

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

- ❖ *Republic Day Celebrations without the “Public”*
- ❖ *Monetary Easing for Recharging Growth*
- ❖ *Is It Desirable to Stop Migration of Workers?*
- ❖ *Need for the Chief of Defence Staff in India*
- ❖ *The Sad Story of the
Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF)*
- ❖ *Swami Vivekananda*
- ❖ *Almora’s Forgotten History*

In 2009, she was named
one of the most influential people in the world.
She has won a record 27 Filmfare Awards,
2 Oscars, 2 Grammy, 1 Bafta and 1 Golden Globe.

**When A R Rahman dreamt of becoming
the best composer in the world,
his mother Kareema Begum dreamt the same.**



Your dreams are not yours alone

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया  **Union Bank**
of India

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine – 59th Year of Publication
No.537 March 2012

Contents

<i>Between Ourselves</i>	1
<i>From Our Readers</i>	2
Republic Day Celebrations without the “Public” Madhu Kishwar	4
Monetary Easing for Recharging Growth Sunil S. Bhandare	5
Restructure the Society K. K. Pathak	7
“Show Me the Money” Firoze Hirjikaka	8
Soldierspeak : Thy Corruptible Self! Soldierspeak	9
<i>Point Counter Point</i> Ashok Karnik	10
Is It Desirable to Stop Migration of Workers? T. H. Chowdary	13
Need for the Chief of Defence Staff in India Furdoon S. B. Mehta	15
The Sad Story of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) Suresh C. Sharma	17
<i>Cornucopia</i> Firoze Hirjikaka	19
Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) B. M. N. Murthy	21
Almora’s Forgotten History M. A. Haque	25
The Perspective of a ‘Worker Communist’ Azar Majedi	27
<i>Book Reviews</i>	29
<i>Freedom First</i> This Month in March 1955	32
<i>Educating Adults</i> <i>An Adult Education Institute Feature</i>	33

Between Ourselves...

It seems to be all quiet on the Anna Hazare front. Anna is undergoing treatment we are informed somewhere in Gurgaon or Noida. So he has been absent so far in election campaigns in the North and in the recent elections to the local bodies in Maharashtra. In a manner of speaking he has been ‘silenced’. Meanwhile the flow of money, liquor and numerous other forms of ‘inducements’ are open and brazen. I was among the 42 odd percent who cast my vote in the Mumbai Municipal election. Travelling back from office that evening I got into a conversation with an auto driver. I merely asked him whether he had voted. Instead of answering my question he replied with a big smile. “Arre Sir” he said in Hindi, “I do not have a vote because nobody registered me but does that matter. I wish every day is polling day because not only did I have a sumptuous dinner – chicken biryani – last night but this afternoon mutton biryani too – all free of course made possible by you know who!” He wanted to know whether I had had my lunch! And to imagine that just a few months earlier we saw what we mistook to be a revolution by the middle class against corruption! Most of this class did not even bother to vote! Also one did not see any “I am Anna” caps during the run up to the election or on voting day. Obviously it is business as usual.

But there is one very sinister development that we can ignore only at our democracy’s peril. Some of us who care for our country and our people, were under the impression that three institutions at least had withstood the machinations of political parties, particularly the one in the Delhi *gaddi*. The three were: The Judiciary, the Election Commission and the Army. The Date of Birth controversy of the Army Chief it would appear was deliberately allowed to burn before being doused to denigrate the Armed Forces; and the pantomime involving the Law Minister, the Election Commissioner and Indira Congress *aka* Indian National Congress was enacted to attract the Muslim vote on the one hand and to show the Election Commission who’s the boss on the other. As for the tears shed by the daughter in law of the mother in law who once almost succeeded in converting the judiciary into a ‘committed’ one, it is to be seen whether her tear drops will translate into votes. We’ll soon know.

