

Tibet Will Be Free

“Once people have made up their minds to be free, there is nothing that will stop them.” – Desmond Tutu

Who could have predicted on 8th November 1989 that the following day the Berlin Wall would fall. But it did and in less than a year thereafter the Soviet satellite euphemistically called the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist. This also signalled the beginning of the end of the Soviet empire and freedom for the countries of Eastern Europe. Most of us did not expect an end to Soviet tyranny in our lifetime. But it did happen. So will it in the case of Tibet.

This collapse of the Soviet empire was not a sudden development. The commies never willingly give up their hegemony over other countries and being masters of double-speak called their satellites as peoples republics’. Absolute bull. Numerous uprisings, many not known to the free world, and others too big to be hidden ate away at the vitals of the vicious imperialism of the Soviet Union.

And this is what is happening in Occupied Tibet. The Chinese are bent on destroying Tibetan culture. Millions of Han Chinese have been forcibly re-settled in Tibet. The Tibetans have been reduced to the status of second class citizens in their own motherland. There is smouldering resentment and it is bound to flare up again and again as it did in March 1959. Tiananmen saw the revolt of the Chinese against their own rulers. It was brutally crushed. What we are witnessing these last couple of weeks is the Second Revolt of the Tibetan people.

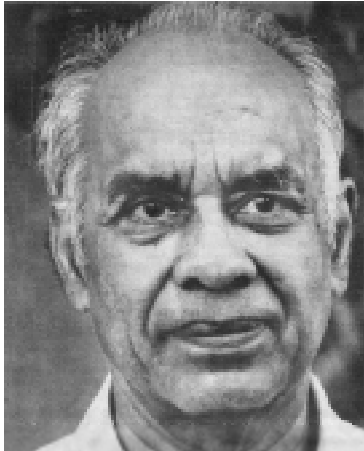
The front page editorial in *Freedom First* of April 1959 said: “To Indians, Tibet will ever remain an independent country or territory with an entity of its own and a civilization and culture of its own. We the people of India cannot but sympathise with the brave efforts of the Tibetans to preserve their separate entity and to uphold their way of life....Our hearts go out to the Tibetans in their hour of trial. At the moment it may not be possible for us to do anything more than to extend our moral support to their courageous struggle. But let there be no doubt where our sympathies lie. Let them be expressed clearly and unequivocally.” Almost forty years later we reiterate these sentiments,

which, we are convinced, are the sentiments of the large majority of our countrymen.

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Freedom First Salutes Justice H. R. Khanna



"If India ever finds its way back to the freedom and democracy that were proud hallmarks of its first eighteen years as an independent nation, someone will surely erect a monument to Justice H.R. Khanna of the Supreme Court. It was Justice Khanna who spoke out fearlessly and eloquently for freedom this week in dissenting from the Court's decision upholding the right of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Government to imprison political opponents at will and without court hearings....The submission of an independent judiciary to absolutist government is virtually the last step in the destruction of a democratic society, and the Indian Supreme Court's decision appears close to utter surrender."

Editorial in the New York Times, March 7, 1976

On April 28 1976 the Supreme Court ruled by a majority of four to one that during the emergency (declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi 10 months), that those arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) could not move the courts for a writ of *Habeas Corpus*. Chief Justice A.N.Ray held that "Liberty is confined and controlled by law. It is not absolute freedom." The fifth dissenting judge was Justice H.R.Khanna who contended "the State has got no power to deprive a person of his life or personal liberty without the authority of law. That is the essential and basic assumption of the rule of law in every civilized society."

Referring to this judgement in his autobiography Justice Khanna wrote of what he told his sister: "I have prepared my judgement, which is going to cost me the Chief Justice-ship of India." Mrs. Indira Gandhi made sure that though Justice Khanna was next in line for appointment as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he was superseded and replaced by Justice M.H.Beg. Within minutes of this happening Justice tendered his resignation.

The majority of four were Chief Justice.Ray, Justice Beg, Justice Chandrachud and Justice Bhagwati After Beg, Justices Chandrachud and Bhagwati went on to become Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of India.

In his tribute to Justice Khanna (*Indian Express*, March 6, 2008) T.R.Andhyarujina also refers to the famous Kesavananda Bharati Case where again "Justice Khanna had shown the courage of his conviction. Today, it has become an axiom of our constitutional law that Parliament cannot amend the Constitution to destroy 'the basic structure of the Constitution'. It is Justice Khanna who was the author of the theory of the basic structure of the Constitution...A bench of 13 judges of the Supreme

Court...had to decide whether Parliament had the unfettered right to amend the Constitution or not. Six of out of thirteen judges held that parliament's power to amend the Constitution was limited. Six other judges in the case were of the view that Parliament's power was unrestricted. Justice Khanna took the position that though Parliament's power to amend the Constitution was plenary, Parliament did not have the power to abrogate what he called "the basic structure of the Constitution".

Justice Khanna's portrait adorns Court no.2 in the Supreme Court. This is the man who passed away on February 25, 2008. He was 95.

Freedom First salutes this great son of India.

Justice Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court said: "Judges are more often bribed by their ambition and loyalty than by money". Unlike his four colleagues, Justice Khanna did not succumb to ambition or loyalty. His judgment was reminiscent of Lord Atkin's celebrated dissent in *Liversidge v. Anderson* during the dark days of the Second World War when he invalidated an order of detention without trial and observed: "I view with apprehension the attitude of judges who on a mere question of construction when face to face with claims involving the liberty of the subject show themselves more executive-minded than the executive ... In this country, amid the clash of arms the laws are not silent".

Anil Diwan,
The Hindu, March 7.

A Serious Threat to National Integration

Mohan Daria

Attacks and provocative statements made by Shri Raj Thackarey along with his party colleagues and retaliated by Shri Abu Azmi, is a matter of great concern for every Indian citizen and in particular for freedom fighters like me. Such confrontation can only sow the seeds of disintegration of our country. In the interests of the country I would like to urge all citizens to ask the people concerned to refrain from such statements. At the same time, the Government should not remain a silent spectator when the unity and integrity of the country is in danger.

It would be advisable to examine the root causes behind the migration of people from poor states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other states to flourishing cities like Mumbai where employment opportunities are available. Basically, for want of sufficient earnings to survive, people go to cities and prefer even to stay in filthy slums without any amenities. The main reason for such migration is abject poverty. Even in Maharashtra, several families migrated to Mumbai from backward areas like Marathwada or earlier even from Konkan for the same reason.

