

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

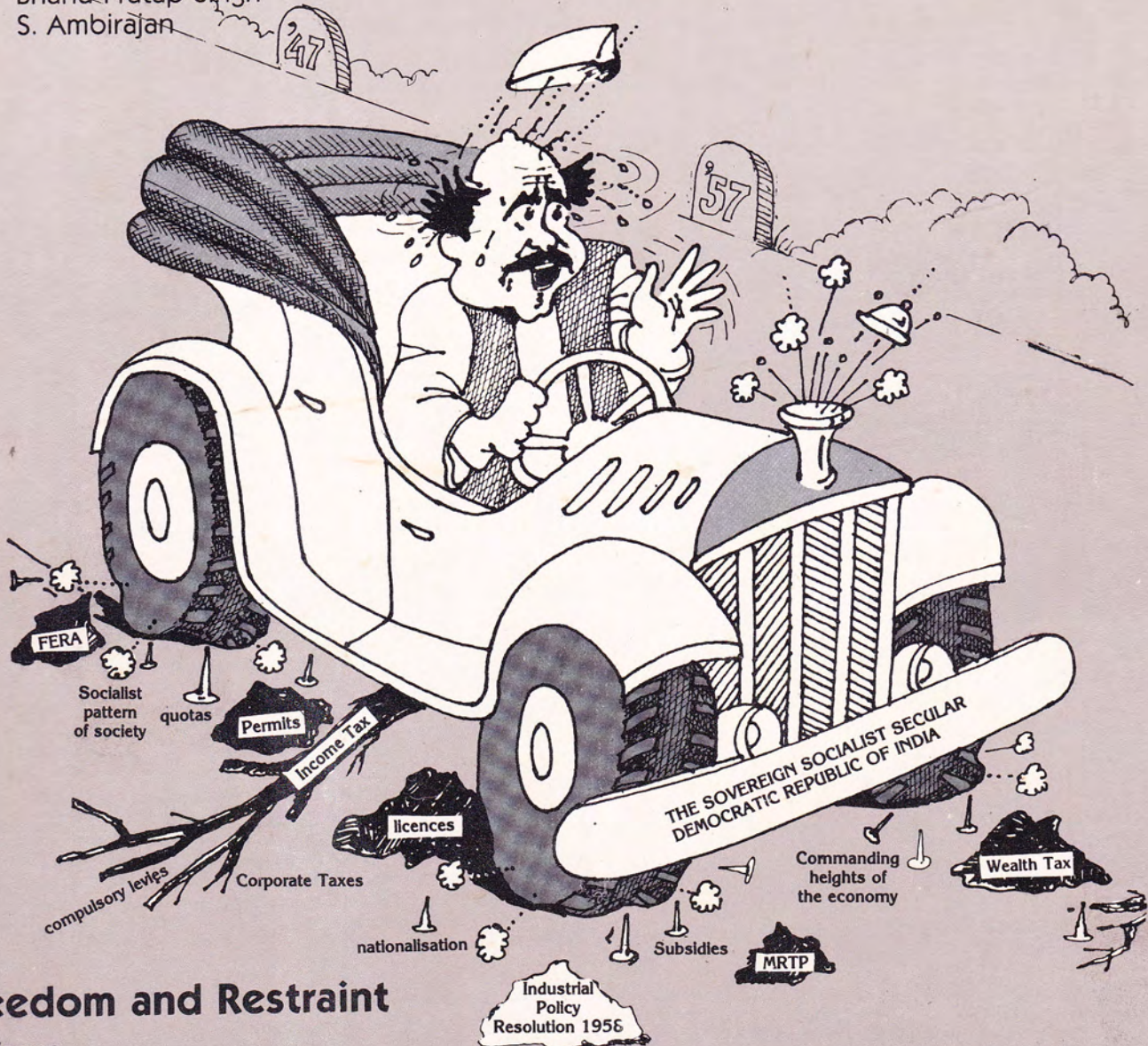
Freedom First

July-Sept. 1991
No. 410
Rupees Ten

39th YEAR OF PUBLICATION

After 40 Years of Stability...

J.B. D'Souza
Tanmay Datta
Bhanu Pratap Singh
S. Ambirajan



Freedom and Restraint

M. Varma

Setting of the Rising Sun

Prema Nandakumar

From Marx & Engels to Marks & Spencer!

A.G. Modak

Amnesty International Report 1991

What Doordarshan didn't want you to know

The 9.30 pm English news on Doordarshan on July 10 had a surprise item — a fairly long (by Doordarshan standards) coverage of the Amnesty International Report 1991. The TV report referred to the Amnesty Report on civil rights violations in a host of countries — from Iraq and Burma to Hong Kong. But not a word on India — The Amnesty Report has three pages on India. We publish below extracts from these three pages which Doordarshan did not want you to know.

Several thousand political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, were held without charge or trial under special or preventive detention laws. Increasingly, politically motivated arrests were not officially acknowledged. Torture and ill-treatment were widespread and in some states systematic, resulting in scores of deaths in police custody. Dozens of people "disappeared" or appeared to have been extrajudicially executed in "encounters" staged by the police. Over 100 peaceful demonstrators were believed to have been victims of extrajudicial executions. A small number of death sentences were carried out.

★

...The NF government, which had stated its commitment to accountability and respect for human rights, faced increasing violence by armed separatist groups, notably in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Assam. According to Jammu and Kashmir's Director General of Police, 1,044 people were killed in the state by armed separatists between January and September, including 107 members of the security forces and 377 civilians — mostly alleged informers or victims of abductions. In Punjab at least 3,800 politically motivated killings were reportedly committed by government forces and armed separatists during the year — an unprecedented level of such deaths. In October alone Sikh separatists were officially said to have killed 265 people, including 68 members of the security forces. President's rule was extended for the eighth time in October for a further six months. In Jammu and Kashmir, the state assembly was suspended in January and direct rule was imposed. In July the government applied to Jammu and Kashmir the Armed Forces Special Powers Act — already in force in northeast India — which empowered the security forces to shoot to kill with immunity from prosecution.

Well over 10,000 political prisoners were held under preventive detention laws — the National Security Act (NSA) and the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act — or under special "anti-terrorist" laws, notably the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and the Arms Act. Some political prisoners were held on criminal charges.

★

Hundreds more arrests were reported during 1990. No official figures were given in 1990 about the number of those being held for political reasons at any one time in Jammu and Kashmir, although unofficial sources in July estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people had been detained without trial in the state since January. Semi-official sources put the number held in September at 2,800, of whom 2,000 were said to be suspected armed secessionists and the others political leaders.

Trials of political prisoners were rare and subject to delay. "Naxalite" (Maoist revolutionary) political prisoners in West Bengal were denied the right to prompt and fair trial: four of them had awaited trial for over nine years.

Torture remained widespread. In Jammu and Kashmir there were well-documented reports of women being raped by members of the security forces, especially during house-to-house searches. Released prisoners said they had been beaten, tortured with electric shocks, burned with cigarettes and suspended upside-down. In Punjab, torture was also systematically used: methods included rolling wooden bars across the

thighs and inserting chilli powder into sensitive parts of the body. Relatives of alleged armed secessionists were among those arrested and tortured. Elsewhere, victims of torture included villagers detained in connection with demands for greater autonomy or separatism in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur, criminal suspects and people belonging to lower castes or tribal populations. In Bihar, people were tortured to deter them from asserting their demands to land rights and better pay.

Scores of people, including many members of the lower castes, died in police and military custody allegedly as a result of torture.

Increasingly, political suspects were held in unacknowledged detention, sometimes for months. Some "disappeared" after arrest, especially in Punjab, where arrests were made and subsequently denied by plainclothes police or paramilitary forces. *Habeas corpus* applications resulted in the courts ordering some of those held to be produced, but such orders were often ignored by the security forces.

★

During a campaign to build a Hindu temple at the site of an existing mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, the security forces allegedly killed several unarmed Hindus inside houses in early November. In November and December members of the Provincial Armed Constabulary were said to have deliberately killed several Muslims, including women and children, not connected with communal violence which had erupted in various towns in Uttar Pradesh.

Police officers allegedly responsible for human rights violations were sometimes suspended but rarely prosecuted. Moreover, when official investigations were conducted into alleged large-scale human rights violation, their outcome were often withheld. The NF government had stated its commitment to repealing that part of the 1952 Commission of Inquiry Act enabling governments to withhold the findings of inquiries on grounds of state security. Despite this, it refused to disclose the findings of an official inquiry into alleged extrajudicial killings of Muslims in Meerut in May 1987, saying the inquiry had "been treated as "secret" by the government of Uttar Pradesh".

Dozens of people were sentenced to death and some executions were believed to have been carried out. However, the exact figures are not known. At least one mercy petition was rejected by the President.

Amnesty International sought information about possible prisoners of conscience and victims of "disappearance", and pressed the government to investigate and prevent extrajudicial killings, notably in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh. It urged full and impartial investigations into all deaths in custody, and appealed to the government not to execute prisoners sentenced to death.

In June the NF government partially lifted a 10-year-old ban on all Amnesty International visits in India, and said that the organization would be allowed to conduct "private visits" or talks with the government in New Delhi. The government subsequently failed to schedule such meetings although Amnesty International proposed dates in July, August, September and October. An Amnesty International delegation attending the World Congress on Human Rights in December met the Cabinet Secretary and Foreign Secretary, who said that there had been no change in the previous government's policy that Amnesty International could visit New Delhi for discussions with the government. However, the government had not decided whether to allow the organization to visit Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

Postscript: Ultimately the Amnesty team was not given permission to visit Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Again, in April this year, Amnesty asked the Government of India permission for a three-member delegation (consisting of a Japanese lawyer and two members of the staff of The Amnesty International Secretariat) to visit Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, to meet officials in the states' Home Departments, lawyers and civil liberties groups to discuss human rights concerns.

Visas were denied by the Government of India.

Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

FOUNDER

Minoo Masani

EDITORS

S.V. Raju
R. Srinivasan

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Jehangir Patel

ADVISORY BOARD

Adam Adil
Sumant Bankeshwar
Arvind Deshpande
Geeta Doctor
Nissim Ezekiel
Yogesh Kamdar
Aziz Madni
Ramu Pandit
S.A.A. Pinto
Nitin Raut
Abe Solomon
Ajay Varadacharya

COVER, ILLUSTRATIONS AND LAYOUT

M.G. Talwadekar

PUBLISHERS

Democratic Research Service
4th floor, Maneckji Wadia Bldg.
127, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Bombay 400 001
Tel: 27 39 14

Published by J.R. Patel for the
Democratic Research Service and
printed by him at Parsiana Publications
Pvt. Ltd., 300 Perin Nariman Street,
Bombay 400 001

Typeset at Ace Fototypesetters
8, Kalyandas Udyog Bhavan
Near Century, Worli 400 025
Tel: 437 4368

Single Copy: Rs. 10
Annual: Rs. 30
Life: Rs. 400
(add Rs. 10 for outstation cheques)

Overseas (II Class Air Mail)
Annual: USD 20 or £ 12
Life: USD 120 or £ 70

Cheques to be drawn in favour of
Freedom First and mailed to publishers
at address listed above

BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

Every general election throws up a catchword. This time it was 'stability' — and like most catchwords it was treated as an end in itself and not the means to an end. The Congress(I) want us to believe that they alone can offer us a stable government in Delhi. Even assuming this is so, the question arises as to what they did with the 'stability' they provided for the forty odd years they were in power.

Four eminent Indians — Mr. J.B. D'Souza, a distinguished Civil Servant, now retired; Mr. Tanmay Datta the Chief Executive of an industrial enterprise; Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh an agriculturist and a former Minister for Agriculture at the Centre; and Prof. S. Ambirajan who teaches economics at the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras share their views with us on this subject.

The Economist's Survey of India deserves to be read by as many Indians as possible. It is factual, analytical and pinpoints with considerable accuracy what went wrong, and what needs to be done to set things right. In fact it establishes the fact that the people of India have *not* got the governments they deserve. We have taken the liberty of publishing some extracts as the subject is very much a part of the theme of this issue.

The car on the cover is illustrative of the state of our country and of our economy — stable but immobile. It has come to a halt thanks to the litter of contradictory policies and the myriad rules and regulations strewn on the road by none other than the driver himself! The only period of growth was during the first five year plan (1952-57) which gave primacy to agriculture and the concept of State control over the "commanding heights of the economy" had not yet been sprung on the people.

We now have over 250 life subscribers. This is in addition to a sizeable number of annual subscribers. While the number by itself is pitifully small it is, nevertheless encouraging. We would like to repeat that *Freedom First* is a vehicle to promote the ideas of a genuinely free society where the people are not hampered and harassed by passing governments. Much of what was written in its pages over the last 39 years has been vindicated — be it the demise of communism or the bankruptcy of Statism. The coming years are not going to be easy with vested interests in industry, the labour movement and the bureaucracy putting up a last-ditch effort to protect their interests at the cost of the people and the nation.

Howsoever small we have a role to play in continuing to call a spade a spade and correcting distortions in perspectives. We can only do this with your active cooperation. Send us names and addresses of your friends (as many as you like) to whom we could send specimen copies of *Freedom First* with your compliments.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Editors.

The Statesman's permission to reprint Mr. Masani's column is gratefully acknowledged.

Contents

July-September 1991
No. 410

After 40 Years of Stability	J.B. D'Souza, Tanmay Datta Bhanu Pratap Singh, S. Ambirajan	7
India — The Tiger Caged (From <i>The Economist's</i> Survey of India)		15
<i>The Masani Viewpoint</i>		19
The Setting of the Rising Sun		23
Of Freedom and Restraint	M. Varma	27
Burma — "A Country in Prison"	Shirin Panthaki	31
Edmund Burke — The Philosopher of Conservatism	G.N. Sarma	33
My Impressions of the Soviet Union	A.G. Modak	27
India and Israel	T.H. Chowdary	41
On Taxes	S.Y. Agnon	44
Book Reviews		47

WITH MANY VOICES

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

Of Our Netas & Politicians

What the Common People think

What can we say about political leaders. We can trust even prostitutes but not them!

Politicians don't keep their word. I don't like them.

During the day they are clad in white *kurta* and *dhoti* and they claim to be socialists; but at night they drown themselves in wine and women.

They make promises but when they come to power they only make money.

All politicians are thieves.

It (politics) has become a business. Good people don't enter politics.

From interviews by *Eyewitness*, March 1991

It is obvious that not having succeeded in any other field, they join politics.

... and others

I feel that the country's future is not safe in their hands.

Indian politicians have rhinoceros hides, resilience and mastery over the art of survivorship

Khushwant Singh, *The Week*, May 5, 1991

How will I benefit from voting? What have they done for us. None of the parties have done anything.

If presented with the classic options of guns *versus* butter, these *netas* (leaders) wouldn't hesitate. Butter of course. Butter Saddam yesterday, butter the Shahi Imam today. It's a far far butter thing that they do.

T.V.R. Shenoy, *The Week*, May 5, 1991

Whenever there are elections they are only for the seat, not for the country, not for the sake of the people.

Mahatma Gandhi was killed by a bullet from a pistol. Indira Gandhi was killed by bullets from sten guns and Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a plastic bomb. Indeed India is progressing.

Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil on Doordarshan, May 22, 1991

A crow flying over Kuwait today would have to carry its own rations.

James Walsh, *Time*, May 6, 1991 *

It is true that no one would have been greatly troubled by Saddam's aggression had Kuwait been exporting oranges.

Louella Lobo Prabhu, *Insight*, May 1991

The British supplied opium to the Chinese for they knew it could be exploited later. In India, politicians will supply the opium of Mandal in lieu of education.

Anjana Agnihotri, *India Today*, July 15, 1991

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



Valuing the Bharat Ratna

Though the world moved into a publican century, the baubles of the earlier aristocratic feudal age have persisted. In England the award of peerages and pontifical positions became something of a scandal as these were sold either to those who contributed to political party funds or for crasser purposes. Prime Ministers and monarchs dined with each other in distributing these empty sonarities and sinecures. Lloyd George was to use it liberally and was once publicly humiliated for his blatant misuse of power in awarding a title to someone who did not deserve it.

We in India never miss such opportunities of abusing power. The Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest award has been conferred so indiscriminately that it has lost its lustre and original purpose. It started — like so many other things — with Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Her son Rajiv Gandhi carried it to ridiculous lengths. One can applaud conferment on such illustrious persons as Maharishi Karve (who did so much in the cause of women's emancipation); Mother Teresa (for her noble work among the ill and the oppressed); or even Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan (the towering chief of the Pathans who preached non-violence in a fiery and violent race). But the award to Nelson Mandela was plainly calculated to earn plaudits.

But how does one justify the Bharat Ratna being awarded to MGR whose only claim to fame arose from a charisma built on his celluloid exploits and which drove millions of his fans into a fanatical devotion to him. Time and again he insulted the political intelligence of the citizens of Tamil Nadu with his gimmicks, while administration came to a virtual standstill.

And now the title has been conferred posthumously on Rajiv Gandhi. The only claim he could have had to this title was by the manner of his death. If so, every one who stood as a candidate for the Lok Sabha and got killed in the

Punjab should be given the Bharat Ratna. Rajiv Gandhi's eight-year regime was not only undistinguished but sullied by scandals and the strutting across the political stage of his cronies who were men of questionable qualities. No prime minister who ruled for such a long period accomplished so little. To cover the manner of its giving the government, as an afterthought tagged on another Indian all but forgotten by the Congress but not by the people — Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Vallabhbhai's name is etched too deeply in the chronicle of India to need any of these paints.

Mourning Dead VIPs

More than twenty years ago, this writer commented in the columns of *Freedom First* (August 1959) on the funeral of Dr. Zakir Husain the then President of India. Since then things have changed little and the electronic media for days becomes insufferable. The holidays (as a mark of respect for dead leaders) continue as does the boredom. TV has made most people empty-headed voyeurs glued to the idiot-box watching things compulsively for want of better things to do. What I wrote on 1959 is equally valid today:

In the first place, the declaration of a holiday immediately following Dr. Husain's demise is a matter on which there could be an honest debate. It would have been more dignified if most of the commercial and other establishments had closed for about an hour or so and more importantly had observed five minutes of silence and people given an opportunity to reflect on the passing away of this great son of India. On such occasions we have to dedicate ourselves once again

for national improvement. Since the people were let off a day following a Sunday and since all the places of entertainment were closed, the public did find it difficult to while away the time hanging on them. The people just did not know what to do with their time. The nation was supposed to be mourning. Yet in many places Radio Ceylon was tuned in.

That we have to learn to bear our public calamities with dignity is yet to be impressed upon us. All India Radio put up music which it must be confessed was one long wail. But for the speeches, the music provided was one of laboured pathos and there was little of dignity. It is significant to contrast this with the public funerals of Kennedy or Churchill. We have to realize that all men, including leaders of the political destinies in India are after all mortal, and that one should not be surprised if they died in office. And we will have to think of the appropriate music that will have to be broadcast and transmitted on such occasions. Surely our musical heritage too has several moods appropriate to such national occasions. It is said that our music is built up on moods and a mood of public tragedy is as important as any. Orchestration should be tried and experimented. The Home Ministry would do well to explore the desirability of the type of national elegiac dirges and compositions that ought to be put up on such occasion. To this should be invited the eminent musiologists and some tradition consciously built in.

RS

'Economic Reforms'

Even in this day and age for most Indian politicians prompted no doubt by those super-intellectuals at the JNU and the many economic and sundry research institutes that proliferate in Delhi, the words 'liberalisation' or, horror of horrors, 'privatisation' continues to be anathema. They would much rather prefer the term 'economic reform.' Whatever be the label, it is the content that matters.

The Prime Minister puts on a sad look on TV and tells us that the economy has been reduced to dire straits in the last eighteen months. 'Hard decisions' have to be taken warns the PM, all the time giving the impression that the Congress was never responsible for the mess we are in today.

There were a few men and a party that swam against the tide as far back as twenty or even thirty years ago. Two among them were Rajaji and Minoo Masani and the party was the Swatantra Party. Associated as I was with this Party I could quote chapter and verse from the numerous policy statements and resolutions of its National Executive spelling out what needed to be done to prevent economic ruin. For its trouble the Party was reviled as a 'party of capitalists', 'reactionary' and so on by none other than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He described the Swatantra Party as 'outdated' when it is now clear that the Party was decades ahead of its time.

At the Sixth National Convention of the Swatantra Party, Mr. Minoo Masani delivering the Inaugural Address on April 4, 1973, drew a blueprint of what a government of sensible persons would do to set the country on the path of progress and growth:

"Let us imagine for a moment a sudden outburst of sanity in New Delhi or, since that is not very likely, an act of will on the part of the Indian people to replace the present Government by a more enlightened and sensible set of persons. Let us, for the moment, rule out the possibility of the Swatantra Party being in office and in a position to carry out its own policies. Let us say that those who take over are modern, practical people who are not wedded to any dogma and who will take sensible steps to pull the country out of the morass. Let us even imagine that they would do what would be done by socialists like Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yu of Singapore, or by Chancellor Willy

Brandt of West Germany who won the elections last December in alliance with the Liberal (Free Democratic) Party on a manifesto for "the free market economy" which would be considered blasphemous by those who call themselves socialists in this country.

Such a regime could *inter alia* be expected to take the following steps to undo the mischief of the past two decades:

First, it would go in for a drastic cut in taxation, both indirect and direct, and a corresponding reduction in the unproductive expenditure of government.

Secondly, it would stabilise the Rupee by eschewing inflationary policies like deficit financing and by insisting that the country live within its means.

Thirdly, it would give priority to labour-intensive activities like agriculture, irrigation and road-building in order to further employment opportunities of a productive kind.

Fourthly, it would stop further nationalisation and takeover bids and insist on Government enterprises making a profit and giving a return to the taxpayer and to the country.

Fifthly, it would double the rate of industrial production by utilisation of installed capacity, modernisation of plant and machinery, eliminating most of the shortage of raw materials, power and transport, and reducing labour indiscipline.

Sixthly, it would cut out excessive controls, red tape and delay and follow Ludwig Erhard's prescription to 'let the men and the money loose', so that the country may advance.

Seventhly, it would activate competition and fight monopoly in all sectors and stop the current shadow boxing against the so-called concentration of economic power which has deprived the country of the economies of size which the rest of the world enjoys.

Last but not the least, it would take more serious steps to stop the explosive growth in our population on which today not even half a per cent of the outlay of our Five Year Plans is allocated.

Can there be any doubt that, if only these things are done, the picture would begin to change within a matter of months?

Politically Impossible?

There are people who tell me: "Yes, all this is true, but it is politically impossible." To them, all I can say is that they seem to have learnt nothing from history. Listening to them it would seem that these advocates of change have come to believe that there can be no further change and that history has come to a stop in 1973.

When educated and affluent people talk like this and claim that it is the ignorant and illiterate masses who come in the way of desirable reforms, I feel that they are advancing an alibi for their own guilt. Let us frankly face the fact that the greater part of the blame for the state of the country today lies on the shoulders of the educated and the affluent.

There is nothing wrong with our country; there is nothing basically wrong with our people who are both intelligent and enterprising. What is wrong is that the people are not getting the leadership that they have a right to expect from those who are better endowed with intellectual and material resources."

It is small consolation to Mr. Masani and the Party that Rajaji and he founded that they have been proved right. The tragedy is that the common people of India have had to undergo so much of avoidable hardship and the country reduced to having to pawn its gold for cash.

The guilty men are the Congressmen and the socialist politicians in power or outside who slavishly followed the siren song of socialism sung by Nehru. No lessons appear to have been learnt judging by the Prime Minister's repeated reassurances that the 'Nehru Line' has not been abandoned. The 'Nehru Line' it is amply clear is the shortest distance between bankruptcy and insolvency.

If these politicians are now advocating the freeing of the economy (with long-winded, often dishonest explanations) it is not because they are anxious to part with their power to issue licences, permits and quotas but because they have no options left. They have forced the Indian people to stand in the queue outside international financial institutions in the company of their former mentors.

S.V. Raju

BJP — The New Bogey-man of Indian Politics

The tenth General Elections to the Lok Sabha marks, according to many commentators and psephologists a turning point. Why? Mainly because it was fought (at least in the second phase) without a charismatic personality (meaning Rajiv Gandhi or any one from the Nehru-Gandhi family) at the hustings. Secondly the elections marked the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party as a party with a national dimension. Finally it has signalled the end of one-party dominance on the one hand and the emergence of coalition politics on the other of which rule by minority governments is but the first step.

Freedom First plans to organise a seminar in August to discuss what the outcome of the elections signify and the likely shape of our polity in the years to come (see box below).

For the purposes of this issue of *Freedom First* we would like to discuss the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party at the national level.

What is the reaction of some politicians and the parties they belong to are to be believed the BJP's emergence could prove fatal to the democratic fabric of society. The BJP is the new 'bogey-man' of Indian politics — hence the concerted campaign to treat them as political outcasts. Does the fact that the BJP received 20.95% of the votes polled in the general elections signify that India is reverting to the dark ages — repeating the terrible experience of living under the Ayatollah? It is true that political parties inspired by religion are not generally kindly disposed to dissent and to "unpopular" opinions.

It may be useful to recall that the apartheid regime in South Africa had the loyal and continued support of the white Church. Our Muslim friends might remember that in their community all over the world were, by and large, sympathetic to the *fatwah* against Rushdie — violating all the agencies of public life. In the same vein it is feared that a polity 'inspired by the Hindu religion may be no better. Remember the attempts made by Shiv Sena to denigrate Ambedkar for his views on certain parts of the Manusmriti? More recently readers will recall the fever pitch

of public anger at Khushwant Singh's remarks about Shivaji. Should we therefore conclude that the rise of the BJP sounds the death knell of civil freedoms in our land?

Since the Hindus are in a majority (80%) will the tyranny of the majority be a reality? In his classic essay *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill warned that the tyranny of society is something from which there is no easy way out: "Its social tyranny (can be) more formidable than many kinds of political oppression." Since it faces no penalties, this tyranny "leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life and enclosing the soul itself."

The speeches of *Sadhvi* Rithambhara and the stridency of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) or the Bajrang Dal are indeed frightening. Press reports inform us that even Mr. L.K. Advani the BJP Chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha was quite disgusted with the *Sadhvi's* recorded speeches. But what should be noted is the context in which they were effective. Why did they make little or no dent in Maharashtra, for example? On the other hand why did the BJP do so well in Uttar Pradesh. One reason is that the then UP Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's inept and rather brutal handling of the Ayodhya *kar sevaks*. His obvious attempt to use the opportunity to consolidate Muslim minority support recoiled against him.

If the VHP's revivalist and blatantly religious campaign was meant to sway the Hindu vote in favour of the BJP, how does one explain the drubbing this party received in the states where it ruled — Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh? On the other hand it swept to power in Uttar Pradesh (UP) India's most populous state. Surely it does not mean that the voters in some states are 'fundamentalists' and in the others 'secularists'.

