

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

THE SECOND LIBERATION OF EGYPT

❖ *Issues of Governance*

- "Deficit Governance" - The Open Letter
- Fall from Grace
- Congress Party on Suicide Watch
- The UK Bribery Act - Worthy of Emulation

❖ *Why Development Alone Does Not Neutralise the Incumbency Factor*

❖ *Our Environmental Impact Assessments*

❖ *Graham Staines Murder - Supreme Court Judgement*

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Freedom First

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Contents

<i>Between Ourselves</i>	1
<i>From Our Readers</i>	2
The Second Liberation of Egypt B. Ramesh Babu	4
<i>On Issues of Governance</i>	
● On “Deficit Governance” An Open Letter from some concerned Citizens	7
● Fall From Grace H. R. Bapu Satyanarayana	9
● Congress Party On Suicide Watch Firoze Hirjikaka	13
<i>Freedom First</i>	
This Month in March 1954	14
● Where There is a Will, There is a Way! Meera H. Sanyal	15
<i>Point Counter Point</i> Ashok Karnik	18
Why Development Alone Does Not Neutralise the Incumbency Factor T. H. Chowdary	20
<i>Come On, Liberals: Let's Change India!</i> The Absurd Dreams of Liberatarian Anarchists Sanjeev Sabhlok	22
Our Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) Zafar Futehally	25
Graham Staines Murder Case Keshav Rau	27
<i>On Rabindranath Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary</i> The Parrot's Training Rabindranath Tagore	29
<i>Book Reviews</i>	31

Between Ourselves...

In the February issue in this column we wondered whether in the light of today's circumstances, as a liberal magazine, we need to consider whether we need a new paradigm in furtherance of our objective which in broad terms is to develop a liberal society with a liberal temper; to advocate a free, ethical society based on the rule of law; to stop the erosion of our public institutions and to protest the fact that gradually we are being persuaded to accept that what is happening is inevitable and we should take it as a part of our way of life!

If we let this thought take hold of us it is the surest way to invite a million mutinies that Naipaul wrote about. In the light of the virtual absence of governance let us recall that we witnessed for 18 months authoritarianism which we rejected at the first opportunity by voting the authoritarians out. Now we have to consider how to do the opposite. How do we persuade those who have the ability to help enable good governance.

We had a meeting recently of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. The major part of the discussion was on the rapidly deteriorating governance in the country. What role, however small, should *Freedom First* play in such a situation? In the past we played a role in educating and informing our readers on the danger posed by the communist conspiracy. Thereafter we spoke for a free market economy and supported long overdue economic reforms. Though the reforms have been stagnating and also degenerating into crony capitalism, the fact is that the GDP is growing as it did not in the first 40 years of freedom.

Readers may recall that in October 2006 our cover feature read: “While the Economy soars, Governance plummets.” Things have gotten worse since.

Perhaps we should devote ourselves to seek answers to some basic questions that have debased our politics and public life. Let's start with one to begin with however irrelevant it may sound:

Do we want to be a superpower or a country that has no global ambitions but the modest desire to eliminate poverty and hunger and provide opportunities for people to develop and grow; for a vastly improved infrastructure, with efficiently managed public health and education services.

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From Our Readers

Are We a Nation of Citizens or Subjects? (Freedom First November 2010)

We are subjects. That is ingrained in our blood having been subjects of one invader or another over the last several centuries.

We always look for a leader, or a swamiji, or an authoritative boss to whom we like to bow and obey!

True we have democracy but what kind? It is ruled by the leaders created by the people. The people create leaders whom they can follow and obey and be subservient to. Every leader has followers, cronies, fans, 'chelas', who fawn on them and may be make a living out of that. They are the people who constitute the mobs and lay down policies on behalf of their leaders and force the administration to follow their dictats, right or wrong. The leaders are happy because it is these 'followers' who get them elected and also see they get positions which guarantee pelf.

Whether you open the newspaper or switch on the TV in the morning the first thing you see or hear is there is a strike here, a protest there, a riot here and a boycott there seeking action on their demands with the threat of 'or else'. They have become adept in organizing discord and dissensions among the ruling parties and force the leader (CM) to bow to their demands or else!

So what is the remedy and how do we restore real democracy?

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*

"Unhappy is the Land that has No Heroes"

India is just about 63 years old after independence but its sad to see our very fibre is coming apart, thanks to the *babus*, the media and our politicians !

There's a famous exchange in Brecht's play The Life of Galileo in which Andrea says, "Unhappy the land that has no heroes", and Galileo replies, "No, unhappy the land that needs heroes".

I must admit that I am with the unsung Andrea here. All nations need heroes.

To accept Galileo's notion will be a great injustice

to those who have been working selflessly to serve India in this age of 'self'. We wish that good Indians of integrity should unite to cleanse this muck that is rapidly enveloping in our country.

I love my country but not the governments, for we lack the governance meant to uphold the dignity of an *aam admi*.

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*

Reining in Coalition (a)dharma

According to the current electoral law, any candidate polling less than 16% of the votes polled, forfeits his security deposit. On this analogy, splinter political parties securing less than 25% of the seats in the House (Parliament or State legislature) should be entitled to only 0.5 of the seats.

This will deter these splinter groups from exerting force on parties with higher majority of seats but depend on some more votes to form Government, or pass a law. These parties will then be put in their place. Perhaps Coalition (a)dharma will cease!

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On Nationalism

This refers to the article on Rabindranath Tagore's views on nationalism (*Freedom First*, February 2011). What is a 'nation'? Isn't it just an 'idea' of something? The flag is nothing but a symbol of the idea of a nation. So the flag and the nation are the same thing. And on that idea of a nation we fight, maim, kill, loot, usurp... How different is a man living in the US or Honduras or Saudi Arabia or Singapore or India? Not much, other than just the superficial skin and colour and the so-called cultural differences. And yet we all suffer the same agonies of living a small, beastly life. Why can't we see that all these differences, which are nothing but ideas, are dividing us and where there is a divide there must be conflict all the time.

I have observed how 'ideas' run our lives. An idea of being a muslim or a hindu or an American or Indian or Egyptian or a doctor versus an engineer or a communist

versus a socialist Haven't ideas divided our society and fractured it? And an idea is not real. The word idea as it has come to be seen is nothing but a summation and an abstraction of something. And so any idea must, by its very nature, be limited. No wonder we are in perpetual conflict; because we act from that limitation. And yet we humans put so much of value on ideas as a way of living. For example non-violence is an idea. It is not real. It's just a projection – an ideal. Violence is real. That's why no amount of talk of non-violence can ever create peace. Because we are constantly dealing with an illusion. Isn't it logical to deal with violence, which is real? The reason for violence then can be understood clearly and in that understanding perhaps end it. And by violence I mean not just physical violence but even imitation which is ideas being thrust on a mind – that too is violence. Perhaps the human mind in its inability to deal with the real has created the ideal – like non-violence and God.

Not many know that the root meaning of the word idea in Latin is to observe? That's interesting because in observation there is only seeing what is real!

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*

The Border Dispute With China

In an article in *The Indian Express* (January 12 2011) on the India-China dispute former foreign secretary Shyam Saran rightly asks us to be firm on the issue. Yet he deals with the subject of the 1962 India-China war with an attitude of servility which we have perhaps developed because of our one thousand years long subjugation by outside forces and our refusal not to learn from the past.

Shyam Saran says that Mao attacked India because his Great Leap Forward was a failure. Why don't we face the fact that Mao's decision has benefitted China. That one blow in 1962 was enough to silence us for the next fifty years. If the Chinese took advantage of happenings on the world stage it was because they had a better strategy. China's order to liquidate the Indian Army was an order from a position of strength. How I wish our leadership could have given such an order to our army to liquidate our enemies! But we are ready to take beatings even from Pakistan over the last sixty years. Let's face it we are weak.

For two hundred years nobody attacked India under the Mughals. After Aurangzeb, India became weak. Within ten years of the end of the Mughal empire we were attacked by Nadir Shah.

It is childish to say that China attacked India because we gave shelter to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama came to India in 1959. Before that India had lost all its privileges in Tibet. Mansarovar and Kailash had been closed to us. China had completed the Aksai Chin road and had occupied more than five thousand sq. miles of territory claimed by India to be its territory.

The origin of the conflict was at the trijunction of India, Bhutan and Tibet. There was only one brigade in that area under Brig. John Dalvi. We should read the account given by Brig. Dalvi and the Divisional Commander Niranjana Prasad. The whole brigade was moved to the trijunction. The Chinese were announcing over loud speakers that if there was any dispute then both sides should meet and discuss the issue. Instead Gen. Kaul reached the trijunction to lead the attack on China. Then there was Nehru's so-called casual declaration. Where does the Dalai Lama fit into this?

Because China played it cool upto the 1962 war Nehru got the wrong impression that he could get away with the gimmick of attacking China. The general who warned of the consequences was punished. When India was not at all capable of throwing away the Chinese, when the Indian Army had not at all been got ready to face the Chinese, to make an announcement in the Indian parliament that orders had been issued to throw out the Chinese was empty, irresponsible bravado. It was Nehru who stabbed India in the back and not the Chinese.

After playing a major role in letting down Tibet, we shamelessly go on declaring Tibet as part of China. This is hardly the way to deal with China. We should make ourselves strong enough to meet any threat that we may have to face in the future. There is no point in making silly excuses for the mistakes we have made in the past.

Ajay B. Agrawal, author of
"India, Tibet and China The Role that Nehru Played".
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Of Prejudiced Indians

In many ways it is challenging to be a foreigner in India. Being a *firangi* opens up some doors. I know I have access to bureaucrats a *desi* would find hard to meet. However also some doors that close. India is more prejudiced than people are willing to believe. It is a surprisingly difficult culture to assimilate into. So many expats who live here feel that way.

Novelist William Dalrymple. Excerpted from an
interview given by him to Saloni Meghani,
Mumbai Mirror, January 30, 2011.

The Second Liberation of Egypt

Unfinished Revolutions For the Arab World

B. Ramesh Babu

The Police and the Army deserve all praise for supporting the popular will. The top leadership of the Army played a positive and constructive role in eventually easing the President out of office.
The contrast between Tiananmen Square and Tahrir Square cannot be more glaring!

The eighteen day long saga of popular revolt against the oppressive regime in Egypt and its success in toppling the 'elected' dictator Hosni Mubarak is as unforeseen as the demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism. No resident pundit in the Arab world or foreign expert on West Asia has warned of the storm that toppled one regime and threatens to unseat others in the Arab World. Dictators of all hues, ranging from the feudal sultans of Saudi Arabia to the men in uniform ruling the roost, and the 'elected' usurpers of power elsewhere were caught off guard by the 'desert storm' that began in Tunisia and is sweeping through many countries in the region and beyond. The sea of men and women that rose in revolt unseated one despicable regime so far. Hopefully, this is not the end of the wave of popular discontent and disaffection against oppression, poverty, denial of livelihood, and callous neglect of the welfare of the people in many countries around the world.

The youthful protesters and the people of all ages that swarmed the Tahrir Square in Cairo and other cities and towns across Egypt deserve kudos for their dogged determination, sincerity of purpose, and above all for their commitment to maintain peace in the face of provocations and violence. Unlike such massive crowds elsewhere, who usually go berserk, the protesters literally policed themselves and kept the overcrowded Square and the vicinity clean and peaceful. The uncharacteristically 'responsible' behaviour of the masses was unique and tactically very significant. They did not want to give the police or the Army any pretext to crack down on them. They knew by instinct that violence on their part would invite retaliatory state action. How such a mature leadership emerged out of the crowds that gathered spontaneously is indeed a mystery.

This dynamic is worthy of close scrutiny so that it can be replicated whenever people rise in revolt against dictators and other usurpers of power elsewhere. Except for the brief interlude of violence initiated by the hired

hoodlums and over enthusiastic supporters of Mubarak and the inevitable retaliation on the part of the protesters, the prolonged uprising in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt remained peaceful and positively focused. Their perseverance and optimism must be admired. The crowds formed human barricades to protect their greatest cultural treasure, the National Museum, in the midst of the turmoil and the ups and downs in the popular movement is even more remarkable. The police and the Army deserve all praise for supporting the popular will. The top leadership of the Army played a positive and constructive role in eventually easing the President out of office. *The contrast between the Tiananmen Square and Tahrir Square cannot be more glaring!*

It is necessary to recall at this juncture that it was a young Colonel in the Egyptian Army by name Gamal Abdel Nasser that ousted the King and banished the royalty from Egypt six decades ago. That was part of the postwar anti-colonial and nationalist movements that liberated country after country in Asia and Africa in the aftermath of Indian independence. At that time Nasser was heralded as a great leader and much was written about the progressive and revolutionary role the Army could play in the Arab world and beyond. That was the first war of liberation in Egypt. But in a few years it degenerated into a repressive authoritarian rule. Egyptian people have a great sense of humour. They are particularly great in making fun of themselves. I still remember a couple of stories of those days. "Colonel Nasser will go down in the history of the country," said a wag, "for his great contribution to its geography! Egypt lost the Gaza Strip to the Israelis!" Another one went like this: Q: "What did Nasser do?" A: "He brought socialism to Egypt." Q: "Then, what happened?" A: "Nothing happened for a decade. Then we had to import sand from abroad!"

Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak succeeded to the *gaddi* and the rest is history as they say. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. However, when

fools come to power, as George Bernard Shaw observed, they corrupt the very process of power. In the bargain common people suffer most. Decades of repression and rampant corruption led to callous neglect of the poor and the lower middle class culminating in the ignominious exit of the President of the Republic of Egypt! Mubarak ran away to a walled compound in the Red Sea resort of Sharm-el-Sheik. This indeed is another turning point in the history of the country. What happens in the land of the Nile today happens in the rest of the Arab world tomorrow, it is widely believed. Recent history testifies to the veracity of the popular belief. Many other autocratic rulers will be forced into exile in the days and weeks to come. "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" as they used to say in America's Wild West!

Let us now turn to the key role of the US and President Obama in the unfolding of events on the fast track during the last three weeks. Being the Super Power, America is always suspect in the eyes of the people in the third world. President Obama is damned if he acts and he is damned if he doesn't. As expected, the US was anxious over the fate of Mubarak its staunch and long trusted ally. As the swelling crowds in Tahrir square grew in numbers and fury, policy makers in Washington grew more and more worried. But, soon Obama realised that Mubarak's days in office are numbered. To his credit, he came out in favour of peaceful transition in response to the popular will. He quickly added that he wants the transition to start *now*! He could see that things were moving very fast and the rebellion against the regime was gathering momentum. He welcomed the appointment of Omar Suleiman as the new Vice-President, a known friend of Israel. Obama also recognised Dr. Mohammed ElBardei, the Nobel Laureate for peace and the former Chief of the IAEA, as the leader of the opposition to the besieged Mubarak regime.

