, IBRD, FAO, UNCTAD, ILO, and other International bureaucracies, and would they not magnanimously chip in their share of advice?

Were we wrong, after all, when we were under the soothing impression that Economics and Public Administration had become thoroughly professionalised since the second world war? Certainly we were given to understand that our economy was a planned one where every policy decision was taken carefully, marking how it devetailed with the whole. Soon after India became independent, it was realised that the issues it would face would be extremely complicated. At that time it was thought not correct to muddle along imagining that the rulers would acquire somehow

a feel for the situation. Instead of a hit-or-miss approach, our early rulers felt that a systematic approach was essential if we were to face successfully complicated policy issues. Planning, it was given to understand, was a job for Professionals, which was why a Planning Commission (some would call it *Imperium in Imperio*) was created.

Why then, and why indeed, this ingenious or ingenuous move to tap the uninformed amateur for professional advice, transcending the numerous sources of informed advice already abundantly available? Is it a case of the belated realisation of the poverty of solid content in the full-time, part-time and occasional *Sarkari* economists? It would not even be called a late realisation, because as early as 26 October 1958, the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru groaned; "What has distressed me is that our economists have not helped us to the extent they might have done....Still some are functioning in their old ways with the old text books which are apt to be hide-bound". Notwithstanding this clear perception of the capacity (or rather insufficiency) of our

economists, he did the every opposite, and permitted a phenomenal growth of economists within the administration. True to the great economic historian Michael Postan's statement about England, in India too one can postulate an inverse relationship between the rise of economists in the Indian government and the economy's performance in general. Our social scientists are as good weathercocks as any other body of academic and non-academic scientists and have accommodated themselves to every conceivable type of politician and bureaucrat. Is it leftist West Bengal? You have collaborator economists enough. It can be conservative Janata at the Centre; you have willing economists to go along with them. It can be a mindless ideology-shorn government at Centre or Circumference, there will be no dearth of comprador economists. You will find them in all sorts and shapes. Some are employed young and slowly push their way up. Others come sideways from the numerous Institutes of Research and Universities. Even the Jewels can be cajoled to take a vacation from the

Heavens they normally inhabit, corridors of the Fund and the Bank in Washington and New York.

Our Governments can have no cause for complaint. When Nehru was concerned about our economists, he was actually re-enacting good old Truman's exasperation at not finding a one-handed economist, because all his advisers were telling him "on the one hand... on the other hand..." without advising the President which way he should go. Happily our *Sarkari* economists are apt to be one-handed with a clear perception of the minds of their masters. Panditji said "Planning", and they all said in chorus 'Aye Aye!' TTK said 'Expenditure Tax'; Indiraji said 'Devaluation'; Nehru/TTK said 'Import Substitution'; and the economists said 'Yes, we are with you'. Now Rajiv says 'Liberalisation'; and 'How right he is!':

Nobody in his senses would say that governmental economic policy is made in accordance (or should be made in accordance) with what the science of economics tells. Usually the government economist is like a lawyer making



**THE MYSTIC 'AUM'  
AS IT WOULD APPEAR  
TODAY IN DEVNAGARI**

In ancient India, written communication was through symbols. Gradually the symbols gave place to letters, words and numbers as we know them. But the process took tens of centuries.

Today's pace is more rapid, change more frequent. Thanks to paper . . . the medium that enables constant revision, quicker progress.



**West Coast Paper**

Shreenivas House, Hazarimal Somani Marg, Bombay-400 001.



out the best case for the behaviour of his client, if necessary glossing over inconvenient facts, but emphasizing the good points. But the docility of the Indian economics expert to the ideas of his Masters is qualitatively of a different magnitude, and this can be explained only in terms of the general downgrading of the academic community.

A time comes when the Government finds that, confronted by the most daunting of problems, it simply cannot get worthwhile advice from a demoralised body that is only conditioned to OK anything that their immediate masters may say. Neither formal bodies like EAC, or the Planning Commission, nor informal meetings with Economists in singles or aggregates seem to have worked. What, then, should the Government do? The earlier governments would have just fidgeted and blundered their way through the crisis, but not the present impatient team led by Rajiv. They share the thought (with apologies to Horace): *Nil Desperandum un Rajivo duce et auspice Rajivo* (with Rajiv as leader and under Rajiv's Star, never despair). The new breed of 'computer boys' nurtured in the private sector simply replicate the attempt to seek catchy slogans to sell consumerist favourites through the offer of fabulous gifts. Why not get ideas and advice on the same basis for rejuvenating the economy?

It is perhaps merely symptomatic of this Age that we live in. We think we can buy anything for money, and indeed money only too often seems to be the deciding factor. Instead of participating in the normal political process, people feel encouraged to deal directly with Delhi. In democratic countries there should be accepted channels of communication for intelligent citizens to participate in the formulation of government policy. It would be considered the citizens' right and duty to write to their MPs or Ministers, or take part in political discussions, or to publish their views in responsible periodicals. And such views would carry weight with the appropriate authorities. When problems are thus brought to the rulers, they are expected to find solutions with the help of their advisers. Not so long ago, I heard Dr Nurul Hassan say that he introduced the policy of providing cheap paper for text-books and school exercise books when he received complaints about their prohibitive cost from school chil-

dren. Here is an instance of a problem being brought to a Minister's attention, and a solution being worked out by the Government.

Instead of such a system of challenge and response, the current idea savours of the lottery and the cross-word puzzle with the attendant prizes. This goes to the extent that one should be considered worthy of special reward for doing his normal duty. After all, haven't we accepted without a whisper of dissent the policy of customs officers getting a share of the booty captured from smugglers for merely performing assigned work?

There is, perhaps, another explanation too for this direct appeal to the population at large for suggestions. This is to do with the normal proclivity of politicians to manipulate the public at large. It is understood that a modern government has a large 'agenda' of activities. The items of this 'agenda' can range from the very broad but difficult of implementation to the very narrow controlled by vested interests with various in-between cases. The government in order to prevent attention from the public towards the more sensitive and controversial items deliberately directs public gaze towards issues which have hardly any disputed points. Take the Education policy for instance. No one will question the need for universal primary education, for education with a vocational bias, and education that will bring out the best in our young people. Instead of going all out to achieve these aims, didn't our Prime Minister throw the question open to the people at large:

"We want to provoke you, we want to hear your views, more than that, we want to hear views of everyone in the country, because this is a subject which will affect every single person. And we must have proper national debate on this in the media, in the academic circles, on radio, TV, in journals and everywhere. It must be debated openly. All views must come forward uninhibited, so that we can see, read, understand and then.... we produce a document which will lead India to the forefront of technologies, to the forefront of development".

