

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

April-June 1990
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38TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Autonomy is not Freedom
— The Prasar Bharati Bill



The Right to Know

— J.B. D'Souza

The New Government's Economic Policy

— S. Ambirajan

The Kashmir Question

— Minoo Masani

The Power of Words

— Vaclav Havel

A.D. Gorwala — The Lone Warrior

Though he died five days short of his 89th birthday, Astad Dinshah Gorwala had the privilege of knowing that dishonest governments can be turned out of office. Not only in India, but across Eastern Europe. While the changes in Europe have come about because of the Soviet Union's realization that it cannot progress economically or technologically by enslaving people, in India the ouster of the Congress government is in no small measure thanks to people like Gorwala.

For over 25 years he spoke, wrote and championed the cause of honesty in public life. Not only did he fight for it, he lived in compliance with the laws of the land. During prohibition, for example, he abstained from liquor even though he enjoyed his evening drink; and after prohibition, if somebody gifted him a bottle of foreign liquor that was smuggled, he did not touch it.

He paid his taxes and believed that everyone should work for the common good and for the 22 years or so that he edited and published *Opinion*, he led an austere life, living alone, travelling by bus, drinking tea from an old lidless tea pot.

Many people looked upon him as a quixotic individual, someone who was out of tune with the times and intemperate in his attacks on the government of both Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. When he called Ms Gandhi "an arrant liar," several subscribers wrote in asking him to stop their copies of *Opinion*. It took the infamous Emergency to make people truly appreciate the worth of the man.

When the Emergency was first declared, Gorwala was insistent on following the procedures laid down by an unscrupulous government to gag the press. Like all the other publishers he went to the censor's office to submit his manuscripts for approval. He would tuck the more offensive pieces between the apolitical ones, but the censor would ferret them out and reject the ones that he felt his paranoic government would not approve. Even the proceedings in parliament, published by the government itself, were barred from re-publication in *Opinion*.

Outraged by the arbitrariness of the censor, Gorwala refused to submit any more issues of *Opinion* for censorship. At first he was cautious with what he published but then decided this was wrong.

All his life he had spoken out against wrong-doing and he did not feel he could change at the behest of a corrupt dictator. Like Socrates, whom he admired, Gorwala was prepared to opt for hemlock over suppression.

As he began to once again attack the government through *Opinion*, the presses that printed it were threatened; and when one press printed the issue without the imprint line (a legal requirement indicating the name and address of the press where the copy is printed), Gorwala was issued with a summons.

That day in court he was legally well represented and the magistrate was sympathetic. "How much should I fine the defendant?" he asked Gorwala's counsel. "A hundred rupees," replied the lawyer. The judge answered, "I was going to fine him only fifty rupees." Relieved, and with his faith in the judiciary reconfirmed, Gorwala left the courtroom.

As no press would print the issues of *Opinion* with an imprint line, the publication was cyclostyled. This was done stealthily at a commercial cyclostyling centre whose apolitical owner did it out of friendship and on the understanding that his name would not be disclosed. It was suggested to Gorwala that the imprint line should state that *Opinion* was being cyclostyled at his residence. But Gorwala felt that would be telling an untruth and decided instead to state that it was published and edited by him from his residence.

Shortly thereafter a second summons was issued on Gorwala and this time he decided not to be represented by a counsel. He had violated the law and he was prepared to face the consequences. He also felt that as the judge had been sympathetic the last time, this time, too, he would be let off with a nominal fine.

When he realized that the matter was in a different court, he was concerned. Perhaps the government has selected a magistrate who would toe their line. In the courtroom he sat on the bench waiting his turn like any other defendant. How ironic it was, he noted, that a man like himself who had obeyed the law and whose career as a government official had been to uphold the law should now be the accused in a magistrate's court. When his turn came, the prosecuting lawyer kept goading the magistrate to make Gorwala reveal the place where the issue had been cyclostyled. Gorwala ref-

used to do so and the magistrate indicated that that was not the business of the court.

A nominal fine of Rs 50 was imposed and Gorwala left in good spirits.

An old cyclostyle machine was soon installed in his residence and the imprint line stated his address as the place for printing. But now the post office said it would refuse to post *Opinion* and held back an issue. The threat of legal action, however, soon ensured that the copies were posted. Finally, under the provisions of the notorious Maintenance of Internal Security Act, *Opinion* was ordered to cease publication. That, of course, did not stop Gorwala from sending out cyclostyled letters to subscribers, with his well-wishers posting them from various post offices throughout Bombay to avoid detection. Thus he prevailed, an irrepressible gadfly, a gallant and fearless fighter, a David battling a Goliath.

But while Gorwala was prepared to take on and vanquish his foes, there were two adversaries against whom he found himself helpless. One was age, the other loneliness. He found that his body refused to do what he wanted it to. The food would spill as he ate, he could not stand up straight, he had to stop shaving, unable to look into the mirror for long. Blind in one eye and with limited vision in the other, he was dependent on others to read to him. Writing became more and more difficult with arthritis making the holding of a pen painful. And though as he aged, many of his old acquaintances and relatives passed away, till the day he died he was blessed with the best and most loyal of friends.

His insistence on living alone increased his physical isolation. He once likened life to a bullock tied to a grinding wheel going in circles with blinkers on its eyes. He said he welcomed death, he wanted to be relieved from fighting the good fight. He was not a religious man but he believed strongly in his religion, which told him a man must choose whether he is to fight on the side of good or evil. There can be no fence-sitting.

Gorwala showed us that an individual can fight the system. That you don't have to be a millionaire or a press baron to influence government, or the way people think. You have only to believe in yourself.

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Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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Dear Reader,

True to its name, *Freedom First* always keeps freedom first. It is with this yardstick that we measure the Prasar Bharati Bill. To be able to bring you the views of a good cross section of the intelligentsia, we organised, in cooperation with the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, an half-day seminar on the Bill. A summary of the deliberations and the issues on which there was general agreement form the cover story of the issue.

The government's obsession with 'secrets' and the citizen's right to know are discussed by Mr. J.B. D'Souza, a distinguished civil servant. We cannot think of even one reader of *Freedom First* who is likely to disagree with the writer that the citizen's right to know is paramount and cannot be denied.

Given the constraints under which it has to operate, and the *prima donnas* it has to contend within its own ranks, the record of the National Government has been creditable — so far. Its efforts to restore the credibility of institutions seriously damaged by the previous regime are to be commended. But it will need the continuing pressure of informed public opinion to push the present rulers in the direction of open government.

It also means that facts however unpleasant, have to be faced squarely; and solutions however drastic must be taken. It is in this spirit that Mr. Masani has articulated (in his article on Kashmir) what many Indians would be prepared to advocate privately, that the people of Kashmir have the right to determine their future. One may or may not agree with Mr. Masani's point of view; but it needs to be heard — and considered seriously.

We are grateful to our friend Russi Lala for sending us a copy of a speech delivered by Czechoslovak President, Vaclav Havel, on "The Power of Words" — only he was in jail in October 1989 and the speech was read out on his behalf. As a playwright and writer of eminence and himself a victim of words used by the late rulers of his country to maintain their hegemony, his speech deserves a far wider audience. We are not aware of this speech having been reported or published in any newspaper or journal in India so far. *Freedom First* takes pride in reproducing this classic statement.

Contents

April-June 1990
No. 405

The Right to Know

Prasar Bharati — Yet Another Public Sector Undertaking	S.V. Raju	5
"Sunshine" on Government — Let there be Light	J.B. D'Souza	13

The National Front's Economic Policy — Which way to Turn?	S. Ambirajan	17
---	--------------	----

Kashmir — The Case for Self-Determination	Minoo Masani	21
---	--------------	----

The Post-Election Scenario	Nagindas H. Sanghavi	23
New Political Equations in Maharashtra	Avikay	25

The Power of Words	Vaclav Havel	27
--------------------	--------------	----

The Rural Perspective

— The Roots of India's Poverty	Bhanu Pratap Singh	31
--------------------------------	--------------------	----

The Masani Viewpoint

Religion and Politics: Notes from a Conversation with Djilas	Leif Hovelsen	35
--	---------------	----

Violent Politics in India: Some Issues	V. Venkatesan	37
--	---------------	----

Lithuanian Independence: Myth or Reality	Vasundhara Mohan	41
--	------------------	----

From the Foreign Press		43
------------------------	--	----

Book Reviews		47
--------------	--	----

WITH MANY VOICES

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

Though it may sound unpatriotic, I prefer to believe what he (Mark Tully of the BBC) has to say about the situation in Kashmir than accept Upendra's or governor Jagmohan's version.

Rahul Singh, *The Sunday Observer*, February 4

Once upon a distant time, Indian planners talked of catching up with the developed economies of the West; soon we may be talking of catching up with Thailand!

T.N. Ninan, *Seminar*, January 1990

Some countries are obsessed with sex; we, as a nation seem to be obsessed with budgets.

Jay Dubashi, *The Sunday Observer*, January 28

What happened in Russia in 1917 wasn't a revolution. It was a *coup de'etat*. The true revolution is what is happening in Russia and Eastern Europe today.

Margaret Thatcher, *Newsweek*, October 23

What is rape after all? In America there is a rape every minute. It is as common as drinking tea. One drinks tea and commits a rape.

E.R. Nayanar, *The Times of India*, February 24

That prostitute of literature (Salman Rushdie) you call that rat an author? He deserves what he is getting.

Nirad Chaudhuri, *The Independent*, March 24

Countries...need Deputy Prime Ministers not uncles and if there is one thing Devi Lal is not, he is not a responsible Deputy Prime Minister.

Tavleen Singh, *Indian Express*, March 25

People will have to decide whether they want rapists and murderers as their representatives.

Jabbir Hussein, a Janata Dal dissident, *India Week*, February 16

We took such a beating on Bofors. As far as I know, no one from my government was involved.

Rajiv Gandhi, *India Today*, March 15

Now that Bimal Jalan is going to be finance secretary, Dhirubhai Ambani is in trouble. The (finance) ministry's new slogan will be: only Bimal.

A "rival industrialist", *Sunday*, January 7

Hinduism is the only philosophy in the world where the woman does not come out of the man.

Mallika Sarabhai, *Sunday*, January 21

Tomorrow there will be a battle.

Andrei Sakharov's last words, *Frontline*, January 6

It's easy to see why foreign banks are able to show better profits than Indian banks. They can pick and choose their clientele.

N.D. Prabhu, Chairman, Canara Bank, *Business World*, February 14

Today we are not in need of any more temples, mosques, gurdwaras and churches. We need more schools, hospitals, orphanages and homes for the aged.

R.A. Manchhani, *The Week*, January 21

Dogs look up to us, cats down on us, but pigs treat us as equals.

Winston Churchill, *Time*, January 22

Black money generation now is closer to Rs. 80,000 crores per year or over Rs. 9 crores per hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days of a year.

D.R. Pendse, *Sunday Observer*, February 18

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

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

- Lewis Carroll



Nirad Chaudhuri

In my review of Nirad Chaudhuri's latest book, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* (Freedom First July-September 1989) I had described it as one of the most important books written by an Indian during the last twenty years which no educated Indian can ignore. We are gratified that the Oxford University has set its imprimatur by honouring Niradbabu with an honorary D. Litt degree. This unique honour he shares with such men of eminence as Radhakrishnan, Tagore and Satyajit Ray. That three of them happen to be Bengalis will no doubt tickle the native in Niradbabu!

This is particularly to be commemorated for the honour came unsought to him something unusual in our country where chief ministers and vice-chancellors are known to be avid collectors of this empty honour. A chief minister reportedly bought this by donating six lakhs of rupees to an undistinguished Indian University.

The *Spectator* bemoaned a few months ago that none of the colleges in Oxford saw fit to extend the facilities of its dining hall to Niradbabu one of the most distinguished of the residents of that town. This complaint is now amply met in action.

His autobiography details the petty means resorted to, by "friends" and colleagues to discredit him with the government in India. It is but natural that he should react the way he did when asked whether he would accept a Padma Shri "Padma Shri? I won't even accept a Bharat Ratna from them... They (the politicians in New Delhi) are a bunch of opportunists. I do not need their award, thank you."

Some among our intellectuals will begin reading his writings now that one of the foremost of foreign universities have recognized him. The same thing happened to Tagore after his Nobel Prize. Those who held him in disdain began to court him. Let Niradbabu himself have the last say quoting from Tagore: "The Nobel Prize cannot be a measure of the worth of literary work. Rather it is a measure of the critical awareness of those who judge".

Vaclav Havel

When Shelley wrote that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, he might well have had Vaclav Havel in mind. Like the British poet, Havel too come from a well-to-do family but unlike him was denied (being a bourgeois) the right to study in a University. He worked in theatre companies helping them as a "scene-shifter" for the advanced plays that were put up.

Beginning to write plays he became popular abroad but found that they were popular abroad but banned in his own country — Czechoslovakia. They had to be read in *Samizdat* versions. His fiftieth birthday (1986) saw him winning one of the most prestigious of European awards, the Erasmus Prize. This is awarded by the Erasmus Foundation, supported by the Dutch government. The Prize is generally awarded "in order to honour persons or institutions that have made an exceptionally important contribution to European culture, society or social science."

Very much like Pasternak, Havel did not go to Rotterdam to receive the prize in person lest he be not allowed to return home by the authorities. For he was in the very thick of civil rights activities, spearheading opposition to the authorities. He is one of the signatories to the Charter 77 movement. These activities only earned him prison sentences many times. When he fell ill in prison in 1983, the authorities quickly released him lest his possible demise in jail should create an international furore.

Intellectuals in central Europe have had a continuous involvement in politics. As Havel wrote: "Professional politicians have made a mess of things... so let amateurs have a go." His father was close of the great statesman Jan Masaryk (1886-1948)

During the recent upheavals in eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia saw the emergence of a determined group of dissidents who were bent on not allowing a return to the evil days of the recent past. It is this that made for the sidestepping of Dubcek who did so much to save the country but who in the circumstances in which he was placed then could attain but limited success.

The people have put their faith in the opposition leaders and have made Havel President of Czechoslovakia, something he himself perhaps would have least expected. The tasks confronting the country are enormous and almost impossible of resolution. The sudden transition to a market economy from a tightly controlled economy will bring in great unsettlements. There are no party organizations to talk of except

the dominant Party of yesterday. People are still in a state of euphoria and have put great trust (perhaps uncritical) in their leaders — the new President will have greater tasks ahead of him than he has faced till recently. Will he succeed? Time alone can tell.

RS

How to Coopt Journalists

Mr. Nikhil Chakravarty the noted journalist and Mr. V. Shirwadkar better known as Kusumagraj, the eminent Marathi poet and playwright, deserve congratulations for declining the Padma Bhushan award.

These awards have become, like the knighthoods in Britain, a means to reward supporters of the establishment of the day. Would Arun Shourie or N. Ram have been included in this year's Republic Day honours list had Rajiv Gandhi returned to power?

In a conversation with Ajay Bose published in the *Sunday Observer* (February 4), Mr. Chakravarty said that "as a journalist he would be particularly careful to stay away from such honours. It's like wearing a chastity belt in a brothel."

Mr. Bose also reminds us that Dr. Hridaynath Kunzru, the veteran liberal declined the Bharat Ratna when it was offered to him by Pandit Nehru.

Mr. Shirwadkar who was awarded the "Gyanpeeth Award" last year is reported to have said that this award was enough. Hence he declined the Padma Bhushan.

In his column in *India Today*, Mr. S. Nihal Singh hit the nail on the head:

"Given half a chance, the ruling establishment of the day would make the press a pale copy of Door-darshan and All India Radio. But the existence of a rumbustious press makes that task difficult, if not impossible. Attacks on the press must perforce be indirect — through raising the cost of newsprint and other imposts, the arm-twisting of proprietors who tend to be industrialists and suborning those who write the journalists..."

"How much easier it is then to simply coopt journalists. And what better way than heap official honours on them?"

Need we say more! It is time such relics from our colonial past as Mr. Cha-

kravarty correctly observes, are done away with.

Quite Disgusting

Elsewhere in this issue we have reprinted a letter to the *London Times* from some members of the House of Lords in England protesting against a Thatcher government *diktat* prohibiting her ministers from meeting the Dalai Lama if he were to visit London.

Across the Atlantic, President Bush vetoed Congressional legislation permitting 40,000 Chinese students to remain in the country after the expiry of their visas.

In both cases commerce has pushed aside human rights — both in Tibet and in post-Tienanmen Square China.

Nearer home, our very own National Front Government has been wining and dining some Chinese minister or the other and looking forward to a revival of the 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' days. Conveniently, 1962 is forgotten.

That Thatcher and Bush should also have behaved the way they did in currying favour with the gerontocracy in Peking (in return for alluring prospects of trade no doubt) is quite disgusting and deserves to be condemned unequivocally.

A free society and a free economy are two sides of the same coin. But a market economy need not necessarily be a free society. *Freedom First* will always opt for the first. People matter more than filthy lucre. Human rights and dignity are not negotiable.

The "Honourable Acquittal" of Rama Swarup

As this issue goes to press comes the long overdue news that Rama Swarup has been honourably acquitted of all charges of spying. As Delhi Additional Sessions Judge Mr. P.R. Thakur observed in the course of a 579-page judgement:

"It is only in rare cases where honourable acquittal is justifiably necessitated."

The judge, according to a PTI report further observed that *all the charges* framed against the accused had collapsed as the prosecution failed to

prove them in the so-called espionage case of "much outcry and little outcome."

Readers of *Freedom First* will be familiar with this case. We had, in this journal, repeatedly demanded that the trial process be expedited and either the government prove its case that Rama Swarup had violated the provisions of the *Official Secrets Act* or be released. The political overtones of the case and the attempt to harass a citizen who was on the other side of the then establishment, are unmistakable.

Justice delayed is justice denied to quote an old truism. Rama Swarup was incarcerated for over four and half years of which around two were in Tihar jail and the rest under house arrest where he was kept under police vigil and visitors could only see him with police permission.

More about this infamous case later. Meanwhile, as a friend observed to me, will the present Attorney General of India a known champion of human freedoms look at the many more cases of people in detention for years without trial and ensure that justice is done to them irrespective of which side of the political spectrum they belong to?

SVR

On Astrology

When you collect the ten wisest men of the world and ask them to find out the most stupid thing in existence, they will not be able to find anything stupider than astrology.

Mathematician David Hilbert

quoted by Dr. H. Narasimhalah in his essay
"Nehru and the Scientific Temper"

Of Steaks and 'Vegetables'

Mrs. Thatcher takes her Cabinet out to dinner. The waiter asks the Prime Minister what she will have. "Steak", she says. "And for the vegetables?" he goes on. "They'll have steak too."

Encounter, November 1989

Efficient Communism?

While the Russian people have no experience of democracy of any kind, an efficient and an honest communist system is a contradiction in terms. Authoritarianism must, by definition, be corrupt as well as inefficient.

Girilal Jain

Seminar, January 1990

Prasar Bharati

Yet Another Public Sector Undertaking!

S.V. Raju

The Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill, 1989 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 29, 1989.

When the Bill is passed into law, and come January 1, 1991, Akashvani (All India Radio-AIR) and Doordarshan (TV) will cease to exist as separate identities; they will also, *formally*, cease to be departments of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B Ministry).

In their place we shall have Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) a wholly-owned undertaking of the Government of India.

With this consummation, the National Front Government will claim that it has fulfilled its election pledge to free the electronic media from State control.

The speed with which the new government initiated legislation to set up Prasar Bharati is commendable. A similar exercise in 1978-79 by the then Janata Party government came to nought. Their Bill in the Lok Sabha (a watered down version of the Verghese Committee's recommendations) lapsed as the government fell. This time the introduction of the Prasar Bharati Bill within a month of assumption of office indicates that at least some lessons have been learnt!

A Study Group at the Planning Commission has been set up to examine the Bill, elicit public opinion and suggest modifications.

The Bill has been widely discussed at a variety of forums. Numerous articles written by eminent journalists and commentators have appeared in the press. A welcome development has been the involvement of both the technical and non-technical personnel of Akashvani and Doordarshan in the debate over the last couple of months.

As part of this public debate the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) organised a half-day seminar at Bombay on March 3.

The discussion concerned itself with two fundamental issues:

1. Does the Prasar Bharati Bill (as drafted) really free AIR and TV from State control; and
2. Even assuming it does, is autonomy in a monopoly situation, by itself enough to ensure the free and objective coverage of news and views or is competition necessary as a corrective?

This article is based on the proceedings of this seminar.

The Structure

The Management of Prasar Bharati is vested in an eleven-member Board of Governors (equivalent to a company's Board of Directors) including a Chairman and an Executive Governor (the equivalent of a Managing Director). Six of these Governors are part-time. The Bill specifies a Governor in charge of finance and another for personnel. It is interesting that for a Corporation whose only business is broadcasting and telecasting there is no Governor specifically entrusted with programmes!

"The Chairman and part-time Governors" says the Bill "shall be persons of eminence in public life". As for the Executive Governor, he or she shall be a person having "special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as administration, management, broadcasting, education, literature, culture, arts, music, dramatics or journalism." This kind of dispersed qualities ignores the specialised skills needed to manage an organisation such as Prasar Bharati. "Eminence in public life" is also a vague description capable of a hundred different interpretations.

The Chairman and Board of Gover-

nors are appointed by the President of India (meaning the Union Cabinet) on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (i.e. the Vice-President of India — a political appointee), the Chairman of the Press Council of India and a nominee of the President of India.

This provision vitiates the very concept of autonomy.

The Chairman and Governors should be appointed not by the government *via* the President of India but by a group consisting of representatives of public bodies; users of the media and those akin to the media.

Apart from the change in nomenclature (Governors instead of Directors) there is little to set Prasar Bharati apart from the structure of management of other public undertakings of the Government of India. In reality all that has been done is to replace a government departmental bureaucracy by a new Corporation bureaucracy.

A provision relating to the "power of Central Government to give directions" is tucked away in chapter IV under "Miscellaneous". This provision is open to misuse and goes against the very grain



of autonomy.

Then there is the umbilical cord to the I&B Ministry with the presence on the Board of Governors, of a representative of the I&B Ministry — much like the presence of representatives of financial institutions on the Boards of private sector enterprises — a watchdog of the government.

A New Bureaucracy

The Bill appears to be preoccupied with who is what and where and how he or she is to be removed should the need arise. It lays down in some detail rules for the removal or suspension of the Chairman and Governors; the frequency of Board meetings; the constitution of Recruitment Boards; the transfer of personnel and so on. It is so obvious that the Bill has been drafted by

bureaucrats for bureaucrats!

Where was the need for a separate Broadcasting Corporation if it merely meant the creation of yet another bureaucratic apparatus?

This is what the Bill is all about. What it does not say is spelling out details of how the media is being liberated from the interference and control of the government of the day. It is significant that throughout the Bill, the word "autonomy" does not figure even once!



सत्यम् शिष्यम् सुन्दरम्

Handling Public Complaints

An elaborate procedure for the processing of public grievances is laid down. A Broadcasting Council is to be set up to hear public complaints in respect of "any programme or broadcast or the functioning of the Corporation ... which is not in accordance with the objectives for which the Corporation is established.

This Council will be appointed, again by the President of India in consultation with the Chairman of the Board of Governors "from amongst persons of eminence in public life".

Where complaints cannot be resolved no procedure is laid down for their final resolution. Such complaints will be recorded in the Annual Report of the Corporation that will be tabled in Parliament. Not a word about how they will be solved.

This is in contrast to the Verghese Committee's recommendation (1978) that complaints must be attended to and resolved without undue delay.

The Fragility of Autonomy

True, the present government has so far shown commendable restraint in minimising its interference in the functioning of radio and TV. But it is not inconceivable that the present government could well become the entrenched government and the tolerance now being shown could disappear. Given the country's lack of a democratic ethos we could easily slide back to the bad old days. What is to prevent a future government from

Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill, 1989

Statement of Objects and Reasons

It is the Government's declared policy to confer autonomy on Akashvani and Doordarshan thereby ensuring that they function in a fair, objective and creative manner. It is in this context that it is proposed to provide for the establishment of an autonomous Corporation to be known as 'Prasar Bharati' (Broadcasting Corporation of India) and to entrust to it the functions which are at present discharged by Akashvani and Doordarshan. The intention is that the proposed Corporation should function as a genuinely autonomous body — innovative, dynamic and flexible — with a high degree of credibility. It must function in a democratic manner which enriches our democratic traditions and institutions, being responsible to the people and Parliament of India and keeping in mind the variegated traditions, languages and cultures of the country.

