

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

- ❖ **A Ritualistic Call for Austerity**
- ❖ **A Pragmatic Approach to Clean up India**
- ❖ **US-China-India Trilateral Relations**

Freedom First believes in an open society based on 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; and 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

The Liberal Magazine – 60th Year of Publication
No.541 July 2012

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Between Ourselves...

We resume our journey for the next sixty years with this issue No.541, July 2012.

On reaching sixty last month we reiterated our determination to stay on course to our commitment to "The Open Society". The communist totalitarian movement / the international communist conspiracy is behind us. Some nations that call themselves communist ranging from Cuba in the West where a physically unfit Fidel Castro has passed on his hammer & sickle to his brother and North Korea where the regime change brought about by the death of father Kim Jong-Il resulted in his anointed son Kim Jong-Un ascending the throne amidst the bursting of crackers only this one cracker was a missile that didn't take off. The Chinese Communists have seemingly resolved the conundrum of bread or freedom by retaining freedom with them and 'allowing' the 'people' earn their bread the way they want to. This of course makes nonsense of Marx and Mao but who cares. And then we have the former KGB operative now President of Russia for a second time round, hoping dialectics will help him re-tune the laws which will guarantee his re-election five years hence. Be that as it may what is material is the fact that the international communist movement is dead. But our goal of an honest open society is still far away.

Tiny, as we are, we have our tasks cut out. We shall continue to strive for the India of our dreams. And this dream involving some concepts that are integral to an open society, need to be fine-tuned. What are they? And why do they need to be fine-tuned or refined? We listed them in our editorial last month. It is in this context that we begin with a discussion on "Secularism". Turn to the back cover. Share with us your views.

Also, we have, finally, caught up with the Joneses and gone online. 'www.freedomfirst.in' should enable us reach out to many more readers. Visit the site and tell us what you think of it and how the site can be improved both visually and in content. We are novices and could do with a lot of help.

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Professor S.Radhakrishnan, R.I.P

PROFESSOR S. RADHAKRISHNAN (or Prof.SRK as many liked to tease him) an outstanding individual, a liberal-par excellence and a dear friend passed away in Chennai on June 12, 2012 after a prolonged illness.

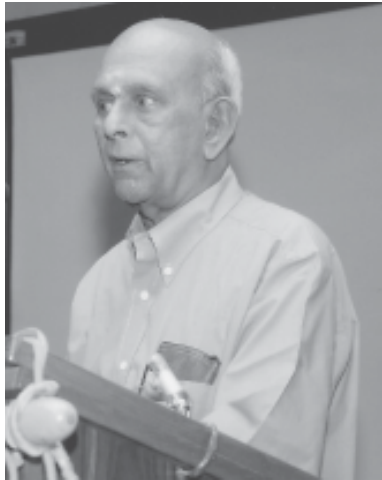
A graduate of the Madras University, Professor Radhakrishnan did his Masters at the Michigan State University as a Fulbright-Smith Mundt Scholar. Returning to India, and for the next 28 years he taught economics in colleges in Tamil Nadu and Mumbai. Thereafter he did a five year stint as an Economist in Delhi; for a time as a consultant for non-banking finance companies and on the Board of a company in Chennai. Alongside he was a visiting faculty for management schools in Chennai.

He authored a number of books among them one on banking called “The Romance of Banking” and another titled “Economic Anecdotes”. He wrote numerous articles dealing with economics and the Indian economy.

Believe it or not this was the rather brief and sketchy “CV” I could get. And I was not surprised. Prof. Radhakrishnan was, I soon found out reticent to a fault. It was quite a task getting him to talk about himself.

I first met Prof. Radhakrishnan nearly 18 years ago at a seminar that the Project for Economic Education had organised in Chennai on the subject of the then ongoing process of economic reforms. In the absence of the Swatantra Party which was the only party to have bucked the socialist “mantra” but collapsed due to internal dissensions in 1974, Minoo Masani one of the founders of the Swatantra Party felt that there was need to educate the people on the reforms with a view to accelerate the growth rate. For this purpose he founded the Project for Economic Education (PEE) in 1985. It was at this seminar organised by the PEE in Chennai that I ‘discovered’ Prof. Radhakrishnan! His clarity of thought and his articulation of the liberal position was an eye opener. He also offered the collaboration of an organisation that he had recently founded in association with a group of academicians, economists and professionals - the Institute of Economic Education (IEE). Thereafter for the next 15 years we worked in close cooperation on a number of well focussed projects not only in Chennai but in various parts of the country.

He was a human dynamo and a workaholic. His



rapport with students in high schools and colleges and the younger generation was remarkable. Professor Radhakrishnan took on the responsibility of organising the Indian Liberal Group (a dormant group that was being restructured) in Chennai. Under his leadership a number of youth camps were organised and all three organisations – his own IEE, the PEE and ILG worked in tandem.

A favourite technique that he used to great effect to enthuse students was to involve them in what he called ‘field activity’. Here is an excerpt from

a preface he wrote to a Report submitted by students on “Workers and Entrepreneurs in the Informal Sector in Chennai: “As a part of co-curricular activity, students are encouraged to go beyond books and learn something on their own. The students of E-Com Club of Sri Sankara Vidyashramam, all of whom are youth club members of the ILG, conducted a survey of small business establishments. Over 30 students met 100 such entrepreneurs and workers and got a structured questionnaire completed. Based on the data collected, they classified and tabulated them and wrote a survey report. I must compliment the students who went to the market and witnessed how some segments of the population make their living...” There were many such surveys that were conducted with his support and guidance; all of them unique in their own way and several well-reported in the press.

He was then also President of the Chennai Chapter of the Indian Liberal Group. This was in 2006. Two years later he was the president of the Indian Liberal Group nationally.

The interesting thing about Prof. SRK was the fact that he handwrote his letters and reports sometimes running into 8 to 10 pages. His language was precise, the handwriting was clear and he wrote what needed to be written without the any kind of ambiguity. He was a great champion of IT but refused to go anywhere near a typewriter let alone computer. His standard reply was why do I need to I can always get one of the youngsters to do it!

Freedom First conveys its deepest condolences to Mrs.Radhakrishnan and other members of his family on their sad bereavement. Their loss is ours too. We’ll miss him.

From Our Readers

60 years of *Freedom First*

Freedom is utterly meaningless without awareness of who we are and what our potential is. Education is the foundation of that freedom

India has chosen to keep its citizens uneducated and reduced education to literacy and failed to provide that either.

Today 95% Indians have no capability to understand the world they live in and cannot write two correct sentences in any language of their choice.

Please start with education if you are serious about freedom. Otherwise it will remain an empty slogan.

Satish Jha, USA, satish@olpci.org

Hearty congratulations to *Freedom First*. *Sataayushmaan bhava* – a hundred years to it.

K. Vedomurthy, Chennai. kved@yahoo.com

Firoze Hirjikaka's remarkable piece "*Freedom First*, Senior Citizen" says it all. What a magnificent achievement for a journal which does not crave for any special tax exemption or any other financial support! It demands support for what it legitimately stands for and what India needs to do in fostering the liberal spirit and ethos.

My hearty congratulations to the *Freedom First* Advisory Board and its editor. I have yet to come across a person who is so deeply committed to the cause.

I fully support the task cut out for *Freedom First* for the next forty years. We have to build upon our rich heritage of liberal philosophy and move forward to build an Open Society. There is still fire in the belly of this 60 year-young publication.

Sunil Bhandare, Mumbai
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God is Within Us

I have been an avid reader of *Freedom First* for over 30 years now. My esteem for your magazine, your team, your contributors has been steadily growing. The articles are well articulated, there is no undue bias. No topic is treated in a casual manner.

However, in the article entitled "Nirmal Baba is

within us" (June 2012 issue) the author says "Other *babas* like Satya Sai Baba made their impact ... on the basis of miracles." Is it really necessary to name a particular guru and show him in poor light just because you are upset about the media campaign against your chosen guru? For the media anything that is negative and perverse sells. Do you ever get to view or read about any positive developments or about people who are quietly working for the neglected masses of our country?

When objects are materialised by a guru, for believers they are miracles; for others this is a sleight of hand... Miracles and myths are to be found in every religion. Their authenticity comes under scrutiny and debates continue. It is fortunate that we still enjoy a semblance of democracy where people have the freedom to air their views. Of late we are steadily becoming more and more intolerant. The game rule is very simple. Let us disagree with each other but never disrespect those with whom we do not agree. In a liberal society every single voice needs to be heard and taken cognizance of.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has inspired people belonging to various faiths, not for joining a new cult, but for making them realise the true meaning of their own faith and thus becoming better human beings. After his *Mahasamadhi* last year many expected that activities at Prashantinilayam (Puttaparthi) would come to a grinding halt. But to the utter delight of all of us, within a few weeks, devotees from Turkey and UAE turned up in even larger numbers for celebrating Ramzan at Puttaparthi. This is a truly amazing situation coming at a time when humanity is torn apart by greed, intolerance, mistrust and hatred. The media has no interest in reporting such positive developments.

There are two super specialty hospitals (one in Puttaparthi and another in Bengaluru) and one general hospital in Bengaluru. An estimated 2.5 million people have received medical treatment free of cost. These are the only hospitals in the world where there are no cash counters. The very first patient who underwent a heart surgery on the very day when the super specialty hospital at Puttaparthi was inaugurated in 1991 was a 10-year old Muslim lad who could not even afford bus fare.

Drinking water is supplied to over 1100 villages in Andhra Pradesh benefitting 3 million people. These massive projects received no government aid and were completed in record time.

Free education is provided in campuses only for girls at Puttaparthi, Whitefield and Anantapur from primary

school to post graduate studies, business management and even music . The emphasis is on excellence in harmony with ethical conduct. It should not therefore be surprising that Sri Sathya Sai Institute for Higher Education has been awarded A++ rating by the National Academy of Accreditation Commission. .

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has awakened in many the human values that are latent. The goal is achieved for some by materializing objects (be it by the sleight of hand as claimed by his detractors), for some others by performing miraculous cures (be it placebo effect for his critics) and many others by his teachings. He displayed amazing insights into the inner meaning of scriptures and true significance of rituals common to all faiths. His aim was to unite humanity. These are truly mind boggling achievements for a lad who grew up in a little known hamlet in Andhra Pradesh, and who left school and family at the age of 14.

Indeed our country is blessed with many spiritually evolved souls irrespective of the faith they belong to, many rationalists/atheists whose ethical conduct is impeccable inspiring us to emulate them. Inspirational role models are the need of the hour in our country, which has the misfortune of being to be led by corrupt, self-seeking, intolerant, politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, fundamentalists..... the list is endless.

Vasudev Nori, Mumbai. vasudevnori@gmail.com

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Dinesh Trivedi's Exit as Union Railway Minister

"Dinesh Trivedi's Unsavoury Drama" (*Freedom First* May 2012) was a disappointing read in a publication like *Freedom First*. Surely one of the 'freedoms' to be defended is the freedom of an important public servant to act in accordance with his convictions regarding the best course to be followed in the nation's interests.

Instead of applauding Mr. Trivedi's action in keeping with his convictions, even in the face of virulent opposition FF seems to vilify him, in the interests of 'keeping the peace' through continued kow-towing to self-aggrandising satraps who glory in appointing puppets to positions of critical importance to the nation's well-being. For an illustration one need go no further than the position of the Prime Minister itself.

Surely the fact that "Trivedi could not even stand up in Parliament to defend the budget presented by him" speaks volumes about the level of impotence, self-interest

and sycophancy to which the position of the Prime Minister has been debased.

Instead, FF makes a case to present Trivedi as the incompetent politician who could not even anticipate and respect the wishes of his selfless benefactress. How ungrateful, traitorous and disruptive of him to actually cock a snook at the 'wishes' of his would-be puppeteer!

The final paragraph of this article, which seeks to seal this argument against Trivedi, could very easily be paraphrased as under, with equal force and logic to present the very opposite position, thus:

"Banerjee, while relinquishing the Railway portfolio to her own appointee, Trivedi, would have been fully aware of the (parlous) state of the affairs of the railways. She would have also been aware of her appointee's predisposition to the introduction of measures in keeping with his convictions. She had, in the circumstances, only two options before her; either convince him, or decline to make the assignment. Instead, she chose to enact a drama – clearly unsavoury in nature – and in the process place the PM in an embarrassing situation. The intention clearly was to project herself as an iron-willed, no-nonsense leader – and apparently she has succeeded".

Your readers may judge for themselves which concluding paragraph is the more realistic.

N. J. Cama, Bengaluru.

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The views expressed in articles published in Freedom First are not necessarily those of the journal. The pages of Freedom First are open to all those who subscribe to the values that the journal stands for and very clearly expressed on the cover page of this issue. It's a wide canvas which allows a variety of points of view. It is in this context we glad to publish your interpretation of the manner in which Dinesh Thakur was pushed out of the Railway Ministry. Editor.

Freedom First Goes Online.

Visit www.freedomfirst.in

Freedom First has crossed yet another milestone. It goes online with this issue. Readers will recall we had launched a digitisation project over a year ago. That project is nearing completion. Barring a few which are missing, all issues of *Freedom First* are now available on our website archives.

Monsoon Forecast



Rabari herdsmen in post monsoon grassland, Kutch. ● Photo: © Ashish & Shanthi Chandola.

The British are credited with being obsessed about their weather but as the monsoon season approaches, we in India are not too far behind! I guess for the British it is the sheer unpredictability and the ever-changing nature of their weather that makes it a perennially relevant talking point. After all they are stuck on an island that is subject to warm and cold fronts caused not only by the winds and the proximity to the mainland of Europe, but also by ocean currents. Our monsoon winds are on the whole more predictable and follow more or less a set pattern.

And yet, the common refrain that if one wants to be a failure in life then one should aim to become the weatherman, holds as true for the fickle British weather as it does for the predictability of the Indian monsoon for it, too, is fickle in its own way!

What has fascinated me over the years is the manner in which the monsoon proclaims its arrival in different parts of our country. In Assam, where the rains begin in April/May the season is heralded by the most furious of electric storms.

I watched these storms two years in succession from Kaziranga and it was awe inspiring to see huge banks of clouds pile up along the North bank of the Brahmaputra.

They hang low on the distant horizon and seem to touch the very waters of the mighty river. As the light dimmed to merge into the night, huge tongs of lightning lit up the giant bales providing us with momentary snaps of their shapes and shades while the loud claps tore into the constant rumbling of clouds piling upon clouds.

