

Freedom First

The Liberal Position

❖ *Elections to State Assemblies*

Some Perspectives

❖ *The Lokpal Bill and What it Entails*

❖ *For Whom The Bell Tolls*

❖ *M. F. Hussain*

Look who's Talking About his Obduracy

❖ *On Rabindranath Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary*

The Trespasser - A Short Story

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Freedom First

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Between Ourselves...

For the first 29 years after independence we had political stability – at least at the Centre. It was then described as the era of one-party dominance, the dominant party being the Indian National Congress. The stability was also described as the 'stability of the graveyard' - there was peace but little growth in almost every field of economic and social endeavour. Then came the 'emergency' so called that rocked the boat for 18 months. It was followed by a non-Congress government at the centre when a party stitched together by Jayaprakash Narayan was returned with an overwhelming majority. It appeared to us then that finally we could look forward to the emergence of a genuine two-party system – The Indian National Congress (better known then as the Indira Congress) and the Janata Party. But this proved to be a mirage. The Janata Party's stitches gave way and the Indira Congress returned to power once again regaining its dominant position but for a briefer spell. 1989 marked the beginnings of the coalition era. While coalitions reflect the mosaic that is India the political mosaic as it is today is chaotic and one despairs for the survival of the parliamentary form of government. Civil Society alone can strengthen parliamentary democracy. That is not happening. Instead Civil Society appears to be set on a collision course with parliament.

A discussion on the recent Assembly elections organized by us and which forms part of this issue's cover feature, spent half its time discussing the dangers of the face-off between the government and some well-meaning citizens on the Lokpal bill. Sharad Bailur's one-page comment on the 'Lokpal Bill and What it Entails'(see page 15) is a good exposition of the liberal position. We commend it for your attention and invite you to share your views with us.

Mr. C. R. Dalvi, an outstanding humanist and a respected lawyer practicing in the Mumbai High Court and a good friend of *Freedom First* passed away on 24th May 2011. A tribute to honour his memory will be published in the August issue.

As we go to press comes the sad news of the demise of Professor Suresh Tendulkar, the liberal economist. We shall carry our tribute to him and his work also in the August issue.

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From Our Readers

Do We Want India to be a Superpower ...

Or a country that has no global ambitions but modest desire to eliminate poverty and hunger and provide opportunities for people to develop and grow? We asked readers to send in their views. – Ed.

Super Power or Welfare State?

There has been a constant debate on “butter or guns” in most democratic countries where budgets are subject to public scrutiny. In 1933, when the USA had not fully recovered from the ‘Great Depression’, the Government proposed a cut of USD 80 million in the Defence outlay. General MacArthur told President Roosevelt: “Mr. President, when we lose the next war and the enemy bayonets the American soldier with a boot on his throat, I hope he would curse the President and not MacArthur.” The President retorted that the General could not talk like that but the proposed cut in the defence budget was restored! In World War II, the Allies were caught unprepared believing there was “no likelihood of war”. They ignored the expansion of the army by Germany into consideration. The USA which had been drawn into World War I should have realized the possibility of getting involved in a conflict in Europe. Yet they were caught with poor anti-submarine resources in World War II. Even if there were no obvious signs of hostile intentions, the capability of the neighbouring countries should be considered in preparing defence plans.

After World War II, the economies of Germany and Japan had been completely shattered. Absence of any expenditure on defence is cited as a reason for their fast recovery. That is true but the fact is the US had provided a defence shield. Western Europe and Japan could develop their industries because of protection provided by forty Divisions of NATO troops and the USA’s nuclear deterrent. The USA undertook this responsibility in order to establish itself as a world power and influence events to promote her own geopolitical and economic interests.

In India, the debate on butter or guns has often been pushed to unrealistic limits. It has become a slogan to misguide people and an excuse for serious shortcomings. Expansion of telecommunications, surface communications and TV network was shelved on the pretext of concentrating resources on food for the people. National security, we are told, is not merely integrity of borders but includes the well being of citizens. True, but a state has to survive in order to be prosperous and the security of citizens is an essential responsibility of a welfare state.

The history of India during the last fourteen centuries is a shameful record of raids and invasions. Most of the invaders like Nadirshah and Timur had much poorer economies and succeeded because we had not given adequate attention to our security needs. The nuclear test in 1999 drew adverse criticism from intellectuals who claim to speak for the people. They gave data of how many schools could have been opened with the money spent on a nuclear test. It is of interest that in a poll conducted by Dr Sawant, formerly professor at Mumbai University the people living on pavements voted for nuclear arms. They gave their choice clearly – “We will eat grass but we must have the atom bomb.” Many falsehoods are created in the name of people’s welfare.

A superpower has a dominant position in the international system with ability to influence events anywhere and simultaneously at more than one place to ensure its national interests. It requires both military and economic strength. India certainly need not aim at being a superpower as it is beyond its present capability; but, India’s security needs must be clearly defined and provided for. Since Independence, a few myths have been propagated against this objective.

Firstly, it is historically wrong to claim that India never ventured into other countries. It must be appreciated that the key to prosperity and security of the Chola Kingdom rested on the dominant position of their navy in the Indian Ocean. They had established a monopoly of trade in the Ocean and defended it with hard power by occupying Malaysia. We must strive for friendly relations with Sri Lanka and the Middle East. Friendly relations imply that no hostile power is allowed to build bases there.

Secondly, it was spelt out that the Defence outlay should not exceed the GDP growth. It pegged down the Defence allotment to 2.5% of budget expenditure. This limit was forgotten when the GDP grew at 9.5%. Defence budget was not raised to 9.5%. This limit had no logical justification.

Thirdly, the well accepted desire to produce all

equipment in India became an obstacle to Defence preparedness. There is considerable difference between the desirable and the possible. Before World War II, France had the money to buy arms from wherever available but they decided, instead, to build arms manufacturing facilities. This has been listed as one of the reasons why France fell. We need real arms, not sketches on a drawing board.

There is no conflict between butter and guns. We need both and a balance has to be struck. If our resources are not adequate for both the tasks, we can take recourse to changes in our foreign policy as a compromise. There is one major difference in this sphere. A conflict in Europe immediately draws other countries into a war since they are interlinked by history and common objectives. India does not enjoy such a position and we are likely to be left alone to fight our battles. The compromise asked for in case of a conflict may be politically unacceptable. It could be a withdrawal from Kashmir. The staunch support of the USSR is not available now.

It will be of help if we build up our relations with neighbours through benign economic deals and at the same time maintain a tough posture. We cannot ignore the massive build up of arms by China and their aggressive policy of extending Chinese territory. They have claimed rights in Arunachal, South China Seas and underwater exploration for oil off Japan. Their 'string of pearls' in the Indian Ocean is a threat to our shipping and consequently to energy security. They have a strong presence in Pakistan and have established influence in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Nepal. We need to develop our economic and military strength to promote our national interests. Domination of the Indian Ocean is a must and Chinese influence in our neighbourhood has to be countered. The neighbouring countries will take note of us only if we are a strong nation with determination to defend our interests and be in a position to help them. We need to be a regional power, if not a superpower, and we have the capability to be one.

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In Asia, journalist killings face endemic impunity

Most murders of journalists go unpunished

We had planned to publish the following press release by the New York based Committee to Protect Journalists when we read the news of the murder of investigative crime journalist J. Dey in broad daylight on the afternoon of June 15 at Powai in Mumbai when he was on his way home for lunch. The murder has sent shock waves across the city. Even as we go to press a week after the killing, the police are clueless. *Freedom First* mourns the death of this veteran journalist.

"Asian countries are significantly challenged when it comes to prosecuting the killers of journalists," says the Report. "Of the 13 countries on CPJ's 2011 *Impunity Index*, seven are in the region, accounting for 41 percent of the 251 murders of journalists that have gone unpunished over the past decade. The Philippines ranks third, due to the massacre of 32 journalists in November 2009, which is still making its way through the country's troubled legal system. Sri Lanka ranks fourth, an indication that justice is evading journalists under an administration that is struggling to defend its human rights record.

In South Asia, Afghanistan and Nepal rank sixth and seventh, while democracies like Pakistan (10th), Bangladesh (11th) and the world's largest democracy, India (13th) round out the list.

Uninvestigated and unprosecuted journalists' deaths have broad implications. "The targeted killing of journalists serves as a silencing message to others, ensuring that sensitive issues are not subjected to public scrutiny," said CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon. "Many journalists who were murdered had been threatened beforehand but were left unprotected. Governments can either address anti-press violence or see murders continue and self-censorship spread."

"Law enforcement must respond aggressively when journalists are threatened, and it must solve the crimes once reporters are attacked," said Simon. "Otherwise, authorities perpetuate a vicious cycle in which impunity breeds violence and ensures silence."

CPJ delegations have met recently with heads of state in the Philippines, Mexico, and Pakistan, and with senior law enforcement officials in Russia, to seek systemic reforms and convictions in unsolved cases. In each instance, top officials pledged to reverse the record of impunity in their countries, but the task is considerable. CPJ research shows that, time and again, entrenched corruption and dysfunction in law enforcement has thwarted justice in journalist murders. Suspects have been publicly identified in dozens of unsolved cases examined by CPJ for the 2011 index, but authorities have been unable or unwilling to gain convictions.

The Recent Elections to Five State Assemblies

Some Perspectives

Much has been written about the growing maturity of the Indian voter; that the Indian voter has come of age. Has he become more discriminating in exercising his franchise? Does he look at the name of the candidate or at the symbol when punching his vote on the EVM? Is vote bank politics (voting based on caste or religion) on the retreat? What about money power? Are we reading too much into these results? These were some of the issues that were discussed at a half-day brain-storming session organized by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom on Saturday June 4, 2011. The meet was sponsored by the Hilla and Dosi Vakeel Endowment.

Introductory Remarks from the Chair

The results of the just concluded Assembly elections have thrown open many questions. The main among them whether the electorate has really understood the fact that it possesses the power to bring about change; or is it just a temporary reaction to the happenings in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu throwing out the ruling parties in these two states. Are voters examining the issues involved before casting their vote?

The democratic process is under scrutiny; there is pressure on the government from civil society groups to do certain things. Is such pressure good or is it bad? This too the electorate has noted and must be wondering whether it is necessary to wait for five years to make its voice felt; or is it that it wants shortcuts outside the electoral process? Would such shortcuts strengthen or weaken the democratic process? (Ashok Karnik)

The Background

A background paper prepared by Dr. R. Srinivasan and circulated to invitees and which formed the basis for the discussion is reproduced below.

The enthusiasm of the voters and the commendable turnout in the recent Assembly elections makes India proud. All shades of public opinion and divisions have accepted the legitimacy of the ballot box and nothing has politically educated them more in the alphabet of democracy than voting in which they have participated with enthusiasm. The electoral mechanism has come to stay as the final arbiter of politics. Many political leaders have been cut to size, humbled and put in their place.

One lesson that we have learnt is that local elections are decided by local issues and no ideology-

grinding or guidance from the party headquarters will be acceptable. The locality is what matters. Also the variety of our regions makes each of our areas unique with its own traditions, history and logic. What is salient in Tamil Nadu will be ineffective a few hundred miles away. Karunanidhi or Jayalalitha will not be able to cut ice outside their region. Local parties will never lose their salience and Indian politics is a mosaic of different colours unique not only to the country but to the different regions as well.

Can we presume that the Left has been permanently left behind to lick its wounds and a new dispensation is on the rise, both in Kerala and West Bengal? Is a new phenomenon on the rise in different regions? Will it presage change?

Kerala has been the most volatile of the states and has experienced political changes more than any other and its political experience over the decades has been without precedent. Like all elections in the region, the latest too was keenly contested and the Congress has managed to form a government with a very thin majority too small for comfort. Kerala also is unique in that it does not vote for the same party in successive elections. The Left is a permanent fixture in Kerala. Politics as with the Muslim League and the Christian groups all together give the state a unique political culture of comparative politics. The support for the Congress comes mainly from the Muslim areas and the Christian groups, even as the Hindu groups voted for the CPM. It is argued that the vote is not pro-Congress as much as it is anti-Communist. Searing experiences such as the near decimation of innocent helpless citizens because of the endosulfan tragedy has permanently put a deep gash in the society and body politic of Kerala. It is one of the ironies of Kerala that an experiment of this dimension has not resulted in the emergence of a leadership to voice the grievances and

give a new sense of direction. V. S. Achutanathan warned of the new unprecedented scandals relating to sex supplementing the usual corruption scams. The new Chief Minister Oomen Chandy has unique political qualities – his accessibility to the common man and his capacity to take quick decisions have been regarded as refreshing. In this, he is like Karunakaran and unlike the otherwise widely liked A. K. Anthony.

The successive third victory notched by the Congress in Assam has been interpreted as an acclamatory vote for the stable and clean government of Tarun Gogoi. The State cries for development of its enormous potential, its natural resources, but still is in a state of underdevelopment. The Congress victory is seen as a result of the massive support of the immigrant Muslim vote; but the Congress Party itself sees this as a vote for its record of development. Charges are made by the opposition parties of corruption on a gigantic scale. Conceding this to be true, can any one point to any one state rid or cleared of corruption? The Assamese have a grievance that they are getting far less than what they contribute to the Indian Union. However, industries have been moving continuously, as for instance, the establishment of a Hindustan Unilever plant in the state; also farm produce has increased. The third term for the Congress is also seen as a vindication of its development policies.

Both in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the ruling parties, the DMK and the CPI(M) appeared invincible. The DMK had its members in important Union ministries and was marching from a position of strength and becoming stronger. Now, in the state assembly, their strength has been reduced to a paltry 23. The decimation of the Party was long in coming. As early as 2001, Tamil Nadu was written off by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Union Planning Commission. It was recently mauled by morally repellent scandals relating to the 2G Spectrum. The government had become a byword for corruption and the public was fatigued with the ruling family and its hubris. The unprecedented *largesse* doled out to the public before elections appeared obscene and there was public cynicism that had become all pervasive. The seizure of cash (by the Election Commission's Returning Officers) stacked in bags totalling more than 5 crores lying unclaimed was obviously meant for redistribution. The public accepted the goodies such as mixer grinders but voted according to their conscience. They argued that the money was theirs after all which had been snatched by the politicians! The 2G scam

perhaps unprecedented in its Himalayan dimensions in contemporary India and its exposure brought the DMK statewide moral revulsion. It was the largest graft in Indian history.