2. The Corporation is conceived of as a single unit with two distinct wings — Radio and Television respectively. The proposed structure takes into account the need for ensuring that Radio and Television, which belong to two distinct cultures, are enabled to evolve and grow in terms of their own genius while, at the same time, ensuring a commonality in overall approach which alone can ensure that the requirements of the people in terms of entertainment, information and education are met.

3. The Corporation will have a Board of Governors comprising a Chairman, an Executive Governor, a Governor who would be responsible for finance and a Governor incharge of personnel matters. Besides these full-time functionaries, the Board will also have six part-time Governors — people of eminence drawn from diverse walks of life. The Governors will be appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a Committee headed by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and consisting of the Chairman of the Press Council of India and a nominee of the President of India.

4. The Corporation will, while discharging its functions, be guided by specified objectives, with emphasis on upholding the unity and integrity of the country, nurturing the democratic and social values enshrined in the Constitution and projecting the varied cultural traditions of different regions of the country.

5. The Executive Governor shall be the Chief Executive of the Corporation, responsible for its day-to-day administration.

6. The Bill also provides for the establishment of a Broadcasting Council, consisting of a President and ten other Members appointed by the President of India. This Council will ensure that the citizen's right to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively is fully protected and that the Corporation does not stray from the objective of ensuring adequate coverage to the country's diverse culture, and of catering to the various sections of society. This Council will consider complaints about programmes broadcast by the Corporation in this context and render suitable advice to the Board of Governors.

7. In addition to making provisions regarding establishment and composition of the Corporation, appointment and removal of the Governors of the Corporation, the Bill also provides for transfer of properties and funds at present vested in the Central Government for the purpose of Akashvani and Doordarshan to the Corporation, transfer of employees of Akashvani and Doordarshan to the Corporation and other ancillary matters and the establishment of Recruitment Boards for recommending the appointment of officers and other employees of the Corporation.

8. The Bill seeks to achieve the above objectives.

Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality

1.1 This White Paper sets out the Government's proposals for broadcasting in the UK in the 1990s.

The Government places the viewer and listener at the centre of broadcasting policy. Because of technological, international and other developments, change is inevitable. It is also desirable: only through change will the individual be able to exercise the much wider choice which will soon become possible. The Government's aim is to open the doors so that individuals can choose for themselves from a much wider range of programmes and types of broadcasting. In this as in other fields consumers will rightly insist on safeguards which will protect them and their families from shoddy wares and from exploitation. But the Government believes that, with the right enabling framework, a more open and competitive broadcasting market can be attained without detriment to programme standards and quality. Its single biggest advantage will be to give the viewer and listener a greater choice and a greater say. The Government is also clear that there need be no contradiction between the desire to increase competition and widen choice and concern that programme standards on good taste and decency should be maintained. Both are essential if the quality of British broadcasting is to be safeguarded and enhanced into the next century.

1.3 Chapter II sets out the Government's general approach. It explains more fully why radical reform of the framework for broadcasting in the UK is both necessary and desirable. Chapters III to XI contain the Government's specific proposals. The main ones are these:

- Most viewers will have a major increase in choice with the authorisation of a new *fifth channel*, to be operated as a national channel, with different companies providing the services at different times of the day. A *sixth channel* will also be authorised should technical studies show this to be feasible.
- The present ITV system will be replaced by a regionally based *Channel 3* with positive programming obligations but also greater freedom to match its programming to market conditions.
- Provision will be made for at least one body which is effectively equipped to provide him quality *news* programmes on Channel 3...
- All television services (including those of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) will be given freedom to raise finance through *subscription* and *sponsorship* (subject to proper safeguards). All services (except the BBC) will also be free to carry *advertising*.
- A new agency, the *Independent Television Commission* (ITC), will be established in place of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the Cable Authority to license and supervise all parts of a liberalised commercial television sector. It will operate with a lighter touch than the IBA but will have tough sanctions...
- The *BBC* will continue as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting...
- The *night hours* from one of the BBC's channels will be assigned to the ITC. The BBC will be allowed to retain the other set on the basis that it uses it as fully as possible for developing subscription services.
- The part played by *independent producers* in programme making in the UK will continue to grow.
- The Government will proceed with its proposals for the deregulation and expansion of *independent radio*, under the light touch regulation of a new *Radio Authority*.
- All UK television and radio services will be subject to *consumer protection* obligations on such matters as taste, decency and balance.
- The *Broadcasting Standards Council* (BSC), established to reinforce standards on taste and decency and the portrayal of sex and violence, will be placed on a statutory footing.
- The exemption of broadcasting from the *obscenity* legislation will be removed.
- There will be a major reform of the *transmission* arrangements, giving scope for greater private sector involvement.

From the White Paper presented to the British Parliament in November 1988.

Some Disquieting Indicators

While it is early days yet, it may be said that the National Front government seems to be a great improvement on the last one, in terms of not misusing Television 'News'. There are, however, other disquieting indicators which rate serious mention. The contemporary classic *The City of Joy* was initially denied permission for film-shooting 'on locale', as the NF's ally, the CPM felt the idea would project a wrong image of Calcutta. (In fact, the message of the book is the indestructible character of the people and the city, despite the overwhelming odds of socio-economic survival). The pertinent point, here, is not whether or not this is the right interpretation of the book, but whether censorship under political pressure, jells with the ethos of a government committed to freedom for the media.

The serial *Sword of Tipu Sultan* has encountered rough weather. If it was the CPM which blocked permission to film *The City of Joy*, it is the BJP which is reportedly unhappy over the ideological thrust of this serial. This is said to be a refutation of the belief, that Tipu was a Muslim fanatic. In fact, much of India's history is the product of British historians, especially in respect of the British period. It partakes of the conqueror's conscious or subconscious strategy to divide and rule. Re-examination of history in the light of present day scholarship, is necessary, and should be welcomed. The decision on this matter will be a test of the NF government's commitment to autonomy: allowing Doordarshan to take a decision on merit, or the extent to which it can be manipulated by its allies.

Yet another case which deserves mention, is the censorship of *Newstrack* the current-affairs news video cassette, brought out by the publishers of the fortnightly *India Today*. A recent edition had some material on Kashmir, which did appear in the printed magazine. However, government scissored out actual candid camera shots, of supposedly objectionable portions, though reference to the same did pass in the print media. Government appears to take the line that what is *seen* is more dangerous than what is *read*.

Louella Lobo Prabhu

repealing the Prasar Bharati Act and returning TV and radio to the tender mercies of the I&B Ministry?

The fact is, autonomy has so far not worked in India. More often it has been misused to mislead the people. The ethos being what it is, it is very unlikely that Prasar Bharati would muster the courage, for instance, to say 'no' to the Prime Minister like the BBC which has said 'no' to Mrs. Thatcher.

The only way to reduce the risk of this happening is to make the right to know and access to information a part of Article 19 of the Constitution of India — a Fundamental Right. This will ensure that the Corporation once set up cannot be dissolved by a majority vote in Parliament.

But no monopoly howsoever autonomous on paper and with all the safeguards one can think of, can really guarantee the right of the citizen to know, to be informed. The only guarantee is competition — competing channels and broadcasting stations. And there is no law in India which prevents this. Just as any Indian citizen has the right to publish a newspaper or a journal, he has the right to establish and operate a TV channel or a broadcasting station.

Prasar Bharati Bill

Chapter IV — Miscellaneous

Power of Central Government to give directions.

22. (1) The Central Government may, from time to time as and when occasion arises, issue to the Corporation such directions as it may think necessary in the interest of the security of the State or preservation of public order requiring it not to make a broadcast on a matter specified in the direction or to make a broadcast on any matter of public importance specified in the direction.

(2) Where the Corporation makes a broadcast in pursuance of the direction issued under sub-section (1), the fact that such broadcast has been made in pursuance of such direction may also be announced along with such broadcast, if the Corporation so desires.

(3) A copy of every direction issued under sub-section (1) shall be laid before each House of Parliament.

Meanwhile the Bill which, as the Minister for Information and Broadcasting admitted, has been hastily drafted, needs considerable revision to ensure to the extent possible, that the Broadcasting Corporation of India or Prasar Bharati operates in an atmosphere of freedom.

Promoting Values

Among the objectives of the Corporation spelt out in the Bill is the following.

"Safeguarding the citizen's right to be informed feely, truthfully and objectively on all matters of public interest, national or international and presenting a fair and balanced flow of information including contrasting views, without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own."

Laudable, in the light of what we have been through under previous regimes, but inadequate nevertheless. We do not need a sterile Corporation. It must be the objective of the Corporation to promote democracy, secular values and the scientific temper — to modernise India's thinking.

These values are clearly spelt out in the Preamble to the Constitution of India. TV and radio should be the conduit for the spread of the ideals of the Indian Constitution — a yardstick to measure the policies, pronouncements and performance of the government in particular and of the polity in general.

In fact, in furthering these values the Bill should contain a special provision enabling voluntary agencies to broadcast socially relevant programmes which would enable persons like Swamy Agnivesh, for instance, to produce a programme on the evils of obscurantism or for Mrs. Sheela Barse on the conditions of our jails or on juvenile delinquency.

Truth at Any Cost?

Then there is that vexing question: How much of the truth should the people be told? This question is particularly relevant when reporting on such matters as communal disturbances, terrorism or secessionist agitation.

For instance, in a violent communal flare-up is it necessary to give factual data of how many died? Or, as in the case of Kashmir, how strong anti-India feelings are in the state. Should the burning of the Indian flag be telecast?

Would the projection of reality result in a backlash in other parts of the country? Would the telecasting of the ghastly killings in Bhagalpur inflame opinion in the rest of India?

It is best in such matters to tell the truth and, in the light of the values that the Corporation stands for, educate the people on what is the right path. The government's point of view can be projected along with the point of view of the other side.

In this connection the 'Newstrack' model is instructive. Its relatively frank projection (despite censorship) of sensitive news has served to educate rather than inflame. Or for that matter the excellent feature on 'booth-capturing' that was telecast on Doordarshan. It made viewers sit up and take notice of a

Five Principles for a Free Media

To my mind any new legal and institutional framework that ensures a free, fearless and impartial electronic media must build around five principles.

First, Doordarshan and Akashvani must be free (not autonomous) from all government control. The time has come when they should be on a par with the free press. The executive government must be an outsider.

Second, Doordarshan and Akashvani must sever all connections with the bureaucracy. An immediate process of complete de-bureaucratisation is essential both in personnel and staff.

Third, the creation of statutory rights in the form of a licence or franchise in favour of political parties, the press the Central and state governments to broadcast their views and news must be guaranteed. Sharing of time or assigning of channels at subsidised non-commercial rates for these sectors is absolutely essential.

Fourth, creation and expansion of the number of channels within a time-frame to facilitate a large dose of competition is necessary. Potential licensing of other networks must be envisaged.

Fifth, an adequate and imaginative statutory frame (in the event of a constitutional amendment not being immediately feasible) which would permit judicial review by the courts — a framework which would immediately attract the umbrella of fundamental rights, if a future government attempts to annul or modify the statute.

Anil Divan
Indian Express

The Verghese Report was Better

The Verghese report had, for good reason, suggested a non-executive National Broadcast Trust and a Central Executive Board appointed by the trustees and headed by a Controller-General as the chief executive of the trust, who would also be the secretary of the trust. The trustees would serve as a "buffer" between the executives and "the powerful external forces playing on them". The trustees would be more detached and function as "guardians of the charter given to the National Broadcast Trust by statute."

The (Prasar Bharati) Bill rejects this concept as also two vital clauses of the charter suggested by the Verghese report. One enjoined the trustees to "uphold the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution." The trust was to be declared a "citizen" so that it could assert for itself this precious right, which is available only to citizens. Another clause enjoined the trustees to "uphold the impartiality, integrity, and autonomy of broadcasting in the country." The nearest the Bill comes in this direction is Clause 12, which requires the corporation to safeguard "the citizen's right to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively on all matters of public interest..." It does not go far enough.

In one major respect the Bill is worse than the 1979 model. The Broadcasting Council it would establish to consider complaints against the corporation would be a solemn farce. The President (in other words, the Government) would appoint the council in consultation with the chairman of the corporation. Its verdict will remain secret till publication in the corporation's annual report to Parliament. The 1979 Bill required the complaints board to inform the complainant of its verdict in writing so that he could publicize the result. The Verghese Bill required the Board to "make and publish its adjudication promptly" while its members were to be appointed by the Chief Justice of India.

A.G. Noorani
The Statesman

very pernicious evil that has crept into our electoral system about which one read reports, but shocked many when it was brought to the drawing room.

The BBC is an ideal model. Its broadcasts have a large listening public in

Participants at the ICCF Seminar on the Prasar Bharati Bill, Bombay, March 3

Mr. Arvind Deshpande, Hon. Secretary, Leslie Sawhny Programme; Mr. Vinay Dhumale, TV Producer; Mr. Y.A. Fazalbhoy, Chairman Emeritus, Photophone Ltd.; Mr. Lionel Fernandez, Lecturer in Political Science, Bombay University; Ms. Rajani Iyer, lawyer and civil rights activist; Mr. Yogesh Kamdar, company executive and civil rights activist; Mr. D.B. Karnik, journalist and former editor of *Maharashtra Times*; Mr. P.C. Manaktala, publisher; Mr. Madhu Mehta, Convenor, Hindustani Andolan; Mr. Minoo Masani, member of the Constituent Assembly, former MP and Chairman, Project for Economic Education; Dr. Usha Mehta, Gandhian social worker and former Head of the Department of Politics, Bombay University; Mr. Jiban Mukhopadhyay, economist; Mr. Ramu Pandit, Secretary General, Indian Merchants' Chamber; Mr. S. V. Raju, Hon. Secretary, Democratic Research Service and Editor, *Freedom First*; Mr. Nitin G. Raut, Lawyer and Hon. Secretary, Indian Council of World Affairs; Mr. K.F. Rustamji, retired Inspector General of Police and member of the Police Commission; Dr. R. Srinivasan, retired Professor of Politics, Bombay University and editor, *Freedom First*; Mr. Abe Solomon, President, Indian Secular Society; Mr. M. Treasurywala, retired Director of Ontario Hydro, Canada; Dr. Mary Thomas, Professor of History, Bhavan's College; Dr. Usha Thakkar, Head of the Department of Political Science, S.N.D.T. University; Mrs. Nargis Wadia, Managing Director, Inter Publicity Private Limited.

India. Its credibility is high because its coverage is honest and factual. AIR and Doordarshan on the other hand are very low on credibility because of their blatant misuse by the Congress Party.

Implied in keeping facts away from people is the belief that the common man is not to be trusted with facts; that he will be led into the 'wrong' type of reaction. This underestimates the basic commonsense of our people. The results of the recent elections provide proof, if any was needed, of the high level of maturity of our people who, not influenced by the gross misuse of the media by the party in power, threw them out.

Perhaps, in a given situation the considered opinion of those in charge of a broadcast or a telecast may be to withhold the truth — for a while. There may be some justification for this. But the guideline should be clear — never tell a lie.

In fact an occasion like a gruesome massacre, may just be the opportunity to educate people on the futility of violence and the human suffering it entails.

He who Pays the Piper...

For its funding, Prasar Bharati is totally dependent on the Government of India. The Bill is very explicit on who holds the purse-strings.

"For the purposes of enabling the Corporation to discharge its functions efficiently under this Act, the Central Government may, after due appropriations made by Parliament by law in this behalf, pay to the Corporation in each financial year.

- (i) the proceeds of the broadcast receiver fees, if any, as reduced by the collection charges; and
- (ii) such other sums of money as that Government considers necessary, by way of equity, grants-in-aid or loan."

On March 2, Mr. P. Upendra, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting is reported to have stated that "there was no alternative to State funding. He gave an assurance that there was no need for apprehension that this would put the media in the clutches of the government: "The government would treat this as an obligation, on par with other constitutional bodies as far as

Doordarshan's Reach

As of now, the network has 500 transmitters covering 75 per cent of the population and 55 per cent of the land area. The transmitters include 54 high-power ones but as many as 369 low-power transmitters (LPT) — the access doors of government propaganda to the rural and semi-urban populace. Beginning from scratch, Doordarshan has acquired 18 production centres and is soon going to have 30 more. The number of receiving sets in the country, too, has shot up to 21 million, with nearly seven million colour TV sets. Today, any programme with a 75 per cent-plus viewership, or rating, is watched by 9.5 crore people, which is six times the population of Australia and nearly double the population of Britain.

Sumit Mitra
Sunday



COURTESY: Index on Censorship

funding is concerned," he said (*Indian Express*, March 3, 1990)

Not quite. Mr. Upendra is a good man. We could, perhaps, take him at his word. But his successors may not all be good men. And then there are examples of government undertakings that are supposedly autonomous but who are completely dependent on the ministries concerned. Air India is an example. It is 'autonomous'. But is wholly dependent on government for its funding — in this case the Ministry of Civil Aviation which calls the shots.

With financial power in its hands, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting can bend Prasar Bharati to its will. Without appearing to interfere, the Government could put paid to the Corporation's plans — if these plans are not to the liking of the government of the day.

In fact Mr. V.N. Gadgil, Minister for Information in the Rajiv Gandhi government underlined this very bluntly when

he remarked in June 1985: "If I want to interfere, I can interfere in an autonomous corporation."

The fact is government funding and autonomy are a contradiction in terms. If the State must fund the Corporation let it be by parliament (through appropriations from the Consolidated Fund of India) and not *via* the I&B Ministry.

A free media means choice to the user. This in turn means multiple channels and broadcasting stations.

For the Government of India or for Prasar Bharati to have multiple channels may be unaffordable given the financial constraints even assuming the State is inclined to consider this favourably.

The Case for Competition

The answer by some that second channels at the disposal of state governments would bring a better balance in the projection of news and views is unacceptable for the simple reason that

government control of the media is bad whether controlled by the central government or by state governments.

There can be only one solution — competition.

Financial constraints for having multiple channels if franchised to the public are not unsurmountable.

The spate of highly successful, often oversubscribed, mega equity issues of companies in the private sector in the recent past are testimony to the fact that there are plenty of funds available and a willingness on the part of the public to invest in joint stock companies. A TV/Broadcasting company will easily be able to raise the required capital.

But who decides on applications for licences from the public to set up broadcasting or television stations?

Ideally it should consist of a Committee (appointed by Parliament) of public figures from various walks of life including persons in the fields of arts, science, the humanities etc. and people connected with the media.

The Shape of the Future

The world over, frontiers in TV will be abolished as quickly as radio frontiers have been. The BBC World Service is already working on a TV news programme like its Radio News. We must discuss the shape of the future before the Corporation in the subcontinent and the world. Soon TVs will be adjusted to direct reception and the price of dishes will fall. Already the competition is heavy — Sky Channel, CNN, Pakistan's new buy into the Hong Kong TV and even VOA's Worldnet.

What I am saying might well be considered to be irrelevant. Discussions lay high store by the Charter and Bill, the organisational structure and the Management. These are, of course, important, but I would plead urgently for opening up the range and spirit of the discussion. How many times are we going to discuss one Corporation or two, Chairman of the Rajya Sabha or Lokpal, Executive Governor or D.G., the transfer of service of existing employees of the Corporation, Article 19(1), Article 12(3)(a) and so on? They are, as I readily concede, important, very important, but not nearly as important as programmes which the head of one big European broadcasting agency described recently as "our glory and our purpose".

Chanchal Sarkar
Indian Express

Restructuring Akashvani and Doordarshan

I. The present set-up of Akashvani should be restructured into a three tier set-up.

- A) An organisation responsible for National Programmes.
- B) For commercially sponsored programmes.
- C) The infrastructure organisation which will have the potential for growth and development to provide simultaneous programmes locally as well as for a national hook-up to broadcast national programmes.

The above objectives will be feasible by bringing into being the following arrangement in the place of the existing organisation under the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

- A) Akashvani and Doordarshan as two autonomous corporations responsible to Parliament.

They will operate to arrange programmes without any programme being sponsored by advertisers. The example which has been suggested is on the BBC pattern without the interruption of commercial announcements.

- B) The Independent Broadcasting Corporation (IBC)

Which will handle the Broadcasting of sponsored programmes prompted and paid for by advertisers which facilities will also be available to newspapers and magazines to present views or debates on the national programmes from AIR and DD. The element of differing views and open debate will be possible. This will meet the doubts and fears that freedom of expression will be restricted under a Government run autonomous organisation. The real autonomy will be generated by the facility of a competitive set up. The Independent Broadcasting Corporation will be a joint venture corporation i.e. private share holders along with Government.

- C) The Transmitter Corporation of India.

The present huge network of transmitters, studios, OB Vans will be transferred to this corporation which also will be a joint venture. Both AIR and DD autonomous corporations and the IBC will pay on rates fixed by the Transmitter Corporation for the use of the transmitter and for the production facilities and the studios on rates which will be on cost plus reasonable return on capital say of 12 to 15%. This will attract private investors as well as institutional investors.

Y. A. Fazalbhoy

COURTESY: Forum of Free Enterprise.

given the importance it deserves. This is in contrast to the BBC where the radio programmes have been organised so skillfully that for news and views BBC broadcasts have held their own throughout the world. BBC's television channels cater more to entertainment. What therefore needs to be done is for a programme policy that enables radio to revive its position.

Recommendations

The seminar, as mentioned earlier in this report, which set out to examine two fundamental issues concluded unanimously that the Bill as drafted does not free the media from State control. The problem arises because there is a monopoly of Prasar Bharati which, in terms of the Bill, has both direct and indirect control over radio and TV and this is not in the interests of the public.

The seminar also examined the wisdom of a single Corporation for both radio and TV and came to the conclusion that the two should be separate entities. Until this happens radio broadcasting should have the same importance as the television system and both should be treated on par so that they can play their distinct role.

Finally, it was the view of most participants that the Bill was far too detailed. What was needed was a simple law that sets up an autonomous Corporation; defines its objectives; and has provisions that guarantee its freedom from government control including the manner in which its board of management is appointed. The rest of the Bill can be put into rules. The basic concept (free radio and TV) is thus protected while the detailed rules could change whenever occasion requires such changes.

This group or committee will only deal with the issuance or denial of licences. They will have no authority in the running of TV or radio stations.

TV and radio stations in private hands would be subject to a Code of Conduct as laid down by Parliament. In Australia for instance there are two TV Corporations. One government and the other privately owned which has to subscribe to a Code of Conduct laid down by law.

A monopoly TV or radio will be subject to pressures from fringe or extremists groups who can impose a kind of non-official censorship eg. the protest by some groups against the telecasting of late night films as being against 'Indian culture'. Competing channels will prevent this kind of censorship by pressure groups for the people would have a choice of channels.

The fear that education programmes

or public services by voluntary agencies may not find sponsors in a commercially oriented private TV station is not well founded. For instance, in the USA, there is the well-known Channel 44 which is devoted exclusively to such programmes. And this Channel has proved to be commercially viable.

Two Corporations or One?

Yet another issue which is debatable is the re-unification of AIR and TV. AIR has a far greater reach and is the ordinary man's medium — the truck driver's medium. It has essentially a regional character. On the other hand TV as an audio-visual medium has universal appeal. Moreover the requirements of radio and TV are basically different.

It is a fact that ever since TV made its appearance in India, radio has not been



COURTESY : R.K. Laxman, The Times of India

Trust has so many reasons

COOLGUARD

100% Polyurethane insulation

MEGA FORCE

The energy - efficient compressor

SPECTRUM

A wide range of exclusive colours

ULTRASPACE

The most spacious interior



What's more,
you can trust
the Godrej 165L
refrigerator
to give you
good value for
money.
Always.

TRUST *Godrej*®

HTA 1813

"Sunshine" on Government

— Let there be Light

J.B. D'Souza

The consequences of undue secrecy are unacceptable in a democracy. The worst of them is the licence that secrecy confers upon deceit. Without legislation requiring public access to government documents, there is much less to deter the government from dishing out half-truths and lies.