Obama was unwilling to buy Mubarak's desperate "after me chaos" argument, the most common ruse of dictators throughout history. Egyptian people roared in protest when Mubarak said so in public. They wanted him to "go now." On the penultimate day the top officials of the US Government were able to persuade Mubarak to see the writing on the wall and depart gracefully. Mubarak agreed to publicly announce his exit to the nation and the world. The Egyptian people, rest of the Arab world and all nations eagerly and confidently waited for the announcement. But, at the last minute Mubarak changed his mind. In his address to the nation and the world, he declared that he is not quitting office. All the people were stunned in disbelief and the Tahrir Square resounded with "Go, Mubarak Go." The huge crowd surged forward to storm the Presidential palace. And the inevitable happened. Mubarak ran away from the capital. Another chapter in

the nation's history was closed.

In this context, it will be of interest to find out whether the last minute surge of bravado was linked to Saudi King Abdullah II's vocal support saying he would "bank roll" Mubarak if Americans forced Mubarak to a sudden and humiliating exit. In the end, it did not help much. The role of the Army once again proved crucial at another turning point in the life of Egypt. It became the backbone of the second liberation of the country and the people. The High Power Council of the Army took over the reins and promised to amend the Constitution to enable the people to become voters and hold free and fair elections soon. Hopefully, this will become the first step in Egypt's march towards self-government. The transition is not going to be easy or smooth. The Army by its very nature is intolerant of protests and disorder. It is inherently incapable of governing the nation and work for the welfare of the common people. The latest news is not very propitious. The Army tried to clear the Tahrir Square and force the protesters to go home. While most of the protesters went home, a sizeable number of them stayed on to keep vigil. They refused to budge till tangible steps were taken towards democratic rule in the near future. As of now there is a peaceful stalemate in the historic Square. What this holds for Egypt only time can unravel. We can only hope that the Army will act quickly on the democratic front and be patient in dealing with the common people who liberated the nation from Mubarak. Above all the Army top brass should not become tempted to capture power and return the country to the bad old days. This possibility cannot be ruled out in the long run. The people should remain vigilant and must be ready to get back to the streets, if they are betrayed. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.

Moreover, the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak's National Democratic Party, the only two organised political formations in place are not votaries of democracy, it must be remembered. Rightwing radical Islam is going to become more powerful to begin with because they supported the downfall of Mubarak. The Army is the one that is likely to wield real power and hold the balance between the two serious contenders for power. All the three are not ideologically wedded to democracy, pluralism, and secularism, etc. As this goes to press (February 14), the future is uncertain. The break from the past is unmistakable and hopefully it is also irreversible.

It is not out of place to draw a lesson or two from the successful popular revolt in Egypt and the gathering storms in the rest of the Arab world. Many analysts have asserted that such a thing cannot happen in India. They have given many compelling reasons to sustain their

arguments. Surely, our democratic form of government, multi-ethnic demography, and the plethora of sub-national identities do not favour such unity of purpose across the board, they argue. The many safety valves functioning in the country militate against the pressure cooker exploding. However, there is no reason for us to be too very sanguine. Let us not forget Jayaprakash Narayan and his Bharat Nirman movement. With “democratic deficit” and “ethical deficit” (to use Chidambaram’s elegant understatement), staring us in the face to be overly optimistic is not realistic. I would like to add. It is noteworthy that Mehbooba Mufti, the leader of the opposition in J&K welcomed the Egyptian model as worthy of emulation to right the wrongs in the state. Since

Mehbooba is always on the prowl to unseat Omar Abdullah, we may discount her antics. However, a nationwide popular upsurge may not seem to be an unwelcome instrument to get rid of the scam ridden Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi duo in power. They have been unwilling and unable to contain inflation; pervasive corruption and mis-governance stalking the land. A wild thought “why wait for the next elections?” may cross the mind of the youth and the not so young across the land! In disgust even the wise may think otherwise!

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Shocking Ignorance of Elementary Economics

The continuous and sustained rise in prices, especially of food and essential commodities – the fruits and vegetables price index is 19 percent higher than it was at this time last year – is a cruel tax inflicted upon the vast majority of the country’s poor. And the depth of poverty in contemporary, allegedly shining India is chilling. According to the report of a committee chaired by the late economist Arjun Sengupta, 836 million citizens precariously survive on a per capita income of Rs.20 per day. It’s a wonder how the poor make ends meet in a society in which the ruling price of staple pulses has crossed Rs.100 per kg, rice price averages Rs.22, wheat Rs.18 and onions Rs.60 per kg.

There’s a great deal of confusion and misinformation on the cause of this insidious tax on the poor. Yet at bottom, there’s no side-stepping the reality that the roots of inflation can be traced to government profligacy and/or mismanagement of the economy. In the instant case it’s astonishing that the Congress-led UPA-II coalition government at the Centre, headed by an internationally renowned economist, has committed so many sins of economic mismanagement which have ignited an inflation prairie fire.

For a start, the government which has recorded huge fiscal deficits in two successive Union budgets since it was returned to power in May 2009, should have been aware that the massive increase in money supply consequent upon the Sixth Pay Commission award for government employees (Rs.20,000 crore) in 2008-09, and the subsequent payouts under MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Assurance) scheme in 2009 (Rs.39,000 crore) and 2010 (Rs.40,000 crore)

without corresponding effort to boost productivity and production, would exert heavy pressure on prices. Yet no effort has been made to improve the productivity of government employees commensurately with the Pay Commission award. Nor has the UPA-II government undertaken any meaningful initiatives to improve production in agriculture to absorb increased MNREGA money supply and/or upgrade rural India’s pathetic post-harvest infrastructure which inflicts an annual loss of Rs.50,000 crore by way of foodgrains and horticulture spoilage.

Quite clearly there’s been shocking lack of awareness within the Central government of the need to balance increased money supply with greater supply-side productivity and throughput. Consequently, with greater money supply chasing stagnant production within rural India and the economy, double-digit inflation was inevitable.

The national interest demands that wage hikes in government are linked with increased productivity. Conterminously it’s high time that public pressure is exerted on urban-centric governments in Delhi and the state capitals to seriously address the issue of building rural India’s post-harvest infrastructure to eliminate enormous annual wastage in agriculture. Further procrastination of these vital issues is to throw the populace to the untender mercies of the inflation monster, which is squeezing the breath out of Indian society.

Dilip Thakore’s editorial in *EducationWorld*, February 2011. Visit www.educationworldonline.net

On “Deficit Governance”

An Open Letter from some concerned Citizens

Not only political parties in the opposition but the rumble among the people in general is now growing louder. Slowly, but surely this rumble will turn into a roar if those in power do not mend their ways, give up misusing their public power for personal or party ends and get on with the task of providing good, efficient and honest governance.

The rumble has begun with an Open Letter from some of India's leading industrialists, businessmen, economists, corporates and former members of the highest judiciary on what they mildly describe as the growing “deficit in governance”.

They are: **Anu Aga, Ashok Ganguly, Jamshyd Godrej, Bimal Jalan, Keshub Mahindra, Yezdi Malegam, Nachiket Mor, M. Narasimham, Deepak Parekh, Azim Premji, B. N. Srikrishna, N. Vaghul, A. Vaidyanathan, Sam Variava**

They write:

“We are a small group of like-minded citizens who are concerned with the general deterioration in the overall value system of the nation, but have abiding belief and commitment in India's potential and prospects as a successful democracy.

“We are a fraction of a very large number of Indians who, we believe, share our hopes and aspirations but have no means to channel their views and opinions in India's public domain.

“In the last few months, the country has witnessed the eruption of a number of egregious events, thanks to an active media eagerly tracking malfeasance. There are, at present, several loud and outraged voices, in the public domain, clamouring on these issues which have deeply hurt the nation.

“We do not wish to add to the confusion by joining that debate. What we are deeply worried about is not to allow India's huge growth potential and poverty alleviation challenges to be diluted or digressed from, and which would be a great loss, especially to the poor and the dispossessed.

“Our aim is to try and rise above the present

clamour and seek a more confident and purposeful national environment.

“As concerned citizens, who have full confidence in the country's ability to reach its social and economic development potential, and who have a deep and abiding faith in India's prospects for a vibrant, pluralist and successful democracy, we have put down a few thoughts.

“This letter is the beginning of our aim to develop specific actions and recommendations which shall be placed in the public domain, from time to time.

“We are alarmed at the widespread governance deficit almost in every sphere of national activity, covering government, business and institutions. Widespread discretionary decision making have been routinely subjected to extraneous influences.”

“The topmost responsibility of those at the helm of the nation's affairs must be to urgently restore the self-confidence and self-belief of Indians in themselves and in the State, as well as in Indian business and public institutions which touch the lives of every Indian.

“The judiciary is a source of some reassurance but creation of genuinely independent and constitutionally constituted regulatory bodies, manned by persons who are judicially trained in the field concerned, would be one of the first and important steps to restore public confidence.

“Possibly, the biggest issue corroding the fabric of our nation is ‘corruption’. This malaise needs to be tackled with a sense of urgency, determination and on a war footing.

“The institution of *Lok Ayuktas*, vested with adequate powers, would go a long way in effecting the needed correction, as is evident from the example of Karnataka.

“There is a need for every State to have effective and fully empowered *Lok Ayuktas* and, indeed, for early introduction of the Lok Pal Bill at the national level, for the purpose of highlighting, pursuing and dealing with corruption issues and corrupt individuals.”

“Apart from speedily installing independent *Lok Ayuktas*, it is essential that their investigative agencies and law enforcing bodies should be made independent of the executive.

“Amongst several urgent steps needed, this is possibly the most critical one that the nation can immediately initiate in order to reassure its citizens that corruption will be most severely dealt with, both at the branch and at the root level.

“Time is overdue for India’s elected representatives to distinguish between dissent and disruption, while in the era of coalitions, tolerance of compromise still remains a challenge.

“Elected legislators and leaders must acknowledge and demonstrate their collective role and responsibility

in restoring a sense of purpose and confidence in national institutions.

“It is widely acknowledged that the benefits of growth are not reaching the poor and marginalised sections adequately due to impediments to economic development.

“This is because of some critical issues like environmental concerns and differences in perspectives between central and state governments.

“It is imperative to establish ways and means, for every Indian, to feel that they have genuine equal opportunities, access to decision makers and a stake in India’s progress.

“Dealing determinedly with governance and aggressively against corruption, while openly debating these issues by elected legislators is the only means left to reassure our citizens.

“We believe that through urgent, concerted action in which we are ready to lend a hand, positive change can be achieved.”



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Fall From Grace

H. R. Bapu Satyanarayana

Probably, Manmohan Singh forever frozen in the mould of an economist is unable to deliver on governance genuinely suffering from a delusion that development will be the panacea for all the evils that afflict India.

In May 2004 when Sonia Gandhi anointed Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister of India responding to her 'inner voice', it was most dramatic with far reaching implications for political change and unprecedented because Sonia Gandhi could have easily become the Prime Minister of the largest democracy in the world. In fact, the Congress parliamentary faction unanimously requested Sonia Gandhi to rescind her decision. Some members of the Congress Working Committee threatened to resign in protest while distraught Congress cadres protested. Sonia Gandhi has never come out openly to say what prompted her to take the decision she did.

While the Congress cadres may have been unhappy, USA's *Wall Street Journal* was practically ecstatic that Manmohan Singh who ushered in economic progress under P. V. Narasimha Rao's stewardship in 1991 was now the Prime Minister. It may be recalled that Manmohan Singh had worked in the World Bank. Besides, he had perhaps the most envious credentials as an economist with few peers of his eminence. Big business interests in India too were happy. The reasons for their happiness unfolded in dramatic fashion in 2010 with the expose of the Radia Tapes.

Flattered to Deceive

Whatever be the reasons for his being appointed as Prime Minister, gradually people all over India accepted him for two reasons: firstly, it was a refreshing break from dynastic politics and secondly, he was considered a person of impeccable integrity and honesty. However, it gradually became clear that in most policy issues he was acting at the behest of his party president Sonia Gandhi. This perception got strengthened in many policy initiatives which had a pronounced tilt towards vote bank politics. The opposition BJP used it as a political weapon to taunt the PM as weak. But the PM refused to be provoked and was ably defended by redoubtable Congress spokespersons. The impression was sought to be conveyed that the PM felt it unnecessary to intervene personally and his 'silence' became a trademark for a politician leading such a vast and complex country like India.

Indo-US Nuclear Agreement

That he had a mind of his own and could act with determination was made evident with the way he took personal responsibility to push through the Indo-US nuclear agreement.

Coalition Adharma

Next was the political drama that followed when UPA's coalition partner CPI(M) withdrew support. However the government survived and the lesson must not have been lost on the PM who must have realised that to be in power would mean entering into political compromises with coalition partners or accommodating others supporting the government even if it meant ignoring criminal charges, however grave. The immorality of this did not obviously bother the PM confident that his personal integrity was not questioned.

Black Money

In its election manifesto the Congress had promised that within 100 days of coming to power it would take action to get back the black money stashed by Indians overseas and take action against the offenders. After the recent Wikileaks this has once again become a raging debate in the media. The PM has coolly chosen to ignore the promise he made when the heat was getting intense. It is rumoured that money by Indians in Swiss banks is nearly \$1.4 trillion out of a total of \$20 trillion – the highest for any single country. Despite the finance minister assuring that he would get the list of Indians few believe him. Such is the loss of credibility that the government of India headed by Manmohan Singh enjoys. Why? If full details are revealed it is likely the names of many political heavyweights would be exposed endangering the government's survival in office.

An Unholy Act

In 2006 when Bihar Governor Buta Singh sent his ill-advised recommendation to dissolve the Assembly what our PM did was unthinkable: He held a midnight meeting of the cabinet and decided to accept the Governor's



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recommendation and sent it for signature to the President of India, who was then on a state visit to Russia and was apparently hustled into signing. By this one act the PM not only became a party to such an unholy act but also dragged the President who is above party politics. It showed how he failed to live up to the high tradition of being impartial. The least the PM could have done was to get more details and taken time to calmly evaluate the political fallout of such hasty action. A correct decision would have enhanced his stature and sent warning signals to his cabinet colleagues not to trifle with him. But it was left to the court to pass strictures. These two incidents were the precursor of more damaging developments that happened during the first two years of UPA II re-elected to office in 2008 that reflect seriously on the political integrity of the PM.

