

Freedom First

A LIBERAL QUARTERLY

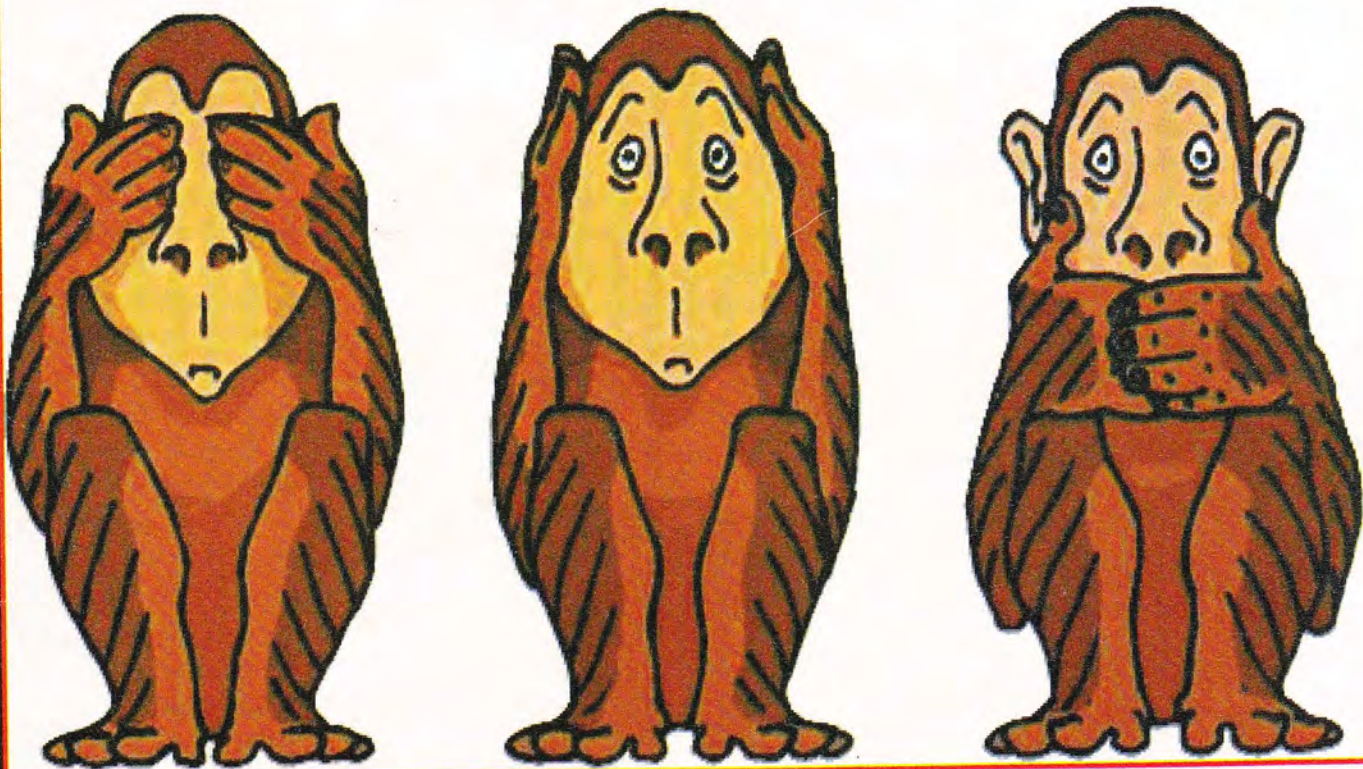
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RUPEES TWENTY-FIVE

We, the Voters...



Encounter with
Rajiv Gandhi

Kisans in Distress

Murarji Vaidya -
Industrialist with a
Social Conscience

*... Do we really
care who
we elect?*

The 42nd Commemoration of the Tibetan National Uprising of 1959

March 10, 2001

Statement by The Dalai Lama



Over fifty years ago Tibet was occupied by China. It is also over 40 years since 1959, when thousands of Tibetans began their life in exile. Three generations of Tibetans have lived through this darkest period of our history, undergoing tremendous hardship and suffering. Yet the Tibetan issue is still

very much alive. Whether the Chinese government admits it or not the world is well aware of the grave problems inside Tibet, not only in the Tibetan Autonomous Region but also in other Tibetan areas.

The Chinese government continues to whitewash the sad situation in Tibet through propaganda. If conditions inside Tibet are as the Chinese authorities portray it to be why do they not have the courage to allow visitors into Tibet without any restrictions? Instead of attempting to hide things as "state secrets" why do they not have the courage to show the truth to the outside world? And why are there so many security forces and prisons in Tibet? I have always said that if the majority of Tibetans in Tibet were truly satisfied with the state of affairs in Tibet I would have no reason, no justification and no desire to raise my voice against the situation in Tibet. Sadly, whenever Tibetans speak up, instead of listening to them they are arrested, imprisoned and labeled as counter-revolutionaries. They have no opportunity and no freedom to speak out the truth.

If the Tibetans are truly happy the Chinese authorities should have no difficulty in holding a plebiscite in Tibet. Already some Tibetan non-governmental organizations are advocating a referendum in Tibet. They argue that the best way to resolve this issue once and for all is to allow the Tibetans inside Tibet to choose their own destiny through a freely held referendum. They demand to let the Tibetan people speak out and decide for themselves. I have always maintained that ultimately the Tibetan people must be able to decide the future of Tibet. I would in fact wholeheartedly support the result of such a referendum.

Tibet had been existing as a distinct and separate entity for over two thousand years. There is no denying this fact. History is history and no one can change the past but accept the facts. I believe that it is best for historians and legal experts to decide the historical

status of Tibet. Irrespective of past history, I am looking towards the future.

Successive leaders of the People's Republic of China, from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang have repeatedly acknowledged the "unique nature" and "special case" of Tibet's status. The 17-Point Agreement of 1951 between the Tibetans and the Chinese, embodying the original spirit and concept of "one country and two systems", is the best proof of this recognition. No other province or part of the People's Republic of China has any such agreement with Beijing. The Chinese government promised to respect the "unique nature" of Tibet. Despite these assurances, sadly for the most part of its rule, China's oppressive Tibet policies have been misguided by a deep sense of insecurity, distrust, suspicion and arrogance and by a glaring lack of understanding, appreciation and respect for Tibet's distinct culture, history and identity. What is actually "unique" today about Tibet is that it is the poorest and most oppressed area where policies implemented by ultra-leftist elements are still active even though their influences have long been diminishing in China proper.

When one looks at the situation inside Tibet it seems almost hopeless in the face of increasing repression, environmental destruction, and alarming developments undermining the identity and culture of Tibet as a result of the massive transfer of Chinese into Tibetan areas. The global trend today is towards more accessibility, openness, freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. China is in fact already in the process of changing. It is most encouraging that there are a growing number of informed Chinese, including intellectuals and farsighted thinkers, who are not only showing concern but also expressing their solidarity to the Tibetan cause.

Because the situation inside Tibet still remains serious, there is growing criticism of my policy of "Middle-Way Approach". There are those who hold firmly to the goal of independence of Tibet. While I firmly reject the use of violence as a means in our freedom struggle, I respect the right of every Tibetan to discuss and explore all political options.

THE DALAI LAMA

(This is an excerpt from a much longer statement. You can log on to www.Tibet.net for the full text)

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

Most votaries of democracy are perplexed by the behaviour of the voters particularly in the states of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Is it that these voters decided to reward corruption and violence? Or is it an indication of general voter disgust with all parties and politicians that it doesn't matter if it's tweedledum or tweedledee, as they are all tarred with the same brush? A dangerous moment for our democracy already under siege from several other directions – all our own handiwork – beginning of course with voter indifference – the subject of our cover feature.

Who initiated the process of economic reforms? Most people believe it was Manmohan Singh. Not so, says Subroto Roy. Read his 'Encounter with Rajiv Gandhi' and draw your conclusions. But whoever started it the fact remains that the reforms have scarcely touched the Indian farmer. If anything he continues to be miserable, bound by state-made fetters and facing the worst of both worlds – pre and post reform. That is the theme of Bhanu Pratap Singh's article. And who can argue with him – a farmer himself. The fact is, reforms or not, rural India continues to be the nation's step-child and in a state of extreme neglect.

Our Next Cover feature BOLLYWOOD UNLEASHED!

No, we are not going 'filmy'. The feature is in keeping with our cover stories – taking a serious look at issues, this time the Bollywood phenomenon. For details please read overleaf. We have been fortunate in persuading Sanjit Narwekar, an award winning expert, to be Guest Editor of this cover story.

Last date for contributions – September 15 at the very latest. No extensions possible and the Guest Editor's decision whether or not to include contributions will be final.

[Contributions invited by email freedom@vsnl.com or floppy disk (Word 95) or fax 022 2843416]

Editor

July-September 2001
No.450

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WITH MANY VOICES

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

I believe globalisation is about sourcing capital from where it is cheapest, producing where it is most cost-effective, and selling where it is most profitable, all without being constrained by national boundaries.

Mr. N.R. Narayana Murthy of Infosys,
The Times of India, June 20

The matter is not of cleaning the Ganges or the Yamuna or of any particular territory or region; it is of removing the filth that has started accumulating over this entire country...The filth is of corruption and degradation of ethical values.

H.D. Shourie, Editor, *Common Cause*, Vol.XX No.3

I feel marriage has got nothing to do with settling down in life. I am a happy bachelor girl.

Film actress Tabu, *The Week*, July 29

The roads are Indian and the conditions are Indian. What is the point of looking 'phoren' (foreign).

A Bombay police constable (commenting on the supply of Suzuki motorbikes to policemen) *The Times of India*, June 1

It's only the rich and idle who shout about heritage.

Bishop Raju (who looks after St. John's Church, Kolkata),
India Today, June 18

As a city that pollutes the mind and the body alike, Delhi seems eminently worth abandoning. Tughlak certainly was not mad.

T.J.S. George, *The New Sunday Express*, August 12

If the poor are not there many of our politicians would be out of the business of politics. Many who overcome poverty are those who take to the profitable business of politics.

Dr. T.H. Chowdary, *The New Indian Express*, July 28.

All of us have to pay bribes, even policemen. Last week a CPWD electrician came to repair the line in my house and asked for *chai-pani kharcha*. I tried to offer him a cup of tea but he wasn't satisfied till I paid him Rs.10.

A Delhi police sub-inspector, *Outlook*, April 2

Bollywood makes it to the Oxford English Dictionary... and also makes it to *Freedom First*!

The cover feature of the October-December 2001 issue of *Freedom First* is on Bollywood. Lest readers wonder whether we too are going 'filmy', we hasten to add that this is a serious look at the Bollywood phenomenon.

The British Broadcasting Corporation was the first to use the word Bollywood to describe Bombay's commercial cinema in 1984. Others used the word in a derogatory manner to mean a "native cinema" with pretensions of Hollywood. Somewhere along the way the term acquired a semblance of respectability and while there are still filmmakers who chafe at the use of the word, there are many others who accept it with grace, and, indeed, pride! Maybe, the respectability was acquired somewhere in the late 1980s and 1990s when several of India's movie products (films and filmmakers) found their way West and met with approval - so much so that the recent film 'Moulin Rouge' uses a popular Indian film song as a part of its musical repertoire. Very recently, newspapers reported that the word Bollywood has made it to the Oxford English Dictionary. And now it makes it to *Freedom First*!

The cover feature which is timed to coincide with two international film festivals will be edited by Sanjit Narwekar. Sanjit Narwekar is a media historian. Formerly News Editor of *Screen* and Editor of *TV and Video World*, his definitive history of Marathi cinema bagged the President's Gold Medal at the National Film Awards.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

So Many Pendulums

We Indians are like pendulums. We swing from one extreme to the other. From Pandit Nehru's time we have been conditioned to look upon enterprises in the private sector as entities that are not to be trusted at best and thieves at worst. With the easing of controls and empty state treasuries, we are falling all over to win the favour of these very same private enterprises. One such way is offering them space to advertise their wares at public places.

Mumbai's BEST bus stop shelters are relatively better maintained than similar conveniences elsewhere. A narrow strip just below the roof of such shelters normally carry an advertisement. There was however no difficulty in recognising the place as a bus stop! Today the advertiser's message often with neon lights has converted such bus stops into huge multi-dimensional hoardings. One has to first recognise them as bus stops and then search for such essential information like bus numbers and routes of buses calling at that stop.

Why talk of bus stops. Recently I was checking in at Cochin airport to take a flight to Mumbai and looked around to know departure schedules. Finally I located one. It occupied a small part of the corner of a huge hoarding advertising a brand of motorbikes. Why should the two be together and inconvenience the passenger. In fact Cochin airport is a cute little airport with a very tasteful decor merging into the local atmosphere. Does it have to be spoiled with such loud and tasteless hoardings which also hide information that's essential to the traveller?

'Beware, VIP Inside!'

Laws that are not enforced are no laws. While it is good news that over 300 laws some over a century old and some which even refer to the East India Company are, at last, being scrapped, what about laws that are observed in their breach. In this city of Mumbai, must be the same in other cities too, we can see traffic laws for instance being violated with impunity – the offenders are in most cases official cars with revolving yellow lights on the roof, as if proclaiming "Beware, VIP inside". Policemen make no effort to stop such vehicles because of the "mayor-sahib" nature of the car's inmate?

Car drivers couldn't care less about the law against the use of cell-phones while driving. Spitting



or urinating in public places continue unabated despite warnings painted on walls in big letters in three languages – Marathi, Hindi and English of the consequences of doing so – fine or imprisonment. Not carrying out the punishment for violating the law will only encourage a growing disrespect for the law. If, as in Singapore, violators particularly of the VIP kind are apprehended and penalised on the spot it would not only act as a deterrent for others, but also a revelation of the kind of 'respectable' people who are 'caught' in the act, as it were.

Perhaps, the kind of punishment meted out by policewomen to young men travelling in a ladies' compartment, as the picture below shows, may just work. Not many may want to be caught with his mouth open or his pants down!



COURTESY: Bombay Times, August 22, 2001.

WE'RE SORRY: Students who were illegal entrants in the ladies' compartment were made to atone for their deed at Wadala station yesterday.

The Dalai Lama and Kashmir

Some nameless bureaucrats and two-bit politicians in Delhi started squeaking about a statement made by the Dalai Lama in Chennai on the Kashmir issue.

Let's not forget that it is India's betrayal of Tibet by the then Congress government led by Pandit Nehru that has resulted in the Dalai Lama having to flee his homeland. And he has been in India for 40 years which qualified him to be a citizen of India had he so desired.. He said what Gandhiji would have said had he been alive. Let's not forget why Gandhiji was assassinated - because a Hindu lunatic fringe could not stomach his insistence that India honour its commitment.

Freedom First does not see anything wrong with the statement attributed to the Dalai Lama. It is sad that these nameless bureaucrats and two-bit politicians made it necessary for him to explain himself. We consider the Dalai Lama closest to what Gandhiji was - our conscience-keeper.

We reproduce below the full text of his statement clarifying his remarks on Kashmir:

"I regret that inspite of the clarification my office had issued yesterday regarding the comments I had made at the conference in Chennai organised by the Akhil Bharat Rachnatmak Samaj there is a great deal of speculation from various quarters about my stand on the status of Kashmir. This is to categorically state that I had always accepted the fact that the State of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. I have never questioned this. I am also appreciative of the fact that the people of Jammu and Kashmir elect their government through a well-established democratic process. My main concern is putting an end to all the killings

that are taking place in Jammu and Kashmir. I very strongly believe that the issue needs to be resolved through peaceful means, through discussion and dialogue. This I feel is of the utmost importance.

"I have also never considered the issue of Tibet and Kashmir to be similar. I have stated this many times in the past both to Indian leaders as well as in my media interviews. The legal accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Union could not be more different from the forceful occupation of Tibet by the Communist Chinese. I merely explained my middle-way of approach to the Tibetan issue as an example of a suitable method for solving such complicated issues, including Kashmir.

"There were suggestions from certain quarters that I am ungrateful to India. I would like to make it clear here that I have in fact never lost an opportunity to express our gratitude to the people and the Government of India for their kindness to the Tibetan people. Whether it is about the strong democratic traditions rooted in this country, the importance of India in Asia as well as to the rest of the world, India's right to be a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations, or even India's right to be a nuclear power I have always stood up for India. My stand on these important issues during the past forty-two years should be seen in its entirety.

"No invitation has been extended to the representatives of Hurriyat Conference. They indicated their interest to visit me at Dharamsala to explain their stand and I responded in my usual way that they were welcome."

The Dalai Lama
Dharamsala, August 7, 2001



COURTESY: Southern Economist, September 1, 2000.



COURTESY: Bombay Times, August 18, 2001.

We the Voters ...

... Do We Really Care Who We Elect?

R. Srinivasan

To the public, elections have become a gladiatorial sport and the casting of one's vote is but a minute part of the happenings.

That in politics one has to buy support and reward one's benefactors has been well-known and this indeed compromises a basic moral position that one would like to take. You have to soft-peddle some issues and sweep under the carpet unpleasant things. This is the very stuff of politics which makes it not to everyone's taste. Some have preferred to keep away from this. But if one has to get involved one comes to terms with politics but tries to keep things under some control.

It is to the credit of our country that many have managed to emerge out of the arena of politics with a fairly clean image – Chaudhary Charan Singh, Kamraj, Balwantraji Mehta, Gulzarilal Nanda, S. Nijalingappa – to give names at random. But that this is becoming something increasingly difficult is something on which almost all will agree. But what is striking is the rapidity with which public values have collapsed.