Ever since our new Government of India came to power in December 1989 we have heard noises about its commitment to freedom of information. Before we let our euphoria on this account get out of control, let's look at a perceptive observation the Australian Consumers' Association's journal made after reviewing progress on open government in that country: "It seems politicians' commitment to freedom of information while in opposition quickly changes to freedom from information once in government." In America Gerald Ford came to the Presidency after the Watergate cover-up scandal with a pledge to open government, but quickly vetoed the new Freedom of Information Bill that Congress had passed. Happily, a two-thirds majority in Congress overrode his veto.

It is tempting to make the broad assertion that secrecy in government is incompatible with freedom. That assertion is, however, open to debate. I find on the one hand an American author writing confidently: "We began this century with a free government — as free as any ever devised and operated by man. The more that government becomes secret, the less it remains free. To diminish the people's information about the government is to diminish the people's participation in government. The consequences of secrecy are not less because the reasons for secrecy are more. The ill effects are the same whether the reasons for secrecy are good or bad." Eloquence aside, this does not strictly make the case. The British Government has gone to great lengths, ridiculous lengths at times, to lower a Black Curtain between its doings and the public. Margaret Thatcher's strenuous efforts to keep *Spycatcher* (the memoirs of a British Intelligence officer) under wraps were

so absurd that this mediocre spy memoir stayed on the bestseller list for months on end. Yet only extreme anti-Thatcherists would argue that freedom is in peril in Britain.

Hide to Fiddle

The consequences of undue secrecy are nevertheless unacceptable in a democracy. The worst of them is the licence that secrecy confers upon deceit. Without legislation requiring public access to government documents, there is much less to deter the government from dishing out half-truths and lies. Open government laws raise the cost to the administration of lying to dupe the people. They don't of course, altogether prevent that possibility.

Last year the Maharashtra Government was quietly dropping public amenity reservations of land in Bombay's master plan. Distributed evenly over the city, these reservations aim at ensuring that every locality has land earmarked for health facilities, schools, playgrounds, etc., corresponding to its population. If a plot is released from reservation at the behest of its owner, it is the people in that neighbourhood who suffer a loss. There was a furtiveness about the process: no notice was given in the neighbourhood or elsewhere. Somehow, in a moment of indiscretion, the Minister in charge revealed the large number of such privations his government was inflicting on Bombay. There was an instant outcry, and a demand for details, from citizen action groups. The Government first tried to put a bold front on its fiddle. All was above board, it said; there was nothing to hide. Full details would at once be revealed. Soon after this it apparently realised that there *was* plenty to hide. It reverted to secrecy. Meanwhile, I had

secured some of the details. I approached the Secretary to the Government for more complete information, but was turned down. What really nettled him was my partial success in discovering what he had been so determined to conceal. He even started a 'plumbing' enquiry to plug the leak. His right to secrecy is being contested in the Bombay High Court. Had there been a freedom-of-information law in India, litigation would not have been necessary. Indeed, such a law would probably have deterred the Government from its unseemly fiddles in the first place.

The Secretary's fury and his mindless plumbing effort reveal an attitude quite oblivious of the people's right to know, based on the fact that, in more senses than one, they pay the bill. It is we, the people, who pay millions of rupees for the Bofors gun, so we must be sure that competent military advisers are satisfied that it gives the best value for money and that we are not paying more than we need to. Rajiv Gandhi's attempts to blindfold the people were pathetic. When lie after lie came to be exposed he was reduced like Richard Nixon to pleading that he was not a crook, but by then no one believed him. It was as worthless an assurance as a statement "I never tell lies".

The Limits to Secrecy

Bofors at once illustrates the importance of the people's right to know and the limits on that right. Had the then Prime Minister the wisdom to recognise these concepts he would not have suffered the repeated indignity of having his lies uncovered. Clearly it is necessary to keep the technical features of the gun in secrecy. Revealing them would reduce the weapon's value in war. The

people who pay the bill cannot ask for information that might reduce the value of the goods their money buys. But surely they are entitled to know everything else about the transaction. Attempts to withhold that information only confirm the suspicion that public money is being stolen.

Governments resort to concealment when their decisions favour a special interest at the expense of the general public. The Bombay master plan releases mentioned earlier clearly illustrate this. They favour individual landowners and deprive whole localities of needed facilities. Demands from special interest groups can be quite vocal and incredibly absurd. In his bestselling book *Without Marx or Jesus* Jean-Francois Revel writes of resort hotel-owners in France who demand that weather reports should not be broadcast when it rains during the holiday season!

A British Legacy

Here in India the British have left us a legacy, the Official Secrets Act, that makes it an offence for a civil servant to disclose what goes on in the corridors

of power. Like its counterpart in Britain the Act is a catch-all device that a secretive government can use to prevent or punish any disclosure whatever. Writes one critic of the corresponding provision in England, "A government gardener commits an offence if he tells another gardener what roses he grows, as does any civil servant who tells his family, over dinner, what he did that day". Governments do use this repressive law to prosecute when it suits them; in ordering acquittal in an official secrets prosecution in Britain during the seventies, the judge suggested the Government consider whether or not the relevant section of the Act (nearly identical with section 5 of our Act) had "reached retirement age and should be pensioned off".

The British Government has at last got around to amending its outmoded Act. Future prosecutions for disclosure of information will have to prove harm to the public interest — a requirement that we could usefully write into our law if it survives the new drive towards openness. For although governments in India have seldom invoked the Offi-

cial Secrets Act to punish leakage, except in espionage cases, they have misused the Act for purposes quite unrelated to national security. An outrageous instance of this is its use last year to declare large areas on the Narmada project as prohibited places, so that the environmentalists' resistance to the project could be obstructed; and information about schemes for the rehabilitation of local peasants shrouded from public view.

Open Government in America

You get an entirely different attitude to secrecy in America. Political theory in the U.S.A. has strongly emphasised open government, holding that democracy requires a well-informed public and that any restriction on the free flow of information to the people about their government is a big step toward despotism. The first Freedom of Information Act (1967) required each department to make information available to the public on demand, and to set forth methods by which the public could get information. There were exceptions, of course. Information relating to defence, foreign policy, and certain commercial

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and financial subjects was excluded, as were also data that intruded on personal privacy. Appeals against a denial of information lay with the courts. The 1974 Act prescribed time limits both on the supply of information by governments and on the disposal of appeals, and required disciplinary action against officials who wrongly withheld information.

A third step towards open government came in 1975, in the shape of a law colourfully called the Government in the Sunshine Act, which opened to the public the meetings of government agencies and of congressional committees. Here too there were exceptions like those in the Information Acts.

Freedom of Information Law for India

Can India afford sunshine legislation? When the second Freedom of Information Act was passed in America the relevant congressional committee estimated that the cost of providing information to those who might seek it would not exceed \$100,000 yearly. That was a bad under-estimate. In 1984 the Defence Department alone spent \$ 30 million (Rs. 45 crores) on this account. (Should one compare that with the Bofors loss of Rs. 64 crores that secrecy made possible?) Most of the cost arises from the sentence-by-sentence scrutiny of each document required to determine what material is protected from release on national security grounds. The F.B.I.'s costs are even higher: it has 300 people working full-time to meet FOI Act requests, and spends about \$ 60 million a year on them. The American Government does recover fees from information seekers, but they amount to less than five per cent of costs. Of course, costs would be lower in other departments, where documents are not likely to be as sensitive. In India fees could be pitched at levels nearer costs, particularly to discourage frivolous probes.

To the morass of corruption in which the regime of the last two Prime Ministers has left us, a freedom of information law will be a whiff of clean air, more powerful by far in the higher echelons of government than anti-corruption police and prevention-of-corruption laws. The openness must be extensive, and the exceptions minimal. Officials, and of course Ministers should not be able to apply a 'confidential' label to papers or a prohibition to places when-

ever the fancy takes them. Protection should extend only to matters concerned with individual privacy, those likely to assist criminal activities or impede law enforcement, and those relating to currency, foreign relations, internal security and, of course, defence. Even under defence, secretiveness need not be so pervasive as it now is. Bofors is one example of this. Here is another, more amusing if less significant: One of Bombay's few amenities is a beach at Marve, on the northern fringe of the city. To my dismay when I last went there, I found one part, a substantial stretch, closed off by the Navy, which has used the Official Secrets Act to make it a prohibited place. The pretext for this is naval security. Actually, the ban protects a school for naval cooks and accountants. What it really does is to keep the beach reserved for the school's commander, who has his bungalow there.

In defence, as in other excluded subjects, the exception to openness should be limited only by the principle I have proposed earlier. Only such information as would reduce the value of the goods to be bought or the effectiveness of the policy being shaped, should be protected.

And of course, an Ombudsman should decide appeals against the denial of information.

Let there be Light!

Is all this wishful thinking? Will the new Government really go all this way toward an open administration? Unless they do they will keep the door open for newer land scandals and Bofors-type fiddles. Unless they do they will confirm the suspicion that our rulers regard themselves as the masters and not the servants of the people they govern. Should we remind our governments of what Woodrow Wilson wrote: "Whenever any public business is transacted, wherever plans affecting the public are laid, or enterprises touching the public welfare, comfort or convenience... over that place a voice must speak, with the divine prerogative of a people's will, the words: 'Let there be light!'"

Mr. J.B. D'Souza is a former Municipal Commissioner of Bombay and former Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra. He is currently very active in Bombay's Development Plans.

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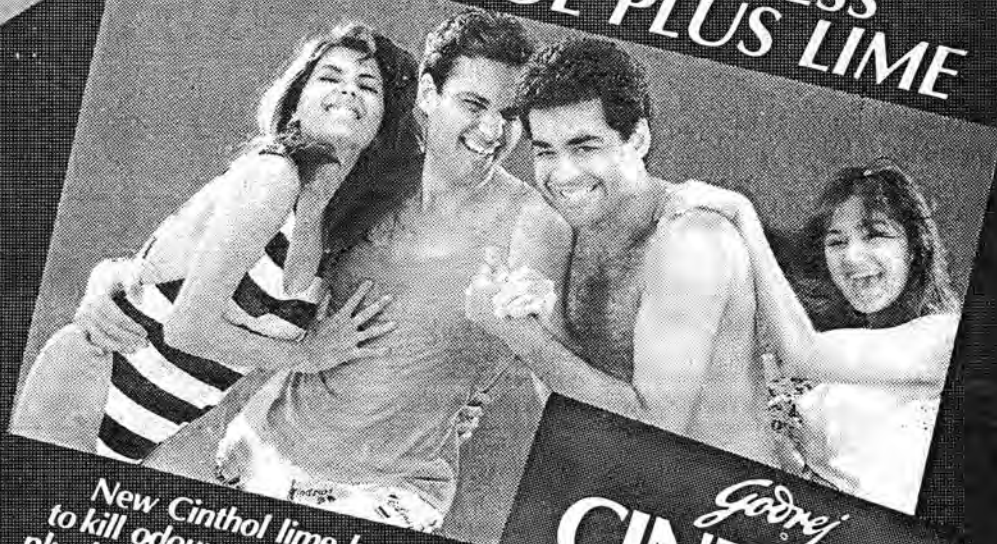
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The National Front's Economic Policy

— Which Way to Turn?

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*

S. Ambirajan

When a new government assumes power in a democratic country after a hard fought general election, it enjoys certain advantages for a period of time, although they are counterbalanced by certain disadvantages as well. How well the new government utilises the inherent advantages but avoids the inevitable disadvantages depends on the capacity and determination of the government and the ministers. The advantages are obvious. There is a climate of support and goodwill for the new rulers. The government can change policies within reason, take fresh initiatives, and in general give a new direction to the way the country will move in the future.

These advantages, however, may seem chimerical when one considers the disadvantages faced by the new rulers. There is, first of all, the tally of expectations generated in the minds of the people who have elected the new government. It is legitimate — considering the rash promises usually made by even the most responsible of politicians — for the voters to expect the new government to achieve miracles. While it may be irrational to expect a sudden end to the grievances built over many decades, there it is all the same. When many years of maladministration had preceded — for otherwise the old government would not have been voted out — the situation must naturally be unhealthy, calling for prompt correction.

The Problems of Victory

All in all, a victor's life is not all that enviable. And the victorious leader in India — Mr V.P. Singh — now has even more serious problems to face than the generality mentioned above. Not only has he to do justice to the promises made by his party during the run-up towards the general elections and to clear the mess left by the Rajiv Gandhi government, he has also to achieve all this by operating as he does in a minority government with conditional support extended by mutually antagonistic groups such as the Bharatiya Janata

What is the vision of the National Front? How are the objectives and goals to be achieved? What has been its economic policy and action until now? Important and relevant as these questions are, they are not easily answered. In India it is very difficult to pin down the real beliefs of parties. What the parties in their manifestoes (and the leaders from the election platforms) say they will do (or claim to be actually doing) is very different from what they actually do.

Party on the one hand and the Communist Parties of India (Marxist and Indian variants) on the other. Even his own Janata Dal is by no means a cohesive body let alone the National Front which is notionally in charge.

Given this precarious landscape, it is hardly possible even for a highly principled leader not to worry about the day to day survival itself. All the effort, ingenuity and talent are spent in preserving the government from collapse or dealing with the sudden and the unexpected. Where is, then, the time and scope for perspective thinking about the future? And even if a long term plan were made, in the precariousness of the present, would it be of any use?

Any analysis of the policies, prospects and long term priorities of the government has thus to take into account these political ground realities. In this uncertain world, anyone who prescribes what *should BE* is in as dangerous ground as the one who predicts what the future *would BE* like. And yet one has to be realistic and must have —

even if it be vague and opaque — a picture of where he is going or likely to go.

The Dilemma

It has to be admitted that, though the socio-political scenario in India is grim, the Indian economy — looking at the macro indicators — seems to have done much better during the last five years than before. Whether it is agricultural output or industrial production or performance by the public sector enterprises or export performance, things have improved. Whether all this is due to the past achievements of the Nehru era as some would have it, or whether it is due to the changes in economic policies made during the last decade, the fact is that we have apparently much better growth rates now. At the same time, some disturbing trends such as the deteriorating balance of payments and increasing unemployment have manifested themselves clearly. If this went on, we would reach a stage where, while we might have achieved high economic growth, it would be at the cost of even more unequal income and wealth distribution and consequent social tensions, as well as increasing domination by the international economic organisations. Whether this is the correct price to pay for escaping from the low rates of growth, is a disputable matter. Obviously the National Front government is not prepared to pay this price, at least not yet.

Rajiv's Economics

It would appear that the Rajiv government had a clear goal and it seemed reasonably sure of the way it was going. It was the picture of the economy drawn by the pundits of the World Bank and reflected in South Korea, Taiwan and similarly placed countries: pursue growth through energising the private sector, liberalize the economic administration, use inflation to redistribute income in favour of the capitalists, import and utilise the latest technology, use the market mechanism in a big way, and so on. The key elements in the

* The more things change, the more they remain the same

structure of the Rajiv economic policy were growth rates, high technology and the market. Eventually the hope was that a large middle class would be created, and the benefits would ultimately trickle down even to the most impoverished in the land. Not that the Rajiv government was callous, for it had schemes to alleviate the economic problems of the poorest, but by their very nature they could be little more than public relations exercises without altering the basic thrust of the government policy.

Contrary Pulls within the National Front

In this background, what is the vision of the National Front? How are the objectives and goals to be achieved? What has been its economic policy and action until now? Important and relevant as these questions are, they are not easily answered. In India, it is difficult to pin down the real beliefs of parties. What the parties in their manifestoes (and the leaders from the election platforms) say they will do (or claim to be actually doing) is often very different from what they actually do. It is only by analyzing their actions that one can say with any degree of clarity the way the future is visualised.

Is there anything like the National Front's point of view regarding economic development? Like the previous government, the present government too perhaps believes in economic development, but what exactly that is, seems difficult to spell out. Going by the views held by important policy makers and advisors, one does not find any unity of thought. V.P. Singh and Arun Nehru were not very long ago very much part of the policy formation coterie around Rajiv Gandhi. Not only did they not dissent from the 'new liberalisation economics' of Rajiv Gandhi's government, but they actually helped in forcing it down on India. Similarly, Ajit Singh with his American business background cannot but favour the essential elements of the Rajiv Gandhi vision or notion of India's future. However, at the other end, we have old socialists like Madhu Dandavate and George Fernandes who, though believing in economic growth, nevertheless are (or were) clear about how it should be achieved.

Again among the chief advisers, there is even greater divergence.

Ex-World Bank/IMF types like Bimal Jalan, Montek Singh Ahluwalia and a few others are very much part of the higher echelons of Indian economic policy-making apparatus. Sukhmoy Chakravarty and his Advisory Council continue in their role and though they may bend their sail a trifle to suit the new government, they are unlikely to abandon altogether their orthodoxy about the need for rapid economic development as the most important objective. Har Swaroop Singh of the Planning Commission is not against growth *per se* because he sees it as inevitable. As he remarked: "when development takes place, growth automatically follows". His colleague in the Planning Commission J.D. Sethi categorically feels that "growth with equity" should be the basic thrust of the government. Along with these, we have L.C. Jain a Gandhian economist who professes employment creation as crucial, and for whom economic growth can take a back seat. Rajni Kothari, another important adviser, is of the firm view that the present paradigm of economic development itself is flawed, and should be replaced. Kothari, Jain and many other advisers of the present government have serious reservations about the very structure of the political economy of the country. One is not sure how they will view Madhu Dandavate's statement: "The government would change the development growth model" without "destabilizing the existing structure". As likely a possibility, perhaps, as making an omelette without breaking the egg!

The divergences in the views of these key individuals cannot simply be wished away and we can only hope that after a careful churning of these different oceanic levels a coherent and new elixir (*Amrita*) of the future Indian economy will emerge. But in the absence of a clear-cut objective, the old economic policy framework continues by default. This could be seen if we examined the actual record, that is to say, in such of those sectors where decisions have been taken: and in these there seem to be no fundamental difference from what went on before.

Rhetoric Vs. Reality

It is not claimed here that new initiatives have not been made and alternative ideas have not emerged. But the sum total of all this is confusing at worst and do not add up to anything new at

On the Fast Track

On the whole, the countries that have grown fastest kept inflation under control by pursuing prudent (that is, unambitious) monetary and fiscal policies; they promoted exports mainly by refraining from discriminating against exporters; they left their economies open to foreign competition, which spurred internal efficiency; they left their domestic price systems largely intact, instead of supplanting them with marketing boards and other state monopolies; they allowed their financial systems to provide adequate return to savers; and they gave the private sector a big role in deciding where those savings should be used.

The Economist

best. Two things stand out regarding the economy and economic policy as handled by the National Front government:

- The government is slowly struggling to wriggle out of the election-eve promises, and eventually the economic policy of the National Front — with its Centrist position — may not be very different from that of the previous government.
- Many cosmetic changes (along with smooth public relations) are being made to camouflage this steady approach towards the growth-at-any-cost oriented economic policy.

In their election manifesto, the National Front promised a lot, but generally without specifying any concrete programme. It was going to tighten MRTP and curb the growth of monopoly capitalists, it was going to discourage multinationals from exploiting India; the public sector was to be made more efficient; self-reliance was to be encouraged; and rural-urban employment was to be rectified; poverty was to be eradicated; employment was to be augmented through the cottage and small scale sector; and, finally, deficits were to be reduced by curbing non-developmental expenditure. All these promises and many more were given in strident terms from a thousand platforms, but where are we being taken to now?

Hardly the National Front assumed charge, the new Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate, made it clear that the Government was not "dogmatic about its stand" and that it "would be responsive to the needs of the country". Dandavate was careful to add: "when

things are changing all over, including in the socialist countries, we should have the necessary flexibility in our approach so that the economy prospers" (*The Hindu*, 14 December 1989). Even on specifics, this retreat is noticeable. While the Manifesto of the National Front said it would not increase foreign equity to 51%, Dandavate said that the issue "would be examined on merits." Arif Mohammad Khan said much the same thing recently to an international body of capitalists in Davos, Switzerland. To the question: "Would it be correct to say that there will essentially be no departure from the economic policies of the previous governments...?", Khan said: "We live in a dynamic society where apprehensions and attitudes are constantly changing. Today I can only say that our policies too are not necessarily static and we are willing to learn..."

Despite the talk about self-reliance before winning the elections, a different tune is heard since coming to power. For example, K.P. Unnikrishnan, who is heading a ministry where science and technology are crucial, said on 9th January 1990 "Whenever upgradation of technology is required... we would not hesitate to import technology". A month later he went further declaring that the government was not "against multinationals and technology imports". Another constant refrain in the National Front's criticism of the previous administration was its encouragement of consumerism by the elite, with a promise to remove it if the Front came to power. But Ajit Singh, according to a report in the *Economic Times*, "allayed apprehension that the government would come down heavily on consumerism."

The Planning Commission

Thus there is reason to believe that the ministers, now that they have the task of putting into practice what they had promised are developing cold feet. Consequently they have become less emphatic and more 'pragmatic'. But tarry a little! What of the Planning Commission, the other important economic decision making body?

One of the earliest actions of the government was to appoint a deputy chairman and a set of new members. It is difficult to appreciate this action because, *firstly* the retiring members were non-political, and being specialists

quite capable of translating Government's political objectives into economic programmes. And *secondly*, the Commission would have done all the exercises leading to the finalising of the Annual Plan for 1990-91, the first year of the Eighth Five Year Plan. Not only a new Planning Commission has been constituted, there are also plans to give the Commission a constitutional status. Even more important is the directive given to the Commission to prepare the VIII plan to fall in line with the objectives set in the National Front manifesto.

Unlike the earlier Planning Commission which deemed themselves nothing more than technical bodies, Ramakrishna Hegde the present deputy chairman thinks of it as a "think tank and an advisory body", rather than as a mere "vehicle for clearing projects and according financial sanctions". He has complained that the previous government had placed too much emphasis on "numbers, target and growth rate". In making this criticism he was, as our perceptive readers will no doubt vouchsafe, one with Rajiv Gandhi himself. Everyone remembers Rajiv Gandhi's famous statement: "I ask Manmohan Singh (the then deputy chairman of the Planning Commission) to tell me something about the Plan, and he shows me a table". Hedge's Commission has so far stubbornly refused to give any sort of table to anybody, assuring everyone that it "would attempt at reorientation of the plan process with accent on human beings and total social transformation". Even the stoic Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, must have been exasperated, and hence remarked that he would like a clear "quantification of concepts".

Where Planning Failed

We can take legitimate pride in having designed our own satellite, at the third largest scientific and technical pool of manpower, at being the 11th most industrially advanced nation. But our pre-occupation must be with the illiterate, with the hungry, with providing drinking water to the 1,50,000 villages that do not have water. It is in these areas that planning has been a failure. And we have to bridge this gap. It is not a matter of pride that 11 crore children in our country have to work for a living. Planning has to be reoriented to reach these areas, where we have failed.

Ramakrishna Hegde
Business India

A Public Relations Exercise

The tragi-comedy of the hasty attempt to restructure the Planning Commission is that its real work is bound to suffer notwithstanding its glittering composition. Planning is very much of a continuous process and a hard-headed concrete (not merely a conceptual) exercise. There must be a factual base of growth rates, production targets, estimation of resources, internal consistency, sectoral allocation, and so on. That is the real stuff of planning. All the eloquent talk about decentralization of decision-making, social transformation and people's participation can only mean a public relations exercise to hide the reality; that is, it cannot totally change the VIII Five Year Plan as promised in the National Front manifesto. Hegde himself, in a candid moment, confessed that the "existing planning process is right, but it is the implementation that is wrong". This shows up also in the Commission's work here and there: A report in the *Economic Times*, says that "despite their best efforts the planners have not been able to change the complexion of the annual Plan much," and we are told that, according to official sources, no radical changes in the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and Nehru Rozgar Yojana are to be made.

Reading the various news items about the thinking of the Government and the Planning Commission, one can be full of optimistic expectancy. It is all so attractively worded, and the members seem to be so full of confidence, that one gets the impression that Utopia is just round the corner. For example, we are informed that the Planning Commission has a five point strategy for the VIII Five Year Plan, namely emphasis on agriculture, employment generation, infra-structure, minimum needs programme, and local participation. Who would deny their importance? But the question is how are these five objectives going to be translated into a coherent plan of action that the government can implement? As yet, there is no answer, but the sort of problems — minor and major — that plague the country are so numerous and complicated that one wonders whether such a Plan can ever be drawn, let alone successfully implemented. Besides, despite all the hoopla, the Planning Commission has few options. Firstly, there is a serious resources crunch with heavy

reliance on deficit financing; secondly, there are many commitments that have already been made by the previous governments; and thirdly there are many promises, like allocating 50% of resources for the rural sector, debt waiver upto Rs. 10,000, provision in the Constitution of the Right to Work, etc. made in the National Front manifesto that need to be incorporated into the VIII Plan.