Not surprisingly, our educated — leaders and followers alike — have fallen for this amazing prestidigitation and one report informs us that there have

been more than four thousand seminars during last year.

There are other areas where powerful vested interests are at play, such as our massive nuclear programme and the escalation of military expenditure where no discussion at all is permitted. And the management of the economy is also an esoteric field demanding a lot of secrecy. It is no more than a sop to ask for advice from all and sundry, and offer rewards for bright ideas. It is good management style all right: Keep the proles engaged in Seminars and playing lottery games and you do whatever you damn well please.

PROF. S. AMBIRAJAN is Head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.

### Principal P.S. Ramaswamy

We had the good fortune of being present at the felicitation extended to Professor Ramaswamy who laid down his office as principal of the S.I.E.S. College, after nearly thirty years of dedicated, silent service. The college has marched steadily from excellent academic performance to even bettering records and many of its alumni are spread all over the world, some of them occupying very distinguished positions indeed. It is on its way to being recognized as an autonomous college which is a testimony to its excellence.

Not a little of this is due to the dedicated band of teachers with whom Ramaswamy worked and many whom he came to guide and manage as junior colleagues. His dedication to the college, his sterling character, his readiness to help and above all his childlike innocence and almost boyish enthusiasm endeared him to all his students and staff. The packed hall, the continuous ovation, the mounds of floral presentation, and the gifts lavished upon him and the speeches were unprecedented in the college and in North Bombay. The college will miss his booming voice and his infectious enthusiasm. We join our friends in wishing Principal Ramaswamy and his family years and years of unalloyed happiness, health and above all peace of mind.

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# The Relevance of Martin Luther King

Nissim Ezekiel

Whenever I have re-read Martin Luther King, I have been impressed above all by his warnings about thought and action. Though a master of both in his time and situation, he was always self-critical, and aware of the traps faced by those who offer solutions to social and political problems.

He never takes his ideas for granted, never assumes the validity of his viewpoint but persistently examines ideologies, past and present, which are very different from his own. And he manages to do this without undermining all that he stands for, without being dogmatic or ineffective.

Otherwise, he would have been no more than an idealistic champion of Christian values and beliefs, of non-violence and human rights, of peace and universal love. As a leader of the Black-American struggle for racial justice and equality, he would have retained his historic role and evoked the admiration it deserved. His relevance in our time would have been limited.

I believe Dr. King's relevance is extensive and inspiring not for some sentimental reasons but because he transcends his credo and the specific recommendations of his leadership. He transcends the main cause which he had taken up as his life-long responsibility, for which he became a martyr.

## Man's Weaknesses

Not many martyred leaders have acknowledged the possibility that even their sincerity and conscientiousness may have degenerated into tragic vices. In spite of his Christian faith, Dr King stated boldly that it is a mistake to consider man basically good. At the same time he explains systematically his rejection of all forms of pessimism and ethical relativism. On Reinhold Niebuhr, for example, whose critique of pacifism, he admits, once left him in a state of confusion, Dr. King ultimately passes this judgement: "He was so involved in diagnosing man's sickness of sin that he overlooked the cure of grace".

That is a typical formulation in his thinking about a host of political and philosophical positions. Neither the



sickness of men nor his capacity to find a cure for it is over-emphasised. In the chapter entitled "Pilgrimage to Non-Violence" of his book *Strength to Love* he reveals, as in many of his other writings, his willingness to learn from all seekers and movements, carefully separating their positive contributions to the making of his own convictions from other aspects of their creed.

In rejecting for example, Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* because of its optimism concerning human nature, he also praises it for insisting that the church deal with the whole man, "not only his soul but his body". Dr King notes that ever since reading Rauschenbusch he has been convinced "that any religion which professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the social and economic conditions that scar the soul, is a spiritually moribund religion only waiting for the day to be buried".

It is the idea, perception and behaviour model of individuals and institutions which may have been once vital but has become spiritually moribund that frequently appears in a clear light in Dr King's speeches and essays. Some of these speeches, which were

often addressed to mass audiences have a strong element of rhetoric, as in "I have a Dream" delivered at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28 1963 in the march on Washington D.C. for Civil Rights.

"So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire  
Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York  
Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania."

and so on

Considering the occasion, this is not surprising, but as a rule Dr King argues persuasively in a tone of moderation and human reasonableness. If we attend to what he says about existentialism and personalism about various radical groups including beatniks and hippies about marxism and liberalism, we begin to arrive slowly at the secrets of his greatness.

He is rational and logical in his criticism of society, the state, the church, the whites and America, but he is always aware of the abyss to which rationality can lead. So he draws the line to make room for hope and the possibility of progress, while rejecting at the same time false expectations from these

## "The Upward Reach for God"

He knows as few political leaders and critics of society know that in analysing distortions of all kinds in human thought, feeling and action, one may be guilty of them oneself. His expression of the poetic and mystical intuitions in him is always guarded. He asserts what he describes as "the reality of the unseen" while avoiding the sweeping doctrinaire celebrations of the almighty divine power which saints, mystics and poets provide us, ignoring the condition of the million which never seems to be mitigated by such celebrations.

Dr King was a religious believer in the fullest sense of the term. For him, life is incomplete if it does not include what he calls "the upward reach for God". He is not satisfied with those forms of



humanism which "attempt to substitute a man-centred universe for a God-centred universe". According to him, that attempt with all its emphasis on ethical and altruistic social values "leads only to deeper frustrations. Dr King can only turn to his conviction that "we have spiritual experiences that cannot be explained in materialistic terms". Our dilemma is that we cannot answer the question which Dr King poses as follows: "If there is a good God who is all-powerful, why does he permit such unmerited pain and suffering to exist?" Allowing that such a question may be the result of honest intellectual doubt", which religious believers attempt to belittle, Dr King goes on to construct his own faith in God, without which, he says, "life is a meaningless drama in which the decisive scenes are missing".

