

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

Bhopal Gas Tragedy

THE GREAT INDIAN FARCE

Also

A Disaster That Was Waiting To Happen

On Israel and the Gaza Blockade

Israel: The Friend You Love to Hate

The Gaza Blockade: Myth and Reality



(26th August 1908 -29th May 2010)

G. P. Pradhan

The Gentle Gandhian

Aroon Tikekar

Generally a politician's career comes to an end with his defeat in an election. Till such time regardless of his age and health, the lure of political power makes him continue to "serve the country". Professor G. P. Pradhan who withdrew on his own accord from active politics as early as in 1985 belonged to a rare breed of leaders and himself shut the doors of public life one after another to lead the life of an ascetic. Yet he continued to inspire hundreds of young minds in Pune and roundabout till the very end with his passing away on May 29. He was every inch a professor and loved his vocation till the end. Whether in the profession of teaching or in politics or as a public speaker or a social critic, he loved to teach. He was an extremely popular professor of English of his generation. He was gifted with an analytical mind and oratorical skills. Little wonder then that his lectures used to be attended even by students from colleges other than his own, the Fergusson College. His command over his subject was supplemented by utter simplicity of his character. He unfolded majestically the plots and characters from the novels or plays he was teaching but that was not all. His lectures used to convey valuable lessons of life for students. As a public speaker he made complex issues easy to understand and thus influenced at least four generations of Maharashtra.

As an author writing in Marathi as well as in English, he interpreted the lives and actions of some of the most powerful leaders and socio-political thinkers of all times such as Lokmanya Tilak, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Mahatma Gandhi, by his perceptive insight into their personalities. The shy and coy Pradhan showed that he could be very strong when the society's freedom was threatened. He, like his colleagues, showed no remorse when imprisoned for protesting against attempts to limit

the freedom of expression. Pradhan earned greater respect from inmates during his two imprisonments, first in the 1942 movement before independence and the second during the Internal Emergency between 1975 and 1977, for his simple living, unassuming – almost self-deprecating - nature and an innocent, ever smiling face. He, no doubt, carried his scholarship lightly. Whether it was his widely read autobiographical novel or a piece of literary criticism, Pradhan was adept at analyzing characters and, more importantly, could delve into the realm of ideas with simplistic grace. A case in point is his Open (and unsent) Letters to Leo Tolstoy, his favourite author.

What was most likeable in him was his faith in the younger generation and an ability to appreciate the goodness even of his political opponents, competitors and detractors. He was a perfect liberal and trusted even his enemy. He could almost anticipate what was going on in the mind of the opponent and consider his views sympathetically, an extremely rare quality for a leader. His disarming smile and amiable nature endeared himself to such an extent that he had no enemies and no detractors. He never entered into competition with any one, but carved out a special place for himself in the minds of companions and followers.

During the last few years, perhaps he was aware that he was the survivor of a generation of political leaders steeped in liberal tradition that held high ethical values imbibed at the feet of Mahatma Gandhi. He had grown up with some of the most astute and clean leaders from the Socialist Party such as Raosaheb and Achyutrao Patwardhan, Nath Pai, N. G. Gore and S. M. Joshi for all of whom, even in politics, means are as important as ends. Like a true and ardent advocate of humane, democratic and secular nationalism, Pradhan never lost faith in the younger generation. He was an incurable optimist. Never was he seen complaining about the radical shift in values of the ruling elites in recent times where ideologies have been pushed to the backseat. Pradhan was a humanist in the non-theistic sense of the term. It was not in the temperament of the man to be a heretic. His liberalism

(Cont'd. on page 12)

Freedom First

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Between Ourselves...

"Farce" according to the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary means "ridiculous empty show" or "mockery". And farce indeed it is. Both meanings apply to the present leaders of the ruling 'United Progressive Alliance' whether it be the Law Minister or a worried Queen Bee. Even here the empty show is not out of concern for the thousands killed or maimed by methyl isocyanate (MIC) but the manner in which the judgment has triggered a "blame game" tainting the "royal family" and its courtiers with allegations of gross negligence and dereliction of duty. This is the gravamen of the word "Farce" used by Keshav Rao in his lead article. Had they been really concerned for the thousands of dead and the hundreds of thousands maimed, soon after the disaster, the present leaders of the coalition who were in power then (with a huge majority in Parliament more than that enjoyed by the then Prime Minister's grandfather and his mother) they ought to have shifted their government to Bhopal made the country's resources available to treat the injured and bring back normalcy including cleaning up the contaminated site which they are 'contemplating' now – after the judgment. Whether even this will really happen or will simply remain on a wish list to quietly to disappear in due course, time alone will tell.

Israel is a democratic state not a "rogue state" and certainly not comparable to the most notorious "rogue state" of them all, North Korea, nurtured by another 'former' rogue state – the "People's" Republic of China. It is now a rich State and, to quote Oscar Wilde: "Nothing succeeds like excess." Here is another farce. Communist China can easily spank its ward and force it to behave but that it will not do because of the 'leverage' that North Korea provides China if in the future things go wrong.

So far as India is concerned petrol and vote banks have prevented our current political ruling elites from calling a spade a spade. We take a look – Firoze Hirjikaka with his deadly humour and Nitin Raut with cool reason at the circumstances that led to the blockade.

Now we go back to our favourite woe: Funding *Freedom First*. Please turn to the inside back cover. We have in a 'picturesque' setting reasoned why we feel *Freedom First* should carry on and why it continues to have a meaningful role to play. Judging by the generous response from some readers we would like to believe it is a vote for this journal's continuance. It costs around Rs.25,000 to publish one issue of 36 pages. You could help us by donating any amount or sponsoring an issue or even several issues. Of course you could also advertise in the magazine (or persuade an enterprise you are connected with to do so). We can send you the tariff card. Email us at: jurasv@gmail.com (preferred) or freedom@vsnl.com.

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Founder: Minoo Masani • **Editor:** S. V. Raju • **Associate Editor:** R. Srinivasan • **Advisory Board:** Sharad Bailur, A. V. Gopalakrishnan, Firoze Hirjikaka, Ashok Karnik, Farrokh Mehta, Jehangir Patel, Nitin Raut, Brig. (Retd.) S. C. Sharma, Kunwar Sinha, Sameer Wagle

• **Cover Design:** Vivek Raju

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From Our Readers

On *Freedom First*

I enclose a cheque for Rs.10,000 as a small token of appreciation for the work you are doing with *Freedom First*.

Ramachandra Guha, Bangalore

*

I was reading the May issue of *Freedom First* and it brought to mind your consistent commitment in keeping the flag flying as it were of what Minoo Masani and others started so many years ago

Instead of just the appreciation with a few words, I am enclosing a cheque for Rs.10,000 for your paper. It is perhaps a small amount but it convey us to you and your team my kudos.

Kekoo Gandhi, Mumbai

*

Enclosed is a cheque (for Rs.10,000) a small donation from me towards the good work you folks are doing and to further the cause of liberal thought and discussion in the country.

Kavi Avari, Mumbai

*

Bhopal Gas Tragedy

Warren Anderson and his accomplices converted Bhopal into Hitler's gas chamber, killing thousands, and maiming lakhs. A large number of Bhopalis continue to exist, as the living dead. Their progeny will live a miserable life too. The credit for creating this hell on earth goes to our own governments, our own ministers, elected representatives, bureaucrats, and the courts too. And, did not our own Mr. Abhishek Singhvi, the Congress spokesperson and MP, also defend the accused? Indians let down and failed by their own fellow Indians!

Warren Anderson was virtually escorted out of India. The others responsible for the biggest industrial disaster are awarded the lightest punishment, which may be further watered down by the higher courts.

Ultimately, who will provide succour to the victims? Almost no one?! Are we not a banana republic?

V. V. Vijayan, Mumbai. thestray@rediffmail.com

*

Anderson is not the only culprit. Is the exaggerated publicity on him designed to save the authorities who watered down the claim for damages? Has there been a failure of the government inspectors to ensure safety regulations?

**Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (Retd.),
Navi Mumbai. brigscs@gmail.com**

*

Indian Students in Australia: What's Brewing?

This refers to the response of Mr. Ashok Karnik, Mr. R. N. Vepari and Brig. S. C. Sharma to my article on the subject (*Freedom First*, February 2010).

Please do not misconstrue what I have written. I fully agree with the cautionary statement that precedes Mr. Ashok Karnik's column 'Point Counter Point.' "Every issue has at least two sides; A wise man examines all sides before coming to a conclusion..." After reading Mr. Vepari's riposte: "Whether one likes it or not, no other reasons, except the racist mindset of some sections of Australians is behind this" I was provoked to share with him and readers of *Freedom First* the following excerpts from a report in a Melbourne newspaper involving one Mr. Jaspreet Singh. When my article was written about Indian students, the Melbourne police, in the interests of peace, had not disclosed all the facts of the case relating to this gentleman. Mr. Jaspreet Singh sought to give a racist colour to his attempt to commit a fraud. This is what the report had to say:

"Deport Demand for Fiery Race Lie

"An Indian who falsely blamed racist thugs, for setting fire to his car won't go to jail. But there are calls for Jaspreet Singh to be deported for stoking international tensions over attacks on Indians. Singh walked from court yesterday displaying the scars of his botched insurance fraud.

"His fraud literally blew up in his face when he doused his car with unleaded petrol and set it ablaze with a gas stove lighter. He suffered burns to 30% of his body, including to his neck, face and scalp.

"Singh who lives in the country with a spousal visa, pleaded guilty to attempting to obtain property by deception and making a false report to the police.

"Melbourne Magistrates' Court heard yesterday

that Singh was in dire financial trouble when he torched his car, worth \$8000 in Essendon on January 9, 2010.

‘(He) failed to consider atmospheric conditions and the volatility of petrol vapour so, upon engaging the flame...a vapour explosion occurred’ police prosecutor Sen-Constable Luke Devlin said.

“On January 27, Singh lodged an insurance claim. He told police a group of men attacked him. Sen-Constable Devlin said it was an aggravating factor that Singh made his false report when tension between Australia and India was at a high.

“Defence lawyer Paul McClure said his client’s desperate plan had “backfired”

“Deputy Chief Magistrate Felicity Broughton said Singh’s crime was a stupid premeditated enterprise” that brought shame to himself, his family and his community. She sentenced Singh to “eight months’ jail” but suspended it for two years.

Singh refused to comment outside the court.

(Report by Chief Court Reporter Paul Anderson, Herald Sun, Tuesday May 4, 2010)”.

How does Mr. Jaspreet Singh answer the hatred drummed up when he tarnished Australia’s reputation and tried to rip off the system. Which honest Australian or Indian would dream of doing such a thing. In fact every race and culture has its minority with its quota of split personalities. Mr. Singh’s incident occurred when there was so much at stake - literally adding fuel to the fire. No pun intended.

Yes, I do discuss this issue of ‘racism’ with Australians whenever an opportunity arises. In this particular case of Jaspreet Singh they all know that racism was not the reason in the first place. I hope this report will help us Indians view such matters with an open mind.

Sunita. freedom@vsnl.com

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Land for MLA’s in Old Mahabalipuram Road, Chennai

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has announced that 50 acres of land along the Old Mahabalipuram Road in Chennai would be allotted to MLAs at market value, so that they may construct their homes. Old Mahabalipuram road is an area in Chennai where the land prices are skyrocketing.

Nandini Voice for the Deprived, a Chennai based NGO conducted a survey amongst 3000 citizens of Tamil

Nadu through email and letters to know their views on whether such special allotment of land for MLAs is justified. These citizens belong to a cross section of society at various education and income levels. In all, 510 persons responded with their views.

Of the 510 persons who responded, not even a single person said that the Chief Minister’s move to allot land for MLAs was justified. The proposal was questioned and criticized on several counts.

Several persons said that they were afraid to convey their dissenting views since the matter concerned the politicians and the decision of the Chief Minister and they insisted that under no circumstances, their name should be revealed. This shows the sense of fear and insecurity prevailing amongst the citizens in expressing their views particularly in matters concerning politicians.

Most of the persons expressed their helplessness and wondered whether their dissenting view would matter at all, since the Government and politicians do not really seem to care about public opinion and views of the common men and they go ahead with their agenda whatever they may be.

Several persons also opined that this move should be stopped which can be done only by filing a public interest litigation in the High court. However, very few said that they would file such petitions themselves

Typical of the responses was this one:

“It is the usual land scam and loot. Blatant buying of political support at public cost. Time and again, the ruling dispensation has allotted prime land to bureaucrats and party people in housing projects under some government quota or Minister’s “discretionary” quota at what they describe as market rate. This is nothing but a blatant lie. It is corruption.”

“A good example is the erstwhile green areas in Annanagar which was converted to residential areas and allotted to select people. The opportunity cost was twenty times the so-called market price fixed by the government. This is how millionaires are created by government, for people who already are multi-millionaires, having amassed money in the course of their ‘public service’.”

“Poramboke land meant for public and community purposes and land acquired for public purposes (by paying a pittance to the original owners) must be used and developed by Government in a responsible and transparent manner to subserve the common good and not treated as the private property of politicians and bureaucrats. Let us fight this. A PIL is called for, apart from public agitation.”

N. S. Venkataraman, Trustee, Nandini Voice For The Deprived, Chennai, nsvenkatchennai@gmail.com

The Great Indian Farce

Keshav Rau

We, Indians, have a fantastic knack of locking up the stables after the horses have bolted, and also making a big song and dance about it. If one views the various human tragedies, disasters and even scams that the country has experienced, this is the sort of predictable reaction that we have witnessed. After every incident of this nature all sorts of measures will be thought of, including enacting new laws/regulations, to ensure that similar incidents don't recur.

Leading this "crusade" for a "clean-up" of the mess created is the media – both electronic as well as print – which will make – what will appear on the surface – very serious and thoughtful analysis of what went wrong, where and on whom the blame should be apportioned and the remedial steps that should be initiated. In the process, all and sundry will be interviewed and their comments aired/printed. However, after a few weeks the euphoria will die down and it will be back to business as usual. That is, till another tragedy/disaster strikes the nation, when all the motions will be gone through once again.