People have been puzzled by the BJP phenomenon. Even in a state like West Bengal — a stronghold of the CPI(M) the BJP has made its presence felt. The generally accepted explanation appears to be that local events, local issues and local performance have influenced the voters.

Attention: Freedom First Subscribers

The next seminar to be organised by the Freedom First Foundation will be held in the last week of August. The subject:

New Politics for India?

The discussions will centre around the recent general elections and changes in the directions of the economy and polity of the country.

As in the past the proceedings will be reported in some detail in the October 1991 issue of *Freedom First*.

If you would like to participate in the seminar do drop us a postcard or telephone 273914 (11 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday) and leave your name, address and phone number.

For instance, the Congress coalition of castes in Gujarat was no longer attractive and the BJP was the beneficiary. The Janata Dal's infighting in Karnataka made for the success of some BJP candidates in Karnataka.

Therefore attributing the rise of the BJP to a 'Hindu Wave' is only a partial explanation. Had it been Rama it should have been Rama everywhere. But our 'secularists' and our 'leftists' have seen the rise of the BJP as a 'feudal fundamentalist, fascist' development. They perceive this as being similar to the rise of Hitlerism with the Muslims being the Jews. Others see it as 'Spaghetti Hinduism' with its appeal to the sense of identity of the Hindus; revulsion with the blatant wooing of the Muslims for their votes. Examples abound: the reversal of the Shah Bano judgement by legislation; the declaration of Prophet Mohammed's birthday as a holiday and the withdrawal (within 24 hours) of an Ordinance to take over the disputed site at Ayodhya. These actions were perceived as being cynically catering to the minority vote bank.

Mandalisation, the increasing violence in Punjab, Kashmir and Assam and the survival of India as a nation made the BJP an attractive proposition to the middle class. Many retired civil servants and retired top army brass joined the BJP boosting the latter's image. The party is the only one in India (barring the communist parties which keep shuffling their pack of old men in their seventies and eighties) to hold regular internal party elections; it has a second rank of leaders and well

organised cadres. They know their mind on economic matters (market economy but not favourable to foreign investment) and offer an alternative to the disorganised personality-based political parties. The BJP asked in their advertisement to be given a chance as the others had been tried and wanting. They have been denied this at the centre but given an opportunity to rule Uttar Pradesh. Their performance will be watched. Repeatedly, in the last few elections, it has been established that the Indian voter is nobody's fool.

As for the fear that an authoritarian right wing political party might well come to stay permanently in Indian politics, the voters in Madhya Pradesh have given the answer. Power given will be withdrawn if you don't perform. If we accept electoral politics should we not accept its perils?

Repeatedly BJP leaders Advani and Vajpayee have sought to clarify the meaning of 'Hindutva' and 'Ram Rajya'. They have, time and again, affirmed that what they oppose is 'pseudo secularism' which in their view perpetuates the communal divide. Why not give them an opportunity to prove themselves. If they are what their critics fear them to be then the BJP will be thrown out unceremoniously. But let us not continue to give a dog a bad name and hang it. It has happened before in Indian politics.

R. Srinivasan and S.V. Raju

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM

COFFEE LANDS LIMITED

(Registered Office: SAKLASPUR 573134)
KARNATAKA

Growers of Coffee, Tea, Cocoa, Orange, Pepper and Cardamom in
Hassan and Chikmagalur Districts, Karnataka State

Our Range of Products includes Quality
Tea and Cocoa Products

After 40 years of Stability...

The Congress(I)'s pre-assassination campaign slogan was 'stability'. After the assassination the BJP pointed out that the Congress(I) had lost its only leader and, in the changed circumstances, the BJP alone could offer 'stability'.

If the present Prime Minister is to be believed 'unstable' governments these last eighteen months were responsible for the parlous economic situation the country is facing today; that, had there been a stable government the situation would have been different. This, Mr. Prime Minister is not being quite honest. For forty four years we had a single party in power, (the Indian National Congress) with a majority, sometimes brutally so. But four decades of stable Congress governments have little to show in terms of growth except in terms of population increase and civil unrest. The economy however has been badly damaged by the men in the white cap.

We invited a retired civil servant, a farmer-politician, a business executive and an economist to share their views on this subject with our readers. This is what they say:

Institutional Decay

J. B. D'Souza

For millions in our country, particularly the 250 million below the poverty line and quite a few million above it, victims of social and economic oppression, stability is simply another name for sustained opportunity provided to their exploiters

Who wants stability? The economist, of course, seeks it, in his perennial tussle with the trade cycle. Businessmen like it, because they can plan their investments with a fair measure of certainty. Most of all, the haves in a society cherish political and social stability. How else can they stay on top of the pile? Have-nots gain little from stability. On the other hand, though threats to stability could loosen the chains that bind them in privation, they don't always do.

Consider a five-year old story of a group of workers hired to get the bark off wattle trees in a forest near Kodaikanal. It was a sub-contractor of Tanindia who hired them. Tanindia was a firm engaged in the dye and other industry, for which the wattle bark is a raw material. The workers were taken into the forest and lived there in batches of 20 to 50 families, totally isolated from the outside world, heavily exploited in their wage levels and living conditions. After some months they got restless, demanding proper wages as promised to them when they were hired. To their rescue came a young and enthusiastic Sub-collector, Gurdial Singh Pirzada, who insisted on the immediate payment of the wage arrears. Quite predictably,

the contractors used their political connections to retaliate. Before long, Mr. Gurdial Singh was transferred away. Stability then returned to the forests.

For millions in our country, particularly the 250 million below the poverty line and quite a few million above it, victims of social and economic oppression, stability is simply another name for the sustained opportunity provided to their exploiters.

Who has Gained by Stability?

But let's accept stability as desirable and good. Let's ask why it has suffered undoubted dilution in India, dilution that has produced repeated surges of violence. I believe most of today's instability is due to one's feeling of helplessness in one's quest for justice. For 40-odd years our people have been urged to sacrifice present comfort for future prosperity. Four decades of sacrifice have left most of us as far from the promised land as we were in 1947. Only 9 years away from Rajiv Gandhi's 21st century, thousands of villages don't even have drinking water. Today, as in 1947, the nation is being fed on promises, but there is a difference. Today's noble appeals come from a new breed of

politicians, "sanctimonious windbags clad hypocritically in homespun who spouted socialist rhetoric while amassing private wealth through the manipulation of political favours", to quote Shashi Tharoor. These are the men who have made the greatest gains from other people's sacrifices. They have managed this by perfecting and continuing the process of erosion of the country's most valued institutions, a process that Indira Gandhi began. So that now the very institutions that could offer a citizen justice and opportunity have turned into tools for his exploitation.

Judicial Decay

Perhaps the most spectacular example of institutional decay is the condition of our courts. For years we have known of the corruption that pervaded the lower judiciary and the administrative staff of our high courts. Whispers there were, of venality among the higher judiciary, but we dismissed them as either unfounded or exceptional enough to be ignored. The Auditor General of India and the Bar Associations have now dispelled our complacency. Four or five judges of the Bombay High Court have been

assailed as corrupt by the Bar, and have had to quit. A Supreme Court judge is awaiting impeachment for irregularities discovered in audit. Where can an aggrieved citizen finally take his grievance for redress?

To the decline in the common man's respect for the judicial system the executive government and the courts themselves add their own dose of contempt. Anand Dighe, a Shiv Sena leader accused of a political murder in 1989, is still at large. He must have taken an active part in the recent election campaign, with effects on the election results that you can imagine. He had been arrested in April 1989 but got bail a month later. In May 1991 the Supreme Court passed strictures on the judge who gave him bail, and directed the issue of an arrest warrant within 10 days. The execution of this warrant became a subject of negotiation between Chief Minister Sharad Pawar and the Shiv Sena, so the police did not execute it until June 3. Just 8 days later Dighe again got bail from the court.

What an effective way to destroy respect for the police, for the judiciary, for the morality of our entire system of governance! After this, how does a common citizen retain his confidence in the justice and equity of the system? Can you devise a better way to undermine stability?

Elections Getting Devalued

While the Dighe case may be a specially flagrant threat to our confidence in the Establishment, equally disgraceful developments are becoming routine. Each round of elections we hold gets less 'free and fair', the description our pious rulers still cling to, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In the recent elections the Congress party gave tickets to no less than 30 dacoits in Uttar Pradesh. "People are losing faith in the democratic system to a certain extent because they feel it is not serving the right purpose", commented a BJP candidate in U.P. as he sat in a police station writing complaints about shootings and vote stealing. "The system and especially the people at the helm of affairs are corrupt. They are criminal actually".

Wanton Maladministration

Nearly every week in the intervals between elections the press brings

women raped and property destroyed. Uncommonly serious riots evoke ministerial declarations that District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police will be held personally responsible for future riots, and will be severely punished. Now and then the public outcry following a riot forces a judicial inquiry which lasts long after public indignation has worn itself out, but almost never results in either effective prosecution of the rioters or penalties for careless officials. Remember Bhiwandi and Meerut as instances of this. How can a citizen's confidence in the system and his stake in stability survive such wanton maladministration? These are glaring examples of our rulers' determination to drag the administration into disrepute and contempt. Less striking examples abound.

Laws with Convenient Loopholes

In the years since Independence the legislators we have elected and our several governments have generally been eager to make all kinds of new laws to regulate our conduct. Having done so they have either imagined or pretended that they have solved the problem the law professed to address. Generally, the ministers who promote the legislation are the very ones who later search for loopholes to exploit in favour of themselves, their clients or their patrons. Except in this respect the zeal displayed in piloting the law never survives into its administration. So that the citizen seldom gets the benefits that the speeches in the legislature promised him.

Prime examples of this phenomenon are the land ceiling laws that appeared on the statute book in the

'sixties and 'seventies. The ceilings on agricultural land have proved to be illusory: huge holdings have persisted into the 'eighties and the 'nineties, often by prominent members of the very political party that imposed the ceilings. The urban land ceiling has been an even greater scandal. Imposed by Indira Gandhi during the Emergency in a pretence of concern for 'an equitable distribution of land ... to subserve the common good', it achieved by the manner of its administration precisely the opposite. Fifteen years after its enactment, just a fraction of the land in excess of the ceiling has come to the government. Still less has been used for the 'common good'. The law has done a lot of good to many of the ministers and officials who administered it, men who have unblushingly helped escapes, legitimate as well as illicit, from its rigours. Meanwhile the drastic shrinkage of the land market in which the law and its administration have resulted, has driven the prices of homes to astronomical heights, depriving the poor and the middle class of access to decent housing and ensuring that the man in the street will always stay there.

Who is Responsible?

If our society has turned sour and unstable then, that has happened chiefly because of the steady erosion of public confidence in our most treasured institutions. These institutions have been steadily corroded and corrupted during the regimes of Indira Gandhi and her son, which brought the law and the bodies of officials, judges and others who administer it into contempt.

MR. J.B. D'SOUZA retired from the Civil Service after a distinguished career.

Bankruptcy of Ideas

Tanmay Datt

The world that slept as India woke to freedom forty four years ago was a world repentant and awed. It had repented for its colonialism (or had its might. The fall of Berlin and then of East Europe to Russia were fresh in every mind. If this world could

disintegration of the Soviet empire and the socialist hubris, its sickness perhaps started with the lesson that the end of colonialism did not mean the beginning of prosperity in the newly liberated countries. Where it meant the reverse.

India, boasting of the highest savings rates in the world, more than

As in the rest of the world, in India also we witness the limitations of state power. Power is exercised through people — ministers, bureaucrats, big and small, the armed forces. The wider the powers, the more the number of people you need to exercise the power, the more, therefore, the distance between intentions and their implementation. The stability we have had in India during the last forty four years is the stability, it is now squalidly clear, of going round in circles.

millennium's tradition of agriculture, arte and industry has today joined the ragged ranks of despotic, destitute socialist countries. This denouement takes place amid the loud collapse of the idea that we are nation. The beggaring of the country and its drowning in blood are the backdrop of the end, the mindless assassination of the dynasty that had ruled India practically uninterrupted since Independence.

Indian Politics Bankrupt

The dynasty gave the country undoubted stability; its members had the trust of the electorate and used the trust to hold the party they led in thrall. The trust and the thralldom gave the country stability. They had the trust because they had a political feel, which was magical in that the people ignored the political angle to it and ways warmed to them, for the many-facetedness of India and the loneliness of its poor. The abject attempt of the Congress(I) to draft Mrs Sonia Gandhi to the Congress(I) presidency caused ridicule among the intelligent, Indian and foreign. Had she, wisely, agreed, the Congress(I) might have swept the post-assassination polls. It is not merely at the Congress(I) is a bankrupt paradigm. Indian politics is bankrupt. No politician, other than the members of the Nehru dynasty, is perceived to be beyond clans and sects.

So, with Rajiv gone, Mrs Sonia Gandhi in grief stricken seclusion, Manmohan-Rahul too young, we have another Congress(I) government, its mirroring ministerial faces again promising stability. Shorn of the mystic magic, stability only means more of the same: continued beggaring of the country, its continued self-immersion in blood.

As in the rest of the world, in India also we witness the limitations of state power. Power is exercised through people — ministers, bureaucrats, big and small, the armed forces. The wider

the powers, the more the number of people you need to exercise the power, the more, therefore, the distance between intentions and their implementations. A despot tries to bridge the distance by secret police, the Red Guards. Pluralist politics have no such answers but keep trying half-measures. The exercise of state power on politics, economics and social movements is too large an enterprise — for despot as well as the demagogue. Both fail, the democrat instantly and visibly, the despotic ruler buying some time by terror. The stability we have had in India during the last forty-four years is the stability, it is now squalidly clear, of going round in circles.

Our Netas and Babus

Cliches can be tyrannical. Spouting of self-reliance, we have built an economy pathetically reliant on the state, that is, on transient politicians and bureaucrats. Talking of unity in diversity, we have built a polity where provincial politicians are made to live at the sufferance of Delhi. So every local grievance is a resentment against the distant State and festers into demands for secession. Buffeted by the stormy winds of change blowing through the world, the present leaders are talking in unaccustomed phrases of going global, of more openness of the economy, of more power to the states. The new found wisdom is not lit by comprehension. What is necessary to understand is that our ministers and bureaucrats have neither the ability to make the economy self reliant nor globally competitive. They have neither the ability to unify the nation by central control nor preserve unity by leaving more of the cake to the states for the politicians and bureaucrats of the states to squabble over. The complex dynamics of the economics and politics of such a large and varied country as ours cannot be bottled and unbottled at will by netas

and babus. They have tried bottling and brewed scum. It is time they learn other trades for a living.

That might sound like a complaint against Indian democracy itself. It is not meant to be. It is a complaint against the economics and politics of stability that have been practiced on us, the elaborate, fiendishly clever schemes of doing good to us, which always fail and, on failing, give birth to other, still more clever schemes. It is as if we are the stage on which the netas and babus act out on obscure and esoteric play, full of hidden meanings and allusions of significance only to the players. The world serves as bored, and contemptuous, spectators.

The Politics-Business Nexus

Only a very brave man will answer the questions that, today, Punjab, Kashmir and the mandir-masjid monsters pose to the future of the nation. Most fortunately, the economic riddles are immeasurably less apocalyptic. True, we have run out of foreign exchange.* Against this large red-ink entry, put down in bold black the fourth successive good monsoon. It is entirely good news, reported with lament by the NCAER, that 20% of steel production is unreported (and untaxed, but also, therefore, unreliable on imported scrap). Against the lumbering Public Sector white elephants, pit the assured agility of our Rs 600,000 million 'black' economy which by producing a waterfall of goods and services (regrettably,

**It is useful to remember that another great foreign exchange crisis, in the early seventies following the first oil price increase was quietly solved by the people by mass emigration to the Gulf — and remitting back the savings. The big-thinkers of Delhi paid back by harassing them at the customs clearance whenever they came home with some trinkets bought with their money. The wisdom was so much owed by a country to so few and the owing so ungraciously acknowledged.*

also narcotics) keep hyperinflation away and unemployment reduced. Even the pervasive Control has had its uses. It has honed the innate canniness of the Indian businessman. Practically every business that has survived and prospered in post-independence India has first survived and prospered by making a fool, or a bribed felon of rule-making bureaucrats and politicians. And many businesses have survived and prospered. This larcenous nexus between politics and business may have damaged politics more than it has damaged business. The damage to business is considerable in opportunities, time, growth, jobs, competitiveness lost. But when the gales of competition come, as they certainly will, Indian business will present a very different spectacle than does business in today's eastern Europe.

That is still in the future. For the present, even a destitute economy, an imploding polity have people benefiting from the destitution, the implosion. The beneficiaries, among whom can be counted most politicians and bureaucrats, have mounted a sort of deathwatch on the economy from the high ground of positions of power and influence acquired in the wasted forty-four years. What is more lethal than these necrophiles is the large number

of economic and political flat-earthers among our intelligentsia that have not yet given up on preaching their archaic faiths. We have economists declaring themselves to be "unrepentant Stalinists", a claim that is as moral and as relevant as that of being unrepentant child-molesters but is perhaps merely foolish.

Palace Plots Continue

We have discussions on IMF conditionalities as if the IMF is some evil Martian force and not a world body of which we are members and which before lending money makes sure that we have organised ourselves to save and repay. We have endless seminars on privatisation solemnly concluding that privatisation is not a panacea. As if anything is a panacea, as if economics have anything to do with panaceas. That the new Prime Minister has appointed political non-entities to important positions and give minor portfolios to the heavy-weights — a ploy patented by the Nehru offsprings and their hangers-on in 25 dreary years of increasing failures — has been editorially applauded as proof of Prime Ministerial sagacity. No matter that this is not how the cabinet system — where the prime minister is the first among equals — is run. No matter that, with the charisma of the dynasty gone, this strange precedence of palace plots over political

realities cannot work. The gods of destruction, who are said to destroy reason first, are busy.

However the *netas* and *babus* and columnists strut around in Delhi and in spite of their many confident pronouncements on the future course of the economy and politics, one is not persuaded that they are competent to discuss the subject. Perhaps their irrelevance is the lesson of the stability of the last forty four years. We had stability of sorts based on the ability of the members of a dynasty to get out the votes and their surprising barrenness of ideas. Perhaps the barrenness had something to do with the erosion of the ability at vote getting. Now the members with the magic are gone; the wages of barrenness remain. We are paying them now and will be doing so, gritting our teeth, for the next few years. The pain will be tolerable since the barrenness, thanks to the temporary bankruptcy, will have gone for ever.

MR. TANMAY DATTA is the chief executive of an engineering enterprise.

Rural Economy Ruined

Bhanu Pratap Singh

India had 'stable' governments for over 40 years. This stability of government has little to show in terms of real progress thanks to the pursuit of outmoded ideas, first propounded by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and doggedly pursued by his successors, under the overall label of the "socialist pattern of society"

Stability in the governance of a country, and that too by a dynasty, pollutes the democratic environment, inhibiting, in turn, the growth of true leadership. Though the stability of an elected government for its full term of five years is desirable, it is in the interests of the people that the party in power is made to sit in the opposition every five or ten years. In the governance of a country, as in the progress

of science, new ideas need to be constantly tested. The acceptance of any development strategy as the last word in economic management, or of any "ism" as the ultimate truth, amounts to saying, that humanity has nothing more to learn from new experiences and discoveries.

India had 'stable' governments for over 40 years. This stability of government has little show in terms of real

progress thanks to the pursuit of outmoded ideas, first propounded by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and doggedly pursued by his successors, under the overall label of the "socialistic pattern of society". Before discussing the extent of damage caused by these ideas, it needs to be said, that it is not the personality of the leader, but the strategy of development which determines the pace of progress of a coun-

Pandit Nehru was, no doubt, great in many ways; but his strategy for the development of the country was all wrong. It is unfortunate, that inertia of thought is so pervasive in India, that in recent years, none of the opposition parties could muster courage to unequivocally repudiate Pandit Nehru's socialist planning. It has now been amply demonstrated worldwide that socialist planning only leads to waste, inefficiency, corruption and frustration. Hence despite changes of government at the Centre, the economy failed to grow because all of them refused to give up centralised planning. Failure in the economic field is one of the main reasons, why most political parties are now indulging in divisive politics as the only way to attract votes. Pandit Nehru's strategy was based on three assumptions:

The rapid industrialization of the country was the surest way to alleviate poverty.

To ensure that the benefits of higher production reach the common people, the public sector should occupy the "commanding heights of the economy".

Government was the best judge to decide *where* the capital resources of the country should be invested, *what*, and *how much* of each product should be produced and at *what prices* these should be sold.

Licence Control Permit Raj

The Licence Control Permit Raj (LCPR) as the instrument to promote the socialist pattern of society not only retarded the growth of private industries, but also stunted Indian agriculture. In course of time, the LCPR disrupted the political system by establishing a nexus between corrupt politicians and black money barons. It was again the LCPR which made the Indian people "captive consumers" of the "made in India" high cost, poor quality products which are unable to stand international competition without export subsidies. Even in domestic markets these products survive with the help of high tariff walls. The few hesitant steps taken towards liberalisation in the '80s have hardly made any impact on the overall situation. Not surprisingly, the bureaucrats who exercise their regulatory powers, and the favoured industrialists with their

monopolistic enterprises are the greatest votaries of the LCPR.

While the government in pursuit of Nehruvian socialism assumed the role of the Omniscient and the Omnipotent, the economic development of the country miserably failed in its primary duty of developing the country's human resources. India, it is claimed, can make anything; but it has failed to make literate the vast majority of her people. Making people literate is undoubtedly the first step, which should have been taken by the government but that was not considered as vital as the pursuit of grandiose schemes. Even today, India spends no more than 3.5 percent of her national income on education, against 6 to 10 percent in other countries; and even out of this measly percentage, nearly two thirds is spent on higher and urban education, leaving rural India one vast sea of ignorance and illiteracy.

India Amongst The Poorest Nations

Government spokesmen make tall claims about the progress made by India since independence. They say India can make anything — from pins to aeroplanes. Also, that she has become self-sufficient in foodgrains and the incidence of poverty is being rapidly reduced. These claims, even if not totally false, are only half-truths, based on a comparison with the past, and not with what other countries have achieved during a similar period. Science and technology have made rapid strides. The number of discoveries made during the last fifty years outnumber the discoveries made during the preceding two centuries. To give a few examples: high yielding variety seeds of cereals evolved during the last thirty years, have raised agricultural productivity the world over; similarly advances made in the field of medicine have extended human life in all countries. The relevant comparison therefore should be not between the past and the present, but between what India has achieved and what other countries have achieved during the last 40 years. By this yardstick it will be found that India has lagged behind other developed countries not only in economic development, but also in improving the quality of life of her people (see Table I).

Table I
India amongst the poorest countries of the world*

	India	Group of Poorest Countries* (Weighted average)
G.N.P./Capita in \$ (1988)	340.0	320.0
G.N.P./Capita annual per cent growth (1965-88)	1.8	3.1
Average annual per cent growth in Agriculture (1980-88)	2.3	4.4
Average annual per cent growth in Industry (1980-88)	7.6	8.7
Energy Consumption (kgm per capita of oil equivalent) (1988)	211.0	322.0
Average annual percent growth in Govt. consumption (1980-88)	8.8	7.0
Merchandise trade exports per capita in \$ (1988)	17.9	37.2
Life expectancy (in years) (1988)	58.0	60.0
Infant mortality (per 1000) (1988)	97.0	72.0
Population Growth (annual per cent) (1980-88)	2.2	2.0
Adult Literacy Rate (per cent) (1985)	43.0	56.0
Per capital daily calorie supply (1986)	2238.0	2384.0

* Group of low-income developing countries.
Source: World Development Report

Comment: It may be noted that India, as compared to the weighted average of the poorest countries, is lagging behind in economic growth as well as in other human development indicators. India is marginally ahead in G.N.P./capita and population growth, but lags behind in consumption and population nutrition (to be noted about

India has also lagged behind most developing countries in the annual rate of reduction of population below the poverty line (annual per capita income less than \$275, according to World Bank criterion). Between 1972 and 1983, the annual rate of reduction in India was 1.04% (For the same period, this rate was: Indonesia: 2.34, Malaysia: 1.66, Brazil: 1.45, Pakistan: 1.43, Costa Rica: 1.41 and Thailand: 1.40 per cent per annum).

On the other hand India, has excelled in increasing government expenditure and borrowing. We have resorted in a big way to deficit financing. The reason is that the per capita total budgetary transactions of the Union, States and Union Territories have increased during the period 1973-74 and 1988-89 at a rate, which is 2.8 times faster than the increase in per capita national income. This kind of extravagance has been justified in the name of development. According to the *Asian Development Review* (Part II, Vol. I), for the period 1970-82, India's incremental capital output ratio (ICOR) was the highest among South East Asian countries. India spent Rs 6.11 to increase her national income by one Rupee whereas in South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia, this ratio was lower than 3.5. This means that our's has been the most mismanaged economy in Asia. The main culprit is the Public Sector, which, broadly speaking, has been consuming nearly one-half of our national investment, but contributing only one fourth to national income, and negatively to net national savings.

The surest indicator of the strength of the economy of any country is the value of its currency in international markets. During the period 1985-90, the last five years of the 'stable' *raj*, the Indian Rupee depreciated by 55% against the SDR, 54% against the Pound Sterling, 75% against the DM, 70% against the Yen and 32% against the U.S. Dollar (RBI Annual Report 1989-90). Within the country too the Rupee has been rapidly losing its value in terms of goods and services.

Agriculture the Worst Sufferer

The Nehruvian development strategy has done maximum damage to the rural economy. Though lip service has all along been paid to agriculture, it has been deprived of its due share in developmental expenditure. The benefits of

Table II Draining out the Farm Sector

	Index of Productivity	Index of Procurement Price	Index of All commodities wholesale prices	Index of real price of wheat produced on one hec. of land.
Wheat				
1970-71	100	100 (76)	100	100
1988-89	171.4	240.81 (83)	435.3	94.8
Rice				
1970-71	100	100	100	100
88-89	151.32	296.3	435.3	103.0

(Source: Economic Survey 1989-90)

It may be noted, that in the case of wheat, in spite of productivity growth between 1970-71 and 1988-89 being 71.4%, the gross return per hectare to wheat growers in real terms (or the purchasing power of wheat in terms of "all commodities") was reduced by 5.2% as compared to what it was in 1970-71. In the case of rice, against a productivity growth of 51.23%, the gross return per hectare, in real terms, increased marginally by 3.0%. Taking wheat and rice together, it can be safely stated, that all the benefits of higher production between 1970-71 and 1988-89 were effectively drained out of the farm sector.

higher production in agriculture have been systematically drained out of the farm sector through price twists. Expenditure on agriculture, irrigation, rural development, education and medicare, which could improve rural conditions and formed 49.6 percent of the total plan expenditure during the First Plan was reduced to 27.5 per cent during the Seventh Plan. The benefits of higher production in agriculture, particularly in grain production, have been sucked out for the benefit of others (Table II).