Some may say and many have done so in our time that a meaningless drama is precisely what life is and that the decisive scenes are missing. Nothing that Dr King asserts to the contrary answers that crucial question which he himself has formulated so honestly. Why, why, so many millions suffer in every generation for no fault of their own, not for their sins, but in their innocence and helplessness? We may leave Dr King alone at this stage with his faith in Christ and God, or we may follow him if that's the way we feel but one way or other there should be no diminution in our support for him as a fighter for human rights and for human values.

### "Jet Flights to Freedom"

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, at the age of thirty-five Dr King makes a casual remark which is characteristic of his human values, "Every time I take a flight" he said, "I am always mindful of the many people who make a successful journey possible — the known pilots and the unknown ground crew". This touching reminder is transformed into a metaphor as he mentions the ground crew in "the jet flights to freedom" which, he points could not otherwise have been possible. It is characteristic of him also that in quoting the Biblical story of the good Samaritan he emphasises the three qualities of altruism projected in the parable which are rarely identified — the universal, the dangerous and the excessive. It is comparatively easy to go out of one's way and help where help is desperately needed, but not so easy to face possible



The Kings at a reception in his hometown, Atlanta, after he won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize.

dangers in the situation or to do considerably more than is demanded because that is often the logic of supportive action. Dr King's reflections on the problem of being a good neighbour are worth re-reading over and over again. It may not be possible to live up to the ideals he propounds, and the practical self-regarding self within us may wince at the suggestion that the true neighbour ought to risk even his life for the welfare of others. But it is a mistake in my view to conclude from our legitimate caution that in less threatening situations we should behave in the same way. If we can't be heroes it doesn't mean that we can't find ways of translating, however inadequately, our least generous impulses into action. The self-confidence learnt by doing so can be raised gradually to higher and higher levels. Dr King, let me confess, does not at any stage in his argument recommend this procedure, but I have ventured to deduce it from my own failures in the light of his standards for being considered a good neighbour, and from the failures of others as I have noted them.

Dr King is of course right in differentiating between the luxury of passing by on the other side which was once only called moral failure and similar behaviour today, which "will lead to universal suicide". Whether this difference will produce more Samaritans I do not know.

### Man is not an Impersonal Cog

One of Dr King's psychological and philosophical principles is that "life at its

best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony". In his essay entitled "A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart" he spells out with magnificent thoroughness as well as brevity, the capacity and need to cultivate both in specific ways and along different lines. He describes the soft-minded to the point of despair when he asserts that "nothing pains some people more than having to think".

They live in a perpetual cloud of half-truths, prejudices, superstitions and distortions which never seems to clear up and sometimes becomes denser. Dr King commits himself to the courageous declaration that "a nation or civilization that continues to produce soft-minded men purchases its own spiritual death on an instalment plan".

To make matters worse, a reality which Dr King compels us to confront, the world is full of the hard-hearted who see people not as people but as objects or impersonal cogs or digits in a multitude. This de-personalisation, not merely in the context of racial problems but of the contemporary world as a whole is deadly for the million who don't even know what is hurting them so persistently and severely. Dr King's voice is not the only one in the wilderness today but my attempt has been to show that it is powerful and relevant.

Text of a talk at the United States Information Service, Bombay.

PROF. NISSIM EZEKIEL is a poet and former editor of *Freedom First*.

## British Aid to Mozambique

Ian Tickle

SPR.T. Mrs. Thatcher stood firm in the matter of sanctions against South Africa because she knew that they were literally impossible for the nations of southern Africa. Although her negative stance was disavowed by Prime Minister Mugabe of Zimbabwe and President Kaunda of Zambia, who were both present at the mini-Commonwealth Conference which was held in London last year, she has turned out to have been right even in so far as those two countries are concerned. For they are both economically dependent on South Africa and therefore quite incapable of indulging in sanctions. The international status of Messrs. Mugabe and Kaunda dictated the stand they took in London, and they were themselves certainly aware that their support for sanctions would be limited to words.

Britain's point of view has received ready acceptance from most of the other African nations which are grouped together in the alliance of donor and recipient countries which meets regularly in the framework of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). These include Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho – as well as, more importantly, Mozambique.

In spite of her disagreement with Mr. Mugabe's stand on sanctions, Mrs. Thatcher made it clear that she understood the pressures which lay behind the attitude of the Zimbabwe leader. As things are going in South Africa, the time may well come when Zimbabwe finds itself blockaded. That would mean that as far as sanctions were concerned the boot would be on the other foot. Instead of Zimbabwe breaking off trade relations with South Africa, South Africa would break off its trade relations with Zimbabwe. And whichever way round this happened, the result would be catastrophic for Zimbabwe. For it has no other reliable land outlet to the rest of the world.

It does of course have the relatively short railway line through Mozambique to the Indian Ocean port of Beira. This

was the object of the famous Beira Patrol – in which twenty years ago the British sent a couple of destroyers to blockade the port of Beira in support of the economic sanctions which were then in force against the Smith regime in what was then Rhodesia. There is an oil pipeline as well as a railway in what has now come to be called the Beira Corridor, and the main purpose of the Beira Patrol was to prevent the delivery of oil in transit to the Rhodesian refinery near Umtali.

All that belongs to history. Now it is the Beira Corridor which is insecure and not the high seas outside Beira. The area is permanently threatened by the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (Renamo), whose troops are holding the Beira Corridor under threat. Prime Minister Mugabe of Zimbabwe has said on a number of occasions that he will do all he can to prevent the Mozambique Government being overthrown by Renamo, and he has also promised to contribute to this and to the economic interest of his own country by sending in Zimbabwean troops to help guard the Beira Corridor.

These troops number about 6,000, and they are trained by British military instructors at the base of Nyanga, not far from the frontier. What is new, however, is that a modest contingent of 120 Mozambican soldiers are now being trained by the British at the same camp. In addition, the railway line from the northern Mozambican port of Nacala to Malawi is also being safeguarded by the British, in the form of a private company, Defence Systems Ltd., which consists mostly of former members of the British elite SAS force. This company is also training Mozambicans as part of its operation in northern Mozambique. So we have a situation in which the British are giving limited military help to a non-Commonwealth African country for the first time.

The Mozambican army as such was trained by the Soviets, the East Germans and the Cubans. But these are now seen by the Mozambicans to have

been extremely inefficient, and, to the best of our knowledge, most of them have departed. They have left a fighting force which is totally demoralised and scarcely worthy of the name as well as being heavily infiltrated by Renamo. Curiously enough, especially when we think of the hard-headed nature of Mrs. Thatcher's government, their place is being taken, though in a much more modest degree, by the British.

