

Discipline and Morale in the Indian Army

S. C. Sharma

There is plenty of disturbing news: Enquiry against officers of general rank for alleged breach of procedure in the procurement of Barak missiles and coffins; dereliction of duty during the Kargil operations; appeals to the courts for promotions; and postings and violence against superior officers. Are these incidents indicative of a rot setting in?

Or do we consider them as minor events in the context of a 1.2 million strong army taking shelter in the clichés that there will always be some black sheep and the law takes its course. In this connection it might be useful to recall that the Army has been the only organization to have taken action against the guilty officers involved in the Tehelka exposé. It is fortunate that the Defence forces cannot hide behind the protective shield of having to take the prior approval of the Central Government before launching prosecution.

Tight Civilian Authority

An increase in the number of appeals to civilian courts for appointments and promotions or against the judgment of courts martial is not due to the system being unfair. Every individual has the right to think himself to be the best. They go to the courts since this provision is available. This rush to the courts is unique to India and is of recent origin. Field Marshal Wavell never uttered a protest when eased out. His biographer writes “the sword was sheathed and he lived a quiet life.” Nehru had wanted to bypass General Cariappa in the appointment of the Comandcr in Chief of the Indian Army. The two senior officers next in line, Generals Rajendra Singh and Nathu Singh declined the offer. During the debate in parliament on the resignation of Gen Thimayya, Nehru had promised reform for the redressal of grievances by setting up a machinery like the UK Army Council but nothing has been done. It would appear there is a clear reluctance to loosen civilian authority.

There has been an alarming increase in the number of members of the Armed Forces using the influence of senior civil, military bureaucrats and politicians for minor advantage. This is symptomatic of the change in the social system. Solzhenitsyn describes it as “operating to the extreme limits of the legal framework.” That others cannot get similar advantage is of no concern to him. Postings, promotions and employment have to be done in the best

interests of the service and the desire to place rights before obligations needs to be curbed.

Military Justice System

An increase in the number of crimes and appeals against courts martial are not indicative of bad discipline and of an unfair military justice system. The aim of military justice is to ensure that the Army is capable and ready to meet the commitments of ensuring national security; the command authority is best left to decide the severity of the lapse in military discipline and

-  **Inside**
- ▶ [Why Futures are Farmer Friendly](#)
 - ▶ [Point Counter Point](#)
 - ▶ [A Wedding Affair](#)
 - ▶ [Cornucopia](#)
 - ▶ [Book Review](#)
 - ▶ [Between Ourselves](#)
 - ▶ [Many Voices](#)

behaviour; determine the importance of the orders and the circumstances warranting severe punishment or clemency. In the United States, the Pentagon advised the Supreme Court that the objective of the armed forces was national security. As for the crime rate in the US Army, during the Second World War there was one disciplinary case for every ten soldiers.

Discipline is not merely obeying orders or not committing a fault. It is the ability of a body of troops to respond enthusiastically and vigorously to the commander's orders and all the institutions in the Army are designed towards that end.

Morale is the Key

The rulers of Pakistan have nearly always made their plans on the presumption that the morale of the Indian Army is low. A directive by Field Marshal Ayub Khan's directive reads: "The Hindu psyche is such that one hard knock will demoralise them." The Kargil operation was launched on such a presumption. What do we understand by morale and what role does it play? Tolstoy, who did not think much of the intellectual ability of the generals he knew, considered all talk of strategy and tactics as of no consequence. "The battle is decided when 10,000 soldiers can say 'hurrah' and 100,000 enemy run away." Napoleon would put the same characteristic in military language "morale to physical is ten is to one". When one of his Marshals was hard pressed, he shouted "My left has been pushed back, my centre is under pressure, and it is the right time to attack" and he won against all odds. Morale is that invisible, intangible characteristic which achieves success by defying the arithmetic of numbers of men or superiority of weapons or the principles laid down in military text books on strategy and tactics. It inspired Abdul Hamid to pit himself against the steel monster - the enemy tank. It has been stated by the Afghan Mujahiddin that they found the Indian soldier a tougher enemy than Soviet gun-helicopters.

Morale cannot be measured. How can we be sure then? There are indicators - judgment of experienced senior officers, working enthusiasm, absence of cribbing, an aggressive spirit and commitment to the task on hand. It is built up by confidence in the cause, in the superiors, and in the weapons. The *cliché* that man matters more than the machine is only half true. It has to be supplemented with confidence in the weapons.

Understanding by the political leadership, backing by the people and media, are vital for high morale. Our Armed Forces have been lucky to have enjoyed the

support, even adulation of the people. In the Kargil operations, the media played a praiseworthy role. This has not always been the case. In peacetime, carefully planted stories are given undue prominence and the other side of the story is ignored. Part of the blame is that of the Ministry of Defence for they do not readily come out with explanations. Recently a commotion was created by the media about the death of a girl in Manipur. The Government should have clarified that the Assam Rifles is not under the Army but comes under Home Ministry discipline. The Army took the blame unjustly.

