

Freedom First

The Liberal Position

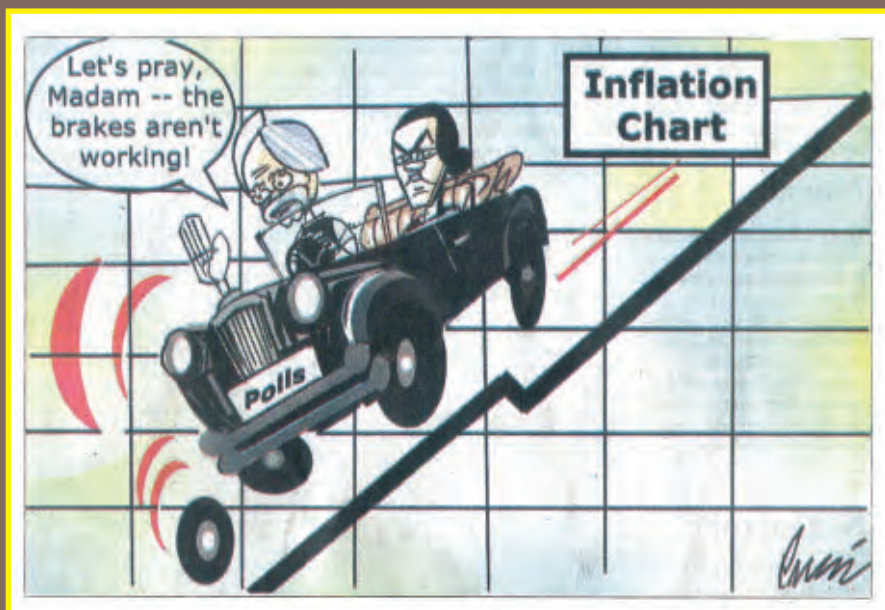


Illustration Courtesy: Rajinder Puri and *The Statesman*.

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Statement of Purpose

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 result of State intervention in the daily lives of our people. The economic reforms of 1991 reduced the State's stranglehold on commerce and industry. Yet, while GDP growth in the last ten years has been impressive, the slide in governance is alarming. The mindset of permanent and elected representatives continues to be meddlesome and suspicious of civil society. This has to change if India is to step out of the quagmire of impoverishment, insecurity and instability.

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

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

Freedom First

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BETWEEN OURSELVES...

Our 'friend' Inflation is back again on a visit. As someone who has lived through quite a few inflationary periods during the decades of Congress rule, I found that this time this inflation was an inflation with a difference. He has come uninvited and not at the invitation of statist policies. And this makes a difference. In the earlier days, the price of rice, wheat, pulses, kerosene for instance shot up and often after standing in queues for purchasing these scarce commodities, I recall having to return disappointed or make a deal with a merchant who was willing to sell at a price and that too discreetly and no bill or cash memo. This I recall was called the black-market where anything is available for a price. This time there is no shortage, no scarcity (not even kerosene). Its all there on the shelves of super markets and the prices are printed. You can go to any supermarket and buy what you want and get a cash memo for your purchase. There is no black-market. There are no controls other than the administered price of petrol and diesel. This is because this inflation is not a result of the licence permit raj or state capitalism. Hence not invited! The free market mechanism is in full play and the law of gravity will play its role - what goes up has to come down.

We need to understand this and hence the lead article is on the 'Inflation Phenomenon'. There is no need to panic.

- Editor

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MANY VOICES

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

The leader of the opposition should keep away from books. L.K.Advani is now saying that he has released a book (on Benazir Bhutto) which he has not read. Tomorrow Advani might say that he has not read the book which he has written".

Indira Congress spokesperson, Manish Tiwari,
Press Trust of India, news.in.msn. June 12

All politics in the country, Congress, Communist or Socialist, has one big area of national agreement, whether by design or through custom and that is to keep down and disfranchise the Sudra and the woman who constitute over three fourths of our entire population.

Rammanohar Lohia, quoted in *Janata*, April 20

While many in the rest of the world think of globalisation as being driven by American interests there is now a subterranean current that is beginning to argue that globalisation in its current form may not exactly be in America's own interests.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *The Indian Express*, May 5

I couldn't believe we didn't have enough Parsis. Every European consulate in town had a Parsi trying to stop you from going abroad. The British Council Library was guarded by a ferocious old bat whom we called 'No please' because that was what she snarled at you all the time, whatever your request was.

Journalist Jerry Pinto, *Mumbai City Limits*, cited in *Parsiana*, May 21

Young people today just can't visualise the India their parents grew up. It's so distant from today's India.

Journalist Shoba De, *Sunday Hindustan Times*, April 27

When it concerns India's interest, the human rights violations by China in Tibet should be treated as of consequence.

Reader K.P.Rajan, in a letter in the
Sunday Hindustan Times, April 27

The highest aspiration of any Buddhist is to achieve Nirvana. That path is much harder than the one I have chosen to try and seek freedom for Tibet.

Writer, poet Tibetan freedom fighter Tenzin
Tsun due, *dna.Sunday*, May 18

India is a country where marriage is consid-

ered sacred, so it is hardly a surprise that there is no word in Hindi for divorce.

Andrew Buncombe, *The Statesman*, May 3

The Reds have been remarkably candid about what they want. The folly lies in others imagining they don't mean what they say.

Journalist Swapan Dasgupta, *Sunday Times of India*,
April 20

I do not want to make too much of the Hindu empathy with the Dalai Lama's movement and its emphasis on non-violence, but ask yourself this: if the Tibetans had been Muslims led by an Ayatollah or an Imam would they have captured the Indian imagination, quite the same way?

Columnist Vir Sanghvi, *Sunday Hindustan Times*,
April 20

Like a murderer is put in prison for his action, parents of those children (who do not send their children to school) should also be imprisoned for their deed.

Maharashtra Government's Education Minister
Vasant Purke, *Hindustan Times*, April 23

Frankly speaking, I disagree with and dislike some of Taslima's views. But still I believe, a John Stuart Mill would have outright condemned the way she was driven out of the country(India) she loved so much.

Reader Sobhanlal Mukherjee of Kolkata in a letter to
The Statesman, April 19

The farmer's needs are growing thanks to globalisation but he has no watrto irrigate his land and earn a better living.

Radhesymam Chandak, Chairman, Buldana Urban
Cooperative Bank, *The Week*, May 4

One of the enduring mysteries of our times is how China has created capitalism out of think air.

Columnist Andy Mukherjee, *Mint*, May 1

As a civilisation, China is great. As a people, the Chinese are great. As a regime, China grates. Its government is corrupt, criminal and cruel. It represses its subjects. It threatens its neighbours. For half a century, China has bullied India, without meeting adequate response.

Columnist Rajinder Puri, *Outlook*, March 10

The Inflation Phenomenon

A Liberal Perspective

Sunil Bhandare
C. S. Deshpande

Inflation is a reflection of bad economic policies and equally bad economic management. If the Government, economic planners and policy makers give in to Leftist pressures for short-term political expediency of election politics and reverse the process of economic liberalization and globalization, it will not only be counter-productive, but will be fraught with disastrous economic consequences.

As this article goes to press, the rate of inflation has surged to a thirteen year high around 11%. We therefore are already in the danger zone of double-digit inflation. Obviously, everyone is seriously concerned about high inflation – the phenomenon of continuously rising prices. Managing one's monthly expenditure budget becomes an increasingly agonizing task – be it for the housewife, contract labourers, factory workers, Babus at Mantralaya or for professional managers. At the same time, business and industry are haunted by the thought of how to sustain demand for their products and services and manage profit margins in their respective businesses. While policy makers are at their wit's end in trying to reconcile policy dilemmas with the complex problem of controlling inflation, politicians are going through a nightmarish experience of having to face their electorates and the prospect of losing the next election. Undoubtedly, the challenges are daunting for all concerned!

On the other hand there are those particularly of the 'Left ideology' or the 'communist' kind, be they politicians or economists, who welcome this 'opportunity' to create confusion by blaming the

country's policy of economic liberalization and globalization since the launching of reforms in 1991 as being essentially (or entirely!) responsible for the rising prices; they are not prepared to engage in an objective evaluation of the current phenomenon of inflation.

Seriously, is economic liberalization or the gradual process of the globalization of India's economy the reason for the continuously rising prices? Did the period prior to economic reforms of 1991 (the period between 1957 and 1991 when Centralized Planning and State Capitalism reigned supreme) not experience strong and uncontrollable phases of inflation? Wasn't the Indian economy, with the State perched on the commanding heights of the economy, repeatedly exposed repeatedly to double digit inflation?

From a Historical Perspective

In the three decades prior to economic reforms (1957 to 1991), the high inflation phenomenon, that is annual prices often going beyond 7% [measured in terms of Wholesale Price Index (WPI)], made its frequent presence felt in our economy. There were at least 12 years of double digit inflation during this period of intensive and rigorous economic planning and

controls. For instance the mid-'sixties witnessed three consecutive years of double-digit inflation – 15.2% in 1965-66, 13.9% in 1966-67 and 11.6% in 1967-68. In the decade of the 'seventies, there were two phases of massive inflation: Phase I – 10% in 1972-73, 20.2% in 1972-73 and 25.2% in 1973-74; and Phase II – 17.1% in 1979-80 and 18.2% in 1980-81. (See box on page 7)

Even during the early 'nineties, India witnessed three consecutive years of double-digit inflation – 10.3% in 1990-91, 13.7% in 1991-92 and 10.1% in 1992-93. In fact, it was the high inflation in the early 'nineties that triggered economic liberalization.

In contrast, in the post-reforms period, especially a little over a decade since 1996-97, India has experienced relatively moderate inflation. Witness the sharp deceleration in the average annual inflation rate (based on WPI) in the post-reforms period: 10.6% during 1991-96; 5.1% during 1996-2001; and further to 4.9% during 2001-07.

Evidently, economic liberalization through domestic deregulation; import liberalization through virtual abolition of import licensing; and across-the-board ra-

tionalization and reductions of commodities taxation (customs, CENVAT and State VAT tariffs) have all contributed towards intensifying competition, promoting cost-efficiency, improving supply management, and restraining any upward pressures on prices. In the manufacturing sector, where there has been a more radical transformation, the deceleration of inflation has been more pronounced since the mid-nineties, as can be observed from the adjoining table:

Admittedly, the increasing globalization of the Indian economy requires India's benchmark of inflation rate to be aligned with the global standard – which is as low as 2 to 2.5% in the case of most of our major trading partners and global investors. Such rigorous benchmark of low inflation rate was never ever an integral part of the erstwhile (pre-1991) regime of investment, imports, pricing and distribution controls pursued relentlessly for well over four decades. Indeed, during those long decades, India experienced

Average Annual Inflation Rate (Based on WPI)				
Period	All Commo- dities	Primary Articles	Fuel, Power, Light & Lubricants	Manufactured Products
1991-1996	10.6	11.3	11.3	10.1
1996-2001	5.1	5.4	13.0	3.1
2001-2007	4.9	4.5	7.4	4.3

Note: The up-scaling of inflation in the latter part of 2006-07 has raised the overall long-term average inflation rate for the period 2001-07.
WPI = Wholesale Price Index

the worst of both worlds – low growth with declining standards of living and high levels of inflation, bringing misery and poverty to India's teeming millions. Indeed, the "controlled" economy managed to control everything, except – Inflation!

The Liberal Position on Inflation

It is in this context, that we need to reflect on the current high phase of inflation. As citizens and more so as liberals, we have never ever liked inflation – It erodes and distorts the living standards of the people. It is inequitable in its impact; it hurts the *poor the most*,

senior citizens, fixed income earners and workers in the unorganized sectors. Indeed, inflation amounts to the State taxing the people surreptitiously ("*Regressive Tax*"). The beneficiaries of inflation are the hoarders, the speculators and the market manipulators and not genuine traders, manufacturers and investors.

We are convinced that inflation is a reflection of bad economic policies and equally bad economic management. If the Government, economic planners and policy makers give in to Leftist pressures for short-term political expediency of election politics and reverse the

The Nature of Inflation

"In my humble view, once inflation is permitted to move by negligence and overconfidence, it is difficult to do anything about it for quite sometime. But with determined efforts, at a very early stage inflation it can be brought under substantial control. There is no doubt about it.

"There are variations in the pattern of behaviour of inflation. It can be brought under substantial control, with appropriate technology, in particular, in monetary and fiscal areas. A variety of instruments that are available should be used – not just one instrument as the Americans do...

"...a leading newspaper, I read about a week back used the expression "inflation menace". I thought I should correct the approach to inflation, which is not a menace but a phenomenon, like hundreds, in this great God's world. Merely because the phenomenon is not understood, we should not give it bad names. Another statement made is "consumers have never had it so bad". Not at all... The failure is that of man, and man mostly. Let man do his job thoroughly; we will all have a golden world, without fail!

Prof. S.L.N. Simha, Emeritus
Editorial Advisor *Southern Economist*

COURTESY: *Southern Economist*, June 1, 2008

process of economic liberalization and globalization, it will not only be counter-productive, but will be fraught with disastrous economic consequences. All the good work of the last over fifteen years will be undone in no time. What then remains of India emerging as an economic power!

As Liberals we are also convinced that it is critical to deconstruct the components of inflation with a view to identifying its underlying causes and formulating appropriate policy strategies. At the retail end, which is the real

interface of the mass of consumers with the market prices of commodities, it is found that prices of common varieties of rice and wheat have risen by more than 10 to 12% over the year; of tur dal and gram by 12 to 15%; of milk by 12 to 15%; of edible oil and vanaspati by 15 to 18%; of vegetables by 15 to 20%; and so on.

Basically, in the case of most primary commodities, wherein inflation is strident, the root causes are to be found in (a) relative stagnation of agricultural production; (b) rising incomes of the middle

class consumers, whose consumption habits and preferences are undergoing significant changes and (c) *Behaviour of Global Commodity Prices*. As regards, manufactured goods, the rapid price increases are attributable to domestic cost-push pressures on one side and global factors on the other.