Since independence the Central and State Governments should have given priority on a war footing to poverty alleviation programmes instead of mouthing empty slogans. A wrong impression has been created all over the country that employment opportunities are available only in industrialized centres. I am aware of the relevance of industrialization and its potential to generate employment opportunities. However let us not forget its limitations. Though modern computerised industries have been adding considerably to economic growth their ability to create more employment is limited. For a country the size of India, development of our rich natural resources should be the reply to solve her massive problem of poverty.

Out of the total geographical area of 329 million hectares more than 50 per cent of our lands are considered degraded or waste. They are not waste but wasted lands. By conserving every drop of water whenever it rains, and preventing soil erosion, it is possible to make most of these lands productive, generate huge local employment opportunities to millions of our people, enhance agricultural production and also take due care of the environment by planting crores of trees through scientific watershed management. To consider the serious problem of

wastelands, a high level Policy Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of this writer. The report of this Committee was accepted by the Central Government in 1996, and it was decided to implement the programme all over the country within fifteen years. However, this vital programme as recommended by the Committee has not been implemented. Unless employment opportunities are made available in local areas, it has to be realised that poor people are bound to go to such places where employment is available. Instead of blaming the poor unfortunates, it is necessary to squarely address this problem and provide solutions.

Had all the states initiated immediate action, there would not have been any problem in securing employment in rural areas and migrating to the cities. Many voluntary organizations like 'Vanarai' have established that the migration of people from rural areas to cities can be effectively prevented. In fact they have succeeded in persuading such migrants to return to their villages and earn incomes enabling a better quality of life. This can be the only approach to solve the problem of migration on a permanent basis.

The existing approach of the government to encourage mega cities and multi-storeyed high tower buildings has no relevance in a country like India, with over six lac villages. More than thirty per cent of people in big cities stay in filthy slums. This proportion is more in metros like Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata. As stated in Chapter Four of our Constitution, decentralization of economic power is the most suitable and sustainable way for healthy progress. Instead of the craze for Mega Cities, it would be advisable to have self-reliant villages and decentralized healthy new growth centres with all modern amenities.

It is understandable that foreign countries are reluctant to accept Indian people except in their self-interest. But our country should not bar the fundamental right to every citizen to move to any part in India. This calls for patriotic spirit, tolerance and mature thinking. Everybody has to bear in mind that we all are **one nation** and shall remain united forever come what may!

MR. MOHAN DARIA formerly Union cabinet minister and deputy chairman of the Planning Commission.

Who Failed the Maharashtrians?

M. D. Kini

While the uneducated migrate from UP/Bihar, the educated migrate from Maharashtra - to West Asia and USA.

The recent turmoil in Mumbai and some other towns in Maharashtra has raised the question: Who failed the Maharashtrians? The great visionary of Maharashtra, Shri Y. B. Chavan, initiated many new developments – he laid the foundation of Navi Mumbai, SICOM, Thane-Belapur Industrial Estate and other industrial estates to promote industry and enterprise among the technocrats of Maharashtra. During his time *Maharashtra Times* and *Loksatta* were launched. These initiatives were never followed up.

The politicians who followed Shri Y. B. Chavan had no vision – they promoted the sugar industry which guzzles water in a state where there is very little rain; they devised monopoly procurement for cotton which drained the exchequer but never encouraged diversification which could sustain the farmers. The death and poverty of the farmers of Vidarbha is a testimony to their lack of vision. The list can go on.

The Shiv Sena-BJP government was no better. All that it has done is to build a series of flyovers and the Mumbai-Pune Express Highway. It did not give any encouragement to public transport which could have reduced pollution and the congestion of all our roads in Mumbai. It did start new schools in Mumbai - only exclusive clubs.

Industry developed in Maharashtra, not because of the GOM but because the Communist trade unions drove them out of West Bengal. This was aided by the 'freight equalization' policy of the Government of India (GOI). Of course, the cotton textile industry was killed by both militant trade unions and government policies. It is difficult to remember any new initiative by the GOM. The only new idea has come from the farmers – the Magarpatta Township, where farmers have pooled their land and built a township.

Linguistic states were formed to help communication between the people and the representatives of the people, almost 'elected rulers'. This has not helped Marathi literature, drama, *natya sangeet* and films. They are not in good shape, thanks to lack of patronage/encouragement by the state. The GOM has started teaching English to

the students of first standard in the mistaken notion that it will help them go far in life. The result will be - the students will neither know proper Marathi nor proper English.

Of course, there is no good governance in Bihar and UP as well. That is why people migrate. While uneducated migrate from UP/Bihar, the educated in Maharashtra migrate to West Asia and USA. The migration is a sad commentary on governance. The permit-license raj, over-manned public enterprises and corruption have denied good governance to all Indian citizens. 1991 has changed all that. If politicians and bureaucrats become promoters of industry instead of controllers of industry, India can flourish and Maharashtra too will flourish. It is not the UP/Bihari taxi drivers who are responsible for lack of jobs and development, it is the politicians without vision not merely in Maharashtra and UP/Bihar but all over the country. We have ourselves to blame for electing people on the basis of caste and creed and not on the basis of vision and policies.

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Signboards in the Regional Languages – Gujarat's Achievement

Violent protests against sign-boards in a non-Marathi language is a recurring feature in Mumbai. Gujarat has achieved it without any demonstrations. The impact of Gujarati has been acknowledged even in the USA. The US Consulate in Mumbai provides the facility of Gujarati to English translators for visa applicants. The USA does not care what language you speak as long as you have the money to spend or have the skills to contribute to wealth. It is high time that we learnt the real value of an individual.

Brig S. C. Sharma [retd]
Mumbai

Need for a Code of Advertising for TV

Kunwar Sinha

It was the well-known Canadian Newspaper tycoon, Lord Thomson, who had once famously dismissed 'News' as "Oh, that stuff in between the ads!"

That is precisely how one could best describe the condition of our TV programmes today. How often in the middle of an important news story, a serious discussion, or at the most crucial moment of a cricket match, there is a sudden interruption and one is inflicted with a series of unending commercial spots.

Some time back, the former Australian captain Steve Waugh pithily described the telecast of cricket matches on Indian TV as completely "unwatchable". It is about time that some one spoke for the rights of the viewers, so that some sort of sanity is brought to our TV screens.

To some extent one can understand the greed of the commercial channels; after all they are in the business of making money. To the best of my knowledge, the total Ad. spend on TV commercials at present is estimated at about Rs.10,000 crores a year.

But why should Doordarshan succumb to such temptations is beyond comprehension. After all Doordarshan is supposed to provide a public service and its original charter was to 'educate, inform and entertain' - in that order. There is an annual budgetary provision for it in the Union Budget, and for almost the first 25 years of its existence Doordarshan functioned without any commercials.