Political Interference

The support by the political leadership is in doubt. Interference in personnel management, lack of appreciation in pay and allowances, lack of urgency in procurement of contemporary weapon systems are serious handicaps. Counter-insurgency operations cause severe stress on Army personnel. It is confusing to the military that the leaders talk of peace when there is a bloody war on. It is certainly demoralizing when a nexus between insurgents and politicians is ignored. A feeling builds up in the ranks of the Armed Forces that the political leadership is not serious or lacks the will to combat insurgency and terrorism.

The Tamilnadu Government continued to give help to the LTTE even when the Indian Army had a mandate to fight them. The Andhra Government was holding the Naxal leaders in friendly embrace declaring them to be "our children" ignoring that they were responsible for the death of a few hundred police personnel and innocent citizens. All this changed when one MLA was killed. The 'children of the lesser god' can die. The police in Canada and UK have a tradition that the killer of a policeman should not escape punishment. This has made it possible for them to carry out their duties without arms. The CIA went to considerable effort to successfully arrest the killer of two CIA agents by a Pakistani national in the USA. It is high time that the political leadership in India took the task of combating insurgency seriously.

The difficulties of the Army have been aggravated by a shortage of officers. If there are no volunteers for the Army, we should resort to compulsory military service, like many countries have done in periods of a crisis.

Article based on the proceedings of a half-day discussion held in Mumbai on February 23, 2007 and sponsored by Freedom First. The discussion was chaired by Vice Admiral (Retd.) I. C. Rao.

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Why Futures are Farmer Friendly

Sharad Joshi

On February 27, 2007, at a meeting in Alwar in Rajasthan, the President of the Kisan Coordination Committee announced that the farmers of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh had decided to sell their wheat in the ensuing season, through one of the Futures Exchanges.

The very next day, making an extempore addition to his prepared budget speech, the Finance Minister announced the government's decision to take wheat and paddy out of the Futures market.

The declaration of the government's decision so closely following the decision of the farmers' organisations could not be a coincidence. The government has deliberately thrown a gauntlet at the farmers and the farmers will respond in full measures.

Last year the government allowed the entry of private traders. The ensuing competition allowed the farmers to get a price of about Rs. 100/- above the procurement price per quintal. The minister for Agriculture has often vaunted this accomplishment. It was expected that the government would continue with the openness in the market this year too.

The entry of private traders last year has not, in any manner, affected the overall stock position of wheat in the country. For some mysterious reason in June 2006, traders in Chicago were already talking about the possibility of India importing around 10 lakhs tonnes of wheat, while the minister for agriculture was stoutly holding that there would be no need for imports of wheat that year. And yet, the Government of India imported something like 30 lakhs tonnes of wheat. The purchase was made at a price much higher than the domestic price in India. The government justified the dumping operation by saying that the imports will be unloaded and used in south India, thus reducing the cost of transport and putting the imported

wheat on par with north Indian wheat. It would appear that this was an *ex post de facto* reasoning and that the decision about imports had been made much earlier in the year.

The massive import had nothing to do with purchases by private traders. However, the left allies of the UPA government, always on the lookout for excuses to blame free trade, mounted a campaign against the government on this score. By then, inflation had become a hot political issue. The leftists and some of the NGOs mounted an attack on Futures trading claiming that the inflation was caused by the Futures traders. On the eve of budget day, the Congress was mauled at the hustings in Punjab and Uttarakhand. In a knee-jerk reaction, the government decided to take wheat and paddy out of the Futures market.

The Rural Perspective



Earlier, the government had already sent a message to private companies not to enter the wheat market till the Food Corporation of India (FCI) had had its fill. Instructions were also given to the Railway authorities not to book railway wagons except for the FCI. Thus cornered, private traders decided to give a walk over to the FCI and re-

frain from entering the wheat market.

With both private trade and the Futures market banned, the wheat growers had no option but to accept the paltry procurement price offered by the FCI and sell their produce exclusively to it.

In all probability, the farmers' organisations will retaliate by boycotting the FCI procurement. The ensuing wheat procurement season threatens to be a hot one.

What was the farmers' plan for selling wheat in the futures market?

Some of the Futures market platforms offer operations through the Internet. Some of them also provide warehousing facilities. Any farmer can take his produce

to one of these warehouses and store his produce there after due verification of quality and grade. He has the possibility of visually knowing the going spot price as also the futures prices in various languages on the monitor. He can decide to sell at the current price, in which case he gets the full amount in cash. Alternatively, if he decides to sell on a convenient future date, he gets an advance of around 70-75% of the current price as also a warehousing receipt, which is a negotiable instrument. On the expiry of the contract date, the holder of the warehousing receipt is assured of getting the contracted price.

The farmers have no difficulty in understanding such a trading practice and would opt for the Futures market through the Internet rather than suffer the bureaucratic hassles of the FCI. Unfortunately, our left intellectuals are still under the notion that Futures markets are pure speculation indulged in by unscrupulous traders.

There indeed was a time when a farmer was not a participant in the Futures trade and the Futures markets could therefore be used for speculation. When the Futures market is open to farmers, the market takes on an entirely different aspect.

The farmer produces crops of different types and thus creates the “form” utility. The socio-economic and political framework makes it difficult for him to change the form of his produce through value-addition. It is also difficult for him to make his produce available at a geographically separated location where the prices may be better. He knows well that the immediate post-harvest prices are low and that the prices would rise in about three to four months. However, he is unable to take advantage of it for want of waiting power.