The 2G Scam

The next saga in corruption is in the allocation of the 2G spectrum by the telecom minister A. Raja. This has been reported in some detail in the December 2010 issue of *Freedom First*.

Radia Tapes

A parallel development which shook the nation was the revelations contained in the Radia tapes. In effect it revealed how a powerful lobby was not only influencing spectrum allocation but also in the allocation of ministerial portfolios to suit influential corporate giants with the support of influential media anchors. This further tarnished the PM's image.

Shying Away from a JPC

Meanwhile we witnessed the total disruption of the winter session of parliament. The Opposition in parliament demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the 2G scam. The government was equally opposed to this demand and in the process parliament's work was disrupted. Throughout the winter session the Prime Minister was silent as though the matter did not concern him while logic pointed out that if his role in this scam was blameless he should have exhibited the moral courage to face a JPC probe. His silence coupled with the way his cabinet colleagues and Congress spokespersons repeatedly asserting like a broken record that the PM is blameless gave the impression that the PM seemed to be overly cautious to safeguard his reputation as a person of impeccable honesty and integrity. His silence has caused untold harm to the country in terms of enormous revenue loss and exposed the moral bankruptcy of the government and its reluctance to act decisively against corruption.

Appointment of CVC

Probably, the appointment of Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) P.J.Thomas was a more definitive indication of the fact that the PM seems determined to compromise his position. This was a case when he could have asserted himself and yet he was a party to the appointment of a person against whom a court case is pending. He was earlier Secretary in the Telecom Ministry. A person occupying the important post of CVC according to convention has to be a person of impeccable integrity and have the approval of a three member committee comprising the prime minister, the home minister and the leader of the opposition. Despite Sushma Swaraj, the leader of the opposition recording her objection citing the case against him, his name was approved. Thomas has refused to step down. Probably, it will be for the Supreme Court which is hearing a PIL against his appointment, to give its verdict.

Scams Galore

Year 2010 can be characterized as the year of scams unprecedented in the history of India. The Commonwealth Games scam and the Adarsh Housing Society scam to mention just two have fully exposed how influential people, many belonging to the ruling party, are defrauding the nation. In fact it is widely accepted that the government is dragging its feet and only the media pressure appears has compelled the government to take steps to prosecute those involved who, like Kalmadi of the CWG scam, are intent on defying authority. In fact defiance of authority seems to have become endemic..

Conclusion

Corruption has a free run of the country in which a few amassed wealth defrauding the nation while the living conditions of the vast majority is getting worse. The recent unprecedented spurt in the price of onions is indicative of the failure of governance. Ours has become a country of hoarders, the corrupt and criminals who remain above the law. The only saving grace is the fear of the judiciary that still holds sway despite its limitation. The Adarsh scam revealed how the culture of corruption has even rubbed off on the highest in our armed forces who enjoy the reputation for discipline, bravery and integrity. What is most damaging is the fact that every institution has been perverted to serve the narrow designs of those in power. There is even speculation that what is happening in Egypt may have its echo in our country. Yes, our PM is an honourable man but of what use is his personal honesty worth when he watches in silence the country being looted with impunity. There have been earnest appeals from people of eminence to the PM to break his silence. The

reply from the PM is yet again deafening silence. It may be relevant here to quote from Gurcharan Das's book 'The Difficulty of Being Good' "Vidura quotes the sage Kashyap about the immorality of remaining silent when there is evil afoot. When honest persons fail in their duty to speak up, they 'wound' *dharma* and commit *adharma*" Again, he writes in *The Times of India* of January 2: "Bhishma, remained silent when Draupadi was being disrobed. When Draupadi insisently questioned the '*dharma*' of the ruler, everyone remained silent. Then Vidura scornfully spat out at the immorality of silence: when crime occurs, he said,

half the punishment goes to the guilty, a quarter to his ally: and another quarter falls on the silent". By this account our PM being both an ally and also being silent shares half the blame and that is being generous considering how immorality has grown. Probably, Manmohan Singh for ever frozen in the mould of an economist is unable to deliver on governance genuinely suffering from a delusion that development will be the panacea for all the evils that afflict India.

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From Kyoto To Cancun Via Bali And Copenhagen

Are There Any Forward Steps Towards Carbon Emission Cuts

Sadanand B. Kumta

The December 2010 Conference in Cancun, Mexico of 184 countries was expected to rectify the compromise made at the Copenhagen meet of the Kyoto Protocol which is now wholly buried at Cancun. The net results of the climate negotiations have gone in favour of the big and powerful polluters like USA and European Union.

It is well expected that to keep the world temperature below the already dangerous 2°C, global emissions have to drop to 44 billion tonnes CO₂-e (Carbon Dioxide equivalent) – against the current emissions of 48 billion tonnes of CO₂-e. There is no space in the world for extra gases. We are already 4 billion tonnes extra, thanks to powerful polluters like the USA and the European Union. At the Bali conference in 2007, the target for industrial countries was to cut emissions by 20 to 40% by 2020 over the 1990 levels.

In concrete terms, what did the so-called Cancun success achieve on the night of 10th December 2010 in the draft agreement? The developed countries no more have to commit legally to cut emissions. What they pledge to do voluntarily is also too little. On the contrary, the developing countries are persuaded to take on legally binding commitments. With its past and current emissions, USA is required to cut these emissions by 40% over its 1990 levels. It has pledged to do nothing of this kind. Its right to pollute continues. USA has however made a promise of 30 billion dollars on the fast

track by 2012 and the other 70 billion dollars as technological aid by 2020. It is only a promise. India has committed to 20-25% emission cut by 2020. Out of the total envisaged 4 billion tonnes emission cut, developing countries including China have to cut 2-3 billion tonnes while the developed countries share comes only to 0.8-1.8 billion tonnes.

Cancun agreement appears very much like the Copenhagen Accord giving a decent burial to the Kyoto Protocol – it is almost a total surrender of the poor countries to big brother USA and other rich countries. The trick that was played by the rich countries was to postpone the decisions to the eleventh hour and then steamroller the final decisions at the fag end of the conference.

Experts believe that by 2020, instead of the 2°C rise in temperature (average) the rise is expected to be 3o-3.9oC. Hotter and hotter weather is to be expected year by year. The inequity of the Cancun agreement is that developing countries have to shoulder the cleaning up responsibilities. Of all the 184 countries, it was left to Bolivia alone to give a dissenting note by saying that by sending the Kyoto Protocol to the dustbin, we will be responsible for ecoside and also genocide.

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Congress Party On Suicide Watch

Firoze Hirjika

In its half hearted measures to regain public confidence, the Congress keeps shooting itself in the foot.

During the past few months, India has been witnessing a remarkable spectacle. The ruling Congress Party seems hell bent on committing political hara-kiri in full public glare. Moreover, the cosmetic gestures it is making to improve its image are only causing it to sink deeper into the hole it has dug for itself. Not surprisingly, the main opposition party, the BJP, is sharpening its knives in anticipation of the fatal thrust. Even the parties that are ostensibly allies of the Congress – in the time honoured tradition of political rats – are distancing themselves from the Congress' sinking ship.

The key issue that has finally provoked the normally somnambulant Indian public to outrage is corruption in public office. Of course, corruption has been a part of India's officialdom for the past 60 years. But this time it is so blatant; and so thoroughly exposed by the Indian media, that the people are rubbing their eyes in disbelief. And in its half hearted measures to regain public confidence, the Congress keeps shooting itself in the foot.

Take the scam that started the Congress debacle. I am referring, of course, to the celebrated Commonwealth Games heist and its chief perpetrator, Suresh Kalmadi. As evidence of monumental loot piles up against Kalmadi and his lieutenants in-crime, the government is running around in circles. Initially, it held out some promise by arresting three of Kalmadi's key aides, but then got egg on its face by having to release them because the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), controlled by the government, failed to file a charge sheet within the stipulated period. That this lapse was allowed despite intense media scrutiny and public anger is truly baffling. Indeed, the Congress is presenting all the appearance of a startled deer frozen in car headlights. It should now be obvious to the densest intellect that Kalmadi has become a major embarrassment to the Congress and it is in the party's best interests that he be charge sheeted at the earliest and summarily sacked as head of the Indian Olympic Committee (IOC). The Congress has nothing to lose and everything to gain. Yet it is dilly dallying to the point of impotence.

Then there was the much anticipated Cabinet

reshuffle, which turned out to be a damp squib. Here was a golden opportunity for the Congress to shore up its plummeting reputation, but the PM made a mess of it. The least he could have done was drop the controversial ministers to send a signal that he was serious about tackling corruption, but even that proved to be beyond his severely curtailed powers. It is widely presumed that he was stymied by Madam, who has an unfortunate proclivity to be influenced by self serving sycophants and to prize loyalty over competence, integrity and even morality.

Fortunately or unfortunately for the government, scams are being revealed so thick and fast that it is becoming difficult for the public to keep track. For example, yesterday's *bête-noir*, the infamous A. Raja, was barely mentioned until very recently when a token arrest took place. Even then, the probability of the DMK's Dalit icon being actually being put behind bars is fairly remote. The latest buzz is about the billions of dollars illegally stashed away by some Indians in foreign banks. Apparently, the banks in question have obligingly passed on the names of the fraudsters to the government, but the latter is inexplicably reluctant to reveal them. The Congress' credibility and probity is taking a terrible beating in the media and in public perception. The government's pathetic attempt to take shelter behind some nebulous treaties; and reluctance to take punitive action against the perpetrators, save recover tax dues, is fuelling public outrage to the point that, were a general election to be held tomorrow, the party would be decimated. Here again, the Congress is in a position to restore its damaged image to a large extent by at least appearing to take firm action. Yet it appears to be fumbling in bewilderment and handing the opposition parties a giant stick to hammer it with. For sure, disclosure of the names on the infamous list is likely to reveal the names of powerful politicians. However, given the reality that crookedness among our politicians cuts across party lines, the gains from punishing the looters would far outweigh the embarrassment.

Finally there is the curious case of P. J. Thomas. For an already besieged government to deliberately set itself up for a shellacking from the opposition and the media

by appointing an official with a chargesheet against him is not just bad politics, it is downright foolish. The BJP must be grinning from ear to ear at the political plums that keep falling into its lap. The only explanation I can think of for this eminently avoidable embarrassment to the Congress is that the sainted Thomas is a favourite of Sonia Gandhi and was pushed through due to her insistence – and it is well known that madam values personal loyalty above all else.

The Congress party's defence and excuses for not taking a strong stand against blatant corruption are becoming ever more feeble and farcical. So much so that

even the Congress' nominated blowhard, Manish Tiwari, has been keeping away from the television debates he loved fulminating on. My guess is that it finally dawned on him that he could no longer defend the indefensible without making a total ass of himself. As for our benign and powerless Prime Minister, he is clearly overwhelmed by events and is sustaining his customary invisibility. The rumour is that even the Supreme Leader is crying *basta* (enough) and wishing she had never left Italy. Or maybe she is hoping that the Heir Apparent can yet pull a rabbit out of the hat – but I wouldn't hold my breath.

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MARCH 1954

Editor : Faiz S. Noorani

This month in March 1954

Pandit Nehru on the Communists

This issue carried some plain talking by Pandit Nehru on the communists. He was on a campaign trail in Kerala (then known as the State of Travancore-Cochin). Minoo Masani welcomed Nehru's remarks in a lead article in the March 1954 issue. The following are excerpts from his article. The quotes are for Nehru's statements. – *Ed.*

The Congress for Cultural Freedom came into existence with certain purposes, one of which was the dispelling of some of the confusion prevailing among considerable sections of the intelligentsia about the real nature of totalitarian communism. The Declaration of Cultural Freedom, to which the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom pledged, ends in consequence, with this call for action:

'The new tyranny founded on the theory and practice of totalitarianism is the gravest challenge man has faced in civilized society.

"The defence of cultural freedom is, in the main, the defence of free society against this challenge. Indifference or neutrality towards this totalitarian tyranny amounts to a renunciation of the Indian tradition..."

This Committee (the ICCF) has been only too painfully conscious of the fact that it has functioned during the past three years of its existence in an uncongenial climate of thought and emotion...It has been no joy to us

to find that from time to time we have been forced to disagree with some of the intellectual attitudes and pronouncements of the Prime Minister....

In this context it has been a source of great encouragement to many of us to read about the vigorous and hard hitting campaign which the Prime Minister recently undertook in the beleaguered state of Travancore-Cochin. An analysis of Pandit Nehru's various statements shows that he attacked the very fundamentals of communism. The main charge levelled by the Prime Minister against the communists was that they owe allegiance to a foreign power and are out to disrupt the unity of India. "The Communist Party", he charged, "leans or depends on, or looks to foreign countries". He accused the communists of "going about posing as if they are Russians....Their body was in India but their mind was somewhere else...The communist policy changes a great deal, but one thing remains constant, and that is their entire thinking is based on something outside India...The capacity of the Communist Party to condemn anything done in India and acclaim only those done in Russia or certain other countries was something un-understandable."

With Many Voices

Addressing a Gaya meeting on *Bhoodan*, he (Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan) told the audience that 'land reform' in China was no match to the land reform carried out by MacArthur in Japan.

The New Age, February 4, 1954

Where There is a Will, There is a Way!

Tackling Corruption – The UK Example

Meera H. Sanyal

Both the giver and taker are held to be guilty, with no distinction made whether the individual is a member of the public, bureaucracy, judiciary or a politician. The British Act thus captures the sentiment of the old Indian adage “*taali do haat se bajti hai*” (clapping requires both hands).

Over the past few months, with every emerging scandal, there has been a public outcry on the need for urgent steps to tackle corruption.

With Parliament paralyzed on whether a JPC will be appointed to probe the 2G scam or not, it would be the perfect time for the UPA Government to take the moral high ground and enact legislation that is clear, simple and enforceable and which has penal provisions that are draconian enough to be a sufficient deterrent.

It has been over 42 years since the first Lokpal bill was introduced in 1968 with a few half hearted and unsuccessful attempts to pass it. While the UPA Government is now seeking to revive the bill, regrettably this is so poorly construed, that it has been termed “lame duck” and attracts no confidence.