It would also be interesting to point out that the British Broadcasting Corporation - the oldest and possibly one of the best TV channels in the world - has no commercial advertising during its telecast in the UK. It runs on the revenue it collects from a yearly license fee from the viewers, and the royalty it earns from the worldwide sale of its programmes. The other Commercial TV channels in Britain & most other European countries follow a strict 'Code of Advertising'. In Britain too separate and independent bodies regulate this code:

- i) **The Advertising Standards Authority:** a body of the UK advertising industry, which practices self-regulation.
- ii) **The Ofcom (Office of Communications):** an independent watchdog and regulating authority that strictly enforces the code.

Under the code, some of the general practices being followed are: Amount of Advertising: The total amount of spot advertising on any one day (24 hours) must not exceed an average of nine minutes per hour (or 15 per cent) of broadcasting time.

Maximum amount in any one hour: In any one clock hour there must be no more than 12 minutes of advertising. There must not be more than four commercial breaks in any one hour and no commercial break should be of more than 3 minutes

Programmes and advertising have to be clearly separated: Television advertising must be readily recognisable as such and kept quite separate from other parts of the Programme service. Breaks containing advertising spots of any kind must be clearly identified in vision and/or sound, with a Channel / Programme identifications while going in and out of breaks.

Placing of Breaks: Breaks within programmes may be taken only at a point where some interruption in continuity would, in any case, occur (even if there were no advertising) and such natural breaks must not damage the integrity or value of the programme in which they occur.

In sports programmes and in coverage of similarly structured events or performances containing intervals, breaks may be taken only in the intervals.

Particular Separation of Advertisements and Programmes: In order to maintain a distinction between programmes and advertisements that is clear to the viewer, and to minimise any risk of confusion between the two, advertisements featuring a well known personality or performer, or a person who takes a leading role in or whose appearance is central to a Programme, must not be scheduled in breaks in or adjacent to that Programme.

Categories of Programme carrying no Advertising: Advertisements must not be inserted in the course of any broadcast of: (i) A news or current affairs programme of less than half an hour scheduled duration. (ii) A documentary of less than half an hour scheduled duration.

Documentaries and Discussion Programmes: A break may be taken only when: (i) There is a change of topic, or (ii) at the end of any filmed inserts used in live documentaries, or (iii) New participants in a discussion programme are introduced.

Persons Appearing in Advertisements and in Programmes: In order to maintain a distinction between programmes and advertisements that is clear to the viewer, and to minimise any risk of confusion between the two, advertisements featuring a well known personality or performer, or a person who takes a leading role in or whose appearance is central to a programme, must not be scheduled in breaks in or adjacent to that programme.

Programmes Featuring Advertisements: Advertisements for products or services which appear as part of programme content may not be transmitted within or adjacent to that programme.

These are just some of the main features of the Code. For the full code visit www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/advertising/rules)

Indian TV channels are brazenly flouting most of these rules. For example, under the code entitled ‘Particular Separation of Advertisements and Programmes’ any Ad featuring say a sports person, cannot be shown during or adjacent to a match where he/she is a member of the playing team.

Surprisingly, it’s not only the viewers but, in this process, advertisers too, who are being short changed. All the Ads are jumbled together; with the result that it is often impossible to make out when spot ‘A’ ends and spot ‘B’ begins. To avoid such confusion the standard practice is to use a ‘Wipe’ or a ‘Blur’ to separate the two.

It is about time that some such ‘Code of Advertising’ was introduced in India too.

- There is already the Advertising Standards Authority of India in existence, they need to take the initiative and emulate their mother association - the

Advertising Standards Authority. (Website: - www.asa.org.uk)

- In addition we also need a strong & independent watchdog body, on the lines of the British Ofcom/ or the Press Council of India. (No government body please).

Being cricket crazy I find frequent interruptions during cricket telecast the most frustrating. Ironically, cricket also attracts the maximum Ads. So the breaks are more frequent and for longer durations. The moment a wicket falls or a sixer is hit, instead of showing us action on the field, we are told which soap or shampoo is good for us.

After silently suffering for several years I have worked out a system to take my own sweet revenge. I diligently note down all the products so advertised, and then take a vow never to buy them again. Amen!

In a lighter vein if I may: A solution would be a separate time slot devoted exclusively to advertising and tele-shopping, like a newspaper supplement!

MR. KUNWAR SINHA is a well-known documentary producer. He was trained at the BBC in England and worked as a Producer with Bombay Doordarshan in its early years.

Form IV

Statement about ownership and other particulars about *Freedom First*.

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I, J. R. Patel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: 1st April, 2008

J. R. Patel

Publisher.

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 all issues so that a considered opinion can be formed.*

Politics of the Narrow Mind

1) Raj Thackeray's attack on Big B and the North Indians in general raised a political storm. His arrest was dramatised by the media to make him look like a martyr. The issue raised by him is important but the media lost the kernel and went after the shell. Is it the "sons of the soil" argument revisited? Is it the issue of Mumbai being burdened with unbearable influx of population? Or is it a simple matter of opportunist politics? MNS vs. Shiv Sena vs. Congress/NCP! Opinion polls, which are never reliable in any case, paint a grim picture of Mumbaikars being badly divided. Some believe that Amitabh Bachchan is more loyal to UP than to Maharashtra, most agree that Mumbai is being despoiled. Raj Thackeray has found qualified support, with some people agreeing that a problem exists but not agreeing with the violence let loose on taxi drivers and small vendors. There is a gut feeling that something is wrong but no remedy is in sight. It is a morally confusing and emotionally draining debate.

"There is no doubt that we are surrounded in our adult life with a wealth of humbugs: fame humbugs, wealth humbugs, patriotic humbugs, political humbugs, religious humbugs and humbug poets, humbug artists, humbug dictators and humbug psychologists".

– Lin Yutang

1) The anxieties of Mumbaikars are genuine but the method sought to resolve them is counter-productive and dangerous. The "Sons of the soil" issue raised by the Shiv Sena in the 1960s had some logic; the demand that local people should be given preference for jobs not requiring special skills made economic sense; why should they be compelled to uproot themselves and go to distant places for ordinary jobs? This is not the issue now. It is a simple matter of Amitabh Bachchan building a school in Barabanki and not in Maharashtra, Biharis celebrating 'Chhat Puja' in Mumbai or 'Uttar Pradesh Divas' being celebrated in Maharashtra. Any culturally cohesive group comes together anywhere in the world to celebrate events of common interest. This does not affect their loyalty to their place of residence. Amitabh's loyalty is questioned because of his "misplaced" charity. Should Amitabh build a bigger school in Mumbai to wash away his perceived sin? Is charity no longer a willing gift but a command performance? The fact that Amitabh has brought joy to millions of people through his art and made Mumbai proud of his being a Mumbaikar is no longer enough? Bollywood has enriched Mumbai. Should each successful man in Mumbai be made to pay his dues to obtain a loyalty certificate? How lopsided our can thinking get? Yes, there is a problem with the Mumbai infrastructure being unable to cope with the rising population. This is a problem to be solved through administrative and legal measures, not by attacking the hapless and by denigrating those who have made Mumbai what it is today. A sure way of checking further influx is to disallow addition of even a single more zhopadi in Mumbai. Does the State or the BMC have the gumption to do it?