The unprecedented surge in energy sector prices together - cost of petroleum products, coal and electricity - is one of the dominant factors in the current inflationary upsurge. Witness, the world at

Inflation in the 'Sixties' How the Swatantra Party Educated Citizens

In the sixties when the Swatantra Party was an active participant in Indian politics, it carried on a regular, almost annual campaign to educate the citizen on inflation.

The following is an extract from a folder published and circulated by the Swatantra Party in English and a host of other languages on the occasion of "Anti-Inflation Day" observed by the Party on September 18, 1966:

"In this folder are some answers to such questions as "What is Inflation", "Why Inflation?" and so on so that the citizen may realise the dangerous extent to which the Government, by its unsound economic policies, is taking the country on the road to ruin.

"What is Inflation?"

"Inflation is too much money chasing too few goods and services. In other words, while money is being pumped into the economy at a rapid pace, the goods that can be purchased with the extra money continue to be in short supply. Therefore the prices of these goods rise and we have to pay more.

"Inflation is inherent in the pattern of our Five Year Plans. Goods which the people need are not being produced. The State and the National Planning Commission decide on what to produce. The Five Year Plans will produce more steel. So the price of steel will come down. But the prices of food and cloth which are not produced sufficiently, rise because there is not enough to meet the needs of all and only those that can pay more are able to purchase. It is thus an iniquitous and indefensible tax on those that can bear it least."

"When there is inflation the middle classes are the worst sufferers. They get a fixed income every month. They have a certain standard of living to maintain. When there is inflation, they have to pay more for food, more for clothes and more by way of house rent. The salary they get is one fifth in real form compared to what they were getting fifteen years ago. And with the same salary they have to buy the same amount of goods possibly more, as the family would have grown betimes, at much higher prices."

"Can Controls Check Inflation?"

Controls will not check inflation. They will only increase scarcity. When there are controls there will be profiteering and black-marketing. The people will be at the mercy of government officials for permits and licences. Corruption will increase. The prices of goods will go up and inflation will go unchecked. The only persons to benefit by controls will be the ruling party who will gather into their hands immense economic power."s

large is being administered the fourth "oil shock" since 2004. The average international crude oil prices have risen exponentially from \$27.69 per barrel in 2003 to \$64.20 per barrel in 2007 and the average for May 2008 is hovering around \$136 per barrel with a strong upward bias every passing day.

Let us also recognize the fact that the current inflation phase is posing a major challenge not only to India, but virtually for the entire global economy. Other than some of the freak economies of Africa, which are witnessing triple or quadruple digit inflation, many other economies face a progressively mounting rate of inflation ranging from as high as 31.4% in Venezuela to 25.2% in Vietnam; from 15.1% in Russia to 11.1% in South Africa; and from 17.2% in Pakistan to 8.5% in China. Even the relatively stable inflation economies of the Euro Area and USA have seen their lower norms of inflation being breached with inflation rates of 3.6% and over 4%, respectively.

Liberal Policy Options

The fact of the matter is that, over the last year or so, inflation has emerged as a global phenomenon. As such, it will be absurd to attribute it to the process of economic liberalization and globalization. At the same time, the liberal position is that the current inflation is a serious matter - it does not appear to be a temporary or a cyclical phenomenon. Several negatives are going to shape both the short-term and long-term inflation outlook of the Indian economy - the basic domestic supply side, especially of agriculture goods, and infrastructure constraints; uncertainties of global oil prices; strong emerging pressures on wage costs,

especially of skilled workers, including technology and knowledge manpower and so on.

At the same time, the demand side will be driven by rapid growth of money supply largely under the impetus of capital inflows from abroad (and not, as it was the experience in the controlled economy of printing more and more currency notes); growing consumption demand of the newer middle class; and investment demand.

In this frame-work, strategizing the battle against inflation is a task that cannot be left to the RBI's monetary policy alone. Nor can one expect the *ad hoc* fiscal (customs and excise reliefs) and supply management measures (import of wheat and edible oils and banning of exports of some sensitive goods) to be effective on an enduring basis. What can truly make a difference to this outlook on a sustained basis are the strategies to reform the agriculture sector (the productivity driven next agricultural revolution); second, the management of energy security; third, expansion and modernization of critical infrastructure; fourth, the capacity building of manpower; and last, but not the least, good fiscal governance.

The success of economic policy measures lies squarely in the welfare of people. Nothing matters more to the "man-in-the-street", than the spectre of losing one's job and/or rising prices. Needless to say, no liberal supports "growth-only" policies, which are devoid of social content and which pay scant attention to the twin devils of Unemployment and Inflation.

However, it needs to be re-

iterated that the objective of "High Growth with Price stability", which was, incidentally, achieved only during the post-reform years, needs to be achieved with renewed vigour - by staying firm on the path of deregulation, liberalization of domestic trade and investment and greater internationalization of the economy. A throw-back to the regime of greater controls, greater government interference is tantamount to a remedy-worse than the disease!

In short, the battle against inflation is going to be tougher. This is so not only because of the complexities of domestic and international economic factors, but more importantly, due to the ruling UPA Government's concerns about not endangering the current delicate political balance and winning the next elections. The Left parties have already stepped up their attack on the government, accusing the ruling UPA of adopting a "slack attitude" in containing inflation. But does "acting tough" mean going against the basic tenets of economic liberalization and globalization? It should not; it must not. **Indeed, the current resilience of the economy even in the midst of convergence of many adverse domestic and international factors is essentially the reflection of the fact are on the right correct course in our economic policies, notwithstanding the many hurdles created by the Left parties. We liberals will have to be constantly on guard against the devils playing their dirty tricks!**

MR. SUNIL BHANDARE, formerly Economic Advisor, TATAS & MR. C. S. DESHPANDE, Executive Director, Maharashtra Economic Development council are members of the Drafting Group of the Indian Liberal Group.

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Inflation Bites?

1) Was the Congress in Karnataka the first victim of inflation? May be not. BJP's victory in Karnataka was more a vote against the chicanery of the Deve Gowda clan, not a reaction to the rising prices. Inflation is indeed the overriding worry for the common man as well as the Government. The latter has to worry about the fallout on the future elections. There are extenuating circumstances to lessen its culpability:

- a) The price rise is an imported phenomenon. International prices, particularly of crude oil are affecting the overall prices of commodities.
- b) Every country in the world is suffering from this phenomenon
- c) Food prices in India are the lowest in the world
- d) The Public Distribution System here is able to protect the poor from the rising prices of essential commodities.
- e) The measures taken by the Government would control inflation within a few weeks. (So the Government claimed initially).
- f) There is nothing wrong with our economic policies; our fundamentals are strong - Finance Minister

1) All this may be true but the fact is that the common man is suffering and explanations mean little to him. The Government is oblivious to the contradictions in its own arguments. If inflation is an imported phenomenon, dominated by the crude oil prices, how can it be controlled by measures initiated here? It may be true that our Government's policies are not responsible for the price rise. However, an impoverished man cannot stop to analyse the root-causes of inflation. He blames the Government. It is illogical that a Government running well otherwise (which this Government is not), should be defeated for no fault of its policies. We have seen Governments getting defeated over the price of onions! The latest fuel price hike (June 4) is perhaps the last straw on the camel's back. Goodbye to logic!

"The Swatantra Party will fight inflation by reposing more trust in people. It will encourage the people to invest in industries and agriculture and will permit the people to have their own way of Investment".

From Swatantra Party publication, September 1966

Congress-BJP Coalition?

2) Only a political ignoramus or a mad optimist could have thought of such a coalition. Everything militates against this possibility. The two parties are sworn enemies. For the Congress, the BJP is untouchable as a communal party. The suggestion initially came from industrialist Rahul Bajaj, a Rajya Sabha MP elected with NCP support. He is a political lightweight but a man of incisive common sense. He spoke out his mind two years back but nobody paid attention. Meghnad Desai, a British economist and political analyst, made a similar suggestion. Now NCP's PA Sangma, former Speaker, has reiterated the idea and

2) The idea of a coalition is far-fetched but cooperation in matters of common concern is not such impossibility. Mature political parties have no hesitation in approaching opposition parties for help in reaching broad consensus on matters of national importance. "Death of ideology" is an offensive idea but national interests should transcend ideological divides. A common resolve to see important legislation through should see the ruling party and the opposition act in concert. This is done occasionally but we have failed to institutionalise the process. Action against terrorists, Naxalites, legislation to deal

MG Vaidya, RSS veteran, endorsed it. Does the suggestion have any possibility of germination or is it a pipe dream?

There is no crime of which I do not deem myself capable.

Goethe

Contributed by C. R. Reddi, Chennai

Oh, It Is Jaipur Now!

3) Terrorists hit Jaipur on May 13, 2008 after a lull (outside J&K). It came as a shock. It need not have been, because it must be understood that terrorists will not keep quiet for long. If not Jaipur, it had to be another place, sooner or later. Frequent violence desensitizes the mind. We are inclined to forget the 60 killed in Delhi (Oct 2005), 200+ killed in Mumbai trains (July 2006), 40 killed in Hyderabad (Aug 2007) and 60+ killed in Jaipur and hope that the worst is over. The bitter truth is, it is not over. What are we doing about it except for the bickering between the States and the Centre as to who is responsible? Acronyms like HUJI, L-e-T, J-e-M, ISI, SIMI are thrown at us, making us none the wiser. In the last five years, 18 towns and cities in India, outside J&K, have been hit, which exposes the inconvenient truth that these and many more cities have harboured terrorist modules all these years. How many more sleeper cells exist is anybody's guess. No official is held responsible for anything and life moves on. Are we that helpless?

That man is an aggressive creature will hardly be disputed. With the exception of certain rodents, no other vertebrate habitually destroys members of his own species. No other animal takes positive pleasure in the exercise of cruelty upon another of his own kind. We generally describe the most repulsive examples of man's cruelty as brutal or bestial, implying by these adjectives that such behaviour is characteristic of less highly developed animals than ourselves. In truth, however, the extremes of "brutal" behaviour are confined to man; and there is no parallel in nature to our savage treatment of each other. The sombre fact is that we are the cruelest and most ruthless species that has ever walked on earth; and that although we may recoil in horror when we read in newspaper or history book of the atrocities committed by man upon man, we know in our hearts that each of us harbours within himself those same savage impulses which lead to murder, to torture and to war.

Anthony Storr, *Human Aggression*

Contributed by C. A. Reddi, Chennai.

with these threats, the nuclear deal or globalization are issues on which the Congress and the BJP can easily come together but electoral calculations come in the way. National interests take a back seat. It is our misfortune that our politicians are not mature enough or we, as people, have not learnt to make them accountable for their lack of broader vision.

3) Terrorism cannot be stopped completely but that does not mean we cannot fight it. It is unfortunate that no inspirational leader has emerged to create a sense of confidence among the people. Politicians are lost in platitudes. There is no time-bound plan of action. Some measures suggested by experts are getting entangled in political debate:

- a. There is an oft-repeated demand for more effective legislation against terrorism. The Chief Justice of India has himself pointed out its need. This is countered with political arguments. There is the juvenile, knee jerk response that harsher laws do not prevent terrorist attacks. No law has ever eliminated a crime but it gives society the power to deal with the offender. Terrorism is a state of undeclared war and not a routine law and order matter. It needs to be fought with all weapons at your command. While the free world opts for tougher measures, India, which is the biggest victim of terrorism, chooses to be an ostrich with its head in the sand.
- b. The Government has suggested formation of a federal force to deal with terrorism and similar inter-state offences. The States are wary of allowing the Center to interfere in State matters but there should be realisation that individual States cannot handle activities that span several states and may have foreign epicenters. Terrorism cannot be handled as a random occurrence in one State at a time. Can our politicians wake up to this reality and stop squabbling? They need to unite the whole country to fight the war on terror as one.
- c) All political parties must get together and decide what is achievable and what is not. After that, there should be no blame game every time the terrorists hit.
- d) Norms for administrative and executive accountability need to be set up and failure against terrorism not treated as inevitable, as if it was an Act of Nature.

Readers are invited to send in their points of view on serious issues of the day to avkay@mtnl.net.in

(2006), another best-seller. Always at the top of his class at Harvard Law School, he became the first African American president of the *Harvard Law Review* in 1991. His anti-Iraq War speech in Chicago in October 2002 at a time when he was considering running for the US Senate and when 28 Democratic senators had voted for the proposed war, was a great risk, but it paid off. His impressive keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, despite being a state legislator, won him instant fame.

The *Audacity of Hope* contains his political philosophy of "empathy and inclusiveness." Chapter 8, "The World Beyond Our Borders" contains his foreign policy scheme. He credits the post-Second World War American leadership of crafting "a new architecture combining Wilson's idealism with hard headed realism" which saw its results after 60 years. However "American foreign policy has always been a

jumble of warring impulses." Nationalist movements, ethnic struggles, reform efforts or left leaning policies were viewed through Cold War lenses and considered potential threats, since, "US policymakers unnecessarily viewed problems elsewhere in the world through a military lens rather than a diplomatic one." The post 9/11 policies were old and outdated strategies, "dusted off, slapped together and with new labels affixed."

On the other hand, he decries "isolationism," since globalisation has made the US economy, health and security captive to events outside. Also, such transnational threats are from "the margins of the global economy," through weak or failing states, corruption and poverty which the US had earlier ignored. Unilateral military action should only be when US faces imminent threat. In all other cases, a multilateral action on the lines of George H.W. Bush's First Gulf

War should be undertaken, with cooperation from other countries. "Freedom means more than elections" in many parts of the world reeling under poverty. He faults US trade barriers, patent regimes and World Bank-IMF policies for depriving the poor access to drugs, food and development.

Obama's July 2007 declaration in Charleston that he would meet the leaders of Cuba, Syria, Venezuela, Iran and North Korea in the first year of office to resolve differences, was attacked by Hillary Clinton as "naïve." However, for a world tired of the present American policy which creates more problems, this would come as a breath of fresh air. Also, it would prove that Obama is the "future" while Clinton is the "past." Would US electors choose a further dose of militarism or "empathy and inclusiveness"?