An alternate Lok Pal Bill drafted by Justice Santosh Hegde, Prashant Bhushan and Anand Kejriwal, termed “The India against Corruption Draft (IAC Draft)” has received support from many sections of civil society. As can be

seen in the table below the alternate bill is much stronger

While the IAC draft of the Lokpal Bill is a considerable improvement over the government draft it may be helpful to examine recent legislation passed in the UK, which is even clearer and stronger.

The new UK Bribery Act, which is due to come into force in April 2011, will dramatically change the way companies and individuals conduct their business. The Act has led to a renewed focus on bribery and corruption around the world and not just in the UK.

Hitherto global firms had focused on complying with the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) given the soaring rates of prosecutions, fines and prison terms that have recently been levied, such as the high profile prosecution and conviction of four of Rio Tinto’s employees in China last year. Under the FCPA, violations attract jail terms of up to five years and fines of up to US\$ 2 million.

	Government Draft	IAC Draft
Jurisdiction of Lokpal	CVC over Bureaucrats,	Lokpal to have jurisdiction over politicians, Politicians, bureaucracy and Judiciary
	Silent on Judiciary	
Powers of Lokpal	An advisory body	Complete powers to investigate & prosecute
Protection of Whistleblowers	Responsibility given to CVC	Lokpal to provide protection
Selection & Appointment	By committee of Ruling & Opposition MP’s	By committee of apolitical persons
Accountability of Lokpal	Silent	Complaint against Lokpal to be investigated in 30 days. If found guilty, summarily dismissed
Recovery of loss due to Corruption	No provision for recovery of loss	Trial court to estimate loss and order recovery from all convicted

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When compared to the FCPA (which has always been regarded as very stringent) the UK Bribery Act has been described as “the FCPA on steroids”!

The Act has been drafted to capture offences in the broadest sense possible, so that any prosecution will not be hampered by the narrow definitions, which have been a feature – and failure – of many historic corruption cases.

The Act defines four new criminal offences:

- Offering or paying a bribe
- Requesting or receiving a bribe
- Bribing a foreign public official
- As a corporate entity, failing to prevent bribery being undertaken on its behalf

This is a significant expansion of the existing international anti corruption legislation prescribed by OECD guidelines. In fact the definition includes “facilitative payments” such as a cigarette carton to a customs official to clear a cargo, to be considered an act of bribery.

Both the giver and taker are held to be guilty, with no distinction made whether the individual is a member of the public, bureaucracy, judiciary or a politician. The Act thus captures the sentiment of the old Indian adage “*taali do haat se bajti hai*” (clapping requires both hands).

Corporates who fail to prevent bribery are also accountable. Companies and senior managers will be required to prove that they have the necessary policies and processes in place to identify any improper practices their staff, agents, distributors or joint venture partners may be making on their behalf. Companies can be liable even if their employees offer or give a bribe without official knowledge and authorization, based on the common law

doctrine of *respondeat superior*, where the master must reply.

The Act has a large scope and covers not just British nationals, enterprises and partnerships, but also their agents’ and subsidiaries’ foreign businesses. Bribery offences committed beyond British shores will be prosecuted.

The rules of the game have thus been made explicitly clear.

The penalties are also severe – much more than the FCPA, and which would clearly have a salutary effect if we were to adopt the same in India!

- Individuals risk up to 10 years in prison with unlimited fines
- Organisations risk unlimited fines, confiscation of the value of corruptly obtained contracts and debarment from EU contracts.

Enforcement of the Act is entrusted to the UK Serious Fraud Office (SFO), which is the primary regulator and prosecutor of violations under the Bribery Act. Similar to our proposed Lok Pal, it is clear that the SFO is armed with far more power. After many years of inactivity, in the last 18 months the SFO has been extremely active, which is an indication of how seriously UK authorities are taking the issue of tackling corruption.

We would do well to take a leaf out of their book – for it is clear that when there is a will – there is certainly a way!

MRS. MEERA SANYAL is the Country Executive and Chairperson of Royal Bank of Scotland UK, and the National Convenor of the Indian Liberal Group. The views expressed are personal.

When Will the GOI Understand the Urgent Need for Governance?

In Davos our ministers attended sessions on India in which they admitted that we are desperately short of carpenters, masons and electricians. Without these skilled workers it will be almost impossible to build the infrastructure we need of cities for the millions expected to move from villages to urban centres in the next two decades. Without decent schools it will be impossible to educate our vast population of young people and yet there is no indication that the Government of India has understood the urgent need for a new approach to governance. Education and healthcare may be mostly the responsibility of state governments but if the Prime Minister sets a new course. The states will follow. On my first day in the old homeland last week the newspapers were filled with pictures of parents waiting outside nursery schools to see if their children had been able to gain admission or not. It happens every year and yet we go from year to year without government understanding the need for an education policy that will make it easier to build private schools. Most of India’s economic progress in recent years has been led by the private sector but there is only so much the private sector can do. In the end it is for government to deliver its side of the contract. Only when it does will Indian political leaders have the right to boast in Davos of “inclusive” growth

Excerpted from Tavleen Singh’s column ‘On the Spot’ *Afternoon Despatch & Courier*, February 3, 2011

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Cloud Over Armed Forces' Integrity?

1. For many, the question is a sacrilege but the fact that it is being asked is itself worrying. The spectre has risen because several senior service officers have come under the scanner for corrupt practices. There are cases of diversion of food grains from army supplies, liquor sales and now misuse of cantonment land for personal gains. The Darjeeling (Sukna) land deal has been quickly followed by the Adarsh scam in Mumbai. There are whispers that defence estates have been similarly diverted in several areas. Then there are allegations of concocted battles to get bravery awards and the Kargil blame game. These may be isolated incidents but defence services which were the epitome of pristine purity are getting tarred. So far, they stood apart from the bureaucrat-politician nexus which has been looting the country. Are they no higher than the rest of the country in the honesty index? Has the cancer spread that far because our genes are the same?

Despite being re-elected to power, the Congress has succumbed to its old maladies of putting expediency before principles, winking at corruption and putting economic reforms on hold. Even the façade of integrity presented by the likes of Manmohan Singh and P. Chidambaram will not arrest this fall from grace if the party leadership does not change its ways.

**Political Commentator Amulya Ganguli,
excerpted from DNA, December 26, 2010**

1. Institutions which remain away from public contact have less chances of indulging in corruption. The police, public works officials and revenue officials who come in daily contact with people are prone to misusing their petty powers. They are suspect in the public eye. It does not mean that others are morally superior. Defence service personnel are viewed differently because they have less public contact and fewer opportunities. Besides, the training they receive to sacrifice their lives, if necessary, for an abstract idea of the 'nation' makes them less susceptible to personal aggrandizement. The country has greater faith in them than the rest of the government machinery put together. The hardships they endure and the risks that they take for our safety cannot be dismissed lightly. There will be black sheep everywhere and the Services cannot be immune to them. The hope is that the Services would have built-in mechanisms to detect the guilty and demonstrably act against them instead of waffling like the bureaucrats and politicians to escape punishment. They can perhaps hide their dirt better but they should be the first to expose the miscreants among them. The court martial in the Sukna land deal where a serving Lt. General was held guilty is reassuring. Our disillusionment with other leaders and quest for heroes has forced us to raise the standards of probity for the Armed Forces. Like Caesar's wife, they should not only be honest but must remain above suspicion!

Black Money

2. Black money is in the news again as India has got names of Indian account holders (26) in Liechtenstein Bank through Germany. The Government has told the Supreme Court that the names cannot be made public because of the promise made to Germany under the Dual Tax Treaty. Out of 26 account holders, 18 are Indian and 8 are NRIs; nothing can be done against these 8 as they are outside Indian jurisdiction. Legally speaking, the excuses for doing nothing appear valid. Only the 18 Indians can be charged with evasion of taxes, which is a petty offence compared to the gravity of what they have done by stashing money abroad. Even the Swiss banks which are safe haven for such loot get away by claiming that they do not consider tax evasion or similar financial mischief as offences under

2. The point is that Indian laws need to be more stringent so that the loot of national wealth is treated as much more than tax evasion. Can the laws not be strengthened to define the loot as a danger to national economy or subversion of financial integrity of the country? International pressure needs to be built up on countries like Switzerland to make it clear that excuses like non-application of Indian laws will no longer be tolerated. Black money is not only the tax evaded income; it is a product of drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling to terrorists and rebels of all varieties, bribery and extortion. It multiplies crime all over the world. A civilized nation cannot run its economy on crime money as Switzerland apparently does. G20 countries have agreed that black

their law and therefore cannot act against the secret account holders. Leaders like Mani Shankar Iyer, who speak on behalf of the Government, also argue that the Swiss will never allow disclosure of names or return of the loot as the Swiss economy is dependent on these shady deposits. This at best is a defeatist attitude like arguing that India should not ask Pakistan to ban terrorism as it will never do it! The Supreme Court has described the black money accounts as plunder of national wealth. The stashed money is assessed to be around \$ 500 billion (40% of India's GDP). Even then we are content to plead helplessness.

Today, the Congress is not even in a position to cope with the power that it has, or to retain it, much less fantasise about increasing it.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar,
Sunday Express Magazine, January 2-8 2011

Shameless in Power

3. A new phenomenon has emerged in India. There was an unwritten code that a person in an eminent position would not only fulfil the obligations and duties of that post but also protect the sanctity of the post. If ever any doubt was raised about his integrity, the person would vacate that post not because he accepted his guilt but he did not want that post to be brought into controversy. The reverse is happening now. Every incumbent who comes under a cloud argues that unless he is convicted he would not quit the post. We have the recent examples of the Chief Vigilance Commissioner (P. J. Thomas), the CWG Organising Committee Chairman (Suresh Kalmadi), the ex-Chief Justice of India and Chairman of the NHRC (K. G. Balakrishnan), Maharashtra's Chief Information Commissioner (Ramanand Tewari), all sticking to their posts despite serious allegations about their probity. Their defence is that they are being victimised and are yet not proved guilty. They do not give a thought to the posts they occupy and that is the tragedy. If removed, they go out kicking and screaming, without a semblance of dignity left.

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

The battle is about people not battlefield supremacy

The battles of the next decade will be fought not for military supremacy, but for influence. That is why Hezbollah's leaders have become world experts on post-conflict reconstruction, realising that every conflict is now a battle for hearts and minds. Even Iran knows that the old slogan 'they'll like us when we win' does not apply. From Iraq to Afghanistan, everyone is now fighting for the same objective: popular control. It is more about people than battlefield supremacy.

The war in Afghanistan is being fought not in the deserts but in the pubs and drawing rooms in Britain. Afghanistan may be, in all too many ways, a 13th-century country – but the Taliban is fighting a 21st century war to great effect. They aim to inflict maximum casualties, using methods that generate the most headlines. This undermines popular support for the war, and will eventually lead politicians to withdraw troops before elections. The Taliban's greatest asset is the short political attention span of the West.

Courtesy: *The Spectator*, London, 17 July 2010

money is a threat to national economies and agreed "to take action against non-cooperating jurisdictions, including tax havens" (London – 2009). Under international pressure, Switzerland and other tax havens have agreed to disclose information about secret account holders if there is a Tax Information Exchange Agreement with the country concerned. India has yet not signed a single such agreement*, while Germany, UK, France and Italy have recovered billions of dollars through this route. Why is India shy of signing such treaties? Will the bright legal brains in the country get out of their defeatist arguments and see what legal hurdle is preventing India from finalizing agreements with all tax haven countries. We can bring our money back if there is a will. Or are we waiting for some VIPs to clean up their accounts?

** (Note: A couple of agreements have been signed since –with Isle of Man and Bermuda)*

3. The problem with this legalistic position is that till they are convicted or acquitted, the position they hold is demeaned; the damage is permanent as the posts lose authority and sanctity in the public eye. If they leave the posts, it does not mean admission of guilt; they would still have the chance to prove their innocence and re-emerge with greater honour. They may or may not be reappointed to the post but they would leave behind a legacy of uprightness and enhance the reputation of the post they held. The examples given are only of high level officials; there are scores of ministers, and some CMs, in legally worse positions, facing charges in cases of moral turpitude, but can we expect exemplary behaviour from politicians any longer? They have started the rot and others are merely following suit. When nothing budges politicians facing charges, why should others act differently?

All the desirable things in life are either illegal, expensive or fattening or married to someone else.

Anon.

Why Development Alone Does Not Neutralise the Incumbency Factor

T. H. Chowdary

Chandrababu Naidu accomplished unprecedented development of Andhra Pradesh during his Chief Ministership, 1996-2004. But his party lost the Assembly elections in 2004 and again in 2009 because his rival, the late Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy excited farmers and the poor by the wildest promises of free rations, electricity, health, housing, education, etc. But Chandrababu did not educate the public enough about what is the lasting good for them. His defeats should be a lesson for Narendra Modi and Nitish Kumar.

During his two terms as Chief Minister Sri Chandrababu Naidu succeeded in making the Telugu people conscious of economic development and good governance. Within a short period he changed the mindset and outlook of the young and the parents. Hundreds of engineering colleges were started in the people's (private) sector; Information Technology & Telecommunications were evangelized as engines of development. A document, Vision 2020 was prepared in 1998 and imaginative and inspiring presentations of the contents were made to intellectuals, professionals, government officers, universities and colleges. They were also the theme of his speeches everywhere. As never before, entrepreneurs were invited from all quarters of the world. They were encouraged to invest and every facility that they wanted to set up their business or industry was quickly provided. A number of officers enthusiastically cooperated with him to use their connections in India and abroad to invite companies and investors to come to the state. A high-rise building – Hitec city was constructed in record time to provide ready-to-use space (plug and play) for any company to set up its business and launch its operations. World class broad-band telecoms using satellite and optical fibers connected the city to all continents. He got international air-lines to Hyderabad and built excellent roads in the city.

He used his 28 MP strong contingent in the Lok Sabha to wrest whatever concessions and allocations were needed for businesses to take on in the shortest of time, with least red tape. All these endeavors and exertions and exhortations of his bore fruit – Hyderabad became a shining star on the IT map of India. Hyderabad became the fourth largest exporter of software and ITES services. Sri Naidu got Bill Gates of Microsoft and former US President Bill Clinton, USA to the city. These two personalities further brightened the image of Andhra Pradesh as the most

desirable destination for location of the world's companies in Hyderabad. Realizing that the high paid IT professionals cannot work in a vacuum, Naidu's government promoted house-building and housing estates; corporate hospitals, international schools, tourism, catering and transportation services for the hundreds of thousands of IT professionals working in various companies.