Editor

Founder: Minoo Masani ● **Editor:** S. V. Raju ● **Associate Editor:** R. Srinivasan ● **Advisory Board:** Sharad Bailur, A. V. Gopalakrishnan, Firoze Hirjikaka, Ashok Karnik, Farrokh Mehta, Jehangir Patel, Nitin Raut, Brig. (Retd.) S. C. Sharma, Kunwar Sinha, Sameer Wagle
All correspondence to be addressed to the Publishers: Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF), 3rd Floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001. Phone: +91 (22) 2284 3416 ● Mobile: 9820016392 ● E-mail: freedom@vsnl.com / freedomfirst1952@gmail.com
Published by J. R. Patel for the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) and printed by him at Union Press, 13 Homji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400 001. Phone: 2266 0357, 2266 5526.
Typeset at **Shubham Print & Web** 59, Dr. V. B. Gandhi Marg, 1st Floor, Fort, Mumbai 400 001. Phone: 2284 2619 ● Mobile: 9892921277
Single Copy: Rs.20 ● Annual: Rs.200 (Add Rs.50 for outstation cheques) ● Overseas (Incl Class Air Mail) Annual: \$20 or £10
Cheques to be drawn in favour of **ICCF** and mailed to the publishers at the above address.

From Our Readers

Sale of Spectrum Unjustified?

Mr. T. H. Chowdary's argument against sale of spectrum is intriguing (*Freedom First*, February 2012). It is claimed that natural resources like sun, wind and electromagnetic waves are not produced by any country and should be nobody's property to be sold or auctioned. The argument is confusing as resources which are taken for exclusive use by anybody, by definition deny its use by everybody else. Electro-magnetic wavelengths are not universally available for use; these are rationed, so to say. Hence the price on them. Sunlight cannot be so parcelled out; it can be used by all, all the time.

Ashok Karnik, Mumbai
ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in

*

Agitators Stall National Projects and Progress

A number of important infrastructure projects in the country, that are vitally necessary to sustain industrial and economic growth have been stalled in the last few months due to agitations by the so-called environmentalists, who do not listen to scientific and technical explanations. It is sad that a few hundred determined agitators have been able to dictate terms and enforce their views by threatening mass demonstration and violence on any issue.

The agitation against Koodankulam nuclear plant in Tamil Nadu is an immediate example, when a few thousand agitators have stalled the project not listening to any appeal and explanations by experts. Even the appeal by the former President and renowned scientist Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has fallen on deaf ears and the agitation is being continued "successfully". The net result is that more than Rs.13,000 crores invested in the Koodankulam nuclear plant threatens to go waste and with no one knowing now as to whether the Koodankulam nuclear plant would be commissioned at all. Tamil Nadu is now facing severe power cuts with shortage of around 2000 MW and several parts of the state have been subjected to power cut for five to six hours every day, leading to closure of tiny and small industries and loss of employment.

Even as some protestors are blocking the Koodankulam nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu, a national level coordination committee of so-called environmental activists was formed in Chennai city recently to fight through courts what they called the expansion of thermal power plants along the coast unwarranted. The committee said that it would ask the Centre and state governments for an immediate halt to the expansion of the thermal plants until a cumulative assessment of the actual energy needs

were spelt out clearly in a white paper.

Some agitators do not want nuclear power plants and want thermal power plants to be set up in their place. Some others do not want thermal power plants. Yet another set of agitators in central and western India are protesting against the hydroelectric power projects. All these agitators are getting huge media publicity and they are interviewed here, there and everywhere making them look like environmental heroes. This scenario is creating confusion in the minds of the common man in India who does not have technological awareness, as to whether the environmentalists have a valid case.

Recently, local protestors have forced the country's biggest iron ore miner National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) to suspend production and shipments from Jharkhand, which accounts for two thirds of its 25 million tonnes annual output. NMDC's mines in Chhattisgarh produce daily about 40,000 tonnes of the ore, which is vital for the steel industry. It is reported that the railways refused to supply wagons fearing that they could be attacked by agitators. Piling stocks forced suspension of production. Vast areas of the mineral rich state are a stronghold of Maoist rebels and public protests against the government have become common.

Several rules and regulations do exist with regard to the implementation of projects such as environmental clearance, public hearing etc. but the agitators seem to have their own "rules and regulations".

Now, where do we go from here? If such conditions persist and agitators continue to have a field day, there would be huge industrial and economic setback for India which will prove to be very costly.

One gets the impression that the main reason for such frequent agitations is that the governments have given an impression that they would be guided only by vote bank politics in dealing with the agitators and, in the process, making it look that the governments have no conviction.