The latest focus is on the Bhopal gas tragedy of December 1984. The provocation: The judgment delivered by the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Bhopal on June 7 sentencing Keshub Mahindra, the then Chairman of Union Carbide India Ltd [UCIL], and seven other Indian officials of the Company to two years, imprisonment for their acts of negligence resulting in a massive leakage of gas from the UCIL plant in Bhopal which took the lives of more than 15,000 people and affected nearly 5.7 lacs in varying ways, including permanent and partial disability. Clearly, the Indian version of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Ever since the judgment was delivered, our newspapers and TV news channels, politicians, retired bureaucrats and officials (even if remotely connected with the incident at the material time), NGOs, activist groups etc are only too eager to air their comments and opinions as to what went wrong, what should have been done and what could be done now. However, the core issues have not been highlighted for comment.

Firstly, the fact that it has taken over a quarter of

a century for the judgment to be delivered. One of the most eminent legal luminaries of the country, the late Nani Palkhivala, had commented in December 1984 that the judgment by an Indian court on the issue would see the light of day only in the next (21st) century. His prediction was, no doubt, prophetic, but almost in the very same breath, in the following year, he told a U.S. court "*There is no doubt that the Indian judicial system can FAIRLY AND SATISFACTORILY [emphasis mine] handle the Bhopal litigation.*"

This sort of assertion of Palkhivala was made in the face of the contention of American legal experts – one of whom was engaged by the Indian Government — that the victims of Bhopal were more likely to get justice in the stricter American courts. The U.S. court accepted Palkhivala's contention. Thus, the first round was lost by the country. Yet, at the material time, no Indian newspaper or any of the other legal experts deigned to join issue with Palkhivala on this count. Was it a case of Palkhivala being too high and mighty to be criticized?

Now, Indian media is waking up to the fallacy in the arguments put forth by Palkhivala. If the memory of this writer serves him right, at the material time, one of the National newspapers carried a special article by Palkhivala in which he had ridiculed the stand taken by the Government of India before the U.S. court. One of his contentions was that U.S. lawyers, whose job it is, to handle compensation cases, would descend on the Bhopal victims and promise them hefty compensation, and, in return, claim 30 per cent of the compensation amount as legal fee. Is there any dearth of such lawyers/touts in this country? What is the guarantee that several lawyers/touts/activists/politicians would not have short-charged the victims of the compensation amount without even the latter being aware of it? At least the U.S. lawyers would have been transparent about what they would charge for the services rendered.

Another issue about which a lot of hullabaloo is being made by the media, politicians, bureaucrats et al is who should be held responsible for the former Chairman of Union Carbide, Warren Anderson, being allowed to go

back to USA just a day or so after he was arrested on landing in India. The then Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Arjun Singh, is being singled out for blame. That is because emergency instructions went out from his office for arranging a special flight from Bhopal to Delhi for flying out an individual, who turned out to be a foreigner. That foreigner, the Bhopal airport authorities learnt later, was Warren Anderson.

Digvijay Singh, who was in Arjun Singh's cabinet at the material time, set the accusation ball rolling by saying that Arjun Singh was answerable for Anderson's sudden departure. Digvijay Singh holds a very senior position in the Congress Party hierarchy, has been a Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, is very articulate and can also get away with giving a label of "intellectual arrogance" to Home Minister Chidambaram. Yet, it would appear, he remains at the core a Rajiv Gandhi sycophant like the majority of Congressmen. Obviously, he was quick to realize that a lot of flak would be raised on the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for letting Anderson go. What better way of diverting attention than pointing towards the then Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister?

Sure enough, a few days later, Pranab Mukherjee, obviously speaking on behalf of the Government, referred to the statement issued by Arjun Singh at the material time to the effect that a law and order situation would have been created in Bhopal had Anderson's house arrest been allowed to continue any longer. (Pranab Mukherjee's explanation was clearly in line with the stand taken by the Congress Party that it was for the Government and not the Party to explain how Anderson was let off.) However, all the other reports emanating from the US clearly point to pressure having been applied on the Indian Government for the release of Anderson. It should be realized that in all such situations, no Chief Minister of a State – however much the law and order may have been threatened – could possibly have allowed Anderson to leave without the concurrence of the Centre. Quite possibly, even at that time Arjun Singh would have made that statement in order to save Rajiv Gandhi from being grilled by the Press and the Opposition.

This brings us to the fundamental question: What purpose would have been served had Anderson been detained or arrested or got extradited and criminal proceedings launched against him? The Union Law Minister Veerappa Moily, ever-quick to react, said that *technically* the case against Anderson was still not closed. He could still be tried in Indian courts, he said. How? Possibly he can't also answer — even with all his legal acumen! In all such human tragedies, the first thing we do is demand the arrest of the persons concerned and

initiation of criminal proceedings against them. To what use that would be for the victims or their kith and kin nobody is bothered about.

Moreover, it should be realized that demand for compensation (in an adequate measure) and pinning down criminal liability in all its severity cannot go hand in hand. It would be worthwhile looking at the way other countries handle similar situations. Way back in the early '60s a major tragedy struck West Germany on account of a sedative called Thalidomide prescribed to pregnant women to overcome morning sickness resulting in the birth of more than 10,000 deformed babies. The uproar that ensued made West German Pharmaceutical Company Chemie Gruenthal shell out millions of dollars by way of compensation. There were no arrests.

The most recent example is of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In one single sitting, the US President was able to drive an acceptable compensation deal of US\$ 20 bn. with British Petroleum [BP]. Here also, there has been no talk of arrests of BP Executives. On the contrary, in the Union Carbide case, the hapless victims and their families had to settle for a whittled down compensation amount of US \$ 470 mn. – thanks to the sanction accorded by the Supreme Court to a settlement reached in a hush-hush manner between the Government and Union Carbide to scale down the Government's original demand of US \$ 3bn.

Instead of disclosing how the settlement with the Company was reached, Veerappa Moily is harping on the Supreme Court having erred in diluting the charges against the Company officials – from culpable homicide not amounting to murder to death caused by negligence. The former attracts a maximum punishment of 10 years' imprisonment and the latter two years. Even if charges had not been diluted, would it have provided any succour to the millions of people who were affected? Moreover, was the case properly argued out by the CBI counsel?

The Government as also many of the organizations who have taken up cudgels on behalf of the victims has wasted more than 25 years in trying to pin criminal liability on the Company and its officials. No attempt has been made at providing relief and rehabilitation to the millions affected. Even the clean-up of the plant site has not taken place. The farcical manner in which this case as well as several others have been dealt with only reinforces the view held the world over: In India there is hardly any concern for human life or welfare of the people.

KESHAV RAU is a free-lance writer based in Bangalore. His e-mail ids: keshav.rau@gmail.com and keshavrau@yahoo.com

A Tragedy that was Waiting to Happen

Many studies done later clearly revealed the unwise and imprudent steps taken by UCIL to cut on safety systems.

This report, is based on one aspect (how did the disaster happen) summarised from a comprehensive article by Mr. K. Subramanian, a former Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Government of India. He is currently Associate of the Chennai Centre for China Studies. Email: subrahama@gmail.com. His paper (C3S Paper No.511 dated June 9, 2010) can be accessed at www.c3sindia.org. We are grateful to Mr. Subramanian and Mr. D. S. Rajan, Director of the Centre for enabling this report - Editor.

When Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) obtained the approval of the Government to establish the methyl isocyanate (MIC) based project in 1972 for the manufacture of SEVIN, it was apparent that UCIL and its parent Union Carbide of USA (UCC) had to face several problems connected with its establishment in India. SEVIN was considered to be a pesticide of great value and one involving high technology and required to boost the green revolution. UCIL was under constant pressure from Indian officials to speed up the setting of the project.

UCIL needed assurances from UCC over the project design, safety, etc. It entered into separate technical services agreement with the parent company. There were doubts about the capacity planned and also the designs to keep huge quantities of MIC in storage. In their book (*"It was five past midnight in Bhopal"*, Dominique Pierre & Javier Moro, Full Circle, 2001) the authors refer to the advice of German engineers at Bayer with the caution *"never risk keeping a single liter for more than ten minutes"* and to UCC/UCIL planning for storage of several hundred litres!

By the winter of 1978, when the project was half way through, there were worries about overruns and potential demand for pesticides in India, particularly for SEVIN. The feasibility of scaling down the plant was discussed in a meeting in New York. As the project had already reached an advanced stage, it was decided to go ahead with it. There were inter-department conflicts. The Ag Product Division was keen to continue with its exports to India as it had over capacity built in the U.S. plant. Both were over sized plants with under sized markets. Thus, export to India was ruled out and, in any case, it would eat into the global profits of UCC.

The Sevin project could not be scrapped for more strategic reasons. It became vital for survival in the FERA battle. UCIL had a non-resident equity of 60 per cent and under the FERA Guidelines initially laid down, it became eligible to retain 40 per cent non-resident equity. A provisional order was issued by the Reserve Bank of India on the decision of the FERA

Advisory Committee. Such a holding would be contrary to its Corporate Policy and Manual! UCC mounted its pressures on the Indian government as also in Washington.

Ultimately, the Government of India succumbed to the pressures of companies such as UCIL and relaxed its guidelines – it was named *"amplified guidelines!"* Under the relaxed guidelines, UCIL was able to maintain its subsidiary status with UCC. SEVIN saved the day for the company as it was accorded high technology status.

The approval was given by the RBI on July 5, 1980. It was truly a long battle and worthy of celebration. Unfortunately for UCIL and UCC, it came late. In the intervening years, the company had lost the market for pesticides, Sevin in particular. Demand for Sevin did not pick up and stocks began to accumulate in Bhopal. UCC had neither studied the Indian market nor the psychology of the Indian farmer. Sevin may be efficacious in large U.S. farms, but not in small patches of land in India. Insects fleeing from farms treated with Sevin ravaged neighbouring untreated farms. The Indian farmer was unwilling to switch over to a hazardous pesticide. Moreover, the country faced severe drought and farming was substantially reduced. The Bhopal Plant became sick and seemed beyond redemption.

Savage cost-cuts were imposed. Many studies done later clearly revealed the unwise and imprudent steps taken by UCIL to cut on safety systems. Critical air-conditioning for MIC tanks was shut down. These are in many ways comparable to the cost cutting down by BP in its offshore operations in the Gulf of Mexico! The net result was that across the Bhopal plant, there were signs of neglect and indifference. As Lapierre and Moro describe, *"Quite naturally there had come a point where people preferred card games in site canteens to tours of inspection around the dormant volcano."*

By 1981 several instances of neglect leading to gas poisoning and deaths had come to notice. A special team sent from the U.S. drew pointed attention to several lapses and suggested rectification. The warnings of a local journalist, Mr. Keshwani, went unheeded. It was very poor satisfaction for him that he got a young journalist award months after the disaster.

By October 1984, the possibility of dismantling the plant and shipping it to another developing country such as Brazil or Indonesia was considered and abandoned. One important factor which worked against the idea was that the MIC plant was so corroded that it would not be dismantled! A week before the

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Israel – The Friend You Love to Hate

Firoze Hirjikaka

*In the 60 years of its existence as an independent nation, Israel has not only survived, but thrived.
Nobody buys the image of Jews as victims any more.*

What do many Americans think of Israel? My guess is that the overwhelming emotion is exasperation. In the Israeli-Arab equation, the Israelis are supposed to be the good guys. The problem is they don't act their role. After all, Arab groups like Hamas and Hezbollah are recognized nasties who deserve their comeuppance. So the Israelis giving them a shellacking should be easy to applaud, but this becomes difficult because in almost every confrontation, the Israelis come off as the bully boys.

Consider the recent fracas when Israeli commandos boarded a Turkish ship (ostensibly) carrying humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in Gaza; and killed nine activists/terrorists depending on which side was defining them. Israel may have succeeded in asserting its authority, but it was a public relations disaster of epic proportions. Even worse, it put Israel's traditional well wishers in an embarrassing position. The ship belonged to Turkey, a NATO ally of Israel's chief patron, the United States. America could not placate one friend without alienating the other. So it resorted to the age-old diplomatic ploy of double speak: mouthing platitudes that meant absolutely nothing.

Not surprisingly, Turkey and fellow Arabs made much capital of the ostensible reason the ship was heading towards Gaza: Carrying humanitarian aid to a population suffering deprivation – obligingly amplified by the Palestinians to the world media. True to form, the bleeding heart liberals who seem to be proliferating in continental Europe and the Scandinavian countries joined in the condemnation. And the Israelis played into their hands by sending military commandos to board a civilian ship that was ostensibly on the side of the angels. Their argument that all assistance to Gaza had to be routed through Israel, subject to inspection and clearance, cut no ice with the international community. It is always morally and spiritually satisfying to side with the underdog and the Palestinians, egged on by its Arab patrons, played their part to perfection. Israel, either wilfully or unwittingly, doesn't seem to get this. Even assuming a few weapons did manage to sneak in the guise of humanitarian aid, the limited damage Hamas would be able to inflict with them

would be an acceptable trade off for Israel not becoming the international community's whipping boy.

Israel's dilemma is that, even three generations after the Holocaust, its citizens have not rid themselves of their persecution complex. Some would argue that after 2000 years of wandering in the Diaspora, the Jews are justified in the belief that they can rely only on themselves for survival. If, in the process, they often come across as gung-ho cowboys, that's a price they seem prepared to pay. However, the reality is that in the 60 years of its existence as an independent nation, Israel has not only survived, but thrived. Nobody buys the image of Jews as victims any more.

In theory, of course, Israel is grossly outnumbered by hostile Arab neighbours, not to mention the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose eccentric president has publicly threatened to blow it to smithereens. In practical terms, however, there is no genuine threat to Israel's existence. That is because even the Jewish state's avowed "enemies" have a vested interest in keeping Israel viable. After all, Arab solidarity has long been debunked as a myth. The truth is that many Arab states hate each other's guts, but admitting that publicly would shatter the image of the brotherhood of Islam. A strong Israel ensures that they don't get too big for their boots. The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

The irony is that Israel usually ends up getting the bad press. In the present imbroglio, Israel is the big bad wolf starving the helpless denizens of Gaza. What seems to have escaped the media's attention is that Gaza's "big brother" Egypt, with which it shares a common border, is not acting very "humanitarian" either. Nothing really stops Egypt from sending food and supplies across the border. Israel may protest, but it is hardly going to risk going to war with its powerful neighbour over this issue. So why is Egypt enforcing its own informal blockade? Because it despises Hamas. Not many may recall that the grandfather of all militant Islamic groups like Hamas, Hezbollah and even Al Qaeda, was the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded way back in 1928 by Hassan Al-Banna. The Brotherhood made no secret of its desire to overthrow

Egypt's secular governments and establish an Islamic state based on Sharia law and is, therefore, definitely not on the government's Christmas list. Then there is the Palestinian Fatah faction in the West Bank, the legacy of Yasser Arafat. In 1970, this group tried to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy. Quite naturally, they are viewed with extreme distrust by Jordan's rulers. So as long as Israel keeps Hamas and Fatah in check, Egypt and Jordan are not likely to rattle its cage. What makes Israel's job easier is that Hamas and Fatah are constantly at each other's throats.