He won the 1999 elections. His party, TDP returned 28 MPs and the BJP with which he was in alliance returned 10 MPs, paving the way for the strong BJP-led NDA government at the center. This success convinced him to say and propagate that "development is good politics". He believed that the creation of employment for the educated, young and so many new services coming up would promote entrepreneurship as well instead of the young seeking employment in government.

One view of his which he thought correct was that there is not much prosperous future in agriculture and so farmers have to change to other professions. Though farming is essential to the country and it has got to be subsidised as everywhere in the world, prosperity cannot be built by so many farmers with small holdings and their inability to put in the required capital to become prosperous like businessmen and industrialists. The fact, that agriculture is contributing only about 18% to the GDP but nearly 70% of the people are dependent upon agriculture was repeatedly mentioned by him. The fact that agriculture-dependency by so many would prevent many to quit poverty and low incomes was stressed. As much effort that was put in correctly evangelizing and implementing the development of ICT & other services, was not put in to explain the transformation that is required in the attitude of farmers to agriculture. Farmers concluded that Naidu was neglecting, if not hostile to agriculture. The great migration of the educated young to Hyderabad and their dazzling

incomes were in contrast to “no change” agriculture on the other side. Many years of his rule also saw drought which badly told on farmers’ incomes.

Then came the Lok Sabha elections in 2004. These were advanced by six months, entirely on the persuasion of the NDA by Naidu. There was an attempt on Naidu’s life by Maoists in 2003. He wanted to cash in on the sympathy wave. He went in for the dissolution of the state Assembly prematurely in the hope that he would win for the third time. The TDP lost; it drowned the NDA with it.

Why did not *development* which was there for everybody to see save Naidu and his TDP in Andhra Pradesh and the NDA in Delhi? Development alone does not ensure political dividends. The Congress party in Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of the late Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy made promises of unlimited welfare. free houses, free food, free schooling, write off of all debts. government money would be given for the celebration of marriages, pensions would be given to all above the age 60, women would be made *lakhpathis* by giving them loans at pavalu vaddi (3% interest) which maybe written off eventually, free transport for many, free electricity for the rural households and farms and the poor, health care would be free for all and so on. He was also highly critical of the importance given to the ICTs. He asked if computers could give water, food, housing, can it give work to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed people (who he knew were all either illiterate or hardly literate and unqualified for any services sector jobs excepting physical labour in agriculture, for instance). He charged that even though 70% of the people are dependent on agriculture, the Naidu government in imitation of some western countries was neglecting agriculture; Naidu was an enemy of 70% of the people. All these promises and accusations were sweet music to the unemployed and to the agriculture - dependent farmers who were led to believe that if Naidu’s TDP won again, that would be the end of all farmers; they would become paupers.

Chandrababu drove government servants to work; to be punctual, to be responsive to the public, to be transparent in decision-making; he introduced e-procurement to eliminate cartels; he launched villager-involving, villager-contributing, government-supplementing and local official-supervised development works in rural areas.

The denunciation of Chandrababu Naidu as an enemy of agriculturists and government servants torpedoed his chances of a third successive win. It is therefore clear that emphasis only on economic development and creation of wealth and growth rates and

minimization of corruption will not automatically lead to electoral victories.

In the light of widespread unemployment and agriculture- dependency, *these categories of people are being promised by competing parties all sorts of welfare benefits without any work for them.* They are taught that they have a right for everything and no duty at all. Competitive politics promise reservations, fee reimbursement and waiver of all loans, taken not only from government and banks but even from private money lenders. These irresponsible parties and their governments are inciting people to take loans and also not pay them. In such a situation economic development alone will not make for good electoral politics.

Narendra Modi and Nitish Kumar, the Chief Ministers of Gujarat and Bihar respectively are doing very well as regards economic development and good governance. They must take a lesson from the failure of Chandrababu Naidu to win a third successive term. It is necessary that they become educators of the people from the grassroots level of people. They must give utmost importance to education for all up to SSLC (SSC as it is known elsewhere), ensuring good quality of education, inculcate the work ethic and the values of hard work, saving and truthfulness and love for the country. Most importantly, during the period of, development, for the rapid rise out of poverty, every family, must be given the incentive to limit the number of children to one or two. Welfare benefits like fee re-imburement, subsidized rice/wheat, sugar, kerosene; housing, health, pension, reservations should be offered only to families with not more three to be withdrawn as soon as a third child comes. Work must be guaranteed to those who are prepared to move to where work is, at project, construction sites; their transport and tented living and care of children at work sites included in project costs. None should be paid for no work. China has been imposing the one-child norm for the last 30 years and inculcating the work ethic Though it is a communist country they are saying “*he who does not work neither should he eat*”. They are not distributing money like us through schemes like NREG. In contrast to what is happening in China, it appears that we are promoting among the poor, the belief, “*it is our right to breed; it is your duty to feed*”.

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Come On, Liberals: Let's Change India!

The Absurd Dreams of Libertarian Anarchists

Sanjeev Sabhlok

While socialism presents a real and ongoing threat to liberty, it is also important to challenge the fringe school of thought called libertarian anarchy or anarcho-capitalism. These people threaten liberty through a utopia in which we would not only organise our economic affairs privately, as in the classical liberal state, but even defence, police, and justice. This idea is untenable and will destroy liberty comprehensively, as this article will show. The febrile, adolescent dreams of libertarian anarchists must be nipped in the bud so we can get on with the serious challenge of battling socialism and statism in India.

The Problem of Foreign Invasion

There are at least two problems for which the state is the necessary (but not sufficient) solution. The first is the problem of large-scale foreign invasion, wherein marauding armies come in across borders and raze down entire towns, causing catastrophic ruin. India has been raided hundreds of times, but even the communist takeover of Russia and China involved mass destruction of life and property. In response, people carried huge rocks to hill-tops and built forts. This collective defence, that includes a large army, forms the foundational pillar of the state.

The second problem is of trust. Human nature is not always very pleasant. The private sector, left unregulated, is basically a rogues' gallery steeped in fraud, bullying, deception, and violence. While governments are by no means trustworthy, the private sector's credibility is much lower. Each of us has been cheated so many times by the private sector even in the regulated state: imagine what would happen without the state.

The classical liberal knows that the state is not a nice little fairy but a potentially dangerous beast. Hence he builds checks and balances to ensure that power remains with the people. But of this he is clear: that it is more desirable to entrust our life and liberty to a parliament whose functions of lawmaking and governance we oversee, than to fraud-prone private businesses. It is from such considerations that the classical liberal social contract arises in which people *voluntarily* hand over some of their innate animal powers to the state, being assured in return of a level of security of life and property. The classical liberal state is an evolutionary stable Nash equilibrium of private strategies.¹ This is evident from the fact that people swear allegiance to their national flag only

as long as their life and property are secured by the state, else revolutions are precipitated. The state is a creature of public consent.

The libertarians can't seem to understand this basic logic. They also can't seem to understand that had anarchy been able to resolve the problems outlined above, then human society would have tended to evolve into anarchy, not into the modern, classical liberal state.

Taxation is Not Forced Labour

Libertarian anarchists completely deny the validity of coercive taxation. Even some classical liberals claim that taxation is theft or forced labour. And Ayn Rand could only tolerate the idea of voluntarily payment of taxes. But these ideas are all misplaced.

Taxes are nothing but the dues for security and justice. Even libertarian anarchy would need to pay for these services, there being no free lunch. The question then is: Which is the most efficient way to get such services? The response must display a keen understanding of the mechanism of collecting fees for such universal services ('public goods').

And the first thing we note is that voluntarism can't work. Imagine that India disappears overnight and is replaced by libertarian anarchy, with thousands of private businesses competing to provide us defence services against the nuclear-armed Chinese army. Apart from the chaos that this would entail, barely any funds would be collected on a voluntary basis. Everyone would expect others to pay. The next thing we know: those living in this anarchy would have come under the control of Chinese communists, ending all liberty that they might have dreamt of.

Compulsory taxation that is tempered by democratically agreed principles is the *only* viable method of providing sound defence, police and justice. Everyone gets this point, but not libertarians! They need to snap out of their foolish day-dreams.

The Inadequacy of Private Security and Justice

The classical liberal is happy for police and justice to be provided by the private sector to the extent that is feasible. Indeed, private contracts that do not harm others and are viable (in terms of transaction costs and free rider issues) form a part and parcel of the classical liberal state.

In any event, the state can only provide the more basic policing and justice services. Just because we have a police system doesn't mean we should keep our gold jewellery lying about on the roadside. The rich must necessarily complement the state's security services with private security arrangements where appropriate. That does not give the rich man any right to shoot down a 'thief', however; since even the alleged thief needs the protection of natural justice.

Anarcho-capitalists suggest that all laws should be privately determined and apply *only* to those who have paid for them. Also, "[e]veryone may choose which of the competing courts he will look to for protection; and he may alter his choice at will."² This means that we could very well be shot dead by a private 'justice agency' to which a rich man has paid a lot of money. There is not much to distinguish private justice agencies from the Bihar mafia. No person in his right mind will ever entrust his life and liberty *entirely* only to a private police or justice system.

The Nightmare of Contractualism

Libertarians want us to negotiate all our defence, police and justice needs individually. In this context we note that laws of modern nations run into thousands of pages, with clear definitions, precise formulations of accountabilities and punishments. The idea of individually replicating this effort through private suppliers is beyond the absurd!

It is *undoubtedly* cheaper to send our representatives to parliament to make our laws and organise a police and justice system. This takes advantage of specialization, and allows us to supervise these systems. The classical liberal is perfectly happy to increase contestability even in matters of security and justice. For example, in *Breaking Free of Nehru* I suggest that the Indian government should register a range of marriage contracts that comply with minimum standards established by parliament. But note that even this needs minimum standards to be enacted and enforced by the state. The classical liberal state sets the foundation of the rule of law. That underpins modern civilisation.

The libertarians clearly betray not even the remotest understanding of human nature, nor understand costs and benefits. Theirs is mere idle, delusional day dreaming. The people, fortunately, are far more sensible. No peoples have ever demanded anarchy nor is there any mechanism (known even to the libertarian anarchists!) to convert the modern state into libertarian anarchy. The sooner the libertarian anarchists get real, the better for everyone.

Freedom Team of India

Let me assert that India can't become a classical liberal state without your active participation. FTI (<http://freedomteam.in/>) is looking for leaders to lead a movement for necessary political reforms in India. Please join FTI or otherwise support it! There is no magic involved in getting a good government, only a lot of hard work and perseverance.

MR. SANJEEV SABHLOK can be contacted at sabhlok@yahoo.com

¹ Nash equilibrium – a concept that won John Nash a Nobel prize in economics. It represents a "balance of powers" position across society, based on a mutual long term recognition of self-interest.

² <http://www.paulbirch.net/AnarchoCapitalism1.html>

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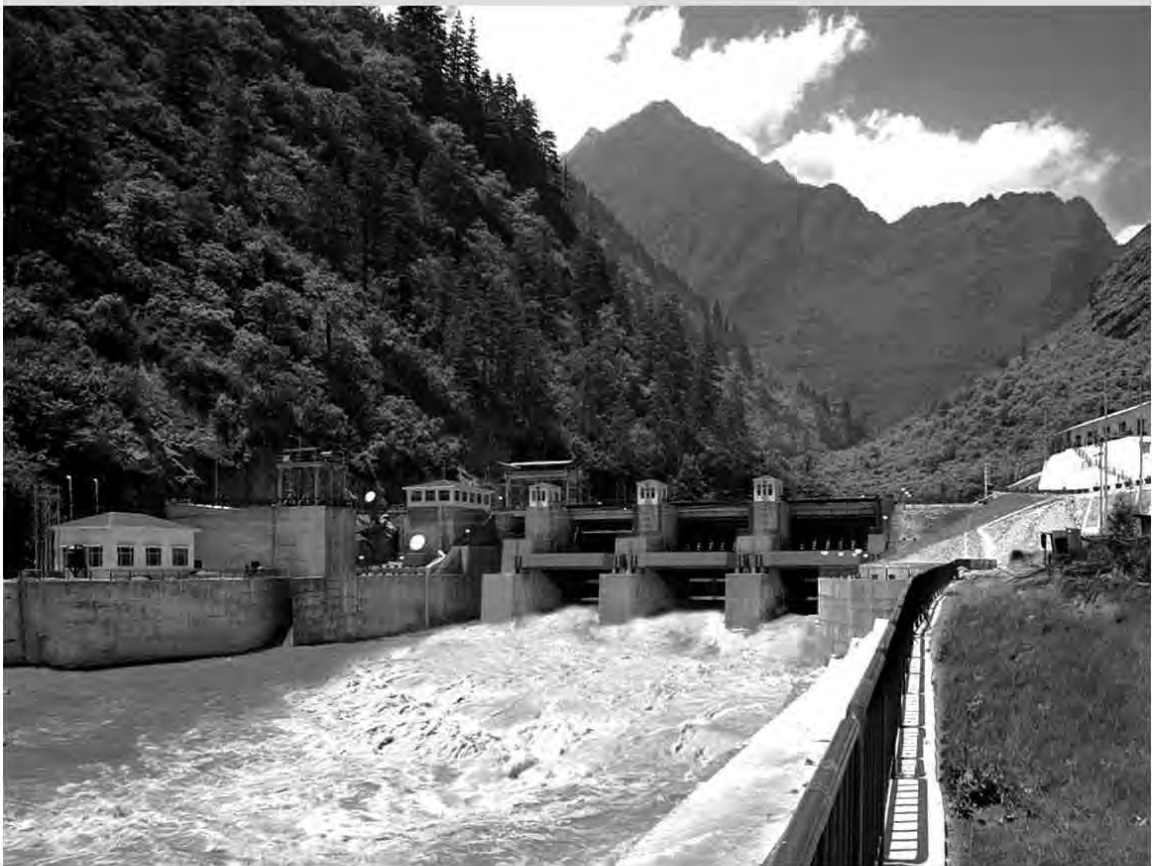
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Our Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

Zafar Futehally

It is easy to know technical and scientific jargon; and more difficult to have the perspective and intelligence that is called for. An example of this widespread lack, is a section of the Environment Protection Act of 1986. In the section on Definitions (2C), we find the following wise words: “Environment Pollution means the presence in the environment of any environmental pollution”!

When the EIAs were initiated in 1977 there were great hopes in the conservation lobby. We imagined that conservation and development would indeed become two sides of the same coin, and that industrial projects would in future be designed to avoid damage to the natural environment.