At the same time, there are traders and consumers who need the farmers produce, but at geographical locations separated from the point of production or at a point of time in the future. The objective is to avoid costs of transport and storage.

The Futures markets bring together these two elements in the

economy and match the offers to sell and the bids to purchase. For the first time, the farmers would be able to choose the price at which to sell their produce. The operations of “hedging” and “options” only facilitate price discovery and the risk covering operation. They can be misused but to a very limited extent under the present regimes which provide for physical delivery in most cases.

According to data published by the Economic Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture, the average rate of increase in prices of food items was 9.6%. The food items that **are not** traded on the futures markets like jowar, bajara, moong, fruit, coriander, tea and coffee have shown hikes of 10.0, 10.8, 12.8, 35.7, 13.0, 17.4 and 14.3% respectively. On the other hand, produce like wheat, maize, gram, urad, pepper and chillies that **are** traded on the Futures have shown rates of increase of 17.4, 14.5, 30.1, 39.8, 46.8 and 61.3% respectively. This is a practical confirmation of the theory that Futures markets by themselves do not lend to any increase in prices.

Unfortunately, the popular impression is to the contrary and the Finance minister is in no position to be market savvy and must bow to the perceptions of illiterate masses and an ignorant leadership.

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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man studies all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to debate opposing viewpoints so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Civic Elections in Maharashtra

● Results of the elections held in early February for 10 Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra, apparently indicate that the Shiv Sena/BJP combine scored well and its opponents (Congress, NCP) fared badly. This impression is created by the Sena's victory in Mumbai, which is considered a matter of prestige. Hair-splitting might indicate that the NCP did not do too badly, outside Mumbai. In fact, the overall figures may indicate a fall in the Shiv Sena/BJP holding in the State and increase in the Congress share. Statistics can be turned around to prove anything – victory into defeat and defeat into victory. The striking point was that the Shiv Sena, which appeared to be gasping for its last breath due to defections, did well. In electoral arithmetic, it scored over its opponents. Can it be called the victory of communalist forces over secular forces? Does ideology play a part in such elections?

Why is so much importance being given to ideological positions in civic matters? How does ideology matter in improving civic amenities? These are issues on which good administration is all that matters. Civic authorities do not decide the economic agenda or foreign policy or security related issues. They simply decide on taxes to carry out civic programmes – or at least they are supposed to do so. By bringing politics into every field, we divert attention from the civic problems and give them a divisive tilt. Programmes that should be acceptable across the board, are tied up in debate, criticised and often made controversial just because one party suggests these programmes and the other party feels duty bound to oppose them. A time has come when even at the national level, politics needs to be kept out of subjects like foreign and defence policies. Could we not start with civic matters, unshackle them from ideological straitjackets and leave the best administrators to provide us good roads, clean water and clean environment? Let us leave more complicated matters like unemployment, food, security and shelter to politicians to mess up! Even these could perhaps be better handled by non-politicians.

Note: Election results in Punjab and Uttarakhand underline the conclusion that it is not a battle of ideologies; price rise and anti-incumbency are the causative factors. Secularism and communalism are mere tools for the wordsmiths.

Freedom of Expression!

● There is a book called “13 December: A Reader – The Strange Case of the Attack on the Indian Parliament”. It does not deserve to be taken note of but with our desire to see the other side of the coin, we must understand what even the most perverse argument in any case is. It also underlines our faith in the idea of freedom of expression, however repugnant the expression may be. The book is a compilation of essays (?) to prove that the attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001 was not a simple terrorist attack as we were led to believe but a hotchpotch of confused investigation, torture of suspects, deliberate lies, false propaganda and absence of proper legal help for Mohammed Afzal Guru. A man should not be hanged with such meager proof; there should

The whole exercise is to save Mohammed Afzal Guru from the gallows. Arundhati Roy concedes that Afzal may not be “wholly innocent”. The opposition to capital punishment *per se* is understandable but is Afzal being made a martyr? Every piece of evidence against him is peremptorily dismissed. His own confession is unacceptable because it was obtained under duress. His brother's accusation that Afzal is guilty is rejected as concocted. In the US, there is an industry built around expounding the most bizarre explanation of a sensational happening. Every incident, when reconstructed later, leaves many unexplained holes in the story. There are profit making experts who point to these holes, write research papers and debate no end to suggest that things are not what they are depicted by the authorities. Something must be amiss; novels are then written and films produced to titillate the populace with a ‘who done it?’ The recent example is the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center in the US. Volumes have come out to prove that the whole thing was a Pentagon/CIA plot to allow Bush to attack Afghanistan and Iraq. Our own ‘wise men’ have swallowed the argument hook, line and sinker, without a thought, as it fits into their anti-US mind-set. Similar arguments

be an independent enquiry to get to the root of the entire conspiracy since the STF and Delhi Police who investigated the case could not be trusted. Fifteen keen minds including the venerable Arundhati Roy believe it to be so and write vehemently to prove their point of view. They do not require any evidence to prove their contention but the inveterate belief that the “establishment “ is never up to any good and would do anything to destroy its enemies. They do not analyze the prosecution case and refute each charge but use the tactic of obfuscation to confuse the reader. There is no line of argument that one can follow or dismiss but a jumble of allegations and instant conclusions. They do not explain what independent authority they would trust to enquire into the matter, since they do not trust the Supreme Court. Where else is one supposed to go to find the truth?