Corruption – A Way of Life?

2) If Dr. Horror who organised 600 kidney transplants by duping the poor was not enough of shock and shame, there are reports that a gang of policemen in Delhi helped his co-conspirator to escape to Nepal even after his horrendous deeds came to light. How is one to judge the morals of these guardians of law? There has been an outcry over corruption in the police. A doctor running an industry in organ transplant is certainly not acting alone; there must be other doctors/surgeons who helped him, not to mention hospitals, nursing staff and others who must have known what was happening. Policemen were only

2) No sphere of life has remained untouched by corruption. We seek piecemeal remedies but the disease has spread and is beyond band-aid treatment. The demand for strict action against the police is rightly accompanied by demand for police reform, as there is a systemic defect. Politicians are unwilling to give up control over the police as their own power stems from the police. Therefore, despite recommendations of the Police Commission decades ago, states have refused to free the police from political control. Police reform can only be a beginning. Other departments are equally infected. Corruption has spread into the entire government machinery, starting from Mantralaya. Who is to cleanse whom? In the present state, men of integrity have to hide into obscurity to survive. Moral values are an object of derision and scams are the

the latest and the last rung in the corruption ladder. Then there are instances of corruption in other departments like revenue, public works, income tax, municipalities, passports, courts, colleges, rationing offices *et al.* You name it and there is a dirty hand stretched out to demand an illegal buck.

norm. Are there even a few Ministers capable of setting an example? The inspiration has to come from the top.

The people need to know everything that is being done in their name. A democracy gives us that basic and inviolable right. If nothing else, we must at the least call the bluff of the hypocritical assurances made at the time of election, in assemblies and in Parliament.

Aruna Roy

Elections in Pakistan

3) The fact that elections were held in Pakistan is by itself worthy of praise. The expectation that the Government would resort to poll fixing was belied; there might have been failed attempts at rigging and very low voter turn out due to fear but the bottom line was that the people's will has prevailed. This can be considered a triumph of the democratic system. But the questions remain. Has the election opened a door to sanity and reason in Pakistan politics? Have the radicals been defeated? Or is it an illusion still hiding the ugly face of militancy? For India, it does not matter whether a Musharraf or a Zardari or a Nawaz Sharif is in power. All that matters is whether Pakistan will stop using India as a target for terrorist action. It is good to see Pakistan returning to the path of democracy but is it a permanent status or only an interlude as in the past?

3) It is too early to breathe a sigh of relief. The understanding between Zardari and Nawaz Sharif has no solid foundation and can collapse any time. Musharraf is probably on the way out although the US does not want to abandon its steadfast (?) ally. He may still manipulate a division in the opposition ranks. Whichever party holds power has to deal with the militants and Al Qaeda. Will it have the courage to take on the radical Islamists? Can it survive such a bold step, as it will be seen as subservience to the US and immediately invite people's wrath? The new Government will be in the same position as Musharraf and may adopt the same evasive postures. This time it will be a democratic government undertaking the onerous task of fighting the militants and would face more obstacles than Musharraf ever did. Terrorists will become bolder once they realise that the Government dare not act against them. Taliban have already warned of serious consequences if the new government tries to oppose them. For India, a clever but unreliable Musharraf will be replaced by a possibly sincere but equally ineffective PM. Being cheated by a charlatan and being let down by a friend are equally frustrating.

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

Auctioning of Cricketers

The news, much publicised in the media that Indian cricketer Dhoni has been "auctioned" for Rs.6 crores and crores of rupees have been spent "in buying the cricketers" make nauseating reading. Obviously, businessmen in the country with pots of money to throw around, are targeting to exploit the gullible Indian public and their enthusiasm for cricket to make more money themselves.

At this time, my heart goes to the millions of men and women in India remaining in the lower income group working throughout the day and all day long to sustain themselves with meagre income. Inevitably, I also think about the hundreds of farmers in the country who have committed suicide due to debt and poverty and their family members continuing to live in distress conditions.

I strongly think that there would be feelings of revulsion and even anger amongst the poor and downtrodden about such vulgar exhibition of wealth and affluence by small pockets of people in this country. I am sure that there are millions of Indians who have not seen cricket being played and who do not understand the euphoria over cricket.

Now that the damage has been done, I appeal to the cricketers who make crores of rupees and the businessmen who seek to make crores of rupees in this business deal, to provide at least 10% of their income and profit towards the cause of the poor and the downtrodden by spending for their education, health, dwelling and their welfare.

To maintain social stability in the present conditions of unequal distribution of income and opportunities, the nation has to buy peace with those in the lower income group by meeting their needs or at least conveying to them that the nation is sensitive to their plight. Otherwise, the naxalite movement would be seen by many as a necessary evil by the deprived persons.

N. S. Venkataraman

Trustee, Nandini Voice of the Depressed, Chennai



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

Media-Created Monsters

Movies distorting historical and other facts in the name of 'artistic licence' are nothing new. Hollywood has been doing it for the past 80 years.

I am often surprised by the hypocrisy displayed by our print and electronic media. They make gratuitous folk heroes out of total nonentities; and then they appear pained at the excesses perpetrated by them.

The latest example of this is the ridiculous fuss – and the media hype – being created over the film “Jodha Akbar”. A hitherto fringe group, calling itself the Rajput Karni Sena (the Shiv Sena has displayed a lack of foresight by not taking out a patent on the ‘sena’ nomenclature: now ‘senas’ of various hues seem to be mushrooming all over India), has taken umbrage because Jodha Bai, a Rajput princess, was the wife of Akbar’s son Jehangir and not Akbar’s wife, as depicted in the film. They wanted the film banned because it has an “incestuous, immoral connection”. So they have disrupted the screening of the film all over Rajasthan. Even by the standards of nonsensical issues that become causes celebre these days, this takes the cake.

Movies distorting historical and other facts in the name of ‘artistic licence’ are nothing new. Hollywood has been doing it for the past 80 years. A standard joke making the rounds of Hollywood in the 1960s went something like this: An author is being felicitated on the release of his latest novel. “Thanks,” he avers, “I got the idea from the movie they made of my previous book.”