To ensure that this would happen, I suggested at a meeting of the National Committee for Environmental Planning and Coordination (NCEPC), that every Ministry should have a permanent Environmental Advisor. He/she would have the same status as the existing Financial Advisors. This would ensure that right from the planning stage of a project, its ecological implications would be properly factored. Last minute decisions, which have become routine and which are so deleterious, would be avoided. Perhaps our new Minister of the Environment, who seems to be succeeding in giving the natural environment its due, will consider this suggestion.

I have had some experience with EIA procedures, and though at 90 my memory is not entirely reliable, I am certain that what I state here is essentially correct. Sometime in the 1980s, as a Member of the GOI National Committee for Environmental Planning and Coordination (later “coordination” was dropped from the title) I was asked to report on the proposed project of the Karnataka government for a dam on the Betdhi River in North Kanara. I was given royal treatment by the officials of the then Karnataka Electricity Board (KEB), who were keen on the hydel project. On my arrival at this richly forested area one of the first striking sights I saw was the black eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*), a bird at the top of the food chain, which indicated that there was a wealth of smaller birds in this evergreen forest. I talked to the forest official who was around and asked his opinion about the pros and cons of the project. He said that this was one of the best examples of an evergreen cum moist tropical forest that it had been well protected and totally undamaged and that it would be a pity if it was submerged. I asked him whether there was a detailed report submitted to the authority concerned with the project. His short answer was that the report had been suppressed. I wrote to the NCEPC that

in view of our obvious need to conserve evergreen forests it may be unwise to destroy this asset for setting up a hydel project. My report of course was too general to form the basis of a decision. Later, Prof. Madhav Gadgil (now the right hand man of Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh) was asked to report but he “was given exactly three hours at the project site and then had to write the report.” You can imagine the futility of such an exercise.

Disgusted by the situation, Madhav organized a Public Hearing and a seminar to discuss the pros and cons of the project. The KEB refused to participate in the discussions, obviously because the data on which the project was based was deliberately skewed in their favour. Finally the project was approved with some safeguards.

In 1973, as a Commonwealth Fellow in the University of Calgary (Canada) I had the good fortune of observing how the Alberta Conservation Authority dealt with the problems of EIA. The fact that impressed me most was the amount of trouble they took to find out the wishes of the people immediately around the project site. At the time I was there, the big issue was “Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes.” The Eastern Slopes (of the famous Rocky Mountains) play the same ecological role as our Western Ghats play in peninsular India. They arrest the rain clouds arriving eastwards over the Pacific Ocean, just as the Ghats arrest the moisture laden clouds coming over the Arabian Ocean.

I quote from a report. “The Eastern Slopes are the source of the rivers which flow eastward providing the Great Plains provinces with the water so vital for support of population, industry, irrigation and other human activities. Protection of these watershed areas was recognized early as an important responsibility of government, and particularly through the establishment of the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board, the federal and provincial governments jointly undertook the protection of the forests and of the watershed basins of the Eastern Slopes.” To get the views of the public about the nature of the developments which would be ecologically feasible on these Eastern Slopes, about 50 Information

Centres were set up which gave detailed information about the projects proposed, mentioning clearly the advantages and drawbacks of the activities proposed. The Introduction to the final report says, "The results presented in this study were obtained by interviewing 500 Alberta residents, 18 years of age and older during the month of October 1973. Care was taken to ensure that Albertans from all walks of life were given the opportunity to participate." Obviously this participation by citizens ensures that the final decision was the best option available.

When I returned from Canada, I thought it may be useful to speak to Prime Minister Gandhi about having a similar exercise of Public Hearings undertaken for our Western Ghats; as I said earlier, the problems of our Ghats and Canada's Eastern Slopes are almost identical. I requested Salman Haidar, the PM's personal secretary to make an appointment. I told Mrs. Gandhi what I had seen of the process of Public Hearings in Canada and suggested that something similar should be done for the Western Ghats. Her answer surprised me. "If we ask them we will have to follow their advice."

So the philosophy here, which causes so much confusion and resentment, is to ask no one and simply do, or try to do, what suits you. However Mrs. Gandhi did set up a Task Force for the Ecological Planning of the Western Ghats with me as the Chairman. Among other things we suggested that Silent Valley should be totally protected but should Government decide to implement the hydro project there, certain severe safeguards should be imposed. This was a blunder on my part and I was roundly abused by the NCEP members and the D.C. Forests Sheth for leaving this loophole. However as is well known, the protests from more important persons than me - Salim Ali, M. S. Swaminathan and the PM herself, led Kerala to succumb and Silent Valley is likely to remain pristine forever.

Quite often, the EIA team is asked to report on a project well after it has been initiated and considerable physical change to the landscape has already taken place. The Konkan Railway is one example of the callous way our IEAs were produced in the past, and caused so much unnecessary havoc. This railway runs through "the heartland of Goa (and is) flanked by the estuaries of the Mandovi and Zuari in which the tides flow back and forth over tens of kilometers." One can therefore imagine how sensitive this landscape is and the necessity of ensuring that the railway embankment was suitably designed to allow this natural process to continue. But Madhav Gadgil and MD Subhash Chandar who were asked to prepare the EIA *after* the alignment of the railway track was already determined, found that "in the village of Dhavji.... the villagers had pleaded with the railway authorities to

construct a bridge spanning ten metres opposite one of their sluice gates. But this was rejected, so the water now stagnates, certainly ruining paddy fields, and perhaps becoming a fertile ground for mosquitoes spreading Japanese encephalitis."

Our experience of EIAs in India re-confirms the importance - indeed the necessity- of genuine public participation in the project by the local population, who are after all the people most affected in case of a radical change in their surroundings. Let us learn from the Canadians in this regard.

Finally our experiences show that for this kind of assessment, common sense is as important as technical knowledge. It is easy to know technical and scientific jargon; and more difficult to have the perspective and intelligence that is called for. An example of this widespread lack, is a section of the Environment Protection Act of 1986. In the section on Definitions (2C), we find the following wise words: "Environment Pollution means the presence in the environment of any environmental pollution"!

MR. ZAFER FUTEHALLY is an eminent Naturalist and Conservationist. Email: zafar123blr@dataone.in

Corruption and Earthquake Fatalities – The Connection

A new assessment of global earthquake fatalities over the past three decades indicates that 83 per cent of all deaths caused by the collapse of buildings during earthquakes occurred in countries considered to be unusually corrupt.

The study also found that some relatively wealthy countries where knowledge and sound business practices would be expected to prevail the collapse of any building is nevertheless attributable to corrupt building practices.

The authors of the study Professor Nicholas Ambraseys of the Imperial College of London and Professor Roger Bilham of the University of Colorado used data gathered by Transparency International.

The authors noted that while a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck New Zealand in 2010 resulted in zero fatalities, an identical quake in Haiti in 2010 resulted in the death toll reaching six figures.

Poverty and poor education also contribute to building collapses that otherwise would help guide safe building practices, the authors said.

The number of deaths attributable to collapsed dwellings is influenced both by the population density and the vulnerability of buildings near earthquake epicentres, said the authors.

**VINSON KURIAN in *Business Line*, January 14, 2011.
Contributed by reader A. Pankajakshan
of Arattupuzha in Kerala.**

Graham Staines Murder Case

Keshav Rau

In the Staines murder case, what is surprising is the type of reasoning given by the Supreme Court judges in certain passages

On January 21, a Division Bench of the Supreme Court consisting of Justices P. Sathasivam and Dr. B. S. Chauhan upheld an Orissa High Court judgment reducing the sentence of death pronounced by a trial court on Rabindra Kumar Pal (better – or more popularly – known by the name of Dara Singh) to life imprisonment for the murder of Australian Missionary, Graham Stuart Staines and his two sons. However, within four days, the Apex Court Bench expunged certain passages of its own judgment. This latter act of the Bench was hailed in several quarters as a suo motu act and an unprecedented one.

In the view of this writer, it was the *passages* that were unprecedented, and not so much the act of expunging. The passages in question, in the view of this writer, reveal a dangerous and unhealthy mindset of certain Judges presiding over the highest Court in the country with regard to the right of a person to propagate his religion.

To recapitulate, Dara Singh and several others were charged with having set on flames the vehicle in which Graham Staines and his two 10 and 6-year old sons were sleeping on the midnight of January 22-23, 1999 in Manoharpur village of Keonjhar district in Orissa. When the vehicle in question was set on flames, Staines and his two sons tried to force themselves out, but they were prevented by Dara Singh and a mob of 60-70 people, resulting in all the three succumbing to death on account of burn injuries and suffocation.

With neither the State Police nor the C.I.D. being able to even identify the culprits, let alone bringing them to book, the Central Bureau of Investigation was asked to step in on account of the understandable uproar that ensued over the merciless and brutal murder of the defenseless victims, two of whom were minors.

However, even while the C.B.I. was entrusted with the job, there was a large section in the State, run, at that time, on a coalition Government of Naveen Patnaik's Janta Dal and the BJP, which alleged that Missionaries like Graham Staines were adopting coercive methods for

converting people in that area to Christianity. In all likelihood, personnel of the State Police and the C.I.D. held similar views, resulting in their being lukewarm in conducting investigations.

The trial court came to the conclusion that Dara Singh was the person who instigated and led the mob in torching the vehicle in which the victims were sleeping and also preventing them from getting out of the vehicle. The trial court finding this to come under the category of rarest of rare cases, pronounced the death sentence on Dara Singh and life sentence on 12 others who were accomplices to the act.

However, the Orissa High Court observed discrepancies/contradictions in the evidences of the witnesses, the doubtful nature of the statements given by some persons said to be eye-witness to the incident, inadequacy of evidence to establish that Dara Singh was the person who masterminded the whole act etc. In view of this, the High Court commuted the sentence of death on Dara Singh to life and confirmed the life sentence of one of the remaining 12 persons, acquitting the remaining eleven for lack of evidence.

No doubt, in criminal cases, courts are expected to closely weigh and analyze the depositions of witnesses, return a finding on the veracity of their statements, examine the procedures adopted in recording confessional statements etc. In the process, it is not uncommon for trial courts and the appellate courts differing on all the above aspects and pronouncing sentences which are at variance with one another.

However, in the Staines murder case, what is surprising is the type of reasoning given by the Supreme Court judges in certain passages – which have now been expunged – while agreeing with the High Court for commuting the death sentence to life on Dara Singh. One the expunged passages read:

“Though Graham Staines and his two minor sons were burnt to death while they were asleep in a

station wagon at Manoharpur, the intention was to teach a lesson to Graham Staines about his religious activities, namely, converting poor tribals to Christianity. However, all these aspects have been correctly appreciated by High Court and modified the sentence of death into life imprisonment with which we concur.”

According to the Supreme Court whether or not a case fell under the category of rarest of rare cases (for pronouncing a sentence of death) would depend on the facts and circumstances of each case, with the courts taking into account aggravating as well mitigating circumstances. From the passage in the Supreme Court judgment quoted above, it would appear that the Judges considered the motive of revenge on the part of the accused enough of a mitigating factor for modification of the sentence. What is surprising is that this view was expressed by the Judges even when no case/allegation was made out against Staines for using coercive methods while propagating his religion.

The above passage was replaced by the following passage:

“However, more than 12 years have elapsed since the act was committed, we are of the opinion that the life sentence awarded by the High Court need not be enhanced in view of the factual position discussed in the earlier paras.”

Given the nature of the long-winding procedures followed by the courts in the country, it is not uncommon for a case to take 12-15 years before the Apex Court pronounces its judgment. But that does not make an act any the less horrendous.

In another passage also, the Judges harped on use of force in converting people from one religion to another. That passage read as follows:

“It is undisputed that there is no justification for interfering in someone’s belief by way of ‘use of force’, provocation, conversion, incitement or upon a flawed premise that one religion is better than the other.”

This passage, too, was replaced by:

“There is no justification for interfering in someone’s religious belief by any means.”

Surely, merely propagating one’s religion cannot be construed as interference in someone’s religious beliefs. As a matter of fact, the right to propagation is guaranteed in the Constitution. Coming out with unwarranted observations and then having to face the ignominy of expunging them has clearly been an embarrassment to the nation and its legal fraternity.

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The Parrot's Training

Rabindranath Tagore



Does this parable by Tagore bear any resemblance to the Education Policy in India today? – Ed.

Once upon a time there was a bird. Utterly ignorant, it could sing all right but not recite the scriptures.

It often hopped and frisked but knew nothing of manners.

The King said to himself: This useless creature eats up the fruits of the forest and is bringing about its shortage in the market.

He called his minister : “Let the bird receive education,” he said.

To mend matters the King’s nephew was put in charge of the parrot’s training.

Soon the wise men, the pundits, were summoned. They at once went to the root of the matter and tried to find out why it was that the bird was that ignorant. The reason of its backwardness, they found out, was due to its inveterate habit of living in a small, ramshackle nest which, it was obvious, could hardly contain much knowledge. Therefore, the first thing needed was to erect a Cage, and a good one.

Because of their wonderful discovery the pundits were richly rewarded and returned home happy.

Then it was the goldsmith’s turn. He sat down to work and a Golden Cage was soon ready. From all corners of the world curious folk eagerly crowded to have a look at the contraption.

“Culture, caged and captured! “ exclaimed some, while a few burst into raptures. Others said: “Even if culture escapes, the Cage, will remain. Fortunate bird!” The goldsmith filled his bag and went back home, a contented man.

It was now the pundit’s turn to begin his pedagogy. After taking his pinch of snuff, a ritual he relished the pundit observed: “For work such as ours there can never be too many text-books.”

So the nephew brought together a host of scribes.

who went on, and on, copying from books, till the pile of manuscripts was mountain-high. “Oh, the Tower of Culture, so high! “ ran the amazed murmur of spectators. “Look, its spires are lost in the clouds!”

With merry heart the scribes returned home, their pockets filled with money. All the while the royal nephews, bursting with zeal, were busy as busy can be. Keeping that costly Cage in fine fettle was quite a job. As they scrubbed and polished, scrubbed and polished, the people cried with satisfaction: “This is progress indeed!”

A large number of men had been employed to keep up the show, but the number of supervisors grew to be even larger. These and their countless cousins, of different degrees, soon built a palace for themselves, where they lived happily ever after.

Everything seemed to get along so well.

But, alas, whatever other commodities the world might lack, it has never known a shortage of critics or fault-finders. These people went about saying that while everyone connected with the parrot’s training had prospered beyond words, the bird itself was in a bad way.