The Real Problems

What needs to be realised, then, and it has been stressed so often, — as in last year's Economic Survey, and the latest report of the Economic Advisory Council, — is that the Indian economy has three intricately inter-related macroeconomic problems. A high level of inflation with the consumer price index reaching two digits, a horrendous balance of payments problem, and a colossal budget deficit that might exceed Rs. 12,000 crores this year. Try to cure one of these, — and even there the options are limited — it will almost certainly exacerbate the other two problems. Long term secular forces intrinsic to our socio-economic structure, international economic developments and ill-conceived policies of successive governments since independence, have all contributed to this state of affairs. Thus the Indian economy has been thrust into a path that it cannot deviate from without harmful consequences; and if it stays on its course, it cannot avoid the inevitable worsening of the existing problems.

Tough Decisions Needed

It is not easy to solve problems created over a long period within the constraints of a short period. But a start must be made somewhere. To solve all and efficiently, very careful thinking is needed about priorities and a high degree of efficiency in carrying out the decisions. Tough decisions have to be made without worrying about the electoral consequences. No decision, be it minor or major, will be easy, and every one of them will involve painful trade-offs. Take such a thing as edible oil imports. Should we import or not? Imports would mean a reduction in the inflationary pressures as well as a reduction in the hardship of the poor. There is some political advantage in this as well. But decision to import will

also mean a drain in our scarce foreign exchange reserves. On the other hand, if edible oil is not imported and procurement prices hiked, it might lead, in the long run, to self sufficiency in edible oil, besides endearing the National Front government to the Gujarat groundnut farmers. The choice of policy is not an easy one here.

Similarly, should the government go ahead with the farm loan waiver which will not only cost the exchequer anything from Rs. 14,000 to Rs. 20,000 crores but also create a psychological climate of opinion that would favour more and more such demands in the future? But to renege on such a sensitive commitment will mean losing popularity among the farmers. Even if the farm loan waiver is accepted in principle, further choices will have to be made with no clear cut advantages to all. As an official of the co-operative banks federation said: "If the waiver is limited to co-operatives and commercial banks, 60% of small farmers will not be benefited ... If such a waiver is extended to private loans, there is scope for foul play. This will have greater repercussions on the functioning of the co-operatives and the banking system in the country".

In the final analysis, it is both difficult and unwise to pronounce any firm judgement on the way the National Front government has conducted the economic affairs during the last three months. We have seen that, in order to solve the myriads of economic problems faced by India, the Government will need sensible ideas, a capacity for tough decision-making, a keen sense of timing and also a measure of good luck. It is bound to be a slow and painful process, besides being a thankless job as well. As yet it is too early to say whether the new Government is proceeding in the right direction or not. So far, however, apart from a few totally non-controversial but not very significant decisions, nothing spectacular or concrete seems to have been achieved. Hard decisions are being postponed or left to committees to ponder over. This can buy Mr V.P. Singh and his colleagues some time, but human time must always have a stop.

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Kashmir — The Case for Self-Determination

Minoo Masani

The state of Jammu and Kashmir was never part of India. Lord Mountbatten gave the Maharajah of Kashmir the option to join either India or Pakistan. Led by Sheikh Abdullah the Muslims of Kashmir persuaded the Maharajah to accede to India on the strength of a solemn promise that the accession would be subject to a plebiscite.

A lady asked me the other day why Mr. Gorbachov would not agree to the Lithuanian demand for independence from the Soviet Union. I countered with the question: "Do you believe that Kashmir belongs to India?" "Yes, of course" she said. "That is why?" I said. "There are too many Russians who wrongly believe that Lithuania belongs to the Soviet Union, just as you believe that Kashmir belongs to India; so poor Mr. Gorbachov does not feel free to accede openly to the Lithuanian demand." Unfortunately, the good lady's answer could have been by nine out of ten Indians. Let me make it clear at the outset that while my sympathies are with those who want the Valley to be independent, I condemn the methods of violence and terror to which some of them are resorting.

I am delighted to read two recent articles in the Press, one by Ajit Bhattacharjee, entitled "The last chance in Kashmir" which appeared in *The Statesman* on 7th January and the other by Pran Chopra, which appeared in *The Independent* of 15th January under the title "We have failed Kashmir". From what these experienced and prominent members of the press whose patriotism cannot be doubted have said, the responsibility for the current situation lies not with the people of Kashmir but with the Government of India in Delhi. Even more encouraging have been the statesmanlike words of Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann on 26th January asking the Governor of Kashmir to lift the siege by the Indian Army. He went on to say: "The Indian Government is bound by Article 51 of the Constitution to its international commitments. Under the United Nations charter the state of Jammu and Kashmir is disputed territory". He further observed: "The people of Kashmir

have their rights and I support every democratic action. Plebiscite is not a bad word. The right of vote must prevail over the right of the bullet." Along with me, there are thus at least three Musketiers in the field! Having been a student of this matter since Independence, I heartily concur with these gentlemen even though it is not fashionable to say so.

Conditional Accession

The state of Jammu & Kashmir was never part of India. Let me repeat that at the time of the transfer of power by the British, Kashmir was not part of India. Lord Mountbatten gave the Maharajah of Kashmir the option, if he so desired, to join either India or Pakistan. The Maharajah, better known as Mr. A, dithered but, led by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the Muslims of Kashmir persuaded the Maharajah to accede to India on the strength of a solemn promise given by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, that the accession would be subject to a plebiscite which would enable the people of Kashmir to decide their destiny. India later forgot all about the plebiscite and to this day the people of Kashmir valley have been denied the right of self determination.

Nehru's Regret

The later story is a sad one. Nehru joined in a conspiracy to make a *coup d'état* against the Kashmir Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah, arrested him and put the corrupt Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad as a puppet in his place. Abdullah then remained under trial on false charges for about twelve years because the case against him could not be proved. In January 1963 my friend, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was then minister without portfolio in Nehru's Government told me that Jawaharlal Nehru

wanted Abdullah to be released. "*Maine Sheikh saheb ko bade anyay kiya hai*" (I have done great wrong to Sheikh Abdullah). So the Sheikh was duly released and sent by Nehru to Pakistan to negotiate a settlement of the Kashmir problem with President Ayub Khan. He was to bring Ayub Khan to Delhi to sign an agreement if he agreed to do so. Sheikh Saheb telephoned Nehru from Pakistan to say that Ayub was willing for a settlement and so the day of his visit to Delhi was fixed for June 20. Tragically, Nehru died in May and so Kashmir remains a problem to plague both countries.

JP's Mission to Pakistan

When Lal Bahadur Shastri was Prime Minister, he sent my friend Jayaprakash to Pakistan to find if the settlement of Kashmir was possible. When Jayaprakash returned to Delhi, he saw me before he saw Lal Bahadur and he told me what Ayub had suggested. Jayaprakash told me that Ayub suggested that Ladakh and Jammu should join India but that the Kashmir Valley should be independent and, as in the Austrian Treaty between the Soviet Union and the USA, India and Pakistan should guarantee the independence and integrity of the Valley. When Jayaprakash returned from Lal Bahadur Shastri later that evening, he was depressed because the Indian Prime Minister had failed to respond. "*Yeh chees badi acchi hai, lekin Parliament aur meri party nahin manegi*" (This is very good but it will not be acceptable to parliament and my party.) How sad. I commented to Jayaprakash that perhaps he and I were the only Indians who could see our own country's imperialism along with that of other countries.

Rajaji, always the statesman and a

realist, wrote in *Swarajya* as far back as September 25, 1965; "... it would be as foolish as any foolish thing a nation can do, if we proceed on the assumption that we can hold any people down by sheer force and without making it absolutely manifest to world nations that we have the consent of the people concerned by imposing any administration on them. Like injustice, the political decision concerning Kashmir, or any part of it, should ... be on the basis of self determination ..."

It is all very well to send Mr. Jagmohan as Governor and start shooting. The first result of this repression is a

revolt of the Kashmir police who have alleged atrocities committed by the Indian armed forces on the people of Kashmir. So, now we have only an army of occupation to rely on. It is possible by brutal terrorism to suppress a national urge for freedom, but for how long? Don't recent events in Eastern Europe have a lesson for our government?

Neutralising the Valley

Many of my friends tell me that if a plebiscite was held, the people of Kashmir would vote to join Pakistan. I do not agree. They would vote for independence. But why not try this out by ask-

ing Prime Minister - Benazir Bhutto whether she would join India by neutralizing the Valley on the lines suggested by President Ayub Khan? If she declines, the blame will be on Pakistan. If she agrees, let us go ahead and do the right thing.

This advice may not be palatable to many, but sooner or later, it will have to be carried out, so why waste time? Why not turn to the path of conciliation right now? For one thing, we can stop spending the large amounts of money that we rather stupidly spend on Kashmir without getting any gratitude.

Doordarshan's Racist Bias

Making Doordarshan an autonomous body on the model of the BBC will not serve any purpose. Indeed we need more than one Doordarshan set-up for this vast country with its many regions, languages and cultures. We must have three or four autonomous broadcasting bodies for the nation. I must say that each region has a right to its culture. Each region has a right to enrich its own traditions and to enrich itself. Why should every Indian be compelled to become part of the captive audience for Hindi

programmes?

I hear voices of protest: I will be accused of taking the stand of separatism. But in my view northerners forget they too are guilty of separatism in wanting the rest of the country to listen to, or view, only programmes in Hindi. I ask them whether they will tolerate a "national programme" that is predominantly Tamil or Telugu. Will they not rise in protest?

No, we cannot impose unity by making everything Hindi and trying to north Indianise everything. Yes, this is what

Doordarshan has been trying to do all these years. I am for unity more than those who run Doordarshan but I think unity can be promoted only by those who are truly "national" in outlook, people who do not mistake northern regionalism for nationalism.

For me freeing Doordarshan from the northern and racist bias is more important than even its autonomous functioning.

RGK
The Week

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The Post-Election Scenario

Nagindas H. Sangahvi

It is an irony of the political situation today that these two ideologically natural allies — the Janata Dal and the Congress — stand on opposite sides of the fence while each hobnobs with elements uncomfortable to itself.

1967 marked a watershed in Indian politics. Since then, election results in India have always been dominated by momentous issues or by charismatic leaders. The election of 1984 to the Lok Sabha registered one such extreme swing though real issues were non-existent and charisma lacking. This election, held under unprecedented emotional stress (the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi) distorted, and partly camouflaged the ground realities of public experience and opinion. Ever since, election results have charted a course tangentially away from charisma and issues. All subsequent elections to the state assemblies witnessed political realities re-asserting themselves and electoral support slowly but inexorably ebbing away from the Congress Party, reaching its culmination in the 1989-90 elections to the Lok Sabha and to several state assemblies.

A Lurch rather than a Swing

These elections also registered a partial swing or a wave, but of a different sort — not a full swing but a lurch, because the other end of the swing is not visible. Even though the leadership on both sides were equally lack-lustre and tarnished more or less with identical brushes and the issues raised were trivial and transitory in nature, the swing away from the dominant Party was decisive, and indeed dangerously so. The trend was real and deep-seated and continued to manifest itself at state level elections held three months after the Lok Sabha election.

The state assemblies which produced variegated patterns of national and regional governments seem to have taken India to a grand climacteric which would leave deep scars on the polity and decide its shape for many years to come. What is at stake is not the fortune of this or that political party; the very survival of the entire system hangs by a slender thread.

The swing away from the Congress is quite conspicuous, but the swing to is not at all clear. For the first time, the voters have refused to choose a single party to form the national government. Instead they have charged the different political parties with the onerous task of structuring a ministry.

A Hung Parliament?

The seats in the Lok Sabha are so distributed that neither the Congress alliance (Cong + AIADMK = 205) nor the non-Congress Front (Janata Dal + BJP + CPM = 260) can command a majority. The widely used term "hung parliament" borrowed from judicial practice is not quite appropriate. Juries are expected to be unanimous in their decisions but are often forced to 'hang' their verdicts. Political assemblies on the other hand work by majorities which may either be achieved or contrived. Therefore by its very nature, a parliament can never be 'hung'.

The sharp fall in the votes polled by the Congress Party in the north was partially compensated by its unexpected victories in the four southern states accounting for 104 out of its tally of 194 seats in the Lok Sabha. Rejected by the more populous states in North India, and shunned by all other political parties, the Congress had no option but to sit in the opposition. The minority National Front (NF) government, totally dependent on its allies, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) is in an unstable equilibrium and its continuation in power has been a matter of anxious speculation right from the day it assumed office.

As in physics, all such unstable equilibrium can survive only by keeping itself in perpetual motion. This is exactly what the NF ministry under its soft-spoken but determined leader V.P. Singh, has been doing. Without bothering overmuch about the susceptibilities

of its dominant ally, the BJP, the Prime Minister is leaning more and more to the 'left of centre' both in approach and action. The BJP's call for scrapping Article 370, the demand for the enactment of the Common Civil Code, the construction of a Ram Mandir on the Babri Masjid site have been quietly but firmly put into cold storage. The BJP has been responding with appropriate noises of outraged modesty, but is careful not to upset the delicately balanced apple-cart.

It seems that all non-Congress parties have learnt their lessons rather well from the 1979 experience and are unwilling to wander into the sterile world of opposition politics. The discussions, the debates, arguments and even the public expression of dissent amongst the partners and the supporters of the coalition have so far not been pushed to a point of no return.

The President's Loyal Opposition

In fact, an atmosphere of amity and goodwill is being maintained not only amongst the allied parties, but also between the government and the opposition Congress Party. In contrast to what had happened in 1977, the shifting of power has not been accompanied by any vendetta or witch-hunting. The Congress Party leaders are being accorded all the courtesies and facilities which are legitimately due to the opposition. On every conceivable occasion, the Opposition is being associated with the decision-making process in authoritative councils and is being allowed to say its piece. To borrow a phrase from England, we have now, for the first time, something like the President's Loyal Opposition. This is quite in the fitness of things because, after all, the Congress Party is still the single largest party in the House and in its approach and programme, the Congress stands closest to the ruling combination. The V.P.

Singh ministry will feel more at home with Congress attitudes to issues than with either the BJP or the CPM. It is an irony of the political situation today that these two ideologically natural allies — the Janata Dal and the Congress — stand on opposite sides of the fence, while each hobnobs with elements uncomfortable to itself. Those who wishfully write off the Congress ought to keep in view the fact that the Congress Party still has quite an impressive electoral performance to its credit, not only in numbers but even in garnering electoral support. The percentage of votes secured by the Congress Party in the Lok Sabha election (39.33%) exceeds the total electoral support of the Janata Dal (17.73%) and its allies the BJP (11.56%) and the CPI-M (6.32%). In view of the imbalances inherent in our defective election system, it would be extremely risky to adjudge the emerging landscape on the basis of seats alone.

the BJP and the Shiv Sena — could win only 547 seats out of 1649 and of these more than 300 are from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The BJP undoubtedly has emerged as a force, but only in the areas where there is hardly any trace of well-entrenched *Hindutva* militancy. The BJP is powerful in areas which are economically, socially and educationally backward. It would be of interest to note that while Hindu obscurantists succeeded in whipping up communal passions about the Babri Masjid affair in Bihar, that state decisively turned its back on the BJP both in the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections. It cannot be overemphasized that in the elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies Indian voters in the South as well as in the North have declared themselves overwhelmingly in favour of non-communal parties which swear by secularism. What is significant is that the CPI and the CPM have not benefitted from the decline of the Congress, as

juxtaposed in it. Such a marriage of convenience involving persons like V.P. Singh, Devi Lal and Chandrasekhar may not exactly be a good augury for prolonged marital bliss. Some of the partners of the NF — the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) — have received a severe battering in the elections and even the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) is not in too good a shape to face popular scrutiny. It will take all the ingenuity and all the patience which V.P. Singh can command to hold the coalition together. A point may be reached, probably sooner than expected, when he may throw in the towel and in sheer disgust, quit the scene.

V.P. Singh has displayed an off-repeated penchant to giving up the fight in moments of stress. If he falls a victim to this tendency and steps out of the scene, the National Front government may not survive because, as of now, V.P. Singh appears to be the only cementing force of the Front. Alternately, any attempt by an exasperated Devi Lal or a frustrated Chandrasekhar to replace him would write *finis*, for many years to come, to the experiment of providing an alternative to the Congress. It is only the V.P. style of functioning that is likely to spare this second non-Congress government from the humiliating experience of a collapse.

The Congress-I

Much of what happens to the NF is dependent on the happenings within the Congress Party and as of today, such developments can be anybody's guess. Long years in power has greatly sapped the energy of the Congress Party. It has grown bloated and indolent, slow to react and awkward in adapting itself to changing environments. Habituated to the comforts and adulations which power brings in its train, the party can be held together only by patronage and pelf. Impending or actual loss of power has already led to dissensions and splits within the party as in 1966, 1969, 1977, 1978. This may well happen again. The party most probably may not split again if there is a rallying point to unite its members. Handling dissent within the party is the crucial thing. Just as the

The following table reveals some very interesting features:

	1984 Seats	% of vote	1989 Seats	% of vote
Congress	397	49.06	194	39.33
Janata Dal	13	13.04	142	17.73
BJP	2	7.73	86	11.56
CPI	6	2.64	11	2.61
CPM	21	5.96	32	6.32
TDP	28	4.41	2	3.32
AIADMK	12	1.72	11	1.51
Others	19		34	
Independents.	5	8.42	12	5.61
	503		524	

The *Hindutva* Psychosis

Much is said about the emergence of militant *Hindutva* which may disfigure post-election politics in India by stoking communal passions. But this anxiety is based more on noise pollution than on realities. We are rather disturbed by the strident assertions of a few obscurantist campaigners. But there is hardly any concrete basis for such a psychosis. The BJP secured only 12% of the votes and 14% of the seats in the ninth Lok Sabha. Of these, nearly half are from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Both these states lie outside the communal-riots zone. The BJP has been decisively rejected in areas notorious for communal violence viz. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Even in the state assemblies elections (1990) *Hindutva* parties —

much as the rightist groups have. Both these communist parties have merely reverted to the positions they held in the seventh Lok Sabha where the CPI had 11 seats and the CPM had 36.

The National Front

The post-election scenario will continue to evolve around two separate but mutually interdependent events: (a) the stability and the efficiency of the National Front ministry headed by V.P. Singh and (b) the developments within the Congress Party. The National Front is an edifice structured after prolonged and painful negotiations and pulling it down may take even less time and effort. A number of personalities whose angularities and ambitions make them incompatibles, have been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

New Political Equations in Maharashtra

Avikay

The two elections (to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies) should make the idea of coalition governments less frightening.

The February 1990 Assembly elections underlined the Lok Sabha election verdict that the Congress(I) had lost its credibility and was no longer considered a pre-requisite for the country's stability. The bogey of 'Congress or chaos' has been laid to rest. The self-appointed conscience-keepers of the country who turned a blind eye to the government's misdeeds and passionately argued that the country had to be protected from the forces of destabilisation have perhaps realised by now that warnings of a 'foreign hand' or 'forces of destabilisation' should not be used as excuses to refuse to face the truth. If nothing else, the two elections should make the idea of coalition governments less frightening. The point is that opposition parties can be as patriotic as the ruling party and it is despicable to dub opposition leaders as agents of foreign powers, as was done when V.P. Singh broke away from the Congress(I).

While the Janata Dal has replaced the Congress(I) as the party of the centre (although both would like to be placed left of centre), the Janata Dal's ideology makes it indistinguishable from the Congress(I) minus Rajiv Gandhi. The gains made by the Janata Dal and the losses suffered by the Congress(I) are really immaterial in ideological terms.

BJP's Gains

The real advance has been made by the BJP. It has forged ahead not only on the negative plank of anti-Congressism but also on the policy of majorityism. Its calculated decision to concentrate on the Hindu community as its constituency by risking the stigma of being called 'communal' has paid handsome dividends. Even in Maharashtra, although there is euphoric talk of the Congress(I) having defeated communalism, rhetoric does not hide the truth. True, the Shiv Sena-BJP combine talked of flying

the saffron flag from the Vidhan Bhavan and failed to do so; but their election bravado has to be recognised for what it was. The fact that the Congress(I) strength in the Assembly came down from 210 to 141 and the saffron flag marched from 17 to 94 constituencies — although not reaching the dome of the Vidhan Sabha — can hardly be dismissed lightly.

The Shiv Sena's thunder rarely leads to rains but its reverberations are disturbing. Sena Pramukh Balasaheb Thackeray's strength lies in his ability to give expression to the common man's gut feelings. The absence of intellectual underpinnings to his postulations does not make his ideas less challenging. His appeal is simple and direct, may be even crude, the 'Hindutva' slogan blatantly espoused by Thackeray and more cleverly used by the BJP has not exhausted itself. It is perhaps only the beginning of the awakening of the majority community to what it can achieve through the ballot box.

The Ram Janmabhoomi (RJB) dispute was not an accident. The RJB issue is a cleverly calibrated time-bomb. Many such issues like Kashmir, Punjab, Common Civil Code etc. could be similarly fine-tuned to the BJP's advantage. Some secular parties' shrieks of anger and knee-jerk responses to the growth of the BJP do not go beyond verbal protestations and the spouting of platitudes. The only answer that these parties can offer to the majority community's increasing perception of being taken for granted is to make sure that they do not encourage minority communalism while opposing majority communalism. Such actions have been disastrously counter-productive. The Congress(I) laid bare its secular credentials when it did a somersault in the

Shah Bano case by passing the Muslim Women Act; such double think of the secular parties provides fodder for majority communalism. It is doubtful if any of the secular parties is equipped to halt the communal juggernaut.

The Pawar Factor

The Congress(I) has retained power in Maharashtra through fortuitous circumstances. Without Sharad Pawar, the party would have disintegrated but Pawar's own position in the party was very uncertain a few months back. Sharad Pawar was always viewed with suspicion by the coterie around Rajiv Gandhi. Messrs. Antulay, Tirpude and Nilangekar covertly and not so covertly supported by S.B. Chavan, lost no opportunity in poisoning Rajiv Gandhi's mind with the thought that Pawar would betray him at the first available opportunity. If Rajiv Gandhi had returned to power, it is doubtful if Pawar would have been allowed to remain in control in Maharashtra. The Congress(I) debacle in the Lok Sabha election closed most options for Rajiv Gandhi and he had to depend on Pawar to fight the Assembly election in Maharashtra. The howls of protest from Tirpude and *sub rosa* manoeuvres by Tirpude's erstwhile comrades-in-arms failed to disturb Pawar from his perch. The fact that Pawar has won the state assembly elections almost on his own, despite a strong challenge from the BJP-Shiv Sena combine drives home the point that there is no other leader of equal political stature in Maharashtra. Notwithstanding the fact that Pawar barely managed to pip the opposition to the winning post, he has emerged as a major force in the depleted Congress party. It would not be surprising to see him play a more active role on the all India level in the days to come.

*“WE MUST REBUILD
OUR LOST ARISTOCRACY,
NOT OF BIRTH OR NOT OF
WEALTH OR EVEN OF
INTELLECT, BUT OF
CHARACTER”*

Rajaji



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The Power of Words

Vaclav Havel

Words are a mysterious, ambiguous, ambivalent and perfidious phenomenon. They are capable of being rays of light in a realm of darkness, as Belinsky once described Ostrovsky's "storm". They are equally capable of being lethal arrows. Worst of all, at times they can be the one and the other. And even both at once!

In the beginning was the Word; so it states on the first page of one of the most important books known to us. What is meant in that book is that the Word of God is the source of all creation. But surely the same can be said, figuratively speaking, of every human action? And indeed, words could be said to be the very source of our being, and in fact the very substance of the cosmic life-form we call Man. Spirit, the human soul, our self-awareness, our ability to generalise and think in concepts, to perceive the world as the world (and not just as our locality), and lastly, our capacity of knowing that we will die — and living in spite of that knowledge: surely all these are mediated or actually created by words?