There are a number of cases in which Soviet-supported countries have been shored up militarily by the Soviet Union but have been ordered by their masters in the Kremlin to ask for economic aid from the West against a spurious promise to give up the Soviet connection. This was done on a number of occasions by both South Yemen and Ethiopia. But there are also countries which have genuinely tried to leave the Soviet bloc and have succeeded. Amongst these are the classic case of Egypt, as well as Somalia and Ghana. The British now take the view that such an attempt is being made by Mozambique and that it has been evolving over a number of years.

This was of course the work of the late President Samora Machel, but the British Government is now satisfied that the trend is to be continued, and probably increased, under his successor, President Joachim Chissano. The latest news on this particular front is that Mozambique may be on the verge of a truly remarkable gesture, an application to join the Commonwealth. It is indeed true that an informal request has reached the Commonwealth Secretariat in London that Mozambique should be allowed to attend the next Commonwealth Conference, to be held in October at Vancouver, Canada, as an observer. The Commonwealth is itself rather an informal organisation and its decisions are reached informally. But it is probably unprecedented for an independent country with a non-British past to apply for membership, and this would be unlikely to occur if there were significant objections from any member. Pakistan, which withdrew in pique



at the time of Britain's recognition of Bangladesh, cannot now rejoin because of objections from India.

There is no Portuguese "Commonwealth", and the Mozambicans see the advantages which Commonwealth membership brings to all its neighbours in the SADCC. It also has first-hand experience of what life is like as a member of the Soviet "Commonwealth". In the

last few years, since President Samora Machel's official visit to London and his honorary knighthood, Britain has increased its aid to Mozambique fourfold, and it is likely that further increases will be announced in the next few weeks.

All this is the other side of Mrs. Thatcher's hard stand on sanctions. She is a politician who does not believe

in making gestures merely for their effect. If these southern African countries are ever to be rendered economically independent of South Africa, a lot of infra-structure has to be provided – and before this is done there is no point in talking about sanctions. That is the present British attitude, and because of its long coast-line Mozambique has a key position in this strategy.

## Western Europe and Disarmament

It is four years now since President Reagan first brought forward his plans for SDI. Six months went by, and then the Soviets resumed their places in Geneva. Since then, the primary Soviet objective has been to prevent the Americans going ahead with SDI. This is in spite of the fact that they are certainly capable of developing an SDI system of their own, and they are in fact working at it in secret with great speed. But this has horrific economic consequences for the Soviet Union, and Gorbachov is faced with a direct choice between his reconstruction policies on the home front or continuing with SDI development.



Mikhail Gorbachev

The fact is that today Gorbachov has to deal with much opposition at home. He is trying to free the Soviet system from the social and economic paralysis which has grown up in every sector over the years. And it is precisely because of the opposition which he has been encountering at home that he needs a success in the field of foreign policy. The most likely success would seem to be an agreement on intermediate range weapons. President Reagan, as Gorbachov knows, has only two years of his

period of office left and is also under constant pressure because of the Iran arms affair. A success in the disarmament dialogue would also be welcome to him.

The West Europeans ought to give a thought to the idea that there will certainly come a time when there will appear no reason why 240 million Americans should be protecting 320 million West Europeans against 280 million Soviets. These figures do, after all, speak for themselves – especially when so many of these same West Europeans do in fact seem to prefer the other side.

Some West European politicians – notably the French prime minister, Mr. Jacques Chirac – are already looking forward to a time when Western Europe will indeed have to look to its own defences. It is not unrealistic to suppose that by the turn of the century there will have come into existence a European Defence Community, with West Germany and France, and possibly Great Britain, at its heart. If and when the Americans leave, this will be the only way that freedom can survive in Western Europe.

It is certainly true that Gorbachov is in earnest in his effort to disarm. This is because he can do nothing else if he is to succeed with his "reconstruction" of Soviet society. At the recent "International Peace Forum" held in Moscow, he actually said that the Soviet Union wanted to disarm so that it could concentrate on its own interior problems. But if there is also talk of democratisation in Moscow, this is not about to be democracy as we see it in the West. What Gorbachov wants to do is to free the Soviet Union from its old taboos,



Ronald Reagan

and to some extent at least to take the people with him

This does not mean that he will free the Soviet Union from domination by the Communist Party or that he will retreat in any long-term sense from the old Communist Party design to march to victory everywhere. He doubtless deserves support in his desire to enlarge the viewpoint of the Soviet people. The question which remains open is whether this has anything to do with what we call democracy and freedom. The next few years will tell us whether these new ideas will create a completely new situation in the Soviet Union through their momentum and impetus, or whether the result will be simply the creation of a stronger home base for continuing the struggle to dominate the world.

But there is certainly no reason to believe, as so many West Europeans appear to, that the Soviet leaders of today intend in any real sense to change their traditional aims. In the event of nuclear disarmament between the super-powers, Western Europe will be in a position in which it will have to defend itself – both in terms of military strength over and against the Warsaw Pact and in terms of the psychological struggle, in which it has often appeared so vulnerable in recent years.

*Courtesy: Swiss Press Review*



# THE RURAL PERSPECTIVE

## The Other Immoralities

Bhanu Pratap Singh

In this article, attention is drawn to institutionalized cheating of the rural masses, which is a greater crime than merely cheating the public exchequer.

### The Cities and the Villages

Shri Rajiv Gandhi has pleaded for a New International Economic Order in all the international conclaves that he has attended. His arguments are for fairer trade relations between the developed and developing countries, and easier access for the latter to international monetary resources. But he ignores the fact, that within our own country, there is a developed part, and another one that is developing, viz. The cities and the villages. One has only to substitute the words, "cities" and "villages" for "developed" and "developing countries" respectively to arrive at the same conclusions of unfair trade relations, and poor access for the latter to national resources. The attitude of our decision-makers towards the rural masses is as callous, as that of the leaders of the developed world towards the developing countries. While hundreds are dying of starvation in Orissa, our leaders in Delhi are sanctioning grants for African and Latin American countries.