So Israel continues to cock a snook at international

opinion. It knows that the world community will continue to fulminate against the Jewish state's intransigence, but to paraphrase Shakespeare, it will be little more than sound and fury; and signify nothing. America is quite content to allow Israel, which is not encumbered by its patron's moralistic pretensions, to act as a surrogate world's policeman – a role the US often gets lambasted for. The Arab world, too, will do little more than shout as long as Israel serves its interest; and Israel will continue to take care of its own interests whatever it takes. Sometimes, being regarded as a bully can actually be an advantage.

MR. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA can be contacted at leonardo8_99@yahoo.com

The Gaza Blockade: Myth and Reality

Nitin G. Raut

Humanitarian aid was being used to aid a terror outfit like Hamas whose active armed attacks on Israel since 2005 are largely ignored in a world where the strident roar of militants and terrorists often drowns the voice of democratic States.

Israel intercepted the Turkish ship "Mavi Marmara" on 31st May 2010 on its way to the Gaza Strip ostensibly on an aid mission. It was in fact a calculated move to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza and, as hoped by its organisers succeeded in creating an international furor. Israel was roundly condemned but what was ignored was how the veil of humanitarian aid was being used to aid a terror outfit like Hamas whose active armed attacks on Israel since 2005 are largely ignored in a world where the strident roar of militants and terrorists often drowns the voice of democratic States.

In 2005, following years of arduous and often acrimonious negotiations driven by the carrot and stick policy of the U.S., the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreed to co-exist with Israel. Israel therefore disengaged itself by withdrawing from Gaza to pave the way for the Palestinian Arabs to elect their Parliament under a Palestinian Authority.

In the elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip held in 2005, the Hamas emerged victorious. However, the legitimacy of a democratic mandate was forfeited by the Hamas no sooner it declared that it does not recognize Israel and refused to honour the agreements between Israel and the PLO which culminated in the formation of the Palestinian Authority. After its electoral victory in the elections that followed, Hamas refused to renounce violence against Israel and began using the Gaza territory to launch armed attacks, often targeting civilian areas and

started availing of the Gaza Coast as a sea route to smuggle arms and military equipment to be used against Israel.

This led Israel to impose the Gaza blockade in 2005 which continues till today. In fact, when Egypt also became a target of Hamas, it imposed a similar blockade of Gaza, as Hamas was openly collaborating with the Muslim Brotherhood, an extremist organization, which is a threat to Egypt. In fact, Hamas is banned by the United Nations, the U.S., the European Union and Russia. Egypt of course has relaxed the blockade now to placate the hostile Arab mood.

It is in this context that the purpose of the aid ship "Mavi Marmara" needs to be understood and how it was Turkey's game plan to don a new avatar in the Arab-Muslim world.

Turkey has, since 1948, maintained close ties – diplomatic, economic and political with Israel. This had virtually ostracized Turkey from the Arab world. Given its geographical position which straddles Europe (Asia Minor) and Asia, Turkey had long prided itself on its European "character" and has been aspiring to be a member of the European Union. This aspiration has not materialized as the EU, all said and done, wants to retain its European lineage without saying as much.

Turkey, although a nation with a Muslim majority, has had impeccable secular credentials – a legacy of its

statesman, Kemal Ataturk. The government of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan is dependent on the support of some Islamic parties which do not favour a secular policy. With its ambition for EU membership in tatters, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan is trying to cast Turkey into a new role as a regional power and leader of the Arab world. And what better way to project his image as a leader of the Arab-Muslim world than by making the Gaza blockade an issue – six years after it was imposed!

The “Mavi Marmara” operation was organized by the “Foundation of Humanitarian Relief” (IHH) believed to be a radical religious outfit and maintaining close ties with Prime Minister Erdogan’s Islamic Justice and Development Party (*Adalat ve Kalkilna Parpisi* or AKP). It had a tactical purpose, for the Turkish government should have well known that such a ship would not be allowed by the Israelis to breach the blockade. However, Tayyip Erdogan has succeeded in bolstering his image as a leader of the Muslim world and a patron of the Palestinian cause.

Has this Turkish initiative furthered the Palestinian cause? The Palestinian Arabs continue to be pawns in the intra-Arab power politics. Now non-Arab states like Turkey and Iran have become major players. With the US-Iran stand off on major international issues not the least being nuclear proliferation, the Palestinian Arabs are the losers. Groups like Hamas only add to their woes. After all, it is worth recalling that when Gaza was under Egyptian occupation and the West Bank under Jordan from 1948 to 1967, the Arabs never thought of making the Palestinian State a reality even though the PLO was formed in 1964. It was only after the 1967 Six Day War when Israel occupied Gaza and the West Bank that the demand for a Palestinian Arab State became a major issue. Can the high sea drama of an aid ship be a solution?

International law recognizes maritime blockade in times of armed conflict. Economic sanctions have been imposed in recent times against States like Syria and Libya for armed acts or supporting terrorist organizations. Hamas

is using the Gaza coast to smuggle arms to attack Israel. Israel therefore has sufficient cause to impose a maritime blockade. Even the U.N. Charter justifies the right of a nation to defend itself against armed aggression. US and England also recognize maritime blockade as a tool against aggression. In 1971 India successfully blockaded the erstwhile East Pakistan Navy when its coast was being used to transport troops and military aid to the Pakistani Army which was engaged in genocide to put down the liberation movement of the Bangladeshis.

If maritime blockade is a legitimate action under international law, it also imposes corresponding obligations on nations resorting to maritime blockades. Such nations have to issue notices of blockade. Israel claims that it has done so. Humanitarian aid like water, food, medical supplies is exempted from such blockades. Israel claims it has allowed non-military aid to Gaza right from the inception in 2005. The humanitarian aid to Gaza is supervised by the UNO and the International Red Cross. Otherwise, Gaza would have faced starvation long ago.

It is interesting to note that in the petitions filed by some human rights outfits in Israel for alleged denial of medical facilities in Gaza, the Supreme Court of Israel has ruled that armed operations are subject to international humanitarian laws which policy the State of Israel has asserted it is adhering to. In fact, the Supreme Court is also supervising transfer of civil supplies to Gaza to ensure that Israel abides by its obligations under international law.

If “Mavi Marmara” was Turkey’s trial balloon to announce its new role as a regional power, it was not only a tactical blunder but Turkey missed an opportunity to play a responsible part in resolving the vexed issue of the Palestinian Arab State. The purported aid mission is thus a myth. The real intent is to abet the armed conflict and keep the terror pot boiling.

MR. NITIN G. RAUT is a lawyer and a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First.

The Hamas Dictatorship In the Gaza Strip

(The Israeli) siege has also allowed for much greater control. Manned by militants from its Ezz al-Din al-Qassam brigades hitherto deployed against Israel, Hamas’s internal security applies the brigades’ blinkered codes to harness society. This has created stability but at the price of a reign of fear. When rival Islamists decried Hamas’s rule in Rafah, the militants stormed the mosque and killed its worshippers. When leftists protested that the tax rises hit a people already burdened by siege, they were hauled to jail. The death penalty has been reinstituted. And insensitive to comparisons with Israel, Hamas’s forces have bulldozed the homes of Gazans who had moved on to former settlement land without authorisation. A thriving political culture has been culled to a one-faction state

Excerpted from the article “How Israel Plays into Hamas’s Hands” *The Economist*, 3 June, 2010

Self-reliance : the keynote of our independence

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

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

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

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

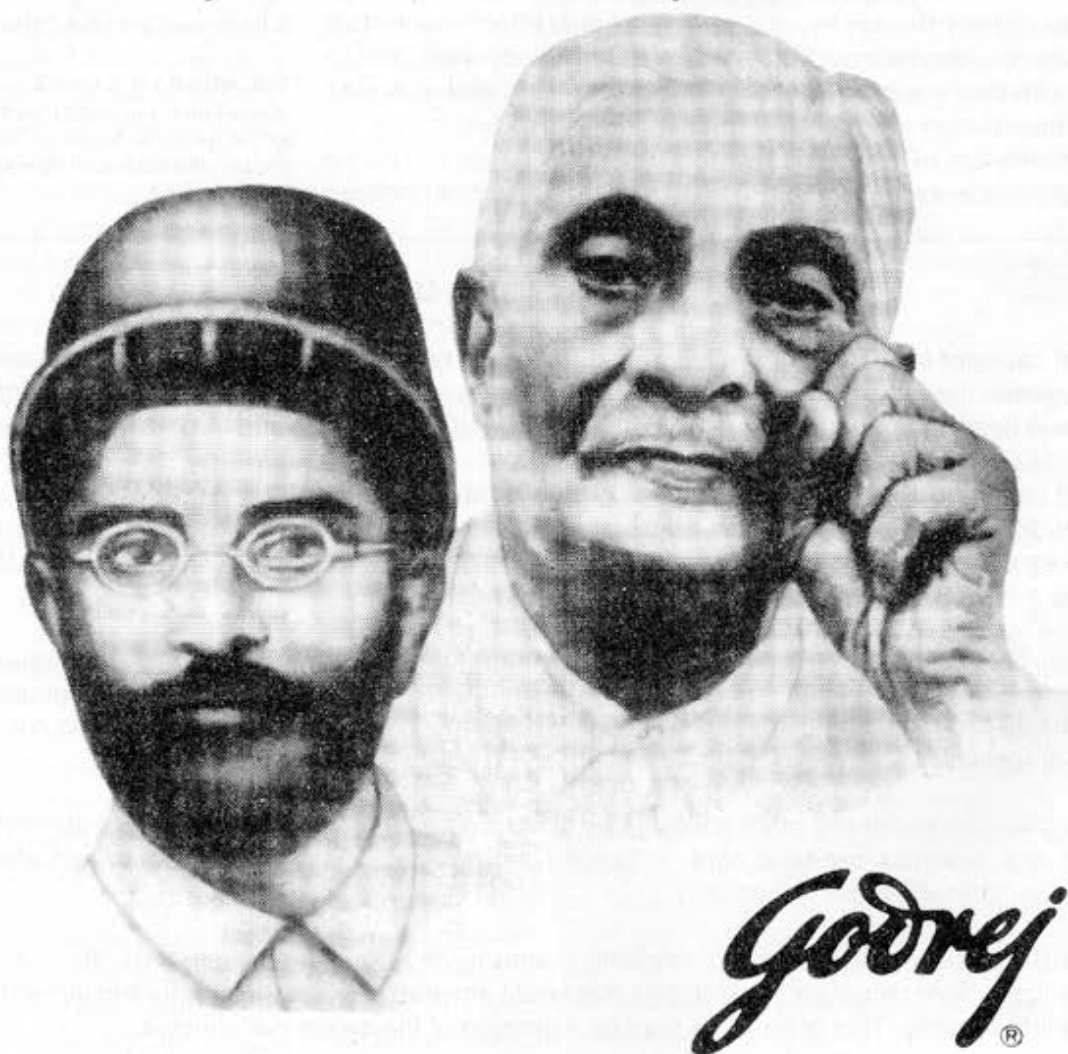
Made to international standards and backed by continuous technical innovation, their products range from locks and security equipment, machine tools, forklift trucks, architecture and steel castings to furniture, typewriters, refrigerators, computers and elec-

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

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

Self-reliance is both a means and an end.

For Godrej it is the essence of independence.



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.

Falling Stars

1. UPA II started with an expectation of being a Government having the capacity to turn a moth ridden old administration around due to its vigour and the ability to look to the future. It was exemplified by a new generation of MPs spearheaded by Rahul Gandhi and a band of dynamic Ministers. The new breed of Ministers was suave, sophisticated and forward looking. Shashi Tharoor and Jairam Ramesh were two such Ministers who could hold their own in any intellectual gathering in the world and brighten India's image all over. They were considered to be harbingers of the future as more and more of their pedigree were expected to emerge on the national firmament. They were the rising stars of Indian politics. We have had enough of the pan-chewing, foul-mouthed, garrulous leaders and the new generation looked like a great change from the uncouth collection.

It was the end of the day when I parked my police van in front of the station. As I gathered my equipment, my K-9 (canine) partner, Jake, was barking, and I saw a little boy staring in at me. 'Is that a dog you got back there?' he asked..

'It sure is,' I replied.

Puzzled, the boy looked at me and then towards the back of the van.

Finally he said, 'What'd he do?'

From the Net

1. What went wrong can be a subject of study for the science of management. Are knowledge, sophistication, sincerity, ready wit and personal charm enough to make a good political leader? What more can you ask from a budding politician? A little humility perhaps! The arrogance of intellect, knowledge that one is superior to one's colleagues in efficiency, understanding and articulation can be a fatal flaw. Others who are perhaps equally intelligent do not flaunt their superiority, maintain a patina of humility and get away with worse conduct like corruption, misuse of authority and blatant nepotism. Tharoor lost his job because of suspicion of a favour done to his lady friend by a third party. Jairam Ramesh lost his halo because he thought he was smarter than his colleagues in the Home Ministry; and he was not seeking favour for anybody but just making a point that he had won the Chinese hearts in Copenhagen by standing by China in face of opposition from the West. He believed that he had single handedly done what the rest of the Government and failed to do in 50 years. He did not understand why the Home Ministry was so 'paranoid' and 'alarmist' about Chinese business entities wishing to do business with India. Jairam Ramesh's 'worldly wisdom' got him a rebuke and tarnished his reputation as a blue eyed boy of the new brigade. We need the bright stars in our political cosmos but they need to undergo an induction course at the old school!