But that is not all: thanks to the miracle of speech, we know probably better than the other animals that we actually know very little; in other words, we are conscious of the existence of mystery. Confronted by mystery — and at the same time aware of the virtually constitutive power of words for us — we have tried incessantly to address that which is concealed by mystery, and influence it with our words. As believers, we pray to God; as magicians, we summon up or ward off spirits, using words to intervene in natural or human events.

As subjects of modern civilisation — whether believers or not — we use words to construct scientific theories

and political ideologies with which to tackle or redirect the mysterious course of history — successfully or otherwise.

In other words, whether we are aware of it or not, and however we explain it, one thing would seem to be obvious: we have always believed in the power of words to change history — and rightly so, in a sense.

Why "rightly so"?

Power to Change History

Is the human word truly powerful enough to change the world and influence history? And even if there were epochs when it did exert such a power, does it still do so today?

You live in a country with considerable freedom of speech.* All citizens without exception can avail of that freedom for whatever purpose, and no one is obliged to pay the least attention, let alone worry their heads over it. You might therefore easily get the impression that I overrate the importance of words.

I live in a country which, 21 years ago, was shaken by a text from the pen of my friend Ludvik Vaculik. And as if to confirm my conclusions about the power of words, he entitled his statement: "Two thousand words". Among other things, that manifesto served as one of the pretexts for the invasion of our country one night by five foreign armies. And it is by no means fortuitous



that as I write these words, the present regime in my country is being shaken by a single page of text entitled, again, as if to illustrate what I am saying: "A few words".

Yes, I really do inhabit a system in which words are capable of shaking the entire structure of government, where words can prove mightier than 10 military divisions, where Solzhenitsyn's words of truth were regarded as something so dangerous that it was necessary to bundle their author into an aeroplane and transport him. Yes, in the part of the world I inhabit the word *Solidarity* was capable of shaking an entire power bloc.

But I do not wish to demonstrate this mysterious power of words by pointing exclusively to those countries where a few words can count for more than a whole train of dynamite somewhere

This is the text of Mr. Vaclav Havel's speech of acceptance for a peace prize he was awarded in the Federal Republic of Germany in October 1989. The speech was delivered *in absentia* as Mr. Havel was in a Czechoslovak prison under the then communist regime. Today, Mr. Vaclav Havel is the President of a free Czechoslovakia.

else.

The Word as Arrow

We live in a world in which it is possible for a citizen of Great Britain to find himself the target of a lethal arrow aimed — publicly and unashamedly — by a powerful individual in another country merely because he had written a particular book. That powerful man apparently did it in the name of millions of his fellow-believers. And, moreover, it is possible in this world that some portion of those millions — hopefully only a small portion — will identify with the death sentence pronounced.

What is going on? What does it mean? Is it no more than an icy blast of fanaticism, oddly finding a new lease of life in the era of the various Helsinki agreements, and oddly resuscitated by the rather crippling results of the rather crippling Europeanisation of worlds which initially had no interest in the import of foreign civilisation, and on account of that ambivalent commodity ended up saddled with astronomical debts they can never repay?

It certainly is all that.

But it is something else as well. It is a symbol.

It is a symbol of the mysteriously ambiguous power of words.

In truth, the power of words is neither unambiguous nor clearcut. It is not merely the liberating power of Lech Walesa's words or the alarm-raising power of Andrei Sakharov's. It is not just the power of Salman Rushdie's — clearly misconstrued — book.

The point is that alongside Rushdie's words we have Khomeini's. Words that electrify society with their freedom and truthfulness are matched by words that mesmerise, deceive, inflame, madden, beguile, words that are harmful — lethal, even. The word as arrow.

I don't think I need go to any lengths to explain to you Germans, of all people, the diabolic power of certain words: you have fairly recent first-hand experiences of what indescribable historical horrors can flow, in certain political and social constellations, from the hypnotically spell-binding, though totally demented words of a single, average, *petit bourgeois*. Admittedly, I fail to understand what it was that transfixed, a large number of your fathers and mothers, but at the same time I realise that it must have been something extremely

compelling as well as extremely insidious.

The point I am trying to make is that words are a mysterious, ambiguous, ambivalent and perfidious phenomenon. They are capable of being rays of light in a realm of darkness, as Belinsky once described Ostrovsky's "Storm". They are equally capable of being lethal arrows. Worst of all, at times they can be the one and the other. And even both at once!

Lenin, Marx and Christ

The words of Lenin — what were they? Liberating or, on the contrary, deceptive, dangerous and ultimately enslaving? This is still a bone of contention among *aficionados* of the history of communism, and the controversy is likely to go on raging for a good while yet. My own impression of those words is that they were invariably frenzied.

And what about Marx's words? Did they serve to illuminate an entire hidden plane of social mechanisms, or were they just the inconspicuous germ of all the subsequent appalling Gulags. I don't know: most likely they are both at once.

And what about Freud's words? Did they disclose the secret cosmos of the human soul, or were they no more than the fountainhead of the illusion now numbing half of America that it is possible to shed one's torments and guilt by having them interpreted away by some well-paid specialist? But I'd go further and ask an even more provocative question: what was the true nature of Christ's words? Were they the beginning of an era of salvation and one of the most powerful cultural impulses in the history of the world — or were they the spiritual source of the crusades, inquisitions, the cultural extermination of the Americas, and later, the entire expansion of the white race that was fraught with so many contradictions and had so many tragic consequences, including the fact that most of the human world has been consigned to that wretched category known as the "third" world?

I still tend to think that His words belonged to the former category, but at the same time I cannot ignore the umpteen books that demonstrate that even in its purest and earliest form there was something unconsciously encoded in Christianity which, when combined with

a thousand and one other circumstances, including the relative permanence of human nature, could in some way pave the way spiritually even for the sort of horrors I mentioned.

Words can have histories too.

'Socialism'

There was a time, for instance, when, for whole generations of the downtrodden and oppressed, the word socialism was a mesmerising synonym for a just world, a time when, for the ideal expressed in that word, people were capable of sacrificing years and years of their lives, and even their very lives themselves. I don't know about your country, but in mine, that particular word — socialism — was transformed long ago into just an ordinary truncheon used by certain cynical, *parvenu* bureaucrats to bludgeon their liberal-minded fellow-citizens from morning till night, labelling them "enemies of socialism" and "anti-socialist forces". It's a fact: in my country, for ages now, the word socialism has been no more than an incantation that should be avoided if one does not wish to appear suspect.

I was recently at an entirely spontaneous demonstration, not dissident-organised, protesting at the sell-off of one of the most beautiful parts of Prague to some Australian millionaires. When one of the speakers there, loudly decrying the project, sought to bolster his appeal to the government by declaring that he was fighting for his home in the name of socialism, the crowd started to laugh. Not because they had anything against a just social order, but quite simply because they heard a word which has been incanted for years and years in every possible and impossible context by a regime that only knows how to manipulate and humiliate people.

What a weird fate can befall certain words! At one moment in history, courageous, liberal-minded people can be thrown into prison because a particular word means something to them, and at another moment, people of the selfsame variety can be thrown into prison because that word has ceased to mean anything to them, because it changed from a symbol of a better world into the mumbo-jumbo of a doltish dictator.

The selfsame word can at one moment radiate great hopes; at another it can emit lethal rays. The selfsame

word can be true at one moment and false the next, at one moment illuminating, at another, deceptive. The selfsame word can at one time be the cornerstone of peace, while at another, machine-gun fire resounds in every syllable.

Gorbachev wants to save socialism through the market economy and free speech, while Li Peng protects socialism by massacring students, and Ceausescu by bulldozing his people. What does that word actually mean on the lips of the one and the lips of the other two? What is this mysterious thing that is being rescued in such disparate ways?

And what about the French Revolution and that splendid Declaration that accompanied it? That Declaration was signed by a gentleman who was later among the first to be executed in the name of that superbly humane text. And hundreds and possibly thousands followed him. *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* — what superb words! And how terrifying their meaning can be. Freedom: the shirt unbuttoned before execution. Equality: the constant speed of the guillotine's fall on different necks. Fraternity: some dubious paradise ruled by a Supreme Being!

'Perestroika' and 'Peace'

The world now re-echoes to the wonderfully promising word *perestroika*. We all believe that it harbours hopes for Europe and the whole world.

I am bound to admit, though, that I sometimes shudder at the thought that this word might become just one more incantation, and in the end turn into yet another truncheon for someone to belabour us with. It is not my own country I am thinking of: when our rulers utter that word it means about the same as the word "our monarch" when uttered by the Good Soldier Svejk. No, what I have in mind is the fact that even the intrepid man who now sits in the Kremlin occasionally, and possibly only from despair, accuses striking workers, rebellious nations or national minorities, or holders of rather too unusual minority opinions, of "jeopardising *perestroika*".

I can understand his feelings. It is terribly difficult to fulfil the enormous task he has undertaken. It all hangs by the finest of threads and almost anything could break that thread. Then we would all fall into the abyss. But even so I can-

not help wondering whether all this "new thinking" does not contain some echoes of former stereotyped thinking and the *ancien regime's* verbal rituals? Isn't the word *perestroika* starting to resemble the word "socialism", particularly on the odd occasion when it is discreetly hurled at the very people who, for so long, were unjustly lambasted with the word "socialism"? I'm finally getting round to that beautiful word "peace". For 40 years now I have read it on the front of every building and in every shop window in my country. For 40 years, an allergy to that beautiful word has been engendered in me as in every one of my fellow-citizens because I know what the word has meant here for the past 40 years: ever mightier armies ostensibly to defend peace.

In spite of that lengthy process of systematically divesting the word "peace" of all meaning — worse than that, investing it instead with quite the opposite meaning to that given in the dictionary — a number of Don Quixotes in Charter 77 and several of their younger colleagues in the Independent Peace Association have managed to rehabilitate the word and restore its original meaning.

Naturally, though, they had to pay a price for their "semantic *perestroika*" — ie, standing the word "peace" back on its feet again: almost all the youngsters who fronted the Independent Peace Association were obliged to spend a few months inside for their pains. It was worth it, though. One important word has been rescued from total debasement. And it is not just a question of saving a word, as I have been trying to explain throughout my speech. Something far more important is saved.

The point is that all important events in the real world — whether admirable or monstrous — are always spear-headed in the realm of words.

Distrust Words

As I've already stated, my intention here today is not to convey to you the experience of one who has learnt that words still count for something when you can still go to prison for them. My intention was to share with you another lesson that we in this corner of the world have learnt about the importance of words. I am convinced it is a lesson which has universal application: name-

Gorbachev wants to save socialism through the market economy and free speech, while Li Peng protects socialism by massacring students, and Ceausescu by bulldozing his people. What does that word actually mean on the lips of the one and the lips of the other two? What is this mysterious thing that is being rescued in such disparate ways?

ly, that it always pays to be suspicious of words and to be wary of them, and that we can never be too careful in this respect.

There can be no doubt that distrust of words is less harmful than unwarranted trust in them.

Besides, to distrust words, and indict them for the horrors that might slumber unobtrusively within them — isn't this, after all, the true vocation of the intellectual? I recall that Andre Glucksmann, once spoke in Prague about the need for intellectuals to emulate Cassandra: to listen carefully to the words of the powerful, to be watchful of them, to forewarn of their danger, and to proclaim their dire implications or the evil they might invoke.

Thanks to this regime, we have developed a profound distrust of all generalisations, ideological platitudes, clichés, slogans, intellectual stereotypes and insidious appeals to various levels of our emotions, from the baser to the loftier. As a result, we are now largely immune to all hypnotic enticements, even of the traditionally persuasive national or nationalistic variety.

The stifling pall of hollow words that has smothered us for so long has cultivated in us such a deep mistrust of the world of deceptive words that we are now better equipped than ever before to see the human world as it really is: a complex community of thousands of millions of unique, individual human beings, in whom hundreds of beautiful characteristics are matched by hundreds of faults and negative tendencies.

They must never be lumped together into homogeneous masses beneath a welter of hollow clichés and sterile words and then *en bloc* — as “classes”, “nations”, or “political forces” — extolled or denounced, loved or hated, maligned or glorified.

This is just one small example of the good that can come from treating words with caution.

In the beginning of everything is the word.

It is a miracle to which we owe the fact that we are human.

But at the same time it is a pitfall and a test, a snare and a trial.

The selfsame word can be humble at one moment and arrogant the next. And a humble word can be transformed quite easily and imperceptibly into an arrogant one, whereas it is a very difficult and protracted process to transform an arrogant word into one that is humble.

Arrogance of Man

As we approach the end of the second millennium, the world, and particularly Europe, finds itself at a peculiar

crossroads. It is a long time since there were so many grounds for hoping that everything will turn out well. At the same time, there have been so many reasons for us to fear that, if everything went wrong, the catastrophe would be final.

It is not hard to demonstrate that all the main threats confronting the world today, from atomic war and ecological disaster to social and civilisational catastrophe — by which I mean the widening gulf between rich and poor individuals and nations — have hidden within them just one root cause: the imperceptible transformation of what was originally a humble message into an arrogant one.

Arrogantly, Man started to believe that, as the pinnacle and lord of creation, he had a total understanding of nature and could do what he liked with it.

Arrogantly, he started to think that as the possessor of reason he was capable of understanding totally his own history and therefore of planning a life of happiness for all. This even gave him the right, in the name of an ostensibly better future for all — to which he had

found the one and only key — to sweep from his path all those who did not fall for his plan.

Arrogantly, he started to think that, since he was capable of splitting the atom, he was now so perfect that there was no longer any danger of nuclear arms rivalry, let alone nuclear war.

In all those cases he was fatally mistaken. That is bad. But in each case he is already beginning to realise his mistake. And that is good.

Having learnt all those lessons, we should all fight together against arrogant words and keep a weather eye out for any insidious germs of arrogance in words that are seemingly humble.

Obviously this is not just a linguistic task. Responsibility for and towards words is a task which is intrinsically ethical. As such, however, it is situated beyond the horizon of the visible world, in that realm wherein dwells the Word that was in the beginning and is not the word of Man.

FREEDOM FIRST FOUNDATION

Freedom, with social responsibility and the rule of law, is the foundation of civilisation and a precondition for social and cultural progress. Few people however, have an adequate idea and understanding of the meaning and value of freedom and its implication on day-to-day life. Generally, freedom is taken to mean merely the absence of restrictions of whatever one wishes to have or do. It is doubtful whether freedom as a basic value has become a part of our cultural ethos.

There is urgent need to promote the acceptance of the values of freedom and dignity of the individual among our people and specially among the young. The only hope lies in the efforts of voluntary organisations specifically dedicated to the promotion of these values. A long-term programme of sound popular education in the meaning, implications and responsibilities of freedom in all its aspects is necessary.

These considerations, and the desire to make efforts in that direction, have prompted the establishment of the **Freedom First Foundation** as a non-partisan, educational, charitable Trust for the promotion of these values and ideals. The Foundation will organise lectures, seminars, study classes, and other educative and cultural activities, and will publish and/or subsidise the publication of periodicals, books and pamphlets, for the promotion of these aims and objectives.

We appeal to all those who are committed to freedom, democracy and an open society to support the Foundation by sending donations and contributions to the corpus of the Foundation.

The Foundation has been registered under the Public Trust Act and donations of Rs. 250 and above are exempt from tax under Section 80 G(1) of the Income tax Act, 1961.

Cheques should be made payable to the **Freedom First Foundation**, 127, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400 023, and earmarked for its corpus.

The Roots of India's Poverty

Bhanu Pratap Singh

When poverty is so widespread, as in India, it can be traced either to lack of national resources or its under-development. India does not lack natural resources. Her poverty is due to under-development and mismanagement of her resources — natural as well as fiscal.

A poor man is one, who does not have enough purchasing power to buy for himself, and his family the basic needs of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, child's education and medicare. From this definition it follows, that poverty can either be due to lack of proper employment — proper in the sense of providing adequate purchasing power to meet essential needs — or erosion of purchasing power due to inflation. In India, unfortunately both factors have been operative for long to enlarge the circle of poverty. Except for a small minority of organized workers, whose emoluments are related to the cost of living index, the vast majority suffer no less on account of rise in prices than from increasing unemployment. During the last eight years, the purchasing power of the rupee has declined to nearly half, and the number of applicants on the live registers of employment exchanges has more than doubled.

Another point overlooked, perhaps deliberately, is that mere growth in the national income does not necessarily bring about reduction in the incidence of poverty, unless it is ensured at the same time, that the benefits of faster growth accrue proportionately to all sections of the population, if not more to the poor. In spite of repeated government affirmations of adherence to socialist principles, the distribution of national income in India is more skewed than in any of the seven free enterprise countries of the world, the U.S.A., Japan, West Germany, France, the U.K., Canada and Italy. According to a World Bank report, the share of the richest 10% families in India is 33.6% of her national income, whereas it is 23.3,

22.4, 24.0, 26.4, 23.4, 23.8 and 28.1 percent respectively in the U.S.A., Japan, Germany, France, U.K., Canada and Italy. It also needs to be noted that the share in the national income of agriculturists, who constitute two-thirds of India, is less than that of the top 10% families.

The Real Beneficiaries

Worse still is the pattern of sectoral growth of the Indian economy. According to data provided by the Central Statistical Organization, the average rates of annual growth, in the seven years 1980-81 to 1987-88, of the Net Domestic Product at Factor Cost at 1980-81 prices, by industry of origin, were as follows :

NDP.	4.71
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	1.51
NDP minus Agriculture Forestry and Fishery	6.55
Public Administration & Defence	7.57

Two conclusions emerge from the above analysis: First, that the growth rate of the farm economy, at constant prices, has been slower than the growth in population, and since there has been

no significant decline in the percentage of population engaged in agriculture, the per capita real income of farmers has declined during the last seven years. Secondly, that the contribution by Public Administration and Defence to the NDP, in other words the total emoluments of employees in those services, has increased 1.6 times faster than the total income of the rest of the nation, and 5 times faster than those of agriculturists. These diverging growth trends of different sectors have further widened the already wide income disparities. Hence no one need be impressed by claims such as, "the Indian economy has moved on to a higher growth path". Even if true, most of the benefits of growth have gone to what may be called the "Urban Organized Sector" while two-thirds of the population engaged in agriculture have been left poorer than before.

The question arises, who represents the nation: the vast majority of the people living in villages, or the small minority at the top? It can confidently be stated, that the bulk of the nation has not benefited at all by the higher growth trajectory of the Indian economy. This

Per Capita Average Foodgrain & Cloth Consumption

Period	Total Foodgrain grams per day (Average of the period)	Cloth meters/per year (Average of the period)
1961 - 65	461.1	15.9
1966 - 70	433.9	15.9
1971 - 75	442.6	14.8
1976 - 80	441.8	14.3
1981 - 85	457.1	14.5
1986 - 88	463.1	14.8

finding is further confirmed by the fact that during the last twenty-eight years, the average per capita consumption of foodgrains and cloth in India, where energy intake per capita is still less than the minimum required, and hundreds die of exposure during the short winters of North India, has not increased, as can be seen from the table.

When poverty is so widespread, as in India, it can be traced either to lack of national resources or its under-development. India does not lack natural resources. Her poverty is due to under-development, and mismanagement of her resources — natural as well as fiscal.

The Agricultural Economics Division of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute has quantified the loss suffered by the nation due to the technological gap in our agriculture, the difference between potential output and actual output. According to their estimate, the money value of this gap is equal to half of our national income. This great potential of our agriculture has been left undeveloped because the Congress(I) government was enamoured of rapid industrialization. Most of the national savings were diverted to the industrial sector, which is highly capital-intensive and least capable of generating employment. Whatever progress has been achieved in the industrial sector has gone to enrich either the industrialists, or the employees of the public sector. The majority of the people, living in the villages, remain as impoverished as before.

Sucking the Nation's Wealth

The high incidence of poverty in India is mainly due to the squandering of the nation's savings in the state sector, which includes not only the public sector enterprises, but some of the so-called nation building departments of the government. Shri Rajiv Gandhi spoke the truth at a meeting of Congress(I) workers in Madras when he said "The public sector, instead of generating wealth is absorbing, robbing, and sucking the wealth of the people." Alas, he did nothing to prevent these. No nation can ever prosper, which wastes its savings with such gusto, as the Government of India has been doing its capital resources. It raises capital by taxing the people, over-burdening them with debts — internal and external —

which posterity will have to repay, charging them exorbitantly for the products of its monopoly enterprises, and pinching their pockets by deficit financing. Having collected all the money, what use do they make of it? Burn it in the state sector. Here is the record:

Though capital formation in the public sector has been nearly half of the national total, its contribution to the national income is only one quarter, and to the net national savings, negative.

During the five years 1983-84 to 1987-88, the net trading profit (before tax) of Central Government Undertakings was Rs. 12,353 crores, including the trading profit of Rs. 12,522 crores of the monopolist petroleum industry (The Indian consumer pays perhaps the highest price for petrol per litre in the world). If we leave out the profit of the petroleum industry, which in fact is an indirect tax on consumers, the Central Government Undertakings were net losers of Rs. 169 crores during the aforesaid five years.

The worst feature of the public sector enterprises is their very poor employment generating capacity. Between 1982 and 1987, their employment went up by only 11 lakhs or 2.2 lakhs per annum. The number of new entrants to the job market in India, every year, is around 55 lakhs. Though investment in the public sector is nearly one-half of the total, it provides employment to no more than 4% of the new job seekers. This explains the high incidence of unemployment and poverty in the country.

Foolish Grandiose Schemes

The public sector enterprises are not the only culprits, swallowing public money without producing tangible results. Take the major and medium irrigation works. Average per hectare cost of creating additional irrigation potential is now estimated to be nearly Rs. 40,000. No farming system can afford to meet even the interest charge on such capital investment. After having spent this kind of money on irrigation projects it has now been found that more than one-fourth of the additional irrigation potential created through major and medium irrigation works since 1950-51 has remained unutilized, the cost of construction of which at the present rate would be more than Rs.

20,000 crores. The situation in states like Uttar Pradesh is even worse. Between 1950-51 and 1985-86, irrigation potential in UP went up by 68.83 lakh hectares, but its utilization by no more than 28.86 lakh hectares.

In the pursuit of grandiose schemes, not only has the development of land, but also the development of minds, been neglected. In our Constitution, it was promised that education of children will be made free and compulsory within ten years of the adoption of the Constitution. But to our shame, even 40 years after independence this promise has not been fulfilled, with the result that the literacy rate in India, as a whole, is only 36.2%, and less than 30% in rural India. The expenditure on education as a percentage of the total plan expenditure was reduced from 7.6% during the first Plan to 3.5% during the eighth Plan. And, in the total expenditure on education, the share of primary education was reduced from 55% to 36%. It has been proved beyond doubt, that for the rapid progress of any country, the first step that needs to be taken is the development of land and minds. Even in India, the poverty of its states is almost directly related to under-realization of their agricultural potential, and high incidence of illiteracy.

While discussing poverty, two more points need to be noted. First, that higher industrialization in Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu have not helped in the amelioration of rural poverty in those states. And secondly, that the potential of agriculture has not been realized, even to the extent of 40% in ten states, whose cultivated area exceeds 82% of the country's total.

The new Government must realize that its business is not to create national wealth. Its predecessors have failed miserably in this task. The duty of the Government is to promote favourable conditions for growth and prepare the people through proper education and training to create wealth for themselves and the nation. Our new slogan should be "Develop the people to develop the country".

Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh, former Union Minister for agriculture is currently Chairman of a committee appointed by the Government of India to bring agriculture on par with industry.

Punjab — Towards Reconciliation

One of the happiest developments in recent months has been the transfer from a prison cell in Bhagalpur jail to a seat in the Lok Sabha of Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann. The prison cell in Bhagalpur, as Mr. Mann has testified in court was the scene of horrible torture of the worst kind at the hands of the police. According to Mr. Mann his teeth were knocked out, his jaw was broken and his hair was pulled out, among the various forms of torture, in order to get him to confess that he was guilty of conspiracy to assassinate Mrs. Indira Gandhi, which of course was complete nonsense. Mr. Mann, a brave man, successfully withstood this torture.

The case of conspiracy to assassinate Mrs. Gandhi against Mr. Mann and his three colleagues has since been withdrawn.