When these rumours reached the King’s ears, he called for the nephew. “Dear nephew, what is this that I hear?” he said.

“Sire,” replied the nephew, “if it is the truth that your Highness desires to know, call the pundit, the goldsmith, the scribes, the supervisors, all who have been connected with the parrot’s training. The critics are a starving lot, hence their tongues have grown so long and biting.” A luminous explanation! A rare necklace, a present from the King soon adorned the nephew’s person.

At last the royal Master expressed a desire to see how the little bird was getting on, and what the Education Department had been doing about it so long. One day, with his entourage, he appeared before the Hall of Learning.

At once from the gates of the building went up the deafening noise of gongs and conch-shells, of horns, bugles, trumpets, cymbals, cornets, drums and how many other ear-splitting instruments who knows. The wise men, swaying their sacred pigtails, started chanting, at their topmost pitch, hymns and songs of praise, while the

scribes, supervisors and goldsmiths and all their assorted cousins let off loud cheers all round. "Sire, what do you think of it?" asked the nephew with an arch smile. "It seems so frightfully like the real stuff," answered the happy monarch.

Mightily pleased, as he was about to mount his elephant, the old fault-finder emerged from a nearby bush. "Sire, did you see the bird" it whispered.

"Alas, no," the King had to admit, "I quite forgot about it." Turning back he then asked the pundits what method they were following in teaching the bird.

And he was told. He could not but be impressed. In fact, the method appeared to be so portentous and punctilious that the bird itself looked ridiculously insignificant. The King could not but be convinced that the arrangements were adequate. As for any complaints from the side of the pupil, that is the bird, such a thing was not to be thought of. In any case, it was so well stuffed with the dry leaves of numerous books, which had been forced down its throat, that it could hardly sing, or even whisper. It was thrilling to watch the transformation, what education could do. As the King, all doubts set aside, mounted the royal elephant, he instructed the State Ear-puller to give a hard tug at both the ears of the fault-finder who had tried to mislead him.

Thus the bird's education went ahead till it duly reached the verge of civilized inanity. To its guardians, however, the progress appeared to be in every way satisfactory. But even then sometimes nature, it seemed, did assert itself. For instance, when the morning light flooded the bird's cage it sometimes fluttered its wings, a shocking thing to do. On such occasions, it was reported, it even pecked at the iron bars with its feeble beaks.

"What impertinence!" growled the city's police chief.

It was then that the services of the blacksmith were

requisitioned for the Department of Education. And oh, how efficient he proved to be! What resounding blows with his hammer! The bird's wings were clipped and iron chains forged.

All the while the King's brothers-in-law watched it with angry eyes. "The bird," they said, "not only lacks good sense but even an iota of gratitude."

With a baton in one hand and a text-book in the other the instructors continued with their lessons.

For his skill the blacksmith was rewarded and his wife put on jewellery. Nor was the police chief forgotten. For his watchfulness he was given an honorific title.

Then – the bird died.

No one had the least idea when this had happened. The first person to spread the rumour was the old fault-finder.

The King called his nephew and asked him: "Dear nephew, what is this that I hear about the bird?" "Sire," replied the nonplussed nephew, "its education is now over."

"Does it hop?" asked the King.

"Never!" answered the nephew triumphantly. "Does it fly?" the King continued.

"No."

"Bring the bird here," ordered the King.

Flanked by the police chief and his underlings the bird was brought before the King. With his hand he felt its body. It made no sound, there was only the rustle of the stuffing of book-leaves inside.

That April morning there were new leaves of spring outside, and the southern breeze wafted a touch of wistfulness across the fragrant forest sky – in vain.

(From *Tagore For You*, edited by Sisirkumar Ghose, published by Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1966)

"Divide and Misrule"

"Despite its surface differences, India's political class is a model of underlying unity: it is united in perpetuating its power at any cost. The people of India, on the other hand, you and me, are divided along economic, social, religious, linguistic, and many other fault lines too numerous to count. These differences have over the years been emphasised and exploited by the political class which has created its own captive vote banks based on caste, creed, language, regional identity, economic status and other real and imagined divisions that separate us from each other. The British taught our political class that the secret of gaining and holding on to power lay in the policy of divide and rule. After Independence, our *netas* have bettered the instruction of our colonial masters.

"Never has India been more internally divided than it is today. Maoists hold almost one-third of the country to ransom. Separatists, from Kashmir to the northeast, openly demand secession from the Union. Escalating regional chauvinism flexes its muscles from Bal and Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka which are engaged in a water dispute. Thanks to the Mandalisation of education and employment opportunities, violent caste-based agitations have become a substitute for social justice. "

Jug Suraiya, excerpted from his column in *The Times of India*, February 9, 2011

BOOK REVIEWS



WHY SMART PEOPLE CAN BE SO STUPID by Edited by Robert J. Sternberg ● Byword Books, 2010, GF-15 Viraat Bhavan, Mukherjee Nagar Commercial Complex, Delhi 110009 ● bywordbooks@gmail.com ● 2010 ● PP.245 ● Rs.395

Reviewed by Sharad Bailur author, freelance journalist and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: sharad.bailur@gmail.com

This extraordinary book is a compendium of eleven articles written by fifteen authors (some jointly) on the issue of stupidity among smart people. Before I take up the book and its contents it is necessary to recall

a few instances of this phenomenon within my own experience.

The first that comes to mind is that of Dr. S. Bhagavantam, former Scientific Adviser to the Government of India who claimed that he was aware of how Satya Sai Baba had materialized a Seiko wrist watch, then not on offer in the market, for the Japanese Director of S. Hattori and Co, the manufacturer of the watch, having dematerialized it from the safe in which it had been ensconced in Japan and rematerialised it for the edification of the foreign devotee. Dr. Abraham Kovoov took up the case and wrote to the company asking a few pointed questions. They replied that they were not aware of any Mr. Sai Baba and that nobody had ever dematerialized any wrist watch manufactured by them. When Dr. Bhagavantam was confronted with this reply, there was no answer.

Question: How did an obviously scientifically qualified man of the high eminence of Dr. Bhagavantam fall for the story and then enthusiastically repeat it in his claim?

The other example before I go on to the book itself: Cold Fusion. Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann were two very highly thought of chemists working in two different countries. They came to the conclusion that it was possible to fuse two atoms of hydrogen to form one of helium and release the sort of energy that is blasted out by the sun. They claimed their experiment had succeeded. Elementary Particle Physics be damned. Replication resulted in total failure because the repulsive

power of negatively charged electron shells that constitute atoms is far more powerful than the power used to overcome them. It cannot be done as a chemical experiment on a desk top. It requires the gravitational power of a star to overcome the repulsive power of the electrons to perform the feat. Hence the Sun.

Question: What made two highly reputed chemists come to their crackpot conclusion, and worse, to announce it to the world at a press conference without peer review?

Ray Hyman, Professor Emeritus at the University of Oregon begins the discussion with a number of cases like Leverrier and the non-existent planet Vulcan, the case of the Piltdown Man, which as it turned out, was a hoax deliberately perpetrated in England, and Arthur Conan Doyle and the Fairies. Among his conclusions: Stupidity contains both cognitive and moral implications. On the second of these two there will be more said in this review below; Justifiable mistakes and blunders should not be labeled stupid; Many acts of stupidity or seeming stupidity result from mindlessness; many acts of stupidity result from limited or inadequate information and resources; and dumb people cannot do stupid things.

Carol S. Dweck of Columbia University writes on Beliefs that make smart people dumb. Among the beliefs that she discusses are: The belief that intelligence is a fixed trait versus a potential that can be developed; the belief that performance measures intelligence and self-worth; Teaching a belief in malleable intelligence; Sacrificing the chance to learn: The belief that learning is risky (I had a number of fairly intelligent colleagues in senior positions who were terrified of computers, though they knew how to type.); Denying the power of effort: the belief that effort is only for the incompetent. Some people call this race of people the “gifted” or “talented”; never knowing what you could have been or done; converting intelligence into genius or not; and making people dumb by telling them that they are smart.

Richard K Wagner, of Florida State University

Self-reliance : the keynote of our independence

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

In Godrej, self-reliance has been considered indispensable to progress, the aim being not just self-sufficiency for the or-

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

Based on our country's needs, and exploiting the country's own resources, Godrej have diversified.

Made to international standards and backed by continuous technical innovation, their products range from locks and security equipment, machine tools, forklift trucks, architecture and furniture, typewriters, refrigerators, computers and electronic business

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

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

Self-reliance is both a means and an end.

For Godrej it is the essence of independence.



discusses the case of managerial incompetence. Among his insights are: Book smarts versus street smarts; Biases, non-linear problem solving; Reflection in action; Tacit knowledge; and Development of expertise.

David N. Perkins writes about the Engine of Folly. This essay discusses how a person arrives at a situation where he commits himself to making a disastrous mistake. Beginning with Emergent folly; he goes on to discuss impulsiveness; neglect; procrastination; vacillation; back-sliding; indulgence; overdoing and walking the edge. I would have added a paragraph on hesitation particularly where instant decisions are needed. He believes that there is a folk psychology of folly that includes overwhelming emotions (*crime passionelle*), mindlessness and social folly.

Ozlem Ayduk and Walter Mischel, both of Columbia University discuss: Reconciling inconsistencies in social-emotional intelligence. They believe that there are multiple determinants of stupid behaviour. Among them: Deficiency of will power; the role of goal related mental representation in delay; the hot-cool analysis of the delay of gratification; purposeful self-distraction in cooling operations (I learnt to cook as a means of regaining my mental equilibrium after particularly stressful work); planning for long term goals; the inability to delay to protect against dispositional vulnerabilities and the value one puts on all of these.

Diane F. Halpern of California State University writes about the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal in Sex Lies and Audiotapes. Among the issues she takes up are : The Machismo of the US Presidency (not necessarily that of only President Clinton but also Eisenhower, Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Grover Cleveland and others.) She says that history has ample evidence for Clinton that people would accept such behaviour from him as well. She goes on to discuss the changing social mores in the United States and then takes up the Clinton case specifically to discuss what actually went wrong for him under: 'Public Office in the post Watergate era'; 'the changing nature of evidence'; his failure to adapt to a changing environment; the psychology of explaining; and critical errors like the Starr case.

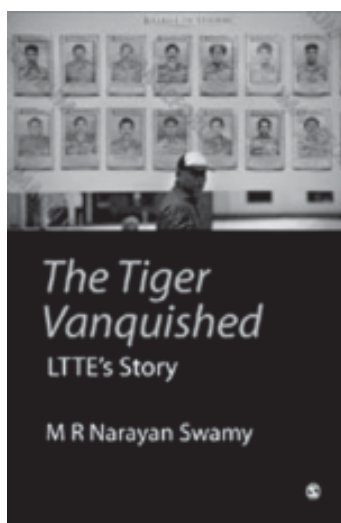
Keith E. Stanovich, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto discusses the topic: Is disrationalia possible? He talks about thinking dispositions as predictors of rational thought. The thinking disposition of say a Sherlock Holmes would be quite different from that of a bus conductor of that era. So how would one use their thinking dispositions to predict how they could come to rational conclusions? Folk

psychology he says can help to resolve the dumb-smart paradox: Disrationalia involves the demarcation of intelligence and rationality and there is a paradoxical relationship between rationality and emotion.

Elena L Grigorenko of Yale University and PACE Centre and Moscow University and Donna Lockery also of Yale University PACE Centre explore the bases of erroneous reasoning of smart people regarding learning and other disabilities. Elizabeth J Austin and Ian J Deary both of the University of Edinburgh discuss about personality dispositions. Mihnea Moldoveanu of the Joseph L Rotman School of Management and Ellen Langer of Harvard University discuss about mindlessness and the attribution of stupidity. The last article by Robert Sternberg, the editor, discusses how smart people are not stupid but they can be foolish in, what he calls, the imbalance theory of foolishness.

The word "stupid" is used in the book to mean "wrong" in the colloquial sense just as the word "smart" is used to mean "intelligent". Each of these articles are personifications of erudition in psychology written by highly educated people, which is what makes this book eminently readable. There are, however, a number of aspects that I wish at least some authors had discussed. One, the moral or ethical issue. President Clinton is dubbed stupid simply because he got caught. Had he got away, the morality of his act would apparently be justifiable. This implication sounds strange to our ears. Second, self-absorption and inferiority complex masquerading as superior intelligence. Third, the mistaken belief in one's own intelligence due to early success resulting in a feeling of "I am great; therefore I will not accept being second best. This can result in years wasted.

Fourth the number of publicly known fallacies that caused disasters to many people and mirth among others: Among them: "The Case of the Midwife Toad" in the book of that name by Arthur Koestler about Paul Kammerer's attempt to prove the inheritance of acquired characteristics and a justification of Jean Paul Lamarck's theory against the Darwinian theory of survival. It failed and he was publicly discredited. It is only now that the subject is being gingerly approached again in the guise of "the inheritance of epigenetic characteristics". Then there was the case of Wolfgang Kohler and the intelligence of chimpanzees. We had our own case of the milk drinking Ganapati. Carl Sagan had discussed what he called "Cargo-cult science" a mode of attributing miraculous powers to imitations of alleged originals. The list is endless. All in all a completely absorbing book.



THE TIGER VANQUISHED LTTE'S STORY by M. R. Narayan Swamy ● Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, B1/1-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110044 ● sagepublications.com ● 2010 ● PP. 269 ● Rs.325

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

Prabhakaran and other such tinpot heroes are leading the Tamils towards a long term moral and political disaster. There will neither be Eelam, nor true federalism, nor genuine federalism, nor anything else which is

just and fair to the Tamils this century, if ever.

- British author David Selbourne

Narayan Swamy is the author of two previous books on the conflict in Sri Lanka. He has keenly followed the rise and decimation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) albeit from a distance. The present book is a collection of articles written between 2003 to 2009. It covers the period when an internationally backed peace was followed by a vicious war that resulted in the defeat of the LTTE. The introduction provides the previously unpublished information of India's covert involvement in the Norwegian brokered peace process and the silent war that Indian Intelligence waged against the LTTE.