Collapse of Values

This deceleration of values worldwide has to be accounted for and one explanation is the depletion of the stock of religion and a sense of individual responsibility to the Almighty that it entailed. While religiosity has gained ground, a genuine religious attitude is totally absent all around. The accumulated religious-moral capital has gradually been nibbled away for two

centuries and the gods have been relegated into the world of the celluloid to arouse children and offer entertainment to the older. The deep moral commitments that traditional religions embodied have been forgotten. Secular ideological values like socialism and its attendant sense of personal integrity and probity briefly did service and this explains the politics of the Scandinavian countries and the comparatively cleaner personal record of some socialist and even communist leaders.

Not only politicians but the public too as a whole have been gradually immune to common moral values. Traditionally, in our country, the kings and zamindars were a law unto themselves and were not supposed to be within ordinary decencies. However, in the independence movement, rectitude in matters political was the prevailing dominant philosophy of governance. Gandhian idealism had seeped deep into the consciousness of the political elite and a sense of dedication was widely spread not because the public expected this but this was the done thing.

But it did not take long for these ideals to be denuded. The fruits of office, the enormous temptations in the way were so attractive that he would have been a man of irreproachable moral fibre who could resist the fleshpots. Also the public did not expect the rulers

to abide by standards. Their erstwhile rulers, it will be recalled, were not accountable to anyone.

Also, the newly recruited members of the ruling class had not been educated for long or had served in public life to have imbibed the ideals that came so naturally to an older generation. They totally were unaware of the sense of direction that political leaders are expected to provide, they were far from concerned about the future of the country and their people. Above all, they were unaware of the unborn generations to whom they owed some obligations. After all, politicians come and go, but a statesman worth his salt is concerned with the immediate and distant future.

A Gladiatorial Sport

A facile philosophy of winner takes all threw overboard all restraints and continuing importuning of members of the caste, of the neighbourhood, could not be resisted. Since all politics was seen essentially as casteist, it was natural that benefits should percolate to one's caste – the larger sights were lost sight of.

To the public, elections have become a gladiatorial sport and the casting of one's vote is but a minute part of the happenings. The *humshe* lasts for almost a month and it is seen as a free spectacle where adversaries battle against one

another with fair means and foul, where the tricks or the moves resorted to in buying support, the theatricals all tickle the viewer and it gives a needed relief from the tedium of everyday life.

That voting can change the political set up, that it is an assertion of one's deep sense of commitment to the larger stage of politics, that it is a matter of individual choice and as an assertion or rejection of a particular party and all that it stands for – all these important dimensions of our electoral exercise are forgotten, the serious dimensions taking a back seat. Above all, among the persons who stand for elections, there are not many with whom one would want to be seen hobnobbing, many of them are disgusting characters and of questionable probity. The average person has indeed a low expectation of any electoral outcome, he says a curse on both your houses and is resigned to get along irrespective of the results.

An Invalid Assumption

One of the unexamined

myths of modern politics is that in elections, people cast their votes rationally and that there is a finality about them which is unquestionable. The assumption that people know what is best for them and that this must be respected is one of the fundamentals. What happens if the findings go contrary to commonsense? We have seen free elections with no exercise of any overt coercion or foul play yet returning with an unbelievable majority the present Chief Minister of Tamilnadu when there was almost a near unanimous opinion that she had indulged in unparalleled corrupt practices and encouraged political cronies to play ducks and drakes with public responsibility and that she had a cynicism about politics that was unheard of from any aspirant chief minister.

Global Phenomenon

Unfortunately, this is not confined only to our unhappy land. A recent news item reports that the French President Jacques Chirac "will go on television to tell the people ... to explain who paid for

the expensive trips he made with family and friends to a range of places from Mauritius to the Alps." Between 1992 and 1995, he spent £240,000 on holidays with family and friends. (*The Hindu*, July 8, 2001, p.12). A few weeks earlier, the son of the late President Mitterand, Jean-Christopher, had to answer queries in the court relating to financial misconduct. The last decade has seen an incredible decline in the conduct of politicians, from China to Peru, all involving financial scandals or inappropriate conduct. Relatives of the elder President Bush, of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher and of course Clinton's family have all been put on the carpet, not to mention the happenings in South Korea, Japan and Peru. Since this is a global phenomenon, we in India should not be unduly harsh on our public figures! There is no doubt that from the very highest to the lowest, everyone is tainted with the mask of Cain!

DR. R. SRINIVASAN, professor of political science (retd.) Bombay University, is associate editor of *Freedom First* and a member of the Indian Liberal Group.

What do the Election Results Indicate?

Practically nothing, except that (a) people were only thinking 'locally', not 'nationally', (b) that they are not too happy with the NDA's performance but tolerate it because of the TINA (There Is No Alternative) factor, (c) there was really *no real choice* for the people; so they opted for changing old rulers, DMK in T.N., AGP in Assam, CPM in Kerala and in West Bengal they were not sure if Mamata is mature or good enough to rule.

To say that it is a sweeping mandate for Jayalalitha and, therefore, corruption, is wrong. Only 59 out of 100 voted, 41 *refused to vote*. Secondly, of the 59 who voted, 29 voted for Jayalalitha and 26 for DMK. Can this be called 'sweeping', 'landslide'? Jayalalitha should not forget that 29 voted for her but 71 *did not*. Besides, she is supposed to get elected within 6 months – how, when she is debarred from contesting? Does democracy mean 'numbers' (30% in

this case alone or norms, values, morality? If there was PR (proportional representation), both the AIADMK and DMK would have got almost the same number of seats – AIADMK only a few more. So where is this 'sweeping mandate'?

MR. ARVIND DESHPANDE is Hon. Secretary, Leslie Sawhney Programme for Training in Democracy, and a member of the Indian Liberal Group.

Arvind Deshpande

Don't Our People Care Any Longer?

Anjali Patil-Gaikwad

It is a sad paradox that although India has a stable democracy, though governments may be unstable, the people holding it in place are of doubtful credibility, to say the least.

The recent elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal highlighted Indian democracy at its worst. While in Tamil Nadu, a woman barred from contesting elections on corruption charges ascended the throne of Chief Minister, the intense rivalry between the CPI (M) and the Trinamool Congress unleashed violence and terror on the common man.

A Sad Paradox

Democracy may have its flaws, but among all the available systems of governance, it has been acknowledged as the best. Logically, it should work very well, because it is the only system in which the people have a say in their own affairs. It is also logical that the people, in their own interests, should choose clean and dedicated candidates to serve the nation. But India is a land that has defied logic time and again. It is a sad paradox that although India has a stable democracy, though governments may be unstable, the people holding it in place are of doubtful credibility to say the least. Our politicians have been accused of murder, abduction, rape, extortion, corruption, and sometimes convicted, of every crime in the book. And yet, hooligans and criminals find their way into representative bodies everywhere from gram panchayats to the central government. Why?

The answer lies largely in our

gullibility. Unscrupulous politicians promise us the impossible and we vote for them. They shout inane slogans like *Garibi Hatao* and our votes are theirs for the asking. Neither they nor we realise that the principles of economics deny this Utopia. They demand votes in the name of caste and religion and their demands do not go unfulfilled. Well, so much for secularism. If none of these tactics work, the options of booth capturing, poll rigging, and rioting are always open.

The Government We Deserve

Over half a century of gimmicks has gone by and we are yet to learn our lessons in democracy. It is now time to stop thinking of democracy as a process in which every adult gets to vote once in five years and gets to slip into complacency in between. We need to realise that we have the power not just to elect our representatives, but to decide the way in which we want to be ruled. If the Tamilians choose to turn a Nelson's eye towards the petty squabbles between Jayalalitha and Karunanidhi, it is not surprising that the two use their power to settle personal scores at the cost of development. If the Bengalis find nothing wrong in the strong-arm tactics employed by the Trinamool and the CPI (M) workers, small wonder then, that flash points are low and the state reels under

violence.

If we Indians take governance to mean violence and corruption, it is only natural that nothing changes from election to election and the electorate suffers. Because, ultimately, we get the government we deserve.

Don't Our People Care?

So, don't our people care? Actually, by and large, they do. Because, a bad government affects their daily bread. It determines the level of security in their lives. On it also depends their standard of living. And our people know this only too well. One has only to look around and talk to anybody with a grievance. Their words are proof enough that they know who has added to their sufferings. Most rant against the *sarkar* for not having any sympathy with them and doing precious little in their interests! We voted for them and now they have turned their backs on us, is the common refrain.

Surely, the malaise is known to us all. What eludes the common man is the cure. The real culprit, then, is the people's ignorance of their rights and the power that democracy bestows upon them. In fact, they are not even sure that they are in a position to do anything at all. There is a sort of helpless resignation among them over the state of affairs because they are

certain that whatever happens up there, they have no role to play in it.

On the other hand, there is a small section of society whose level of awareness is quite high. Let us call it the elite group a small minority with a progressive outlook and access to good education, people who can make a difference if they so choose. Unfortunately, this is the group that doesn't really care. The probable reason seems to be that since these people are well educated, and are quite well to do, changes in governments, riots, high incidence of crime do not really affect them in any manner. So, it doesn't bother most of them much, that things are not the way they should be. They consider their duty as citizens done once they have expressed their concern and they go about their lives, without attempting to do anything constructive.

Futility of Cynicism

There is also a lot of cynicism among these elite of our society. These people know they comprise a small minority and cannot hope to change anything on their own.

To make a difference, they need the help of the uneducated minority. Since this is not forthcoming, helplessness, and ultimately, cynicism set in. However, this elite group must wake up to the fact that it is they who have to make a beginning. The huge gulf between the haves and the have nots needs to be bridged. If these two sections of society come together, much can be done.

Active Citizenship

To begin with, cynicism will get us nowhere. On the contrary, active citizenship can bring about a radical change in the present situation. If Indian democracy is to thrive, the elite have to start taking a healthy interest in it. They should ponder the fact that they are a privileged lot in this country, and that they are at least partly responsible for the rampant ignorance that is the albatross around India's neck. Our people should be made to understand the importance of even a single vote. Further, they should also understand that politicians are not their masters, but their servants, and as such, can be fired if their services are not satisfactory. Given

the inadequacy of our education system and the high rate of illiteracy, this kind of education in an individual's rights and privileges can best be imparted with the initiative of the elite.

Networking

Above all, networking is vital. One can only do so much in one's capacity as an individual. A common platform, bringing together people from all over the nation with the good of the people at heart, will be more effective in tackling problems. But since this will take time and resources, a viable alternative would be for like-minded people in smaller areas to merge interests. Pressure groups can be formed at a local level, and they can serve a dual purpose. First, they can keep tabs on local administrative bodies by persisting in demands for development, accountability, and more transparency in money matters. Second, they can identify problems specific to their respective areas, and chalk out possible solutions, which can be conveyed to the general public. Thereafter, it becomes a collective responsibility. Whatever action is to be taken, should be taken with the help of the laity. Politicians who use the electorate as a short ladder to high success should thus be weeded out carefully and systematically.

School for *Netas*

Our problems are plenty, and there are very few immediate solutions. But in a largely dismal atmosphere, a ray of hope comes from a novel project currently being carried out in the newly formed state of Jharkhand. *Netagiri*, a school for future politicians, launched last April by a former politician, Raj Ranjan, is a school with a difference.

Performance-based Politics

Think for a moment that all our *netas* are involved in politics to "serve" people. How do you determine how well the politician has "performed" in serving people. How do you compare one politician with another?

I suggest that there be performance-based incentive for a person to enter politics.

Let's say that when an MLA takes office there were 100 children in his constituency, out of school, if at the end of first year he is able to bring that number down to 50, he gets paid a bonus.

Similarly performance can be judged by an independent agency in areas like education improvement, employment generation, pollution abatement, industries opened etc. in the constituency.

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It teaches its students the ABC of governance and imbibes in them a sense of moral right and wrong, which is so sorely missed in today's crop of politicians. The idea is to train young blood in such a way that they look upon politics as a means to serve the people rather than as a means for personal gain. When changes at the grassroots level are effected, they will automatically be reflected on a larger scale. But until such changes become widespread, the onus of sweeping our politics clean lies with the people.

Change is Possible

As things stand today, we are deep in the muck of corruption. To add to our woes, we are easily swayed by those who seek to incite us for their private gains. Our representatives are taking undue advantage of the very people who voted them to power. Under the prevailing conditions, India cuts a sorry picture abroad, and discourages foreign investment, which in turn compounds our problem of poverty. All this can be changed. Two sections of society,

which stand poles apart today, need to join hands. One is the minority with the means but without the will to change things and other is the majority with the will but without the means. When these two come together, the rest, even though not easy, won't be impossible any longer.

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Democracy on the Decline in Tamilnadu

C. Narendra

The actions of the newly-elected government in Tamil Nadu would do fascism proud. Arresting a septugunarian in the middle of the night, dragging him out with a policeman standing close-by with a *lathi* in his hand as if to ensure that the old former chief minister does not escape is condemnable. The Indian Constitution and the institutions of democracy were thrown into the dustbin.

The servile behaviour of members of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) gave one the impression that they belonged to a sub-divisional service. This was in marked contrast to the behaviour of the Indian Police Service (IPS) in Andhra some years earlier. In 1983 the then government in Andhra Pradesh headed by N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) was thrown out by the

Governor, Ramlal by name, a Congressman. To prevent the members of the state legislature belonging to NTR from being induced to defect, NTR had them put up in a place in Karnataka. When the Chief Minister who had replaced NTR asked the police to bring the MLAs back to the Assembly, the police politely refused. In 1994, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu put more than 150 MLAs owing allegiance to him in a hotel. When NTR sought police help to bring the MLAs to the Assembly, the police rejected his request. In both cases the chief ministers concerned headed minority governments. The attitude on both occasions by the permanent executive was in keeping with the best traditions of democratic rule.

On the other hand in Tamil

Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha had an overwhelming majority in the Assembly and there was no reason for her to have done what she did. She should have remembered that that she was elected to serve the people and not harass her political opponents. At the time of independence, Tamil-nadu was a front-ranking state where education and governance was concerned. Over the years it lost its place and lags behind the national average where literacy, health facilities and potable drinking water availability among others, are concerned.

The sad fact is that, as the people of Tamilnadu know to their misfortune, both parties are corrupt and there is little to choose between them.

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A Great Leap Backwards

S. S. Bankeshwar

The founding fathers of our Constitution perhaps could never have anticipated or foreseen that a time might come after three or four decades, when dacoit kings and queens, scamsters, gangsters and underworld dons in our country – the law breakers – would one day become our law makers; or that the dynamics of our democracy would make the law redundant; or that our politicians might follow the letter of our Constitution, while violating the spirit of the law; or that our democracy would ignore questions about constitutional ambiguity and moral legitimacy because of the 'authority' of popular mandate; or that a person convicted by law, but 'acquitted' by the "People's Court" (voters) would become a Chief Minister; or that a convict with a massive popular mandate might legitimize his or her criminal activities and adorn our parliament or legislative assemblies and even come to power; or that a convict unfit to fight elections, having been disqualified by the Election Commission, could become a chief minister; or that political power would make a mockery of official prosecution.

The late Shri H. V. Kamath and the late Shri Mahavir Tyagi (contemptuously dubbed by our late Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, as the two clowns of our parliament) did foresee such a possibility while participating in one of the debates in the Constituent Assembly. Their idea or plea was dismissed with contempt. Now, these two 'clowns' have been proved right!

Democracy means mobo-

cracy, when there is no harmony between the spirit and the letter of our Constitution or the rule of law. Morality and Truth are now disposable items for our political class in general.

The 21st century heralds a new age in our criminalised politics. It is needless to mention the names of our guilty politicians, as they are well known.

Our political convicts have nothing to lose, but everything to gain, including the chief minister-ship of a State and even the prime ministership of India!

If the 'Court of the People' is superior to our Supreme Court or High Courts or any Court, why have these courts and the rule of law at all?

The Madras High Court suspended Jayalalitha's sentence, but not her conviction. Since Jayalalitha had filed her nomination papers from four constituencies, all her nomination papers were rightly rejected. Yet, the AIADMK MLAs unanimously elected her as their leader!

"There is the people's verdict and there is the rule of law. The first cannot override the second," said Shri G.V.G. Krishnamurthy, our former Election Commissioner and rightly so. He added, "The swearing in of Jayalalitha as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu is a slap on the face of all our courts. A thief is sent to jail, but a convicted political criminal becomes the Chief Minister! Why have the Prevention of Corruption Act at all? Is it meant only for our bureaucrats and ordinary citizens, while politicians

can get away with it?" he rightly asked.

Our politicians have taken undue advantage of the glaring lacuna in our system, where the RPA and EC guidelines prevent a convict from contesting an election, but our Constitution permits the Governor to appoint him or her as Chief Minister for six months.

Can Veerappan, Chota Shakeel or even Dawood Ibrahim become Chief Ministers or the Prime Minister lawfully, because of a 'mandate' from voters in the constituencies contested by them with their money and muscle power, or without even any mandate, for five years, with a one day break before the end of every six months?"

What is called for is an amendment to our Constitution, taking care of its departures from the RPA provisions and injecting objective criteria for the Governor to adhere to. The Constitutional Review Committee should attend to the following issues immediately:

1. Whether law breakers should be allowed to become law makers'
2. Minimum qualifications for voters and contesting candidates (at least primary education, say the 4th standard), should be mandatory.

In the history of the world, no person without even primary education has emerged as a political genius, the only exceptions are, perhaps, in the fields of arts, music and sports.

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Rewarding the Corrupt

Seetha

Every time we cast a vote for a corrupt politician,
we are as much guilty as the victim.

The country was outraged over the treatment meted out by Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalitha to former chief minister M. Karunanidhi on June 30. A little over a month earlier, there was outrage over Jayalalitha becoming chief minister despite corruption charges against her. The Tamil Nadu governor Fatima Beevi was roundly castigated for having sworn Jayalalitha in. There were endless debates on the legal, technical and moral aspects of the decision. But there's another, far more worrying aspect, which should engage the nation's attention.