Match Fixing

● Just prior to the Cricket World Cup, another match fixing controversy has broken out with the epicenter again in India. Why does it have to be India? Is it because betting is banned in India? Is it because there is so much money riding on cricket in India? Most cricket pundits agree that it is difficult to fix the result of a match unless five or six major players join the conspiracy, which is very difficult to achieve as Hansie Cronje found out with his own team. He confessed to having received money to fix things but denied having fixed the result of any match.

West Indies all-rounder, Marlon Samuels, who was in constant touch with a person (Mukesh Kochar) suspected to be a bookie, on the eve of an ODI in Nagpur (Jan 21), is on the mat this time. Kochar says that Marlon is like his son and he was only wishing Marlon best of luck before the match. Great! The Nagpur police have also admitted that they have not found any money trail and, therefore, they have nothing further to do. ICC is seized of the matter now. What is all the fuss about then? Can the game be fixed at all without a major chunk of players joining the racket?

are offered to hint that the CIA at the behest of the military-industrial complex killed JFK. We have doubting Thomases in India who believed that Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated at the behest of the government since he had become an embarrassment; Sanjay Gandhi was killed because of the money he refused to hand over and so on. Now, we can request Arundhati Roy and her colleagues to let us know how the 1993 bomb blasts in Mumbai were the handy work of the police to persecute innocent Dawood Ibrahim and Tiger Memon; how the train blasts of 7/11 in Mumbai were organised to blame the minority community; and the attacks on Akshardham, Ayodhya, Varanasi and Delhi's Sarojini Nagar were all part of horrendous conspiracies by Indian intelligence agencies! We are waiting breathlessly!

“Match fixing” is a much-misunderstood term. In fact, results of matches are hardly ever “fixed”. It is the sub-plots within a match that are easy to fix, like who will open the batting or bowling, who will come one down or as a third bowler, etc. ICC is aware of these dangers and has set a code of conduct, prohibiting passing any information that would give inside knowledge to a bookie. Samuels did pass on information that he would bowl as the first change and a debutant would open the West Indian batting. According to an expert, each bit of information was worth Rs.50 crore to a bookie. Why would Samuels pass on such information even to a father figure? Let us see what ICC does with this bomb; or will it also get stumped by requirements of proof that can stand scrutiny in a court of law?

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

Reader Response

On Amoral Power

Please do not blame Indians alone for what seems to be a universal phenomena (Cornucopia, *Freedom First*, No.471)

You have to see the behavior of local Arabs towards everybody else in Dubai to see how demeaning they can be. The young males roister around on the roads, confident that no one will touch them for fear of facing terrible consequences from the local police.

And as for the females, who no doubt get the wrong

end of the stick at home, they pass on similar boorish behaviour to everyone. Gas station attendants, supermarket staff and those in beauty parlours are at the receiving end of their uncouth and churlish behavior. Seeing that one is not amazed at the stories which regularly appear of household staff being traumatised physically and mentally, little do they realise how they are exposing their own lack of breeding and uncivilised culture.

Kusum Chopra

A Wedding Affair

Kusum Chopra

Recently couch potatoes were treated to public outrage on a news channel. The outrage came from viewers as well players in the drama which unfolded in Bhopal where a young bride chose the *Varmala* ritual in the wedding proceedings to take a stand. Bypassing her waiting groom, the young lady placed her garland around the neck of her boyfriend who had been invited to the wedding.

The groom's side and practically all the male viewers who phoned in were almost apoplectic over the bride's *perfidy* in handing out such an insult to the groom, his *baraat* and *Bharatiya Sanskriti* which demands strict obedience of parental orders by girls. The outrage over the bride's insult to the groom and his *baraat* and her attack on Hindu *sanskriti* had to be seen to be believed. What was that all about?

Our hoary traditions prescribe a *Swyamvar* wherein the bride selects her groom in an open assembly by placing a garland around his neck. Over the centuries the demands of patriarchy have transformed this Lady's Choice into a *Varmala* ceremony wherein the bride is usually compelled to place the garland around a groom of her parents' choice.

How much of the outrage was male ire at the Bhopal lass who had reinstated the original *Swyamvar* concept, obviously in the face of parental pressure to drop her boyfriend and marry the groom of their choice

The very stridency of the male outrage over the terrible loss to the groom's family, not of his bride, but of the prospective expenses on the wedding dinner they had planned on the return back home sounded obnoxious. The groom's family had apparently already given their caterer a down payment for the five hundred odd guests they were expecting.

The obvious question: All this concern over the waste of expenses of the groom's side? The world and his wife knows that the major expenses in an Indian wedding are on the bride's side, from the trousseau and gifts to all and sundry, to dowry and staging the actual wedding with all its peripheral pre and post events, all expensive affairs with lavish settings, sumptuous food and gifts galore. Would the bride's family not suffer much more losses? Why did no one think or comment on that?