The reversal in West Bengal appeared like a tsunami surfing away 26 ministers of the CPM-led Left Front Government including the Chief Minister. Arrogances and instances of corruptions seeping among the cadres angered the voters. The top leadership was isolated from the public and this has been regarded as explaining the rout. Also it has been alleged that the minorities in the state were neglected in the fields of education, economic development and empowerment.

Thirty four years ago, the Congress ministry was wiped out and Siddharth Shankar Ray had to quit. A similar political change has repeated itself. Rumblings of discontent over Singur, Nandigram and Lalgarh were ignored and the government had to pay a price for this neglect. In 1984, Mamata Banerjee who electorally defeated the formidable Somnath Banerjee, came into prominence and in 1997 founded the All India Trinamool Congress. Singur in 2006 was a turning point in her career when she went on a 26-day fast to oppose the Tata proposal for an automobile (Nano) plant at Singur. Will the memories of Nandigram and Singur continue to haunt them? Will the emigrating captains of Industry return? If Kerala had its endosulfan problem, West Bengal has had the Himadri Chemicals and Industries spreading a pall of black carbon ash on its ponds and fields, resulting in people becoming sick with headaches and rashes. Pollution has remained a live issue but the Leftist government did not have the will to tackle this public menace. This is true of all governments at the state level and what is poignant is that both Kerala and West Bengal were ruled by parties claiming to represent the poor

The emergence of Mamata Banerjee as a determining factor in West Bengal politics is something that we should note very carefully and see what its implications are on long term issues as such. We had expected her to do well. What she has done is astonishing. We always thought that the CPM was too well entrenched to be knocked off from West Bengal. We need to think about it and the immense potentialities that are there for dynamic individuals to build up a new style of politics.

In Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha's return is equally astonishing. Does it reflect more on the shortcomings of the DMK rather than her having anything positive to

offer? I can't think of her having anything ideologically new to offer to the people of Tamil Nadu as such. Nevertheless one who was written off from the political stage, has once again come back to the centre stage. What are the long term implications?

What do these things indicate about the future of Indian politics? What we know for certain is that elections have come to stay and the fact that the Election Commission has played perhaps a greater role than was expected is a good augury for Indian democracy.

THE DISCUSSIONS

The Election Commission of India

The Assembly elections proved beyond doubt that the Election Commission (EC) has a world class infrastructure among the best, perhaps the best. A summary of the management of the recent Assembly elections posted on its website is well worth a visit. It tells us *inter alia*: number of constituencies(824); Electors(146 million - or 20% of total electorate of the country); number of Candidates (6,679); polling stations (1,65,945); EVMs (2,00,157); polling personnel (7,45,947); security personnel (6,36,820); (video cameras (14,429); Webcasting (11,399 polling stations) and much more. It's a five page 'revelation' and underlines the increasing sophistication of India's election machine. A section entitled "Major challenges" lists the following: Inducement of voters through distribution of money and kind; media misuse (paid news), voter apathy among youth – the educated urban population; and security arrangements especially in Naxal violence-affected areas.

In other words the Election Commission has gone beyond its functions of holding elections, to ensuring that the environment for the elections are conducive and offers a level playing ground to both parties and voters. So what we have is a wonderful infrastructure. It is for us the voters to make good use of this to produce worthwhile representatives.

The fairly high percentage of votes cast in the Assembly election is a tribute to the Election Commission. They are succeeding in getting people to come out and vote particularly in rural India by assuring voters personal security and well managed polling stations at convenient distances. However they have yet to figure out how to get the lazy middle class in urban India to exercise their franchise (to me the reference is obviously to the jean-clad social networking chatterati) . I am sure the EC will find a way to get these too to the polling booths. (S. V. Raju)

The Role of Ideology

In both Kerala and West Bengal, ideology took a

back seat. We too now are following the general pattern in the world, where communism (both states were led by communist-led coalitions) does not matter very much any more. (Fr. Benny Aguiar)

Did the voters in Tamil Nadu vote against corruption? If they did, then how come the Lok Satta Party did so poorly. According to a press report, their party in Tamil Nadu put up candidates in 36 constituencies, lost all, receiving an average of 500 votes each. During a post election TV discussion, when Cho Ramaswamy was waxing eloquent about Jayalalitha, Historian Ramachandran Guha, intervened to point out that the lady during her earlier tenure in office was also accused of corruption!

Then there is a fact that is becoming increasingly obvious. All elections be they local (panchayat, Municipal, District, State) or national are all treated by the elector as local elections. How do we deal with this. Perhaps only through voter education and working out mechanisms for networking and operating as a tandem even if they belong to different political parties. The Election Commission has got the people to come out and vote. It is for civil society to get them to vote wisely. (S. V. Raju)

The CPM-led Left Front was defeated because of Mamata's agitation in West Bengal. The Left front had become popular because of the land reforms, i.e. land for the tiller. So they survived on that for 34 years. But they failed on the Industry front. Now is Mamata pro-Industry? Is it that she has been standing for industrialisation of West Bengal; an alternative to what the Left Front was offering? (Ashok Karnik)

Extra Constitutional Power Centres

In the last twelve months, the changes that have taken place in this country are unprecedented. Many of them are good, many bad. For example, this is the first time that we have ministers going to jail. That may be good or it may be bad. Persons who hold office, going to jail may or may not be good for the future. It is when

people get their backs to the wall, fed up with the administration, that they tend to go and exercise their right to vote. And this is the right thing to do. But the public is going beyond the constitutional framework and we are now having examples of extra-constitutional powers being exerted. No well governed democracy in the world can afford to have extra-constitutional power centres.

Corruption is an outward manifestation of poor leadership. Why is there corruption in private companies; because the managing director or chairman who is overseeing things does not have the courage to sack somebody who is corrupt. So instead of putting somebody in jail, if we had the courage expected in a leader to sack a minister, and if that leader then gets the backing of the public, which he would, then I think we would probably have a better administration, and it will stop the destruction of constitutional authority. During the last three years, we have destroyed several constitutional authorities and now there is a danger of destroying Parliament itself which is the ultimate constitutional authority. (V. S. Palekar)

Governance Issues

Civil societies, are very much discussed in present times. After the 9/11 tragedy, there were so many candle light processions at that time by large numbers of the urban young and old alike. Many thought this marked the emergence of civil society. Soon thereafter, we had elections and we did not see any increase in our urban voting percentages. (Dr. Usha Thakkar)

Perhaps 30-40 years ago, in a small district town, I met a gentleman who had just become a minister. I was working with the Tatas as an economist. He was very outspoken. At one point came he said, 'You know, I am a minister now but my job is extremely temporary. In my department, if a peon takes a bribe, he cannot be removed, all kinds of enquiries have to be undertaken, it may take upto 10 years to take action against him. But if I take a bribe and something is found against me, tomorrow I will be removed as a minister. So my job is very temporary. And therefore, I must make hay while the sun shines. As long as I am a minister, I must quickly make as much money as I can'. Very outspoken.

Elections have become a very capital intensive industry in India. That was said by someone some 20 years ago. Today it is a much larger capital intensive industry. This is the reality. If we have to have the present system of elections the choice is whether it will become

a mafia industry or a regular industry; by mafia I mean only a black money industry or a regular industry where you take money from various people and promise to pay them back. Both ways, it is an industry. This is how it is and will remain so for the next 15-20 years or so. This is true of many developed countries including the USA and the UK. Now the question is, is this a part of democracy. If you don't want it then you need to consider whether the democratic system itself is bad. (D. R. Pendse)

Electoral Reforms

The whole process of elections has to be reviewed. We should fix a time frame for the political life of a person. Like a person's term should be for a maximum number of 20 years in politics; or a maximum of four terms in either the Assembly or Parliament.. His political tenure should be fixed. During this period he has to perform and then exit gracefully. Thereafter he will not hold any elective post.

The idea of electing people directly from the constituency. Because the constituency is very large only those who have lots of muscle and money power will contest. There should also be the option to elect a person from a particular field or profession. Like we can have dual type of elections. We could have elections electing people from the graduates constituency, a teacher's constituency, a professional lawyers constituency, so the electorate will be limited. Being from the same profession he will be able to send a representative to the Parliament, without having muscle power and money power. He will have a professional constituency to speak to, and that professional group can elect him and send him as their representative from a particular state or region. If there are 80% elected from the region, atleast 20% electorate would be from the professional class like teachers, students, graduates, medical officers. This will ensure we have professionals in Parliament who will be able to run the ministries more effectively. (Rohit Singh)

Actually what Rohit has been saying represents the views of the younger generation, which does not mind drastic changes; which looks at issues that are happening today from a different perspective, that rejects the argument just because the Constitution is 60 years old we must respect it. What he is saying in effect is that there is need for change at the Constitution level. Sixty years on there have been changes, people have changed, situations have changed, economic policies have changed. As a professional, I appreciate the need for space. Who is going to give us that space? The politicians? (Jyoti Marwah)

Talking about electoral reforms, first we accept the fact that contesting elections requires a lot of money. It should be a process where elections should be fought with white money. This implies there should be no limit imposed on a candidate's election expenditure. If there is no limit, there should be a tax rebate, income rebate – supposing one person gives Rs.1 crore to help a candidate, that Rs.1 crore should be reduced from his income, i.e not be part of his taxable income. This in reality means public funding. For example, if I desire to finance a particular candidate to the tune of Rs.5 crores then that Rs.5 crores is deducted from my income; basically it works out to be government funding of that candidate – indirectly. (*D. R. Pendse*)

The biggest flaw in the electoral law today is that a criminal – a thief, a rapist, a swindler, anyone who you would not like to invite even to your house – can become a member of parliament. Unless we have law makers who are not law breakers we cannot expect any improvement in our democratic system. So, if a person wants to stand for elections and if he has a charge against him, then a fast track court should be set up to decide the case within the next six months. From the point of view of the person concerned, and of the society, the person is proved innocent or guilty. Today all political parties use the excuse that false charges will be levelled against a candidate, and he will be debarred. So he should be given an opportunity to cleanse himself of the charges; atleast for the record, he will be declared innocent.

Today when you go to vote, you have to choose between 10 rascals. Now you don't know which rascal you should vote for. So the EVM must have Choice No. 11 'none of the above'. This provision is in the election rules but it is totally ineffective, treated like a suggestion it involves a lengthy procedure which also violates the secrecy of the ballot.

The moment a person gets an office it becomes an office of profit for him, he starts making money, and there is no way by which anybody can check him. I suggest that, if a person gets elected for the first time and declares that he has an income of say Rs.10 lacs, and five years later, that person's income is Rs.50 crores, obviously there has been a sudden rise in his income. He is expected to file in an income tax return. The Income tax officer is expected to ensure that whatever income he shows can be accounted for. If his past income tax returns are capable of being verified, (because under the

RTI Act, it cannot be done) but if that can be done, there will be a salutary check on sudden increases in income. if we can go through simple methods which are already on our statute books, and implement them with absolute honesty, and authority, I think the problem is really soluble. (*Jamsheed Kanga*)

Recently 5 state elections were held. Next year we have the UP elections. Soon there is one more election and the year thereafter the Lok Sabha elections. So every 6 to 12 months, every political party is in election mode. If a party has to fight elections, it will always be in election mood, propping up issues, agitations, which will benefit it in a particular election, rather than working on issues for which it has been elected. So we must first reduce these frequency of elections by holding elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies together. If some state government falls mid way, then President's rule should be imposed till the next elections. So we can avoid mid-term elections. With this, we will be helping keeping the parties away from the election mode ever so often.

I have heard that every corporator, MLA or an MP – all of them have been given quotas to procure funds for the party, no matter what. So once this person is elected to the post, no matter whether he is corrupt or not, since he has been allotted a particular target, he sets about reaching the target. This is where the corruption cycle starts. (*Rohit Singh*)

This question of ministers being always bothered about the elections, in a way, is a good thing; otherwise they will relax comfortable with the feeling that there are another five years, nobody can say anything or check us. So frequent elections, in a way, act as a restraint! (*Brig. S. C. Sharma*)

Women in Politics and Public Life

Turning to the larger issue of women in politics and public life there needs to be more women in the public sphere to cleanse our politics. This raises a fundamental issue of the type of women entering politics; can they make a difference? To survive in politics, often they have to absorb 'male norms' or the dominant norms then prevalent. This is a fundamental issue which was so far being debated only in women's groups, but now being debated across the world whether women's participation will make any difference to the working or the democratic system, especially when women are asking for more

reservations of seats. (*Usha Thakkar*)

A Welcome Development

As a professor all my life, I have seen the changing population of students. They now come from a class, we would not have expected even 20 years earlier. This is happening even in rural areas. And this is an encouraging development. Elections have not always thrown up bad people. It has thrown up good people too and sometimes thrown out the bad. "I have seen many young people, coming from very modest means, in Mumbai. A young candidate I met recently asked for my blessings and my vote. He got both. I was delighted that he was elected as a Municipal Corporator. (*Usha Thakkar*)

Elections and Black Money

Mahatma Gandhi's idea of elections was that the poorest of men also should be able to contest the Lok Sabha elections. For that, he proposed, and it was put in our Constitution, that the deposit should be very low to ensure him a level field. To face competition from the rich there should be a limit on the overall expenditure that a candidate should spend. Today the cost of contesting elections has reached astronomic heights. So while the principles of the Mahatma were kept on paper, ways of breaking the limits, were found. People who wanted to contribute to help poor candidates, could not contribute in white money because that would exceed the limit of the candidate. So they contribute in black money. Elections became the prime source of generation of black money. After a long time people started to realize this and to regularize what was happening the limits started to be raised substantially high. The beauty of black money, is that whatever the limits are, the actual expenditure by the candidates are substantially more than what is revealed. And that difference has always been met by black money. So elections need black money and black money needs elections. That is the unfortunate fact at present. (*D. R. Pendse*)

We really need to focus on the outcome we want. And the outcome we want is that our democracy runs in the good honest way, with good people, people of ethics, and integrity and morals, and capability of running the country.