Though the Ganga leaves the mountains at Rishikesh, the valley that it has carved for itself is still relatively narrow till well after it has flowed past the holy city of Haridwar. When I was young and lived up North, it was possible to scramble up a hillside and look well beyond the Sivalik range to where the sliver of the river merged into the smog that hung over the 'Great Plains of Hindustan'.

Much like the huge dark elephants that Kalidas compared them to in his classic work, Meghdoot, the monsoon clouds move up the Ganga to march into the Doon valley and the Western Himalayas. Here the start of the rains is normally preceded by a roaring windstorm that lashes and bends even the stately Sal to a point that would snap most other trees. And when the rain sets in, it will rain for days. Torrential from time to time but mostly a steady drizzle that gives the region its high water table and lush vegetation. Actually, this is true for the Terai but in Central India things are quite the opposite.

Over Bandhavgarh the monsoon arrives quite unobtrusively. Perhaps we did not notice, as we have been knocked senseless by the searing heat of May and June when temperatures touch 45C by 8.30AM. But then around 20 June a blanket of cloud, very nearly a straight line of dark cloud was moving over us at a steady pace. It stretched from end to end all around and it was as if a lid had been placed over the giant pot in which we simmered. Everything stood still; it seemed for an eternity – *chital* moved listlessly through the grassland and tiger stayed close to pools of water in the forest. Only the babies of langur monkeys seem to have the stamina to play.

Whatever little breeze there was also dropped before the heavens opened and then the world was transformed. Overnight. The world of Bandhavgarh was born again. Nowhere else has the thought that the monsoon is the greatest event in nature hit home harder than in the forests and countryside of Central India, Rajasthan and the grasslands of Kutch. It provides generously for all. Little wonder it also plays such a major part in the literature, art and music of this land.

Things have changed dramatically from the days when to be a weatherman was akin to courting failure. My wife, Shanthi and I keep a close tab on the Indian Meteorological Department website and their forecast is

mostly on the dot. But for us, the observers of Nature, it is the sightings of the pied cuckoo that say the monsoon is around the corner. Here in Bandipur we saw one on the 10th of June so we are expecting proper showers by the 15th. The other sure sign is the perceptible change in the quality of light; you find it has suddenly changed one morning - when the cold whiteness is gone and the light attains the warmth of a golden hue, it is time to declare that the monsoon season is with us.

ASHISH CHANDOLA is a well-known wildlife photographer and a director/cameraman with several highly regarded wildlife documentaries to his credit. He lives in Bangalore and can be contacted at chandola.ashish@gmail.com.

The Lost Tycoons

How Government is killing India's private sector

Dhiraj Nayyar

At 10.30 am on the morning of May 2, two of India's top telecom entrepreneurs, Sunil Mittal of Airtel and Kumar Mangalam Birla of Idea, and two CEOs of global telecom giants, Vittorio Collao of Vodafone and Jon Fredrik Baksaas of Telenor, walked into the office of Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram in Delhi's North Block. They expressed their grave concern about the recommendations of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India announced just two days earlier on April 30, which they said would kill the Indian telecom industry. The four businessmen spent the rest of the day, until after 7 pm meeting ministers and bureaucrats who could conceivably help an industry that has been repeatedly battered in the past three years. They called on Pranab Mukherjee, Sharad Pawar, Veerappa Moily and Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who are members of the Empowered Group of Ministers on spectrum pricing. They met Cabinet Secretary Ajit Seth, Commerce Secretary Rahul Khullar and Joint Secretary PMO, BVR Subrahmanyam.

The sight of top businessmen shuttling frantically between Government offices was a revival of the worst excesses of the pre-1991 licence raj. The UPA Government and its top functionaries have resurrected the ghosts of India's socialist past twenty years on. Said the usually cautious but now agitated Sunil Mittal as he traversed New Delhi's corridors of power, "This has been the most destructive period of regulatory environment I have seen in 16 years."

India Inc spent much of 2011 complaining about policy paralysis in the UPA Government. The spectre of corruption, and the prospect of being investigated, had made jittery bureaucrats terribly shy of putting their pen to the paper of Government files. Then in 2012, the empire of Government awoke from its slumber to strike back at its detractors.

Large sections of India Inc would no longer suffer from policy paralysis. They would suffer instead from policy action of the most arbitrary, retrograde kind. Evidence suggests that sectors which have a close interface with Government, like infrastructure, mining and natural resources, are struggling. Those at an arms length are doing reasonably well. An analysis by a leading business daily of the January-March 2012 quarterly financial results of 989 companies that make up 52 percent of the total market capitalization of the Bombay Stock Exchange showed that just five sectors were propping up the net profits growth of India Inc. None of these five sectors – banking, IT, pharma, Fast Moving Consumer Goods, and cement – have extensive interface with Government. With these sectors taken out, the net profits of India Inc actually declined by 9.6 percent compared with the same quarter last year. Says Adi Godrej, President of apex industry chamber CII, "There is little doubt that all businesses that have a significant direct interface with Government are suffering.

Those which don't are still doing okay." Dr. Manmohan Singh became famous for ending the licence raj in 1991. He is becoming infamous for reviving it.

Market forecasts predict a number closer to 6 percent. Some are predicting a number under 6 percent. The Indian economy is crash landing just at the time when it should have been taking off to 10 percent. If growth slows down to 6 percent or below, there will be fewer jobs, lower salaries, and diminished savings. The middle class may, for the first time in 20 years, experience a serious fall in their standard of living.

Dhiraj Nayyar, Deputy Editor. *India Today*, dhiraj.nayyar@gmail.com

Courtesy Dhiraj Nayyar. Excerpted from his posting on the net.

A Ritualistic Call for Austerity !

Sunil Bhandare

Should not austerity become an integral part of prudent fiscal governance at all times?

When in acute fiscal crunch, every single government inevitably gives a clarion call for austerity; and so does our own Finance Minister. There seems to be a sudden awakening of the virtues of fiscal prudence and the urgency for rationalisation of expenditure and optimisation of available resources. And the avowed objective is to improve the macro economic environment. That in less than three months of presentation of the Budget 2012-13, the package of economy measures that are necessary is becoming mysterious; and, therefore, lacks credibility. Has India's macro economic environment suddenly turned hostile? Was the writing on the wall not crystal clear even in the early months of 2012? Should not austerity become an integral part of prudent fiscal governance at all times?

What are the key components of the new fiscal measures? First, every ministry/department will achieve a mandatory 10% cut in non-plan expenditure. This, however, excludes interest payment, repayment of debt, defence capital expenditure, salaries, pensions and the Finance Commission grants to the States. Second, there will be utmost economy in organising conferences, seminars and workshops. Third, there will be restraints on exhibitions, conferences and seminars abroad; and a ban on such activities in five star hotels. Fourth, there will be a ban on purchase of vehicles. Fifth, there will be restraints on foreign travel, except on grounds of unavoidable official engagements based on functional necessity, and where study tours, seminars, etc. are fully funded by sponsoring agencies. Last, there will be a total ban on creation of new plan and non-plan posts. Some procedural disciplines are also sought to be imposed on fiscal transfers to States, PSUs, and autonomous bodies as well as on pacing of expenditure during the course of the fiscal year.

What the PM & FM Need to Do

Doubtless, the FM is trudging, what by now has become, a familiar path. Yet, we believe that these are welcome initiatives and must be taken up seriously – and on a sustained basis. That said, what we invariably find is a huge gap between promise and performance. To overcome such likely murky situation what is really

necessary is a diktat from the Prime Minister setting out responsibility and accountability standards for each and every one of his cabinet colleagues as well as for those in top bureaucracy of every ministry. And such standards should not become hostage to compulsions of coalition politics. Indeed, he must monitor the ministerial performance at regular intervals and willing to take the risk of sacking the non-performing ministers and secretaries, if warranted. Or else the entire exercise of the FM will read as a wonderful Office Memorandum without any effective substance – “also read, but not to be acted upon”!

It is also imperative that either the PM or the FM sets out the actual quantum targets (in terms of rupees crores) of cost/expenditure reduction that each and every minister and the government departments concerned are going to be responsible for achieving during 2012-13. In fact, such efforts must yield new normative performance benchmarks for the formulation of the subsequent budgets. This would also necessitate revamping of the current format of “outlay-outcome” budgets. While doing so the basic tenets of ABC analysis need to be pursued, wherein the attention must be more acutely focussed on relatively numerically smaller A and B items of high value expenditure with high demonstrable impact (e.g., cost effective repairs and maintenance of capital assets) rather than numerically larger, but value-wise insignificant C items (e.g., spending on office stationary).

What proportion of non-plan expenditure would really come under the austerity drive? It is evident from the Central Budget's expenditure structure that total non-plan expenditure would be of the order of Rs. 969,900 crores, representing about 65% of total expenditure (plan and non-plan). Of this non-plan expenditure, the exempted categories like debt servicing (repayment of principal and interest), salaries and pensions, defence capital expenditure and non-plan grants to States, etc. would account for almost four-fifths, thus, leaving a balance of at best about Rs. 185,000 crores on which mandatory cut of 10% would become applicable. Even if this proposition is effectively implemented, there could be potential for expenditure saving of about Rs.18,500 crores. But, based on our past

experience, this is easily calculated than actually achieved!

Mind you, the axe will fall almost entirely on provisions for subsidies and some of the government's new aggressive schemes of social sector spending. Is there enough courage to handle the likely backlash both at the popular level or at the political level from the coalition partners of UPA and within the Congress Party *per se*? Also, not to forget the likely opposition from the National Advisory Council!

Need for Plain Speaking by PM

From a longer-term perspective what is truly needed is "plain speaking" from no less an authority (what really remains of it!) than the PM on the grave state of fiscal health. And he now needs to do this not only to his ministerial colleagues and all those who really matter in policy making in the government, but also to the "high command" in his own party and the coalition partners. The time has come for the PM to carry the message to the people at large that there is "no free lunch". A fiscal crisis is brewing – the target of cut in the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio from 5.9% of GDP in 2011-12 to 5.1% in 2012-13 is most unlikely to be achieved under the existing framework of fiscal complacency.

Indeed, the FM will be faced with a double whammy in his budgetary goals – on the one hand, an economic and industrial growth slow down would erode the anticipated revenue buoyancy and on the other, there would be a strong resistance to fiscal austerity. The latter is clear from the recent decision to roll back part of the hike in petrol prices irrespective of whether beneficiaries of such action are neither the poor nor the common man. What happens to the finances of the oil marketing companies? What happens to the goal of reducing the ratio of subsidies to national income?

The Need of the Hour

While concluding our observations, we must state that the liberal position recognises the current imperatives of fiscal austerity. Expenditure controls and administrative reforms have to be an integral part of this exercise. At the same time, the government must refrain from imposing curbs on private consumption/investment expenditure through any new tax measures, import controls and/or pricing and distribution controls. We also need to stress that a call for austerity cannot be restricted only to the domain of fiscal governance. The business and industry in general, and the corporate sector in particular must also practise what it preaches to the government. It will be in the long-term interest of our business and industry to continuously strive for restraining ostentatious

consumption and attain even better standards of costing and productivity benchmarks in their operations. Indeed, such efforts should become an integral part of corporate social responsibility.

Likewise, austerity has to be imbibed through self-discipline by the rich, the neo rich professionals and high income middle-class – those who are essentially the products of the post-liberal era and who are fast turning to extreme forms of consumerism in the country. For strengthening economic liberalisation both corporate and household sectors have to make sacrifices, as and when necessary. At a time when public sector savings are rapidly eroding, the burden of responsibility increasingly shifts to corporate and household sectors to shore up national savings so urgently required to revitalise the momentum of economic growth.

The current predicament is not unique to India. There is a call for austerity across so many advanced countries of the world, especially the worst affected Euro-zone economies of Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Italy. The message that has come loud and clear from the global financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath is: (a) fiscal stimulus alone does not sustain economic recovery; (b) persistent fiscal profligacy does not deliver social welfare on a sustainable basis; and (c) a combination of fiscal profligacy and financial system's irrational exuberance is far more deadly – it can only ensure a prolonged and painful period of recession, unemployment, austerity and restructuring. We believe that India has still a chance to make a choice between pursuing substantive fiscal austerity and allowing fiscal drift with its inevitable consequences of dangerous stagflation!

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Nasrudin Mullah and the Philosopher

A philosopher, having made an appointment to dispute with Nasruddin, called and found him away from home. Infuriated, he picked up a piece of chalk and wrote "Stupid Oaf" on Nasrudin's gate.

As soon as Mullah Nasruddin got home and saw that, the Mullah rushed to the philosopher's house. "I had forgotten," he said, "that you were to call. And I apologize for having not been at home. Of course, I remembered the appointment as soon as I saw that you had left your name on my door."

From the Net. Contributed by Asrarul Haque

Who Will Be India's President? This Time, It Matters

"In theory, the President is above politics; in practice, he is what he chooses to be."

M. J. Akbar, India Today weekly

President Pratibha Patil wakes to the sound of trumpets and horse-backed riders in the cobbled courtyard of her magnificent palace in New Delhi; she walks on a treadmill, prays at her private temple and prepares for a long, hollow day.

That's how it has been for Patil and her 11 predecessors as Presidents of India: a grand office and an opulent home with liveried attendants, but almost no power. But that might change when Patil leaves office in July and a new President is elected for the next five years. For the first time since India became independent 65 years ago, it may have a President with political clout. That power will flow from a prerogative that effectively gives the President a casting vote when no one political party has a clear mandate to rule - the likely outcome of the next national elections due in 2014.

A politically driven President - and the leading contender for the job, the current Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee - could also take advantage of India's vaguely worded Constitution to influence legislation in a parliament splintered by many parties and alliances. He could also use his power to dissolve an impossibly fractured parliament, and delay or even scupper legislation by withholding the required Presidential assent.

"The role of the President will be critical after the next general elections," wrote M.J. Akbar, a former Congress party lawmaker, in the India Today weekly. "In theory, the President is above politics; in practice, he is what he chooses to be."

'Hung Parliament' Ahead

The Indian Constitution recognizes the President as head of State but stipulates that real executive power sits with the Prime Minister and his ministers. Where the President does have a say, however, is on the appointment of the Prime Minister.

Sonia Gandhi's Congress Party, which leads today's coalition government, has seen its popularity crumble after a run of corruption scandals and scant progress in taming inflation, while the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) is riven by squabbling leaders and hardly more ready for an election.