Dowry is an ancient tradition which is spreading its evil tentacles even in those communities which never

knew it before; this serves to load the dice against the arrival of the girl child in any family. With all the leaders of society leading the trend away from simple dowry-less weddings, is it any wonder that commerce is taking over where tradition left off. All the TV channels and magazines are replete with ad. campaigns and coverage of lavish spreads of jewelry, designer clothes and accessories, marriage melas and fairs, bank loans to fund all that razzmatazz and so on. The icing on that cake is of course, all those weepy *saas bahu* (Mother-in-law/daughter-in-law) soaps.

Did no one recall those thousands of weddings over the years, in which the groom's party had wrecked trauma, havoc, ruin and even death by walking away from the *mandap* over dowry issues or even just how well they were or were not received and looked after by the bride's family!

Considering the dramatic sequence of events as it unfolded, obviously the bride had failed to move her parents on her choice and had been willy nilly railroaded into the wedding, with perhaps little help from the young man of her choice; she had apparently had to practically order him when she rang up to invite him to the wedding. Was that perhaps why the last minute mustering up of courage to place the garland on the correct neck, leaving him as much surprised as her family and *baraat* was aghast?

Yes, one would definitely have wished that the bride had been more discreet and not made her preference known so publicly; but perhaps that is the point: That when she told her parents in private, they were not moved. Hence a public show to force their hands?

The preponderance of male viewers calling in to breathe fire and brimstone against the errant bride, with only a couple of rather subdued female call-ins raised suspicions that the female sympathisers from countless middle class homes could not possibly express their solidarity with the brave bride on air; because the telecast took place at eventide when they would have to do with their *Papajis* and *Bhaijans* breathing disapprovingly over their shoulder, as menfolk are wont to do when their womenfolk are on the phone?

For all the tall talk and headlines of women racing ahead, *ghar ghar ki kahani* still prevails, does it not? Hats off to the young lady from Bhopal who resurrected the *Swyamvar* tradition.

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Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

Cheque and Mate

Considering the sad fact that we Indians have notoriously poor memories, a little background may be provided here. Back in the 1980's, when Rajiv Gandhi was India's Prime Minister, the Indian army placed a massive order for 155 mm field howitzers on arms manufacturer Bofors AB of Sweden. It was widely believed that Bofors had paid massive kickbacks to procure the contract. The name of the middleman associated with the scandal was Ottavio Quattrocchi, an Italian businessman who represented the petrochemicals firm, Snamprogetti. Quattrocchi was close to the family of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his wife Sonia currently President of the Indira Congress.; and emerged as a powerful broker in the '80s between big business and the Indian government. The charges against Quattrocchi are still pending.

The Quattrocchi drama, currently being played out among India's politicians and the media, is like an elaborate game of chess. F.O.S (Friend Of Sonia) Ottavio has already cashed his cheque and he has an unshakeable mate in Mrs. Gandhi. The outcome should be obvious to all but the impossibly idealistic and naïve.

If the information about Quattrocchi's detention had not been leaked, it is a safe bet that the CBI would have experienced convenient amnesia and the extradition deadline would have been allowed to pass without a murmur. The boss lady does not want her dear friend to be harassed – and that would have been that. The so-called independence of India's investigative agencies is a myth that has been busted long ago.

Once the news did become public, Mrs. Gandhi and her sycophantic coterie went into emergency damage control. And they were not the only ones. Quattrocchi's son flew into Delhi to remind "Sonia Aunty" to stand firm. He need not have bothered. Mrs. Gandhi's "loyal soldiers" may be expeditiously expendable, but she stands by her friends. There is no way Ottavio is going to be brought back to India to stand trial – not on her watch.

And so the game continues. Quattrocchi is already out on bail – a little nugget the CBI had been aware of for over a week, but did not think it important enough to share with the rest of the country. They also demonstrated that they have developed procrastination into an art form.

First the Indian mission in Argentina was to get details of the extradition procedure in that country. One would have thought that a nation which has pretensions about being a major player on the world stage would have such routine information on file – but no matter. Then when a copy of the Argentine Extradition Act finally did arrive, the CBI discovered (Surprise! Surprise!) that it was in Spanish. So naturally it took five days to get it translated into English – Spanish is such a rare and exotic language, you see.

The result of this world-class filibustering is that twenty of the thirty days that the Argentine authorities are empowered to detain Quattrocchi in their country have already lapsed as I write this piece. The CBI is now making haste slowly to file the extradition request before the deadline expires. No bookie, worth his salt, is going to give you any odds on that actually happening.

The opposition parties – not surprisingly – have been participating in this charade with unbridled gusto. They know full well that there is no way Mrs. Gandhi is going to offer up her good friend as a sacrificial lamb – and no one in the Congress has the gumption to overrule her. What they are really after is some significant political victory that will boost their popularity among the masses. I am pretty sure a *quid pro quo* is already in the works. The opposition will ease off on Quattrocchi, in exchange for.....Only the blank remains to be filled in. In other words, it's business as usual in the world's largest democracy.

Samjhauta Express – No Lessons Learnt

The deadly train explosion last Sunday on the Samjhauta Express, currently the only railway service between India and Pakistan has been in the news lately: it even made it to CNN. The bare facts have been widely reported: how more than 60 passengers died in the resulting fire and how India and Pakistan are, for once, cooperating to track down the perpetrators.