An Indulgent People

This is not about Jayalalitha or about Fatima Beevi, or even the law. It is about the indulgent attitude we, as a people, have towards corruption in public life. The only place where one finds indignation about corruption is in newspaper articles, letters to the editor, seminars and television talk shows. And in all these, we – the middle class – are quick to blame the politicians for things coming to such a pass. But when it comes to

showing these politicians the door, when it comes to exercising the ultimate weapon to fight corruption, all of us prefer to turn away.

How else does one explain the fact that the AIADMK gets an obscenely overwhelming majority in spite of projecting Jayalalitha as chief minister? (It's another matter that even if it hadn't done so, it would have been Jayalalitha who would have been the *de facto* chief minister). How can one explain the victory of Shri Neelalokahitadasan Nader, accused of sexual molestation? How does one explain the fact that Rabri Devi (Laloo Yadav, actually) came back to power in Bihar in spite of the fodder scam and the complete abuse of power and lack of governance there? Remember, no one is charging the AIADMK or Shri N. Nader with having rigged the elections. In Bihar, rigging may have played a part, but that alone could not have brought Laloo and Rabri back to power. Clearly, people have voted for all these politicians.

All of us believe in the supremacy of the people's court and the wisdom of the voters. That,

never mind the flaws in our laws and legal systems, corrupt politicians will meet their comeuppance in the election arena. We take strength from the drubbing the Congress got in 1989 where Bofors was the main plank of the opposition parties. But a lot seems to have changed in these past 12 years. Corruption, obviously, is no longer an election issue. It is this which is more worrying than criminals using muscle and gun power to win elections. This is not condoning poll violence. But when someone has to resort to violence, it means they know that people, if given a choice, will not vote for them. It means people are sufficiently revolted by them to use the anonymity of the ballot box to deliver their verdict against them. It means people will not tolerate them willingly.

In Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar and countless other cases, voters have voted for corruption. The victory of the corrupt in elections shows an acceptance of corruption as a way of life. What a sad day for Indian democracy.

Remember, when we blame politicians and bureaucrats for corruption, we are merely passing the buck. Every time we give a bribe for something we can afford to wait for or something we can do without, every time we cast a vote for a corrupt politician – we are as much the guilty as the victim.

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A Worrisome Response

An opinion poll by *India Today* shows what a difficult task we liberals have before us. It's actually the response to two questions that is worrying. The first is who is the best prime minister India ever had. 43% said Indira Gandhi, the next was Nehru with 13%.

The second question is who is the best person to lead the Congress if Sonia is replaced? Priyanka Gandhi wins hands down with 23%. Manmohan Singh comes far behind with 11%.

Clearly dictatorship and dynastic rule don't disgust our people.

Seetha

"THOSE WHO ARE INCLINED TO COMPROMISE,
NEVER MAKE A REVOLUTION"

- Kemal Ataturk



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On the Origins of the 1991 Economic Reform.

Encounter with Rajiv Gandhi

Subroto Roy

I met Rajiv Gandhi for the first time on 18th September 1990 thanks to an introduction by Siddhartha Shankar Ray. We met a half dozen or so times until his assassination in May 1991. Yet our encounter was intense and consequential, and resulted directly in the change of the Congress Party's economic thinking prior to the 1991 elections. I had with me the results of an interdisciplinary "perestroika" project for India which I had led at an American university for some years; this manuscript, later published by Sage, was given by me to Rajiv Gandhi, and was instrumental in the change of thinking that took place. It contained inter alia an unpublished memorandum by Milton Friedman done at the request of the Government of India in November 1955. After Rajiv's assassination, *The Statesman* center-pages July 31-August 2, 1991 published some of the other work I had done for him. Ten years after this death, I look back on the encounter with some nostalgia.

That first day, Rajiv came to the door to greet me. He was a handsome tall man with the most charming smile and manner, seemed pleased to see me and put me at ease at once. We exchanged books; I gave him my *Philosophy of Economics and Pricing, Planning and Politics: A Study of Economic Distortions in India*, as well as the manuscript of the Indian "Perestroika" I had led for the University of Hawaii and the East West Centre since 1986. He gave me a copy of a hagiography of Nehru that had just been published.

"Public Goods"

He began by talking about how important he felt *panchayati raj* to be, and said he had been on the verge of passing major legislation on it but then he lost the election. He asked me to spend some time thinking about it, and said he would get the papers sent to me. I said *panchayati raj* could be seen as decentralized provision of public goods, and gave the economist's definition of public goods as those essential for the functioning of the market economy, like the Rule of Law, roads, fresh water, and sanitation, but which were unlikely

to appear through competitive forces. I distinguished between federal, state and local levels and said many of the most significant public goods were best provided locally. Rajiv had not heard the term "public goods" before, and he beamed a smile and his eyes lit up as he voiced the words slowly, seeming to like the concept immensely. It occurred to me that for most of his life, he had been a family man and a pilot of commercial aircraft. Now he seemed intrigued to find there could be systematic ways of thinking about navigating a country's governance by common pursuit of reasonable judgement.

Redistribution of Wealth

I said the wastefulness of the public sector had drained scarce resources which should have gone instead to provide public goods. Since the public sector was owned by the public, it could be privatized by giving away its share to the public, preferably to *panchayats* of the poorest villages. The shares would become tradeable, drawing out black money, and inducing a historic redistribution of wealth while at the same time achieving

greater efficiency by transferring the public sector to private hands. Rajiv seemed to like that idea too, and said he tried to follow a maxim of Indira Gandhi's that every policy should be seen in terms of how it affected the common man. I wryly said the common man often spent away his money on alcohol, to which he said at once it might be better to think of the common woman instead.

Many Problems

The Hawaii project had identified the Congress's lack of internal elections as a problem; when I raised it, he spoke of how he, as Congress President, had been trying to tackle the issue of bogus electoral rolls. I said the judiciary seemed to be in a mess due to the backlog of cases, many of which seemed related to land or rent-control, and it may be risky to move towards a free economy without a properly functioning judicial system or at least a viable system of contractual enforcement. I said a lot of problems which should be handled by the law in the courts in India were instead getting politicized and decided on the streets. Rajiv had seen the problems

of the judiciary and said he had good relations with the Chief Justice's office, which could be put to use to improve the working of the judiciary.

Our project had worked on Pakistan too, and I went on to say we should solve the problem with Pakistan in a definitive manner. Rajiv spoke of how close his government had been in 1988 to a mutual withdrawal from Siachen. But Zia-ul-Haq was then killed and it became more difficult to implement the same thing with Benazir Bhutto, because, he said, as a democrat, she was playing to anti-Indian sentiments while he had found it somewhat easier to deal with the military. I pressed him on the long-term future relationship between the countries and he agreed a common market was the only real long-term solution. I wondered if he could find himself in a position to make a bold move like offering to go to Pakistan and addressing their Parliament to break the impasse. He did not say anything but seemed to think about the idea. He then talked about his visit to China, which seemed to him an important step towards normalization. He said he had not seen (or been shown) any absolute poverty in China of the sort we have in India. He talked about the Gulf situation, saying he did not disagree with the embargo of Iraq except he wished the ships enforcing the embargo had been under the U.N. flag.

The meeting seemed to go on and I was embarrassed at having taken too much time and that he was being too polite to get me to go. Just before we finally stood up, I expressed a hope that he was looking to the future with an eye to a modern political and economic agenda for the next election, rather than getting bogged down with the

domestic politics of the moment. That was the kind of hopefulness which had attracted many of my generation in 1985. I said I would happily work in any way to define a long-term agenda. His eyes lit up and as we shook hands to say goodbye, he said he would be in touch with me again.

Drafting A Manifesto

The next day, I was called and asked to stay in Delhi for a few days as Mr. Gandhi wanted me to meet some people. I was not told whom I was to meet but that there would be a meeting on Monday, 24th September. On Saturday, the Monday meeting was postponed to Tuesday because one of the persons had not been able to get a flight into Delhi. I pressed to know what was going on, and was told I was to meet Gen. K. V. Krishan Rao, V. Krishnamurthy, M. K. Rasgotra, and Sam Pitroda. The group met for the first time on September 25 in the afternoon. Rasgotra did not arrive. The rest of us gathered in the waiting room next to V. George's office. They knew each other but none of them knew me and I was happy enough to be ignored. It seemed mysterious while we gathered, especially when the tall well-dressed General arrived, since none of us quite knew why we had been called by Rajiv; the General remarked to the others that he had responded at once to the call but could not get a flight into Delhi for a day. On that Tuesday, when our group was finally called in by Rajiv, we entered hesitantly now knowing what the meeting was going to be about.

Rajiv introduced me to the others, then spoke of why he had gathered us together. He wanted us to come up with proposals and recommendations for the direction the country should take on an

assumption the Congress Party was returned to power in the near future. He said it would help him to have an outside view from specialists who were not party functionaries, though the others obviously had been involved with the Congress governments before. Rajiv said we were being asked to write a draft of what may enter the manifesto for the next election which we should assume to be forthcoming by April 1991. I asked what may have become of the "perestroika" manuscript I had given him at our previous meeting. He said he had gotten it copied and bound, and that along with my 1984 monograph, it had been circulated among a few of his party colleagues who included P. Chidambaram and Mani Shankar Aiyar.

The initial meeting left us breathless and excited. Yet within a few days, the others became extremely tied up for personal causes, and I found myself alone in getting on with doing what we had been explicitly asked to do. I felt I should get done what I could in the time I had while keeping the others informed.

Getting to Work

Rajiv had said to me at our first meeting that he felt the Congress was ready for elections. This did not seem to me to be really the case. He actually seemed very isolated in his office, with George seeming to be his conduit to the outside world. I decided to start by trying to write a definite set of general principles which could guide and inform thought about the direction of policy. I spent the evening of October 26 in the offices at Rajiv's residence, preparing an economic policy memorandum on a portable Toshiba computer of his, the first laptop I ever used. After Rajiv's assassination, this was part

of what was published in *The Statesmen* July 31-August 2, 1991.

Rajiv read the work and met me on October 30 or 31, even though he was down badly with a sore throat after his *sadbhavana* travels around the country; he looked odd clad in khadi with a muffler and gym shoes. He said he liked very much what I had written and had given it to be read by younger Congress leaders who would discuss it for the manifesto, for an election he again said, he expected early in 1991. I said I was grateful for his kind words and inquired whom he had shown the work to. This time he said Chidambaram and Jagdish Tytler, and the latter's name made me wince.

Gulf War

In December 1990, I was back in Hawaii when I was called on the phone to ask whether I could come to Delhi. With the rise of Chandrashekhar as Prime Minister, Rajiv had called a meeting of the group. But I could not go. In January 1991, the Gulf War brought an odd twist to my interaction with Rajiv. On January 15, the UN deadline for the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait passed without Iraqi compliance, and American-led forces started the heavy aerial bombardment of Iraq. The American media had built up the impending war as one of utter devastation and mass killing, especially when the American infantry became engaged. Estimated casualties on the American side alone were being wildly exaggerated by the number of "body-bags" being ordered by the Pentagon. An even larger conflagration was being imagined if Israel entered the fighting, while Saddam Hussein had vowed to set fire to Kuwait's oil-fields before retreating.

I, like everyone else, erroneously believed the media's hyperbole about the impending regional catastrophe. On January 16, just after the bombing of Iraq had begun, I called an American family friend who had retired from a senior foreign policy role and who had known me from when I was an infant. In informal conversation, I mentioned to him that since other channels had by then become closed, an informal channel might be attempted via India, specifically via Rajiv who was still Leader of the Opposition but on whom the Chandrashekhar Government depended. The sole aim would be to compel an immediate Iraqi withdrawal without further loss of life. What transpired over the next few days was that a proposal to that effect was communicated at Rajiv's decision to a high level of the Iraqis on the one hand, and evidently received their assent, while at the same time, it was mentioned to the authorities on the American side. But nothing came of it. Rajiv initiated a correspondence with Chandrashekhar beginning January 19, demanding a coherent formulation of Indian policy in the Gulf war, and faxed me copies of this.

By February 8, *The Times of India* led by saying Rajiv's stand "on the Gulf War demonstrates both his experience and perspicacity ... in consonance with an enlightened vision of national interest", and urged Rajiv to "give the nation some respite from [the] non-government" of Chandrashekhar. My phone conversations with Rajiv during this time were taped by me, because notes could not be taken at the necessary speed; after his death, I gave his widow in December 6, 1991, a copy of the tape for her personal record.

I returned to Delhi on

Monday, March 18, 1991 as new elections had been announced. Rasgotra said I should speak to Krishna Rao, and the next day, Krishna Rao met me for several hours. I told him what I thought were the roots and results of the Gulf war. He in turn generously told me about the group's meeting with Rajiv in December. He said our group had now been asked to draft the manifesto, reporting to a political committee of three senior party leaders who would report to Rajiv. They were Narasimha Rao, Pranab Mukherjee and Madhavsingh Solanki. Krishna Rao said I should be in touch with Krishnamurthy who was preparing the economic chapters of the draft of the manifesto.

Krishnamurthy told me he had brought in A. M. Khusro to the group, and there would be a 5 p.m. meeting at Khusro's office at the Aga Khan Foundation. I arrived early and was delighted to meet Khusro, and he seemed pleased to meet me. Khusro seemed excited by my view that India and Pakistan were spending excessively on defence against each other, which seemed to resonate with his own ideas, and he remarked the fiscal disarray in India and Pakistan could start to be set right by mutually agreed cuts in military spending. (Khusro was eventually to accompany Prime Minister Vajpayee to Lahore in 1999).

Working on the Draft

Krishnamurthy had prepared a draft dated March 18, 1991 of the economic aspects of the manifesto. After our discussions, Krishnamurthy was hospitable enough to open it to change. That evening, I worked through the night and the next morning he got by noon copies of a revised version with all the members of the group. The next

day, Friday, March 22, I worked from dawn to get the penultimate draft to Krishna Rao before noon as planned the night before. Rasgotra arrived shortly, and the three of us working until evening to finish the job. I left for an hour to print out copies for a meeting of the entire group, where the draft we were going to submit would come to be decided.

When I got back, I found one member had launched an extended and quite unexpected attack on what I had written on economic policy. Would someone like Manmohan Singh, it was demanded, agree with all this talk we were putting in about liberalisation? I replied I did not know what Manmohan Singh's response would be but I knew he had been in Africa heading something called the South-South Commission. I said what was needed was a clear, forceful statement designed to restore India's credit-worthiness, and the confidence of international markets. I said what we should aim for was to make clear, e.g. to the IMF's man in Delhi when that person read the manifesto, that the Congress Party at least knew its economics and was planning to take very bold new steps in the direction of progress. Others came to my defence saying the draft we had done greatly improved on the March 18 draft. For a bare half hour or so with all of us present, the draft was agreed upon. Later that night, I gave Krishna Rao the final copy of the draft manifesto which he was going to give Narasimha Rao, and sent a copy to Krishnamurthy who was liaising with Mukherjee. Pitroda got a copy on a floppy disc for Solanki.

In its constructive aspects, the March 22, 1991 draft of the Congress manifesto went as follows regarding economic policy:

"Chapter V : Agenda For Economic Action

"1. Control of Inflation: ... The Congress believes the inflation and price-rise of essential commodities ... is a grave macroeconomic problem facing the country today. It has hit worst the poorest and weakest sections of our people and those with fixed incomes like pensioners. The Congress will give the highest priority to maintaining the prices of essential commodities, increasing their production and supply using all appropriate economic instruments.

"2. Macroeconomic Policy Framework: To control inflation of the general price-level, the Congress will provide a predictable long-term policy framework. The average Indian household and business will not have their lives and plans disrupted by sudden changes in economic policy. Coherent monetary policy measures will be defined as called for by the Report of Experts of the Reserve Bank of India in 1985. The Long-Term Fiscal Policy introduced by the Congress Government of 1984-1989 will be revived. Medium and long-term export-import policies will be defined.

"The basis for a strong India must be a strong economy. The Congress believes a high rate of real growth is essential for securing a strong national defence, social justice and equity, and a civilised standard of living for all. As the party of self-reliance, Congress believes resources for growth must be generated from within our own economy. This means all wasteful and unproductive government spending has to be cut, and resources transferred from areas of low priority to areas of high national priority. Subsidies have to be rationalised and reduced, and

productivity of investments already made has to be improved. The widening gap between revenue receipts and revenue expenditure must be corrected through fiscal discipline, and the growing national debt brought under control as a matter of high priority.

"These policies in a consistent framework will create the environment for the freeing of the rupee in due course, making it a hard currency of the world of which our nation can be proud. Public resources are not unlimited. These have to be allocated to high priority areas like essential public services, poverty-reduction, strategic sectors and protection of the interests of the weaker sections of society.

"Government has to leave to the initiative and enterprise of the people what can be best done by themselves. Government can now progressively vacate some areas of activity to the private, cooperative and non-government sectors. Black money in the parallel economy has become the plague of our economic and political system. This endangers the social and moral fabric of our nation. Artificial price controls, excessive licensing, capacity restrictions, outmoded laws on rent control and urban ceiling, and many other outdated rules and regulations have contributed to pushing many honest citizens into dishonest practices.

"The Congress will tackle the problem of black money at its roots by attacking all outmoded and retrograde controls, and simplifying procedures in all economic spheres.

"At the same time, the tax-base of the economy must be increased via simplifications and rationalisation of tax-rates and coverage, user-fees for public goods, and reduction of taxes wherever

possible to improve incentives and stimulate growth.