An equally banal fracas was engineered a couple of years ago, over the movie “Fanaa”. The film was banned all over Gujarat, not because of the content of the movie, but because its star, Aamir Khan who had opined that the raising of the Narmada dam was unwise, because it would displace several hundred poor families. How that was presented as an insult to Gujarati *asmita* (pride) remains a mystery to me. What is even more puzzling is why the supposedly literate and intelligent Gujaratis fell for it.

The point I am trying to make is that these self-

proclaimed ‘champions of the people’ are worthy of nothing but contempt. Left to their own devices, they would rapidly sink back into the obscurity whence they emerged. Instead, they witness their vacant, maniacal mug shots displayed on countless television screens; and splashed across newspapers – and get emboldened. And I am not talking about tabloids and scandal sheets here, but mainstream periodicals. I do not buy the argument that the media is obliged to give them prominence because they constitute ‘news’. They make news precisely because the media affords them totally disproportionate and unwarranted attention. Fortuitous demonstrations like these have no social relevance whatsoever; and deserve to have no impact on the lives of the general populace. They do so only since the media builds them up – to sell copies and eyeballs. And then, the very same media pontificate on how such activities are decaying the fabric of Indian society. Can you blame me for showing disgust at their hypocrisy?

A larger issue here is why federal and state governments allow these goons to dictate terms. For example, by allowing a bunch of ruffians to disrupt the movie all over the state – a film, by the way, that many Rajasthanis are very eager to watch – the state government is not only abdicating its responsibility, but displaying its indifference or, even worse, its impotency.

Some would, perhaps, argue that it is only a movie, after all. True, but by extension, such governmental apathy can have very damaging consequences. The recent mayhem caused by the MNS in Mumbai – where they targeted non-Maharashtrians – has resulted not only in displacement of ethnic groups, but extensive damage to property; and a significant loss to the national exchequer. By dithering over taking action on the ringleaders, our politicians have, as usual, done a fine job of making a mockery of good governance. What we certainly do not need is for the media to add to that.

Here is my advice as we begin the century that will lead to 2081. First, guard the freedom of ideas at all costs. Be alert that dictators have always played on the natural human tendency to blame others and to oversimplify. And don't regard yourself as a guardian of freedom unless you respect and preserve the rights of people you disagree with to free, public, unhampered expression.

– Gerard K. O'Neill, 2081

An Outsider's View of Senator Obama Barack

There seems to be an Obama-mania sweeping across the United States at the moment. He is being variously portrayed as the new Messiah, the new broom that is going to sweep away the sorry legacy of George Bush; and the brand ambassador of a vibrant, young America.

I am not so sure that all this euphoria is justified. In Obama's case, obvious and predictable comparisons are being made with John F. Kennedy. Was Kennedy really as great a president as he is often made out to be? Personally, I believe that his untimely assassination added to the halo of greatness that surrounds him. If he had been allowed to serve out his full two terms, he probably would have had his fair shares of political blunders. Even during his brief tenure, the Bay of Pigs fiasco was not his shining moment. Some admirers would rebut this by pointing out the steely resolve he displayed during the Cuban missile crisis. Here again, I believe that main reason he stared down the Soviets was that they accepted the inevitable. For all his bluster, Khrushchev was realistic – and experienced – enough to realize that the much-touted Soviet military might was more a myth than reality. The Soviets would stand no chance if it came to a military confrontation with the United States.

There is a lot of buzz going around right now about that 3 a.m. phone call. It sounds like a corny *cliché*, but there may be some substance in it. Substance, in a word, is what bothers me about Obama. There is no denying that the man has style. In addition, he is awesome on the message. Listening to his speeches, one is sometimes tempted to sing hosannas, like it was a revivalist meeting, complete with gospel singers. But is the message enough? Obama is like the general who plans brilliant strategies, on paper, but fumbles when it comes to putting boots on the ground.

For non-Americans, like me, the greatest issue of concern is Obama's take on America's foreign policy. We simply do not know what it is. In his speeches, Obama talks vaguely – and with a flourish – about his willingness

to talk with the bad guys, like Iran's Ahmadenijad and Venezuela's Chavez. What is not forthcoming is what he intends to say to them. They are not so sure that Obama's foreign policies will be in the world's best interests – ok, make that America's best interests; but they are intricately connected to those of the free world.

The reality is that Obama, for all his grand vision, is a political novice when it comes to world affairs. It is hard to imagine him being a match for Russia's wily Putin, for example. (Don't be fooled by the recent election of Medvedev. Putin will continue to pull the strings). Hillary Clinton, even though indirectly, has been there, done that: or, at least, she has been exposed to it. If I was a world leader not favourably inclined towards the US, I would have more respect for Clinton – even while welcoming Obama as a less worthy opponent.

Another issue of concern with foreigners would be economics. Outsourcing may have become a dirty word to many Americans, but it does provide gainful employment to millions of people in less developed countries. Personally, I have always found it a bit hypocritical that the so-called patriots talk grandly about "buying American"; and yet, while shopping at Wal-Mart or elsewhere, they have no hesitation in picking up a Made-in-China product for a quarter of the price of a similar American-made one. Of course, I doubt that any US President would be powerful enough to curtail outsourcing, even if he wanted to. The big American corporations who outsource jobs and manufacturing do not do so because they feel sorry for those poor Asians and Africans. They do it because it multiplies their profits. As everyone is aware, in the US, Capitalism is king. Similar forces come into play where NAFTA is concerned.

Yes, Americans want change. The prevailing mantra is: anyone is better than George Bush. Obama is a breath of fresh air. Maybe so, but in today's complicated and unstable world, I'm not convinced that fresh air alone is enough.

Why Taslima Nasreen had to Leave India

It has been nearly eight months that I have been living under virtual house arrest, in a prison without any facilities. I have been asked continuously by the government to leave this country. Naturally, this has upset me a great deal as I left Europe to relocate to India; to make India my permanent home. I settled in Kolkata where I was living peacefully in a Bengali milieu. I was very active helping oppressed women and writing feminist and humanist literature. Just because a few Muslim fundamentalists objected to my being in this country, I was first imprisoned in Kolkata and then moved to Delhi. In order for the politicians to secure their Muslim vote bank, I had to be locked up and, as a consequence, my health was irreparably destroyed.

Taslima Nasreen

Professor Sibnarayan Ray R.I.P.



20.01.1921-26.02.2008

Sibnarayan Ray's father Professor Upendra-nath Bidyabhushan Shastri was a thinker-writer with over 50 books in Sanskrit and English. His mother Rajkumari Roy was a poetess and a literary person who regularly contributed to a number of Bengali magazines. Sibnarayan Ray graduated from the Calcutta University in English language and literature. He was married to Lila Ray.