Unless there is a radical change in the fortunes of one of these two national parties, the next general election should yield a 'hung parliament' and both will scramble to prove to the President that - with coalition partners - they command a majority of seats in parliament and therefore the right to rule. Both might fail to cobble together required numbers for a parliamentary majority, leaving the way open for a fragile rainbow coalition - a so-called "Third Front" - to claim power.

The constitution is silent on who the President should appoint in such cases: the party with the most parliamentary seats or the alliance with the most credible claim that it has a workable coalition? In effect, it may be down to the judgment - and perhaps political preference - of the President to name the Prime Minister.

Constitutional Ambiguity

Framed in 1949 after the Westminster model, India's constitution made the President a ceremonial head like the queen in Britain. However, the authors omitted to mention whether that model should be strictly followed, leaving it ambiguous. "This is a role that has been governed by convention rather than norm," said K. K. Venugopal, a constitutional expert. The Supreme Court has ruled that the President is not a mere figurehead but a moral authority who may stay in touch with the Prime Minister on matters of national importance and policy.

So, without ever becoming a parallel political centre of power, the President can choose to influence the government - though few have chosen to flex their muscles and indeed most have been happy to play a passive, ceremonial role. Zail Singh, a President during the 1980s, contemplated dismissing the government led by Sonia Gandhi's husband, Rajiv Gandhi, after it became embroiled in a massive defense procurement scandal - but he didn't. "The problem is, some presidents have allowed themselves to be brow-beaten by governments," said B. G. Verghese of the Centre for Policy Research, a think tank.

There have been some precedent-setting Presidents, however. In 1999, following an inconclusive general election, Sonia Gandhi stood amid camera flashlights in the sweltering forecourt of the President's palace and announced that Congress and its allied parties together had 272 seats in the 545-strong lower house of Parliament, enough to form a government. The then-President K.R. Narayanan was not convinced by her claim and allowed the BJP to form the government, which subsequently fell after a key ally pulled out of its coalition. His predecessor, former Congressman Shankar Dayal Sharma, also exercised his discretionary powers, choosing the BJP over its rival after inconclusive elections in 1996.

Backroom Power Broker

Finance Minister Mukherjee, who now appears to have accepted that he will never fulfill his ambition to become Prime Minister, has his sights set on the Presidency. Breaking with the tradition of meekly waiting to be asked to take the role, he has made his new goal abundantly clear, telling an Indian newspaper that he loves the lawns of the President's Palace. However, he is unlikely

to be content sauntering through rose gardens and banqueting with royalty on trips abroad.

Although 76, Pranab Mukherjee, is still one of India's most influential and politically astute leaders. Adept at backroom broking between Congress, its mercurial coalition allies and opposition parties, it is unlikely that *President* Mukherjee would follow in the footsteps of his more passive predecessors.

Historically, the country's political parties have tended to agree on a candidate ahead of the election, which means they have stood virtually uncontested in the proportional representation vote by parliament members and state lawmakers. There are still several horses in the race - among them the current Vice-President, retired diplomat Hamid Ansari, and Patil's predecessor, rocket scientist A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. Patil could even be nominated for a second term. But political sources say Mukherjee has emerged as the front-runner.

Excerpted from Global Marathi Newsletter, June 12, 2012. Courtesy: Global Marathi and Reuters.

Disturbing Unconcern for Costs

India is rapidly losing its advantage as a competitive economy, thanks to various factors of production like land, labour, construction and finance turning costly. There is disturbing unconcern over the consequential steep escalations in costs all around. Sadly the government is looking the other way.

Take property prices. I remember an 800 sq. feet dwelling unit cost just Rs.6.4 lakh. The EMI on a 20 year mortgage was around Rs.5700. This was affordable for someone getting a monthly salary of Rs.12,000. Today, at Rs.8000 per sq. feet, the same dwelling unit costs Rs.64 lakh. The EMI comes to Rs.71,000 per month. This is affordable only by a person with monthly income of around Rs.2 lakh. How facilely a necessity of yesterday has become an unaffordable luxury today!

There is a sympathetic cascading of cost all along: from the humble river sand and bricks to cement and steel; of plumbing and sanitary fittings; of tiles and other finishing materials; of electrical wiring, fittings; of labour; of the architect's and contractor's fees. Of course the numerous agencies that clear the various formalities want their share. Look at the

recent steep upward revision of guideline value of properties that has resulted in a big increase in registration charges; the fees for CMDA and corporation for issuing building permits; of water and sewage charges and electricity connection.

There are signs of an exploitative bordering on the acts of the robber barons of yore. Look at this paradox. You have a current dwelling unit and you want to demolish it and construct a new one. You pay for a demolition fee of Rs.25,000. Does the corporation render any service for this fee? Fat chance! The existing connections for electricity, sewage and water are terminated. Of course these were taken at modest costs decades ago. New fees are insisted. There include liberal charges for cutting and relaying the road, amounting to around Rs.66,000!

In developed mature democracies, citizen's rights are better protected. In ours, the government has no qualms in joining hands with avaricious property developers in exploiting an inflationary regime!

Courtesy: Editor's Notes, Industrial Economist, May 2012.

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.

Baited Intelligence

1. Intelligence operation is a game of deceit. Things are not what they appear to be. There is no room for crying foul as the entire exercise is itself foul. Intelligence alerts issued by central intelligence agencies to State Governments are therefore not sacrosanct. The alerts have always been an object of concern and suspicion; the alerts lead often to a lot of fruitless activity without commensurate results. However, the alerts can be ignored only at great peril. It can always be argued that because of an alert, an attack was averted and therefore it is wrong to say that the alerts are unproductive. Vagueness of intelligence about time, date and place of an attack makes the intelligence troublesome. The alert is by itself not enough; it is intended to get the state police to activate its intelligence sources to work out the information further. If the state police have no such sources, the alerts become useless. The May 6, 2012 alert of entry of 5 terrorists in Mumbai for an attack was more specific in that the alert notice gave photos of the 5 terrorists. This was something so unusual that it should have raised antennae for something fishy in the air. The minute the photos were published, Pakistan came up with the explanation that the so-called terrorists were ordinary businessmen. Indian intelligence came in for ridicule in the Pakistani press.

We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.

Aesop

1. To be frank, feeding of false information is a part of psychological warfare. The ISI/LeT etc. know that every time there is even a rumour of an impending attack, Indian security forces have to go into overdrive and 'tighten' security all over. Therefore, besides planning attacks, it is useful for them to plant stories of likely attacks. Security forces develop battle fatigue after some time and may start ignoring even genuine intelligence. The May 6 alert has to be viewed in this perspective. Although we will never know for sure, the scenario could be guessed. Knowing that Indian intelligence is always hungry for information, the ISI or its henchmen put into circulation information of a possible infiltration into Mumbai/Gujarat and provided photos of the infiltrators; Indian intelligence could ignore the information at its own peril and fell for the trap. The alacrity, with which Pakistan identified the persons in the photographs, showed that it was ready for the denouement. Indian intelligence can be faulted for not verifying the status of its sources: whether it was so highly placed that it could get photographs of the infiltrators in advance and know their destination. Generally such information is available with those who plan an operation; all other helpers are kept out of the loop. This was a give away that was missed by our intelligence in its anxiety to look good. It is a lesson for the Multi Agency Centre (MAC) which is so keen to issue alerts at the drop of a hat. Instead of episodic alerts, India has to be vigilant all the time; that is the price to pay for security!

Vacuum in Governance

2. There is no need for a political pundit to underline that UPA II is in trouble. It has two more years to undo the damage but its proclivity to prioritize electoral gains over national imperatives offers no scope for optimism. One hard step it took was to increase fuel prices but there are no signs that it would be followed by more meaningful measures. It is in a state of denial and believes that things are not as bad as made out by the opposition and Team Anna/Ramdev. It has refused to move further on corruption or black money or administrative reforms. Its White Paper on Black Money enlightened nobody. Pessimism overwhelms the common man, who does not understand how Greece is responsible for his woes; he only understands that his purse is empty. The statistics of our GDP being the second or third highest in the world even in these difficult times does not help. The Government which touts these figures must understand that

2. The opposition too has shown no road map to build hopes for a better tomorrow. Change of a bad Government is not a solution in itself. Our lady who conquered the red dragon in West Bengal is bereft of ideas and look where she is taking the State! UPA II may be displaced but where is the template for improved governance? Where does the BJP stand on economic issues? Does it offer any alternatives to the non-governance of UPA II? It is afraid that if it does not criticize every move of UPA II, it would lose out on electoral gains. From terrorism to FDI to fuel price hike to Lokpal, it cannot appear to be on the same page as the Government; although if it comes to power, it will have to adopt the very same policies. That is the tragedy of our political system; even desirable policies have to be opposed to score brownie points. The electorate can vent its anger on the ruling party but does not know what lies ahead. The ruling party is

Self-reliance : the keynote of our independence

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

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

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

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

Self-reliance is both a means and an end.

For Godrej it is the essence of independence.



countries starting from a deep hole of poverty cannot be compared with developed countries for statistical bromides. The Government promises tough measures but it has expended its goodwill by doing nothing so far and the people are not prepared to give it enough rope now. Its every tough measure will be met with resistance. What would have been acceptable three years back is no longer tolerated. And its allies, like the Trinamool Congress, are of no help either!

IPL - Brickbats and Bouquets

3. The Indian Premier League is at once the greatest enemy of pristine pure cricket and its saviour, depending on the hair-splitting ability of the connoisseurs of cricket. IPL V started this year with a lot of negatives: the TRPs were poor, sponsors were running away, a sting operation showed that some players were willing to do spot fixing, the franchisees were paying black money to attract players, players were caught molesting girls, taking drugs and franchisees were misbehaving in public. Anything remotely wrong was instantly connected with the IPL because it made mercenaries out of sportsmen. It was argued that the IPL could do nothing right because IPL was essentially immoral. The standard criticism was that the affairs of the BCCI and particularly of the IPL were opaque; transparency was needed. There were calls for a ban, Enforcement Directorate Enquiry, withdrawal of any and all Government facilities to cricket. Politicians were asked to dissociate themselves from cricket administration. It was forgotten that cricket is essentially a spectator sport and survives on the support of spectators who need to be entertained. In the end, the joys of cricket triumphed over the sum total of misconduct of a few flawed individuals. If test cricket dies it will be of its own making and not because of T-20 cricket.

arrogant enough to think that it does not need opposition support on any issue and, therefore, there is no effort made to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality. Many problems can be solved if the two major political parties i.e. the Congress and the BJP come together on issues of national interest. What wishful thinking!

3. In our poverty-ridden society, jealousy plays a pivotal role; success is appreciated but success accompanied with wealth is considered evil. The belief is that one must be poor to be really good. IPL's success mixed with its ability to make money renders it suspect; there must be something inherently wrong if it made obscene amounts of money. Kirti Azad, MP (BJP) declared that IPL was not cricket at all and that its debauchery had brought international shame to this country. Most cricketers who had started doubting the merit of T-20 cricket took a U-turn when the proceeds from IPL were distributed in lakhs to retired cricketers. IPL V ended on a high note, as nail-biting, pulsating cricket was witnessed during the matches. Spectators, who had turned away from test cricket, came in their thousands to see the so-called *tamasha* cricket and not merely watch the cheer girls who were the focus of criticism of most puritans. It is said that a puritan is a person who suspects that somebody somewhere is enjoying himself and cannot be allowed to do so! Cricket is a sport and no life or death principle is involved in the simple enjoyment of a game! Then we had the other extreme in Mamata Banerjee who turned the success of the Kolkata team into a State celebration. There is no limit to politicians' opportunism! A people starved of good news will pick any occasion to celebrate because otherwise they have nothing to cheer in their daily miseries.

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

A Warning for Cellophiles who speak loudly in public

After a very busy day, a commuter settled down in her seat and closed her eyes as the train departed Montreal for Hudson.

As the train rolled out of the station, the guy sitting next to her, pulled out his cell phone and started talking in a loud voice: "Hi sweetheart, it's Eric, I'm on the train – yes, I know it's the six thirty and not the four thirty but I had a long meeting – no, honey, not with that floozie from the accounts office, with the boss. No sweetheart, you're the only one in my life – yes, I'm sure, cross my heart" etc., etc.

when the young woman sitting next to him, who was obviously angered by his continuous diatribe, yelled at the top of her voice: "Hey, Eric, turn that stupid phone off and come back to bed!"

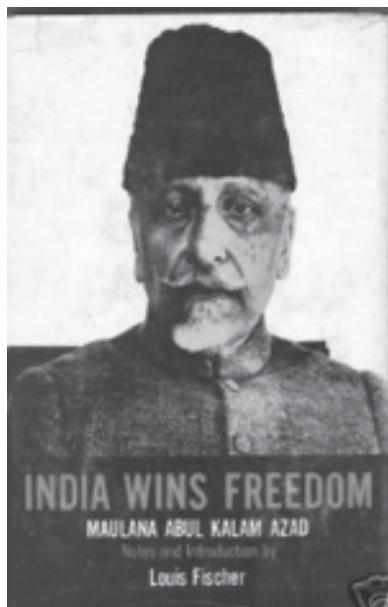
Eric doesn't use his cell phone in public any longer.

From the Net. Contributed by Hina Manerikar

Fifteen minutes later, he was still talking loudly,

“India Wins Freedom”

Nagesh Kini



At his request the initial editions of India Wins Freedom had blocked certain passages that he considered politically sensitive then.

The story of how India Wins Freedom was written by one of the most low profile *dramatis personae* of the Freedom Movement known to all as Maulana Azad, independent India's first education minister. It provides the

reader a peek into what actually happened along the long road to freedom.

We are informed over 30 million copies of this book have been sold. At his request the initial editions of *India Wins Freedom* had blocked certain passages that he considered politically sensitive then. Though its full text was confined under seal in the National Library, Calcutta and the National Archives, New Delhi for thirty years, in 1958 a slightly abridged and revised version was published leaving out “incidents and reflections mainly of a personal character.”

I have now reviewed the complete text, its 2009 reprint - initially released in September 1988 under a court directive. All the words and phrases of the original have been reproduced to restore the tone and temper to unravel the controversies that simmered for long about what lay in the blocked text. The Maulana comes out with his frank personal assessments and forthright views of the events and personalities involved. He depicts them in their true colours hitherto shielded from the public eye and his assessments which with the benefit of hindsight are bang on.

Abul Kalam Azad, a *Maulana* and a distinguished scholar was elected president of the Indian National Congress first in 1923. He was considered closer to Nehru, but disapproved of his ways as well as those of Gandhiji

and Sardar Patel.

