

Freedom First

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A Liberal Quarterly

Indian Troops
in World War II

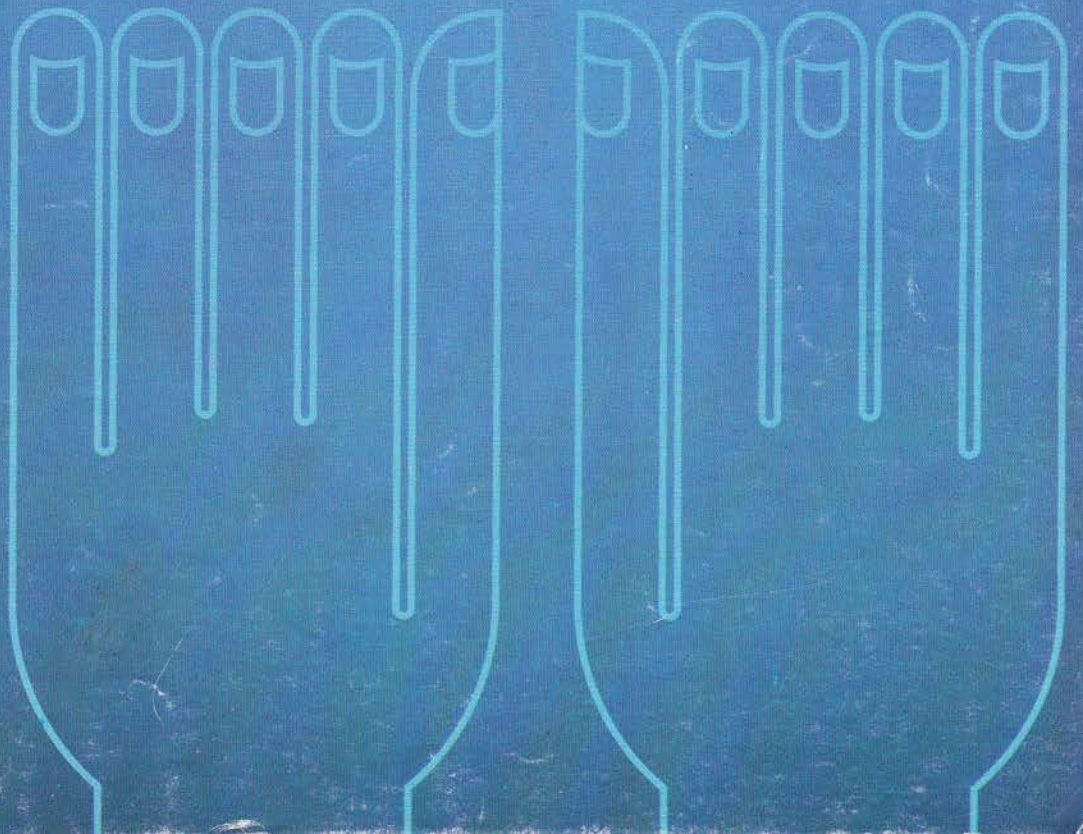
Glimpses of
Vasudaiva
Kutumbakam

Nelson Mandela
- A Blow for
Women's Rights

Truth:
The Strength
of Our Struggle

THE LIBERAL BUDGET

BUILDING AN EQUITABLE SOCIETY.



Dr. Indumati Parikh



(March 16, 1918 - June 17, 2004)

Dr. Indumati Parikh was one of the pillars of the Radical Humanist Movement. She was the Chairperson of the Indian Radical Humanist Association (IRHA) for a number of years.

Coming from a family of freedom fighters Indutai, to her friends, she came in contact with M. N. Roy, when he was conducting study classes in Pune and was attracted to his ideas and philosophy. Another young man who was influenced by M. N. Roy was Govardhan Parikh. Indutai and Prof. Parikh married and settled down in Mumbai. Prof. G. D. Parikh started teaching Politics and Economics in the Ruia College. Dr. Indumati Parikh started a dispensary at Matunga. Prof. G. D. Parikh became a very popular Professor of Politics and Economics and a renowned leader in the Royist movement.

Indutai founded Streehitakarini in 1964, for teaching hygiene, family planning, child welfare, literacy and several other self development programmes to poor women belonging to the lower middle classes and hutment dwellers. Indutai was not only a builder of institutions but also a great motivator. She gathered around her a large number of socially conscious women to work in Streehitakarini. Today even after the passing away of Indutai the work of Streehitakarini goes on because of Indutai's ability to train leaders to carry on her work.

Prof. Parikh had founded an institute known as the Centre for the Study of Social Change (CSSC) with the assistance of a number of intellectuals including Radical Humanists like Laxman Shastri Joshi. He had secured a plot of land for the Centre at Bandra (East). When Prof. Parikh passed away prematurely, Indutai took over the reigns of the Centre.

Indutai as usual motivated a large number of committed persons to work for the Centre. She succeeded in raising a building on the plot with two wings and an upper storey. She named it the M. N. Roy Human Development Campus.

Indutai used to say "I am not an intellectual. But I am a grassroots worker". In fact she was both. She used to write with felicity in English and Marathi for newspapers and journals including *The Radical Humanist*. She has written a number of books in Marathi one of them on the population explosion.

It was only natural that she should have acquired a bagful of awards in recognition of her work. Among them:

IHEU Distinguished Humanist Award; The Jeevan Puraskar Gaurav Award for lifetime achievement in the social field; The Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Women and Social Welfare; R. D. Karve Prize and Citation.

Abe Solomon



(December 4, 1914 - July 4, 2004)

Abraham Solomon known to his friends as Abe, educated in Pune and Bombay, he became a Rationalist through reading freethought literature published by the Rationalist Press Association.

In 1935, he formed the Rationalist Youth League. In 1938, he was elected Jt. Secretary of the Rationalist Association of India which had been founded in 1930.

He founded Modern Age Publications in 1943 selling freethought literature till 1952.

In 1952 he joined the Asian Regional Organisation (ARO) of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Calcutta and moved to its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, in 1963. He took premature retirement in 1978, in order to return to India to join with Professor A. B. Shah and work for the Indian Secular Society, founded by him in 1969.

On the death of Prof. A. B. Shah in October 1981, Solomon was elected President of the Indian Secular Society which position he held till his passing away on July 4.

He was a great friend and supporter of *Freedom First* and it was on his initiative that Freedom First Foundation was set up to assist *Freedom First* financially.

He was a great champion of human value. It was his contention that "values preceded Rights and therefore the UN's Universal Declaration of Rights" had to be preceded by a Universal Declaration of Human Values.

In 1997 *Freedom First* featured on its cover Solomon's draft "Universal Declaration of Human Values". The draft was discussed at a Seminar in Mumbai on October 18, 1997 and later adopted by the International Humanist and Ethical Union based in London. The IHEU which enjoys observer status with the United Nations has, since, been recommending this Declaration for the UN's consideration.

In fact the last decade of his life was an "obsessive" preoccupation with the need to restore values in public life.

In 2000 he was awarded the Distinguished Humanist Award by the IHEU at its Conference in Mumbai.

Freedom First

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

A major liberal offering for 2004 thanks to the combined efforts of the Indian Liberal Group and the Project for Economic Education is "The Liberal Budget - Building an Equitable Society". We believe that this is the first time that such an alternative to the annual budget presented by Union Finance Ministers has been offered. We felt that readers of *Freedom First* would be interested and so this forms this issue's cover feature. We welcome comments from readers. As mentioned on page 10 we shall be happy to send any reader who makes a request a copy of the budget document.

Though on the facing page we have paid our tribute to Abraham Solomon, there is need for a special mention here. He was not only a member of the Advisory Board but the man responsible for the continued publication of *Freedom First*. He was this editor's friend, philosopher and guide and fund raiser. During his life time he expressly forbade me from mentioning his name as a fund raiser. His passing away is indeed a grievous loss. We dedicate this issue of *Freedom First* to his memory.

We offer a varied fare ranging from the cover feature on the Budget to a not-so-flattering assessment of Nelson Mandela plus the usual features.

The next issue will be a special number on the occasion of the Second National Convention of the Indian Liberal Group to be held in Mangalore on December 3, 4 and 5.

Editor

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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*

As sundry, geriatric leftists crawl out of the woodwork, there is a real danger that economic reforms might be thwarted. I hope I am wrong.

Economist, Ajit Karnik, in a communication to the editor of *Freedom First*.

My main complaint against pollsters is that they made a mountain out of a molehill.

Kuldip Nayar, *The Indian Express*, June 1

The core competence of many a civil servant, and the reason he is so indispensable is that he knows the turns of this maze, he knows the signposts and the wayside inns...The system is such that it entangles in the same faded tape despite every effort to reform it.

Former Union Minister Arun Shourie,
The Indian Express, March 18

Comrades Bardhan and Yechury of the Left Front have between themselves helped wipe out several thousand crores of wealth of small and big investors with two sentences. One said the stock market can go to hell and the other said the disinvestment ministry will be closed down.

An editorial in *The Indian Express*, May 15

Retired civil servants suffer from a disadvantage: They bring to new appointments their old baggage, preferences and prejudices.

Kuldip Nayar, *The Indian Express*, June 29

While I have my differences with them (the BJP), you have to concede that ...inflation is quite stable, economy is in a growth mode and reserves are comfortable. Today we can afford risks. I have more room to experiment with ideas.

Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram,
The Indian Express, May 31

This is what the rural poor want from this government for a start. Drinking water and lighting. So simple. The funds required is a pittance compared to the colossal amount wasted so far. Don't leave it to engineers and experts. Take it out of their hands. Leave it to the poor communities who could have the capacity to do it themselves.

Bunker Roy, in an open letter to the Prime Minister
The Indian Express, July 2

In office, the BJP appeared to be focussed, confident, and, at times, even cocky. Out of office as its deliberations in Mumbai so vividly demonstrated, it seems to be sullen, divided and plainly befuddled.

Dileep Padgaonkar, *The Times of India*, June 27

The blunt truth, which the BJP is as yet unwilling to acknowledge, is that the country, including an overwhelming majority of Hindus, has had enough of identity politics.

Dileep Padgaonkar, *The Times of India*, June 27

If you see Amitabh Bachchan praising Doordarshan in a 180-second brief campaign don't be surprised. He is only trying to clearing his dues.

An Express News Service report,
The Indian Express, May 28

When parliamentary democracy was introduced, most Indian politicians were attracted by the rewards of the democratic process, not by the democratic idea.

Author Pavan K. Varma, in his book 'Being Indian',
cited in *The Hindu Magazine*, April 25

We are free to elect rogues, criminals and murderers and they can occupy the highest office in the land - but we're up in arms about an Indian citizen who happens not to have been born here.

Columnist Ritu Menon, *The Indian Express*, May 20

We are a Leftist government but we are a pragmatic government. We will rope in private capital in urban development. And if you want faster development there has to be inflow of private capital. I would even invite and welcome foreign investment ...

Communist Chief Minister of West Bengal,
Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, *The Indian Express*, June 6

The people are the owners of a PSU. The government is only the manager and a manager has no right to sell it.

Comrade Sitaram Yechuri, *The Indian Express*, June 4

Saffronisation and Stalinisation are two extreme ideologies and we cannot replace one ideology by another.

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting,
Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy, *National Review*, July 2004

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

A Good Man at the Helm

When it was finally known that the Congress would be back in power in Delhi even if it be as head of a coalition government, this writer was seized by a strange sense of *déjà vu*. And when old-timers trooped back into key portfolios, that feeling got stronger – a staleness in the air. Perhaps this feeling is confined to those of my generation who lived through interminable years of Congress Party rule. The only relieving factors – this time are the personalities of Manmohan Singh and P. Chidambaram. Not only because they are protagonists of economic reforms but because they represent competence and clarity even if the latter quality is not likely to be allowed full play in a coalition dependent on the communists. Pulls by regional parties, one can understand – it contributes to the further development of India's federal character. The feeling of *déjà vu* comes from a fear of the same old prevarications, the same old attempt to be everything to everyone with no clear objectives and, above all, turning a blind eye to corruption particularly in the bureaucracy.

The only relief is the man at the helm – Manmohan Singh. In my ways he reminds me of another simple man who had the potential of being an outstanding Prime Minister had death not intervened – Lal Bahadur Shastri. But he did not have two handicaps that face the present PM – a coalition of many parties and that too with a number of ministers facing criminal charges, and a new version of the notorious 'kitchen cabinet' in the form of a National Advisory Council headed by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who has been accorded cabinet status. Time will soon tell if what the country gained in the swing is not lost on the roundabout. Whatever it is, we welcome the appointment of Manmohan Singh as the new Prime Minister for one very simple reason – He is a good man.

If Communists were Ruling India....

A friend in the course of a discussion observed that had the communists been voted to power the reforms would have been tossed out of the window. I disagreed. It was my contention that, on the contrary the pace of privatisation and globalisation would have accelerated. The first act of the comrades would have been to curb trade unions; the second to muzzle the press and public opinion. Opposition to reforms would have been denounced as anti-people and their goons would have been all over intimidating the opposition as they have been doing in West Bengal. Economic freedom yes, civil liberties no. The old communist choice – Bread or Freedom. Think about it. Fortunately the communists will never be able to get a majority on their own or ever

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



be able to replicate the West Bengal experiment on a national scale.

The Institution of Governors

Every time the regime in Delhi changes the Governors in the states are changed. Almost like the spoils system. But this is not the intention of the fathers of the Indian Constitution when they established the office of Governor. He was to be the representative of the President of India holding office at his pleasure. Governorships were for men and women who had distinguished themselves in various fields including the army, the civil service, men of letters, men and women of known integrity. The list can go on. In the years after independence many distinguished men were governors in the various states. For example, Sarojini Naidu was governor of UP; so was K. M. Munshi and Homi Mody. Rajaji was West Bengal's governor. Even if they were members of the Congress they were personalities in their own right and did not seek government-sponsored sinecures. They were also impartial and did not give in to their own partymen's blandishments. But these persons passed on, only to be replaced by stooges of the parties they belonged to.

Sadly it was the Janata Party that indulged in the wholesale changes of governors. An unhealthy practice that has survived and which is now being assiduously followed by the UPA government. For the BJP to now cry foul is like the pot calling the kettle black. They peopled Raj Bhavans with members of their *Parivar*, who, perhaps understandably, cannot be trusted by the present coalition in Delhi.

Be that as it may, it is necessary to go back and follow the spirit behind the appointment of Governors as envisioned by our Constitution-makers. Since this is not easy, perhaps we need to appeal to the Supreme Court to 'legislate' the restoration of the original purpose of the office, just as they legislated CNG and cleaned Delhi of air pollution!

RSS Going Mod?

And talking of the *Parivar* it was most amusing to read in the *Deccan Chronicle* (June 26) that the RSS, the Head of the *Parivar* is considering a change of uniforms. This is what the report says "The RSS has decided to have a new uniform for its cadre. We asked two city-based designers how they would dress up the *swayanusevaks* in a style that is contemporary yet reflects the basic ideology of the organisation". One dress designer suggested "A semi-fitted trousers on the lines of Cargo pants in thick hand-woven cotton teamed with a full-sleeved fitted T in khaki or khaki blends". To complete the 'look' he suggested a "baseball kind of a cap with the RSS logo and matching canvas belt ..."

A lady designer when asked said: "The *ensemble* I have in mind consists of convertible trousers in cotton khaki in a straight fit...The shirt style T-Shirt in cotton knit..."

May I suggest that along with a change in dress the RSS could consider a change in their thinking to pull it all the way back from the hangover of the 1761 battle of Panipat to fit in with the present fashion of a tolerant, liberal society. Or is a "liberal RSS" an oxymoron?

Man Beheaded to Stop Floods!

According to a report in the press an 80-year old ailing man in a West Bengal village was beheaded by a neighbour who said that the sacrifice was to appease a river that was eroding its banks and threatening their homes. The murderer collected the blood of his victim in a container and poured it into the river praying for it to stop breaching its banks.

Comment is futile except to say that superstition is so rampant I won't be surprised if someone reading this asks whether the floods subsided as a result!

Pune – Modern India's Nalanda

Pune, has over 8,000 foreign students including those enrolled in deemed universities like the Bharati Vidyapeeth and Symbiosis. This constitutes a third of the foreign students in the country according to a report by Sunanda Mehta (*The Indian Express* June 29, 04). "Take a walk", says Sunanda, "through the corridors of the International Centre of the University of Pune, and you are bound to run into students from every corner of the earth – from Iran, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Germany, Russia, Canada, New Zealand... – the reverse brain drain is on".

According to the Director of the International Centre, Dr. Santishree Pandit "In the early years, our international students were invariably from the Middle East and African countries. But since the past 2-3 years we have been getting students from Germany, France, Russia and Canada. This year we even have someone from The Netherlands who has enrolled for an undergraduate course in Fergusson College".

Scholars from Japan are here for two-year courses in Pali, Sanskrit and Buddhist scriptures. About 20 students from China have applied for B.Sc, M.A. in Philosophy and English.

And why Pune? According to Santishree, "Students find Pune safer than places in the North." That perhaps is not the only reason. Pune has always been a centre of learning and perhaps is re-discovering its 'core competence'!

This report should cheer those who gripe about Indian students going overseas for education and foreign universities and educational institutions seeking space in India. What we are witnessing is globalisation in the field education – a development that should be universally welcomed.

SVR



The Spirit of Swatantra ...

The Swatantra Party believes that to live and work, to earn and save, to attempt to possess property and inherit and accumulate and seek to bequeath it to one's relatives, friends or the public are rights which are most essential for the sustenance and development of the personality and freedom of human beings.

Professor N. G. Ranga, "Why Swatantra and Why Not Congress?
Swatantra Party Souvenir, 1961

(The late Professor N. G. Ranga was President of the Swatantra Party from 1959 to 1968).

The Liberal Budget

Building an Equitable Society

Union government Budgets and, to a lesser extent, State government budgets have acquired a larger than life importance. Along with the proliferation of laws, these Budgets too have become increasingly complex, requiring 'experts' to interpret the laws or the various provisions in the Budgets. Indeed it required a genius like the late Mr.Nani Palkhivala to explain the implications of a Budget in terms that people could understand.

Until the early nineties, business, industry and taxpayers generally, waited with bated breath with their eyes and ears glued to the TV or radio to hear what the finance minister had in store for them. With socialist governments perched on the commanding heights of the economy it was natural to fear the worst - and more often than not these fears were justified and the country and the people suffered. And, to make confusion worse confounded, invariably, these Budgets underwent several transformations in the form of "revised estimates" in the course of the financial year. But that is another matter.

Budgets in the first forty years of freedom were designed to serve a statist economy. When the government at the Centre was finally compelled by economic compulsions, in 1991, to take a "U Turn", the Budgeting process did not take a similar turn. It continued to be as complicated and as obtuse as ever. On the other hand with the considerable dilution of the licence-permit-quota-Raj, Union budgets no longer scare the citizen as much as they did in the heydays of the 'socialistic' regime. But this is not enough.

In the evolving liberalisation of the economy there is need to promote better fiscal governance through transparency and accountability, fiscal consolidation, productivity, growth and equity. The Project for Economic Education is convinced that a liberal economy needs a different kind of Budget – a Budget that is de-mystified and made simpler, highly transparent and, above all, brought in tune with reality. The reality is that since 1991 the country has been heading in the direction of a liberalised economy. A liberalising economy needs a truly Liberal Budget.

Work began a year ago when a Drafting Group was appointed with a brief to prepare a Model Liberal Budget – the kind of Budget India's current economic situation needs; a budget that is not only economic-reforms friendly, but which also reflects the Liberal economic philosophy.

However when drafting the Liberal Budget, the Drafting Group's critiques of the existing practices have been brief, and that too only to serve as reference points for correctives vis-à-vis the Liberal Budget. The dictum that the Drafting Group kept reminding itself was "Everyone knows what's wrong. The job is to offer the people what is right."