"3. Panchayati Raj: India's farmers and *khet mazdoors* are the backbone of our economy. Economic development is meaningless until their villages provide them a wholesome rural life. The Congress will revitalise Panchayati Raj institutions to decentralise decision-making, so that development can truly benefit local people most effectively.

"4. Rural Development: Basic economic infrastructure like roads, communications, fresh drinking water, and primary health and education for our children must reach all our villages. The Congress believes such a policy will also relieve pressures from migration on our towns and cities ...

"Through the Green Revolution which the Congress pioneered over 25 years, our farmers have prospered. Now our larger farmers must volunteer to contribute more to the national endeavour, and hence to greater equity and overall economic development. Equity demands land revenue should be mildly graduated so that small farmers holding less than one acre pay less land revenue per acre ...

*

"9. Education and Health: The long-run prosperity of our nation depends on the general state of education, health and well-being of our people. Small families give themselves more choice and control over their own lives. Improving female literacy, promoting the welfare of nursing mothers and reducing infant mortality will have a direct bearing on reducing the birth-rate and improving the health and quality of all our people.

"Primary and secondary

education has high social returns and is the best way in the long-run for achievement of real equality. Efforts will be made to reduce the cost of education for the needy through concessional supply of books and other study materials, scholarships and assistance for transportation and residential facilities.

"The Congress Party pledges to dedicate itself to promoting education, especially in rural areas and especially for girls and the weaker sections of society. The next Congress Government will prepare and launch a 10-year programme for introduction of free and compulsory primary education for all children of school age. It will continue to emphasise vocational bias in education, integrating it closely with employment opportunities ...

*

"11. Industrial Efficiency: Our industrial base in the private and public sectors are the core of our economy. What we have achieved until today has been creditable, and we are self-reliant in many areas. Now the time has come for industry to provide more efficiency and better service and product-quality for the Indian consumer.

"The public sector has helped the Indian economy since Independence and many national goals have been achieved. Now it has become imperative that the management of public sector units is made effective, and their productivity increased.

"Major steps must be taken for greater accountability and market-orientation. Failure to do this will make our country lose more and more in the international economy. Budgetary support will be given only for public sector units in the core and infrastructure

sectors. Emphasis will be on improving performance and productivity of existing investments, not on creating added organisations or overmanning. Units not in the core sector will be privatised gradually. Even in core sectors like Telecommunications, Power, Steel and Coal, incremental needs can be taken care of by the private sector. The Government-Enterprise interface must be properly defined in a White Paper.

"The Congress believes privatisation must distribute the profits equitably among the people of India. In order to make our public enterprises truly public, it is essential that the shares of many such enterprises are widely held by the members of the general public and workers. Congress pledges to allot a proportion of such shares to the rural Panchayats and Nagarpalikas. This will enhance their asset-base and yield income for their development activities, as well as improve income-distribution.

"12. Investment and Trade: Indian industry, Government and professional managers are now experienced enough to deal with foreign companies on an equal footing, and channel direct foreign investment in desired directions. Foreign companies often bring access to advanced technological know-how, without which the nation cannot advance. The Congress Government will formulate a pragmatic policy channelling foreign investment into areas important to the national interest. Every effort must be made also to encourage Indians who are outside India to invest in the industry, trade and real estate of their homeland.

"Because of the protected and inflationary domestic market, Indian industry has become

complacent and the incentive for industrial exports has been weakened. When all production is comfortably absorbed at home, Indian industry makes the effort to venture into exports only as a last resort. This must change. A Congress Government will liberalise and deregulate industry to make it competitive and export-oriented, keeping in mind always the interests of the Indian consumer in commercial policy."

"Export-oriented and predictable commercial policies will be encouraged. Existing procedural constraints and bottlenecks will be removed. Quotas and tariffs will be rationalised. Thrust areas for export-development will be identified and monitored. Efforts will be made to develop a South Asian Community. Trade and economic cooperation among South Asian countries must be increased and simplified."

This March 22 draft of the Congress's intended economic policies got circulated and discussed, and from it rumours appeared that the Congress party was planning to launch a major economic reform in India which

had been exactly the intended effect. When I met Manmohan Singh via S. S. Ray in September 1993 in Washington, Ray told him and his senior aides the Congress manifesto had been written on my computer. Manmohan Singh smiled and said that when he had been challenged by Arjun Singh and other senior members of the Congress, he had pointed to the manifesto. Yet, oddly enough, the published Congress manifesto in April 1991 was as tepid and rhetorical as usual, as if some party hack had had a loss of stomach for the real thing at the last moment. It was the March 22 draft which got discussed and circulated, and the Indian economic reform since July 1991 corresponded in certain basic ways to its contents as reproduced above, specifically the bold change of attitude towards economic policy that came to be signalled by Narasimha Rao. Rao himself (who, before the elections, had been due to retire), initially claimed authorship of the reform until January 1995, when he publicly acknowledged he had received the materials from Rajiv Gandhi. Manmohan Singh has not (except when he ran for Parliament)

claimed to have been the author of the reforms but said he received the change of direction from the Prime Minister who had appointed him Finance Minister. Jairam Ramesh has recently claimed that from June 1991 onwards, he and Pranab Mukherjee were invited by Rao to write the reform. In truth, as I experienced it, the change of direction came to occur when a young progressive Leader of the Opposition and Congress President met an even younger academic who had with him a completed "perestroika" research project designed for India. The academic had also predicted to those around the leader that the leader seemed to be very vulnerable to terrorism. But nobody listened.

This article is dedicated to Mihir and Purnima Roy, and the memory of Suchandra Bhattacharjee.

Dr. Subroto Roy gained a First at the LSE and received the PhD of the University of Cambridge in 1982 for his thesis "On Liberty and Economic Growth: Preface to a Philosophy for India". Dr. Roy's works include 'Philosophy of Economics: On the Scope of Reason in Economic Inquiry'. He is Professor at IIT Kharagpur's Vinod Gupta School of Management since 1996. Dr. Subroto Roy is a member of the Indian Liberal Group.



The foundation for Science as well as for Religion is wonder. Man's greatest endowment is the sense of wonder and the spirit of enquiry following it. It is for Science to find out the answers to wonder through investigation and experiment. When we reach the limit of such investigation and wonder still remains unanswered, we pass on from wonder to the awe that is Worship.

C. Rajagopalachari
Swarajya, February 22, 1964

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The Rural Perspective

Kisans in Distress

Bhanu Pratap Singh

What is the reason for the increasing rural poverty? Is it due to persisting inclement weather that our agricultural growth is stagnating? Have we run short of natural resources which support the rural population? Have we fully exhausted the potential of our farm sector?

The National Sample Survey Organisation of the Government of India had some time back reported that the incidence of rural poverty had increased to 42.58% in 1998 as against 37.27% in 1993-94. But the Government of India has now come up with an announcement that rural poverty had declined to only 24% in 1999-2000. Though it has been admitted that the latest estimate of poverty is not strictly comparable with the earlier estimates; nevertheless, it has been asserted that these provide clear evidence of a substantial decline in the overall poverty ratio in the country.

One may ask: "When the estimates are not comparable, how can the claim of substantial decline in rural poverty be accepted, particularly in the light of the large number of suicides committed by farmers in various parts of the country? All the recent trends, relating to the rural economy, point in the opposite direction. The growth rate of agricultural production has sharply declined.

There has also been a perceptible decline in the prices of nearly all farm products. According to the National Income Accounts, the G.D.P. growth rate in the farm sector has been no more than 0.8% per annum, during the last two years, which is less than half the growth rate in population. Increase

in employment in rural areas, has also been no more than 0.67% per annum, which again is much below the growth rate in population. The Planning Commission in its Mid-Term Appraisal of the IX Plan has recorded: "During the nineties, the growth rate in availability of foodgrains per capita has come down to (-) 0.28% per annum, as compared to a growth rate in per capita availability of (+) 1.20% per annum during the eighties. The food consumption of the poor in India has gone down in the last 10 years".

What is the reason for the increasing rural poverty? Is it due to persisting inclement weather that our agricultural growth is stagnating? Have we run short of natural

resources which support the rural population? Have we fully exhausted the potential of our farm sector? The reply to all these questions is an emphatic 'No'!

Favourable Climate

According to the Economic Survey 2000-2001, rainfall between 1990 and 2000 has been between 91 to 119 per cent of the normal, which cannot be said to be unsatisfactory.

India is also richly endowed by Nature. Her most



abundant natural resource is her agro-climatic condition. In the world as a whole, the percentage of arable to total land area is only 11; in India, it is 51.5. Our climate also being moderate, enables us to grow two to three crops in a year; whereas in most parts of the world, due to severe winters, only one crop can grow in a year. We, in India, also have more irrigated land than any other country in the world. Yet another vast resource which we have not fully developed, is our human resource. Nearly half of our rural population is illiterate. If we develop our two main resources – agro-climatic and human – which augment each other, India will no longer be the home of the largest number of poor people in the world.

Why Low Productivity?

We are still far from achieving the full potential of our agriculture. According to the Production Year Book 1997 of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), our per hectare productivity of cereals was only 2232 kgms, whereas it was 5298 kgms in the U.S. and 4845 kgms in China. If we increase our productivity even by 50%, rural poverty can be substantially reduced, as has already been demonstrated in the Punjab. The question that calls for a reply from the government is, "Why has per hectare productivity of our agriculture remained so low?"

Adverse Terms of Trade

The poor performance of our agriculture can be attributed to the cumulative impact of the injustices perpetrated against agriculturists, in the last 20 years, by all those who have been in power. Even after the dawn of the economic reforms, there has hardly been any change in the restrictions and control on the movement and trading of farm products. These continue to be

imposed with the only purpose of creating local gluts, and thereby keeping farm prices depressed. The government has been quite successful in these manipulations.

According to Reports of the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, the terms of trade between agriculturists and non-agriculturists with reference to the triennium ending 1971-72=100, have all along been adverse to agriculturists. In other words, agriculturists have all along been paying for their purchases, a higher price than what they were receiving for their produce. Such a huge and persistent adverse terms of trade against farmers have reduced their profits, savings, and ultimately their capacity to invest in land. Capital formation in the farm sector, as a percentage of the total in the country, has sharply declined from 18% in 1980-81 to only 5.5% in 1998-99. The most revealing fact is that the government's own contribution, in percentage terms, towards capital formation in the farm sector, now stands reduced to less than one third of what it was in 1980-81.

N.A.P.'s Diagnosis

It needs to be realized, that unless the government spends more in rural India on the creation of the necessary infrastructure to support a faster growth in agriculture, even higher levels of investments by farmers themselves will not yield the desired results. Lack of infrastructural support is one of the main causes for the backwardness of agriculture in India. This view, has now been substantially corroborated by the Union Ministry of Agriculture, which in its National Agricultural Policy (N.A.P.) has diagnosed the ailments from which Indian agriculture is suffering in the following words:

"Capital inadequacy, lack of infrastructural support and demand

side constraints such as controls on movement, storage and sale of agricultural products etc. have continued to affect the economic viability of the agricultural sector. Consequently, the growth of agriculture has tended to slacken during the nineties. Agriculture has become a relatively unrewarding profession, due to generally unfavourable price regime and low value addition, causing abandoning of farming and increasing migration from rural areas. The situation is likely to be exacerbated further in the wake of integration of agricultural trade in the global system, unless immediate corrective measures are taken".

Illiteracy and Poverty

The above diagnosis by the Ministry of Agriculture of the ailments from which Indian agriculture is suffering is correct. But nothing has so far been done to improve the situation. The Government of India has also so far not taken into cognizance the following facts, relating to agriculture:

- That agriculture is now a modern technique of production, which cannot be readily adopted by functionally illiterate farmers. Whatever the government may claim about the growing percentage of literacy in villages, not even one in four agriculturists of India can measure the length and breadth of his field and calculate the quantity of chemicals that need to be applied to his field. Such farmers cannot adopt the latest techniques of agricultural production.
- That rural poverty cannot be eradicated, or even reduced by distribution of state charity which in any case, is largely swindled on its way to the poor. The only way to reduce poverty is to enable the poor farmers to produce more for themselves, and the nation. This

will, however, be possible only by upgrading the rural economy by providing it a better infrastructure. To do so, Plan Expenditure on Agriculture and Allied activities, Rural Development, Irrigation, Education and Health will have to be raised to the level of at least 50% of the total Plan expenditure, as was done during the First Plan period, but which has now been reduced to less than 29% during the IX Plan. This will have to be raised again to at least 50% if the rural economy is to be revived.

Rotting Foodgrains

- That the Public Distribution System has utterly failed to achieve any of its objectives. It does not provide any real support to farmers, because often, support prices as fixed by the government have not covered even the cost of production and never the increased cost of living of agriculturists. Coarse grains are hardly ever procured. Most of the rice is procured as levy from the rice mills, which are under no obligation to purchase their paddy from farmers at minimum support prices. Also, no less than three-fourths of the total foodgrains procured by the government are only from three states, Punjab, Haryana and Andhra, which produce no more than one-fourth of the total grains produced in the country. The producers of three-fourths of food grains in the country do not get the benefit of either a free market, or of government purchases at the M.S.Ps.

- And lastly, in spite of the ballooning subsidies paid to the Fertiliser Corporation of India (FCI) – Rs.2,850 crores in 1991-92 to Rs.12,125 crores in 2000-2001 – it has failed to achieve any of its objectives. Its ever mounting stocks, rotting in godowns, are due to confusion, corruption and inefficiency in the system, and not

due to over-production of foodgrains in the country. While more than 4.5 crore tons of foodgrains are rotting in government godowns, more than half of our children and their mothers remain undernourished.

The viability of the farm sector cannot be maintained except by maintaining parity between prices received, and prices paid by farmers. The prices received by farmers have always been at a lower level than the prices paid by them. Unless this situation changes, faster development of agriculture will not be possible. To change this situation, a more equitable price policy will have to be adopted, and a more efficient marketing system organized.

Mechanisation

To achieve higher production at lower costs, the process of mechanization of agriculture will have to be accelerated. Agriculture in India is most mechanized in Punjab, where unemployment and the incidence of poverty are much less than in other states in India. Mechanisation reduces the total cost of production, because mechanized power is much cheaper than human power. Japan and South Korea have amply demonstrated, that the small size of land holdings is no impediment to mechanisation of agriculture.

Unfair Competition

Global agricultural markets are yet far from being a level playing field. How unfair is the competition in agriculture between developed and developing countries is evident from the following comments made by the World Bank in its Annual Report on Global Economic Reforms:

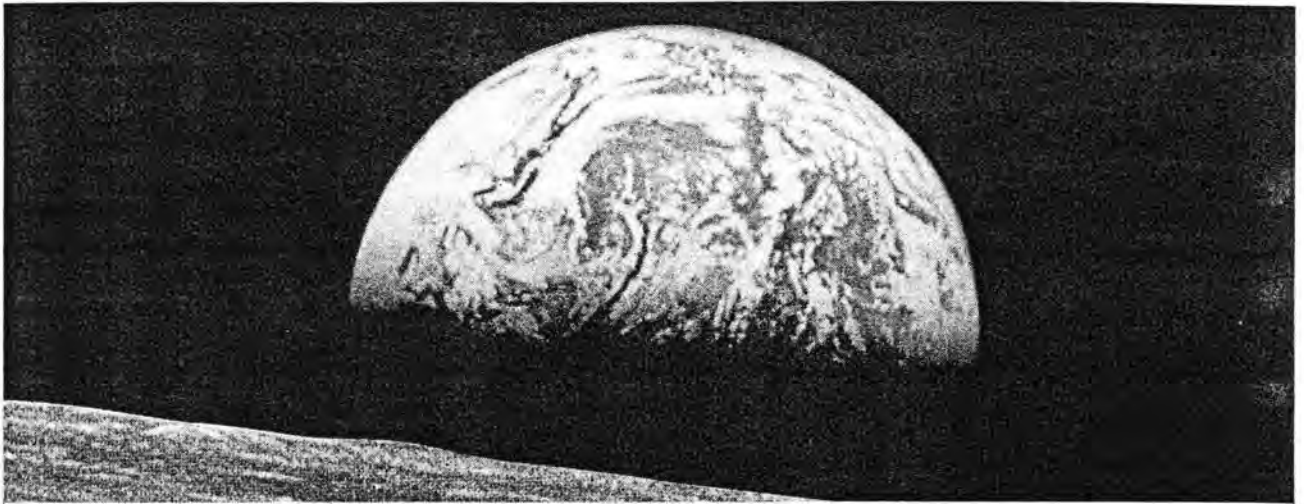
“There is stark contrast between words and deeds and

double standards applied by the Quad countries (USA, EU, Japan and Canada)”.

“The quad countries, tariffs for trade among themselves range from 4.3 percent in Japan to 8.3 percent in Canada, but their tariffs to keep out developing country exports are, in some cases, as high as 550 percent. Products with high tariffs in quad countries, include major agricultural staple food products, such as meat, sugar, milk, dairy products and chocolate, where tariff rates frequently exceed 100 percent; and tobacco, some alcoholic beverages, fruits, vegetables, textiles, clothing and footwear. These are the sectors, in which the developing countries have a competitive and comparative advantage. High trade barriers imposed by the industrial countries on agriculture and processed food imports, along with agricultural subsidies, have contributed to a decline in the developing countries’ share of world trade in these commodities. These trade distortions have particularly affected the poorest countries because a host of other domestic policy and institutional weaknesses inhibit their diversification into less restricted sectors.”

Besides these protectionist measures, governments of developed countries are still very heavily subsidising their agriculture. For example, in the USA, the subsidies paid to agriculturists in 1998 added upto Rs.24,000 per hectare. Opening local food markets to such unequal competition will not prove a prescription for improving efficiency; but a recipe for destruction of livelihoods on a massive scale in our country.