MR. V. BALACHANDRAN is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat.






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India Must Know its McCain and Obama

V. Balachandran

The contrast between the two could not have been sharper. John Sidney McCain III will be the oldest President if elected (72), while Barack Hussein Obama "Junior" (Barry) will be the fifth youngest (47).

In May 1981, our embassy in Paris was not mentally prepared for Francois Mitterrand's victory over Giscard d'Estaing as President. Our ambassador frankly admitted that he knew no one in the Socialist Party. A similar situation arose in 1992, when a Congress Party delegation from Delhi wanted to visit Little Rock to felicitate Bill Clinton. Our embassy in Washington DC, which never thought of developing contacts with the President-Elect's group, had to search deep inside Arkansas to locate an Indian American doctor to facilitate a meeting with Clinton.

The bureaucracy is notorious for its inability to anticipate new situations as Laurence J. Peter (The Peter Principle) said: "Bureaucracy defends the status quo long past the time when the quo has lost its status." A similar situation should not arise in November 2008 if John McCain is to clash for the high office with Barack Obama, now a certainty as the candidate of the Democratic Party..

The contrast between the two could not have been sharper. John Sidney McCain III will be the oldest President if elected (72), while Barack Hussein Obama "Junior" (Barry) will be the fifth youngest (47). McCain, a highly decorated soldier, comes from an illustrious family of naval officers. Nicknamed "McNasty" in the Navy, he was fearless but rebellious, a tendency he has displayed even during his Congressional term since 1982, where he was considered a maverick because of his speeches

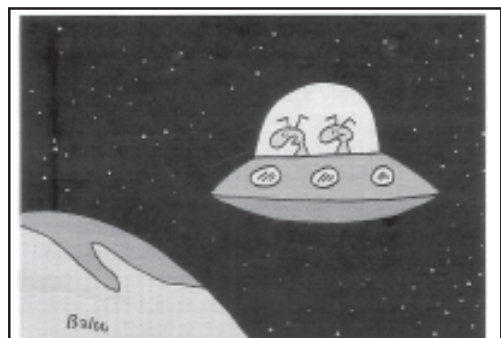
and actions. But he was a national hero, showing the highest leadership quality in refusing to be released on priority ahead of his comrades when he was a prisoner of war for six years in Vietnam where he was often tortured.

Iraq will be the central issue for McCain and Obama for different reasons. McCain believes in a militarist Jacksonian model of foreign policy on unilateral overseas intervention if American interests are threatened. His ideas conveyed through *Foreign Affairs* (November-December 2007) go beyond the Bush and Cheney doctrine of a military and civilian "surge" in Iraq, strengthening Pervez Musharraf in defeating Taliban, organising unilateral or multilateral sanctions on Iran, supporting Israel against its enemies, increasing US military muscle by raising US Army and Marine troop level to 900,000 and setting up a new Second World War type OSS to fight unconventional warfare and covert operations to "take risks that ... bureaucracies today rarely consider taking." McCain wants a new US information agency to defeat Islamic extremism, the creation of a "worldwide League of Democracies" as envisioned by Theodore Roosevelt, to take over when the United Nations fails, close co-operation with European Union and cementing a growing partnership with India.

Obama "Junior" comes from a lower middle

class family where the burden of raising children fell on his mother and grandmother. Barack Hussein Obama "Senior" hailed from a remote Kenyan village. In 1959 he was selected for a US scholarship to Hawaii University where he met a White student, Ann Dunham from Kansas. Their marriage lasted only till 1963 when he moved to Harvard to study economics. He returned to Kenya with another American wife, became an alcoholic and died in a car accident in 1982. Later Obama would pen a sensitive sketch of how he missed his father in his best-selling book *Dreams from My Father* (1995) remembering that "more than half of USA's 5.6 million black boys lived in fatherless households, 40 per cent of them impoverished."

Ann Dunham then married an Indonesian student, moved to Jakarta in 1967 where Obama studied in Indonesian schools spending four years of "joyous time, full of adventure and mystery" as he wrote in his second book *The Audacity of Hope*



"It's hard to decide – Hillary would give us driver's licenses, but McCain promises a path to citizenship."

Courtesy: *National Review*, February 25, 2008.

Damsel Democracy in Distress

Eknaath Nagarkar

S'Merit among its youth is the true asset which a Nation can neglect only at its own peril.

D*espite being individually brilliant we could prove to be collectively stupid if Phoolandevi winning an election is any proof!*

Whereas SHE is worshipped as an Immortal Goddess symbolizing the concept *Jana-shakthi Janaardhana Shakthi* the Marxists to this day believe, SHE can't deliver the goods. Nevertheless they do contest and get elected to indulge thereafter in back-seat driving so as to undermine HER through techniques handed down to them by their Guru Karl Marx.

'Merit among its youth is the true asset which a Nation can neglect only at its own peril. Setting up fa-

cilities to enable those with merit to pick up a discipline and evolve and raise themselves socially and economically is the fundamental responsibility of the State. And in doing this the State also stands to gain.' Something in this direction was the conviction of many a great thinker like Aristotle and Socrates. However this aspect never figured in the priorities of the Royalty, whose hands were full with on-going rivalry with the papacy on the one hand as also petty wars on the other. Failure of the Royalty in this regard is what finally persuaded those thinkers to believe SHE and SHE alone would be equal to the task and would be able to do that. In fact this is what enabled HER to reappear on this planet after

more than 17 centuries. That SHE had made a brief appearance in some of the Greek City States, over 2000 years back is known. But the reason why SHE vanished for so long is not known.

Now let's examine how SHE fares in India; HER largest manifestation on this planet.

Democracy In India

"Disband the party! Our job is done! We have achieved what we relentlessly fought for. Now go back home, settle down and pursue whatever be your chosen vocation." These were the words of Mahatma Gandhi. Those who held his word as *veda-vaakya* and in whose hands power would have been safe left the field. Others who had a rebellious streak coupled with a hunger for power in them stayed back. And subsequent politics evolved around these pseudo freedom fighters. Little wonder therefore that many a genuine freedom fighter was left high and dry without being identified as such.

SHE entered this superstitious country right foot first and not without a sense of trepidation. As one who survives on the daily diet of healthy discussion and lively debate, SHE certainly had some real good time initially with great leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Chakravathy Rajagopalachari, Piloo Mody, Feroze Ghandy,

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MONEY?

This is one question that begs an answer and nobody seems to have it. Going by Police records as also media reports, Veerappan, the sandalwood dactoir had killed thousands of elephants, looted thousands of trucks of sandalwood beside killing men in uniform etc. Of what avail is that kind of money for one living a Tarzan like life in the jungles is anybody's guess. But then where has the money gone?

The time-honoured rumour in this regard goes 'a prominent politician of Tamilnadu who had been backing the brigand throughout holds all those hundreds of crores.'

But then one of the wives of the dead brigand let off a secret that her husband had the habit of burying bags of money underground or shoving them in the hollow of tree trunks - all in the denomination 500s & 1000s. In doing this unknowingly she set in motion a live drama that is no less gripping than the Movie McKenna's Gold. Many of those involved in that futile attempt to nab Veerappan including the police have shed their uniforms and taken up shovels to enter Sathyamangalam and adjoining forests in pursuit of 'McKenna's Gold'!

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and many others in action. Libertarians headed by late Minoo Masani were upbeat and got busy so as to ensure a sustained and sound health for HER. They made long-term plans setting up institutions like the Democratic Research Service (DRS), Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Adult Education Institute; all this with the purpose of training up wannabe as also elected leaders in the art of debating!

But then the unlettered contested in a big way and surprisingly got elected too! And alas these institutions could do precious little thereafter because there was neither time nor facility to start from Primary level!

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the most charismatic Prime Minister we ever had, believed in the good old Hindu concept *sarva dharma sama bhawa*. But then felt it would be risky using any word even remotely connected to our Hindu tradition! The correct word is Non-Denominational suggested by the late Minoo Masani. But No. Secularism, Nehru decided would be the right word.

And that was it. HER make-up of secularism had to be noticed and HER secular credentials proved. Therefore Lord Shiva was not invited. A grave blunder indeed!

Because

the first Democratic Elections in 1952 was a replay of the good old Mythological story '*samudra manthan*'. In a repeat action the great churning process yielded *amritha* (the good) and *kalakoota* (the evil). If only Lord Shiva were there on the scene? He would have downed the entire supply of *kalakoota* in one gulp. This was a ghastly sight for one who had descended from the Utopian World. SHE had now no option other than to contain this deadly venom – that was to soon become the *virus* of corruption.

And now the good and the evil had to work as a team as ordained by HER. And it didn't take long for the milk of goodness to turn sour. The *virus* of corruption got the better of HER and rendered the leadership deaf and blind! The *virus* thereafter seeped down!

Hamstrung thus, damsel democracy started limping. And when Indira Gandhi's infamous Emergency came through SHE was virtually in coma! How SHE got back into HER own is History.

Long Drawn Chess Game

The New Millennium had much to offer to the world at large that had been watching climax of a CHESS GAME; Lord Krishna of Karnataka himself had taken on this notorious brigand. Veerappan playing Black made that crucial (K)night move on 31st July that year and announced Check!

Dr. Rajkumar – Icon of the celluloid world and the uncrowned King of Karnataka, was trapped! If the opponent playing White was taken unawares, so also were the punters backing him by this surprise move. The notorious brigand Veerappan was believed to have killed over a thousand elephants and ruthlessly killed many policemen in uniform. He had been at this seemingly never-ending game for over 3 decades playing single-handed whereas his tired opponents were every now and

"King of Karnataka No More"

By the time this appears in print, the Bharatiya Janata Party would have formed the government in Karnataka on its own strength and hoping the performance would be repeated at the national level. That the voters in the south of Vindhyas are slowly turning to the BJP has inevitably led – not to soul searching but to pointing fingers by the losers. Given the mindset of Indian politicians, that is understandable.

However, one stunning result of the outcome of the Karnataka Assembly elections is the fall of Deve Gowda's Janata Dal (Secular) and after the party think tank analyses the voting pattern honestly, it would have to blame its own party leader for the debacle. Gowda's flip flop on his son joining hands with the 'communal' BJP to rule the state for the period of his term and then breaking the power-sharing agreement with the BJP has apparently not gone down well with the voters. Any one in the BJP's position would have used the 'betrayal' card and BJP's strategists are past masters at that. That the 30-seat loss suffered by the JD(S) from its 2004 election tally has been equally shared by the Congress and the BJP and is a clear indication that Deve Gowda's 'appeal to many *non-vokkaliga* voters has almost disappeared and his own caste base was shaken by the presence of S. M. Krishna, the suave and urbane Congress leader. The result 'the wily' Deve Gowda is King of Karnataka no more! Wiles and mind games just don't win hearts and minds of the people. Hopefully, he has learnt his lesson, even though it has come the hard way.

Neelanant Patri is an Economist

COURTESY: *Southern Economist*, June 1, 2008

then being replaced by the damsel much to his chagrin.

He had been striking at regular intervals and cocking a snook at those daring to challenge him with impunity. And verily he had proved to be a festering boil on the backside of successive Chief Ministers of Karnataka.

This was a bizarre form of Chess indeed! A mega live game! That was something far superior to the kind Mogul Emperors were supposed to play in their court-yards. The chess rules were in place but applied only to the law-abiding. Not for Veerappan who was a law unto himself. There was no place for inanimate pieces made of wood or plastic – not even ivory. Elephants, Camels, Horses and soldiers all live!

Accustomed to freely roaming around in the wilderness of Sathyamangalam and adjoining forests, this maverick player could scarcely be expected to restrict himself to the 64 squares of the standard board. In this long drawn game of Chess he had made the opening move. Even so insisted on BLACK; his lucky colour!

White – played by the State Government did seem to seize the initiative by employing men and material in a bid to hunt down this one-man-army and the Mid Game got going in right earnest. Rs.180-crores and ten years later when the honchos were rudely shaken out of their slumbers by this surprise move of Veerappan, realization dawned on them that all they had gained out of the whole exercise till then, was mere publicity and brownie points. And now Brigand Veerappan had once again seized the initiative!

Lord Krishna of Karnataka

seemed prepared to go to any length to save the *damsel*. In the process HER institutions, the main support systems were sought to be compromised. The stakes were heavy and the damsel was firmly tethered to a tree in typical filmy style and SHE was in the woods, in more than one sense.

Finally however suit-cases exchanged hands- how many fund-mobilizers handed over to the dreaded brigand and how many they managed to retain for themselves nobody knows- and thus Veerappan conceded a Draw. And SHE was saved!

The common man is left disillusioned and frustrated and is unable to distinguish notoriety from popularity as is evidenced by a Phoolandevi getting elected here. Elected leaders have ganged up with frontline businessmen to rob the poor of their precious lands in the name of SEZ. Worse! CPM leaders have proved to be worse than the capitalists in this regard, if Nandigram is any proof.

Thus we find that the journey for this damsel has been a strenuous one. Elections continue to remain a *samudra manthan* exercise of sorts. Only with passage of time the churning process has stopped yielding the good any-

more.

Gone are the days of healthy discussion and debate. Deliberations of late are invariably in high decibels. Even the Prime Minister is unable to talk undisturbed. When tempers run high strident members find mikes and paper-weights handy and go physical at times.

Watching all this helplessly she is literally in tears. For that one sin of having gone back on the promise of privy-purse does she deserve all this punishment? Friends, death relieves one from all pains and sufferings. As one supposed to be immortal SHE is denied even this source of relief. It is therefore up to you and me to help her recover back to resplendent health by electing the good without being swayed by other considerations. SHE has to survive. Are there any options?

Now that ELECTIONS are round the corner we can only hope janatha janaardhan proves a little more discreet, and exercises its powers without fear or favour. SHE can only be as good as the outcome.