The Liberal Budget is not frozen in time. There will be an annual review of the Liberal Budget. Changes will be made if change is justified but always in keeping with the basic Liberal belief - Man is the measure of all things. On this there can be no compromise. And this goes well with the objective of the Liberal Budget - Building an Equitable Society.

What then is this equitable society? It is not to be confused with the egalitarian ideal propounded by socialists. An equitable society is a just and fair society – A society where the state provides opportunities for growth. All human beings are not born equal if economic and social circumstances are the only criteria. It is the task of a Liberal State to provide them opportunities for growth irrespective of their caste, creed or status - economic or social. The State is the enabler, providing the required social and physical infrastructure. These include basic primary education, primary health care, easy availability of safe drinking water or water for irrigation; decent roads for easy connectivity; speedy justice and the maintenance of law and order. In an equitable society the individual matters. The Liberals seek growth with equity. The Liberal Budget is an instrument to make that happen.

We reproduce, in the following pages, a summary of the Liberal Budget.

S. V. Raju

An equitable society is a just and fair society – A society where the state provides opportunities for growth

The Liberal Budget – A Summary

Man is the measure of all things. This about sums up the Liberal credo. Liberalism has no dogma except one - the centrality of the human being; what is good for him - or her - is acceptable. What is not, is not. Liberalism like Socialism aims at promoting the welfare of all. As Ludwig von Mises the great Liberal philosopher put it, where the two differ is "not by the goal at which it aims, but by the means that it chooses to attain the goal".

Philosophically speaking the Liberal position is very clear: It is, that the business of government is governance and not business. In a Liberal State, the individual is supreme and the State must work to further his or her potential. So it will focus its activities on law and order, defence, physical and social infrastructure (health, education and a social safety net).

When preparing this Liberal Budget from a Liberal perspective, we have kept these fundamentals in mind. The key basic tenets of this Liberal Budget are:

- ❑ Effective Fiscal Governance
- ❑ Fiscal Consolidation and Stabilisation
- ❑ Efficiency and Productivity
- ❑ Acceleration of Growth
- ❑ Promotion of Equity

The main focus of the Liberal Budget will be issues concerning human development or human capital formation - health, education and a social safety net for those who are not capable of looking after themselves.

At the same time, no budget can be genuinely Liberal in its essence and powerful in its impact, unless the overall economic policy regime becomes genuinely liberal, deregulated and capable of nurturing and fostering private and individual initiative. In other words, an interventionist State cannot be the right setting for a Liberal Budget.

Unfortunately, over the past fifty years, the Indian State has become an interventionist one, appropriating

to itself practically every aspect of human life. As a result, it has spread itself too thin and is not able to play an effective role in any area, let alone the areas of its main responsibility. The Liberal Budget will, in a sense, attempt to set this right and attempt to provide resources for the government to effectively carry out its main responsibilities.

What kind of targets relating to human development should the Liberal State set for itself? The Liberal Budget sets out the following nine-point objectives of a Liberal State:

- 1) Reduction of poverty ratio by 5 percentage points by 2007 and by 15 percentage points by 2012.
- 2) All children in school by 2005; all children to complete five years of schooling by 2009.
- 3) Increase in the literacy rate to 75 per cent by 2007.
- 4) Reduction of infant mortality rate (IMR) to 45 per 1000 live births by 2007 and 28 by 2012.
- 5) Reduction in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 2 per 1000 live births by 2007 and to 1 by 2012.
- 6) Improve infant and child feeding and caring practices to bring down the prevalence of underweight children under three years from 47 per cent to 40 per cent.
- 7) Reduce the prevalence of severe under-nutrition in children in the 0-6 years age group by 50 per cent.
- 8) Provide 100 per cent coverage of rural and urban population with safe drinking water.
- 9) Provide cost-effective means of safe and sanitary disposal of solid waste and waste water.

While framing the Liberal Budget, we have recognised some distinctive recent changes, especially the tax policy, which reflects what Indian Liberals have been advocating in the preceding several decades. This change has already brought about several remarkable gains in our economic performance, particularly in the sphere of industry and the external sector of the economy.

But this exercise is far from complete. Much more remains to be done, and it will be our endeavour to set out a strategy to make India a truly world-class economic power over the next decade even while attending to the basic needs of the population, particularly in rural India.

The Liberal economic philosophy recognizes the importance of expenditure policy as a powerful tool of fiscal policy. The expenditure policy impacts in a variety of ways on key parameters of socio-economic development, employment generation and poverty alleviation. It impacts directly or indirectly the sectoral composition of growth as well as patterns of income distribution. Thus, an efficient expenditure policy is a critical component in the strategy for accelerating growth and improving its quality.

In this context, the effort of the Liberal Budget is not merely to reduce and rationalize expenditure, but to shift radically the focus and direction of expenditure policy. What are the key guideposts for this purpose?

- First, expenditure growth in real terms over the next three years shall not exceed the anticipated real GDP growth.
- Second, the composition of expenditure must change decisively in favour of developmental expenditure over the next three years. Thus, the ratio of development expenditure shall increase from the present average of about 7% of GDP to 9% in stages over next three years and remain at least around this level thereafter.
- Third, the Liberal Budget strongly advocates the case for reducing non-developmental expenditure. The savings from non-developmental expenditure shall be redeployed largely to finance sustainable, well-conceived social sector and welfare programmes such as (i) primary education and healthcare; (ii) employment guarantee scheme; (iii) mid-day meal scheme for deserving school children; (iv) health insurance for the poor; and (v) an effective pension scheme, etc.
- Last, it is imperative to devise certain qualitative benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of both development and non-development expenditure.

The Liberal Budget envisages a systematic and

rigorous expenditure management process, essentially reflecting the following elements:

- First, each individual Ministry and Department shall formulate inspiring missions, aspirations and targets for its activities for the future. At the same time, there must be a mechanism for mid-course corrections, when found necessary;
- Second, on the pattern of the "profit centre" favoured by corporate enterprises, there shall be "performance cells" in each Ministry and Department;
- Third, there shall be an effective performance management system to monitor the achievements separately of each Ministry and Department together with those of the top officials from the level of Principal Secretary to Deputy Secretary. This must also be accompanied by a suitable "reward - punishment" mechanism;
- Fourth, while there must be tight controls on budgets and performance against targets, there should be operational autonomy for implementation of various projects/programmes.
- Fifth, in designing the process, there must be participation of the officials concerned so that there is a clear understanding of the missions, aspirations and targets. Also, a quarterly report card would become a useful tool in constantly monitoring of the process.
- Sixth, the process shall be transparent and the aspirations and targets of these missions shall also become part of the public domain.

Expenditure reduction has to be accompanied by steps to raise revenues to fund government spending in essential areas. Both tax and non-tax revenues have to be tapped. The policy prescriptions (both budget and non-budget) set out in this document will result in significant buoyancy in both tax and non-tax revenues. The restoration of high growth levels and increased investment activity will automatically lead to growth of revenues.

Rationalizing and simplifying Direct and Indirect Tax Laws and bringing them in line with the current needs of a liberalising and competitive global economy is an urgent task. Accordingly, in the area of tax reforms,

An efficient expenditure policy is a critical component in the strategy for accelerating growth and improving its quality.

The Liberal Budget : Building An Equitable Society

the Liberal Budget would be guided by the following two broad principles:

- (i) Any increase in tax revenues would not be by increase in the tax rates, but by rationalization and simplification of the tax system.
- (ii) Tax reforms would be through the creation of a simplified and rational tax policy and globally competitive tax rates.

It is imperative to stress that the falling tax-GDP ratio is a source of worry, but the Liberal State does not envisage any drastic increase in this, given the need for substantive reduction and rationalisation of taxes, especially indirect taxes. However, the fact remains that the State does need to raise revenue to finance its various functions. This can be done, without increasing the incidence of tax rates, through efficient and innovative tax administration.

The Report of the Task Force on direct/indirect taxes under the chairmanship of Dr. Vijay Kelkar was submitted in November 2002. Though it provides radical changes in tax administration and addresses issues in the tax policies to achieve rationalization and simplification, it has unfortunately not found acceptability with the government. However, the Liberal response to this report has generally been favourable and hence, Liberals will give it their serious consideration.

All this will lead to better tax compliance. However, there will still be a host of defaulters and the State cannot ignore its responsibility of improving tax administration, without giving draconian powers to tax authorities, which they can use to harass tax payers. Even while supporting a government with a will to govern and implement laws necessary to ensure their compliance, the Liberal way does not accept actions that lead to intimidation and the invasion of the privacy of the individual.

Thus, provisions for search and seizure will be abolished, since they have not served their purpose of acting as deterrents, but have been misused to harass taxpayers. Similarly, the 'public interest provisions'

(relating to disclosure of information about the assessee, exemption or reduction in rates of taxation for oil companies, etc.), which give the government undue discretionary powers, would also be abolished. Inefficiencies in the tax administration system would be eliminated and powers of the assessing officers will be reviewed. Tax collections can be strict without being brutal.

Tax payers with an income up to Rs.5 lakhs will not be required to maintain books of accounts and assessing officers will not have the right to demand books of accounts from them. Computerisation of all tax operations, including customs clearances, will be given the highest priority in the interest of transparency and efficiency.

Rationalizing and simplifying Direct and Indirect Tax Laws and bringing them in line with the current needs of a liberalising and competitive global economy is an urgent task.

The Liberal Budget is concerned over the fact that the ratio of non-tax revenue to GDP has been declining over the years. This is happening exactly at a time when the tax/GDP ratio has also been stagnant, thereby putting considerable pressure on government

finances. Therefore, it will be our endeavour to expand resource generation through dividend and interest receipts from PSUs and Departmental Undertakings by improving their efficiency and profitability on a continuing basis.

In recent years, the Union Budget has been looked upon, not only as an Annual Financial Statement, but as a signalling mechanism to the world at large (and the investing community in particular) of the progress in India's economic reforms programme. Hence, it is necessary to

- (a) Identify some of the crucial factors that influence the budget; and
- (b) Suggest specific policy reforms to enable the Liberal Budget to become functionally effective.

The process of disinvestment/privatisation of PSUs needs to be speeded up substantially and extended to state-level public sector enterprises as well. The criterion for privatisation must not be whether a PSU is loss-making or profit-making. The test should be

whether the State should be in that field of activity in the first place. While deciding on issues of disinvestment/privatisation, the Liberal Budget will not be guided by arbitrary or ad hoc considerations of the strategic reasons for PSUs' businesses and operations.

At the same time, while privatising a PSU, care will be taken to ensure that the process is completely transparent. Also, it is necessary to safeguard against a public sector monopoly being replaced by a private sector monopoly. The best way to do this would be to open up all sectors to competition. Where this is not possible or may take time, privatisation must be preceded by a strong independent regulator.

This privatisation exercise is a temporary one, in the sense that it is correcting a policy (of nationalisation) that was adopted at one point of time and which has resulted in putting a huge strain on the fiscal health of the country. In a genuinely liberal economic environment, there will be no PSUs in areas where the private sector is interested and capable of investing.

Moreover, a whole range of reforms are necessary to improve the investment climate in the country. These include: deregulation and liberating industry from the tyranny of inspectors; ending the practice of reserving sectors for small-scale industry or restricting in any way entry into non-strategic areas; allowing companies the freedom to restructure; faster liquidation of companies; and a more flexible labour law regime, among other things. In the area of labour law, the government must not take upon itself the task of deciding levels of wages, etc. or standing in judgement over whether or not companies should retrench workers. Instead, it should confine itself to enforcing contracts, for example, ensuring that workers get their termination benefits and that companies do not default on social security obligations. Needless to emphasise, an improvement in the domestic investment climate is likely to pull in the much-needed FDI and the government need not do anything more apart from ensuring that there are no restrictions on FDI in any areas or placing ceilings on levels of FDI.

The Liberal Budget also calls for the following

crucial policy initiatives:

- * Movement towards a more liberal interest rate and exchange rate regime.
- * Agriculture: The declining trend in investment in this sector has to be reversed. This has to be accompanied by better targeting of subsidies, increased investment in infrastructure, especially irrigation, power and rural infrastructure. All controls on the domestic movement in and trade of agricultural goods need to be lifted. An atmosphere conducive to attracting private investment in the agriculture sector needs to be created. Land ceilings also discourage investment and inhibit growth. These need to be reviewed. Contract farming and partnerships between the corporate sector and farmers need to be encouraged. These steps will only strengthen the agricultural sector and enable it to not only face up global competition, but exploit fully the global opportunities.
- * Trading Activity: Reforms are necessary in the legal arena, which should be geared towards creating a transparent system integrating the country into a single market. States should consider a single procedure for granting licences.
 - * Physical Infrastructure: It is necessary to have a phased but definite movement towards promotion of private sector participation and public-private partnerships in the development and/or management of infrastructure, whether it be power, roads, ports, transport or telecom.
- * Reform of Legal/Judicial Apparatus: A mammoth task.
- * Independent Regulators: Even in a free economy a certain amount of regulation (more in the nature of coordination, checking negative externalities and ensuring that the rules of the game are observed) is needed. Rather than the government, the task should be carried out by independent regulators. However, these regulators must be genuinely independent. Currently, they are still heavily dependent on the government and their independence depends on the person heading the regulatory body. This is not a desirable state of

The criterion for privatisation must not be whether a PSU is loss-making or profit-making. The test should be whether the State should be in that field of activity in the first place.

The Liberal Budget : Building An Equitable Society

affairs and will neither promote true competition nor check market failure.

- * **Restructuring Government:** The re-orientation of the role of the State will necessitate a restructuring of government as well. Reducing the number of employees of the government is an important measure, which is outside the scope of the budget but has a tremendous impact on it. Government salaries and pensions account for over 25 per cent of total revenue receipts and is one of the committed liabilities that cannot be cut down. The only answer, then, is to reduce the number of people to whom salaries need to be remunerated. Each ministry must be subjected to a performance audit and ministries/departments found inconsistent with the liberal conception of the role of the State should be closed down.

At the same time, a Liberal Budget does not call for a blind downsizing across the board. What is needed is rightsizing. This means that staff will be retained - and numbers increased - in areas where the government is needed, and this should be

accompanied by measures to ensure accountability and increased responsibility.

- * **Political Environment:** It will not be possible to create a liberal economic environment unless there is a major change in the political environment and culture in the country. Political parties and politicians must learn to rise above narrow personal and partisan ends and address the needs of the nation.

An atmosphere conducive to attracting private investment in the agriculture sector needs to be created.

Besides, there is the phenomenon of legislative work being sacrificed at the altar of political grand-standing in Parliament and state

assemblies. All this needs to be checked.

Law and order is another issue that needs to be addressed. Though not an economic issue, it has a far-reaching impact on the country's economy. Neither domestic nor foreign investors would like to put their money in areas where the law and order situation is poor. The government has to make efforts to address the root causes of violence and maintain law and order firmly. In substance, the Liberal economy requires the Liberal Budget of the kind envisioned in this document.♦

THE LIBERAL BUDGET - BUILDING AN EQUITABLE SOCIETY is published by the Project for Economic Education. The 40-page publication in an attractive brochure format has the following Chapters:

- Liberal Perspectives and Human Development
- The Current Budget Scenario
- Policy Framework and Structure of the Liberal Budget

Appendices include

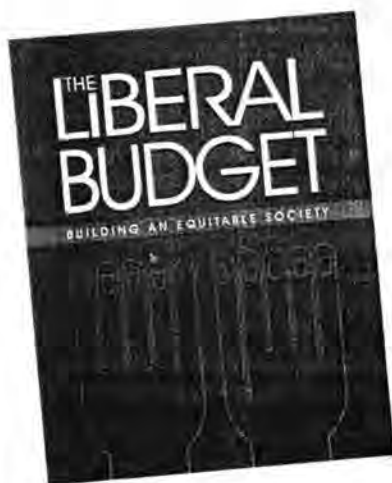
- 6 'Liberal Budgets' in terms of Rs.Crores and percentage of GDP
- Revenue Receipts and Expenditure pattern,
- A Note on the potential of e-Governance

The authors of the Liberal Budget are:

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M. F. Hussain and Art Related Matters

For those who feel good when Indians do well in the West, it was splendid news that 22 of M. F. Hussain's paintings sold for one million dollars. The buyer was a wealthy NRI. Hussain is the maverick of the Indian art scene. He started life as a painter of film posters, but moved on to serious painting which caught on. He is not a naturalistic painter. His famous and most popular series on Mother Teresa, show a blank face, but it has gone into thousands of reproductions. On one

occasion, he spread coarse cotton bed sheets on the ground and designated them as Art. He raised hell, and ignited a national controversy, when he was denied entry to a British Club, wearing a *kurta pyjama*, and chappals, instead of the mandatory suit, tie, socks and shoes. Opinion on the matter is still divided. Whether a standing rule should be respected, or be set aside for a celebrity? If so, whom? His latest exploit is to idealise Madhuri Dixit as the quintessential Indian woman.

The Much Maligned Police

Police personnel, are targets most people love to hate. Yet, the police are a necessary evil. They are there, as a silent backup for the work which keeps society going. When a team of psychologists analysed their work load, they found that the average policeman is on duty for as much as 72 hours of continuous duty. They can get stressed out, and occasionally go berserk. Other ranks not in the I.P.S., are ill-paid and overworked. To this, the public would retort that they are on the take,

and make up, illegally, what they do not get, from the Service. Many vacancies have not been filled, adding to the burden of those who have to work, doing duty for those whose vacancies they have to fill, unofficially. This is a uniformed service, and it functions with an *esprit de corps*. This is not to say, that the police are always blameless but to point out that they are all too human, in terms of reacting to the demands of the job.

Right to Strike, Not Fundamental

In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court has held, that the right to strike, is not fundamental. This decision will be welcome to the public at large, which is fed up with strikes, causing inconvenience for those who are not a party to the strike-call. Jayalalithaa has to be thanked for calling the bluff of the strikers, by pursuing her desire to see who would emerge victorious. Although the strikers were re-instated, (barring those who were guilty of violence), the strikers are now a spent force. Here are some of the highlights of the Judgement:

1. There is no fundamental, legal, equitable or moral right as a justification to go on strike. (What about Article 19(G)?)

2. Government servants cannot hold society to ransom, for issues which have their own procedures for redressal.

3. The strike as a weapon is mostly misused, resulting in chaos and maladministration. The Supreme Court in the United States, is what the judges say it is. In India, the Supreme Court is less powerful. Nonetheless, read with the Essential Services Maintenance Act, the government, if it so desires, has enough ways of disciplining erring government servants. The people will thank India's iron lady if it (the Supreme Court), is able to take on the Unions, as she did.

Fahrenheit 420

Fahrenheit 420 is the temperature at which a book burns. I do not know at what temperature a movie on celluloid burns - but the BJP has come perilously close to doing it. The BJP's front organisations forcibly stopped the screening of the movie, "Girl Friend", by intimidating those who bought tickets. The management had to refund the money to the cinegoers. The film is undoubtedly a controversial one, which deals with the hush-hush subject of lesbianism. But it deals with it sensitively, without any scenes of kissing or nudity. The Director,

Razdan, cannot understand how his thoughtful movie should provoke such a violent reaction. The more so, as it had been cleared by the Censor Board, with an "A" Certificate. What gives the *Parivar* the right to think that it has superior wisdom, which enables it to decide, what the public may or may not see? Especially, when the competent body to do this, has cleared the movie for an Adult Certificate? Cinegoers spend good money for a ticket. They should enjoy freedom of choice.

**A Man is a Slave, if he asks for
anything other than Freedom.**



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Indian Troops in World War II

E. D'Souza, PVSM

Not many Americans are aware that Indian troops were deployed in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, the North West Frontier, Aden, Eritrea, Somalia, the Western North African Desert from Cairo to Tripoli, and from the heel of Italy to the Alps and that India was a base for operations in West and South East Asia.

There was much hoopla in the United States of America on the anniversary of 'D' Day during World War II. This writer happened to be in that country and the media went on a ball eulogising the role played by US Forces. Reading the mainline papers, watching TV Channels and speaking to Americans, one would have thought the rest of the world was asleep and made no contribution to the war effort.