What is not so widely reported is that the tragedy was entirely preventable. As the security agencies in India have demonstrated time and again, they do not believe in the old adage: prevention is better than cure.

Granted that there is no foolproof method to prevent terrorist attacks but, in this case the railway and security agencies appear to have gone out of their way to facilitate the evil doers in carrying out their nefarious design.

It started at the Old Delhi railway station; the embarkation point for the train. Not only are the metal detectors malfunctioning, or totally ineffective, but there are gaping openings in the so-called security fence. Passengers routinely slip through these openings and stroll past the railway yards right up to the platforms; including Platform No.18 from where the Express departs. Since the train sits unattended in the yard the night before, it would be child's play for a terrorist to plant explosive devices. What is even more inexcusable is that the Express had been running without adequate state escort for the past five months. The Haryana Government Railway Protection Force (GRPF), which is supposed to escort the train from Delhi to Ambala; and the Punjab GRPF, which continues the escort duty up to Attari, have both been abstaining from duty because of a dispute over jurisdiction.

Bureaucratic wrangling has been the bane of this nation since its inception, but when it is allowed to affect national security, it is inexcusable. To compound the farce – as always happens in such cases – the security agencies have now gone overboard in reacting. Train passengers in Mumbai are being screened, for example, and predictable “red alerts” have been sounded in various parts of the country. Common sense would dictate that terrorists are highly unlikely to carry out attacks in rapid succession.

After all, they require careful planning – these are hardly spur of the moment decisions. But the authorities never learn. Those who do not heed the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it.

The initial police investigation into the Samjhauta Express bomb blasts is following an all too familiar pattern. Within a few days of the crime, suspects are announced with great fanfare and self-congratulation. After the euphoria has settled down, it is quietly revealed that there is not sufficient to prosecute them.

What is more likely is that the individuals who could shed some light on the blasts are already back in Pakistan. One has to wonder at the undue haste displayed by the Pakistani government in insisting that all Pakistani nationals on the ill fated Express be immediately repatriated to Pakistan – even though some of them were in no medical condition to travel. Was it to ensure that some individuals – during interrogation – would not reveal information that would be embarrassing to the ISI and their political masters? In all the apparent Indo-Pak bonhomie, it would be imprudent to forget that the ISI has, by no means, given up its agenda *vis-à-vis* India.

Compare this immature bravura with the investigations into the London train bombings. Even though Scotland Yard with far more reliable investigative clues in the form of closed-circuit television footage, were in no hurry to announce their findings until they were sure they had an almost watertight case. It's about time the investigation agencies in India grew up.

GlobalisingWeb Censorship – Learning from Communist China

Research by a transatlantic group of academics has revealed that “Internet censorship is spreading rapidly, being practised by about two dozen countries and applied to a far wider range of online information and applications”, according to the *Financial Times*, London reported in *The Heritage Insider On Line* of March 16.

A recent six-month investigation involving 40 countries to find out if they resort to censorship shows that the practice is spreading, with new countries learning from experienced practitioners such as China and benefiting from technological improvements.

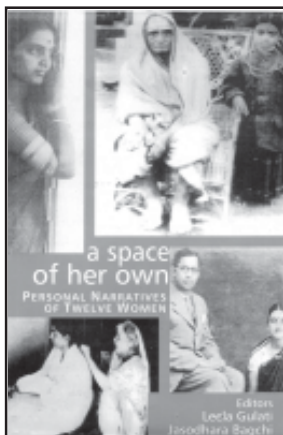
OpenNet Initiative, a project by Harvard Law School and the universities of Toronto, Cambridge and Oxford, repeatedly tried to call up specific websites from 1,000 international news and other sites in the countries concerned, and a selection of local-language sites. The research found a trend towards censorship, with many

countries recently starting to adopt forms of online censorship. 10 countries had become “pervasive blockers”, regularly preventing their citizens seeing a range of online material. These included China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Burma and Uzbekistan.

New censorship techniques include the periodic barring of complete applications, such as China's block on Wikipedia or Pakistan's ban on Google's blogging service, and the use of more advanced technologies such as “keyword filtering”, which is used to track down material by identifying sensitive words. China, according to the report has the most experience in internet censorship, with Zimbabwe appearing to use the same technology.

While internet censors are learning to apply new technologies to expand their efforts, activists wanting to circumvent the controls are using the latest internet methods to advantage.

Book Review



ASPACE OF HER OWN : PERSONAL NARRATIVES OF TWELVE WOMEN edited by Leela Gulati and Jasodhara Bagchi; published by Sage Publications, B/11, Mohan cooperative Industrial Area Mathura Road, Post Bag 7, New Delhi 110 044; Year of Publication : 2005 No. of Pages : 275 Price: Rs.340

Reviewed by Professor Dhiren Narain, Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology (retired), University of Mumbai.

We were delighted when Professor Narain consented to review the book. Normally, due to space constraints, book reviews in Freedom First are restricted to no more than 1200 to 1500 words, but this review is three times as long! If we were to abridge it to fit into the normative size of our reviews such a condensed review would do injustice to the reviewer who considered it important enough to review the book in some detail. We have therefore decided to publish this in three parts. This is the first part.