The Government's subsidy on fertilizers is supposed to compensate farmers for the infra-parity prices, that they are forced to accept by exercise of the regulatory powers of the government for the processing, trade and movement in foodgrains. But the fact

is, that the huge subsidy on fertilizers is to support inefficient Indian fertilizer factories, and not farmers. Despite these subsidies, Indian farmers have to pay 10 to 25 percent more for their fertilizers in terms of cash and several times more in terms of the price of wheat and rice. If Indian farmers are allowed to sell their rice and purchase their fertilizers in international markets, they would get nearly three times more fertilizers by the sale of one quintal of rice, than what they get in the domestic market.

As a consequence of the adverse terms of trade, savings and capital formation in the farm sector have sharply declined, and almost parallel to that, the average annual growth rate of foodgrains has also declined. (Table III)

Table III

Average Annual Growth Rate in Production of Foodgrains, and Capital Formation in the Farm Sector as Percent of the Total.

Period	Capital Formation in Farm Sector as % of Total	Average annual % Growth Rate in Foodgrains Production
1970-71 to 1974-75	16.8	3.44
1975-76 to 1979-80	18.0	3.11
1980-81 to 1984-85	13.6	2.84
1985-86 to 1989-90	10.5	2.33

Source: Central Statistical Organisation (Ministry of Agriculture)

Disparities Have Increased

The great slogan of socialism was that it would lead to more equitable distribution of national income and reduce disparities in incomes and opportunities. That hope has now been totally belied. According to the Central Statistical Organisation, between 1980-81 and 1988-89, the period when Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were in full control, national income, at constant prices, increased by Rs. 66,640 crores. Out of this, only Rs. 16,762 crores or 2.15% of the total, accrued to primary producers (those engaged in agriculture, fisheries, logging, mining and quarrying) who constitute no less than 70% of the population, whereas the balance 87.85% went to the remaining 30% engaged in other pursuits. As a consequence of population growth during the period, the gain of 25% additional income in the case of primary produc-

ers was nearly wiped out whereas in the case of the others, despite the population growth, there was substantial gain in per capita income. This unequal distribution of the additional income is reflected in the growth pattern of consumption by the common people and the comparatively well-off. While between 1980-81 and 1988-89, consumption expenditure — at constant prices — on cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables, education and medical services increased by 2.4% per annum; on personal transport, furniture, furnishings and household equipment, it increased by 11.5% per annum, against a population growth of 2.1% per annum.

Socialist leaders, when returned to legislatures rarely miss an opportunity to raise their own emoluments. They have also been quite generous in increasing the emoluments of the employees of public sector undertak-

ings. Between 1970-71 and 1988-89, against the general price rise of 4.35 times, emoluments of legislators (U.P. MLAs) were raised by 14.66 times, and of employees of the public sector 7.2 times. During the same period, per capita national income increased only by 5.2 times. If separate accounting is done for agricultural workers, the increase in their income is found to be less than the increase in prices. In other words, their real income had declined. It can therefore be safely stated that, under the socialist dispensation, those who are nearest to the seats of power have benefited the most, and those who are farthest have suffered the most. Concentration of power and pelf is the only outstanding achievement of four decades of socialist planning and 'stability'.

MR. BHANU PRATAP SINGH is a farmer and former Union Minister for Agriculture.

Instable Economic Policies

S. Ambirajan

"Has our economy been stable — or unstable — during the last forty years?" is a question that cannot be easily answered because the many facets of 'stability' can be defined in more than one way, and the desirability or otherwise of stability will depend on the prevalent circumstances.

The current concern for 'Stability' leaves economists cold because "growth with Stability" has always been their central theme of discourse. Stability for economists does not mean an unchanging static immobility but something that remains firm in a positive way while also allowing for change or movement. Thus, for example, an increasing but stable rate of growth is preferred to an unchanging economy. One of the frequently uttered laments among economists until not so long ago was the so-called 'Indian Rate of Growth', meaning India's annual rate of economic growth around 3.5 percent.

While stability in the political and social spheres of our society might be welcome, a narrowly defined stability in the economic sphere is not neces-

sarily an attractive proposition. Economic development involves movement and movement entails a measure of dynamic tension which is no doubt a form of instability. Countries in the modern world — except, perhaps, societies living in inaccessible jungles and untouched by events elsewhere in the Globe — experience elements of both stability and instability over the years. Some combinations of these elements yield beneficial results while others seem to lead to unhappy consequences. In analysing the economic experience of particular nations, it is thus necessary to consider both the factors that provided the needed dynamic tension for economic progress and those that kept the system stable by linking such economic achievements with the welfare

of the society as a whole.

Instability in Economic Growth

"Has our economy been stable — or unstable — during the last forty years?" is a question that cannot be easily answered because the many facets of 'stability' can be defined in more than one way, and the desirability or otherwise of stability will depend on the prevalent circumstances. One can talk of the stability of the Indian economy, but only at the crudest level, by examining the rate of growth of the real per capita income during the last forty years. It is something around four percent, but the same when seen as year to year annual growth per capita NNP would range from -8.7% in 1954-55 to 20.5% in 1973-74, with no single figure occurring for more than

two years. Again, admittedly from 1957-58 onwards, the per capita income has been rising, although not steadily; but if seen in real terms, there have been as many as eleven years out of the forty with negative rates of growth. Such fluctuations are absent, of course, when we look at things like population growth, price level, and the numbers of the unemployed. They have been rising — sometimes slowly, and at other times very fast. All said, then, our economy cannot be said to be growing with stability.

What has contributed to this instability in the functioning of our economy over the last forty years? Obviously there are certain causes of instability, like monsoon failures, that are beyond human control. Thus not for nothing was the Indian economy called a "Feast or Fast Economy". Until the so-called Green Revolution that increased our food production substantially, even the availability of adequate foodgrains to feed our population was uncertain, and India had to depend upon countries like the USA for necessary cereals to prevent the outbreak of large scale famines. A test of a country's economic stability is to see how well it can cope with such external causes of instability. During the last forty years, thanks to the many irrigation projects, a certain measure of protection from monsoon failures has been acquired, although it is nowhere near what can be deemed adequate. Military hostilities with neighbours, of happenings elsewhere like the recent Gulf War that create unexpected complications and impose heavy strains on the economy cannot be anticipated, for they are external to the system. It follows therefore that the economy needs to be strong as well as resilient to be able to absorb such shocks and remain stable.

Dismal Record

While external sources of instability are unpredictable and nothing can really be done except to be on one's guard, internal sources of instability can and should be kept under severe check. On this score, the record of independent India is very dismal. No one would dispute that a country's production system and distribution channels should be allowed to function smoothly to make the economy effi-

cient. In modern times with our economies becoming more and more complex and inter-linked, it should be the responsibility of the government to create and sustain the right kind of such stable environment. Government policies can either make positive contributions to make the economy function well, or create unstable conditions to destroy the productive potential, and thus ultimately the welfare of the country's population.

Unstable Plans

In India, government policies and actions have been more a source of instability to our economy than supportive of the productive capacities. To be fair to our government — especially the early years under Jawaharlal Nehru — it consciously tried to frame policies to reduce instability. In order to avoid the uncertainties involved in a free market economy, it set up the Five Year Plans to think ahead as to what was necessary, to identify the possible obstacles that could arise, and to devise policies that will make things smooth for the economy to operate efficiently. These Plans worked well upto a point to achieve their objectives, but became counter-productive due to numerous reasons. The entire structure of economic activities in India came to be defined by these Five Year Plans, but these Plans themselves introduced other elements of uncertainty into the system. To start with, most of the Plans were finalised only after the Plan periods began. Not every Plan could be fully implemented with some of them given the go by when the governments changed. On three occasions the Plans were suspended by substituting annual Plans. Again the Plans were based on data that in the event were found inaccurate. Above everything else, there were frequent changes in the constitution of the Planning Commission.

Complicated Regulations

With increasing involvement by the government in the economy, all the producing agents — private businesses, public sector enterprises, and even the individual peasant households — were affected one way or the other by what the government did or promised to do. One of the major stumbling blocks on the many uncertainties in the situation. Although India was blessed with practically a one-party

rule for the greater part of the last forty years, the economic policy pursued has been most unstable. Not that the broad economic objective of growth with stability underwent any change, but at the detailed legislative and the vital executive levels, there was neither coherence nor stability. The elaborate regulations piously intended to channelise our collective efforts to desired directions have actually become a source of instability. With most of the statutes written in often ambiguous language and exasperating detail, no one could be sure how they would be interpreted by the bureaucrats and ministers armed with sky-high discretionary powers. And the rules and regulations are constantly changed so that not infrequently the bureaucrats themselves got confused.

A prime example of government policy being neither coherent nor stable relates to taxation. It was only in the late 1980s under the Rajiv-VP Singh dispensation that the importance of long term fiscal stability was realised, and yet the whole policy was given up a year after this realisation had dawned upon our rulers. Not a single year has passed without some major or minor changes being made in our tax system. Rates, definitions, concessions, structure and indeed everything connected with taxes was grist to the legislative mill.

One could give many such instances of instability within the Indian economic system preventing it from functioning properly. While political instability is spectacularly and explosively visible and worrying, there are other kinds of instability that are not in the open, though equally undesirable. The new government which is to assume office shortly will be doing a great service if it:

- (a) refrains from introducing elements of instability into the productive system; and
- (b) actively formulates a policy to provide an adequate supportive infrastructure so that the productive system's capacities are properly increased.

India – The Tiger Caged

The Economist's "Survey of India" (May 4, 1991) has attracted considerable attention in the Indian press. Yet, none of our newspapers have, to our knowledge, thought it useful to share with their readers its contents. The story of what went wrong and why India bankrupt need to be understood. The public debate over the IMF loan has been turned into a question of India's self-respect and sovereignty. The fact of the matter is we are broke – thanks to forty years of "Nehruvian socialism". Like an individual who in state of financial crisis goes to a bank for a loan, our country is compelled to go to the IMF for a loan. We patterned our economic development on the Soviet model. The Soviets are broke. So are we. They are going around asking for help. So are we. The Survey helps us understand what went wrong and suggests what needs to be done. We wish we could have reproduced the Survey in its entirety. We cannot afford to. Hence we have done the next best. Given you extracts in this issue – and, hopefully, more in the next.

"...few of India's troubles are as tractable as Indians, especially, suppose them to be. Of all its miseries, the greatest by far is the country's economic failure, which is as broad and deep as the poverty that it sustains. If India could put its economy right, any of its other difficulties would immediately seem less overpowering; they would not vanish, by any means, but they would at least begin to seem manageable. Undeniably, political stability and human progress in India depend on greater economic success. That is exactly why so many Indians smile with resignation at the hopelessness of their case.

They are wrong. Nowhere else, not even in communist China or the Soviet Union, is the gap between what might have been achieved and what has been achieved as great as in India. The country is rich in the resources at matter most for economic advance – not physical resources (which it also has) but human sources. Indian are capable of punishingly hard work; remarkably for people so poor, they are thrifty; they are entrepreneurial; they are ambitious and materialistic. When Indians have ignored the Hindu injunction never to cross the "black sea" and travel abroad, they have prospered within a generation. Only at home are many imprisoned, in their hundreds of millions, in a sink of despair and degradation.

Since independence in 1947 India has pursued self-sufficiency. That pursuit has been its undoing. An ever-inflating bureaucracy has planned and installed, using ideas and methods borrowed from the Soviet Union. A related goal of this approach was to

separate India from the world economy. This was done by replacing imports with domestic production, by discouraging foreign investment and in many other ways. Nehru and his followers took the view that interaction with the rest of the world would inevitably lead to dependence. If their country was not to be exploited, it would have to go its own way.

★

...Never forget that India was crippled by its colonial past, that the rich first world will refuse to let it catch up, that democracy costs India one or two percentage points of growth a year. For much too long, Indians were encouraged to believe such rubbish by people in the West who claimed to be their friends. Now that, at least, is changing. The question is whether India will change too.

India is not merely capable of making great inroads on poverty over the coming decade; that should be the least of its ambitions. It is an economic miracle waiting to happen. Indians are fond of saying that whereas Japan, South Korea and the other thriving economies of East Asia are tigers, their own country is an elephant: immense, cautious, slow-moving, but also sure-footed, strong, purposeful. (It is a comforting image in another way: Ganesh, the Hindu god of good fortune, has the form of an elephant.) The idea is as false as the notion of the Hindu rate of growth.

If a zoological metaphor is desired, a better one is this: India is a tiger caged. This tiger, set free, can be as swift and fierce as any in the world. Releasing it will, however, be immensely difficult. What needs to be done is quite clear – which makes

India's misery all the more heartbreaking. The challenge is political. The government must dismantle an unbelievably complicated system of restraints and rewards that, over the past four decades, has securely enclosed every aspect of Indian life. The first and necessary step is to see these restraints and rewards as the cage that they are. Depressingly, India is far even from realising that.

A post-socialist age

In the past two years the world has witnessed an extraordinary event: the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. The ideological battle between the command model and the market model of economic management is over, and history's verdict could hardly be clearer. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary reject any compromise with socialism, the idea that there might be a "third way": they want capitalism as soon as they can get it. The Soviet Union cannot bring itself to reform its economy and is visibly paying the price. Throughout the third world – in Latin America, even in Africa – governments are struggling to liberalise their economies. Surely India cannot resist this tide?

It seems ready to try. Surprisingly few among India's rulers see lessons for themselves in what has happened in Europe since 1989. ("India is different. India is incomparable.") Some, without irony, see the changes in Eastern Europe as an endorsement of their own blend of planning, intervention and private property. ("Why should we be worried? They want to do more and do it.")

Unexpectedly, India's few economic dissidents seem to work mainly inside

the bureaucracy, where they struggle in vain to educate their political and civil-service masters. Ministers and lesser politicians seem unaware of how much of an anomaly India has now become – though, in many cases, understanding that fact would only strengthen their conviction that India was right and everybody else was wrong. Academics and journalists might have been expected to take a critical look at India's accomplishments; on the contrary, they have been the most trenchant critics of reform.

★

One glimmer of hope is that many of India's businessmen are beginning to understand this. The country must look to them, not to the government, for its deliverance. When India's managers and entrepreneurs speak collectively, through their various associations and chambers of commerce, they now call for less intervention and a more liberal approach to economic policy.

This is encouraging – but only a beginning. Businessmen have had to work with the system and have acquired a stake in it. The most successful have learned to manipulate the rules and the bureaucrats in charge, and have invested heavily to that end. India has carried the flag for protection in the third world, and protection means less competition and safer profits. Businessmen may be waking up to what this approach has done to the economy as a whole, but they are bound to fear that they themselves will lose out if real reform ever happens.

Such fears partly reflect a lack of self-confidence. Many Indians believe that they cannot compete as equals in the world economy. Some companies, despite all the obstacles, have already proved that to be false. India has huge economic strengths; its comparative advantage in cheap and well-trained labour could make it a global source for many sorts of manufactured goods. Everything you see in a humming centre of business such as Bombay tells you that India would thrive on greater competition, astonishing itself and the rest of the world.

For further proof, look at the way Indian business has responded to reforms attempted from time to time

since the late 1970s. By Indian standards, the changes introduced by Rajiv Gandhi in 1985-87, for instance were a bold liberalisation; by anybody else's, they were timid tinkering, an opportunity shamefully missed. These reforms left the structure of official control intact. Not a single instrument of intervention was cast aside. Yet India's businesses eagerly seized what benefit they could. For most of the third world, the 1980s were a troubled decade. In India, industrial production and national income grew faster during the 1980s than for 20 years.

Now the economy is struggling again. The country is deep in debt and acutely short of foreign exchange. India's traditionally low inflation rate is on the rise. For all this, some blame Mr Gandhi's "liberalisation". They are mistaken; the fault really lies with an excess of government borrowing.

Prisoner of its past

History drove India almost irresistibly to the course it chose after 1947. The country's heritage at independence was an intense suspicion of foreigners, trade and capitalism. Moreover, it seemed, a tried-and-tested alternative to rapacious western liberalism was at hand.

★

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first leader after independence, believed that the Soviet Union had pioneered a new way forward. Central planning had enabled the Soviet economy to leap over the classical stages of development. In a little more than two decades, rapid industrialisation had transformed a backward, peasant society into a world power mighty enough to withstand, and then defeat, Germany. In the late 1940s planning was in tune with India's needs, and with everything India had learnt from its history.

In fact India's first five-year plan, for 1951-56, was a comparatively moderate document. It said that detailed planning should be attempted only for a few selected industries (notably in "capital goods") which India lacked and which the private sector, public or another, could not be expected to provide. The rest of the industrial economy could be left, more or less, to get

on with it. India's "command capitalism", as it later came to be called, was not proposed until the second five-year plan, for 1956-61.

The principal author of the second plan was P.C. Mahalanobis, a cabinet adviser. His ideas blended Fabian socialism with values that had been propounded by Mahatma Gandhi – notably, disdain for consumer goods and revulsion at the idea of "luxuries". India, said the Nehru-Mahalanobis blueprint, would transform itself from an agricultural economy into an industrial one. Investment would be channelled into the production of capital goods. Imports would be turned away with tariffs, quotas or outright bans. There would be no need for exports. Consumer goods would stay in short supply, so people would save. These savings would provide the resources for more investment.

The government nationalised 17 big industries and gave itself a big say in the running of many others. A regime of licences and direct controls was applied to what was left of the private sector. Licences strictly controlled the creation of new industrial capacity a variety of other controls extended to almost every aspect of management. Firms were told where to produce (in "backward areas"), what to produce (for example, textile mills had to supply a quota of cheap cloth for the poor) and, in many cases, how much to charge. To prevent unemployment, businesses that failed were told that they could not shut down.

Especially after 1971, when Indira Gandhi campaigned under the slogan *garibi hatao* (abolish poverty), the government began to spend more on programmes that were intended to help the poor directly. Small, labour-intensive firms were favoured over bigger capital-intensive ones: handloom weavers over powerlooms, and so on. But since the great bulk of India's poor live in the countryside, where they depend for their living on farming, helping the poor meant helping agriculture. This was awkward, because the goal of forced industrialisation necessarily meant holding agriculture back. The planners needed to shift resources from the primitive rural economy to the rising new industrial sector where India's future was supposed to lie.

So the government drew resources

out of the farm economy with one set of economic policies and then to alleviate poverty, fed resources back with another. Today one of the government's biggest spending programmes is the fertiliser subsidy. Last year it cost 17 billion rupees (\$1.9 billion) and is one reason why government borrowing has recently run out of control. It is well known that the programme benefits India's richer farmers and fertiliser producers much more than its rural poor...

balance sheet

Many Indian intellectuals claim a large measure of success for the strategy. India did industrialise quickly, they say. This was not at the expense of agriculture. Farm output expanded quickly after the green revolution (the introduction of high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice) of the mid-1960s. India, once an importer of foodgrains, now has a surplus to ship abroad. The country can feed itself, and famines are a thing of the past.

★

The green revolution was not confined to India. It transformed farming across Asia. Between 1970 and 1989 the volume of farm output went up by 1.1% a year in India — but by 3.7% in Indonesia, 4.7% in Malaysia, 3.6% in the Philippines, 4.5% in Thailand and so on. While India's output went up 10%, in other words, Malaysia's for instance, doubled. By the mid-1970s the green revolution was actually fizzing out in India; output growth was slowing even though India's low yields indicated plenty of room for expansion.

India's agricultural miracle was mirrored in other ways too. To a much greater extent than in other countries, progress was confined to certain crops, especially wheat and rice. In many other crops, where technological advance was slower, India's output lagged behind and in some cases stagnated. As a result, the benefits of the green revolution were concentrated in the few regions best equipped (with education and physical infrastructure) to take advantage of it. Punjab became India's most prosperous state, and the north-east became the country's breadbasket. Growth in the eastern and central states, despite their rich agricultural potential, was much slower, so income disparities between the states widened.

Nationally, farm output barely kept pace with population growth (which has averaged 2.1% a year since independence). More food is available, but the improvement is puny compared with the changes in the rest of Asia. Farm-labour productivity has increased by much less than 1% a year (in South Korea between 1970 and 1985 it increased by 5% a year). So rural incomes have risen only slowly. That, in turn, has meant little progress on poverty. It has also deprived industry of the growing home market that rapid agricultural growth gave the industries of South Korea and the other Asian tigers.

Remember the poor

Many Indian intellectuals would be quick to point out, rightly, that there is more to human welfare than output. Progress needs to be measured in other ways too: India has been fighting battles against poverty, illiteracy and child mortality. Surely its leaders were right to be distracted by these other aims, even if that meant that India could not achieve all it might have wished according to the conventional yardsticks of economic advance?

The premise is false. Unlike many developing countries, India was not distracted by these other goals. Its record on social spending has been abysmal. It has spent markedly little (even as a proportion of its slow-growing GNP) on such programmes, and much of what it has spent has been wasted. Measuring poverty is difficult, but on almost any measure India's performance has been weak.

★

When India's industrial output accelerated after the mid-1980s, poverty fell faster — to the embarrassment of the Indian intellectuals who still argue that growth does not help the poor. By 1987, new government figures say, the incidence of poverty had fallen to 30%. But estimates by the World Bank, using a definition that allows cross-country comparisons of the level of poverty (as opposed to its rate of change) still paint a gloomy picture. In 1985, the most recent year for which numbers are available, the Bank reckons that 420m Indians, 55% of the population were poor (that is, had an income of less than \$30 a month) and 250m, or 33% were "extremely poor" (with an income of

less than \$23 a month). On the same definitions, 20% of China's people were poor and 8% extremely poor. India's figures are even worse than sub-Saharan Africa's, where 47% were poor and 30% extremely poor. If India has been waging war on poverty, it has not been notably successful.

India is proud of its achievements in education. It has many excellent universities, and one of the biggest stocks of technically trained manpower in the world. At the lower end of the system, however, India has done less well. Between 1960 and 1980 its literacy rate rose from 24% to 36%; Malaysia's rose from 23% to 60%. China's literacy rate is now, 77%. Two-thirds of the children who enrol in India's primary schools drop out by the sixth year; in China and Indonesia the drop-out rate is less than 40%. In these two countries roughly as many girls as boys are enrolled in primary schools. This matters, not just in itself, but also because it is well understood that improving female literacy is one of the most effective ways to control population growth and reduce child mortality. In India, male enrolment exceeds female enrolment by nearly two to one.

Among the poorest people in the poorest states, the picture is even bleaker. In rural Bihar, 90% of adult women are illiterate; among the poorest fifth of the population, the female illiteracy rate is 98%. In rural India as a whole, 80% of women are illiterate; among the poorest fifth, 92%. In Bihar in the mid-1980s, 81% of girls between five and 14 were not attending school; among the poorest fifth, the figure was 93%. Educationally, much of India's vast rural hinterland has been left to rot.

Excuses and miracles

For all these failures, India has two great excuses. The first is sheer weight of people. It is undoubtedly true that India is already over-populated, and the continuing growth of numbers is a heavy burden on the economy (That is why the country's inability to educate poor women matters so much). But it is worth remembering that India's population growth has not been all that rapid by Asian standards. In the two decades to the mid-1980s, its population grew by a little over 2% a year. The populations of Hong

Kong, Taiwan and Indonesia grew at about the same rate. Malaysia, Thailand and Pakistan — all of which have been more successful than India on most economic measures — had to contend with significantly faster population growth.

The second excuse is that poverty tends to be self-reinforcing. India started from behind; it is a struggle merely to prevent the gap from growing. This is a lie that India's governments have been telling their people and a sympathetic outside world for 40 years. At independence, India had many advantages: a functioning democracy, a well-developed civil service, a thrifty

people second to none in drive and resilience. At that point, the country's size and population were taken to be further advantages, because they would make it possible for India's producers to reach efficient scales of production in their home market. The government has been able to draw on an immense pool of domestic savings; if it spent little on education that was not for lack of resources, but because it chose to waste money ostentatiously in other areas.

The hopes of 1947 have been betrayed. India, despite all its advantages and a generous supply of aid from the capitalist West (whose "wasteful" societies it deplored), has

achieved less than virtually any comparable third-world country. The cost in human terms has been staggering.

Why has Indian development gone so tragically wrong? The short answer is this: the state has done far too much and far too little. It has crippled the economy, and burdened itself nearly to breaking-point, by taking on jobs it had no business doing. At the same time it has neglected essential tasks that only the state could have discharged. The more closely you examine this combination of hyperactivity and sloth, the more heroic India's modest achievements since independence come to seem.

(To be continued)

Home Truths for India

At independence in 1947, left-wing enthusiasts thrilled that India's size would allow its industries access to a great single market in which to attain huge economies of scale. Pity the poorer and more ravaged tiddlers such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, these collectivist minds said. Today average recorded incomes in those four are 10 to 25 times higher than India. As with other socialist countries, with their centralised planning, controls and ownership, much of India's production is 1950s-style protected junk that nobody, given choice, would buy.

It is sometimes said by friends and apologists that Indian politicians have had a more difficult population than other countries to deal with. In economic terms, that is rubbish. Abroad, Indians are marvellously entrepreneurial (think of all those British millionaires called Patel), frighteningly hard-working, thrifty and academically bright. Indian children in British schools struggle through their sometimes foreign English language to better exam results than most native-born Britons.

At home, India's trouble has not been its people but the wrong ideology and bad government, and both came from one main source: for all but six of its 44 independent years, it has been ruled by charming, brave, English-educated, upper-class, utterly incompetent (especially when it comes to economics), Fabian socialist family called the Nehrus, and Gandhis.

For example, the very first anti-colonialist socialist, Nehru also harboured a protectionist obsession even more para-

noically than does the troubling new woman prime minister of France. He thought progressive statesmen should keep out foreign imports and avoid "exploitation" by foreign multinationals, through all manner of controls.

That paranoia impoverishes almost 900m Indians to this day. Bans — not just the world's highest tariffs — are imposed on the import of any goods some bureaucrat thinks Indian firms might conceivably soon produce, no matter at what cost. Limits are set on the fees Indian firms can pay for imported technology. Because the government seeks to avoid "wasteful capacity", anybody wanting to create, expand or move a private firm (or sometimes even develop a new product from it) has to ask a bureaucrat's permission. This is refused if the bureaucrat rules that India has sufficient capacity already.

This system is kept in being solely because it feeds the world's biggest network of corruption. So many at each stage of India's bureaucratic and political process (except at the very top) profit from the graft, which is the only way such a system of "socialist" controls can operate. State jobs are openly bought and sold, with the price varying according to the graft that job makes available.

At the very top the Indian establishment prefers jobs to be inherited within particular famous families, because they are rich and public spirited and well-tied enough not to go to the hubbub, especially by the manipulating media. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi died her father Nehru's job, she still barely believed in some of his Fabian socialism. When brave Rajiv Gandhi

was virtually conscripted into his murdered mother's job, he did attempt some reforms, including cutting the top marginal tax rate from Nehru's (negotiated) 98.7% to 50% (sometimes actually paid). He did not, however, dare to attack most of the graft and licences. His heroic but politically inexperienced Italian-born widow would be even worse-placed to bring in reforms, which is why she has rightly resisted being conscripted.