The 1940s were momentous years in the history of the Freedom Movement. Azad was re-elected Congress president in 1940 and held office till 1946, another landmark year. Azad along with Gandhi and Nehru held talks with the British Cripps Mission and the Viceroys Wavell and Mountbatten.

Azad recounts two of his conclusions during the talks with the British that were “doomed to failure”. The arrest of the Congress leaders on the morning of 9 August 1942 following the Quit India Resolution and the World War II was coming to an end with the Allies firmly in control. The first was Gandhiji's decision (taken after a 21-day fast) that if India was declared free, she would voluntarily side with the British by extending full support to the war effort. The second was to make fresh attempts to meet Jinnah and come to an understanding with the Muslim League. Writes the Maulana: “It was largely due to Gandhiji's acts of omission and commission that Jinnah regained his importance in Indian political life. In fact, it is doubtful if Jinnah could have achieved supremacy, but for Gandhi's attitude.”

After Azad stepped down from the Congress presidentship in 1946, he would have preferred Vallabhbhai Patel to succeed him as successor, but being under intense pressure he had to choose Nehru. He frankly concedes, “That was, perhaps, the greatest blunder of my political life... (had Patel been chosen) he would have seen to it that the Cabinet Mission proposals were successfully implemented... he would have never committed the mistake of Jawaharlal which gave Jinnah the opportunity to sabotage the Plan... I cannot forgive myself when I think that if I had not committed the mistakes, the history of the last ten years would have been different.” It indeed would have made a world of difference to India's history - no Partition and no massacre of both Hindus and Muslims, no Pakistan, no wars, no cross-border terrorism and no 26/11s.

Azad also recounts in detail the errors committed

by everyone though all that sound hypocritical. As Congress president Azad, in 1940, had declared that if India's political problem was to be solved it should not only join the war of its own free will but would also adopt conscription and send every able young man to the war front. No one heard him then. He believed that had this happened the duration of the war would have shortened and rendered Britain morally indebted and the Muslim League and Jinnah could have been totally sidelined and the disastrous consequences that followed, the Partition, would not have happened. Unfortunately for India, he says, his advice was disregarded!

Azad takes us into the times, mindsets and the outcomes of the contradictory stands taken by his illustrious contemporaries like M.N. Roy, Gandhi, Patel, the Nehrus-Motilal and Jawaharlal, C.R. Das, Rajaji and Subhas Chandra Bose. Of his friend Nehru, he says, he

was prone to talk in his sleep "carrying on a debate, sometimes muttering and sometimes talking loudly... indicating how much strain under which Nehru was working."

As one who has also read the earlier volume I find this one much more alive. His views on the Muslim League and Jinnah; his disapproval of Gandhiji conferring the title *Qaid-e-Azam* on him and letting the League have the finance portfolio in the Interim Government, just because Patel wanted Home, makes us admire afresh the honesty and courage of this son of India who has been largely ignored by our historians. This book is a must read for those who really want to know more about the Indian Freedom Movement.

NAGESH KINI is a Mumbai based chartered accountant turned activist.

A Pakistani's Point of View

Around the same time that this review was written by Nagesh Kini, Yasser Latif Hamdani a Pakistani lawyer and a blogger (he blogs at <http://globallegalorum.blogspot>) comments on Azad's role for two decades after partition with reference to Azad's book. His assessments make interesting reading and very revealing inasmuch lending truth to an increasingly growing belief that Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and the Indian National Congress were as responsible for the Partition as were Jinnah and the Muslim League. Ed.

"As Pakistan continues to dangle on the brink of failure and India thrives, there are many who have begun to ask whether Maulana Azad, the great Indian leader and Islamic scholar, was right and Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was wrong in those final days of the British Raj. Both Azad and Jinnah were extremely intelligent leaders and were contenders for the leadership of Muslims. The westernised Jinnah managed to win the support of the Muslim masses while the religious scholar, Maulana Azad, was sidelined.

"In his autobiography, Azad made a prescient observation about Pakistan breaking into two, which came true of course. There are however, a number of predictions, all seemingly accurate, which are associated with Azad that seem to reinforce further his image as the sage of the age. He is said, amongst other things, to have predicted Pakistan's dependence on Western powers and growing discord between the religious right and liberals in Pakistan in an interview conducted in April 1946. The only problem is that the latter list of predictions has been transmitted to us through a dubious source. This source was Agha Shorish Kashmiri, a committed Ahrari leader who opposed the creation of Pakistan (and ironically, played an important role in fomenting sectarian trouble against Ahmadis and Shias in Pakistan). No one other than Kashmiri seems to have seen a record of this interview and there is no primary

source to confirm this interview. The said interview does not appear in any of Azad's papers or in any record of his life as preserved in India. In the view of this writer therefore, that interview was a concoction and a distortion invented by Agha Shorish Kashmiri in the 1970s when he wrote an Urdu biography of Azad. TV shows like Khabarnaak have recently referenced these predictions and the myth therefore, is now fully under way as being accepted as the gospel truth.

"What is equally bothersome about this attempt to re-invent Azad as a latter day Nostradamus, staring into his crystal bowl and predicting the future is that it completely disregards his own role in the first five decades of the 20th century. The Khilafat Movement brought Azad, who was a well-respected Islamic scholar in Sunni circles, into prominence, where he used fiery Islamic rhetoric to galvanise the religious Muslim masses behind the movement to save the Caliphate in Turkey. Mahatma Gandhi and other Hindu leaders who, naively, assumed that deploying the abrasive theocratic logic of the Caliphate could somehow paradoxically bring Hindus and Muslims together on one platform, supported this movement. Azad repeatedly denounced the Aligarh school and chastised Muslims for following the timid and pro-western ways of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, when Islam was a complete code of life. He also gave the famous fatwa

for Hijrat, which declared that India under British rule was Dar-ul-Harb and that it was the religious duty of every Muslim to either resist the government or migrate to Afghanistan. It is noteworthy that Jinnah repeatedly warned Gandhi to stay away from this pseudo-religious approach, which would ultimately divide Hindus and Muslims as well as Muslims and Muslims. The consequences of the Khilafat Movement and the rhetoric of Azad and Maulana Mohammad Ali were that Muslim professionals left government service and other material benefits of the British rule and were led on to a path of self-destruction. Gandhi, Azad and other leaders of this movement went on to ask even Aligarh University to refuse British patronage (while paradoxically failing to ask the same of Benaras Hindu University)...

"This militant and hostile communal atmosphere laid the foundation for open communal warfare, leading to mass rioting and violence. The Khilafat Movement, which had temporarily united Hindus and Muslims for an illogical cause, rendered religious identities non-negotiable. That Jinnah had predicted this in his letters to Gandhi is a matter of record. Azad's role for two decades after partition was that of a token Congress Muslim 'show boy' as Jinnah famously called him. In his book, *India Wins Freedom*, Azad blames Jawaharlal Nehru for not coming to an

arrangement with the Muslim League after the 1937 elections, completely sidestepping his own role in the horse trading that weakened the Muslim unity board and led to the final break between the Muslim League and the Congress. Similarly, Azad concedes, rightly, that the Cabinet Mission Plan would have kept India united and that Congress was wrong in how it handled the Muslim League in the aftermath of the 1946 elections. It is also true that Azad wrote a letter to Gandhi, which suggested exactly that and which probably caused Azad to lose his place as president of the Congress. However, what Azad forgets is that he publicly justified and remained wedded to Congress' erroneous interpretation of the groupings clause, which led to the collapse of the Cabinet Mission Plan.

"Therefore, the myth of Azad's prescience is problematic because it papers over facts leading to partition. It is a well-known fact now that Jinnah's own idea of Pakistan was in a treaty arrangement with India, a sort of a European Union type arrangement, and not of complete partition. In fact, according to Mountbatten, Jinnah had to be forced into accepting partition. Therefore, the Jinnah-Azad binary itself is perhaps a distortion of history and should be avoided in any serious investigation of partition."



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A Pragmatic Approach to Clean up India

N. Vittal

Why people become corrupt? It is ultimately, the basic human weakness of greed. Greed has long been recognised as the main cause of malpractices and corruption. Behind greed is the further basic fact of desires. But is it possible for all of us to be without desires? It is basic human nature to have desires.

We therefore, will have to look for other alternatives to remove the causes of corruption in our system other than preaching people to give up desires. We must design systems which will ensure that they will function without indulging in corrupt practices.

The power of the system can easily be understood by our everyday experience. In our country we may throw rubbish wherever we want but when we go to a place like Singapore we don't do that. Not that we have suddenly become very conscious about the environment and the need for cleanliness, We know that in Singapore the system will punish us if we disobey the rule.

That brings us to the next question. It is not the rules that lead to achieving results. The rules have to be implemented to achieve results. Making rules which are not implemented is like putting up a scarecrow. Shakespeare pointed out in 'Measure for Measure' that we should not make our laws into scarecrows. When the birds look at the scarecrow for the first time, they feel that it is a monster and avoid it, but very soon they realise that it is only a doll and start building their nests on it. The same is the history of all our laws.

We have plenty of laws. In the current debate about Jan lokpal there has been extreme focus on having the right type of laws to ensure that the people behave properly and the corrupt are punished. Laws alone are not enough. They have to be implemented and that brings us to the heart of the issue.

It is obvious that we can achieve and control corruption and clean up India if we have the right system and the right people to operate the system. That in turn raises a further issue, what should be the system and how do we ensure that right people come to occupy the right posts so that the results are delivered. a cleaner India free of corruption in public life.

A recent experience last year has brought out the

solution which provides a strategy to evolve a pragmatic formula to clean up India. I became Central Vigilance Commissioner in 1998 after the judgement of Justice J.S. Verma in the famous Hawala case or the Vineet Narain case. The issue of corruption has been a reality in our public life right from the time of independence. One of the earliest scandals was the Mundra scandal in the time of Jawaharlal Nehru. This led to the appointment of the Santhanam Committee, which in turn recommended the setting up of the Central Vigilance Commission. They also recommended the setting up of a Lok Pal to tackle the issue of political corruption.

The Central Vigilance Commission was to tackle the issue of corruption at the level of public servants of the government of India. From 1964 when the first Central Vigilance Commissioner Justice Nittoor Srinivasa Rau was appointed, till 1998 when I became Central Vigilance Commissioner, there have been ten CVCs. Justice Nittoor Srinivasa Rau was the only judge who occupied the post of CVC .The nine others who followed were all retired civil servants belonging to the ICS, IAS or IFS cadres. Justice J. S. Verma in his judgement in the Hawala case laid out specific conditions to ensure that the Central Vigilance Commission was designated as the agency to ensure that the two investigative agencies the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance were quarantined from external influences or political interference.

The CVC was to be selected by a high power committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Home Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The person selected should have a good record and should have held a post not less than the rank of Secretary to the Government of India. This ensured that the person who was selected was a competent person with a clean record and who was perceived to be politically neutral in decision making. In addition, certain service conditions are provided to ensure that a person appointed as CVC is not tempted to curry favours in the hope of landing a post- retirement sinecure. Only one term was allowed and after completing this term,

he is debarred from holding any office of profit under the centre or any state He cannot occupy any constitutional post like the Governor, Vice President or President of India. This was considered adequate guarantee for the right person to occupy the post.

Nevertheless, a piquant situation arose in 2010 when P. J. Thomas was appointed as CVC, in the face of strong objection from the Leader of Opposition, who as a member of the committee pointed out that Thomas was an accused in a criminal case pending in the Supreme Court relating to the import of Palmolein in Kerala when he was the Food Secretary. The appointment of Thomas as CVC was challenged in the Supreme Court and on 3rd March 2011, Justice Kapadia pronounced a judgement which in my view marks a great step forward after the Verma Judgement. According to Justice Kapadia, *it is not only the integrity of the individual but also the integrity of the institution that is relevant while selecting people to key positions.*

So far, the argument in defence of those who were charge-sheeted in courts in even contesting elections or occupying sensitive posts was that mere framing of charges in a court of law does not amount to guilt. Even those who are convicted for offences and imprisoned for less than two years are eligible to contest the elections. Justice Kapadia has articulated the concept of the integrity of the institution which adds a new dimension to the issue of selection. He held the selection of Thomas for the post of CVC to be void or *non-est*.

This principle provides a very useful instrument by which we can clean up key public organisations in the country. The parliament is expected to make laws for the country and if potential law breakers become members of the legislature does it not go against the integrity of the organisation meant for making laws for the good governance of the country? On that ground alone, the Chief Election Commissioner, in my view can debar those candidates who are facing criminal charges in courts, from contesting elections, till they are declared as not guilty by the courts. This one step can ensure de-criminalisation of politics. That will be a healthy first step.

That brings us to the basic issue of how do we develop a system which will ensure that people automatically avoid corrupt practices and the right people come to occupy posts so that the laws can be implemented in letter and spirit. In engineering there is a concept of autopilot or servo mechanism. We can design systems like missiles or planes to run by themselves and perform tasks. We can put a plane on autopilot. We can design a missile to go and attack a particular target making provision for all the expected challenges that will arise in the path

of the missile. Can we therefore design a system of governance which will be on autopilot to ensure that the right objectives are achieved? For achieving this, we must follow the two principles, which I would call as the 2T principle. The first T is the Transparency in the process of selection itself. The qualifications required for any post and the process of selection must be transparent .

The second T is the TINA [There Is No Alternative] factor. The selection process must be such that there is no alternative but to arrive at the right selection.

We have in the Constitution three pillars of democracy namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The legislature makes the law, the judiciary interprets the law and the executive implements the law. A recent affidavit filed in a case in the Supreme Court by Shanti Bhushan and his son Prashant Bhushan, has claimed that out of the last 16 Supreme Court Chief Justices, 8 have been corrupt, 6 have been honest and about 2 the jury is still out. If this is true, even at the highest level, our system produces only 50% of the time the right people to occupy the sensitive posts. Can this be made 100%?

To make it 100% we should have transparency in the qualifications required for any posts and the selection process also must be so designed that there is no alternative but to arrive at right selection. Today after the Verma and Kapadia judgements in the case of CVC, such a 2T situation exists. Can this formula be applied right across the system?

And that is where we come to the next challenge. Who will be the agencies who will ensure that this change in the selection process is realised? After all, our entire politics being based on money power or muscle power, the politicians would be the last persons interested in cleaning the system.

We should, therefore, find agencies who can do this. We today face in this country a multi-organ failure of governance. I faced the threat of multi-organ failure as an individual in 2007 when a battery of five doctors, led by the cardiologist, pulmonologist, nephrologist, urologist and the diabetologist pulled me through. I am alive because of two 'pathys' Venkatachalapathy (the Lord of Tirupati) and allopathy.