Victory to HER!

MR. EKNAATH NAGARKAR is a freelance writer based in Bangalore. Email: eknaathnagarkar@gmail.com

Question: What is the true definition of Globalization?

Answer: Princess Diana's death. An English princess with an Egyptian boyfriend crashes in a French tunnel, driving a German car with a Dutch engine, driven by a Belgian who was drunk on Scottish whisky, followed closely by Italian Paparazzi, on Japanese motorcycles; treated by an American doctor, using Brazilian medicine

This is sent to you by an Indian, using Bill Gates's technology, and you're probably reading this on your computer, that use Taiwanese chips, and a Korean Monitor assembled by Bangladeshi workers in a Singapore plant,

That, my friend, is Globalization

From the Net: Contributed by Kumar Ramachandran, Mumbai



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

Our Politicians have Transformed Hypocrisy to an Art Form

Where is this 'National Honour' when our politicians indulge in blatant acts of corruption and nepotism?

It has now been established, beyond reasonable doubt, that in India's hypocritical society, the biggest offenders by far are our venal politicians. Whenever they spot an opportunity, they are quick to adopt a holier-than-thou attitude that is diametrically opposite to their true character. It is sickening to watch.

The latest example is the brouhaha, reported recently in a morning newspaper, over Maharashtra's Forest Minister, Babanrao Pachpute, unfurling the national tricolour upside down during a flag hoisting ceremony on Maharashtra Day. Naturally, two scapegoats, in the form of police officials were quickly located and suspended. This is typical behaviour for our politicians who are prompt to 'take action' on inconsequential issues which do not merit it; while dithering for months on matters of vital national interest. It should be obvious that the upside down flag was an unintentional mistake.

Apparently it was not obvious to opposition politicians from the Shiv Sena – that party of impeccable moral rectitude. A Shiv Sena chief has 'demanded' strict action against the Minister (who conveniently happens to belong to the Congress). He wants Pachpute to be found guilty of violating the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.

This is the biggest joke of all. Where is this 'National Honour' when our politicians indulge in blatant acts of corruption and nepotism? Where is the National Honour when essential civic services are neglected or delayed? Where is the National Honour when these worthy gentlemen squander away crores of taxpayers' money by behaving like brainless buffoons during parliament sessions; where they have been elected to perform the business of the people?

Indian Bureaucracy is Biggest Ally of Terrorists

It is ludicrous to expect the terrorists to carry out another attack the next day; or the day after.

The Times of India of May 16 carries a telling graphic. It lists the nine major terrorist bombings that have taken place in the country since 2005 (the latest one occurring in Jaipur); and the current status of the investigations to trace the culprits. In a word, the current status of the investigations is pathetic. Most of the bombers have escaped or remain untraced; and few of the masterminds behind the attacks have been conclusively identified, let alone brought to justice.

The reaction of India's security agencies in the aftermath of a terrorist incident has become so predictable, that it is almost a text book. A 'high alert' is declared; and roadblocks are set up at major traffic junctions. The problem is that, in most cases, the policemen manning the roadblocks have no real idea what they are looking for; and only end up harassing ordinary law-abiding citizens.

It is a classic example of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. I am sure the security agencies don't need to be told that every big terrorist attack is the result of months of meticulous planning and considerable resources. It is ludicrous to expect the terrorists to carry out another attack the next day; or the day after. The emphasis, unfortunately, is everywhere except where it should be – taking steps to prevent future attacks.

As has been proved, even in countries that have first rate security agencies, it is virtually impossible to stop all terrorist attacks. However, a good many of them can be prevented with good intelligence. The tragedy of India is not that its intelligence gathering agencies are totally incompetent – they are not. The shame is that even after intelligence is received by the state governments; it is rarely acted upon in time.

There is no malevolent intent behind this apathy. The slow reaction time is almost inevitable, because the intelligence runs up against the brick wall of the traditionally lethargic Indian bureaucracy. Ironically, I am able to buttress my case with another news report in the same paper.

To most people living in Mumbai, the deadly serial train blasts of July 2006 have been imprinted on their memories. Immediately following the blast, the Maharashtra state government decided to set up an intelligence wing that would work in the same manner as India's Intelligence Bureau (roughly equivalent to America's FBI). A good idea indeed, but nearly two years later, it remains on paper. Not a single person has been recruited to man the new wing. The reason is a classic illustration of Indian bureaucracy at work.

To start with, it took more than one and half years after the idea was formulated for the state government to grant the sanction to recruit 900 personnel for the new wing. Two months after that, the government department that is supposed to conduct exams for recruitment is yet to announce the dates. It is not that the responsible agencies are deliberately trying to sabotage the process. It is just the way they function. Our politicians are not displaying any sense

of urgency because, to them, it is not urgent. It does not directly affect their continued prosperity, after all. Translation – it is not going to gain or lose them any votes. If I was a terrorist planning an attack in Mumbai, right now I would be feeling pretty complacent.

In this case, the indifferent bureaucracy will find a natural ally in that other bugbear of the Indian polity: corruption. Normally, there are over a thousand applicants for every vacant government position. Here, the new Intelligence Wing may have difficulty in filling its 900 vacancies. As a senior police officer quoted to the TOI, "The fresh staff will be dedicated to intelligence gathering and will work with the State Intelligence Department until retirement."

In the Indian context, this is anything but an inducement. The most in-demand posts in India's police forces are those where the cops come in frequent contact with the general public. Frequent contact translates into frequent bribes. There is no percentage in joining an Intelligence department, till retirement, where one has no avenues for personal enrichment. And so the cycle will be repeat itself ad infinitum. As a wise man once said, "those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it."

Yeh Hai Mumbai Meri Jaan

The solution is obvious, of course. The Sainiks will obliterate the name of Bombay from every nook and corner of their city. Then, it is only a matter of time before Mumbai is restored to its pristine glory. I can hardly wait.

I grew up in the 1950's in a city called Bombay. It certainly could not rival London or New York, but it was a pleasant enough town with a population of around half a million Bombayites. So just who was a Bombayite? That was the beauty of it; it could be just about anybody – Tehmina Batliwalla from Cusrow Baug, Balakrishnan from Matunga, Gidwani from Pasta Lane, Nanabhai Patel from Gamdevi, or Anthony Gonsalves from Bandra. At worst, they tolerated each other, but that was the exception. As a rule, there was an easy camaraderie amongst them. They made jokes about each other's ethnic peculiarities; enjoyed each other's specialty dishes; and shared a leisurely ride along Marine Drive on the top deck of a C route bus.

Yes, Bombay wasn't a bad place to live in. For one thing, it was reckoned to be the safest city in India. Young couples strode hand in hand, or billed and cooed on the Marine Drive sea wall in blissful oblivion

(moral policemen were unheard of then); and girls walked back to their Churchgate flats after a late dinner at Bombelli's. And Bombay was a wealthy city. The *dalals* shouted themselves hoarse in the old Stock Exchange. They were dressed in crisp white dhotis and white Gandhi caps – like caricatures from the Independence movement – but they had pots of money. Or so it was rumoured. You'd never realize it, since they did not believe in ostentatious living. In short, Bombay was as good as it could get in a developing country like India.

That is what I thought anyway. Apparently, I was wrong. It took a prescient and wise gentleman named Bal Thackeray to realize that Bombay was not realizing its full potential; and that it was its colonial name that was holding the city back. So he promptly decreed that Bombay would be banished to the history books; and the city would reclaim its rightful name, Mumbai. Furthermore, all signboards

on shops and other establishments would henceforth be in the language of Mumbai, Marathi. At first, the cosmopolitan citizens did not take him too seriously; but after his Shiv Sainiks defaced a few hundred signs – and broke a few dozen heads – they got the message.

So now I am living in Mumbai; and to be sure the change of name has also transformed the city. Mumbai now has 13 million inhabitants, half of whom live in filthy hovels. And that is not the only division. The city is now split between the Marathi *manoos* and the 'outsiders', most of whom seem to have descended from North India and are intent on despoiling the fair name of *aamchi* Mumbai. There may be a rape and a murder reported every single day, but at least Mumbai has been 'purified'. There is a whole legion of self-appointed moral guardians who ensure that sinful acts like couples kissing on the rocks at Bandstand are nipped in the bud; and the offenders brought to book. Also, the pride of Mumbai has been restored by renaming almost every important public building after the great warrior-king, Shivaji.

There are still problems, of course. The city gets

flooded, like clockwork, every monsoon; and potholes proliferate like rabbits. The streets are unsafe at night; and traveling by local train can cause severe bodily injury. The hapless public gets routinely fleeced by crooked taxi drivers, cops and so-called public servants. The list is quite exhaustive.

It has even begun to dawn on Mumbai's original saviours, the Shiv Sena, that perhaps conditions are not ideal in their Garden of Eden. Being extremely savvy, they have also determined the cause of the decline. There are still a few stubborn holdouts – like Bombay Dyeing and Bombay Scottish School – who have not got the message; and persist with the hated old name of Bombay. That is why the gods are angry and are plaguing the city with so many difficulties.

The solution is obvious, of course. The Sainiks will obliterate the name of Bombay from every nook and corner of their city. Then, it is only a matter of time before Mumbai is restored to its pristine glory. I can hardly wait.

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**“ DEMOCRACY IS THE ART
OF DISCIPLINING ONESELF,
SO THAT ONE NEED NOT BE
DISCIPLINED BY OTHERS “**

– Georges Clemenceau



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War Heroes of Andhra Pradesh

A Vanishing Tribe

Cecil Parker

However, in a triumph of bureaucracy over bravery, the orders were made prospective and not retrospective

Mohammed Ibrahim, Sheikh Kadar, Sudhir Sonpar, Rudolph Rosario, Eshwar Iyengar, Mohammed Zaki, Tatapothu Raja, Cecil Parker, Nagulapalli Rao, Prakash Sawhney, Andre Dacosta, Vikram Deuskar, Farokh Mehta, Shahid Naqvi, Iqbal Ali, Winston Rao, Gopalan Swamy, Jayaram Reddy, Kappilasai Raju, Koili Christopher, Kycharala Mahalakshmi, Jajula Sanyesi, Manohar Samuel, Padmapani Acharya.

What does this melange of 24 pan Indian names have in common? Each of the individuals named belongs to Andhra Pradesh; each has been decorated with one of the country's highest decorations in war, i.e. the Vir Chakra (VRC) or the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) and collectively the group comprise the war heroes of Andhra Pradesh listed in chronological order of receipt of the award from 1948 (Kashmir) to 1999 (Kargil). 36 years have elapsed since India's last officially declared war; it is therefore not too surprising that these gallant warriors fade from memory. *Vijay Diwas* on 16th December of each year commemorates our victory in the 1971 Indo Pak War - a conflict in which 15 out of 24 war heroes of Andhra Pradesh won their gallantry awards. It may therefore be appropriate to remember this dwindling tribe today.

This group of 24 awardees from Andhra Pradesh have won 22 VRCs (two posthumously) and two MVCs (one posthumously). These awards recognise individual acts of bravery in the face of the enemy in the Kashmir Operations of 1948 (two), Congo 1961 (one), Sino Indian Conflict 1962 (two), Indo Pak War 1965 (two), Indo Pak War 1971 (15), Sri Lanka 1988 (one) and Kargil 1999 (one) - seven different scenarios. The recipients comprise 17 officers and 7 PBORs (Persons Below Officer Rank) and come from all three arms of the defence services, i.e. 16 from the Army, one from the Navy and 7 from the Air Force.

Perhaps unique among all States, the Andhra Pradesh group of war heroes includes three doctors from the Army Medical Corps and represents four religious faiths. Geographically the individuals comes from West Godavari, Vishakapatnam, Secunderabad (three each), Warangal, Guntur, Anantapur, Chittoor, Kakinada (one each) and 10 from Hyderabad. The passage of time has reduced the number to eight known survivors; five reside in the twin cities and one each in Vishakapatnam, Bangalore and the USA.

Pursuant to the Centre's suggestions to standardise monetary awards to gallantry

recipients, the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 1995 issued orders recommending Cash Awards, Monetary Grants and Annuities for winners of gallantry decorations from the State. However, in a triumph of bureaucracy over bravery, the orders were made prospective and not retrospective thus immediately debarring all 23 (as they were in 1995) from receipt of monetary grants in lieu of land or annuities in Andhra Pradesh. Appeals to review this perfectly unfair ruling are met with official repetition that the same cannot be changed. Potential beneficiaries of these 1995 orders will have to await future wars. All other States have been far more generous with their war heroes.

Unperturbed by the discriminatory clause, which is no doubt legally right but morally wrong, the surviving war heroes of Andhra Pradesh (all grey haired pensioners in their '70s) continue to attend the Vijay Diwas memorial function on 16th December every year with undiminished pride in their profession and great satisfaction in having contributed to national security in bringing success to the country and pride to the State.

AIR VICE MARSHAL (Retd.) MR. CECIL PARKER can be contacted at (040) 27112957.

Don't Stop the Revolution!

Jamyang Norbu

The spontaneity of it all was remarkable. Yes, we had the common focus of the Beijing Olympics, but Tibetans everywhere, thousands of miles apart, seemed to be operating on a single wavelength.

There is a recurring nightmare, well known in clinical psychiatry, in which the sleeper belabours an enemy, but to absolutely no effect. The more furiously the enemy is beaten, or punched or kicked, the more infuriatingly untouched he remains. All these years living and working in Dharamshala I have felt myself struggling under a burden of unrelieved frustration and ineffectiveness, often even uselessness. I have no doubt other Tibetans in exile as well as inside Tibet have experienced much the same. But now it seems we are finally waking up from this long nightmare and beginning to realize that what we do has effect, does make a difference; that we can land a blow – a hard blow – against the Communist Chinese regime. And that although our common goal of Tibetan independence may not happen as soon as we would like it to, we can actually take concrete steps, make sacrifices if need be, to advance the time-table of its realization.