Caste Census

2. Census 2011 is to be launched in a few months but the demand for inclusion of caste in the census form has created divisions even before it has started. The Government initially opposed the idea as being divisive but OBC supporters immediately smelled a rat and argued that this was an attempt to hide the OBC strength and their problems. The Government dithered and the PM assured Parliament that the views of those demanding caste census (all the Yadavs who can tilt the Parliamentary majority) would be placed before the Cabinet. The door is now open for inclusion of caste enumeration in the census. It is argued by the caste lobby that information about the caste composition of the country is essential for all development

2. The initial reaction of the Government was based on experience of the Mandal Commission whose report nearly split the country; it was politically exploited. It is feared that another set of caste figures would give rise to demands for more caste-based concessions. The country would be divided again as was done by the Mandal messiah, V.P.Singh. The present 27% reservation for OBCs may be considered inadequate and pressure would build up for greater percentage because of the presumably greater numbers. Another wedge in its unity is the last thing this country needs now. The real problem is that the remedy of reservations has not solved any problems; instead the move has created more problems as more and more

programmes and correct information can cause no harm. In fact, they argue that they are not asking for the caste to be mentioned but only the generic description as OBC, which is a category, not a caste. The need for caste census was expressed several times since 1950 and even the Mandal Commission observed in 1978 that the OBCs might number 52% but recommended a census. The idea is that the Planning Commission may be able to allocate funds better if the strength of OBCs is known.

communities want to get concessions and there are few goodies left to distribute; the pie is too small to be divided further. The whole exercise may only stir the pot further and create bitterness. The best way would be to list only economically backward persons and grant concessions to them without bringing in the divisive caste issue to the fore. The attempt should be to get citizens to forget their caste and communities and identify themselves as Indians. The renewed emphasis on caste would defeat the idea of one India!

Limited Mandate

3. Public discourse is becoming complicated because politicians keep twisting their words and what they say today may not be the same the next day. Take P. Chidambaram, a straight talking Home Minister, if there was one. Interviewed on TV channels (May 18) after yet another eruption of Naxalite violence in Dantewada, Chidambaram was frank enough to admit that he had only a “limited mandate” to tackle Naxalites and all the Chief Ministers were asking for stronger action against the Naxalites; he was, therefore, planning to request the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to give him a broader mandate. In simple words, this appeared to mean that he was denied adequate backing earlier and he would ask for it now. This may or may not mean use of air support as demanded by the CMs. Everybody was happy that the country was at last moving on the right path and the strong and firm Union Home Minister would now tackle the Naxalite problem more vigorously.

3. Life is never that simple for the politically innocent. The Home Minister issued a clarification the next day that what he meant by “limited mandate” was that the Centre would leave it to the states to tackle Naxalism while giving them all necessary help; the Centre was not directly tackling the Maoists. What this meant would require a legal debate to decide. Was Chidambaram embarrassed that his statement would be construed as criticism of the CCS? What then happens to his “broader mandate”? Does it mean that air support would be available to the states? Would the army be brought in as in the North East and J&K? Would there be a joint strategy or the states would be left to deal with the problem on their own? What would the strong Union Home Minister do? Or are we looking unnecessarily for deliverance when it is not even envisaged by him. The Defence Minister was more to the point when he said that military tactics were not open for public debate. The question begging an answer is whether Naxalism is a national problem or a state problem?

Readers are invited to send their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in

G. P. Pradhan (Cont'd. from cover page 2)

was of the vintage variety. In this sense he was closer to Ranade than Tilak. All his life never did he repudiate the past, but always appealed for purging impurities and irrelevancies in the society around and even accepting what is good in the Western societies so that a new and better era is ushered in.

I have always felt that Pradhan belonged to the intellectual and social tradition of Ranade, Gokhale and Gandhi. No doubt, he greatly admired Lokmanya Tilak whom he almost adored as leader of the masses. Yet in his heart of hearts he revered Ranade, admired Agarkar and almost worshipped Gandhi. If one takes into consideration Pradhan's life and teachings it can be surmised that temperamentally he was more suited to the socio-political ideas of Justice Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Little wonder then that Pradhan who admired Tilak in his greener days, came to worship Mahatma Gandhi and his ideas of social evolution in his ripe age.

In him one could trace the liberalism of Justice Ranade, nationalism of Lokmanya Tilak, rationalism of Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and universal humanism of Jotiba Phule, Gandhi, Sane Guruji and Dr. Ambedkar. All these early influences on him which he was never tired of mentioning made him a temperate man. He received many literary and life-achievement awards. None of the awards made him as happy as the “Maa-Bapu Award”. He later declined all other awards politely saying that the “Maa-Bapu Award” was the highest and the most coveted award for him and that he did not desire any more. Having once decided not to accept any more awards, he stuck to the decision and declined even life-time achievement awards of high denominations.

MR. AROON TIKEKAR is a well-known journalist and an author of books in Marathi and English. He was editor of the Marathi daily *Loksatta*, for over a decade and adviser to two other Marathi dailies.

Taking on the Maoists

H. R. Bapu Satyanarayana

The series of attacks by Maoists in recent months each one deadlier than the other that has taken a horrendous toll of lives of both security personnel and civilians has put the UPA Government in a quandary as to how to tackle the problem. The latest attack was on the railways in the early hours of 28th May 2010 by removing a fish plate to target the Mumbai bound Howrah- Mumbai Super Deluxe Express at Kalaikunda in West Bengal. 150 innocent passengers were killed. It appears Maoists were spoiling for a fight trying to challenge the Home Minister Chidambaram who by his tough talk has made his intention clear that force is the only answer to subdue the Maoists.

Chidambaram's Tough talk

It may be recalled that Chidambaram used rather intemperate language to describe Maoists as 'cowards in the jungle'. Whether it was a coincidence or by design the next day eleven personnel of the Special Operation Group of the Orissa Police were killed in a landmine explosion. This was followed by the massacre of 76 members of the Central Reserve Police Force at Dantewada in Chattisgarh.

Lessons Not Learnt

The tragedy is that despite such attacks indulged with impunity, it appears the same mistakes are repeated. This indicates that our security forces are not adequately trained to fight in the jungles and have not been taking even the basic precautions. The failure is attributed to the CRPF not following standard operating procedures. Chidambaram's call to the Maoists to suspend all attacks for 72 hours and inviting them to a meeting was ignored.

Chidambaram Isolated

Chidambaram followed it up with his theory of a 'limited mandate', which again strengthens the perception that he relies on force rather than the alternative strategy of winning the hearts of Adivasis/Tribals. In fact, this has not gone well with his senior cabinet colleague, finance minister Pranab Mukherjee who opined that it should not be discussed in public. It also appears that opinion is divided amongst his own party members, prominent among them being the Congress Party's General Secretary Digvijay Singh who described Chidambaram as 'arrogant' leading to media speculation that Digvijay Singh has the backing of Rahul Gandhi.

Human Right Activists

The situation is complicated with human rights activists chiefly Arundhati Roy who went to the extent

of describing the Maoists as 'Gandhians with a guns'! There is another dimension to this problem that has complicated the situation – the Government's view that the concerns of human rights activists are misplaced and that this has emboldened the Maoists to persist in their ways. This perception has been strengthened by the observation that, on the other hand, human right activists are lukewarm in condemning the dastardly acts of the Maoists.

Lack of Coherent Policy

As always this has something to do with compulsions of coalition and vote bank politics. According to Chidambaram, the primary responsibility of tackling the Maoists rests with the states governments even while assuring them of central support in augmenting the security forces. This has prevented the emergence of a coherent policy specially because several states are involved. Since each state has its own perception about the Maoists and the states have not been able reconcile the differences fully, possibly Maoists are taking advantage of this. If the Maoists are able to target both civilian and security personnel on highways it is logical that they have sympathizers, or informers or may have even infiltrated into the establishment to carry out such precision attacks.

Three Blighted Decades

It is no secret that the Union minister for railways, Mamata Bannerjee, is bent on bringing down the West Bengal government and hopes to become the next Chief Minister. Her recent success in the local elections in which she routed the CPI(M) has strengthened her position. CPI(M) spokespersons accuse her of hobnobbing with the Maoists. The clashes in Singur and Nandigram between the CPI(M) government and Mamata Banerjee were a turning point which presaged all sorts of trouble for the CPI(M). In fact according to reports it was the followers of her party the Trinamul Congress who have

been attacked by CPI(M) cadres while Maoists have attacked the CPI(M) cadres. An unbiased analysis reveals that the basic fault is with the CPI(M) government in West Bengal, which during its three decades of uninterrupted rein politicized all organs of the government including the police. They were so uncaring that they freely absorbed migrants/refugees from Bangladesh to swell their vote bank. Even a warning by the Supreme Court did not affect their attitude. As a result there has been a demographic change that now poses a security threat to India.

The Dilemma

Therefore, in the cross current of various opinions the Government of India is confused not knowing how to confront the Maoist challenge. However, it would appear that by their latest attacks the Maoists have left the UPA government with few options. The Maoists have to face the full wrath of the government who are being forced to take action leaving little scope for negotiations. It is now like a declaration of war in which the government is free to marshal all its resources to put down the insurgency. While doing so the Government has to convince itself beyond the shadow of doubt whether the Maoists are the enemies of the State before taking a step from which there can be no going back. Herein lies the dilemma.

A Catch 22 Situation

If the Government decides to use the armed forces it is bound to result in collateral damage; many civilians mainly tribals will die, for the terrain is thickly forested and it is not easy to distinguish between the Maoists and the tribals notwithstanding the best of technological support. We have the example how a single individual Veerappan held out for years before he was killed. What we are dealing here is a well armed cadre of Maoists of considerable strength holding rein in practically 40% of India comprising around 200 districts. The fight is bound to be long and hard.

The Genesis of the Problem

The Maoists problem started with certain ideological moorings as a fight against society wherein the rights of the poor and particularly the tribals were trampled by an uncaring authority. The tribals form a sizeable percentage of the population occupying a vast swathe of forest land and were content to live from whatever they produced in the forest and making a living by selling forest produce during their foray into the urban areas. Over the years the scene changed because the governments of the day in the name of development exploited the forest land rich in minerals. In the beginning it was the middlemen who played havoc among the tribals. They were followed

by the police, who, in the name of controlling the Maoists unleashed all sorts of atrocities on the tribals. At this stage sensitive and educated youngsters, both men and women who were otherwise accustomed to good things of life moved by the plight of the tribals spurned a life of ease and moved to the forests to join forces with the Maoists. However the original ideology of the Maoists appears to have changed. It is unthinkable that government's repeated calls for a suspension of arms and offer to talk have been largely ignored. Also, the type of sophisticated arms and the methods being used by the Maoists points to the possibility that the Maoist movement has been infiltrated or even taken over by others who are inimical to India. The possibility of receiving supplies of arms from the Lashkar-e-Toiba and China through clandestine means cannot be ruled out.

The Buck Stops at the PM's Table

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated on June 18 2009: "If left extremism continues to flourish in parts which have natural resources, the climate for foreign investment will be affected". This reveals that despite six years at the helm of the country's affairs he still wears the cap of an economist paying homage to foreign investors and is not thinking of the country in a broader perspective as a statesman. Manmohan Singh is an honourable man and everybody accepts him as a person of impeccable integrity and honesty but of what use are these attributes if he has failed to use his power in creating an enabling national policy to bring about equity in the system touching all sections of people? In fact, in respect of the Maoist problem the buck moves all the way up to the table of the Prime Minister. Till now he has enjoyed a charmed life. The question now is will he accept the challenge posed by the Maoists or will he be content to continue to occupy the position as a badge of honour; complete his tenure keeping it warm for Rahul Gandhi, the prince in waiting to inherit the dynastic throne?

(Due to space constraints we had to considerably trim the latter part of Mr. Satyanarayana's "Genesis of the Maoist/Naxalite problem." Readers may recall that this problem featured as our cover story in Freedom First April-May 2008 -Ed.

H. R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA, Mysore, is a freelance writer and a regular contributor to the pages of Freedom First. what_option@yahoo.co.in

The Extent of the 'Epidemic'

The total number of Naxals is pegged at 200,000. Trained and armed militants number between 45,000 and 50,000. Bastar alone accounts for over 6,000. Recent intelligence reports suggest that the influence of the Naxals is spreading to Karnataka, Kerala, Uttanchal and Tamil Nadu.

The Week February 21

This month in July 1953

Language Has No Nationality

by P. Kodanda Rao

In his Presidential Address to the Indian Languages Development Conference, held recently in Poona, Mahamahopadhyaya P. V. Kane, a former Vice Chancellor of Bombay University and a great scholar and patriot observed it would not be in keeping with the dignity and self-respect of India to retain a foreign language like English as the official language of the Union and the medium of instruction in the universities for an indefinite period. ...His main objection to the English language was that it was foreign and therefore its retention hurt the self-respect of India, particularly when she became free and independent...

"Foreign" seems a political concept, denoting nationality. But no language has a nationality. The English language is not of the British nationality, for people of the American, Indian, Japanese, Russian, German and other nationalities speak it in varying numbers. Indeed, languages have no political, religious, racial or sex correlations. Nobody is born with a language; everybody acquires it after birth, even as he acquires other items of knowledge and skill, like eating, dressing playing, etc. The English language, like any other element of culture, cannot be "foreign" to anybody; it is new until acquired.

Another prevailing concept is the one of "my" language and "your" language. It has led to much linguistic patriotism and jingoism and mutual jealousies and rivalries both in India and elsewhere. But there can be no "my" language since "you" can learn it. In which case it becomes "ours."

Urdu is not the language of the Muslim, for millions of Muslims in the world do not speak it and millions of non-Muslims speak it.

In evolving the language policy of India, as of other countries, the appropriate criterion is communicational utility and not historicity. For language is a medium of communication of thoughts.

The late Mr. P. Kodanda Rao was a Liberal, a prolific writer and well-known for his political biography of the Rt.Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri. Reproduced above are excerpts from Mr. Kodanda Rao's article "Bilingualism For India", the lead story in the July 1953 issue.

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Memories of Yusuf Meherally

by Bertram D. Wolfe

On Thursday 2nd of July falls the third anniversary of the Late Yusuf Meherally. We are happy that we are able to publish on the occasion an article on Meherally from the celebrated author of Three Who Made Revolution

Yusuf Meherally was one of those people that one would gladly go half way around the world to meet, and despite all our differences in background, training and the like, I felt an instant kinship with him as he seemed to with me. I first met Yusuf in 1930 at the home of V. F. Calverton, Editor of *Modern Monthly*.