But for the nation who will be the doctors? As I see it there are four doctors who can achieve this. The most important is the Supreme Court. The second is the Election Commission. The third is the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and the fourth is the Central Vigilance Commission. These bodies if they are manned

by the right people can deliver the goods and make corrections. We all know the healthy changes that have been brought about in the last 60 years because of the critical judgements of the Supreme Court from time to time. We saw the miracle wrought by one individual, T.N.Seshan in the Election Commission to reduce the muscle power in elections and bring in greater transparency in the election process. The CAG reports have been the basis in the recent exposures we are having about the 2G scams and the CWG scam and so on. Vinod Rai as the individual holding this key post has exposed all the recent scams grabbing the attention of the nation.

The doctors don't perform everything themselves. They require paramedical staff. The paramedical staff so far as the cleaning up and tackling the multiple organ failure facing the government today are the media and the civil society organisations. Their role is limited but crucial. We recently celebrated the 25 years of the exposure of the Bofors scam and the role played by the media. The CWG scam has shown how the media itself may be involved in the vicious cycle of corruption. The civil society organisation's role in highlighting the issue hardly needs to be emphasised, especially when Anna Hazare and Baba Ramdev are still active. For these doctors to play a role, the right persons need to come forward to operate the agencies. For that the 2T formula is the solution.

In my view, this approach of 2T may be the ultimate way by which corruption in India can be tackled and we can move towards a much cleaner public life.

That brings us to the final question. Who is to do all these? In fact, each individual, every citizen has to play a role. Definitely not all are equal. As in the Animal Farm of George Orwell, all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others. When it comes to tackling corruption, all citizens are equal but some citizens are more equal than others. Those who are public servants and occupy key positions in the institutions which have been identified as doctors and paramedical staff have their roles to play. Nobody need complain that they have no power. For example, the bureaucrats are today accused of playing second fiddle to the politicians, but this needs not be always so. We have seen eminent people like G. V. Ramakrishna, who has shown in his book 'Two score and ten' how a civil servant can maintain intellectual integrity, perform his task and ensure that he has an excellent career also. Krishnaswami Rao Saheb who served three different Prime Ministers at a very critical stage in our history is another example to show that a honest civil servant need not compromise on his principles and at the same time ensure that the quality of governance is improved.

If Ambirajan was present today, I am sure he would have at least considered the proposition I have made worthwhile. It is people like Dr. Ambirajan who kept the intellectual sparks alive and maintained the tradition of intelligent and informed debate on public affairs.

Mr. N. Vittal IAS, retired as Central Vigilance Commissioner.

This is excerpted from the 11th Ambirajan Memorial Lecture organised by the Institute for Economic Education in Chennai on 11th June 2012 and published with their permission.

Tamil Nadu Government's Advertisement Spree

The Tamil Nadu government is spending several crores of rupees to advertise its one year of governance in several newspapers and media. These crores of rupees are the tax payers' money. The Tamil Nadu government has increased the price of milk, bus fare and electricity tariff among other items which are hurting the poor people. Obviously, not wasting the resources and tax payers' money can enable the government to refrain from increasing such prices to some extent.

When the government wastes its resources, one would expect that media would condemn and criticise such moves. But, this would not happen in the present case since media is the biggest beneficiary of the Tamil Nadu government's advertisement spree. Probably, this is the best strategy for a government to "buy peace with the media".

Now, whatever may be the quality of governance of the Tamil Nadu government, one is unlikely to see any critical comment in the media for some time. Whoever thinks that the media would be the ultimate saviour of democracy will have to think again.

We have not heard of any newspaper refusing to take such repeated and huge advertisements, protesting against the wastage of the tax payer's money by the government.

I wonder what the Press Council of India has to say about this

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A Lucrative Profession

K. K. Pathak

If vice is a virtue, nothing useful is likely to come of these efforts and activities of our leaders of our society.

One are the days when social workers were selfless, dedicated and missionary zealots without getting any monetary gains for their services to society. The variety of social workers has become so wide that it includes political, social, religious and economic fields in a way which is professional in all respects, so lucrative enough that young, adults and old people are actively engaged with no other profession to meet both ends of their families. All this is done in the name of service to our society! We have the highest percentage of professionals in our legislatures. Central and States legislatures, including municipal and panchayati raj, are full of people who are whole-time social workers, minting money by hook or by crook. When social workers with NGO bodies at their disposal talk of corruption, good and honest people, a rare creed in our society, laugh in their sleeves without directing public opinion against these breeding spots of corruption, out to wipe corruption from the country!

It is no use naming the political leaders who are professionals from head to foot without doing any other job in their lives to discharge the obligations of a householder. What is worst still is that leadership is passed on from one generation to another making a family of professionals in the political life of the country. This kind of dynasty professionalism in public life is hardly instrumental in providing a clean and efficient administration of public life to be regulated by the so-called social servants of our society. The malady is so widespread these days that there is no hope of any redemption now. We should be prepared to live with this kind of corruption with no means to put an end to it. It is rampant from Delhi down to the remotest corners of our country, leaving no place for honesty, dignity and integrity to play any active role in our public life. The entire structure of our society has gone so wrong that thousands of Mahatma Gandhi cannot cleanse the Augean stables the country has come to be today. What can an honest Manmohan Singh achieve in such a scenario as the one the country has come to be?

The idea comes to mind that we are a lost people,

neck-deep in the whirlpool of vices which seem to have come to be recognised as civic virtues these days. If vice is a virtue, nothing useful is likely to come of these efforts and activities of our leaders of our society. Our leaders talk like a Mahatma with their deeds of a rogue in any civilised society! Is there no hope of a change from this unhappy and nasty situation? The question haunts the good people who are in a minimal minority possible, with an impending danger of the creed dwindling day in and day out, soon to reach a point of total extinction. That horrible stage is not far off as the country is running on the path of self-ruin with a frightful speed so frightening that the good and honest people have preferred to remain silent spectators to any role of an activist out to redeem the disastrous trend.

Selfishness has come to be a social virtue. It is the most potent breeding ground of all corruption. If people decide not to give bribe for anything in the world, we will have few or no takers. But this seems to be a wishful thinking as selfishness has become the only motive behind all actions. It is not a way to survival of any social structure.

Rajaji used to call *dharma* a code of conduct with nothing to do with gods and goddesses, let alone God. All culture is self-induced. Nothing imposed from outside either in the shape of laws or any ideal code of conduct will be of any avail so long as flouting of laws and disobeying any ideal code of conduct remain the order of the day. Obedience is no longer a virtue in a family. Nor is the head of a family an ideal for its members.

Thinking people should come forward and show the door out of the so-called social, political and religious leaders of our society who are out and out professionals with no good to deliver to their countrymen. It will take a few generations to set things right. No iron-rod can do any good now. Things have gone past all such ways of redemption.

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US-China-India Trilateral Equation

New Strands in the Complex Web

B. Ramesh Babu

The whole idea is to increase our importance to both the US and China so that our leverage vis-à-vis the two sides is enhanced to our advantage in global affairs.

Addressing the Indian Parliament some time ago President Obama, in his usual rhetorical flourish, declared that the US-India partnership was one of the “defining relationships in the 21st Century.” We were naturally very pleased. Early in his Administration, Obama tried to woo China into a global partnership and even invited Beijing to play a major role in South Asia. We were naturally displeased and said so to Washington. China refused to fall into the American “trap” and reiterated its enduring opposition to America’s “global hegemony.” Since then the global political, economic, and strategic scenario changed a great deal. Chinese and Indian economies continued to grow rapidly even as the American and the western economies continued to decline. The US forces left Iraq and they will soon leave Afghanistan. By all accounts the centre of gravity in world politics has been shifting rapidly to the Asia-Pacific.

New US Defence Strategy

In a dramatic acknowledgement of the new reality, the US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta declared that 60% of America’s battleships will be deployed in the Asia-Pacific by 2020. Unfolding his country’s new defence strategy at the Asian Security Summit in Singapore, Panetta said, “America is at a turning point. After a decade of war, we are developing a new defence strategy. In particular; we will expand our military partnerships and our presence in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and South Asia. *Defence cooperation with India is a linchpin in this strategy.*” (Emphasis added)

On the sidelines of the recently concluded meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Chinese Vice-Premier Li Keqiang told our External Affairs Minister S M Krishna that Sino-Indian ties would be “the most important bilateral relationship in the 21st century.” He also made it a point to publicly state that India always followed an independent foreign policy. It may be added that Li will take over the reins from Wen Jiabo as China’s Premier soon. This is indeed a remarkable twist in China’s assessment of India. It always referred to India as the South

Asian or at the most as a Regional Power. It made light of India’s successful 5,000 mile range missile test by saying that China has 80 of those in her kitty.

US and China “Wooing” India

Last week’s meeting of the SCO assumed unusual significance because of the timing of Panetta’s statement on his country’s new defence strategy that constrained China to issue a rejoinder immediately. Panetta’s Asian tour including a visit to India and the SCO meeting in Beijing were happening in quick succession. Suddenly India found itself in the rare and enviable situation of being wooed by both sides. If we play our cards with dexterity our significance to both sides can be enhanced. Towards that end, we can and should do several things for their own sake and also thereby enhance its importance to the two countries.

Foremost among them is our economic and social performance at home. We must return to the path of high growth rate immediately. At the same time we should not be over obsessed with GDP alone. While foreign investment has its place in the scheme of things, our internal market is the key to our growth and destiny. There is plenty that can be done at home unrelated to the economic gloom abroad and inflow of foreign investment. These can be elaborated in this short article on the trilateral equation.

On the external front, we should strengthen our equation with the US greatly on all fronts not only because this is inherently desirable, but also to enhance our leverage vis-à-vis China. This is the most opportune time because both sides have publicly upgraded our value to them. To begin with, our so called “strategic partnership” with America must quickly rise beyond that of buyer and seller of weapons. It should extend to joint production and joint research and across the board defence-industrial collaboration. More importantly, the oft repeated rhetoric of shared values and converging interests should be converted into a framework of operational cooperation on the ground. For example, both countries want a stable and united Afghanistan and peace in the region. But, where

is the common action plan to move in the direction? This is particularly important because the Americans are going to leave the scene soon. Iran cannot be excluded from any such venture, whether the US likes it or not. With their armed forces gone, America's leverage on the future dispensation in the region will be greatly reduced. Both India and the US have shared interest in working for a stable balance of power in Asia. This is more feasible now than before because Washington is more realistic in its approach and more eager to cooperate with India. On our part, we should be more pragmatic in dealing with the US.

Similarly, India can and should do several things in the wake of the Chinese statements at the Beijing meeting of the SCO. Most important of all we should explore whether the new found elevated significance of partnership with India really makes a difference on the ground, i.e. on the border dispute between the two countries, on Arunachal Pradesh, and on insurgency in the northeastern states. If the Chinese remain as hostile and inflexible as before with respect to these vital issues, we can take Vice Premier Li's remarks with more than a pinch of salt! But, we should not expect too much too soon on this front. However, it is in our interest to work closely with China (and Russia, Iran, and other stakeholders in the region) on the future of the Af-Pak region after the US and the West withdraw from the scene. That will give us a sense of how China will deal with our stakes in the stability and peace in the region. In the meanwhile India should continue to work together with China on all issues that divide the North and the South, i.e. terms of trade and investment, pollution and climate change, migration, intellectual property rights, etc.

The whole idea is to increase our importance to

both the US and China so that our leverage vis-à-vis the two sides is enhanced to our advantage in global affairs.

Towards a New Global Balance of Power

As a long standing teacher of International Relations (IR), I would like to see India utilise its enhanced leverage in world politics not merely to further its narrow and short term nation state interests. Its long term goal should be to work for the reconciliation of the legitimate interests of all the three nations and all the countries and peoples in Asia-Pacific. This calls for hard work beyond the call of duty so to say, and also patience and perseverance. Our diplomacy should seek to play the role of the peace maker between the two warring sides. I conceive this role to be qualitatively different from the part India played in the Cold War era. We were a poor and weak nation those days. Today we are the third largest economy in the world, notwithstanding the decline in our rate of growth lately. We can and should play the new role with more confidence and from a position of relative strength. Success on this front, even in small instalments, could transform the intractable US-China-India Trilateral Equation into a basis for a new global balance of power for stability and peace in the vast region called Asia-Pacific and possibly beyond. To an optimist like me such a conjecture is not beyond the realm of possibility!

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Repairing Fences with Myanmar

On the morning of May 29th, just before heading off to Thailand, Aung San Suu Kyi had met the Indian prime minister, Manmohan Singh, who was on an official three-day visit to Myanmar. This was another momentous occasion. Mr. Singh may have been late out of the blocks, trailing behind other leaders from Europe, America and Asia who came to Myanmar a while ago, but his visit was more significant than most. India is intimately bound up with Myanmar; the two countries share a 1,600-km (1,000-mile) border. Yet this was the first time for 25 years that an Indian prime minister had visited the country. It was another sign of how swiftly Myanmar's diplomatic and economic isolation is coming to an end.

All this, together with further internal economic reforms, is encouraging people to contemplate what a fully functioning Myanmar might one day look like – and how such a country might fit into a world that it turned its back on 50 years ago. Given its size and economic history, a revitalised Myanmar could make itself felt in the region. With 55m people, it is the fifth-most-populous member of the ten-strong Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Myanmar may be impoverished now, but in the 1930s it was the world's biggest exporter of rice.

Excerpted from *The Economist*, June 2, 2012

China's String of Pearls

Suresh C. Sharma

Lack of infrastructure and surface communications do not permit movement and operations of large armies in Asia. European powers had based their strategy on naval fleets and bases along the sea routes. Lack of a strong central government and internal feuds in Asia made empire building possible. USA has inherited the same doctrine of dominant naval and air power bases and allies to be a dominant power in Asia. China too is following the same strategy of acquiring a string of pearls in the Indian Ocean. It has concluded treaties with Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for naval facilities. It is being carried out as development aid. The latest in this move has been the Maldives. Maldives has a defense agreement with India. Mohamed Nasheed, the recently ousted President of Maldives, has commented in an interview to *The Indian Express* that a draft defense treaty with China was put up to him. He did not sign it and this may have been the reason for the coup. These plans for military bases are outmoded and do not take note of recent developments in weapon technology.