Not very long ago, I met a very senior Congress person, and he said, how often will I stand for election, and I said I will stand till I die. And he said, then you will lose each time; and I replied, that's all right. I am not

standing to win, I am standing for principles. The point here is that there is nothing in a democracy that prevents you from standing as a candidate. Of course, you stand to win even if many factors are loaded against you. But it is a good system, and therefore what we need to do is to take what's good from that system. If we want a society which is not corrupt, we have to have good legislation, we have to have good enforcement, and we have to have a right culture as well. And that's the culture which I think is changing. Mr. Kanga's point is right when he says you cannot fight corruption with bad tools.

Dr. Manmohan Singh is a person of great integrity, he is a person with great intellect, and he is probably, in my view, the best Prime Minister our country could have at this moment of time. What do you expect him to do?. For the first time, in our country, we are seeing people in high places going to jail – people of power, people of influence, people of money. We are surrounded by hostile neighbours, which are nuclear powered states. We are surrounded by an economic environment which is probably the most unstable, that the world has ever witnessed. We need good stable governance. And it is people like us who actually should be standing behind people like the Prime Minister. Yes, don't support the government and don't support the corrupt ministers. But the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh himself is worthy of our respect, and he is worthy of our support. And I think civil society needs to stand up and support him - because he is the one man who can deliver the agenda that we want.

I think it is absolutely correct that money should come back from the Swiss banks. But how should we do it? We need to see the one country in the world which has succeeded in getting the Swiss banking system to change its Privacy Laws. And that is the United States of America. And there are ways in which you can do it too. One of the primary requirements is that the country which is asking for money out of the Swiss banks has to have a very strong Anti-Bribery and Corruption Act. We are at the first stage, we are just getting an Ombudsman in place. Where is India's Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption Act? If you want change, first you have to have the right laws. Then let us talk about enforcement. We have been talking about Police Reforms for so long. Several states are in contempt of Supreme Court directives. Civil society needs to stand up for that. Implement Police Reforms. So let us talk about strengthening the democratic framework. There are many things available to us without having to change the Constitution. We can copy and paste

on to our lawbooks the UK Anti-Bribery and Corruption Act. We can do a copy and paste from the FCPA. If you don't want to go so far then look at Bhutan. They have got an outstanding Anti-Bribery and Corruption Act. Let's pass it. Let us follow a democratic process to achieve the things we want. (*Meera Sanyal*)

The reason why people are criticizing Manmohan Singh is because they are disappointed that at times when he could have taken the decision that when information had been sent to him that things were being done in a totally wrong manner he chose not to do anything in the matter. In the case of the Commonwealth Games, when Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar who was the Minister for Sports said that he brought to the notice of the Prime Minister, that Kalmadi was going to lead us into difficulties, the PM. didn't do anything in the matter. So it is not a question about his integrity but his performance as the Prime Minister that people are now questioning.

I have worked with Dr. Manmohan Singh. When I was in charge of Finance of the Atomic Energy Commission, he was a member of its Finance Committee. I dealt with him directly. He is a brilliant man, but I don't know whether as Prime Minister he is incapable of taking hard decisions. He could have easily threatened to step down if Raja was not removed; he failed in that crucial act of saying this far and no further. Now we hope that with all these things happening, he does something, otherwise his brilliant record in the service of India will be spoilt because people will say as Secretary, Governor of Reserve Bank, he was excellent but as Prime Minister he was a disappointment. I hope he takes the courage now to do something. (*Ashok Karnik*)

Why People Vote the Way Do

In Poona, where I was posted years ago, the very well-respected socialist S. M. Joshi told me this story. 'I stood for the Municipal Elections. Next to my house, there was a Pathan with whom I was very friendly. But he used to come and ask me, Sir, do you know the Collector? I have to get this job or that job done. I told him I can't do it. So when I went to him to ask him for his vote, he said, Joshi Saheb, *aap bahut buzurg aadmi ho, to bhi aap hamare kaam ke nahi kiya*. I will not vote for you. I will vote for somebody who will get my work done. So the people will vote for you, if you can show that you can be of help to them. (*Jamsheed Kanga*)

People vote for you in the expectation that their life will improve. But if they are sure that none of the

parties is going to come to power, they will think, they might as well give their vote to some party which can come to power and get something done for myself too. I think the Indian voter is generally intelligent enough to realize that if the society as a whole improves, the infrastructure improves, other things too improve, then this is the right party to vote for. Therefore, even Jayalalitha, even Mayawati today though she has other fads like statues, etc. has started looking into the welfare of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, because she knows that her spending money to build elephantine statues and her own statues is not going to get her elected. So what I am trying to say is to create the incentive in the politician to want to do something for the people. They have taken people for granted for too long. We have allowed ourselves to be kicked around. So he thinks, he can kick you around. But the moment he knows that no, you don't do things for me, I am not going to vote. In fact, what really needs to be done is for civil society to prepare a complete list of what it expects the government to do. List them out. In my locality, I want the following things to be set right. If you do it, I vote for you as a corporator. In Santacruz-Juhu area, we did it, and the corporator got elected. But you can't do it unless you have strong group of citizens, prepared to stand up and give this kind of an agenda (*A participant*).

Indian society is not a homogenous society. So even if the candidate of a particular group or party is corrupt or inefficient, still the tribal instinct comes to the fore and he or she gets the votes from those belonging to her caste or religion This consideration is not going to change. These things are not visible in the urban areas, but it is quite prominent in rural India. (*Rohit Singh*)

Concluding Remarks from the Chair

The discussion shows that we are aware of the changes that are taking place in the minds of the electorate. The electorate does not tolerate and will not tolerate inefficiency, corruption and false promises. They want results from their rulers. That's what has happened in Tamil Nadu, that's what has happened in West Bengal. Now whether the alternatives selected by the respective electorates are going to fulfil those promises? Is Jayalalitha going to be more honest than the DMK; will Mamata Banerjee do what the Left Front could not do? Time alone will tell though past experience is not very encouraging.

On the question of why a non-corrupt party like the Lok Satta does not get elected, the problem here is

that the alternative should be credible enough to gain power. Otherwise a single person standing doesn't help the electorate in general. They may respect that person, but unless you know that this not group is going to rule the State, you will not really vote for them. It is a sort of waste of your vote. That is what the electorate is afraid of, generally speaking.

We talked a lot about corruption which has become embedded in this country. We have many suggestions on how to get rid of corruption. There are no sure fire solutions. Implementation of existing laws and stricter punishment are needed. Which is what perhaps the Lok Pal Bill is all about. But we have our reservations about the methods adopted about by the state and by the agitators. We think it is undemocratic. These are coercive tactics.

Anna Hazare may be a very wise person, a very honest person, but is he able to control the people who are behind him? Or are they going to control him? This is the question that arises. Arundhati Roy made a statement on the success of the Anna Hazare movement, to the effect that she didn't know why Anna Hazare was talking about corruption as if corruption is itself the disease. The disease is the system. So Anna Hazare should be fighting to abolish the system. This is a nihilistic, naxalite way of talking. They want to destroy the system, whereas Anna Hazare's pure aim is to get rid of corruption. So his aim may be acceptable to people at large. People like you and me, agree corruption should be removed. But we don't want the democratic system to be overthrown. This is the problem that we will face in the days to come, when these kind of civil activists come to the fore.

Now the other point of view, an honest point of view, is that of Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan. They have a theory that we should have direct democracy. Now direct democracy is perhaps not yet understood in this country. At least it has not been spelt out. It is a system they envisage in which an electorate of 3000 people will elect a representative and that group of 3000 will have the right to recall the representative. That group will have the right to override the decisions of elected assemblies and parliament. This has happened in California where they have this so called direct democracy, where local representatives elect people. This is causing tremendous chaos in the state of California, because whatever the taxes are imposed or decided upon by their House of Congress or whatever the American state of California have, that is overruled by the local committee. The local

counties refuse to pay these taxes, because these taxes are rejected by their direct democracy. And the State of California can do nothing about it. So the taxes which the State is prepared to obtain, are not obtainable because somebody has overruled them.

If this is the system that Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan have in mind, we are facing danger. If they stop at corruption, it is most welcome. If they stop with the Jan Lok Pal Bill, it is fine. You can amend the Lok Pal Bill, because it could be draconian in some respects. Like you have a single authority to determine who is corrupt, who is not corrupt, whether the Prime Minister is corrupt or whether the Chief Justice is corrupt. The super cop may be a group of ten people, but after all, even this group of 10 people are likely to be influenced by the power that they wield. They will be supreme authorities in this country, without getting elected because they will all be selected.

Those 10 bodies who are selected from various angles, may be honest, good persons, because they will be very carefully selected. When the Chief Justice of India can be tainted for corruption and bribery, what assurance is there that these ten people remain honest? They may be initially honest, but given so much power in their hands, will they remain honest? So this solution for corruption which we are trying to see, whether it is going to land us into more serious problems, we do not know. We want corruption to be removed, but how to remove it is the problem. (Ashok Karnik).

Participants

Fr. Benny Aguiar ● Dadi Darbary ● C. A. Kallianpur ● Ashok Karnik ● Jamsheed Kanga ● Jyoti Marwah ● V. S. Palekar ● D. R. Pendse ● Aditya Phatak ● D. M. Popat ● S. V. Raju ● Kashmira Rao ● D. S. Ranga Rao ● Meera Sanyal ● Brig. S. C. Sharma (retd.) ● Rohit Singh ● Prof. R. Srinivasan ● Col. T. S. Tanwar (retd.) ● Prof. Usha Thakkar ● Brig. A. Thyagarajan (retd.) ● Chirayush Vakil

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**Type Tests conducted as per
IEC-62271-100/200**

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2. Single Phase Test at 26.4 kA.
3. STC Test at 26.4 kA for 3 sec.
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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.

Two Fasts

1. This is a season of fasts for causes. Anna Hazare's successful fast was quickly replicated by Baba Ramdev (June 4). The Baba wanted to get back the black money pronto and also hang the evil doers. His demands lacked definition; he could have waited for the culmination of Hazare's agitation but he was obviously in a hurry. He had a larger following than Hazare's candle carrying educated elite, which perhaps unnerved the Government. The entire country is behind anybody demanding eradication of corruption and recovery of the nation's wealth. If everybody is on the same side, where is the need for confrontation? There was a patch up with Hazare that is threatening to collapse any day and declaration of war with Ramdev. The Government is forced to negotiate with such agitators because it has done nothing on its own to resolve the problems the entire country is concerned about. When a social worker of repute or a Baba of no political pedigree threatens to stake his life over the issues, the Government flounders! While Hazare's group had given a lot of thought to its demand, Ramdev appeared to be a wrong person pursuing the right cause.

The More corrupt the State, the more Laws
- Roman Historian Cornelius Tacitus

1. The Government's handling of Ramdev Baba's agitation was bizarre. Four Ministers danced to his tune initially but a Congress spokesman declared that the Baba was a well-known cheat. Why did they then elevate him to the level of a national icon in the first place? Did the situation change because the saffron brigade supported him? On the issue of corruption, the whole country is one, including the saffron brigade. No doubt the Government needs to be pushed and cajoled to expedite anti-corruption measures; its record is not reassuring and, therefore, the country is seeking quick fix solutions. The Baba's demands were not carefully worked out as Hazare's but instead of exposing these weaknesses the Government chose to crush the satyagraha. By attacking the hapless satygrahis in the middle of the night (June 4) the Government earned a bad name for itself – not reputation for toughness. It almost forced all opposition groups to get together, even when all of them were not in favour of either Hazare or the Baba. Blaming the RSS/BJP for the people's agitation amounts to refusal to recognise that something is rotten in the kingdom! One hopes that the hitherto peaceful agitation does not turn violent in the face of Government's obduracy. Baba Ramdev's call for military training to his followers shows lack of political savvy and restraint but the trend of thinking is ominous.

The Karachi Attack

2. The terrorist attack on the naval base at Mehran, Karachi (May 22/23, 2011), shook the Pakistani establishment. Six Taliban fought for 16 hours and inflicted damage on the naval base, particularly on the P-3 C Orion surveillance-cum-attack planes supplied by the US. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) launched 9 revenge attacks in Pakistan in three weeks after the killing of Osama-bin-Laden and threatened more; the Karachi attack was the worst and raised questions about the reach of the TTP and Pakistan's ability to face the danger from within. There were serious concerns that the attackers had help from the camp. The Pak Interior Minister described it as an attempt to destabilise Pakistan and called for national unity to face the enemy. He named the enemy as Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Since Light travels faster than Sound, people appear brighter before you hear them speak

2. The attack generated extreme reactions in India; a large section felt that Pakistan deserved what it got from the Frankenstein it created and it should be allowed to stew in its own juice. A smaller section was concerned over the fate of that failing state. They were worried that the spread of Taliban would spell danger to the nuclear establishment in Pakistan. Although a Karachi type attack would not be viable against a nuclear installation, the danger stems from the militants within. The warning by the Taliban that the Pak nuclear weapons belonged to them (today or tomorrow) is chilling. The US alone can do something about it because it is already embedded in the Pak security establishment. India should keep out of it as its interest would be misinterpreted. Already there are perverse analyses spreading from the reverse logic of examining who were likely to gain from the Karachi attack; no evidence, mind you, but conjectures! And who leads the

*A blind person asked Swami Vivekananda: "Can there be anything worse than losing eye sight?"
He replied: "Yes, losing your vision!"*

list of beneficiaries? India indeed! Just wait and see if India does not emerge as the villain. Human psychology demands an outsider as enemy so that there is no need to seek the villain within. Pakistan is deeply afflicted by this siege mentality.

