

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

July-
September 1994
No.422
Rupees Fifteen

42ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

**The Americanisation
of the World**

**The Press
and Freedom**

**The Return of
Swatantra**



*Taslima Nasreen -
A Profile in Courage*

How to Torture Tibetan Nuns

Some Easy Lessons from the Chinese Communists

The following is the story of Ani Kalsang Palmo who survived the most degrading form of torture by the communist Chinese for peaceful protest against the illegal occupation of Tibet. She fled into exile in August 1990.



In January and March 1988 five nuns including myself launched a wall-poster campaign to protest against the continued persecution of our people by the Chinese. The Chinese made every effort to ferret out the authors of these posters, but they did not succeed.

On 15 May 1988, nine of us nuns, and two monks from Ganri Thokar held a secret meeting to stage a demonstration calling for Tibetan Independence and the release of political prisoners. We vowed that we would keep our activities peaceful, as advised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

On 17 May 1988, we met in front of the Jokhang temple and began the demonstration at about 10 am. We made three rounds of the Jhokhang, shouting slogans. We were about to complete the third round when Chinese armed police arrived in trucks and arrested us. They forced us onto trucks and ordered us to stand with our hands raised in the air. But while the trucks journeyed towards the prison we kept shouting slogans. This really infuriated the Chinese Public Security Bureau police, who began beating us with truncheons, rifle butts, etc. Some were kicking us. A monk bled profusely, seriously hurt by the assault.

I was asked the name of the ringleaders. When I refused to say anything more, they brought in a dog to attack me. Fortunately I was wearing thick robes that day, so the dog could only injure my ankles and shoulders. Then they took me to another room where an officer kicked me several times. He also hit me in the face with a flat shiny object. Whatever the object was, it caused unbearable pain. He kept on hitting me with this unidentifiable object until he himself was exhausted. My face was swollen. They searched me once again and then handed me over to a woman officer.

The woman took me to another room where she made me take off all my clothes. I was ordered to lie prone and was beaten with truncheons from head to heels. Afterwards they made me stand up

and jabbed a stick into my private parts. They did this in full view of some male prisoners who were watching from two windows.

Then a Chinese officer took out an electric cattle prod and jabbed it into my private parts. I felt overwhelmingly embarrassed, ashamed, and humiliated. The pain was so great that I nearly lost consciousness. Finally, they dragged me into another cell, still naked. At around midnight I was called for re-interrogation. There were three Chinese and two Tibetan officers. I continued to stand by my earlier statements. They became angry and they made me lie down and began stomping on my body. They brought in a chair and made me squat, and balance on my toes with my chin resting on the chair. Every time I fell they beat me. This went on for quite a while. After that, five prison guards came and kicked me around with all their might. They twisted my arms behind me, I lost consciousness.

The next morning I found myself all alone in a cell. There was blood on my face and my whole body was in excruciating agony. During the following ten days my urine was red with blood. Some time later, two lady doctors came to see me. I showed them my body and told them of the pain I was suffering. Instead of giving me medical care, the doctor slapped me across the face and walked off. I had no food that day, nor the previous day. On the third day I was again taken for interrogation and was beaten, once more.

After two months in captivity I was released along with the other Shungseb nuns. Although the Chinese ordered us to go straight to our nunnery, I went to a hospital for treatment. After a month in the hospital, the Chinese forced me to leave for my nunnery.

When I reached there, I discovered that the Chinese had begun daily re-education sessions to indoctrinate our nuns about the virtues of the communist system, and to convince us that Tibet is an 'inalienable part of China'. The nuns were ordered not to follow the 'few splittists' headed by the Dalai Lama. The abbess and administrators of the nunnery were warned that they would be held responsible for any future demonstrations by our nuns. This went on for two months.

Again, in October 1989 nine Chinese came to our nunnery. They stayed there to 're-educate' us till January 1990. While they were there it was not possible for us to pursue our religious activities. All prayers composed by His Holiness were banned. Then, on February 11, 1990, the Chinese expelled 43 nuns, including myself, from Shungseb. We were handed over to the district authorities with his order:

- Henceforth we should not undertake any religious activities;
- We should stay home and work in the field;
- All the nunneries were banned from admitting us.

On reaching home in Lhoka, south of Lhasa, I found my mother ailing. She had been forced to stand naked on ice for three days for shouting slogans criticising the lack of religious freedom in Tibet. My sister, Gyaltsen Choenyi, had served a nine-month term in Gutsa prison for taking part in the March 1988 demonstration.

I decided that I must escape and tell the world what the Chinese are doing to our people. I left home by lying to my parents that I was going to Shungseb to collect my remaining belongings. I went straight to Lhasa, collected some money and made for Mount Kailash in western Tibet. From there, I escaped to Nepal with five nuns and eight monks; we all wore lay clothes. I reached Dharamsala on August 21, 1990.

Courtesy: Rangzen, Spring 1994.

A "Counter-revolutionary" Song

Looking from the window,
Seeing nothing but the sky,
The clouds that float in the sky
I wish were my parents.

We, the captured friends in spirit,
We might be the one's to fetch the jewel.
No matter how hard we are beaten
Our linked arms cannot be separated.

The cloud from the east
Is not a patch that is sewn;
The time will come when the sun
From beneath the clouds shall appear.

I am not sad.
If asked why,
Days will follow days
And the time of release
From here will occur.

(The above song is one of the many songs sung by 14 nuns in Drapchi prison in Lhasa whose prison sentences were either doubled or tripled for singing "counter-revolutionary" songs.)

Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

Founder

Minoo Masani

Editors

S. V. Raju
R. Srinivasan

Associate Editor

Jehangir Patel

Advisory Board

Sumant Bankeshwar
Arvind Deshpande
Geeta Doctor
Nissim Ezekiel
Yogesh Kamdar
Aziz Madni
S. A. A. Pinto
Nitin Raut
Abe Solomon
Ajay Varadachary

Cover, Illustrations and Layout

M. G. Talwadekar

Publishers

Democratic Research Service
4th Floor, Maneckji Wadia Bldg.
127, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Bombay 400 023.
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 **Page Graphics**
59, Dr. V. B. Gandhi Marg,
Fort, Bombay 400 001.
Tel: 204 60 18 - 24 26 19

Single Copy : Rs.15
Annual: Rs.50
Life: Rs.500
(add Rs.10 for outstation cheques)

Overseas (II Class Air Mail)
Annual: \$10 or £7
Life: \$100 or £70

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

Some of us might recall that remarkable little book by US President John Kennedy, "Profiles in Courage". Stories of men who had much to lose by standing up for what they felt was right, unmindful of the fact that by so doing they were courting unpopularity, not to speak of considerable personal loss. Taslima Nasreen is one such individual who would have qualified for inclusion in the late President's collection of heroes.

She stood up not so much as a champion of women's rights but as a crusader against religious fundamentalism. If communism and state capitalism were the devils of the 20th century which fortunately won't be carried forward to the 21st, religious fundamentalism and its champions be they swamis, maulvis or padres or their counterparts in politics will be the devils that will have to be challenged and beaten if the right of an individual to live life according to her or his right is to prevail. This is what Taslima Nasreen did. This is why the mullahs are howling for her blood. This is why *Freedom First* salutes her - for her courage.

The facing page carries the heart rending narration by a Tibetan Nun who was tortured by the Chinese communists and who, fortunately, lived to tell her story. Commercial considerations have alas, made the Chinese communists the USA's MFN and India's *Chini bhai* acceptable partners in international trade. We salute Nun Ani Kalsang Palmo for her courage. With women like Taslima Nasreen and Nun Ani Kalsang Palmo around, there is still hope.

A reader has complained that in the last issue there were too many reprints and too many pages of book reviews. While we take note of the complaint may we say that by and large we reprint articles and comments that would interest readers, which contribute to promoting the liberal view and, equally importantly, are not likely to have been read by our readers in the publications in which they first appeared. As for too many pages being given to book reviews, we would like to point out that in many cases these reviews are themselves substantive articles by those who have specialised in the area of knowledge covered by the book they review. We might also mention here that our book reviews have drawn much appreciation not only from book publishers but also from many readers who appreciate the attention paid to books at a time when, sadly, the reading habit is in retreat.

S.V.Raju, R.Srinivasan

Contents

July-September, 1994
No.422

<i>Many Voices</i>		2
<i>Of Cabbages & Kings</i>		3
<i>The Masani Viewpoint</i>		4
The Return of Swatantra	S. V. Raju	5
Taslima Nasreen - A Profile in Courage	V. K. Sinha	7
<i>Lakshmi-Mukti</i>		13
A Testimony of Shame	Dilip Thakore	15
What Makes for a Nation State Forging a National Identity	Rajesh M. Basrur	17
The Press and Freedom	K. S. Ramamurthy	21
The Americanisation of the World	Ramesh Babu	23
Secularism Indian 'Ishtyle'	Sharad Bailur	29
The Great Maratha	Kusum Chopra	31
Summits of Scholarship	P. R. Dubhashi	33
The Undoing of Africa	Anthony Daniels	35
<i>Book Reviews</i>		39

WITH MANY VOICES

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

We are competitive paranoids.

Mr. Craig Barrett, Chief Operating Officer, INTEL,
quoted in the *Indian Express*, July 14.

Unka Chatni aur achar bana do (Crush them into paste
and pickles)

Mr. Kanshi Ram's advice to his followers on how to deal with
legislators defecting from his party, *Indian Express*, July 14.

A man is known by the company he keeps. A nation is
known by the judiciary it has.

Justice Bhaktawar Lentin, *The Times of India*, July 15

If a woman recites the Vedas it will affect her uterus and
she may not be able to produce a healthy child.

Kapileshwaranand Saraswati of Sumerupeeth Kanchi,
Indian Express, July 25.

Most political activity is carried out with black money
which is by definition generated by crime. The entire
political system (in India) is afloat on a sea of crime.

Prem Shanker Jha, *The Hindu*, August 13.

There is no problem with agriculture. As I have always
said, the government solves no problem. It is the prob-
lem. Get it off our backs and farmers will be fine.

Sharad Joshi, *The Economic Times*, June 28.

Politicians are like Urvasi the celestial dancer. This
charmer changes her husband every day. On a particular
day she remains extremely faithful to that day's spouse.
She forgets the previous lover completely. Politicians
also show amazing fidelity to the current party boss. I
admire them. We need that hardy tribe.

N.C.N. in his column "Laugh Lines", *The Week*, June

Competition, it was once observed is like chastity; widely
praised but hardly practised.

Editorial in *Business India*, May 23.

Women seem to appreciate men who can handle a Hoover.

Minoru Takeuchi, Editor, *Checkmate* (Japanese Fashion
magazine) on how today's Japanese women prefer men who can
do household chores, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 2.

Men like Pandey and Khairnar, and also Seshan and
Hazare, are not just standing up against corruption,
they are showing us once again corruption is the despi-
cable, abhorrent disease we once knew it was.

Dilip D'Souza, *Humanscape*, August '94

Although we are in a democracy, actually we are in a
goonda raj. Superficially, everything is normal but in-
ternally it is terrible.

Deputy Municipal Commissioner, G. R. Khairnar,
India Today, July 31.

The saddest problem for any biographer of Harold Laski
is how to deal with his propensity for fabricating un-
truths.

Lewis S. Feuer, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, University of
Virginia, in the course of his review of a biography of Laski,
The New Leader, March 14.

Always remember others may hate you, but those who
hate you don't win unless you hate them, and then you
destroy yourself.

Richard Nixon, quoted in an editorial comment
in *The New Yorker*, May 2.

I work hard and am answerable only to myself. I believe
in practising leadership. There is no such thing as a one-
man army.

Ms. Kiran Bedi, Magsaysay Award winner and
Inspector General (Prisons), *Indian Express*, July 14.

There can be a mosque at Ayodhya on only one condition,
that is, if a temple of Hanuman is built at Mecca.

Uma Bharati, BJP MP, quoted in *Muslim India*, July '94.

An almighty surge in growth in the next quarter century
should mark the triumph of free trade over ideology.
Barring a relapse, change will accelerate. India and
China will eclipse a Europe shackled with social com-
mitments.

Padraic Fallon, *Euromoney*, June '94.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Before You Utter a Word

During the nightmarish days of the Emergency imposed by our sainted Indira Gandhi, newspapermen had a taste of censorship for the first time in many decades. This has become an accepted way of professional life for many people in the Arab lands and the popular proverb in Arabia sums it up well - "Turn your tongue ten times inside your mouth before you utter a word".

A new experience is now widespread in many of these countries, something undreamt of by Liberals like Acton or Mill or our own Gokhale or Ranade. An instance is quoted in *Index on Censorship*, April '93 of "Sami", one of the many who have devoted themselves to journalism. Like many young people who came to the profession he was committed to his calling of writing the truth as he found it. But knowing that any direct reference to statements would invite the wrath of the mighty, he began to refer indirectly, never mentioning names but tried to convey his findings nevertheless. He knew of journalists who "sold their words for money" but wanted to be far away from them and do his bit by the pen to reform society. Since politics is dangerous he contributed his piece to a well established cultural journal with a wide circulation. It was returned with an appreciative note from the editor suggesting changes. "To Sami's dismay, every line had at least two corrections, some lines were entirely cancelled; and the conclusion was rewritten by the editor-in-chief."

An old friend learned in the ways of journalism was consulted who sagely advised him to accept the changes. The friend explained that it was not only the journalists who were scared of the censors. The censor himself is all the time in a tremble for he does not know what the reaction

of the ever-watchful "faithfuls" would be to what he permits to be printed. For by admitting dangerous doctrines he might pollute the purity of the country's religious and social organizations.

Sami saw the thrust of the argument and after a great deal of mental agony accepted the changes. Not only was his censored article published but it was popular and his contributions were in demand.

By now he had become so used to writing what is admissible that he became not only same sort of a robot in penning what should be written that "he started to see and hear only these consensual opinions, phrases and words. Sami does not know anything else by now. Sami believes in what he writes."

The tragedy of people like Sami and our times is that he has totally internalised beliefs and made the censors' creed a part of his own. We will do well to reread Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* now even as the communist monolith has crumbled. Koestler would never have foreseen that another would have emerged to take its place so soon. We need a new John Stuart Mill to write a fresh tract for our "advanced" times.

"Creeping intolerance"

Egypt is fighting a losing battle against the militants; something unusual is taking place in a country

"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



which has had a fine record of fighting for reform. Dr. Nasr Abu-Zaid who was due for promotion to a full professorship of Arabic Literature in the University of Cairo found suddenly that it was blocked. The ground was that his published work *A Critique of Religious Discourse* (1992) a work of Semantics is regarded as something that would have a "negative" effect on the morals of the students. Worse, he is charged with being an atheist and an apostate to his religion.

There was a demand that his marriage to Dr. Ebtihal Yunis an assistant professor of French in the University should be annulled - for how can an apostate be married to a Muslim?

The authority who blocked the promotion of Dr. Nasr Abu-Zaid had not discussed his offending book with him; his earlier writings offer enough proof for this action. Friends of the professor offer another explanation. He had led attacks on the Islamic specialists who had "prepared the legal ground for the establishment of Islamic finance houses which robbed thousands of ordinary Egyptians of their life's savings to the tune of billions of dollars." (*Index on Censorship*, July 1993, p.33)

Obviously, it is not only foreign tourists who invite the wrath of the "faithful" in Egypt.

RS

The Masani Viewpoint

Bombay - Another Chicago

"Are we living in Bombay or Chicago?" asks Mr. Nana Chudasama (former Sheriff of Bombay) in his poster on Marine Drive. He well might ask.

The number of people who have been bumped off for one reason or another is alarming. The maintenance of law and order is supposed to be one of the prime duties of Government but it does not seem to be fulfilled.

An Easy Dodge

The easy way out of dealing with a problem by our Government is to appoint a Committee or a Commission. That solves the problem for the time being or does it? Because when the report of the Committee or Commission comes, nobody takes any interest and it turns out to be a dodge to placate public opinion.

Kudos to the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court deserves to be congratulated on seeing the cruelty of punishing a person who has tried to commit suicide and gone through the agony of failing in the attempt. This is a provision of the Indian Penal Code that needs to be removed and I am very glad that the Supreme Court has taken a human view.

Nelson Mandela's Victory

I am not among those who rejoice at the so-called victory of Mr. Nelson Mandela.

I have already expressed the view that in a polyglot country like South Africa, a majority is not the way of expressing the democratic consensus. What is required is the sharing of power and the so-called African National Congress victory is unfair both

to the whites and the Zulus of the Inkatha Freedom Party led by Chief Buthelezi.

Domination of whites by blacks or a section of them is not democratic.

India and Sri Lanka are other countries where these considerations apply.

When I once mentioned to President Jayawardane that he should share power with the Tamils and Muslims in the National Government in Colombo, he said he had both Tamils and Muslims in his Cabinet. I said that was not good enough. The Tamils must select their own representatives and so should the Muslims. He laughed and said, "The Sinhalese would never accept it".

I had expressed these view in a contribution I had made to the Harold Lasky Institute entitled "The Essence of Democracy"

Freedom First

4th Floor, Maneckji Wadia Building, 127, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400 023.

I wish to enter a Subscription and enclose my cheque* in favour of **Freedom First**.

(Please type or write in block letters)

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PIN _____

*Subscriptions can also be sent by MO/DD. No Postal Orders Please. On outstation cheques please add Rs.10 for bank charges)

For Subscribers in India

- ☐ Life Subscription - Rs.500
☐ 3 Years' Subscription - Rs.125
☐ 2 Years' Subscription - Rs.90
☐ Annual Subscription - Rs.50

Single Copy: Rs.15

For Overseas Subscribers

- (By Second Class Airmail)
Annual Life
\$10 \$100
£7 £70

Delayed Realisation

One is amused that Mr. C. Subramaniam and Mr. R. Venkataraman propose to evolve an action plan to eliminate corruption. Both of them were ministers for a long time in the State and at the Centre and were very much part of the establishment that had already become the fountainhead of corruption. They were closely associated with Mrs. Gandhi in whose regime corruption became an universal phenomenon. One does not recall any action plan evolved by Mr. Subramaniam or Mr. Venkataraman to contain corruption when they were part of the government. Out of power, they seem to have suddenly become aware of the evil and how nice of them to want to do their bit for the nation!

Tirupathi

K. S. Ramamurthy

The Return of Swatantra

S. V. Raju

Readers will recall Mr. Minoo Masani's open letter carried in the *Freedom First* issue of January-March 1994 exhorting his younger friends to start a movement for freedom so that the process of economic reforms did not come to a halt.

Mr. Sharad Joshi, the leader of the Shetkari Sanghatana, the very popular farmers organisation in Maharashtra responded to Mr. Masani's appeal by convening a meeting at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan auditorium on May 28, 1994. In his invitation letter Mr. Joshi wrote, among other things:

"We like to claim that our movement has produced a farmer who considers agriculture as a vocation rather than as a way of life and who looks upon himself as an entrepreneur rather than as a self-employed labour.

"I am seriously disturbed at the fact that the political commission agents, the organised employees and the non-competitive producers are out to oppose freedom and have succeeded in mobilising against liberalisation - those who stand most to gain therefrom by sheer Gobbelsian tactics.

"I am concerned that the economic reforms are rapidly losing their momentum due to a lack of commitment on the part of the government, effective mobilisation by the opposition and a near total silence of the vast majority of freedom lovers.

"Like Masani, I feel that the case of the entrepreneurs who constitute the bulk of the Indian population, is going by default for want of articulation.

"The tyranny of the politician, the gangster, the union leader; and the mandir/mandalwallahs is rampant

while large numbers of people who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields prefer to abjure all public activities and politics as essentially a dirty game."

Explaining why he had decided to enter the arena of party politics, Mr. Sharad Joshi observed: "All the fifteen years of my public life, I have been strictly apolitical and have foresworn political activity. I have for some time now the unhappy feeling that worthwhile people, by their absence have left the field free to the scoundrels of society.

"I have asked myself what I ought to do? How can this movement for freedom be best promoted? What action needs to be taken on the social, economic, educational and political fronts?

"I have come to the conclusion that the minimum I can do is to help us come together, so that we can deliberate on what we owe Freedom and History."

The meeting, which began with a brief address by Mr. Masani who, despite keeping poor health managed to personally deliver his good wishes, resulted in the decision to form a political party to be called Swatantra Bharat. A small Preparatory Committee was set up to finalise the Constitution of the new party and its immediate programme.

The Preparatory Committee met soon thereafter and adopted a programme and a Constitution which would be the basis for party organisation and would be ratified or modified, as the case may be, at the first national convention of the new party.

The following is the text of the Programme:

Transitional Thirty-point programme for containing and reversing the damage caused by the Nehruvian regime.

Law and Order

- 1) Ruthless suppression of gangsterism, terrorism and bellicose fundamentalism.
- 2) Restoration, in the first place, of the Ambedkar Constitution by deleting all subsequent amendments damaging its basic structure.
- 3) Moratorium on implementation of all social legislation for a period of 5 years.
- 4) Review of all legislation with a view to abolishing the redundant acts and provisions; bringing together diverse amendments, notifications, ordinances, orders etc. so as to reduce the present plethora of legislation
- 5) Systematic arrangements for updating the codes so that presumption of knowledge of law applies only to what figures explicitly in the latest edition of the Code concerned.
- 6) Computerisation of all recognised jurisprudence.
- 7) Establishment of security forces under the control of Panchayats and municipalities and municipal corporations with a system of responsibility to the community; State police coming in only in case of inter-jurisdictional matters.
- 8) Empowering of village panchayats in judicial cases

to four codes: civil, criminal, economic and social.

to be specifically defined.

- 9) Capital and corporal punishments in cases of corruption, child abuse, rape and breach of public trust.