New Developments in Warfare

Firstly, the bases are useful to collect intelligence and project military and political power. They convey an assurance to the allies of help when needed. These isolated bases cannot provide mutual support and are vulnerable. The military resources are spread over a large area and a major military operation will require considerable time and air or naval resources. For example, the USA took

six months from August 1990 to January 1991 to build up supplies for the Iraq war. In our own country, we took the same period before the launch of the war in 1971.

Secondly the Asian countries are translating their economic progress into military power and countries from Israel to India have weapons of mass destruction [WMDs]. Some of them will not hesitate to use chemical or biological weapons. The string of pearls is vulnerable and can become a liability. The attempt to limit the developments of WMDs by Control of Missile Technology and Strategic Arms Limitation has failed.

Thirdly, local conflicts can become international wars and projection of influence can create political sensitivity as has happened in the relations between USA and Pakistan. Oil pipelines may pose security problems like those faced by USA in Colombia. The greater danger is the reluctance to undertake reprisals for minor attacks as experienced by the USA in Beirut and Somalia.

For the Chinese the string of pearls may become a trap as long as we have a strong navy and dependable allies with a common objective. It is reported that the USA wants to establish a naval base in Bangladesh. This should be a welcome development.

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J. S. Mill on Liberty of Thought and Reason

which is not the same as spamming or being rude or vexatious etc.

"If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. Were an opinion a personal possession of no value except to the owner; if to be obstructed in the enjoyment of it were simply a private injury, it would make some difference whether the injury was inflicted only on a few persons or on many. But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing

generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error...."

I put this up here months ago, not realising Bengal may come to need it more than J&K...

Subroto Roy on Facebook.

The Iron Lady

Merrie Cave



Meryl Streep as The Iron Lady

This is a review of the movie, The Iron Lady (Margaret Thatcher). It was released in India earlier this year. Directed by Phyllida Lloyd, the film didn't fare well at the box office in Mumbai. Outstanding films rarely do! Fortunately DVDs are available. It's a 'must see'!

THE IRON LADY was one of the best films I have seen recently and it should appeal to all shades of political opinion. Meryl Streep's performance was truly

mesmerising, for at times Margaret Thatcher seemed to be on a newsreel live in front of me; Streep also caught her heroic spirit. The script was sharp and witty and used many of her own words. I went to see it in Islington, her enemies' spiritual home, not that she ever paid attention to them as she was always gloriously convinced that she was in the right. I expected the Islington audience to show some signs of mild misbehaviour, but once the film began, the crunching of popcorn ceased and Mrs T/Meryl Streep received their rapt attention.

There hasn't been such controversy over a film since *Downfall* showed the last days of Hitler. There were protests outside cinemas in the north and a call-for-a blanket ban on the film in Scotland. Norman Tebbit said it was a gift to the Left but Charles Moore, firmly on the right, liked it. Max Pemberton in the *Telegraph*, called it despicable, because of the depiction of a frail old lady with dementia. In truth this film should not have been made before her death; there are some scenes, where she hazily remembers her past and sometimes thinks Denis is still alive, which seem exaggerated and a distraction from the main narrative about a unique woman's rise to power. But the dementia is a powerful motif in a film which is mainly about decline and loss. The flashbacks usually work well, giving structure and black humour, which make the film much more than just a straight narrative or a pompous Hollywood bio-pic.

There is no dumbing down here. The writer and director have the confidence to expect that the audience will understand the history of the last fifty years. So the reasons for the Falklands war were not explained, nor those for the Poll Tax riots. Viewers were expected to enjoy identifying politicians of the past like Airey Neave, Norman Tebbit and Keith Joseph who set up the Centre for Policy Studies, a necessary alternative to the unadventurous Central Office.

With a comic touch the film shows how Maggie was remade to change her from suburban housewife into a consummate politician; the hats had to go, the shrill voice modulated by coaching, but the pearls, given her by Denis, remained firmly in place. Denis was wrongly portrayed as a lightweight while in reality he had a razor-sharp intelligence. Their relationship was touching and he believed in women in politics, unlike his fellow members on the Dartford selection board. Airey Neave told her it was not impossible for her to win the leadership: 'If you want to change the party, lead it' - so she proceeded to win the leadership and went on to win three general elections.

We are given a cunning exposition of Margaret Thatcher's behaviour once she had topped the greasy pole, her strengths and weaknesses. The Falklands of course established her leadership and confounded her opponents in the Conservative party.

She often muttered that men lack guts and explained to Francis Pym who was scared of going to war with Argentina that he, coming from a landed background, had never had to struggle for anything while she fought battles every day. One of 'the bastards', as Denis called them had even called her 'a common little woman from 'the suburbs'. As the Task Force set sail for the south Atlantic, another exclaimed that 'now they could get rid of her'. After her triumph, it was she who got rid of some of them.

It was a pity that we did not see more of the grocer's shop in Grantham and her influential father, Alderman

Roberts. As one who comes from a non-conformist background, I admire the values he gave her: brains before birth and character over cash, work before fun. Such homes lack enjoyment and suffer from an irritating moral earnestness but they often ensured that their products were members of the useful awkward squad. Scratch such a person's ancestry and you will often find a nonconformist or a recusant Catholic.

Her downfall was shown on screen as the result of her intransigence and poor man-management in cabinet. Alfred Sherman, one of her most able advisers and speechwriters, thought she could have won a fourth term if she had not neglected her power base in the Conservative party. I don't think this would have happened; her time as a dominant world leader had given her opponents time to regroup and she had caught a little hubris, with which all successful leaders become infected sooner or later. The end of the Iron Lady, admired abroad particularly by the US and the Soviet Union, brought an ideological vacuum which still remains to be filled. The Conservative party suffered a nervous breakdown by their failure to come to terms with the Thatcher legacy. By turning their backs on her, politicians like Cameron cut themselves off from their past, favouring managerial politics instead of her conviction politics which had served the country so well ; as she remarked in the film, 'politics used

to be about doing something, now it's about being someone'. Her 'assassination' was treated very sympathetically with Denis persuading her to give up and not to fight on. A good test of a somebody is how they treat underlings and show kindness to them. She always remembered birthdays and asked after families; this trait was shown well in the send off - by the Downing Street staff. The film reminded me of the wonderful romance of her life which we hope will be remembered by future generations. Here was a woman from the provincial lower-middle class, without connections rising as an outsider to lead the Conservative party which had personified social class and male dominance, and yet retaining her feminine humanity. It was also a Greek tragedy, for her time in office came too late; it was an interlude and now we are back where she started. Perhaps those who wish to dance with joy on her grave will think better of it after seeing this film. We will not see a leader like her again.

COURTESY: Merrie Cave and *The Salisbury Review* a quarterly magazine of conservative thought published from London. Mrs. Merrie Cave the Managing Editor of this Quarterly welcomes articles of current events in and about the subcontinent (the Saarc countries) be it on matters relating to the political economy or the arts or society in general – the canvas is wide. Those interested can contact her at merriecave@salisburyreview.co.uk. A visit to their website <http://www.salisburyreview.co.uk> is highly recommended."

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Greening the Economy : Another Green Pasture?

P. Koshy

Green is becoming a password to attract more money and sometimes fool people. Except for some companies which were already aware of their responsibility before this word became fashionable others are probably just attaching this term to their projects for good PR. They never say what exactly about their products or whatever they are doing is 'green'. There may be, no doubt, some genuine people in this movement but like all other movements there are more people looking for opportunities to use such things for their own benefit than the genuine ones. As a result this will also look like a much abused word after a few years. NGOs are always looking for fresh pastures. What has happened to the AIDS movement? One does not hear about it as much as we used to when there was money flowing into such projects. Even Bill Gates seems to have withdrawn his support for AIDS programmes.

The focus is on green. The way to a green future is in discussion everywhere. Sustainable Development, Corporate Social Responsibility, Green Technologies etc. are terms used without much meaning by NGOs, from the so called management experts to young management graduates these days. For NGOs, this means some money for carrying out community – social – developmental activities; less paper work in CSR money than in government grants!

In every aspect, socio-development and corporate sector are full of ideas on a game called green! Green micro finance, green investments, green buildings are some other terms commonly used. Educational programmes, too, are coming up and offering different courses for aspiring future green professionals! This is not an attempt to question anyone's integrity. However, questions need to be raised at every point in our societal journey, so that our path to the future can be brought more in tune with what we want to attain!

Does this whole talk about green revolve around green pastures for the few? Of course, we cannot challenge the need to look for new avenues of livelihood and opportunities as people and communities have to constantly innovate for finding better avenues for survival, create jobs and engage in meaningful ventures.

On 8th July 2011, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Government of India, released a 50-page National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Business; a very important document for all businesses as well as other economic stakeholders! The report addresses very important issues concerning our common future and the private sector role in building a society which is more responsible and active concerning delivering their socio-economic and environment responsibilities.

Though the guidelines look interesting, there are a number of issues arising from it. In the guidelines, the corporate affairs ministry states that, "Businesses should respect the right to freedom of association, participation, collective bargaining, and provide access to appropriate grievance redressal mechanisms." (P. 11). The right of workers to form and join organizations of their own choice is an integral part of a free and open society. Does that need to again figure in the voluntary guidelines? The rights and guarantees enshrined by International Labour Conventions 87 (on freedom of association) and 98 (on the right to collective bargaining) are available under the Indian Constitution to all citizens. Of course as part of the larger interest of social justice, business sustainability and declining public sector participation, government should ratify these two conventions immediately to make its implementation much firmer, stronger and universal covering all entities rather than making them a part of voluntary guidelines. Is this an attempt to further dilute the rights and freedom of association of the Indian working class that they are already enjoying?

However the question that I would like to raise here is whether green is only yet another opportunity? How serious are people about their talk of green? I think, business sustainability guidelines and other voluntary business responsibility initiatives that the corporate affairs ministry recently took seems to be going in the direction of creation of another "reporting revolution", where sustainability professionals create lots of reports about the activities that the companies are already doing, without much contribution, may be, and much cost attached to it. The entire responsible business reporting initiative seems to be targeted at creating jobs for a new set of professional graduates created by a few elite organizations in the country owned by few corporate houses.

For the MCA, the small scale sector is just an

ancillary industry and a part of a larger supply chain and thus, responsible green and ethical business practices are not a priority for them. It seems the whole premise on which responsible business reporting seems to have been defined is on the basis of ability to pay. For instance, take the statement, “develop governance structures, procedures and practices that ensure ethical conduct at all levels; and promote the adoption of this principle across its value chain”. The entire guidelines have an excess emphasis on this value chain, governance structures, procedures and practices. Here, the authors seem to have very little understanding about the structure of the Indian industry. They may have a very good understanding of corporate

governance but for them SMEs are just vendors catering to some of the larger corporates.

Though, theoretically the whole voluntary guidelines looks excellent, it would certainly generate lot of reports in the years ahead, generate a few jobs for report writers, if not a transition to responsible and green enterprise practices. But we must wait and see when the business becomes responsible? Good luck to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs!

Mr. P. Koshy, based in Delhi, is associated with Samadhan Foundation and working with a focus on the Informal Sector, Micro and Small Enterprises. Email: caushie@gmail.com

Growing Intolerance

V. Krishna Moorthy

From the incidents that took place in both houses of Parliament about the reproduction of Shankar's cartoon in one of the textbooks of NCERT which reportedly hurt the sentiments of Dalits, it is clear that present day politicians on both sides of the divide lack both morals as well as a sense of humour.. While no one, including members of Parliament care when Mahatma Gandhi or his views are criticized, people are afraid to criticise Dr. Ambedkar, because they fear attacks like what happened following the row over the cartoon under question. No wonder, not much of critical writing or assessment is coming about Dr. Ambedkar these days. It is therefore clear that hero worship of Ambedkar is the greatest obstacle to the progress of the backward castes. Unfortunately, none of the present day politicians who show so much concern for Dr. Ambedkar, hardly follow his life's work or his principles.

Cartoons serve the role of court jesters—entertaining at the same time raising questions, thereby providing an insight or exposing any folly in society. Characters in Shakespeare's plays or Tenali Raman or Birbal are examples of this tribe. Shankaran Pillai started *Shankar's Weekly* in 1948 after a stint with *Hindustan Times* when he lost his freedom to draw with the departure of Pothan Joseph from the paper as editor had a great run for several years attacking the society and its ways as well as its leaders in his own inimitable style. *Shankar's Weekly* closed down when Censorship during the “Emergency” rejected a number of cartoons. Politicians of yester

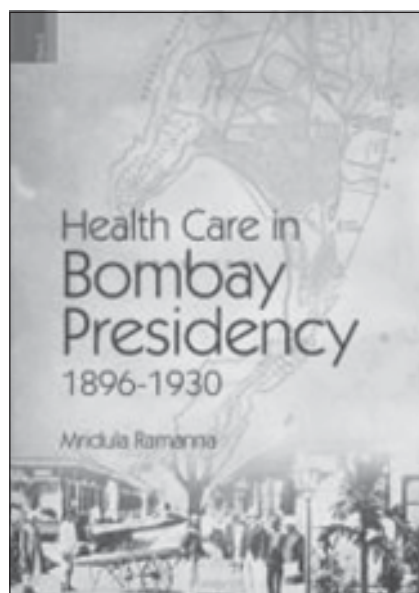
years enjoyed being caricatured in the Weekly, and it was a great publicity for them, though critical in nature.

While such a rumpus was created in Parliament about the cartoon under reference how come no one bothered to point out yet another entry in the CBSE-prescribed 8th standard English work-sheet titled **Me 'n' Mine** another NCERT product which reportedly provides ‘invaluable practice material for students.’ One of the worksheets in the name of teaching “Summative Assessment’ has a write-up about the ‘Yuvraj’ Rahul Gandhi, in all his impeccable glory.

The worksheet under the heading ‘RAHUL GANDHI’ - a two paragraph write-up of the life of Rahul Gandhi sourced from *freshinspiration.wordpress.com* followed by 5 questions with four choices to choose from. The authorities concerned want to create a good image of their Yuvraj ingrained in the young minds for future use. Does it not amount to social conditioning of the young minds? Why nobody questions this, though every government that comes to power at some point or other tries its hand at social conditioning especially of the young, and BJP being no exception.

**V. Krishna Moorthy, Mysore.
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BOOK REVIEW



HEALTH CARE IN BOMBAY PRESIDENCY 1896-1930 by Mridula Ramanna
H Primus Books, Virat Bhavan, Commercial Complex, Mukherjee Nagar,
Delhi 100002 H www.primusbooks.com H 2012 H Pages 212 H Rs.795

Reviewed by Dr. Usha Thakkar, Hon. Secretary, Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. ushathakkar@yahoo.com

Events of today are history of tomorrow. We bask in the glory of our 'old' culture; we pay tribute to our 'legacy'; however, we do not care to have events and happenings in the form of well

documented chronicles. We need to have a systematic inquiry into the past for better understanding of the present and the future.