The Bhatta-Parsaul Affair

3. Rahul Gandhi's foray in to agitational politics was inauspicious. His selection of UP as the target could not be faulted as the Congress has to capture that state to make an impact of its own in the Lok Sabha election. The beginning is to be made from the next Assembly election by attacking a very large target that Behenji Mayawati presents. The farmers of Bhatta-Parsaul presented themselves as the focus of victim hood. Their fight against forcible acquisition of land and punishment for their effrontery could be made a *cause celebre*. The charge that the police had destroyed homes, killed villagers and raped women was sensational. This was a chance to put Mayawati on the defensive and underline Rahulbaba as the champion of the poor. It was tailor-made for a hate campaign. The National Conference for Women (NCW) joined the battle by 'finding' that there was evidence of molestation of women and demanded a CBI enquiry. The PM, not to be left behind in siding with the heir apparent, announced compensation to the victims of atrocities in Bhatta-Parsaul. Mayawati retaliated by demanding disbandment of the NCW. The hesitation of the NCW and the PM to mention rape and murder was noticeable. What appeared to be a case of police brutality was heightened as a case of mass rape and murders.

3. Things did not go as scripted by Rahul's new Man Friday, Digvijay Singh who specializes in the sweepstakes of the deprived and the minorities. Along with allegations of police brutalities (regrettably too common in India), very moving stories of rapes and mass murders were in the air; nothing as gruesome as ash heaps hiding remains of cremated corpses. Digvijay Singh and Rahul made most of the horror of the mounds of ashes everywhere. The small detail was that there were neither rape victims coming forward nor the names of the missing men whose bodies were purportedly lying under the ash heaps. The demand for judicial enquiry into the gruesome incident started sounding hollow but Rahul is not the one to give up; he declared that he would fight from village to village in UP to expose Mayawati's misrule. That would be welcome as Mayawati is no saint. In all this confusion, as usual, truth is the victim. What happened really? Land acquisition all over the country is facing resistance and the Centre has to chalk out a uniform policy. No use denouncing Mayawati in UP and ignoring the problem in the rest of the country. The Bhatta-Parsaul atrocities were good material for a local rabble rousing *neta* but for a leader aspiring to be Prime Minister, credibility should not be sacrificed for expediency.

Unwanted In The 'Wanted List'

4. The mystery of the 50 Most Wanted terrorists would continue to haunt our savvy Home Minister for a long time although he was clever enough to evade direct responsibility while appearing to take it bravely. How could two men who were already in police custody be shown as fugitives taking shelter in Pakistan? The Home Minister's 'defense' of the indefensible was an astute play of words. He declared that the CBI's Interpol wing was responsible for preparation of the Red Corner notices but since his Ministry had given the list to Pakistan, his Ministry took constructive responsibility for the error; he ingenuously added that the matter was not as serious as made out by the media; in any case, Pakistan had never acted on the list and wondered why the list was being sent to Pakistan every now and then. Very clever indeed! What happened to the State Police who should have updated the list, the CBI which should have double checked the list and the Home Ministry officials who blindly accepted the list prepared by another agency for forwarding it to a foreign Government?

4. The question was not whether Pakistan was serious about the list and which department of the Government was responsible. It goes deeper into our work ethics and practice of accountability. If the serious matter of listing those who are out to destroy India is treated as casually as pushing a file from one desk to another and if some names remain in the list because some clerk forgot to delete those already arrested, some thing is wrong with our steel frame of administration left behind by the British. Our tolerance of the shoddy and the laggards will not end unless a steel broom is used to scrape away the dirt. 'No damage done' is not an answer we expect from an efficient Home Minister! Mr. Chidambaram you replaced Shivraj Patil to do better than this. Pakistan immediately seized the opportunity to return the list to India asking us to re-verify all the names. For once Pakistan cannot be faulted.

*Whenever I find the key to success,
someone changes the lock.*

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

The Lokpal and What It Entails

Sharad Bailur

Most practising democracies anywhere in the world take the entire concept of the Ombudsman with more than a pinch of salt, not because it is not a 'good' idea but because it is muddleheaded and has not considered all the consequences. But then the way to perdition is always paved with good intentions.

On what basis are we seriously considering handing over the right to decide if we need a Lokpal at all to a bunch of self appointed so-called Civil Society Representatives irrespective of the brightness of the halos they wear? Let us suppose I get together a bunch of another five people. Let us for convenience call them the Uncivil society. Should the government listen to us as well? If the answer is YES, what is to prevent another 1.2 million five member 'Uncivil Societies' from springing up demanding the same right to be heard? And if the answer is NO, why not? What is so special about these five people except that they have appointed themselves? In this situation we would just be throwing out the baby of our Constitution with the bathwater of our democracy - however dirty it is.

Next, how are we to deal with an unctuous Lokpal who forces his morals on the nation when he is not even democratically legitimized by election? This amounts to handing over the power of the people to a bunch of unelected 'Civil society' people who will decide who is good and who is bad. In any democracy the state and its people must be prepare for the worst and take steps to ensure that it does not happen. Mere wishful thinking that it won't is not merely childish, it is dangerous.

Most practising democracies anywhere in the world take the entire concept of the Ombudsman with more than a pinch of salt, not because it is not a 'good' idea but because it is muddleheaded and has not considered all the consequences. But then the way to perdition is always paved with good intentions.

As Aarti Jerath said in her interview with *Times Now* the entire exercise on dealing with widespread corruption must start at the bottom. I have the following suggestions:

1. Make all appointments in any government or semi-government organisations mandatorily dependent upon performance. This should include the Police. In essence all such appointments should be made subject to dismissal from service for non-performance on the same lines that prevail in the private sector.

2. Institute an amendment in the Constitution to include the Recall of a member of Parliament if his electors find his performance unsatisfactory.
3. All employees in government or semi-government service and Members of Parliament should be paid on the basis of a concept of 'Cost to the nation' on the lines of 'Cost to the company' that is used routinely in the private sector. We will know exactly how much these people cost us to maintain.
4. Make corruption punishable by much more draconian measures if it is established. Change the rules of evidence where necessary.
5. Change the laws on election expenses to make them compulsorily transparent and make donations to political parties legal.

The first measure will help to clear the logjam of non-performance and thereby reduce bribes to lubricate the system. The second will make MPs and MLAs more responsive to the needs of their constituents. In the event the people's representative does not do what is expected of him/her by his constituents he can be punished with a recall. The cost to the nation concept has met with approval of a number of economists in the country some of whom are editors of major newspapers. It will also help the nation budget the cost of governance. Lastly there are laws to punish corruption which are not being used. They need to be tightened; and if necessary they need to be made stiffer in terms of punishment. With the carrot of good emoluments should go the stick of condign punishment in the event of non-performance.

The great disadvantage about the measures outlined above are that they are unspectacular in the extreme. They do not have the advantage of the daily TV news soap that seems to have become the staple of the uneducated middle class which is provided by the Ramlila Jamboree of Baba Ramdev or the Anna Hazare fasts. But neither the Hazare stunt nor the Ramdev contortions would have yielded any results because like Indira Gandhi's 'Garibi

(Cont'd. on page 30)

For Whom the Bell Tolls

H. R. Bapu Satyanarayana

The crucial question remains that all this started because civil society was asking the government to bring back black money stashed in foreign banks. Why is the government shying away?

Sri T. J. S George in his weekly article 'Democracy: Threat from unseen forces' in a local popular evening paper 'Star of Mysore' on March 15, 2011 refers to the former head of counter-terrorism division of RAW Sri B. Raman: '(Sonia Gandhi) has been conducting herself as a neutral disinterested bystander.' If one has to find out the real truth behind the recent controversies, it is important to go into the real truth behind her role as it is to go into the role of others. The assumption that Sonia Gandhi can do no wrong has to be challenged by the public'

Hitherto our Prime Minister was treated as a holy cow and even renowned political commentators were shying away from targeting him personally despite being described as presiding over the most corrupt government, though many in the privacy of their drawing rooms held him responsible. However, the 2G scam has blown the lid off the murky details and now everything is in the public domain. Now the media are freely pointing the finger of suspicion at Manmohan Singh.

PM in an Unenviable Position

The appointment of Central Vigilance Commissioner Sri P. J. George which went into twists and turns because a charge of his culpability was pending in court in a case concerning imports. The PM admitted his mistake in the selection of the CVC. When the Supreme Court was not taken in by his defense, P. J. George had to make an inglorious exit. Again, when it came to charges of corruption during the UPA's first term in office when reportedly huge sums of money were paid as revealed by Wikileaks, the PM denied the charge on the puerile ground that his party had actually increased its tally of seats in the last general elections. In tandem the Commonwealth Games scam too reached its logical culmination with Suresh Kalmadi being charged with misappropriation and jailed. Meanwhile the Central Bureau of Investigation found incriminating evidence in the 2G scam involving Kanimozhi the daughter of DMK leader Karunanidhi, a UPA ally.

Meanwhile a most seminal event that could well lay the foundation for a new moral and political ethos is taking place. On April 5 2011 the Gandhian crusader Anna

Hazare decided to go on a fast unto death demanding the enactment of a Lokpal Bill to deal with corruption. His protest reflected the deep disenchantment of the people of India who have been a silent witness to the corporate-bureaucrat-politician nexus that has virtually remained above the pale of law indulging in looting public money making the rich richer and the poor poorer even while India's Planning Commission twiddles with statistics in defining the poverty level – whether it should be Rs.20 or 25 a day! This resulted in a hitherto silent rage bursting forth when Anna Hazare and his protestors were determined to get a Lokpal Bill enacted to bring to book corruption in high places.

The Jan Lokpal Bill reflects the aspirations of the people with the formation of a committee in which civil society is represented to draft a bill to be tabled in parliament. The government, initially tried to scuttle the demand for the formation of a committee but seeing the writing on the wall acceded to the formation of such a committee. This acceptance was also due to the fact it realized that with the Supreme Court directly monitoring the corruption cases by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and with the daily media expose, evidence was mounting against the accused.

The public too well know by now that this has happened only because the CBI's work was being directly monitored by the SC. Were it not so, it would have been the same old story of inept handling, suppression of facts, and obfuscation in dealing with cases to toe the line of the government of the day. The media too played a helping role which spurred the public to join in the chorus. Even when the committee was formed there was the initial hiccup with some people casting aspersions on the members of the civil society which threatened to unmake the whole initiative. Fortunately, it has died down and the committee has had a few meetings.

The Baba Ramdev Phenomenon

Meanwhile Yoga guru Baba Ramadev with his huge following announced his intention to undertake a fast on 4th June at Ramlila grounds in Delhi on the issue of bringing

back black money stashed away abroad. This created a piquant situation. On the one hand the Government of India has a list supplied by German government of people who have parked their illegal money in foreign banks but is reluctant to publish it. It is using all sorts of strategies invoking technicalities and international agreement that come in the way of making the list public. The plain fact appears to be that the government is hell bent on avoiding making the list public lest its publication damage its image and compromise its position seriously. It is not unlikely that the list may contain names of powerful politicians. All this strengthens the perception that though the government has been very vocal about its resolve to bring back the black money it has never moved an inch to set in motion the steps involved to implement that resolve even if in its election manifesto it grandly proclaimed that it would be getting back the black money of Indians in foreign banks and curb corruption. This is where the fast undertaken by yoga guru Baba Ramdev assumes significance.

In addition to the list already with UPA government there is a huge amount of money parked in Swiss banks. The crucial difference between the position of Anna Hazare and Baba Ramdev is that while the formation of a Jan Lokpal committee has its own time frame because it had to go through the parliamentary procedure, Baba Ramdev's demand was a direct threat to the UPA government for it had a certain immediacy by demanding a written assurance from the government. This is when a drama was played by the UPA government for it must have sensed that if the government could somehow make Baba Ramdev agree to their conditions it could throw a spanner in Anna Hazare's efforts, and bulldoze their way to produce a much watered down bill.

Airport Drama and After

When Baba Ramdev landed in Delhi in a jet, four senior ministers of the UPA government rushed to give him a red carpet welcome, a gesture worthy of welcoming a king. Then he was closeted with the Ministers in a five star hotel. What transpired in their discussion is not known but the net result was the redoubtable trouble-shooter Pranab Mukherjee and the H.R.D Minister Kapil Sibal, a legal luminary. whose reputation as a know-all is well known, apparently failed to convince Baba Ramedev who stuck to his decision to fast on Saturday June 4 at Ramlila grounds. Having suffered a rebuff, obviously the Congress would not take it lying down. It was obvious that the government was orchestrating a gradually escalating attack to show its clout. First, it started with what was purported to be a signed agreement reached with Baba Ramdev and charging him with going back – words like

‘betrayal and cheating’ and much else were freely used.

The Congress General Secretary Digvijay Singh let loose vituperative attacks on Baba Ramdev describing Baba Ramdev as a ‘thug’ who had amassed huge illegal money and so on, forgetting that the same Baba Ramdev was given a grand welcome earlier.. Then they argued that Baba Ramdev had been given permission for yoga and not fasting at the Ramlila grounds;. raising the pitch that the presence of Sadvi Ritambara, a fiery speaker would inflame passions and give a communal colour; that the whole show was being managed by the RSS and the BJP. Of course the presence of other communities did not weigh with the government. All this was indicative of the government's nervousness and near hysteria that Baba Ramdev's fast had the potential to create a situation that would seriously damage the credibility of the government. But Baba Ramdev refused to see it the Congress way. In a desperate measure government took the most heinous action of ordering the police to swoop on the sleeping mass of men, women and children at the dead of night on June 5 night, lathi charged and fired teargas shells on the hapless sleeping mass of people. This resulted in injuries to more than 70 persons some of them seriously. Then they shifted Baba Ramdas to Haridwar.