Pruning of the State

- 10) Abolition of extra-constitutional bodies like the PMO, the Planning Commission.
- 11) Substantial pruning of the expenditure on administration through-
- (a) closure of ministries, departments and functions through-
 - (b) reduction in the establishment, staff privileges and official ostentation.
 - (c) abolition of cadre and career services.
- 12) Opening up for competition all fields and sector presently under state monopoly particularly production (excepting special category defence production), generation of energy, mining, distribution including PDS, domestic as also international trade, tourism, hotelry, etc.
- 13) Systematic and comprehensive schemes for transferring the management and ownership of enterprises to employees, consumers and suppliers of materials and services so as to bring in a democracy for, of and by haves, rather than a dictatorship of the have-nots.
- 14) Gradual and selective pruning of State welfare activities with transfer to appropriate charitable agencies.
- 15) Phased reduction in the so-called developmental expenditure, to match the emergence of non-state bodies to carry out the work.
- 16) Promotion of the transport, communications, energy, water, technology and infrastructure systems, either directly or through franchising/privatisation of existing services and the redeployment of existing personnel for development work.

Economic Reforms

- 17) Reduction in the burden of interest charges on national debt by reducing the debt level to correspond with the new role of the State.
- 18) Comprehensive scrutiny of all governmental expenditure, including standing expenses. Utmost frugality in the conduct of all government work, transformation of a tyrannical government into a genuine one of service to the community.
- 19) Monitoring the regime of markets so as to minimise higher profit, wages, rents or interest and to ensure that the consumers' interests predominate.
- 20) A radical transformation in the taxation system so that it becomes transparent, non-discretionary by relating the assessment to the installed capacity, rolling stock and business or residential area occupied.
- 21) Recognition of the principle that no tax collecting

officer has the right to demand or examine business or personal accounts from any citizen.

- 22) Prohibition of deficit financing as also of bank overdrafts by State or Central Governments for financing their expenditure.
- 23) Prohibition of all control, monitoring and subversion of institutions of justice, intellect, piety and expression by the Government; and empowerment of these institutions to raise their own resources.
- 24) Declaration of an early date as the 'Zero Regulation Day' on which all regulations relating to licensing of production, restrictions on holding, lease, hiring, renting etc., trade, export, imports will stand abolished. Such of these regulations as are considered essential can be reintroduced on appropriate scrutiny and approval.

Electoral Reforms

- 25) Prohibition on electoral propaganda, except by written or spoken word unaided by any contrivance or public medium, during the period between the declaration of election and the date of polling.
- 26) Introduction of the system of proportional representation.
- 27) Elected representatives to have full freedom to take positions, express themselves and vote according to their conscience on all matters except when such positions are inconsistent with their electoral commitments or manifesto.

Corrective Measures

- 28) Rehabilitation of scavengers, prostitutes, criminal and nomadic tribes.
- 29) Making all private property jointly owned with spouse.
- 30) Public scrutiny of into the wealth of all those who have held public office or office in the public or co-operative sector for over five years.

SWATANTRA BHARAT Statement of Objective

The objective of the Swatantra Bharat is to restore before the turn of the century, a nation reduced to penury, bankruptcy, and humiliation, where even the primary law and order machinery is paralysed, being under attack by parochial, inimical and parasitical forces from within and without, to its historical place in the comity of nations consistent with the proven abilities and the genius of its people frustrated since 1947 by the nehruvian licence-permit-inspector raj and neta-goonda polity.

Taslima Nasreen

A Profile in Courage



Taslima Nasreen, Bangladesh writer with over twenty publications of verse, essays, and novels, an ardent feminist and sharply forthright in her views, a popular columnist, probably an agnostic catapulted to the world's attention when an obscure fundamentalist group issued a *fatwa* against her with a prize on her head. Another Salman Rushdie? One more lethal target of a mind-set which has little compunction in issuing death sentences in the name of Islam? Have the fundamentalists become so insecure in their adherence to the "true" Belief that they view the opinions of a writer as threats to the very survival of their Faith? Is any Faith worthy of respect if it cannot meet any criticism of it except through violence to the very person of the critic? These and several other related questions emerge as one ponders with despair and anger over the travails of a young writer, above all a woman, faced with real threats to her life and yet who is unwilling to compromise on her basic beliefs.

Common Bengali Traditions

Ms. Nasreen, thirty-two years old belongs to a nation which is younger than her and which after a war and two coups is still seeking peace, stability and a secure national identity. A desperately poor country burdened with massive illiteracy, Bangladesh has probably the highest concentration of population in the

No one is compelled to read *Lajja* or any of Taslima Nasreen's writings. Banning these do not protect religion; they abridge freedom of expression. It is a thin end of the wedge which can impose today a censorship on one's views on religion and tomorrow on one's opinions.

world - over a hundred million people eking out subsistence from a land which is less than 1.5 lakh sq.kms. The emergence of Bangladesh in 1971-72 had dealt a severe blow to the two-nation theory which had split the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan. East Pakistan which was treated more as a colony than as an integral part of an independent Pakistan seethed with despair and resentment for over two decades before it seceded in the name of Bengali nationalism. Language here proved to be stronger than religion as a source for defining a nation. Islam failed to cement the two parts of Pakistan.

Bangladesh shares with its neighbour not only a language but a common literary tradition. Tagore is as much a revered poet in Bangladesh as he is in West Bengal. Liberalism, Marxism, Humanism compete for the allegiance of young minds as much in the University of Dacca as they do in Calcutta University. Islam is a dominant religion in Bangladesh but it shares little of the harsh, austere and Arab-oriented Islam which prevails in Pakistan. Islam in Bangladesh is relatively more tolerant, less rigid and hardly influenced by Arab culture.

However, in recent years Islamic fundamentalists have been steadily gaining ground in Bangladesh. In a country as poverty-stricken as Bangladesh with seventy percent illiteracy, blandishments of religion and superstition are irresistible. Compounded with these harsh realities is the fledgling democracy in Bangladesh. Compulsions of power have led to strange alliances - both the BNP, the ruling party with a slender majority

and the Awami League, the main opposition party, have been negotiating with the leading fundamentalist group, the Jamaat-i-Islami. The chief of the Jamaat, Gholam Azam was a former detainee who was charged with being a war criminal in 1992 for supporting Pakistan in the late 60s and the early 70s. He was released only last July and it is he who has been spearheading the Jamaati thrust into Bangladesh politics. His commitment to democracy is at best ambivalent. It is in this turbulent situation that Taslima Nasreen's maiden *Lajja* was published giving the fundamentalists a convenient issue to whip up communal frenzy and mobilize supporters.

Family Background

Taslima Nasreen, born in My-mensingh, a small town in Bangladesh, comes from a typical Muslim middle-class family. Her father, himself a teacher of medicine, encouraged Taslima in her educational pursuit finally leading to a medical degree. However, the same latitude was not extended to her two sisters who were brought up under the more restrictive Islamic tenets. Taslima took to writing early, at the age of thirteen, and was already a well-known poet and writer in Bangladesh (as well as West Bengal) before the publication of *Lajja* in February 1993. Her earlier writings, apart from newspaper columns, were in verse. Her poems reflect an acute sensibility of a free spirit caged in a male-dominated and conservative society which treats women as mere chattel rather than as autonomous persons with a dignity and identity of their own. In her *Nirbachita Kalam*

V. K. Sinha

"I Am Like the Voice of Women"

Taslima Nasreen

"I hate the fundamentalists in my country and I hate the BJP in India, but don't for a moment think that I hate my country. I don't I love it and will never leave it. But that doesn't mean I am blind to its faults; it is because of these faults that I write. I know what I write does not appeal to the mullahs but I do not write to please them. I will not write to please them. I write for change. I write for women. I write so that they can cross the border — the dividing line between a man and a woman and get their freedom... I am not scared of the mullahs — they are scared of me, for they know the power of my pen...

My fight is for all the weaker sections of society — weaker by gender, religion or money, and I hope that I succeed one day in getting them their equal rights. If they kill me before that I know there will be many more Taslimas to take on my battles. And that is what keeps me going...

I worked in Mymensing as a family planning officer. It was here that I saw many women of the villages, all tortured by their husbands. Many of them had six, seven, or eight children: It used to make me angry. I asked them, are you interested only in making children? They told me no, but their husbands forced them to have them. Their husbands did not let them take any contraceptive pills. I used to perform tubectomies, which was when another aspect of the society, the country we live in, also upset me. Poverty. The people are so poor and poverty drives them to any length. I found that all kinds of women used to come to me for a tubectomy — even 16 and 17 year old girls. This is because the government gives 175 takas and one sari to anyone who undergoes this operation. Sometimes they say they have children, some are unmarried, some married, some divorced — they all come for the money...

When I move around in Bangladesh I find that even today very few women work outside the house. Many literate women are just housewives be-

cause their husbands don't allow them to work outside the house. The purdah system exists and I want to remove it. I am not even fighting for simple things like what women should wear. What they wear doesn't matter to me, a sari or salwar-khameez, because there are far more important freedoms to be fought for. And I will fight for these not just for myself, but for the women of Bangladesh. I am like the voice of women which I make heard through my writings...

I know that when the women read my writings they react very strongly. They tell me what I write is true. Some of them say I am writing their story. And because my writings change the minds of women, the mullahs are scared of me...

My country is becoming fundamental and it is the fault of the politicians. They have created an opportunity to let fundamentalists stand for elections. Until '72-'75 they had no right to stand for elections. But from '85 the government has created an opportunity for them to join politics...

I love Bengal and it is my dream to see the two Bengals together...

I hate the BJP. I would never take money from the BJP. I have never met any person from the BJP and I don't know any person of the BJP. I have written *Lajja* only for my country, my society. I know the BJP are using my book in India. I know one of the leaders of the BJP says, "Read *Lajja*, read *Lajja*, read how Hindus are tortured in Bangladesh". But I did not write it for the BJP. I wrote it for my country to alert them about fundamentalism. I hate fundamentalists. I hate the BJP and I hate the Jamaat-e-Islam, and I criticise both — I criticise the BJP and I criticise the Jamaat-e-Islam. I have only written for humanism because to me there are no Hindus or no Muslims. There are only human beings. And it is for them I write and fight..."

COURTESY: *Sanny*, November 1993.

Nari Drabya

Want a girl?

there are girls a plenty
Fair girls, tall girls with knee-length hair
Slim waist, flesh firmly in place
Everything just to your taste
See, there isn't a crease on the skin.

The nose is pierced, so are the ears,
narrow gullet

Probe her with your finger - no ugly lumps
or holes

A virgin, uterus untouched, a flower unsmelt
Want to keep this girl?

Feed her thrice a day

Give her pretty clothes and jewels

She won't lift, her eyes - or her voice -
shy girl

She'll cook seven dishes for you in one
afternoon!

Treat her as you will;

If you wish, chain her feet, her hands,
her mind

And when you want - cry 'talaq' - just give
her talaq

Nari Drabya (Item Woman)

Nirbachito Kabita

When I see you

I wish to begin life anew

When I see you I wish to die, and become
holy water

When thirsty, you may touch me

I will give you my sky

You may take the sun, rain - what you wish

I will blanket your sleeplessness with
my morphine

Give me a twelve year long night

To see you

You are more precious than the moon

Bathed in your silver light,

I will braid my hair

Wear sindoor and dress very feminine

When I see you

I wish to die. If you light

My face, I will die and reach the heavens.

Nirbachito Kabita - selected poems - 1993.

(selected writings from her newspaper columns) published in 1992 and which fetched her the prestigious award Ananda Purushkar, she writes:

"Within a male-controlled family structure, the tenets of Islam endorse male superiority. The women's subsidiary, even servile position reduce them to slaves; they are objects of male desire, turned into commodities as sexual wares."

As a physician, Taslima Nasreen had the opportunity to visit rural and semi-rural areas and witness at first hand the lowly, even demeaning and degrading, status of women in Bangladesh society. Her feminist views, seething with anger and passion, spring not from any bookish or academic source, but from her intimate insight into the place of women in her society.

The Real Issue

Taslima Nasreen has been faulted as a writer by certain literary critics. Her verse, they argue, lack subtlety and her novel *Lajja* is poorly structured. They assert that Taslima Nasreen is a journalist and not a creative writer. On the other hand, Shanto Ghosh, a highly respected poet in West Bengal has argued that Taslima Nasreen's "work stems from intensely personal experience, yet is vastly objective." Sunil Gangopadhyaya calls Taslima Nasreen as one of the most powerful authors writing today in Bengali, "She has spoken of her personal experiences unhesitatingly", he states, and "broached such issues in a spirit quite unexpected from a woman in a conservative society".

The real issue is not Taslima Nasreen's literary talent. Even if her writings were to pass into literary limbo meriting a footnote or two, her significance today is of momentous importance. No writer in our sub-continent - India and Bangladesh - has so forthrightly and clearly highlighted the feminist issue and made the world aware of it as Taslima Nasreen. She has given a global dimension to the whole problem of injustice to women in the name of religion.

Taslima Nasreen represents a faith in the humanist vision which sees in reason and persuasion potent weapons of social change. She declares most emphatically that she writes "because I believe in the power of my pen, and to bring change."

Advocate of Women's Equality

Taslima Nasreen has used her columns to expose the iniquitous place of women in her society. An ardent and passionate advocate of equality, she has asserted: "Women must have control over their minds and bodies, their reproductive capabilities. First of all they must enjoy economic independence and have access to education. This is the first step towards empowerment. In many suburbs and villages in Bangladesh, schools for girls are being burnt down or forcefully closed." She has been a persistent critic of the personal laws and property rights prescribed by the Shariat and has demanded their revision to ensure justice to women. Her pen addressed to women has a universal appeal. It is addressed not just to women in Bangladesh but to women in India and to women everywhere else where they suffer discrimination in a male-dominated society:

Live woman. Learn to live life fiercely. If you are human, break these chains and stand up. Break the chains with your two hands, they are yours. Run with your two feet, they are yours. See life with your eyes, laugh loud, those lips are yours. You are wholly yours. Entirely yours. Here I have dusted off all pain and stood up. I have not compromised with vulgarity or sickness. Women, walk holding hands with beauty and dreams...

All Religions are Man-made

Taslima Nasreen has invited the wrath and fury of all fundamentalists by her relentless campaign against the religion-based tenets which legitimize women's lowly status. "I hate all forms of fundamentalism," she declared, "whether it is the mullah in my country, or the BJP in India." She has argued further that "the

women's liberation certainly doesn't suit the fundamentalists. Keeping women illiterate and behind the purdah perpetuates inequality. They blindly follow religious tenets of the Shariat which are obfuscating and ancient." In an interview to the *Statesman* of Calcutta, she called for a radical revision of the Koran. She later denied that she had made such a statement. However, her demand for revision of the Koran is consistent with her beliefs that all the major institutionalized religions are man-made (whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian) and comprise several tenets which have become obsolete. They are shackles which inhibit any progress towards the establishment of a more humane and egalitarian society in the future.

One of the oft repeated arguments put forth by the apologists of religion, and which is primarily evasive, is that religion has nothing to do with the persecution of writers like Taslima Nasreen and Salman Rushdie. It is argued that "true" Islam does not countenance such intolerance and barbaric actions. The *Fatwas* issued against these writers are contrary to the spirit of "true" Islam. This is a form of argument which can be advanced, say, by a Christian apologist confronted by the Inquisition or the burning of witches at Salem. It can be advanced by a pious Hindu in the face of daily injustices meted to the "untouchables" or the militant posturing by the various "dals" in this country.

The apologists of every religion, not excluding Islam, refuse to admit that all religions are a *pot-pouri* of the noble and the base, that all are a mixture of universally valid tenets and locally-based superstitions. Christianity is not just manifested in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also reflected in the Spanish Inquisition and the Index. Islam projects itself not only through the Prophet's revolutionary social change of the primitive and barbaric society in which he lived but also in the savage penal code - still practised in certain parts of the Islamic world - which enjoins stoning of a woman charged with adultery.

Islamic Feminism

Gwynne Dyer

Three of the five biggest Muslim countries now have female prime ministers. They are Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh and Tansu Ciller of Turkey.

This fact will pose a serious ideological problem for those who see Islam solely as an oppressor of women. After all, there has never been a time when three of the five biggest Western countries had female heads of government at the same time.

Indeed, none of the three biggest industrialized countries has ever had a female leader. The Americans, the Japanese and the Germans leave such daring experiments to smaller countries like Canada, Britain and France.

But in Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh - total population 200 million - it is already a reality. And nobody seems to be very upset by it. Given Islam's traditional attitude to women in public life, this needs an explanation. Given the deluge of media reports about the relentless advance of the fundamentalist fanatics, it is downright extraordinary.

The reports are all true. Egypt is hanging Islamic terrorists every month, but their attacks against government officials and foreign tourists continue: 200 people have died in less than two years.

In Algeria, the fundamentalist extremists, robbed of victory by the cancellation of last year's elections, are keeping their promise to kill a "communist" every Tuesday - and murdering lots of other people during the rest of the week. Any educated Algerian with a secular lifestyle is potentially an assassination target.

In New York, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman and fourteen other Muslim militants face trial on charges of organizing the World Trade Centre bombing, plotting to blow up other

buildings and tunnels in the city, and planning the 1990 murder of their mirror-image, Rabbi Meir Kahane.

And there is lots more where that came from. Sudan's military-Islamic dictatorship is waging a genocidal war against the Christian and non-Muslim tribes of the south.

The Iranian fatwa ordering the killing of British author Salman Rushdie for writing the "Satanic Verses", which allegedly blasphemes the Prophet, is still in effect.

On the one hand, we have fanatical "beards" who kill to restore imaginary pure Islam of a bygone age. On the other hand, a community of faith (for even educated people in Muslim countries are still mostly believers) which seems more at ease with women in leadership roles than the post-Christian West is. Where, if anywhere, is the Muslim world really going?

Wrong question, really, the "Muslim world" has no more uniformity and cohesion than the "Catholic world" - and what useful comments could you make that would apply equally to Peru, Portugal, Poland and Philippines?

And the contradictions between Muslim fanaticism and Islamic feminism are less contradictory than they seem. Almost all the terrorist incidents are connected with the Middle Eastern countries, mostly Arab ones. And all of the female prime ministers hail from non-Arab countries.

The Arab world is in a desperate political mess. Dictatorships rule everywhere, and it is a decade since most Arab countries saw any real economic growth. Moreover, Arabs live in the core area of the patriarchal culture, where forcing women to wear veils dates back two thousand years before Islam.

So there is a lot of terrorism in

the Arab world, and a lot of misogyny. And holding your breath until the next Arab country holds a free election, you will probably turn a very attractive shade of blue. And holding your breath until an Arab country elects a woman leader would seriously endanger your health.

But Turkey has legally been a secular state for over fifty years. It has been more or less democratic for thirty years, and Turkish attitudes about women are about the same as in Greece or southern Italy. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are far removed from the Middle East, and only got the patriarchal culture second-hand.

Women leaders are not nearly such a big problem for the three-quarters of Muslims who are not Arabs. It probably wouldn't be all that hard for a woman to win an election in Iran, once the mullahs lose power.

Think back to the time when "Christian" culture and values were starting to change under the impact of modernism: the time of the religious wars in Europe, and the witch burnings in New England. The time when the Puritans made a revolution in England, and banned Christmas as a pagan festival.

In the fast-forward replay of four centuries of European history that the Third World is having to compress into two generations, that's about where Islam stands today.

Old Muslim values are bucking under the impact of the new ideas, and so a huge backlash is underway to protect them. The Islamic fundamentalists have had some successes, and they will have more. But they have no more long-term hope on holding back a largely secular future that the Puritans did.

Courtesy: *Human Rights Worldwide*

The screaming and exultant hordes who vandalized the Babri Masjid did so in the name of Rama.

Religion and Human Rights

Any attempt to determine what is essential in a religion and what is merely peripheral, to remove chaff from the grain, is an exercise in futility, an endless debate which can never conclude. A more practical approach would be to confine religion to a limited area of influence. And whenever any particular belief or practice tends to abridge or abrogate a human right, it should be disallowed. One may presume that what is "essential" in a religion is unlikely to harm human rights!

Another significant issue raised by the Taslima Nasreen affair (and Salman Rushdie) is the apparent conflict between two "values" - freedom of expression and respect for the religious susceptibilities of people. It is on this ground that some liberals in India and abroad have justified (though not condoned the *fatwa*) the banning of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Some liberals and secularists in Bangladesh have expressed reservations in their support to Taslima Nasreen that her call for a revision of the Koran was a grave affront to the religious feelings of the Muslims. Freedom of expression must be sacrificed to protect the religious sentiments of the faithful.

Ms. Taslima Nasreen has been charged under Section 295A of the penal code in Bangladesh of "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage the religious beliefs" and if convicted could be sent to prison for a maximum term of two years. This code is a legacy of the ancient and savage practice of meting out harsh punishment to heretics. It is akin to blasphemy in criminal law which is prevalent in a few Christian States, including England. There is a strong movement in England to remove it from the statute books. The Law Commission in England in its Report, *Criminal Law: Offences against Religion and Public Worship* (1985) has cogently argued for its abrogation. On the other hand, the Jamaat

in Bangladesh has called for revision of the penal code to impose more severe punishment on "Blasphemers"!

A closer analysis of the issue of "conflict" between freedom of expression and religious sentiment of the people should clearly reveal the falsity and pernicious nature of the argument in defence of religious susceptibilities of the people. Primarily what constitutes "hurt" to the religious feelings of the people is highly subjective and therefore open to arbitrary and irrational responses. The existence of the Babri Masjid on the "Ramajnamabhoomi" hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindus, apparently at least a large number of them. Was vandalism of the mosque justified? Tomorrow a number of Hindus could put forth a claim that the sight of the mosque at Haji Ali hurts their religious feelings. It may be argued that the mosque pollutes the sea which belongs to the 'majority' community. Would one be justified in having the mosque pulled down? Maulana Rahman who leads a campaign in Bangladesh to "save the Faith and save the country", says, "How can a woman be treated as Muslim if she drives a car or rides a bicycle?" Obviously, these sights hurt his precious religious sentiment!

Philip Green writing in *New Statesman and Society* presents an unassailable case for the primacy of the right to freedom of expression over religious belief:

"Such a defence... is located in the distinction between institutions that are constitutive of a social or political system, and those that, however laudable, are incidental to it. Free speech is such a constitutive

institution; along with a few other related institutions, such as the right to vote, freedom of association, accountable government, equality before the law, and equal opportunity, it is constitutive of the political system we call "democratic". Freedom of speech is constitutive of democracy because in its absence the very process of democracy, the voluntary formation of groups of persons with like-minded views about what the public good or public interest requires, cannot go forward. Contrarily, no particular religious belief is essential to democracy. In this respect, and in this respect only, free speech and religious dogma, however much they may deserve to be called "sacred beliefs" are not on an equal footing."