He joined the City College in 1945 as a Lecturer in English literature. Fifteen years later he was head of the Department of Oriental Studies at the Melbourne University, Australia from 1963 to 1981. Professor Ray a much in demand visiting professor including the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London, Department of Social Science in the University of Chicago, Goethe University in Frankfurt and Stanford University among others.

On returning to Calcutta from Melbourne, he worked as Director of the Rabindra-Bhavan, Visvabharati University; was, an Emeritus Fellow on Literature of the Department of Culture, Government of India; Chairman of the Raja Rammohan Roy Library and Senior Research Fellow Indian Council of Historical Research. He was Executive Secretary of the Renaissance Institute from 1960 to 1969.

In accordance to his wish his body was donated to the SSK Hospital, Calcutta.

He was attracted to communism in his early life. Stalinist repression revolted the young Ray and he was drawn to the teachings of M.N.Roy himself a major leader of the international communist movement who renounced communism and founded the Radical Humanist movement. Sibnarayan Ray was profoundly influenced by the M. N.

Roy's *Beyond Communism* his *Basic principles of Radical Democracy*. One of the assumptions was that party-politics was inconsistent with his ideal of organized democracy. It was 'radical' because it rejected many of the traditional political and philosophical assumptions underlying early twentieth century Indian society; and it was 'humanist' because it focused entirely on the needs and situation of human beings. Ray said that it is not just religion, but politics too can stifle free-thinking and the spirit of inquiry.

Sibnarayan Ray was highly respected for the high quality of his literary criticism. He was considered the only critic with an international mindset. He published and edited *Jijnasa*, which became a very important Bengali journal of literature, history, culture and philosophy.

At the time of his death he was writing a biography of Manabendra Nath Roy. Earlier he edited the works of M.N.Roy in four volumes which have been published by the Oxford University Press.

Sibnarayan Ray composed some poems in his early years of writing. Most of them were collected in an anthology under the title *Kothara Tomar Mon* published in 1951. Ray has more than fifty titles to his credit. His works have been translated into many languages. Eclectic his writings covered a wide spectrum. Among the journals which carried his articles was *Quest* then published by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and the current publisher of *Freedom First*.

Bertrand Russell commented that "... Sibnarayan Ray stands for a point of view which I consider important in every part of the world. ... His writings ably represent a more reasonable point of view than that of most writers of our time."

Freedom First joins the fraternity of Radical Humanists and Rationalists in paying its tribute to a great son of India.

I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.

– James Madison, 1788

Rites, Rituals and Festivals (4)

Suman Oak

The foundation of the intellectual aspect of Indian Culture was laid down by our ancient sages. They strived to progress from ignorance to knowledge. What these sages discussed, debated and passed on to the later generations was beyond the understanding of the common people. The other aspect i.e., social conduct was taken care of by intelligent but shrewd and sharp men with very little consideration for the lofty philosophy of the sages. For a peaceful society they strengthened the social structure laid down by the Varnashrama system. For the moral rectitude of the masses they reinforced ritualistic devotion by writing the Brahmanas that gave concrete shape to rituals of worship and thereby assimilated almost all tribes and their deities into the eclectic Hindu religion. Most of us accept the role assigned to us and faithfully observe all traditionally inherited customs and rituals. We have got to overcome this weakness and inertia and start thinking afresh about our customs and ritual.

The intention, here, is not to condemn all rites, rituals and festivals outright but to look at their utility, propriety and necessity critically, and loosen their grip on the minds of our people. (For the full text of this introductory note to the series please see the January 2008 issue of FF (No.488) or email us at freedom@vsnl.com for the text. – Ed.

Holi – The Festival of Colours

Holi is a vernal festival to express the passionate feelings inspired by the arrival of spring that is supposed to be the companion of the deity of the love-god, 'Kamadeva'. This season of foliation of trees, budding of grass and the pairing of birds is the month of Falgun according to the Hindu calendar. Holi is celebrated on the 15th day of Falgun and this year it is to be celebrated on the 21st and 22nd of March. The rites and rituals of Holi are supposed to promote begetting children and securing their health and long life. A few mythological legends account for the origin and the purpose of the celebrations.

The legend of Kamadeva tells us that this archer-god of love was cajoled by all other gods to direct his shaft towards the stern deity Shiva to invoke passion in his breast for Parvati who was undergoing severe penance to become Shiva's wife. When Shiva became aware of this design he was indignant with rage and opened his third eye; the flames that shot from it consumed the god of love instantly. Other legends are about female demons that devour children. In the ancient days, it is said, a female demon named Dhondha Rakshasi started devouring innocent kids. The affected villagers drove her away shouting insults and abuses at her using foul and obscene language and setting fires at many places to scare her away. This practice is still carried on in the name of protecting our children from an imaginary demon. Yet another story tells us that while Lord Krishna was still an infant, his uncle, Kamsa the king of Mathura sent the female demon Putana to kill the child feeding him poisonous milk from her breast. Instead of dying of the poison Krishna sucked her *Prana* (life) leaving her dead. The dead demon Putana was cremated in the night. This triumph of good over evil is celebrated every year as Holikadahan—a holy bonfire in the evening followed by an immodest carnival the next day.

The religious ritual of this festival, very briefly, comprises of the Holi fire that should be ignited in the evening when the householder should bathe and then declare his intention of worshiping the Holi in Sanskrit language with the help of the priest. Next dry wood, chips and dung cakes are piled up with a branch of Erand (castor oil tree) set in the top. After all this ritual the householder is supposed to shout vulgar words as loudly as possible and then ignite the Holi mound. The next day the embers of the Holi mound are doused with ghee and milk and the Holi fire is extinguished.

Then begins the real revelry letting loose all polite civic restraints, drinking and dancing and throwing mud and dirt at each other singing vulgar songs regarding women and sex. This festival originally must have been an earthly, unsophisticated popular vernal celebration. Even on being admitted as a sophisticated Hindu religious festival, its original vulgar aspect did not disappear. Although it is celebrated in different regions in different fashions the buffoonery and barbarity is obvious everywhere with only a little difference in the degree of its intensity. The custom common every where (more so in the northern parts of India) is to sally forth into the streets and throw red powder (variously known as Falgu, Abira or Gulal) and skirt coloured water over passers by through syringes. Even respectable persons participate in this revelry with gay abundance.

In many other regions of the world such practices of the vernal carnival evince community of origin with the Holi of the Hindus. Recently I read of a ceremony - Hadaka Matsuri - in Japan wherein people muddy themselves in the rice fields. Other obvious analogies are the permitted license in speech and conduct, sprinkling with water or throwing powder over each other, wearing masks or disguises, eating and drinking and lowering all guards.