SC Delivers the Punch

The Supreme Court moved swiftly, took *suo moto* cognizance of the incident. This provoked the Prime Minister, accustomed to prolonged silence, reacting with alacrity. He defended his action describing the incident as ‘unfortunate’ and that there was no alternative. The PM's excuse did go down well either with BJP or the Left parties nor even with the people.

The Ghost that Haunts

The crucial question remains that all this started because civil society was asking the government to bring back black money stashed in foreign banks. Why is the government shying away? The answer appears simple for the revelation would permanently damage the reputation of the Congress as the list most likely contains the names of big guns who have been shielded from the beginning. In fact, out of the names of 18 people in the list received from Germany, *Times Now* TV channel identified one of them in the list. The TV clip shows that when questioned he confessed that the money was not his but actually belongs to an influential gentleman. If the whole list of people who have their accounts in Swiss banks is revealed the reputation of the Congress would be in the mud and perhaps end its political life for ever. There is no other

(Cont'd. on page 30)

Has the White Man Had His Day?

Firoze Hirjika

I recently read a fascinating article by Roger Cohen, in the *New York Times*, where he postulates that the white man's era is virtually at an end. In support of his theory, he contrasts the booming economies of Asian countries, like India and China, with the economic decline of the United States and many countries in Europe.

I would not go so far as to state that centuries of world domination by the white man has ended, but it is heading there; and at a far more rapid pace than he realizes. Those who scoff at this absurdity may not, perhaps, be aware that in the 17th century, India and China did indeed account for more than half of the world's economic output. The pendulum is now accelerating back.

Those who believe that it is the inherent destiny of the fair-skinned races to be superior to their darker counterparts would probably point to Africa as justification. I admit that there is some truth in this assertion. Until fairly recently, virtually the whole of Africa was ruled by white colonial powers: Britain, France, Holland and Portugal. After these nations were bled dry by World War II, they were forced to surrender their possessions. Rhodesia and South Africa were the last holdouts. Rhodesia, now called Zimbabwe, is the most glaring example of black mismanagement. A country rich in natural resources, which once had the second highest standard of living on the African continent, is now a basket case; with runaway inflation eerily reminiscent of the Weimar Republic in Germany. South Africa may have rid itself of the scourge of apartheid, but it is a country where crime is rampant.

The other side of the coin is to be found in countries like India and China; and the Asian tigers like South Korea, Singapore and Vietnam. Yes, that's right, I said Vietnam. A country, a good portion of which the United States tried to obliterate with napalm bombs – and expended tens of thousands of American lives in the process – now has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Ironically, it is also a major trading partner of its former enemy. China is already the world's second biggest economy, after the United States; and with its economy rapidly accelerating to meet America's down-spiralling one, it is only a matter of time before it gains the number one spot.

Some Americans would scoff that America remains the world's sole superpower. In terms of military muscle, perhaps it is – and will probably remain so because of its

huge lead. But history has shown us that, in the final analysis, money is always the trump card. Take the American Civil War, for example. It is generally acknowledged that the South had better soldiers and generals superior in strategic and tactical planning. Yet, it lost because the North had more money.

If many white men have great difficulty in acknowledging the new world order, I can understand and sympathize with their bewilderment. The white man and his tribe have been the big guns of the world for so very long, that they do not remember it being any other way. As a citizen of a country which was dominated by the British for almost three centuries, I cannot claim to have experienced their arrogance first hand (I am old, but not *that* old), but I have heard enough stories from my grandfather to make it seem almost real.

The Imperial British did not just rule India, they subjugated it. Even the most illiterate, ignorant white Englishman was considered superior to the most educated, erudite Indian. And it was not just an attitude, it was state policy. Except for a few privileged Maharajas, many clubs and fancy hotels were barred to even wealthy Indians; and no Indian could head a police force, say. The British cloaked their arrogance in benevolence, of course and, in truth, they did not display any overt cruelty towards their subjects. At the same time, they never let them forget who was boss. The British still regard India as a Third World country – and in some respects, it is – but the reality is that India's economy has far outstripped Britain's. As Cohen mentions in his article, by 2030, India will probably overtake Japan as the world's third biggest economy – behind the United States and China.

Asia still has a long way to go; and it is still a continent of stark contrasts. A considerable proportion of its population remains mired in poverty. However, at the other end of the scale, an increasing number of Asians are flaunting their wealth. This is borne out by the fact

(Cont'd. on page 30)

Look Who's Talking About M. F. Hussain Being Obdurate

Keshav Rau

However, one should not blame only people like Bal Thackeray or others holding similar views about Hussain and some of his works. The blame should also rest on: the entire community of artists, the Central Government, the judiciary.

On the death of painter and artist, Maqbol Fida Hussain in the second week of June, the Shiva Sena chief, Bal Thackeray while acknowledging that as an artist, Hussain handled his modern art with zeal, he described him as an “eccentric and adamant person”, who thought it fit to leave his country rather than change his stubborn attitude to his art. Without denying every artist had his own domain, Thackeray was critical of Hussain for having “slipped while drawing paintings of (Hindu) gods and goddesses (in the nude).”

Without doubt each one is entitled to his opinion on the great artist – described by some as India's Picasso – and his works. However, it doesn't lie in at least Bal Thackeray's mouth to talk about Hussain's obduracy, when he himself, ever since he formed the Shiv Sena, has been displaying nothing but obstinacy and arrogance, and also egging on his followers to let loose a reign of intimidation and violence on targets of his ire, which by now are a legion. If he really feels that every artist had his own domain, he (the artist) should be allowed to operate *freely* within his domain.

Instead, Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena, various saffron brigade outfits, Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad etc. consistently ridiculed and lampooned Hussain for the manner in which he painted female forms, including Hindu gods and goddesses.

Right from the very beginning, Bal Thackeray's name has become synonymous with obduracy. What began as a fairly innocuous objective of training Maharashtrians with the skills for becoming eligible for white collar jobs, his outfit blossomed into a violent, fanatical movement against all non-Maharashtrians having jobs in the State – more particularly the city of Mumbai. For the Shiv Sena Chief, it mattered little whether a Maharashtrian candidate seeking employment was qualified enough or not, competent enough or not, experienced enough or not, or the non-Maharashtrian getting the job was born and brought up in Maharashtra, could read and write Marathi well and for all practical purposes was a

Maharashtrian. Only thorough-bred Maharashtrians should be preferred over others. As the years progressed, he adamantly brooked no opposition to the various other issues and causes that he took up. For instance, Udipi hotels doing business in Mumbai, celebration of Valentine's Day, Mumbai city being called by its old name “Bombay”, any critical reference to Shivaji, some top positions in Central PSUs, including State-owned Banks being manned by Maharashtrians. Many more instances could be added to the list.

Any resistance shown or even the expression of a contrary view to issues which are “dear to the Shiva Sena Supremo's heart or hurt his sensitivity” is visited with a type of fury with which the Fascists were associated with. Imagine such a person talking about Hussain's adamant attitude. The latter type of adamant attitude – if it could be called adamant – did not harm or hurt anybody or result in the unleashing of violence all over. Hussain had given his own explanation for his nude paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses and it should have been accepted as such. However, a further explanation was sought from him as to why he did not bring out a similar painting of the Prophet, too. If he had done so or come up with a nude painting of Jesus Christ, would Bal Thackeray, his followers and various others who subscribed to similar views have been satisfied and stopped baying for his blood?

Bal Thackeray's nephew, Raj, who broke off from the Shiv Sena in March 2006 to form the Maharashtra Navnirman Samiti, apparently, was more magnanimous in his tribute to Hussain than the Shiv Sena Chief. Referring to Hussain as a national asset, he wanted all controversies which were associated with him during his lifetime to be laid to rest. He also said that the burial of the painter should be allowed to take place in India, if his family members so desired. However, it should be remembered that Raj Thackeray was party to all the anger and threats that were let loose against Hussain by the Shiv Sena during his life time. The praises showered by him now sound very hollow. At the time Hussain became a citizen of Qatar – being

fed up with some 900 cases instituted against him in various courts of the country – Raj was not only part of the brigade founded by his uncle, but also as adamant and intolerant of criticism – if not more – as his uncle and mentor.

The irony is both uncle and nephew are well known as cartoonists, although better known for their political and all other activities which are not liked by a large section. Both of them would have come out with some very pungent – and objectionable also to some – caricatures of well known personalities or of major events. Would they have stomached violent reaction to their pieces of art by those who didn't find them comfortable?

However, one should not blame only people like Bal Thackeray or others holding similar views about Hussain and some of his works. The blame should also rest on: the entire community of artists, the Central Government, the judiciary. Not a single effective voice was raised by the artists in his defence. The Central Government was content with announcing that if Hussain wanted to come back to India, he was most welcome to do so, but never said how he would be given protection from people expressing similar views like Bal Thackeray and others. Various courts – particularly belonging to the lower judiciary – were merrily slapping notices after notices on Hussain to put in appearance before it on a variety of petitions filed by all and sundry against his paintings without, apparently, examining the *prima facie* merit of the case and the locus standi of the petitioners concerned. Even the Supreme Court could not give him any support.

The sole voice of reason came from Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Judge of the Delhi High Court in his judgment of May 5, 2008, the excerpts of which are worth reproducing

Terming the criminal proceedings against Hussain as baseless, the judgment recorded:

“...India's new Puritanism practiced by a largely ignorant crowd in the name of Indian spiritual purity is threatening to throw the nation back to the pre-Renaissance era...”

“...This is the typical case of an artist facing the ire of the types who would not go to art galleries or have interest in contemporary art because if they did, they would know that there are many artists who embrace nudity as part of contemporary art...”

“...Here is a Painter who actually celebrates nudity and considers it as purest form of expression...”

“...A painter at 90 deserves to be in his home painting his canvasses...”

Although Bal Thackeray does not fall in the category of the type of people referred to by Justice Kaul in his judgment – “types who would not go to art galleries or have interest in contemporary art” – yet was intolerant of the freedom of expression which Hussain longed for on his canvasses. And yet Balasaheb says it was Hussain who was adamant!

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On M. F. Hussain – A Liberal Perspective

The following is an excerpt from Sanjeev Sabhlok's posting on his blog in facebook and published with his permission

I'm not a great fan of M.F. Hussain. Given the many controversies that have grown up around him, I have browsed through his nude depictions of a range of Hindu goddesses (some of them in compromising positions). And I do not like them. Not one bit. And so I will never buy them. And that should normally be all that there is to say about an artist. You either like the artist's work or you don't. You buy it or you don't. But Hussain's paintings have caused great outrage. Why? Why are so many people worked up about Hussain's representation of nude Hindu goddesses?

I do know most stories of the Hindu tradition and I can see clearly why the crass depiction of highly respected characters from Hindu mythology by Hussain has annoyed so many people.

Note the following Shekhar Gupta interview with M. F. Hussain:

Are you a devout person in your personal life?

Hussain: I am a believer and not a non-believer.

The question that people would like to throw at you is – if you can paint Hindu gods and goddesses like this, why don't you paint the Prophet?

Hussain: I don't want to say anything.

And this has not affected your creativity in any way?

Hussain: No. I am doing my work well...

Note that by not responding to the question which most Hindus have asked him (i.e. why he did not paint the Prophet), Hussain has effectively relinquished his right to paint others' gods. Because the classical liberal believes that **liberty is a two-way street**.

Reciprocal obligation is crucial in order for a society to function coherently. **Freedom is not a one-way street.**



“A Stream of Correspondence”

with C. Rajagopalachari - 2

K. K. Pathak

Mr. K. K. Pathak, R.E.S (Rajasthan Education Service), is an educationist and academician. He enjoyed a unique relationship with the late C. Rajagopalachari, CR or Rajaji as he was more popularly known. This resulted in a “stream of correspondence” between the two that lasted for over 15 years. Mr. Pathak decided to publish these letters and chose the Rajaji Foundation to be the publisher. He has also agreed to our request to serialise in FF excerpts from the proposed publication. The first part was published in the FF of June 2011 (No.528). This, the second part, carries excerpts from Chapter 1 “The Beginnings” – **Editor**

“The Beginning”

I am a little surprised to note that our correspondence was pretty intimate right from the beginning, giving an impression of mutual understanding without wasting more words than necessary. Today I sometimes curse myself for my impertinence and insolence in writing him things I would now shudder to. The enthusiasm of a young man is a little different from the patience of a mature mind. I was immature without considering that I was writing to the best and most intelligent man on the Asian Continent. His patience in coping with my insolence and impertinence makes me regretful when I read his letters, reminding me of my wildness which I considered at that time frankness of an extreme individualist I was then. He took pains to trim my angularities making or turning me into a more moderate man than I was in the beginning. Within a short period of about six or seven years he told my parents, who called upon him on their way back home from Rameshwaram that I was his “devotee”. I was surprised to hear from my parents his calling me a devotee. My faith in his wisdom was abiding and was one main reason of my following his line of thinking without his seeking it from me. Honestly speaking, we used to think alike so much that his occasional press notes and brief comments in *Swarajya* were no different from my own thinking on men and matters. With this brief introduction let me now begin with the letters he wrote me over the first five years of the stream of correspondence.

The main theme of my letters in the beginning was either about the philosophy of the Swatantra Party or my own suggestions to popularise it. Nehru’s confused policies and his wrong priorities for national reconstruction brought us closer to the extent that when we met in 1963 for the second time on the occasion of a protest against the 17th amendment to our Constitution (organised by the

Swatantra Party) CR told me at the residence of his youngest daughter, who was married to Mahatma Gandhi’s youngest son, the late Devdas Gandhi, that he had made a mistake to support Nehru for the post of Prime Minister, pleading on his behalf with Gandhiji.