### Poorer than the Poorest

Due to adverse terms of trade between the farm and the non-farm sectors, the benefits of higher production in agriculture have not accrued to agriculturists. Though productivity per agricultural worker has increased, their per capita income in real terms (adjusted for inflation) has gone down. It is significant, that no one at the helm of affairs has even taken note of this fact. The nation's per capita real income has been slowly but steadily going up, but as far as the two-thirds of the population engaged in agriculture are concerned, the opposite is true. Disparity between average incomes of farmers and non-farmers has widened rapidly, as is evident from the fact, that the share in the national income of two-thirds of the population dependent on



The attitude of our decision-makers towards the rural masses is as callous, as that of the leaders of the developed world towards the developing countries.

agriculture is now reduced to less than one-third, against nearly one-half, that prevailed only twelve years ago, while there has hardly been any reduction in their share in population.

According to the World Development Report 1986, Ethiopia is the poorest country in the world, with an average per capita income of only \$ 120. According to our Central Statistical Organization, net national product derived from agriculture was Rs. 60721 crores in 1985-86. This was shared by more than 50 crore people dependent on agriculture, providing them an average income of no more than Rs. 1214, which is less than \$ 100. This means that rural India is poorer than the poorest country in the world.

As far as access to national resources is concerned, the rural population, which is 77% of the country's total, gets only one-seventh of the total credit advances from banks, one-sixth of the power consumed in the country, and

two-fifth of the total budgetary allocation for education. Overall, it can be stated, that the average per capita availability of national resources and social services for the urban population are seven to eight times more than for the rural population.

The most reliable criteria for judging the quality of life of any community are its death, infant mortality and illiteracy rates. These are 68.8, 75.4, and 55.6 per cent higher respectively in rural areas as compared to the urban. The other criteria are the per capita consumption levels of power, steel and drugs. According to Mr. Vasant Sathe, per capita consumption of power, steel, and drugs in rural areas are respectively one-fifteenth, one-thirteenth and one-sixth of their per capita consumption in cities.

### Lop-Sided Modernization

Modernization of industries, which is the craze of the present regime, has no meaning for those who are steeped in poverty and ignorance. For them, most of the technologies and facilities, even currently available, are out of reach. They should first be enabled to meet their basic human needs. This is no easy task; it cannot be achieved unless the state directs most of its resources – financial as well as administrative – towards that end. It is a question of priorities. Whatever might have been said or written in plans and manifestos about giving top priority to agricultural and rural development, the fact is that these have been neglected.

The thinking behind the development strategy, that has been followed since Nehru, is that the rate of economic growth is essentially a function of capital formation in large scale industries, particularly in the public sector. Hence most of the capital and other resources of the country have been diverted towards achieving that end. In this strategy, agriculture is supposed to play no role, except to provide food for bare subsistence, raw materials for

agro-based industries, and surpluses for industrial growth. Development of agriculture for its own sake, or improving the economic and living conditions of agriculturists is considered secondary, though for political reasons, lip homage is paid to agriculture all the time. But for capital starvation, inherent in the policies pursued, Indian agriculture would have grown much faster and relieved wide-spread unemployment and poverty in villages. Experience in India and abroad has proved that investment in agriculture gives the maximum return, in the shortest period of time, and that too for the benefit of the largest number. And yet it has been treated as the poor cousin of industry.

### Nothing New For Agriculture

Shri Rajiv Gandhi's Government has so far taken no steps to quicken the pace of agricultural development. Even the allocations made in the VII Plan do not indicate any change either in policies or priorities pursued thus far. During the five years of the VII Plan, the total expenditure on agriculture, rural development and irrigation, would be Rs. 36625 crores. During the VI Plan, expenditure on these items was Rs. 24550 crores. Taking inflation into consideration of more than 55.5% during the period 1979-80 to 1984-85, it is obvious that expenditure on rural programmes in real terms would be less in the VII Plan than in the VI Plan. Also in terms of percentage, the plan outlay on agriculture, rural development, and irrigation will be only 20.3% of the total in the VII Plan, against 22.5 percent in the VI Plan. Thus there has been a clear downgrading of rural programmes under the new dispensation. It may also be mentioned, that Rs. 9074 crores, proposed to be spent on rural development or poverty alleviation programmes, during the next five years would not be even one percent of the G.D.P. in those years. If anyone thinks, that the 40% of our population, living below the poverty level, can be uplifted by diversion of less than one percent of the national income for their benefit, must indeed be day-dreaming.

Even if it be true, that the government cannot find all the resources needed for agricultural and rural development, it cannot be absolved of its responsibility for capital starvation of the rural sector. The capital could be raised from land itself, which, in the case of India, is a

veritable gold mine. But this has remained undeveloped to the extent of 70 percent, mainly because the surpluses of the farm sector have been systematically drained out of it, for utilization elsewhere. During the VI Plan period, prices of all farm products, as compared to those of all non-farm products were kept depressed on an average by 21%. The intra-parity prices for farm products are not natural, but contrived by the Government. This has resulted in the drain of resources from the farm to the non-farm sector during the VI Plan to the tune of Rs. 62000 crores, which is more than two and a half times the amount invested by the Government on rural programmes during the five years of the VI Plan. It is this colossal drain, for which the government is blamed, and not merely for its inability to find more funds for the rural sector.

So long as Shri Rajiv Gandhi does not correct the policy imbalances between rural and urban India, he hardly has any moral right to ask for the establishment of a more just "New International Economic Order". He should first strive to establish a more equitable "New National Economic Order" within the country.

### Directives Not Implemented

One need not go far in search of a more equitable "New National Economic Order". It is clearly spelt out in the Directive Principles of our Constitution, to which we all owe allegiance. The Directive Principles, though not enforceable by any court, were nevertheless to be regarded as fundamental to the governance of the country. According to it, "all citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, to education and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, and disablement". The state was required to provide for all these. It was also required "to take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority, as may be necessary, to enable them to function as units of self-government", and further "to reduce inequalities in incomes, status, facilities, and opportunities not only amongst individuals, but also amongst groups of people engaged in different vocations". None of these Directives have been faithfully carried out. The right of equal opportunity has been denied to the rural masses.

MR. BHANU PRATAP SINGH is the former Union Minister of State for Agriculture.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

**WHAT'S HAPPENING TO INDIA** by Robin Jeffrey; Macmillan India Ltd, Bombay; Pp 249; 1986; Rs. 110.



Why is it, it may be asked, that some of the best books on India are written by foreigners? Is it because they can stand apart and see the scene as a whole and with a certain degree of objectivity? Robin Jeffrey's *What's Happening to India?* belongs to this class. He is concerned not so much with what's happening to India as to what has happened in Punjab. Indeed, the secondary title of the book is: "Punjab, Ethnic Conflict, Mrs Gandhi's Death and the Test for Federation."