Taslima Nasreen's views are no bar on any faithful Muslim in Bangladesh to practise his Faith. Nor has she forcibly compelled any unwilling ears to listen to her opinions. No one is compelled to read *Lajja* or any of Taslima Nasreen's writings. Banning these do not protect religion; they abridge freedom of expression. It is a thin end of the wedge which can impose today a censorship on one's views on religion and tomorrow on one's opinions on other social and political questions.

L'Affaire Nasreen has not only underlined the issue of justice to a beleaguered young writer but has raised issues of freedom of speech - basic to a democracy - the place of religion in politics and the role of women in society. Taslima Nasreen has chosen not only to speak for herself but for the entire womenkind.

MR. V. K. SINHA is editor of *The Secularist*, a bi-monthly published by the Indian Secular Society.

Indian Secular Society

- The Indian Secular Society is a non-political organisation of men and women committed to secular human values and their promotion in Indian society.
- It seeks to combat obscurantism in all its form, in all spheres of life, and to educate public opinion, particularly where public sentiment runs counter to public interest.
- It believes that the most serious threat to the development of India as a secular democratic state guaranteeing individual freedom and social justice to its citizens comes from religious obscurantism and intolerance.
- The bimonthly journal of the Society *The Secularist* is sent free to all its members. Annual Membership Rs. 50; Life Rs. 500.

Write to:

The Indian Secular Society
850/8A, Shivajinagar, Pune 411 004.

Threats to Free Speech from Religious Bigots

- * Aubrey Menon's *O Rama* is targeted for fundamentalist attack by Hindu chauvinist sections in India (1950s)
- * *The Last Temptation of Christ*, a fictionalised critique of the Biblical version is the target of fury by the Christian orthodoxy. Many western countries forced to ban/restrict viewing; in India too, there are protests demanding a ban. (1960s).
- * *Jesus Christ Superstar*, another fictionalised biography of Jesus, on the stage and films is similarly targeted. (1970s).
- * *Shakespeare Ki Ramayana*, a play scripted by Iqbal Khwaja and staged in Bombay is disrupted by Vikram Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha, the playwright forced to touch Savarkar's feet in forgiveness; the play is never performed again. (1987).
- * *Mohammed, the Idiot*, the title given to a short story in the *Deccan Chronicle* generates such rage from Muslims in Hyderabad that offices of the newspaper are attacked and set ablaze. (1987)
- * Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's *Riddles of Hinduism on Ram and Krishna* generated violent objections from the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra which were silenced only after a massive show of strength from Dalits in support of the book. (1988)
- * Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* generates worldwide furore, a price is put on Rushdie's head; the author has been forced into a life in hiding ever since. (1989).
- * Public showings of *Ram Ke Naam*, a documentary film by Anand Patwardhan that severely critiques the Ramjanmabhoomi movement have often been marred by violence and the filmmaker subjected to violent threats from various wings of the Hindutva brigade. (1990 onwards)
- * Nikhil Wagle, the outspoken editor of the Marathi evening paper, *Mahanagar* has thrice been roughed up, and copies of *Mahanagar* burnt by Sainiks for his courageous criticism of the Sena (first in 1991).
- * Professor Mushirul Hasan survives a murderous attack on his life by Jamia Milia students after he defends Rushdie's right to freedom of expression. (1992).
- * Dr. Abid Raza Bedar, Director of Patna's Khuda Baksh Oriental Library faced a violent witch-hunt from Muslim students and other fundamentalists when he made bold to say that the word kafir meant someone who rejects faith; hence Hindus should not be called kafirs but mushrik, someone who has more than one God. (1992).
- * *The Rape of Sita*, a critique of the anti-feminist perspective of the Ramayana is banned in Indonesia (1992).
- * *Hum Sab Ayodhya*, an exhibition put together by the *Salamat group* Delhi faced violent objections since among many other panels, it displayed the *Dasaratha Jataka* that depicts Ram and Sita as siblings. (1993)
- * Activists and MLAs of the Jharkand Mukti Morcha threaten Sunil Gangopadhyay for his book, *Prothom Aalo* for "uncondonable derogatory references to Goddess Kali". (1993).
- * Taslima Nasreen faces the wrath of the Bangladeshi clergy for her book *Lajja* and outspoken remarks against organised religion. (1993).
- * *Schindler's List*, the award-winning film by Stephen Spielberg is banned by many Muslim countries because it "portrays Jews as a persecuted minority and encourages racism!" (1994)

COURTESY: Communalism Combat

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,
Vadodara-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

Lakshmi-Mukti

It was easier to force liquor shops to close down or to secure representation for women in panchayat raj institutions than for them to secure property rights.

Lakshmi-Mukti literally means deliverance of the goddess of wealth. In rural Maharashtra the term is more commonly understood to mean deliverance of the housewife. Whatever the scriptural connotation, *Lakshmi-Mukti* is now a popular movement to shift the ownership of agricultural land to rural housewives.

The movement is organised by the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi - the women's wing of the Shetkari Sanghatana (SS) the well known farmers' organisation in Maharashtra that, among other things made remunerative prices for agricultural produce a common expression in economic discussions.

Judging by the massive attendance it commands at its rallies and demonstrations, the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi (SMA) is a mass organisation. The SMA is not the conventional women's lib movement. It does not seek redressal in individual cases of harassment or abuse but favours mass action.

Though a wing of the SS, the SMA is totally autonomous and has taken, whenever the occasion demanded, positions quite different from those of its parent organisation.

The SMA's basic concerns are the civil and property rights as also the economic problems of women.

At its founding conference in Chandvad, Maharashtra in 1986, the SMA set for itself an agenda which included:

- * Dealing with the drinking water problem.

- * Including domiciliary agro-processing in EGS work.

- * Including domiciliary work performed by women in calculating the cost of production of agricultural produce.

- * A common civil code that would eliminate injustices to women inherent in all religions.

- * Education of the girl-child.

- * Mass action to prevent and remedy the abuse of women.

Three years later, at its Amravati conference, the SMA widened its scope of attention to deal with:

- * The effects on women as a result of communal riots and violence.

- * Women's participation in Panchayat Raj institutions;

- * Liquor shops and campaigning to shut them down.

- * The wages of women agricultural labourers.

Wide as this agenda is, the SMA's main thrust, perhaps its biggest achievement, has been its movement to secure women their property rights.

The situation in rural Maharashtra, as indeed in the rest of India is the inequitable situation of daughters in disputes relating to property; the wide prevalence of the dowry system in all societies; the widespread incidence of murders of women and their destitution for reasons related to property; the provision of economic support to divorced, widowed and abandoned

women; and the unsatisfactory system of payment of alimony.

To deal with the irrationalities in the present system relating to women's property, the SMA proposed a novel form of co-parcenary right for women both in the parents' and the husband's household. Its principal features:

- * The law relating to the property of a family should be similar to that governing a partnership firm. Every female by virtue of birth or marriage should obtain rights to property on equal terms with the male members.

- * Every woman should have the right to claim her share of the property at each dissolution of the family-firm on account of wedding, separation or divorce.

- * All letters of consent by female members that would have the effect of abdicating their property rights should be treated as void *ab initio*.

Easier said than done. The SMA leadership soon discovered that it was easier to force liquor shops to close down or secure representation for women in panchayat raj institutions than for them to secure property rights. This failure was attributed to cultural inhibitions of both men and women in accepting the very concept of women's property.

To get over this inhibition and based on the dictum that charity begins at home, the SMA asked activists of the SS to earmark a part of their holding, not necessarily

accompanied by documentary transfer of title, and make the gross proceeds of the plot concerned available to the housewife for use at her own discretion.

This was tried out in the village of Vitner, a village difficult of access in the Chopda taluka of Jalgaon district. Under the leadership of Ms. Vimlatai Patil, this village did one better - even the titles to the plot were transferred in the name of the housewives. Vitner also had to its credit the election of an all-woman gram panchayat and the closure of the village liquor shop. It was honoured as "Jyotiba Gaon" by the then Prime Minister Mr. V. P. Singh on January 28, 1990 at a massive rally in Nagpur.

Encouraged by the Vitner experiment, the SMA launched the *Lakshmi-Mukti* movement all over Maharashtra on 2nd October 1990.

Under the scheme, farmers were encouraged to transfer voluntarily a part of their landholding to their wives in gratitude for their toil and sacrifices for the household. The transfer could be with or without the statutory transfers of title but with a formal conferment of the gross proceeds in favour of the *Lakshmi*.

Any village that had at least a hundred transfers of land of either pattern would be conferred the title of *Lakshmi-Mukti* village and a Scroll of Honour would be presented to the village personally by Mr. Sharad Joshi the leader of the Shetkari Sanghatana.

The first village to be honoured under the scheme was Yenora in the Hinganghat taluka of Wardha district. By the end of February 1992 over a thousand villages fulfilled the conditions to qualify under the scheme.

There is no known case where the transfer could have helped the holder in escaping the provisions of the ceiling laws. Most of the holders own land well below the maximum,

the average holding being 6 acres.

In quite a few cases the entire holding has been transferred to the spouse. Well over a hundred thousand women have benefited from the transfer of land. Most transfers are in favour of the *Lakshmis*. In only a few cases are the beneficiaries sisters, sisters-in-law, or daughters-in-law.

The participation of muslim and scheduled caste families is remarkably high.

While the quantitative performance of the *Lakshmi-Mukti* movement is very impressive, there is more to it than just numbers.

That the menfolk voluntarily agree to transfer landed property is surprising enough. What is more astonishing is that the event is celebrated by the entire village in colourful ceremonies accompanied by much fanfare. The village has a festive look with buntings, illuminations, the sprinkling of roads and courtyards and decorations with traditional *rangolis* and festive *gudhis* in an ambience of joy and festivity.

The *Lakshmi-Mukti* movement is not feminist. It is strictly economic. It is promoted on the following lines:

- * Women do 2/3rds of agricultural work and therefore they must be accepted as agriculturists;
- * but landholders they are now; and their plight is worse than that of landless labourers or bonded labour. No regulations regarding minimum wages, maximum working hours, protection of tenure and protection from assault etc.
- * The farmers movement demanding remunerative prices can overlook the question of adequate compensation for the womenfolk only at its own peril.
- * An improvement in the economic situation of the household is often accompanied by a

deterioration in the quality of life of its womenfolk.

- * The real and more substantive *Karjamukti* (freed of loans) will have to come from the *Lakshmis* to whom the men-farmers owe astronomical amounts.

Today's women are in the same position as was Sita in the Ramayana. After sharing her husband Rama's hardship in the forest for fourteen years, Sita is sent back to the forest in a state of destitution for no fault of hers. Rama, the model of male perfection does not consider it necessary to make arrangements for her livelihood by offering to accompany her or, at least, making provisions for her shelter until she delivers her twins. Rama has a number of temples; he does not need one more. Far more pressing is the need for a temple for Sita!

(Based on a report on the work of the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi).

Of Clumsy Post Cards

Prima facie it appears that there is politics in designing the existing clumsy post cards and post packets.

When the British ruled India the upper right hand corners of post cards and post packets contained a very small printed portrait of the emperor or the empress as the case might be, and the remaining blank space was for writing the address.

But the present clumsy designs of the post cards and post packets are such as make the writing of the address most troublesome to the writer.

The idea behind this might be that while writing the addresses on the cards and packets, the writers would abuse the Government in power and, at the time of the next election, they would vote for the designer's saffron party, cannot be ruled out, because no other political party except the BJP has the capacity to think and act in such direction which they adore as "*Chanakya neeli*".

Jalgaon

G. Y. Dharap

A Testimony of Shame

Dilip Thakore

It is quite obvious from the Human Development Report 1994 that for the overwhelming majority of this ruined nation's citizens, life is nasty, brutal and much too long.

The Human Development Report (HDR) 1994 published by the United Nations Development Programme in early June, is a diplomatically worded beautifully printed 226 page document. The brainchild of Pakistan economist Dr. Mahbub Ul Haq who, dissatisfied with the limitations of national income statistics to monitor the economic development of nation states, began producing the HDR for the UNDP in 1989, the latest annual report constitutes an even more determined effort to identify the root causes of the world's "silent crisis - a crisis of underdevelopment, of global poverty, of evermounting population pressures, of thoughtless degradation of the environment", and to suggest remedies.

And given that the authors of HDR 1994 are firmly - and rightly of the opinion that sustainable human development is "pro-people, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women," it is a damning indictment of post-Independence India's economic development effort characterised by pathetic and glaring failure on all these counts. According to the global classification of nations in the report, India is a "low human development" nation and notwithstanding all the high-sounding rhetoric and moral posturing of its foolish and benighted leaders, ranks a lowly 135th out of the world's 173 nations.

Scathing Indictment

India's low rank in the human development table is hardly surprising considering that the prime criteria utilised by the undoubtedly learned authors of HDR 1994 is life expectancy at birth, educational attainment and per capita income (adjusted for

purchasing power parity). For a long time it has been painfully obvious to all but the nation's woefully ignorant politicians and dominant leftist intellectuals bent on propagating self-serving socialism and statism, that the basic functions of government - education, health, employment generation and economic growth - have been criminally neglected.

The reaction of indigenous media pundits of HDR 1994 has been surprisingly muted. One gets the feeling that there is a pervasive sentiment of resignation tinged with more than a touch of oriental fatalism in the muted response to the scathing indictment of the Indian economic development effort which is the hidden message of the report. Very few, if any, of the media pundits view the report as constructive criticism which offers valuable suggestions to set right post-independence India's failed national development effort which constitutes one of the greatest acts of mass betrayal in contemporary economic history.

Yet to convert the development disaster of post-independence India into a development opportunity requires an understanding of the root causes why things have come to such a sorry pass in a nation gifted with an abundance of natural and human resources. A thorough diagnosis of the causes of the wastage of the body politic must precede the writing of the prescription.

The Mother of All Errors

In retrospect it should be clearly apparent to any person of average intelligence that perhaps the mother of all errors was to have adopted the centrally planned socialist model of

development characterised by the creation of a massive agglomeration of public sector enterprises to "capture the commanding heights of the economy". During the four decades past such a collection of several thousand central and state government owned public sector enterprises (PSEs) has indeed been created and they do dominate the commanding heights. But over the years these perennially loss-making, high-cost and grossly overnamed PSEs have sucked the economy dry and have made a nonsense out of the citizenry's heroic national savings rate of 22-24 percent per year. The consequence has been the neglect of the nation's educational infrastructure ("educational attainment") which is rightly given great weightage in the Human Development Index of the HDR.

Even the small minority of Indian intellectuals and media pundits who are critical of the socialist public sector-led economic development model tend to regard the adoption of this *dirigiste* model as an honest mistake made in good faith. But to regard the creation of a massive public sector and subjecting the private sector to a stringent licence-permit-quota regime as a well-intentioned error is itself a great error. To identify and understand the root causes of post-independence India's abysmal underdevelopment the phenomena of a massive monopoly public sector and the imposition of comprehensive (largely discretionary) controls upon private enterprise have to be linked with another barely understood and seldom discussed social phenomenon: the rise to positions of power in government and the PSEs of the mofussil middle class or the lumpen bourgeoisie.

Emergent, Amoral Middle Class

The capture of political power and the institutions of government by this newly emergent, amoral class made the creation of the public sector and the imposition of comprehensive controls on private sector activity inevitable. As has been made manifest after the collapse of the communist nations of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the adoption of the centrally planned socialist model offered this new class easy opportunities for private capital accumulation.

Unfortunately, quite apart from the waste and ruination of the PSEs, another more deadly consequence of the emergent political dominance of the quasi-literate mofussil middle class is that it has imposed its shallow and regressive value premises upon Indian society as a whole. And HDR 1994 is replete with statistics and data reflecting the socio-economic consequences of the imposition of mofussil middle class value premises upon the nation. Among them : widespread adult illiteracy, the unavailability of health services, sanitation and safe drinking water to the majority of the population, the lowly status of women, haphazard urbanisation and reckless military expenditure. To this catalogue of sins must be added the importation of the deeply entrenched communal and caste phobias and prejudices which are characteristic of mofussil towns and villages in India into the nation's cities. Mercifully these regressive value premises have not been given any weightage in HDR 1994. If they had been India's ranking would have slipped further.

A Statistic of Shame

In particular the indifference of this newly-emergent dominant class to education needs to be emphasised, and HDR 1994 provides this emphasis. Less than half the adult population (49.8 per cent) of contemporary India is literate, confirm the authors of the report. Which means over 450 million citizens lacking even the most rudimentary

skills for survival and development - indeed a statistic of shame. Not surprisingly in terms of per capita income, even after it is adjusted for purchasing power parity, contemporary India ranks abysmally low within the international community of nations. Perhaps the only reasonably respectable statistic India has merited in HDR 1994 is life expectancy at birth (59.7). But when read with the other statistics of shame contained in this global progress report, it is quite obvious that for the overwhelming majority of this ruined nation's citizens life is nasty, brutal and much too long.

Defeating the Vested Interests

Very belatedly a half-hearted effort is being made at the centre and in some of the state capitals to break the stranglehold of the narrow-minded mofussil bourgeoisie upon the nation. The Union government's economic liberalisation and deregulation programme needs to be viewed in this perspective. But this now firmly entrenched class is fighting back to retain its dominance and unearned privileges. The rash of strikes in PSEs, the nationalised banks, insurance companies and in government institutions are a manifestation of this counter-revolution. And since the stakes are very high and rising, in this struggle for the soul of India communal and caste ill-will - quintessentially middle class poisons - are being increasingly utilised.

The antidote of course is for truly educated and right-thinking citizens with deeply entrenched metropolitan liberal value premises to end their divorce with Indian politics. This rapprochement though slow and cautious, is beginning to crystallise. In the meanwhile researched studies such as HDR 1994 with their statistics of shame serve the useful purpose of highlighting the spreading rot.

DILIP THAKORE is the founder editor of *Business India* and *Business World* and the former Editor of *Debonair*.

ACC

cement

**FOR
RELIABILITY
STRENGTH
AND
QUALITY**

ACC

**THE ASSOCIATED
CEMENT COMPANIES
LIMITED**

What Makes for a Nation State?

Forging a National Identity

Rajesh M. Basrur

While the Constitution is the bearer of secular principles based on equality and the rule of law, the reality is an iniquitous society in which crime all too often does pay.

As a nation, Indians have a sense of where they have come from. Hardly anyone, for instance, questions the historian's label of "ancient" or "medieval India". But if we are comfortable with a fictional nation-ness projected into the past, there are increasingly uncomfortable questions about the present and a sense of foreboding about the future. Where are we now and where are we going? Is there a future in Indian-ness? Most difficult of all, what is Indian-ness? These questions, which we have barely begun to ask, are inherent in the widespread uneasiness about a fundamental sense of identity which was till recently, taken for granted by most people. In part, our attention is drawn to them by events abroad: the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the bloody violence among Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia. And while "ethnic" is "in" in fashion and prose, it assumes a menacing aspect in Samuel Huntington's prophecies of civilizational conflict.

But the real sources of unease lie largely within our own society. Over the past decade, large sections of our own people have sought a separate nationhood. Assam, Punjab and Kashmir (to name but three) have been engulfed by violent movements led by men and women who, whatever we might think of their cause, have been willing to die for their separateness. All three movements have some objective basis for their claims in unity of language, with religion forging a powerful sense of identity in Punjab and Kashmir.

Are these the first signs of a nation close to breaking up? There is evidence

enough that the ties that bind are being loosened by violence on an unprecedented scale. The violence of Ayodhya is symbolic, a single peak in the rising graph of barbaric blood-letting that erupts with growing frequency. Religion today represents the most visible of the theatres of conflict between subnational communities, but scarcely the only one. Linguistic hostility has pitted Kannadigas against Tamils; caste conflicts regularly break out into blindings, burnings and other hideous demonstrations of brotherhood; bland police statistics tell of rising atrocities against women.

Pervasive Moral Anarchy

All this reflects a pervasive moral anarchy. While the Constitution is the bearer of secular principles based on equality and the rule of law, the reality is an iniquitous society in which crime all too often does pay. Religions that proclaim humanism and compassion are instruments of aggression against the "other" and of the suppression of their own. Competitive politics places a premium on ends rather than means, breeding cynicism among its beneficiaries and losers alike. Through it all runs the thread of a grasping materialism that values things rather than people. What, then, remains of the abstraction of the "nation"?

Notions of national community rest on bonds created by external as well as internal forces. When the internal domain lapses into adversarial relationships, there is inevitably the risk that the sense of community will come to depend heavily on antipathy towards outsiders. Hence

our shrill preoccupation with some variant or other of the "foreign hand". But beyond a point a community cannot derive strength from hostility towards "the enemy". Colonial exploitation was a powerful unifier, but is now only a dim collective memory in a country whose population is largely young. Wars against China and Pakistan sustained our nationhood at a price. But modern technology, with its awesome destructive capacities, makes the price unaffordable. So it is to the realm within that we must turn for answers to the question: what can keep us together? It is, of course, arguable that there is nothing intrinsically valuable in such a union. Against this, it is at least equally - perhaps more strongly - valid to say that there is no reason whatsoever for the fragmentation of a nation to be thought of as intrinsically worthwhile.

The Nehru Model

After independence, the nation-building enterprise took shape in the Nehruvian mould of a secular, liberal-democratic political system combined with planned industrialization. The magnitude of this task ought not to be underestimated: the process envisaged the transformation of a technologically backward, socially orthodox and divided society into a "modern" entity on the western model on a massive scale. The changes that ensued were necessarily slow and uneven. Liberal democracy cannot take root overnight, while industrialization is a difficult business when resources are limited. Problems multiplied as democratic politics generated powerful populist pressures. Optimism ran high, but progress was slow. Not

To find out whether you're using
the best Powder Hair Dye,
place it next to ours.



Now take this simple test.

- * Is it shampoo based?
- * Does it spread easily?
- * Is it convenient, non-messy, easy to use?
- * Are the shades natural?
(i.e. no one can make out you're using a hair dye)
- * Is it long lasting?
- * Is it safe?
- * Is it from a reputed company?
- * Finally, what is the price?