I

I have always found an edited book difficult to review. The present book is no exception. It is not because there is no unifying theme to bind them. Of course, there is. Otherwise, the book will be a collection of miscellaneous writings held together by the binding. The unifying theme never fully overcomes the discreteness of the individual pieces, more so in a collection like this!¹ All the articles were published before. They offer a rich fare, too rich in their details to be easily summarized.

I began by reading the Introduction, as one should. In sheer admiration and despair, I stopped somewhere halfway. I found the Introduction so well-written that I felt I will have nothing to say, by way of my review, if I read the whole Introduction. I therefore decided *not* to read the Introduction first, read all the twelve contributions, write the first draft of my review and then read the Introduction, changing the text of the draft wherever required. Whether my strategy has succeeded or not, only the reader can tell. No review can be or even should be a substitute for reading the book. I urge the reader to go through the book and taste the rich fare, from different (not all) parts of India, that is on offer here.

I have never thought of my grandmothers,² aunts and mother so often as I did while reading this book. Grandmothers, aunts and mothers keep leaping out of the pages, some strong and formidable, others weak and pathetic. How could I not think of my own grandmothers, aunts and mother? My mother used to describe our home in Bhagalpur (Bihar) as “Jogsar jail”, Jogsar being the name of the locality (*mohalla*) in which our house was situated. For a long time, I thought she said this light-heartedly, in

fun. Only much, much later did I realize that she was dead serious. My mother had no sense of humour, and as her son, worthy or unworthy, I have none. Her pithy remark forcefully brought out the feeling of entrapment, of being confined within a limited space, that Indian women experienced. (I use the past tense in the hope that things are better today). From *being* a proud daughter to *becoming* a proud daughter-in-law is a long and difficult journey.

Men do not face any such biographical transition. Most wives come from the outside. It is true that Muslims permit first cousins to marry. (Children of two brothers can marry). In South India, cross-cousin (children of brother and sister) and uncle (mama)-niece marriages are allowed, even preferred. But, in vast majority of marriages, wives come from the outside. She is generally unknown to her husband's family³. From adjusting to the ways of the husband, in the privacy of their bedroom, mostly under the cover of darkness, to adjusting to a host of relatives outside⁴, during the day, is a sociological marvel. In overwhelming majority of cases, the women were uneducated, even illiterate. How most of them passed the test is an awe-inspiring story. In the pages of this book, the reader will get some idea of the difficulty in this journey – in some cases, brilliantly successful; in some others, miserable failures. Women show remarkable coping ability.

Some women are outstanding examples of courage and ability. The cultural norm prescribes that men should be strong and decisive; women should be weak, submissive and obedient. Not all men become strong, not all women remain submissive. How and why this happens, it is difficult to say. At least, it is difficult for me to say.

Permit me to go back to my mother. I was surprised

to read, in Hema Sundaram's account, the following: "Marriage meant for me, more or less, life-long imprisonment. As I saw it, it was one monotonous round of cooking, cleaning, child-bearing and forever trying one's level best to please the husband and in-laws". (p.92). Here is a Brahmin lady from Mylapore, Madras, essentially echoing what a literate but uneducated⁵ middle-class Kayastha woman from Bihar was saying in her own eloquent way. (Can one think of a greater cultural divide than this?) Where could married women go?⁶ In the early years of marriage, visits to parents' home may be frequent and stay long. As parents die and brothers get married and her own involvement in her husband's family increases, with more and more children, such visits become less frequent and stay brief. Visits may gradually get confined to occasions like marriage and death.

Theoretically, pilgrimage was always a way out. But how many could afford it, on any regular basis, as a way out of domestic monotony? Besides, pilgrimage was best left for old age. My mother and aunts would *occasionally* visit other Kayastha families in the locality, in the afternoons. There would be return visits to our family. But these visits were too few to acquire any pattern. Women went to cinema with very great difficulty. Such visits were rare – only when mythologies were being shown. Generally there was nothing to relieve them the tedium of daily repetitive chores⁷. It is only when my elder brother starting working in Delhi and had a home there that my parents regularly went there during court vacations. My mother eagerly looked forward to these visits. She died in Delhi, on her last visit, in her eldest son's home. I reached too late. She was already in coma. Five grandchildren were doting on her, as she was exiting this world, plus her

husband and all the three sons. and, the eldest daughter-in-law.

(To be continued)

Notes:

- ¹ I suppose a book like Amartya Sen's *The Argumentative Indian* will present similar difficulty. Though written by a single author, different pieces were written at different points of time. Each has its own uniqueness.
- ² My parental grandfather's younger brother died young and left behind a widow. She lived with us till her death. She was closer to my mother and aunt in age. That is how we grew up with two grandmothers. I did not know my maternal grandmother. She died before I was born. I knew my maternal grandfather quite well. And, of course, my paternal grandfather and grandmother.
- ³ I understand that in parts of Gujarat, a young girl comes and lives with her future in-laws, once an alliance is settled, in order to learn the ways of her home-to-be. I do not know how extensive it is in Gujarat (area, caste) and whether it is practiced elsewhere in India.
- ⁴ Large households in India always had some members, not directly related, on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. All could express their opinions. A particularly troublesome relationship, at least potentially so, is that of *nanad-bhabhi*, the unmarried sisters of the husband. Soon to be ejected out of their parental home, on marriage, they can feel the threat the new bride, potentially or actually, constitutes. To the extent she is loved by her parents and brother(s), is the extent to which the 'contest' is keener. Occasionally, a very sweet and sisterly relationship may develop between the two.
- ⁵ I am not certain but reasonably sure that my mother had no formal schooling. She must have learnt to read and write Hindi at home. It is surprising how little sons know about their mothers.
- ⁶ "My mother was hardly ever sent to her parental home for a holiday". (Maitreyi, p.126).
- ⁷ "Very few men understand ... how repetitive, confining and unrewarding domesticity is". (Maitreyi, p.127).