This fact was brought into focus when, a Catholic priest who had served in Indore and Mhow, the latter being very much a military cantonment, sent the writer an e-mail in which he says: "I've just read an infuriating book by Stephen Ambrose, official recorder of the participation of the US Armed Forces during World War II. He makes it sound as if the Yanks won the War single-handedly; there are just one or two references to the Australians but none at all to the Indians. If I knew his address I would fire off a nasty letter". Fr. Connor is an Australian who has since settled in the USA and whose Father was a soldier then.

Being a World War II veteran himself who participated in the campaign in Italy in 1944/45, the writer did his best to clear the air by

stating that the 'D' Day Landings may have been the last of the major battles during World War II in the European Theatre but what contributed tangibly to its success was the softening up done earlier by Allied Forces including the ANZACS, in the Persia and Iraq Theatre (PAI Force), North Africa against the wily Rommel and in Eritrea. And the bulk of these forces were from India.

Admittedly neither the Indian or ANZAC troops were involved in the Normandy Landings by the British, Canadians and Americans, but one cannot write off the earlier operations when the first essay into the underbelly of Fortress Europa was in Italy where three Indian Divisions, the 4th, 8th and 10th, 43 Lorried Infantry Brigade and sundry other minor Units participated against Field Marshal Kesselring's stubborn Wehrmacht Forces who conducted a masterly withdrawal ensuring thus that the Germans in Italy could not be pulled out from this theatre of operations that continued until the end of the War in Europe.

What is conveniently forgotten is that at the end of the Italian Campaign in which the British 8th and American 5th Armies participated, a well known British

Correspondent writing in the *Illustrated London News* at the end of that campaign stated that the 8th Indian Division was by far the best field formation in Italy!

In this campaign there were British, Free French, Polish, Brazilian, New Zealand and South African Troops but again apart from General Mark Clark's 5th US Army, the bulk of the other troops were from India. This very same Indian Division with *inter alia*, the 1st and 5th Royal Battalions of the Mahratta Light Infantry, led every river crossing, cracked the Hitler and Gothic Lines, helped in the liberation of Rome (yes, by the Americans) and with the Poles, Free French and Canadian Tanks cleared that bastion of Monte Cassino that withstood two earlier attacks, one by the US 5th Army. It was during this campaign that four Sepoys of the 8th Indian Division and one NCO posthumously from the 10th Indian Division earned Victoria Crosses, the highest award for supreme Gallantry in the face of the enemy, the largest number of such awards in the Italian theatre

The Americans were asked how many Congressional Medals of Honour were awarded to American Troops in this hard slogging match. During World War II Indian troops

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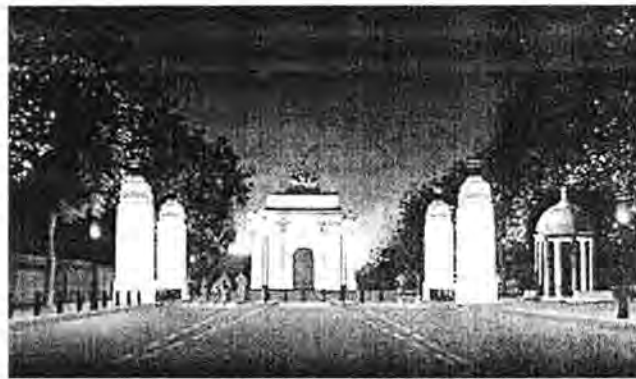
earned as many as 37 Victoria Crosses, an unmatched record. Yet, no mention was made nor credit given, one may well ask? And it was not only in Europe. The Americans claim that they were largely responsible for the defeat of the Japanese in Burma and if the Japanese were defeated in this forgotten theatre it was leadership provided by the American-led Chinese Forces of the NCAC operating to the North of the forgotten 14th Army. It is commonly known that the bulk of the Allied Forces facing the advancing Japanese in their advance to India were Indian troops. Nor have the Americans given the recognition due to the Australians fighting in the Pacific Theatre. All one hears or reads is of the Americans in Okinawa and Guadalcanal and the Pacific Theatre!! This is indeed a crying shame and is the *raison d'être* for Fr. Connor's caustic remarks.

Not many Americans are aware that Indian troops were deployed in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, the North West Frontier, Aden, Eritrea, Somalia, the Western North African Desert from Cairo to Tripoli, and from the heel of Italy to the Alps and that India was a base for operations in West and South East Asia.

But let us not blame the Americans alone for this total lack of acknowledgement of India's major contribution to the World War II effort. Britain is equally to blame to some extent. At the end of World War II, a war memorial was erected in front of Buckingham Palace for those Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and South Africans (Boers) who laid down their lives for

the Allied cause and rightly so. But the Indian contribution from the Sub Continent was forgotten. This lapse remained unnoticed not only in India but in Britain as well, that is until the 50th Anniversary of Burma Day when there was a big to do of the role of the British in driving the Japanese back from the threat to India.

There was very low key acknowledgement in the British print and electronic media and this non recognition would have continued



The Memorial Gate at Hyde Park Corner, London

but for the gutsy Baroness Sheila Flather, a Peeress in the House of Lords, and of Punjabi origin to wit. She was furious at this non recognition and did not hesitate to express her sense of shock, her feelings as one of Indian origin, in the strongest possible terms to all and sundry. Using her membership in the House of Lords to advantage, she raised this issue on every platform possible demanding that a suitable memorial in a high visibility location in London be erected to honour soldiers from the Indian Sub-Continent and the Caribbean who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom. Mind you she received very little support from the Government of India as it was a non issue in India. But she battled on regardless.

Her tireless efforts paid off.

The Borough of Westminster and London County Council reluctantly agreed to the proposal and after much binding in the marsh, a suitable and high visibility site was located and agreed to, behind the Memorial Gate at Hyde Park Corner on the road leading to Buckingham Palace. But much remained, including a suitable design and to raise funds amounting to nearly 5 million pounds sterling. The NRI's in the UK were not particularly responsive but the Baroness continued relentlessly and eventually achieved her aim.

The memorial consists of four very tall pillars astride the road, at the top of which rests decorative urns signifying the repository for ashes of those cremated. To one side is a typical Rajasthani style 'Chattri' with the inside of the canopy being inscribed for posterity with the names of Victoria Cross and George Cross awardees of World Wars I and II. Flanking the Chattri are two

stone graves representing those who sacrificed their lives in the two World Wars and the theatres where they laid down their lives.

But this is not the end of this 'gripe'. Lets not call the pot black. Have we as Indians erected a suitable and imposing War Memorial in the Capital to honour the 19,000 Officers and Men who gave their all after Independence? Can one honestly say that the present Amar Jawan, a plain *Samadhi* with a reversed rifle and helmet surmounted on top, dwarfed under an Imperial War Memorial, the India Gate engenders a sense of gratitude for these brave men? It is left to the reader to decide on its suitability.

MAJOR GENERAL (Retd.) E. D'SOUZA
PVSM a regular contributor to *Freedom First* is himself a World War II veteran.

Glimpses of *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam**

The Eighth Mumbai International Film Festival - 2004

Prem Vaidya

MIFF-2004, just an eight-year old Indian child has now grown in stature by becoming one of the three largest and the best organized documentary film festivals of the world

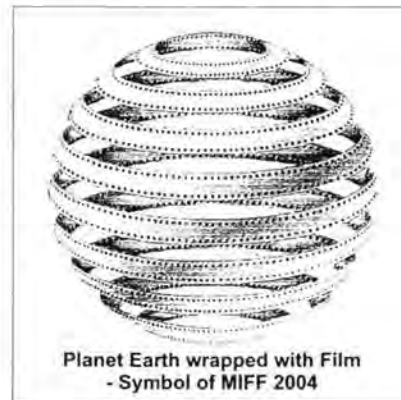
It was a gathering of Documentary, Short and Animation filmmakers from various parts of the world. Each one of them had brought with him various creative dimensions of human life to be shown on the silver screen. If there was anything common in most of them it was their commitment and the desire to deliver their best.

It was a seven-day bonanza, from 3-9 February 2004 a period of good fortune for media persons like film-makers, film critics, journalists, writers and viewers. As many as thirty countries from the five continents participated in this Festival including U.S.A., U.K., Canada, France, Germany, Russia, Israel, Japan, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Denmark, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Netherlands, Palestine, Taiwan, Thailand, Ukraine, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and India.

Over 600 entries were received from 36 countries. There were as many as 13 members in the Selection Committee for choosing films for International and National Competitions. Awards ranged from the Golden Conch, Silver Conch plus cash Rs.2,50,000, Rs.1,50,000, Rs.1,00,000, Rs. 75,000 respectively for the 19 different categories - totalling prize money to the tune of

Rs.27.5 lakhs. Apart from this, the Indian Documentary Producers' Association (IDPA) - an independent body also came forward to award a Trophy and cash of Rs.25,000 to the best film/Video.

The screening venue, Mumbai's Ravindra Natya Mandir was tastefully converted into three different theatres for International, National and Retrospectives screening simultaneously. Three



days in advance of the Festival, two more theatres were booked for International and National juries at the Films Division Complex.

The Chairman of the International Jury was Tom Zubrycki from Australia with 30 years of experience as documentary film-maker. With him were four other jurors: Ram Mohan (an Indian 'Walt Disney'), Richard Green (South Africa), Siladitya Sen (India), and Helena Trestikova (Czechoslovakia). The Chairman of the National Jury

was N. S. Thapa (Narayan Singh Thapa) backed by 56 years of hard-earned experience in newsreels and documentary films with many awards. Four jurors to assist him were P. K. Nair (India), Aurel Klimt (Czech Republic), D. Gautaman (India) and the author of this article.

MIFF-2004, just an eight-year old Indian child has now grown in stature by becoming one of the three largest and the best organized documentary film festivals of the world - the second largest in Asia next only to Japan (Yamagata). Thus 8th MIFF-2004 has become a significant international event.

Time had come to show the world what India could do - even in the field of documentary, shorts and animation films. The symbol for this Festival was Planet Earth, wrapped around with filmstrip. The symbol signifies a reality. The film-footage of 52 years of national growth that is treasured by the Film Division can easily engulf the entire globe with topics of art, culture, industry, science, environment, education, health, family welfare, agriculture, biographies, history, sports, land, the people etc.

Award to K. L. Khandpur

The most important item was the presentation of the Dr. V. Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award to Lahore-born Shri Kishen Lal Khandpur. A princely figure at the age of 81 as he moved towards

* *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam* (A well known vedic chant meaning 'The world is one family')

the dais, the audience greeted him enthusiastically. Kiran Shantaram, son of the legendary V. Shantaram presented him a citation and cash award of Rs.2.5 lakhs. In the midst of spontaneous clapping, an emotionally charged Khandpur could just mutter: "It's an award for the documentary film movement." To mark the occasion a Special MIFF Cancellation stamp were released by the Postal Department.

Triumph of the Will

On the Opening Day MIFF-2004 paid homage to the great German filmmaker - Leni Riefenstahl (1902 - 2003) who lived to be 101. In a tribute to her, one of her most remembered films, *Triumph of the Will* - that was assigned to her as Director in 1934 by Adolf Hitler - was screened for the documentary filmmaker of the day. Some of us felt that it had no relevance to this Festival.

But while going deep into the background of the subject it was found to be quite informative: While consolidating his power Hitler wanted to celebrate (Nazi) "Party Day" through a huge pageant parade. He therefore erected a stone structure 1300 feet long and 80 feet high. Crowning it was a giant eagle with a 100-foot wing-spread and fluttering all around were thousands of *swastika* banners. To show the strength and power that he commanded at that moment, he decided to create a permanent record of the event. He therefore, assigned the task of making a feature-length film to Leni Riefenstahl! Leni in turn delegated the assignment to someone else. Hitler was upset. He immediately called for Leni and instead of getting angry he tried to persuade her by saying that "You'll only have to give up six days of your life." Leni insisted that she was the last person in the world to do such a film. "I am not a member of the party and I don't even know the difference between SA

and SS". "That is why I want you to do it" said Hitler. "That will give it a fresh approach."

Leni arrived in Nuremberg a week before the opening day, with a crew of 120, including sixteen cameramen. Hitler provided her all the facilities. On the day of the event, Leni and her cameramen filmed the spectacular scene. It was the first display of the military might of Germany since the First World War. The gathering of 300,000 was almost uncontrollable. Leni and her cameramen came away with thousands of feet of extraordinary footage. While the editing was going on there were protests from some of the Nazi party leaders whose images had not been included. Hitler suggested a compromise to Leni to fit into the film the pictures of the disgruntled leaders. Leni took it as an offence to her creative principles of documentary film-making and refused. Hitler heatedly persisted. According to Leni's own version, she stamped her foot and shouted, "I won't do it!" "Are you forgetting whom you are talking to?" Hitler warned. But such was her conviction and such was Hitler's appreciation of her talent that Leni completed the film without any changes and she titled it *Triumph Of The Will*.

At the premiere, Nazi party officials greeted Leni coolly but even Goebbels - her greatest critic - realized that it was an outstanding achievement. The film was awarded the May Day "cultural achievement" award for best film of the year and was later recognized universally as one of the most important documentary film ever made, eventually winning a gold medal at the 1937 World Exhibition in Paris, for its artistry.

Fifty-five year old Helena Trestikova, Documentary filmmaker on social issues from Czechoslovakia

said: MIFF is for me a very interesting and important opportunity to know India - her culture, new films and new people. Suprio Sen from West Bengal burst-out: Every show is a classic, every set is a new grade, MIFF is a university to me.

Patrick Cazals a producer-director from France and Maker of a 52-minute documentary, *Amrita Sher-Gil, Une Rhapsodie Indienne* (An Indian Rhapsody) was more emphatic: The idea, the spirit, the construction and the echo given to the documentary are very changeable from one continent to the other. At the MIFF, there is a friendly confrontation of these "documented viewpoints".

An Indian Rhapsody

Viewing the scale of the national and international competition films at the MIFF it is clear that there is a new phenomenon in the making of documentary films. The aggressive careerists who have tasted power in their craft have come out with bold expressions. For example, 32-year old Eliane Raheb from Lebanon in her 26-minute documentary "*Intihar*" (Suicide) depicted the attack and fall of Iraq. For the annihilation of the regime she used the most appropriate visuals - famous by now - showing the fall of Saddam Hussein's statue in the centre of Baghdad. And courageously, she has shown the same fallen pillar going back to its original position with the statue of President Bush, which has no global approval! In a running commentary behind these visuals, she questions: "Did we all contribute to this war in some way or another? Were we involved by being glued to the television screen, or perhaps by allowing the media to manipulate us? Or were we victims of false aspirations, of deceptive hopes of victory, an illusion which fooled thousands of die-hard Arab volunteers who went to Iraq. Where are they today?"

Ek Sagar Kinare

Goa is associated with the lover's sigh, with detachment and serenity. A young boy in his twenties, Laxmikant Shetgaonkar from Goa has produced an excellent documentary – *Ek Sagar Kinare* (A Seaside Story). A young foreign tourist girl 'Nancy' roams the seashore near a small village. She comes in contact with a happily married school teacher named Shabu. They became friends. Nancy tries to peep into the lifestyle of Shabu. She often visits his house. Shabu asks her about her parents and about her married life. Nancy is frank. She has fought with her parents and separated from her husband. Shabu invites her for dinner. The harmonious lifestyle of a poor Indian teacher in a small village on a peaceful seashore makes a great impact on Nancy. Full of tears, she confesses to Shabu. She will adjust her life and hereafter invest her future in something long-lasting. "I will search for my parents and meet my husband." Saying so, she boards a bus and goes away. This incident also influenced Shabu's life. Thereafter he becomes a more caring husband! Not surprisingly, Director Laxmikant Shetgaonkar was one of the national award winners.

Survivors

Another masterpiece, '*Survivors*' is from Kerala. The theme is based on the suicide of two young girls. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India yet there is an alarming upward trend in suicides! The phenomenon is intriguing. The 23-minute documentary is the factual record of two young girls in their adolescence who want to live together. But social norms are against their love. When one experiences pure love, there is a sense of holism, exhilaration and freedom. There cannot be space for hate in such a situation. Unable to bear the insults and taunts hurled

at them all the time, they decide to take the extreme step. If they couldn't live together, better they die together. They go to a lush green forest nearby, and by the side of a running stream swallow poison and give up this world, thus turning their love into holy communion! The director of the film is a 22-year old girl from Malappuran (Kerala). Shimna is a self taught painter, poet and theatre activist. Her documentary '*Survivors*' is a product of four years of rigorous research.

Shimna won the Golden Conch and cash Rs.1,50,000 for the Best Documentary Film – the achievement is all the more remarkable for the fact that this was Shimna's first independent film.

A Certain Liberation

Yasmine Kabir from Bangladesh as Producer, Cameraman, Editor and Director presented her 37-minute film '*A Certain Liberation*'. The year is 1971 when Razakars roamed wild in what was then East Pakistan, collaborating with the occupying forces. Gurudasi Mondol a lady imprisoned and raped by the Commander of the Razakars was freed by the Bangladesh Liberation Army. 31 years later we see Gurudasi continuing to roam the streets of Kopilmoni, a small town in Bangladesh. In her madness, she has found the strategy of survival.

Swara

Swara - A Bridge Over Troubled Water is a 40 minute documentary from Pakistan. *Swara* is an age-old practice where girls are given away in marriage as part of a peace making arrangement between two disputing parties – one of the most painful social problems that is facing northern Pakistan.

Through interviews given by the girls who were actually given away as *Swara*, the documentary attempts to draw the attention to this

continuing social stigma. Unfortunately the rulers are blind to this issue. Even the mighty Musharraf, who does not like to be overshadowed by anyone in Pakistan, feels helpless to interfere in this crude tribal ritual. Little has changed in this part of Pakistan. Traditional *jirgas* (courts) routinely pass judgment giving away girls in marriage to compensate the aggrieved party. Ironically, Pakhtuns in Pakistan consider this a religious practice! This film has been directed by a progressive Pakhtun lady – Samar Minallah, an M.Phil in Anthropology and Development from the University of Cambridge, U.K. Her documentary has been screened widely in Pakistan.

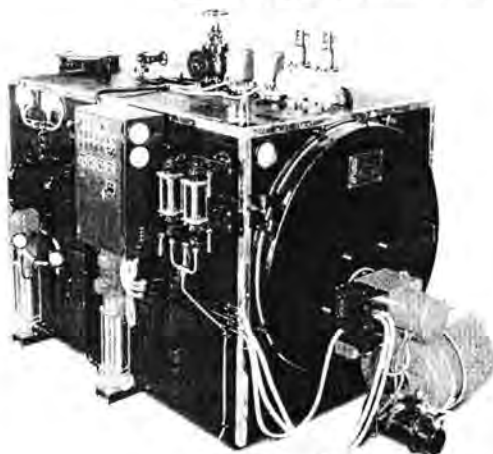
Twin Towers

Twin Towers an entry from the USA is a 34-minute documentary. Its subject matter – September 11 – is quite fresh in everyone's mind. The film is about about the officers of the New York City Fire Department who were among the first to answer the call. The film follows a Harlem based unit before the tragedy and then deals with the fate of these firefighters. The central characters in the film are Joseph Vigiano, a young officer in the unit, and his father, retired fireman John Vigiano Sr., who is one of the most decorated firefighters in the history of the New York City Fire Department. John had a second son, John Jr. who followed him into the NYFD. The tragedy of 9/11 destroyed many families, but as former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani emotionally says in the film, "Many families were affected by the attack on America, but what this family was asked to bear was really too much."

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MR. PREM VAIDYA, a documentary film maker, was with the Films Division of the Government of India. He can be contacted at premvaidya@hotmail.com

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Nelson Mandela

– A Blow for Women's Rights

Kusum Chopra

Winnie's political execution was swift and savage; and it was horrendously public. As public as Nelson's immediate plunge into his prime time romance.