Godrej
Powder Hair Dye



Rs. 32/-
for 10 gms.*

Any other



Rs. _____
for 6 gms.



Godrej Powder Hair Dye. So much more for so much less.

* Max. retail price as on 1st Jan. 1993 (inclusive of all taxes)

Mudra GS 1458

surprisingly, the revolution of rising expectations, denied its due, was overshadowed by rising frustration. The cake was too small and more and more people wanted a slice.

It fell to Indira Gandhi to grapple with the growing conflict that inevitably followed. Nehru had tried to construct a society in which economic policy was centralized, whereas politics was much less so. Mrs. Gandhi centralized politics as well in the hope of controlling the modernization process. But the project failed despite her assertion of the centre's power over the states, the manipulation of regional leaderships and the tightening of economic regulation. Linguistic, religious and caste conflict burgeoned, while the economy, weighed down by excessive controls, retained its elephantine gait. By the 1980s, the Nehruvian model, or Mrs. Gandhi's version of it, was in tatters.

The Hindutva Model

Since the middle of that decade, there has been a concerted effort to build an alternate model of nationhood: what might be called the "Hindutva model". Though it is usually identified with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), it has a wide and strong appeal simply because it appears to be the only socially rooted alternative to the Nehruvian model of the national community. Language, which has played a central role in most nationalisms (more on this later), is not a significant candidate; not only are there not enough people who identify with Hindi, there are too many who view it with suspicion. Class is even weaker: Marxist class politics has failed utterly to transcend language barriers. The RSS, the BJP and other faithfuls of the "*sangh parivaar*" have been able cleverly to draw on history as well as the absorptive aspects of Hindu society to construct a universal conception of Hinduism that incorporates other religious groups.

As it happens, Indian society is infertile ground for such a concoction. Hinduism itself is too diverse to permit

an easy cultural consolidation of the kind being attempted by the advocates of *Hindutva*. It is one thing to whip large sections of the population into emotional frenzy over a symbolic issue like the construction of a Ram temple. The stated objective of "construction" cannot hide the fundamentally negative nature of the movement which was the destruction of the so-called Babri mosque. It is a far, far more difficult thing to build a positive identity in a society that is so culturally diverse. Apart from differences of language and caste, Hinduism incorporates a wide array of belief systems and traditions, as is evident from the varieties of the Ram legend itself. Nor is it likely that followers of other religions, numbering in the millions, will be persuaded that their happiness lies in submission to the dubious conception of an over-arching *Hindutva*. More generally, barring the unique case of Israel, no nation in the modern world has sustained itself on the basis of religious identity. We have only to look at the Pakistani experience to appreciate this.

Centralized Power

It must be said that there is one other possibility that has not yet been attempted in this country: some sort of secular dictatorship, with the armed forces either in command or functioning as primary instruments of governance. In a conflict-ridden society, the middle and upper classes are prone to see virtue in an authoritarian system. Such talk is in the air today. Half a century ago, Erich Fromm explained this as the inclination of these classes to "escape from freedom" by handing over power to a strong authority that promises them the stability and security that "their" (representative) government has failed to give them. Mussolini and Hitler were beneficiaries of this phenomenon, and we know what happened subsequently. Besides, dictatorships around the world have not usually brought peace other than of the graveyard kind. Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Nigeria - the list is a long one. To those who believe that strong centralized power is the key to efficient

and speedy economic growth, we may wave an equally long (and largely the same) list.

Language as Unifier

So we return, as we must, to that fundamental question: What is it that gives a nation its nation-ness? The definitive study of nationalism is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (New York: Schocken, 1993). Anderson's wide-ranging global survey highlights two basic sources of national identity. The first, of course, is language, which gives people the ability to communicate and thus to evolve a shared culture. In Germany and Japan, language was a driving force in the forging of national identity. In other countries, particularly in Latin America, it was not an issue at all, but did nevertheless provide the foundation on which unity was constructed. In both cases, the existence of a common language was not by itself a sufficient cause for the growth of identity. Rather, it was the diffusion of language through print (the reading of common books and newspapers) that gave birth to the "imagined community" of a nation. The role of administrative and schools systems, operating through a common language, contributed to this process in a big way. The case of Indonesia is striking because, like India, it is a society of great ethnic diversity with a history of sub-national conflict. It was only in the 1920s that *bahasa* Indonesia emerged as the national language with the help of the educational system and print-capitalism.

The second factor underlying the genesis of nationalism is shared experience. Colonized peoples, particularly, shared the experience of racism, economic exploitation and domination by the metropole. In addition, elites (and later others) were drawn together by colonial administrative and educational structures. The common language which unified these structures was usually that of the metropole - English in India, French in Indochina, Portuguese in Mozambique - but not necessarily so: Dutch played a

relatively limited role in Indonesia.

Clearly, a common linguistic framework is an essential prerequisite for the development of a strong sense of identity. In India, the situation is problematic, largely because of the absence of a clear-cut language policy. English is the only language that is geographically universal, but is limited to a small, urban elite. The government is dependent on it, but denigrates it. Yet there is a growing demand for English because, in an expanding industrial economy, it has by far the highest market value. Hindi once had considerable potential, but has failed to foster a sense of identity because of the disparity between the official Hindi promoted by the state and the colloquial Hindi disseminated by cinema and television. Other regional languages have obvious geographical limitations. In this context, Anderson remarks that "the only question-mark standing over languages like Portuguese in Mozambique and English in India is whether the administrative and educational sys-

tem, particularly the latter, can generate a politically sufficient diffusion of bilingualism". This, lamentably, is precisely where India's problem lies. The schools system, while acknowledging the need for a bilingual or trilingual population, is not in fact producing one in a "politically sufficient" way.

The language problem exposes the limitations of the centralized idea of nation-ness underlying all the three models outlined above. A multilingual society requires a different view of the nation. Only in a decentralized polity can a society of many languages become cohesive. Real unity cannot be imposed through either political centralization or linguistic "Russification".

We might do better if we conceive of India in less unitary terms. After all, tightness restricts. A better model might be the slowly developing "Euro-model": a common market and economic policy, a unified defence, and a loose federation of regional units

largely autonomous in other respects. This would allow for economic efficiency and national security as well as the retention of strong ethnic/regional identities. Indeed, if we develop a more purposeful language policy, Europe might look to us for a model.

DR. R. M. BASRUR, teaches history at the Ruia College, Bombay, and is a student of contemporary politics and international relations.

IF IT'S TUESDAY, IT SHOULD BE HINDI!

The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation issued a directive to private airlines that on Tuesdays, all communications to the DGCA be addressed in Hindi. A report to this effect appeared in the press on August 9.

On August 11, *The Times of India* reported that our MPs (mostly from South India) demanded its withdrawal.

A conspiracy to keep Tamil Nadu out of business, said one MP. Demanded another that idli and dosa should also be included in the menu of airlines. The MP concerned did not, however, specify the day of the week.

ONE NAME THAT ECHOES
FAR BEYOND THE HILLS OF
KODAGU, HASSAN AND CHIKMAGALLUR

CONSOLIDATED COFFEE

*India's largest
Coffee Growers and Curers*

That is right. Consolidated Coffee, the country's premier Coffee Plantation Company, has a sterling reputation brewed from over 50 years of consolidated experience in India's Coffee world.

The Company's plantations comprise over 13,000 acres of Coffee (interplanted with Pepper, Cardamom and Oranges) and Tea, all availing of the best cultivation

methods. Consolidated Coffee are also the largest curers in the country, handling more than 15% of the country's Coffee production.

In Consolidated Coffee, you have a Company that's been rapidly scaling the peaks of Indian Coffee care and cultivation, and whose name now echoes even beyond.

*Consolidated Coffee
The echo spreads, day by day.*

CONSOLIDATED COFFEE LIMITED

Pollibetta 571 215, Kodagu

The Press and Freedom

K. S. Ramamurthy

No democracy can sustain itself in the absence of a fiercely independent Press to protect the public interest and to lay bare the corruption and misdeeds of the powers that be. We might have won freedom from foreign rule, but we are yet to win our freedom from our own masters.

The Press is not a messenger of God to purvey the good news to the faithful. Nor is it to be thought of as an industry guided solely by the profit motive. The Press is to reflect and to mould public opinion by presenting facts without bias, analysing news and events, and allowing debates to take place in its columns. Newspapers should go beyond the news to find out the truth. Scandal-mongering and scurrilous attacks are not to be indulged in but honest investigation to expose corruption and questionable deeds are necessary functions of a free Press. In a country like India where various nexus exist and the parliamentary opposition is weak and divided, the responsibility of the Press to take up public causes and to take a stand against arbitrary decisions and the wayward actions of those in authority becomes crucial. Only when the Press is fearless can it be free and deserve to be called the Fourth Estate. The duty of the Press is to the public and to the public alone.

If one were to go by these norms one finds that, barring a few exceptions, the Indian Press has not acquitted itself well enough to be worthy of public trust. The test came during Mrs. Gandhi's infamous Emergency when censorship was clamped down and the Press was exposed to arbitrary action by the authorities. In the words of Mr. Advani, most of our newspapers started to crawl when asked to bend. *Indian Express* and *The Statesman* were notable exceptions refusing to be bullied. *Freedom First* and *Opinion* also stood the test. But many others including some well-established dailies vied with one another to project a non-entity who

happened to be the centre of extra constitutional power. National newspapers simply buckled and at least one of them was given a certificate of good conduct by Mohammed Yunus.

The bulk of the Press, even in normal times, is keen not to cause offence to those in power. For one thing, the owners look upon newspapers as business ventures to be run entirely on profit-making considerations. For another, when the owners have other economic and industrial interests the papers they own avoid antagonising those in power, so as to protect such interests. Because of this, the concept of a free and independent Press suffers in India.

The anxiety to keep the Establishment happy leads to comic situations at times when centres of power change. Such situations are taken in their stride without any embarrassment. A leading English daily which bent over backwards to keep the extra constitutional power centres happy during Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency did not bat an eyelid when it said (after the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi at the elections and a new government had taken over) that it was not aware of the Emergency atrocities as otherwise it would have taken cudgels against the perpetrators of such crimes! And it is a newspaper well-established with staff reporters and special correspondents not only in the capital but also in all other important places. Yet it wanted us to believe that it was unaware of all that happened during those black days!

Many newspapers take notice of

events embarrassing to those in authority only when they cannot help it and even then they tread a cautious line. Several papers were underplaying the stock market scam to be on the right side of even the discredited elements in the Narasimha Rao government. In the case of the wanton destruction of the Babri Masjid, except for a couple of papers the rest did not take to task the union government for dereliction of duty by failing to protect the monument.

"Toeing the line" is the favourite pastime of the bulk of the Press in India. Not many of the newspapers do any in-depth analyses of even important issues and present all the facts to their readers. *Suppressio veri** and *Suggestio falsi** are freely resorted to to favour those in power. A leading newspaper of Madras, while deafeningly silent on the large scale corruption and maladministration in Tamil Nadu, went out of its way to publish selective legal opinion including a lengthy article obtained from a leading lawyer favouring the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on a charge levelled against her by Dr. Subramaniam Swamy. But for Medha Patkar, the Narmada issue would not have stood exposed. The Press did little to gather facts and educate the public. So is the case with civil liberties, falling educational standards, wasteful expenditure by governments running into crores of rupees, lack of concern for public welfare, non-provision of civic amenities and many such issues. There have not been many investigations by the Press on these subjects to

*Suppression of truth and misrepresentation by concealment of facts that ought to be made known.

bring to public attention the scandalous state of affairs. In the name of sobriety and credibility, sycophancy has been developed into a fine art by a large section of the Press.

The Press spends a lot of space on politics and does not concern itself seriously with important social issues. The problems of rural India do not get the attention they deserve. The news and articles that appear in our Press do not have any relevance to the villages. India is still a land of villages and if the plight of the rural poor is not going to be taken seriously it only means that the largest and most important segment of society goes uncared for in the Press.

Governments and public servants exhibit dictatorial tendencies every now and again. Lord Acton warned us long ago that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. We have seen this happening in India ever since independence. The politician-bureaucrat-businessman nexus has reached alarming proportions.

No democracy can sustain itself in the absence of a fiercely independent Press to protect the public interest and to lay bare the corruption and misdeeds of the powers that be. We might have won freedom from foreign rule but we are yet to win our freedom from our own masters.

As Lord Acton put it, "the great question is to discover, not what governments prescribe, but what they ought to prescribe; for no prescription is valid against the conscience of mankind". The Fourth Estate is its own domain and is independent of the legislature and government. Democracy is too serious a business to be left entirely to the legislature and government of the day. Any number of instances can be shown how brute majority in the legislature; compromises between the ruling party and opposition groups and unholy alliances have tended to dilute legislative check over the actions of the executive.

Representative democracy in India has been a farce thanks to the

existence of several nexus and the entry of criminals in politics. Part of the blame for this deplorable situation is squarely to be laid on the Press which has often let down the public by becoming part of the Establishment. It has all too easily succumbed to political pressures.

We should remember that we have to wage a continuous battle to be free. Henry W. Nevinnson remarked well and truly:

"For freedom, we know, is a thing that we have to conquer afresh for ourselves, every day, like love; and we are always losing freedom just as we are always losing love, because, after each victory, we think we can now settle down and enjoy it without further struggle... The battle of freedom is never done, and the field never quiet".

If the Press and the public are not going to be vigilant we shall keep on losing freedom.

MR. K. S. RAMAMURTHY is a business executive based in Tirupathi in South India and a regular contributor to our journal.

THE
COMPLETE
MAN.



He's a myth.
He's real.

He's a winner.
No, not always.

He commands.
He rebels.

He's unchanging.
He's impulsive.

Demanding.
Daring.
Discreet.

A devil.
A dilemma.
A dream.

Raymond's



0844

Americanisation of the World : Myth and Reality

B. Ramesh Babu

All major civilizations exercised their influence over other cultures and peoples that came under their sway. We in India even today proudly talk of *Brihan Bharat* (Greater India) and the spread of our civilization far and wide in ancient times.

No one can miss it. Whether it be Bogota or Bombay, Ginza or Kowloon, Madrid, Manila, Mombasa or Moscow, Sydney or Singapore, Timbuctoo or Toronto, you will find the youth (and the not so young) swing to the latest hits in pop music. Blue jeans, bubble gum, popcorn and coke abound in disdain of national boundaries. Amidst the cacophony, in the lingo of the young, you can easily recognise the sounds "ya", "yep", "hi", "hai", "zee", "great," over and over again with the all too familiar shrugging of shoulders. On the face of it, the world is getting Americanised! It hits you in the eye and you can hear it too. Some love it and others hate it. The youth are enamoured and the old are appalled. Young ladies are drawn to it while the older men feel threatened. Nobody can ignore it! Like it or not, "Americanisation" is all around you and is here to stay!

Over the last four decades hamburgers have become available everywhere in the world and also universally popular. Fast-food 'joints' have become fashionable hangouts for the jetset and the "in" thing for the upward bound in all countries. The world has been, in effect, "MacDonaldized"! American television programmes (game shows, sit-coms, soap operas, cartoon serials and animation shows) are watched by millions of people around the globe. Language is no barrier or you can dub them with ease. But that hardly matters! Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse are universally recognised and loved by one and all. American pop culture, especially pop music, is the biggest and most sought after

American export, a runaway commercial success. It is in this sense that we can talk of "coco-colonisation" of the world. But, the sinister influence of the verbal and visual "badges of belonging" of the new and growing global tribe of "conspicuous" consumers should not be exaggerated. The shallow waves on the surface should not be confused with the calmer waters of the ocean below. The "pop" invasion has not uprooted and can never replace the "high culture(s)" of the world's great civilisations. In some situations and cultures the mass demand for better consumption is, in fact, liberating in its impact. Furthermore, in the process of the inexorable globalisation underway today, if some "weak" and "marginal" cultures get swamped, we might as well accept "the facts of life" as the inevitable price of progress. We may make conscious efforts to preserve the endangered cultures in order to contain the damage. But, I am running ahead of my story. Let us get back.

What is Americanisation? At the very superficial level and in common parlance it often means the acquisition of mannerisms, speech, dress and styles of high consumption associated with the United States of America by people living in other cultures. At the more basic or fundamental level "Americanisation of culture" means acceptance and adoption (willingly or otherwise) of "American" values, beliefs, patterns of thought by other peoples and nations.

All Civilisations Reach Out

All major civilisations exercised their influence over other cultures and peoples that came under their

sway. They sought to "export" their culture, ways of living and their wares to foreign lands. We in India even today proudly talk of *Brihan Bharat* (Greater India) and the spread of our rich civilisation far and wide in ancient times to Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and even to the Mayas in Mexico and the Incas in Peru. The British Empire had its global reach in cultural terms as well. The spread of English as the global language is easily the most enduring beneficial legacy of the Empire. In its drive to spread across frontiers, American culture is no exception. As long as other peoples find it attractive and as long as America remains a dominant nation, the "Americanisation" process will continue.

However, the contemporary global concern over "Americanisation of world culture" or "cultural imperialism" by the USA stems from a combination and convergence of diverse forces at work, especially since the Second World War. The inherently expansionist urge of a dynamic culture, the global thrust of a foreign policy based on anti-communism and the scientific-technological capability of near universal dissemination of the American view, have come together at one time. It is this convergence of the will, the capability and the availability of the technological means to dominate and the cumulative reach of their mutual reinforcement that is disconcerting to other nations.

Communications Revolution

Here lies the real threat to the rest of the world. The collapse of communism and the demise of the

Godrej®

ELECTRONIC TYPEWRITER

The right choice
for your office.



STARWRITER

VERY, VERY TALENTED

Soviet Union makes the "imperialism of attraction" even more irresistible because the counter magnet lost the power, the will and the allure. Americans are as eager as ever to export their way of life. They were, in Kennedy's words, "willing to spare no effort" and "pay any price" to protect freedom and democracy. Above all, the revolution in communications makes it possible to reach the target-audience, the people of the world! The protestations of the "local" national governments are easily reduced to the proverbial cries in the wilderness!

The Iron Curtain couldn't really jam or block Radio Free Europe's broadcasts; the "Voice of America" was not merely audible, it came across loud and clear, people were eager to listen to it and were greatly affected by what they heard and re-heard over the years. The role of radio and television in the complex mix of forces and factors that led to the collapse of communism cannot be underestimated. That in itself is a fascinating side story and does not belong here. But, what is important for us is the extraordinary revolution that has taken place in the world of communications. The coming of television (in black and white and later in living colour), the state of the art satellite transmission, and all the other breakthroughs in cable TV, fibre optics etc. have literally wired and soldered McLuhan's outmoded "global village" into an integrated circuit, one complex and fascinating communications web.

Pervasive Global Influence

The demise of the Soviet Union and the utter failure of communism knocked out the second pole from the erstwhile bipolar world. Whether the world has become unipolar or not, America is the power to be reckoned with and the rising curve of Americanisation of culture is a fact of life on earth at the present and for the immediate future. The rest of the world cannot ignore the US sponsored definitions of world order, the do's and don't's as they see them and their life styles as they strut around

the globe in their, by now not so strange, garb, or even without them! How to deal with this threat, the cultural onslaught, is one of the principal sources of anxiety not only for Asians and Africans, but even for the Europeans, America's own cousins! Their anxiety is all the more poignant because they must find distinctions where differences are not deep or often perceived to be non-existent.

Of all the white Christian cousins of Europe, the British are the closest to the Americans. Yet, they are highly concerned. For example, the American Studies Centre of the University of Wales convened as recently as September 1992 an international conference on "The Americanisation of Culture and the End of History." The flyer calling for papers and participation stated that "American culture is pervasive in its global influence," and asked "as the ideological rigidities of international communism melt down, what limits are there on America's capacity to set the cultural and political agenda of a new world order?" "... what resistance remains to the idea of America recreating the world in its own image?" I am sure that similar anxieties plague the attentive and informed public, intellectuals and leaders of other lands and nations around the world.

A word of caution, however, is required here so that we don't go overboard chasing chimeras and get carried away by a misplaced anti-American phobia. It is one thing to say that the US is an unrivalled world power today and that it is seeking to dominate other nations politically and also culturally. It is another thing to hold the USA responsible for all and every not so wholesome tendencies that all kinds of people detect in their own countries. Such an approach is not only inaccurate, but also unfair.

All You Don't Like is not Americanisation

Industrialisation, urbanisation, modernisation, westernisation and Americanisation should not be and

cannot be telescoped into a single process, and placed in the last, and admittedly, unsavoury category. These phenomena are different and are linked with one another in that loose chronological order. Such "conflation" of historical processes in the human mind is understandable at the individual level, but not justifiable at the macro level. For example, in the mass media, where the accursed phenomenon of Americanisation is most visible, several concurrent and mutually reinforcing trends and tendencies must be distinguished. The chief villains are commercialisation, conformity and vulgarisation; and they plague American society in general and the mass media in particular. These evil forces are at work in all other countries as well. Unless we recognise them and tackle them forcefully and patiently, cursing the so-called catch all Americanisation won't help. The American "super culture" that is undermining (and perceived to be undermining) all the "unique" national cultures is the product of modernisation as it is taking place everywhere. This process seems to gather its own momentum and go forward inexorably along trajectories in search of the lowest common denominator! And alas, this media hype is rumbling along the path of lower levels of vulgarity and commercialisation. Each nation must wage its battle against the unwanted constituents of modernisation in its own way; but without checkmating and reversing the process itself.

At this stage, it is appropriate to sit up and ask—what do we mean by American culture? What are its unique characteristics, good as well as bad? What is "good" and what is "bad" and for whom and as seen by who?

What is American Culture?

Each major society that has lived as a distinct entity for a number of years acquires unique and distinguishing features. America is no exception. Though it began as an Anglo-Saxon transplant on the Atlantic coast, the people of the Old World looked

upon the 13 colonies to be different and belonging to what was aptly called the New World, unfamiliar and somehow attractive. The immigrants left their "home" countries for good and were determined to make it in the distant and strange New World. They were in reality free long before their early stirrings for freedom from the mother country surfaced. By the time of the War of Independence, the future United States of America was all set on course to become a new nation and by 1832 it began to speed along the road to becoming a distinct civilisation with a unique culture of its own.