I spent several hours with him then, after which I did not see him again for many years. I forgot his very existence until he appeared in New York sometime in the late 40s. He was already in extremely poor health, was suffering from a bad heart...

The circumstances of his wanting to meet me touched me rather deeply. He said: "One of the tasks I was given when I set out for America was to bring you the greetings and the thanks of my cell mates who shared imprisonment me. We spent many happy hours reading your *Portrait of Mexico*. We read it, studied it and discussed it together and I have come to thank you on behalf of all of us for the pleasure and enlightenment you afforded us in our prison cell."

Excerpted from the late Bertram Wolfe's two-page article – a very personal and emotional account of his "memories". If you are interested in reading the full article please email us at jurasv@gmail.com or phone 022 22843416 /022 66396366 and we will be glad to mail you a hard copy.

With Many Voices

Mr. Georgi Malenkov's cleanshaven face had nothing whatsoever to do with the disappearance of his own moustache, Mr. A. K. Gopalan, communist M.P. declared here last night.

Insinuations that he had chosen to retain his hirsute adornment so long as Marshal Stalin was alive and that after the moustached Marshal's cleanshaven successor arrived, every comrade was ordered to show a clean upper lip, Mr. Gopalan said, were nothing but "demeaning propaganda" on the part of his political opponents to catch votes.

Evening News of India, June 26, 1953

Indian Bureaucracy

– Rating an Administrative Migraine

Sadanand B. Kumta

Ask any Indian whether he ever willingly goes to any government or semi-government office to get his work done.

When one ponders over the future of this country, one gets a feeling of optimism looking at its economic indicators, but at the same time one cannot shirk off the nagging pain of its administrative migraine – namely the Indian Bureaucracy – more popularly known as Babudom. Despite the country's marvellous record as a vibrant elective democracy which can periodically defeat the cleverest of electoral manipulations by political parties, the hapless Indian is burdened with a self-perpetuating civil service – a euphemism for India's inevitable curse.

A Hong Kong based research firm, PERC, the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, has slammed the Indian civil servants as the least efficient of the bureaucracies among 12 Asian nations: Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, Indonesia and finally India – in order of efficiency. Thus the report, which calls Indian Bureaucracy as “suffocating”, says further that “working with its civil servants was a slow and painful process”. Thus it is no surprise that we have been dumped to the bottom of the heap. It is small consolation that an economic giant like China is ranked 9th in the list of 12 north and south Asian nations. Singapore has been rated 1st – 3 times in succession since the poll began in 2007.

What is more painful about our bureaucracy, other than the ranking, is the comment that “they are a power centre in their own right at both the national and state levels and extremely resistant to reform that affects them or the way they go about their duties”. In short, our babus, like leopards cannot change their spots. The poll mentioned was based on opinions of 1274 expatriates working in the 12 nations who were asked to rate their bureaucracies.

One of the glaring examples is the way Babus handle RTI (Right to Information) applications requiring them to be more transparent and accountable in matters affecting the common man: electric power, potable water, schools, hospitals, security, transport and municipal

functions. India's common man has been driven to the state of being a supplicant or an applicant with a great facility of filling up any form in triplicate. But India's public servants are masters of all they survey.

This civil service, which was earlier headed by the Indian Civil Service (ICS) has come to us in a new *avatar* of Indian Administrative Service (IAS). It was Sardar Patel who thought it fit to continue this service for the then nascent republic. When the part C state of Saurashtra was formed, he advised the ministers that though they were the masters, they should seek advice and guidance from the civil servants. The so-called steel frame of the erstwhile British Raj, which as ICS, has neither left a legacy of civility nor of service. Ask any Indian whether he ever willingly goes to any government or semi-government office to get his work done.

Now the latest of Babudom's gift is of mooted amendments to the RTI act where file notings are to be excluded from information with some exceptions. The Prime Minister has been approached by CIC, Shailesh Gandhi, not to violate the spirit of the RTI act as some of the basic sections of the Act are under threat.

Let it not be forgotten that our top bureaucracy has all the privileges – the best cake from the Pay Commission report. After retirement, they seldom walk into the sunset – they can become ministers, governors, vice-chancellors, heads of Public Service Undertakings and other innumerable post-retirement openings. The least that is expected from them is to solve the common man's problems in the true spirit of service and be not just people who have different answers to the same question on different days while the problems and questions remain unanswered and even allowed to fester.

MR. SADANAND KUMTA, a regular contributor to *Freedom First* retired as Director of Technical Education, Government of Gujarat. He is a resident of Pune and can be contacted at sbkumta@rediffmail.com



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjickaka

Crocodile Tears For Bhopal

*As for the thousands who are still enduring the after effects of that terrible day 25 years ago,
well, who really cares?*

The real tragedy of Bhopal is that among the grandstanding, blame-shifting and the most contemptible hypocrisy displayed by our political parties; and the totally misguided hysteria generated by the Indian media, the genuine victims of the Bhopal tragedy have been all but forgotten.

The most ludicrous manifestation of the dog and pony show currently being played out is the cacophonous clamour created by the media for the extradition of Union Carbide former Chairman, Warren Anderson. It is as if the return of a senile 89-year old American will spontaneously and magically bring “justice” to the 25,000 victims of the gas leak, who have been patiently enduring their misery and pain, unheeded and unheralded, for a quarter century.

On the other side of the fence, the ruling Congress party is tying itself in knots, trying to justify why they facilitated the quick departure of Anderson to his native shores. They seem to have settled on then Chief Minister of Bhopal, Arjun Singh as the designated scapegoat. The hapless Singh, who had been put out to pasture during the Congress’ second innings, is not even being allowed to enjoy his senility in peace. Meanwhile the BJP, who believes that its primary function as the chief opposition party is to oppose everything, has got on its moral high horse, conveniently oblivious of the fact that they, too, suffered a collective amnesia about the Bhopal victims during the 5 years they were in power.

The India media, suffused with self righteous indignation, is completely missing the point. Instead of concentrating on Anderson – the *Times Now* television news channel, in an unpardonable invasion of privacy, went to the extent of barging in, uninvited, to the Anderson residence – and the embarrassment of the Congress, they should be asking the pertinent questions, not to mention indulging in self introspection.

The only reason anyone is even talking about Bhopal now is because of the shockingly delayed court verdict – 25 years after the accident – that imposed a laughably inadequate two-year prison sentence and a paltry fine of \$2000 on seven former Union Carbide

employees, including Anderson. The same fire-breathing media was oblivious to the suffering of the gas victims in the 25 intervening years. Now that they have woken up from their Methuselahian slumber, these are the questions they should be asking.

One: Why did the government of that time accept a paltry \$450 million as a final settlement from Union Carbide, when the initial demand was for \$3.5 billion? Remember the then Prime Minister was no less than the hallowed Rajiv Gandhi who, according to the Congress, walked on water. Even more pertinent, how much of that \$450 million has actually reached the intended parties? Knowing the predilection of our politicians and bureaucrats to siphon the cream off any large disbursement, the answer to that should come as no surprise. Still, aren’t they even more culpable and accountable than those who let Anderson off the hook? Why isn’t the media probing this aspect?

Two: isn’t it convenient that the then Chief Justice of India, who let the Union Carbide top executives get away with a mere slap on the wrist, subsequently got a cushy position as the head of the Bhopal Memorial Trust Hospital set up by – surprise, surprise – Union Carbide? Or that Arjun Singh allegedly received two crore rupees from Union Carbide for one of his Trusts? Those familiar with how these “trusts” work can make a fairly good guess in whose pockets most of these funds ended up. If this does not smack of quid pro quo, I don’t know what does.

Yes, these are the questions the media should be asking – but don’t hold your breath. Right now they are content to play up the myth of Arjun Singh and Warren Anderson as the chief villains, because the government has its exit strategy in place and, therefore, winks at media “outrage”. Never forget that our media barons have a cosy relationship with the powers that be; the benefactors who keep the profits rolling in the form of advertising revenue. They may rock the boat slightly, but will make sure that it does not overturn. And as for the thousands who are still enduring the after effects of that terrible day 25 years ago, well, who really cares?

Change Your Name, Bud

So how come the technical wizards that can send a spacecraft to the outer reaches of our solar system, cannot solve this minor glitch?

Once in a very long while, even a technologically-challenged individual like me comes across a piece of information that brings a smug smile to his lips; and an I-told-you-so hovering on his lips.

I'm talking about those infernal machines, computers, of course – those awesome marvels that can make even a human genius look like a moron, when it comes to number crunching and processing information. Turns out, those behemoth brains have a problem with names – and not just exotic names either.

Say you are O'Hara or an O'Connor. A very common name, right? There are probably millions of you in America and Ireland. Yet, try booking an air ticket online, or making an online purchase and, chances are, you will get a name-not-recognized error message. It appears that a lot of computer systems have a problem with the simple apostrophe. Why? Apparently, most computer programs set a rule for first and last names; and the data entered has to be limited to alphabets. An apostrophe is mistaken

for a piece of programming code. The system cannot figure out what it is doing in a name; and goes berserk.

If you're laughing this off as the luck of the Irish, think again. They are not the only victims. Almost all Arab last names are Al-(something or other) and that foxes the computer too. Heck, even the renowned actor and kick boxer, Jean Claude van Damme, can face problems, because of the 'van' in his last name.

So how come the technical wizards that can send a spacecraft to the outer reaches of our solar system, cannot solve this minor glitch? They can, actually. It just did not occur to them while writing the program; the dumb jocks. They think everyone is named John Smith, or Violet Brown. One solution could be to make sure the programming team contains at least an Irishman, a Dutchman; and an Arab.

MR. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA can be contacted at **leonardo8_99@yahoo.com**



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The Not So Gentle Art of Reading

R. Srinivasan

The art of reading is generally viewed to be commendable; it is harmless, disturbing nobody and keeps the reader away from mischief. Yet people have regarded the avid reader with some contempt. The word bookworm is used to describe him. One of the most famous of novels Don Quixote tells us as to how a man may become nearly mad, his head full of fancies all because of excessive reading. He gets into scrapes because of his feverish bookish imagination. Sancho Panza his servant with his robust unlettered commonsense stands tall and often saves his bookish master from uncomfortable situations.

Burning of Books

Generally regarded as harmless, the subversive nature of the reading of books is known both to dictators and authoritarians. All of them dislike the reader for one does not know what the reader harbours in his mind. If possible they will burn all the books of the world. For books and the reading of them in private can harm the larger social set-up. Time and again wholesale burning of books have been resorted to and this has not been only in the 20th century. Hitler's Germany introduced the cult of book burning and by the 1930s they were burnt by the tens of thousands in the public squares of the cities of Germany. Millions of people all over the world were shocked by this. "The past is lying in flames the future will rise from the flames in our hearts" declared Goebbels. This was justified on the ground that a new purified and virile civilization would be born from the ashes like the proverbial phoenix.

Hitler has had honourable predecessors and they are to be found in all civilizations. The first emperor of unified China Chin Shi Huang Ti in 237 BC is associated with the first thorough burning of books from all the Imperial libraries. An ordinance made it mandatory that all possessors of classical works like the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of History* and many others including the discourses of a hundred philosophers should take them to the local government and have them burned; those who talked of the books should be executed and their bodies deposited in the market place; those who have not destroyed their books should be branded and sent to build the Great Wall of China. Only books on medicine, pharmacy, divination and agriculture should be spared. Only the memoirs of Chin the founder of the dynasty should be allowed to be read.

The burning of the Library at Alexandria (AD 642) supplied fuel for the public baths of the city for a full six months. It was estimated that 700,000 volumes were destroyed. Caliph Umar the First in a statement proclaimed: If the contents of these books agree with the *Holy Quran*

then they become redundant. If they disagree they are undesirable. In either case they should be consigned to the flames.

We, who have been witnesses to the vandalizing of the Bhandarkar Oriental Library by the Sambaji Brigade know how delicately poised the public libraries are. Mob frenzy is the greatest potential danger to public libraries and mobs can easily be goaded into action, particularly destructive action. The mobs of Sri Lanka who were anti-Tamil destroyed to cinder one of the greatest libraries of South Asia which had housed priceless books and manuscripts.

Why this zeal for burning public libraries and making a bonfire of books?

Fear of Reading

These manifestations are born of a fear of reading, for reading encourages the individual to be alone, to reflect and in general promotes a sense of rationality and critical temper – all these are deadly to the existence of an authoritarian order. All civilizations have feared the individual who is all by himself and who has a book in hand. This was particularly so when the readers were women, dalits and negroes for they are all susceptible to harmful and unsettling ideas. For nothing is so subversive of social peace as a critical temper and this is what reading would promote.

Frederic K. Douglass (1815 – 1895)

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave (1845) is a small disturbing book that ought to be read by many. It can be read at one sitting. He was a slave and his kind mistress Mrs. Auld taught him the letters of the alphabet and to read. Her husband discovered this and at once prevented her from doing so, for it was unlawful and unsafe to teach a slave to read. "The nigger should know nothing but to obey his master – to do so as he is told to do. Learning would

spoil the best nigger in the world". As a slave he was not allowed in any room lest he read a paper or parts of a book. He had to account for time spent in loneliness. When he was sent on errands he would run, finish it off and steal a few minutes to read the small book that he was hiding. He discovered that the white man's power to enslave the black was by preventing him from reading. The pathway to freedom from slavery was through reading and the new power that it bestowed upon the reader.

Nearer Home - the Instance of Muktabai

The right to read, especially for women in modern India was not without obstacles. It had to be fought for, cajoled and won over by women after persistent and incessant efforts. As early as in 1835 the women of Chinsura in Bengal presented a letter to the *Samachar Darpan* demanding the right to study and education. The revolutionary potentialities that reading offered were demonstrated in an essay that a girl of 14 of the deprived Mang caste wrote in 1855. Muktabai had just three years of education. It eloquently expresses an awakening of sensibilities, of the indignities suffered by her and her community all because of the accident of birth.

The date is important for it preceded by two decades the publication of the fiery *Gulamgiri* by Jotiba Phuley. Her essay about the griefs of the Mangs and the Mahers expressed vividly the sufferings that they had to undergo under the Brahminical Peshwai and she calls in anguish; "Teach us, O Lord, thy true religion so that we can all lead our lives according to it. Let religion where only one person is privileged and the rest deprived, perish from the earth and let it never enter minds to be proud of such a religion". Had she not been educated she would have accepted her lowly position.