Within months of this meeting Nehru fell critically ill and three days before his passing away I wrote a letter, a copy of which I had sent to CR, to *The Hindustan Times*, commenting on Mahatma Gandhi’s choice of making Nehru his successor to lead the country. In that letter I narrated a story how the question of selecting Aristotle’s successor to run the affairs of his Academy after his death was settled by the ailing Aristotle. The two disciples, who deserved to be his successors, were asked to bring wines from their respective countries. He tasted one and then the other and commented: the latter was delicious without neglecting the former. By the time my letter reached the *Hindustan Times’* office Nehru had passed away. The copy I had sent to CR reached him the next day and his reply came, appreciating my letter and wondering what chance was there of its publication. I wrote it because the talk of Nehru’s successor was hot news that week. Nehru could not name his successor as he had gone into a coma from which he never recovered.

As early as April 1961 CR wrote: “Please continue to write as you have promised.” These words gave me an impetus to indulge in an animated correspondence with him. In December 1962 he wrote again: “I repeat – please continue to write.” I was surprised to note that his memory was so fine that he remembered what he wrote almost twenty months earlier. The word “repeat” reminded me of his April 1961 postcard. When I met him in 1963 I found A. C. Bradley’s *Oxford Lectures on English Poetry* on the table. He asked me if I had read the book. When I told him I had read it he asked me some searching questions on Hegel’s views on aesthetics. He asked those

questions simply to test my understanding of Hegel's views discussed by Prof. Bradley. On returning home I sent him Douglas' book on English poetry. He wrote back: "I don't think much of the book you have sent." I was amazed to read his candid view of the book, written by no less an authority than Bradley. His 'Dear Reader' column in *Swarajya* made me wonder almost every week to note how much he used to read on such a large range of subjects. He was not only a prolific writer, but also a voracious reader at an age when most of us would cease to indulge in the kind of intellectual activity he continued with till October 1972, hardly a few weeks before his sad demise on 25 December 1972. In a postcard of 6 December 1962 he wrote:

"Thank you for your kind letter. You may note that I have written (an article on the front page of *Swarajya*) exactly on your lines."

Such an appreciation of my "kind letter" should have made a young man I was then somewhat puffed up with pride. But it did not excite me the least. Instead, I tried to exercise a kind of self-imposed restraint on myself, slowing down the frequency of my troubling him with letter after letter, making it difficult for him to cope with my "affectionate correspondence", as he would call it time and again. As a matter of fact, it was not my fault; he had encouraged me in a long letter of 11 August 1962:

"I got your letter and read it with interest. I am glad you write legibly and use good ink and paper. So many letters come to me with which my present eyesight cannot cope. Apart from my eyes, people write in a shabby way and use bad paper and worse ink; and when the matter is typed it is worse still because they use worn out ribbons. I blamed my eyes when I saw such a typescript, but I see when I get a letter like yours, it is a pleasure to read..." These words of encouragement from him as early

as August 1962 made me more enthusiastic, troubling him more and more with my letters. Once again I expressed my hesitation in my letter of 25 March 1963. He wrote back again on 27 March 1963:

"Thank you for your letter of March 25. I repeat – please continue to write."

How could I ignore his wishes? It was CR who started publishing my private letters in *Swarajya*. In his postcard of 29 April 1963 he wrote me:

"Thank you for your beautiful letter of April 26. May I use it in *Swarajya*? I intend publishing it as a letter if you will say yes."

When this letter came in I was out, at Delhi, attending a conclave of young intellectuals from all over the country called at the instance of V. K. Krishna Menon at his residence, 19 Teen Murti Marg. Menon was made to resign from the Nehru Cabinet as Nehru had to bow down before the wishes of the people after the invasion of India by China in October 1962. In March 1962 Nehru had made it an issue of his prestige to get Menon elected and Acharya Kripalani defeated from Bombay. Within months Nehru was forced by strong public opinion to show Menon the door. The contents of the letter of 26 April 1963 were published on 13 May 1963 as a letter under the heading, 'Alignment and Non-Alignment.' Perhaps CR liked my definitions that my private letter was published as a letter to the Editor. In response to my letter of 26 May 1963, in which I had informed him about his article on India's foreign policy on the front page of *Swarajya* translated by me in Hindi and got it published in a local paper, CR wrote on 29 May 1963:

"I have your letter of May 26. I am glad you are helping me to be understood by Hindi speaking people."

China's Guantanamo Bay for Buddhist Monks of Kirti

B. Raman

No one is talking of the new Guantanamo Bay type military detention centre which has reportedly been set up by the Chinese authorities under the supervision of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to interrogate and subject to so-called legal education an estimated 300 Buddhist monks— young and old.

They are just religious people who have remained steadfast in their adherence to the Buddhist religion and in their support and loyalty to his Holiness the Dalai Lama. Their only crime was to refuse to eat in solidarity with a 16-year-old monk who committed self-immolation on March 16 last to protest against the Chinese colonisation of Tibet. He belonged to the famous Kirti monastery in the Aba County in the Aba Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture of the Sichuan province.

Since then, the Chinese authorities of the Ministry of Public Security have started a demonization campaign against 300 monks of the monastery who expressed their solidarity with the young monk.

For further details visit 2www.c3s.org C3S Paper No 810 dated June 13, 2011

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Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

We Are Not British

If India adopted a system that seems to be working very satisfactorily in the United Kingdom, why have we made such a mess of it?

I recently read an interesting article by David Brooks in the *New York Times* about how Britain, in the early part of the 20th Century, made the transition from an aristocratic political society to a democratic, industrial one without any significant political upheaval or societal turmoil. Now it is widely accepted that India, after gaining independence from the British, adopted the parliamentary system of their former colonizers, as well as many of their laws and statutes. Indeed, many of the provisions in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) are direct reproductions of their British counterparts.

This begs the question: if India adopted a system that seems to be working very satisfactorily in the United Kingdom, why have we made such a mess of it? Pundits would come out with erudite explanations for this dichotomy. Corruption is an obvious candidate. It seems to be ingrained in Indian genes, particularly those of our politicians. However, for me, there is a fundamental reason that overrides all others. WE ARE NOT BRITISH. The Indian temperament is diametrically opposed to the British personality. The British stand in orderly queues; we instinctively jostle for precedence by breaking them. Britain has its fair share of crooks, but the general populace is basically honest: Indians adore freebies and are always on the lookout to make a quick buck by fair means or fowl. The British admire discipline: Indians treat it with contempt.

The other explanation is that blindly aping colonial British laws, for example, clauses in the IPC, shows a lack of application of mind bordering on foolishness. For one thing, these are not the provisions adopted in Britain itself. They were framed by a colonial power and designed to ensure the “natives” never forgot their place. In fact, it is these same clauses that give licence to the Indian police to legally unleash restrictive measures on their fellow citizens; generally with complete immunity. Maybe our lawmakers are not so foolish, after all. In effect, they have merely replaced one form of colonialism with another. Instead of the *gora sahibs*, it is now our elected leaders who have no compunctions in treating the general populace like chattel. Indeed, if it wasn't for our hyperactive media laying bare the politicians' excesses, modern Indians would probably have few more privileges than their “native” forebears did.

There are heartening signs today that the Indian people are very gradually trying to reclaim the power that is due to them as citizens of a functioning democracy. They may even achieve their goal eventually. Be that as it may, we are never going to be as “propah” as the British – and it's a good thing to have our own identity. So maybe it is time to ponder whether the inherited British system is right for us. We should never give up our democracy, of course, but maybe we can fashion a model that is more suited to our aspirations and temperament. It is certainly food for thought.

Should Kripashankar Singh Be Worried?

Singh must be a deeply worried man; and busy compiling a list of scapegoats he can pass the buck to.

The Mumbai Congress chief Kripashankar Singh is in the dock for accepting freebies hand over fist from private companies, not just for himself but for his son and miscellaneous family members. The jaded among us would simply shrug our shoulders and remark that this is hardly a startling revelation in the Indian political context. Everybody does it: so what's the big deal?

Actually, the story is newsworthy, but not for the obvious reason. As recently as six months ago, Singh would have greeted the news of his interrogation by the

demanding illegal gratification from corporate bigwigs as a *quid pro quo*, has been par for the course for decades past. Moreover, whenever his political brethren had been caught in financial irregularities, they had escaped with nothing more serious than a temporary suspension, followed by a quiet reinstatement. The investigation would have been nothing more than a nuisance.

Things are different now, however. The fact that powerful politicians like A Raja and Suresh Kalmadi have actually been arrested and put behind bars has very badly

shaken up our political class. The hitherto unthinkable has become a reality. Singh must be a deeply worried man; and busy compiling a list of scapegoats he can pass the buck to. And of course, most of his ill-gotten wealth will soon disappear into so many *benami* accounts that it will be a Herculean task for the authorities to locate them and conclusively link them to Singh.

As a side note, the impact of the arrest of some

corporate honchos from giant Indian corporations must be even more traumatic among our businessmen. After all, many of our *netas* have emerged from the criminal element and now they are being sent back there – going back home, as it were. But many CEOs and Chairmen of major corporates have been born with a silver spoon and are used to scores of minions grovelling to them. For them, the mere notion of being in jail would be unthinkable. But such is life. What goes around comes around.

Hail Mary

I have a sneaking suspicion that the government's unusual decision to enforce the law against St. Mary's is a result of vested interests

I am sure many readers of *Freedom First* have either themselves schooled at – or have friends and relatives - who have attended St. Mary's High School in Mumbai over the past three generations. Therefore the news that the venerable institution has been derecognized by the government must have occasioned considerable chagrin and heartburn.

On the face of it, the government's action seems to be justified. If the allegations are true, the school management stands accused of inadequate facilities and charging exorbitant capitation fees. However, that hardly makes it unique in Mumbai's school system, where greed and profit often take precedence over providing a sound education. The St. Mary's management may have latterly succumbed to this malaise, but there is no question that its quality of education has been uniformly good. Why then, has the axe not fallen on dozens of schools guilty of similar malpractices?

I have a sneaking suspicion that the government's unusual decision to enforce the law against St. Mary's is a result of vested interests – not to mention unbridled hypocrisy. Take the issue of inadequate facilities. The school building in question may well have insufficient toilets and other deficiencies, but for it to be penalised for this transgression is a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black. It is well known that one of the complaining parties, the Bombay Municipal Corporation,

runs several schools in run down and pathetically maintained buildings with broken desks and stinking toilets. As for capitation fees, the mother of all "donations" are collected by private engineering and medical institutions, many of which are owned by top state politicians. Enough said.

The government's weak response to the possibility of hundreds of students being displaced midterm through no fault of theirs is that the students will be accommodated in other schools. Which other schools – the "excellent" schools run by the Corporation? In that case, the grossly unfair exchange would indeed be a grave robbery.

The St. Mary's school building is located on prime property in the heart of South Mumbai. If it were to close down, the land it stands on would command an astronomical price. It's a safe bet that, soon after, the property would be gobbled up by builders, who already own the city and most of its politicians. It goes without saying that, in the process, a number of officials will experience a sudden increase in their net worth. That is the way things operate in our fair land.

After this was written (27th May), the State's Education Department is having a relook.

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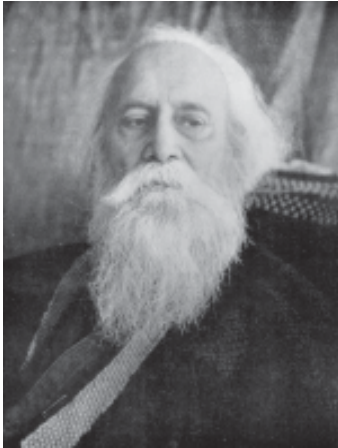
Think About It !

- Where a car loan is charged at 5% but an education loan, so necessary for our youth is charged an interest of 12%!
- A nation where students with 45% get into elite institutions through the quota system and those with 90% are sent away because of merit.
- Where a millionaire buys a cricket team, spending crores instead of donating the money to any charity. Where two IPL teams were auctioned at 3300 crores, yet still a poor country where people starve for two square meals per day.
- A country where footwear is sold in AC showrooms, but the vegetables we eat, are sold on the footpath and very often next to garbage dumps!

From the Net. Contributed by Nagesh Kini

The Trespasser

Rabindranath Tagore



One morning, a small boy stood on the roadside by a temple and laid a wager with another boy on a very daring venture. The question was whether he could steal some flowers from the arbour

of the temple. It is necessary to explain in detail why the task was not so easy as it sounds.

Jaikali Devi, widow of Madhabchandra Tarkabachaspati, was the owner of this temple to Radhanath. Madhabchandra, while he lived, had never been able to prove to his wife that he deserved the title of Tarkabachaspati (Master of Logic and Speech) which he earned by his academic accomplishments. Some went so far as to suggest that both logic and speech had fallen to the share of the wife and the husband had to suffer the consequences.

To be more precise, Jaikali did not really talk much, but she could often check the most forceful eloquence of others with a few words or even by a mere gesture.

She was a tall firmly-built and keenly intelligent woman. While her husband lived, their property was not well looked after and was on the way to liquidation. The widow retrieved the situation, realizing all her dues, fixing the boundaries and recovering possessions which had been virtually lost earlier. Nobody could deprive her of a penny of what was her due.

As she had strikingly manly traits in her character, this woman had no real friend. The women were afraid of her as she did not tolerate gossiping, mean words and idle tears. Even the men feared her because she could put the complacency and boundless indolence of the leading village folk to shame with a sort of silent and contemptuous glance that had the power to pierce even the dense dullness that enveloped their hearts.

This middle-aged widow had an unusual capacity

for scorning meanness and for expressing her scorn in a vehement manner. She could scorch with or without words, by gestures and suggestions, whoever appeared to her to be the offender.

She was ever ready to participate in all the activities of the village in times of adversity as well as prosperity. Everywhere she secured easily a place of honour for herself. Not the slightest doubt arose in her mind or in the minds of others present, that she should be given the leading position wherever she was.

She had a great skill in tending the sick, but the patients feared her as much as they feared the god of Death. If there was the slightest deviation from regimen or other rules, the heat of her anger would make their pulses beat faster than the heat of fever.