Openness in every sense of that word and enormity of size and expanse were among the unique spatial features that shaped the new nation in the making. As the immigrants came in waves and embarked on the gigantic task of "laming the continent", the narrow social class distinctions were cast aside. Nobody asked the new settlers or their hired hands as to where they came from or who their grandfather was! They were eager to know what they could do to hack it there, which is far away from nowhere! Can you shoe the horse? Ride a herd? Sow the seed? Reap the harvest? Feed the ranch hands and do housekeeping in the Wild West?

The America of those days was relatively egalitarian in actuality as well as in intent and aspiration. The Frontier not only forced the immigrants to be self-reliant and resourceful, but also gave recurrent and renewed impetus to the growing process of ever widening democratisation across the continent. Freedom and democracy, liberty and equality and a deep seated and healthy suspicion of arbitrary authority, and rough and ready justice characterised the early America. It is on such novel foundations (to oversimplify and somewhat romanticise a tortuous story) that the new civilization, American culture as we knew it later grew. To this day America throbs with a dynamism and vigour that is the envy of all mankind. Individual freedom, liberty, equality, democracy,

openness, curiosity about other peoples, rationality and a modern scientific temper are among the more notable features of American society. These ideas and ideals, values and attitudes have brought to America much of its commendable progress, endowed it with affluence and much else that is attractive to others abroad. Such ideas and values also have done a great deal of good to the rest of the world. This certainly, cannot be denied.

Like all civilizations of continental dimensions that are alive and kicking, American culture is also a mixture of a number of distinct strands and identifiable sub-cultures bound together in varied and dynamic mutual relationships. There are variations within the once dominant Anglo-Saxon culture by region (South, Northeast, Midwest and West) and by religion (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish). Ethnicity plays an increasingly vital role in cultural differentiation (Chicanos, Chinese, etc.). Race is an important factor in endowing American culture with tragic depth and complexity (slavery and blacks). To be young and to behave and dress like the youth (to deny being old) is a very dominant feature of the national ethos. Superimposed on all these are the distinct cultures germane to the different social classes. As many as five such categories could be distinguished, namely high, upper, middle, lower middle, quasi-folk and low cultures. These are not rigidly exclusive and inevitably some "straddling" between social classes obtains in American society.

Unique Characteristics

The unique sources of the main characteristics of American culture can be delineated as follows: (a) A "new" nation with a relatively weak sense of tradition. (b) It began as a provincial branch of the rich Anglo-Saxon culture. (c) America was a more wholly industrialised culture shaped by new technologies to a great extent than even the industrialised British society. (d) It is the first modern society in which mass participation in political and social life ob-

tained. America has the oldest continuing democratic constitutional system in operation. American society is more egalitarian than most others (e) It is dominated by private enterprise and values commercial success very highly. The TV, radio and mass media, consequently, are amenable to consumer pressures (the market). Popularity is the basis of success and no governmental or public institution has the authority or power to raise the general level of national culture or disseminate an official variety of any kind.

The spectre of "Americanisation" or "coco-colonisation" haunting the rest of the world (or inhabitants of other cultures) is experienced through the television programmes and shows transmitted on satellite networks. If seen in proper perspective it will be realised that much of their impact is vastly exaggerated and not always pernicious either. The superficial penetration of the so-called Americanisation is in direct proportion to the level of industrialisation and affluence of the middle and working classes in the receiving countries. The attraction and magnetism of the American way of life is undesirable; but, the eager willingness of the target audience (people world over) to embrace it whole hog cannot be relegated to a secondary place either. Much of what is glibly dubbed as Americanisation is in fact the spread of modern industrial culture, a process that emanates from an array of forces at work, has a dynamic of its own, and is gathering momentum as it rolls along.

Modernisation is Desirable

In fact the broad process of modernisation has had and is having today a salutary and liberating impact on many societies and cultures around the world that are steeped in ignorance and obscurantism, and trapped in all kinds of authoritarian structures. It is only fair and proper to recognise that the tendency of such an industrial super culture at its best is towards modernity (away from tradition), towards cosmopolitanism (rather than

nationalism), sexual equality (rather than female subordination), democracy and freedom (rather than authoritarianism), secularism (rather than religiosity), rationality (rather than faith and conformity), and formal education (rather than assigned status). Is it any wonder then "the mullahs" of the world (be they in the business of religion or politics) are up in arms against the "Americanisation" of their countries and cultures.

When 'Interference' is Welcome

A Muslim fundamentalist leader from a West Asian country angrily declared that his proud nation will not brook any American interference in its internal affairs. "How we beat our women and keep them chaste is none of your business," he warned the western correspondent! If that is the essence of what is being preserved and if that is what is feared in terms of Americanisation by the powers (secular and religious) in other cultures around the world, I for one would wholeheartedly welcome the invasion of satellite television and the so called "Americanisation" that comes in tow. Regimes of all degrees of bestiality and all kinds of illegitimate governments are entrenched in power in many poor countries. In the media surcharged world of today these fraudulent power holders, the vestiges of feudalism, despotism and tyranny live in fear of being exposed. Their subjects could be informed of their greed and lust for power and the scandalous realities obtaining around them. It is unfortunately true that in many a country nothing much might happen even after the scandals are exposed and the rascals "caught" red-handed by the media. This is unfortunately sometimes true even in relatively better governed nations like India and Japan.

Also it is not axiomatic that the new cable systems have to only Americanise the world. They can as well be used by other nations to Indianise or Islamise and to spread their own distinct national and

cultural identities. And to do this far more effectively than even before they can use the media to galvanise themselves for nation-building, for greater unity, and for more meaningful popular participation. Other nations can also counter the onslaught of Americanisation with a concerted media offensive of their own. Why should a "superior culture" like ours feel threatened?

The real and more treacherous enemies of modernisation are commercialisation, vulgarisation and conformity, as pointed out earlier. These are as much a threat to American culture as they are to all the other modern and modernising nations. Using the powerful and all embracing media to spread humanism (universal values) rather than cosmopolitanism (cultural imperialism spearheaded by America) may be the best strategy to promote progress along with social peace and political harmony on the global scene. But, that is a different story and deserves to be told elsewhere. The inexorable pressures towards commercialisation, vulgarisation and conformity we see in American pop culture are not unique to the USA alone. They are to be found in all "mass cultures" (cultures of post-industrial urban societies) and should be distinguished from the folk-tradition based cultures of pre-industrial societies. In today's inter-dependent world, one cannot escape "the imperialism of attraction" exerted by the USA. Any amount of jazz cannot uproot our ancient and inherently durable classical musical traditions. Our own pop music is already holding its own against the imported brands. Soon we should be jumping in there and swinging as a partner and not merely as the consumer of American pop.

In this context it is pertinent to point out that pop culture has not undermined the "high culture" of the major (resilient and vibrant) civilisations of the world. In fact, American participation and support has literally protected and promoted many forms of western "high culture," like the opera, ballet and the classical theatre.

Furthermore, the affluent nations of the west as well as Japan, India and others are helping the preservation of "high cultures" of mankind all over the globe, whether it be Angkorwat, the Pyramids, Ajanta and Ellora.

The Real Threat

Getting back to our story of Americanisation, the final word is that pop culture, the most pervasive and dominant export from the US is not as threatening or sinister as it seems on the surface. The impact is more transient than lasting and is not deep seated. So enjoy the shows and the music. If you really like modern American dance, jig and jog along. But don't break your neck or sprain your ankle if you can't shake a decent (or an indecent) leg or twist and turn in tune (or out of tune) on the floor!

As for that other dimension, the "Americanisation" of the world, i.e. political, economic and strategic domination by the US, the threat must be recognised for what it is, a serious business! The threat is real, massive and has grown bigger after the demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism. India (and all the other nations) must face it, stand up to it, counter it, and overcome it. We should throw into the fight all we have got and more. Get the others to join forces with us. But, we shouldn't be afraid. Above all we shouldn't succumb and then complain. Worse, we should not give up when the fight gets tough and then grumble.

American pop is O.K. Howl along with Michael Jackson. It can't do much harm. But, US domination is another breed of cat. Don't let Bill Clinton get away with Super 301 side-tracking GATT or stop Prithvi from soaring high above just because Bill feels so low!

DR. B. RAMESH BABU is Pherozeshan Mehta Professor of Civics & Politics, University of Bombay.

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

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 •**

Secularism Indian 'Ishtyle'*

Sharad Bailur

Since all religions involve conviction and faith, not reason and evidence, they are, by definition, intolerant. Equal respect for all religions can therefore only mean that there is equal respect for competing intolerances.

Over the last four decades not a single political leader, with the honourable exception of Jawaharlal Nehru, has been clear about what secularism really means. The Congress party which has run the country for most of these years has never been clear about the principle of secularism involved in a modern constitution based on the rule of law. And, unfortunately neither has any other political party. *The Economist* stated it rather aptly in 1988. "In India," it said, "secularism means religious tolerance."

Negative Connotation

The principle of secularism in the Indian Constitution gives the citizen the freedom to profess, practise and propagate any religion. This right, like the other fundamental rights, is negative in nature and merely limits the power of the state, preventing it from forcing any particular religious belief upon its citizens. It has no other connotation. It does not mean that the state respects all religions equally or that it respects any religion at all. Implied in it is the inviolability of the right to hold a belief, indeed any belief; not respect for beliefs themselves.

For instance, I might hold a belief that two and two make twentytwo. So long as my belief is private to myself and my followers and does not impinge on the rights of others to hold beliefs different from mine, my right to do so is inviolate. So, for instance, would be your right to have no belief whatsoever, in other words to be an agnostic. This right is closely allied to the right to the freedom of opinion and expression which is the keystone of the civil rights arch. This was the interpretation that the country's first prime minister,

Jawaharlal Nehru, stood by throughout his long tenure.

Secularism Misinterpreted

But other leaders, even during his time, were not so clear. The public demonstration of their private religious convictions was something he was powerless to prevent. Their visits to temples, mosques and churches were news on the radio and in the papers. Over the decades it became the norm. When the ordinary man in the street goes to a place of worship it is his constitutional right and evokes no response. But when, say, the President or the prime minister does, it makes for publicity, and possible unhappy interpretations because of the official position which he holds. It has to be publicly justified. The only way to justify it is then to say that the leader in question has respect not only just for the religion he practises but, for the peace of mind of those who do not share his convictions, for all other commonly practised religions as well. Indira Gandhi was the first to popularise this theme of 'equal respect for all religions'. The travesty of secularism that we today have, comes of this background. The inability of the government to bring into law a common civil code stems from just this misinterpretation of secularism. It glaringly exposes our congenital inability to work out, in advance, the possible implications of a policy before it is publicly announced. And it is this, if anything, which is responsible for letting the genie of political denominationalism out of the bottle.

The Rights of Atheists

Since all religions involve conviction and faith, not reason and evidence they are, by definition, intolerant. Equal respect for all religions can therefore only mean that

there is equal respect for competing intolerances. This is impossible. Political leaders are aware of this hypocrisy without saying as much. So are the people. Besides does this principle of equal respect apply to the views of agnostics and atheists as well? If it does it means there is no respect for any view. If it does not, it means that atheists and agnostics can not claim protection under the relevant fundamental right; that, because secularism involves respect for religions, atheists and agnostics must somehow acquire religious convictions of one colour or another, to be treated equally with other citizens. It is surprising and sad that the Indian Secular Society did not raise a voice in protest when this twist first became public.

A second angle to this interpretation is that the Constitution has no definition of what a Hindu is. It merely says that Hindus are all those who do not practise the other religions specifically mentioned in its contents. According to the Constitution therefore, all agnostics and atheists are Hindu by definition, whether they like it or not.

Official Public Display

With the new interpretation has come the encouragement of religion in public, often with official sanction and invariably with studied silence from those in authority, apparently in the hope that looking the other way will make the problem go away. Instead, it has only got bigger and more menacing each day. The word 'religion' has come to acquire a dogmatic public sanctity which even the forces of law and order do not wish to be seen controlling. Various organs of government and public sector bodies permit their employees to demonstrate their private religious faith at their

*'Ishtyle' is the way many Indians pronounce 'style'

places of work. Central and State Government offices, police stations, public hospitals, railway and airline offices and bus stations maintain shrines to various deities which are ceremoniously looked after by the staff during working hours. Many public sector organisations officially approve the holding of Satyanarayana *Pujas* in their offices on the ground that it is a social occasion. The proliferation of unauthorised roadside shrines is of a piece with this phenomenon.

The decision to allow the showing of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata on T.V. would have been completely harmless if these great epics were to be regarded as great literature or mythology which they are. Unfortunately, in the Indian context, mythology is religion and religion, mythology. There is a lot of truth in the apocryphal stories of television sets being garlanded and *aartis* performed when the serials came on. As a sop, official functions are held involving other religions. The spectacle of a Hindu President holding 'Iftaar' parties during Ramzaan is telecast for the gratification of Muslim viewers. It is only an act of inadvertent omission, or perhaps the weather is too cold in December, for the Prime Minister to be shown on T.V. attending Midnight Mass at Christmas.

Equal Encouragement of All Religions

Secularism gave way to equal respect for all religions. This has now given way to equal encouragement of all religions. It has not occurred to anybody that what is being equally encouraged is competing forms of intolerance. At what point does one call a halt to the encouragement of religion? The short answer: None. Equal encouragement of all religions invariably results in competitive obscurantism and one-upmanship. It is the best fuel for communal riots. 'Anti-social elements' are always blamed for such riots, and rightly so, because they are in the best position to take advantage of a combustible situation. But the dynamite which explodes is first provided by shortsightedness in the interpretation of secularism. Hence Ayodhya, the Bombay riots and the

subsequent bomb blasts.

Even educated people who sympathise with the BJP's views, often say that if other (presumably western) constitutional democracies can have a state religion, so can we. That there is nothing wrong in going ahead and changing the Constitution to make India a Hindu State in which 'the rights of the minorities are respected'. Other constitutional democracies in the west find their religious incubus a constant embarrassment over which they have to maintain eternal vigilance to prevent religious forces from entering the temporal arena. In all such cases the state religion is a relic of the past; not a blueprint for the future. This is something nobody is willing to talk about.

Freedom of Belief Curtailed

Without going into the merits of such a move, it is quite clear that what is being aimed at in our country is the curtailment of the freedom of belief and thence of opinion and, perhaps later, even of expression. It has apparently not occurred to anybody that succumbing to the temptation of imposing one religion on the country is the first step to the abolition of all civil liberties. If the right to freedom of opinion and expression is curtailed we shall no longer be a free democracy. We can at best be a dictatorship of the majority in which the Hindu shall be more equal than the others and where there shall be no place for such occidental fancies as the concept of equality before the law or even of the rule of law.

Much of the problem is caused by the fact that the concept of the modern state and the rule of law is something which was imposed upon this unwilling conglomeration of nations, (which later became the India we know), by those wicked imperialists, the British. For every law we enacted, we have provided exceptions. Some perhaps inevitable and justified. Others, for completely frivolous reasons. This again betrays our congenital lack of foresight. Take prohibition. We first make a law which prohibits drinking. Then we say that those with medical certificates may be permitted to drink. Later we say that medical certificates

are not necessary; just a permit to drink is. The law of prohibition stands on the statute books. Nobody respects it and, nowadays, nobody gets himself a permit. This applies to every law. If laws are flouted through exceptions, the respect for law diminishes in direct proportion to the exceptions made, till it vanishes altogether. In matters religious, it, in addition, spawns corruption protected by the religiosity of the fanatic.

Lip Service to Secularism

The Indian mind is far sharper than almost any other mind in the world. Its weakness is laziness. We are therefore always on the eternal hunt for short cuts, looking for ways to reduce the mental effort involved in modern democratic practice. The only way to reduce mental effort is to ritualise action. In action the Indian mind prefers the safe route taken by the herd. Where possible, it is substituted by symbolism and sloganeering; ceremony and sermonising. We go through the ritual of modern democratic practice and of a rule of law in the hope that the ritual will fetch us the essence. It is quite clear that secularism as a concept is only a ritual to which we wish to be seen publicly paying lip-service. It is not something to be put into practice with the full might and backing of the state and of the rule of law. This is because of the rule of exceptions. Having compromised and made exceptions on the question of secularism all these decades, till the word became utterly meaningless, secularists and those others who hope to see the emergence of a pristine form of secularism and of a rule of law are forced on the defensive to the point of being called anti-religious thus increasing the level of intolerance further.

It is important that civil libertarians take up the secular cause if this country is to be prevented from falling into a dictatorial trap, because once a compromise is made on one fundamental right, the erosion of other fundamental rights will follow rapidly in its wake. That will be the end of the Indian democratic dream.

MR. SHARAD BAILUR is a Consultant in laser printing and a former bank executive.

The Great Maratha

Kusum Choppra

We have become so besotted with the image of our "Glorious" past that we cannot accept ourselves as human beings, capable of errors like everyone else.

For a society which never tires of taking credit for its hoary past and which worships a leviathan pantheon encompassing a current political mascot who let a washerman dictate state policy and a judicial separation, and a deity who makes Machiavelli and all his latter day emulators look like babes in the wood, we tend to be particularly shortsighted.

Even the gods obviously had clay feet. Why not then men?

We fantasize fondly over the romantic dalliances of the one we fondly call "Gopinath"; we swallow, hook, line and sinker his questionable but pragmatic military tactics, along with those of his *Maryada Purshottam* colleague.

But the same tolerance is conspicuous for its absence towards more recent recorded history. And we allow the narrowest minds amongst us to dictate halos around all and sundry.

Thus a Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who incorporated his bania non-cooperation so that commerce will continue after a fashion, has become a Mahatma; and a Rajneesh with his clever juxtapositioning of eastern philosophies with the 'Brown Man's Burden' of the flotsam and jetsam of the materialistic occidental cultures, into a bhagwan and an Osho.

Rajneesh himself had once expounded on the *Maryada Purshottam*, comparing him to the white chalk on a blackboard, who had to exhort his people to desist from lusting after neighbours' wives and other sundry sins, because that was very much prevalent in his day.

Declaiming the repeated demands for *Ram Rajya*, Rajneesh had questioned whether it would be actually welcomed since it was apparently the era of adultery and abandoning of wives at the say so of *dhobis*. Similarly, living as he did in the Gandhian era of massive corruption and other ills, he wondered

whether those who aspired for a repeat Gandhian era would be happy, if it actually came about.

Despite such warning, it would appear that we have become so besotted with the image of our "glorious" past that we cannot accept ourselves as human beings, capable of errors like everyone else. Hence the deification of Indira Gandhi as Durga Mata and that of Rajiv as the Indian Camelot, etc.

One wonders whether these deifications are not the machinations of the mediocre to camouflage their mediocrity in the worship of the great; for they will not allow any free winds of opinion to blow; woe betide anyone who does not follow the prescribed line of thinking, whether it be theories on any episode in history or the contemporary *choli ke peechey kya hai* scene.

One man's meat is often another's poison. But that perspective is all too often missing, despite the pious intoning of the unity in diversity theme we have been brought up on.

What was a stand for his honour and motherland for Rana Pratap, must of needs be viewed by the Mughals as a betrayal of the oath taken by the Rajput bigwigs accepting the sovereignty of the Mughals and bestowing on them their sisters and daughters in marriage, knowing full well the guiles used to ensure victory.

Then again, for a single ruler to raise a standard of revolt would definitely ensure for him a local romanticism akin to that attached to Scotland's Bonnie Prince Charlie; but for the Mughals, it cannot but mean betrayal of the promise made by a few on behalf of the many.

Does that mean that we should put a full stop to the exploration of our past in a medium which will popularize it with the next generation, which has almost been weaned from the reading habit. Our vociferous legislators are so quick to demand bans on serials depict-

ing some areas of history, as they have in the case of Akbar the Great and the Great Maratha; but none of them has raised a banner of revolt at the almost total elimination of the delectable regional flavours from the national network, which is now spewing out the totally synthetic, plastic urban culture to keep pace with the plastic culture being depicted on Zee TV, Star TV and the other aerial "invaders" of the late twenty first century.

Why does no-one protest against the depiction of the puppie-yuppie culture as the sole representative of our "Great" Indian Culture?

Serious thought has to be given to whether we intend to wipe out more than a century from our history, merely because a section of the community to which we had entrusted our defense, failed in its task?

If so how do we teach the kids about the conception of Independent India, born out of British India, a later day *avatar* of Mughal India?

Were they to read history, they would come across even more damning condemnation as when historians have declared unequivocally "Udai Singh, the reigning Rana was a coward who left the defence of the fortress to Jaimal Rathor and fled to the Aravalli hills. His son and successor Rana Pratap is said to have bewailed had there been no Udai Singh between me and Rana Sanga, the Turks would not have become masters of India".

This quotation is from a very reputed history book, which I will not name, for fear that it may spark off grotesque reactions from those lacking perspective, who are seeking to whitewash a history already convoluted by the perjuries and hypocrisies of colonial historians.

MS. KUSUM CHOPPRA is a freelance journalist.

*Men sacrifice themselves for the
good of the State, for the safety of
future citizens and for their
happiness in the coming
generations. In all this men and
women derive a joy which is
instinctive and not argued from
hopes or expectations of present or
future rewards of such conduct.*

- Rajaji's Speech



THE LAKSHMI MILLS COMPANY LIMITED

COIMBATORE - 641 037.

Summits of Scholarship

P. R. Dubhashi

Our University system with over 200 universities, 7000 colleges, 5 million students and more than 2,00,000 teachers, is the largest in the world. However, by any standard, whether of teaching or of research or publication or infrastructural facilities, we lag far behind.

My participation in the Commonwealth Universities Congress held in October last year in Wales provided me with an opportunity to visit two universities in the United Kingdom, and two in Germany - two old Universities and two modern.