MR. BHANU PRATAP SINGH, a farmer himself, was Union Minister for Agriculture in the Janata Party government of 1977.



apocalypse now?

It's not as though we have anywhere else to go. She is our only home. If she dies, we die.

Already, we have stripped her of her forests. Polluted her air and water. Blasted a gaping hole in her delicate protective atmosphere.

If we continue to live the way we do now, then by the year 2025, about 75% of her rain forests will be wiped out. Over 50,000 species will be extinct. 40% of her fertile land will be barren. Her rivers and seas will turn toxic. Her weather patterns will spin out of control.

But if enough concerned, aware people act now, there is still hope. And what is called for is not heroic but rather very simple.

Check your equipment and your processes regularly. Recycle waste products. Use technology that's environmentally sustainable. On an even more basic level, don't leave a tap running when you're not using it. Don't leave lights on when there's no one in the room. Write on both sides of a sheet of paper. Check your vehicle regularly. Recycle old plastic bags. Pool your car.

Such simple things, we can all do them. We can all teach our children to do them.

Start today. Because tomorrow, we may not have a planet left to save.

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Reflections Serious and Facetious

Louella Lobo Prabhu

Remembering Agatha Christie

An article in a tabloid reminded me that this is the 25th death anniversary of Agatha Christie. She is popularly known as the Queen of Crime, for her tremendous output of detective stories still in print, with one of her plays having but lately closed down, after a run of 50 years.

Taking a leaf from Conan Doyle's books, she created in Hercule Poirot, and his sidekick Dr. Hastings, two characters who seemed more real than life itself. Poirot with his activation of "the little grey cells", and his desire that all things should be symmetrical. Her own favourite detective, among the many she created, was Miss Marple, a maiden Victorian lady of advanced age, who had a mind like "a Victorian sink". She sees the place where she lives,

St. Mary's Head, as a microsm for the world. Like Conan Doyle, she resurrected by public demand, both Miss Marple, and Hercule Poirot.

Her "murders" are not blood and guts chronicles, but discreet in their presentation, in an upper class English ambience. However, she set several of her novels in Asia, and Egypt, as her husband was an archaeologist. In the Sherlock Holmes books, the ambience is of fog and gaslight. Her ambience is the English country home – when the local is not foreign. There can be no better tribute to her, than the fact that 25 years after her death, all her novels are still in print.

Dame Agatha Christie

When taken up, a book of yours,
Cannot by put away.
Hooked to the story and players,
Compulsively we stay.
Thanks for the happy hours of reading.
You gave us, clever "Dame",
Enduring is your fame and household name.

Bal Thackeray on "Valentines"

It was amusing to hear Bal Thackeray on the subject of Valentines. He appeared to think that a Valentine was as lustful an object as a fun or fancy condom. (A recent issue of *Cosmopolitan* actually distributed one as a "freebie", but it had nothing to do with Valentines). In fact, the Valentine heart, worn on a band, is virtually a Christian *raakhi*, for, I often suspect girls who like boys, and *vice versa*, tie the *raakhi* or brotherhood or sisterhood, because they rather like the person in question, and are shy of saying so. The other indulgence of the Day are heart-shaped chocolates, which are no more moral or immoral, than say Diwali sweets, or Christmas plum cakes. No doubt, Archies has made a commercial killing out of creating

consciousness of this Day, or for that matter, Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day. But Indian feasts, no less (Hindu and Muslim) have seen the same commercialization. There were no Eid cards, ten years ago.

His reaction was as bizarre as his admiration of Hitler. It is a pity that when people speak of love, what they see is only the physical expression of it. The last, under the right circumstances, is a valid face of love. So is the love of a mother for her child, the love of siblings, the love of friends. True love is to be treated as something holy, not with a wink or a leer. Oh, love has many names and faces; each of them is sublime. For they reflect the God-head, the source of life divine.

The Star of David

It is reported that the Taliban in Kabul, have now specifically targeted Hindus, demanding that they identify themselves by wearing a saffron piece of cloth. Hindu women are required to wear a veil. According to a Taliban spokesperson, this is to protect them from the searches, to which Muslims are subject. It brings back memories of Nazi Germany, and the Star of

David, which identified the Jewish people, and the areas in which they lived. "Mila 18", the novel of Chris, relates, how "following the stars" they flushed out Jews like sewer rats, till the last Jew was no more.

Religious intolerance has no barriers. Even as I lament the travails awaiting Hindus in Afghanistan,

the back page of just one national daily, reports that three Christian priests have been savagely butchered in the North East. Information is knowledge, knowledge is power. With fuller reporting of the incident, Christians could have raised their voices in protest. As it is, the episode has passed off, with the three victims going unwept, unhonoured and unsung.

Why is religion such a divisive force, when in

fact, it is man's common quest for the Divine. Europe has outgrown the religious wars that tore it apart, though Ireland represents a case of religious intolerance fanning into violence. Though the founder of Christianity preached and practiced love to the bitter end, what a pity that we have enough in us to hate, and not coexist with men of goodwill born in another faith.

Nepalese Grand Opera – And A Legal Question

It would be pointless to go over the details of the Nepalese tragedy. As in the first version which came out, the deliberations of the expert committee came to the conclusion that Crown Prince Dipendra, high on drink and drugs, did it.

One question nags. The Nepalese Royal House must have had many ADCs from the armed services. Where were they, when the shoot-out took place? From my own experience of Rashtrapati Bhavan and various Raj Bhavans, ADCs are sitting at tables along with the guests. One nagging doubt has also been cleared. The bullet in the Crown Prince's back was not that of a conspirator, but the ricochet of the bullet he fired into his own chest.

Heartless as it sounds, it is as well that the Crown Prince slipped out of the world from coma. His living would have brought up a plain question of law. The Crown Prince was a regicide, patricide, matricide and a common killer of others present at that fatal table.

Yet, he was accorded the status of a king! And a king can do no wrong when he is a reincarnation of Vishnu. Had he lived on in a vegetative state, there would have been grave constitutional questions. King Gyanendra has an unenviable task. He is more intelligent and introverted than his late brother. He is also a successful entrepreneur, who will have to disengage himself of ventures he built up, as someone who had no expectations whatever of the throne. His son, Prince Paras, is a liability, showing the same propensities as the late Dipendra.

Gyanendra will have a lone struggle for legitimacy *vis-a-vis* a disaffected population, and only time can change this sullen equation. He should quickly move to lift the gag on the Press, and to counter growing Maoist influences in the kingdom. He needs to see India, not as an enemy but a benevolent big brother with no expansionist designs, as it is a democracy, unlike China, which is a dictatorship, which proved its expansionist designs in Tibet.



In all walks of life, the remuneration of people is always fixed by someone else. The remuneration of the employee is fixed by the employer ... Even the emoluments of the President of the Republic and the judges of the Supreme Court and the ministers themselves are not fixed by themselves ... There is no reason why we (Members of Parliament) should treat ourselves apart from all others who we are elected to serve ...

MPs draw perquisites of about Rs.28,000 tax free for producing a lot of hot air and yet they have the impertinence to raise taxes on the incomes of honourable and hard working engineers, technicians, chemists, managers, calling them exploiters and enemies of the people. If they are exploiters, so are Members of Parliament.

Minoo Masani

In the course of his interventions in the Lok Sabha on 5 August 1969 and 10 March 1970 and published by him in his Memoirs *Against the Tide*.

Profiles of Indian Liberals

Murarji Vaidya

Industrialist with a Social Conscience



M. R. Pai

Murarji became a natural leader to a business community which was demoralized by vicious political propaganda against them.

Vaidya visited many colleges and institutions in Mumbai, and undertook strenuous tours to small and big cities. After he became President in 1965, till his end in 1968, his involvement in the Forum became more intense.

He was up-to-date in economic developments. Murarji had a command over not only English but also his mother tongue Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi, and could speak fluently in these languages. He knew Sanskrit and French. He was an excellent speaker with a deep resonant voice which held the audience spellbound. His sense of humour, knack of presenting any issue in clear, simple language, helped him to establish instant rapport with the audiences. What really won him many admirers was his deep sense of humility and ability to present a case in a persuasive way. He used commonsense arguments.

Murarji became a natural leader to a business community which was demoralized by vicious political propaganda against them.

Murarji Vaidya knew, as A. D. Shroff also emphasized that India lived in smaller places so far as public opinion was concerned. If you sit in Mumbai and address any number of meetings, it will not

be so effective as going round the country, particularly smaller towns. Ignoring physical inconvenience, and his delicate health, he travelled to many such places and addressed a large number of meetings.

Murarji was an organization man. He was closely associated with many leading organizations. In some of them, he was a founder or co-founder. He had learnt his lessons by close association with Sir M. Visvesvaraya to whose ideals he remained loyal till the end. Sir M. V. used to brief Murarji on many leaders and current affairs. He had devoted himself to the All-India Manufacturers' Organisation founded by Sir M. Visveswaraya, the famous engineer-administrator. When Sir M. V. was requested by Murarji Vaidya and his friends like J. V. Patel, Prabhu Mehta, N. D. Sahukar, G. V. Puranik, all small and medium scale entrepreneurs to form an association to protect and promote the cause of such industries, the great engineer-statesman had said that he would do so only if they promised to give at least two hours every week to the organization. They promised, and till the end, Murarji and his colleagues kept their promise. It is this philosophy which built AIMO into a powerful national organization.

The Times of India had published a supplement on 31st March 1956, on the eve of the Second Five Year Plan. It featured two articles, one by A. D. Shroff and the other by Murarji Vaidya, expressing concern over state capitalism, and the gradual extinction of private initiative and enterprise. A. D. Shroff was asked what he proposed to do, and in his typical practical manner told Farrokh Mulla, chief PRO of Tatas, who had posed him this question: "I underwrite Rs. One lakh. You start an organization". That is how the Forum of Free Enterprise (Forum) was set up, and Murarji Vaidya joined A. D. Shroff, N. Dandekar, Minoo Masani, R. V. Murthy, S. N. Haji, T. M. Desai (of Walchand Group) and others in this effort.

Murarji Vaidya was always available for Forum work. His workload increased when the mantle of leadership fell on him after A. D. Shroff's death in 1965. During these nine years, as Vice-President of the Forum, Murarji

His association with Indian Merchants' Chamber of which he eventually became the president, taught him the dynamics of a Chamber of Commerce. He and a few other young members were dissatisfied with the way the Chamber was being conducted, and decided to challenge the senior members. They fought the annual election to the Committee and lost. Then one senior member called him aside and advised: "Look here, I like the way you are spiritedly fighting for improving the Chamber. But your way is wrong. All of you should form a group, and put up your panel. You will get more strength and the existing members will then negotiate with your group and you can get an entry into the Committee". This is how the Democratic Group of the Indian Merchants' Chamber came into existence. Murarji Vaidya was a leading light of the group, and eventually its members gained complete control of the Chamber.

As Indian Merchants' Chamber President, he had started the practice of inviting every afternoon office-bearers of three or four member trade organizations – there were about 150 such trade organizations, to the Chamber and discussing their problems. For the first time, a Chamber President had started taking keen interest in problems of various trade bodies instead of waiting for them to come to the Chamber as and when they faced any big problem.

In the Swatantra Party of which he was a leading light, he was emerging as a highly respected leader, by virtue of his knowledgeable contribution to discussions, which were mainly on economic issues and ability to integrate diverse elements into the fold of the party. Moreover, he was totally devoid of any personal

ambition. Everyone could see that his only objective was public good, not any private gain. He was least interested in personal power or glory.

While Murarji's star in public life was sparkling brightly, he was in the midst of a great crisis in his personal business. His Indian Rayon project had run into several difficulties. The more he tried to solve them, the greater were the difficulties that arose. Some of them were truly amusing, nevertheless troublesome. The project was delayed for several months at one stage. Murarji found that the reason why the papers were not moving in Delhi was a casual remark by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at one meeting that he did not like Indians going in for fancy artificial fabrics! The bureaucracy, which is very sensitive to the opinions of its political masters, interpreted this to mean that the setting up of rayon yarn factories was not favoured!

Eventually, Murarji had to bow down to the pressure of bankers to dispose of the unit, and also make some arrangements for the sale of his original units at Lalbaug in Mumbai. He was truly worried that the Lalbaug units were to be handed over to parties favoured by the bankers while he would have preferred to see it go into the hands of the people whom he knew.

Though by temperament he was always calm and unperturbed, one afternoon when I met him, he seemed greatly worried. Asked why he was so worried, he mentioned the cause of his worry. "The biggest mistake I made in my life was to go in for a big industry. When I was running half a dozen small and medium-sized enterprises, I had all that I wanted, and was carefree. The moment you

try to join the big league, troubles are in store for you in our country". He explained his difficulty.

On the spur of moment, I asked him whether he had approached Voltas. He jumped at the idea, and asked me whether I could find out if Voltas was interested. I contacted a friend in Voltas who came back with a prompt reply that Voltas would very much like to negotiate for the Lalbaug units. By evening, things started moving and eventually the deal was clinched. Murarji Vaidya heaved a sigh of relief and said: "I am not sorry I have lost these industries. I am happy that my employees who trusted me all these years are in the hands of a known party, and I am sure, Tatas will take good care of them".

For such a good human being, it was a sad development in the evening of his life. And then came his sudden end at 60. He knew about his precise end, as he had shared this information with me earlier.

One evening, I phoned him in the evening to seek an appointment. The telephone operator said, "Mr. Pai, he left the office only a few minutes ago". The next day's papers reported how he collapsed at a meeting of the Swatantra Party the previous evening. He died literally on his feet, active till the end, and got the most sought after death, viz. "a painless end". It was a glorious end for a truly noble soul, a role model in public life, and a human being with 24-carat gold heart.

A few days later, his brother Hemant phoned me: "Mr. Pai, can you come over to the office now?" When I met him, he said, Murarji Vaidya had kept some papers in his handbag, and one was an envelope

on which it was neatly written in Murarji Vaidya's hand, "To be handed over to Mr. Pai of Forum of Free Enterprise".

On opening it, I found an

amount of about Rs.6,000/- which he had collected as donations for the Forum of Free Enterprise, from some friends.

My eyes became misty as I

saw his noble figure came before my mind's eyes. That was Murarji Vaidya, a totally dedicated man in life as in death.

Mr. M. R. Pai is Vice President of the Forum of Free Enterprise.

Debate

The Tehelka Tapes

This refers to Mr. Karnik's article on the Tehelka Tapes (*Freedom First*, January-March 2001)

There can be no two opinions. Disciplinary action should be taken against those found guilty of misconduct. Merely asking for blood is not enough. It is time to consider the extent to which military justice be diluted with provision of appeals to the courts. Mr. Karnik has expressed an apprehension that the guilty officers may find some legal loopholes. I wish that they do so. That at least should compel us to review the right of armed forces personnel to appeal and limit that right.

Another suggestion given by Mr. Karnik in the April-June 2001 issue of *Freedom First* is to bring in transparency in equipment acquisition. This is neither feasible nor desirable. Transparency means that those who need to know should have access to that information. The acquisition process consists of two parts - identifying and selecting a weapon system and then commercial negotiations for pur-

chase of indigenous production. Let us examine the selection of a weapon first.

The first step is to lay down the specifications of the proposed equipment. A draft note is commented upon by various directorates at Army Headquarters and by commanders in the field. Due to security requirements, this information has to be restricted. The import process is initiated only when no indigenous source or R&D capacity is available in India. An enquiry is sent to all suppliers.

The offers from various suppliers are graded after examination and detailed discussions. Equipments from three or four suppliers are short-listed for trials. The trials are conducted at more than one place and commanders at all levels endorse their recommendations. The trial reports are available to the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of

Finance. If the trial reports and recommendations are made public, considerable and undesirable lobbying will confuse and prejudice the decision.

Usually, the recommendations of the Army Headquarters are made in the form of preference for the various offers and not for a single vendor. This helps in competitive commercial bargaining. The Ministries of Defence and Finance make the final selection. No commercial negotiations can be conducted openly. At this stage, one change can be introduced. Instead of leaving the final decision to the Ministries or the Cabinet, let this responsibility be given to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee for major purchases of Arms and Equipments. This will also have the advantage of ensuring all-party support and continuity in Defence policies.

Brig.(Retd.) S. C. Sharma,
Navi Mumbai.



Suspicious of Indians, as the British rulers were, they built their entire administrative structure upon distrust which was reflected in the intricate network of rules and procedures they had devised. It is regrettable that the system still continues intact, even though government now derives its sanction from the will of the people.

Jayaprakash Narayan
Towards Total Revolution, Volume 3, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai



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The Harm That Bad English Does

Sharad Bailur

"City limps back to normalcy". Why not just plain "normal"? Nobody knows.

"Is it?", was the first "stylish" expression that I heard from a boxwalla working for ICI the chemical multinational giant, some time in the late fifties. He meant, "Did you?" or "Is that so?" I was young then. Young enough to think that anything spoken by anyone in authority, someone who was so visibly in control, was correct. "Is it?" as a form of cure-all formed part of the multinational boxwalla lexicon for over two decades and seems to have died some sort of an unsung death about two decades ago. I still hear it rarely, but more and more among the elderly.

Our inability to understand the full nuances of a phrase in English, of course, comes of thinking in our own language and then trying as hard as possible to translate it into educated English. That, at least, is understandable. What is not understandable is carelessness about correct meanings. This has resulted in major disasters, not just among the ordinary people but in matters of national importance like India's foreign policy and even in the controlling of law and order.