At one time, he was the universal hero.

The argument was: when Jawaharlal Nehru and the rest of our Independence brigade never hesitated to take advantage of every British offer of parole to slip out of jail, here was a man who stuck it out inside, never venturing out at all, no matter what blandishments were offered, no matter who fell ill or died outside, no matter what happened.

He refused to accept the regime's 'generosity' by bargaining with his righteous stand. He was the man who remained in prison uninterruptedly, confident that his work outside was being carried on.

For while he and his cohorts either left the country or went to jail, the work was carried on and his memory was kept fresh in the mind of the whole wide world by his wife, Winnie Mandela.

And she used that time-honored tactic which has paid such rich dividends to the Gandhi-Nehru brigade, whose assiduous cultivation of the western media has left the lasting impression that it was they and they alone who won India her independence; the silent sacrifices of thousands of other freedom fighters submerged in a

conspiracy of silence.

In this case too, the lady took full advantage of the western media to ensure that her jailed husband remained in the headlines; it was she who raised awareness of him, not only across Africa, but across the

and battled and maneuvered and fought and kicked all the time.

Finally, after years of battling and fighting and politicking across the globe, the wife triumphed in getting her aging husband out of jail.

Honorably? No bargains for freedom? But triumph was short-lived. The end of the Mandela dream.

Here was Nelson Mandela, the man who had sat it out in jail, leaving the dirty work, of fighting to rid the country of apartheid, to his second wife.

Nelson had divorced his wife of eleven years, Evelyn to marry Winnie, whose royal African lineage was to stand him in good stead as he manoeuvred himself to the forefront of

the political stage. And then he left all his political and family responsibilities on her capable shoulders, while he made a lengthy political statement by remaining in jail.

Perhaps, when the hour of triumph was at hand, it was difficult for those who had sat it out in jail, in London or elsewhere, to swallow the obvious popularity of the one who had stayed at home to fight on home territory? The hounding of Winnie Mandela started in right



Nelson and Winnie Mandela - In happier times

whole world; it was she who plotted and manoeuvred against the apartheid regime, shifting house constantly, often fugitive, but keeping her embattled family under her wings, balancing political work with parenting and with police beatings; all the while ensuring that the world could not forget her husband in that dreaded jail, Nelson Mandela.

It was not a case of 'they also serve who stand and wait'; she neither stood nor waited, she plotted

earnest. Sordid allegations, of liaisons, of violence, of other matters surfaced.

Was former terrorist Nelson Mandela as yet unblooded that he could not accept allegations of blood on Winnie's hands so blandly?

Were the hands of all those other anti-apartheid leaders clean and anti-septic? Was freedom from apartheid actually won without a blow? If the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi had been so effectively revived, why did the world not hear about it?

Winnie's political execution was swift and savage; and it was horrendously public. As public as Nelson's immediate plunge into his prime time romance.

Like Britain's beleaguered Prince Charles, South Africa's Nelson Mandela too assiduously built up the ground for "prime age" marriage. First came the spate of newspaper stories across the globe about the budding of a "regal romance", of a "love match made in heaven" for the unofficial first couple of Black Africa.

Nelson Mandela, 78 had finally made it to the presidency of South Africa after long years of imprisonment by the apartheid

regime and Graca Machel, 51 was the widow of Samora Machel the freedom fighter who led Mozambique's liberation battle against the Portuguese and was rewarded with the Presidentship and the education ministership for his wife, later widow.

After weeks of news of the development of the romance and photos of the couple hand-in-hand comes an innocuous sounding report of the remarriage, in August 1997, of Nelson Mandela's little known first wife, not Winnie Mandela, but her predecessor, Evelyn Mase-Mandela. This prime time marriage comes at age 77, 40 years after her divorce from Nelson... to ease her loneliness. The selected groom, Simon Rakepile who was widowed only six weeks before his remarriage.

Next step

Gandhi and Nehru were kept in the public eye by good friends in the media. While most of his anti-apartheid cohorts remained virtually anonymous to the rest of the world, it was Winnie who kept Nelson Mandela in the public eye. But just as the Partition had to happen to enable Nehru to take over as Prime Minister immediately, so too South Africa had its Truth and Reconciliation Commission to allow Nelson Mandela his days of glory fast, before it was too late.

So now the world enjoys the spectacle of a woman being publicly condemned, while her husband enjoys prime time romance, and the perpetrators of apartheid get off scot-free, 'confessing' their crimes to continue their economic plunder under the benevolent eyes of international financial giants.

And the poor of South Africa? who gave Mandela the status of a saviour? they remain where they were: sunken in poverty, with poor housing, few jobs, less health and education, just as it was under the apartheid regime. Only the colour of the Boss-man has changed, from white to black. Little else has changed.

Perhaps Nelson and Winnie Mandela are amongst the most misunderstood couples today. The one poses as a hero, too tired of jail to do anything but tired prime time love.

The other wanting her share of the glory she slogged for and the energy still to fight for it. Did she ask for too much?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, NELSON.

KUSUM CHHOPRA is a journalist and a regular contributor to *Freedom First* till two years ago. It's good to have her back among the pages of this journal. - Ed.



It is a fallacy that if you cut down the rate of tax, your revenues drop. They do not do anything of the sort to the same extent. Tax cuts have a therapeutic, healing value, and the law of increasing returns sets in. Just to give you an example, if my income were to be Rs.1.5 lakhs and the tax was 40 per cent, that would yield more to the revenues than if my income was Rs.1 lakh and the tax cut was 50 per cent. In other words, a small slice of a big cake is bigger than a bigger slice of a small cake.

Minoo Masani
in the course of a Budget speech
in the Lok Sabha on 10 March 1966

'Let Freedom Reign' for the Young

Sukrit Sabhlok

Were the Taliban still dictating their wishes in Afghanistan, it's highly improbable that Robina Muqimyar, a 17-year old who will be competing in the Olympics as one of Afghanistan's first two female athletes would have been able to do so.

Young people like me usually prefer not to dwell unnecessarily on the past. We seem to agree with inventor Charles Kettering, who said: "My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there" The young in Iraq and elsewhere are coming to terms with the fact that, for all the criticisms made by anti-war commentators about the decision to go to war in Iraq, these same critics have been either strangely silent, or have conveniently played down positives arising from the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Critics have told us the war was "unjustified". It was really about control of oil, and not about helping Iraqis, say staunch critics. Perhaps. But there's no point in beating a dead horse, as there are currently 12 million people in Iraq under the age of 19 – more than half the country's population – who need our constructive support. Despite the installation of democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan having come at a significant price, it's the young there who are going to eventually benefit.

Democracy creates the ideal environment for creativity and fosters innovation, which in turn moves society forward. It has the potential to keep governments accountable too, and gets young people involved in political processes.

Were the Taliban still dictating their wishes in Afghanistan, it's highly improbable that Robina Muqimyar, a 17-year old who will be competing in the Olympics as one of Afghanistan's first two female athletes, would have been encouraged to step foot outside her home, let alone "parade" herself in front of hundreds of thousands. Now without the Taliban's presence, the push

towards education for all – without gender bias – has new force in Afghanistan, and children are being encouraged to attend school.

In Baghdad, 20 year-old Hadeel Alwan is one of the youngest recruits of Iraq's new police force. She is also female; in fact, she's among the first females to be hired for law enforcement in Iraq since the 1960s. "My biggest wish is to destroy terrorism," said Alwan in a *Reuters* report. Some of America's largest youth organisations, including the YMCA, are making their presence felt through soccer games and other initiatives designed to inspire hope among Iraqi children.

It may have stunk of political theatre when George Bush scribbled "Let Freedom Reign!" on a note informing him of the handover of power in Iraq, yet the words were appropriate because, although the stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction haven't been found, what *has* been found is just as important. Thousands of mass graves have been uncovered and torture chambers have been revealed. The media has conveyed harrowing stories of the mutilated victims of Saddam's regime.

In addition, the best estimates say thousands of orphans are missing one or both parents because of Saddam. Why isn't discussion progressing to tackle such issues?

The sanctions imposed by the United Nations because of Saddam's past actions, coupled with the Iraqi government's own priorities, were financially crippling sizable numbers of families in Iraq and pushing them towards poverty. Young people in the old Iraq were not allowed to reach their

full potential. That much is clear.

When Indian youth are concerned with poignant issues they are free to criticise the government openly. In Iraq, the young did not enjoy such a privilege. For the first time, the young there will be able to exercise democratic rights and vote out the government that would dare lie to them. In Spain this year, the government was toppled by the youth vote; a similar fate may await successive Iraqi governments.

Save the Children estimates that close to 90 percent of all injuries and deaths during war are sustained by civilians, mostly women and children. Indeed, Pamela Bone wrote in *The Age* (July 3) that the "most honest estimates" place the civilian toll between 9,000 and 11,000. A statement by Ayad Allawi, the Iraqi PM, said that before the war a shocking "1 million Iraqis" were "missing because of Saddam." Allawi leaves me wondering how many more innocent lives could have disappeared were Saddam still in power.

Young people around the world have heeded the call for help: hundreds are volunteering their time and skills to aid in the co-ordination of resources in Iraq. As Iraqi expatriates slowly trickle back to rebuilding efforts, they face an Iraq where tensions between ethnic groups are running high and adrenaline is flowing freely. But small improvements in quality of life matter, especially if it improves the lives of the very young, who didn't ask to be born orphaned, or even, ask to be born into the volatile environment created by grown-ups.

MR. SUKRIT SABHLOK studies at the Melbourne Grammar School and is a regular columnist for www.vibewire.net where he writes on youth affairs.

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South Asia at Islamabad

Usha Thakkar

When I received an invitation to participate in a Seminar on "Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia" (May 26-27, 2003) at Islamabad, I accepted it enthusiastically. This Seminar was jointly organized by the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad and the Hanns Seidel Foundation. Experts from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India presented well-articulated papers, and what followed were stimulating discussions and candid comments. The three-day Seminar left its mark on the minds of the participants for the quality of intellectual stimulation, the transparency of discussions, free interaction with invitees and the warm hospitality of the Institute of Regional studies.

The inaugural address was given by Mr. Shaukat Aziz, Federal Minister for Finance in Pakistan. There were five panels for five countries - Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India.

Conceptual Determinants of Policy Making in Pakistan

In a thought-provoking presentation *Conceptual Determinants of Policy Making in Pakistan*, Dr. Manzoor Ahmed of Pakistan drew attention to issues like role of external issues in determining domestic policies, the growing distrust of the Islamic world and the perception of the Islamic political groups as being selfish, insensitive to the deprived, and corrupt. Just as the Islamic ideology paradigm is not workable in the form it is currently advocated by Islamic ideologues in Pakistan, religion too cannot be thrown out of the political, economic and social decision-making process as suggested by the liberal elite of the country. Ultimately for a civil society to be a tolerant and moral society there should be freedom of thought and action as long as they are not cognizably offensive to moral standards.

Rise of Religious Parties: Stakeholders in the System?

Religious parties have been a

major political phenomenon in Pakistan since 1947, pointed out Khaled Ahmed in his paper on the *Rise of Religious Parties: Stakeholders in the System?* In his incisive analysis of the subject, he drew attention to the fact that the spectrum of opinion is divided between those who think that democracy would transform the religious parties and those who think that religious parties would transform democracy till it is no longer recognizable as democracy. This, in turn, would impose isolation on Pakistan and harm it by making it clash with the outside world. The religious parties of Pakistan are set to play a role they had always dreamed of, that of imposing a theocratic order in Pakistan. This will happen in an extremely globalized political environment which the religious parties consider as their enemy. How they will cope with it, especially as the national economy is virtually globalized and is dependent on external concessions, is a vital question.

Pakistan's Economic Restructuring: Impact and Future Prospects

A. R. Kemal, in his paper *Pakistan's economic restructuring: Impact and future prospects*, presented a comprehensive analysis of Pakistan's economy. He examined structural changes in the financial

sector of the economy including fiscal and monetary policies, foreign exchange reserves and exchange rate policy. The restructuring of real sectors of the economy including investment, human resource development and productivity growth were also explored.

State of Civil Society, Rule of Law and Human Rights

Barrister Shahida Jamil, in her presentation on *State of Civil Society, Rule of Law and Human Rights* traced the history of events before and after Partition. She expressed concern over the strength of the Hindu leadership in India, and the unresolved issue of Jammu and Kashmir. The need to restore norms and respect for the rule of law and to ensure the human rights of the citizens was emphasized.

Politics of Confrontation: the Crisis of Parliamentary System in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has experienced many political changes since its emergence 32 years ago. There were three papers discussing various issues related to Bangladesh. Akmal Hussain in his paper on *Politics of Confrontation: the Crisis of Parliamentary System in Bangladesh* presented a review of political developments in the country and an

analysis of the political culture of Bangladesh, the idea of a Caretaker government, the parliamentary practices of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League and the contribution of street-agitation in creating confrontation style in politics. He ably showed similarities between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League. Both initially rejected the election results calling them a fraud, later joined the parliamentary sessions, boycotted the sessions, and resorted to street agitation including general strikes.

State of Law and Order and Military Involvement and its Consequences

Brigadier General Sakhawat Hussain (Retd) in his paper *State of Law and Order and Military Involvement and its Consequences – A Bangladesh Perspective*, discussed the happenings and the history of the military in the country and argued that no democratic society, especially an emerging democracy like Bangladesh, wishes to hand over internal affairs to the military under any pretext unless the situation goes beyond the control of the government. What is needed is strengthening of democratic norms and institutions.

Poverty, Politics and Governance: Bangladesh experiences

Dr. Salahuddin M. Aminuzaman in his paper argued that poverty is associated with poor governance. Poverty in Bangladesh

should therefore be addressed by a synergic approach taking into consideration the importance of sustainable improvements in the livelihood of and basic services for the poor; assisting local governments to respond to the needs of the poor; assisting non-government organizations and community-based organizations to strengthen the voice of the poor; and initiating pro-poor growth and budgetary policies.



Prospects for Peace and Third Party Facilitation in Sri Lanka

The peace process in Sri Lanka has drawn considerable international attention. The session on Sri Lanka had two papers. In his paper on *Prospects for Peace and Third Party Facilitation in Sri Lanka*, Mr. Jehan Perera drew attention to the important fact that a success in Sri Lanka is likely to induce the international community to invest more resources in ensuring that peace processes elsewhere in the

world can be successfully supported. But a failure in Sri Lanka will be a huge blow not only to its own people, but will also jeopardize the hopes and prospects for peace elsewhere in South Asia and the world at large.

Third Party Mediation and Facilitation in Establishing Peace in Sri Lanka

In his detailed paper on *Third Party Mediation and Facilitation in Establishing Peace in Sri Lanka: A role Model for South Asia?* Dr. Dushyantha Mendis discussed the complexity of the Sri Lankan issues attracting mediation and facilitation, the emergence of the LTTE, the Indian intervention, the Norwegian facilitation, the situation and the present peace process. He maintained that if the peace process is to yield lasting benefits for the Sri Lankan state and the long suffering people of the north and east of Sri Lanka, there appears to be now, no

alternative to a joint SAARC intervention.

Nepal: Politics of Stalemate, Confusion and Uncertainty

M. R. Josse pre-sented a detailed overview of *Nepal: Politics of Stalemate, Confusion and Uncertainty*. The paper discussed the Maoist insurrection, peace talks of 2001, the extent of violence and external factors. It expressed concern that Nepal today stood at a dangerous crossroad.

India's Destiny: Secularism or Hindutva

Eight presentations on India brought out diverse issues and challenges facing India, Mani Shankar Aiyar in his paper *India's Destiny: Secularism or Hindutva* traced its history and explored Nehru's liberal ideas. He argued that secularism is about contemporaneity and *Hindutva* is about atavism, a return to a pre-existing order, a wiping out of the present reality. That is why it cannot be allowed to prevail. India's destiny has to be a secular one.

Religion as Ethnicity: Hindutva in Britain

Maneesha Tikekar, in her paper on *Religion as Ethnicity: Hindutva in Britain*, took a brief review of the role of Hindu organisations and their activities in the *Hindutva* movement in Britain. It argued that the formation of the Hindu identity is not influenced by the events in India alone but is also shaped to a considerable extent by the diasporas' perceptions and experiences of discrimination and marginalisation in the host society, and perceptions of the self vis-à-vis the 'other' – British Muslims.

Mainstream Politics and Minorities

Asghar Ali Engineer clearly brought out the developments in mainstream politics and minorities during the Nehru era and subsequent times in his paper *Mainstream Politics and Minorities*. Commenting on the regional diversities in India, he pointed out that Muslims in Bihar, West Bengal and Kerala are not as insecure as in some other states.

Hindutva and Indian Democracy

Irfan Engineer argued in his paper *Hindutva and Indian Democracy* that *Hindutva* is against the basic structure of the Indian Constitution,

i.e. secularism as well as equal rights to all citizens. Now the secular and democratic forces will have to address the concerns of the people and resolve to contain terrorism rather than allow the *Hindutva* organizations to use terrorism to push their own agenda.

Minorities Terrorism and Democratic Politics

In his paper *Minorities Terrorism and Democratic Politics* Bharat Karnad commented on the ethnically diverse, multi-religious and secular democracy in India. His main argument was that while Partition did not change the communal and religions demography of India very much, the Pakistan that emerged after 1947 divested itself of the Hindu and Sikh minorities and thereby lost the social and political ballast that, in India, has ensured a pluralistic society and democratic rule.

Secular Democracy in India: Domestic and Regional Challenges

P. M. Kamath, in his presentation *Secular Democracy in India: the Domestic and Regional Challenges* elaborated on the practice of secularism in India and the challenges thrown by communalism and political parties formed on a religious basis. He argued the need to give up majority-minority concepts (i.e. referring to religious, caste or linguistic status of citizens) in our political discourse, to take a firm stand against terrorism, and to make a commitment to democracy and secularism in the region.

Bigotry and Human Rights

Yogesh Kamdar in his paper on *Bigotry and Human Rights* showed with examples that all the wings of the state in India viz. the legislature, the executive and the judiciary have to bear their own shares of the blame

for stifling freedom of speech and expression – directly and indirectly.

The Gujarat Assembly Elections 2002: Results and Ramifications

My presentation on *The Gujarat Assembly Elections 2002: Results and Ramifications* analysed the results and implications of the recent elections in Gujarat. I maintained that the Gujarat experiment could bring electoral victory because of its specific cultural and political scene at that time. The *Hindutva* factor cannot be a sure bait for all the elections. The basic democratic and secular framework of the Indian Polity is going through stormy times, but all is not yet lost.

DR. USHA THAKKAR is Honorary Director, Institute of Research on Gandhian Thought and Rural Development, Mani Bhavan, Gandhi Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.

Leopard Attacks at Mumbai's Sanjay Gandhi National Park

The law does not permit killing the cats to reduce their number. Capturing and releasing the cats in a different location only transfers the problem elsewhere. Can the GoI, BNHS and other concerned NGOs create a nature reserve on an uninhabited island in the Andaman & Nicobar group of islands and transfer such animals to the island reserve?