The new government in Delhi will do well to settle the Punjab problem by taking advantage of Mr. Mann's appearance on the scene. He has shown a spirit of sweet reasonableness by two actions of his. The first is his rejection of the advice of the All India Sikh Students Federation not to take the oath of allegiance to the Indian Constitution. The second is his sage advice to accept the Anandpur Sahib Resolution which involves nothing more than the carrying out of the principle of federalism in the Indian Constitution. There is no earthly reason why this resolution, which the Akali Dal had accepted, should not now be made the basis for negotiations. Now that the main obstacle to the solution of the Punjab problem is mercifully out of the way, there is no reason why the Punjab problem cannot be solved in the immediate future.

An esteemed friend of mine has taken the trouble to work out a programme of the steps to be taken to restore amity and peace in the Pun-

jab. I quote it in full as it deserves to be quoted:

"The basic problem of the Punjab and Sikhs is psychological. There is a strong feeling of hurt and injury to the Sikhs by the Blue Star operation and the virtual failure to control rioting in New Delhi in November 1984 and also police excesses.

"The ideal first step in the solution will be on the following lines:

a) "The Lok Sabha should pass a resolution (preferably unanimously or at least by a large majority) (i) expressing its profound sense of regret of the government's decision to have Blue Star operation without exhausting all the alternatives and the consequent injury to the religious feelings of Sikhs who have made tremendous contribution to Indian society and the sacred Golden Temple which is a part of the Indian heritage; (ii) Resolution condemning Hindu-Sikh riots of November 1984, excesses by the terrorists and excesses by the police; (iii) Resolution condemning the act of the bodyguards in killing the ex-Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi as totally contrary to the tenets of the Sikh religion and the techniques of Guru Gobind Singh and as an individual inhuman act; (iv) Resolving and directing the Government to set up a National Reconciliation Fund and directing the Government to bring appropriate legislation in this behalf to compensate the victims of the police excesses, the victims of Hindu-Sikh riots, the victims of the terrorists irrespective of any fault finding and resolving the government's contribution of Rs 100 crores and permitting public contributions to such fund to be administered by an impartial authority (preferably a person selected from Parsi or Christian religion); (v) Resolving that in religious institutions, whether Hindu temple, masjid, gurdwara, Jain temple or Church,

there should not be any storage of arms or stationing of militants and directing the government to bring legislation in that behalf to ensure effective check and control and (vi) lastly resolving that no religious priest, leader or institution (i.e. San-karacharya, Shahi Imam, Cardinal etc) should issue any fatwa firman or directions to any religious community or people at large in respect of whom to vote for at a general election or in matters political".

IAC — A National Disgrace

In all the speculation about the tragic air crash at Bangalore airport of an IAC plane, lots of scapegoats are being looked for, such as the Air-bus Industrie, the ground facilities at the Bangalore airport and the pilot. I am sorry to find that nobody has pointed out to the Indian Airlines Corporation, which is the real culprit. It is the government monopoly which has now become a national disgrace and which failed to learn a lesson from the earlier crash outside Ahmedabad airport. In the light of this background, the death of 90 passengers is sheer murder and nothing less than a massacre.

Mr. M.R. Pai has, with his usual wisdom, put his finger on the spot. He has indicated the lessons which the Indian Airlines Corporation did not learn and which are responsible for the tragedy:

"(1) Over the years, lack of vision at the political level, and interference in the day-to-day functioning of the airlines.

(2) The gross incompetence of the Civil Aviation Ministry of the Government of India in decision making, while it is known to do backseat driving.

(3) The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has been reduced to a

joke, its regulatory authority being no thicker than the ink on the paper.

(4) Failure of the National Airport Authority and the International Airport Authority to provide basic equipment and facilities to airports, and their poor maintenance, in spite of collection of Rs 10/- compulsorily on each ticket through IAC.

(5) The over-obsession of the IAC top brass with profits, to be squeezed out from its captive clientele, without requisite attention to passenger safety, comfort and needs.

(6) IAC staff is an orphan so far as leadership is concerned. It is divided into fiefdoms which are dimly aware of each other, and many of them are manipulated by unions which are constantly agitating for more and more, without a thought to their basic obligations to the travelling public."

Mr. Pai has also written an excellent article in the *Independent* arguing for the privatisation of the Indian Airlines Corporation and introduction of competition.

Mr. Murli Deora, the MP from Bombay has in a statement pointed out the incompetence of the IAC management and related his own experience as a passenger as follows:

"He recalled that on each of the three trips he made in that aircraft, there was at least one defect. He said that either the public address system was making a noise even when not in use, or the lights flickered or there was deafening noise, or the plane's door did not open. Surprisingly the crew did not seem to take the passenger complaints seriously and dismissed them as petty faults, a loose contact or a short circuit".

Mr. Deora's suggestion, however, that government should move in and revamp the Corporation, falls sadly short of the mark. Nothing less than competition from private airlines will do. All monopoly is inefficient and government monopolies which are at the mercy of incompetent workers and their unions are the worst. Until this vicious monopoly is ended air travel will continue to be hazardous

in this unfortunate country. The only persons who have come out with credit from this incident are the brave girls who, as air hostesses, showed courage and presence of mind and saved many lives.

The acting Chairman of IAC also showed his sense of responsibility by resigning the chairmanship. When I resigned the chairmanship of the Minorities Commission in 1979, I was told that I had committed an 'un-Indian' act because nobody in this country resigns! I am glad to see that there are some exceptions.

It is high time for Mr Arif Mohammad Khan to announce the end of IAC monopoly and to licence one or two private airlines to compete with IAC on equal terms.

Bernard Levin

It was a real joy for me to welcome to Bombay my friend Bernard Levin of the *London Times*. I had the opportunity of a good chat with him over a meal and it was a pleasure to watch his incisive mind and refreshing candour. It has been said that Levin "wields a pen like a scalpel, or sledgehammer, or feather-duster, or velvet glove, according to need".

I was glad to find from Levin that his reservations about Mr. Gorbachov a year ago have softened somewhat though he is still very cautious about the man's future. I found that Bernard Levin, who had attacked Indira Gandhi's bogus Emergency and welcomed the Janata Government is nervous about a similar fate overtaking the National Front government. He admits that they have made a good start.

Levin came to Bombay to deliver the prestigious Sir Dorab Tata Memorial lecture on the intriguing subject "Utopia — The Everlasting Dream".

I had the pleasure of listening to him. The text of the talk is a valuable literary contribution, which will make excellent reading. Levin dealt expertly with man's eternal quest for perfection and pointed out how almost all such efforts had ended in disaster.

He mentioned Stalin who had taken many good people in other countries for a ride, as the latest example.

My friend Jayaprakash was an Utopian since he wanted a "total revolution" and believed in a party-less democracy. I recall that my epitaph for JP, at the end of a book I had written about him while he was alive was a line from Robert Louis Stevenson, which JP felt was a very appropriate epitaph for him:

"Oh toiling feet of mortals, travelling ye know not wither, soon soon it seems to you, you will come forth on some conspicuous hilltop and descry from afar the spires of El Dorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness, for it is a far far better thing to travel than to arrive and the true success is to labour."

The Choice of Governors

I fear that, with all my goodwill, I cannot congratulate the new Union Government on their choice of Governors. Throwing out the old lot was in order, but I fear the new lot of Governors, though good men, do not qualify for the post, considering what we had in mind when we framed the Constitution in the Constituent Assembly. We never thought of retired politicians, but of distinguished men who were not politicians at all, but journalists, writers, men of arts and science and social workers. Nor did we want the President to consult the Prime Minister of the Union Government but only the Chief Ministers of the states of which the Governor was to be the Head.

With the sole exception of Mr. C. Subramaniam, who is an elder statesman, who has been engaged for the last many years in educational and social work, and would be welcomed to Bombay, none of the others qualifies for the position. What a pity.

Religion And Politics: Notes From A Conversation With Djilas

Communism can exist only as a totalitarian system. Communism with a human face is not possible. Human rights, as we in the free world visualize them, are not possible under communism. They are contradictory to the System. Glasnost and Perestroika may open up a little more tolerance here and there, but, in essence, Communism will remain a monopolistic power. In its ideals, Communism is very good, but in practice, it is the contrary. It is not working.

(Leif) Hovelsen: *Where is its flaw? Why doesn't it work?*

Djilas

Because it is contrary to human nature. The party is monopolistic and totalitarian in its structure. Human nature is pluralistic in its being. Human nature is sinful. If human nature was perfect, Communism might be possible, but, that would be a "dead" society. Human nature is evil, and, at the same time, gentle and good. The constant struggle of different tendencies in each of us is essential for the existence of humanity. If there were absolute evil, or absolute good, it (humanity) would die. That means we must fight to be good, seek good ideals, have good aims, but we must understand that the evil will always be there.

Capitalism functions better because it is closer to human nature. It permits the human being to express more freedom. Communism has failed, and will fail, because human nature cannot live without freedom, without choices, without facing alternatives. If we are not creative, if we do not change, do not have ideas, we cannot exist. We cannot be truly alive. This is the essential difference between human beings and animals.

Man is creative, full of ideas, imagination, visions. He cannot be restricted, put under police control, repressed, or placed under brutal ideological pressures – or, rather, he can be restricted for a while, but not

Religions become dangerous when they are linked to ideology or nationality. Orthodox anti-communism as an ideology is also dangerous. Spiritual Freedom is the best.

for generations. Communist societies of today are decadent and will become more decadent. Or, they must change.

Hovelsen: *Do you mean to say man is not only a materialistic creature, but also a spiritual one?*
(Milovan) Djilas

The spiritual element is essential. It is the foundation. I consider myself an atheist, but I believe in man's spiritual dimension. This makes freedom of religion important. Religion and religious expressions are basic feelings. There is no human being without some faith, some belief. Atheism is also a belief. It is not a religion, but it is not much different from religion. We do not know of human beings without religion. From early, prehistoric man, there are drawings and signs indicating a form of religion. Because man must explain the world, explain his own destiny and his death.

Now, we have scientific explanations, not religious ones. But, these scientific explanations are not absolute. They are restricted, limited to the knowledge of this time. Science cannot explain the universe completely, nor can it explain fully man's place in the universe. Religious explanations are not rational, but absolute. Religion explains by using faith to draw a picture of mankind's place in the universe.

Hovelsen: *But doesn't man still need "Utopia," some vision of society worth living and striving for?*

Djilas

Every society is utopian! Even Western societies are utopian! They speak of absolute freedom, and that is also utopia. In the US Constitution, we read that man is

Leif Hovelsen

born free. That is utopian. We do not know for what reason man is born. But, he must fight to be free. He must fight for good aims. Only in this way can one become free.

You might be free in most totalitarian systems, if you are fighting for freedom, that means struggling for good goals. The last time I was in prison, I was a free man, free from the party, free from all the Marxist-Communist ideas. I was free as I am right now.

Religions become dangerous when they are linked to ideology or nationality. Orthodox anti-communism, as an ideology, is also dangerous. Spiritual freedom is the best. Every human idea can be wrongly used against mankind. There exists no better idea than Christianity, but, we also must admit that, at times, it has been wrongly used. History tells us that. Today, we have the case of fanatical Khomeinism. It is in reality a form of totalitarianism.

Religious freedom is crucial, for it opens the way toward political freedoms. With freedom of religion, belief and thinking are free, which makes possible political ideas. This is essentially why Communist ideology rejects religion and Churches. For them, it is nonsense – it is stupid to believe in God. God is not dangerous to them; free expression of religious beliefs and an organized Church are threats. Freedom of religion diminishes the ideological influence of monopolistic powers. Believers have loyalties outside the party, the ideology. They recognize an authority other than the Party and the Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Too much religion in politics is simply not good for politics is a painful job. It cannot be without sin. Even the very best of us is sinful every day.

Beograd/Oslo
December 1988

Leif Hovelsen is a member of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee Council and author of numerous feature articles on human rights.

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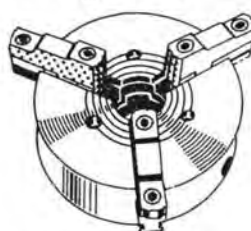


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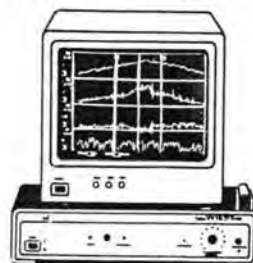
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Violent Politics in India: Some Issues

V. Venkatesan

Violent politics, a dimension of political violence, includes all physically injurious and destructive acts and the threat of such acts directed at persons or property for the purpose of furthering or opposing political interests.

The last decade has been marked by cataclysmic political changes putting to the severest test the resiliency of Indian political institutions. Commentators like Myron Weiner have been surprised at the coexistence of both political violence and democratic institutions. Many of us may share the optimism of observers, of India's capacity to mitigate social conflicts. But the persistence of violence and its spread all over the country has to be taken seriously. For it threatens the very survival of India's political life.

Categories of Violence

Violence, in a purely ethical sense, is inherently evil. However, such abstract reasoning is quite unhelpful in understanding political violence. According to Joseph LaPalombara, author of *Politics Within Nations*, (1974) 'Political violence' includes all existing injustices, deprivations, and other conditions harmful to a nation that the latter's government creates or could prevent. Most of these acts of political violence are generally tolerated, if not justified, as a price for general peace and order. Violent politics, a dimension of political violence, includes all physically injurious and destructive acts and the threat of such acts directed at persons or property for the purpose of furthering or opposing political interests. Violent politics could be an instrument of elites, counter-elites, and non-elites both for perpetuation of rule and social transformation.

Violent politics may also become institutionalised and may become part of the very functioning of a system, as it seems to happen in India now. T.D. Gurr, in his *Why Men Rebel* (PUP,

1980), classifies political violence into three major categories: turmoil, conspiracy, and internal war. The present upsurge in violent politics in India broadly falls under the second category, conspiracy, which is characterised by less widespread participation, more disciplined organisation and use of violent techniques.

Any objective consideration of such violent politics ought to be based, not on supra-historical and absolute standards, but within the historical terms Indian politics finds itself in. If there were to be a complete embargo on violence, the political community itself would become impossible, for there is no society which does not resort to violence of various kinds. The government, further, is responsible not only for the violence it uses itself but also for that which it authorises, connives at, or is unwilling to prevent or control. To invoke the principle of the sanctity of life against violent politics, but to remain silent or covertly justify the violence of established society is hypocrisy. One cannot start becoming moral and ethical at an arbitrary but expedient cut off point: the point of violent politics. One has, therefore, to work out which form of violent politics is more reactionary historically.

Violent politics, at least for explanatory purpose, should not be used to mean other categories of violence in India, such as terrorism, militancy, communalism and the violence indulged in by various groups and sub-national movements. These categories, despite their impact on the political process, have varied sources and their resolution

squarely depends on the ability of the political process to accommodate and to be responsive to their grievances. Violent politics in India has to be precisely located in the nexus between criminals and the political process and in the impact of such a nexus; and in the State's own indulgence in overt or covert encouragement to violence which is often justified on grounds of doubtful 'legitimacy'. A policy of accommodation and responsiveness cannot obviously solve or end such violent politics which throws a formidable challenge to effective but democratic governance, and to peaceful expression of political dissent. Besides, these forms of violent politics take us back to old feudal traditions and therefore are reactionary.

The Criminal-Politician Nexus

To indicate the extent of the malaise, police sources claim that at least 100 MLAs in UP have criminal records of some sort. A pre-election survey conducted by *The Times of India* revealed that

- the criminalisation of politics affects all states today, not just the heartland.
- the criminal-politician nexus cuts across all political parties, Congress and Opposition
- political parties are no longer embarrassed by this and openly accept it
- criminals no longer hide behind politicians; they seek political office themselves.

The Illustrated Weekly of India,
Nov. 19, '89

The Criminal-Politician Nexus

In the olden days, the powerful elite would seek the help of gangsters for settling scores or for intimidating the protestants. But these were few and far between. The recent all-round criminalisation in the society and the role of the mafia has assumed dangerous proportions unknown to an earlier generation. And yet, it must be said to the credit of our political system that at least till the mid-seventies, politics remained largely insulated from crimes in other walks of life. The deterioration, however, started with the murder of Lalit Narain Mishra, former Union Minister, in 1975. The Emergency days saw the rise of mafia politics with the encouragement of the then ruling party. Yet, it had not assumed alarming proportions as most of the criminals who flirted with the political process had to operate on the periphery and were not prepared to defy the Indian state.

The turning point perhaps came with the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the riots which followed; the failure of the Indian state to book even one single individual responsible for the riots has inevitably exposed the breakdown of the rule of law. Events since the end of 1988 clearly indicate that criminals using force with impunity are wooed by politicians of all hues as the Indian state proved itself to be the weakest since independence. A few instances would suffice: the murder of Mohana Ranga Rao, a former Congress-I MLA in Andhra Pradesh at Vijayawada on 26th December 1988, which in turn led to the sudden eruption of intense violence surpassing the extent of damage to property inflicted by the 1984 riots; the murder of Safdar Hashmi, an artiste sympathetic to the CPI(M) on January 1, 1989 which provoked nation wide protests; the violence unleashed by the Congress-I students forum, the National Students Union of India (NSUI) at the residence of Rajya Sabha M.P. and lawyer Ram Jethmalani which left 25 police personnel injured in April 1989 and the NSUI's involvement in various other violent incidents elsewhere; the admission into the Congress-I of known criminals in Bihar, the alleged involvement of a number of Congress-I members of the previous U.P. Legislative Assembly in criminal activities; the release of criminals enjoying the patronage of the then government in U.P. on the eve of the

1989 Allahabad by-election in order to use their services to terrorise voters; Ghani Khan Chowdhury's exhortation to Congress-I members to pick up guns, sten guns, stones or lathis to wage a 'total revolution' against the CPI(M) regime; the nexus between certain Janata Dal leaders and a section of the underworld in U.P. and Bihar; the general elections of November 1989, the bloodiest ever witnessed in India; the alarming spectacle of booth capturing captured live by TV.

State Violence

Instances of State encouragement to violence and turning a blind eye to it in recent times have become common. The 'encounter' killings in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, for example; many dangerous amendments and enactments brought forward by the Centre to curb the formal rights available to all classes of citizens during the previous regime; Kehar Singh's execution, a terribly unfair act even under existing rules and traditions of criminal justice; the abdication of responsibility by the administration and political leadership which led to communal riots in Jammu in January 1989 despite decades of communal amity; the erstwhile Telugu Desam government's move to arm villagers in Andhra Pradesh with licensed guns which marked the official entry of mafia politics into the countryside; the handing over by the then DGP of the Punjab, guns to boys barely out of their teens to make them an auxiliary force, to provide defence against terrorists — an alibi for encouraging private gangsterism; and the alleged plot to kill Nusli Wadia and implicating in it an Ambani close to Dhirubhai who was close to the previous establishment in Delhi. One could see that all these instances were a result of either the criminalisation of polity or the failure to open up the government for scrutiny of its policies.



Citizens' Role

As all political parties are equally guilty of polluting the political life of the country, it is difficult to expect any meaningful reform to be initiated by the new Central government that has come to power — ironically on the plank of value-based politics. It is significant to note that the freeing of politics from criminal gangs was not made an election issue; it is perhaps an indication that the new government at the Centre may not give it the priority it deserves. One does not even find it on its agenda. Saner people, however, have made a number of proposals: revamping the judicial system and strict and timely enforcement of punishment of wrongdoers; unity of democratic forces in all parties opposed to the *mafia raj*; electoral reforms aimed to clean up election campaigns and to prevent the use of money power and mafia in political activity; resorting to the 'negative vote' as a non-violent method of renewal of the system by voting against the establishment which includes both the ruling and the opposition parties; the need to secure more than half the votes for winning an election which would generate unifying processes; and the need for openness in government and a reasonable degree of consensus over policies.

The citizens, on their part, cannot remain passive. They must start a nation-wide crusade to force the government to work on the implementation of these proposals for reforms. As Karl Popper, the eminent contemporary political philosopher, rightly said in his book *Open Society and its Enemies*: "If we extend unlimited tolerance to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them... We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant — the right to suppress them if necessary even by force." He goes on: "Any attack against the use of democratic methods, especially if it comes from the government in power, or if it is tolerated by it, should be resisted by all loyal citizens, even to the use of violence. Such violent resistance is justified only when reforms without violence are impossible and it should have only one aim, that is, to bring about a state of affairs, which makes reforms without violence possible."

Let liberal opinion in the country try to achieve reforms without violence, to break the unholy nexus between criminal gangs and politicians. Let us not be driven to the unpleasant option of choosing violent resistance to re-establish democracy and freedom. It is our responsibility as citizens to seek ways and means to put an end to this cancerous growth.

Postscript

The recent elections to the Assemblies in eight states and the Union Territory of Pondicherry have once again exposed the magnitude of the politics of violence in India claiming many innocent lives in these elections particularly in Meham in Haryana, Bihar and Gujarat. One is particularly surprised by a remark made on TV by an election officer in Bihar that violence should mean bloodshed and that any incident short of bloodshed must not

be categorised as violence! Thus booth-capturing, snatching of ballot papers, using threats of force to intimidate voters, display of muscle power short of bloodshed, wanton damage to property, tries both public and private, would be excluded from 'violence'. Such official interpretations of 'violence' notwithstanding, one needs to clarify further the meaning of the term 'violence' used in many contexts. The dictionaries agree that violence is intensely forcible; unrestrained in action; and unjustifiable force. It would mean the application of injurious physical force to either persons or property. It need not necessarily involve bloodshed; though in most cases, bloodshed-free violence is only a prelude to bloodshed. Social or political violence is violence to persons or their property because of the social or political category into which they fall. There is also the violence which is accorded legitimacy by a given society or group; though the reasons for such legitimacy may be justified or unjustified.

However, it has to be accepted that violence stresses destructive or uncontrolled physical force, generally in relation to human action, stressing extreme agitation and even harmful or vicious behaviour. But can violence in itself become a creative force insofar as it exposes the violent nature of certain groups, or even of the state, and serves to accelerate the development of a non-violent or anti-violent consciousness and organisation in opposition to such violence? The coming to power of new governments both at the centre and in various states may be a promising development insofar as it is an indicator of change. However, it is the qualitative change in governance that matters. We need to ensure greater accountability from governments when they resort to police force or "encounters" in the maintenance of law and order so as to mitigate the danger of state violence.

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Debate

Boom Time For Freedom Lovers

Reference your query in the issue of October, 1989 as long as I live and am economically able to afford, I shall continue to subscribe to your esteemed Quarterly. I say this because firstly I have stepped into my 80th year and cannot say how long I shall be able to support the cause of human freedom, a philosophical defence of which I shall send you in a brief article as soon as the extreme chill abates a bit. Considering the costs of inputs the journal should cost Rs.40/- per annum, and your readers should be able to afford it.

Secondly the wind the world over has begun to blow in our favour, and it is boom time for lovers of freedom; how can we your readers desert you now that your labours have begun to bear fruit?

Kindly convey my greetings and good wishes to Mr. Masani. Wishing your journal greater popularity in the year just begun.

M. Varma
Retired Professor of Education
5 D, Venus Apartments
9, Mayfair Road
Calcutta 700 019.

Leadership Crisis in India

Minoos Masani in his article "Why Rajiv must go" (*Freedom* First Oct.-Dec. '89) has expressed what most of us would have liked to. True to his assessment we now have a minority government, but his hope for new leadership needs to be considered keeping in view the state of our electorate.