Sovereign & Suzerain

When the British left India they had clearly stated that British India recognises Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. A suzerain is a state having some control over another state that is internally autonomous. In other words while British India recognised that China had some control over Tibet, Tibet would be recognised as being internally

autonomous. Some uneducated idiot in the Foreign Office confused "suzerainty" with, "sovereignty", and in 1951 the Foreign Office announced that India recognised Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. This meant that Tibet was recognised by India as Chinese territory. Any hope of having Tibet as a buffer state between ourselves and China evaporated with just this one misinterpretation of English, to the benefit of the Chinese.

Militants and Terrorists

Today the "K" word is Kashmir. People are trained in Pakistan in training camps with the sole purpose of causing murder and mayhem after crossing over into Indian Kashmir. They have been responsible for a long running battle with the Indian police and the army but it is not just the Indian army or the police that are the targets of these animals. It is the local people of Kashmir. Indian newspapers revel in calling such people, "Militants". A militant is a person who militates or rebels against the established order. It would be correct to describe a local Kashmiri as a militant if he does not like India and Indians and rebels. A person who sneaks in from across the border to commit mass murder in India should not be given this spuriously benign face. He is a terrorist, plain and simple. By describing such people as militants, India is actually playing into the hands of Pakistan which gratefully accepts such descriptions, since it meets very well with the stand that it takes. At the recent talks Pakistan

bucked like a bronco when the Indian side described what was happening as "cross border terrorism". For the first time someone in the Foreign Office had understood the significance of using wrong language and the harm it can do, and had come out with a correct, if blunt, term for the phenomenon.

Smuggler and Dacoit

Much the same sort of short shrift is given to other less important but nevertheless difficult problems. Veerappan is a brigand, a dacoit and a murderer. He has been responsible for killing more than seventeen people. Some half literate newspaper hack called him a "sandalwood smuggler". The epithet stuck, if only because other reporters had neither the education nor the application to find out if that was all Veerappan was. The fact that he had a much more malign face than that of a mere sandalwood smuggler was lost in a cacophony of misleading, almost eulogistic description of Veerappan as some sort of modern Robin Hood.

Ice Cream and Frozen Dessert

This sort of wrong description does not apply only to humans. Large multinationals sell "ice cream" that isn't ice cream. It is made of vegetable oil, water and emulsifying agents. Luckily, it is not harmful. When pressed, they are careful enough, for fear of the law, to call it "frozen dessert" or "non-dairy ice cream". In Europe the same thing is kept under separate storage and is called Mellorine, not

ice cream. Here people, who don't know better, are paying the prices they would for real ice cream and eating stuff made of vegetable oil, and they are not aware of the fact that they are being cheated simply because they do not know the difference between "frozen dessert" and ice cream. When I pointed this out to Dr. Kurien, he was the first to instruct the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation to insist on giving Amul ice cream the slogan, "Real milk. Real ice cream", to distinguish it from the imitation.

Real Milk and Synthetic Milk

North India is facing an epidemic of adulterated milk being sold to unsuspecting housewives. Testing for fat, which is the normal way to test milk, does not work. This concoction of vegetable oil, detergent powder, urea, chalk or poster paint and dirty water goes by the facile name, "synthetic milk". Synthetic milk is nothing but poison because the titanium dioxide in the poster paint is carcinogenic. The bacteria contaminated water often results in enteric infections. The description "Synthetic milk" gives to this concoction a spuriously benign face and benefits those who make it. We should, I suppose, thank our stars that it is not called "non-dairy milk". It would have been, if it had the benefit of multinational clout behind it.

Science at the Cost of Arts

Much of the problem of misnomers and mis-descriptions comes from two separate phenomena. The first is an inadequate education. There is constant pressure on children to do well in school but no pressure is greater than for them to do well in Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Almost unanimously, all parents wish that their children should become engineers or

doctors. Therefore while attention is given to the child's prowess in Mathematics and Science there is no pressure to learn how to write well, especially in English, partly also because the parents themselves are uncomfortable in the language. Those schools that have English as their medium of instruction develop in children the ability to speak fairly fluently, but their ability to write is at best barely passable. Second, those who do really well are invariably those in the Science stream and therefore get into colleges offering professional courses. Those who opt for the Arts are almost always second raters. Their prowess at English is probably worse than those who do Science. It is these students who finally drift into journalism. There are exceptions, of course, but this is more or less what happens. For example, I was a second rater. If I had not gone into banking I would have become a journalist. Today, I do Corporate Communications. Near enough.

Why Poor English?

Third, reading and the spirit of curiosity does not come easily to Indian students, used as they are to rote learning. And with the advent of television even those who would normally have developed the habit tend to become couch potatoes and watch faces and bodies on the screen jiggling up and down like so many marionettes. The absence of television did a lot for earlier generations to encourage a habit of reading. Reading by itself improves the writing of any language. If the reading is extensive in range it makes for broad frames of reference and better general knowledge. The absence of the reading habit is what these former students take into their journalistic careers. Combined with mental laziness this leads to journalese of

a peculiar sort. For example, we have this trite illiterate headline every year after a heavy downpour: "City limps back to normalcy". (Why not just plain "normal"? Nobody knows.) The same headline every year. It is often result of the desk editor being too lazy to invent another headline. It can also be that he genuinely does not know better. But much worse, it could be that he couldn't care less.

It is this factor, of infirm understanding of English, that is really responsible for mis-description and the wrong use of words that make for meanings widely different from those that should actually be used. The only way this can be improved upon is for newspapers to employ people who are not merely able to write but those who write well. If seniors among the editorial staff take it upon themselves to instil into their juniors a certain habit of merely wishing to write better, they automatically will over time. The willingness to learn to craft sentences and take pride in writing comes much later, but this, at least, will be a beginning.

Some thirty years ago I was appalled to see a first edit by the celebrated Shyamlal in the *Times of India* that began with, "Who do they think they are kidding?" Today, "more better", commonly finds place in its second edits. It appears that we shall have to be satisfied with being condemned to many more years of, "limping back to normalcy".

MR. SHARAD BAILUR is Chief (Corporate Communications) for BSES Limited. He is a member of the Indian Liberal Group.

He knows nothing; and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career.

— George Bernard Shaw.

Political Empowerment of Women

Some Dimensions of Women Reservations in Indian Legislative Bodies

V. Ravindra Sastry

Recently, a study was conducted on the representation of women in the parliaments of several countries. This study was undertaken under the auspices of the Geneva-based inter-parliamentary union. The study consisted of as many as 179 parliaments drawn from different parts of the globe. The study provides stimulating insights into the abysmally low levels of representation of women in contrast

with their male counterparts.

The table below (Table 1) illustrates that even in respect of advanced countries like the U.S., England and France, the share of women in parliament is in the order of 11.7%, 9.5% and 6.4% respectively. Scandinavian countries however exhibit better performance in this regard. The proportion of seats held by women is around 33% in Sweden, Norway, Finland and

Denmark.

In India, 7.2% of the seats are shared by women. This, by and large, corresponds with the low levels of women's share of seats in other third world countries. The inter-parliamentary union study suggested quotas for women in electoral politics.

While the number of women voters in India since Independence has risen to half the electorate,

Table 1 : Women in the Seats of Power

Women in National Parliaments, lower or single house as of January 1, 1997. World classification of selected countries only.

Order	Country	Seats	Women	%age of Women
1	Sweden	349	141	40.4
2	Norway	165	65	39.4
3	Finland	200	67	33.5
4	Denmark	179	47	30.0
5	Netherlands	150	47	31.3
6	New Zealand	120	35	29.3
9	Germany	672	176	26.2
14	Spain	350	86	24.6
16	China	2978	626	21.0
16 (Tie)	Switzerland	200	42	21.0
19	Vietnam	395	73	18.5
21	Canada	295	53	18.0
27	Australia	148	23	15.5
29	Zimbabwe	150	22	14.7
30	Mexico	500	71	14.2
43	Poland	460	60	13.0
36	Indonesia	500	63	12.6
41	Colombia	163	19	11.7
41 (Tie)	United States	435	51	11.7
44	Phillippines	203	22	10.8
46	Russian Fed.	450	46	10.2
48	Zambia	155	15	9.7
49	Syria	250	24	9.6
50	United Kingdom	651	62	9.5
52	Bangladesh	330	30	9.1
60	Malaysia	192	15	7.8
63	Chile	120	9	7.5
63 (Tie)	Israel	129	9	7.5
65	India	545	39	7.2
71	Brazil	513	34	6.6
72	France	577	37	6.4
75	Greece	300	19	6.3
76	Venezuela	203	12	5.9
78	Thailand	393	23	5.8
83	Japan	500	23	4.6
100	Egypt	454	9	2.0
106	Morocco	333	2	0.6

women members still account for only seven percent of the National legislature.

Even today, there are only 36 women in the Lok Sabha in a 543-member House. Table 2 explains women's representation in the Lok Sabha from 1952-1996

Women's Movement Worldwide

In 1961, American President Kennedy established the President's Commission on the status of women, at the behest of Esther Peterson, the then director of the Women's Bureau. This Commission, in its report "American Women" revealed that American women are still denied many rights and opportunities.

In India, the Government of India appointed a committee to study the status of women. The Report: "Towards Equality: The Status Women in India" states that Indian women are not getting equal status with that of men in the socio-economic and political fields and are facing many problems in their day-to-day life.

The Third International Women's Conference, which was held at Nairobi in 1985, focused on the question of women's development and raised the issue

of the political participation of women.

In India, the national document prepared at the time of the Nairobi Conference of 1985, the NAM meet of the same year, has recognized the importance of this theme and raised issues relating to the nature of political participation of women, the problems faced therein and strategies to be evolved.

The Fourth International Women's Conference was held at Beijing in 1995. This conference focused on the question of empowerment of women. India was also one of the signatories to the Beijing Declaration.

It was against this background that the election manifestoes of the major political parties in 1996, such as the Congress, the BJP, the Janata Dal, the CPI, the CPM promised to provide for reservations of seats for women in parliament and state legislative assemblies. However, this promise was broken even before the elections, as is evident from the fact that for the 1996 elections, the BJP fielded 477 candidates out of whom 23 were women. The CPI(M) gave 5 out of 72 seats to women. The CPI four out of 43 and the Congress fielded 530

candidates of whom 49 were women. Consequently, out of the 547 members of the Lok Sabha, only 36 were women. Thus it is clear from the above that the commitment of political parties to the question of women's empowerment is political rhetoric rather than reality.

In the light of the recommendations of the CSW (Committee on the Status of Women) as well as the resolution of the Nairobi Conference, the Indian Parliament passed the 73rd and 74th amendment Bill in 1991, which provided for 33 percent seats in local governments for women. By 1993, all the states had ratified these amendments.

After the 1996 elections, the United Front government came to power at the Centre and it introduced the 81st amendment bill in the Lok Sabha which sought 33.3 per cent reservations for women in parliament and state assemblies.

A select committee was appointed with Geeta Mukherjee as chairperson. The committee, after consultations with eminent people and parliamentarians, recommended the immediate passage of the Bill.

After the introduction of the Bill in the Lok Sabha, various arguments cropped up for and against 33 percent reservation in the legislatures. The justification for the quota bill is based on two different arguments. One, the Bill will become a tool to attain equality and justice for women in the political arena. Such an egalitarian thrust springs from liberal feminist views that seeks to overcome discrimination against women in society, mainly through the law.

After 50 years of independence, women are not in a position to come up in leadership positions

Table 2

Women's Representation in the Lok Sabha

Terms of the Lok Sabha	Total Seats	No. of women members	Percentage
1952-57	489	22	4.8
1957-1962	494	18	4.0
1962-1967	494	30	5.0
1967-1971	520	31	6.0
1971-1977	520	20	4.0
1977-1980	542	19	3.5
1980-1984	529	28	5.10
1984-1989	542	23	4.24
1989-1991	523	39	7.45
1991-1996	543	36	5.62

Source: Election Commission of India.

because of entrenched patriarchal values. If reservations are given, a greater number of women can become members of legislative bodies. Though reservations by themselves cannot bring about radical changes overnight, they are a step in the right direction as they are necessary for empowerment.

The General Secretary of the All India Women's Federation, Vimla Farooki supporting reservations says that "we wanted women to come up in fair competition with men and this is why we were opposed to reservations initially, but we found that no party, however, progressive, was willing to give women their due or nominate women in elections. It is reflective of the gender bias and male dominance which is deep-rooted in Indian socio-political life.

Janata Dal leader Pramila Dandavate opined that "more women in politics would reduce the growing criminalisation in the area". She demanded that all parties which proclaim support for the bill must issue a whip to their partymen whenever the constitutional bill comes up for voting.

The critics of women reservations, both within and outside parliament, articulated certain arguments. They raised the imperative of caste reservations as a sub-reservation category within the broad framework of women reservations. In parliamentary circles, the main and not so subtle opposition to the Bill came from those who demanded sub-reservations for the OBC women and the minority women within the 33 percent.

Muslim MPs of all the political parties opposed the 81st amendment Bill on the ground that

the bill denies the minorities and backward classes their due share in power.

Ela Bhatt, the Director of Self Employed Women's Association and a former Rajya Sabha member in her article, "Women Need Equal Opportunities, Not Reservation", opposed the quota system and argued that "women value their dignity, they do not want doles, they want justice, they do not want reservation, they need equal opportunities.

Conclusion

The debate on Women's Reservation in parliament and assemblies points to the on-going women movement in India. It can be seen as a part of the processes against gender discrimination, demanding greater share in political power. Gender equity and gender justice are the imperatives of Indian socio-political life. The issue of quotas for women can be construed as a step in the direction of women empowerment.

Political empowerment is indispensable for attaining the wider process of socio-economic empowerment because it provides an institutional access to decision-making power. Such an access to decision-making power in turn provides direct initiative to articulate their interests and formulate suitable policies for achieving a just and human social order. Further, the protagonists of women reservation argue that the style and content of contemporary politics is demonstrative of the process of criminalized politics. Criminalisation of politics or public life poses a serious challenge to the foundations of Indian democracy. This process can be contained or partly arrested if women reservations are provided in Union and State legislatures. This

argument assumes that by nature, women are less prone to criminality. Political empowerment of women, it follows, would contribute in some measure to counter the criminalisation and lumpianisation process.

The critiques of the proposed reservation articulate the issue mainly in the caste perspective. It is observed that the OBC reservations as applied to general reservation policy, should also be applied to women's reservations. In other words, the gender question cannot be precluded from the caste question. The general unequal relations of caste hierarchy, it is apprehended, would reinforce the dominance of upper caste women or through their proxy. Besides, it would further strengthen elitism, of upper urban class groups.

Apart from the caste dimension, the minority view point is also advanced. It is argued that women's reservations would marginalize or ignore the interests of minorities in terms of their representation in legislatures. In some quarters, it was voiced that political parties themselves should recruit or field 33 percent women candidates on their own. It should be observed by all political parties instead of providing legal status to reservations.

It was also highlighted that the existing electoral system should be modified in such a manner that double member constituencies are introduced in the place of single member constituencies – one reserved for women and the other general or open one. In the event of its adoption, the strength of the existing legislatures would be double. Another viewpoint relates to the dignity and self-respect of women which will be effected if they are treated as weaker sections by virtue of reservations.

By and large, reservations in general are intended to protect the weaker and provides additional inputs for their accelerated development as they are socially and economically handicapped or disadvantaged. Viewed in this context, women reservations would also be perceived as conflicting with

their status and self-respect, bringing into focus the psychological component.

Despite the above critical view points on the proposed women reservations in legislative bodies, the overall empowerment process of women is necessary. At

the same time, it is also true that mere reservations cannot result in wonders. It is a step in the larger process of acquisition, retention and expansion of empowerment.

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The Wages of Honesty

My father Late Wg.Cdr. Ramanathan, was a marine biologist in the Madras University. He joined the RIAF (Royal Indian Air Force) in the early forties and headed the Ariel Photographic Interpretation Section of Air Force Intelligence. He retired in 1966 and lived in Madras.

With the help of ariel photographs which revealed jeep tracks, going over to the Indian side from Chinese base camps he warned the government of Chinese incursions nine months before the Chinese invasion in 1962. He went to Krishna Menon, but was ignored. He was asked to submit written memos. The civilians were not interested in taking his warnings seriously. He would sit at home and lament that the Chinese would be occupying a large chunk of India, and no one outside his department cared. His audience - my mother and me!

He passed away in April 2000. We took him to the crematorium. The fee was some Rs.200/- plus, but we had to pay Rs.500/- under the table to the officers posted at the crematorium.

The joke was that my father, a scrupulously honest old time officer, who attended office for a month in civvies, after

retirement, used to argue that government is sacrosanct. The government halved his pension, but he would not go to court, saying he had eaten government salt! He would not see corruption and swore by the total integrity of all government servants.

It's not the money, but when genetic begger materials are given the chance, they beg by command! We call it corruption. Generations of lakhs have impressed into the genetics to collect in lakhs!

The first training government servants must receive universally is how to keep a ceiling on desires, and there must be a law where all should be stripped from him if he is found corrupt.

His honesty arose from a simple life and minimum wants. That is possible only when one is satisfied with oneself, and not in the values exhibited by relatives, friends and the TV.

I believe that no one can fan both his desires and be honest at the same time. Morality should be taught first even before the alphabets.

- Sairam Sathya Kumar, Chennai.

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Frederic Bastiat – 1801 – 1850

Frederic Bastiat, French economist, statesman and author, was born in Bayonne, France in 1801, and died in Rome in 1850. He spent most of his life in a little town called Mugron, just 40 km. East of Dax, in the French region of "Les Landes". It is in Mugron where a statue was erected in his honour.

Frederic Bastiat spent the better part of his latter years in Paris, where he founded and edited the weekly newspaper *Le Libre Echange*. He also edited *Le Journal des Economistes*, and from 1848, was a Deputy in the Legislative Assembly where he fought valiantly for private property rights.