The history of the Bombay Presidency is fascinating. It presents enormous possibilities for exciting and interesting research in various disciplines, ranging from society to culture and governance to customs. The colonial policy and practice in India used both the expropriation and appropriation of the indigenous. It retrieved and praised the past achievements as the Orientalists and archeologists did, and also took steps to 'civilize' the 'natives', emphasizing that the Western cultural system is superior to that of the Indian. Efforts were made to project the image of colonial rule as a benefactor and reformer. The colonial rule critiqued the indigenous social, cultural, intellectual and medical practices; and the latter had their own critique of the colonial rule. Their intermingling led to tensions and conflicts and also to creative integration of the colonial and the indigenous, resulting in new ideas, new horizons and new institutions.

It is in this context that this book assumes special importance. There are a few research studies by scholars like David Arnold, Ian Catanach, Raj Chandavarkar and Jim Masselos in the area of the medical history of colonial India. By covering the topic of public health in Bombay presidency between 1896 to 1930, a relatively under-researched area, Dr. Ramanna has given us a sequel to her earlier work *Western Medicine and Public Health in*

Colonial Bombay: 1845-1895 (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2002) and a welcome addition to the existing research. The book is based on an impressive amount of primary sources, printed and manuscript material, collected from many libraries in India, UK and US, coupled with the author's own insightful analysis.

It gives a wide coverage of medical issues in the period under discussion. The first chapter throws light on the changes in the policy to combat the frequent outbreaks of plague from 1896 to 1920 in Mumbai and other places in the presidency. It shows that individual colonial officials differed on how they interpreted and implemented policy, while Indian responses also varied accordingly. The second chapter points out that the establishment of semi-official organizations on the initiative of local people in order to bring sanitary awareness into the public sphere was a unique approach. In addition, the steps taken by the officials to keep Bombay healthy benefited the city. The third chapter provides an overview of hospitals and dispensaries and their increasing acceptance. The fourth chapter looks at maternal health, and examines efforts to tackle it. The contemporary views of British and Indian medics about the causes for the high death rates are discussed. It is interesting to note that the author uses a unique and not frequently used source viz. papers presented by them at various conferences, to outline their opinions and perspectives.

The contribution of and challenges before women doctors are covered in the fifth chapter. The medical education for women and medical facilities for the exclusive use of women and children were started by the Medical Women for India Fund. Women were admitted to the Grant Medical College in 1883. This chapter highlights the career profiles of some Indian women physicians like Drs. Manak Bahadurji nee Turkhud, Kantabai Sadanand, Avanbai Mehta, Dossibai JR Dadabhoy and Jerusha Jhirad during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The presence of women doctors at maternity hospitals contributed to an increase in the number of women patients who constituted about 20 per cent of the total number of patients in hospitals and dispensaries by the 1920s. The issues of the health of female mill workers and the *dais*

and midwives are also addressed. The last chapter examines the relative position of Western and Indian medicine in the Presidency during the period, the latter including *ayurveda* as practiced by the *vaid*s and *unani* as dispensed by *hakims*. It explores the complexities in the encounter between Western medicine and Indian society. The Bombay Government established the preponderance of Western medicine by passing the Bombay Medical Act or the Registration of Medical Practitioners Act in 1912, effectively keeping out *vaid*s and *hakims*. It is significant to note that in some cases patients chose alternate therapies: the Indian system for a set of complaints like skin diseases and snake bites, and Western medicine was preferred for surgery. The State, therefore, could not perceive that the line was not sharply drawn especially in the minds of the urban patients.

The book is an important account of many aspects of health care in the Bombay Presidency. It brings out many issues like, civil amenities, steps taken by the officials to keep Bombay healthy, role of individuals who contributed to health care like the health officer John Andrew Turner, the Indian doctors like Nusserwanji Hormusji Choksey and Bhalchandra Krishna Bhatvadekar and civic leaders like Pheroze Shah Mehta. The work also presents accounts of associations like the Bombay Sanitary Association and the Anti-Tuberculosis League and draws our attention to distinctive hospitals like Nair Hospital. It also deals effectively with issues like the perception of the colonial state about the poor health of women, different facets of the encounter between Indian and Western medicine, perspectives and policies of the colonial rulers and responses to them, and the relative position of the

Western and Indian medicine in the Presidency. It is a major strength of the work that it is sensitive to the varied and complex nature of the responses of individuals, institutions and the State.

The author rightly observes that the emphasis in the early twentieth century was on preventive medicine along with the new theories of disease doubtlessly having had their effect. As for Indian involvement in research, it was limited; Indian doctors being primarily responsible for implementation at the grass roots. By the 1930s, the public health record in Bombay was a mixed one. While the cities saw earnest attempts to tackle a variety of challenges, the rural areas seem to have been either caught in a bind with tussles between competing authorities or no relief at all.

The Bombay Presidency has a unique history of its people, their aspirations and initiatives, and the government policy during the colonial rule. The book clearly demonstrates the importance of studying local history. It shows that the collection of data from primary sources and its critical analysis can lead to an exciting and fruitful journey.

Dr. Ramanna traces a part of this history that is splintered and important. The book elucidates the distinct and changing scene of health care in Bombay Presidency. For the people, the poor in particular, much is at stake on how health care is constructed, what and how the strategies are found to deal with it, how resources are mobilized, and how improvement is measured.

Dadar Taxi Drivers Ferry Patients Free of Cost

A group of taxi drivers at Dadar railway station took on the task of ferrying all hospital staff and patients for free to the Tata Memorial Centre and KEM Hospital on while the Bharat Bandh shut most of city's transportation.

When we saw these people waiting, we made up our minds no matter what we will take them to the hospital said Balwant Singh (49), who was behind the idea. He added that activists stopped them on two occasions but let them go when they saw they were carrying patients.

"These taxi drivers normally cater to the mail train passengers. I was prepared to punch in for work late today but was pleasantly surprised when I reached

Dadar station, said Swati Mhatre (33), a Tata Memorial employee.

Taxi driver Tejpal (38) said, politicians call for a bandh but it affects the common man the most. They can sit at home but we don't. We do not have that luxury. I am glad we could do our bit for these people.

**Alison Saldanha, *The Indian Express*,
sourced from Karmayug**

Let There Be No Mistake

To criticise the actions of persons in high places and to invite attention to certain dangerous implications is always a hazardous task. If, however, freedom is to survive and democracy is to thrive there must be in a free society some who will be intrepid enough to undertake that task.

Freedom First's criticism of the Mahalanobis Plan and the technique of physical planning and its revelations regarding the communist character of most of the foreign experts gathered together by the Indian Statistical Institute has evidently earned for it some displeasure in high quarters. *Freedom First* is not afraid of incurring displeasure, when public duty requires it to run that risk; it would not, however, like its position to be misunderstood.

Freedom First had criticised the Mahalanobis Plan and its technique of physical planning on the basis of the little information that was then available in scanty newspaper reports. Since then, some authoritative documents have been published, namely, the Plan Frame of Prof. Mahalanobis, a note prepared jointly by the Economic Divisions of the Ministry of Finance and the Planning Commission, the memorandum of the Panel of Economists and Prof. B. R. Shenoy's note of dissent to the memorandum. Now that these documents have been published for general discussion, it will be necessary to study them and to re-examine, in the light of this new information that has now become available, the criticism that had been made earlier. *Freedom First* will essay that task in the course of the next three or four months that are happily allowed for a discussion of the Plan Frame.

At the moment, it is necessary to point out that *Freedom First* is not alone in the doubts and apprehensions that it had expressed about some of the features of Mahalanobis Plan and their impact on freedom and democracy. One of the most outspoken critics of that Plan, now called the Plan Frame, has been Dr. B. C. Roy, the Chief Minister of West Bengal. In a note submitted to the National Development Council, Dr. Roy stated: "In my opinion, the Plan is unpractical both in regard to the total effort which is envisaged, as well as the manner in which this total effort is proposed to be applied in different directions.

Equally trenchant criticism of the Plan Frame has been voiced by Prof. B. R. Shenoy, a member of the Panel of Economists with a distinguished record of academic and public service behind him. It is true that his was the only voice of dissent in the Panel but that does not in itself reduce the validity of his criticism. He has criticised the basic idea of the Plan Frame of financing the Second Five Year Plan to the extent of Rs.1000 crores by resort to deficit financing. He has pointed out that deficit financing of such a high order may well lead to wild inflation which would inflict permanent injury on the economy of the country. He regards the plan as "over-ambitious" and warns against the consequences of adopting an over-ambitious plan in the following words:

"To force a pace of development in excess of the capacity of the available real resources must necessarily involve uncontrolled inflation. In a democratic community where the masses of the people live close to the margin of subsistence, uncontrolled inflation may prove to be explosive and might undermine the existing order of society. Alternatively, if appropriate "physical measure", familiar to a communist economy, were adopted (in an effort to prevent inflation) we would be writing off, gradually or rapidly, depending upon the exigencies of the Plan, individual liberty and democratic institutions by administrative or legislative action."

Prof. Shenoy has also examined the "policy and institutional implications of the Plan frame" and has stated: "I apprehend that reliance on legislation and administrative measures to increase the rate of saving, which will permit a bigger and bolder Plan, may by degrees undermine our democratic social order, which would be too high a price to pay for accelerated economic development. Legislative and administrative action should be directed to ensuring the socially most effective uses of savings. To permit accelerated economic development it would be preferable to supplement domestic savings by foreign capital and foreign aid."

Educating Adults

Humanities for Our Youth

– Educating Emotions for Building Empathy

Jyoti Marwah

This topic has been taken up for discussion because of the need for empathy among the youth to deal with issues of violence, impatience and hatred leading to problems of road rage and lack of respect for each other – even among the young in schools and colleges.

‘Sans Humanities, the centre of Indian education doesn’t hold,’ feels Prof. Homi Bhabha, Director of Mahindra Humanities Centre at Harvard University, a Padma Bhushan awardee for his contributions to literature and education. Inclusion of humanities in the curriculum gives the young adults the desired rounded education and knowledge which is so integrated that it creates crossroads for concerted interplay of social sciences, technology, applied sciences and other disciplines. Dr. Bhabha believes, and rightly so, that India’s image as a global force is not restricted to its economic performance alone as varied vicissitudes of culture have given ‘India prominence beyond the rupee’. India’s art, literature, design, fashion, architecture, films and food craft are a divine semblance of Indianness making India unique in so many ways.

Inclusive and Humanitarian Education

In a globalized world, humanities contribute to develop the necessary skills for communication across boundaries and for cross cultural linkage. In the Indian context, this is prominently visible through Bollywood films / music, popularity of Indian cuisines, art galleries, museums, contemporary Indian Art, Indian publishing houses, heritage and culture. Old Universities of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta, at one time, did have an approach favouring integrated education which has gradually been given up in favour of institutions offering specific and specialized study of a single discipline. Therein the paradigms of development in developing countries has become technology, financial markets and management thus creating a deficit in emotions, empathy, humanitarian concerns and sincerity in cementing relationships.

The beastly instinct of cruelty and the humane instinct of compassion is the dualistic definition of Man. If cruelty increases, compassion becomes frugal and if compassion grows, society becomes humane and caring. So, education must aim at building empathy by seasoning emotions. Environmentalists like Bittu Sehgal believe with enough evidence to establish the point that cruelty in human beings begins with the practice of cruelty towards animals. Compassion and emotional display of kindness, concern, love and gratitude are an integral part of the human trait and a dominant instinct of every human being. Its practice at all times can prevent its defeat in the face of challenges thrown up by cruelty, deceit, fraudulent practices, betrayal and hypocrisy.

Education for the young needs to focus on instilling culture so as to make them sensitive to the needs of the society at large and of those with whom they interact closely and intimately. For this, the pre-requisite requirement is the creation of an environment to develop warmth, understanding and humanitarian outlook. This has a multiplier effect as it spreads warmth, love, compassion, generosity, kindness and concern to help society heal. Assimilation of human intellectual achievement is regarded as culture, which helps build identities to develop beliefs, faith, practices, customs, traditions, arts, crafts, languages, food habit, dress and much more. It is unfortunate that the young generation is lured by the ethos of the globalised world, for as they move away from their villages, they leave behind a world of goodness and well-being. When cultures of two different societies clash, the dominant one establishes its hegemony making the indigenous culture



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appear inferior. This needs to be understood and prevented. Dr. Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director (Research) SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka, believes that a number of factors are accelerating the erosion of cultures with the result that very soon traditions and practices will be confined to the pages of history. The erosion is neither tangible nor quantifiable but as this happens, we lose our identity, which consequently will affect the very survival of the human race. He cites that in the next 50 years, half of worlds 6,900 languages will disappear and with it history, ideas, culture, stories, epics, songs and folklore will create a vacuum which is unimaginable.

Sustainable Lifestyles

Culture is a stabilizing force and instils moderation, which in turn generates empathy and is the key to sustainable lifestyles of the future. The need for moderation arises by empathizing with the poor and the have-nots. Cross-cultural appreciation of traditional values fosters an equitable relationship with nature and builds a balance between civility and politics. Tibetans, with spiritual pursuits, represent an enigmatic culture with an ability to survive in harsh conditions with faith in their inner self, which is untouched by materialism. Their monasteries are a repository of divine comfort and their prayer wheel a composition for patience and eternal spiritual retreat. They are a hardy race of people who have adjusted to altered lifestyles in the country of exile. Responsible consumerism can be the key to this empathy.

Concern for Differently Abled

As disabilities are on the rise, due to increased life expectancy, terror attacks, mutated genes, conflicts, natural disasters, insensitivity to human concerns and rising crime due to changed life styles *there is a need for enhanced concern, care and an inclusive policy for the disabled.* Familial, societal and governmental responsibility increases for mainstreaming them. Various art forms such as music, painting, dance, oratory and training as wellness therapists helps in their rehabilitation, which needs patience and understanding. Thus, there is an urgent need to create sensitivity among the abled, to serve and inflate their emotional bank balance.