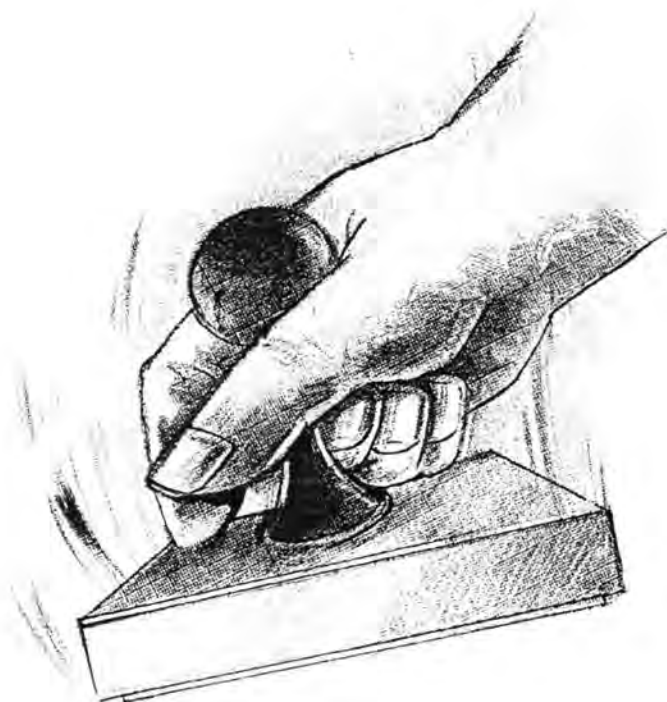
One, unproductive land is put to use. Two, if this island is developed well, it could become a safari park and a tourism attraction. The animals will be at peace, so will the forest dwellers. If this sounds farfetched, perhaps the leopards should be caught, spayed and released. This will reduce the leopard population over time.

If this is done, Sanjay Gandhi National Park will have earned its name. After all, isn't this what Sanjay Gandhi did to people in Uttar Pradesh during the so-called Emergency imposed by his mother in 1975?

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Is the Indian Press the Voice of the Voiceless?

N. S. Venkataraman

It is not a secret anymore that many political, social organizations and industrial enterprises buy their space in the Press, by exerting influence and even bribing the reporters.

Many persons in the know of things, would have been surprised to read the Prime Minister's* speech on the 125th year celebrations of *The Hindu* at Chennai that the Indian Press should be the "voice of the voiceless".

The fact is that the Prime Minister and the so-called VIPs largely present in the particular meeting would have known that the Indian Press, by and large, is not the voice of the voiceless. On the other hand, it has slowly and steadily come under the control of family ownership and businessmen and many of them talk about the problems of the poor and deprived only in the manner and to the extent that it would suit them.

It is now well known that today the predominant objective of the Indian Press is to promote business and make money, which objective is explained away by stating that the journals and newspapers themselves would collapse in the absence of money generation.

For the sake of economic objectives, the Indian Press have largely resorted to methods which are unethical from the journalistic perspective.

Rarely we see a journal or newspaper in India which does not write about women and publish the photographs of women, so as to attract the attention of the largely male dominated readership, without bothering about the harm that is being done to the image and position of women in the society. Such methods are adopted even by several of the so-called women's journals.

Many newspapers and journals publish the profiles of individuals and organizations, without adequate investigation and without highlighting both the positive and negative aspects. If one were to believe such media, one would get an impression that every industrialist and NGO organization in the country is blemishless.

It is not a secret anymore that many political, social organizations and industrial enterprises buy their space in the Press, by exerting influence and even bribing the reporters. Everything is being justified in the name of economics and income and in the process, the noble objectives of journalism are being diluted and given away.

The essence of the journalistic philosophy is that it must be investigation oriented, bring out the injustice meted out to organizations and individuals, uphold social and ethical values and fight against the issues that are against the interests of society.

While there can be differences of opinion about what is in the interests of society and what is not, there cannot be any difference of opinion about the honesty of approach needed.

Such objectives of journalism obviously highlight the fact that money-making objective cannot be the be all and end all of the media. This requirement means that anybody involved in the journalistic profession should be simple and straightforward not only in appearance, but also in mental bearing and should be willing to make physical and financial sacrifices for the sake of the cause.

Even the term "professional journalist" appears to be illogical and

perhaps the right term would be "social journalist".

By the objective of the profession, the journalists should remain as the conscience keepers of the nation and the journalists should not reduce themselves by merely running after money. Such situation can take place only if the media business is viewed as a social proposition and not a business proposition. This is not happening today, which is the problem issue.

The declining credibility of the journals, newspapers and the electronic media is leading to a very difficult situation, where the common man does not know who should be believed and who should not be. Such trend shakes the confidence of the people that would create more exploitative conditions, where the money multipliers will have a field day and society will lose its focus and get destabilized. Such a situation should not be allowed.

The interests of any nation and society are ultimately protected and preserved only by the very small segment of population, whose stand up to the cause of truth, probity and real progress. The journalists should lead this very small segment of the population and this is the prerequisite to maintain the quality of life in any society.

Finally, the deterioration in the journalistic ethos in the country has to be contained by all concerned and must not be ignored. Ignoring it would lead to further deterioration in all respects and would not remain harmless.

MR. N. S. VENKATARAMAN is Trustee, Nandiai Voice for the Deprived, Chennai.

* Refers to Mr. A. B. Vajpayee. This article was written well before the recent elections to the Lok Sabha.

Fifty Years of *Panchsheel*

Why the Foreign Minister Wants to Celebrate Defeat

Ajay B. Agrawal

The whole world celebrates triumph; it seems we are bent on celebrating defeat. Because Panchsheel was just that!

India's foreign minister has talked about celebrating fifty years of the declaration of *Panchsheel* during his trip to China. Prior to this the Government of India was considering the possibility of sending troops to Iraq in the changed circumstances. On being questioned about the changed circumstances the government retracted its steps on the declaration. The declaration of celebrating *Panchsheel* has been made by Mr. Natwar Singh to show some results arising from his visit to China. The whole world celebrates triumph; it seems we are bent on celebrating defeat. Because *Panchsheel* was just that!

Panchsheel was a fraud spread by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which was exposed at the time of the India-China war of 1962. The war was a slap on the face of Pandit Nehru's foreign policy. Now we want to celebrate that failure.

Panchsheel was not even an independent agreement. India and China entered into a trade agreement in the year 1954. *Panchsheel* was an annexure added on the request of India. China was not interested. It was a trade agreement but its implications were political. For the first time in world history two countries accepted Tibet as a state of China. This was a most unfortunate development for Tibet. India and China decided the fate of Tibet which they had no right to do. There was widespread protest in

India over this agreement. Pandit Nehru declared that the main gain of the trade agreement was *Panchsheel*. It was claimed to be the guarantee of peace in the whole world.

The main principle of *Panchsheel* was to respect the borders of one another's country. Pandit Nehru declared in the Indian Parliament, 'Live and let live....no one should invade the other, no one should fight the other.... This is the basic principle which we have put in our treaty with China.' A writer remarked, 'Nehru referred to *Panchsheel* in words which the hindsight of history exposes both as pathetic and prophetic.....If verbal assurances of this character really meant what they said, the world would have talked itself into peace.' Acharya Kripalani described *Panchsheel* as 'five nonsense.'

It is ironical that China which has swallowed Tibet and India which has turned itself into an agent of China are sermonizing the world on how to establish peace!

At the time of the Trade Agreement of 1954 Indian officials had emphatically suggested that India should accept Tibet as part of China only when China recognized the Indian borders. Pandit Nehru did not listen. The historian Sarvapalli Gopal has written, 'This was clutching at straws after the main opportunity had been deliberately

discarded....the chance of securing a clear and explicit recognition of India's frontier at a time when India had something to offer in return had been lost.'

The strong criticism of the agreement prompted Nehru to claim that it was the best thing done after independence. The agreement was for a period of eight years. After eight years China proposed a renewal of the agreement. India refused. This was the final outcome of the best job of Pandit Nehru. He had claimed that because of *Panchsheel* the border had got recognition. It was a lie. In fact the border became a permanent cause of conflict. The same situation remains today.

The agreement took place in the year 1954 and the same year China started encroaching upon Indian territory. China went on encroaching and Nehru deliberately kept the country in the dark about it. It will be hard to find an example where the territory of a country has been encroached upon and the ruler hides the fact from his countrymen for years. After the 1962 Indo-China war China declared *Panchsheel* a big humbug. Now we will celebrate fifty years of this humbug. May be we will soon decide to celebrate our defeat in the 1962 war with China!

MR. AJAY B. AGRAWAL is a businessman who had a family business in Kalimpong. He followed closely the fall of Tibet from a sovereign state to a colony of the Chinese Communist Empire.

TRUTH: The Strength of Our Struggle

Tenzin Tsundue

**Nobody will champion our cause, whether it be the US or India.
We have to work and make it happen on our own.**

My old-man friend refuses to believe that the 'Inji' soldiers could inflict such violence on Iraqi prisoners, simply because as a refugee he has been sponsored all his life by an Inji, and he knows hundreds of other Tibetans, old people, monks, and babies living in the kindness of foreign aid.

Recently, Dharamsala saw posters splashed across the streets with images of a Chinese soldier dragging a Tibet freedom fighter juxtaposed with pictures of US & UK soldiers torturing a naked Iraqi prisoner laid out on the same page, the title read in Tibetan, 'Torture has no different face'.

Thanks to all the kind hearted Injis, the image of the American and the British soldiers in the eyes of the Tibetans tarnished, but a little. There were Tibetans who said that they would rather live a life in the US prison than continue the 'drag' life in India. The recent images of helpless Iraqi prisoners being tortured in the most humiliating manner by the 'civilized and modern' forces led by United States of America and United Kingdom has got the Tibetans rethinking. The images naturally invoked empathy as common victims of foreign military invasion as that of the Iraqis.

When China first invaded Tibet, they came in as friends, showing camaraderie to win over the natives. I know many old *palas* and *amalas* who in their teens worked with Chinese cadres, building roads and bridges. China looked at Tibet as a treasure house inhabited by the 'barbaric and dirty people whose mind is poisoned by its religion.'

It was true that aristocrats and local fiefs ran Tibet and there was slavery. There were no schools in the modern sense of a four-walled classroom, 40 odd students and a

boring teacher. There were no metal roads or cement bridges. Like any community there were social and political problems in Tibet. But, who are they to come to our country and

བཅོངས་འགྲོལ་དང་། རང་དབང་། དམངས་གཙོ་

བཅས་ཁ་ལ་འབྱེད་ནས་

མནར་གཅོད་གཏོང་གིས་འདུག

**In the name of Liberation,
Freedom and Democracy
they are torturing**

"LIBERATION"

ཨི་རག IRAQ



བཙན་ཁྲུལ་ཨ་མི་རི་ཀ་དང་དབྱིན་ལེན་གཉིས་ཀྱི་
དམག་མིས་ཨི་རག་གི་བཙན་པར་མནར་གཅོད་
གཏོང་བཞིན་པ།

Imperialist U.S. and U.K. soldiers
torturing Iraqi prisoners
in Iraq

བོད། TIBET



བཙན་ཁྲུལ་བྱ་དམར་གྱིས་བོད་མི་རང་བཙན་
འཐབ་ཅོད་པ་ཞིག་ལ་མནར་གཅོད་གཏོང་
བཞིན་པ།

Imperialist Chinese soldiers
torturing Tibetan
Freedom Fighters in Tibet

མནར་གཅོད་ནི་ངོ་བོ་དབྱེད་མེད་ཡིན།

TORTURE HAS NO DIFFERENT FACE

Posters on the walls of Dharamsala

dictate terms to us? We could have sorted out the problems ourselves.

China came to Tibet with the mission, to 'liberate' Tibet from the 'old and barbaric mind and poverty' and also to liberate its people from the 'imperialist foreigners'. Our direction of development was focussed inwards. In the same way our culture aims to understand the mind or the inner being or the universe within. With the help of Tibetans' studies, practices and scholarships a religion like Buddhism, which was born in India, attained greater heights as a philosophy and way of life.

Communist China's ambition to uproot the 'old and traditional mind' sent tremors of destruction all across China. Today, China is bereft of its spirituality. The Chinese have killed it for themselves and have caused irreparable damage to other communities that they have occupied and imposed their communism like the Islamic Turks (in what is now called 'Xinjiang'), Mongolians, Manchus and the Tibetans. But the strength of our spirituality is such that it has survived all the wanton destruction. It is there at a place where no physical force can reach- it is there in everyone's heart like a butter lamp.

Today's China blames the 'Gang of Four' for all the destruction caused on the cultural houses across China during the Cultural Revolution. However, the present corrupt Chinese leadership lives on the pumped up nationalism and the indoctrination China injected during those years of 1960's.

I have met some Chinese students learning Buddhism from Tibetan lamas, they say: 'because our Buddhist cultural roots were snapped, with the new materialistic life-style devoid of any cultural roots, I feel an exile in China.'

* A column by Tenzin Tsundue, appearing in the *Tibetan Review*, a monthly magazine published from New Delhi.

Today, the Chinese government is morally degenerated. The 400-odd capitalist-minded politburo members now run the country in the name of communism, without any labour rights or the right to expression of the common people. China is weak under its apparent monolithic economic and military power. Today it is a country surviving on the shaky ground of a silenced people's agony. And this makes me unable to understand as to why, the world's highest moral authority His Holiness the Dalai Lama is willing to make Tibet a party to this corrupt communist regime, a regime that has lost the confidence of its own people.

The recent 37-page white paper released by China called 'Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet' yet again retorted that His Holiness should give up the demand for independence of Tibet. Even after 25 years of effort by the exiled Tibetan community for 'genuine autonomy' for the Tibetans within the mainframe of People's Republic of China and without asking to separate Tibet from the Mainland China such demands repeatedly come up.

With this, the Tibetan hope for a Hong Kong kind of autonomy has been thrashed. I have always spoken for Independence of Tibet and nothing less than that. We do not need to beg, we work for it and earn it for ourselves with dignity what we have lost. And with the power of truth it is possible, and we can do this.

One of the things that I greatly appreciate about His Holiness is his vision of Tibet, for the future - the idea of Tibet being a self-reliant and self-sufficient country and that it be made a zone of peace. With this I am hopeful that the dignity of the people can be restored, and its culture be preserved and promoted.

It's a different question altogether that even after proving

Tibet as an independent country in the language of the nation state "the International Commission of Jurists, declaring so, at the time of the Chinese occupation" no government today supports this stand. And this is so frustrating a fact that we have to live with. Still there is patience that the truth will triumph. The truth remains that Tibet was an independent country until Chinese occupation in 1949.

Today, China may have silenced all the heads of governments with her lure of money and power, over the heads of the billion Chinese who look for a free and democratic China. But the honeymoon will not last beyond the conjugal heat. The truth is with the people. People of the world support us. Our leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama is loved more than the Chinese leaders whether it is Hu or Wen.

It is this strength that gives me the conviction that even after the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan struggle will live on, and perhaps would gain more urgency, unlike some pessimists who say that the Tibetan issue will die with the present Dalai Lama.

Often, I have been asked the meaning of the word Semshook, the title of my one-page column*. At a personal level, Semshook is the courage and determination it takes for the truth to prevail. The willingness to make any sacrifice that truth demands, and finally the act of achieving it. Such a Semshook we must all inculcate lest the gold remain in the dust for a very, very long time.

How and when would the truth prevail depends on us. Nobody will champion our cause, whether it be the USA or India. We have to work and make it happen on our own.

MR. TENZIN TSUNDUE is a writer and activist for free Tibet. He can be contacted at tenstundue@hotmail.com

A Great Editor R.I.P

Melvin Lasky (1920-2004)



Melvin J. Lasky, the legendary and controversial editor of the *London Encounter* and the *Berlin Monat*, used to be called all sorts of names. To his friends he was "the last of the Cold Warriors" and one of the great "intellectual troubadours". To his enemies he was "a repulsive war-mongering fascist", "a pocket Trotsky", and a *Schmutzfink*.

Three vivid incidents will always recall him to my mind. The first was in Berlin three or four years ago at the end of an international conference on the European Union and the Congress for Cultural Freedom which Lasky had helped form in 1950. He was stooped and frail. He had had major heart surgery, he was a little hard of hearing, his oriental eyes seemed partly filmed over, and his familiar Lenin goatee was grey. But his mind and wit were as lively as ever, as Germans and foreigners milled

* *Freedom First*, October-December 1990.

Peter Coleman

On the big issues in the totalitarian age, Lasky's tenacious integrity will be long remembered.

around to hear him reminisce about the great events of a long life.

He seemed to have seen everything in the Cold War, from the first working-class uprising against the Stalinist dictatorship in East Berlin in 1953, to Budapest for the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, on to West Berlin for the fall of the Wall. He had also met, known or interviewed almost every key figure from Churchill and Adenauer to Brecht, Koestler, Sartre and Muggeridge. He had published George Orwell, Albert Camus, Thomas Mann, T.S. Eliot, Bertrand Russell, Cyril Connolly, William Faulkner and Norman Mailer.

The second episode was in London where I interviewed him several times for my book on the Congress for Cultural Freedom, *The Liberal Conspiracy**. I recall his long oral memoir of his soul-mate, Michael Josselson of the CIA and the presiding genius of the cultural Cold War. Now shouting, now whispering, Lasky relived the triumphs and prolonged death rattle of the CCF. My only worry was that my time in London was running out and I had not yet been able to examine the records of *Encounter*. Lasky then offered me the keys to his Haymarket office and filing cabinets. Why not, he said, spend the weekend on them. Given the break-ins, lies and leaks that had marred the last days of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, not to mention the

bad faith of some of the key figures, this was an extraordinary and moving act of trust. The files were an invaluable treasure trove.

Lasky's openness remains with me. It is irritating (to put it mildly) to come across hacks who still defame him as "oily", "devious" or "deceitful".

My third paradigm is in New York some twenty years ago, at a splendid celebration of Norman Podhoretz's twenty-five brilliant and portentous years as editor of *Commentary*, the monthly political-cultural magazine published by the American Jewish Committee. A Schubert and Schoenberg concert in the Belvedere Suite of 30 Rockefeller Plaza was followed by a dinner in the Rainbow Grill. The guests included ambassadors, secretaries of state, senators, and editors of great magazines from *Time* to the *New Criterion*. (I represented *Quadrant*!)

Lasky was among the guests - but he seemed slightly defensive. He too was a New York intellectual and was now editor of one of the most famous magazines in the world. Yet at this grand Manhattan occasion he seemed marginalized and slighted, almost ignored. His fame in London and Berlin clearly did not extend to the trans-Atlantic provinces. He had become, as Ignazio Silone put it, in his Zurich-accented German, less a New Yorker than "den echtensten Weltbürger" - the

most authentic citizen of the world. So the recent British and German obituaries did him far more honour than did the American.

Melvin Jonah Lasky was born in New York in 1920 of Polish Jewish origins. (His talmudic, black-hatted grandfather only spoke Yiddish.) Educated in the ideological hothouse of the City College of New York, where he was administered the Trotskyist inoculation against Stalinism, he joined the anti-Stalinist *New Leader* before becoming a combat historian in the US army.

Demobilised in Germany, he settled as a freelance reporter in Berlin, that "traumatic synecdoche of the Cold War", as James Burnham called it. In 1947 he delivered a sensational, and courageous, speech at a communist literary conference in East Berlin in which he protested at the brutal cultural *Zhdanovschchina* in the Soviet Union.

The next year, at the moment of the Soviet blockade and the Anglo-American airlift, he launched the magazine of ideas *Der Monat*, with State Department funds. It pitted the cosmopolitan, highbrow and liberating culture of the West against the mix of shoddy Spenglerism and

Soviet fellow-travelling that dominated German intellectual life. It also supported the social democrats against the communists. An enormous success, it became the Berlin centre for the foundation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1950.

In 1958 Lasky succeeded Irving Kristol as editor of *Encounter* in London. He made this English magazine compulsory reading around the world. *Newsweek* caught some of its secret: *Encounter*, it reported in 1963, was "as open-minded, as animated, as brilliantly bitchy as a successful literary cocktail party". But it was more than a cocktail party. It was also a political force: When Harold Wilson formed his Labour government in 1964, his ministry included half a dozen *Encounter* writers.

With the emergence of the New Left and radical chic, it was inevitable that *Encounter's* Cold War liberalism would lose its *éclat*. But the "revelations", in the mid-sixties, of CIA funding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom delivered the *coup de grace*. From Paris and Rome to Tokyo and Manila, CCF publications closed down. In London *Encounter's* circulation fell, assistant editors

resigned, and some old contributors boycotted it (and Lasky).

But a long list of writers, from Amis to Wesker, called on him to stand firm because, they wrote, *Encounter* had become "indispensable". Lasky did stand firm and the magazine survived. It also prospered - intellectually if not financially - until its last issue at the end of the Cold War.