Jeffrey's thesis is as simple as it is practical. He believes that factional networks in Punjab, for instance, have been caught up and overwhelmed by the innovations accompanying the Green Revolution, a point that has been well argued by others. It is his view that the resulting mixture of innovation and factional expectations has produced "a dizzyingly uncontrollable political brew". It is his contention that further centralisation originally started by Mrs Indira Gandhi will simply not help. As he quite early states: "What India requires is a more genuine federalism, a greater readiness of central governments to follow the spirit (indeed following the letter would be an improvement) of the present constitution". Jeffrey, to his credit, makes an excellent argument for the strengthening of federalism. The Indian state, he says, is "remarkably resilient", a point worth remembering by all our doom-sayers who see the country

being destabilised at every twist and turn of politics. He adds: "There are strong structural reasons for its unity... But no one can hold the reins of state as tightly as Mrs Gandhi tried to do. To do so is to increase the pulling and chafing and thereby the risk of snapped reins and bolting horses".

Well said and that is the central thesis and Jeffrey proceeds from point to point. The author has done his homework very well and has some pointed – and relevant – things to say about people and institutions. Take for example this insight: "The 23 per cent of families who own two thirds of the land in Punjab face the problem of controlling and channelling the sense of deprivation that arises in poorer peasants and the landless. The television sets and motor cycles are there for the poor and the landless to see. One way to deal with the problem is to encourage a religious fundamentalism in which all believers are invited to share equally". Very few scholars will dispute that. In fact some have held that it is the Green Revolution that has been responsible for the growth of fundamentalism.

Jeffrey deals with all the issues that might have led to fundamentalism in a detached manner. He traces some of the bitterness in the struggle for power among Sikhs to the fact that among Jats, everyone regards himself as a leader. He notes that it is this "spirit of undisciplined equality, coupled with the fact that spokesmen for Sikh interests in the 1940's were not the most sophisticated men the community had produced" that has contributed to the plight in which Sikhs have found themselves. What can Sikhs expect if their leader is a Bhindranwale?

Jeffrey traces other reasons for the violence in Punjab society: to the fact that Punjab is a frontier state, to the fact that it is still a peasant society and to the even more relevant fact that society in Punjab is based on links of dependence which tie most people to a patron and may thus involve them in the patron's struggles. In the past, one sociologist has called the Jat Sikhs as *Robber Noblemen* – not an entirely wrong description. Like peasant noblemen the

Jats took offence quickly; scores had to be settled. Turning the other cheek was just not part of their code. A murder had to be avenged by another murder; justice settled on the spot. What Jeffrey has theorised has been said in a more concrete manner by Partap Sharma in his novel on contemporary Punjab entitled *The Days of the Turban*.

It comes as a shock, but it is nevertheless true, it is the effort to drag Punjab into the 21st century through innovations that has been substantially responsible for the fundamentalism and violence in the state. Jeffrey states that the innovations had begun to corrode the old wire fence that kept violence within bounds. The sten gun and motor cycle symbolised the change. Says Jeffrey: "Expanded communication networks now bombard Punjabis with information that enables them to treat other people as abstractions and, in the worst event, to hate (and kill) whole groups whose members, as individuals, are unknown. This new potential, characteristic of mass societies, meets and mixes with Punjab's violent traditions and the powerful Sikh heritage of resistance to would-be rulers. The personalised, face-to-face qualities that previously kept violence within manageable bounds are gradually being stripped away".

Is there, then, no hope for Punjab and the country as a whole? That, happily, is not Jeffrey's thesis, and what he says marks him out from the many Indians who see a glum future for India. Even in the current turmoil, he sees hope. As any serious sociologist would, Jeffrey also sees in the ferment of modernisation, capability of generating religious revival, ethnic conflict and secession. But, he adds, these new energies also make it possible for the poor to organise. For the first time in history, the poor have the potential to unite over wide areas, to cooperate with sympathetic sections of the elite and to create or capture institutions which they can turn to their own needs. Ultimately the possibility exists for them to transform the Indian state and make it work



for them.

The poor in Punjab have demonstrated the bloody cost of short-sighted central government meddling in the affairs of a state. That said, says Jeffrey, the so-called Punjab crisis "may ultimately strengthen Indian democracy and federalism". And why? "Sobered politicians" Jeffrey continues, "may be more inclined to strive for a balance between the prerogatives of regional leaders and the requirements of national integrity. Such a balance must lie at the heart of a democratic federation".

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. Mrs Indira Gandhi made the mistake of seeking to over-centralise power in Delhi out of compulsions peculiar to the times in which she lived. By now most people involved must have learnt some important lessons. We are a rational people. It is on this aspect of our national character that Jeffrey so heavily relies upon to see a better and happier future for India. It is good to feel that his prognostications are sound.

M.V. Kamath

**MAJYA JALMACHI CHITTRAKATH**  
(The story of my life) in Marathi by Shantabai Kamble; Purva Prakashan, 1986; PP 165, Rs 40

Autobiographical writings form one of the important features of Marathi Dalit literature. There have been a little over a dozen such works in the last decade. Naturally, these writings are the outpourings of the anguished and miserable lives experienced by the socially downtrodden. Their accent is on social rather than the economic deprivation. For, the latter is shared by another 20% of the Indian population, who otherwise are above the untouchability line. However, even the socially deprived are not a homogeneous lot. There are among them some who are the slave of the slaves, the dalit among the dalits, the exploited and the oppressed not only by the traditional higher ups but by their own kith and woe-sharers. The women and some of the lowest of the scheduled castes find their place among these. In Maharashtra at least, some of these have recently made bold to bare their hearts and relate their woes. The autobiographical writings of a dalit woman – the first to be published in Maharashtra – reviewed here is a

good example of these.

This is the life story (1925-80) of Shantabai Kamble, a first generation educated woman who made it good. In the twenties it was rare for a girl – and a dalit born girl at that – to go to school. Shantabai did so by accident when the village teacher enrolled her name too while admitting her younger brother. Ironically, she stuck to it even while her brother dropped out, eventually to pass matriculation and to become a school teacher.