A full ten years had to pass by when Bengali women of the upper castes woke up from their deep slumber and began to express similar grievances, again thanks to reading. They had a controlled and limited emancipation, for their men folk were averse to liberating them. There was an apprehension of women learning to read. It was found that they would intrigue and spread disaffection in the home. They might write love letters. They had to read surreptitiously hiding the printed sheets within the ample folds of the saree generally in the dark recesses of the kitchen. The highest duty of the woman was to care for the husband and family and formal education was not relevant. Progressive ideas would unsex them and these would be indeed revolutionary and fraught with great danger to society (Keshab Chander Sen).

In 1861 Bamasundari Devi wrote an essay "Which

are the superstitions that have to disappear for this country to prosper?" This was published as a pamphlet. In 1864 was published an essay by Kailashbhashini Devi on the lowly position of Hindu women and both saw the only way out through women's education. Both these were published in Bengali. They went to great lengths to persuade that reading by women will not lead to the disruption of the family or to foster familial unrest. If anything these will make for better and more intelligent family members.

An All India Phenomenon

The suspicion of women reading persisted in almost all parts of modern India. The champion of the women's cause had to go to great lengths to argue that heavens will not fall if women began reading, that their husbands would not die if they were to pick up books and that families would not be disrupted. In the 1870s was written the first Tamil novel and first tract on women's right to education. They were written by Samuel Vedanayagam Pillai. Here he repeats the same staid arguments that were made in Bengal in the 1860s.

The most poignant account available of the travails of a Maharashtrian woman learning to read is to be found in Ramabai Ranade's autobiography. The Justice himself personally taught his illiterate wife to read and this was done in the nights and she was an avid learner. First she learnt to read Marathi and later English. Once her husband went to court the elderly female relatives would pounce like harpies upon the young helpless daughter-in-law and heap insults and abuses upon her and she had to experience these day after day without complaint. The transformation of a young illiterate girl into a self confident woman sharing her husband's drafting, summarizing of public reports is one of the minor sagas of modern Maharashtra, and a testimony as to how the habit of reading can transform a person.

Even as Ramabai was reading at nights Tagore wrote a number of unforgettable stories of the humiliations, taunts, indignities that young Bengali brides had to suffer at the hands of their sisters-in-law because of their desire to read.

By the time Ranade passed away reading for women was no more the impossible thing that it was decades earlier. In all the provinces more girls went to school than they did earlier. Schools exclusively for girls had been established even in the smaller towns and women won the battle to read for themselves.

DR. R.SRINIVASAN is retired professor of political science, Mumbai University and Associate Editor, *Freedom First*.

Come On, Liberals: Let's Change India!

An Invitation to become a Freedom Partner

Sanjeev Sabhlok

On 1 July 2010, the Freedom Team of India (FTI) completes one year of its existence. Despite a political and media culture in India that is hostile to liberalism, and despite a severe shortage of leaders, FTI has successfully managed to build a platform where good leaders can work together towards a free India. FTI's tricolour torch is now well recognised by thousands of people across India, and everyone has been invited to become a Freedom Partner (<http://partners.freedomteam.in>).

A Liberal National Political Group

What is FTI trying to do? Essentially, it aims to fill the void in India's political spectrum, of a missing liberal party. Ever since the Swatantra party wound up in 1974 things have gone downhill for India. FTI is trying to reverse this trend and take India towards freedom.

What is the obstacle to this goal? Is it that we don't have the policy solutions? No! The solutions to India's governance problems are quite clear, being broadly on the lines suggested in my 2008 book, *Breaking Free of Nehru (BFN)*. (You can download it from <http://bfnsabhlokcity.com>.)

So if the policy solutions aren't an obstacle then what's holding us back? Leadership vacuum. There is no one to fight the corrupt leaders who rule India. After Rajaji died, India's liberals washed their hands off politics and, ever since then, have watched from the sidelines and made idle, useless comments about India's ruin. They are *bhadrakalok* and will not step into the 'dirt' of politics. They are the problem!

Our education system has added to this by creating millions of clerks. Our clerical classes would much rather serve corrupt politicians as bureaucrats and industrialists, than join politics and change things themselves. No one in India seems to be aware of what Pericles said about ancient Athens, that 'this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all'¹ We must therefore tell those liberals who refuse to actively engage in India's politics that they have *no business in India*. Please get involved! That is FTI's main message.

One generation of liberals has *bitterly* failed India. I am now already fifty years old (what a shock!) and if I can't deliver a free India to my people, then one more generation would have bitterly failed. With repeated failures

of this sort, we don't know whether there will even remain an India to talk about in the future.

Make no mistake. The ball is *firmly* in our court. Your court, my court. Our children will blame us just as we don't hesitate to blame those who have failed us so bitterly.

For the past 12 years I have been working towards bringing together outstanding liberals into India's public life. After promoting the Swatantra Bharat Party between 2004-05, it became clear to me that piecemeal efforts simply can't work. We have to do this properly, or not at all. Changing India is no piffling matter and we should give this task due respect and prepare for it properly.

The Path of the Freedom Team

At least 1500 outstanding leaders therefore need to come together to agree on the policies they will offer India. They then need to campaign for three years and acquire considerable funding support. Only then should they consider joining or forming a political party with the clear aim of winning a majority of seats in the Parliament.

I proposed the idea of FTI in mid-2007 and later that year created a Yahoo group, inviting a few people to join. Shantanu Bhagwat, a former foreign service officer, was among the first to join, and published my guest post on his blog, *Saytameva Jayate*². That post received many comments and many bright young people then joined FTI. That was a lucky break.

These founders of FTI then initiated a range of activities. A magazine called *Towards a Great India* was issued, and an excellent brochure released. Thereafter, led by L. K. Kandpal and Ajay Anand in Indore, FTI became a Trust on 1 July 2009. FTI's rules, and particularly its Code of Conduct establish high standards for FTI members to follow. FTI later released its *Basic Principles* and *Strategy* documents and launched a website. Members

actively conducted outreach events in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and received good press coverage.

FTI is based on the citizen-leader model, a citizen who is also a leader. It doesn't require full-time commitment. Members are asked to give the highest possible priority to their livelihood and family, after which they can work collaboratively on a few activities with the team in their spare time. A lot of excellent work has been achieved this way, at very low cost. To further keep costs down, member expertise in finance, accounts and IT is extensively used on the team.

FTI's teamwork is exemplified by a letter that was drafted, designed, and sent out across India to 4000 independents candidates in the 2009 parliamentary elections. Members fielded tens of telephone calls that were received from all over India in response. FTI currently has 94 members and is in touch with 119 independent candidates.

FTI's First Conference

Seventeen members attended FTI's first three-day conference in February 2010 held in Mumbai. At the end of that conference I was able to announce "to the nation that we have a Team. It is now up to the remaining bright and determined young leaders of India to join the Team, and for the good people of the nation to support this effort to transform India's governance."

The conference endorsed FTI's strategy with minor amendments. In brief, FTI members will *not* launch direct political action until all the necessary homework is done

and the people of India *clamour* for change. Further, as part of FTI's annual action plan, a range of programs will be organised this year, including public seminars and Freedom Rallies.

Challenges to be Overcome

The environment for liberal politics in India remains *extremely* hostile. The shortage of leaders is beyond acute: virtually impossible. No reader of *Freedom First* has joined FTI yet. About two thirds of those who have joined FTI are dormant. IT millionaires (and billionaires!) in India who pontificate about values and write books advocating liberal policies have no hesitation in consorting with corrupt socialists!

Funding remains the second major challenge. Members have funded almost all FTI efforts so far. If funds could be raised, then a few FTI members will be able to devote their full time to this task, giving this effort a much needed boost.

Despite these difficulties, FTI is determined to rouse the country from its slumber. It is clear to me that FTI is India's *only* hope now; indeed, India's greatest hope for the past many decades. If anyone has a better alternative to offer, please tell us urgently about it! But if you have nothing better to offer, then make haste to get on board this movement. I look forward to your active participation.

¹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, c.410BC, trans. Rex Warner.

² <http://satyameva-jayate.org/>

MR. SANJEEV SABHLOK can be contacted at sabhlok@yahoo.com.



I am asking the educated man or woman who reads this: Do you love the common folk of our land, the men and women who swarm in town and village? Do you love the languages they speak? Do you love their ways and manners? Do you love the religion they believe in, not looking upon it as ignorance but better wisdom than your own? All this love sums up to patriotism. You can see now I am a 'reactionary' but not a hopeless one: because I see the defects among our people as well as I see their admirable qualities. Their general apathy I deplore. I would have them show more energy in many matters more than they do now, more tolerance and love towards one another, more capacity to work together for common purposes. I love, I intensely love the bullock cart, but I do not wish to give up the railway train steaming from one country to the other... I love the great religions of the mass of our people and all its splendid variations that make no differences but form a beautiful and wise whole. But I do not want the search of material truth called science to be neglected. I want the elite to go to the shrines and the temples as the

common folk do and daily renew and strengthen their resolve to be truthful and helpful to those around them. Otherwise the elite would be alienating themselves from the people, and serving neither themselves nor the people.

C. Rajagopalachari, *Swarajya*, September 5, 1970

In the Event of An Indo-Pak Nuclear War

Sharad Bailur

Brought to the attention of our Editor recently by Mr. Robert Stewart of Dunblane, Scotland, a life subscriber to Freedom First, was an article in The Scientific American of January 2010, titled, "Local Nuclear War" by Alan Robock and Owen Brian Toon.

The writers discussed the consequences of what would happen if a nuclear war took place between India and Pakistan.

Among the points at issue were:

1. Nuclear bombs dropped on cities and industrial areas in a fight between India and Pakistan would start firestorms that would put massive amounts of smoke into the upper atmosphere.
2. The particles would remain there for years blocking the sun, making the earth's surface cold, dark and dry. Agricultural collapse and mass starvation could follow. Hence global cooling could result from a regional war, not just a conflict between the US and Russia.
3. Cooling scenarios are based on computer models. But observations of volcanic eruptions, forest fire smoke and other phenomena provide confidence that the models are correct.
4. The human toll would kill 20 million in India and Pakistan from direct bomb blasts and subsequent radiation. In addition another one billion world wide, (that is a sixth of the human race) would die of starvation because of the ensuing agricultural collapse.

In support of this thesis a detailed analysis of computer models showed that by the 49th day of the war the detritus up in the atmosphere would have spread world wide causing a nuclear winter, just as bad as would be caused by a war between the US and Russia. What stopped the arms race between the US and the USSR and brought about a cap on nuclear weapons was the realisation that a nuclear war would result in a nuclear winter that would destroy all life on Earth.

According to the authors of the article: "Some people think that the nuclear winter theory developed in the 1980s was discredited. And they may therefore raise their eyebrows at our new assertion that a regional nuclear war, like one between India and Pakistan could devastate agriculture worldwide. But the original theory was thoroughly validated. The science behind it was supported

by investigations by the (US) National Academy of Sciences, by studies sponsored within the US military and by the International Council of Scientific Unions, which included representatives from 74 national academies of science and other scientific bodies. Our current work has appeared in leading peer review journals. Still we seem to be the only ones pursuing research into the global environmental risks of nuclear exchanges. We urge others to evaluate and repeat the calculations both for the effects of a super-power conflagration and for more regional nuclear wars."

The authors suggest that the only solution is to abolish all nuclear weapons.

As we are aware India has a publicly declared stance of "No First Use" in the event of a nuclear exchange. But as General Padmanabhan said so succinctly some ten years ago, if Pakistan were to start any such thing, "it would be wiped off the map". More importantly, Pakistan is aware of it. Unfortunately, with the widespread belief in an afterlife in Heaven populated by perpetual houris and ever flowing wine, propagated by the religion that Pakistan follows, death, even mass death is glorified. Hence the concept of the *Fidayeen*. Whether this will tip the scales in favour of starting a nuclear war with India, especially if the Taliban takes over Pakistan (not an unlikely scenario with the current instability of that country), only time can tell. But the danger is an issue that must exercise the minds of the strategic planners of India above all else.

Now to the issue of the article itself and the stance it takes. First, there is no question that if such an event were to occur there would be horrendous damage and loss of life on a genocidal scale in both countries.

Second, my first suspicion is that this article is sponsored by the "nuclear Ayatollahs" of Washington, with the unstated attempt to pressure India into signing the NPT and the CTBT both of which it was exempted from doing when the embargo on nuclear trade was lifted by the 45 nation NSG (Nuclear Suppliers' Group). The Nuclear Deal that India signed with the US met with harsh criticism from the Stimson Center and its chief, Michael Krepon because it let the Indian nuclear lion out of the



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embargo cage with no *quid pro quo*. I doubt that India will fall into that trap and give up, for ever, its right to test nuclear weapons either as computer simulations or as explosive tests. But efforts will continue to be made to bring India into the NPT and CTBT regime.

Third, the issue of the nuclear winter and why the US and the USSR stopped their nuclear stockpile race. The assumption that the USSR and US suddenly woke up one morning and stopped the nuclear stockpile race because they were concerned enough about the health and well being of the Hottentots and Bushmen of the Kalahari or the inhabitants of Tierra Del Feugo is rubbish. They were afraid of MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction, plain and simple. Nothing like good old self-preservation, especially if it can be cloaked in the unctuous garb of international altruism.

Fourth, the article presumes that India and Pakistan, unlike the wonderful fellows the US and Russia are, are irresponsible enough to start a nuclear war (even if the Taliban does not take over Pakistan). In other words, brown monkeys should not play around with dangerous stuff. So let us take away these dangerous playthings from the hands of the Indians and the Pakistanis, (but not the Chinese to whom the US has sold its economic soul – if China were to call in all its debts it could destroy the US instantly) And, of course, India has nothing to fear from China. “*Hum Hai Na!*” (Hindi for ‘I am here for you’). It should be left to the good pure white men who have only been responsible for the genocidal destruction of entire populations of indigenous Americans in both the Americas and the indigenes in Australia and New Zealand.

Today anyone who knows 12th standard science can design a bomb. Even I, with no scientific background but given the right things can assemble one in about three hours. The knowledge to do it is out there on the web. The plea therefore, for abolishing nuclear weapons has about it the same farcical ring that Indira Gandhi’s slogan, “*Garibi Hatao*” (abolish poverty) had; or George Bush’s “War on Terrorism”. Let us work a miracle and take away all the weapons from all the countries in the world – including the US and the USSR. (Nobody knows, of course, who will actually hide how many.) Even if we presume total success in abolishing nuclear weapons you cannot take away the knowledge of how to make them from people’s heads.