As an economist, he was gifted with a very clear mind and a devastating sense of humour. He invigorated the economic science of his time by developing it from the standpoint of the consumer. He was a tireless apostle of freedom of exchange and freedom of choice by individuals – without statist constraints or subsidies.

His works have acquired classic status and are as fresh and relevant today as they were 150

years ago – and his numerous predictions about the evolution of Institutions and Societies have invariably come true.

As a philosopher, he was the precursor of many present-day Libertarians – building normative ethics on the foundations of individual liberty and personal responsibility. As a local judge, he was a paragon of efficiency and fairness.

As a politician, he exhibited great foresight. He was a staunch advocate of minimum government, and fought against the unlimited growth of public spending. He was critical of colonial expeditions, and of slavery. He argued for the separation of powers; for preventing MPs from being ministers at the same time, and for limiting the number of civil servants in the Assembly. He was an advocate for greater participation of women in politics.

Bastiat's major writings are: *The Law* (which to this day remains one of the great classics of libertarian literature), *The State*, *Economic Sophisms*, *What Is Seen And What Is Not Seen*, and *Economic Harmonies*. They have been translated into many languages.

This July, an international conference to celebrate the life and teachings of Frederic Bastiat is being held in Dax, France (just south of Bordeaux). This event is being co-sponsored by the International Society For Individual Liberty and the Libertarian International. Le Cercle Frederic Bastiat under the leadership of Jacques de Guenin, is the host of this event.

Besides featuring a star-studded line-up of speakers, the conference will feature trips to Bayonne where a plaque will be placed on the house where Bastiat was born.

Courtesy: *Freedom Network News*, No.61, January-March 2001.

What Is Law?

Each of us has a natural right – from God – to defend his person, his liberty, and his property. These are the three basic requirements of life, and the preservation of any one of them is completely dependent upon the preservation of the other two. For what are our faculties but the extension of our individuality? And what is property but an extension of our faculties?

If every person has the right to defend even by force – his person, his liberty, and his property, then it follows that a group of men have the right to organize and support a common force to protect these rights constantly. Thus the principle of collective right – its reason for existing, its lawfulness – is based on individual right. And the common force that protects this collective right cannot logically have any other purpose or any other mission than that for which it acts as a substitute.

Frederic Bastiat

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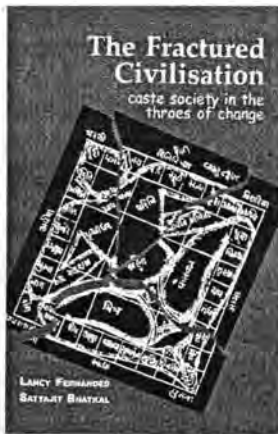
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BOOK REVIEWS



THE FRACTURED CIVILISATION : CASTE SOCIETY IN THE THROES OF CHANGE

By Lance Fernandes and Satyajit Bhatkal

Published by

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Reviewed by

Mrs. Suman Oak, retired lecturer in English and a freelance writer.

The caste system is a unique feature of Indian society. The ghetto mentality and the vice-like grip of the *jati* on the psyche of the Indian people bred by the caste system have engendered many flaws in their behaviour and thinking. *Jati* exclusiveness and intra-*jati* solidarity and egalitarianism is balanced by repulsion, hatred and even animosity towards other *jatis*. These cultural ghettos are arranged in a hierarchical ladder - the *varna* scale with *jatis* having the greatest scope for cultural advancement and many other privileges at the top of the ladder and those denied such privileges and opportunities for acquiring knowledge and cultural refinement on the lower rungs according to the degree of denial and suppression.

People of all *jatis* endeavour to raise their social status by adopting the customs, manners and occupations and even surnames of higher *jatis*, in a process of sanskritisation (which may be called cultural advance). The authors of the above book give two examples of this process, viz., the Mauryan dynasty that brought a golden period in Indian history and Shivaji, who was crowned king of the Marathas. Both rose to eminence despite their humble origins.

However, such examples are too few and far between.

Despite the *jatis'* urge to sanskritize and ascend the social-cultural ladder the ghetto mentality prevails and is an important cause of the lack of civic sense and social responsibility in public life. Our "*jatwala*" is our man, our kinsman to be treated equally, helped in every way, his person and property to be protected at all costs, even if he is corrupt, or a smuggler or anti-social and should be voted to power.

For us, our *jati* is more important than even the country. Civil society does not exist beyond one's *jati*. On the other hand, everything else is to be exploited. Public property can be vandalized. Government service, public office or the public treasury can be looted. This is the cause of the rampant corruption visible at every stage and in every section of our society - open plundering by hoarders and traders, cynical use of religious passions for political exigencies, plunder of resources, atrocities on women and bloody caste wars.

The war of *jatis* has fractured our social fabric to such an extent that the last Lok Sabha elections produced hung parliaments. Even

in the state assemblies, no political party is given a clear mandate by the voter.

Why have we reached such a dangerous political impasse? Why is our society fractured to such an extent? Why are we, despite our cultural heritage, natural resources and abundant talent, still an undeveloped (euphemistically, a "developing") country? These are the questions the authors address.

Indian social evolution has taken a unique path and there is a common thread through all the stages of evolution, i.e. the caste system. There are different theories regarding the genesis of the caste system. The writers have analysed them one by one. Starting from the *Purusha Sukta* - the theory of divine origin which is uncritically (or intentionally?) accepted, they trace the other non-divine explanations to the caste system. *Purusha Sukta* explains the origin of the four *varnas* from the different parts of the body of the sacrificed *Purusha*. The four *varnas* later gave rise, through corruption, to thousands of endogamous *jatis*.

But the history of social evolution suggests that the *jatis*, far from originating from the four *varnas*, actually existed as clans and

tribes who were later assimilated into the *Varna Vyavastha* with their baggage of magical religious rituals and mythology. Each clan or tribe acquired a ritual and social status in the hierarchy of *jatis* within the *Varna Vyavastha* of the four *varnas*.

Social scientists have provided us with non-divine theories like the occupational and racial theories. But these theories like the *varna vyavastha* are flawed and fail to explain the peculiarities of the age-old caste system. But, the authors maintain, they serve some political agenda of which quite a few examples are quoted in the book.

They maintain that "Today's *jatis* are yesterday's tribes" and claim that unlike the other dominant theories, this theory, viz., "the tribal origin theory" does explain the tenacity and morbidity of *jatis*. "It has the power to explain not only the complexion of caste but also its resilience and the power to transform itself under capitalism". Blaming the sick Brahmin mind for evolving the *varna* scale is, according to the authors, a one sided view. It does not answer the question of how the normative ladder of the *jati-vyavastha* was internalised by all *jatis* including the most suppressed ones.

The authors have given a short, critical analysis of different ideologies to explain the effects of these ideologies and ensuing politics on the modernised castes.

Finally they arrive at the question of whether caste is only a system as enunciated by *Varnashrama Dharma* or whether it is a civilisation. Indian society has evolved from tribal society to civilisation. Tribes and sub-tribes became endogamous *jatis* and this process of transformation continues today, primarily through fusion.

The basic social units of Indian society are *jatis*, not classes. The *jati* of a person, unlike the class, is fixed by birth although through sanskritisation it is possible to ascend the ladder. The *jati* system has engendered a peculiar ethic - sanctification of mental power and degradation of physical work. The religion of this caste-based system is Hinduism with a plethora of gods and godmen having a grip on the minds of both the learned and the unlettered Hindus. A number of characteristics both the good and bad effects of this civilisation are discussed.

Civilisational perspectives of different political parties and intelligentsia are discussed, juxtaposing perspectives like *Varnashrama Dharma* and rationalism, and a multitude of regional and caste parties.

Globalisation is bringing about another civilisational shift in India. This will undermine the state-centred economy, the nexus between state and *jati*-power brokers, and the *jati* culture, which is being replaced by global culture. During the freedom struggle, *Varnashrama Dharma* and traditional caste society had to be replaced by cultural pluralism and the bourgeois mode of production respectively. To face the challenge of globalisation, cybernetic revolution and internationalisation of capital, we need to replace both the existing perspectives of cultural pluralism and cultural nationalism by an alternative civilisational perspective. The elements of this new perspective, according to the authors are: democratic form, progressive content, and not denial but engagement of *jati* cultures in order to transform them. A sketchy theoretical framework for it would include: overcoming the divide between mental and physical

labour; reinterpreting *jati* mythologies; the struggle against inter-*jati* repulsion; redefining secularism; opposing parasitic capitalism; and the parasitic state power.

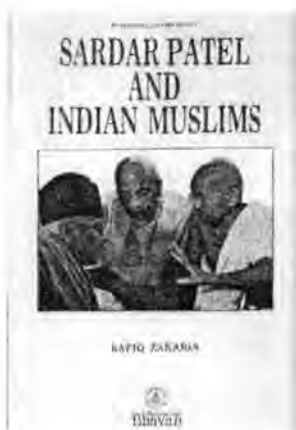
One could disagree with a few statements made by the authors, for instance, they cite as an example "human pyramids to break the *"dahihandi"* on *Janmashtami* day (in Maharashtra) being drenched in water from the surrounding buildings as obstacles put up by the upper castes to prevent the lower castes climbing up the *varna* ladder. Here, I think, those who throw water are not necessarily upper castes, as the *"dahihandis"* are generally set in the mill workers' localities and the human pyramids, in fact invite and enjoy being drenched.

This book at once makes easy and interesting reading and gives useful insights into formulating an alternative perspective that has to be based on humanism and the democratic way of life. ♦

Fangs

Slithering on the ground
was a big Russel's viper.
It was at least six feet long
It stood on its tail
The ground was slippery
The viper was slithery
A man stepped on its tail
Suddenly it dug deeply its fangs
The Russel's viper spat venom
The man struggled for life
A passerby tied a tight knot
with his handkerchief
The victim was taken to a nearby hospital
The doctor injected anti-venom serum
The victim had fallen unconscious
The poison didn't affect his body
Slowly the man came out of his stupor
He opened his eyes and prayed to God
He thanked the Lord he was alive
Slowly and surely he recovered
But marked was his right foot
With the mark of the viper's fangs

Kamal Kumar



SARDAR PATEL AND INDIAN MUSLIMS

By Rafiq Zakaria

Published by

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Mumbai 400 007.
Year of Publication: 1996. No. of pages: 118. Price Rs.125.

Reviewed by

Mr. J. B. D'Souza, a retired civil servant.

Isn't it sad that so many of our Muslims feel compelled to display their patriotism, their loyalty to their motherland, by shrill acclamations of the Indian claim over Kashmir and treatment of Kashmiris, by loud denunciations of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and by invectives against Pakistan? Knowing Dr. Zakaria, I don't believe that he is given to stridency of this kind. Yet I am disturbed by his mildly hagiographic account of Vallabhbhai Patel's contribution to communal harmony in India.

This book is a publication of Zakaria's 1996 Patel Memorial Lecture, which, the author tells us, won praise from his audience. His main thesis is a belief that Patel was by no means hostile to Muslims. In an introduction to the book Nani Palkhivala writes that the author has "authentically demolished the myth built up by vested interests that the Sardar was anti-Muslim". (Which vested interests, Nani leaves us to guess.)

With far less erudition than either Palkhivala or Zakaria, my reading of the book leaves me less convinced than they are. The author writes with evident approval of Patel's eagerness to confront the Muslim League rather than negotiate with it. He can even tolerate without comment Patel's

shocking reaction to the disastrous Calcutta riots on Jinnah's Direct Action Day, August 16, 1946: "a good lesson for the League because I hear that the proportion of Muslims who have suffered death is much larger." Patel's outbursts upset Gandhiji as well: "Your speeches are inflammatory and play to the gallery. You make no distinction between violence and non-violence. You are teaching people to meet the sword by the sword." Do not Vallabhbhai's intemperate outbursts reflect at least a latent hostility that properly earned for him the credit Maulana Azad gave him, as the architect and real flag-bearer of Partition, even if, as we are asked to believe, Azad orally withdrew that credit at some later time?

After Partition, the author tells us, the Sardar "was largely responsible for introducing the obnoxious permit system; under it those Muslims, who had, on and after August 15, 1947, gone even on a visit to Pakistan, were deprived of their citizenship. Nehru protested; he asked how those Indians who went to Pakistan from India 'for a while before the permit system was introduced can be punished by some subsequent enactment.'"

By no means hostile to

Muslims?

And again, writes Zakaria, "the Sardar was ... unhappy at the revocation of the Cabinet decision to release (*sic*), under Gandhi's pressure, the cash balance of fifty five crores of rupees to Pakistan To the Mahatma, a commitment, once made, had to be honoured, whatever the cost; morality was not an item in a bania's shop; it was the sheet-anchor of society." (The author's curious phrasing of the first sentence in that quote upsets what he really means to say.)

During the last year or two of British rule, Gandhi's strenuous efforts to keep India undivided were actually undone at one stroke by Nehru's indiscretion. Patel wrote at the time: "... his press conference immediately after the AICC are all acts (*sic*) of emotional insanity and it puts tremendous strain on us to set matters right. His mind has been exhausted by overwork and strain." Nehru's declaration on July 10, 1946 – his 'emotional insanity' – led Jinnah at once to reverse his acceptance of the British Cabinet Mission's Plan. India would have remained a single nation under that Plan, which had been so laboriously put together by Viceroy Wavell and the Mission, "and unanimously approved by both the Muslim League and Congress". That was

just about a year before Partition. To this simple reviewer at least, it seems unfair to assert so confidently as Zakaria does that "Jinnah was beyond reason", or that "his foul tongue had done more harm to alienate the Hindus from the Muslims than even the most bigoted Muslim ruler in the past".

I would also have liked to see some balance in the author's comments on the working of the Interim Government. Patel, he writes, "was absolutely disgusted with the behaviour of the League ministers in the interim government. Their provocative acts and deliberate insults infuriated him. He tried on several occasions to smoothen the relationship with them and once even asked for Wavell's intervention. He warned the Viceroy that Jinnah was instigating his ministers to use the governmental machinery to break up India." Pakistani historians must have a different story to tell, and our author surely owed it to his readers to research that story as well.

What I believe was Sardar Patel's great strength was his ability to rise above his Hindu bias in practice as an administrator. His record as Deputy Prime Minister was one of firmness and fairness in his treatment of issues between Muslims and Hindus. I wish our author had studied this theme carefully and developed it more emphatically in his lecture. Patel's grandest legacy was undoubtedly the integration of the princely states, an achievement probably unparalleled in history but not germane to the subject of this book.

Patel and Indian Muslims suffers from a few errors and weaknesses, some of them quite insignificant. On the other hand,

what does one make of the claim, in regard to the horrors and brutalities of Partition, that "Pakistan was, no doubt, the worst offender; but the situation turned out to be no better in India". So which side does the author choose as the culprit? And it requires a subtle mind to unravel the author's statement, already quoted, that "the Sardar was ... unhappy at the revocation of the Cabinet decision to release ... Rs.55 crores to Pakistan".

The minor queries. Did our Constitution really give the Scheduled Castes a separate electorate – as distinct from reserved seats – for a ten-year grace period? My copy doesn't say so. Again, I got a bit disoriented when Dr. Zakaria told me that "thousands of Hindus were driven by Pakistan into East

Bengal". And that Mountbatten changed to August 15, 1947 the date of the British departure, for which Prime Minister Attlee had chosen June 30, 1946.

I also wish the publishers, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, had not printed the pictures so shoddily, and had bound the book better – for I still wish to add it to my library. My copy is regrettably suggestive of the country's condition today. It is already falling apart. Surely Dr. Zakaria's scholarly effort deserved better.

Finally, I would have liked to be able, after reading this book, to agree with Palkhivala, that Zakaria "authentically demolishes the myth ... that the Sardar was anti-Muslim". ♦

Cop Unimpressed

There is an interesting anecdote connected with the production of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. It is an extraordinary film in that it has four knights in it – Sir Laurence Olivier, Sir John Gielgud, Sir Ralph Richardson and Sir Cedric Hardwick.

One day during the production of the film, Sir Laurence, while taking his other three friends in his car to the studio, exceeded the speed limit at Picadilly junction, and was at once called to a halt by the cop on duty for overspeeding.

As the cop came up to the car, Olivier thought it might be of help to reveal their identities, so that they might be let off without any penalty. He told the cop with as much modesty as he could simulate, "Well officer, you may not know our identities. I am Sir Laurence Olivier, and by my side you see Sir Cedric Hardwick. At the back are seated Sir Ralph Richardson and Sir John Gielgud. We are in a hurry to reach the studio since we are already late. Will you please let us pass?"

To this, the cop replied with as much deference as he could summon, "Well sir, the whole lot of you may be from King Arthur's Round Table, but I have to do my duty. You are getting a ticket."

– K. V. S. Bhaskar, Gooty (AP).
The Hindu, May 31, 2000

**Pherozeshah Mehta :
Maker of Modern India**



Editor
DR. (Smt.) NAWAZ B. MODY
1997

PHEROZESH AH MEHTA : MAKER OF MODERN INDIA

Edited by Dr. (Mrs.) Nawaz B. Mody.

Published by

Allied Publishers Ltd., 15, J. N. Heredia Road, Ballard Estate,
Mumbai 400 038.

Year of Publication: 1997. No. of Pages: 295. Price: Rs.250.

Reviewed by

Professor Nagindas Sanghavi, freelance political commentator.

This volume is a collection of fifteen research papers submitted to a National Seminar on "*The Contribution of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta towards Nation Building and his Relevance to our Times*". The seminar was organised in February 1996 and was part of the 150th Birth Anniversary of a colossus who dominates the opening chapters of the history of Indian nationalism.