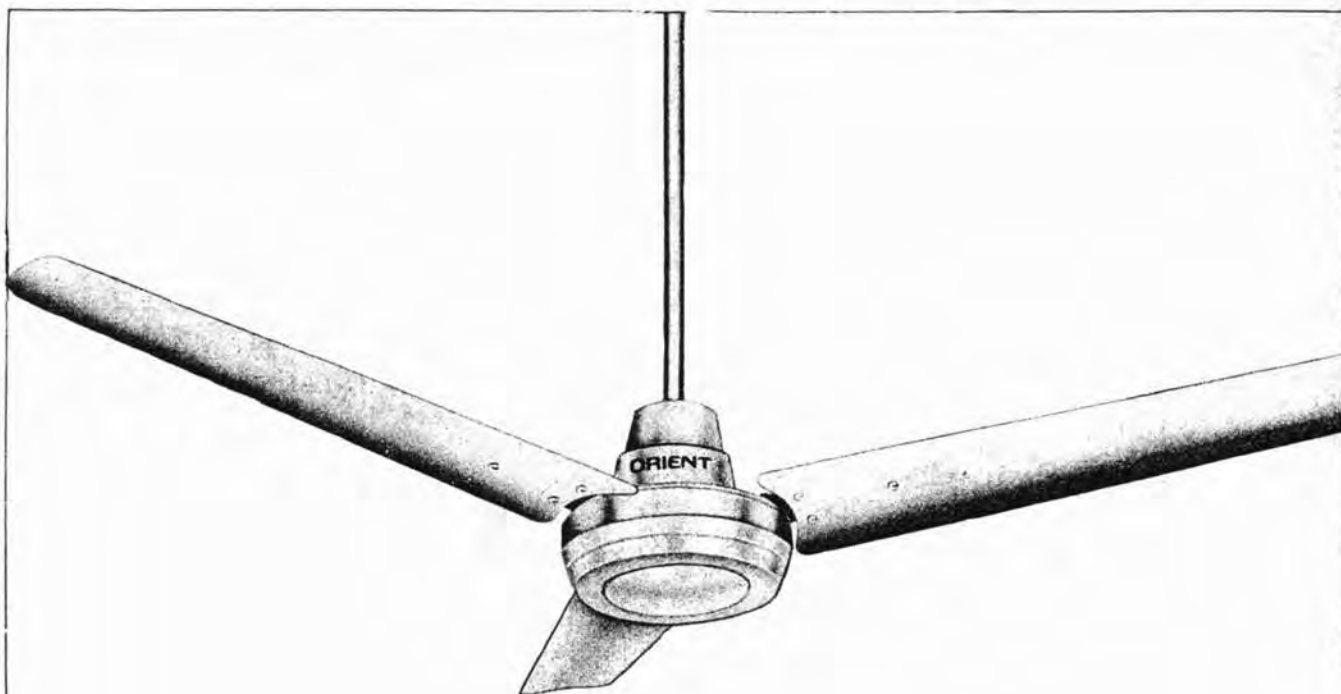
Major drawbacks afflicting our society are neglect of education (namely character building, self-discipline and removal of religious misconceptions), caste/region/creed bias and hero-worship. Our people elect leaders, who, barring a few exceptions, provide a representative sample of the electorate. In other words, it can be assumed that irrespective of party affiliation the basic nature and attitude of these leaders after every election will, by and large, be similar; only the grade will vary depending upon the party culture and duration for which the party has been in power. Our experience confirms this assumption.

Our country has been ruled at the centre by one family which has gradually oriented the policy to perpetuate its rule. It will in all fairness be incorrect to entirely blame the family as they were forced to resort to dictatorial methods due to the irresponsible behaviour of MPs and MLAs of their own party.

Even if we assume, as indicated by Minoos Masani, that we get a top leadership which is positive and competent, its role at best will be to give directions and provide guidelines. The actual implementation of these guidelines will be done by other leaders both at the centre and the states. Our past experience of these leaders has been discouraging and there is no reason to assume that in the future the electorate will elect leaders contrary to their own traits. In other words, the degeneration of the system in the country will be a continuous process, the speed of decline will depend on the type of leadership available at that time.

If this trend continues, we may find the country either heading towards anarchy or may throw up fundamentalist leadership. On the other hand if we examine the present system of government and evolve a modified version bearing in mind our traits, we still have a chance of recovery and achieve wonders which our country is capable of.

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Lithuanian Independence: Myth or Reality?

Vasundhara Mohan

On March 11, 1990 the new non-communist parliament of the Baltic Republic of Lithuania proclaimed Lithuania's independence, decided to drop the prefix "Soviet Socialist" and invited the Soviet government for talks to sort out the various issues arising from Lithuania's independent status.

Addressing the Congress of the People's Deputies the next day in Moscow, Gorbachev told the Deputies that Lithuania's action was "illegal and invalid". He added: "We hold talks with foreign states and Lithuania is not a foreign state". Obviously neither Gorbachev nor the Congress knew how else to react to the news from Vilnius. He added that the Supreme Soviet and the government was yet to evaluate the political and legal implications of Lithuania's decision. It was little consolation that the Deputies who belonged either to the now ruling Sajudis party or had been elected with the Sajudis movement's support, made it known they were present only as observers. They did not participate in the deliberations nor did they exercise their vote. In fact they had boycotted the opening session of the Congress on March 12.

Lithuania's declaration of independence and its invitation to the Soviet government for talks prompted the US administration to counsel Moscow to treat Lithuanian aspirations with understanding. Commenting that the US Administration's advice was an interference in the internal affairs of the USSR, Gennady Geraninov stated that "the Lithuanian decision posed a problem for the Western Countries — to recognise or not to recognise". This poser also applied to the Soviet government. If the Soviet government recognises Lithuania's independence, there would soon be two more independent Baltic States — Latvia and Estonia — and a host of others to follow. If it does not recognise Lithuania's independence, the Soviet government is left with a military option, which means a Czechoslovak-type situ-

ation and perhaps bloodshed.

Very recently Gorbachev had conceded that Soviet Republics should be allowed to exercise their right under the Constitution to secede and a law was being drafted to sort out the issues that would arise in case a federating state decided to opt out. Perhaps Gorbachev is 'shocked' or 'alarmed' with Lithuania's decision only because it has preempted the proposed law. But is Lithuania's action 'illegal' and 'invalid' as Gorbachev describes it?

Constitutional Provisions

Article 70 of the Soviet Constitution declares that "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is an integral, federal, multinational State formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of a nation and voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics". Thus the USSR is a 'federal' State in terms of its Constitution. But is it a 'voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics' at least with reference to the Baltic States?

The Baltic states have lost their independence twice in the past. They cannot be denied a third time, in this era, without serious consequences. The upsurge of nationalism in the Baltic republics as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, has been so great that the Soviet government cannot curb them now.

Article 71 lists the Lithuanian SSR as one of the constituents of the USSR, among others. Article 72 clearly states: "Each Union Republic shall *retain* the right freely to secede from the USSR". The right to secede from the Union is thus granted to the Republics and is enshrined in the Constitution. But the enabling Article does not say that "each Union Republic shall *retain and exercise* the right freely to secede from the USSR". If it is thus argued that the Union Republics have only 'retained' the right to secede but shall not 'exercise' such a right without somebody saying so, it merely amounts to hair-splitting and playing with technicalities. Article 76 declares that a "Union Republic is a Sovereign Socialist Republic". Similarly, "outside the spheres listed in Article 73 of the Constitution of the USSR, a Union Republic exercises independent authority on its territory".

Article 73 which lists the jurisdiction of the USSR on certain matters concerning the Union, states that such jurisdiction shall cover "the admission of new Republics to the USSR..." and "issues of war and peace, defence of the sovereignty of the USSR and safeguarding of its frontiers and territory..." Thus, the federal government's jurisdiction does not cover secession of any Republic from the Union and the "defence of the sovereignty of the USSR and safeguarding of its frontiers and territory" is only against external threat and during war with an aggressor. After all, the government of the USSR has also been entrusted with the responsibility of "safeguarding the sovereign rights of the Union Republics."

Secession is not Illegal

The USSR government, cannot therefore, in the light of the foregoing provisions of the Constitution, prevent a Union Republic which wishes to secede from doing so. The Lithuanian decision does not, therefore, seem to be either

illegal or invalid. It may be argued that the right of secession should be exercised only with the approval of the Soviet of the Lithuanian Republic i.e. the Soviet comprising the duly elected People's (meaning communist) Deputies and not by the new non-communist Parliament of Lithuania which could be described by the CPSU as not truly representing 'workers, peasants and soldiers'. The Soviet government, may refuse to recognise the Sajudis because they are non-communist. But this argument is untenable when, even at the Union level, the Congress has voted in favour of amending the Article of the Constitution which grants supreme authority to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and has ushered in a multi-party system.

The Status of the Baltic Republics

In his report on the Communist Party's nationalities policy presented at the Central Committee's Plenum on September 19, 1989 Gorbachev said: "...in the same year (1940) the USSR was joined by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. This took place in a complex historical period when the Second World War had broken out and fascism was capturing one country after another. The people of the Baltic region also faced the real threat of enslavement. Keen discussions are currently being held on events during the period. Much has yet

to be analysed and evaluated. But there are no grounds to question the decision by the Baltic republics to join the USSR and the choice made by their people". Gorbachev is right when he says that the accession of the Baltic republics with the Soviet Union took place "in a complex historical period". But his statement that "there are no grounds to question" such accession is not correct as he had to admit before long of the existence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement.

In his authoritative book *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (2nd edition, Vintage Books New York, 1970) Leonard Schapiro notes that on August 22, 1939 "a Treaty of Non-Aggression was signed between the Soviet Union and Germany. By the terms of a secret protocol annexed to the Treaty, the three Baltic States and about half the territory of Poland were recognised as being within the sphere of influence of the USSR 'in the event of a territorial and political re-arrangement'. After Germany invaded Poland, the Red Army moved in to occupy the Polish territory mentioned in the secret protocol. Simultaneously, military assistance pacts were concluded with the Baltic States and in June 1940, the military pacts were followed by Soviet-sponsored political coups inside each of the three countries and in each case incorporation into the USSR as a Union

republic resulted". If such is the nature of the "voluntary union", Gorbachev, with his policy of *glasnost* and democratisation of Soviet society, cannot ignore historical facts and force the Baltic States to remain with the USSR.

Lithuania's declaration of independence now and that of the other two Baltic republics, Estonia and Latvia, that are likely to follow, cannot therefore be annulled or invalidated. The Baltic states have lost their independence twice in the past. They cannot be denied a third time, in this era, without serious consequences. The upsurge of nationalism in the Baltic republics, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, has been so great that the Soviet government cannot curb them now. Perhaps Gorbachev's anger with the Lithuanians stems from a feeling that they could have waited till the law under consideration had become a reality, so that the Soviet government could have 'granted' Lithuania its independence and obtained the world's applause. If the Lithuanians had acted under a proper law on secession, this would have prepared the Congress of the People's Deputies and the Soviet people to understand and accept the decision. By jumping the gun and acting prematurely Lithuania's action will now be blamed on Gorbachev and not on the Soviet Congress. Hence the anguish.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

country is said to have no lasting alternative to the Congress, the Congress itself seems to have no alternative to Nehru and his progeny. No sensible Congressman would deny that in spite of his impeccable personal behaviour, Rajiv Gandhi's incompetence and ego-centric style of functioning are the most important factors responsible for his party's debacle.

Rajiv Gandhi is not a self-made man. Physically and politically he is Indira's creation. During the later years of her life, Mrs. Gandhi was a victim of paranoia. In spite of all her great abilities and time-tested mastery of situations, she was haunted by nightmares of loss of power. She could tolerate no rival, not even a fledgling rival. By cutting

down all the tall poppies and stunting the growth of all promising party workers, she converted the Congress into a huge collection of Bonsai plants — full grown but stunted. As a Congress leader nervously confessed: "We have all been muzzled so long that we have forgotten to bark, let alone to bite. All we are capable of is a mere wagging of our tails." Indira Gandhi's technique provided for not only her lifetime supremacy but also for a smooth and swift dynastic succession. The Congress Party of today is entirely her handiwork — a desert presided over by a single small tree with a precarious shadow.

But how long will other Congress leaders continue to seek such a shade

when far more alluring things are available just across the table? Rajiv Gandhi is today the only road-block separating two groups of political activists who otherwise are chips of the same block. Either a fairly large chunk of the Congress may go over to the Janata Dal thereby freeing it from a few mavericks, or a group of the Janata Dal, disgusted with the political haberdashery in the party, may choose to return to the mother party, made more congenial by a new leadership. All this, at the moment of writing is mere fantasy: but in the bizarre world of Indian party alignments, the dreams of today may be overtaken by the realities of tomorrow.

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FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS

Eastern Europe and the Arab World

Ian Tickle

SPR.T. The spectacular events which swept Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea between September and December 1989 and which continue to send ripples through the area and beyond have cast a shadow over the Arab world and its repressive regimes.

For more than four decades, Arab countries have been ruled by absolute monarchies, military dictatorships, single-party hegemonies, or a blend of the latter two, and symbolic democracies. They played East against West and scored off both. The existence of Israel and the plight of the Palestinians united them in rhetoric, in which they are adept.

The richer amongst the Arab countries distributed their bounty, derived from oil, amongst the poorer ones for peace in their time, and the latter held the richer ones to ransom. Some of the radical Arab countries nurtured international terrorism as a political weapon, and in the case of the poorer ones to supplement their revenues.

Eastern Europe has been for some time a source of the illicit supply of weaponry and a venue for military training for some Arab countries; but now with the receding tide of communism there and the advent of democratic regimes, apart from the region's need for the West's economic aid, it is to be expected that that source will dry up. In its present political climate, it is unlikely that the Soviet Union will condone extremism but will in fact oppose it and further cooperate in stabilising the Middle East.

In many Arab countries, only lip service is paid to democracy, and basic principles of human rights are ignored.

In Bahrain, the National Assembly was dissolved in 1976, and in Kuwait it was suspended in 1986 at the height of the Iraq-Iran war. Saudi Arabia had plans for such a body, but nothing tangible has evolved so far. No other Gulf State ever had or has plans for a properly elected representative body. Other Arab countries may have national assemblies, but their members are

either nominated, imposed or not democratically elected and are therefore not truly representative of the electorate.

Perhaps Algeria, Jordan and even South Yemen have sensed the wind of change blowing across Eastern Europe earlier than the others. It is not surprising that Algeria, with a pragmatic leadership, should be the first to feel the chill and introduce reforms which have swept away nearly three decades of one-party rule. This lesson has not been lost on the other Arab countries of North Africa, where Algeria has always had an influence on the political thinking of its neighbours.

Jordan's recently held elections, 22 years after the last National Assembly was dissolved, which were free with all the ingredients of the democratic process, except for the fact that candidates had to run as individuals, and not as members of political parties. These are still banned in Jordan, but Minister Mudar Bardan asked at the new assembly's first session for a vote of confidence in his government, at the same time promising to legalise political parties banned in 1957 and to repeal martial law decreed by King Hussein in

1967. A significant victory was scored by Islamic fundamentalists and their sympathisers, who won some 40% of the seats. Undoubtedly Iraq and Syria must be watching the situation closely, but it is unlikely that either will hasten to make concessions to changing times.

South Yemen, with its Soviet-patterned type of government, has legalised opposition parties and allowed its people to travel abroad and visitors to enter the country freely.

The launching of the European Community as a single economic entity and all that this entails in economic, social and political advantage, together with the political liberation of Eastern Europe under the guidance of Mikhail Gorbachov, gives Arab countries, particularly those of them which had been the Soviet Union's protégés for years, much food for thought. The conservatives amongst those countries will be unable to ignore the march of time for very long. Will they learn their lesson and introduce political, economic and social reforms? Or will they bury their heads, ostrich-like, in the sand? The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab world and beyond will not make their tasks easy.

The Consequences of Soviet Anarchy

SPR.T. President Gorbachov has let it be known for some considerable time that Soviet involvement in other continents would soon be brought to an end. This has been to the great distress of regimes which have so far owed their very existence to Soviet assistance, such as Angola, Ethiopia and South Yemen. In the Caribbean, reaction from Cuba and Nicaragua has been one of defiance, although it is doubtful that either of these unrepresentative regimes will be able to live long without Soviet assistance.

In the countries of Eastern Europe, the boot is on the other foot, but the consequences are likely to be the same. The new governments of these countries want Soviet forces to leave, and Mr. Gorbachov has given every indication that he is ready to bow to their demands. There is no longer any intention whatever of restoring Soviet hegemony in these countries; the danger from the West which has been perceived by Soviet leaders over many decades now no longer exists, given the improvement of relations between the

Soviet Union and the United States.

Yet another crucial matter is the presence of Soviet troops in the Baltic republics, which have formed part of the Soviet Union since 1940. Lithuania is demanding complete independence, and it seems likely that the two other Baltic republics will follow suit. An accessory demand of the popular fronts in these three countries is that Soviet troops should leave. And the Soviet president again seems to have conceded the point.

Nor can we leave unmentioned the change in foreign policy, astonishingly enough — after all that has happened — still less than a year old, which began the whole process: the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and virtually to accept defeat there.

It had been assumed until recently that this immense reduction in military commitments all over the world was essentially due to the fact that if Mr. Gorbachov's economic reforms were to succeed they would have to be accompanied by a rundown in the huge Soviet military establishment, on which a crippling percentage of the national income was being spent.

We may now see another reason. The changes in Eastern Europe have come about relatively peacefully, with the exception of Rumania. Even there, no prolonged period of anarchy followed the violent downfall of the Ceausescu regime. In the Baltic republics of the Soviet Union itself, there has so far been no breath of force from either side.

How different is the case in the Caucasian republics! What we are seeing now is a virtual state of civil war between two constituent republics of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The latter is far the bigger of the two and enjoys the unqualified support of the other Islamic republics of the Soviet Union. Religious fanaticism is fanned by the closeness of theocratic Iran. A state of anarchy exists. The Soviet military has been brought in to ensure that order is restored. If it is not, the Armenians — one of the oldest Christian communities — are likely to suffer a repetition of the terrible massacres which they suffered at the hands of the Turks in the early 1920s. In the face of this serious breakdown in public order, President Gorbachov has for the first time been compelled to use the military

might of the Soviet armed forces. So far, this is being used with circumspection. But the safety of the Armenian Republic must be ensured. The Armenians themselves have already suffered much loss of life, particularly in the pogroms which have taken place in the cities of Azerbaijan and in the isolated region of Nagorno-Karabakh, and they have consequently lost much of the faith they had in Moscow's protection.

This is a storm which has been brewing for over two years. President Gorbachov — with all the sources of information at his command — must have known that it might come to

bloodshed on the present scale. Contingency plans have been made, and now they are being carried out. Once the safety of the Armenians has been assured, the Soviet military will be needed to help if similar disturbances occur in other parts of the Soviet Union.

A breakup of the Soviet Union as a result of violence would serve nobody's purpose, and indeed it would be dangerous to world peace. Now we see that if the Soviet military is withdrawing into its shell it is not only because of the economic needs of perestroika, but also because it is needed at home.

Anti-Semitism in Rumania

The political situation in Rumania is at present far from transparent. But one thing that is certain is that after the demise of the Ceausescu regime a wave of anti-semitism has been shaking the country. This is all the more alarming since there is a large community of Jews in Rumania, most of them in Bucharest.

In large part, this anti-semitism is behind closed doors. But it is a fact that a Rumanian translation of the infamous Protocols of Zion is being sold in some numbers by Bucharest bookshops.

Objections to National Salvation Front members are based not only on their being former Communists but also on their being Jews. President Iliescu's name appears on walls accompanied by the hammer and sickle, but Prime Minister Petre Brocan has the Star of David against his name. A spokesman for the National Peasants' Party was recently heard to say, "To think that our Prime Minister is a Jew; it's a disgrace to the revolution." Shades of the past indeed.

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The ANC Divided

The release of Nelson Mandela is only a beginning. Both the African National Council leader and President de Klerk will have to play a very careful hand. Much has been made of the danger of a white backlash, and it is certainly true that much of the white establishment is unprepared to accept their president's new direction. The events which followed the release of Nelson Mandela show that the police indulged in excesses which were clearly not in line with the new official policy. Such phenomena — and there will doubtless be many of them — will have to be brought under control.

But divisions within the ANC and amongst its supporters are even greater. Already in the few days that Nelson Mandela has spent in freedom he has had to address himself to this. He claims that he believes passionately in racial equality, and there is no reason to doubt it. He has repeated his ringing phrase at the end of his trial: "I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination". This means that as far as he is concerned there is immediate ground for discussion with the white minority government.

But it is not always recognised that divisions in white politics — which have often been publicised as if they were on the same footing as those in a Western European country — are nothing compared with the boiling cauldron of black African politics.

The only thing that seems to unite black South Africans at present is loyalty to the personal stature of Nelson Mandela. Even Chief Buthelezi, the head of the Zulu-led "Inkatha" movement — a man who has often been labelled by sections of the ANC as a collaborationist — shares this view, and he has stated his wish to meet Nelson Mandela as soon as possible.

Nelson Mandela belongs to the old guard of the ANC, those who accept that white fears will have to be accommodated in the South Africa of the future, which is also the basis of President de Klerk's philosophy. But there are other, powerful elements, mainly amongst the younger generation of the ANC, who regard it as an article of faith that transition to majority rule is in itself a precondition for negotiation — their idea is that "people power" must win the day. In the best of all possible worlds, this may be true — but in

today's South Africa it would lead inevitably to civil war.

There is also the Marxist element in the ANC, which believes that a racial revolution in South Africa must inevitably be accompanied by a social revolution, with all power to the State. It is true that this branch of the movement has been considerably decimated as a result of recent events in Eastern Europe, but it still represents a sector which is in no sense committed to moderation.

Like the PLO, the ANC is a very broad label — an *ad hoc* assemblage of many different attitudes and branches of black opinion. The greatest mistake ever made by the apartheid regime was to put its leaders in prison, so that the movement could become dominated by elements which are in no wise what-ever dedicated to a multi-racial State based on accommodation rather than on indiscriminate insistence on the use of force.

All items in this column are
COURTESY: *Swiss Press Review*

UK Attitude to Dalai Lama

Sir, Though martial law has been lifted in Beijing, it is still ruthlessly imposed in Lhasa. Yet last month when we asked in a Lords debate whether, if the exiled Tibetan leader, HH the Dalai Lama, were to visit Britain, a minister would meet him, we were astonished and saddened to hear the answer from the Government front bench that no minister would be permitted to do so.

We are unaware of any other occasion when her Majesty's Government has refused to meet a Nobel prize-winner. Indeed, we know that others, such as Lech Walesa, Archbishop Tutu, and Andrei Sakharov, were received with enthusiasm. Conversely, the Prime Minister has not been afraid to receive leaders who have followed paths not at all associated with peace and of representatives of opposition groups. Examples are leaders of the Palestine Liberation Orga-

nization, the African National Congress, and the Cambodian resistance.

The British Government justifies its treatment of the latest Nobel Laureate as some sort of international pariah by saying that a meeting with him would "be open to misinterpretation". It is an answer that smacks more of fear than of caution. Presidents and prime ministers in Norway, Costa Rica, and Mexico have not been afraid to receive the Dalai Lama, in spite of the threats from Beijing. He is visiting Prague this week, at the invitation of a Government tasting its first weeks of democracy and of a president new to his high office.

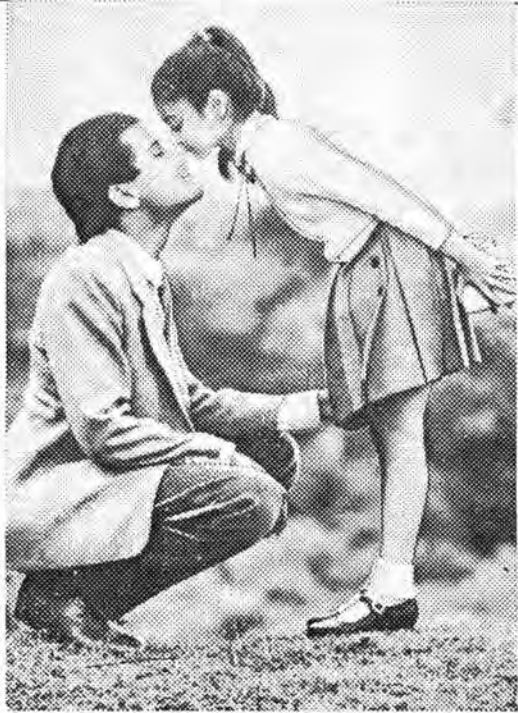
As the winds of change blow across Europe, should we not remember that these movements were led by people and politicians who have stood up, unaf-

raid, for democracy and freedom? Is there not something here from which the British Government should learn in its future dealings with Beijing? When change comes in China, as it is bound to do sooner or later, people will recall those who gave support to the freedom movement and those who refused to do so.