How can we adequately describe all that has happened (and is happening) in Tibet? The media has been calling them protests, outbursts, demonstrations, riots, even uprisings, which is perhaps adequate when describing one isolated event, but completely fails to encompass the significance of this year's 10th March mega-explosion. It is a revolution. Nothing less.

Consider how widespread the events were. In 1987-89, the protests occurred in Lhasa and some surrounding monasteries and villages. But this year they took place as far away east in Amdo and Kham, within the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Sichuan and Qinghai. The names of these flashpoints: Ngaba, Bora, Labrang, Mangra, Ditsa, Yulgan, Tsekhog, Tsoe, Palung, Chentsa, Rebong, Kyegudo, Dariang, Sershul, Machu, Chigdril, Chone, Luchu, Ngaba, Serthar, Palyul, Tehor, Drango, Barkham, Tridu, Kanze, Lithang, Nyakrong and many others, ring out in defiance. I will take the vision of the charging horsemen (and bikers) of Bora to my grave. In Central Tibet, we have had protests and clashes in Sakya, Shigatse, Samye, Toelung Dechen, Ratoe, Phenpo, Gaden, Medrogongkar, and unnamed areas in Western Tibet. Even in Beijing and Lanzhou, in a sea of hostile Chinese, Tibetan university students courageously organized protests and sit-ins. Tibetans everywhere came out and flew the old national flag, shouted their commitment to Rangzen (independence) and their devotion to their leader the Dalai Lama. Even after the Chinese crackdown and mass arrests, thirty Tibetan monks protested in the Jokhang before visiting foreign journalists on a showcase tour of the city. Some days later when foreign government officials were taken on a publicity tour of the city,

another major demonstration broke out in the Ramoche area of Lhasa.

Then there were the demonstrations, protests, marches and vigils by exile Tibetans and supporters in nearly every major city in the world. These have been unusually vigorous, even aggressive. A fairly common feature of these events has been the tearing down of the Chinese flag from the embassy or consulate flagpole and its replacement by the national Tibetan flag. I still cannot get over the video of the amazing Tibetan spider man who climbed up the walls of the Chinese embassy in Vienna with such speed and skill and pulled down the hated Red flag. And it's all still going on inside Tibet and elsewhere. A number of exile Tibetans in New York City have given up their day jobs and are living on their savings in order to keep the demonstrations and protests going. Last Sunday I was at a rally organized by the only Tibetan in Nashville, the capital of Tennessee. I drove down from the mountain with my family and friends. Other Tibetans had come – students, monks and lay people – driving many hours from neighbouring Georgia and Kentucky.

The spontaneity of it all was remarkable. Yes, we had the common focus of the Beijing Olympics, but Tibetans everywhere, thousands of miles apart, seemed to be operating on a single wavelength.

Some of our more admiring dharma friends would say that our native telepathic abilities were being brought into play. But Anne Applebaum, the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and scholar (*Gulag, A History*) in her March 18 article in the *Washington Post* provides a more prosaic explanation – cell phones.

For Applebaum the events in Tibet represent one manifestation of a wider reaction of “captive nations”, Uighurs, Mongols, Tibetans, rising up against the tyrannical rule of an old imperial and foreign power that has long oppressed smaller countries and societies surrounding it. Applebaum includes even such independent nations as North Korea and Burma in this category, hence, quite accurately, relegating Kim Jong Il and the Burmese military junta to the role of Beijing’s surrogate dictators. As if in confirmation of Applebaum’s broad theory, Reuters reported, just a few days ago, that major demonstrations had broken out in East Turkestan (Xinjiang).

On the events in Tibet Applebaum concludes that if Chinese leaders “... aren’t worried, they should be. After all, the past two centuries were filled with tales of strong, stable empires brought down by their subjects, undermined by their client states, overwhelmed by the national aspirations of small, subordinate countries. Why should the 21st century be any different? Watching a blurry cell phone video of tear gas rolling over the streets of Lhasa yesterday, I couldn’t help but wonder when – maybe not in this decade, this generation or even this century – Tibet and its monks will have their revenge.”

The Tibetans, clergy and

lay, are not a vengeful people, but they are not going to settle for anything less than an independent Tibet, and I have a feeling that this will probably happen sooner than Applebaum thinks. But Applebaum is correct in one thing, that this is much much bigger than most people are able to grasp. The Tibetan leadership does not seem to have grasped it at all.

At such a profoundly historic moment, the actions of the exile government in Dharamshala come across as incomprehensible and alarming. On March 17th, the Dalai Lama summoned the leaders of the five organizations that had united to create the Tibetan People’s Uprising Movement and organized the various demonstrations in India and throughout the world, and also organized the peace march to Tibet. The Dalai Lama ordered them to halt their march to Tibet. Not only were the organizers forced to stop their long-planned March to Tibet, but His Holiness’s command seems to have caused the unfortunate breakup of this dynamic alliance.

Then under the direction of the Prime Minister Samdhong Rimpoche, the exile cabinet and parliament created a special “Solidarity Committee” to take over the various independent campaigns and activities taking place around the world. It appears that members of the Committee approached the leaders and representative of these campaigns and organizations, and instructed them to terminate their independent activities and operate under the direction of the Committee. A kind of divide and conquer strategy appears to have been employed by the Committee. They approached and spoke separately to individual organizations. One representative of an activist group informed me that a Commit-

tee spokesperson told him that the situation in Tibet was so critical that it constituted a “national emergency”, hence the exile government had the right and the duty to take over all the activities of all the independent groups, which henceforth had to just do what the “Solidarity Committee” told them to do. It is ironic that Communist Chinese authorities are using similar tired and cynical arguments of “national security” to justify their brutal crack down of Tibetan protesters in Tibet. The Tibetan government should understand that it is violating the rights of individual Tibetans – especially the right to peaceful assembly and the right of peaceful protest – when it does this. It may not be enforcing its will brutally but it is using coercion and even emotional and (dare I say) “spiritual” blackmail by exploiting the people’s devotion to the Dalai Lama.

Prime Minister Samdhong Rimpoche also got in the “divide and conquer” business with a speech he gave on the 20th of March, or thereabouts. I heard an excerpt on Radio Free Asia on the 25th, Tuesday. He offered lavish praise on the efforts of the protesters in Tibet. But then strangely he began to criticize those protesters and activists in India and the West. He asked, somewhat sarcastically, whether these people thought that they could achieve beyond what the Dalai Lama had done? He directed his criticism particularly at the Tibetan Youth Congress. Although he didn’t name the organization, he specified an occasion a year ago when the Youth Congress organized a major demonstration in Delhi against the Chinese. It coincided with the time when the Dalai Lama was in Delhi. Rimpoche angrily demanded to know why the organizers chose the very day

when the Dalai Lama was in Delhi. Was it their intention to sabotage what the Dalai Lama was doing?

Circulars have been sent from Dharamshala to NGO's and support groups instructing them to stop using the term "FREE TIBET". Earlier, only the term independence or Rangzen was regarded as taboo, but now even such a broad and inoffensive term as "freedom" is seen as too provocative. Instructions have also apparently been issued to the Tibetan public not to tear, burn or step on the Chinese Communist Flag. A week ago, Tenzin Choeden, a member of the Solidarity Committee spoke before Chinese UN mission in New York where Tibetans have been keeping up a vigorous demonstration since March 10th. The Solidarity Committee representative gave a lengthy and roundabout speech where he called on Tibetans not to shout slogans demanding Independence for Tibet, and a boycott of the Beijing Olympics. Much to the annoyance of the crowd he also told protesters not to display a large banner they were carrying which read "China Out of Tibet".

On 31st March Tibetans from Washington DC, New York, Boston, Charlottesville and Philadelphia gathered at the American capital for a rally. Staff members of the International Campaign for Tibet, ICT, (most probably on instructions from the Solidarity Committee) tried to remove a large banner proclaiming "Independence For Tibet" which was hanging on the stage and other banners and placards and banners reading "Boycott Beijing Olympics" and "Boycott Genocide Olympics." An unfortunate dispute broke out between the

protesters and the ICT staff who maintained that since ICT chief, Lodi Gyari, would be speaking at the rally and it would be inconvenient for him to have such anti-Chinese banners around him.

The Tibetan leadership is playing with fire. If it actually manages to get all Tibetans completely dispirited and feeling hopeless, it might achieve its goal of "stopping the crisis", but that would be the end of the exile government. I don't see anyone listening to it anymore. On the other hand Tibetan activists and protesters might become outraged and beat up a Committee representative or even be provoked enough to demonstrate before the Office of Tibet in New York City or ICT in Washington DC. It would be tremendously embarrassing for the exile government and the Dalai Lama. Either way it would be a setback not only for the government but for the cause of Tibetan independence as well. It is vital that we have a government that is effective and one that we can respect. Right now it seems our leadership is incapable of being either.

I don't think the exile government is attempting some kind of power grab, as one observer suggested to me. It is more likely that Dharamshala wants to take charge of the movement to water it down. Limit it to candle-light vigils, circulating petitions, wearing black arm-bands and so on, actions which they hope Beijing would not consider provocative, and which would eventually tire and bore all the protesters and activists and get them to go home. That much seems evident. Dharamshala just wants to stop the whole thing. Check out the Solidarity Committee website:

StopTibetCrisis.net. I don't think anyone could put it more clearly. And that is what Beijing, in its own more brutal fashion, is attempting to do -- stop the Tibet crisis.

Dharamshala's hope, of course, is that if the crisis is stopped it could go back trying to negotiate with Beijing. In spite of all that has happened in Tibet our leaders completely fail to see that this will never happen. It is far too late for anyone, even Beijing, to stop this revolution. Samdhong Rimpoche and his Solidarity Committee can no more stop it than they can stop a tsunami by standing before it. To my leaders in the exile government (which will always be for me the true government of Tibet) I say this with due respect but also with genuine concern: Step out of the way.

COURTESY: *Phayul*

The "Clever" Marxists

Clever as they undoubtedly are, Marxist leaders must have reason for believing that after years of telling the UPA when to jump, they can ask everyone to believe they are untouched by incumbency. Just that it is very hard to fathom that reason. The ruling dispensation that is facing elections is the UPA-Left combine. They have had dinner together once a year the last four years, and the rest of the time the Congress has been anxiously looking for policy crumbs the Left has allowed; which is why the UPA has behaved more or less the way the Left wanted it to.

Editorial in *The Indian Express*, May 31, 2008.

On Freedom of Speech

- Two Views

Shyam Ashtekar
Dhruv Mankad

The attack on the house of Kumar Ketkar, the editor of the Marathi daily *Loksatta* deserves to be condemned. The Ketkar editorial had nothing derogatory against Chatrapati Shivaji but raised a point about the government's neglect of basic developmental issues and attending to populist issues such as statues. There cannot be two views over the fact that the attack on Ketkar's house was anti-freedom of speech and a violation of journalistic freedom that has kept our democracy going.

On the other hand, if the real issue is freedom, Ketkar has been supporting the Emergency, which was the biggest state-led assault on freedoms for 18 months. The country was converted into a prison by the police and political gangs of one party. Since the press was gagged, nobody knows how many assaults happened in the corners and streets of the country. Emergency is now regretted meekly even by the family. But Kumar Ketkar upholds the emergency and has penned articles in *Loksatta* supporting his position. His argument is that JP gave a call for disobedience by civil servants and the army and hence the emergency was justifiable. He goes on further to *pooh pooh* the politics of JP and Navnirman.

One who stands for freedom of the press should have definitely condemned the gag and censorship

of the press during the emergency.

Therefore KK's demand for protecting freedom of speech is selective and arbitrary. Journalists surely have a right to ideological stands, but being partisan and selective is not a shining example of a protector of press freedom.

The Emergency is not vastly different from Narendra Modi, Nandigram, Tibet or Tiananmen Square. Indian Democracy faces various threats from parties and people who have no basic commitment to freedoms - the fascist and left parties are no different in this respect.

Dhruv Mankad adds:

I agree with Shyam Ashtekar's condemnation of what happened to Kumar Ketkar.

But the justification of the Emergency by Kumar Ketkar - being inconsistent with freedom of speech - needs to be argued on the basis of evidence which his article does provide. Support for the Emergency requires adequate political evidence. In the United Kingdom at the beginning of World War II, emergency was declared but freedom of speech was not curbed to the extent as happened in India where newspapers were censored. So someone supporting the Emergency need not support freedom of speech - the contexts and rationales can be different. Personally, I do not agree that the Emergency

1975-77 was justified, nor that it was carried out with due regard to the democratic process.

Freedom of Speech also requires some ethical principles - not just legal. This freedom can be used to instigate, to miscommunicate, to misinform, to manipulate or to intimidate someone else - individuals or groups. There are legal interpretations. In USA the Civil Laws are strong and are used to punish this kind of misinterpretation or misuse of Freedom of Speech.

A teacher belonging to a political group instigated three white students to kill an African American student who was fighting for social justice for all. He could not be punished under the criminal laws but he and the group were so heavily fined that the political group had to close down. Freedom and its fallout have their implications.

In this connection the following principles involving Freedom of Speech issued by the National Communication Association ought to interest *Freedom First* readers:

Freedom of Speech

Recognising the essential place of free and responsible communication in a democratic society, and recognizing the distinction between the freedoms our legal system should respect and the responsibilities our education

system should cultivate, we members of the Speech Communication Association endorse the following statement of principles:

WE BELIEVE that freedom of speech and assembly must hold a central position among American constitutional principles, and we express our determined support for the right of peaceful expression by any communicative means available to humans.

WE SUPPORT the proposition that a free society can absorb with equanimity speech which exceeds the boundaries of generally accepted beliefs and mores; that much good and little harm can ensue if we err on the side of freedom, whereas much harm and little

good may follow if we err on the side of suppression.

WE CRITICIZE as misguided those who believe that the justice of their cause confers license to interfere physically and coercively with the speech of others, and we condemn intimidation, whether by powerful majorities or strident minorities, which attempts to restrict free expression.