The oldest amongst them was the Heidelberg University which dates back to 1386. This ancient University has a hoary tradition of learning. The great philosopher Hegel lectured here for two years. Max Weber came here in 1897 and promoted the spirit of inter-disciplinary dialogue. Schlosser founded the Heidelberg School of Political History. Scientists of the calibre of Leopold Gmelin, Robert Bunsen (co-founder of spectrum analysis), Kirchhoff and Helmholtz all working together at the same time, sparked off an era of innovative scientific research. After World War II, under the leadership of Karl Jaspers, the University became "a quest for truth by the community of researchers and students". No less than seven Nobel prize winners emerged from Heidelberg in this century alone. Through its chequered history of over 600 years, it has seen many ups and downs. In deference to this great seat of learning, it was spared bombardment during World War II, thanks to an agreement between the Commanders of the Allied and the Axis forces.

Though not as old as Heidelberg, the Federal University of Wales is also an old institution which celebrated its centenary last year. However, some of the constituent colleges of this University are even older. For example, David University College

at Lampeter was founded way back in 1842.

In contrast, the University of Saarland at Saarbrücken, Germany and the Bath University in England are modern. The University of Saarland was one of the first Universities to be founded after World War II. At the end of World War II, a decision was taken in Paris to develop the Institute of Medicine at Hamburg as an independent University. Later a law was passed by the Parliament of Saarland to formally incorporate the University into the system of German Universities. To the original faculty of Medicine were added faculties of Computer Science, Mathematics and Natural Science, Law and Economics and Humanities.

The Bath University was founded in 1966. It was originally titled Bath University of Technology, but it subsequently became the University of Bath with a broad range of subjects.

Diversified Disciplines

Each of these Universities has developed a distinct identity of its own based on its own tradition. Each has developed a diversified range of disciplines having regard to its own traditions. Thus the University of Heidelberg has faculties on the side of Arts & Humanities as well as Natural Sciences. Its sixteen faculties include Theology, Law, Philosophy, History including Oriental Studies and Ancient Culture, Social Science, Medicine and Natural Science embracing Chemistry, Mathematics, Pharmacy, Biology, Physics & As-

tronomy. At Saarbrücken, Material Science and Construction Technology, Electrical Technology, Microelectronics, Process Automation and Communication and Computer Science occupy the pride of place. The Max Planck Institute of Computer Science is a part of this University.

The Bath University has a variety of subjects like Chemical Engineering, Electronic and Electrical Engineering, Architecture and Building Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and other Science subjects like Material Science, Mathematical Science and Physics, Biological Sciences, Medicine, Pharmacy and Pharmacology, Social Sciences, Education and Modern Languages, Management and International Studies. The University College of Cardiff, one of the constituents of Wales University has English Studies, Welsh Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, History, Archaeology, Theology, Social and Administrative Studies, Law, City and Regional Planning, European Studies, Music, Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry and Applied Chemistry, Geology, Pure and Applied Biology, Anatomy, Biochemistry, Physiology, Maritime Studies, International Transport, Electrical and Electronic Home Economics and Institutional Management.

The Universities vary in size. The ancient University of Heidelberg has over 29,000 students, Saarbrücken over 20,000 students, the Federal University of Wales has more than 25,000 students (11,500 of whom are in Cardiff). On the other hand, Bath University has a smaller number with only 4,700 students.

Each University has its own stamp. Bath and Saarland are modern high-tech universities. They are both "green universities". On the other hand, Heidelberg has been hallowed by a long and distinguished tradition.

High Standard of Teaching and Research

Though differing in age and content of the academic activity, one thing that is common to all the Universities is their high standard of teaching and research. They are all committed to a high quality of teaching. In recent years, some of these universities have introduced the concept of academic audit and have evolved definite criteria for the assessment for teaching, research and institutional performance.

They have set up mechanisms like a Committee for Academic Audit. In any assessment of teaching, the students' assessment is also taken into account. This is a revolutionary concept — yet to be accepted in our academic system.

The Bath University has introduced some innovative methods of teaching which include not only formal lectures but also practical work. The last item emphasises education for real work. A sandwich pattern has been introduced which allows the students to sandwich 'real worlds' experience between periods of academic education.

These universities have research of international standard and bring out publications based on research findings. For example, the academic staff of the University College of Cardiff produced some 3300 publications.

Though we in India look upon Heidelberg University as one specialised in oriental studies, the University is internationally famous for its Academy of Sciences, the German Cancer Research Centre, Centre for Astronomical Calculation, Laboratory for Molecular Biology, Max Planck Institute of Astronomy and Interdisciplinary Centre of Sci-

entific Computing.

All these Universities have built contacts with other universities and centres of studies. For example the University of Saarland has cooperative programmes and exchanges with 50 universities and colleges throughout the world specially in France, USA, Japan, South Africa and former French Colonies in Africa.

Because of the high standard of teaching and research these Universities attract students from all over the world. 11% of the students at Heidelberg are foreign, 8% of the 20,000 of Saarland are overseas students.

Contact with the Community

These universities, though working in the rarified field of esoteric research, are not just academic ivory towers. They have live contacts with the community around. For example Saarland University has established a "contact office" for the transfer of knowledge and technology. It regularly organises "Technology Fairs". Similarly the University College of Cardiff has built up strong community links. It contributes to education not only through the teaching of students but also through an extension and continuing education service that covers half the population of Wales. The faculty serves on public bodies and acts as consultants on a wide range of activities.

Active Student Community

The students of these Universities are not just passive recipients of information. They play a very active role in the academic and corporate life of the University. For example, the students Union Cardiff is one of the largest and most successful in Britain with a variety of facilities including a shop, a travel centre and a night club. The "Unistaff" - the college's inhouse casual employment agency enables the students to supplement their grants by undertaking a few hours of casual work in the college itself - an average 1000 hours a week putting £3000 in the pockets of the students.

High Level of Infrastructure

All these Universities have developed a high level of infrastructure eg. the Heidelberg University Library is the "greatest treasure of scholarly Germany" with 2.6 million books and 6000 valuable codices and manuscripts. Its catalogue is designed as a universal catalogue. The Swansea College has a dining hall which could serve dinner for 1000 persons at a time in a stylish manner. The Cardiff College has invested £97 million over 1987-93 in extending and improving infrastructure facilities and buildings that stand comparison with the best anywhere. The buildings of Bath University over a 200 acre greenfield site are modern, bright, functional and compact with all major facilities easily accessible from a central 'pedestrian deck'. These facilities include the University Library with a stock of over 300,000 books and over 2000 subscriptions to periodicals, central computer facilities, a Centre for Continuing Education acting as a link between the academic schools and the outside world, a careers advisory service, counselling, etc.

Where Do We Go?

Our University system with over 200 universities, 7000 colleges, 5 million students and more than 200,000 teachers is the largest in the world. However by any standard, whether of teaching or of research; or publication or infrastructural facilities we lag far behind. Obviously we do not have the kind of resources that the richer countries can afford. But given a sense of dedication to teaching and research on the part of our teaching community and seriousness of purpose and discipline on the part of our students, we can do much better even within the limits of our resources and facilities. In this we can draw inspiration and ideas from the achievements of some of these great centres of learning and higher education in the West.

DR. P. R. DUBHASHI is Vice Chancellor of the Goa University.

The Undoing of Africa

Anthony Daniels

An unholy alliance has grown up between western intellectuals concerned with Africa and that class of people from which the African political elite is drawn, or with aspirations to become the elite. Both have their interests, material and psychological, in concealing the truth.

The former foreign minister of Tanzania, Oscar Kambona, once told me a story of his exile in London. He met a fellow African on the underground.

'Where are you from?' asked the fellow-African?

'Tanzania,' replied Oscar.

'Ah,' said the other, throwing up his hands reverentially, 'land of Nyerere, great Nyerere.'

'And where are you from?' asked Oscar.

'Guinea,' he replied.

'Ah,' said Oscar, throwing up his hands in mock reverence, 'land of Sekou Toure, great Sekou Toure.'

At that tears welled up in the other's eyes. To hear the man praised who had ruined his country, impoverished it beyond measure, driven a third of its population to death or exile, and elevated paranoia into a principle of government, was too much for his self-control.

As for Nyerere, he achieved much the same economic ends by slightly less vicious means. He merely herded some 75 per cent of the rural population by force from their ancestral lands into collectivised villages - for their own good, of course.

There are Sékou Toure and Nyerere streets, boulevards and avenues all over Africa. Other tyrants, incompetent in everything except in gaining and retaining power, are similarly celebrated and memorialised. Only a few of Africa's many despots - Macias-Nguema aka the Only Miracle, the Emperor Bokassa and Field

Marshal Amin have been denied these singular honours.

The first generation of African dictators (it would be a brave man who asserted that they are also the last) have achieved a kind of immortality elsewhere: in the libraries of the metropolitan countries. I have in my own small collection a few dozen academic studies, decked out with statistical tables and all the apparatus of learning, proving that economic disaster is actually a triumph of equity, that slavery is freedom, that shortages are plenty, and that rigid censorship is the highest stage of freedom. The *betises* of the Africanists are equalled in this century of *betises* only by those of the academic Sovietologists, and would be funny if they had not been serious in their consequences - serious, that is, for the inhabitants of Africa.

One must not exaggerate the extent of the disaster which has befallen Africa since the advent of political independence, however. It is true that, seen from the perspective of those who measure human happiness by infant mortality rates, gross national product per head (a misleading statistic if ever there was one), and the per capita consumption of kilowatts, Africa is in dire straits by comparison with the rest of the world. Its food production per inhabitant is now lower than it was 30 years ago, when the wave of decolonisation first swept over it. Yet it hardly makes sense to complain simultaneously, as many do, that the population is starving to death and growing too fast: after all, Malthus saw starvation as a consequence of overpopulation, not overpopulation as a consequence of starvation. And I have often been surprised that children

as allegedly malnourished as African children should grow up to be such sturdy, indeed strapping, adults. Either malnutrition is not all it is made out to be, or the figures are wrong. In any case, not all the figures are bad, at least when viewed in proper perspective. Infant mortality rates have fallen and life expectancies have risen: few countries have figures worse than those of England when my father was born in 1909. England was then one of the healthiest countries in the world.

Statistics of this nature are but abstractions, however, and no one feels his life is much improved or is much happier because there has been a 10 per cent drop in the infant mortality rate. What strikes the visitor to Africa, on the contrary, is the human capacity there to enjoy life in adversity, which is highly admirable and which seems able to survive in a wide, though not infinitely wide, spectrum of political and economic circumstances. There is a vibrancy in African life which is often lacking in more prosperous climes, and while there is misery enough - as there is everywhere - it often seems disproportionately slight to the cause. Were Africans to have the personal expectations of people in other lands, they would all be sunk in misery, which manifestly they are not. Their desire for children, and their opinion that of all misfortunes childlessness is the worst, would be incomprehensible if life were for them an entirely wretched experience.

Still, the powerful impression remains that African economic and political difficulties are more intractable, and are almost of a different order of magnitude, than those of other continents. Wherever and however

politics impinge directly on the lives of Africans, it is always for ill rather than good, the imposition of a new exaction rather than the redress of an old. Africans are oppressed when they travel, when they stay at home, go to school, to hospital, indeed whenever they come into contact with the pays *legal* rather than the pays *reel*. I shall not soon forget a journey of 120 miles by bus I made in Mali, which was interrupted every 10 miles (on average) by the police, soldiery or customs officials to exact payment from the unfortunate passengers, as a result of which the journey took three days and nights instead of three hours as it might have done, and many of the passengers were temporarily imprisoned *en route* several times. The passengers accepted this outrage with apparent equanimity: for they knew that if they had been the officials, and the officials the passengers, they would have behaved in precisely the same fashion.

This aspect of daily life in Africa has not been well-reported in the western press - with the single exception, perhaps, of South Africa. There are a number of reasons for this: first, many correspondents live in a world as tightly cosseted and privileged in its own way as that of diplomatists, and therefore tend not to encounter life in the raw; and secondly, because to write too much of this aspect of African life would be to risk expulsion, since not many regimes on the continent are kindly-disposed towards adverse criticism. But thirdly, and more importantly, there has been a whole climate of opinion which casts Africans not in the role of actors in their own lives, but as eternal and quintessential victims. They were not therefore to be criticised, but only understood, by which was meant automatic exculpation. Alone of all the peoples of the world they were to be restored to sinlessness. Thus it came about that the assiduous reading of the *Guardian* for twenty years would tell you less about the reality of Africa than five minutes in Kinshasa airport.

I once published an article about Africa in which I made some observa-

tions which to me were obvious (on no subject is the first duty of the intellectual to state the obvious more urgent than on that of Africa). The Nairobi correspondent of an august American newspaper, I later heard, pinned my article above her desk, in relief that someone had at last written what she considered the plain, unvarnished truth of experience. She could not have written it herself, however: not only would her newspaper not have published it, but to have done so would have resulted in her dismissal, so unwelcome would have been the reportage of reality.

This dishonest attitude has its counterpart among educated Africans. An African friend of mine once wrote an article exposing the sheersordidness of life under Zambia's emotionally inconsistent president for-almost-as-long-as-he-liked, Kenneth Kaunda. My friend wrote from personal experience: he recorded only what he had seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. But his African friends took him to task, not because what he wrote was untrue (they knew it to be true), but because the publication of such an article would expose Africa to the ridicule of the white man.

Thus an unholy alliance has grown up between western intellectuals concerned with Africa and that class of people from which the African political elite is drawn, or with aspirations to become the elite. Both have their interests, material and psychological, in concealing the truth.

It is not merely that a few terrible events have been almost entirely overlooked in our press; the massacre of 100,000 Tutsi in Rwanda, the massacre of equal number of Hutu in Burundi, and the decimation of the populations of both Equatorial Guinea and Guinea under vicious dictatorships, for example. These are far away countries of which we know nothing and care less: one could question a thousand men on the street before encountering anyone who had heard of Equatorial Guinea. Far more insidious has been the failure to report the oppressive everyday reality of life

in the new African nation states, a failure which I believe to have been purposeful on the part of intellectuals rather than a mere random oversight: for the moment such reality is described, the pet theories of intellectuals - for example that the malfunctioning of Africa is the result of the operation of the world economic system - seem wildly implausible, indeed ridiculous. It is only by keeping one's eye firmly on statistical abstractions and away from everyday experience that such theories can retain even the slightest plausibility.

Once one condescends to look around one at ground level, and acknowledge truthfully what one sees, the fundamental problem facing Africa becomes obvious. It is the state. It is the state which oppresses at every turn; it is the state which pays the peasant a fraction of the value of what he produces; it is the state which pursues policies advantageous to its employees but disastrous for everyone else. It is the state which establishes monopolies and employs thousands who do nothing except draw salaries, and the size of whose income is proportional to their power to obstruct others. A vicious circle has not infrequently been set up, in which the depredations of the state cause economic decline, necessitating further and more desperate depredations to maintain the state in the context of a declining economy. Foreign aid and borrowing have maintained (minimal) solvency for a time; but eventually even foreign aid donors tire of throwing good money after bad, and commercial credit runs out. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank are then blamed for the inevitable retrenchment, and also for the fact that the economy does not revive at once, as if it were an indoor plant deprived for a day or two of water. Even now it has not occurred to great leaders such as Nyerere that economic confidence can be destroyed (especially in economies as fragile as African ones) in a matter of weeks or months, but cannot be restored in years, especially if the people doing the restoring are the ones who did the destroying, and

if a large part of the intelligentsia remains in the grip of the anti-economic ideology which was largely responsible for the destruction in the first place. Indeed, Nyerere still appears to hope to do for the whole world what he so successfully did for Tanzania, and there are still people willing to listen to him.

Now the experience of colonialism is partly responsible for the economic failures of Africa, but for precisely the opposite reasons from those which are usually adduced. It was not the colonial incorporation of Africa into the world economy which so distorted Africa's subsequent economies, but the paternalist and statist assumptions which the colonialists left behind when they departed. The material backwardness of Africa - which is not the same thing as misery, of course - before its incorporation into the world economy can scarcely be exaggerated, though valiant efforts have been made in the opposite direction by those who see patent untruth as a powerful weapon in the fight against racism. But the colonialists, especially in the later colonial period, assumed that, left to themselves, Africans could not acquire the skills and inclinations necessary to participate in free economic exchange, though the briefest of reflections on African history would have taught them otherwise. According to the colonialist outlook, which the nationalists adopted for their own creed, Africans had to be cajoled or coerced or indoctrinated into participation in a modern economy. They were incapable of making their own decisions - they were too primitive and backward for that - and therefore someone had to make the decisions for them. Who better than the philosopher-kings of the colonial service?

The latter gradually extended and centralised their powers, until by the end of the colonial era they were in substantial control of what used to be known as 'the commanding heights' of the economy. In many territories, the foundations of a *dirigiste* economy were laid by the time of independence. The leader of the nationalist move-

ments were not on the whole the traditional chiefs of pre-colonial polities, imbued with a respect for their own traditions, but men of a new type, educated abroad, who accepted many of the colonialist assumptions about their own people: that, being ignorant and backward, they had to be forced into progress by those who knew better. And these leaders often inherited a state apparatus which had already grown ever-mighty.

The new rulers soon discovered, if they did not know it before, that extending the powers of the state admirably served their own personal purposes: enrichment and the maintenance of their position. It increased the numbers of people beholden to them, creating a permanent constituency; and political patronage is both lucrative and psychologically gratifying, especially to people with damaged egos (and the experience of colonialism severely bruised many egos). The powers of the state, and thus of those who controlled the state, were insinuated into every crevice in the land. This served to enrich, often grotesquely, political leaders; but the damage was done by their power, not their corruption. The relatively incorrupt Nyerere ruined his economy as comprehensively as the most notorious kleptocrats.

Judged by economic criteria, the leaders were grossly incompetent but their policies were not irrational, if it is assumed that their goal was the maintenance of the leaders in power. Judged by political criteria, several of the leaders, including the most grotesque, were brilliantly successful, in that they managed to survive in power for decades. Even the more evanescent managed in a short time to accumulate enormous personal fortunes to enjoy in their enforced retirement. Relatively few came to a really sticky end. And in more than one case, the worse the economy, the better for the ruler and his political clientele, for political privilege is never greater or more lucrative and valuable than in conditions of general scarcity.

For deep-seated but rarely

discussed or acknowledged reasons, the leaders were both nepotistic and inclined to favour their own ethnic groups. It became virtually taboo not only to talk and write but even to think about tribal (or if you prefer, ethnic) affiliations in Africa. Insofar as ethnic questions were referred to at all, it was only to castigate colonialist boundary-making: as if some other boundaries were available which would have been natural and rational, and have led to automatic national integration. The only motive for introducing the embarrassing subject of ethnicity was to explain, or rather explain away, the failure of African states since independence to live up to the hopes of those who thought that the poverty of Africa was the result of European intervention and depredation. Even then, not a few Africanists attempted to prove that tribal antipathies were not spontaneous and therefore 'genuine', but were provoked and fostered by the departing colonialist and the arriving neo-colonialists. At no time was the existence of these antipathies taken as an argument for reducing as far as possible the power of the state, since it was inevitable that the state should be controlled by one ethnic group to the detriment of others. On the contrary, it was taken as an argument for centralising power even further, in the hope that an ideology, blind as to tribe, would eventually replace ethnicity as a focus of loyalty and affections, just as communism was supposed to do in the Balkans. Who can forget the convoluted justifications of the one party state as the guarantor of genuine freedom in Africa, on the grounds that the competition of different parties would inevitably degenerate into ethnic strife? How many diligent and conscientious students of the matter took in all seriousness the idea of a one-party democracy (especially if the one party was socialist and given to wholesale confiscation of property and the suppression of the market)?

The more the state intervened in national economic life, the more it foreclosed other routes to personal advancement, and the more desperate

the political struggle to control it became. This was so even in countries, such as Malawi, Kenya and the Ivory Coast, which were nominally capitalist. The economies were so regulated by governmental bureaucracies that economic success was more a matter of cultivating political and ethnic connections than of genuine entrepreneurial or productive skill. The politicisation of life always exerts a doleful effect on economic advance, the more so in economies as weak as Africa's.

The distorted nature of African education has often been remarked upon, and to it ascribed a wide range of ills. How many times have commentators on Africa referred to the absurdity of young Africans being taught *Our ancestors, the Gauls?* At the same time, *bien pensants* have often ascribed the failures of Africa to the lack of educated people left behind by colonialism: an evident absurdity, since those countries with a relatively long tradition of education (in the western sense), such as Ghana and Sierra Leone, have fared no better, and in some cases worse, than those countries which only had four university graduates at independence.

The problem with African education, however is not so much its content, as its purpose as perceived by pupils and parents alike. All observers have been impressed by the sacrifices African parents are prepared to make to ensure that at least one or two of their children receive as much education as possible: sacrifices which incidentally, put the whining British, with their complaints about lack of textbooks and facilities deeply to shame. Alas, these sacrifices are made for the worst of all possible reasons. In Tanzania I heard many times the opinion that farming was only for the stupid: intelligent, educated people had jobs in the government bureaucracy, from which position, of course, they were able to extort money - from the stupid farmers. It is thus the importance of the state which distorts Africa's educational effort.

State intervention in the economy leads to the extinction of personal

freedom, not only in matters of expression, but in freedoms as fundamental, especially in African conditions: freedom of movement, freedom to buy and sell, freedom to cultivate where and what one likes. And since economic control so drastically increase the stakes in the competition for political power, it creates the urgent necessity to control or suppress opinion. In no continent is the press as feeble as in Africa, and not only for economic reasons. While a free economy is not a sufficient condition for freedom of expression, it is a necessary one, in Africa as elsewhere. And *dirigiste* authoritarianism is always more heavy-handed and oppressive in everyday life than political authoritarianism within a free economy.

The central political question in Africa, therefore, is not so much that of the establishment of multi-party democracy (which can easily degenerate, in a polity in which the state is predominant, into a desperate and intolerant winner-take-all system of patronage) but of the limitation of the power of the state. The more functions the state arrogates to itself, the less likely it is to carry out any of them with regard to their ostensible ends, except those which serve the power of the state itself, such as surveillance of the population. On the whole, and with a few exceptions, traditional African polities, so despised by 'modern' African leaders, were quite limited in their powers and scope; and it may well be that a return to a form of Lugardian indirect rule by the state is the way forward for Africa, though how this return is to be accomplished is not easy to envisage. But left more or less to themselves, African peasants and traders have demonstrated many times that they can respond to economic opportunities presented to them, and insofar as they do not or cannot, it is unlikely - to put it no higher - that the kind of coercion practised by the philosopher-kings of Africa over the past three decades will improve matters.