The Seminar concentrated on the three major areas in which Mehta had devoted his tremendous energies and in each of which he made a seminal and lasting contribution. He was one of the founder members of the Indian National Congress and used it as an instrument for nation building; he shaped the University of Bombay in its years of infancy and he played a decisive role in the municipal governance of the metropolitan city of Bombay.

His professional and personal life were covered in the last phase of the seminar but also in a more exhaustive detail in the eleven appendices attached to this volume. Dr. Mody who was the moving spirit behind the seminar deserves congratulations not only for making it a success but also for the immediate publication of these valuable papers by researchers who are well known for their expertise in their respective areas of

specialization.

The volume so well sculpted by Dr. Mody however includes some papers that have little or no relevance to the cult figure concerned. The problems of higher education or municipal governance or those raised by the policy of economic liberalisation are important by themselves and were Pherozeshah alive today, might have immensely interested him but the situational referents have altered beyond recognition.

However, the palm of irrelevances goes to the eloquent address by Maharashtra Governor P. C. Alexander dealing with the evolution of political leadership in India. It does not deal with any activity of Pherozeshah Mehta and would be of no interest to him because the India of his dreams is sharply different from the course history has taken thereafter. Shri Alexander's analysis suffers from a major weakness because he has chosen to rely upon personalities rather than processes in the political evolution. The arrival of Gandhi (1915) or the death of Nehru (1964) are events important in themselves. But they certainly are not the turning points in the political history of India or in the evolution of its political leadership in the same sense as the partition of Bengal or Jallianwala Bagh or even

the so-called Emergency were.

Prof. Y. D. Phadke suffers from the occasion in the context of which he had to talk. Commemorative celebrations are not exactly the most suitable occasions for incisive analysis. He however has bravely struggled to convey what a scholar of his eminence would have said in more precise terms. Both Dadabhai and Pherozeshah suffered political demise much earlier than their physical death. They had lost their contact with the public ethos after 1905 and more especially after 1908. The Congress that they had contributed to create and which each of them dominated in his own different style died at Bankipore (1912). The power balance had dramatically and decisively shifted to Tilak who emerged as the new messiah even *in absentia*.

Dr. Mody is more fortunate because the *niche* that she has chosen - the Bombay Presidency Association - is coterminous with the dimensions of Pherozeshah all along and she has done a thorough job of her subject. The seminar and the volume will be of immense value to those who are attempting to view twentieth century India in a proper historical and political perspective. ♦

Self-reliance: the keynote of our independence

Long before we won our freedom, self-reliance was the goal of those of our people who could think for themselves and shed the shackles of dependence : men of foresight and determination, like Ardeshir and Pirojsha Godrej, who had confidence in the country's capabilities and shared the same ideals with Tilak, Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru who practised self-reliance.

In Godrej, self-reliance has been considered indispensable to progress, the aim being not just self-sufficiency for

the organisation but for the whole country. Progress can only be achieved in a milieu of progress.

Based on our country's needs, and exploiting the country's own resources, Godrej have diversified.

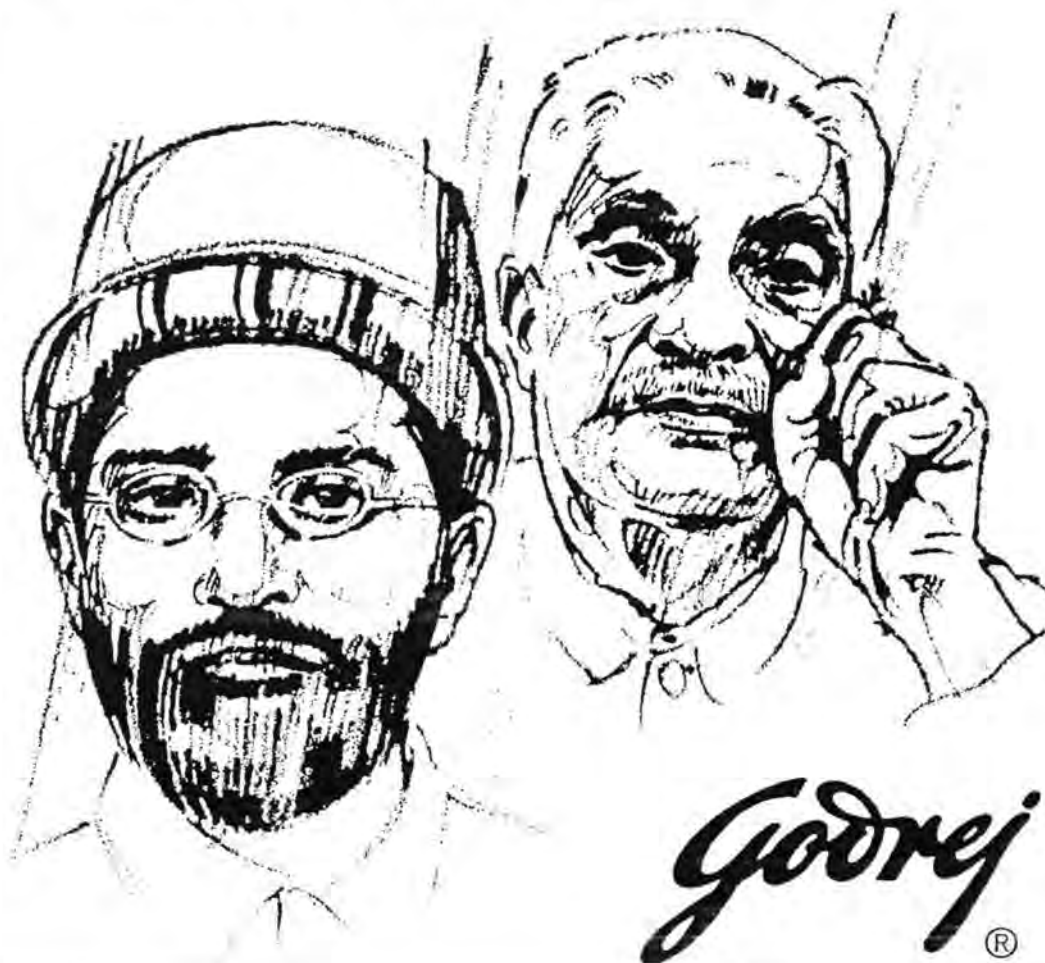
Made to international standards and backed by continuous technical innovation, their products range from locks and security equipment, machine tools, forklift trucks, architecture and steel castings to furniture, typewriters, refrigerators, computers and electronic

business systems as well as soaps, detergents, toiletries, chemicals, animal feeds, agro-products and edible oils.

The Godrej industrial garden township at Vikhroli-Pirojshanagar is an example of self-reliance and progress. For their worker Godrej have provided - in a unique environment - many social benefits : extensive housing, schools, and adult education, recreation, medical and family-planning benefits..

Self-reliance is both a means and an end.

For Godrej it is the essence of independence.





GOOD TIMES, BAD TIMES, SAD TIMES SELECTED WRITINGS OF M. A. RANE

Published by

M. A. Rane 75th Birthday Felicitation Committee, C/o. Freedom First, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001.

Year of Publication: 2001. No. of pages: 505. Price Rs.300.

Reviewed by

Dr. Sarto Esteves, a freelance journalist for over 40 years, has authored several books on socio-political subjects.

As one goes through this book, one cannot but feel the need for many more men and women of the calibre of Advocate M. A. Rane to come forward to let the half-baked politicians in our beloved land know that there are countless millions of Indians who know what India is, what it should be, and how it should be turned into a land worthy of its millions; and that it is not to be turned into a junkyard of communalists, obscurantists and hooligans. They have had a field day for too long. They should know that they are not omniscient, all-knowing leaders by any stretch of imagination. The mess they have made of politics is enough to disqualify them for all else. A nation of 950 million people deserve far better political rulers than the whole breed we see around. They must know that we do not want *bhats*, *purohits* and *sants* to be our rulers. If they want to build temples, mosques or churches, they are welcome to do so, but they have to confine themselves to that "profession" and not dabble in politics or any other public activity. No political party in the world is busy building temples or mosques, and India must not be the exception.

This is exactly what the author of this book is trying to drive home. It is a book of over 500 pages containing his articles, most of

which appeared in *The Radical Humanist* during the last 25 years or so, and has been published by a Felicitation Committee consisting of several leading citizens and legal luminaries. The book is divided into several sections including "Human Rights/Civil Liberties", "Corruption", "Right to Know and Right to Information", "The Indian Polity", "Communalism/Minorities", "Law, Lawyers, Judges and Justice Delivery System", etc. The author is deeply concerned that "the nation is relapsing into anarchy and barbarism". The country's sacred Constitution, the people's rights, nay more, the nation itself, has been "hijacked by professional politicians". Many of them are sheer unemployables, pure and simple. They have found politics a safe haven, an activity where no questions are ever asked or answers ever given about one's antecedents, character, abilities, training, qualifications or the number of crimes one has committed. This makes it easy for *goondas*, *dadas*, hooligans and criminals to claim to be leaders of the country, to loot the country and go about as the most respectable citizens of India.

The author comes down heavily on the communal elements that have been allowed to grow and prosper. They have become a parallel center of authority taking

the law in their own hands and issuing highly damaging orders and *firmands* to the minorities like "they will be thrown out of the country", "they are traitors", "they shall leave the country by a given date or face the consequences", "they will not be allowed to practise their religion", "they will have to convert Islam and Christianity into *swadeshi* religions", ... the list is endless. Those giving these orders to the minorities, are full-fledged, loyal citizens of India, are doing so in a democracy with a duly constituted Government and its functions fully elaborated in the Constitution. This is a most shocking state of affairs. They have been allowed by the powers-that-be to behave in this manner because it is their own ideology which is being enforced by proxy by the 'Sangh Parivar'. If they were made to behave themselves, if they were told that the Government knows its functions and its duties, then this confusion that prevails in the country, with communal riots, deaths, rapes of nuns, destruction of minority institutions, and the perpetual war-like situation that one witnesses for the last 50 years would have vanished in an instant.

The causes of the "present malady and communal disharmony is power politics pursued by political parties" with a vengeance. It has become the safest road to

power in our country. The function of the Government is to enforce the Constitution and safeguard the life and property of every citizen of India and not of the 'Sangh Parivar' alone with its "paranoia, prejudice and hatred" for the minorities. This is a secular nation and no political party in the country has any right to exist if its purpose is to promote any religion or build temples or mosques. The rulers must be made to renounce communalism in every form, draw up a socio-economic ideology and not a religion-based ideology if they want to be in politics; the voters must refuse to have anything to do with any communal outfit when they go to the polling booth. Then only will there be peace and harmony in the country, the political parties will be what they should be, and democracy will flourish.

The hope of the future, however, is the proliferation of a number of human rights organizations that have sprung up in many parts of India, wherein the younger generation and the liberal-minded citizens are playing a very active role in defending our fundamental rights and democratic freedoms. They have shown during the last 20 years that they are not prepared to allow that strange breed of half-literate politicians to set the pace on every issue of national importance and ride roughshod over "the rights, liberties and freedoms" of individual citizens and minorities. If they are politicians, they should confine themselves to that activity. The 950 million citizens of India could not be so bankrupt intellectually, educationally, morally and culturally as not to be able to decide

on some of the basic issues that affect them and the nation. The time has come for every citizen to start thinking about the problems of the nation, express their views forcefully and fearlessly through every medium and help the nation to go forward. The pseudo-politicians, communalists and junkyard hooligans masquerading as national leaders must be shown the door. The rise of the new generation that is gradually taking the center-stage in the country is a most heartening and highly promising sign. It must be supported and encouraged to the hilt so that the India of tomorrow is a modern, progressive, forward-looking nation. This is one of the books that should find a place on every shelf and should be read by every educated Indian. ♦



LIVING THROUGH EXCITING TIMES

By C. V. Elias

Published by

C. V. Elias, Chempakaseril, Kottayam 29, Kerala.
Year of Publication: 2000. No. of Pages: 322. Price: Rs.175

Reviewed by

Brigadier A. Thyagarajan, retired Army Officer and freelance writer.

Mr. Elias, who has had extensive teaching experience both in India and abroad, comes from a middle class family belonging to the Syrian Christian Church which has a large number of followers in Kottayam district.

In Part I of the book, the author has invoked memories of his childhood, his schooling experience and his initiation into the communist party. His observations and recollections mainly revolve

around his life in a small village where there were extended families belonging to a small community.

His participation in the movement against the erstwhile Maharaja's rule is thought provoking. However, Mr. Elias has failed to portray the social life in Kerala which has its own strands of communal amity, secularism and common bonds of culture. Even though he has criticised the repressive measures of the

Travancore Maharaja's Diwan (Mr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer), he has not brought out the immense progressive measures taken by the ruler of Travancore which was a forerunner in the fields of education, social harmony and enterprise.

In the second chapter, the author has taken the readers to the various colleges in Tamil Nadu at places such as Virudunagar, Sivaganga and Tiruchirapalli. Here

again, he has portrayed in a transparent manner his problems of induction, acceptance and interpersonal relationships as he grew with the students. His observations on the discipline and quality of students in Tamil Nadu are remarkable. Perhaps being a Christian, he could easily interact with a varied community of students from all classes and castes.

Mr. Elias, who went abroad for teaching assignments in Kenya, Mombasa, Zambia and Nigeria had a very variegated experience at a time when these African countries were themselves in the melting pot of political and social change. The author had to overcome a number of obstacles at the time of induction and settling down in the newly established African states. It is a tribute both to Mr. Elias and to the

quality of Indian education that Mr. Elias could get approval and extended tenures in the various African schools.

He has mentioned the problems of living in African countries and the isolation of Indian immigrants who were comparatively more educated. However, Mr. Elias could have further probed the problems of the new African generation which was trying to come out of colonial rule with all the handicaps of poverty, tribalism and poor education standards.

In Part IV of the book, the author has quoted extensively his comments about the leaders of the Indian National Congress such as Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and the other successive governments of V. P. Singh and

Vajpayee. The author's writings reflect great dissatisfaction with the policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its various cohorts who are pursuing the *Hindutva* doctrine. He has also revealed his bitter disappointment with the Communist Manifesto that he feels is responsible for creating anarchy, totalitarian rule and a decadent economic theory that plunged the Soviet Union into crisis. He has however, kept silent about the performance of the first communist government in India which was headed by E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

A readable book which could have been more interesting had Mr. Elias reflected more on the changes in the social and economic life of the country, especially the South, during the period 1930-1960. ♦



FINAL VICTORY. THE LIFE - AND DEATH - OF NAVAL PIROJSHA GODREJ

By B. K. Karanjia

Published by

Viking Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., 11, Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110 017.

Year of Publication: 2000. No. of pages: 261. Price: Rs.395.

Reviewed by

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

This volume is the third in the series on the House of Godrej.

Ardeshir B. Godrej was the founder of the House of Godrej. He gave up a lucrative legal practice to plunge headlong into the Swadeshi Movement. As a patriot, he was more concerned with economic freedom than political freedom. He successfully introduced in the Indian market the popular Godrej locks, thereby driving away foreign competitors. Later he diversified

into safes, cupboards, etc. Pirojsha B. Godrej, his younger brother, strengthened and consolidated the position and shifted the entire plant from Lalbaug to Vikhroli.

Naval P. Godrej, the youngest son of Pirojsha, showed an uncanny aptitude for mechanical products at an early age. He used to dismantle products and re-assemble them with ease. Thanks to him, the country can boast of a well-founded machine-tool industry. He

was responsible for ushering an India-built typewriter, fully manufactured in India. Similarly, he pioneered the manufacture of an indigenous refrigerator.

During the '50s, foreign companies had a stranglehold in the Indian market. Remington, Royal, Imperial, Underwood, Hermes, were some of the typewriters quite popular at that time. Naval Godrej, determined to put an end to this preference of foreign typewriters,

The success or failure of a manufacturing company depends solely on the degree of superiority of its tool department. This department takes care of the needs and requirements of other production centers by suggesting, advising, improvising, altering, the machines

His efforts to put India on the World Map having fructified, Naval was quite upbeat about improving and updating it. This would lead him to the launching of other white goods and appliances, over a period of time. There was, however, a slight setback, with Cold Air, suddenly closing down without any prior notice. The agreement with GEC automatically lapsed, compelling Godrej to manufacture the hermetically sealed compressor themselves. Realising the need for a small refrigerator, Naval introduced the 165-litre T model with a laminated table top. As the years rolled by, improvements were effected and in 1987, the latest model, insulated with polyurethane foam (PUF) was introduced.

In January 1979, the watchman at Mr. Naval Godrej's residence saw a person loitering. But he did not pay much attention. But the suspicions of the watchman were aroused, when he saw the same person yet again. This time, he caught hold of the man and asked him to explain. This man pleaded to be let off explaining his dire financial position and requesting permission to meet Naval Godrej. The man, who was later identified as Shankar Vithal Savardekar, turned out to be a disgruntled ex-employee of Godrej, who egged on by the fiery speeches of Dr. Datta Samant stabbed Naval Godrej on 8th January 1979. Quickly admitted to Breach Candy Hospital, he had to be operated, which took hours. The operation was successful and he survived. In the meanwhile, Savardekar was caught, put behind bars and convicted. Naval Godrej passed away in 1990. In a touching tribute paid by Justice Hidayatullah, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India observed: "Naval's name will always be taken with great love and affection".

Even after all this, the 'corruptor', who has by now learned the lesson of his life – if at all – is lucky if his work *gets* done in the first place!

ALL I DID WAS TO SAY THAT WITH THE M.P.'S SALARY HIKE, THEY ARE LIKELY TO BECOME LESS CORRUPT...

HANA HA

STOP IT

HANA

HANAHA

HANA

MAHAHAHAHAHA

MAHA

MAHAHAHAHAHA

M. M. M.

Freedom First July-September 2001

Freedom First

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

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