This tall inflexible widow was like the relentless sceptre of God raised above mortals to rule the whole village. None dared either love her or disregard her. She had contact with everyone in the village yet nobody there was more lonely than she.

Herself childless, she had two orphan nephews whom she brought up in her own house. There was never the slightest ground for complaint that they were not properly disciplined in the absence of a male guardian or that they were spoilt by the love of a too affectionate aunt. The older boy was eighteen years of age. Sometimes proposals of marriage came for him and he was not indifferent to these prospects; but his longings for pleasure found no indulgence from the aunt. Visions of new born love of an adolescent and a newly-married couple did not hold the same charm for her as for other women. On the contrary, the possibility that her nephew should marry like other men, sit idly at home and grow corpulent under the attentions of a doting wife, appeared extremely despicable to her. 'Not before Pulin starts earning, can he bring home a bride' – was her terse comment. The hearts of the neighbour women almost broke at these harsh words of the aunt.

The temple was Jaikali's dearest treasure to which

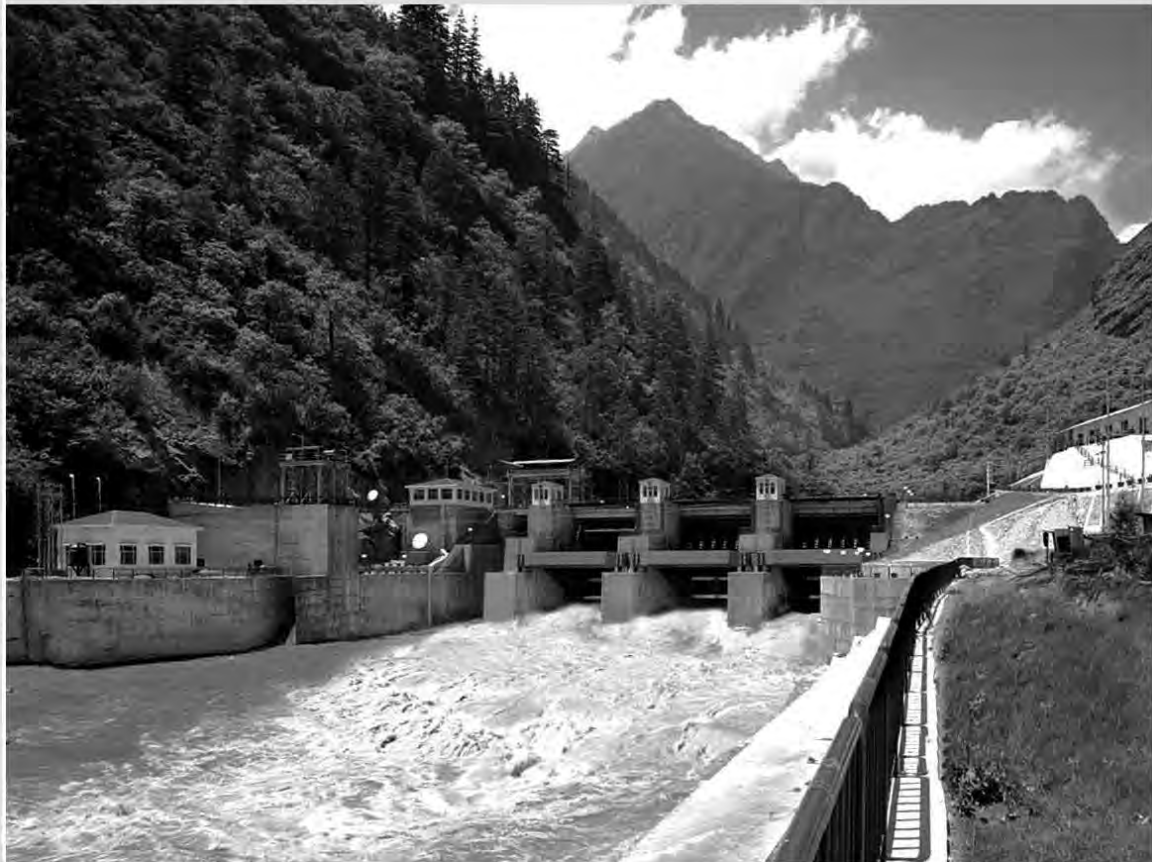
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she devoted her minutest attentions. Not the slightest flaw would be tolerated in the ceremonies of the bathing, feeding and repose of the idol. The two Brahmins in charge of its worship feared this one woman more than they feared the deity. A time had been when the deity would not receive its full allowance of offerings because the priest had another secret object of devotion, a woman called Nistarini. There was a clandestine division of the offerings of butter, milk, ghee and flour between the forces of heaven and of hell. But now under the supervision of Jaikali, God was receiving His full quota and the demi-gods had to seek other means of livelihood.

Under her care, the temple-yard was kept clean and bright. On one side, a “madhavi” creeper grew supported on a wooden framework specially built. Whenever a dry leaf fell from it, Jaikali immediately removed it from the yard. She could not stand the slightest carelessness in maintaining the order, cleanliness, and sanctity of the temple. Previously, boys of the neighbourhood came to take shelter in the courtyard while playing hide-and-seek and sometimes little lambs came and ate the bark of the climbing plant. But now there was no possibility of these occurrences. The boys could no longer enter the yard except on festive occasions and the hungry lambs were thrashed at the very entrance and sent away crying after their proper mothers.

A person who lived uncleanly was not allowed to enter the temple yard even if he was her closest relative. A brother-in-law, overfond of chickens cooked by unclean people, once came to visit her and was about to enter the precincts of the temple. But Jaikali expressed such immediate and strong disapproval that there arose the possibility of a breach with her sister. Such unnecessary and exclusive precautions on the part of the widow appeared to common people to be quite crazy.

Everywhere else Jaikali was stern, aloof and independent. Only before this temple did she completely surrender herself. To its idol she was entirely a mother, a wife, a slave. In its presence she was attentive, tender, charming and humble. This thing of stone was the only means of fulfilment of the hidden womanliness in her character. In it she found her husband, her son, her whole world.

This should suffice to convince the reader that the boy who had taken up the challenge to pick a few madhavi blossoms from the temple yard was possessed of boundless courage. He was Jaikali's younger nephew Nalin. He knew his aunt well enough but still his wayward nature would not be subject to discipline. Wherever there was danger, he was attracted towards it and wherever there were rules to be kept, his mind was restlessly eager to violate them. There was a rumour that in childhood, the

aunt's nature had resembled his to no small extent.

Jaikali at the time was seated at the temple door counting her beads – her eyes full of affectionate reverence fixed on the deity.

The boy approached from behind on tip toe and stood under the madhavi bower. He observed that the flowers on the lower branches had already been picked for worship. So slowly and carefully he climbed on to the wooden framework. Seeing a few blossoming buds on the upper branches he was extending his hand towards them when the worn out framework, unable to bear the weight of this strenuous effort, collapsed resoundingly. The clinging boy and the creeper together crashed to the ground.

Jaikali came running up, saw the doings of her nephew and roughly pulled him up from the ground. He had been hurt by the fall, but this could not be called punishment as it had been inflicted on him by an unconscious and inanimate agent. So there descended upon him Jaikali's conscious chastisements repeatedly and forcefully. He did not shed a single tear and endured it all in silence. His aunt then dragged him in and locked him up in a room. His afternoon meal was forbidden.

Hearing that his meal had been stopped, the serving woman, Mokshada, came with eyes swimming with tears and pleaded with her in a trembling voice to forgive the child. But Jaikali's heart did not melt. There was nobody in the house so rash as to offer the boy food, concealing it from the mistress.

The widow sent for men to repair the bower and reseated herself with her rosary. After sometime Mokshada approached her timidly and said - “Grandmother, uncle is crying for hunger. Shall I take him some milk?” ‘No’, replied Jaikali utterly unmoved. Mokshada retreated. In the cottage Nalin's plaintive whimpering gradually developed into howls of rage and much later turned into weary moaning which fell at intervals on the ears of his aunt engaged in her prayers.

Just as Nalin's mournful voice was dying down from exhaustion, the terrified and piteous cries of another creature became audible from somewhere near. With it mingled the distant shouts of running men carried from afar to fill the road in front of the temple with a frightful commotion.

Suddenly one could hear something running in the yard. Jaikali turned round and saw that the fallen madhavi creeper on the ground was quivering.

(Cont'd. on page 32)

Putin's Dominating Role in Russia

R. G. Gidadhubli

Putin has been taking measures to widen his electoral base and solicit popular support ahead of elections for the Duma and president.

After taking over from Boris Yeltsin in 1999 Vladimir Putin has been at the helm of affairs of Russia first as President of the Russian Federation for two terms and since 2008 as Prime Minister under his former colleague and confidant Dmitri Medvedev who succeeded him as President.

Putinism

The political and economic scene in Russia during Putin's presidency came to be known as 'Putinism', the essence of which was centralization and control over various government bodies and institutions. As President Putin exerted an assertive role over opposition parties including the Communist Party by reducing their influence in Russia's parliament, the Duma. He regrouped 89 regions into 7 macro regions and appointed governors – not elected. There was selective treatment of oligarchs taking ruthless measures against those who dared to challenge president and favouring those who were loyal to Kremlin.

Being a former KGB operative, he brought Russia's intelligence agency FSB under his control. The media which enjoyed relative freedom under Yeltsin had to substantially forego its freedom and influence. Economic reform measures and liberalization process started by Yeltsin were halted and replaced by state capitalism.

Putin's Popularity

Putin gained popularity among a majority of common Russians for making Russia strong and stable. Russia was prosperous thanks to a huge inflow of petrodollars boosted by skyrocketing prices for oil and natural gas during 2003-2008. The Russian economy bloomed with Russians income rising rapidly. On the foreign policy front, Putin was known to be assertive and aggressive projectioning Russia's re-emergence as a major power. This resulted in upheavals in Russia's relations with major powers including USA. This was Putinism as President of the Russian Federation.

Problems with the 'Near Abroad'

In contrast, his tenure as Prime Minister has not

been all smooth-sailing. Ethnic conflicts in Chechnya, Bashkirostan and other former "republics" of the erstwhile Soviet Union, have threatened Russia's internal security eg. The 5-day Georgia-Russia war, conflicting interests with the Baltic States, Ukraine, Byelorussia on issues of pricing and transportation of oil and natural gas to West Europe. These have often strained Russia's relations with the 'Near Abroad' (the non-Russian countries that were once part of the USSR).

Problems with the Economy

On the economic front, since 2009, Russia has been facing formidable problems with sharp decline in GDP growth rates, high rate of inflation exceeding 12-15%, growing economic disparities generating discontentment among large sections of the population. Russia is at the bottom of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India and China)

Strains on the Putin-Medvedev Tandem

With elections due for the Duma in December 2011 and for president in March 2012, there is considerable speculation about Putin's future role. Some analysts including Brian Whitmore have speculated that Putin-Medvedev tandem might be breaking possibly on the basis of reports and statements made by leaders in the Russian press. In the last few months Medvedev has made statements regarding shortcomings in the economic and social policies of the Russian government; urged the need for judicial reforms, a more liberal approach to human rights and so on. Medvedev took the initiative to substantially improve relations with the West and specifically with the USA. All these were an indirect attribution to the failures of Putin's policies. More importantly Medvedev offered his own alternative vision of 'Modernization' of Russia giving importance to liberalization, a greater role for civil societies and private sector in the economy, the rule of law, and the need for greater role for foreign capital etc. He took the initiative in setting up a hi-tech joint venture park with the USA at Skolkovo near Moscow on the pattern of 'Silicon Valley'. As a result the image of Medvedev as a president handpicked by Putin has been gradually changing and

his popularity increased. More significantly, in April 2011, The 'Right Cause' party chief, billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov, even supported his name as a possible candidate for president in the March 2012 election.

A Shrewd Strategist

Putin has publicly disagreed with Medvedev's observations. In April 2011 Putin insisted that a UN resolution was necessary and not unilateral military action in Libya by the West which Medvedev supported. He has blamed USA for the global financial crisis which has created economic problems for Russia. In 2010 to reduce the burden of inflation, Putin increased the wages of workers in the mining and engineering sectors. The contention that Putin is a great strategist becomes evident when Putin's proposed in May 2011 his alternative vision for Russia by setting up a social organization known as All Russia Peoples' Front (RPF) with the objective of involving a wide section of society. In doing so he has the support of the United Russia Party, the largest in the country. According to some Russian press reports there

has been good response for the RPF from trade unions, over 100 NGOs, and sections of intellectuals, thus continuing his hold over state machineries, oligarchs etc. Putin has been taking measures to widen his electoral base and solicit popular support ahead of elections for the Duma and president. It is significant that Medvedev himself has supported RPF thus negating a possible breakup of the Tandem. In fact, possibly under pressure from Putin's lobby, Medvedev had to sack his advisor who had stated that Medvedev would be a candidate for presidency in 2012. In fact some Russian analysts opine that both Putin and Medvedev who have over a decade of close relations have offered their visions for Russia which are not basically different. While it may be too early to predict the possible impact of RPF, there is hardly any doubt about the dominating influence of Putin in the political affairs of Russia in the years to come.

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2 Annas

freedom first

26

ORGAN OF THE INDIAN COMMITTEE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

JULY 1964

Editor : V. B. Karnik

This month in July 1954

The Indian Parliament is not a sovereign body. The Constitution and Fundamental Rights guaranteed by it impose a number of limitations on its legislative authority. The Constitution has further empowered courts of law to examine the laws enacted by Parliament or State Legislatures and declare them void if they infringe any of the Fundamental Rights or other provisions of the Constitution.

These provisions naturally slow down the pace of social and economic reforms. In the first place Parliament has to be very careful and see that none of the provisions of the law that it intends to enact encroaches on any of the Fundamental Rights. In the next place the law must stand the scrutiny of law courts and examples are not wanting when the Supreme Court or the High Courts have declared some laws or some of their provisions *ultra vires*.