Tamil militancy was seen as a legitimate response to the anti-Tamil violence that swept Sri Lanka in 1983. Prabhakaran came to India after the anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka in 1983 and stayed here for three and a half years. He got a safe base, arms and training in India. The DMK openly supported his cause. The international community appreciated the just cause of the Tamils. He took away the moral sheen by carrying out the massacre of Buddhist monks and nuns at Anuradhapura in 1985. Even LTTE supporters were shocked when he ordered the killing of hundreds of guerrillas of the rival group, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO). All other rival Tamil groups were decimated. Prabhakaran grew from a catapult player to command a strong guerrilla force, a naval wing and an air wing, the only insurgent force to have an air wing. He was ruthless and organized suicide bombing to assassinate foes. The victims of this tactics included Tamil leader Amrulingam, former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Sri Lanka's President Premadasa and Foreign Minister Kadirgamar. An attempt on Sri Lanka Army Chief General Fonseka failed.

Due to the military operations, the Tamils in the North were facing dire shortage of food. Concerned over Pakistani aid to Sri Lanka and with an eye on the elections in Tamil Nadu, India sent food supplies in ships on humanitarian grounds. It was intercepted by the Sri Lanka Navy and turned back. Food was then air dropped by the Indian Air Force on 4 June 1984. The message to Colombo was clear. India could intervene militarily. Sri Lanka offered talks and an accord was signed on 29 July 1989. It envisaged calling off military operations, surrender of arms by the LTTE and devolution of power to the Tamils. Indian troops were sent to Sri Lanka to help disarm the LTTE. The Accord soon broke down. Prime Minister Premadasa considered the presence of Indian troops to be an infringement of Sri Lankan sovereignty. The LTTE was never serious about surrendering arms and declared war on the Indian Army. Premadasa even supplied arms to the LTTE! In 1990, the Indian Army returned to India after incurring more than 1200 casualties only to be welcomed by black flags by Karunanidhi. General Kalkat, commander of the Indian force in Sri Lanka laments that there is no memorial for Indian soldiers in Sri Lanka. The author points out that there is none in India as well. The accord was a bold diplomatic move but doomed to failure as it aimed at marginalizing Prabhakaran by disarming LTTE. The Accord had failed to end violence but it did lead to some changes in the Sri Lankan Constitution in terms of devolution.

The withdrawal of Indian troops gave a false sense of pride to Prabhakaran about his being invincible. It left Jaffna in control of LTTE who then started Eelam War II and massacred leaders of rival the Tamil Group EPRLF. It was the fear of the return of Rajiv Gandhi to power that led to his assassination in 1991. LTTE was outlawed in India in 2002. A few politicians still gave vocal support but Karunanidhi had changed his stand. LTTE did not carry out any strikes in India except for one failed attempt on Perumal, former Prime Minister of North East Sri Lanka who lived in India under the protection of India's security establishment.

All was not well in the LTTE's ranks. Prabhakaran permitted no opposition. Karuna, his lieutenant in the East, broke away in March 2004 along with a few thousand guerrillas. He was advocating reconciliation and could not have openly suggested it. The Sri Lanka Government made full use of Karuna as is borne out by diplomatic papers

in his possession when he was arrested in London on 2 November 2007. He was sent back to Colombo after serving a jail term of nine months. The attempt on the Army Chief, General Fonseka, in April 2006 finally wrecked the peace process.

India's relations with LTTE changed from support in the pre-Accord days to indifference in the post-Accord era and a stand off after Rajiv's killing. Things changed with the BJP Government who covertly brokered the peace initiative by Norway. It was signed by the two parties on 21 February 2002. Peace did not last long. As in the past, both sides had their reservations. The author compliments Sonia Gandhi for her statesman like act of not taking revenge on Sri Lanka Tamils, when the coalition Government led by Congress came to power in 2004. India did not support the demand for an independent Tamil State and even gave aid to Sri Lanka. India had a tough choice of not wanting Colombo to get military aid from China and Pakistan. The LTTE raid on a Colombo base on 9 September 2008 revealed that India had supplied radars and two operators Sri Lankan government. It is believed that the Intelligence Bureau of India had moles in the LTTE.

Rajapaksa who become Prime Minister in November 2005 was determined, calculating and lucky. He treated human rights organizations with contempt and set about eliminating the LTTE. Soon the LTTE felt shortage of weapons and ammunition. The international community made it clear in 2006 that there could be no independent Tamil State. Prabhakaran insisted on taking the Tamils into the jungles along with him as the area under him shrank.

Visits by Tamils expatriates showed that they were well fed and clothed. The local Tamils desired peace. As casualties in the LTTE increased, they took to forcible recruitment of children, much against the wishes of the parents and rushed to the war front after one week's training. The situation grew so ugly that some distraught men and women risked their lives by openly abusing Prabhakaran. From 1990 to 2007, LTTE had carried out 200 suicide attacks. This gave them a false sense of having knocked out the Sri Lankan army.

At one time the LTTE controlled one-third Sri Lank and two-thirds of its coast line. By 2008, it had shrunk to 6% of land and 1.25% of population. 90000 people including 23000 guerrillas died. There were harrowing tales of misery and torture. The end of Prabhakaran and all his senior lieutenants at one go on 18 May 2009 marked the unexpected decimation of the seemingly indestructible Tamil Tigers. The final images of the dreaded man were terrifying. He was sprawled on a stretcher staring blankly with eyes wide open, the back of his head blown off and his face frozen in terror.

As a nation, Sri Lanka had suffered enormously. Reconciliation and national integration is the paramount need. Soon after victory, the two architects of military success, Rajapakse and Fonseka fell out. Fonseka is undergoing thirty month jail term on charge of not following procurement procedures in acquiring equipments.

The book is a well researched study of the rise and decline of Prabhakaran and his Tamil Tigers.

Children for Sale at a Fair in West Bengal

According to a Bengali newspaper - '*Sangbad Pratidin*' (8 January 2011) a Fair in West Bengal is selling children due to poverty.

Dhabru Soren, Churka Hembram, Marang Soren, Putia Soren, Mela Kisku are not aware that they have the right to get their privileges from government. They have not received the rights of land although they are living in the village for a long time. There are 400 members in 60 families. Male members numbering 210 are all from different states of India – Delhi, Punjab, Mumbai, etc. They came here long ago and did not go back to their states but settled in this village. There are 75 women, 105 children. They don't get proper food and live on the leaves of jungle, viz, sal leaves, kachu leaves. The children are all suffering due to malnutrition and different types of diseases and cannot live long as they are half fed & sometimes starved.

The 75 women residents of Bindighi have appealed to Panchayat administrators – "Give us food, otherwise take our children & give us money." But no one from the Panchayat listened to their plea.

Finding no other alternative, 50 women adibasi residents of Bondighi village willingly lined up their children numbering 105 in the Main Street on 7 January, 2011. Malati Hembram, Devi Soren, Minati Murmu, etc, shouted all day to sell their children. The male members (mostly the fathers of these children) were also present at the Fair But in spite of shouting there were no buyers.

Posted on info@karmayog.org. contributed by *Freedom First* reader M. D. Kini, Mumbai.
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STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE MILITARY BREAKING NEW FRONTIERS by Ajey Lele ● Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, B1/1-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110044 ● sagepublications.com ● 2009 ● PP.209 ● Rs.550.

Reviewed by Sharad Bailur, author, freelance journalist and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Sharad.bailur@gmail.com

My first reactions to this book were mixed and confused. The title sounded ambitious. The size (209 pages) looked modest in the extreme. I first went into the Index like I normally do while reviewing books and then the bibliography when one exists. Both did.

And they are impressive. There has been obvious painstaking research and in some cases quite obscure sources have been referred to (as befits such a work), since much of what is referred to is either cutting edge technology or even cutting edge science. And that finally sets the tone of this book.

Dr. Lele has an impressive background. He is a former Air Force Wing Commander, with a post graduate degree in Physics and Defence and Strategic Studies. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi and holds a doctorate from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). He clearly brings a combination of academic depth and actual practical knowledge of a subject that is extraordinarily difficult to pin down because of the very nature of the cutting edge science that it deals with.

The nub of the book comes at the end: He calls it "Preparing for War is an endemic progression." I call it the "Survival of the Fittest States".

He begins with Platform Technologies in which he discusses Near Space Technology and its relevance in the evolving security environment and also the relevance of military robots. In the next section he discusses Speed of Light weaponry: Directed Energy weapons and in the last section he dwells upon Emerging and Converging Technologies which are discussed under the heads of the role of nanotechnology in defence, the military applicability of biotechnology and cognitive technology and ambient intelligence.

The reason I complained about the size of the book at the outset was that this subject is vast. Besides he was not discussing it with relevance to India alone. In view of this, the book should have taken up the task of discussing all that has gone on before and what is going on now besides emerging technology in different countries. This would have made for at least three or more huge tomes, not a mere 209 pages. I am aware that not much of cutting edge research is openly known to ordinary folk like us. For example till the beginning of the Iraq war the existence of the B 2 Stealth bomber was not even known. However when the author skims over, even if very competently, some of the issues faced by different countries and their research organisations the reader is left panting for more. India and its needs take up a small portion of the book and that again forms too small a treatment of a topic that itself is big.

Lastly while issues like directed energy weapons or nanotechnology to various countries are discussed, their relevance to different countries is not discussed. What, say, China is looking for in terms of its military research is likely to quite different from what the US is looking for, or for that matter what Sri Lanka is looking for (if at all). The same goes for India. Our research needs in the defence field are completely different from those of Pakistan for example. And directed energy weapons (star wars etc) or nanotech weaponry is not even on our horizon as yet. A set of recommendations form the last part of the book. Among the suggestions is that there is a need for a healthy exchange of ideas and outputs among civil and military R&D establishments. This I think is a forlorn hope, because no country will let on what it is actually up to. North Korea earlier and now Iran are the latest examples.

The quality of the language is uneven. In some places it verges on extraordinary sparkling prose; in others it has a tendency to become merely pedestrian. This is difficult to understand. I think a huge opportunity to produce a world class work has been lost for reasons that remain to be understood especially because the author.

Freedom First

Digitisation Project

Freedom First, which began publication 59 years ago, was founded by the late Minoo Masani, author and MP, at a time when free India was just five years old, World War II had ended and the Cold War had begun. As a participant in India's freedom struggle he shared the vision of the leaders who had led us to freedom that, with independence, our country would launch towards the winning of a new world – the creation of a new society, secular in its foundation, ensuring liberty of thought, belief and action and the realization of economic and social justice for all the citizens of the free republic.

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

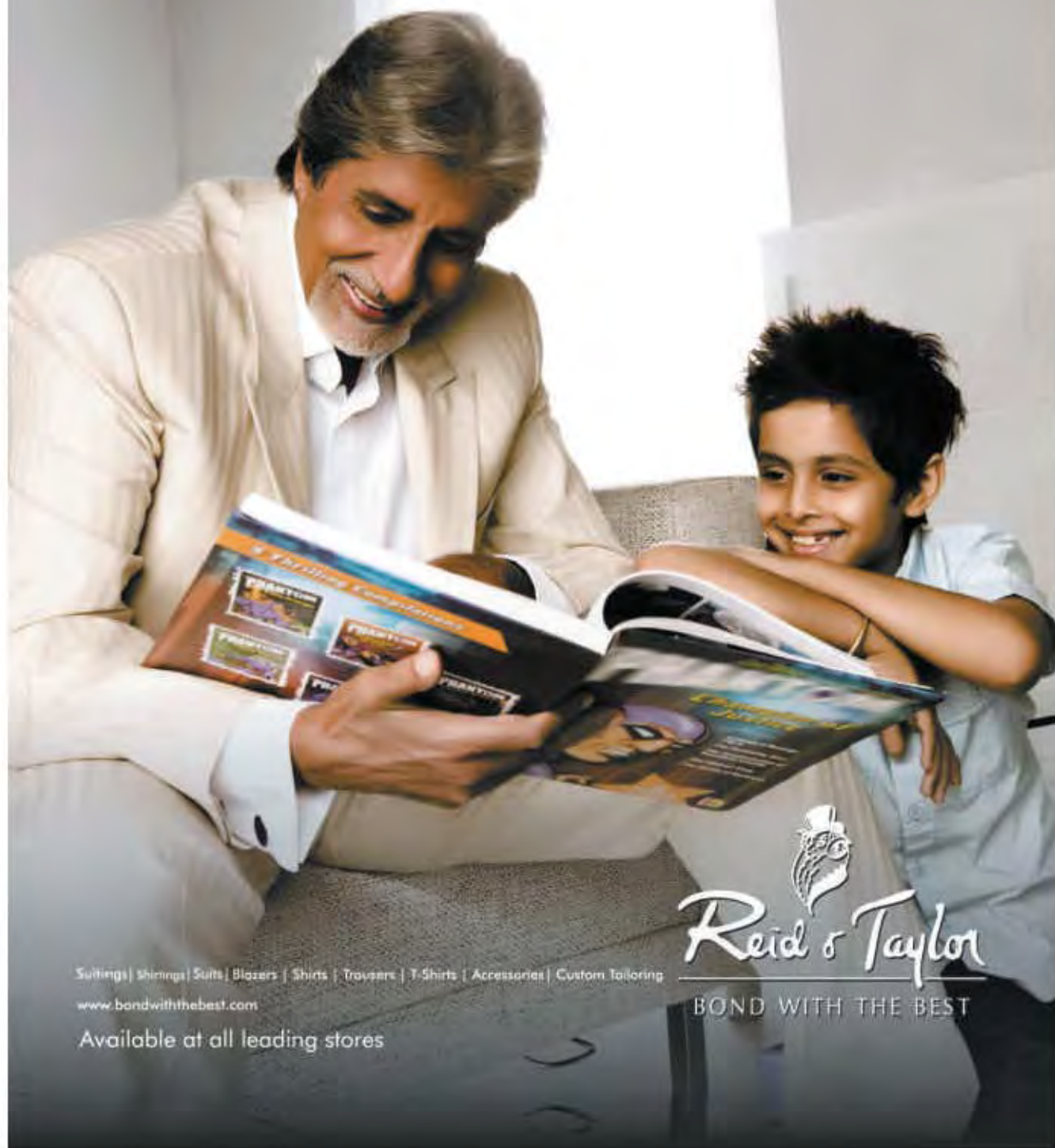
All these were issues that were discussed in *Freedom First* in articles spread over 500 editions (including this one) in about 19,000 printed pages reflecting the times they were written, by men known for their integrity and competence.

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

Dear Reader, we need funds for this purpose. You responded very generously when we sought your help last year. This time we seek your assistance in persuading Charitable Trusts, Foundations and similar organisations you are in the know of, to help. Do write or email us (jurasv@gmail.com) for further details. We look forward to hearing from you and your support.

Editor.

□ PLAYING ACTOR.
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□ PLAYING CHILD.



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