After next month's delayed election, a prime minister should emerge who is no longer under the influence of the Nehru family. The new broom would be wisest to brush away all India's "socialist" licensing restrictions with one sweep. If he does, he may be murdered by the corrupt groups feeding on them. If he does not, he and many more Indians will sadly be murdered by somebody else.

The political parties are now disintegrating into ethnic or other groups that rightly demand they no longer be mulcted by graft from the centre, but appallingly suggest they might murder members of any other ethnic group that displeases them. The way forward for India, as for the Soviet Union, will be to say a great prize can go to any states and sub-states that maintain order without murders and riots. They should be allowed to disregard Delhi's corrupt licensing restrictions, run their own economic policies and bring in as much foreign investment and as many free-market principles as they like. May the Indian reform course from the beginning would have been to split into

CLIFFORD W. B. *The Sunday Times*, May 26, 1991

Congress Culture Must Change

Most intelligent people will agree that the new Government sworn in at the Centre is not as good as Mr. Chandrashekhar's Cabinet. This is the sad result of many weeks of violence during which India looked more like a country at civil war than voting in a new Parliament.

The new Cabinet contains a great deal of old Congress riffraff and gives no indication of striking out a new path, much less undertaking a U turn in economic policy which this country badly requires.

Forty years of Congress Government with the old Nehruite policies have brought the country to bankruptcy and nothing but a complete abandonment of the "permit licence raj" and the so-called Public Sector can save us.

There are two bits of silver lining to this dark cloud. One is the end of the monopoly of power and stranglehold enjoyed by the two most backward states of India, namely U.P. and Bihar. Luckily neither of them have contributed to the supporters of the new Government.

With Mr. Narasimha Rao's choice as Prime Minister it is the first time someone outside the backward Hindi heartland has become the Prime Minister of India. The other bright spot is the nomination of Dr. Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister. If he can honestly carry out the conditions laid down by the International Monetary Fund in giving a loan, India may yet be saved. We shall see.

The Congress culture which is antiquated and decadent will not, I am afraid, change of its own volition. Consider the adherence to the idea of consensus and avoiding the election of a new leader by secret ballot at almost any cost. A nomination by consensus means "fixing" the nomination behind the scenes and then pretending to get unanimous support. This nonsense

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher did not become Prime Minister by "con-

sensus". She was elected in a secret ballot as leader in opposition to Mr. Edward Heath, the then Prime Minister — this is because she was prepared to be defeated. It is a highly democratic instinct and we Indians do not have it because we like to "fix" things in a conspiratorial manner.

Mr. Sharad Pawar was right in asking for a secret ballot in electing a leader in Delhi but he conveniently forgot about it as soon as he wanted to "fix" a docile successor in Bombay. That is how the Congress culture survives.

Sometime back I had expressed the hope that Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Yeltsin would work together as they are both basically good men. Unlike most of my other wishes, this seems to have come true.

The latest reports from Moscow indicate that in the light of developments they are now working together in the common interest.

If these two men can, despite the violent differences of opinion, work together, there is no valid reason why our three national parties cannot form a coalition.

The real reason they do not do so is because of violent personal antagonisms and they have not learnt the need to "dine with the opposition".

Winston Churchill when Prime Minister of Britain, entered into many sharp debates in the House of Commons with Mr. Aneurin Bevan. A few minutes after the debate, they were seen together at the bar having a drink together on an "old boy" basis. When I was in Parliament I often felt a bar in the Central Hall of Parliament could have made life a little sweeter!

Survival International

SURVIVAL is an organisation in the terms of the tribals or aboriginals in India and elsewhere.

Said Stephen Corry, Survival's Director General, of the Narmada dam:

"We are appalled by this crazy project. It's not development and it'll destroy lots of people. If it was really all about getting water to people who needed it they'd be pursuing small projects. For the World Bank to be funding this scandal shows yet again the hypocrisy of their self-proclaimed environmental concern. The Narmada dam should be stopped now! ..."

"As with other large scale development projects, the major cost of this dam is being borne by the poorer people in the villages, while the main benefits go to the cities and big industries ..."

"Tribal people are being coerced, protesters are being violently repressed. 60,000 tribal people will be displaced to alien environments. The World Bank's financing of the vast dam project reveals the emptiness of their promises to finance only environmentally responsible projects said Julie Christie, a keen supporter of "SURVIVAL," on tour in India last December ..."

'SURVIVAL's campaign

'SURVIVAL' joins the tribal peoples in India in demanding that:

- the World Bank withdraw from this disastrous project, and
- the Indian Government halt construction until a complete review of the project is done, including a full investigation of alternative small-scale water supply projects.
- Survival condemns the repressive measures used by the police to intimidate villagers and quell their protests....."

"If we move without our demands being met we will die anyway, why not die fighting? It is a matter of life and death for us. What are we doing for our children?"
— Member of Bhil tribe, Narmada

BREEZY DAYS BLOW IN
ON THREE WINGS. WHEN YOU SWITCH
ON YOUR ORIENT FAN.
EYE CATCHING COLOURS,
SUBTLE SHADES. DAZZLING
RANGE OF SLEEK DESIGNS.
YOUR QUIET COMPANION FOR LIFE.
THINK COOL AIR. THINK ORIENT FANS.

ORIENT FANS

A lifetime of refreshing air.



ASP-D/OGI/91

Freedom First

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Founded in 1952
by MINOO MASANI

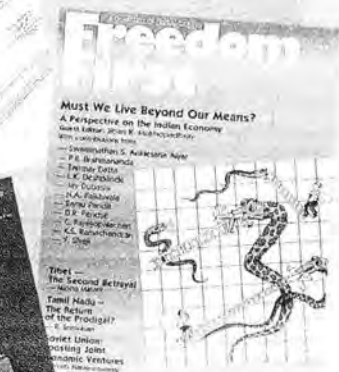
OUR MISSION

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

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

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

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



What Readers Say about *Freedom First*

Freedom First has all the qualities one expects from a journal committed to Liberalism and stimulated by such a stalwart of Indian Liberalism as Minoo Masani. It is clear in its commitment to pluralism, democracy and tolerance, making its position known even if it is unpopular or dangerous to do so.

It is secondly, a journal providing a platform for enlightened debate, spawning new ideas in a society which tends to overemphasise conformism and often stale traditions. Thirdly, *Freedom First* gives a lot of space to the reporting and debate of international events and trends, making the point that a true liberal is international in his/her outlook.

Urs Schoettli, Secretary General, Liberal International, London

I really love *Freedom First* and Minoo Masani's commonsense. Please permit me to send you herewith a small cheque to help the Journal keep alive real Freedom. I am not rich in wealth but I would soon become poor in digestion if I did not share or help in time.

Prof. P.N. Driver, Pune

I subscribed to *Freedom First* very recently and now painfully realise for how long I did not really exercise my freedom to read the really thought-provoking and intellectual material.

May your quarterly dedicated totally to the dissemination of liberal ideas make more and more people conscious of their duties towards freedom first.

Suhas Patwardhan, Badlapur

I re-discovered *Freedom First* after 30 years, courtesy Minoo Masani, and was pleasantly surprised to see that you maintain a uniformly high standard of articles.

Freedom first — by all means. But as we have discovered to our utter dismay after 40 years of "Free India" — Freedom does not mean better Government; Freedom does not mean Quality; as Nani Palkhivala said somewhere recently: Freedom does not mean independence of thought or concern for democracy — or for values and character, which India needs so desperately.

Freedom only means loot and licence in 'Our India' of today! But all is not lost. Men of faith still believe that India will somehow muddle through.

Dinshah K. Malegamvala, Bombay

Over the past two years I have been impressed with *Freedom First*. The issues you discuss are those that concern us, but the flavour of the discussions and the examples are different. The issues are reflected as if by an imaginary, prismatic looking glass. We recognise ourselves but the colours are strange.

Raphael G. Kazmann, Baton Rouge, U.S.A.

I congratulate you for the excellent issue of *Freedom First* No. 407. It, indeed, offered delightful reading. Especially, the report on the proceedings of the seminar on Kashmir is enlightening.

Lakshmana P. Bhandarkar, Amtady

I am happy to say that I find *Freedom First* excellent reading.

B. Massar, Shillong

I just received a copy of *Freedom First*. I found it fascinating — fearless and a beacon for freedom. Congratulations to the Founder.

Ladislav Rice, London

Subscribe Today!

I wish to subscribe to *Freedom First*

☐ Annual: Rs. 30 ☐ Life Subscription: Rs. 400.00
☐ Cheque* ☐ Postal Order ☐ Demand Draft ☐ Remitting
by Money Order

*for outstation cheques please add Rs. 5

(Please type or fill in block letters)

Name:

Address:

Pin

Overseas
(by Air Mail)

Annual: \$ 12
Annual: \$ 20

Life: \$ 70
Life: \$ 120

We Invite You to:

- Advertise in the pages of *Freedom First*. Reach your message to an enlightened readership. In the process you help promote the cause of a free economy. Write to us for details.
- Donate to the Freedom First Foundation — a non-partisan, educational charitable trust established to promote the acceptance of the values of freedom and the dignity of the individual. Donations to the Freedom First Foundation are exempt from tax under Section 80G(I).

Write or Mail to:

Freedom First

4th Floor, Maneckji Wadia Building
127, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400001

or
tel 275914

The Setting of the Rising Sun

Prema Nandakumar

Neither the much-publicised buildings to reactivate the glorious Tamil past nor the several charities (free eggs today; free bus passes tomorrow) could enthuse the common man who could see the speedy spread of corruption everywhere.

Srirangam: Elections have become a way of life for us since the idol of the masses, M. G. Ramachandran, breathed his last. The ruling AIADMK party had then split vertically, and the Congress-I was a divided mansion. So we went to the polls and the people gave a clear mandate to the DMK to rule the Ninth Tamil Nadu Assembly.

During the closing years of MGR'S regime, his ill health had virtually halted the state administration. Files could not move, would not move. The bureaucratic paralysis became one of the widely-discussed points in favour of M. Karunanidhi. Here was perhaps a leader capable of taking quick decisions; one who did not believe in piling up files; one who did not kowtow to the North (Centre) and was hence the upholder of the Tamil spirit; one who would certainly head a government that works.

There were ghostly voices from the past too. Was it not Karunanidhi who had withdrawn prohibition? How about the political infiltration and interference with the administrative machinery in those days? And the definite anti-religious, anti-temple stance? And the hobnobbing with the anti-Brahmin, separatist Dravida Izhakam? However, public memory is rather short. Besides, one saw him now as a mellowed leader who spouted profundities drawn from Tamil texts. After all, he had managed to keep the DMK party as a cohesive unit during these long years of political exile. Above everything else, the AIADMK and the Congress-I were both divided houses. The conservative, stability-seeking electorate over here preferred to sway towards the DMK. The tie-up with the National Front had raised the DMK's stature

too. For the present the oft-heard reiterations of separatism and casteist fulminations from the DMK were swept to the background.

The DMK's Record in Office

The moment the DMK was installed in power, it was bonanza-time for the common people. The predecessor AIADMK's generosity (free meal scheme, free tooth-powder etc.) was outdistanced. It was now free rice in sachets printed with Karunanidhi's image; free clothes; Rs. 5000 for the marriage of poor girls. From a Party that spoken of inheriting an empty treasury from the AIADMK, such endless generosity was not quite expected. There were no exhortations to do hard work to tighten our belts, to show austerity in private and public. When the government itself was engaged in splendidly illumined extravaganzas, where was the time to think of austerity? There were expenses and more expenses amidst a lot of Rising Sun blitz. The rebuilding of the ancient Poompuhar town. The structuring of Valluvar Kottam. A 134-feet statue of Valluvar to dwarf Swami Vivekananda on the Kanyakumari beach.

Neither the much-publicised buildings to 'reactivate the glorious Tamil past nor the several charities (free eggs today; free bus passes tomorrow) could enthuse the common man who could see the very speedy spread of corruption everywhere. He had asked for a government that works from Karunanidhi and also knew that the leader was capable of giving one. But the leader was not willing to take the steep and thorny path to right achievement. When the Chief Minister accepted the Raja Raja Cholan Award

for literature from the Tamil University, our disillusionment was complete.

There were other gasps from the more emotionally tuned among the electorate. The leader of the opposition, J. Jayalalitha had been assaulted in the Assembly on 25 March 1989. Some of the DMK ministers were accused of trying to disrobe her. Jayalalitha who had been talking of retiring from politics (much to the relief of the DMK supremo) was now stung deep. Adding insult to the injury was the total silence of the political leaders. The lone exception was Rajiv Gandhi who condemned the assault in strong terms. "Karunanidhi has given me a new resolve" she thundered gratefully and vowed that she would not quit politics but see to it that the DMK ministry was dismissed ignominiously. Before you could say 'Jack Robinson' she had united the AIADMK, forged an alliance with the Congress-I and swept the Lok Sabha polls held in November 1989.

A New Lease of Life

But then, the Congress-I went out of power at the Centre and thus the DMK government had a new lease of life. Once again, it was time for oratory, extravaganza, more populist schemes. In a bid to get funds for such largesse, Karunanidhi opted for the now infamous Cheap Liquor Policy. This was an ill-advised scheme and alienated the women voters in one stroke. The specious arguments against Prohibition and the 'compassionate' production of cheap adulterated liquor convinced the women of Tamil Nadu that this was a government that had become blind to the daily plight of increasing domestic tragedies even

where.

Nor was there any time for the public to notice whether the government moved the files speedily. It was more concerned with the DMK's encouragement of the LTTE, the 'secret' trip of the party's V. Gopalswamy to meet Prabhakaran, and the churlish decision of the Chief Minister not to welcome the IPKF personnel at Madras. His inaction in apprehending the killers of Padmanabha and his colleagues was inexplicable. The immediate suspicions could not be silenced by the Mandal noise. Indeed the public at large could not be properly educated on the issue and the public cannot be blamed for associating the DMK's policies with the gruesome suicides and killings of young lives in the Mandal agitation that swept North India. And yet people were not quite happy when Chandrasekhar dismissed the DMK government. They thought that it was a foolish gesture and the DMK would now benefit from a sympathy wave in the new election. Karunanidhi himself was quite unfazed, probably because he banked upon such sympathy. He went to work upon his manifesto immediately and unrolled several more 'free' items. To

mention but a few: free electricity, free electric connections, free housing sites, free concrete houses, free irrigation wells, free professional education, free medical aid, free bus passes, free aid for other purposes, abolition of taccavi loans, abolition of loans taken by fishermen and so on so forth. Capping everything was the 'humble prayer': "Give us Justice!"

Two-Phase Election

This election turned out to be a two-phase election. There was not much enthusiasm in the beginning. Though every available wall-space had been 'reserved' by the AIADMK or DMK, the posters themselves appeared very late. At last, Jayalalitha wrested the initiative by travelling 7346 kilometres by car and unleashing a well-planned advertisement campaign. Her brief speeches were not oratorical. She just repeated her points in a clear voice. Yes she wanted the voter to avenge the insult to womanhood in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. She would give top priority to the abolition of Karunanidhi's Cheap Liquor Policy. In Srirangam, she spoke at the Western corner of the South Chitral Street. People stood in every available space, on the road, above on the

balconies, atop the roofs. She was an hour late but we had been told that she had gone to worship Goddess Ranganayaki and so we were quite happy to wait. When she came, she was brisk as she introduced the Parliamentary (Congress-I) candidate L. Adakkalaraj and the Assembly's (AIADMK) K. P. Krishnan. Assurance to give Hindu temples freedom from governmental interference and to abolish governmental cheap liquor pleased the vast concourse no end. And then she was gone.

It was obvious that the poster war favoured the Congress-I and AIADMK. The Assembly seat had been given to the Janata Dal and the Parliamentary seat to the CPI(M) by the DMK. These parties started serious electioneering only after the 15th of May. This was, as usual, one-sided for the canvassers had no inclination to argue and convince the individual voter why they should be swayed by the Hand-Two Leaves. There were the usual remarks: "As if you do not know your Parliamentary candidate? He has millions from his brewery. We have no money even for a couple of jeeps". There were auto-rickshaws fitted with mikes making the



Never say no to life
RAYMOND'S

sounds. As one went to the temple one could hear the speeches of various leaders punctuated by raucous songs. Here too, the DMK made a tactical mistake by opting for overkill in its personal attack on Jayalalitha. The accusation that she is a Brahmin and hence an out-caste from the North unlike Karunanidhi who is a non-Brahmin and hence a Dravidian from the South was insinuated through speeches and posters. The bemused listeners could not help muttering out: "But then why do you want us to vote for the CPI(M) which is leading a Brahmin candidate?"

Post-assassination Phase

Then the blow fell. If the ten feet high statue of Jawaharlal Nehru in the National College Higher Secondary School was blasted to smithereens by a time bomb in the early hours of 21 November, 1989, the night of 21 May witnessed the ghastly assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Srirangam, closely associated with Sriperumbudur because of the Vaishnava luminary Ramanuja, was literally thunderstruck. The temple town woke up on 22nd morning to see that the DMK's flags and posters and flagpoles had been systematically destroyed. Throughout the day, people took out silent processions to mark their sorrow in a dignified manner. It took more than a fortnight for the gloom to withdraw, but by then the election day (in spite of the postponement) had drawn very close.

In the post-assassination phase, there was a singular absence of blaring mikes. There were no public meetings. Occasionally a convoy of cars would move in slow-motion exhibiting the candidate and the canvassers with folded hands. The BJP candidate went in an open jeep, all alone. The public was following the newspaper and rumour-mills anxiously. The statements of leaders like Vazhappadi Ramamurthi, Subramaniam Swamy and P. Chidambaram implicating the DMK in the LTTE killing of Rajiv were producing the required effect. Karunanidhi protested to no avail. The Congress-I and AIADMK were determined to pursue the gory advantage and they could not be silenced.

There was definitely a fear of violence but the actual polling passed off peacefully. Autos piled around with CPI(M) flags and helped voters to travel to the booths. The garlanded portraits of Rajiv Gandhi were placed at

strategic points. Nobody seemed to mind anything much. L. Adakkalaraj had polled 1500 votes less than in 1989, TKR's tally had gone down by 50,000 votes. The newcomer, BJP, received 13,000 votes though the candidate, Mr. Parthasarathy lost his deposit. The ballot paper had been quite big what with a print-out of Hand, Umbrella, Coconut palm, Whistle, Pot, Jeep, Violin, Farmer-Plough, Lotus, Axe, TV-set and Hammer-sickle-star. But apparently there was no confusion in the mind of the voter.

Ballot Paper or Bed-sheet?

In any case, Tiruchi District had displayed its electoral maturity very well. It was here that the notorious Aravankuruchi-challenge had materialised and for weeks we had discussed the 249-symbol ballot-paper. The Aravankuruchi Assembly segment received special security attention with two DSPs, five inspectors, five sub-inspectors, fifty police constables and one hundred constables who were to be on the alert round the clock while everyone of the 201 poll stations was given a "special folding polling officer" to help the speedy entry of the ballot-bedsheet into the extra-large ballot box. But this completely rural constituency rose to the challenge magnificently and gave a convincing victory margin to the AIADMK candidate.

For Srirangam assembly, the choice was simple. A brief ballot paper with Two Leaves, Wheel, Lotus, Apple, Cycle and Elephant. The seat held by the Janata Dal was wrested by K.P. Krishnan with a comfortable margin of 52,000 votes. The temple city gave only 2305 votes to the Mandir-builder BJP. When by noon next day, the crackers began bursting, everyone knew that Tiruchi's Hand and Srirangam's Two leaves had won. There was no need to ask for confirmation. All of us went about our work with nonchalant ease. It was only on the morning of the 17th that the total rout of the DMK was revealed. The people of Tamil Nadu will take sometime to absorb this Big Change but right now, there is a feeling that the state has in some way expiated the assassination of Rajiv by fulfilling his last wish: an AIADMK government headed by Jayalalitha ruling from Fort St. George.

DR. PREMA NANDAKUMAR is an author and journalist.

DO A FAVOUR

to your friends
send them
a sample copy of
Freedom First
with your compliments

Freedom First
4th floor
127, Mahatma Gandhi Rd
Bombay 400023

Please send a sample copy of Freedom First to the following with my compliments

Name _____

Address _____

Pin _____

★

Name _____

Address _____

Pin _____

★

Name _____

Address _____

Pin _____

★

Name _____

Address _____

Pin _____

★

Your Name _____

Address _____

*The Regime of permits,
licences, quotas and controls
must disappear like an ugly
dream and we must get back to
the old free economy which the
Government gave up in favour
of the slogan of socialism. The
recovery of this recent past is the
most effective way to assure our
future.*

Rajaji

Swarajya, Sept. 18, 1965



THE LAKSHMI MILLS COMPANY LIMITED
COIMBATORE 641 037

Of Freedom and Restraint

M. Varma

To survive as a nation with dignity and well-being we must strike out and chop off the tentacles of socialism. This Marxian inheritance has brought poverty and misery, not to mention terms like 'public sector' and 'state ownership' which are really euphemisms for ineffective, costly and oppressive monopoly

In the early fifties I had occasion to invite a former Shankaracharya of Puri, who happened to be in town, to my Post-Graduate College of Education. I was told that he was a Senior Wrangler of Cambridge who had demonstrated to a select gathering of mathematicians and scientists some short-cut formulae for fast calculations contained in old Sanskrit texts which, when compared with computerised results, were found correct. The audience consisted of advanced scholars of Education and local government officials. He began in fluent English with a story from the Sanskrit classic 'Kadambari'. In the story the princess kept a singing bird. But the bird does not sing; so the princess chides the bird telling her that she was protected from predators and inclement weather, fed delicacies and lived in a 'golden cage' and yet remained silent and glum. The bird replied: "But princess 'the goldenness' of the cage does not take away from the 'cage-ness' of the cage!"

As a boy of twelve I too had a curious experience with a dove I had managed to entrap. I put it in a wire cage and put some fruits and sweets for her to eat. On returning from school I went to see how my captive was doing and was aghast to find her head and beak all bloody and the dove feebly striking her beak against the spaces between the wires of the cage, and the food left untouched. In sheer remorse I set free the bird, and I could sense my joy in taking to its wings. These two episodes in my life taught me that the urge to freedom is common to all living creatures; and that life and free-

dom are inseparable.

Freedom is Not Absolute

That freedom is not absolute was brought home to me by Dr. Janvier the old missionary Principal of my College. In the first assembly comprising the staff and students he gave us his first pep-talk. On the stage in a semi-circle sat the staff, and Dr. Janvier who stood at one end began walking straight towards the other end with his fist clenched and forehead folding and stretching in turns until he came to the teacher sitting at the other end of the semi-circle. His fist touched his teacher's nose. Then the old man (so old, he had even taught my father) turning to us sitting below the stage said: "Now, my young friends, note carefully that my freedom ends where his nose begins. So do enjoy your freedom in this College but do not overstep the limits lest you infringe on another's freedom".

I myself am now past 80 but have not forgotten these two lessons I learnt early in life. Only today, I see their relevance and how our lives have been made miserable because our men of public affairs driven by primitive impulses, which ought to belong to the law of the jungle but disguised as ideologies, try systematically to sidestep these basic truths of life: that freedom is our birthright and it ends where the other man's nose begins.

We humans are a gregarious species and, at some time in the remote past, a rough and ready division of labour must have taken place. A class of people took upon themselves the task of managing and ordering the

social life of the community. This primitive organisation with someone at its head was the beginning of the State — the head becoming the first ruler known as king or monarch. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) forecast the likely growth of this institution of the 'State' personified by the king, culminating into a 'Leviathan' a monstrous creature, hampering our freedoms on all sides in its endless coils. But the natural urge for freedom remained and was tersely expressed in the familiar adage: "That government is best which governs the least".

State Oppression

With kingdoms expanding and power concentrating in the hands of the few, common people found their freedom increasingly curtailed and the arrangement oppressive and exploitative. Resistance to oppression by the State is as old as history but the modern-day democratic State had its beginning in England in the 16th century when they cut off the head of Charles I. Rousseau (1712-78) reminded the French of the original purpose of the "Social Contract" (which ought to govern the relations between the ruler and the ruled) and prepared the way for the beheading of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette with the help of a contraption invented by a Dr. Guillotine, to facilitate the work, there being many heads of the nobility to be cut. Still later, in Russia, the Bolsheviks subjected the Russian Czar and the Czarina to the same treatment. These were symbolic sacrifices of relatively harmless men and women. Poor Marie really believed, since

she knew nothing of the life of the common Parisian, that the nearest *patisserie* had run out of bread, but may have some pastry left.

In the course of these developments of human society, the Industrial Revolution in England in the late 18th century produced conditions under which an obviously unjust polarization took place between the capitalists and the workers. The poet Shelley, for instance, called Birmingham, a "hell-hole" and Charles Dickens wrote a novel entitled *Hard Times* to describe the misery of the workers. This ethos also produced Karl Marx (1818-83) a German Jew, thinker and theoretician: He let his intellect run riot and painted a fanciful picture of the future of human society if it followed the recipe he proposed to bring about an ideal human society where the people (his 'proletariat') would rule themselves and the oppressive machine called the State would simply vanish.

The Bolsheviks

The Bolsheviks took him seriously and Lenin actually sought to implement it. Stalin and the Communist Par-

ty of the Soviet Union (CPSU) soon proved how wrong Marx was. For the regime of the CPSU far exceeded in oppression anything done under the Czars. It was supposed to be the rule of the proletariat but under it the people suffered the most. Freedom was completely lost and economic hardships multiplied.

Basically communism was an economic programme of transfer of social wealth to the people and the termination of capitalism. The steps taken by Stalin to implement Marxism were terrible, like the liquidation of his opponents and the wholesale massacre of millions of farmers.

The Fabian Socialists

The British who were a conservative people, after beheading one King, brought back another in remorse and gave the institution of monarchy a new role. They swore by constitutional change and invented a new moderate variation of Marxism giving it the name 'Fabian Socialism' after the Roman Consul Fabius. The Fabian Society in England professing this school of thought became very fashionable and

even the great dramatist George Bernard Shaw succumbed to its allure, to say nothing of a young tiro like our own Jawaharlal Nehru then studying in England in a Public School. Being at an impressionable age he imbibed the culture of 'Public Schools' that were anything but public, but had also, as a 'fag' of British bullies, experienced the seamy side of class difference. He too, like Marx, was a man of ideas given to building castles in the air, and fell for Fabian Socialism as a saviour of the underdog. On his return to India he joined Gandhiji's movement for freedom, but his economic ideas were poles apart from that of his *Guru*. He despised the *Charkha* (spinning wheel) except as a symbol and looked forward to a highly industrialised free India where the proletariat owned the means of production.