WE ACCEPT the responsibility of cultivating by precept and example, in our classrooms and in our communities, enlightened uses of communication; of developing in our students a respect for precision and accuracy in communication, and for reasoning based upon evidence and a judi-

cious discrimination among values.

WE ENCOURAGE our students to accept the role of well informed and articulate citizens, to defend the communication rights of those with whom they may disagree, and to expose abuses of the communication process.

WE DEDICATE ourselves fully to these principles, confident in the belief that reason will ultimately prevail in a free marketplace of ideas.

DR. SHYAM ASHTEKAR and MR. DHRUV MANKAD are both educationists.

William F. Buckley, Jr. R.I.P.

Our revered founder, William F. Buckley Jr., died in his study this morning.

If ever an institution were the lengthened shadow of one man, this publication is his. So we hope it will not be thought immodest for us to say that Buckley has had more of an impact on the political life of this country – and a better one – than some of our presidents. He created modern conservatism as an intellectual and then a political movement. He kept it from drifting into the fever swamps. And he gave it a wit, style, and intelligence that earned the respect and friendship even of his adversaries. (To know Buckley was to be reminded that certain people have a talent for friendship.

He inspired and incited three generations of conservatives, and counting. He retained his intellectual and literary vitality to the end; even in his final years he was capable of the arresting formulation, the unpredictable insight. He presided over *NR* even in his “retirement”, which was more active than most people’s careers. It has been said that great men are rarely good men. Even more rarely are they sweet and merry, as Buckley was.

When Buckley started *National Review* – in 1955, at the age of 29 – it was not all obvious that anti-Communists, traditionalists, constitutionalists, and enthusiasts for free markets would all be able to take shelter under the same tent. Nor was it obvious that all of these groups, even gathered together, would be able to prevail over what seemed at the time to be an inexorable collectivist tide. When Buckley wrote that the magazine would “stand athwart history yelling, ‘Stop!’” his point was to challenge the idea that history pointed left. Mounting that challenge was the first step toward changing history’s direction. Which would come in due course.

Before he was a conservative, Buckley was devoted to his family and his Church. He is survived by his son Christopher and brothers Reid and James and sisters Priscilla, Carol and Patricia. Our sadness for them, and for us, at his passing is leavened by the hope that he is now with his beloved wife, Patricia, who died last year.

We feel honoured to publish this tribute to their founder by the Editors of *National Review* in the *National Review*, February 27, 2008. *Freedom First* founder Minoo Masani had high regard for Buckley and was an avid reader of the *National Review*.

From a 'Functioning Anarchy' to A Mature Democracy – Will India (Can India) Make the Transition

M. D. Kini

**Let us agree to disagree without being disagreeable. Let us be a mature democracy.
At least at sixty one has to be mature.**

The former US Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith had famously described Indian democracy as “functioning anarchy” long ago. This has been repeated recently by our Vice-President Hamid Ansari and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee, of course, in different words. The Vice-President lamented “the decreasing credibility of our legislatures as effective institutions capable of delivering public good” and the “damage to the institution of elected legislatures and to the functioning of Indian democracy”. The Lok Sabha Speaker was more forthright. He said, “You are working overtime to finish democracy” after he was not able to stop members of the parliament from shouting slogans.

Things have not improved after that event. The price-rise issue created agitation both inside the parliament and outside. Now the newspapers are full of another story of Union Minister T.R.Baalu's letters to the PMO to help his sons' companies with gas allocation and the opposition's agitation to get a statement from the Prime Minister. This again has disrupted parliament's functioning.

India has been a democracy for the last 60 years. In 1950 it adopted one of the finest constitutions based on the experience of some of the established democracies of the world conferring on all its citizens the fundamental rights of liberty, equality and fraternity.

While India had adult franchise in the first election itself in 1952. Women in UK and African-Americans in USA had to fight for their right of franchise. India conducts periodical elections, mostly free and fair, thanks to the vigilant Election Commission. Misuse of money power and muscle power has been reduced, if not eliminated altogether, over these years.

Bribing the electorate and concessions to selected sections with an eye on the election has made its appearance in recent decades. Free electricity to farmers has been one of the sops offered by many political parties. In the recent election in Tamil Nadu DMK promised to give a TV set for all poor families and got elected. However, it is not clear whether it is due to this promise or otherwise. Surprisingly, rather not surprisingly, Congress has made a similar promise to the Karnataka electorate which is going to elect a new government. With the increasing education and reducing poverty, it is to be hoped that these sops would not work in the future. (*Obviously this didn't work in Karnataka* – ed)

When we come to the functioning of our legislatures, there seems to be a big gap between the ideal and the real. The newspapers are full of statistics on the sittings of the legislatures, time spent on discussions on various bills and the time wasted on slogan shouting or going down to the wells of

the legislatures.

The number of Lok Sabha sittings have come down drastically by about one-third from 124 during the years 1952-61 to 81 between 1992 and 2001. The number of annual average bills passed have been reduced from 68 to 50 during the same period. It has been pointed out that the British and Canadian parliaments are in session for about 140 days while the US Congress works for over 150 days.

A report states that only five percent of the grants for various ministries are debated in the House while 95% of the demands for grants are passed without any discussion. The total demands for grants are in the region of Rs. 18,00,000 crore a year! All these grants are discussed in the standing committee of each ministry but it is no substitute for a proper discussion in the House itself.

The Lok Sabha Speaker made the above comments during the recent Budget session of the Parliament. According to newspaper reports the loan waiver for farmers became an open secret before it was announced by the finance minister. The opposition members indulged in what the reports described as ‘a game of one-up-manship to voice their demand lest the government walk away with the waiver credit’. One of the opposition members called it the manifesto of the ruling party for the

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coming general election.

Many times in the past the Lok Sabha and other legislatures have been disrupted by the opposition for not discussing issues which they sought to do with adjournment motions.

Democracy, by definition, is a rule by the majority and it also requires the acquiescence of the minority in the decision of the majority. Democracy respects view of every individual and every party however unpalatable they are to the ruling party. It has been well expressed by Voltaire in the these words, "I may disagree with what you have to say, but I shall defend, to the death, your right to say it." Tolerance, restraint and compromise are the necessary conditions for the success of democracy. However, our elected representatives have not acquired these qualities in sufficient measure. The shouting and the disturbance that we see in our legislatures hardly to be seen in UK or US legislatures.

There has been some efforts to make the functioning of the parliament smooth. The members of all the political parties had come together to evolve a code of conduct, sort of a '*Lakshman rekha*' which no member of the legislature should cross. This was during the Golden Jubilee Session of the Parliament in 1997 and the Ethics Committee. However, it has not been observed by the members.

There has to be a *Lakshman rekha* both for the ruling party as well as the opposition. The government has to allow the opposition to have its say and the opposition has to allow the government to have its way. While dissent is essential disruption is a distraction – it changes focus from the issue to the unruly behaviour and deval-

ues the dissent.

Supposing the opposition parties were allowed to speak on the waiver of agricultural loan before the presentation of the budget and were assured by the government that it would be given consideration in the budget, most probably the shouting match would not have taken place. Supposing the government of the day allows all adjournment motions and discusses the issues which the opposition raises, it should be possible for the legislature to take up the legislative business after dealing with the issues raised by the adjournment motions. While the opposition has the right to take up the grievances of the people and put forward its views and suggestions, the opposition has to let the government to govern.

The media has a great role to play in moderating the behaviour of our representatives in the legislature. Hitherto the media having been following the old definition of news – man biting dog is news. An updated definition should be: governance, both good and bad, should be news, grievances of the people should be news and new ideas should be news. Developmental activities by the government, NGOs, corporates should be news as well.

Our political parties have not yet realised the adverse impact their behaviour in the parliament has on the country at large – on students, trade unions and local bodies. The disruption that the people see on TV or read in the newspapers gives some sanction to such behaviour in public life. Indiscipline has become a hallmark of our public life. Not a day passes without some disruption of normal life in our towns and cities. There are processions – political, reli-

gious, even marriage – which prevent the normal flow of traffic. Then there are strikes and *bandhs* though the Supreme Court has banned *bandhs*. VIP traffic is another disruption. India's Political parties and parliamentarians have to introspect whether they are setting a good example to our society which they claim to lead.

Time has come for the leading lights of public life such as former presidents, former justices of the Supreme Court, political leaders, religious heads, top businessmen, legal luminaries, editors and professors to form a forum and to evolve a code of conduct for a civilized way of life and a cultured discourse. Our civilization had a code of conduct called *Dharma* – that which sustains life and society. *Dharma* is right conduct which is not imposed but which is evolved through consensus.

We have to evolve new methods of protest such as black badges, placards, silent marches which do not disrupt normal life of the citizen or the normal functioning of the parliament and other democratic institutions. Since political parties and trade unions resort to disruption of parliament or normal life to get attention, it is the duty of the media to give voice to the grievances raised by them when they use civilised way of protest. Disruption hurts us all. It disrupts our life and our progress. Let us agree to disagree without being disagreeable. Let us be a mature democracy. At least at sixty one has to be mature. Noise and chaos of infant democracy should be replaced by self-restraint of a mature democracy. Let us go from 'functioning anarchy' to functioning democracy.

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The State of Science and Technology in India

Arvind A.

At various points in time from Pandit Nehru to Dr. Manmohan Singh, we have heard how India is developing technologically and will become a technological powerhouse in short order. However, sixty plus years since Independence, technological India is merely a gossamer illusion. A mirage chased by a still primarily agrarian India mired in strife and hamstrung by economic chaos. Quite how much has science and technologically really advanced and why most scientific endeavours must progress at a glacial pace must be explored to understand why the scientists of this country do so well abroad but equally poorly domestically.

Perhaps the seeds are sown early, in school where learning by rote is encouraged in the quest for ever higher marks. Here, problem solving especially in the sciences is not encouraged, alternate problem solution techniques ignored or even suppressed. By the time school ends, imagination and even the inherent curiosity about nature is generally crushed. Something *IS* the way it is and its nobody's business to ask why seems to be the catch line. Scientific attitudes cannot grow in such an environment. Even worse is the prospect of science as a career. Employment prospective other than government research organisations is generally bleak and employment in college/universities is rewarding neither intellectually nor financially. Forever mired in races for personal glory, many of these establishments misuse the grants and freedoms conferred upon them, easily hiding behind the myriad technicalities if called upon to

account for their behaviour. Research projects move based on the political pressures exerted upon them from all directions in byzantine routes making or marring the careers of many involved. Even at these levels, free exchange of ideas is not generally the norm and each department instead of co-ordinating with others tries to further itself and hog the limelight. At the same time, since government research institutes and universities confer the enigmatic "permanent employment" status on their employees, many of whom have entered bettering stiff competition consider this to be an early start to a semi-retired life *with benefits*. Even worse is the publication culture in many universities and research organisations. Irrespective of scientific work, its accuracy or quality, scientists publish their 'findings' as a mark of their proficiency, outputs be damned.

The status of research scholars who get grants and fellowships to pursue research is even more tenuous. It is not unknown for them to be exploited by their research supervisors in more ways than one. Disturbingly, in a number of institutes, having a large contingent of research scholars is a status issue for the research advisors which also ensures that their CVs looks good ensuring rapid promotions. The capability to give time and guidance to the students is taken in is not of paramount importance. All the more demoralising for students embarking on research careers are a combination of meager remuneration coupled with general apathy towards science in general.

Finally, before closing, there might be many who would prob-

ably not agree with my views pointing to that shining symbol of Indian progress - the software industry. While only the most churlish would deny the progress made, it must be pointed out that in spite of all the progress, India does not even now have the capacity to produce semiconductor grade silicon wafers. We even now depend technologically for a number of such basic items upon imports. These imports are not only expensive but also make us dependent upon other powers that may then use the dependence as a bargaining tool. Another example that comes to mind is the much vaunted LCA (light combat aircraft) project, an aircraft that was supposed to be deployed in the late 1990s at the very latest. It is not yet in full fledged squadron deployment, hamstrung by development in its Kaveri engine and avionics suite with the DRDO not willing to accept the problems and concealing setbacks faced by the programme. Numerous other such cul-de-sacs can be quoted, but that would merely be arguing for the sake of it. It could even be argued that science and technology has been completely impotent in wiping out poverty and hunger among other things. In spite of India progressing economically, we still remain a primarily agrarian economy, becoming a technology driven economy is the next step, a step that will be too steep to climb if present attitudes persist towards science in general. After all, in the words of R. P. Feynman (a noted physicist), "Science clears the field on which technology can build".

MR. ARVIND A., can be contacted on arvindno1@sify.com

Rites, Rituals and Festivals (5)

Suman Oak

The foundation of the intellectual aspect of Indian Culture was laid down by our ancient sages. They strived to progress from ignorance to knowledge. What these sages discussed, debated and passed on to the later generations was beyond the understanding of the common people. The other aspect i.e., social conduct was taken care of by intelligent but shrewd and sharp men with very little consideration for the lofty philosophy of the sages. For a peaceful society they strengthened the social structure laid down by the Varnashrama system. For the moral rectitude of the masses they reinforced ritualistic devotion by writing the Brahmanas that gave concrete shape to rituals of worship and thereby assimilated almost all tribes and their deities into the eclectic Hindu religion. Most of us accept the role assigned to us and faithfully observe all traditionally inherited customs and rituals. We have got to overcome this weakness and inertia and start thinking afresh about our customs and ritual.

The intention, here, is not to condemn all rites, rituals and festivals outright but to look at their utility, propriety and necessity critically, and loosen their grip on the minds of our people. (For the full text of this introductory note to the series please see the January 2008 issue of FF (No.488) or email us at freedom@vsnl.com for the text. – Ed.