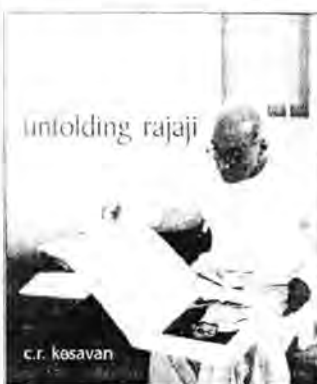
Lasky then returned to Berlin where he revived *Monat* and resumed his journalistic and social democratic polemics. (Unlike most of his American friends, he did not become a neo-conservative.)

He died suddenly on May 19. After an unorthodox Jewish service in English, German and Hebrew, he was buried in the nondenominational Waldfriedhof graveyard, the resting place of many honoured Berlin writers. At the wake or reception in a theatre, a photograph of the young New York Lasky and his sister Floria hung from the wall.

MR. PETER COLEMAN, a member of Australia's Parliament (1980-87), a Barrister, and former Governor-General of Australia.

COURTESY: *Quadrant* (Australia)
PHOTO COURTESY: *The Washington Post*

Unfolding Rajaji – A New Pictorial Biography by C. R. Kesavan



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S. S. Bankeshwar

In the end, it is not what you get but what you give and share with others what you have, that makes your life worth living. Every one in this world is on 'permanent probation'.

My close friend, the late Shri H. V. Kamath, an I.C.S. and a leading M.P. (called the "stormy petrel of our Parliament"), in his last letter to me – written a few days before his sudden death – wrote, "After three scores and ten (70), every year thereafter is a yearly bonus from God". Replying to my earlier letter greeting him on his birthday, Shri Kamath wrote, "At my age, birthday greetings only remind me that I am near to my grave by one year. Nevertheless, thanks for your birthday greetings". How true indeed! I received my first bonus from God on May 31, 2003.

Almost all my influential friends – intellectuals, journalists, economists, freedom fighters, politicians, social workers, trade union leaders, and public figures – are now dead except for a few friends like former Union Minister, Shri Madhu Dandavate; veteran journalist, Shri M. V. Kamath; author, journalist and defence analyst, Shri Bharat Karnad; Editor (*Freedom First*), Shri S. V. Raju; former BJP leader and M.L.C., Shri Madhu Deolekar; Shri M. S. Kilpady and Shri A. K. R. Hemmady, well-known letter writers to the Press.

My old friends – like my mentor, Prof. M. A. Venkat Rao; General K. M. Cariappa; Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer; our former Ambassador to the United States of America and former Chairman of the ICICI, Shri Gaganvihari L. Mehta; well-known freedom fighter, leading Gandhian and social worker, Smt. Ushaben Mehta; internationally known author and journalist, Shri Philip Spratt; well-known writers and journalists, Shri Ram Swarup, Shri Sitar Ram Goel, Shri R. V. Murthy, Shri Shriram Trikanad and Shri P. Kodanda Rao (Servants of India Society); Trade Union leaders, Shri V. B. Karnik and Shri S. R. Mohandas; Shri Ramu Pandit, former Secretary of the Indian Merchants' Chamber; and

Shri M. R. Pai, well-known Consumer Activist and Social Worker, etc. – are all dead. All leading Parliamentarians known to me personally like Rajaji, Shri S. K. Patil, Shri Minoo Masani, Shri H. V. Kamath, Shri Nath Pai, Shri Asoka Mehta, Shri P. G. Mavalankar, Shri N. C. Chatterji are all dead. Among our present M.P.s and political leaders, I hardly know any one intimately and they are not worth knowing either, leave alone cultivating their friendship! In slavery, we produced giants in every walk of life; in freedom, we have produced only pygmies.

I have now reached an age when close relatives, colleagues and friends die around me at the rate of one every month. I therefore feel very lonely, and boredom is the kiss of death! There is now no *will* or *incentive* to live longer. I am not afraid of death but I am scared of the dying process! If God were to give me an assurance that I can meet all my old, dear dead relatives, colleagues and friends after my death, I am prepared to die at any moment! There is no point in merely existing without purpose and being a burden on others.

As I grow older, and nearer to my Maker (Destroyer?), birthday greetings only remind me that I am nearer to my grave by one year! Nothing would make me happier than if I were to die in my sleep, peacefully like my maternal uncle, Shri M. G. Bailur, a veteran journalist who passed away at the age of 94 on May 11, 2002. There is nothing like dying peacefully in one's sleep. It will be only a transition from one deep sleep to another deeper and eternal sleep!

As you grow older, say past 70, you no longer have the position, power and influence you once enjoyed nor do you get the respect you once received or commanded. To add to my woes, I

suffered a stroke last year. I have now recovered but not fully. There is no mobility now. In spite of my poor health, however, I continue to write to the Press on matters of national and public interest and not just to see my name in print.

As you grow older, you are made aware daily of old age creeping on you. Your memory slowly fades away. Your mental faculties and alertness weaken. You become slower on the uptake. To add to your woes, you may suffer from physical disabilities too. Old age brings in its wake, age-related problems like lower-backache, diabetes, frozen shoulder, heart ailments, enlarged prostate, urinary problems, stroke, and so on. You have no alternative but to reconcile yourself to the aging process.

Once you become old, you lose your utility value, unless you have vast wealth which commands respect for you. But then, people will be more interested in your wealth and your "Will", if you have made it rather than in you!

In the end, it is not what you get but what you give and share with others what you have, that makes your life worth living. Every one in this world is on 'permanent probation'. From birth to death, there is nothing permanent in this life. The only certainty in your life is death! Life slowly fades away from autumn to winter, whether you like it or not.

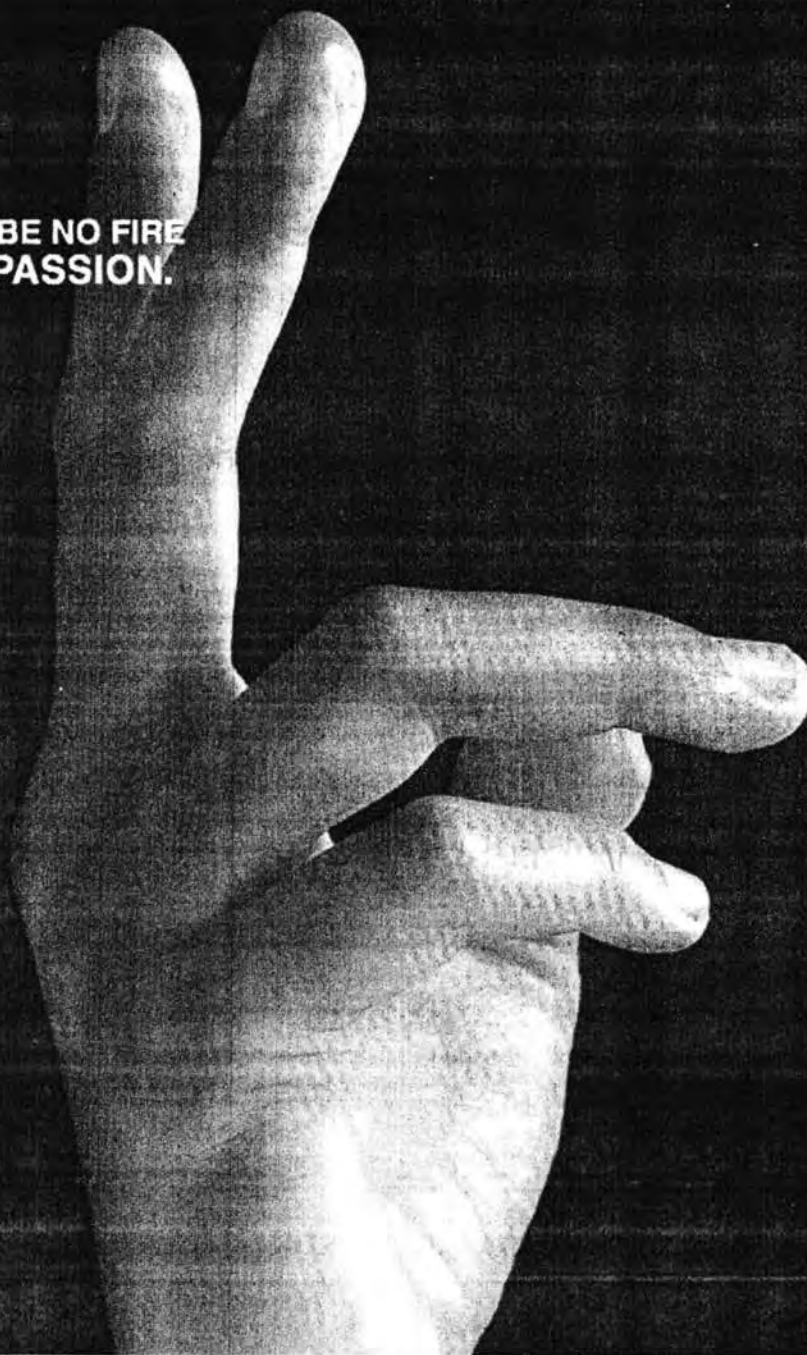
My 'Inner Voice' (as Mahatma Gandhi used to say) tells me that I have reached the end of my life's journey and this article may be my 'swan song'. So Good-Bye to everybody.

MR. S. S. BANKESHWAR is a Journalist and Consumer Activist. He is the Editor of *Research Feature News Service* and Member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*.



GODFREY PHILLIPS

THERE CAN BE NO FIRE
WITHOUT PASSION.



Column D

Feedback on *Freedom First* Etc...

N. Dharmeshwaran

Though the Editor exercising his prerogative and with an eye on grammar has changed the caption to D's Column, I had called it Column D, thereby hangs a tale!

While in service, I worked in a chemical plant, akin to petroleum distillation, the basic stock being distilled at gradually increasing temperature levels, yielding different fractions, as they are called. The columns were designated alphabetically.

The principal product emanated from Column D and it received undivided attention and utmost care to ensure quantity and quality. Hence my reverie and the caption. (*Column D, it will be henceforth!* – Ed.)

I feel that the readers still cud-chew my boxed query on p.13 of FF 460. Or, this point should just fade away! I think not.

Aside, the fear of 13 falling on Friday is spelt with 'k' not 'c'. Perhaps, the Editor is subconsciously influenced by nameology, which leads many to think and believe that the murder and mayhem will stop if Kashmir is spelt Cashmere as was done in good old English days, along with Cawnpore and Calcutta! Do not ask that Calcutta or Kolkatta is in line with the Bard's query, "What is in a name? Rose, by any other..."

I am delighted to find that respected Kuldip Nayar has hinted, *inter alia*, at the futility of constituting the Rajya Sabha, an assembly that never dies in whole! (Reflections Serious and Facetious p.25)

As regards the special high octane manufactured by BPCL for Sachin is customer delight in line with ISO 9001 and doubt the legal undertone expressed.

To my mind, history beyond two centuries should be consigned to the archives and text books deal only with useful matter in that period. Is there any point now debating Shivaji's parentage or the cause of Alexander's demise!

With due and more deference to that fiery Justice Tarkunde, in a lighter vein, the first line from the excerpt of AG's Obituary Oration, front inside cover, reminded me of a newspaper correspondent querying the persons in a town whether any famous person was born there, received the reply, "only children are born!"

Alluding to the message conveyed by voters (p.15) I do not think that the voters have proved pollsters or psephologists as they are stylishly called in this area, wrong. Astrologers are a different matter!

The opinion polls are just statistical exercise and the population, randomness of sample and the genuineness of the replies all count and in this issue, it is next to impossible to secure a representative 'population' or 'randomness' thereof. It is also a moot point how much they can bare about what is said to be a 'secret franchise'.

The ground reality that appears to me is that the political parties, in their own interest 'share' constituencies and deprive the voter of a conscious choice: It is a Hobson's choice, really!

If at all we persuade ourselves that all the Parties have policies (save to grab power or a portion thereof) how come they have to hammer out a common minimum programme and why cannot they contest under their own banner CMP is only a passport to power!

Mea culpa! The 1729 anecdote is quite real and the catch I missed is that it is the SMALLEST number that can be expressed as the sum of cubes of two sets of numbers: 1 and 12; 9 and 10 in this case. In fact, there appears to be many such numbers, immortalised as taxi cab numbers!

Book review on p.17. The chronology of CP receiving the Peter Cator Prize from Dr. P. V. Cherian is not clear; in the present sequence, it appears CP's youth. Is that right? There is a yawning gap between July 15, 1947 7.10 pm. and his passing away in 1966! Of which Rajaji commented that he should not have exposed himself to the London damp. CP's efforts to isolate Travancore from Indian Union, while in formation has not been touched upon. The initiative is sometimes thought had failed due to lack of support from other stalwarts like Rajaji. In fact, some are nagged with a legal proposition how the British could hand over to Congress leaders, what they wrested or voluntarily united by the kingdoms, small and large that were there when the English appeared on the scene. Did they not annex a number of kingdoms and formed British India, they point out.

The cover page collage on electoral college is commendable!

MR. N. DHARMESHWARAN can be reached on natesand2001@yahoo.com

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Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya

A Visionary with a Mission



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2003 was the Birth Centenary Year of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya who participated in the freedom movement in the 1940s and after independence rejected politics describing it as "power with a very big 'P' with scramble and pushing around"¹ and devoted herself to constructive work.

She was born in Mangalore to a liberal Saraswat Brahmin family. Her father was the District Collector and her mother, hailing from an aristocratic family, was well versed in music and the arts.

Very early in life she had to face a number of personal tragedies. Her elder sister passed away in her teens followed by the untimely death of her father. Unfortunately, not having divided the family property between his daughters and stepson before her he died, the latter, according to the law then prevailing,

took over the family property leaving the rest of the family in the lurch.

She was married off at the age of 14 to a wealthy young man of 20 but was soon widowed. Her husband who was studying law succumbed to an undiagnosed ailment. Fortunately, encouraged by her father-in-law she continued her studies in Queen Mary's College in Chennai. Here she developed friendship with Sarojini Naidu's younger sister Suhasini Chattopadhyaya, who had a brother named Harindranath (Harin), poet, playwright and actor. Friendship with Harin culminated in their marriage. She was just 20. Both were the envy of others who thought they were made for each other because of their common interests in the theatre, music and the arts generally. Sadly, the marriage didn't work out and she shifted to Bombay where she was taken care of by Shri Narayan Swami of the *Free Press Journal*, who looked after her as his own sister.

In 1930 she plunged into the freedom movement courting imprisonment. She was active in the Congress Socialist Party and was its President in 1936. Earlier she and her friend Sarojini Naidu were chosen by Mahatma Gandhi to participate in the Salt Satyagraha though, initially Gandhiji opposed the inclusion of women in this satyagraha claiming that 'English-

men would not hurt women, just as Hindus would not harm cows'²

After independence, she rejected high offices saying: "I left the highway of politics to step into the side lane of constructive work". She was at her best as a social worker particularly during the tragic days following the partition of India when thousands of refugees streamed into India, many of them from West Punjab into Delhi. Kamaladevi could be seen organising relief and providing shelter to the thousands of homeless refugees. She formed the

Kamaladevi's staggering achievements had doubtless something to do with the nation-building fervour of the post-Independence period. Kamaladevi accepted with grace awards such as Magsaysay, the World Crafts Council Award, UNESCO recognition or the Padma Vibhushan. Her real imprint on public life was in the creativity and passion she poured into each of her magnificent projects.

On her death in 1988, President R. Venkataraman said he found it difficult to prefix the word 'late' to Kamaladevi's name, because "hers was, and will always be a palpable presence". The truth of that statement seems undeniable today, as so many of the cultural institutions in India are a gift of her vision.

Amulya Gopalakrishnan

Courtesy: *The Hindu*, Tribute - Woman with a mission

¹ Cited in Atulya Gopalakrishnan, 'Woman with a Mission', *The Hindu*

² *ibid*

Indian Cooperative Union, which led to the creation of the industrial township of Faridabad where thousands of refugees were rehabilitated. Soon thereafter, the Central Cottage Industries Emporium was handed over to Kamaladevi's Indian Co-operative Union. ICU's branches were opened at many places. Its inventory included pottery, woodwork, carvings, metal artifacts, jewellery, furniture and accessories, decorative items and designer clothes.

Alongside her social activities she tirelessly campaigned for women's causes as an activist of the All India Women's Conference. She exposed gender injustice and campaigned for tightening legislation such as the Sarda Act and prevention of Child Marriage Act 1929. She played an important role in

fighting for maternity leave for women workers and the enactment of the Uniform Civil Code in matters of maintenance, divorce, inheritance, adoption and child custody.

She founded the National School of Drama in Delhi and later headed the Sangeet Natak Akademi. When Uday Shankar's cultural centre at Almora wound up in 1946, many of them joined the Indian National Theatre (INT) in which Kamaladevi was an active participant. She helped TNT stage a ballet on Pandit Nehru's *Discovery of India* at the Asian Relations Conference. Pandit Nehru declared that the 'ballet was better than his book.'

She was a recipient of many honours. Among them: The Magsaysay Award, UNESCO's World Crafts Council Award and the Padma Vibhushan.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya was such a selfless leader that she refused to let her picture be put on a postage stamp issued in her name. Instead she preferred a handcrafted doll to adorn the stamp. In her presidential address in 1974 to the All India Women's Council she stated: "The 'Women's movement is not a sex (gender) war but a social trend for fighting undemocratic processes that are denying human rights to certain sections of the society. Our drive has to be directed against faulty social institutions, not the males". Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya deserved India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, and the Government of India should have awarded it posthumously in her centenary year, 2003. It is regrettable that it didn't seem to have even occurred to the powers that be.