Gandhi & Nehru

But India was largely an agricultural country run on primitive lines, and his panacea did not apply to it. Gandhiji had provided the *Charkha* to the villager who could gainfully employ himself during the long spells of idleness. He advocated cottage industry and

Talk about quality...
we'll define it
in two words.

Bharat Bijlee

Quality. It's something we don't have to talk about much. At Bharat Bijlee our products speak eloquently for us. And so do our customers. Because for forty years now the Bharat Bijlee name has spelt quality. Be it in transformers, motors or lifts.

Let's talk about transformers. Our range is one that's won wide approval from some very demanding customers. And we're always looking for innovative ways to enhance the range. Bharat Bijlee motors too have made their mark. As is amply borne out by the

fact that 60,000 motors leave our factory every year.

In lifts, we've moved up rather fast. And with our technical collaboration with Schindler of Switzerland we're all set to move even higher.

We have recently ventured into a new field — turnkey electrification projects. Here too it's our commitment to quality that's earning us a name in the field.

Our activities are diverse. Yet they all have one thing in common. Quality Of an uncommon kind.



Bharat Bijlee Ltd.

Electric Mansion,
Appasaheb Marathe Marg,
Prabhadevi, Bombay 400 025.

**Transformers • Motors •
Lifts • Projects •**

made handloom weaving fashionable. The millowner was regarded as an exploiter.

In Europe, developments in technology had revolutionised methods of production and the Labour Party in the U.K. had grown into a political force completely changing the status of the work-force in industry. In fact *Marx had been outgrown within a century*. But Nehru in India remained stuck in the old groove of Socialism which he raised to the level of a shibboleth, a magic 'mantra', so much so that it got into our national rubric. Most of our relatively uneducated public men adopted the term as a badge of respectability without understanding what it implied in practical terms. Bernard Shaw on the other hand saw what lay ahead and sounded the warning: "Socialism does not mean that the passengers drive the train". This warning was either ignored or not understood by Nehru and his followers as the passengers soon took over the Indian train with the adoption of Nehru's 'Socialist Pattern of Society'.

But the ghost of the old codger Hobbes was not to be exorcised, and so the State, ostensibly organised to serve the people, grew into the Leviathan he had predicted. The Minister who is supposed to minister to the needs of the proletariat (to exhume Marx who began it all) ensures fulfilment of his own needs first. In Russia where queues are the normal feature of buying daily necessities, the Commissar gets his rations tied in a parcel at home, being busy *serving* the proletariat, his masters. In India we replaced the maharajahs, the zamindars and the capitalists with Socialist 'VIPs', when Marxism was supposed to level all differences, abolish classes and equalize all people. Thus, just as nature abhors a vacuum it is also proven that nature abhors equality. What has happened is only a change in the designations. The VIPs of today have replaced the maharajahs of yore.

The Queues under Socialism

But why the queues? And that too in Russia, the utopia of Marx's dream. Marx did not know enough human psychology. When the means of production become the property of all, should anybody bother about them? It is the old dodge: someone will do it so why should I? The socialist worker works for his wages, which socialism

safeguards and which are his share of the profits, so he can idle. Socialism has taken away the incentive to produce better and more. The modern industrial order makes it palpably clear to every worker in a vast plant that he has, under law, a legitimate share in the profits he helps the establishment to make. He thus has the incentive to work well. Socialism kills that incentive, and work suffers.

The socialist Leviathan cripples society in another significant manner. Its myriad tentacles control everything in an individual's life. Under socialism personal freedom is cribbed, confined and people are covertly encouraged to break the web of rules observing G.B. Shaw's 'Tenth Commandment', "Thou shalt not be found out". Rajaji, who founded the Swatantra Party very aptly described Nehru's socialism as 'Licence Permit Quota Raj'. Such a *Raj* provided the socialist State with more talons to hurt the economy and kill competitive marketing.

Human society is a natural living organism. Like our own body it has natural means of correcting the imbalances of supply and demand. When the State interferes with these natural functions you get shortages and price hikes and queues. The Russian economy is in the doldrums because it took Marx seriously. The economy of the USA is flourishing because its Leviathan was kept in chains except when it faced other nations. Thus when the USSR was importing grain from the USA, and shoes from India, the black maid doing my room in Washington had a TV at home and came to work in a car. At a nearby restaurant when I was served a huge pork chop I asked the waiter if I could not have a half-portion. His reply was revealing. He said: "Sir, we have so much food in this country, if you do not eat it what shall we do with it?"

Jawaharlal's nostrum of socialism is dear to our elected representatives because it helps them make a fast buck in a short time, while the common man suffers shortages, inflation and black-marketing. A free economy and an open market will deprive them of their VIP status and reduce them to the level of the proletariat they claim to serve. I hope and pray the Indian people will shake off the stupor into which Nehru's socialism has drugged us and grow into a really free people where a

decent standard of life is no longer a distant dream.

Our democracy has been debauched by underserving people getting elected for personal gain. In a democracy run by morally upright parties the steel frame of the bureaucracy and day to day governance remain stable despite changes of parties in power. Not so with us now. The trend was set by Mrs. Indira Gandhi who had no idea of how a democracy should work. Like an untutored woman chasing power she suborned not only the bureaucracy but tried to influence even the judiciary. She created Gestapo-like institutions for political purposes, and laws which gave her arbitrary powers of life and death over the very people who had put her in power. Nationalisation of banks and abolition of privy purses were *her* idea of Socialism, and the declaration of a false 'Emergency', when her election was set aside by a court, were the ultimate reaches of her autocracy as bad as any absolute monarchy or dictatorship. In the aftermath of Mrs. Gandhi's style of governance we now have a clique of political operators, a corrupt bureaucracy, and corrupt big business which is playing hell with our economy.

In short, the result of Marx's dream is that the State, instead of vanishing, has grown into the Leviathan, Hobbes warned us about. But even for the smallest creature freedom comes first (as my captive dove showed) and therefore to survive as a nation with dignity and well-being we must strike out and chop off the tentacles of socialism. This Marxian inheritance has brought poverty and misery, not to mention terms like 'public sector' and 'state ownership', which are really euphemisms for an inefficient, costly and oppressive monopoly. I have been both a sad spectator and a victim of the Marxian prescription. The communist States in East Europe have rejected socialism lock stock and barrel. What are we waiting for?

PROF. M. VARMA is a retired Professor of Education and former Vice Chancellor of the Gorakhpur and Jammu Universities

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it

—THOMAS PAINE

Trust has so many reasons

COOLGUARD

100% Polyurethane insulation

MEGA FORCE

The energy - efficient compressor

SPECTRUM

A wide range of exclusive colours

ULTRASPACE

The most spacious interior



What's more,
you can trust
the Godrej 165L
refrigerator
to give you
good value for
money.
Always.

TRUST *Godrej*

HTA 1813

Burma — "A Country in Prison"

Shirin Panthaki

Aung San Suu Kyi remains in detention. In her determination and dedication to the struggle for her country's freedom Aung San Suu has made a great personal sacrifice. It is encouraging that in July '91 she will be awarded the European Community's Sakharov Prize for Freedom.

Burma (renamed Myanmar) achieved its independence on 4 January 1948. The man who had led Burma's struggle for freedom, General Aung San, and who, as leader of the newly independent Burmese nation, would have governed it on the basis of a democratic framework, was assassinated just a few months before Independence. His assassination had disastrous implications for the stability of the new country. Aung San has since become a powerful symbol of Burma's freedom. And now, his daughter Aung San Suu Kyi has courageously taken up the struggle to free Burma from military dictatorship.

In 1962, General Ne Win overthrew the elected government and established a one party state under his 'Burmese Socialist Programme Party'. For 16 years, Ne Win's military dictatorship ran a ruthless regime of intimidation and severe repression. Repeatedly, troops broke up demonstrations by firing directly into the crowds with intent to kill, and many eye-witness accounts have attested to the use of torture.

The People Revolt

In August 1988, after suffering in silence for 26 years, the Burmese people demanded basic human rights. Spontaneous demonstrations grew into a genuine widespread popular movement all over the country, as thousands upon thousands met and marched. These demonstrations brought on the wrath of the military on unarmed, innocent people. Night raids and arrests began. Those arrested were subjected to beatings and torture; women were raped. Nearly 5,000 people were killed by riot police. The troops even fired on the Rangoon General Hospital.

Events in Burma have been overshadowed by developments to the north in China and in Tibet. Both in

China and Tibet, brutal methods were resorted to silence the opposition.

In Burma however the situation is different at least in one fundamental respect. There has emerged a leader advocating non-violent methods, who commands widespread admiration and support — Aung San Suu Kyi. She is deeply committed to establishing national unity through the restoration of democracy.

Revolt Suppressed

Aung San Suu Kyi's intervention began after the military crackdown in August 1988. In an open letter to the government she proposed that a Consultative Committee composed of respected independent persons, be formed to steer the country towards multi-party elections. This, unfortunately, brought no positive response from the government. Instead, on 18 September a Military Council, the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) was set up to rule the country. Under this Military Council, all existing judicial institutions were abol-

ished, meetings of more than 4 persons were banned, the power of arrest and sentence without trial was reaffirmed, and summary executions were carried out.

On 24 September 1988, the National League for Democracy (NLD) was formed under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi. It rapidly became the largest opposition party. Aung San Suu Kyi appealed to the United Nations to condemn the military violence against unarmed Burmese civilians including children and Buddhist monks.

July 19 is Martyr's Day in Burma, in memory of the assassination of General Aung San in 1947. On July 19, 1989, the NLD planned a people's march from all over Rangoon to lay wreaths at Aung San's memorial. The SLORC was determined to prevent this demonstration of loyalty and respect for the martyred leader. Several thousand additional troops were deployed in Rangoon, and a dawn to dusk curfew ordered. The NLD decided to cancel its march for fear of bloodshed that

LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL RESOLUTION ON BURMA

This Congress of the Liberal International:

applauds the great courage of the Burmese people in their protracted struggle for human rights and political liberty — the courage that led them to vote against repressive militarism in the elections in May 1990 which resulted in a landslide victory for the National League for Democracy;

commends Aung San Suu Kyi, the founder of the National League for Democracy, for her courage, determination and dedication in leading the struggle for her country's freedom, and who, despite the massive support and confidence of the Burmese people, still continues to be held under detention by the military authorities; calls upon all member parties of the Liberal International to persuade their governments to urge the military authorities in Burma to:

release immediately and unconditionally Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political detainees;

recognise and implement the overwhelming electoral mandate of the Burmese people;

enter into a meaningful dialogue aimed at a speedy transfer of power to the National League for Democracy.

Moved by Ms. Shirin Panthaki on behalf of the Indian Liberal Group and adopted unanimously at the Congress held in Helsinki in October 1990.

A Country in Prison

Governments routinely deal with dictators who claim to represent their people, and whose claim cannot be flatly contradicted because they have suppressed all avenues of dissent. Should they also deal with a dictatorship which has been unequivocally rejected at the polls by 82 per cent of its electorate? That vote, exactly a year ago, makes Burma unique: the odious State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which at the time conceded defeat and promised a swift handover of power, is plainly illegal.

After initially accepting the verdict, the SLORC has systematically destroyed not only the result, but the forces behind it. A quarter of the elected MPs are in prison, in exile, or have disappeared. Some 500 League officials have been jailed. Last November, the rump of its leadership was forced to sign an agreement effectively nullifying the election. It gives the army sole right to draft a new constitution before handing over. In December, the League was outlawed.

Since 1988, Western governments have suspended aid to Burma, but the SLORC has found ways to finance its repression, and not only through booming opium exports. Thai logging companies have been sold enormous

concessions in Burma's hitherto well managed teak forests, containing four-fifths of the world's remaining teak, which could now be stripped within five years. Western companies continue to sign trade and investment contracts in Burma, paying over "signature" money which further enriches the SLORC's coffers. While ordinary Burmese get even poorer, such deals are paying to expand the army from 200,000 to a planned 500,000 and to buy £600 million worth of arms from China.

Burma survives thanks to these foreign deals. The West should not stand by until the next, inevitable, explosion of an imprisoned people. Companies dealing with Burma should be made ineligible for export credits. The West should press the Thai government to end the teak trade and, meantime, boycott teak imports from Thailand (which has almost none left of its own) on environmental grounds. At the United Nations, the West should call for a global embargo on arms sales to Burma. Such pressures cannot be decisive, but could yet split the army, whose troops voted massively for the League a year ago. Burma's democracy-in-waiting should at last be given decisive international support.

The Times (London) May 28, '91.



Aung San Suu Kyi

The NLD Sweeps the Polls

When the elections came on 27 May, despite all the obstacles and difficulties that the military government put in the path of the National League for Democracy, and despite the fact that the political parties were virtually prevented from running even the simplest form of an election campaign, the NDL won a landslide victory, sweeping the polls with over 80% of the votes. Of the 485 seats, the NDL won 396.

Yet, despite this massive mandate from the Burmese people, the military government refused to accept the verdict and has refused to relinquish power, and continues to rule the country under martial law. Aung San Suu Kyi remains in detention. In her determination and dedication to the struggle for her nation's freedom, Aung San Suu Kyi has made a great personal sacrifice. Not only is she living under house arrest, but has to endure separation from her husband and two sons. Moreover, she remains in very real personal danger with hostile army personnel encamped in and around her own home.

Meanwhile it is encouraging that next month (July '91) Aung San Suu Kyi will be awarded the European Community's Sakharov Prize for Freedom.

MS SHIRIN PANTHAKI is a liberal activist and member of the Indian Liberal Group

would certainly follow, and asked its people to stay indoors. Aung San Suu Kyi said "We have no intention of leading our people straight into a killing field."

Aung San Suu Kyi's Courage

The following day she tried to leave her home to pay a private visit to her father's memorial, but was prevented from doing so, and forced back. This was the start of her house arrest – now in its 22nd month. Telephones and all other means of communication were cut; letters sent to her strictly censored; and she was allowed limited access only to immediate family members.

Aung San Suu Kyi responded with great courage to her plight. When she heard of the imprisonment of the NLD Executive Committee and of her supporters, she began a hunger strike which lasted 12 days. She ended her hunger strike only after she received solemn assurances from the Military

Council that her supporters would not be subject to inhuman interrogation and torture. Aung San Suu Kyi's hunger strike has been described as 'the most serious challenge the Burmese military government has faced'.

Although support from the international community for the pro-democracy movement has been sadly lacking, foreign governments have at least stopped giving aid to Burma's military government because of its human rights record. This did put pressure on General Ne Win to call national elections. The date set was 27 May, 1990. But with the country continuing to be in the grip of martial law, free and fair elections could hardly be hoped for; meetings of more than 4 persons were still banned; and talking to journalists was (and is still) strictly forbidden; foreign visitors were (and still are) denied Entry Visas.

Edmund Burke

The Philosopher of Conservatism

G.N. Sarma

Though the conservative, liberal and moderate phase of Indian thought and politics has been overshadowed by a more strident and radical turn of mind, moderation remains a silent force still at work, capable of warning us against doctrinaire tyranny and thoughtless political enthusiasm

Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution was written exactly 200 years ago. Freedom First thought it appropriate to have a bicentennial assessment of this important classic which is as relevant today as it was when published.

— Ed.

Two centuries have passed since Edmund Burke wrote his celebrated *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Though the reflections were occasioned by the stormy events which started in France in 1789, their wisdom transcends the historical context. Together with the slightly earlier *Speeches on American Taxation and Conciliation*, they have remained the cream of conservative thought and reflection.

It is well known that the Indian aspiration for freedom and independence was nurtured by contact with western literature and learning. It was an irony of history that the literature which was opened to the Indian mind was the 'literature of protest': Burke's American speeches, *On Liberty* by J.S. Mill, to mention only a few texts, stirred up new hopes in a subject people and ultimately led to the unintended result of India's freedom from the Empire.

Change must be Gradual

The first leaders of the Indian nationalist movement were the representatives of this phase of our intellectual and cultural contact with Britain. The essentially conservative Indian temperament responded with understanding and sympathy to the conservative British mode of thought and action. We must add, however, that contrary to current



Edmund Burke

prejudice, conservatism has never been inimical to change; it has insisted that change is not to be radical, abrupt and unsettling. It is to be gradual and at once progressive. Society must move forward without losing links with its past. As Justice Ranade wrote:

"The process of growth is always slow, where it has to be a sure growth. The best natures naturally want to shorten this long process in their desire to achieve the work of a century in a decade. This temptation has to be resisted, and in this respect the teachings of the evolution doctrine have great force, because they teach that growth is structural and organic, and must take slow effect in all parts of the organism."

One can see how close this was to the conservative, liberal and moderate spirit.

Though the conservative, liberal and moderate phase of Indian thought and

politics has been overshadowed by a more strident and radical turn of mind and action, moderation remains a silent force still at work, capable of warning us against doctrinaire tyranny and thoughtless political enthusiasm, if only we would lend our ears to its gentle voice. We may still say that, by and large, the Indian mind remains inhospitable to extremism, especially of the violent variety.

Central to the understanding of Burke's philosophy of conservatism is his view of Society and Polity. They are not artefacts of the day but have grown with man in an inseparable partnership. They have a life of their own which reaches back to a hoary past, encompasses the present and extends into an infinite future. Individuals, real and significant though they are, are impermanent and fleeting, compared to this organic, undying whole. The individual must live his own life, it is true, but has to do so under its beneficent aegis. Society, with its customs, traditions, habits and "prejudices" is a legacy which we must preserve and pass on to posterity without irreligiously tampering with it or damaging it in a misplaced zeal for radical reform.

State and Society

The idea that Society and Polity are the result of a contract was one of the most popular ideas of the time. It had an ancient pedigree and was generally democratic in its purport. It meant that the final authority in all matters lies with society which itself was formed by a mutual compact of individuals. Society delegated executive power to the

magistrate or head of state as a trust for the sake of convenience. The authority thus entrusted may be withdrawn if the executive betrayed the trust reposed in him and acted against the interests of the community. The withdrawal of the trust and the institution of a fresh executive authority could be peaceful and bloodless as in the English Revolution of 1688 or violent, sanguinary and heartless as in the French. Burke's complaint against the revolutionaries of France was that they looked upon the Social Contract in entirely secular terms as a business deal which could be annulled at the whim of the parties. Minor contracts and temporary agreements could, no doubt, be easily and lightly altered or dissolved, but not the historic and fundamental contract of society which retained its sanctity for all time. In a profound passage in his *Reflections*, Burke has spoken of it in romantic terms and invested it with a religious and transmundane significance:

"Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure but the state ought not to be considered nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper or coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all sciences; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."

The Place of Religion

State and Society are thus invested with a mystical significance. What is more, Burke traces their ultimate foundation and source of reference, to the will of the supreme creator. Religion in its broad sense is not only the origin but the unfailing support of civil society.

"We know, and what is better we

feel inwardly that religion is the basis of civil society and the source of all good and of all comfort."

Man is a religious animal as he is also a political animal. The religious establishment consecrates secular institutions and by its support lends a religious sanction to political obligation. By its total dedication to the Supreme Power and aloofness from worldly ambitions it stands as an example of secular authorities, of the high ideals of service and sacrifice and to the humbler ones in society it is a source of consolation and hope. Burke's view of religion is not restricted by any narrow creed. It emphasizes the universality of different religions because of their common source

"They (the English) would reverently and affectionately protect all religions, because they love and venerate, the great principle upon which they all agree and the great object to which they are all directed."

But Burke emphasises that though the ultimate origin of all institutions is common, their area of operation in practice is, and ought to be well demarcated. They may exert an unobtrusive influence on each other but cannot cross their respective province and transgress their legitimate limits. A theological politician is as much a curse as a political theologian.

Reform and Revolution

From Burke's view of State and Society his theory of reform and revolution follow logically. Society or State are never a clean slate on which anyone can write as he will. No one can build anew; he can only add to what has been built up already, alter where alteration is imperative without damaging the symmetry and grandeur of the historic monument. Burke does not rule out the necessity of reform; he indeed sanctions reform when it is the only way of protecting the core and essence of the social and political structure; when, to resist reform would be to invite revolution and disaster. A necessary and timely concession to the demands of reform can be an effective porphyritic against such an eventuality.

"A state without the means of some change is without the means of preservation."

He emphasises that the two principles of "Conservation and Correction" have guided the historic continuity of

the British constitution. He takes pride in the English method of cautious and preservative change "in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete." He points out further that "A politic caution, a guarded circumspection, a moral rather than a complexional timidity were among the ruling principles of our forefathers in their most decided conduct."

It is otherwise with the revolutionaries. They act on *a priori* principles, without allowing any consideration for the vagaries of human nature and social behaviour. In their view the construction of the polity is as simple and straightforward as the solution of a geometrical problem. This is the defect of all politicians who seek to solve human problems in the spirit and style of mathematicians. They would work with abstractions without paying any heed to human feelings or human sufferings. Such was the doctrine of Natural Rights – "the grand magazine of offensive weapons", "an effectual instrument of despotism". Its abstract perfection is its practical defect; in proportion as it is metaphysically true, it is morally and politically false. Burke was far from denying or abridging the *real* rights of man as member of a well regulated community. Philosophical and speculative claims to right can only result in social and political disorder, in the "disconnection of the commonwealth into the dust and powder of individuality." Rights have their justification in virtue and conscience and are proportioned to intrinsic character, capacity, achievement and the just earnings of the individual in Society. The talk of Natural Rights, in the style of the French politicians, can only inflame a mob, enable them to score in an "auction of popularity", and let loose a storm of anarchy, of which they themselves would be the first victims.

The true lawgiver is totally unlike the revolutionary-lawmaker.

(He) "ought to have a heart full of sensibility. He ought to love and respect his kind, and to fear himself. It may be allowed to his temperament to catch his ultimate object with an intuitive glance; but his movements towards it ought to be deliberate. Political arrangement, as it is a work for social ends, is to be only wrought by social means. There, mind must conspire with

mind. Time is required to produce all the good we aim at. Our patience will achieve more than our force."

The Right to Resist

Another important question with which Burke was concerned was the right to resist and the right to revolution. His answer is cautious, qualified and bordering on the negative. This follows from his exalted view of the State as a sacred and eternal contract. The limited wisdom of the individual ought not to challenge the superior and aged wisdom of the state. The individual must hesitate in humility lest his impatience with a particular grievance should raze down a whole ancient edifice. He should act in the spirit of a conservative who would perforce concede a change in the larger interests of stability. The preservation of order is of the utmost importance.

"The speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance must begin, is faint, obscure, and not easily definable. It is not a single act, or a single event, which determines it. Governments must be abused and deranged indeed, before it can be thought of; and the prospect of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those whom nature has qualified to administer in extremities this critical, ambiguous, bitter portion to a dis-tempered State. Times and occasions, and provocations, will teach their own lessons. The wise will determine from the gravity of the case; the irritable from sensibility to oppression; the high-minded from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands; the brave and bold from the love of honourable danger in a generous cause; but with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resource of the thinking and the good."

Resistance and Revolution, he said, may be the extreme medicine of the institution but not its daily bread. The faults of the state must be approached, like the wounds of a parent, "with pious care and trembling solicitude."

Revolutions End in Despotism

What is most remarkable in Burke's *Reflections* is that he could visualise

Burke's Reflections

- * People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors.
- * But what is liberty without wisdom, and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.
- * Believe me, Sir, those who attempt to level, never equalize.
- * There is no qualification for government, but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive.
- * Everything ought to be open; but not indifferently to everyman.
- * The plunder of the few would indeed give a share unconceivably small in the distribution to the many. But the many are not capable of making this calculation; and those who lead them to rapine, never intend this distribution.
- * Political reason is a computing principle; adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, morally and not meta-physically or mathematically, true moral determinations.
- * Criminal needs once tolerated are soon preferred... Justifying perfidy and murder for public benefit, public benefit would soon become the pretext, and perfidy and murder the end.
- * The arguments of tyranny are as contemptible as its force is dreadful.
- * Equal neglect is not impartial kindness. The species of benevolence, which arises from contempt, is no true charity.
- * A disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman.
- * He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.
- * By hating vices too much, they come to love men too little.
- * They who destroy every thing certainly will remove some grievance.
- * It is with the greatest difficulty that I am able to separate policy of civil society; and any eminent departure from it, under any circumstances, lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all.

the culmination of the Revolution in the dictatorship of Napoleon, even in the initial stages of the event.

"In the weakness of one kind of authority, and in the fluctuation of all, the officers of the army will remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general, who understands the art of conciliating the soldiery, and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself: Armies will obey him on his personal account. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things. But the moment in which that event shall happen, the person who really commands the army is your master; and the master (that is little) of your king, the master of your assembly, the master of your whole republic."

The French Revolution came full circle with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte and ended in military despotism. Violent revolutions, almost without exception, have ended in disillusionment. They have usually meant the replacement of one tyranny by another, interspersed with "monstrous and tragicomic" scenes. It is given to very few communities to enjoy the blessings of uninterrupted freedom and constitutionalism; they must move alternately

between Revolution and Reaction. Recent events in the communist regimes all over have been rocked by popular resistance and have yielded to popular demands in a remarkable degree, though the Chinese regime has proved more stubborn and resistant. As Hannah Arendt has pointed out, it is now outdated to continue to speak in stereotypes such as conservative and liberal, revolutionary and reactionary. She writes:

"To be sure these opposites have their origin, and ultimately their justification, in the revolutionary experience as a whole but the point of the matter is that in the act of foundation they were not primarily exclusive opposites but two sides of the same event, and it was only after the revolutions had come to their end, in success or defeat, that they parted company, solidified into ideologies, and began to oppose each other."

Burke's fears and overheated declarations, romantic visions and mystical utterances, may not suit the modern taste but his ideas and insights can always provide an indispensable background to any consideration of the basic issues of national and international politics.

PROF. G.N. SARMA, Professor of Political Sciences (Retd.) Marathwada University, Aurangabad.

The growing strengths of Empire Industries

Empire in Glass:



The Vitrum Glass division, in collaboration with Owens Illinois Glass Inc, USA, is the largest manufacturer of amber glass containers for the pharmaceutical industry in India.

Empire in Cranes:

The Garlick Engineering division, in collaboration with Noel GmbH, W. Germany, is the largest manufacturer of cranes in the country with a wide range of applications.

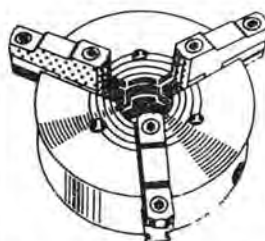


Empire in Finance:



The Empire Finance Co. Ltd., fully backed by Empire Industries, is a leading finance company with hire purchase, leasing, bills discounting, merchant banking and financial advisory services as its core activities.