Naturally, the narration, more in the form of reminiscences than an autobiography, is full of tales of miserable experiences brought on by abject poverty. A dalit invariably was born into poverty and lived through it. Only a few instances may be cited to show the depths of misery to which a rural dalit's life could sink:

In Shantabai's childhood days it was common, during the monsoons without a job, for the mother to tell the children, "There is nothing to eat tonight. Let us go to bed on an empty stomach". For them it was famine all the year round. Therefore, it was considered a lucky day when a cattle died in the village. For, the carrion provided something to fill the stomach with.

On another occasion, her mother and friend, still in confinement, had to work on the farm in the hope of getting the remains of harvested crop which they ate raw. The coarse grain, mixed in dust or even in cow dung, was washed and eaten.

Pangs of poverty is not a novel experience for an Indian, least of all for a dalit. It is the social stigma of untouchability that stung and was painful to bear. Shantabai's first experience of untouchability was at school where she was made to sit out of the classroom. Her question to her mother, "Ma, the teacher is a human being and so are we. Why doesn't he even touch us?" touches one's heart. Such experiences, naturally, did not encourage dalit children to stick to the school. They preferred to work in the fields or remained at home to care for their younger brothers or sisters.

Once she, as a child, went to Pandharpur on a pilgrimage (warkari) but was not allowed into the temple which led her to ask her mother, "If we are not allowed into the temple, why did we come to Pandharpur at all?" They were not permitted even into a mosque to keep a vow. When the dalits having become Buddhists decided to stop doing

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the village menial jobs, a social boycott was imposed on them. Criminal complaints were lodged with the police.

Shantabai, however, is fair enough to acknowledge sympathetic attitudes of some upper caste individuals who extended a helping hand to her in her efforts to rise up.

A village teacher, at the instance of his wife, coaches young Shantabai for the seventh standard and takes her to Sholapur for the examination.

- In the Teachers' Training College for women when her classmates did not join her for lunch because of her low caste she complains to the Principal who admonishes them.
- She had to suffer humiliation while drawing water from a caste Hindu's well. But the local head constable mediated and persuaded the caste Hindus to allow her to draw water.
- At Jat, a Taluka place, she couldn't get accommodation in a Buddhist locality but was able to live in the neighbourhood of a Brahmin advocate. And so on.

What is this gradual change in social attitude due to? Undoubtedly, education and her new lower middle class status is seen as a factor in mobility. Thus her friends with envy say, "You went to

school so your children also got educated and all of you now lead a comfortable life. As against this, we still are casual labourers. When unemployed, we remain half starved. Had we also had education we would have been in a much better position". Partly, the change could be the result of untouchability losing its legitimacy. Hence the help extended by officials and the educated. But what would happen when the meagre employment opportunities now available to the educated dalits get exhausted? Then, they may have to face economic exploitation in its naked form. Shantabai's explanation that by converting to Buddhism they started living as human beings may at best appear a subjective feeling about social change.

In the account of Shantabai her experiences as a woman are the most poignant. She was the fourth successive daughter born to her mother. At her birth her father cries, "You have borne all daughters. Give me this child and a pickaxe. I will have her buried alive". His feelings towards the girl softened only because two male children followed her. Her birth then appeared a good augury. As an adult, her husband takes another wife. When she returns to her parents in protest, he complains that she had carried away gold orna-

ments. What saves her and restores her position, probably, was her being educated and her job as a teacher - a rarity among the dalits then. However, it is amusing to find that she herself succumbs to the ideology of male supremacy when she craves for a son and keeps vows to various deities for the purpose.

There is something to be said for the kinship bonds and the rough justice of a traditional society depicted in the work. Shantabai's account is replete with instances of her relying on kinsmen, especially during emergencies:

- When her sister's daughter returns to her parents because her mother-in-law denies her food, the caste panchayat warns the husband and orders them to treat her well.
- Her sister quits her husband's house because he doesn't work for a living

One cannot but recognise that with the grinding poverty and social discrimination that a Dalit faces, a dalit woman has to bear the additional burden of being a female in a male dominated society. However, Shantabai's life story doesn't fully bear out if this makes her 'a slave of slaves' as Arun Kamble, her son and a Dalit Panther claims in the introduction to the book.

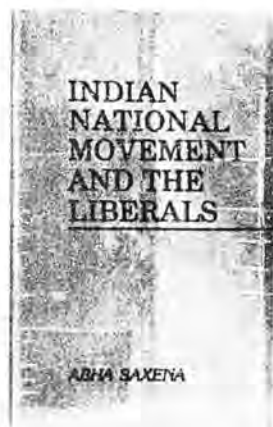
R.S. Morkhandikar

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INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT  
AND THE LIBERALS by Abha Sax-  
ena; Chugh Publication, 2 Strachey  
Road, Civil Lines, Allahabad; 1986;  
Pp 317; Rs. 200/-



The last hundred years of our social and political experience is generally called a national movement culminating in our national independence. But it is something more than merely a movement for independence. It was simultaneously a movement for intellectual regeneration and, for the upliftment of whole sections of our population to new freedoms. To these developments all shades of opinion contributed directly and independently. For the last forty years the emphasis was on the work of the Congress Party and its contribution to political liberation. This is understandable, for the Congress and the Mahatma did loom large. Gradually the abiding work of the other groups is also attracting the attention of scholars. Definite studies as that of Gokhale by B.R. Nanda in no small measure helped to restore the balance for a fuller understanding of national developments.

Ms Saxena's book is a contribution in estimating the role of the Liberals, especially of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, to the development of Indian institutions during this crucial period. To rivet the attention of the intelligentsia, of the newspaper world, of the British government both in India and England and to compel the attention of the Congress leadership at a time when the country swarmed with colossi was an achievement of no small order and Sir Tej Bahadur managed to do this by his enormous intellectual gifts, his

finely honed mastery of constitutional law, his burning nationalist fervour and above all a deep faith in the abiding association with British liberal ideas. The last was a family heritage and a trust which he would not surrender. The author of the book manages to capture some of these great qualities well in the book, and to students of modern India, this will be useful as a remembrance of the contribution of the Liberals to Indian independence.

The Liberals had no popular following — they never had it, neither did they hanker after it. From the beginning, their constituency was the westernized urban educated sections. The Extremists and later Gandhi with his populist following pushed them to the aisles of politics from the centre of the nationalist stage.