MR. M. S. KILPADY is a freelance writer



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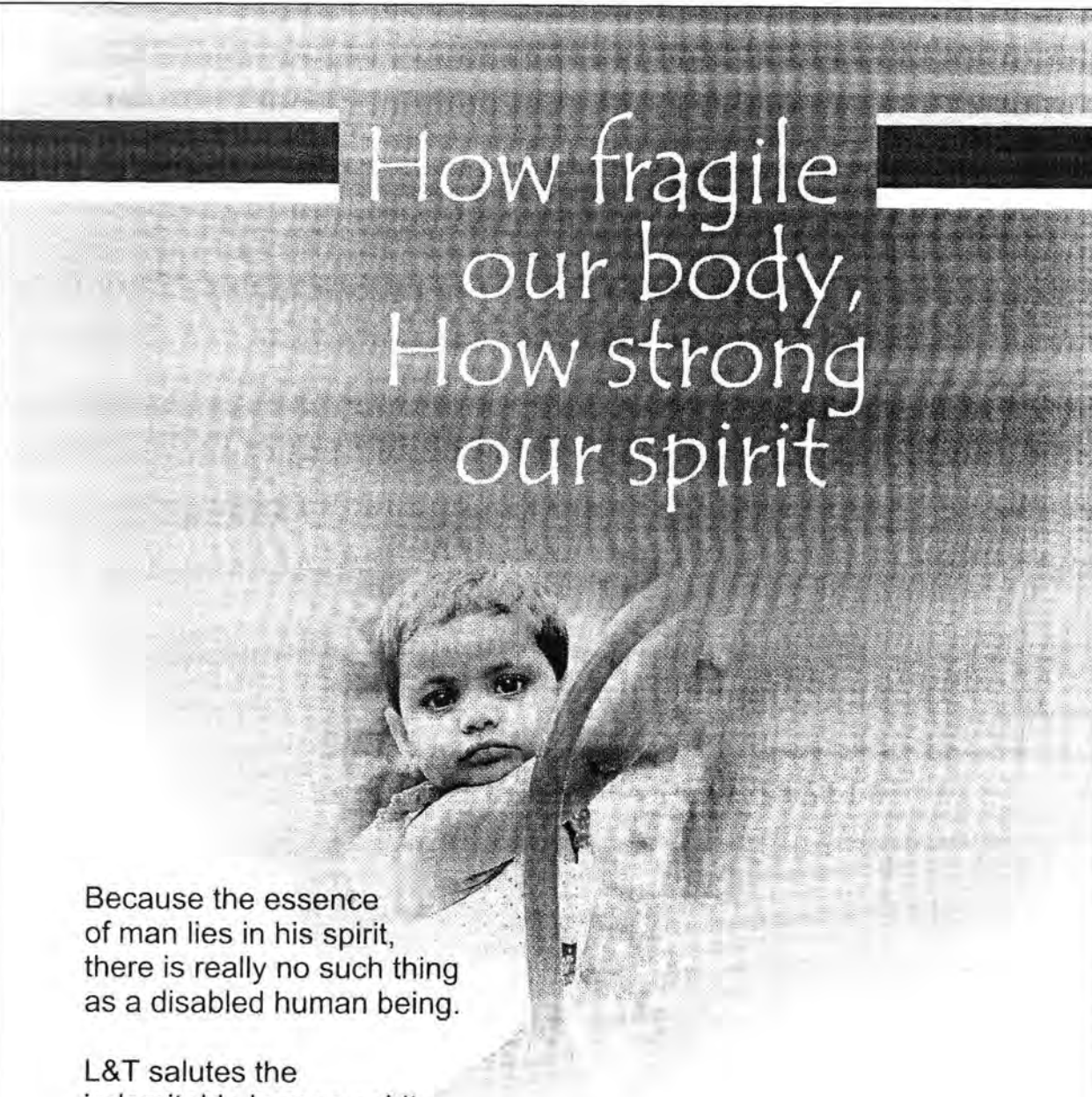
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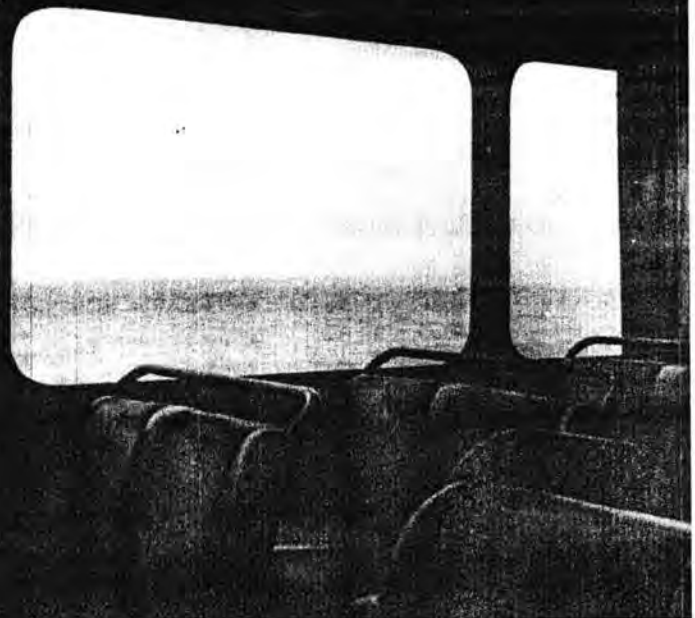
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CANCOHDFC304

BOOK REVIEWS



COMBATING AIDS: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN ACTION

By

Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers

Published by

Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. M-32 Market, Greater Kailash-I,
New Delhi 110048.

Year Of Publication: 2001. No. of pages: 363. Price Rs.295.

Reviewed by

Dr. Shyam Ashtekar, an M.D. in Preventive and Social Medicine, is based in Nashik and working mainly in the area of health workers, health care systems, and rural health services.

Timely and powerful! That is what I think about this book by the authors Singhal and Rogers. It is about the HIV AIDS scourge looming large on India as it has been on Africa and at one time on US. In about 400 pages, the duo has narrated how HIV made inroads in human societies all over the world in a span of less than two decades and how nations dealt with it or did not. The book is about how to communicate to people, state, policy makers, and vulnerable groups about what is HIV and how to fight it. It talks of experiences and actual interviews with its victims and fighters. The telltale first chapter deals with the history of AIDS and how it went places. In this they talk of how national heads stonewalled the question of AIDS epidemic and how they could have actually contained it in time.

For India the most important question is; where are we on the AIDS front? The authors convincingly predict that India will soon have the next and final phase of AIDS epidemic where it will be spreading in the general population. It may be useful for readers to know that HIV-AIDS spreads from at-risk groups (from transnational sources) like sex workers and gay groups to other at risk-groups in distant cities through customers, then to a large number of customers like migrant labour and truckers-drivers, and then to wives (would be mothers) or partners of these customers, and then to others including babies. India is now in the phase of infecting the wives and partners of 'customers'. Soon, that is within a decade we will have the final phase of general spread from these

countless sources. Do we take steps to contain it now is the question.

The book also talks about international experiences of successes and failures. Although there is the lone example of Cuba stopping the epidemic in its track by quarantine measures, no such action can be supported in any nation any more. The best way, they argue, is to accept the patients and make available treatment facilities. A widely available treatment facility, coupled with preventing spread is the best step against epidemic in the current situation. Stigma of AIDS, the book says, is a real enemy to fight with if the war is to be won.

The book has made a special mention of our very own CIPLA's unique contribution to the AIDS war by way of slashing of prices of AIDS medicines, and the great simplification of treatment. Although this trips the TRIPS-WTO regime, the authors rightly justify that most of the inventions have come from national resources rather than MNC (multinational companies) funds. I may add that WHO also supports freeing of important life saving medicines from the TRIPS WTO regime and the CIPLA action is right in the framework of WHO. It is deplorable how MNCs (CIPLA excepted) make profit their only motive even in calamitous situations. Though there can be no general case against TRIPS and the product patent system it upholds (in contrast to the process patent system we have in India), CIPLA is justified in this case of a human catastrophe.

The book has probably not said

it in so many words, but a point about use of AIDS funds in India must be raised. The authors contrast Maharashtra's poor action to that of Tamil Nadu's vigorous efforts on HIV containment. As multinational funds for AIDS are available, the mushrooming of AIDS-NGOs presents a pathetic scene. This lack of seriousness of NGOs (leave notable exceptions) and government despite huge funds is a political problem indeed.

Is it only a health department problem? No is the clear signal from the book. If Heads of States falter, there is little a health department can do to fight AIDS. The neglect by South African legendary leader like Nelson Mandela was a monumental mistake. Thailand is a success story thanks to the great efforts of a senior policy maker and executive Mechai Viravaidya. Thai names sound Indian, and this *Veer-vaidya* (literally a hero medico) has stood true to his name for Thailand. It must be remembered that he waved the condom to even a deeply religious and conservative nation like Thailand. Are Indian leaders serious enough? Do they want to break out of conservative mindsets and meet the problem frontally? If Sushma Swaraj (former Union Health Minister) had her way, condom would have been pushed to the periphery of the anti-AIDS campaign. It is high time personal vagaries of politicians do not get the better of important public health problems. The first Union Health Minister Rajkumar Amrit Kaur with her Christian leanings pushed Family Planning out of Indian policy and that has proved a fatal mistake of geometrical proportions.

Sushmaji may have just done that for AIDS and lament at leisure when out of power. It shows how we lack a consistent health policy and statesmanship.

The weaknesses of the Indian health care system may be limiting factors in meeting the AIDS challenge. In most Indian states there is nothing like village level health care system. The nurse is given a population of 3000-5000 (about 6-7 villages) and she roams

about giving a few services at homes. This is a pathetic model of health care. The services are so scant that 80% people rely on quacks and other private doctors in the area or nearby town for health care. India wanted the sub-center nurses to offer reproductive health services to women and this did not get going over the last decade. There are several problems – policy, funds, infrastructure, style of work etc. India needs to mend its health services quickly and with local health workers.

That is the key to the problem. Unless this is done, there will be no vehicle to take the AIDS HIV services to hamlets and homes. Airdropping messages may not be enough. How soon we do it is the question.

I would recommend this excellent book to policy makers, doctors, activists and all who are concerned for knowing what HIV AIDS is and what we need to do right away.



THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM - ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY AT HOME AND ABROAD

By
Fareed Zakaria

Published by
Viking, Penguin Books India (P) Ltd.,
Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110 007.
Year of Publication: 2003. No. of Pages: 286 Price: Rs.395

Reviewed by
Mr. A. D. Moddie, former civil servant, author and
representative of Industry to Government.

Whatever else, the underlying merit of this book is that it offers a deeper analysis of contemporary politics under the umbrella word 'democracy', trailing subsidiary umbrella words as freedom, liberty, the rule of law and human rights in different cultures of different societies in present times. Its value is in its contemporary global context. Though the primary society examined is America, because it is the dominant democracy as a person of Indian origin, and the son of an Indian ex-Minister, one would have liked Zakaria to give more attention to Indian democracy, not only the largest, more importantly, the most plural democracy in the world, and the largest test case of post colonial societies. And a template for Asia, the most populous continent. The subtitle of the book is a mild reminder of the inadequacies of what passes for democracies, "Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad". One thought ran through the reading of the book. Its contemporary analysis of illiberal democracies makes it necessary supplementary reading to text books on political science, text books which are usually superficial and dated. And

press reports which are even more superficial.

In eight chapters, the book is really in five parts. The first is a general analysis of the Democratic Age of our time, with a central place for America. The second is a mix of the "Brief History of Human Liberty", an interesting historical essay from ancient Greece and Rome to current East Asia: the "Twisted Path" of democracy when democratic elections produce Hitler and Nazism, when Central Europe produced autocratic regimes, and when Sun Yat Sen's democracy-aspiring China produce Mao's autocratic communist regime; together with the "Illiberal Democracy of post-Communist Russia and C. Asia, of S. America and Pakistan with elected autocrats, with the realities of India's yet feudal democracy. Also that of post-Sukarno Indonesia. In these, hyper nationalism and war mongering were significant characteristics which helped autocrats in power.

In the middle of the book is a frank analysis of, "The Islamic Exception", a region which is "the political basket case of the world". It is an

interesting analysis by a liberal Muslim of the problems of the Islamic world, the cleft stick in which it finds itself at the end of the 20th century, the peculiar social and political milieu of the Arab world "stuck in a time warp"; failed politics, failed economics and failed westernisation; the rise of fundamentalist religion and the problems of democratizing people with unearned, untaxed wealth from oil and gas, and the absence of real hard-working enterprise in the creation of new wealth with taxation. Zakaria seems to have missed the findings of the World Values Survey, 1995-2000, in which the real cultural divide between the democratic West and autocratic Islam lay in the inequalities between the sexes. Sexual liberalisation seems to be the most reliable indicator of tolerance and egalitarianism.

The fourth part is a very interesting inside critique of American democracy in "Too Much of A Good Thing" and "The Death of Authority", both leading to less good governance, less credibility for governments, and the decline of the elite. Although Zakaria makes no comparisons with India, his

conclusions are reminiscent of Indian trends since 1947, though in very different circumstances.

The fifth part, "The Way Out", gives rise to a debate on an extremely complex and difficult subject. It brings out the question of the role of huge bureaucracies in modern democracies, including the special case of the E.U., the problems of the legitimacy and confidence in different arms of a democracy, the problems of globalisation and WTO; how to "get more from less" government; with the new problem of fighting terrorism. Eighty years ago, Zakaria reminds us in conclusion, Woodrow Wilson posed a challenge to America and the 20th century, how to make the world safe for democracy. Zakaria now poses the problem for the 21st century, "our task is to make democracy safe for the world"; without brute majorities, without terrorism and social unrest, with that best of democratic values, a blend of power for good governance with checks and balances of power as a balanced way of political life.

To make the world safe for democracy, and to make democracy safe for the world, three major issues come out of Zakaria's book.

In geo-political terms, perhaps the first is the liberalisation of Islam for democracy, and for Islamic societies to take their place in the modern world in tolerant fellowship with other cultures and faiths. According to a Freedom House survey given by the author, the Middle East is the least free part of the world. Whilst 75% of the world is regarded as 'free' or 'partly free' – even Africa being 60% so – the Middle East has a low figure of 28%. Zakaria asks: "Why is this region the political basket

case of the world? Why is it the great holdout, the straggler in the march of modern societies?" His answers are: (a) "the Quranic model of leadership is authoritarian"; "it is the absence of clear religious authority in Islam, not its dominance". It is possible that the authoritarian culture of Arab lands goes back to the authoritarian ways of desert caravans, preceding Islam, and that this left its imprint in Islamic life. Life and survival in the desert between oases requires authority, and there is little room or time for democratic debate. His second reason is true. Any one can set himself up as a righteous Jehadi. "Arab politics", the author says, "is stuck in a time warp". This was seen 25 years ago in a remarkable insight of V. S. Naipaul in even non-Arab Muslim countries, Iran to Indonesia, in his "Among The Believers". He summed up the problem by saying Islam finds it hard to cope with the modern world. Hence anger, frustration, aggression. Now, with their oil wealth, the Middle East countries are "locked in a gilded cage". The dilemma in the minds of the rulers of Egypt, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, closest to the East, is their response to repeated requests for liberalised democracy. The alternatives they say would not be Jeffersonian democracy, but Hamas and Al Qaida. This is also demonstrated in Musharraf's blundering referendum, which resulted in half of Pakistan in the NWFP and Baluchistan going down the Al Qaida way. In Zakaria's last chapter, "The Way Out", there is markedly, no way out for Islamic countries.

The second issue is the improvement in liberalising democracy in the non-Islamic world, as much in the West, as in the East. The first is the rise from illiteracy and poverty to offer jobs and freedom of economic and political choice

before democratic elections, applicable to most developing countries. Zakaria offers a rule of thumb answer, that countries with a GDP higher than \$5000-\$6000 p.a. will find it less difficult to democratise. The most sustainable democracies are those with a GDP higher than \$9000. The second is a better balance between well-informed, capable bureaucracies, de Toqueville's "intermediate associations" in America – NGO's of today – and changes in electoral processes in which "the winner takes all", and the rights of minorities are ignored. This involves the widening of an economically independent middle class, less dependent on governments of patronage and corruption. Lipset's "the more well-to-do a nation, the greater its chances to sustain democracy". So capitalism and democracy seem to be twin paths for peace and progress.

Zakaria's third major issue is "Culture is Destiny". And there is a wealth of evidence to support this. Apart from the case of Islam in desert lands, Russia's czarist decree-issuing ways have been sustained in Communist and post-Communist times. Latin America has had a penchant for military dictatorships, as also Pakistan and Indonesia. And rigidity of faith among Semitism's "Chosen People" has been sustained since ancient times, now expressing itself in illiberal, dogmatic forms, some ending in Terrorism. The Chinese ancient mind-set of Celestial Empire has come through Mao's and Deng's Communism. Africa's of tribalism and India's casteism are lingering, unalterable cultures.

The future of Freedom and Democracy will be as uphill and as prolonged as its past. How to manage power is a perennial problem of history.



Is Tibet lost for ever? No. A thousand times no. Tibet will not die because there is no death for the human spirit

Jayaprakash Narayan
cited in a publication of Friends of Tibet, India



FROM THE IRANIAN PLATEAU TO THE SHORES OF GUJARAT : THE STORY OF PARSI SETTLEMENTS AND ABSORPTION IN INDIA

By

Mani Kamerkar and Soonu Dhunjisha.

Published by

Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 15, J. N. Heredia Marg,
Ballard Estate, Mumbai 400 001.

Year of Publication: 2002 No. of Pages: 228. Price: Rs.390

Reviewed by

Dr. Zenobia Shroff, Reader in History at
Elphinstone College, Mumbai.

The book under review is a well-written and lucid account of the arrival of the Parsis in India and their early settlements on the west coast, as also their eventual migration to Bombay. The numerous photographs (some in colour) inserted at the beginning and the middle of the book enhances it.

The first chapter traces the close relationship between India and Iran, going back to atleast 2000 B.C. The common factor between the two countries did not relate just to language but also to fundamental spiritual and ritualistic matters which are mentioned both in the Avestas (the sacred texts of the Parsis) and the Vedas. The authors' contention is that the Parsis were not total strangers to India nor were they entirely unknown in India. Profits of trade must have first brought them to western India before the Arab conquest of Iran drove them here permanently.

The second chapter deals with the migration of the Parsis from Iran to the west coast of Gujarat and the Konkan from about 770 A.D. onwards. They probably arrived in groups at intervals, trying to escape persecution in Iran at the hands of the Arabs who had attacked and overrun the Sasanian empire. At first, the Parsis stayed at Hormuz for some years before leaving for India where they landed at Sanjan and other coastal towns like Khambhat (Cambay) and Diu in Gujarat, and Thane, Chaul and Kalyan in the Konkan. Here, the authors quote a variety of sources dealing directly or indirectly with the exodus of the Parsis to India.

The Parsis soon achieved a

comfortable status in their adopted homeland. The leadership of the community was taken up by the priests who through discourses with the learned Brahmins established the existence of common ritual practices and the concept of ritual purity which made it easier for the Hindus to accept the Parsis as a separate caste group within their cultural and religious traditions. At the same time, this also played a large part in maintaining a separate identity for the Parsis and ensured their subsequent survival.

The following five chapters of the book deal with the history of the Parsi settlements in Navsari, Surat, Bharuch, Khambhat, Billimora and the adjoining areas. Early in the fifteenth century, Navsari became a Parsi stronghold and the sacred fire was installed there, making the town the focal point of religious leadership. Contemporary records and the reports of foreign travelers indicate that the Parsis were expert craftsmen in textiles and carpentry, as well as traders, merchants, moneylenders, agents and ship-builders. Parsis were also to be found amongst the talatis, patels and desais of those times, adding to the status of the community.

In Navsari, the Parsis kept up their learning and writing in Pahlavi and Pazand (the ancient Persian languages), and Sanskrit. This made the Parsi priests of Navsari well qualified to explain and stand up for their religion, as did Dastur Meherji Rana in the religious discussions of Akbar.

With the growth of Surat as a center of economic and commercial importance, the Parsis began to migrate

from Navsari, in the seventeenth century. In Surat, they came to be recognized as master weavers and shipbuilders. They were famous for the silks they produced like '*kinkhab*' and '*lanchoi*', and embroidered fabrics like the '*garo*'. They built warships for the British navy and large frigates for trade. When Surat suffered from Maratha attacks in 1664 & 1670, and other natural disasters, the Parsis again migrated, this time to Bombay.

Among the other important Parsi settlements in the early tenth and eleventh centuries were Bharuch and Khambhat. At that time, Bharuch was an important seaport and emporia of trade, and thus a natural choice of settlement for the Parsis. It was also a major religious center for several centuries. The Parsis of Bharuch were on the whole a well-to-do community, being largely engaged in commerce. The chief industry in Bharuch was textiles and the Parsis were active in the production of textiles as well as its corollaries of bleaching and dyeing.

The same was the case with Khambhat in the Gulf of Cambay, where the Parsis served as agents of the Dutch and the Portuguese. Both Bharuch and Khambhat were later abandoned by the Parsis for Bombay.

The eighth and ninth chapters of the book deal with the social and religious customs of the Parsis and the social reforms undertaken by them. These are simply explained and will interest any reader anxious to learn about the Parsis in general. The chapter on Social Reforms also chronicles the role of the Parsis in the freedom struggle. Dadabhai Naoroji, Pheroze-

shah Mehta and Dinshaw Wacha were three prominent moderates who guided the early Indian National Congress. Political consciousness drew Parsi women into the nationalist struggle, chief among them being Bhikaji Cama who will always be remembered for unfurling India's first national flag. The entry of Mahatma Gandhi on the political scene accelerated the participation of Parsi women in the freedom struggle – Mithuben Petit, Perin and Khurshed Captain and their sisters Goshi and Nargish (grand-daughters of Dadabhai Naoroji) are names that can never be forgotten.