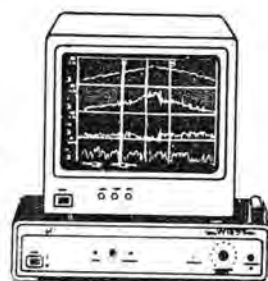
Empire in Machine Tools:



The Empire Machine Tools division is an acknowledged leader in the marketing and servicing of sophisticated machine tools manufactured in W. Germany, Switzerland, Japan and the USA.

Empire in Instrumentation:

The Empire Instrumentation division brings to India medical, defence, pollution-monitoring, analytical, test and measuring, clinical and process control instruments from international leaders in Europe, Japan and the USA.



Empire in Speciality Fabrics:

The Empire Speciality Fabrics division manufactures high tech fabrics for use in tyre, conveyor belt, jacketing, abrasive, footwear and defence industries.



EMPIRE INDUSTRIES

414, Senapati Bapat Marg,
Punjab 400 013
Phone: 4920003
Telex: 11 71800 EMT IN



Glass • Cranes • Machine Tools
Instrumentation
Speciality fabrics
Financial services

My Impressions of the Soviet Union

From Marx & Engels to Marks & Spencer

A.G. Modak

The impressions one gathers after a visit to a foreign land are particularly valuable if it enables an evaluation based on impressions gathered in earlier visits to that country. And, if the visitor knows the local language, his impressions acquire significance since he is able to communicate with the natives. Recently I returned from a visit to the USSR — my third trip in fact — in a position to compare recent developments with those I witnessed on my earlier visits.

I have been studying events in the USSR for more than two decades, initially as a Bombay university student and later as a faculty member of the Soviet Studies Centre of that University. I do not claim fluency in Russian but adequate to establish rapport with any Russian. Thus the observations I have recorded in this article after my recent visit to the USSR will, hopefully, prove of interest to the common reader.

Forget the October Revolution

I vividly recall while travelling in a taxi from Moscow's Sheremetvo airport on October 30, 1969, the driver pointing to the memorial on the right side of the road stretching from the airport to the city centre, as a reminder to posterity of the bravery of Soviet soldiers who stopped the German army from entering Moscow during the Second World War. On my latest visit (January 1991) I could not resist probing if the taxi driver continued to have the same nostalgic attachment to the heroic deeds of Soviet soldiers during the Second World War. Not only was this taxi driver indifferent to the achievements of the USSR but, to my surprise, reacted angrily when I told him the purpose of my visit was to collect material for a book on the history of the October Revolution. "Dear friend," said the taxi driver, the October Revolution no longer inspires us. Please find some other topic for our study! This was my introduction to a change in the attitudes of the people — a sort of nihilism dominating the minds of contemporary youth in the Soviet Union.

As I told the taxi driver, the purpose of my visit had to do with a book I was writing on the October Revolution. Surprisingly enough, the revolution which gave birth to the USSR no longer attracts and inspires Soviet citizens. A Russian magazine *Dialogue* conducted a seminar last year. The proceedings of the seminar entitled "October Revolution: A Curse or a Blessing", were subsequently published in the March 1990 issue of this

magazine. Later, its issue of November 1990 published some other interviews on the same theme. From the proceedings, the following salient points emerged:

- The October Revolution was supposed to be followed by revolutions in the developed capitalist countries. The fact that this did not materialise underscored the weakness in the Leninist prediction regarding post-Revolution developments.
- Socialism was therefore imposed violently in the USSR.
- The resultant miseries were incalculable.
- What is badly needed at present is a new biography of Lenin for a correct assessment of the architect of the October Revolution. One should no longer close one's eyes to the shortcomings of Lenin.

I had the opportunity to meet professors of Russian history at Moscow and Kiev. If one professor pointed out quite bluntly that Lenin was a fanatic, another stated that Lenin never bothered to give due recognition to views even slightly different from those held by him. Professor Verstyuk Vladislav of the Institute of History at Kiev observed in the course of a chat with me: "Bolsheviks cared two-pence for democracy; they captured power and later institutionalised dictatorship." Professor Leonid Vasiliev of the Institute of Oriental Studies at Moscow, who often writes for Russian journals like the *Novaya Vremya* and *Nizavisimaya Gazeta* categorically stated in

one of his articles that the October Revolution caused great damage to the course of Russian history and that the damage could only be repaired by the introduction of capitalism.

If Lenin is attacked, his contemporaries who differed with him and were in the dock until recently, today receive the accolades of new writers and thinkers. Nicholas Berdyaev, a Russian thinker of the religious kind who vehemently opposed Lenin and Bolshevism seems to have emerged as the current favourite. His writings were recently published in Moscow for the first time. Even a cursory perusal of the 1990 and 1991 issues of the Russian weekly *New Times* would indicate that those who had, in the years preceding the Bolshevik Revolution,

Gorbachev was naive enough to believe that the common people would stop with the criticism of Stalin; that they would not indulge in a post mortem of Lenin. Glasnost did not stop with Stalin. The people challenged not only Lenin and the October Revolution but the very principles of Marxism

tion, warned of the possibility of a crude dictatorship under the banner of the Red Flag have now become popular heroes. No wonder then that according to present writers, the common people of Russia have suffered from cruel state terrorism uninterruptedly for 373 years. Thus, according to current thinking, the Bolsheviks who became the rulers of Russia in 1917 carried forward the 300-year legacy of the Czars.

Poor Gorbachev who launched his campaign of Openness (Glasnost) soon after taking over as General Secretary of the CPSU was naive enough to believe that the common people would stop with the criticism of Stalin; that they would not dare indulge in a post-mortem of Lenin. Glasnost did not stop with Stalin. The people went way beyond what Gorbachev intended. They challenged not only Leninism and the October Revolution but the very principles of Marxism on which rests the Soviet State.

The Exhibition of "Bogus" Achievements

During my first visit to the USSR some years ago, I was, like most visitors, impressed by some of the achievements of the USSR. Thus I felt that nobody should belittle the role played by Soviet soldiers in demolishing the fascist menace; that nobody can afford to ignore the way the nationality problem was resolved in the USSR; that nobody can challenge the course of Soviet development especially its salient landmarks like the transport system, the construction of big and basic industries, its education system, etc. I also concluded then that the average citizen was proud of the multi-dimensional achievements of the Soviet Union. The impressions gathered by me during my visit this year are totally at variance. A film: "One should not live like that", — a Russian documentary released in 1989 — became immensely popular because of its candid and honest portrayal of the "bogus" nature of Soviet achievements. For instance, one of the scenes in the film focuses on the huge, permanent exhibition of Soviet achievements in Moscow. The commentator in the film has a dig at this. He describes it as "the exhibition of bogus achievements." In the same film the audience is invited to view an ordinary shop in a German city, where

purchasers are engaged in enthusiastic transactions. Runs the commentary: "This is the scene prevailing in any shop anywhere in Germany. They say that Germany was defeated by us in the Second World War. An ordinary shop full of goods and services in Germany however informs us of the contrary images of the USSR and Germany." The film also informs the audience that the leadership of the USSR tried to demolish traditional faiths and achieved limited success, "but the failure on the part of the leadership in inculcating new faiths in the Soviet masses is more noteworthy than the success mentioned above."

Mrs. Olga Ivanovna, a research associate at the Institute of History at Kiev put to me a rhetorical question: "How can we call ourselves 'developed' and India as 'developing' when we continue to suffer from several shortages and Indians do not complain about similar shortages?" Empty shops, long queues of customers, arrogant salesmen... all these aspects really present a very pathetic picture. In one Russian weekly, I found photographs of such tragic scenes in various sections of the huge governmental department stores. And in the centre-spread of the weekly was the following box-item:

"In the pre-Revolution years, Russia used to have prosperous shops. Then Lenin was busy in chalking out plans for the socialist revolution in Russia. He stayed in Zurich where his energy was spent in explaining the Marxist formula: Commodity-Money-Commodity. At present, everywhere in our socialist country, we observe empty shops. We therefore find that in the above mentioned formula the first and third links are missing but customers with stocks of money are in abundance."

Gorbachev is known for his stress on de-ideologisation. One of my Russian

friends aptly quipped in this connection: "Previously at least ideology was available in abundance. At present there is a shortage not only of goods but of ideological formulations also"

Besides nihilism, permissiveness also seems to dominate present Soviet life. Perhaps it is the scarcity of everything which invites unscrupulous elements in society to grab the opportunity for personal gains. Certain measures adopted by Gorbachev have

unfortunately facilitated corrupt practices. Thus the new leadership has encouraged people to try to accomplish private interests; it has passed the law of individual labour activity; it has sanctioned the opening of cooperative shops. Buccaneers have literally rushed to avail themselves of these avenues. The fact that cooperative stores can procure raw materials at subsidized rates and sell them at high prices is indeed a boon for enthusiastic traders. Initially, at least, leaders of the cooperative movement received enviable honours, and were projected as pioneers goading a revolution from below. The table given below throws light on the wide gap between official rates and those prevailing in cooperative and private shops in Moscow.

From Marx & Engels To Marks & Spencer!

On April 2 this year the USSR government undertook price reforms as a result of which, official prices went up almost three times. Prices of goods in private shops automatically went up even higher. As nothing is available in the official "fair price shops", customers are constrained to rush to the unofficial shops which in recent months have become most favoured transaction centres. Somebody summed up this phenomenon rather well "In capi-

Name of the commodity	Official rate		Rate in a private or a cooperative shop	
	Rouble	Kopeks	Rouble	Kopeks
Potato (per Kg.)	00	50	3-8	-
Tomato (- do -)	4	50	30-40	-
Carrot (- do -)	00	40	3-10	-
Onion (- do -)	2	20	5-15	-
Beef (- do -)	2	00	15-20	-
Eggs (per dozen)	1	30	7-8	-

One Rouble = Rs 20.73

alism, man exploits man; in socialism is the opposite." A Russian comment is equally appropriate: "If you want fair prices, go to the official shops, if however you need goods and services go to the cooperative shops".

As the official currency is losing its value, people in general want dollars and pounds sterling. Taxi drivers, waiters in hotels and ticket checkers in railway compartments insist on pocketing foreign currency units from foreigners. An assistant editor of *New Times* took me to the American Embassy in Moscow to prove that thousands of Soviet citizens were keen to leave their homeland. The campus of the U.S. Embassy was literally flooded with Russians desperately seeking a visa to enter the USA — their El Dorado. Said the assistant editor: "Russians are mad for American dollars because they think that they can purchase their entry into America with the help of this currency."

Mikhail Gorbachev has warned time and again, of the growing trend among Soviet youth towards vices like permissiveness, alcoholism, philistinism, consumerism and hooliganism. What an irony, that barring Marxism-Leninism, every other 'ism' has blossomed in the land of the Red Flag. We all know of the well-known chain of departmental stores in capitalist Europe known as 'Marks and Spencer'. The spread of the contagious disease of consumerism in "socialist" Europe has resulted in the replacement of "Marx and Engels" by "Marks and Spencer"!

Gorbachev has failed miserably in curbing the Soviet addiction to alcoholism. The campaign against boozing launched by Gorbachev in '85-'86 came to a pathetic end as the campaign from above without a favourable response from below only resulted in making people opt for illicit liquor spawning, in the process, a profitable cottage industry. As a result, sugar and related items disappeared. Ultimately Gorbachev and his colleagues were compelled to abandon the campaign against alcoholism. Marshal Goldman refers to an interesting dialogue he overheard in front of a wine-shop in Moscow. Customers standing in a long queue for purchasing their "quotas" got frustrated and irritated. Someone in the queue started abusing Gorbachev for the futile campaign against alcoholism. His listener tried to console him: "Dear friend, please note that Gor-

bachev himself is a strict teetotaler." A third customer intervened: "Thank God, he is not a strict observer of celibacy!"

Gone are the days when there were restrictions on the publication of pornographic literature. Protagonists of the USSR used to proclaim that "prostitution is conspicuous by its absence in the land of Lenin". A typical propaganda ploy then was to depict magazines like *Playboy* as typical of a capitalist country. On my recent visit, I found the complete collapse of all such myths in Russia. Glasnost has resulted in a crop of pornographic books and magazines. Russian newspapers now inform us that the profession of prostitution is eternal and a claim contrary to this is reflective of sheer hypocrisy. The present leadership has honestly admitted that the Soviet Union is not free from sexual problems. Among reasons advanced for this admission are factors like shortages of essential goods and services, rise in philistinism, and the inability on the part of the people so inclined, to accomplish their sexual urges without fear of reproduction.

The Failure of Statism

If my earlier visits gave me the impression of powerful and influential leaders and obedient cadres, the visit in January this year led me to get the distinct impressions of a frightened State on the one hand and a determined society on the other. This is the inevitable result of 373 years of attempts by Russia's rulers to impose Statism at the cost of society (300 years under the Romanovs followed by 73 years under the Bolsheviks). In the first two decades following the October Revolution, a credulous people believed in the need to endure a painful present for the sake of a prosperous future. They allowed their leaders to torment them in the hope that the resultant future would be bright. When however the realisation dawned on them that a dichotomy between "today" and "tomorrow" was nothing but a tactical manoeuvre on the part of the leadership, they felt disheartened. But by then the harsh winter of Stalinism had set in and it was not possible for the people to express their disappointment and anger. Fear, sycophancy and hypocrisy were the three evils that ruled the country. The emergence of Gorbachev was indeed a blessing for the Soviet people, because of the sanction he gave to the uphold-

ing of truth. The first three years with Gorbachev as the CPSU General Secretary were heady days for the people. It was a great relief to speak openly and frankly. But Gorbachev's honeymoon with the people did not last very long. There were many reasons for this. Among these were:

- Chronic shortages and increasing corruption;
- Gorbachev's reluctance to accept the logic of Glasnost.
- After initially supporting the democrats and liberals, Gorbachev sought to establish friendly rapport with the conservatives in the CPSU.

Each of these added to the frustration of the Soviet people. A visitor to the USSR today would conclude that there is a crisis of confidence in a leadership that has lost credibility. Thus when the USSR government decided on 22nd January to demonetise currency notes of the denomination of 50 and 100 Roubles under the pretext that the step became necessary as capitalist countries were conspiring to flood the country with notes of these denominations, journalists and the intelligentsia only laughed at the lame excuse. Later, when the government asked the military to patrol cities and towns with a view to strengthening law and order in the Soviet Union, people poo-h-pooed the government's interest in law and order. Recent attempts to curb freedom of information through back-door measures were treated with contempt by the people.

Yesterday's Foes are Today's Friends

What strikes a visitor to the present day USSR is the contrast between the contempt of the people for everything that is of Soviet manufacture and the attraction for foreign goods in general and for the American or German in particular. In fact, capitalism is no longer treated as an enemy to be demolished. On the contrary it is viewed as a worthwhile goal to be achieved in the near future. If, in the past, Great Britain and America were treated as villains on the world stage, today they are officially presented as friends of the USSR.

How can one forget what *Prauda* and other Soviet newspapers wrote in

their columns in the first decade after the Second World War blaming Great Britain for several disasters such as the murder of Mahatma Gandhi; the rift between Tito and Stalin and other distortions in the socialist camp. On the other hand today's Russian newspapers carry reports and articles that reflect Soviet affection for the British model of democracy. During his recent visit to Tokyo, Gorbachev quoted Sir Winston Churchill to substantiate the validity of a point he was making. An advertisement by a matrimonial bureau in a Russian newspaper in Moscow runs as follows:

"Whoever is interested in seeking a life companion of the opposite sex from Great Britain or America is requested to approach our agency in Moscow."

Another advertisement by a beer bar in Moscow seeks to attract patrons:

"Visit our bar where you will feel the aroma of a British pub."

Gorbachev's Fears

What is being witnessed today in the USSR is a distortion of the content of Gorbachev's reforms. For instance citizens are asked to treat a law as proscriptive rather than prescriptive; to shape their lives not in the light of orders issued from above but in accordance with their own viewpoints. People took these guidelines as a signal or licence to pursue selfish gains. The policy of Openness was an invitation to the people to feel free to challenge government. The people grabbed the opportunity to express their pent up anger against the CPSU. Even the 'sacred cows' were not spared. De-ideologisation was a step to put a stop to Stalinist dogmatism. People however used the opportunity to prove the bankruptcy of Marxism-Leninism. The new leadership exhorted the people not to ignore the positive aspects of capitalism. And when Gorbachev tried to apply the brakes he was accused of wanting to protect the system which in fact was responsible for the miseries of the people.

A leader of the democratic movement in Russia has called Gorbachev an impotent captain. Another has described the Nobel Prize awarded to Gorbachev as his Nobel pension! Boris Yeltsin has stressed time and

again that Gorbachev should step down as President of the USSR. He has in fact ventilated the massive anger against Gorbachev which reflected itself in the results of the Referendum held on March 17, 1991. Out of fifteen republics, only five followed Gorbachev, six republics boycotted the referendum, while four others suggested amendments to the question put to the voters by Gorbachev.

Recently, Gorbachev signed a truce with nine republics thus managing to develop some rapport with the four prodigals. But six republics continue to remain beyond the periphery. The compromise signed with the remaining republics was bought at a heavy price, as it involved the removal of the word "socialist" from the title of the USSR and offers full sovereignty and *de facto* independence to the units of the proposed federation. Gorbachev has accepted that the coal mines and other such enterprises belong to the respective republics. He has also accepted the ownership of the RSFSR (the Russian Republic) over the Kurile Islands which he had offered to Japan as a *quid pro quo* for Japanese help in developing Siberia.

People say that Gorbachev is afraid of a repetition of 1964. At that time the conservatives in the CPSU staged a successful conspiracy forcing Khrushchev to step down. When Khrushchev died in 1971 *Pravda* did not report the news of his death for two days. Subsequently every effort was made by the then ruling leadership to consign Nikita to oblivion. Gorbachev perhaps fears that the conservatives he had antagonised in the first three years of his General Secretaryship might instigate the people against the present leadership. This would mean the end of the experiment in Glasnost launched by the reformers. It is this fear which has perhaps compelled Gorbachev to try to appease conservatives in the hope that he could continue his rule. What I observed during my visit makes me wonder about Gorbachev's future. I have seen the Soviet ship being tossed about in deeply troubled waters. And when the ship is in deep waters, surrounded by a strong tempest, nobody can vouchsafe a safe return for either the ship or its captain.

DR. A.G. MODAK is Reader in the Centre for Soviet Studies, Bombay University

SERVING THE CORE SECTORS OF INDIAN ECONOMY

particularly Power,
Irrigation, Water Supply,
Railways and Industries
such as Fertilisers,
Refineries, Sugar, Cement,
Petrochemicals etc.,



Jyoti Ltd.

® P.O. Chemical Industries
Industrial Area
Vadodra-390 003

**A leading engineering
Company offering a wide
range of products**

- Medium, Large and Special Purpose Pumps
- Mini / Micro Hydel Systems
- H.T. & L.T. Motors
- Generators
- Special purpose rotating electrical machines
- L.T. & H.T. Switchgears and Switchboards
- Electronics & Control Systems
- Turnkey Projects

India and Israel

T.H. Chowdary

If there is one sad, irrational and immoral element in India's foreign policy that is not publicly analysed it is the attitude of successive Indian governments to Israel. Palestine was inhabited by Jews for at least two thousand years before Christ. Twice were its people led away into captivity, first by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia (modern Iraq) and a second time by the Pharaoh of Egypt. Their great prophets Abraham and Moses led them back to freedom and their native land. Their most well known kings are David and Solomon. Their known kingdoms were Israel and Judea. They were conquered by the Romans but the Jews repeatedly rose in revolt. The Roman emperor uprooted the whole population, drove them out of Palestine, dispersed them in all his provinces and prohibited their return. The vacuum was filled by their semitic cousins, the Arabs from the neighbouring areas — modern Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.

The Return to Palestine

The dispersed Jews living in the Diaspora were prohibited agriculture but allowed trade and money lending, occupations which made them prosperous and for that reason hated as alien money-makers. In Europe they were confined to ghettos. Tyrants and despots found it convenient to turn the wrath of their oppressed and deprived subjects on the trading and moneylending prosperous but alien Jews. Hitler hunted and herded them to be killed like dogs in gas chambers. The spectator nations, their conscience pricked concluded that Jews could only live with honour, dignity and security in their land of Palestine, which till the end of the First World War was a province of the Ottoman Turkish empire. Turks are not Arabs but only Muslims.

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, helped by philanthropic organisations, Jewish agencies started purchasing land from Arab

Has Israel caused us any harm? Has it once voted against us in the U.N.? We have a Chinese Embassy, we have a Pakistan Embassy. We even have an Embassy of the PLO. Why don't we have an Israeli Embassy? Is it less friendly to us than are China and Pakistan? Has Israel waged war against us? Has it financed the separatists and subversives in India?

owners and started resettling Jews fleeing persecution. At the end of the First World War, the League of Nations gave Palestine as a mandated trust to Great Britain, which in return for Jewish support against Germany, promised them a Palestinian homeland. The number of returning Jews swelled leading to strife between the Arabs who were in possession and the Jews who were returning to buy up the land they were driven away from, nineteen hundred years ago.

Concerned with their own imperial interests in other Arab lands, the British first restricted and then forcibly tried to prevent the Jewish return to Palestine which at the end of the Second World War, was undergoing a tripartite War — Jews against Arabs, Britain against the Jews and the Arabs against everyone else. The United Nations decided to create two States in Palestine — one for the Arabs and the other for the Jews. The decision was supported by the Soviet Union, the United States and India. Remarkably, England abstained! The Jews proclaimed the State of Israel in May 1948. The Arab States opposed the partition (they were not unhappy with India's partition into India and Pakistan), called upon the Palestinian Arabs not to set up a State and Arab armies from seven nations set out to destroy the new State of Israel and "throw the Jews into the sea". But the

Israelis who were only guerrillas the day before, quickly forged an army, and without tanks and an airforce, defeated the combined armies of the invading nations.

The Genesis of the Palestinian Problem

The United Nations arranged a ceasefire. The Arab states called upon the Palestinian Arabs to vacate Israeli territory, rather than live under Jewish rule. Thus arose the Palestinian "refugee" problem. No brother Arab state has given them citizenship till today. On the other hand Egypt herded them into camps in the Gaza strip. To the east the Palestinian "refugees" settled in the West Bank (of the Jordan River) in Jordan, becoming in the process a majority of its population. Since the 1948 war there were three more in 1956, 1967 and 1973 in all of which the armies of several Arab States were defeated by Israel. In the 1967 war, the West Bank was lost to the Israelis and ever since, along with the Gaza strip, continues to be under Israeli occupation. Egypt and Israel made peace after the 1973 war — the famous Camp David accord with the active association of U.S. President Jimmy Carter. This treaty cost Egyptian President Anwar Sadat his life, when he was assassinated by a member of a Muslim fundamentalist organisation.

In the 43 years since the founding of Israel, nearly three million Jews from Europe and Arab countries returned to tiny (21,000 Sq. Km) Israel, a number far exceeding the number of Arabs who left, fled or who were forced out of Israel. The Palestinian Arabs who left Israel are compelled to live in camps in Lebanon and Syria and are allowed "residence" permits in 'brother' Arab lands (21 States, 19,400,000 Sq. Km) but not given citizenship. In 43 years the "refugee" population grew in the 'refugee-camps', and elsewhere. The United Nations Refugee and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) has been feeding and maintaining these refugees,

I use Cinthol. Do you?

Vinod Khanna



Cinthol's unique deodorant formulation with TCC prevents body odour to give you Body Confidence

Vinod's Body Confidence Soap. Cinthol.

The case of the Palestinians who left Israel and those in the West Bank and the Gaza strip under Israeli occupation is that they must be allowed to return to Israel; that they must be allowed to set up a sovereign State; that Jews from elsewhere in the world should not be allowed to emigrate to Israel. The most radical ones among them want to dismember Israel and expel all those who came there from 1946 onwards. No Arab State except Egypt recognises the State of Israel. Syria, Iraq and Jordan are officially in a state of belligerence. During the Gulf war, Iraq deliberately directed some of its Scud missiles at civilian areas in Tel Aviv setting off jubilation among Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims all over the world.

What is India's position in the Israeli-Arab dispute? India demands that Israel should vacate all the territories it occupied in the various wars. India has not and, in fact, dare not ask the Soviet Union to vacate the countries it conquered and incorporated into its Soviet Socialist Union — The Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia which were conquered by Stalin in 1939. India does not, even now, when the Baltic States are demanding the restoration of independence, advise or demand that the Soviet Union should vacate the occupied-by-aggression territories. India wants Pakistan to vacate occupied Kashmir. Which Arab country has supported India's demand?.

India tells Israel that it must take back all the Palestinian "refugees" who left Israel and allow them to set up a State. Does India ask Pakistan and Bangladesh to take back the more than 40 million Hindus squeezed out of these two countries? Does it ask Pakistan and Bangladesh to allow them to set up Hindu districts or States inside those areas? Would any Arab country support such (an admittedly ill-divided) demand if India makes one?

India says that Israel is wrong in incorporating East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights to enhance its security and that Israel's arguments for secure borders is a preposterous idea. Why did India incorporate Sikkim? Was it not to keep it out of the influence of hostile China? Why did we intervene in Sri Lanka and the Maldives? Was it not to preserve our security for if we did not intervene our enemy would have been invited to intervene there, consti-

tuting a threat to our security. Would we like Bhutan to allow its neighbours who are none too friendly with us, place guns and missiles there? Why, if not for our security, are we having a "forward" policy of placing our armed forces in the inhospitable borders where not a blade of grass grows (a phrase used by Jawaharlal Nehru with regard to Aksai Chin) and in the impenetrable wilds and forests of Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh? Why should Israel not have the same concern for security, especially in the face of avowed hostility, enmity and belligerence.

India says that Israel must stop the brutal suppression of the "intifada", the stone throwing, knife-piercing, bomb-hurling resistance of the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza strip. Why don't we stop our operations against the JKLF and Khalistanis, who call our actions brutal and scream genocide? Have our Arab friends advised our neighbour not to train, equip, support and lend succour to the JKLF and Khalistani "freedom" forces?

Has Israel caused us any harm? Has it once voted against us in the United Nations? We have a Chinese Embassy, we have a Pakistani Embassy. We even have an Embassy of the PLO. Why don't we have an Israeli Embassy? Is it less friendly to us than are China and Pakistan? Has Israel waged war against us? Has it financed the sepratists and subversives in India? Why do we condemn Israel for some of its acts even before some Arab states do so and when some of them never do so?

On the other hand don't we have something to admire in and learn from Israel — the welding into one cohesive nation of a people gathered from more than twenty countries; the revival of their ancient language Hebrew (as old as Sanskrit); the greening of their deserts conserving every drop of water, growing food and fruit crops in the desert and then exporting these products to Europe and America; the reclamation of the swamps; their scientific and technological achievements; and above all their open, democratic and free society even when they are under siege? How hollow are our principles of not bending and bowing before the mighty (meaning America) while routinely always, and in every event, supporting

Arab arguments, demands and positions against Israel — all because our politicians want the votes from a section of India's people?