The number of scientific “freelancers” who can make bombs has gone up exponentially with the death of the USSR. And they will sell their services to the devil himself, personified by the *al Qaida* when the time comes. Then whether the *al Qaida* will start such a war or the *Lashkar-e-Tayyaba* or any of the other funny names given

to God, will not matter. Besides we have not taken into account the number of unstable regimes left over from the old USSR that still harbour nuclear weapons who are just as capable of starting a nuclear conflagration.

Now to the science of it.

I am not sure enough is known, even today, in the era of weather satellites and knowledge of ocean currents, about weather patterns to make sweeping assumptions of the nature made in the article. The nuclear winter predicted by computers depends upon the data fed into them. There has been the recent case of the Himalayan glaciers and the prediction that they would all melt away by 2035. It turned out the prediction made from computer projections was wrong, and a Nobel prize winning organisation had to issue a very public and embarrassing retraction. GIGO (garbage in and garbage out) is a word well known among computer buffs.

A friend with whom I shared this article had this to say:

Ever since *Sci Am* was taken over by, shall we say, more commercial interests one may view it’s science with a grain of salt. A total nuclear exchange with Pakistan by India would leave more sand in Pakistan and a 100 to 200 million dead in India (Jane’s Defense and Intelligence Review, Pentagon simulations).

The other scenarios posited are laughable at best. Hiroshima and Nagasaki did nothing to climate in any real sense. The fire bombings over Dresden by Doolittle with more TNT output than both the nuclear discharges (during World War II) also did nothing to the local or global environment. Cowfarts have a more deleterious effect on climate change! (This refers to the methane emanated by all grass eating mammals that forms a part of atmospheric methane!)

The curtailing of nuclear stockpiles was more an issue of funds especially on the part of the nonexistent government driven economy of the USSR. The rest of the notions that are expressed in this article were discredited in the late 60s.

I am fairly confident that my first suspicion about putting pressure on India to sign the CTBT and give up its weapons is the real reason behind this article. It may never be possible to prove this, but I take the article with a large dose of salt.

MR. SHARAD BAILUR is an author, freelance journalist, and a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First. Email: sharad.bailur@gmail.com

Delhi's Common-Poverty Games

Michael Arthur

In preparation for the upcoming 2010 Commonwealth Games, Delhi is bursting with expensive construction and renovation projects. But these measures may further cripple the already struggling Indian economy, says Michael Arthur.

Few would describe Delhi as a calm and peaceful city. But the noise pollution has reached a crescendo recently as construction workers toil day and night. This October, once the baking north Indian summer has eased, Delhi will stage the 2010 Commonwealth Games. In a city where millions live in utter destitution, vast stadiums are being constructed at immense cost.

Developers keen to cash in on the anticipated influx of visitors are building a rash of new hotels. Construction workers can be seen on building sites throughout the city without hardhats or even shoes, their small children beside them as they break stones.

No city as poor as this has ever attempted to stage such a tournament. The promise is that the Games will herald a new chapter in Delhi's history, enhancing its international reputation and providing a major and lasting economic boost.

But Delhi may have been sold a lie. The legacy of staging major sporting events is, at best, patchy. Athens was sold the same dream. When the Greek capital won the right to stage the 2004 Olympics it was billed as an opportunity for renewed wealth and glory for this most ancient of cities. But the legacy is a Greek tragedy of immense financial debt. Up to 21 of the 22 stadiums built for the Olympics now lie abandoned. Some have become gypsy camps. The Athens Olympics cost a reported £9.4bn, leaving a debt of 50,000 for each Greek household. Six years later, Greece is on the precipice of utter economic ruin.

But Delhi builds on. High fences are being erected to hide unsightly slums from the anticipated visitors. In

the words of the *Indian Express* newspaper: "If you don't see it, it doesn't exist. That seems to be the view of the authorities."

The event offers the Delhi authorities the chance to sell the lie of the shining new India. This is a country which has higher rates of child malnutrition than sub-Saharan Africa, but which also puts satellites into space. Now Delhi is spending immense sums on a sporting event - even diverting funds specifically earmarked for anti-poverty measures.

At first, the fear was that the city's notoriously terrible transport infrastructure would creak under the pressure of Commonwealth Games visitors. But the new fear is quite the opposite.

South Africa, another country of extreme wealth disparity, is hosting the football World Cup. Hoteliers in the country have reported alarmingly low levels of uptake for hotel rooms. According to the *Daily Telegraph*: "Many spent thousands of pounds renovating their properties and are struggling to recoup the costs. Thomas Cook has already slashed travel prices by more than £1,000 after only half the expected 500,000 fans booked flights to see matches live."

The World Cup, the globe's most popular sporting event, is threatening to be an economic dud. What chance, therefore, does Delhi have with the Commonwealth Games? In the global economic downturn, Delhi has been persuaded to stage a crippling expensive party, and the guests might not even turn up.

COURTESY: Michael Arthur and Open Democracy.
www.opendemocracy.net/Open.

A Tragedy that was Waiting to Happen (Cont'd. from page 6)

tragedy, a decision was taken to sell the plan to a willing Indian buyer. Within days, disaster struck. UCC blamed it on sabotage by Indian workers and stuck to the story for a long time. It was later that it began to wear the convenient corporate veil.

The Guardian (8 June) puts it more carpingly when it said, "The difference between BP and Union Carbide is not just a matter of location of the disaster... It is down to the fact that successive national and state governments of India have rolled over time and time again to the realpolitik of dealing with Dow Chemicals' other investments in India."

In the Absence of Police Autonomy...

V. Balachandran

In India the police controls the common man's life more than in any other country. An unsympathetic police leadership adversely affects us more than any other form of governmental activities.

I have often wondered why we feel elated when politicians take correct decisions. Is it because they always take politically expedient decisions which may not be in the interests of the public? Also, why do we show so much interest in police appointments? One reason is that more and more civil administrative responsibilities are being dumped on the police. Hence, in India the police controls the common man's life more than in any other country. An unsympathetic police leadership adversely affects us more than any other form of governmental activities. In this background the media and the public welcomed the two recent appointments in the Maharashtra Police. D. Sivanandan who had restored police and public confidence in Mumbai after the wrenching 26/11 was appointed as Director General of Police. Sanjeev Dayal, a capable, apolitical and low profile officer was chosen as Commissioner of Police in Sivanandan's place. Neither of them reported as "front runners". They did not "lobby" for these powerful posts. However the political leadership took the correct decision by making in these appointments ignoring other pressures.

A transparent administration instils confidence in the public. The media is the window to the public on government activities. This works in reverse if administration hides facts. Images of even good officers can be marred during crisis situations if media and public are denied access to full facts. A. N. Roy who demitted office as Maharashtra's Director General of Police was a victim of this trend because the Maharashtra Government, due to unknown reasons prevented even the Legislature from seeing our 26/11 report. Roy had displayed commendable leadership in dealing with 26/11. But he was savagely criticized by the Legislature for not leading the force to resist the terrorists. Had our report been published it would have been apparent that Roy had tried to handle the situation and offer guidance to different officers in Mumbai even when tactically he was not expected to do so since it was a "Commissionerate". It was to Roy's credit that he suffered criticisms silently without even once trying to issue a rejoinder. Gone are the days when a bold Khusró Rustamji could criticize even Vinoba Bhave for calling dacoits "victims" of police excesses. That is perhaps the fate of all such officers who cannot defend themselves in public. A recent example is a Trinamul MP calling the West Bengal DGP a "fool"

for mentioning Maoist involvement in the gruesome Gyaneswari Express carnage.

During the 1960s State Police used to look up to the Union Home Minister to protect them even when the State political leadership failed. This stopped from the 1970s due to the heavy politicization of the police. In this background it was refreshing to see Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram making two factually correct but politically inexpedient statements, boosting police morale. On May 31 he clearly indicated Maoist involvement in Gyaneswari Express incident which annoyed the Trinamool Congress. On the same day he supported the Karnataka DGP's statement that firing on Sri Sri Ravishankar's convoy was not directed against the Swamiji.

It is not that all state civil bureaucracies support the Supreme Court's directives on police functional autonomy. They only do "proforma" compliance. On the other hand the tendency has been to hide behind politicians and encroach upon police decision making process. In 1987 the Maharashtra Home Department amended S.4 of the Bombay Police Act to confer police "control, direction and supervision" functions on Home Secretary. The DGP who is the Head of Police Department was made a figure head. But Home Department mandarins were conspicuously absent in discharging any of these functions during 26/11. They did not even read intelligence alerts. The latest is the Maharashtra Home Department circular dated 23 April 2010 on police transfer policy insisting on prior consultation with the Additional Chief Secretary, Home before transferring Police Inspectors, who are usually in charge of Police Stations. The number will run into several hundreds. Earlier the Police Commissioner or Superintendent who were legally held accountable for law and order in a police district would decide where to post a particular Inspector as he knows his officer more than a remote Mantralaya Secretary. How will a Commissioner or Superintendent perform his legal obligation if politically influential inspectors are thrust on him? What is the use of conferring powers on civil bureaucracy without accountability or responsibility?

Mr. V. Balachandran, is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat

Courtesy: Mr. M. J. Akbar and the Sunday Guardian



Thomas Paine

...but he wrote the *Age of Reason*

Chapman Cohen

Thomas Paine died on June 8, 1809. He had expressed a wish to be buried in the Quaker Cemetery, but he had written the

Age of Reason, and religious bigotry said No! He was buried on his own farm with a few simple friends as mourners. On his grave was erected the simple sentence, "Thomas Paine author of *Common Sense*."

Paine lived at a time when God was still thought capable of looking after himself, and he visited those who offended him with sudden death, or blindness, or if he did not, they died raving to God for forgiveness. The Christian Church has in its controversial storehouse what is probably the finest collection of religious lies and slanders in the world, and they have used them freely from New Testament days onward. Paine was not struck dead or blind, so he had to recant when dying. The Christian conscience is a curious product, built up very largely of survivals of savagery and masked brutalities, but its most curious development is the belief that a life time of wisdom may be wiped out, and a seat in heaven secured by five minutes of stupidity when a man is on his death-bed.

What was the real cause of the hatred which Christians manifested against Thomas Paine? It can be stated in a single sentence – he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

All other things that Paine wrote might have been forgiven him – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

It might be counted in his honour that he laid the foundation of democracy in their country – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

It would have been forgiven him that he helped to establish American Independence since its justice is now admitted – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

It would have been remembered to his credit that

he was the first man to write in favour of the freedom of the slaves – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

It would have been remembered that he was the first to write in favour of the equality of the sexes – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

He would have been forgiven for being the first to suggest the imposition of estate duty and death duties – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

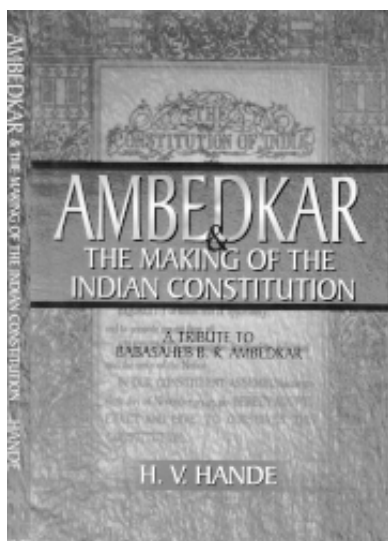
It would have been remembered that he advocated free universal education, maternity benefits, relief for the poor – (not as an act of charity but as a right due to them from society): that he was the first to advocate international arbitration, the first to advocate old age pensions, and the nationalisation of the land, to suggest more reasonable laws concerning marriage and divorce: the first to advocate national and international copyright; the first to plead for the creation of a United States of Europe, all these things would have been remembered – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

It might have been remembered that Paine was a very ardent Theist, that one object of his great work was to rescue the idea of God from what he considered the degrading use the Churches had made of it, and to prevent the growth of Atheism that he actually founded a religion of Theophilanthropy, which was to combine the worship of God with service to mankind – but he wrote the *Age of Reason*.

It might have been that this veritable knight errant of humanity would have been remembered merely for his idealism, for his unswerving devotion to principle, for his readiness to spend himself in terms of the "vision splendid" of a resurrected humanity, and who carried his banner of brotherhood through three of the foremost countries in the world, for these things alone the world would have done him honour, however mistaken his views – but he had written the *Age of Reason*.

Excerpted from Chapman Cohen's booklet, "Pioneer of Two Worlds: Thomas Paine" published by National Secular Society, London.

BOOK REVIEWS



AMBEDKAR – THE MAKING OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION - A TRIBUTE TO BABASAHEB B. R. AMBEDKAR by H. V. Hande • Published by Macmillan Publishers India Limited, 2/10 Ansari Road, Daryanganj, New Delhi 110002 • 2009 • 259 pages • Rs.585

Reviewed by Emeritus Professor Dr. M. V. Pylee, an authority on the Constitution of India, recipient of the Padma Bhushan Award and formerly Vice Chancellor of Cochin University. email: mvpylee@gmail.com; website: www.pylee@gmail.com

This book is an excellent reference work. The author has spent considerable time in going through the entire text of

backward class leaders together participated in many meetings and conferences dealing with problems of the untouchables. Gradually Ambedkar emerged as a champion of the cause of the Depressed Classes. His later life is a saga of his heroic fight for his community.

Ambedkar again went to London, did further research and also took a degree in law. Soon he became a lecturer in law in the Central College of Law at Bombay and later its Principal.

In 1926 for the first time he got elected as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council.

From that time onwards he was the leading champion of the Depressed Classes.

In 1925 while the Indian National Congress boycotted the Simon Commission, he cooperated with it and pleaded for special laws for the protection of the Scheduled Castes. He attended all the three Round Table Conferences in London and pleaded for the cause of the “untouchable” and met personally all leading British leaders.

In 1936 Ambedkar organized a political party called the Independent Labour Party. In the elections of 1937 he and his colleagues won 16 seats in the Bombay Legislative Assembly. In the Assembly he and his colleagues continued their fight for the Depressed Classes. When the Constituent Assembly was formed the Congress ignored him but with the support of his friends in the Bengal Assembly he was elected.