In Italy the custom is to blow out each others' candles comparable to the lighting and extinction of the bonfire and scattering of the ashes. One more world wide practice is that of All Fools day on April 1 and the 'Extravagances of the Abbot of Unreason.' This is the period of vernal equinox when the new year of ancient Persia began and boundless hilarity and jocund sports ensued.

The Holi festival must have risen out of the need to clear forests for cultivation by burning the trees in the early stage of civilization. Secondly occasional gaiety, fun and frolic are necessary for man's wellbeing especially after harvesting a bountiful crop. The apparently religious festivals, all over the world, are manifestations of this human drive for fun and frolic. The arrival of spring intensifies this drive leading to reckless excesses that cause irreparable damage to public health, property and environment. Many days, even weeks before the festival boys and men who have nothing better to do start collecting firewood for the Holi. Many trees are hacked and huge logs of wood are hauled from the jungles in the name of Holi. A lot of money is extracted in the name of donation for the celebrations. Most of it is spent on drinks and feasts and no one is held accountable. Intoxicated bands of hooligans roam the streets harassing the passers by. Throwing stones, balloons filled with dirty water, blackening faces with tar or other harmful colours are common. The noise and din are often unbearable.. In short all sorts of excesses, vulgarities and sadistic belligerence have become the typical characteristics of this celebration.

Many objections can be raised regarding the religious rationale of this festival. It is said that Manmath (Cupid) tried to obstruct Lord Shiva in his pious meditation and was punished to be burnt for this sin. Such an event should be celebrated by inducing people to be pious and virtuous and not by rowdy and licentious behaviour. Throwing not only wood but coconuts and precious food in the flames of the Holi is yet another objectionable custom. Once the food made for offering to the Holika is placed in front of the fire chanting appropriate mantras, the food can be distributed to the hungry poor instead of throwing it in the fire. The Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti in Pune (ANS) has taken the initiative in collecting this food and distributing it to the needy.

There can be better ways of celebrating Holi. First of all the number of Holi fires and the places where they can be lit should be thoroughly restricted. Bringing huge logs from the forests should be banned. The dung cakes used in the fire should be saved for they make excellent manure and can replace harmful chemical fertilizers. At present the Holi fire is lit in the middle of roads that are dug out and never repaired by those who organize the celebrations. This practice should be banned forthwith. The ANS have evolved a novel way of celebrating Holi constructively. The volunteers of the organization of a locality with the help of local people willing to join them collect all garbage sweeping the whole area clean. The dry garbage forms the Holi mound. An effigy of a man signifying all human vices (lethargy, shirking, corruption, arrogance, intoxication, etc) distinctly marked on it, is put in at its top. Setting this mound on fire signifies efforts to overcome these human curses. The occasion is used to enlighten the assembled public explaining the need to strive to protect environment; to shout, if you must, against the system that causes exploitation, discrimination, etc. and to respect and honour our women folk instead of abusing them. Many other ingenious programmes could be imagined and executed to put the surging enthusiasm of the common people to proper use for which Holi is an appropriate instrument.

MS. SUMAN OAK, retired Lecturer on Education, SNDT University is associated with Streehitakarini, Centre for the Study of Social Change and the Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti. She is a freelance writer in Marathi.

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Book Review



CHIRNER JUNGLE SATYAGRAHA: 1930 by Vasant Bhau Patil (translated from the Marathi by Suhasini Sinha) ● Published by Mayuri Prakashan, Post Chirner, Taluka Uran, Dist. Raigad 410 206 ● Year of publication 2006 ● Pages 60 ● Price Rs.60

Reviewed by Prof. V. C. Phadke, retired professor of political science and freelance writer.

Chirner, a village with a population of 1500 people in the Kolaba district of Maharashtra (recently renamed Raigad) acquired national fame for the Jungle Satyagraha, as part of the non-co-operation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930.

The jungle law was as harsh and oppressive as the salt law. The followers of Gandhiji who lived in the precincts of jungles, emulating the salt jungle satyagraha resorted to jungle satyagraha. It meant cutting the grass and collecting firewood in the reserved forests to protest against the law that prohibited use of jungle property by the local population. The book 'Chirner Jungle Satyagraha: 1930' written in Marathi by Vasant Bhau Patil, a retired school teacher and translated in English by principal Suhasini Sinha of the Indian Education Society of Mumbai tells the story of the Chirner satyagrahis – their dedication and sacrifice in the struggle against the colonial rulers.

Such jungle satyagrahas were organized in other districts of Maharashtra as well, but the one at Chirner in which thousands took part, became historical like Chauri Chaura in 1922 because both police and people resorted to violence at Chirner. in 1930.

A hotheaded police officer, Inspector Patil, unnecessarily handcuffed satyagrahis, beat them mercilessly and resorted to firing without the permission of the Mamledar (now called Tahsildar). When Mamledar Joshi questioned Patil about the illegal firing, Patil became so much enraged that he killed the Mamledar. The satyagrahis, shocked by the murder of the Mamledar attacked the police with sticks and stones and killed some of them. But as Inspector Patil surrendered to the mob,

some sensible local leaders saved his life by giving him shelter in the Congress House of Chirner. Many satyagrahis were wounded, or killed in the police firing. The British government reacted with vengeance and arrested hundreds of people for breach of law. Some were convicted on charges of murder and dacoity.

An independent investigating committee headed by Jamnadas Mehta with members like Barrister M.C. Chagla, Husseinbhai Tayabji and Haribhau Joshi, appointed by the Sarvajanik Sabha of Pune, a well-known social institution, was prohibited from entering Raigad district. Depending on the statements by people the satyagrahis, their families and newspaper reports it held Inspector Patil responsible for the murder of Mamledar. But the government confiscated its report.

As a sequel to the Gandhi-Irwin pact, hundreds of satyagrahis were set free. But some who were involved in violent acts were tried and awarded rigorous imprisonment.

Prabhakar Gupte and his younger sister Vimal Gupte Karnik, mother of the translator of this book Suhasini Sinha, played a significant role in Chirner satyagraha. Their father Bhaisaheb Gupte, was among those arrested. A stone monument was erected on 25th September 1931 to commemorate the first anniversary of the Chirner martyrs. This monument was subsequently demolished by the colonial government in 1932 and rebuilt by the first provincial government in 1935.

The book ably translated in simple and lucid style by Suhasini is a must read especially for the younger generation.



MINOO MASANI

A Biography by S. V. Raju

Published by the National Book Trust, India in their National Biography series

This book is a brief biography of Minoo Masani based on the author's 40-year association with him. It traces his roller coaster ride as writer freedom fighter, parliamentarian from the Constituent Assembly to the Fourth Lok Sabha. His journey from Marxism to Liberalism and his role in the formation of, and the decline of the Swatantra Party.