Is there not one party, one statesman, one intellectual in India who would acknowledge our immorality, opportunism, and communalism that is making Israel our whipping boy in West Asia? Is it not time that we compel the Government of India to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel and abandon the policy: The PLO right or wrong.

MR. T.H. CHOWDARY was the Chairman and Managing Director of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited

Comrade Bishop

"I was told by the Saudis that they do not want the allied presence in their country", Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorius of India told a news conference at the World Council of Churches' seventh assembly in Canberra on February 8. "They had asked for it because they were threatened by an invasion by Iraq but now they are convinced, that was not the original intention and that they made a mistake. But they cannot say that", he said.

Mar Gregorius, who is from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India, said he visited Saudi Arabia and held talks with the country's Deputy Foreign Minister in November.

"The Deputy Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia said he and some of his colleagues thought it was a mistake to have invited the allied forces into their country. They were worried that the presence of a 500,000-strong force would endanger their culture", Mar Gregorius said after the conference. "And I am sure there is much support within the Saudi community for that thinking".

Prof. Babu Joseph of the Christian Liberation Movement an inter-denominational group combating 'anti-Christian' ideas being permeated in the Christian community in a rejoinder to the Bishop's observations pointed out that the prelate who is well-known for his pro-Stalinist and anti-Western views had even welcomed the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. His statement therefore lacked objectivity and was far from an un-biased appreciation of the facts of the situation. "The Bishop's statement is so unfortunate especially in the context of the fact that thousands of Keralites had to flee Kuwait leaving behind whatever savings and possessions they had after several years of hard work," said Prof. Babu Joseph in a press statement on February 9, 1991.

"We have forgotten, my friends to tax walking sticks. They alone remain public parasites that evade their civic duty. That, gentlemen, is why I propose to tax them just as we tax all useful implements. Are walking sticks to be more privileged than spectacles on which we levy a tax?"

It so happened one day that an elderly member of the Chamber of Lippery forgot his walking stick [in the Chamber]. When he returned home and sought to stand it in its place, he realized that he did not have it. Though at first he was furious at the sergeant-at-arms for having let him leave it in the Chamber, he hadn't time to be furious for long, for his dinner was already on the table. And so he sat down to eat and put off being angry for tomorrow. Yet between one spoonful and the next he could not stop thinking about his walking stick, and the more he thought the more he marvelled how an old man like himself had managed to walk without it. The next day he told the story to the whole Chamber of Lippery. The older members were green with envy while the younger ones congratulated him and said that before long he would be growing new teeth to replace his false ones.

One member of the Chamber of Lippery, however, did not join in the banter because he was too busy thinking of how the matter might be put to State use. As soon as the Chamber convened he took the floor and declared, "Gentlemen, please give me your attention: I have a proposal to make!" Some of the Chamber members lent an ear; others sat and drew funny faces or already began planning their rebuttals. "I have the solution," announced the speaker, "and I must admit that it is perfect. Please, gentlemen, consider carefully before you answer: what is the one thing, my friends that we have forgotten to tax? We have forgotten, my friends, to tax walking sticks. They alone remain public parasites that evade their civic duty. That, gentlemen, is why I propose to tax them just as we tax all useful implements. Are walking sticks to be more privileged than spectacles, on which we levy a tax? Are they more special than false teeth, which are taxed also? And if

they are, that one means that they deserve a special tax. In my humble opinion, gentlemen, the walking stick is a human accessory and should be taxed as such. That, my friends, is the substance of my remarks, to which I have nothing to add except to say that although the wisdom of my proposal is undebatable, I nevertheless table it for debate as is the custom of the house."

The Chamber of Lippery was so stunned by the proposal that no one could think of a thing to say against it. It was only when a motion was moved to thank its author that several disinterested voices objected that for the Chamber to thank a member of the Chamber was like a person thanking his own self, which was an absurdity so great that the motion should be struck down at once. And indeed it was, although it was agreed to enter it in the protocol together with the reason for its rejection. Then the proposed tax was thrown open to debate and the Chamber voted to appoint a committee of statisticians to determine how many walking sticks there were in the state. It also voted to create a committee of economists to decide how walking sticks should be assessed. A third committee was chosen to establish whether crutches should be considered walking sticks also, and if so, whether they should be taxed as one stick or as two, and if as two, whether they should be taxed by the unit like the lenses of spectacles or by weight like false teeth. The crutch committee appointed a sub-committee to investigate the question of teachers' canes and decide if they should be taxed as work tools or luxury items, since there were teachers who thrashed their pupils bare handed instead of caning them and others who kicked them with their feet. A fourth committee composed of historians, physicists, and botanists, was appointed to investigate if walking

sticks could indeed turn into crocodiles and almond branches as claimed by the Bible. Meanwhile, the tax committee established a commission of enquiry to determine if a walking stick that was temporarily a crocodile or an almond branch should be taxed as a walking stick or not. These committees quickly reported back to the steering committee, which forwarded them to the ways-and-means committee, which found ways and means of putting them into practice. And so, employing its statutory powers, the State enacted a walking stick tax.

At first the new tax was accepted quite matter-of-factly, not only by those who didn't own walking sticks but also those who did. Indeed, some walking stick owners were proud of the tax, which enabled them to boast that they went about with walking sticks less for their own personal convenience than as a contribution to the public welfare. In time, however walking sticks grew rarer and rarer until they disappeared entirely. What did the cripples and old people do who could not get along without them? They used umbrellas instead to evade taxes. When the state saw that it was losing revenue, it passed a new law decreeing that possession of a walking stick was taxable whether the stick was used or not. It also rejected the appeal of certain citizens who sought to pay only 6/7 of the tax on the grounds that their religion forbade them to use walking sticks one day a week. It was no concern of the State, said the State, whether they used their walking sticks on the Sabbath or not, and it proceeded to hire a force of walking stick inspectors and another of special tax collectors.

It is only fair that the Book of the State should praise the State's leaders at this point, for while there was much grumbling that the latter brooked no taxes that were to their own personal disadvantage, we can see

that this was clearly not the case. Indeed, they not only passed the walking stick tax despite the fact that they were subject to it themselves, they even added an amendment requiring everyone to buy a walking stick whether he or she needed it or not. The walking stick owners took to walking with their sticks again, and now there was such a demand for them that the merchants all raised their prices. Whoever could afford one bought it and paid the taxes, while whoever couldn't was exempt. When the State saw that the merchants were diminishing the number of tax payers, it established a committee of experts to establish price controls for walking sticks and added an amendment to the amendment making it a criminal offence to sell a walking stick for more than its legal price. What did the merchants do? They took their walking sticks off their racks and began selling them on the black market. What did the State do? It announced that it would import walking sticks from abroad.

This measure so frightened the merchants that they resumed selling walking sticks over the counter and the price dropped so sharply that every one could afford one. Soon, however, there were no walking sticks left to buy. Moreover, some people started to grumble that although they owned thin walking sticks, they had to pay as much as did those who owned thick ones, while short citizens complained that they should be taxed less than tall ones, whose walking sticks were much longer.

One complaint led to another and before long the whole State was up in arms. The Chamber of Lippery was hastily convened and speeches were given in praise of both walking sticks and their taxes. Since the full text of these speeches appeared in all the newspapers, there is no need to repeat them here. But we will mention the Chamber's decision, which was to send a lumber-purchasing mission abroad so that every citizen could have a

walking stick. This step was necessary because the State did not have enough trees. And why didn't it? Because whenever a tree was planted it was stolen by schoolchildren for their Arbor Day celebrations. A committee was appointed to negotiate an international bank loan for the purchase of the lumber, and another was set up to determine where the lumber should be bought.

COURTESY: *News from Israel*, Jan. '91

Translated from Hebrew by Hillel Halkin
From *The book of the State*, Agnon's Collected Works, Schocken, 1955.

S.Y. Agnon (1888-1970), is universally regarded as one of the greatest writers of Hebrew fiction (Agnon received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966). He wrote one work of political satire, *The Book of the State*, considered a most scathing exposé of the young state.

LEADERS SINCE A LONG TIME CONSOLIDATED COFFEE LIMITED

12,500 acres of coffee plantations. Country's largest
curer, curing about 20% of the total production.
Over 40 years of experience.

Growing coffee by employing the best cultivation
methods. Consolidated Coffee also grows, Tea,
Cardamom, pepper and oranges. A leading exporter
of Coffee, they are also authorised clearing & forwarding agents.

CONSOLIDATED COFFEE LIMITED

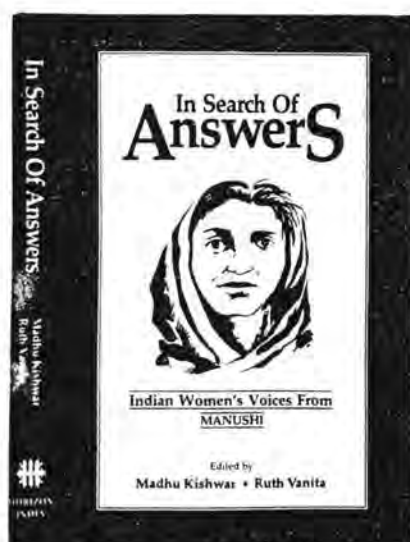
Pollibeta - 571 215
KODAGU

In Calcutta, when people discuss
people, events and news
an important point of reference is
"What did The Statesman say?"



BOOK REVIEWS

IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS: INDIAN WOMEN'S VOICES FROM MANUSHI edited by Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita; Horizon India Books, P.O. Box 3224 New Delhi 110013; second revised edition; 1991; p.249; Rs.200.



There is an uncluttered directness in the pages of this publication which demands participatory reading from us. Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita see to it that the reader is involved in the lives of the oppressed and silent women of India. After 239 pages when we are just about to give up the task of women's upliftment as hopeless, they help us with a note about *Manushi* and teach us how to go about the task of defence and regeneration. All things can be done if the will to act is there!

Manushi was founded in 1978 and the first task of this Delhi-based women's organisation was publishing a journal. During the '80s, the journal helped build a widespread information-gathering system to collect data about the life situation of women in different parts of the country. It is appalling that despite literacy, increased mobility and a modernised life-style, we remain largely ignorant of

the lives of our sisters elsewhere in India

In the past, Indian mythology and legends had helped in 'getting the women together on the emotional plane. *Manushi's* special tenth anniversary triple-issue January-June 1989) shrewdly brought together Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka, Delhi and Kashmir by essays on women saints like Aवाईyar and Mirabai, Gangasati and Akka Mahadevi, Sahjobai and Lal Ded. The issue was meant to insinuate that a woman could lead a life of fulfillment without assuming the traditional role of a mother. One could rebel against one's husband and in-laws and yet be revered by society.

Madhu and Ruth had then collaborated in writing a research-article on the life and work of Mirabai where they admired her disregard for public opinion, "that great deterrent to unorthodox actions, especially for women, even today." Mira had broken down several value systems triumphantly and so had several other women devotees like Kunwarsena and Ratansena, daughters of Narsi Mehta. Such behaviour had aroused the ire of priests but the devotees had not been persecuted as heretics. Madhu and Ruth rightly felt that Mira and other women *bhaktas* can be used as powerful symbols for nurturing a self-respect movement amongst women. Sadly, in a land that swears by the sati myth, a woman who achieves greatness beyond familial and societal norms "is not (an) easily imitable model."

Not any more, perhaps, to judge by the earlier issues of *Manushi* and this selection of "the most incisive records — analysis as well as testimony — to have appeared in the journal in the first five years". Of course, it is a tale of trials galore. But there has been a triumph or two which gives us hope. As when 10,000 women of poverty-ridden Tehri Garhwal demonstrated on 20 November 1971 against drunk-

enness and brought the evil under control. The Shetkari Mahila Aghadi's success in gattling recognition for women's rights. The well publicised Chipko Movement.

However, the general scenario is one of encircling gloom. Madhu Kishwar's introduction takes a close look into the life of the rural woman. Her many burdens. Deprivations. Devaluation. "The logic is simple; it takes money to replace an animal, whereas to replace a woman is not only easy but under certain circumstances even remunerative"

Land ownership and tenancy rights are still with men. The law on equal property rights to women remains 'a dead letter'. Using pickaxes for pens, Madhu lists the many ways in which the rural woman is being exploited by a man-dominated hierarchy. The story is the same in the organised sector (factories, mines, plantations) where women's share in the total employment has shown an alarming decline thereby reducing her chances of attaining self-respect through gainful employment. Where men earn, "drinking, smoking, and other forms of personal consumption" take precedence. The "increasing visibility" of a few women-achievers should not hide the ugly reality of this widespread sorrow. In fact, despite education, women remain in a pitiable state of dependence and helplessness be they from rural or urban India, of middle or labouring class.

So what do we, the "relatively privileged", do? Try to go to the villages, says Madhu: "collect and disseminate information about the specific nature of rural society and women's lives in it, in different parts of the country". This material would help in applying correctives like assuring women of priority right to work, safety from sexual harassment, lesser domestic drudgery, and freedom to combat atrocities like wife-beating and drunkenness. The disarmament of the rural elite is another

er need of the hour for "the use of fire-arms and other lethal weapons to settle social and political issues makes the atmosphere much more male-dominated and anti-women" Above all, we must make proper use of the classical heroines as role-models in our work:

"Gandhi's Sita is not the self-effacing, fire-ordeal facing Sita. Gandhi's Sita is a woman who will not let her husband touch her if he approaches her in a disrespectful way, nor dared the mighty Ravana ravish Sita against her will though she stayed a captive in his kingdom for many years (sic). She also becomes a symbol of *Swadeshi*. She is a woman who will not dress up in order to appear attractive and be a sex object. Similarly he saw Mirabai, the leading *bhakti* poet, as a symbol of *Satyagraha*."

As it was with the tenth anniversary issue, *In Search of Answers* has an all-India perspective. When it comes to victimising women, one state is as bad as another. The section on 'women's lives' is a naturalistic description of the day-to-day lives of women in Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Bihar. Berny Horowitz and Madhu Kishwar seek the truth about Punjab's rural macrocosm through a study of the microcosm: a village with a population of 2561. It is a carefully-done statistical study, a model for would-be investigators of the rural scenario.

There is definitely a 'believe it or not' atmosphere about the rural truth. Punjab that lives on glasses and glasses of milk (as we have been given to understand) has often no milk for its women! While a family readily borrows Rs. 6000 to get a son married, the woman of the house (from whose swollen breasts pus oozes out continuously) is given no medical treatment. The agricultural labourers have no rest even during delivery. Not unoften "the women gave birth at night and went to the fields for cotton picking the next morning." The girl child is definitely unwelcome. With an average workday of 15.5 hours and several more needed for domestic chores, the lot of women in the agricultural sector is unenviable.

What is most cruel in these areas is the loss of parental support. The romantic scene of 'Ruth amid alien corn' changes to a very real tragedy of loneliness made unbearable by wife-

beating as admitted by the village women. Consider this one:

"...the woman was beaten with a stick by her sister-in-law's husband; she was injured and had to be treated by a doctor. She also reported that her mother-in-law beats her with a broom, her father-in-law beats her as and when he likes, and her husband beats her with whatever comes to hand."

The anxious activists from the urban milieu thus receive answers which range from "grim fatalism to acute dissatisfaction".

But wait. This Punjab segment is relatively prosperous. The ladies can afford at least a meal of *rotis* and chilies. Sulabha Brahme's study of the *hamal* (porter) women in Pune takes us right into a Dantean Malbowge. Migrants from rural areas to escape from starvation, they earn between Rs. 1.50 and Rs. 3 on a good day! Horrible working and living conditions, widespread disease, an eternal struggle for just one meal per day. As Shantabai succinctly describes her life, "man's work is from sun to sun but women's work is never done". It is starvation again. Where can they go from here?

So what next? Indian women do not easily rebel but there are moments when one says enough is enough. The section on women's struggles contains extremely relevant documentation of the part played by women in the Bodhgaya Land Struggle, the Chipko Movement and the Shramik Sanghatana of tribal women in Dhulia District. These accounts inject new strength into our psyche. One example: "As a result of the liquor pot-breaking campaign (in Dhulia District), and because women started beating up men who beat their wives, and compelled them to apologise, wife-beating and alcoholism were considerably reduced, but did not completely disappear".

Of course, men cannot be transformed into angels overnight. But the point had been made. Women could not be taken for granted from now onwards. For instance, after some rich peasants and landlords had been given an organised beating up in Kurangi village in 1973, the incidence of rape has declined considerably.

The section on family violence is searing. Ranjani's last letters before her suicide; Kanchan Mala Hardy

burnt to death; Tarvinder Kaur destroyed by kerosene and match box; Malarkodi beaten to death by her drunken husband. Young brides all. There is just a glimmer of hope when we read about the courageous stand of Premlata's parents against dowry and the organised protests against the Narangs, the Chopras. But the police? The law? Also the enemies within the female race. Mother-in-law. Sister-in-law. Women all:

"As long as we women are divided against ourselves, as long as we see ourselves not as women but as some man's wife or mother, our struggle is hopeless. We are our own destroyers".

The inimical attitude could be the result of a vicious circle:

"Religion, the films, her elders, her own, her mother's experience, all tell her that if a woman is unhappy, nothing can be done about it — it must be her own fault. And she who has been denied happiness and freedom, grudges them to her daughter-in-law, who may be educated, employed, who has access to a world she has never seen. She grudges them even to her own daughter."

'Caste, Class and Police Violence' gets chilling documentation from Vibhuti Patel, Darryl D'Monte and K. Manoharan. A report by the Agra Jan Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti unveils the pitiless harassment of women activists (the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini in this case) by the police. For can the police afford to be exposed to the public? What will happen to their liquor bribes, their 'cut' in land-grabbing, their part in political murders? How easily the police and law courts get away with such active connivance and criminal apathy!

The *Manushi* editorial of 1981 carries a terrible indictment of the state of our society and 'the guardians of law'. Since the police and crime investigators in other places like Iran, Argentina, Soviet Union and U.S.A. are also 'torturers in uniform', police behaviour in India is another global phenomenon. However, this is no time to feel helpless or demoralised. Organised protest can still succeed but the protestors better avoid begging the police or government for help:

"Let us organise around these cas-

s, pass our own collective judgements (as we have done in each one of our protest demonstrations), and bring the weight of organised women's opinion against those who commit atrocities on us. Let us see to it that these men are made to suffer some of the trauma, humiliation and social denigration that has so far been our lot. Let us report such cases to the press and publicise them".

Recently I had joined a women's demonstration that decried the drinking habit and the disavowing of the female child. It was disappointing to see that not a single passerby of this enlightened city showed interest in the two hundred women who walked in the hot sun shouting slogans. But it was not a disheartening experience. For many women this was the dreaded first step and they were now charged with a certain self-confidence. *Manushi* calls for such beginnings and *In Search of Answers* is a potent guide-book for the millions of women who want to do something socially useful so that the bride will not be burnt, the mother will not die for want of medical help and the happy home will not be destroyed by alcoholism and wife-beating. In short, 'redefine the kind of society we want to live in'.

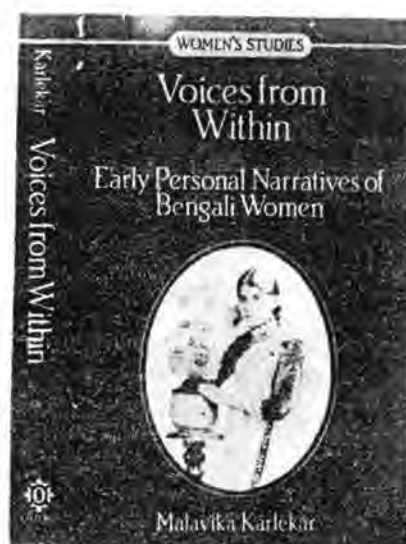
Reviewed by DR. PREMA NANDAKUMAR, author and journalist.

VOICES FROM WITHIN, by Malavika Karlekar; Oxford University Press, Bombay; 1991; pp.227; Rs. 225

SOCIALISATION, EDUCATION AND WOMEN edited by K. Channa; Orient Longman, New Delhi; 1988; p.320; Rs. 150

One of the heartening things about modern India is the partial emancipation of women, though we have miles still to trudge towards total social emancipation. It was the result partly of an intellectual revolution, and of socio-economic developments which snowballed after the second world war.

Both the books explore aspects of this transformation and the book by Malavika Karlekar will be widely read because of its intensely human inter-



est. The other book edited by Karuna Channa will interest a narrow section of students, though anyone who persists in reading through the articles will gain a great deal by way of perception and insights. Also, it is packed with details of great value.

Karlekar recounts how a class of women of the upper social strata over three quarters of the last century beginning as housewives ultimately emerged to be individuals in their own rights. They sought their own identity as persons but in this attempt they faced enormous difficulties, part of which arose from their own outlook which had come to accept the primacy of their roles as wives, mothers and matrons of large establishments. Their early socialization in values and attitudes and the communal wisdom regarding the role of women was something that remained with them all their lives, so much so that even when one of them emerged to be the first woman doctor of Bengal, her attention was divided between domestic and professional demands and the calls of familial duty were never sacrificed.

Modern Indian national development is the history of the liberation of India from a colonial incubus. Similar is the liberation of women from the restricted and constraining *antahpur*, the women's quarters. The sharp division of the world of men which was public from that of the women inevitably led to a near colonial situation where the values of the male tended to dominate women, their social position and their persons themselves. The

chapter detailing the life in these inner spaces with their suffocation (both environmental and psychological) as well the great compensations by way of human intimacy, companionship as well groupism is one of the most valuable parts in the book.

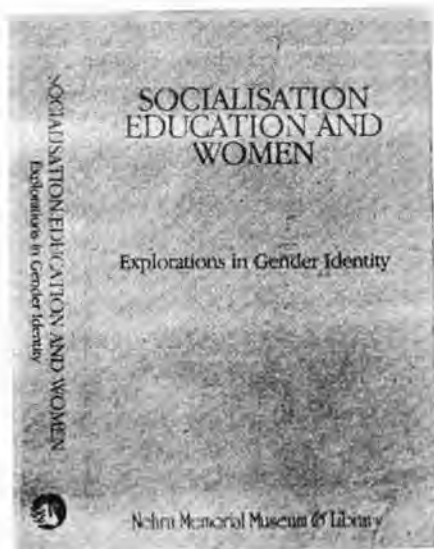
The sense of identity of women as persons had to be realised and this they could achieve only by writing about it either for their own satisfaction or for the edification of others. Therefore education became the door through which they could escape the inner quarters where they were segregated. But there was the rub — for according to traditional wisdom the act of writing or reading was not for girls or for women. They had to pursue it on the sly, or with the tacit permission or connivance of their female relations; or the active support of the men. The struggle for the right to literary and later to a rudimentary education as narrated in these pages is veritably a saga. The effort at education was through several stages, through initial attempts at self-education, by tuition at home, later at schools. Each stage had its own difficulties and the objections to be faced at all these were formidable. For instance the problem of proper apparel for girls going to school and the transport to be used were ticklish issues.

In these the role of the reformers shines like a candle in a dark night. Many of them were Brahmos and they set an example by getting their women educated. But it appears that even the most committed felt that education could be a headstrong potent wine which might wreck the social system. They took care to ensure that the women were educated in the "right" values and that they would not abandon their duties. Exhortatory lessons were written into the text books that were specially meant for them. It is quite likely that the example of the enthusiastic followers of Derozio and members of Young Bengal had shaken Bengali Society.

Once they had some exposure to literacy and education, these women were to vindicate their worth and individuality as sensitive beings in the brief memoirs, autobiographies and books that they wrote. Karlekar selects eleven of these women and traces their new lives. Some of them were to prove to be remarkable as was the mother of

K.C. Sen the great Brahmo leader. Another was Kamini Ganguly the first Bengali women doctor and a third the poet Kamini Roy. But it was no total new life though a new richness came into their perceptions. Yet they did not discard the old as totally useless lumber.

There is more in the book than has been indicated in this brief review. The debates on the education of women, the curriculae to be designed for their studies, the role of Annette Ackroyd, and of Debendranath Ganguly, no less of Iswar Chandra, the new conjugal felicities that opened up consequent to an inner awakening and above all the sociology and the psychology of the inner apartment have all been delineated with a sure but sensitive pen. This book is an analysis of an important aspect of modern Indian social life and should not be regarded as exclusively belonging to women's studies. Hopefully, similar studies would be made of other regions as well.



It will be interesting to compare the same theme of women writing their memoirs in two of the articles in K. Channa's edited volume. C.S. Lakshmi finds a definite negative attitude towards educated women in modern Tamil literature, an attitude that persisted for a very long time. They are still regarded as "arrogant, defiant, sociable and boyish." Evidently the transformation that has come about in Maharashtra and Bengal, with regard to viewing educated women is still to

dawn in Tamilnadu. In the study of five autobiographies of women who were nearly first generation literate or educated, Meenakshi Mukherjee underlines the point raised by Karlekar as to how literacy and education as well the environment did heighten their awareness of their situation and their sensitivity to things around them. Education has therefore remained central and a number of essays in the edited volume explore the record of education of women. Many of them are articles surveying the progress during the last half a century.

Socialization patterns tend to emphasize the subordinate position of women and this has persisted for a long time. What Bhatta writes of the deliberate downgrading of women in the attitudes of women themselves as seen in UP Muslim households is equally true of Hindu households as well. This can be remedied, as an experimental venture in Sardar Patel Vidyalaya demonstrated. Here boys who came from a prejudiced background were able to take up to women's professions with enthusiasm (Vibha Parthasarathy). Another study on the professional career of women too points out how in spite of astonishing progress in the field of managerial positions as well as entrepreneurship society still has to accept them as men's equals. (Pushpa Sundar)

The fact, however, remains that in our society girls and women have been for a long time reminded of their distinctive gender. Though this has remained persistent, yet the consciousness of women with a distinct physiology has not been explored in writing in our land. Orientation to oneself as a woman with clear distinctions on grades of sex and gender is explored in a very sensitive essay by Veena Das; this is one of the most rewarding of essays and its novel approach will strike many readers.

This collection of essays is valuable, and should have a readership beyond the circle of social scientists.

Reviewed by DR. R. SRINIVASAN

TRYING TO GROW by Firdaus Kanga; Ravi Dayal Publishers, 51F Sujan Singh Park, New Delhi 110003; 1990; pp.235, Rs.95.

The main characters of Firdaus Kanga's novel "Trying to Grow" are

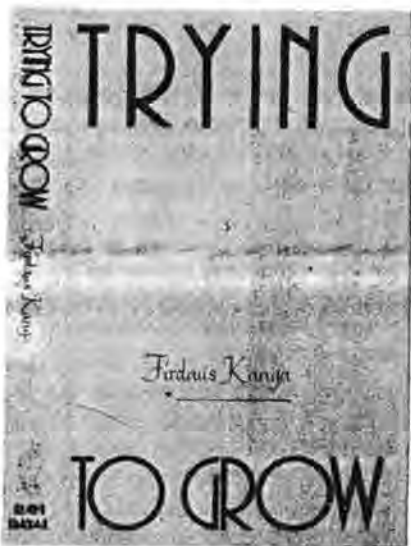
ACC

cement

**FOR
RELIABILITY
STRENGTH
AND
QUALITY**

ACC

**THE ASSOCIATED
CEMENT COMPANIES
LIMITED**



Darayus Kotwal ('Brit') and the city of Bombay. Not the whole city, mind you, but its more respectable parts, though no doubt for the sake of completeness references to the red light district are thrown in. The novel also centres around the rather likeable but somewhat eccentric Parsi community with its fads and pseudo Anglicisms, crowned by its devotion to the British Royal Family.