Ambedkar went into the Constituent Assembly as a “Protestant”. Acknowledged as the undisputed leader of the Scheduled Castes he was a relentless opponent and uncompromising critic of the Indian National Congress. He was one of the few who opposed the Objectives Resolution moved by Nehru. But subsequent developments culminating in the partition of the country

the Constituent. Assembly Reports running into over a thousand pages and taking relevant extracts to make the work authoritative. As the title indicates this book brings out the signal role played by Babasaheb Dr. D.R. Ambedkar in drafting the Constitution of India. It has a Foreword written by no less a person than Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam former President of India.

Dr. Ambedkar has had a most remarkable career. Born in a scheduled caste family but because his father was serving in the British Army he had the opportunity to join a school, a rare opportunity for a scheduled caste boy in those days of untouchability of the worst type and complete his primary education. Later he joined an English medium Government High School.

Ambedkar had to suffer the pangs of Caste discrimination in the school right from the beginning and had to sit in a corner of the class room to be away from upper caste Hindu children .. He however stood the indignities bravely and passed every examination with honours. Thanks to the generosity of the maharaja of Baroda who wanted to reward a brilliant young man, he was given a scholarship to go to America for higher studies. There, in the famous Columbia University he had a brilliant career and took a doctorate degree in record time. Thereafter he joined the London School of Economics and did further higher studies. He came back to India to become a Minister and Secretary to Baroda maharaja. But acute caste discrimination made him to resign the position and he proceeded to Bombay. There he met Sahu Maharaj and they became bosom friends. With his help Ambedkar started a fortnightly called the “*Dumb Leader*.” These two

made him realise that political realism demanded a moderate attitude on his part towards those in whose hands affective political power rested. The Congress leaders responded to this gesture generously and co-opted him first as a member of the Drafting Committee and later elected him as its Chairman. That was a great moment in Ambedkar's life. The Congress party could not have made a decision which was or could be more right. For, Ambedkar not only fully justified his selection but added lustre to the work that he undertook. Ambedkar brought to bear upon his task a vast array of qualities, erudition, scholarship, imagination, logic, eloquence, and experience. He had a rare mastery over the most complicated problems and situations and an ability to put across his ideas in the most lucid and forceful manner. With a rich treasure of knowledge of constitutional principles and practices in most of the leading countries, and his thorough and intimate understanding of the working of the Government of India Act of 1935, Ambedkar was able to meet any critic in the Assembly and expand the principles underlying the Constitution in an admirable manner. Whenever he spoke

in the House, usually in reply to the criticisms advanced against the provisions of the Draft Constitution, there emerged a clear and lucid exposition of the provisions of the Constitution. As he sat down, the mist of doubts vanished, as also the clouds of confusion and vagueness. In the Constituent Assembly none else was as forceful and persuasive in argument, clear and lucid in expression, of quick and arresting in debate, And yet, he had always the generosity to concede the credit to a critic who made a valid point and to frankly acknowledge it. Ambedkar's contribution to the Constitution is undoubtedly of the highest order. Indeed he was a modern Manu and deserves to be called the father of the Constitution of India.

This book based on thorough research and deep study should become a very valuable work for students of Constitutional Law, Political Science, Public Administration – legislators and everyone interested to know the background of the Constitution of India. Dr. Hande, the author, deserves fulsome praise for undertaking this scholarly work.



**GODDESS OF THE MARKET:
AYN RAND AND THE
AMERICAN RIGHT** by Jennifer
Burns ● Oxford University Press,
USA ● 384 pp. ● USD 27.95



**AYN RAND AND THE WORLD
SHE MADE** by Anne C. Heller ●
Published by Nan A. Talese
knopf Doubleday.com/aynrand ●
2009 ● 592 pp ● USD 25.95

Reviewed by Michael O'Donnell, a writer and lawyer living in Chicago.

women but at the public, the masses. As the economist Ludwig von Mises wrote in praise of Rand's other major novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, "You have the courage to tell the masses what no politician told them: you are inferior and all the improvements in your conditions which you simply take for granted you owe to the effort of men who are better than you."

Overuse of this angry word is not Rand's only literary tic – her villains and weaklings tend to be fat or effeminate, and she has a fondness for courtroom showdowns. Moreover, critics have so thoroughly savaged her melodramatic,

A Life of Contempt

Ayn Rand's defining characteristic was hatred - for government, other people, and the very concept of human kindness.

I began counting Ayn Rand's uses of the word "contempt" on page 43 of *The Fountainhead*, by X which point it had already appeared four times, and twice on that page. The word shows up thirty-nine times more in the book, by my count, which probably missed at least a couple of deployments. Rand's villains and heroes smile contemptuously, throw back their heads and laugh contemptuously, and deem others too contemptible to be worth addressing. The most indelible image of contempt takes place when the novel's hero rapes its heroine in an act performed "in contempt, as a symbol of humiliation and conquest." If that were all, the scene would not be infamous. But the word reappears several sentences later: "the act of a master taking shameful, contemptuous possession of her was the kind of rapture she had wanted."

Disturbing as this man-worshipping desire to be raped is – and it is not Rand's only such scene – the most frequent use of contempt in her fiction is directed not at

high-camp prose over the years that it seems ungenerous to focus on her writing at the level of the word and the phrase rather than the grand idea. But this particular tic is revealing, for as two new biographies show, Rand herself lived a life of contempt: for people, for ideas, for government, and for the very concept of human kindness. In the most famous (and overheated) denunciation of her work, the fin-g'er pointer Whittaker Chambers wrote in *National Review* that “from almost any page of *Atlas Shrugged*, a voice can be heard, from painful necessity, commanding: ‘To a gas chamber – go!’” The great irony of Rand’s life is that this woman who seemed to despise everyone beneath her became a cheerleader for democratic capitalism, a type of political economy that entrusts the fate of society to the unwashed masses themselves.

Chambers’s hatchet piece – commissioned in an act of malicious mischief by William F. Buckley Jr., who disliked Rand’s godlessness – was particularly cruel considering that Rand was a Russian Jew who had escaped the USSR. But if his language was shockingly harsh, the sentiments were typical of the type of passions Rand inspired during her life, and still inspires today. Although she died in 1982, half a million copies of her books still sell each year, and her followers continue to guard her name like hardball lawyers protecting a trademark.

On the other hand, Rand has never been taken seriously by the literary establishment or the academy, earning sneers when she has gotten any attention at all. But if liberals disdained her, many conservatives feared her ferocious atheism and her quixotic defense of capitalism. Whereas traditional conservatives believe that free markets create the most wealth for all, Rand praised capitalism in moral terms: great achievers have a right not to be held back, she grimly argued, her dramatic cape atwirl and her gold dollar brooch shining.

Helping to sort out these competing passions are Jennifer Burns’s *Goddess of the Market* and Anne Heller’s *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, two outstanding biographies that reveal much about a figure who to this point has been chronicled only by biased disciples. The books are pleasantly complementary. Burns’s is an intellectual biography that situates Rand in the tradition of modern lib-ertarian politics; the writing is focused and concise, and the analysis very sharp. Remarkably, this shrewd, accessible work is a doctoral thesis repackaged. Heller’s book is a more traditional life, a detailed portrait that uses a narrower lens, painstakingly but elegantly showing Rand’s descent into intellectual madness. Reading the two books together provides for the first time a complete picture of Rand’s life and works – and the picture is an ugly one.

Both authors contend that Rand’s early years in Russia heavily influenced her intellectual development. She was born Alisa Rosenbaum three weeks after the 1905 revolution, and lived through the 1917 ones and their bloody, impoverished aftermaths. Each author seizes on a different formative experience, and if this type of armchair psy-chology by biographers is never very reliable, it is in this case certainly plausible. Heller describes an incident in which Rand’s mother paternalistically tricked Rand into giv-ing away a favorite toy. Burns, by contrast, opens her book with a harrowing scene in 1918 when a twelve-year-old Rand watched armed Red Guards forcefully take over her father’s pharmacy for the greater good of the people. Both incidents taught young Rand that tyrants often profess benevolent motives to justify coercive acts.

Rand’s philosophy – developed after em-igrating alone at twenty-one to the U.S., scraping by as a screenwriter in Hollywood – was essentially an anti-altruism. She called it Objectivism. No kind gesture on behalf of others should be trusted, because it might disguise nefarious motives. (To Rand, Robin Hood is the ultimate villain.) Selfishness is a virtue; reason, above all, prevails; and emo-tion is inconsequential. Thus Rand believed taxation was immoral, charity was foolish, and equality a terrible ideal; conscription and anti-abortion laws were unconscionable intrusions into citizens’ personal rights. Above all she believed in markets, regulated by little more than courts to enforce contract and property law. Viewing Rand’s uncompromising politics in light of her upbringing in the Soviet Union turns her into a type of Clarence Thomas figure: someone who rebels so strongly against injustice experienced during childhood that she creates an extreme perversion of the usual lessons learned. Whereas Thomas reacted to boyhood racism by voting, from his perch on the Supreme Court, to eliminate any law that purported to help blacks or other minorities, Rand took from communism that no one should try to help anyone else, ever.

But as Rand’s fame grew during her years as a famous novelist, pop philosopher, and elephant gun for Republican candidates, she tended to ignore the many selfless people who had helped her succeed. There was her family in Russia who sold their jewelry to send her to America; her relatives in Chicago who helped get her to Hollywood; and her many friends whom she soaked for ideas in late-night debates and then disowned irreversibly when they committed heresies like praising Kant or Plato. (Rand preferred Aristotle.) Above all, Heller shows, there was her husband, Frank O’Connor, a patient soul whose idyllic life as a gentleman farmer was uprooted when Rand insisted they move from their ranch in California to New York so that she could pursue her writing. O’Connor pined

to return to the ranch for the rest of his life, but Rand, scrubbing the historical record like the communists she so detested, insisted that “he loves New York. He *hated* California.”

Rand’s greatest cruelty to her ever-loyal husband was to sit him down and explain to him that she would begin carrying on an affair with her intellectual soulmate, Nathaniel Branden. Branden had by that time become the leader of a cult following that surrounded Rand and eventually isolated her from the public in the 1960s and ’70s. Ironically for a group devoted to individualism, they denounced wayward thinkers in Stalinish show trials and lined up to copy Rand’s most prosaic choices (such as her se-lection of furniture styles). By Rand’s thinking, the affair with Branden was perfect-ly rational, and emotion needn’t enter into the equation. That was little consolation for O’Connor, cuckolded in twice weekly trysts in his own bed – nor, as it turned out, for Rand herself, when Branden abandoned her for a younger woman. She denounced him completely in the pages of her newsletter, *The Objectivist*, and made her followers swear not to attend his lectures. Burns’s book only hints at the full extent of these twisted love triangles and loyalty oaths, while Heller reveals them for the historical record in all their sordid glory.

Burns has the edge, though, in identifying Rand’s intellectual legacy. She describes Rand as “the ultimate gateway drug to life on the right,” elaborating: “Just as Rand had provided businessmen with a set of ideas that met their need to feel righteous and honorable in their professional lives, she gave young people a philosophical system that met their deep need for order and certainty.”

Who needs difficult questions, gray areas, and doubt when one can have all of life’s questions conclusively answered in 1,000 easy-to-read pages? And who wouldn’t want to have every base, selfish motive validated by an unassailable philosophy proving that kindness and altruism are actually bad?

Burns also traces Rand’s prickly relationship to the Republican Party: she campaigned for Wendell Willkie in 1940 and Barry Goldwater in 1964 but grew exasperated with the party’s growing religiosity and tepid defense of capitalism. She loathed Ronald Reagan.

Ultimately, both books show that Rand’s own life disproved her carefully wrought philosophy of selfishness. She happily accepted help from others while denouncing altruistic kindness. She trumpeted the virtue of reason over emotion, then surrendered to jealousy of a former lover. More bizarrely, she proved the preposterousness of absolute self-reliance by setting herself up as psychotherapist to many vulnerable members of her salon, doing untold damage to psyches and relationships. Too many young Ayn Rand followers have relied on her novels alone to prove the value of an individualism so extreme that it does not merely ignore others, but actually spits in their faces. Now that biographers have shown the devastation she brought upon those around her, the lesson is painfully clear: behold the ruins of a completely selfish life.

Courtesy: MICHAEL O’DONNELL and *Washington Monthly* (November/December 2009).

Freedom First

3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001.
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Is economic freedom of a few, *Freedom*?



1991 heralded an economic change that **Freedom First**, India's only Liberal Magazine had been advocating since 1952. Over the last 15 years, while economic liberalization has gained slow momentum, governance has been abysmal. Safe drinking water, basic healthcare and decent education have yet to reach more than 60% of our billion plus population. The economic boom that was to transform India has reached just a small minority and with continued poor governance, will remain so. Are we then truly a free society?

Freedom First, the Liberal Monthly, now in its 58th year of publication, was founded by the late Minoo Masani, author and MP, at a time when free India was just five years old, World War II had ended and the Cold War had begun. As a participant himself in India's freedom struggle he shared the vision of the leaders who had led us to freedom that, with independence, our country would launch towards the winning of a new world - the creation of a new society, secular in its foundation, ensuring liberty of thought, belief and action and the realization of economic and social justice for all the citizens of the free republic.

This vision **Freedom First**, has steadfastly adhered to, even at times when it was politically incorrect or 'unpopular' to speak up for Liberal Values not to mention Liberal economics. Today when India is subjected to Maoist (Naxalite) insurrection, **Freedom First** is clear that the primary concern of the State is to ensure the Rule of Law by enforcing law and order and putting down the rebellion even while attending to the long neglected grievances of the disadvantaged particularly the adivasis whose cause is cited as the reason for the Maoist's violent insurrection.

Over the years **Freedom First** has emerged as the only journal in the country viewing and interpreting events and policies from a Liberal perspective. In addition to its white collar readers, **Freedom First** is also read by professionals, intellectuals, bureaucrats and academicians and those in the establishment. We would dare to submit its influence is wholly disproportionate to its circulation.

With the increasing heat of today's politics where public morality has reached an all time low, **Freedom First's** stance on secular liberalism is perhaps getting unfashionable. As a result, it is having to struggle to survive even more than it had to when it was ploughing a lonely furrow. Increasingly, eroding advertising and other support could well result in **Freedom First** closing down.

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