This is the story of a principled politician – an oxymoron in current political dialogue. Today the word politician draws sneer and derision. That it was not always so the author seeks to establish in this biography of Minoo Masani whose life and work spanned the greater part of the twentieth century.

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The Passing of Gen. Suharto

A Kleptomaniac and a Mass Murderer

R. Srinivasan

In our younger days, we learnt of African leaders plundering the land revelling in cruelty. But the experience of South-East Asia and other countries makes us pause.

Suharto, who passed away a few weeks ago, and was honoured by a state funeral with Lee Kuan Yew leading the foreign dignitaries in full regalia was 86 when he died. Perhaps he had the worst reputation for mass murder (with the exception of Pol Pot) responsible for the killing of 500,000 of his political opponents in 1965 and later of 200,000 citizens of East Timor. His *Kopassus* was notorious in using third degree methods.

Only less excusable was the looting of the country for a full thirty-two years when he was in authority. Each year he salted away a billion dollars. His large family part took of the loot with the elderly statesman winking at their misdemeanours. In almost every pie, they had their finger and whether it be “transport, mining, agriculture, property, telecom, media, airlines, car-making, hotels”, they had their cut. Annually they raked in 5.4 billion dollars. It is said that in Indonesia, one could scarcely spend a *rupiah*

without the family getting a share of it – driving licences, ID cards or even the imbibing of alcohol. In Borneo, Suharto’s wife had extensive property and “plundered ... timber, coal and palm-oil”. One-third of Timor belonged to the family.

Suharto was never brought to book and like other tyrants managed to get amnesties and exceptional treatment. In this, he joins the company of Augusto Pinochet of Chile who ensured that he would remain untouched as “Senator for Life” against any legal action. Similar was the case of General Stroessner of Paraguay whose thirty five years of tyranny ended in 1989 but took refuge in Brazil and lived there in cover.

Pol Pot similarly escaped the arms of retributory justice and a timely heart attack saved Slobodan Milasevic of Serbia from prosecution.

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

From Our Readers

Freedom to Speak the Truth

This has reference to Mr Subhash Athale’s article, ‘Freedom to speak the truth’ (*Freedom First*, January 2008). The article mentions two recent instances when scientists were punished for speaking what they felt was the truth

The question is what is the truth? *Freedom First* itself gave an attribute as the felt truth. It’s other attributes are insignificant, small, large, partial, half, whole, relative, absolute, ephemeral, eternal and so on. Mr Athale is worried that the two scientists of the Archaeological Society of India were punished for saying what they felt was the truth. Fine. Why are only Hindu beliefs targeted carefully excluding others?

From media reports, I understand that the name of the Ram Sethu was rechristened Adam’s bridge in 1804 by James Rennel, the first Surveyor General of India.

When the two scientists chose to question the historicity of Ram, I have every right to question the same of Adam’s. There are so many places in India and Sri Lanka associated with Ram. But what kind of historical evidence is available to accept Adam’s historicity? An incident involving Nobel Laureate Sir C. V. Raman in 1968 is worth illustrating. When he was returning by train from

Visakhapatnam after delivering a lecture at the Andhra University, there was an eclipse. The train halted at a railway station due to some reason and Sir Raman got down and had a bath muttering *mantras*. He was confronted by some students asking him how such a great scientist practised blind beliefs. He quipped, “Science is science and belief is belief”.

Now about Dr. Athale’s reference to the U.S. scientist, Mr Watson. I would like to state that the people in Orissa worship the Trinity in the form of Jagannath - black in colour, his brother Balabhadra in white and sister Subhadra in yellow representing all the colours, not races, of the world. This mode of worship has been popularised by International Sri Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) within India and abroad. Besides, if untouchability were mentally retarding, how was this community able to produce a colossus like Dr. B.R.Ambedkar?

It is high time, we dump decrepit concepts of race, *varna* or colour of the skin, one’s religion is superior to others etc. and judge people on their intelligence and abilities.

S. C. Panda, Bhubaneswar

Between Ourselves ...

The arrogance of the Chinese Communists asking the people of the world to shut up and mind their business shouldn't surprise anyone other than the most naïve; nor should the position taken by their stooges in India - Karat, Yechury and their gang that the ongoing massacre of the innocents in Lhasa and elsewhere in Tibet is "an internal affair" of China. Their support is natural for they belong to the tribe of "red lapdogs of Chinese Imperialism" across the globe. The phrase is crude but this is how the commies of the late unlamented Soviet Union described those with whom they disagreed, among them Mahatma Gandhi. So the Dalai Lama is in good company. The communist Chinese are afraid of him as the Soviet commies were of the Mahatma. *The Times of India* has described the Chinese response to crush the Tibetan movement for freedom as a 'roar'. Lions roar. Dogs 'bark'.

Mamata Banerjee and Medha Patkar would have been history if the communist gang of Karat, Yechury and company were in power in Delhi instead of West Bengal. Had this tragedy happened they would have usurped power, outlawed other parties and subverted the armed forces. Their great poet chief minister of Bengal would

have had no pangs of conscience in ordering the execution of hundreds of protesting kisans in Nandigram without having to worry about High Courts and police enquiries. Mercifully this nightmare scenario will, hopefully, remain what it is - a nightmare

For the first time an Indian prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has talked straight even if it is to state the obvious that the Dalai Lama believes in non-violence and Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India. *Freedom First* does not recall a single prime minister not even the NDA one to make an unambiguous statement where the Chinese communists are concerned.

First Tienanmen and now Tibet – how many examples of communist Chinese brutality and mass murders would be required for our people to understand the nature of the monster across the border.

Freedom First salutes the brave Tibetans inside Tibet people for demonstrating to the world their will to be free.

Editor

Many Voices

Whistling, groping, men trying to rub themselves against you, cars following, obscene words ...all form part of an average Indian woman's daily life.

Nikita Doval, *The Week*, January 20

Harassment of women happens world over, and a lot of it has to do with the media, which treats women as objects. In India what makes matters worse is that the police also do not take violence against women seriously.

Haya, a Ph.D student at the University of California, on her fourth trip to India, *The Week*, January 20

All of a sudden, education of the 450 million children below age 18 – the largest national child population worldwide – has become the high priority, high button

subject it should have become decades ago.

Dilip Thakore, editor, *Education World*, November 2007

The Left Front has always followed a pseudo-nationalist ideology, preferring to remain loyal to ideologies dictated by foreign leaders.

J. S. Acharya, Department of Biophysics National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, *The Week*, September 23, 2007

It seems that we have too much time to spare if the Order of Leopold award given to Sonia Gandhi by the Belgian government is to become a national controversy.

Editorial in the *Mint*, February 18

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