It is against this background that the hero, Darayus Kotwal, the cripple, functions, and throughout the novel is referred to as 'Brit' (short for rittle). He is also rather quaintly called 'Osteo', short for 'Osteogenesis imperfecta' ('Osteogenesis' meaning formation of bone). Mercifully, Brit has a lively, at times almost rotesque sense of humour, which prevents him from indulging in self-pity and brooding over his infirmity. He thus gets his family to succumb to most of his whims at different ages of life. Not that his mother and father, Sera and Sam ('father's name rhymed with Palm not Pam') don't insist on Brit in his youth undergoing some of their foibles. But they don't stop trying to cure it. He is, for example, taken to meet Wagh Baba (based no doubt on a true godman recently departed) who lies naked with a lovely female attendant. 'She began to rub Wagh Baba's thighs slightly higher up'. The great man then pronounces the cure: 'Appli warm salt on legses'.

A bizarre scene amusingly handled by the author, and typical of the humour running through the novel.

Phiroze Kotwal, the legless narrator, has a fine sense of the grotesque. The various stupidities of the Kotwal family are both sharply drawn and cleverly intermingled with the larger eccentricities of his own Parsi community. One of the better known stupidities is the 'Kaaj', or match-making. An age old custom this, by no means confined to the Parsis, but the Parsis manage to impart to the custom a certain well regulated procedure. Thus Brit's sister Dolly (who understandably ends up by marrying a Muslim in America) is introduced to a rather rich but brainless Parsi whom she proceeds to mock mercilessly. By way of getting him to reveal his intelligence, she flings such questions at him as 'Now tell me what do you think of Kant's categorical imperative,' and later, 'Do you think the paintings of Turner pointed the way to Debussy's music ...'. On another occasion, Sera, Dolly's mother, tells Defarge, a curiously named female matchmaker, 'That boy was a moron if ever I've seen one, and his mother is a cry baby'.

'Trying to Grow' is a mixture of fun and sorrow. The fun loving author, alas, is himself a cripple. There are obvious autobiographical touches in the novel but in many ways Brit appears to transcend the author. Obviously many things Brit does and the pranks he indulges in are invented, and provide the fun in the novel. But the sadness is also there, and this lends a touch to reality. For instance Brit's pain, his tears, his longing to jump from his wheel chair and go somewhere: 'I'd broken a thigh bone and couldn't move, not because of the pain but because of the terror ...'. But of course he can't. And these rather moving passages are a sorrowful reminder that both Darayus Kotwal (Brit) and Firdaus Kanga do have something in common.

Despite his infirmity, Brit nevertheless has many friends, both male and female. With one close friend, Cyrus, he develops – quite understandably – homosexual urges, but the urge passes. He frolics with several girls, finally having a love affair with one of them, Amy. But the main thrust of the novel is his

close friendship with Cyrus, and the homosexual relationships both seem to desire but never quite achieve, and they eventually pair off with their respective girlfriends.

There are enough girls to choose from with their different characters and attributes. But Amy, the librarian, is the middlewoman, so to speak, and much of the plot revolves round Amy, Brit and Cyrus. They spend much time together and generally explore the city. It is through these three characters that we are introduced to many landmarks in the city, and to the extraordinary variety of races that inhabit it, all of them with their peculiar characteristics and ways of living.

It is a pity this amusing novel displays a certain immaturity. It is almost a lexicon of sex and sexual terminology. Brit and his friend Cyrus virtually run through most of the common sexual and filthy outbursts – that dirty little word shit being the least amongst them. One wonders whether the author is trying to prove his manhood and maturity. Even the particular circumstances in which the characters find themselves do not warrant the repetitive and exceedingly boring use of these words. Certainly sexual terms are used in European and American novels, but only when a particular situation really warrants their use. Perhaps here the only justification for the use of such words is that they serve as a kind of sexual outlet for Brit, the cripple. It nevertheless constitutes rather an immature outlet and lowers the tone of an otherwise considerable achievement.

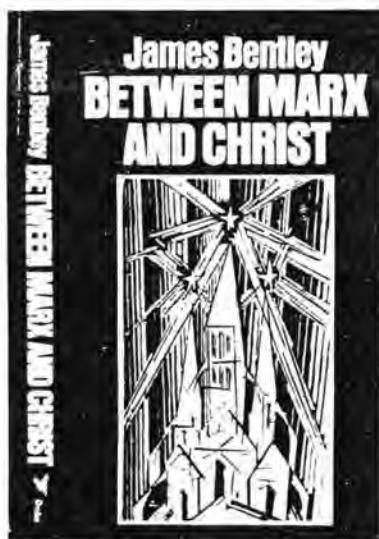
For the novel has many genuinely comic passages and Brit finds himself in amusing situations. For instance he pokes fun at the corrupt and slapdash way in which exams are held. Brit also exposes superstitions; he recites unending 'mantras' which help in the passing of exams! Even in his love-making, Brit – bravely, retains the humour inherent in his make up. He and Amy laugh together, and cuddle into each other. Amy then pays Brit the greatest compliment a cripple can receive, 'Brit, you are the sexiest man I've ever met'.

Thus, in a sense, Brit, sitting in his wheelchair explores the love, sorrow and humour of this world. It is as if the author were telling us, in easily flowing

prose, that it is not necessary to move around the world to discover these qualities. One discovers them at one's doorstep, sitting in a wheelchair. In this case the doorstep happens to be Bombay, peopled by Brit's various friends. The friends, male and female, are lively and intelligent, and many of the city's landmarks become integrated with the friends as they move around the city and discuss their problems, their loves and their disappointments. Granted the novel lacks a certain depth and power with which really mature novels are intertwined. These qualities are bound to reveal themselves in time. But this is a first novel, and a novel of considerable promise.

Reviewed by MR. HOMI J. VAKEEL
Publishing Consultant and Editor

BETWEEN MARX AND CHRIST by
James Bentley; Disha Publications,
Delhi; 1990; pp.191; Rs.150



This book presents an overview of the dialogue that has been taking place between Marxism and Christianity in German-speaking Europe over the period 1870 and 1970. The author traces the origins of this dialogue and its development over a century of very fruitful, if often contentious interaction between the two great traditions.

On the face of it, there can be no greater incompatibles than Marxism and Christianity. The former is materialistic and atheistic while the latter is predicated on the spiritual and the

divine. While Marxism focusses on the struggles to be waged in the here-and-now against social oppression, Christianity seems to stress the paramountcy of the hereafter over worldly concerns. Marx does not shrink from violence to overthrow unjust class structures, while Christ is the epitome of non-violence in thought, word and deed. What, then, do the two divergent and rival traditions have to say to each other?

Lenin had, shortly before his death, categorically asserted that 'Communism and Catholicism offered two diverse, complete and inconfusable conceptions of human life.' On the side of Catholicism, Pope Pius XII had passed the severest strictures against Communism and had issued an edict of excommunication against any Catholic who subscribed to the godless creed. The only dialogue between the two traditions would therefore bid fair to be a dialogue of the deaf, if one were to go by the entrenched official positions on both sides of the divide.

However, Bentley shows by painstaking documentation that perceptive individuals on the sides of both Marxism and Christianity were alive to the concerns of their opposite numbers, and were seriously exploring areas of convergence and complementarity in the two traditions, while not seeking arbitrarily to gloss over the areas of contention and contradiction. Three prominent Marxists on the one side, and three prominent Christians on the other have been chosen by Bentley to exemplify this very interesting Marxist-Christian dialogue. The Marxists are Karl Kautsky, Ernst Bloch and Milan Machovec, while the Christians are Christoph Blumhardt, Karl Barth and Dorothee Solle, all formidable names in philosophical theological circles.

While the Christians are aware of the limitations and foibles of historical and institutional Christianity, they are open to some of the insights and aspirations of their Marxist interlocutors even while they are unable to share some of the basic ideological premises held by the latter. The Marxists in turn decry the blind dogmatism and institutional regimentation that the praxis of Marxism has often entailed and have explored new dimensions to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who is not

necessarily seen as a meek and mild martyr but as a rebel who actively fought for the cause of the liberation of the oppressed and paid the price of his life for that cause. For many Marxists, early Christian communism was the forerunner of the aspired to classless society that was to emerge in the course of history. For them, the official church has projected Christ in a one-sided and totally inadequate manner that does not do justice to the catalytic and cathartic role that he really performed in society. The Church has monopolised, domesticated and emasculated the message of Jesus and has done a grave disservice to him in the process. Passivity, alienation and acquiescence in the iniquitous *status quo* has been the result for Christians, and this anomaly needs to be set right.

Christian theological thinkers on their part acknowledge that the Marxist urge for social justice and the liberation of the oppressed has a long pre-history in both the Old and the New Testaments. A theism that prescind from the 'Social Question' is another form of blasphemy, and indeed of apostasy, as God is the Father of the poor and is the Judge of the unjust rich who resort to violence and oppression to keep themselves in power. The atheism of the Marxists is in this sense preferable to a smug and socially unconcerned theism which in effect banishes God to a distant heaven while leaving the earth free for the machinations of social predators. Indeed, as Dorothee Solle emphasizes, positive atheism is not incompatible with Christianity, provided the gods it demolishes are man-made figments and projections that serve as totems and alienate men from their fellow humans. Worship of God without concern for one's fellowmen is an exercise in futility. Atheism can serve the useful purpose of reminding even believers that God is the wholly 'other' who is inscrutable and who is accessible only in human fellowship and solidarity. God made in man's image and likeness is indeed no God. Here iconoclasm is necessary even to worship the one true God who is beyond comprehension and is not amenable to manipulation for selfish ends.

The paradox of the Marxist-Christian dialogue is that the Christian requires to be a Marxist of sorts in order to be

authentically Christian while the Marxist requires to encounter Christ if he is to be a genuine Marxist. Marxism challenges Christianity to social and political involvement while Christianity challenges Marxism to face the question of transcendence in human life. Both Marxism and Christianity have their utopias and each its own version of eschatology.

One cannot be involved in social affairs without the Marxist commitment to the dimension of immanence, while one cannot keep hope alive in and through life's vicissitudes without the Christian commitment to the dimension of transcendence.

Bentley has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of the substantive points as well as of the dynamics of inter-faith dialogue as it has evolved among some eminent Marxist and Christian thinkers. At a time when classical Marxism seems to have run out of steam and when Christianity seems to have taken a back seat in international social and political affairs, it is instructive to observe how concerned intellectuals have explored ways and means of revitalising socially relevant insights and themes from the two traditions through a serious and sustained dialogue between them.

Reviewed by DR. LIONEL FERNANDES, Lecturer in International Politics, Dept. of Civics and Politics, Bombay University.

SECULARISM — LAW AND THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA by Dr. J.P. Sathe; Indian Secular Society, 50/8A Shivajinagar, Pune 411 004; 1990; pp. 28; Rs 10.

"Secularism" says Dr. Sathe is not only a philosophical necessity — it is a practical need for keeping India united in spite of its religious and cultural diversity. Secularism and federalism are two essential aspects of Indian nationhood. Secularism has to be strengthened".

In a brief but clear analysis of how, 'in spite of the repeated professions of secularism', we have come to the present sorry state of communal tension and violence, Dr. Sathe conveys several unpalatable and bitter home-truths.

India, perhaps, fits theoretically, into

the second of the four models of state-religion relationship available from historical and contemporary politics: "A state which treats all religions with equal respect though it may not have its own religion (*Sarva-dharma-Samabhava*). The other three models to which Dr. Sathe refers are: (i) A theocratic state which professes its own religion. It may not be bad or anti-democratic or discriminatory except in a few cases; (ii) A secular state which neither has its own religion nor promotes or obstructs any other religion; and (iii) An anti-religious state in which atheism is cherished.

The secular state in Europe and America was preceded by the Renaissance which liberated the human mind from religious bigotry. In India, a pluralistic society which included even atheistic streams like Buddhism, Charvaka and Jainism, renaissance had to be brought about by law and, therefore, the emerging secular state could not be totally non-interventionist in matters purely religious nor interventionist in matters temporal though connected with religious activity.

In Dr. Sathe's view, the three essentials of secularism are:

- (i) Religion does not figure or matter in the relations between the state and the individual. In other words, the state should be non-discriminatory.
- (ii) The State does not figure in the relationship between the individual and his religion. The scope of such religious freedom of an individual would be confined to 'other-worldly and non-temporal matters, a private area of conscience.
- (iii) Under the Indian Constitution, in the relationship between the State and religion, the State has an interventionist as well as a non-interventionist role to play *vis-a-vis* religion.

Historically, in Dr. Sathe's view, the choice of a secular Indian State was not merely a reaction to the Muslim League's demand for a Muslim nation. It emerged out of the desire for a just, humane and democratic polity for a diverse society like India which was (and is) an amalgam of various religions, languages, ethnic groups and even atheistic streams.

It should be noted that the word 'socialist' was tagged on to the word 'Secular' in the preamble to the Constitution of India during the ignominious days of the Emergency. Unhappily, as Dr. Sathe laments, "there has been a notable decline of commitment to secularism" since then. "Gone are the days when a Nehru could take umbrage at Dr. Rajendra Prasad's act of washing the feet of Brahmins or performing the inauguration of the Sorthi Somnath temple!" Today, according to Dr. Sathe, for all practical purposes, India is a Hindu State which provides equal treatment to minorities. He rightly points out that secularism cannot be practised by passing laws. "We have plenty of laws and plenty of platitudes. But, in reality, we are becoming more and more communal, parochial and inward looking."

How did this degeneration come about?

Dr. Sathe shows that the record of both the State and the Judiciary has been unfortunate. Stressing, that although Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees personal religious freedom, it makes such freedom subject to public order, morality and health and to other provisions of Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Constitution. This clearly envisages an interventionist role for the State. Therefore while the State should not interfere in matters and activities purely and solely religious, it has the power to do so in the interests of public order, morality, health, the fundamental rights of other citizens and social welfare. For instance, Dr. Sathe mentions that one cannot claim the right to take a procession of Ganapati or Muharram as a matter of religious freedom since such a right is subject to public order and the police may regulate its route, timing or even disallow it if it is likely to inflame communal riots. One cannot claim to practice human sacrifice as part of religious freedom or the dedication of girls to God as *devadasis* in the name of religion since both are opposed to morality.

Article 26 guarantees to every religious denomination the freedom to manage its religious affairs. This right is subject to public order, morality and health. It is, however, not subject to another citizen's Fundamental Rights. This, in Dr. Sathe's view is a drafting

flaw. He suggests that Rights under Article 26 should be qualified accordingly.

But how has the State exercised such powers? "It has intervened where it ought not to have and did not intervene where its intervention was most apt," comments Dr. Sathe. The State's soft attitude towards the question of a Muslim woman's right to maintenance (the Shah Bano case and subsequent legislation) or Roop Kanwar's *Sati* episode are examples of the wrong kind of intervention and non-intervention respectively.

Referring to child marriage, polygamy, the unequal treatment of man & woman (in the law of succession), unilateral divorce, a Christian woman's difficulties in obtaining divorce under the Indian Divorce Act, the absence of adoption law among Christians, Parsis and Muslims and the unequal inheritance laws, Dr. Sathe recommends a more positive role for the State in modernising personal laws. "The rulers are appeasing both minority and majority fundamentalism thereby helping the consolidation of their separate identities. No one has a right to be governed by a personal law," Dr. Sathe asserts. He points out that in being equal to all religions, the State appears to be patronizing all religions.

Dr. Sathe blames ministers and other State functionaries who, by their conduct in office, have obliterated the line dividing religion and State. Government functions begin with religious invocations and the breaking of coconuts. Temples are found in police stations and even in public sector electronic factories. *Satyanarayan Pujas* are performed in police stations and other governmental organisations. Even worse is the fact that many ministers and even judges are publicly known to be disciples of one Godman or the other.

While commending the healthy provisions of the Election law which makes appeal for votes on the basis of religion a corrupt practice, Dr. Sathe observes: "It is not the lack of laws that has caused the erosion of secularism in India... Unfortunately, we have two types of parties, those which are openly and uninhibitedly communal and those which are opportunistically communal though pretending to be

secular... It was the lack of political will rather than the lack of proper laws that are responsible for inaction in not proceeding under the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Arms Act against harbouring of criminals, storing of arms and ammunition or carrying on propaganda to create enmity between different religious groups within the premises of religious institutions."

After an exhaustive analysis of the reasons for the decline in the commitment to secularism. Dr. Sathe, recognising the limitations of the law, points out: "But we cannot make the Constitution and the laws wholly responsible for sustaining secularism. Laws and constitutions after all are words which require to be given meaning by persons who draft them, enforce them, or interpret them. It is here that our education, socialization and State action have failed."

Reviewed by DILEEP DALAL a leading practising at the Bombay High Court.

THE STATE IN BURMA by Robert H. Taylor; C. Hurst & Company; 1987; Indian Distributors: Orient Longman Limited, Kamani Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400038; pp. 395; £27.50

Dr Taylor who has a Ph.D from Cornell University is a lecturer in political science at Cornell specializing in

South-East Asian affairs. This medium-sized book takes off from Furnivall's classic perspective on plural societies. The later sections of the book will be of immeasurable value to those interested in a serious pursuit of political developments of South-East Asian colonial societies and their destinies after independence.

Right from the introduction it attempts to present a historical account in a comparative perspective, and prepares the background towards an understanding of Burma's military takeover. The subsequent culmination into a one-party socialist state is foreshadowed in the earlier narrative.

Among the various questions the author sets out to answer, the following figure spaciouly: Why has the State in Burma developed in the comparatively unorthodox manner that it has? What have been the effects of the State's autarkic policies on the country's economy and foreign relations? Who has benefited and who has lost in the redistribution of power and influence that has taken place during the 20th century?

The book chronicles a nascent democracy stubbing itself out like a dying cigarette butt.

Reviewed by MR. VENKATESH RAGHAVAN a free lance writer.

Freedom First

4th floor, Maneckji Wadia Building 127, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Bombay 400001

I wish to enter an Annual/Life Subscription and enclose my cheque* for Rs.30/Rs.400 in favour of Freedom First.

(Please type or write in block letters)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PIN _____

*Subscriptions can also be sent by MO / Postal Order / DD (for outstation cheques please add Rs 10 for bank charges)

For Overseas Subscribers

(By Second Class Airmail)

Annual	Life
\$ 20	120
£ 12	70

Single Copy: Rs.10

We've got it all worked out for you



– the single-source service advantage.

Airfreight Limited, an enterprise with over 80 offices in India, presents a complete package of services. All conveniently under one roof.

When you have to freight anything, anywhere in the world, by air or by sea, just leave it to us. We'll take care of all the details. Whenever you need to despatch any official or business-related documents or parcels,

desk-to-desk, just call us, DHL, our Courier Division delivers anywhere in India and abroad.

Planning a trip or a tour? INDTRAVELS, our Travel & Tours Division will organise one for you, anywhere on earth. We organise trade fairs, exhibitions and conferences as well, through our Trade Fairs, Exhibitions & Conferences Division.

We deliver the goods.



AIRFREIGHT
LIMITED

AIR CARGO & IMPORT CONSOLIDATION

ACE

DOOR-TO-DOOR
CARGO

INDTRAVELS

(A Division of Airfreight Limited)

TRAVEL & TOURS

SEAFREIGHT

(A Division of Airfreight Limited)

SEA CARGO

DHL

DHL THE COURIER DIVISION
OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED

Regd. Office: Neville House, Currimbhoy Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038.

To contact us, please refer to your local Telephone/Yellow Pages Directory



HAVE YOU ENROLLED AS A LIFE SUBSCRIBER?

The following have:

Rajkumar Adukia	R.W. Desai	K.C. Khanna	S.C. Panda	P.D. Shah
Naozer J Aga	P.R. Deshpande	G.A. Kharadi	Ramu Pandit	Sonal Shah
Rajam Aiyar	Ashish Deodhekar	F.T. Khorakiwalla	Shirin Panthaki	Vipin T. Shah
S. Albert	Govind Deodhekar	M.D. Kini	B. N. Parasrampur	Mahipatral J. Shah
Y.D. Altekar	I.M. Dabhoiwala	S.S. Kurahatti	F.N. Patch	T.N. Shanbhag
Kanchan Aneja	Vithaldas P. Divecha	P.R. Kumar	B.P. Patel	Beena Sherman
D. Anjaneyulu	C.A. Doshi	Leslie Sawhny Centre	D.V.M. Patel	M.V. Shetti
Soli P. Arya	H.J. Doshi	Louella Lobo Prabhu	Jehangir R. Patel	Arun Shourie
Leela B.	J.H. Doshi	Aziz Madni	R.S. Patil	Jaspal Singh
B. Ramesh Babu	P.H. Doshi	P.C. Manaktala	D.N. Patodia	Khushwant Singh
Rashmi Bal	S.C. Doshi	K.Y. Mandlik	M.J.A. Patrawala	Sodhi Gurmukh Singh
M.K. Bajpai	P.N. Driver	Ashok K. Manghnani	Indumati Parikh	Mehtab Singh
Vispi Balaporia	Louis D'silva	Rajen K. Mariwalla	Adil J. Patuck	Y. Sivaji
Shankar P. Barua	A.B.K. Dubash	N.D. Marshall	B.B. Paymaster	Abe Solomon
R. Basantani	Feroz Dubash	M.R. Masani	Marina Pinto	Girdhar V. Somaiya
U.N. Bene	Laleh Dubash	P.A. Masurekar	S.A.A. Pinto	Robert W. Stewart
P.M. Bhatia	Mohammed Ehsanuddin	P.G. Mavliankar	Stanley P. Pinto	Nandini Srinivasan
Ajit Bhulchandani	K.M. Elavia	F.A. Mechery	H.D. Pithawalla	P.N. Subramanian
Rosbeh N. Billimoria	Lionel Fernandes	Anupam Mehta	Ravi Poddar	K.R.V. Subrahmanian
Hornai F. Bode	K.C. Gadre	G.G. Mehta	D.M. Popat	N. Subramanian
Radha Burnier	Virendra V. Gandhi	S.P. Mehta	P.V. Prabhu	K.S. Sukumar
I.M. Chagla	M/s Gandhi Brothers	Zareen Mistry	Prajatantra	Abbas A. Suteir
H.P. Chattopadhyay	M/s Wadia Gandhi & Co	J. Miranda	Mridula Ramanna	SDM College
S. Chatterjee	Gayatri Devi	Zia Mody	Nirmal Raja	R.S. Tak
Sinjit Chatterjee	Monica Ghosh	Jamshed Mohta	S.V. Raju	S.M. Talera
Sanjay Chhaachharia	Edward Gomes	V. Krishna Moorthy	K.V. Ramani	S.D. Tandel
Suresh Checker	Ipsita Gupta	Madhushree Mukherjee	M.A. Rane	V.J. Taraporewalla
Jai Chinai	P. Gupta	Vanita Mulchandani	N. Ranga Rao & Sons	T.D. Tavaria
Aspi Chino	Cyrus Guzder	M.D. Mukhi	J. Rao	H.M. Thacker
C.M. Chopra	Nilangshu Halder	Leela Mulgaokar	N.B. Rao	Usha Thakkar
T.H. Chowdary	K.C. Hargan	Er. L. Munivelu	K. Rama Rao	B.M. Thapar
Nana Chudasama	B.N. Haria	C. Muralikrishna	C. Rashmikant	Manisha Tikekar
B.N. Colabawalla	A.K.R. Hemmady	Padmini Murti	Nitin G. Raut	L. Townsend
R. Commissariat	Vilas T. Hude	A. Nagaraja	Pratap Reddy	V. V. Tulzapurkar
R.C. Cooper	Faroukh A. Illavia	Katte Nagaraja	Nandkumar V. Rege	Zerxis R. Umrigar
Darius Cooper	C.R. Irani	Y.N. Nagarwalla	B.N. Reporter	Devinder Jit Vadra
C.R. Dalvi	Rajani K. Iyer	K.C. Nair	B. Roy	Prem Vaidya
S.K. Dalvi	F.A.A. Jasdhanwalla	K.G. Nair	Anilkumar S. Ruia	O.P. Vaish
H.M. Damania	S.V. Joglekar	J.R. Nirmal	D.S. Saksena	G.R. Venkatanarayana
M.B. Damania	M.C. John	Vasudev V. Nori	Sanskriti Kendra	Latha Venkatesh
R.V. Dandekar	H.M. Joshi	Gayathri Narayan	Mrinalini Sarabhai	Pravin Vepari
C.R. Das	J.C.N. Joshipura	Kiran H. Nayegandhi	B.K. Satapathy	V.V. Vijayan
K.K. Dastur	Pramod C. Kalyani	D.K. Neog	S.P. Sathe	Mahesh Vikam
Tanmay Datta	M.V. Kamath	J.K.S. Nicholson	C. Satyanarayana	Vihang A. Virkar
Dinesh Dave	Hasmukh H. Kamdar	P.G. Oak	Urs W. Schottli	Nalin K. Vissanji
Adi P. Daver	Yogesh V. Kamdar	Y.V. Pai	Machia Sell	V.C. Vishwanathan
Ashok H. Desai	Ajit Kapadia	G.G. Parikh	Anasuya R. Shenoy	Deepak Wadhwa
Jasvant Desai	Harpeet Kaur	C.V. Parker	C.N. Shah	J.M. Wagle
M.O. Desai	Raphael G. Kazmann	Abha Rupendra Pal	M.P. Shah	

What Readers say about *Freedom First*

As a reader, I thank you for producing such a rich number (April-June 1991) — in the midst of this strange famine of good journalism. It is a most well produced number too. Your presentation of the summary proceedings of the seminar on the Gulf War is just excellent. Prof. A.N. Moorthy Rao's analysis is not only remarkable, it is timely too. Your book reviews in this issue are also very good.

Mihir Sinha, Calcutta

I always enjoyed reading *Freedom First*. I am writing this to compliment you specially for the April-June Issue. I am very happy to know that the *Freedom First* Foundation had organised a seminar on India and the Gulf War in Bombay on 16th March. The report on the proceedings made interesting reading. I was one of those who were baffled at the kind of idiotic nonsense carried by our media during the Gulf War, especially in the early part of it. You have done a service in bringing out this article.

V.C. Vishwanathan, New Delhi

Please fill in the form on the last page of this issue and mail it to us with your cheque.