Intellectuals, however, are the slowest to learn from their mistakes, for they have the greatest capacity to

disguise them from themselves by abstractions. They are inclined to believe their syllogistic arguments rather than the evidence of their own eyes; and they believe what they want to believe.

How little they have learnt can be gauged by their response to developments in South Africa. They do not wish to notice that apartheid is a form of state intervention to suppress market forces of which they would have approved had it been designed to benefit a different ethnic group, and not the Afrikaaners. It was precisely the economic policy which they urged, on a larger scale, on all African governments. With regard to the violence in the townships, they have consistently disregarded the careful, unbiased and nuanced publications of the South African Institute of Race Relations, preferring the simple but unrealistic dichotomy of an innocent ANC and guilty opponents of the ANC. They have ignored the likely devastating social and economic consequences of raising the expectations of a young population by persuading them that economic advancement will automatically follow from political action, and that the principal economic problem facing South Africa is that of redistribution of wealth. They ignore the likely consequences of applying the economic methods of apartheid to advance the interests of 80 per cent of the population instead of a mere 10 per cent. That famine and war could follow attempts to impose blueprints for justice is a lesson they have not learned.

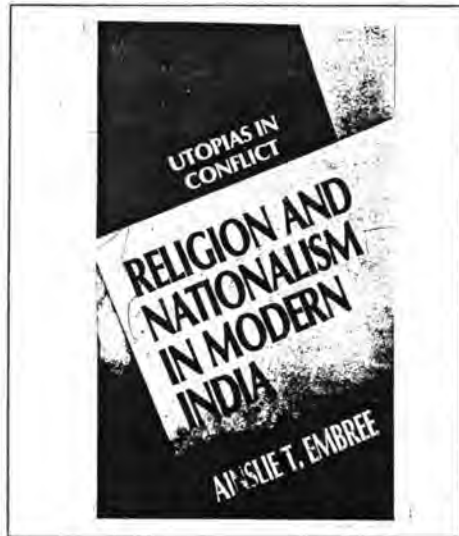
Western intellectuals have for years peddled - and peddle still - the absurd idea that European wealth and African poverty are two sides of the same coin. This was, and is, the greatest possible disservice to Africa, because it was, and is, so useful an idea to the philosopher-king-tyrants of the continent, who abolished freedom, destroyed economies, impoverished multitudes, remained in power and gilded their own nests.

ANTHONY DANIELS is a psychiatrist and a freelance journalist.

Courtesy: *The Salisbury Review*.

BOOK REVIEWS

UTOPIAS IN CONFLICT : RELIGION AND NATIONALISM IN MODERN INDIA by Ainslee T. Embree; Oxford University Press, Bombay; 1992; pp.144; Rs.175.



Reviewed by
Louis D'Silva

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Voltaire could give thanks that religious wars, "the abominable monuments to fanaticism," were over. A modern historian sums up the significance of the changes: "The Wars of Religion came to an end. While in some later conflicts, as in Hungary or in Ireland or Scotland, religion remained an issue, it was never again an important issue in the affairs of Europe as a whole". Yet, one of the intriguing and inescapable facts of the twentieth century is the re-emergence of religion in the conflicts that characterise contemporary national and international politics.

The central and well-argued hypothesis of "Utopias in Conflict" is that the tensions generated by competing visions of the just society, grounded on religion, have been determining factors in the socio-political life of India throughout the twentieth century. Embree explicitly states that the title of his book is intended to indicate that these visions of a good society, or blueprints of the future,

are integral components of the vitality and creativity of contemporaneous Indian life.

When leaders of religions or nationalist movements look to the past in search of a golden age, they are usually in search of the future. The past becomes usable as it undergirds the future. Such "resonant images of the future", are a common feature of religious and political movements at the end of the twentieth century, asserts Embree. Strains and conflicts emerge when there are rival and contradictory utopian visions. Religions and nationalist movements have a further potential for conflict in that all of them are based upon a conviction of the possession of truth which leads to an unwillingness to compromise. The explosive mix of nationalism and religion, then, can become a potent source of conflict between nations, within a state, or within a movement itself. Embree substantiates this view by elaborately delineating the blueprints of the future or world-views of two Indian communities, namely the Muslims and the Sikhs in his concluding chapters entitled "Muslims in a Secular Society" and "A Sikh Challenge".

A fascinating feature of "Utopias in Conflict" is the controversiality of some of its basic contentions. In this connection, the most provocative chapter is the one entitled "The Question of Hindu Tolerance". Embree is of the considered view that the emphasis on Hindu tolerance as a determining feature of Indian civilisation cannot be taken as an accurate reading of this civilisation. He maintains that Hindu civilisation is neither absorptive nor eclectic, for the truly astonishing factor in Indian civilisation is the endurance and persistence of its style and its patterns. This prompts the following confident assertion on the part of the author, "It is the endurance of this civilisation, despite its encounter with a host of other cultures and other political

influences, that has led many observers to conclude that the Hindu style is absorptive, synthesising, or tolerant. What they see is something quite different, namely, Indian civilisation's ability to encapsulate other cultures and make it possible for many levels of civilisation to live side by side. But encapsulation is neither toleration, absorption nor synthesis". From this standpoint Embree arrives at the equally contentious inference that the vital social role of religion in modern India is to be found not in the numerous attempts at accommodation made by neo-Hindus or Islamic modernists but in the activities of groups of the Hindu and Muslim radical right, especially the Hindu ones. "One can hazard the guess says Embree, "that out of the vitalities of Hinduism, and perhaps also of Islam, will come not lesser but greater confrontations as the lines are more clearly drawn in the future".

Our own submission is that Embree's viewpoint is at best a half-truth and a particularistic interpretation of a highly complex Indian socio-cultural reality. If Embree is correct, are the painstaking attempts of sociologists and anthropologists to disentangle the intricate constituents of India's composite culture illusory? And is the time-honoured idea of Hindu tolerance an absolute myth?

Despite the fact that the Hindu way of life has shaped a large part of Indian culture, we are of the view that those who would reduce Indian culture to one particular way of life or thought, one particular set of values or attitudes, would be taking a very one-sided view of Indian culture and would miss the many-splendoured thing. It is an empirical fact that Indian national culture is multi-patterned in character, a composite entity to which many different religions and traditions have contributed. Besides, a powerful process underway is the modernisation of tradition and the traditionalisation of modernity. Fur-

thermore, the ethos of the Indian socio-cultural environment and that of secular democracy mutually reinforce each other.

Consequently, in our view, the present travails of Indian society, including the rise of militant Hinduism, are symptomatic of a transitional period through which India is passing in its movement towards a harmonious nation-state. The history of India gives us reason to hope that India will weather the storm of any internecine conflict which may result from religious discord, thereby indicating that authentic religion, far from being a liability, is really the nation's finest asset. Viewed in historical perspective, atavistic Hinduism appears like a temporary aberration in the context of a much larger, older and profounder reality in India - the only major ancient civilisation extant in the world. In its deepest recesses, the Indian spirit seeks consensus and not contention and this spirit has, in the face of grave challenge, revealed an extraordinary capacity for survival and repeated self-assertion.

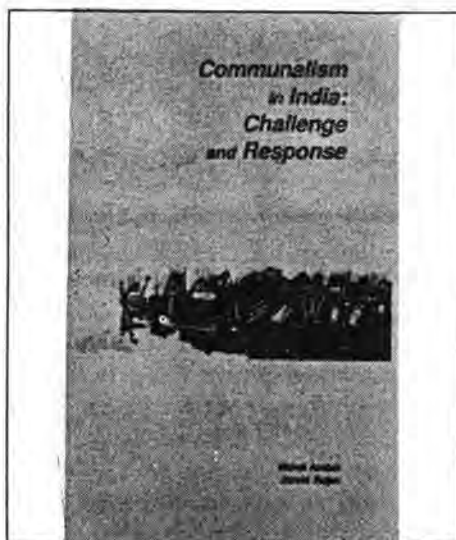
The aforesaid notwithstanding, *"Utopias in Conflict"* makes a notable contribution to an insightful understanding of fundamentalism and religious violence in the developing world. Well-researched and thought-provoking, this little work directly bears on one of the burning issues of contemporary India and should be of vital interest to those concerned about the problematical relationship between politics and religion in the third world. The interest should be heightened on the reasonable assumption that the countries of Asia will occupy the position of dominance in the twenty-first century held by the North Atlantic region in the nineteenth and the twentieth.

DR. LOUIS D'SILVA is Reader in Politics, Department of Civics and Politics, University of Bombay.

Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful.

Seneca

COMMUNALISM IN INDIA - CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE, edited by Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan; Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi; 1994; pp.207; Rs.50.



Reviewed by
F. A. Mechery

In the 1990s, the priorities of Indian politics dramatically changed. Religion came to the forefront as a contentious political issue either as religion *per se* or as a vague but emotional debate on secularism or its variations. Issues of development took a back seat or were presented in cultural and historic terms, blowing out of proportion the role of these factors in a developing polity. At a time when political forces with a religious agenda are aggressive and the Congress Party is apologetic and on the defensive, the secular point of view does not have enough spokesmen who are willing to put forward the argument. The case needs to be stated; there is no wishing away the situation. The book under review basically serves this purpose in some ways. It consists mainly of papers presented at a seminar organised by the Deccan Development Society at Hyderabad on December 18 and 19, 1992, less than two weeks after the Ayodhya incidents. A well deserved compliment is to be paid at this point: The papers do not represent the heat and fury of the situation, but are in-depth studies

some of which have, obviously, been in preparation for some time.

The seminar was not only a dialogue among experts, but a meeting point of experts, activists and victims of communal violence. It is claimed that the presentations not only blurred distinctions between the groups, but brought an organic unity among those involved. This collection of papers deals with various aspects of the communal issue without any serious overlap, thus presenting a thematic unity. The canvas is wide, covering ideological motivations, historical antecedents, socio-economic legacies and political strategies adopted by different groups.

The intellectual perspective of these presentations is clearly 'leftist'. But that is not to say that all of them see the same thing. It is not a 'left' stereotype with which we are too well acquainted; there is no exclusive economic determinism underlying the arguments, no fixed pegs where stock ideas are hung. Economic interpretation finds a place, but not in the deterministic manner that Marxist orthodoxy insisted upon in viewing any phenomenon. Further, one may point out that the communal 'right' is not present here at all to put forward their view. The book does not purport to strike a balance between opposing points of view; that may make it a scholarly intercourse aloof from the happenings. The organizers wanted to address the problem from the midst of the actual happenings.

Tracing the genesis of the recent upsurge in communalism, Kumaresh Chakravarty identifies two major causes. One is the "conscious attempt to spread communalism as an ideology", and the other is "the specific combination of economic and political forces" that took place during this period. He makes a convincing case analysing mainly the ideology and pattern of behaviour of the Congress and Bharatiya Janata parties.

K. N. Panikkar examines the nature of communalism in India today

both from the conceptual and practical points of view. He analyses the programmes and action of the communal organizations, not sparing even the Congress, regarding the use of communalism for political mobilisation. Quoting specific instances of exploitation of communal sentiments for electoral and other political purposes, Panikkar shows how the Congress created a bad legacy during the regimes of Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. Referring to the strategy of building up the communal rationale, Panikkar pinpoints the "selective appropriation of the past" as a technique of mobilisation. The complex historical process that developed the composite culture of India is sifted carefully to find favourable factors. The common man cannot look at history with professional acumen. He easily accepts an interpretation on the basis of who puts it across. History is manipulated to misrepresent the present, and current controversies are read into events that took place long ago in a different social and political milieu. Such utilisation of history leads to intellectual chaos which at a certain stage is bound to raise complex questions about the body politic. In the erstwhile Soviet Union the manipulation of history for over half a century to suit the Marxist world view led to so unrealistic a situation that after Gorbachev's glasnost, history had to be dropped from school examinations in Russia. Time had to be provided to unlearn the errors and to facilitate the return of truth. That experience is important and it can be ignored only at the risk of danger to an understanding of ourselves.

Gyan Pandey focusses on the post independence period and observes that the mainstream political leadership in India since independence has largely been concerned with development issues like import of technology, capital investments, state intervention and welfare needs. He points out that "somewhere along the way the question of cultural identity and pride was lost, until it re-emerges at the hands of the

obscurantist and once politically marginal elements". This shifting of emphasis is clear from the post independence political literature in India or even from newspaper reports if one can see the last forty-five years in perspective.

Examining the vexed question of 'Secularism, Democracy and Rights', Rajeev Bhargava invites attention to a vital issue often glossed over in recent national debates, namely, that democracy involves the possibility of a continuous restructuring of the ruling group. A person in the minority today must have a reasonable hope of being in the majority tomorrow; at least there should be no fixed impediments to it. There should be no permanent political division into majority and minority. To define a majority in such a way that it will be a permanent position and to attempt to freeze politics into that framework is a negation of democracy. Turning the communal division in the country into a political division is a perversion of the political order. This issue is largely parried in political debates in the nation today.

The interaction between the communal and the political is clearly visible in Indian polity. Where issues like Mandal or land reforms, are alive, as for example in Bihar, the issue of Hindutva takes a back seat, as distinguished journalist Pran Chopra has illustrated. Communalism which advanced after independence riding on the crest of nationalism, is now attempting a complete identification of the two. A majoritarian legitimacy is then claimed.

With direct reference to the events of December 6, 1992, Uma Chakravarty points to the ambivalent attitude of the Indian middle classes towards the use of violence. They are horrified at the revolutionary violence of the underprivileged against the privileged. But they are not so moved by the caste violence of the upper castes against the lower castes, because it is seen as the manifestation

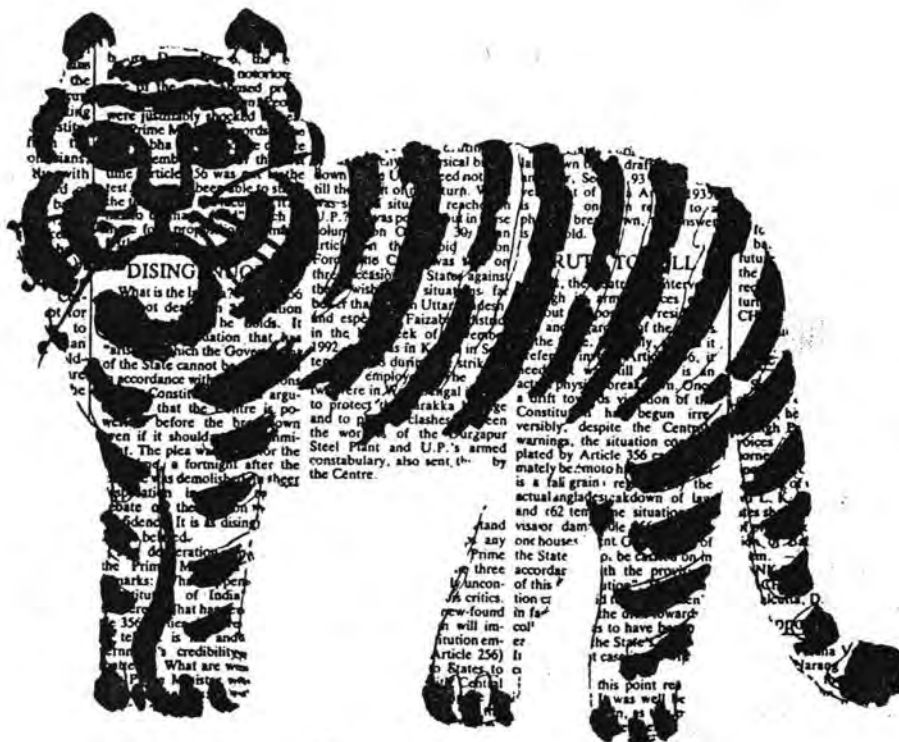
of a long standing problem. The violence of Hindus against Muslims is more easily explained away as the spontaneous outbursts of anger of a patient and long suffering group. What will happen to the 'law governed society' if we indulge in such rationalising of violence? We could become ungovernable as a political community. We cannot responsibly administer ourselves. This is dangerous.

The book also throws light on a number of other problems and events. The role of the media is one such issue. The role that media played and perhaps is still playing is very crucial. Most people stick to one newspaper mainly, understanding little what the picture is on the other side. Objectivity in reports is often sacrificed for any number of reasons, and some press reports can lead to conflagration. The responsibility of the Press is grave in the conditions existing in India today.

The Constitution is a document that in effect represents the basic agreement among members of a political community. Secularism is regarded as one of the basic features of our Constitution. But its meaning itself is the subject of a major controversy. The concept of secularism with the historic meaning that it carries is not fully relevant to Indian conditions. The Church-state problem in Europe was resolved in the seventeenth century by the separation of the spiritual from the temporal. This idea of the separation of the two was secularism. The Indian situation is not identical. As the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court put it in its historic judgement on March 11, 1994, secularism "operates on the temporal plane of the State's activity in dealing with people professing different faiths".

In our multi-religious polity, secularism must mean tolerance first and thereafter anything else.

Prof. F. A. Mechery is Head of the Dept. of Politics, S.I.E.S. College, Bombay.

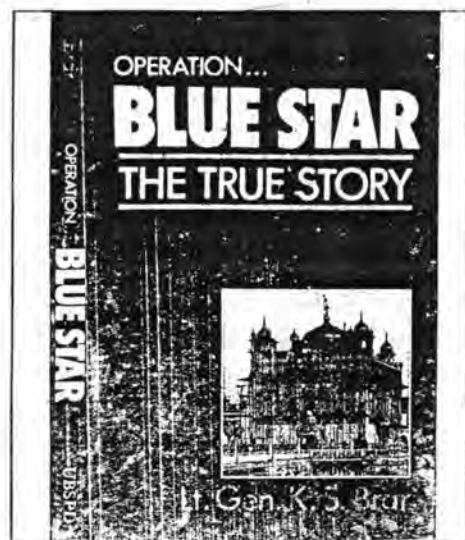


PAPER TIGER

In a way, yes. In a way, no. There's nothing paper-tigerish about us in our unbiased views, our fearless news coverage and editorial policy. But paper is our business and we have that strength and drive associated with tigers in tanks.

The Statesman
The paper people trust

OPERATION BLUE STAR, THE TRUE STORY by Lt. Gen. K.S. Brar; UBS Publishers Distributors Ltd. New Delhi; 1993; pp. 173; Rs. 150.



Reviewed by
Kannamma S. Raman

Operation Blue Star unleashed one of the most traumatic periods in Indian history and marked an important point in the unfortunate developments in the prosperous state of Punjab. This has been one of the most debated issues in Indian politics. A number of books and reports have already been written on the operation itself and the aftermath; but most of these authors were handicapped by the fact that due to strict curfew and news censorship, they had to often depend on secondary and hearsay information. In this sense Lt. Gen. Brar, who was entrusted with the command of the operation in the Golden Temple and was also in the thick of it right from the time the fateful decision was taken, is most pre-eminently eligible to comment on this issue. He is also in a position to clarify a number of controversies and myths that surrounded this operation and documents the military action for posterity "lest truth gets drowned in the quicksand of fractured perception." This book has been written almost a decade after the actual incident, thus giving the author time for introspection and to allow for passions to settle down.

The book consists of nine chapters excluding the preface. The first three chapters provide a very brief overview of the main developments in the Punjab since independence - the demand for a Punjabi Suba, the partition of the Punjab and the main causes for the discontent and discord. The remaining chapters detail the actual military strategy and how the operation was carried out. The book sets out to answer some of the questions that have been worrying a number of concerned individuals; what were the compulsions for commencing the operation two days after Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom anniversary when there was bound to be a large number of pilgrims inside the temple complex; why could the army not lay a siege and starve the inmates into surrender and the oft-made allegations about the army's excesses. The last two chapters provide a very brief analysis of the extent of the malaise in Punjab.

The book clearly highlights how the cowardice of the top leaders belonging to the Akali Dal, the central government and the police forces emboldened Bhindranwale and his followers. This was especially noticeable when no action was taken despite enough circumstantial evidence to implicate both Bhindranwale and his motley crowd of followers, in the assassination of a number of prominent individuals such as Nirankari Guru Baba Gurbachan Singh, Lala Jagat Narain and his son, A. S. Atwal (the Director-General of Police). It is truly amazing that the central and state governments did not react firmly even when the law and order situation had reached a point where finding dead bodies thrown into the sewer behind Guru Nanak Niwas had become a common occurrence. Bhindranwale was literally running a parallel government from within the Golden Temple. The description of how the militants had built fortifications within the holy shrine and also the buildings in the immediate neighbourhood is frightening. It makes one wonder as to how a government that so often proudly claimed to be one that worked could be so pathetically impotent in the face

of such open and flagrant violations. Similarly the total failure of the intelligence system is incredible.

The book provides a vivid and graphic picture of the actual military operation and it is to Brar's credit that he has avoided, as far as possible, military jargon. While reading this book one cannot but admire the amount of planning that went into this operation - right from the establishment of Medical Aid Points to plans to control traffic and the setting up of a safe zone for devotees. Yet, it is extremely depressing that such a massive operation had to be launched on our own people. The pictorial sketches give a clear idea of the actual topography of the Golden Temple and the routes of this operation.

The author has nothing but admiration for the soldiers and officers who performed an extremely sensitive job displaying implicit and unflinching obedience and living up to their credo of "Duty, Honour and Country". The extent of the soldiers' problems becomes clear when we realise, as has been explained by Lt. Gen. Brar, that the armaments used by the militants were such that normally an army unit would deploy this quantum of fire power to cover an area of approximately eight kilometers. Moreover, the book clearly shows that despite heavy casualties and against all odds, the soldiers adhered to the decision that not a single round should be fired in the direction of the Hari Mandir Sahib.

This book vividly describes the situation within the temple and why a police and para-military force operation, like the operation christened "Black Thunder" carried out at a later date, would not have succeeded. The book also emphasises that nothing - not even the Temple of God - has unlimited immunity from armed intervention by its own government. This point is well-explained with the help of two examples from history where military action was initiated against the unholy use of holy places.

One can well agree with Lt. Gen.