Vatasavitree

Vatasavitree is not a festival as such. It is an arduous but fairly well observed observance for Hindu women to secure their husbands' long life. This ritual is observed from the 13th day of the month of Jeshtha, that corresponds with the month of June, till full moon day. A married woman is supposed to fast. On full moon day a golden idol of Savitri or a sketch depicting Savitri, Satyavan and Yama is worshiped under a Banyan tree. Married women offer fruit, sweetmeats etc. to each other. The next day a married couple is to be offered lunch and has to listen to the mythological story of Savitri and Satyavan. The priest is rewarded with a golden idol of Savitri along with other gifts and money. Today Banyan trees are rare and the hectic routine does not permit women to locate a tree. So they buy a branch of it that is readily available in the market instead.

Savitri is the supreme ideal for Hindu women to follow. Obser-

vance of this ritual is a powerful device to strengthen male domination in society. Briefly the story runs as follows: A king named Ashvapati longed for a child (actually for many sons) for a long time. He undertook an 18-year penance worshiping the deity Savitri. Finally the deity presented herself before him and blessed him with a daughter. The disappointed king who had undertaken the penance to beget many sons and not a daughter was warned to be happy with whatever he got. In due course the king was blessed with a girl child. She grew to be a fine woman, healthy, brilliant and radiantly beautiful. She was so lustrous that young eligible men were scared to take her for a wife and it became difficult for the king to get her married. The king finally told her to find a suitable young man herself and sent her on that expedition accompanied by a very senior minister. She crisscrossed the country and in the end arrived in the forest dwelling of an old, blind king, Dyumnatsen, who had

been dethroned and exiled by rebels. Savitri chose Satyawan, the son of this king to be her husband. She returned to the palace and told her father about Satyawan. Ashvapati was warned by Narada that Satyawan was a suitable match for her in all other respects except for the fact that he was destined to die on the first anniversary of their marriage. Ashvapati hastily performed the marriage ceremony in the forest and returned home happily.

Savitri gave up her princess' attire and took to living as the wife of a hermit. Three days before the end of the year she fasted for three days and standing on her feet for three sleepless nights. On the third day she accompanied Satyawan to the forest. When Yama the Lord of Death himself came and plucked Satyawan's soul from his body and was about to return to his abode, Savitri followed and argued with him and would not return. Lord Yama had to grant her several boons including the revival of her

dead husband. Now let us analyse this story.

We saw that the king hastily married Savitri in the forest and immediately returned home happy despite knowing that his daughter, brought up in the luxury of the palace was now going to lead an arduous life of a hermit in the forest and was destined to be widowed in just one year! No only was he not worried but was happy to get rid of an unwanted girl child. It was not any different in those days. This also seems to have been the purpose of the writer of this mythical tale when painting Savitri as an ideal wife, utterly devoted to her husband. He also stressed the point that if a daughter is born one has to accept her but one should not ask for a daughter but for a number of sons.

Later Ashvapati begets thousand sons, only because Yama granted Savitri that boon. While asking for this Savitri refers to her father as childless despite the fact that she herself was her father's child. She was not a brave woman like the Rani of Jhansi or Ahilyabai Holkar, both of whom fought to protect their own kingdoms, but a meek woman who religiously attended on her in-laws; who wasted her health in fasting and other observances; who by her sheer tenacity and steadfastness brought her husband back to life and above all who bore a hundred sons (no daughters) to him so that they would bring glory to her husband's family.

In the story Savitri no prince dared ask for her hand but Satyavan who was a wood cutter and satisfied his passion for horses by making mud horses, readily married her. How ridiculous! In fact Savitri's real fault was that she

did not have any brother. No one wanted to marry a brother-less girl because the first son born to her had to be given away to her so called childless father. At the same time a woman remaining unmarried for some reason or other had to do lowly jobs for her sustenance, even prostitution at times. In addition an unmarried woman had a bleak future after death. So when she died some young male relative of her had to marry her dead body before cremation.

Satyavan was just a wood cutter living in the forest. He had no ambition to regain his lost kingdom. He was also expected to die in an year's time. Why was Ashvapati not prepared to wait till his daughter could get a better match? He was worried more about his dignity and prestige than his daughter's happiness. So was a father's outlook towards their daughters then, and so it is even today.. As a responsible father Ashvapati could have done many things for his daughter, such as, helping Dyumatsen to regain his lost kingdom, giving protection to Satyavan, declaring him or at least his son as his successor, etc. He could have celebrated the marriage befitting a princess. But he chose not to do any of these things. He was wanted to some how get rid of his unwanted daughter.

This story is the dream of every Hindu woman - an ideal chaste and dutiful womanhood (*Pativrata*), total sacrifice and negation of one's identity, ability to revive the husband on the strength of arduous observances, love of in-laws etc. The lesson is 'Savitri is the ideal to be followed by all women.

If this character is to be taken as a historical one, all the incidents

-Yama taking away her husband's life, gaining all the boons and reviving of Satyavan could be the hallucination of a tired, sleepless and famished woman constantly worried about the impending death of her husband; just as St. Teresa saw Christ, the Varakarees see their deity Vithal, some devotees see Saibaba and a murderer sees the ghost of his victim. Such experiences seem to be very real and are rooted in the cultural milieu and the individuals thoughts and aspirations. Women identify with Savitri's character: being an unwanted offspring, causing concern to the father, marrying a man as fate decides, a deprived life, fear of becoming a widow, obliterating identity, loss of parental support and all that happens to an ordinary woman's lot. They see a ray of hope in Savitri's character. The arduous observances, they think, promise happiness in future lives. It gives them strength to survive in the suffocating present life. The cause-effect relation between observances and fulfilment of dreams is engraved in their minds.

Savitri does not show the way for our marginalized and neglected womanhood to escape from the traditional drudgery imposed on women but emphasises the fact that their safety, security and ultimate happiness lies in accepting their fate ungrudgingly. Savitri is certainly not an ideal of womanhood that aspires for human dignity and freedom and is ready to fight for it.

MS. SUMAN OAK, retired Lecturer on Education, SNDT University, is associated with Streehitakarini, Centre for the Study of Social Change and the Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti. She is a freelance writer.

From Our Readers

Vijay Diwas

I was much impressed with Eustace D'Souza's very balanced and objective piece on the Sixth Pay Commission's Recommendations insofar as the armed forces are concerned. In fact, I have just sent my copy of the issue to his NDC batchmate Air Chief Marshal Idris Latif as a little birthday memento. I wonder how many babus there are in *Freedom First's* readership; not too many I fear. Indeed a 'liberal babu' sounds like an oxymoron to me!

To commemorate *Vijay Diwas* on 16th December 2007, I had sent an article to the *Deccan Chronicle* (please see page ____). The piece highlights the moral myopia of the babudom of Andhra Pradesh. The article was not published nor even acknowledged despite enclosure of a stamped self-addressed envelope. I sometimes wonder if the print media has confused the liberal position with its missionary counterpart.

Please do feel free to use this article by AP's sole living winner of the MVC - written in the prime of his senility.

AVC (Retd.) C. V. Parker, Secunderabad

Ex Gratia Payment To Members Of The Armed Forces Who Die In Action

[Page 351 of the 6th Pay Commission Report]

Can You Identify the Difference ?

In WAR	15 lacs
In <i>international WAR</i>	20 lacs
In WAR like action	20 lacs

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

Grand Parents or Glorified Servants - Elders' Views Invited

With the nuclear family becoming the order of the day amongst the middle and higher income group and life expectancy increasing, elders often find that they have to reposition themselves, particularly in the relationship with their sons, daughters and grandchildren.

With both husband and wife increasingly taking up jobs, both for economic reasons and to realize their potential, many young couple expect their parents to take care of their children at least up to fifth year of age.

The aged parents often find this job of looking after grand children to be taxing and tiresome, but the elders can say no to this only at the cost of being misunderstood of lacking in affection for their grandchildren.

Several young couple living abroad particularly in USA and Europe and in big cities in India may even think that grand parents taking care of the grand children is not only necessary to ensure healthy bringing up of the children but also is a matter of economic necessity, as the working couple often cannot afford payment to the maid servants specifically trained for the job.

The elderly grand parents with frail health and dependency syndrome often wonder as to whether they have become glorified servants in their own households, when forced to look after the grand children as the young couple go away for work.

Nandini Voice for the Deprived, a Chennai based NGO is now conducting a study to ascertain the views of the elders about this expectation of sons and daughters and the problems and difficulties that the elders face in meeting such demand.

Nandini Voice for the Deprived invites the elders (age about 60), to send their views on the subject.

The views are sought on all India basis and Nandini Voice for the Deprived would evolve appropriate recommendations based on the views and suggestions of the elders.

A meeting of elders would be convened in Chennai by end July 2008 when the findings of the study would be presented.

Mr.N.S.Venkataraman,

Trustee

Nandini Voice For The Deprived,

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Basant Nagar,

Chennai 600 090

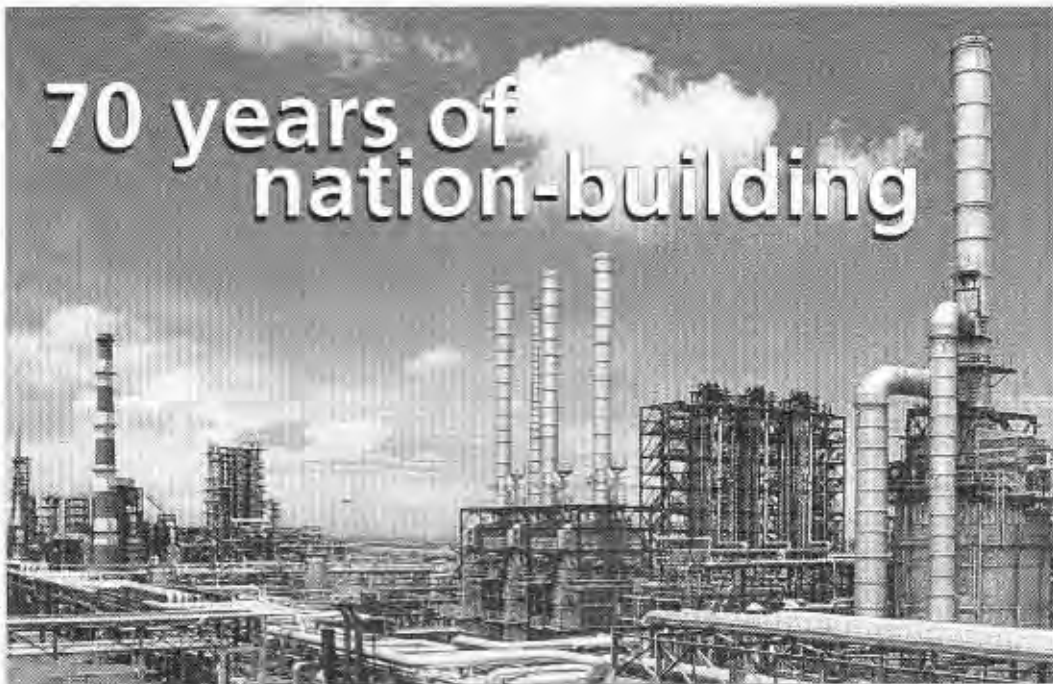
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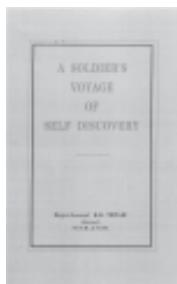
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Book Reviews



A SOLDIER'S VOYAGE OF SELF DISCOVERY by Major General K. K. Tewari [Retired] PVSM, AVSM ● Published by author, Auroville, Pondicherry ● Year of Publication ● No. of pages 197 ● Price Rs.150.

Reviewed by Brigadier (Retd.) S. C. Sharma, an advisor to the telecom industry and a freelance journalist. Email: brigsc@bom9.vsnl.net.ind

The author had a distinguished career in the Indian Army and saw service in World War-II, the Indo- China War 1962 and Indo-Pakistan War 1971. I had the pleasure of knowing him. I had attended a course in the Military College of Telecommunications, Mhow when he was the Deputy Commandant and Chief Instructor there. In 1971, he was the Chief Signal Officer in HQ Eastern Command while I was commanding officer of a Divisional Signal Regiment. He had a vision for future and a sense of total commitment to the task.

He was commissioned into SIGNALS and joined the 25 Infantry Signal Regiment in November 1942. After training and battle inoculation, the Division moved from Salem to Maungdaw in Burma. His first experience of close quarter battle was the capture of Hill 551 by the Gorkhas and Marathas. It changed hands twice. He narrowly escaped a booby trap. The climate took its toll. Malaria, leeches and skin infection were rampant. The de-worming medicine had a generous content of alcohol and after a de-worming dose, he told the Brigade Major to put his hands up. Instructions were issued not to give him that medicine again.

The Division was then moved to Pollachi in South India for rest and refit. The entire division was sent on leave before

preparations for the Malaya campaign. Some officers were called for interviews for permanent commission. The author got a permanent commission. The unit sailed for Malaya from Madras at 1230 hours on 3 September 1945. Surrender by Japan was announced while they were at sea. The surrender took place on 13 September and quite a few officers cried while laying down their arms and Samurai swords. A military defeat is a sad and humiliating experience for the Armed Forces and the public. It may be recalled that Generals Yamashita and Tojo while touring Europe immediately after World War I commented that they must ensure not to face defeat if they ever went to war. The two generals were in key positions when Japan was defeated.

The political leadership must ensure a reasonable chance of victory before going to war. The troops were given a rousing reception by the local population. Gen Tewari was driving the jeep and the brigade commander collected all the kisses. He earned a mention-in dispatch twice for outstanding work. The Division returned to Ranchi and was disbanded. As a rejoinder to the Japanese dishonourable treatment of the Allied prisoners, an Australian commander issued the following order:

"We refuse to treat you as honourable foe. Hereafter, all your ranks will salute all our ranks and we shall show our contempt by not returning a soldier's salute."