They remained at the sides but their influence was to prove far beyond their number. Their commitment to secular values, to moderation, to the patient building up of institutions and above all their sense of optimism about the future were to be leavening influences. The brief period that they served in the different provinces were to be indeed distinguished. It was Sapru more than anyone who in the brief years in the Viceroy's Executive Council was responsible for softening what otherwise would have been a very harsh treatment to the Congressmen bent on non-cooperation. They proved more to be in the right than in the wrong, but Cassandra-like their warnings never were taken seriously. The supreme contempt with which Nehru dismissed them aside in the few lines on them in his *Autobiography* were to be ironical — for he was to tread these very paths that they had charted earlier.

Sir Tej Bahadur was the quintessence Indian Liberal who dominated the Indian constitutional scene from the Nehru Constitution of 1928 to the 1940s in almost all the constitutional advances till independence, or almost the eve of independence. But for him the ground work of the First Round Table would not have been possible at all. He was to prove the ablest of the Indian delegates. He strode across the Hindu, Muslim and

British worlds with confidence and won the trust and admiration of all. He was to serve in countless committees and commissions and was to win single-handedly the case for an Indian Federation. The author concludes that in a sense the work of the Liberals came to an end by 1935. But only in a limited sense. Throughout the parleys during the next decade they kept themselves active, and were tireless in trying to find an acceptable solution to a very tangled political situation with different interests pulling in contrary directions. This was their most glorious hour and they were uniquely fitted for the role of being opinion brokers — for others totally lacked the very special gifts that they had. The Sapru Proposals of 1945 do remain an important constitutional landmark of this period.

It is to be hoped that this study will be followed by detailed ones covering the role of the Liberals of the stature of C.Y. Chintamani and others.

R. Srinivasan

In 1946, when the Cabinet Mission visited New Delhi, the members insisted on calling on Sapru at my house, because of his feeble health. Lord Wavell, Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Alexander spent nearly an hour with him, discussing the details of a settlement. Gandhiji, not to be outdone in graciousness, followed their example the following morning by paying him a personal visit.

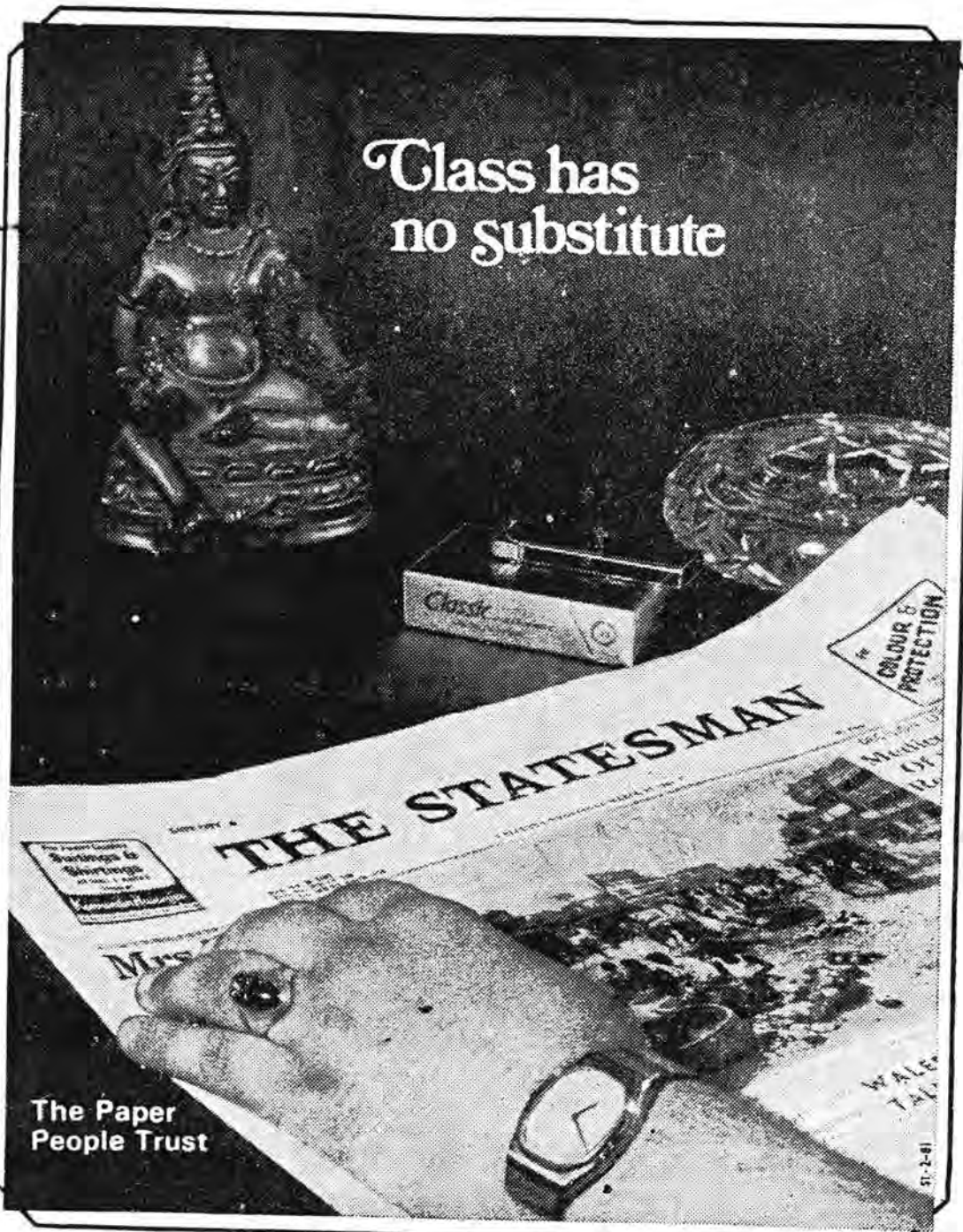
When the Constituent Assembly was formed, he was Gandhiji's first choice for membership of that body; and he would probably have been its president, if ill-health had not prevented him from active participation. His advice was valued and sought especially in framing the provisions relating to the judiciary.

When I look back through all the years that I was privileged to know him, I cannot think of any other Indian who had the vision to see the solutions of so many of our political problems and the courage to stand by them. The like of him India will not see for many years.

B. Shiva Rao, *India's Freedom Movement*.



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