Brar that this operation was one of the most sensitive and thankless missions ever undertaken by an army in any part of the world. As one in charge of the operation Lt. Gen. Brar is ideally placed to judge the armed forces' performance; hence when he uses the word "fascinating" to describe the operation it is extremely jarring. He does not have even one critical remark to make about the army's performance, which obviously, working under much tension, could have erred. One cannot but get the impression that this book would have greater credibility if the author had been more analytical and critical about the actual operation. He could have thrown some light on the way in which, through hindsight, the operation could have been performed more effectively. This in no way would have detracted from the valour and capacity of the Indian soldiers.

The author is obviously unhappy with the way in which the intelligentsia and the masses accepted a number of slanderous and vicious stories circulated about the soldiers' behaviour within the precincts of the temple. He tries to provide an explanation to correct the image of the armed forces. For instance, he refutes the article written by Brahma Chellaney (the Associated Press correspondent who managed to stay in Amritsar throughout the operation) reporting that the army had, in cold blood, shot dead a number of people after their hands had been tied behind their back. The author's argument that a few people were shot dead when they tried to escape and that it was a reflex action of one sentry, is at best half-hearted. His view that "Indian soldiers with a simple peasant background are far too innocent and straightforward to be accused of such brutalities" is hardly convincing. Many well known authors and international bodies have provided documentary evidence about military excesses in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Assam. It is this which led people to believe many of the allegations made against the armed forces operating inside the Golden Temple.

The book also suffers from a

number of lacunae and inconsistencies. Though the author claims that the book has not been written to vindicate or justify the actions of any of the protagonists for the role played by them, he has consciously or unconsciously apportioned much of the blame to the Akali Dal leaders for the Punjab fiasco. For instance, he suggests that each time a conciliatory gesture was made by the government, it was treated with derision and defiance by the Akali leaders. Whenever settlement was in sight they kept shifting their stand. He does not hesitate and rightly so, in laying the blame on many of the Akali leaders and accusing them of cowardice, opportunism, internal gangsterism and for trodding the treacherous path of religious fundamentalism purely for political dominance. He is more or less silent on the role played by Mrs. Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi. By now it is a well documented fact that they, along with Zail Singh, were primarily responsible for the phenomenal growth of the obscure preacher from Rode village. This was done purely to counter the pre-eminence of the top Akali Dal leaders in Punjab. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the creators of Frankenstein soon found that they had lost control over it. The fact remains that in Punjab almost all the protagonists were trying to get as much political mileage as possible for themselves and, as a result, all of them are equally to be blamed for the imbroglio.

It is not clear what Lt. Gen. Brar means when he suggests that the "Military leaders, particularly at senior levels, failed to take the Sikh troops into confidence... They should have been apprised of the true realities of the situation created by the cult of violence and terrorism operating from within the place of worship... It was only fair that they should have been told what was going to happen and why it had become necessary." Yet, he himself confessed that he did not, before the operation was launched, inform any of his staff or formation commanders that they might have to enter the Golden Temple in order to

flush out the militants. This precaution was necessary in order to eliminate any possibility of loose talk and rumours spread by irresponsible individuals which could have had serious repercussions. If the troops had been forewarned could it not have resulted in exactly the same repercussions that he fears. This clearly brings out the two problems that any military action faces: (1) need for immediate and authentic coverage of action and (2) the wider ramifications of such coverage if it jeopardises the success of an operation where secrecy is of the utmost importance. It also highlights the adverse effects of press censorship and government control of the mass media.

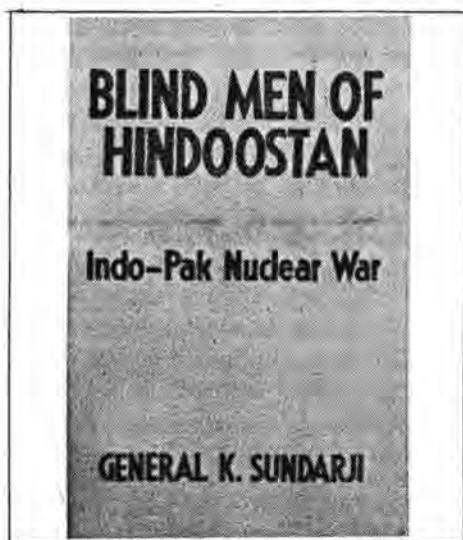
However, despite some flaws, this book is a valuable addition to the existing literature on this very sensitive issue. This book is especially important at this juncture when various factions of the Akali Dal have merged and their leaders vow to renew the struggle for the creation of a separate Sikh state where the Sikhs can "experience the glow of freedom". Even while the nation sighs with relief over the end of a decade of terrorism and uncertainty in the Punjab, comes the Amritsar Declaration signed by six Akali Dal factions and some students and youth outfits once again demanding a Sikh *Kaum*. Although the veiled threat to create a separate sovereign Sikh state is couched in terms of a democracy, it does not make the scenario less threatening. This book should serve as a reminder of the bankruptcy of the path the militants followed in the past and the need to nip the problem in the bud. Otherwise it could shatter the fragile peace in this troubled state and set back the clock of development. Our nation cannot afford another Operation Blue Star.

DR. (MRS.) KANNAMMA S. RAMAN is lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Sophia College for Women, Bombay.

You cannot govern states with words.

Machiavelli

BLIND MEN OF HINDOOSTAN
by General K Sundarji, PVSM;
UBS Publishers' Distributors;
1993; pp. 241; Rs. 250.



Reviewed by
E. D'Souza

General K. Sundarji needs no introduction. He was the erstwhile Chief of the Army Staff during whose tenure the country very nearly went to war because of his brinkmanship during "Brass Tacks" and the Sumdorong Cho episode in the East. He was the Western Army Commander responsible for Operation 'BLUE STAR'. His long Army connection is glaringly evident in the bright red dust jacket. He is very articulate both verbally and on paper and is a thinker who tried to take the Army into the 21st century when our economy is still in the 19th century.

With Indo-Pak relations at their lowest ebb because of Pakistan's overt and covert support to militancy, earlier in the Punjab, and ongoing in Kashmir through a low intensity proxy conflict, and the ISI dirty tricks department attempting to destabilise India, our country may well be driven up the wall leading to a conventional offensive into Pakistan. In its present belligerent mood, Pakistan may well retaliate by using nuclear weapons.

The CIA and other agencies have confirmed that Pakistan has from 7 to 20 nuclear bombs of 20 kt yield, and it

is in a position to launch a first strike nuclear attack on India hoping that India may not be prepared to retaliate as its nuclear weapons have not been capped and by the time it does so the world body will intervene. The author has visualised such a scenario and to that extent the 'Blind Men of Hindoostan' are aware of such a possibility. It is for this reason that this book needs to be read.

Obviously the author is *au fait* with the contemporary nuclear scenario, not only worldwide but in the sub-continent. The depth and degree of his factual knowledge on matters nuclear cannot be doubted and is evident in the well documented and researched tables and figures presented in this book to support his view that: (a) India should go in for a nuclear regime to achieve asymmetry; and (b) there is a pressing need for the immediate establishment of a high powered Cabinet Committee for National Security (CCNS). The second proposition has been debated *ad infinitum* since the establishment of the National Defence College in New Delhi in 1960. The author's anguish and disappointment that it has not yet materialised is reflected in the Dedication, though how Arun Singh, a boxwallah, is depicted as an expert in defence matters is hard to accept!

Be that as it may, General Sundarji has marshalled his arguments precisely and logically in true service style (and jargon). The methodology that he has adopted through a series of imaginary Cabinet meetings attended by all concerned with national security, viz., the Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretary, Minister/Ministers of State of Home, Defence, External Affairs, the three Service Chiefs, nodal intelligence agencies and the Scientific Adviser, is indeed novel and realistic. It is obviously based on the author's experience when he was Army Chief. It enables a layman to get an insight as to how such major decisions are discussed and taken at the top most level, though as yet on an *ad hoc* basis.

Unfortunately, the over use of

typically American acronyms may tend to confuse the lay reader, as also some of the very 'mod' American jargon and terms used. If, as he says, his aim is to 'mobilise' informed public debate, he would have done well to resort to basic english!

Some of the arguments presented by him tend to be flawed, perhaps in his anxiety to prove his point. For instance it is inconceivable that Pakistan would resort to a so called 'tactical' nuclear strike to blunt an Indian conventional attack on its own (Pakistan's) soil. The reviewer, having been privy to the devastation caused by the first ever atomic bomb attack by a 12 kt yield bomb, on Hiroshima a few months after it was dropped, feels that such a position is unlikely. Nor can one visualise the U.S.A., as the author writes, of using even a low yield nuclear bomb on Pakistan and/or India in the event of either or both countries resorting to nuclear weapons. Or for that matter other small nuclear powers like South Africa and Israel posing even a remote nuclear threat to India. These flights of fancy could well have been avoided and more attention devoted to the main issue on the Indo-Pak-Chinese triangle.

The thrust of the various permutations and combinations presented by the author indicates the Indian syndrome of an obsession with Pakistan. History tells us otherwise that we cannot afford to ignore, lightly as the author has done, the threat posed by that giant, ostensibly sleeping dragon China, a nation which has always prided itself as the Middle Kingdom. There can be little doubt that this dragon will continue to slumber until the year 2000 by which time Hongkong will be absorbed and it will have built itself economically into a major power in Asia. What happens then from the year 2000 to 2015 (the author's projection)? This threat cannot be dismissed lightly.

Whether Pakistan, with its limited first strike capability and vulnerability to an Indian conven-

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.

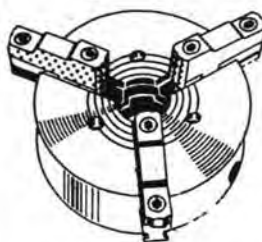


Empire in Finance:



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.

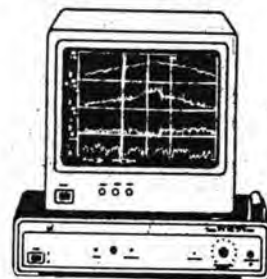
Empire in Machine Tools:



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,
Bombay 400 013.
Phone: 4920003.
Telex: 11 71800 EMT IN



Glass • Cranes • Machine Tools
Instrumentation
Speciality fabrics
Financial services

tional attack will use its nuclear weapons against India's armoured and/or mechanised strike formations which are endowed with the ability to disperse in the face of a nuclear threat and quickly regroup after the all-clear, is debatable. The reviewer had the opportunity to attend an exercise with troops in Germany involving the British 11 Armoured Division, in 1955, based on the use of the 280 mm tactical atomic cannon. This scenario is a different kettle of fish.

Pakistan would select a major target which would cripple India. Such a target would be India's financial and commercial capital Bombay in which are located the Bhabha Atomic Power Facility, the Western Fleet, the major oil installations and the ports of Bombay and Nhava Sheva. Although outside Pakistan's current missile capability, and in the absence of a submarine launched missile platform, it has the capability of doing so with its F16 fighter bombers capable of free dropping a nuclear bomb. Some thought should have been devoted to this 'real' possibility.

Nevertheless this book fills an important void in fostering public interest in defence matters, especially nuclear war, by an articulate and well qualified ex-Army Chief who knows what he is talking about, albeit through a book with a misleading title. Though we may not agree with all his views, he will certainly conscientize the public.

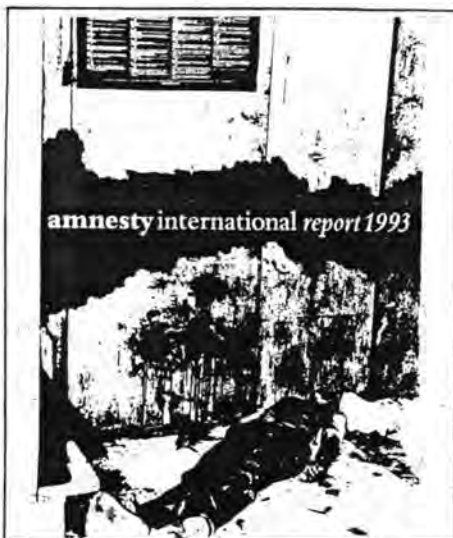
MAJ. GEN. E. D'SOUZA, PVSM (retired) is currently Associate Editor, *Defence Today*. He is also a well-known authority on sports matters.

SOLDIERS DON'T START WARS

No soldier starts a war - they only give their lives to it. Wars are started by you and me, by bankers and politicians, excitable women, newspaper editors, clergymen who are ex-pacifists, and Congressmen with vertebrae of putty. The youngsters yelling in the streets, poor kids, are the ones who pay the price.

Francis P. Duffy

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT-1993; Amnesty International Publications, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, U.K., pp.354; price not stated.



Reviewed by
G. Anantharaman

Used as one is to hearing abuses heaped on Amnesty International, it is with some trepidation that one sets out to read the report of the organisation for the year 1993, covering the period January to December 1992*. At the same time there is a sense of excitement at having found an opportunity to check out the veracity of the charge that Amnesty is biased against the non-western world.

Amnesty International works to prevent some of the gravest violations by governments of people's fundamental human rights. The main focus of its campaigning is to (a) free all prisoners of conscience (b) ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners (c) abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel treatment of prisoners and (d) end extra-judicial executions and the so-called 'disappearances' of prisoners. Amnesty also opposes abuses by opposition groups; hostage-taking, torture and killings of prisoners and other deliberate and arbitrary killings.

The introductory part answers one of the oft-repeated charges against the organisation: that while it is too eager to condemn governmental vio-

lations of human rights, it is lenient on violence caused by terrorists and insurgents. Amnesty argues that all over the globe, it is governments that are guilty of the worst kind of human rights abuses. Arbitrary arrests, execution without trial or after an unfair trial, torture at the hands of security forces are all so common in countries around the world that in comparison, the activities of 'armed opposition groups' - the organisation abjures the use of the word 'terrorists' - are but slight in comparison, the argument goes. As evidence, Amnesty compiles a record of human rights violations in 161 countries around the world.

In the chapter on the death penalty, Amnesty forcefully argues for its abolition in all nations as, according to it, the death penalty is the ultimate form of a degrading and cruel punishment; there is no real evidence of any deterrent effect of the death penalty on rates of crime and political violence in a society. But Amnesty's call for a blanket ban is likely to go unheeded in an age of increasing terrorist violence. The report itself cites the case of Pakistan and the U.S., where the number of executions in 1992 were 19 and 32 respectively.

Amnesty records its concern and anguish over the refugee crises in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Burma, Western Sahara and Haiti in the section titled 'Protecting Refugees'. The inaction of the West in Bosnia (in 1992) and the harsh action of the U.S. in turning away thousands of refugees from Haiti fleeing political repression there, come in for heavy criticism. While welcoming the new role of the UNHCR in Yugoslavia where the agency has taken the lead in providing humanitarian relief in the war zone, Amnesty condemns the attitude of some western nations in making this increasing UNHCR role an excuse to tighten their laws for granting asylum to refugees.

* We regret the delay in publishing this review because Amnesty International's Report for 1994 has since been published. We hope to carry an article on the 1994 Report in the October 1994 issue - Eds.

The central part of the report consists of the country-wise entries. Amnesty does not grade countries according to their record on human rights; the focus is on highlighting specific violations in each case. Hence a major source of controversy is avoided. The entry in each case highlights political arrests, executions, excesses by the security forces and also, wherever they occur, human rights violations by armed opposition groups (read terrorists). Any sense of complacency that arises on finding Australia listed alongside Argentina, or India with Israel and Italy is quickly shattered as one reads through the gruesome record of human rights violations in country after country.

Amnesty's report on India is, not unexpectedly, scathing. The report on India begins thus: "Thousands of political prisoners, including several prisoners of conscience, were held without charge or trial under special or preventive detention laws. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees were widespread throughout the country and the perpetrators operated with virtual impunity. Torture was practised systematically in Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab where its occurrence was facilitated by illegal, incommunicado and secret detentions. Dozens of people died in police custody."

About the communal riots that occurred in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri masjid, Amnesty rather carelessly says: "Over 1200 people were shot dead by police or killed in violence between Hindus and Muslims in the days that followed." Surely this statement clubs together two very different circumstances thoughtlessly. Police firing on rioters did not lead to 1200 deaths, as the statement, at first reading, seems to suggest.

However, quoting a range of statistics, the report does bring home the horrendous scale of human rights violations in India. Quoting government sources, Amnesty says that as on October 1992, 16,925 people were being held under TADA (Terrorist

and Disruptive Activities Act) in various parts of the country, including 1452 in Gujarat, a State where no armed opposition to the government was reported. In addition, 2369 people were being held under the National Security Act (NSA).

On custodial deaths in India, the report says that only in six out of 415 cases of custodial deaths known by Amnesty to have occurred between 1985 and March 1992 were police officers tried and convicted. Only in 14 of the 415 cases was compensation paid, the report says.

In contrast to the detailed report on human rights violations by the security forces, Amnesty almost glosses over the killings and kidnappings carried out by various militant outfits in Punjab, Assam and other north-eastern States. There is no mention of the total number of people killed in terrorist violence in 1992. Moreover, Amnesty's definition of 'prisoners of conscience' is unclear. How many of the 'scores of political activists' arrested in Punjab and Kashmir were armed militants who engaged in violence? There is no clear cut distinction drawn by Amnesty.

It is surprising, and revealing, that there is no marked difference in the human rights record between India and her neighbours. The report on Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka reads similar to that on India. India fares better on free and fair trials or the number of independent civil rights groups that operate within the country. That's about all.

Amnesty does not seem to appreciate the complexities of the political scenario in countries like Sri Lanka, Egypt, Somalia or India. The Sri Lankan forces battling the LTTE and the JVP, the Egyptian forces combating Islamic fundamentalists who target foreign tourists or the Indian army trying to contain terrorism in Kashmir are all grappling with delicate and complex tasks and Amnesty does not seem to appreciate this. It goes about its job with almost

clinical detachment.

A perusal of the reports on the Western nations - U.K., U.S.A., Canada among others, - confirm what is widely believed; human rights are better protected there. Interestingly, Amnesty again glosses over the race riots in Los Angeles in April 1992 over the acquittal of four police officers charged with beating up black motorist Rodney King. There are no details given. Contrasting this with the detailed reporting of the post-Ayodhya riots in India in December 1992, one is tempted to believe the Indian government spokesman's complaint about Amnesty's partiality to the West.

These contentious issues apart, sifting through the annual report of Amnesty International is a learning experience. It does sensitise one to the gravity of human rights violations everywhere and makes one understand the significance and importance of the growing human rights movement worldwide.

MR. GANESH ANANTHARAMAN, teaches politics at the Somaiya College of Arts & Science, Bombay.

Over 52,000 languishing in Indian Jails

A staggering 52,268 persons are languishing in Indian jails under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA).

Lawyers fighting the cases in the Supreme Court of India say that TADA is increasingly becoming a weapon for the police which is unable to keep the accused in jail on other charges of common crime.

TADA cases, according to Rajinder Sachar, President of People's Union for Civil Liberties, are increasing every year.

Most TADA cases have been going on for more than five years. The courts are notoriously slow because in majority of cases, there is no hard evidence against the "accused".

TADA detainees in various states as on Feb. 15 '93: Andhra Pradesh 5614; Arunachal Pradesh 88; Assam 10779; Bihar 190; Gujarat 14094; Haryana 916; Himachal Pradesh 55; J&K 1826; Karnataka 26; Maharashtra 1125; Madhya Pradesh 103; Manipur 1003; Punjab 14457; Rajasthan 422; Tamilnadu 147; Tripura 47; Uttar Pradesh 851 and West Bengal 525. Total: 52268.

Courtesy: Human Rights World.

**AND YOU THINK AIDS AFFECTS
ONLY PROSTITUTES, HOMOSEXUALS
AND THE PROMISCUOUS!**



To date Aids has claimed the very people you'd least expect to be afflicted. And however straight a life you lead, you are in no way immune. Play safe. Insist on sterilized, disposable needles for all medical purposes. Ensure that your barber does not shave you with a recycled blade. And insist on a condom when you're not sure. Most of all, don't ever think 'Aids can't get me'. Rather ensure that Aids doesn't get you.

AIDS
YOU COULD BE NEXT

COURTESY: Everest Advertising / GENTLEMAN Public Service Award

Sponsored by: AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.

What Readers Say about *Freedom First*

Freedom First is really food for thought. It contains hardly any article which does not attract the reader. Its ever increasing number of subscribers makes one optimistic that the number of Indians with liberal ideas is not negligible.

G. Y. Dharap
Jalgaon

I love your magazine, but not your tardiness and incompleteness. Please pardon me for the candour. Please rest assured, my interest in *Freedom First* will not wane.

Y. H. Mahabal
Nanded

Freedom First is a good periodical but it should be more frequent and more widely read.

V. I. Chacko
Bangalore

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

Ladislav Rice
London

Life Subscribers

We Welcome

Anand N. Amin
B. K. Banker
Alka Bhatia
Rebon Banerjee
Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce (Surat)
Dilip Chandulal
K. M. Cherian
Uday Chikile
S. G. Deokule
Godrej N. Dotivala
M. D. Kini
M. J. Kotwal
P. C. Kulkarni
E. J. Kuruvilla
B. B. Kalapesi
A. Kaul
Geeta Luktuke
Madhu Mehta
Hina Manerikar
Jayant J. Mehta
S. N. Mehta
Manisha Mitra
J. V. Naik
Nehru Centre, Bombay
A. R. Nizamuddin
H. A. B. Parpia
N. G. Paranjape
K. J. Patel
K. K. Pathak
Mehul G. Pathak
S. Prabhala
Kannamma Raman
Siddhartha Roy
S. M. Sachdeva
J. C. Sawhney
G. N. Sharma
Bhupendra K. Shroff
S. E. Songadwala
K. K. Thakkar
Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamshala
D. D. Udeshi
Chirayush Vakil
Mammen Varghese
S. Venkatram & Co.
Feroze Vevania

Subscribe Today!

I wish to subscribe to *Freedom First*

☐ Annual: Rs.50 ☐ Life Subscription: Rs.500.00

☐ Cheque ☐ Demand Draft ☐ Money Order

*for outstation cheques, please add Rs.10

(Please type or fill in block letters)

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Pin _____

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 400 001
or Call us at 27 39 14