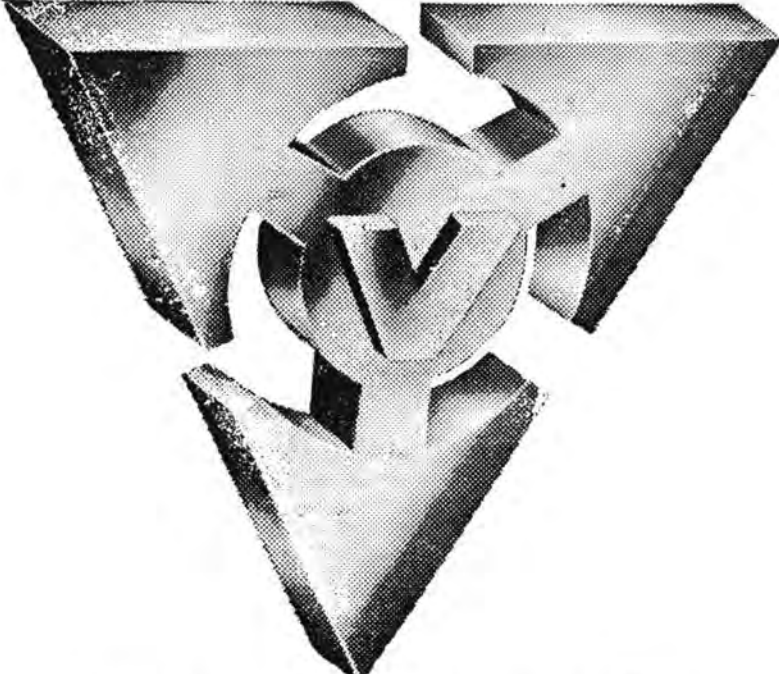
Yours sincerely,
DAVID ENALS,
AVEBURY,
DIANA ELLES,
JANE EWART-BIGGS,
MERSY,
DAVID WILLOUGHBY DE BROKE,

House of Lords,
January 29.

*Text of a letter in The Times (London) of
February 3, 1990*



Never say no to life
Raymond's

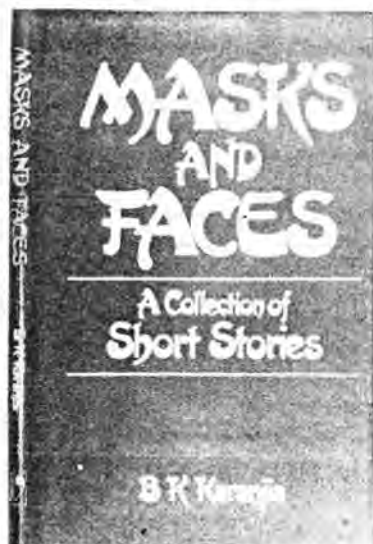


If it's Voltas, it's good

VL/CCC/88

BOOK REVIEWS

MASKS AND FACES by B.K. Karanjia; Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 576, Masjid Road, Jangpura, New Delhi 110 014; 1989; Pp 123; Rs. 125.



Masks and Faces is a collection of fifteen stories, all contributed to various magazines and journals, over a period of years. The title is appropriate for most if not all the stories.

The stories deal with the life of Parsees in Bombay, forty to fifty years ago — their customs, dress, mannerisms, birth, death and marriage rituals. However these descriptions are only at a very general, superficial level and no attempt is made anywhere to delve deeper into Zoroastrian theology or ethics. There is personal involvement of the author in practically all the stories and they are written in the first person singular. It's a leisurely world grounded in social niceties and exuding an old-world charm of faded photographs and pageantry.

This however, is not the only characteristic of the stories. True, the author, like Jane Austen, paints on a small canvas but the colours are rich and varied and there is much of general human interest which makes them truly interesting and heart-warming to read. Each is an exquisitely carved period-piece.

It is evident also that this sensitive author is a great admirer of woman's

beauty. The depictions are sensitive, and even when he describes women of easy virtue, which he often does, he never descends to the level of the vulgar or the crude. He uncovers the mask of their tragic lives; women who do this work for money to help their near and dear ones; women whose lives have sometimes been redeemed by a man's true love as in 'No Statues for Saints'; women who can never aspire to the respectability of wifehood but who can, nevertheless with a little encouragement transform their own lives with hard work; women who are blamed for society's faults but who are actually its victims.

In 'The Better Man', the author shows how difficult it is to understand and know people's minds even though they may be your best friends or perhaps even members of your own family.

My favourite story is 'The Fourth Day'. A father who has died in an accident communicates to his son on the fourth day of his death when he has to prepare himself for the heavenly judgement according to Zoroastrian beliefs. He tells him about the dreams he, as a parent, had dreamt for his son and the plans he had made. He promises he'll be ever close to the son provided he had the patience to listen. There's philosophy too but of a very practical kind.

"We talk of life everlasting. But everlastingness is to be sought not only in our individual lives but in the deep continuity of living".

Quite a few stories have a humorous touch eg. 'The Blessings of Dhujti Doki' which is about a Parsee gentleman who, invited or uninvited made it a habit of attending weddings and partaking of the sumptuous meals. Of course, he always presents a 'parbirun' (cash present). But, in his case it contained neither cash nor cheque but only good wishes for the couple's married happiness.

One fine day he was caught in the act and this put an end to his free-mealing days. However, he would now appear at the beginning rather than the end of the wedding and give his 'parbirun' with his blessings from the Bank of World

Goodwill. Then comes the note of pathos. It appears some time back Dhujti Doki's only son got married against his wishes and he turned him away rudely. Later, the couple died in an air crash in Europe and Dhujti Doki made up for it by blessing every new married couple. This is quite typical of B.K. Karanjia.

The stories are light and easy to read but they are by no means written in a light hearted vein. Sometimes, the poignant climax comes at the end as in the story of the trapeze artists 'Two Mistakes'. Not all the stories are of the same standard and some like 'The Man in Quest of a Gold Mine' are frankly disappointing.

It is no secret that the Parsees are rapidly dwindling in numbers. Perhaps the book captures the flavour of the Parsee middle-class way of life and preserves it for future generations. It's no wonder then that Vijaya Mehta should have selected one of B.K. Karanjia's stories as the plot of her popular play 'Pestonjee'. That story however does not find a place in this collection.

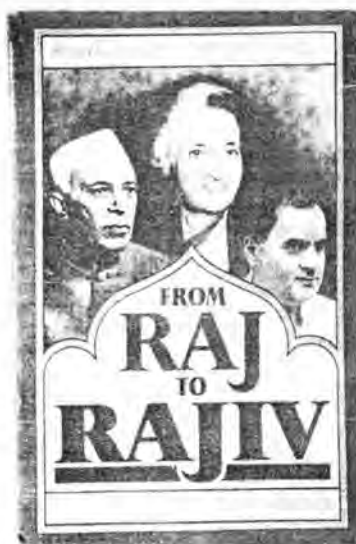
Reviewed by DR. ALOO DALAL, Head of the Department of Political Science, Wilson College, Bombay.

FROM RAJ TO RAJIV by Zareer Masani and Mark Tully; Universal Book Stall, 5, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002; 1988; Pp 174; Rs. 30.

From Raj to Rajiv is not, and am I sure the author will not claim it to be, a scholarly work or a history of 40 years of freedom. There are, unfortunately, many such run of the mill books which pack the shelves and are hawked as authoritative history, when in reality, they generally highlight the activities, comments, actions, and policies of those at the helm of affairs ignoring the under-currents and cross-currents that make or mar the destiny of nations. Lesser known men and women who have played a crucial role at a given

In Calcutta, when people discuss
people, events and news
an important point of reference is
"What did The Statesman say?"





moment are seldom recognised or their contribution recorded.

Independence had raised the hopes and aspirations of Indians. How far have they been fulfilled? What has been the result of India's "tryst with destiny"? What has independence come to mean for the large majority of Indians?

The preface makes it quite apparent that Mark Tully, BBC's highly popular correspondent in India does not suffer from any notions of colonial snobbery and has tried to portray India in its true image. Mark Tully and Zareer Masani, a producer with the BBC, have drawn heavily upon numerous interviews and programmes for this book. Mark Tully's knowledge of Indian affairs and Zareer Masani's academic background have made this book unique in many ways.

The book takes the knowledgeable through memory lane and for the not so knowledgeable opens the door to a highly readable account of major issues that faced India in the post-independence decades.

'Imperial Inheritance' recaptures the dilemma of a fledgling state and the enormous problems the leadership had to grapple with. The widely known differences of opinions and attitudes between Sardar Patel and Nehru are interwoven with incidents and anecdotes that books of history seldom provide.

'Revolution by Consent' is a comparative analysis of Congress stalwarts who then strode the scene. It portrays the conflicting views of the then leadership who nevertheless ensured unanimity in achieving goals. Even if Nehru was the

undisputed leader, the state leaders were no puppets either. Though they posed no challenge to Nehru they were men of stature who had to be reckoned with. At a pitch they could even get Nehru to yield when national interests demanded it. Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit's explanation of the circumstances leading to the resignation of Krishna Menon is a telling example: Says Mrs. Pandit: "Krishna Menon wasn't always straight with him. There were lots of things he knew which he didn't pass on to my brother. And that is the biggest blow my brother had ... when the Cabinet gave him the choice of resigning or getting Krishna to resign".

The shocking revelation of the deception practised on the nation by Nehru in the words of his private secretary, N.K. Seshan is a matter of national shame. Nehru was obsessed with his personal image and utopian ideas. Yet while reading this chapter one cannot help concluding that Nehru's "revolution by consent" was a deception. In fact these were merely cosmetic terms used for a man who still continues to be romanticised in India's political history.

'The Neta Babu Raj' aptly sums up the unholy nexus between leaders and bureaucrats in perpetuating an economy of shortages — what Rajaji called the 'Permit Licence Quota Raj'. Apparently, the authors are quite oblivious of Rajaji's crusade against the system of controls.

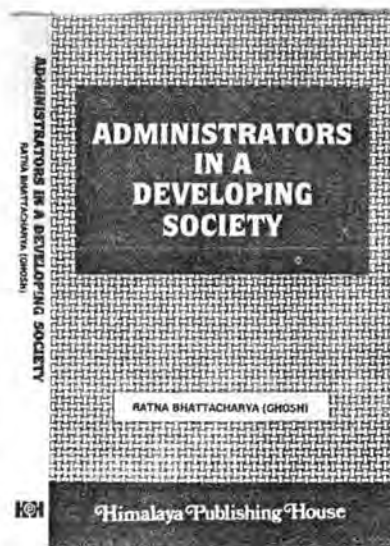
'The Bottom of the Pole' is a gripping account of the malaise that has corroded our political and social fabric where the vested interests in the administration and big business collude to exploit the poor. The suppression of the down-trodden and the perpetuation of a corrupt system have become the unshakable foundation of the 'Neta-Babu Raj'. It is a chapter that should provoke a sense of outrage in all thinking Indians, a telling commentary on our national hypocrisy.

A salient feature of this book is the generous sprinkling of anecdotes and quotes which reveal much. In this respect the authors have done a painstaking job of ferreting out quite a few 'untold stories' adding spice to the book. It is this that makes this book one of its kind. What the authors have sought to do is to set the contemporary scene against the backdrop of recent

history. Another noteworthy aspect is that although the book is political, it is far from being dull and insipid. It is, in fact, a gripping account of events which would not normally find a place in history books.

Reviewed by MR. NITIN G. RAUT, a lawyer by profession.

ADMINISTRATORS IN A DEVELOPING SOCIETY. West Bengal: A study of the problems of the Administrators in Role Performance by Ratna Bhattacharya (Ghosh): Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay; 1989; Pp. 188; Rs. 95.



The politics-administration dichotomy view in the post World War II period is no longer upheld. Increasingly, the interaction between politics and administration is stressed with focus on partnership in policy-making in the higher echelons of government and delivery of goods at the cutting edge of administration. In developing countries in particular, administrators must necessarily play multiple roles, in that they function not only as policy-makers and programme managers, but also as interest brokers, adjudicators and the like. Administrative behaviour in all these functional areas becomes critical. No wonder that from the 1970s a distinct trend in research is to concentrate on the human factor and the socio-cultural environment in administration.

The book under review is one such study of administrators at the state level

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— a tradition and a promise

in a politics-cum-social setting. It is essentially an empirical study which seeks to assess the socio-economic background and attitudinal variables in the higher civil servants of West Bengal. The analysis is done on the basis of data collected through questionnaires distributed to about 250 officers of the IAS (West Bengal Cadre) and the West Bengal Civil Service of whom only 109 responded.

The study purports to examine fourteen attitudinal or psychological variables, such as attitude to social transformation, national integration, and political interference in relation to nine background variables identified as age, caste, education, income, medium of instruction in school and college, service category and father's occupation and income. The attitudinal variables have been measured in an ordinal scale. Through factor analysis, the author has identified the five common factors that underlie the fourteen variables. These relate to political pressure assessment, perceived harmony in administration, job satisfaction, 'socialization barriers' and generalist-specialist harmony. The first three factors which account for more than 70% of the total variance indicate that though administrators are affected in their role performance by political pressure and interference, they are, by and large, satisfied with the general work atmosphere and do experience job satisfaction. The study is replete with tables analysing data that the author has painstakingly collected and worked upon in order to authenticate her findings in a convincing way.

The contention of the author that her work fills a gap in state level studies in development administration is justified. Though empirical studies are plentiful, they are largely micro studies concentrating on a specific government level most often the district, or examining the operational aspects of specific schemes like anti-poverty programmes. Many cover field administrators especially in the context of Panchayati Raj or engage in the specialist generalist debate or official non-official relationships. Ms Bhattacharya's work has added significance because in covering a leftist ruled state like West Bengal it facilitates comparison and contrast with administrators at other state and central levels. Thereby it adds to the corpus of knowl-

edge on the federal dimension of our political system. Also, research studies of the kind could possibly lead to theorising on bureaucratic behaviour.

The author's endeavour to relate her research findings to similar studies both in India and abroad is well taken. However, if attention is not paid to the time-frame of these studies there is always the risk of making facile but misleading comparisons. The study would be more meaningful if all the higher civil servants of West Bengal were covered and the number of respondents was higher. With bureaucrats increasingly viewed as change-agents, administration for development must put the spotlight on administrative behaviour and work processes. A study of this kind which does exactly this, is a commendable exercise.

It is to be hoped that it will be read by students of public administration.

Reviewed by. DR. MARINA PINTO, Reader in Public Administration, Department of Civics & Politics, University of Bombay.

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY AND THE NEW LEARNING (Raja Rammohun Roy Memorial Lectures) edited by B.P. Barua; Orient Longman, Calcutta; 1988; pp.109; Price Rs 100.



Raja Rammohun Roy is generally and rightly regarded as the pivotal figure in India's transition from the medieval to the modern age. His seminal ideas representing the spirit of modernity, his quest for religious and social universalism based on rational-

ism, and his arduous exertions in the field of practical reform to improve the quality of Indian life, marked the beginning of what is known as the Indian Renaissance. In the words of Justice Ranade, the essence of the reform movement which Rammohun initiated was to "humanise, equalise and spiritualise".

This historical image of Rammohun as the authentic 'father figure' of Modern India has lately been disputed by some historians by raising controversies over certain issues associated with his name. The fact, however is that, despite considerable research, some facets of Rammohun's life and thought still remain to be adequately explored and appreciated. It is in this respect that the book under review, which is a collection of nine Raja Rammohun Memorial lectures organised by the R.R. Library Foundation, Calcutta, since 1972, makes a significant contribution. These lectures by eminent scholars help further our understanding of the man and the moderniser that Rammohun was.

"Raja Rammohun Roy: A Bicentenary Tribute", is the inaugural address by Smt. Indira Gandhi. While paying a rich tribute to Rammohun's profound scholarship, his concept of, and quest for modernity and to his manifold contributions to national regeneration, Smt. Gandhi chides those historians who are trying to raise needless controversies over his place in Indian history and observes: "No great movement or achievement is ever the work of a single individual. When we say that Rammohun Roy heralded the modern age in India or that Mahatma Gandhi brought us freedom or that Jawaharlal Nehru moulded India, we are not ignoring the contributions made by countless others, but the statements nevertheless are true as intrinsic generalizations."

Krishna Kripalani makes an illuminating comparative study of the two kindred spirits and crusaders for social justice — Rammohun Roy and Mahatma Gandhi — wholly dedicated to the welfare, material and moral, of their people in their own time and in their own dissimilar ways. Curiously, Mahatma Gandhi in some of his utterances in the early 1920's seemed to take a dim view of Rammohun's achievements in terms of his impact on

the Indian people, though only in comparison with the great men of an earlier day like Chaitanya, Sankara, Kabir and Nanak. These saints, said the Mahatma, communicated with the people entirely in their own idiom, of language and of spirit, while much of Rammohun's work was addressed to the elite. Gandhi held Rammohun responsible for the introduction of English education, which he believed to be the bane and blight of the country. Obviously, Gandhi's knowledge of Rammohun's social and educational ideas was desultory. This is the point which Kripalani clearly brings out and wonders how Gandhi, in spite of his sharing so many spiritual strands with Rammohun "did not care to know more about his predecessor and allowed his political bias against English education to warp his judgement of the man who, he believed, was responsible for the introduction of this evil in India".

The justness of Rammohun's advocacy of New Learning for the regeneration of India is discussed at length in R.K. Dasgupta's "Rammohun Roy and the New Learning". As against traditional learning, Rammohun urged the Government to promote "a more liberal and more enlightened system of education embracing Mathematics, Natural philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences". The new learning was for him a great deal more than a pedagogical question of the medium of instruction. His idea of new learning is to be understood in the context of his conception of a new humanity, a new international order. He contemplated an important role for his country in the creation of that humanity and that order.

Critics have pointed out a certain ambivalence in Rammohun's economic philosophy. This was due to the apparent contradiction between his ideas for the protection of oppressed ryots and his sympathy for the Zamindars. He also supported the Planters and British business which, we know from hindsight, were not exactly in the interests of the country. What prompted Rammohun to take such a position in the given historical situation is sought to be explained in B. Dutta's paper, "Background of Raja Rammohun Roy's Economics."

Prof. Nurul Hasan deals with "The Mughal Background of Raja Rammohun Roy's Thought" with a

Rammohun Roy

Ram Mohun Roy elicited a great deal of interest among his American contemporaries particularly the evangelical group. W. Adam, was to speak of him with enthusiasm. J. Tuckerman was interested in highlighting that Roy is a Christian if Unitarians are Christians mainly if one were to argue from the precepts of Jesus. Though Baptist missionaries such as Marshman and Carey have described Roy as a heathen, Tuckerman argues that Ram Mohun is a true Christian.

However, Ram Mohun had not abandoned his caste; only with his caste in fact he would be able to protect his property, his esteem and yet at the same time would promote Christian values. If he were to throw away the *poita* the sacred thread, he would be reduced to beggary and he will lose his influence. Let him have his caste identities and be a Brahmin but in promoting Unitarianism he is acting like a Christian. Tuckerman ends by saying "Let him who has done or who is doing more for the cause of the gospel of Christ, cast the first stone." *Christian Examiner* (Boston) September and October 1826.

Though Ram Mohun died in September 1833 his death was reported in the *Examiner* only in July 1834 and in the *American Almanac* in 1835.

The *Almanac* writes: "Ram Mohun Roy was about six feet high, and large in proportion but his person, though not wanting in apparent symmetry, was unwieldy and without activity. (This sentence is directly taken from the *Annual Register*, 1833); His features were large, manly and fine; his countenance very dark, with a sallow tinge of death; but his eye was full of Asiatic fire — In politics he was a zealous republican; expressed warmly his hearty approbation of all liberal institutions..."

His remains were silently interred lest "the bigoted countrymen" attack further his property or children.

The *Almanac* also quotes from the *Gentlemen's Magazine*.

"It is added that, as soon as he thought himself seriously ill, he called his native servant, Ram Rattan to him and directed him to closely observe all his activities, that he might, on his return to India, testify to his countrymen that he had never changed his religion, or lost his caste; and that the servant, when the Rajah was in the extremities of death, actually went through the rites of the Brahminical religion".

RS

view to providing a historical explanation for the emergence of the composite culture in the country which was so well represented in the life and thought of Rammohun Roy. Prof. Satish Chandra presents a perceptive analysis of "Integration, Dynamism and Stagnation in Indian Culture", the knowledge of which, he argues, is necessary to evaluate Rammohun's historic role.

Rammohun's quest for rationalism and tolerance, and the origin, nature and growth of Indian liberalism form the subject matter of the last three papers of T.N. Chaturvedi, Amlan Dutta and A.D. Pant respectively. They all emphasise the relevance of Rammohun today.

In his foreword, D.P. Chattopadhyaya has rightly observed that the learned papers contained in this volume, in spite of their thematic diversity, highlight one great aspect of Raja Rammohun Roy: he wished to see the new India built on its old foundations but refusing no light coming from whatever quarter.

Reviewed by J.V. NAIK, Reader, Department of History, University of Bombay.

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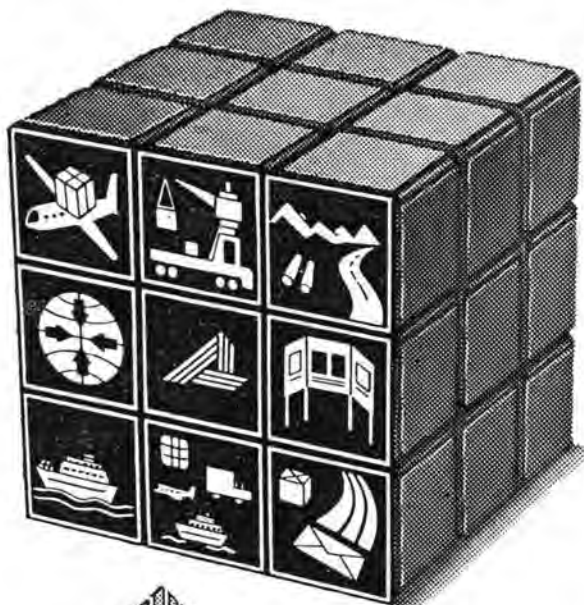
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SARDAR SAROVAR PROJECT

An Economic, Environmental and Human Disaster



Narmada Bachao Andolan

AN APPEAL

The movement against the Sardar Sarovar Project will succeed because it stands for sanity, justice and the true public interest as against the vested interests of politicians and bureaucrats. If the colossal human and environmental tragedy it threatens is to be averted, the movement needs your support.

The struggle requires funds.

If you can help the movement in any way please contact:

Narmada Bachao Andolan
A/51, Ocean Gold Apartments
Twin Tower Lane, Prabhadevi
Bombay 400 025.

Since the 27th of March protesters of the Narmada Bachao Andolan have been trying unsuccessfully, to meet Maharashtra state government officials to plead their case to save their lands and homes which will go under water, thanks to the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP).

The SSP Reservoir will submerge 248 villages — 193 in Madhya Pradesh, 19 in Gujarat and 36 in Maharashtra — displacing over 1,00,000 people. Also to be lost are 13,744 hectares of forests and more than 11,318 hectares of agricultural land, some of it among the most fertile in the world.

Is it any wonder that larger numbers from the affected villages and active members of the Andolan are on hunger-strike in the vicinity of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly in Bombay to draw the state government's attention to the parlous state of the villages in Maharashtra bordering the proposed dam?

By June this year 3 to 9 villages in Maharashtra will be submerged by the waters of the Narmada. It is not as though this was not known to the inter-state Narmada Control Authority. In fact their attention has been drawn to this but they are still to act.

Human and sociological factors take the last priority in Indian politics. And, if they are poor, and rural, despite the socialist rhetoric, they are all but ignored.

By June, in all probability, over 400 villagers living in the project's vicinity will be compelled to abandon the land of their forefathers. Yet, they have not even been officially intimated of the impending doom.

Ironically, while some mega business groups sedulously pursue the Sardar Sarovar programme unmindful of the human cost involved, the small farmers of Kutch and Kathiawar have been asking for water to restore greenery and halt the desert's advance by using alternative technologies. Their case is yet to be heard.

This is the tragedy of Indian planning.. On the one hand drive out villagers from their lands which, in most case are fertile, and on the other hand deny water to farmers who desperately need it!

Time and again a mindless bureaucracy and a cynical class of politicians have ridden roughshod over people in order to achieve their ends. It is time we pause and ask ourselves : Who is to control our future — We the citizens or outsiders who have interests other than the welfare of the people.