Danger to Democracy

The year 2011 has been a year of revelations – as it witnessed the rise of protest as an ideology, like the Occupy movement by youngsters in Europe and USA that questioned the fundamentals of the free market. Faith in democracy may have fallen but starting from Tunisia across

to Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria people have pulled down tyrants with decades of established and deeply entrenched rule indicating the inconsistency of absolutism with the world today as people want good governance. The glaring inequalities in China are of concern. Materialism has its limiting dimensions. Finally, it has been the interpretation of jihad to mean inward spiritual commitment with no implication of violence. Man cannot exist without emotions, feelings and compassion.

Just as the Modern World gained phenomenally from Renaissance, as Man understood the meaning of being humane, we pray that *let not* the globalised world take a U-turn into the dark ages of the medieval times. We need to reduce material and mercenary greed to heal and begin an inter-play with emotions and empathy.

DR. JYOTI MARWAH, Principal and Head of the Department of History, ICLES' Motilal Jhunjhunwala College of Art, Science and Commerce, Navi Mumbai.
Email: jmarwah01@yahoo.in

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Enriching Experience of Empathy in my College Life

Ajay Mishra

Scoring 84.28% marks was one of the happiest moments of my life in T.Y.B.Com after I was judged 'Best Boy' in the same year in my college. It was the culmination of my participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and academic excellence throughout the three years of my college life.

In the very first year in college my teachers motivated me to actively participate in various activities. I participated in skits, debates and poster competitions. At the International Seminar on Heritage Tourism I won the Young Environmentalist award and it was a world of success for me. This boosted my self-confidence and also gave me exposure to an event of such magnitude. It added to my wisdom and knowledge. I worked in the college magazine committee and actively participated in the extension unit of Mumbai University known as LLPE which enhanced my skills of leadership and made me more systematic.

But, it was not as simple as it sounds from the above statement. I used to be a shy and quiet boy till

the first year of my college; this was due to lack of self-confidence and fear of facing an audience. This change in me was the result of extra care shown by people around me as they wanted me to be comfortable for I was physically handicapped due to Polio which I contracted when I was only five months old. This support came from my teachers and my classmates. I always wanted to be like everyone around me because I felt I missed out on various normal things during my school days. This was because most of them assumed I could not do what others were able to do in a normal course of activity. I always wanted to prove myself though it required some extra effort on my part. This was only achieved with the support of all in the college. It remains an emotional point of contact with everyone in my college. Their love, concern and support will be my source of inspiration. I look forward to a successful career in the field of banking and pray to God to give me the companionship of similar colleagues.

Ajay Mishra, TYB Com,
ICLES MJ College, Vashi

*

Sensitising Children to the World of Animals

Naina Athale

The modern world is seeing an increasing number of children and adolescents who are going through bouts of ennui and angst. We are also seeing an increase in senseless acts of violence and crime committed by youngsters. Other than this, there are a large number of children turning into self-centred and selfish human beings.

The causes for this are many, but I would like to dwell on only one much neglected aspect, abuse and dislike for animals. Children see a lot of obvious and subtle abuse against animals all the time. Whether it be the society watchman kicking a dog, or a horse owner whipping the horse on which the child is sitting, or a mother telling the child that 'animals are dirty'; it has a negative impact on the child. The child grows up thinking that animals are to be neglected, they are to be used on occasions and as a result some children may get the impression that they can be abused as well. They grow up with the notion that has given us the holocaust and other terrible human rights violations around the world; the notion that the vulnerable living being is to be condemned, used and abused for

self. They grow up thinking less of the defenceless, even the defenceless humans.

Seeing and experiencing abuse impacts children in two ways. Firstly, the amount of socially acceptable violence against animals (meat-eating, animal experimentation, hunting and use of animals for sports, locking up animals for life in zoos, forcing them into unnatural behaviour in circuses etc.) could lead to desensitizing towards more unacceptable forms of violence like the ones mentioned above. Secondly, it has been proved by clinical researchers that when children themselves abuse animals or see family members abuse them, they are more likely to indulge in violent acts themselves, against peers and others.

It is, therefore, time we wake up to the fact that sensitivity to all living beings should be included in the education of the child. Parents and teachers should be sensitised to the importance and the need for creating this awareness.

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Indians as Law Breakers

"Each Culture holds a certain set of values in higher esteem than others. For us Indians, community, caste and money's might are more important than say, our neighbourhood or the law of the land. We've got accustomed to hierarchical superiority."

Social commentator Santosh Desai

"Outwit the rule is our rule. In our minds, power seems to reside with people, not institutions."

Social scientist Shiv Viswanathan

"We are rude, ill mannered and boorish. We yell, we abuse and we lack plain decency. But the funny thing is, we start behaving ourselves the minutes we land in another country."

Author and Columnist Shobha De

"Whenever I start feeling too arrogant about myself, I always take a trip to America. The immigration guys kick the star out of stardom." Film star Shah Rukh Khan's opening remarks when delivering a lecture at Yale University.

Excerpted from *The Times of India*, June 3, 2012.

India's Growing Leadership Deficit

Leadership at the Grassroots Level

S. C. Sharma

We shall keep returning to this topic time and again. Right leadership is the key to good, transparent and effective governance. In this article, as the title suggests, Brigadier Suresh Sharma, draws attention to the leadership of Sachidanand Bharti in the protection of forests and water conservation.

Big dams dislocate people, submerge villages and demand clearing of forests. Twenty thousand tiny reservoirs in Garhwal have regenerated forests. Small is beautiful

Sachidanand Bharti completed his education in Gopeshwar Mahavidyalaya in 1979 and returned to his village, Ufrain Khal. He became a teacher in the local school. While a collegian, he had taken active part in the Chipko Movement against the cutting of trees. He sadly observed the indiscriminate felling of silver fir trees for industrial needs elsewhere. The women folk had to go to nearby villages to collect firewood and fodder. Often, they were abused and had to pay a fine to the Panchayat. With his experience in the Chipko Movement, Sachidanand started touring the nearby villages to voice the demand against the destruction of forests. He accepted that the forests were the property of the Government but they were essential for the lives of the people who were the real stake holders. Surprisingly, the government officers agreed not to permit timber exploitation. The villages realized that harmful acts of the Government can be stopped by a united stand. This was achieved without taking recourse to confrontation. At the same time, the villagers decided to plant new trees.

Women's Participation

The first camp was organized in 1980 with the help of Rs.1,000/- received from the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. Dudhachal Development Organization comprising Bharti, a watchman, an ayurvedic healer and a grocer was established. The camp was followed by a *padayatra*. People decided to plant trees. A start was made by selling walnut saplings which brought in small amounts of money. Students joined in to collect the seeds. The Forest Department had planted pine trees which reduce dampness and the dry leaves carry the risk of forest fires. Bharti instead opted for broad leaf trees like oak, cedar and fir. A welcome feature was the effort by women volunteers who formed *Mahila Mandals* with the task of guarding the forests. A woman would carry a pole with

bells tied to the top and patrol the designated area. At the end of the day, she would leave it at the door of another woman signifying that it was her turn next. No outside help was sought. It was not a movement for conservation but one for living. That was the key to mass participation.

Water Conservation

In 1993, Bharti turned his attention to water conservation which is the essential requirement for the health of forests and agriculture. Rain water running down the steep hill slopes carries soil along with it. River Sukhral near village Ufrain Khal is a torrent during the rainy season and dry during summer. Bharti revived the traditional method of impounding the water in small reservoirs, called Khal and Chal with capacity of 5 to 10 cubic metres, costing Rs.50 to Rs.200 each. These could be constructed even on slopes. About 7000 Khals and Chals have changed the face of 35 villages in Ufrain Khal area. There was abundance of firewood and fodder. Agriculture has prospered. During the water famine in 1999-2000, these villages did not suffer any water shortage. The five rivers of Dudhachal which were drying have water throughout the year. These tiny reservoirs also help in prevention of forest fires which cause an annual damage of about Rs.450 crores.

In 1988, a proposal was floated for a Rs.90 crore project for water management in the area supported by the World Bank. Bharti wrote to them that such a scheme was already in operation and no funds were needed. A team of officers and representatives of the World Bank came to visit the area and were impressed with the achievements of Bharti's team. Bharti turned down the offer of financial aid with the remark that success rests on a sense of responsibility and hard work. Acceptance of aid from the Bank would destroy this sense of responsibility. It was another first for the people of Ufrain Khal in that

the proposal was given up. Representatives from an NGO in Himachal Pradesh too came to study and initiate similar schemes in their area. They did not succeed since the essential element of leadership and involvement of the people was absent.

Today about 20,000 tiny water reservoirs provide life to forests, rivers and agricultural fields in 150 villages. More than 7 lakh trees have been planted over 27 years. These are 100 feet tall trees in 700 hectares of forests. The humus is so thick that one can walk only along dedicated footpaths. The people have taken to

technological improvements. There are 400 smokeless *chulhas* and solar panels adorn a few roof tops. The villagers carry out maintenance of these panels themselves. Used to water mills for grinding wheat, the locals have installed a 5 kilowatt turbine. The Madhya Pradesh Government has awarded the National Mahatma Gandhi Prize of Rs. Ten lacs to the Dudhachal Development Organization.

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Funding the Right to Education Act (3)

This is the second and concluding part of the article by Brig. Sharma on “Funding the Right to Education Act”. For the first part, see Freedom First No.540, June 2012.

There is no mention of participation by parents in management of unaided schools. It is not essential as most of them are well run and there is increasing trend to organize teachers/parents meetings. The structure of fees and donations do become points of serious conflict. This happens in spite of directions by the Government. The management of present aided schools is as good as can be noticed from the desire of students to prefer them to government schools. Assistant commissioner for education in Navi Mumbai observed that expenses per student in government schools was higher than that in private schools, yet the quality of learning was better in private schools.

There is no mention of the role of government authorities. It is essential that overall supervision without interference in daily routine be carried out by State officers. The Administration should lay down minimum qualifications of teachers but not interfere in actual selection. In some areas violence amongst kids is rampant. Local management committees may not be able to deal with it. An example of a school in UK may serve as a guideline. A school had to shut down due to bad results. There were free fights, gangs loitering at the gate and drug abuse. Results were bad. It was taken away from the local authority and placed under State control, given freedom of staffing and teaching methods. After six years, the school is unrecognizable. 60% students did better than the national average. Mathematics and science are the most popular subjects. A teacher commented “Create an expectation and students can take on hard subjects and they will demand them.”

Qualified teachers with a sense of commitment are the cornerstone of good education. The Act directs salaries which are too high compared to the prevailing rates in private schools. An example is a school in Rajasthan where the Head Master, his son and daughter-in-law are members of the staff. The school can work with a smaller budget. Under the Act such schools will close down unless substantial aid is provided. The management structure of present aided schools should be left undisturbed unless specific complaints are received.

The management should try to obtain adequate and timely grants and ensure judicious utilization. The Education budget has doubled from 2008 to 2011. According to a survey by the NGO, ‘PRATHAM’, seventy percent of the increased budget has been spent on teacher and management costs. Whitewashing of walls and organizing school events were particularly popular. Increase in salary of teachers has not resulted in improved learning. Training of teachers and learning by students were at low priority. Like teachers, management committee members must also be committed.

Concluded

Parsi Bawaji went to Australia to watch the cricket series there. The Aussie at passport control sat fingering through his passport for a long time. Unable to find anything objectionable, he growled: ‘Have you got a criminal record? The Bawa smiled and replied, ‘I am terribly sorry, sir; unfortunately, I don’t have one. Nobody told me that it was *still* a requirement to get into your country’...!

From the Net. Contributed by Hina Manerikar.

The high-minded liberal will no doubt protest that what matters is that a man should make the best of himself, and not that others should make the best of him; that he should achieve a well balanced life by his own efforts, and not that others should impel or coax him. But to do this, he must be free to criticise established authority... to choose his own occupation, to spend his leisure as he pleases. What makes the liberal a liberal is his insisting on this freedom ...when he admits - as he cannot be do – that freedom must be restricted, his admission is liberal in so far as he wants freedom restricted in order to secure it more effectively to more people.

John Plamanetz, *Readings from Liberal Writers – English and French*

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Liberals believe in the creative capacity of liberty and in human and political rights for every human being; in the rule of law in peaceful cooperation between classes and nations; in free enterprise and social security. Liberals mistrust bureaucracy and state intervention. They recognise the need of a role for the state in certain essential affairs of the community, but they believe that the limits of its intervention must be drawn as narrowly as possible.

Issues of Liberty, *Liberal International Yearbook 1986*

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The Liberal understands quite clearly that without resort to compulsion, the existence of society would be endangered and that rules of conduct whose observance is necessary to assure peaceful human cooperation must stand the threat of force if the whole edifice of society is not to be continually at the mercy of its members. One must be in a position to compel a person who does not respect the lives, health, personal freedom, or private property of others into obedience to the rule of society. This is the function that the liberal doctrine assigns to the State; the protection of property, liberty and peace.

Ludwig von Mises

Secular Values in a Liberal Democracy

Secularism in India is viewed generally as a political 'mantra' to contain communalism in the country – a political devise to resolve communal conflicts.

Secularism, however, does not merely entail a separation of politics from religion. It also implies inculcation of certain values without which no stable harmonious secular state can be established.

In India, the issue of secularism has been complicated by fuzzy notions attached to its meaning. On the one hand , it is argued that secularism means “*Sarva Dharma Samabhava*” and on the other it also implies equidistance from all religions. The former, implying tolerance, could also lead to tolerating the intolerable on the grounds of non-interference in “religious” practices. The latter could lead to competing parties to develop as far and, more often than not, as close the distance from religions!

Since the early eighties there has been an enormous rise of what has been described as “religious nationalism” particularly in third world countries. The votaries of religious nationalism believe that independence from foreign rule is just formal. True independence would come only by eradicating the pernicious liberal legacies left by the West, including its concept of the secular state.

Religious nationalism presents one of the gravest threats not merely to secular nationalism but also to liberal democracies.

A secular liberal democracy can survive in India only if there is a strong commitment to secular humanist values. A commitment to those values does not mean violent hostility towards religion. It means putting religion in its place.

The Constitution of India is substantially, if not wholly, a secular, liberal document. Since its promulgation, politics in India has steadily debased the spirit, if not the letter of the Constitution. Certainly , the principal institutions - Parliament, the Judiciary, and the Executive with its Civil Service – have declined in prestige and effectiveness.

Secular human values which form the bases of liberal democracy in India have been under siege now for two decades. Exploitation of religion for political purposes has been on the rise and it is against this dismal background that one has to reaffirm secular values and secure them as foundations of a liberal humane India.

(Excerpted from Prof. V. K.Sinha's essay 'Secular Values and Secularism in India from the booklet Secular Values in a Liberal Democracy')