Reader Response

On Nanotechnology

I agree with Dr. Parukh (*Freedom First*, No.477) that every new breakthrough in human knowledge is a double-edged sword. This is as true of nanotech as it is of any other breakthrough. This is demonstrated by something as simple as computer viruses. These are deliberate attempts at corrupting computer software, the result of human evil.

Nanotech will give similarly give rise to its own forms of evil which will need to be contained. Among them: The creation of an uncontrollable self replicating nanotech bug that eats everything. In the nanotech world this is referred to as the "grey goo" problem. It could destroy the world and life as we know it. Similarly there will

be nanotech 'solutions' to warfare, individual liberty and freedom made more malign by the new technology and the science behind it.

However awareness of such problems beforehand is one way to solving them. Putting our heads in the sand and preventing science from doing what it does best is not.

Science is not philosophy. It is merely systematised knowledge resulting from a sense of wonder and the ability to really understand the Socratic meaning of: "I don't know", tempered by "falsifiability" to use a term from Karl Popper. Best.

Sharad Bailur

Between Ourselves ...

The three institutions that have prevented Indian democracy from derailing are the Supreme Court, the Election Commission of India and the Armed Forces. Attempts have been (and are being) made by ruling coalitions, both the present one and its predecessors, to 'place' their favourites in positions of responsibility, particularly in the Supreme Court and the Election Commission. Fortunately for Indian democracy, once inside, these nominees have tended to disappoint their 'patrons' by showing commendable independence of action and commitment to their position. Therefore, when any of these institutions show signs of weakening it is necessary for citizens to sit up and take notice. Such is the case with the Indian Army where there are indications of fatigue, flagging morale and a lowering of discipline. The Armed Forces have done India proud not only by guarding our frontiers but by being apolitical. Hence the

discussion on Army morale and discipline occupies pride of place in this issue of *Freedom First*.

In our issue of October 2006 we drew attention to the fact that governance was in inverse proportion to the economy: While the Economy soars, Governance Plummets'. Next month we discuss a variation of this theme – As the Economy Soars, why is the State tightening its grip on Intellectual and Cultural Freedom? If in matters of governance we find the ruling coalition negligent, in the latter case they are being hyperactive. Who and what are they afraid of?

Join the debate and write in your views on both these questions

Editor

Many Voices

It is a tragic irony that the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law that all Commonwealth countries must follow are called the Harare Commonwealth Principles.

Clare Baube, Manager, Civil Society Watch Programme
(CIVICUS, *Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative Newsletter*
Volume 13 No. 4

Everyone in the Middle East is flocking to Beijing to seek its political blessings.

Columnist C. Raja Mohan, *The Indian Express*, January 17

If the world wants to achieve both more jobs and better living standards, freedom is essential.

2007 Index of Economic Freedom published by The Heritage
Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*
The Indian Express January 17

The sad reality of today's India is that the law only exists for those with money or influence. For those on the margins of our society, life is tough, unpleasant and dangerous.

Journalist Vir Sanghvi, *Sunday Hindustan Times*, January 28

As a kid, I read the back pages first, then the front. Now, I read the front page first, then go to the back pages

may be because stuff that used to be on the back pages has moved to the front page.

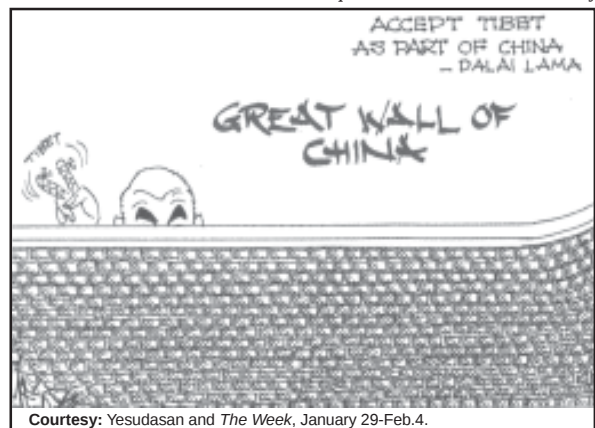
Rahul Dravid, Captain of the Indian Cricket team,
Sunday Times of India, February 25

Are you an American scholar? Please do not come to India.

Front page headline in *The Sunday Express*, February 11

Ground realities indicate that Kashmir is quietly going the Palestine way.

Tariq Bhat, *The Week*, February 4



Courtesy: Yesudasan and *The Week*, January 29-Feb.4.

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