We knew Tewari to be a strict disciplinarian, not sparing himself either. I am happy to note that as a young captain, he took pride in racing his motorcycle at 100 miles an hour to impress a lady and got away with it in spite of having been checked by the military police. After the usual round of postings, he took over command of 4 Infantry Signal Regiment at Tezpur in 1960. The Division had been engaged in Operation Amar to build accommodation at Ambala. It was moved to Tezpur to meet the threat from China. Instead of getting down to training, they were given the task of building bashes for themselves. The unit was short of equipment. On learning from some tea planters that the Army had disposed of considerable equipment to the local traders after World War 2, he bought some walkie-talkies from them. They augmented the scarce resources of the unit. Out of frustration, one unit commander sent a return on a chapati, since it was the only item they had. The batteries were received without the electrolyte and the IAF declined to airlift it. The much needed electrolyte was sent in rum bottles to hide it from the IAF.

In early 1962, Operation Onkar was launched to move the Assam Rifles posts forward. General Thorat who was the Army Commander, HQ Eastern Command was against such a move. The aim was said to be to show the flag. In September 1962, the Chinese had surrounded the Namka Chu post at Dhola Ridge. Besides

shortage of equipment, there was lack of coordination. The Assam Rifles were operating under the Ministry of External Affairs. Even today, they are under the Ministry of Home Affairs and not under the Army. General Kaul took over the command of a newly created corps in early October. He maintained a high profile but by now he had lost the confidence of Nehru and Krishna Menon as is clear from his conversation with General Prasad. A few months earlier, he requested Mr Kaul ICS, nephew of Nehru, to convey to the Prime Minister the possibility of AA attack by China. Nehru dismissed the warning with a comment "Let him come and talk to me."

Tewari got down to the task of establishing the communications, a difficult task in the terrain, wide dispersion and shortage of equipment. He visited Brig Dalvi on 19 October. Dalvi was pleading with the GOC to allow him to withdraw from Namka Chu to a more tactically sound position. Tewari, too, expressed the same opinion. Malik in his book has distorted the conversation to imply that Dalvi wanted to withdraw without fighting the Chinese. The decisions were being taken by people with little understanding of elements of national security or military planning. The result was a military defeat and humiliation.

He went to spend the night of 19 October with 1/9 GR. The Chinese attacked that night and he was taken prisoner. A total of 52 officers and 3319 soldiers including Brig. Dalvi, Col Tewari and three battalion commanders were moved to a camp in Chen Yi. He records the Chinese kicking wounded soldiers and denying water to a wounded Gorkha soldier. General Kaul had sanctioned one MVC per battalion and the awards were made not to those who deserved it. General Prasad

has also noted in his book, Tawang, that the old age custom of confirmation of the deed by eye witnesses was not observed.

The prisoners were issued Mao's Blue Book. The Chinese attempts to brainwash the Indian soldiers failed. They accused the Indian Army of being the first to attack. Our soldiers pointed out that they were sleeping at night when the Chinese attacked. How could the Indians have attacked first? They jeered about our old equipment and poor uniform and went on to denounce Nehru for an agreement with USA for supply of arms and weapons. The rejoinder by our jawans was that they would fight the next war with automatic weapons. The Chinese had interpreters for all the Indian languages.

The first batch of letters was received in the third week of February. Tewari had mentioned in his letter that he was being treated well. That was to ensure that his letter was not withheld by the Chinese. The Intelligence authority in India suspected that he had been brainwashed and delivered a copy of the letter to the family, keeping the original for investigation.

On 26 March the prisoners were told they would be going back to India. They were taken for a tour of China. They saw 3 Chinese for 1 Tibetan in Lhasa. The family of one of the guards was in Shanghai. He did not get any leave to see them and was rushed off to Tibet the next day. Another interpreter on being asked about his family broke down. His father was a professor and liquidated during the Cultural Revolution. He did not know about their whereabouts. The two incidents show the ruthlessness of the Chinese Government.

They left Beijing on 3 May

and were received coldly by an Air Vice Marshal and a Brigadier. They were not allowed to meet friends and relatives who had come to the airport. The families of some of the personnel reported missing came in the hope of getting some news and were kept away. The prisoners were taken to Ranchi by train. No bedding was provided. The shabby treatment given to the prisoners was a matter of shame. They were admitted into the Military Hospital for treatment, the real reason being investigation for any brainwashing. I had met the Commanding Officer of the Hospital later and he expressed his anger for having been used like that. He had no answer when a soldier bluntly asked him whether he was under arrest. Compare it with the reception of the POWs by the US Army. The General shook hands with every soldier and military bands played. The division commander even got a chance to talk to Marylyn Monroe for half an hour. There is no parallel of such inhuman treatment in any democratic country. The Chinese had failed to make any impression on our jawans due to their indifference to wounded soldiers, attempt to divide the officers and men, insulting the officers in front of the soldiers, their false claims and the discipline of our Army.

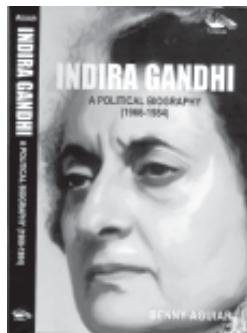
After three days of debriefing, they were allowed to go home. The author cautions us not to be taken in by the Chinese pretence of friendship and peace. The Chinese Government is ruthless and will never give up pursuance of their objectives. He laments the absence of a war memorial and an objective analysis of the reasons for the debacle. Not many will agree with him that such a study will not diminish the image of Nehru. The more important point is that truth must prevail even if it points the finger at our favorites. National

interests are more important than individuals.

Later he came under the influence of the teachings of Sri

Aurbindo. He believes that our victory in 1971 was due to divine intervention and after retirement lives in Auroville with his family.

The book is highly recommended for students of military history and general public as well.



Father Benny Aguiar edited *The Examiner* a 154-year old Catholic weekly published from Mumbai. He was Indian correspondent for the international Catholic weekly, *The Tablet* of London for over thirty years. He has written a book on Indira Gandhi.

Though titled "Indira Gandhi – A Political Biography" restricted to an 18-year period of her public life of Indira Gandhi, the author admits in the preface that it is more in the nature of a "chronicle of the years between 1966 and 1984" when she was prime minister, "barring the period 1977-79" when she was out of office and, which many thought, including this reviewer, was the end of the Nehru dynasty. The book is based on Fr. Aguiar's editorials in *The Examiner*. Be that as it may the author has eminently succeeded in his effort to "piece together these momentous events" during her reign as prime minister "into an integral narrative so that it reads like a biography." Indeed it does.

The narrative is made up of 42 chapters. The titles of these chapters themselves tell the story beginning with the secular and socialist credentials of the Nehru family, the advantage of being the

daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, her gradual grooming over the years as her father's hostess (Jawaharlal Nehru was a widower) and her choice as Prime Minister after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri who had succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister in 1965.

Considering the fact that the various chapters are based on articles written closer to the time when the events happened, some of his comments acquire relevance as reflecting the then 'popular view', while this reviewer has the advantage of viewing events from the hindsight of history. With this advantage one could question the welcome statement by Fr. Aguiar in his article or editorial written in 1966: "Indira's victory over Morarji Desai in a straight contest for the leadership of the country represented the victory of the progressive and forward looking bloc in the nationalist movement over the rigid and conservative section of the Congress Party..."

"The need of the hour was to lead the country out of the slough of despond where it had settled after Shastri's death, and on the road to agricultural and general prosperity... In carrying out that task Indira as her asset had her father's and her own tremendous appeal to the masses. In between father and daughter, Jawaharlal and Indira, straddled the first 50 years of India's Independence which influenced the course of his-

tory as none other had done." This comment however reflected the continuing adulation of the Nehru family by the electorate at large.

Having inherited a "great tradition" the author takes us through the initial days of her prime ministership with its triumphs and travails, Among the first of the problems was the 'devaluation' of the Indian rupee whereby she "pegged down the value of the rupee in terms of the foreign currency by 36.5%". The prevailing wisdom among ruling circles then and particularly what is now broadly described as the "Left" was that devaluation was anti-poor. The author correctly describes this as "a bold attempt to look at the economy of the country squarely in the face, an act of courage and hard-headed realism. In the black market the rupee had already been unofficially devalued". Indeed it was and the Swatantra Party then with 22 members in the Lok Sabha was the only party in the opposition that responded to Mrs. Indira Gandhi's invitation to discuss the issue before it was debated on the floor of the House. Minoo Masani as deputy leader of the party offered the party's support provided that devaluation was followed up by corrective action involving changes in economic policy, particularly not going ahead with the Fourth Five Year Plan. Unfortunately this did not happen and devaluation turned out to a fruitless exercise.

INDIRA GANDHI A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY (1966-1988) BY BENNY AGUIAR ● Vistasta Publishing Pvt. Ltd. 2/15, 1st floor, New Delhi ● Year of Publication 2007 ● No. of pages 220 ● Price Rs.425

Reviewed by S. V. Raju, editor, *Freedom First*.

The author, in an excellent chapter entitled 'Polarisation' draws a brief but accurate pen picture of the country's politics, the split in the communist parties "reflecting the split in international communism", the emergence of the DMK in Tamil Nadu signalling the emergence of regional parties and groupings on the one hand and the determined manner in which she went about decimating the state leadership of her own party on the other; the rise of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and, at the same time, the emergence of the Swatantra Party as a national party with the largest number of seats in the opposition in the Lok Sabha. He observes "One fact, however stood out from the elections that India was a democracy and would remain one, in spite of troubles."

Again from hindsight event started moving swiftly thereafter Mrs. Gandhi was entirely dissatisfied with the results of the elections to the 4th Lok Sabha; the moves she made to take control of the Congress Party even if it meant splitting the Party that led India to freedom from British rule; the war

with Pakistan resulting in the break-up of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh. Riding on this victory, she had the Look Sabha dissolved 14 months before its term was to end. Her sweeping the 1971 elections to the 5th Lok Sabha returning to power with an overwhelming majority; and in between her manoeuvrings in the election of the president of India.

A spanner in her works was thrown when the Allahabad High Court set aside her election to the Lok Sabha in 1971 on corruption charges. Meanwhile with poor governance both at the centre and the states and an economy heading towards bankruptcy led to a lot of unrest culminating in the JP movement which threatened Mrs. Gandhi's political survival. This in turn led to the Emergency of 1975-77, the comprehensive defeat of her party with herself losing her seat in parliament; the emergence of the Janata Party and its fall; the return of Indira Gandhi to power in the elections of 1980 ending with her assassination four years later. All

these are narrated with lucidity with each chapter neatly linked to make for cogent reading.

This book is not meant for scholars or meant to be research material. Fr. Benny Aguiar has simply told the story of Mrs. Indira Gandhi during the crucial years between 1966 when she became prime minister and her death at the hands of her own Sikh Guards in 1984.

It is ideal reading for those born after the events described in the book. The persona of Mrs. Indira Gandhi is treated gently even where she deserved more emphatic criticism. The criticism is dispassionate, the praise is generous. On the whole it's a fair assessment of an undoubtedly strong willed person who was convinced that she knew more than anyone else what was good for the country.

Excellent production values, pages printed for easy reading, the book priced at Rs.425/- is well worth the expense.

Freedom First

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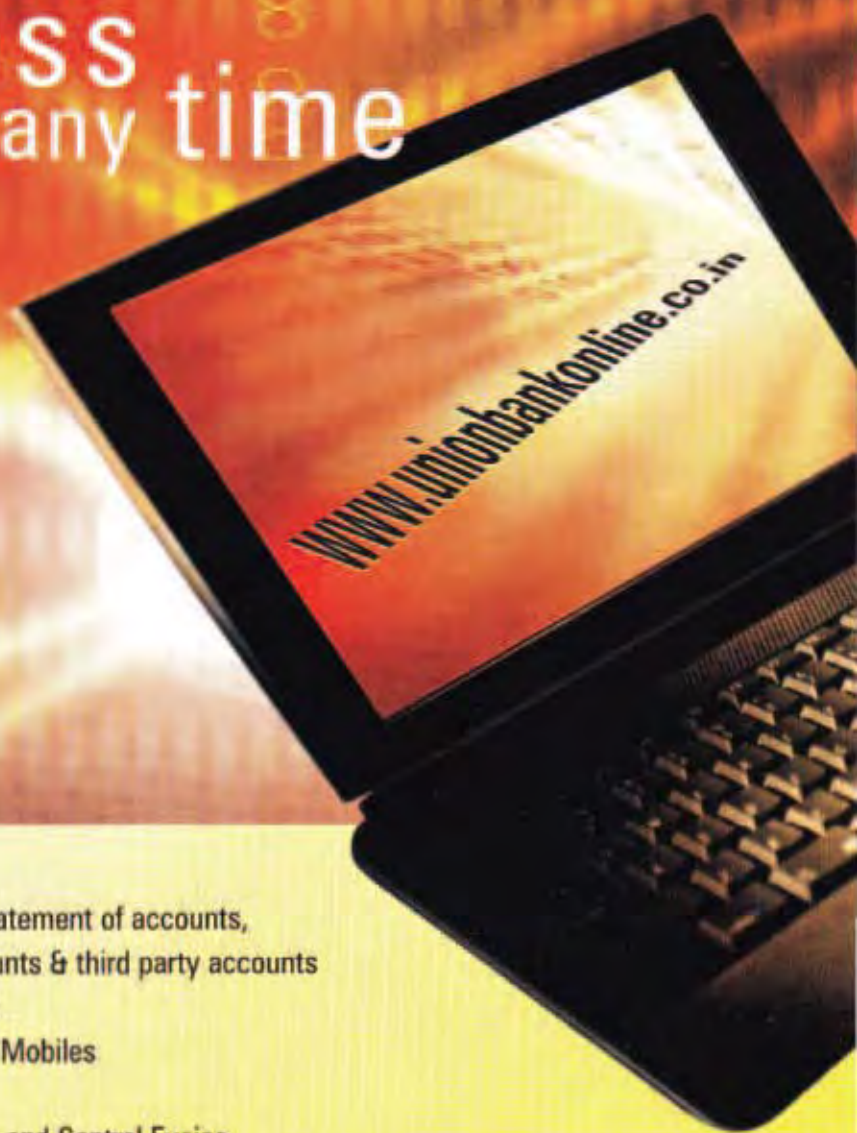
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