The last chapter of this book deals with the making of Bombay and the role of the Parsis as initiators of change. The first Parsi to come to Bombay in about 1640, appears to be Dorabji Nanabhai Patel, an agent of the Portuguese. Another early Parsi in Bombay was Khurshedji Pochaji Pestonji who, in 1665, was appointed as a contractor by the British to supply materials for the fort they were building

in Bombay. Thus, from the beginning, the Parsis seem to have a strong foothold in Bombay and by 1671, there was a considerable number of Parsis to warrant a fire-temple, indicating a well-established settlement.

During the next hundred years, Parsi businessmen worked with the British government to make Bombay a thriving port. The Parsis were again the first to recognize the potentials of maritime trade with the outside world. The Wadias initiated the move to build ships and trade along the Malabar coast, and later with South-East Asia and China. The Banajis, Jejeebhoy, Ready-moneys, Petits, Camas and others followed. By 1800, practically every European agency had a Parsi merchant connected to it.

This close association of the Parsis with the British had two visible effects. Firstly, the Parsis acquired wealth. They came to possess a considerable amount of landed property and some of the best houses on the island. Secondly, inspired

by western education, they began to introduce much needed social reforms.

The book ends by listing the Parsi contribution to the field of modern industries (the Tatas, Godrejs and Pallonjis), as well as to journalism, literature, science, theatre and music. Although this section is brief, it is a fairly comprehensive account and adds to the interest of the reader.

All in all, the volume under review is an extremely well researched and readable text. The authors – Dr. Mani Kamarkar, Vice-President of The Asiatic Society of Bombay, and Dr. Soonu Dhunjisha, Reader in History at the S.N.D.T. University – show their deep understanding and mastery of Parsi history. Undoubtedly, the text is a valuable addition in recording the story of a small but extremely important community that has played such a major role in the making of India.



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION.

Edited by Vandana Shiva & Gitanjali Bedi

Published by

Thousand Oaks, London ♦ Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd.,
M-33, Greater Kailas Market, New Delhi 110 048.
Year of Publication: 2002. No. of Pages: 513. Price: Rs.680

Reviewed by

Professor Shiva Shankar, retired Professor of Agronomy and Forestry and
Trustee, Environment Education Foundation.

The publication presents 20 papers. Vandana Shiva, Director, Research Foundation for Science, Technology & Ecology, New Delhi forcefully argues that globalisation of agriculture is undermining ecological, livelihood and food security. The Structural Adjustment Programme of the World Bank (SAP), WTO, liberalisation in fertilizer imports, land ceiling regulations, and removing market controls are helping agribusiness of Trans-national Corporations TNCS. The SAP created more landless farmers; subsidy favoured the North while it burdened India (Rs.100 billion) for chemicals/fertilizers. Exporting

cereals and captive zones for crops are destroying biological/cultural diversity.

Sharukh Rafi Khan and Sajid Kazim, in their chapter on Structural Adjustment and Food Security in Pakistan, find a lack of incentive to produce crops as the SAP decreased real wages, household income, employment; subsidies on fertilizers and pesticides were eliminated. The private sector controlled 90% production.

Sarath Fernando, Sri Lanka, highlights under-nourishment (800 m people), protein & energy deficiencies (200 m. children) and weakened food security affecting development. Trade

liberalisation diverted resources, services and subsidies away from small farms.

Sulatha Brahma writes: SAP increased fertilizers/pesticides costs and decreased seed supply affecting farming-livelihoods.

Land is converted to non-agricultural uses (> 50%). New Tenure lands with restriction of sale are sold to industries (Rs.3 to 5 lakhs/ac). Grading, purchase and payments for cotton-farmers are poor.

Darshini Mahadevia, Ahmedabad, finds decline in forest/fund-

production; cash-crops; salinity ingress, water-pollution (nitrates/fluorides, 3000-4000 ppm; 82% villages – no water source) & desertification due to SAP. Displaced agricultural-sector was not absorbed in development processes. Wastelands were leased to NRI owned companies/individuals (100 to 2000 acres) fixing low rents (Rs.25/acre).

Abhijit Sen asks. *Food grain stocks to feed the poor or to pay for liberalized imports?* Though food grain stocks are high, poverty has persisted (40% BPL). Instead of using grain for food/cash for work programme, FCI sold wheat and rice and exported 4 m.t. of rice (a fifth of total world trade in rice). Trade deficits were \$ 4.7 billion in 1995-96 against \$ 2 billion in 1994-95.

Vandana Shiva traces cotton failure to excessive pesticides-use, seed sales shifting towards private sector protected by patents and IPRs and becoming costly inputs and not produced on farms. Seed Corporations operated on loans from WB (\$ 194 m). Indian Seed Industry would grow by Rs.20 billion annually. Import of Bt cottonseeds can bind farmers in the grip of seed/pesticide companies/money lenders.

Cotton-area in Warangal tripled to 1 lakh ha.; market was flooded with 13 lakh quintals of cotton (1986-87) as against half of this in 1994. Cotton price declined but not production cost. By 1997-98, instead of Rs.7000/-, farmers spent over Rs.12,000 per ha. to get 4.5 q/acre against 10-12 q initially. So, 27 farmers committed suicide as more pesticides pushed farmers into permanent indebtedness. In Warangal 13,000 pesticide shops (93 companies) sold pesticides worth Rs.10 crores (1982) and Rs.200 crores (1985).

Kristin Dawkins, U.S.A., writes that prior to 1950s, US agriculture followed full cost accounting called *parity* for farmers to avail government loan if prices fell. Moving off two million labour-force, lowering support, delinking prices from full cost of production to increase agricultural exports, selling cheap products at below cost prices called *dumping* has made it impossible for Third World producers to thrive, even in their national markets. The US share of world grain market went up.

World Corporations control-led 90% food trade. The 19th Codex session (FAO & WHO) on trade standards had 445 industry representatives and only 8 NGOs. WTO was backed by *economic sanctions* to enforce its decisions.

T. N. Prakash, Bangalore, writes that High-tech corporate floriculture near Doddaballapur (250 ha) involving Rs.90-120 crores. affected Karnataka's 80,000 laborers and 2.5 lakh retailers/flower vendors. Profits came down with high initial establishment (Rs.125 lakhs), annual expenditure (Rs.105 lakhs), IPRs (Rs.25-30 lakhs), duty (15% on import) and instability in external market. Wages were small, health hazards accentuated due to use of 1500 times more pesticides, high dose of fertilizers (15,000 kg/ha) and exploitation of ground water resulting in high ecological costs of Rs.10 lakhs/ha (70% in soil fertility; 25% in chemicals).

Tim Long, questions goals of food security being rendered meaningless by globalization. Developing countries forming four-fifths of humanity have only one-fifth of global wealth. 358 billionaires have income of 45% of humanity. Radical solutions are: reduction in meat use and transfer of wealth/land/seeds.

Victor Suares Carrera, underscores loss of competitiveness of local basic foods in Mexico (78% rainfed). US maize and wheat sold at \$850 to \$950 compared to \$950 to \$1050/t for these local grains negating income and profitability.

Amitava Mukherjee, New Delhi writes: Starvation deaths, sale of children and post-migration in Orissa indicate gap between public policy and achievement. Investment is falling; commercial-agriculture is shifting to corporations/multi-nationals. Subsidies help US & EU farmers (\$ 28,000 & 20,000/year/farmer) with negative subsidies for Indian farmer. Water resources, fisheries, agriculture and livelihoods are affected. MNC's new varieties may control food security. Food is not tradeable as other commodities but is basic to life itself.

John Kurion, Thiruvananthapuram considers that industrial fisheries/agriculture promoted by WB & ADB created demand for shrimps & tuna in USA, Japan, EU. Their cats/dogs

have higher purchasing power than people in developing countries. Tuna are converted to feed chicken, hogs & cattle as fish-meal. Estimated 1 m.t of feed equivalent of 5.5 m.t of wet-weight fish (nearly double the marine fish harvested in India) was used to produce 5,70,000 t cultured shrimp.

Philip Lymbery, U.K warns against industrial agriculture (Eg. mad cow disease). Broiler chickens are crammed with half a sq.ft space per bird. A 42-day old bird's skeleton is forced to carry that of an 84-day old. These baby giants are crippled. (7 m die of heart failure). Egg laying hens in battery cages (300 m) are cut off the top 1/3rd of birds bill; 300 m. cock-chicks are killed soon after birth by gassing with CO₂. Factory farming is a mistake; poor suffer for lack of employment and highly priced animal protein (feeding poor people is not profitable).

Vandana Shiva and John Cromton contend that small seed companies would be obliterated as public sector seed production cannot match demand; no single hybrid stays long; there is shift from open pollinated to commercial crops. Cargills sunflower costs Rs.350; local hybrid Rs.140/kg. Private companies sell cabbage seeds at over Rs.12,000/kg. MNCs aggressive marketing strategies wean national companies – Mahyco's share of sunflower seed crashed (85%-10%). Farmers are divested of their rights to exchange and save seeds for their own use, thus extending the rights of plant breeders to all harvest derived from original seeds. To litigate against farmers' use of saved seed is inappropriate.

Beth Burrows, Washington considers genetically engineered solutions may lead to greater incidence of other diseases. *Monoculturation* of mind may take place. Impact assessment for economic, social, technological effects on ecosystems are called for.

Niconar Perlas, Philippines considers less infrastructure and labour were replaced by Green Revolution technologies, destroying ecology farming. Agreements on Sanitary & Phytosanitary Standards and Technical Barriers under GATT intensifies agriculture based on massive pesticide/chemical inputs. The poor are forced to

sell their products under distress, not under the signal of free-market. Associate economies including green consumerism, tekei, mutual beneficial interaction at local, national and international levels would overcome many ills of elite globalisation.

Helena Norberg-Hodge, California says livelihoods of farmers are destroyed from Global Dependence of food through trade and transport. Average food travels 1200 miles in USA to reach kitchen table! Mono culture is resource intensive; trade increases distance between producers and consumers. Only 4% of food dollar in US goes to farmer, 96% find their way to multinational middlemen.

J. K. Bajaj and M. D. Srinivas, Chennai write that our food production is miniscule compared to requirements. Sharing food is enshrined as an inviolable discipline of life. Rig Veda considers one a partner of sin if one does not share food. The country was prosperous (12-13 t paddy/ha in 900-1200 A.D). Records of 20t/ha are seen in inscription of 1325 AD from Ramanathapuram. Indian ways are fading with not even a feeling of shame about the continuance of extreme scarcity and all-pervading hunger.

Vandana Shiva warns of starvation like Bengal famine (3 m people died, 1942). Policies of economic reform and SAP as demanded by World Bank increased food prices and decreased off-take. While exporters secured wheat & rice (2001) at Rs.4300/t & Rs.5650/t, people had to pay Rs.7000/- and Rs.11,300/t. This amounted to Rs.13.5 billion & Rs.6,000 crores respectively for subsidy to corporations like Cargill.

Decentralization and local-ization towards people centered food security (*Annakoshi*) at all levels in state be protected with *Rashtriya Annakoshi*. WTO reforms be genuine in decentralization not undermining our Constitution. The people's charter should be: **The Right to food security is a human right.**

The impact of globalisation on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security has been appallingly affecting developing countries and livelihoods of small farmers. Countries in distress (drought/unfavorable systems) have not been really uplifted through globalization, aids and loans! Instead, local markets have been eroded and MNCs are dominating the scene. All this has a tell-tale effect of greater external inputs under borrowed money.

The cost of production has been skyrocketing while the price for produce is steeply falling affecting the economy of farms and countries. The WTO and other players have brought in unfair trade regulations to the disadvantage of developing countries and favouring MNCs in the guise of free trade and SAP. Local wisdom, traditional practices and biodiversity are lost with emphasis on commercial crops and external market.

This book needs to be examined critically for authentic data, correct references (some are wrongly quoted and some omitted) and a holistic analysis to learn how serious is the problem of Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security, when more than half the population of the globe would be forced to go hungry in a short time if the same policies are followed. Alternatives have to be searched and policies should be changed to bring in equity in global management of natural resources and food security. This is what this edition can do as an *Eye-Opener* for general public and policy makers in particular.

**This is an abridged version of a much longer review. We shall be glad to send readers the full review. If they are interested, please email or write to us. - Ed.*

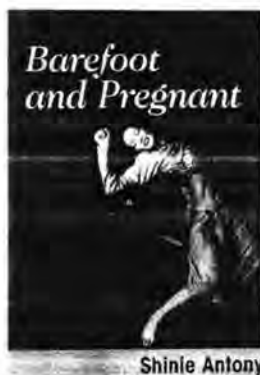


Years ago when public men whom we revered and admired were being prosecuted for sedition, we used to condemn and ridicule the Government for the new Section 124-A which was introduced into Macaulay's Penal Code... 'Disaffection' was the new basic element introduced in Section 124-A, and it was a great joke at the time in political circles that disaffection was authoritatively defined and accepted by the British Indian courts as "want of affection". We used to ridicule the idea that normal Indian citizens were expected to show affection for an alien government...

Now under *Swaraj* the Government of India has asked the Law Commission to report on a proposal to include a new group of offences called "Economic Offences" within the purview of the Indian Penal Code, such offences to include anything "calculated to prevent or obstruct the economic development of the country and endanger its economic health". In particular, one of the proposals is to include not only evasion but also avoidance of taxes in the group of offences referred to. Avoidance is not the same as evasion. Evasion is a positive act contravening the tax law. But avoidance is to arrange one's affairs as legally to free a particular case from taxation and has not been treated as a crime anywhere in the British Dominion. The Government of India now seeks to make such arrangements a crime...

The "economic development of the country and its economic health" as conceived by a political party in power are sought, for the first time to be made the test to decide whether a man is a good citizen and may remain out of jail, or should be imprisoned as an enemy of the State. This notion is of course taken from Soviet law and practice.

C. Rajagopalachari
Swarajya, August 21, 1965



BAREFOOT AND PREGNANT

By
Shinnie Antony

Published by

Rupa & Company, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002.
Year of Publication: 2002. No. of Pages: 208 Price: Rs.195

Reviewed by

Mrs. Suman Oak, Lecturer in English (Retd.) and a freelance writer.

This is the first book of short stories by a young writer-journalist, Shinnie Antony. The apparently disconnected stories seem to tell the reader about the joy and sorrow of procreation, something common to both males and females. Though conception seems to be a bane of the fair sex, most women and a rare man long to give birth to an offspring, one of their own. Going by the title of the book, one expects to get an elaborate stereotype description of the plight of helpless women on whom pregnancy is forced by irresponsible men and social dictates. But Ms. Antony looks beyond this conventional pattern to reveal the inner cravings of human beings and their sexual responses.

The very first story of Jo Mol, reveals attitudes of people belonging to various sections of society, towards an incident of rape. The honestly austere priest wants to give support to the victim while the archbishop, the custodian of society's morals, cannot worry about just one soul – that of Jo Mol – the victim, since his business is saving souls – in plural; the school teachers' conscience is turned into subject matter and react 'subjectively' like the mathematics teacher explaining the whole episode in terms of A, B and C; the policeman assigned to the victim feels duty bound not to leave her even during her physical examination; the poor old father unable to bear his ogling eyes leaves in exasperation; doctors worried more about the multiple semen matches in the report; women's organizations whine as they are ignored by the press and so on. Jo Mol is finally left alone to think of the bits of life she would be able to live. Similarly Jimmy, a street boy of 9 years is left alone to think philosophically of his life and the

'money under his head', the price of a painful 'curling up' against a lover of 42 years.

Munnu for which Ms. Antony received the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association Award, deals not with sex but the parental instinct. Charu, the father of Munnu who is thoroughly disappointed at her birth is juxtaposed with that Charu who weeps helplessly at the loss of this same Munnu when 'hands from the earth's belly' pulled down on the school parade in the deadly morning of 26th January 2002.

Similarly *Gandhari* is different than the rest of the stories. It symbolizes the woes, frustration and helplessness of the 'woman' dominated by men with insatiable hunger for power and domination and for whom victory means the license to molest a dignified lady. Although she decided to be blindfold in imitation of her blind Lord after her marriage, her helplessness in the chaos surrounding her, compels her to remain blindfold now. That chaos is felt even more poignantly today because all Gandharis remain blindfold.

Ms. Antony portrays females as they are – normal human beings with emotions and desires and not just pitiable objects of male desires and aggression. Vana is a cancer patient ridden with the anxiety of breast removal. She slips out of her hospital bed and makes for the stranger's room – that stranger who had noticed her 'whipped out nipples' under the flannel gown. Mariam with her immaculate conception makes her husband feel like a village fool. *Kochumary* is a tale of indulgence in flesh trade to earn quick money to pay dowry for a rich son-in-law to impress the neighbours cul-

minating in disillusion and repentance.

Manka, Fara, Joe and the long story *Darling-Darling* narrated in the first person fall in place when viewed like episodes cascading in a stream of consciousness with no chronological order. It reveals a dual personality with a female psyche weighed down by male genitals. The dual personality is depicted as Fara and Joe. The stream of consciousness flows back and forth, whirls deep into the depths of the past, wavers from side to side alternating into Sara and Joe. The episodes reveal the inner cravings of the double personality, 'with long polished nails' as he longs for a lover and feels in the embrace of another male, like a hermaphrodite whole 'that kissed and made love to its own end'.

As a young aide in a law firm, I was continually embarrassed by a recurring problem of bad body odour. No amount of exercise or washing had helped me cure the condition.

My aunt hit upon a novel idea to help me. Capitalizing on my swarthy features, she decided to give me an image of the rough and ready male. Occasionally, during the hectic working periods of the firm, she would burst into the office with her friends and a bottle of bourbon and proceed to have a small party.

Senior members of the law firm immediately sensed a connection between the liquor and my body odour. One asked: "Do you have bourbon every night?"

Kamal Wadhwa,
Freelance writer, Mumbai.

Freedom First

OUR MISSION

Freedom First speaks for the silent majority - the majority that wants to be left in peace to pursue its goal of improving its quality of life, but has been suffering in silence, the indignities heaped on it by insensitive governments who have 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.

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

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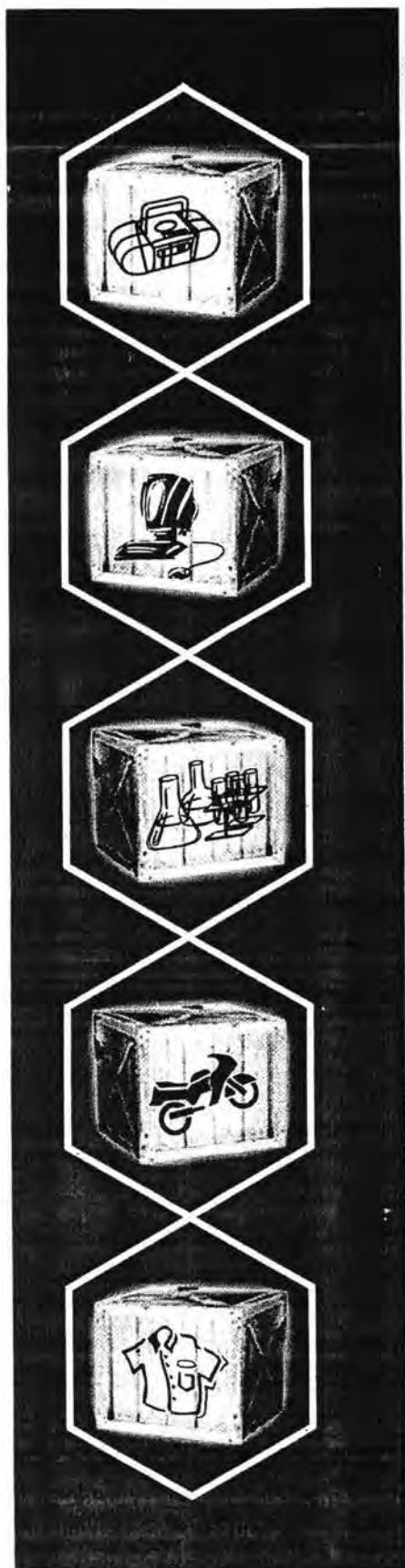
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