The administrators and the Government of the day find these provisions irksome. They feel as if their attempts ensure social and economic progress are being frustrated by the High Courts and the Supreme Court. They feel as if the will of the people is being negated by the technicalities of the law.

But the Constitution is after all the highest expression of the people's will...

NOTES

Art in a Criminal court

The acquittal of artist Akbar Padamsee who was charged with exhibiting an obscene picture is a matter on which not

only the artist but also the magistrate should be congratulated. This is for the first time, in our memory, that a magistrate has brought to bear a genuinely artistic point of view on a case like this... Generally judges tend to act like glorified prudes when they are called upon to decide whether or not a particular work of art is obscene. But in this case, the Magistrate, Mr.M.Nasrullah, stated pointedly: "A painting which is creation of artistic talent does not become obscene for the simple reason that it contains an expressive pose which in other settings may even be considered objectionable, but, from the artistic point of view, does no more than justice to the subject before him." One must also congratulate Mr. Rudy Von Leyden, who by his impeccable and scholarly evidence turned, perhaps for the first time, the gloomy room of a criminal court into the bright classroom of an "Art academy."

*

With Many Voices

The last time he (Djilas) was in the United States, he told an old non-political acquaintance: "I would rather be a dishwasher in New York than second in the line of succession to Stalin in the Soviet Empire."

Bogdan Raditsa in the *New Leader*, April 26, 1954

Liberals are people who have their feet planted solidly in mid-air.

George Bernard Shaw quoted in *Thought*, June 12, 1954

The Lokpal and What It Entails *(Cont'd. from page 15)*

Hatao' or George Bush's 'War on Terrorism' they are fighting to establish an empty slogan.

A Lokpal, even if it is the most powerful institution in India, in which we have surrendered all our democratic rights to this dictator and got rid of our irksome Constitution, cannot control or root out corruption through the entire body of the nation. (In fact it will rapidly become much worse.) So, if it is established, we shall only have brought in an institution that is not answerable to

the people, and therefore liable to much more corruption than all else put together, and one that the people are unable to remove, once established. This is the sole but significant reason that a Lokpal as envisaged is dangerous. Let us not go, like the Gadarene swine, over the cliff only to find that we have pushed the nation into committing suicide.

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For Whom the Bell Tolls *(Cont'd. from page 17)*

reason why the government is so desperate to conceal the names and unwilling to initiate steps to get the list from the Swiss banks. It has taken more than six decades for the truth to dawn of what Mahatma Gandhi had foreseen when he advised disbanding the Congress party.

Situation Takes a New Turn

Meanwhile civil society members abstained from attending meetings as the government went back on its own earlier stand to include the Prime Minister in the Jan Lok Sabha Bill and excludes the Chief Justice of India and other high officials of the government. Such exclusions would effectively nullify the objective of the movement. After Baba Ramdev was evicted and taken to his ashram in Haridwar he decided to continue his fast from there. As I write this Baba Ramdev broke his fast on the plea of various swamis and gurus.

PM Bestirs

The Hazare-Ramdev agitation has not entirely been in vain because recent developments in the wake of charges against Dayanidhi Maran for misusing his office when he

was the telecom minister, led the PM writing to all ministers to declare their assets as also of their dependents. It is a hopeful beginning. Of course there are still hurdles to cross for the PM has not addressed a similar letter to bureaucrats. This is perhaps the first time a bold and definitive step has been taken by the PM to break out from the shackles that made him helpless and is trying to assert his authority. There are other indications also to substantiate this. *India Today* dated June 13, 2011 carries an article 'according to which the PM has kept his own counsel which shows that he is at last cutting himself free disregarding the opinion of the National Advisory Council that Sonia Gandhi heads. No doubt it is a refreshing turn of events but perhaps has come about a trifle too late to change the political fortunes of the nation. This is where the relevance of what has been mentioned in the beginning assumes importance. Therefore, it is tempting to hazard a guess that hitherto it was Sonia Gandhi who was firing the gun from Manmohan Singh's shoulder.

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Has The White Man Had His Day? *(Cont'd. from page 18)*

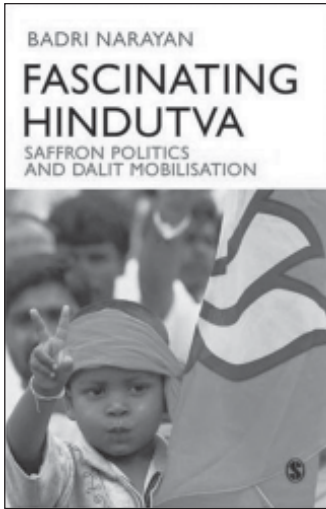
that almost all Western luxury brands – from Armani to Louis Vuitton to Rolls Royce – are scampering to set up shop in Asia. They are enjoying far better sales than in their home countries.

Of course, there are also booming economies in the Arab world – notably Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – but their prosperity is inextricably linked to the price of oil. Right now, they are riding a wave; principally because misguided policies by some Western leaders have raised the price of oil to stratospheric levels; but the bubble has to burst some day.

While I largely agree with the views expressed by Cohen in his *NYT* article, I am not holding my breath. I do not expect to see a new world order in my lifetime, at least. Asians may already be the *de facto* top dogs, but it is going to take them some time to grasp this new reality. They have to overcome a mindset forged by centuries of history and tradition. It won't be easy.

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BOOK REVIEWS



FASCINATING HINDUTVA by Badri Narayan · Published by Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd B 1/1-1 Mohan Coop Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110044-2009 · Pages 195 · Price Rs. 295

Reviewed by Brig. S. C. Sharma (retd.) adviser to the telecom industry and freelance writer. brigsc@gmail.com

The book documents how political parties are re-interpreting the legends of local Dalit heroes as protectors of Hindu religion from the Muslim invaders. This appeal to caste has replaced the earlier strategy of making

promises to the gullible masses. The hierarchy which gives some castes the privilege of domination has been present in India from ancient times. It still exists, particularly in UP and Bihar. The author has ignored that in some states this hierarchy has been reversed.

BJP and RSS are trying to integrate the lower castes into a unified Hindu society. The officers will be provided by the higher castes while the rank and file would be from the Dalits. This army will protect the Hindus from the Muslims. The author is overcritical of the BJP and RSS. The RSS has been promoting the idea of unified Hindu society even during the colonial days. Every political party tries to enlist the support of various groups and communities. The secular Congress does not hesitate in obtaining support of communal bodies like the Muslim League. A few outbreaks of communal riots have been narrated. Both communities have been fairly blamed for it. He wrongly mentions that Arya Samaj claims that Swami Daya Nand was assassinated by a Muslim.

The BJP and RSS organize fairs and sports to promote unity of Hindu society. He calls it communalizing of sports. This practice is not limited to Hindus alone. All communities celebrate religious events and we notice an increase in the number of people attending these functions. Events in village Chittora in the Bahraich district of UP are described as an example. It is inhabited by a large number of Bhar Pasis which is a Dalit caste. It was ruled by a Dalit Pasis King Suhalddev. He defeated the Muslim invader Ghazi Mian. Ghazi Mian was killed and a dargah has been built around his grave. An annual fair is held at the dargah and it is supposed to bring luck and

success to those who attend the fair. Hindus also participate in the fair. The Muslims call it a symbol of communal harmony. In 2001, the RSS leaders formed a Suhalddev Seva Samiti and started organizing Suhalddev Vijayotsav function. In May 2004, a five day celebration was organized in memory of Maharaja Suhalddev. A statue of Suhald Dev was erected in Chittora and later in Lucknow. The popularity of this function equaled that of Ramlila. Wrestling activities were part of these functions to prepare Hindu youths to face mobs in the event of communal riots. Gradually Urdu words have been dropped from local songs and no processions are carried out on Muharram. This did lead to an awakening amongst the Hindus to celebrate Suhalddev's victory over an invader who happened to be a Muslim. The Pasis became convinced that Suhalddev belonged to their caste. The purpose of these fairs is to draw them into their political field and to construct a Hindu history against Islam. As the second largest Dalit community in UP, they are the target of various political parties. The Congress also joined in the Suhalddev celebrations. The statue of Suhalddev in Lucknow is on horse back in the image of Maharana Pratap. The author has described Maharana Pratap as another myth propagated by the RSS. This remark is unwarranted as his deeds of valour are a fact of history and of veneration for many of us.

In the election campaign of 2004, the BJP decided to mobilise each caste individually, while trying to build up a unified Hindu identity. The general category of Dalits was almost abstract and reference to local heroes of each caste amongst the Dalits created a better response. Incidentally, The BJP used to refer to Dalits as Vanchits, meaning the deprived ones. The tales of the local heroes were included in school text books. The BSP and SP took the same path for mobilizing the Dalits.

An interesting side effect of this process is that the castes are acquiring power to negotiate with the political parties to get more privileges. A newly educated class amongst the Nishads, the boat riders, initiated a movement to unite all Nishads. All the Nishad communities combined accounted for 18% of the population of UP. They

traced their lineage to Ved Vyas and tales of glory of their community were narrated to claim a higher status in ancient times. The Nishads rallied behind Advani in the Rath Yatra and 20,000 volunteers went to Ayodhya to construct the Ram Temple.

A similar movement has taken place amongst the highly marginalized community of Musahars who are scheduled caste and are mainly concentrated in Bihar. The word Musahar means hunter. Legends narrated in folk songs link them to Lord Shiva. Another legend describes them as being descendents of a powerful king. They have been organizing fairs since 1988 to popularize these legends as an aspiration to be considered equal to the higher castes. The Hindutva forces have made good use of these myths to mobilize the Mahasars.

There is intense competition amongst the political parties to win elections by securing the votes of the marginalized communities as a whole. Such communities themselves want a share in the political power by asserting their identity through legends that provide self respect to their caste. This process is most visible in UP and parts of Bihar. The same myths are used by political parties with

opposed ideologies. Ek Lavya has been glorified by BJP, SP and BSP as well. The author has narrated some of the legends which link some of the communities to heroes of the Mahabharata. The erstwhile lower castes are happy to be linked with higher castes and the higher castes desire to forge such unity for political support. The author describes this process as cultural fusion. Example of alliance between Brahmins and SCs forged by Mayawati in UP is perhaps a result of numbers which matter in elections. BSP had failed to gain the support of Muslims and OBCs. An alliance with Brahmins who constitute 7.5 per cent of votes makes good sense. It might lead to cultural ties. It has not worked in Maharashtra where the Brahmins are only 2.5 per cent of the population.

In conclusion, the author asserts that the people at the grassroots are not communal and live in harmony in spite of communalisation of folk culture and folk memories. The author has well brought out the changes that are taking place at the grass root level. Hindutva forces are gaining support from the marginalized communities. This is only part of the overall picture. The skewed secularism of the secular parties is also driving Hindus to Hindutva parties.

The Trespasser *(Cont'd. from page 26)*

'Nalin', she called in a stern voice. As nobody replied she had the idea that the incorrigible Nalin had somehow escaped from his place of detention and returned to annoy her. She pressed her lips severely together and descended into the yard.

Approaching the foliage she called out again, 'Nalin!'

Still there was no answer. Then she lifted one of the branches and her eyes fell upon a very dirty pig which had taken refuge among the thick leaves.

Within those stone walls, that arbour was the miniature replica of holy Brindaban. The sweet scent of the blooming flowers reminded one of the fragrant breath of the Gopis. It raised beautiful visions of the happy wanderings of Lord Krishna along the banks of the Yamuna. What a horrible thing was this to happen to this consecrated ground which the widow valued more than her own life!

The priest came running up with a stick. In a moment

Jaikali advanced to stop him and swiftly closed the doors of the temple from within.

Before long, a group of drunken Doms arrived at the temple doors and began clamouring for their sacrificial victim.

Jaikali stood behind the closed doors and said, 'Go back, you people! Do not defile my temple.'

The Doms went back. Confronted as good as with the evidence of their eyes, they still could not bring themselves to believe that Jaikali Thakurani had given shelter to an unclean animal within the temple of her Lord Radhanath.

At this trivial incident, the God of all created things was no doubt very pleased, but that tiny god of the small village called 'society' was greatly scandalized.

(Translated by Punya Prabha Roy)

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Freedom First

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

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

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

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

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Freedom First

Digitisation Project

Freedom First, which began publication 59 years ago, 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 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 when it was politically incorrect or 'unpopular' to speak up for liberal values not to mention liberal economics. Our primary aim has been and continues to be to inform, analyse and educate our readers whether in the context of the not so recent past be it on the real nature of Soviet Communism, its inhuman treatment of dissent; of the fifth column that it created in the form of communist parties organised internationally including India; issues of governance; the onset of corruption as the licence-permit-quota-raj tightened its stranglehold on the economy; the Planning Commission which was patterned on the Soviet Gosplan and which inevitably led to wrong priorities e.g. the emphasis on heavy industry to the neglect of rural India in general and agriculture in particular; a lopsided foreign policy in the guise of non-alignment; and the growing trend towards too much government and too little citizenship. The list can go on.

All these were issues that were discussed in ***Freedom First*** in articles spread over 500 editions (including this one) in about 19,0000 printed pages reflecting the times they were written, by men known for their integrity and competence.

We propose to digitise the entire set of 500 plus copies. This would not only ensure their preservation for the future but will also be a boon to scholars and to those who wish to know the story of India after independence. It will be of considerable historical and research value. We believe that numerous think tanks, the many centres for study and research within our country and overseas not to mention GenNext will need to know the story from the liberal perspective.

Dear Reader, in response to our appeal for your assistance in persuading Charitable Trusts, Foundations and similar organisations to help fund the cost of digitizing, we were deeply touched when we received from Dr. (Mrs.) Harshida Pandit wife of the late Mr. Ramu Pandit a contribution of Rs.1 lakh in his memory for the digitizing project. Mr. Ramu Pandit was a valued member of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and a member of its Executive Council from 1975 till his untimely demise in 1993.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Editor