It is nobody's case that any violation of environmental stipulations should be tolerated or lands should be acquired for the projects displacing poor people. But, there should be proper forum and methodologies to take decisions on such matters without they becoming street agitations and violent protests.

N. S. Venkataraman, Trustee, Nandini Voice For
The Deprived, Chennai.
Email: nsvenkatchennai@gmail.com

*

The Many Versions of Valmiki Ramayana

I refer to the article of Sri B. M. N. Murthy (*Freedom First*, Dec 2011). The protest against A. K. Ramanujam's essay on the 300 versions of the Valmiki Ramayana is not because he has mentioned that there are 300 versions but because he has elaborated on some of them which are blasphemous in nature. If such things are written or referred to about Prophet Mohammed *fatwas* would have been issued to cut off his head. We may recall the fatwas against Salman Rushdie for his *Satanic Verses* and the publications of the cartoons on Prophet Mohammed in the Netherlands. One version of the Ramayana mentions that Sita is Ravana's daughter; another mentioned that Sita is the sister of Rama; yet another mentioned that Lakshmana wanted to marry Sita and so on. It is the highlighting of absolutely outrageous things that is objectionable. More objectionable is prescribing such an essay for reading by students.

Hinduism gives absolute freedom to people to think and write anything in their wisdom. Things that are not there in Valmiki Ramayana as mentioned in some versions of Ramayana are inventions by people with sickly minds. There are more than a dozen communist parties in India. All of them swear by Marx. But none of them write anything that is repugnant to the Marxist ideology as propounded in the tome, "*The Capital*". Before AD 381 there were more than three score versions of the New Testament. They were all standardized when Constantine, the Emperor of Rome embraced Christianity and held a conclave whereat the New Testament was standardised. But even that was reworked at the instance of King James of England in the 1611 AD. Even then between the four Gospels, there are variations. For example one says that Christ did not rise from the grave.

The intention of the "secularists", "leftists" and "Marxists" is to calumniate whatever Hindus hold as sacred. That is why the furore about Ramanujam's 300 versions of Ramayana essay.

Just because there were uncomplimentary references to Sonia Gandhi in one of the social networks on the Internet, the telecom Minister was furious, and threatened the companies concerned and even warned them of censorship. The secularists have no words upholding the freedom of people to write whatever they think, about Sonia Gandhi.

Dr. T. H. Chowdary, Secunderabad.
Email: hanuman.chowdary@tcs.com

*

'Fair poll is not possible as money, liquor flow freely'

DNA, an English daily has published a report on

its front page with the headline, "Fits and starts to the final frenzy" (*DNA*, 14/2/2012) which tells us that the candidates gear up to buy votes for Rs.1,000 to Rs.2,000. The next report is an interview with the State Election Commissioner, Neela Satyanarayan, wherein she helplessly states that 'fair polls not possible as money, liquor flow freely'. This is a shame for our much-praised democracy. The low turnout in Mumbai's municipal (BMC) elections is another indicator of the public disgust with the present election system.

When Anna Hazare questioned the legitimacy of our elected representatives due to the use of unfair means to get elected all the politicians and the constitutionalists questioned his thesis and some even asked him to fight the elections. The number of crorepatris and criminals contesting the election seems to have gone up in the BMC election. If candidates pay to get elected, they would definitely recover with interest whatever they have invested and continue the evil of corruption.

Mahatma Gandhi was in favour of Gram Swaraj with power to levy taxes and use it with consensus for the development of village. This was sought to be done through the 74th amendment of the Constitution during Rajiv Gandhi's time but it has not taken up even after so many years. Similarly, there was a Nagar Raj bill which envisaged elected area sabhas for each ward to oversee the functioning of the municipalities. This has not found favour with politicians as their activities would be scrutinized by the citizens.

Another issue is about legitimacy of the candidate who wins with 25% or 30% votes. With so many candidates, a candidate without a majority gets the legitimacy as a representative. A second ballot only with the top two within a week is a suggestion made to ensure the representative elected by the people has the support of the majority in the constituency.

There are many ideas to reform the present system of election. Initiative to change the system is unlikely to come from our political establishment. The Election Commission, NGOs, Corporate leaders, think-tanks and civil society representatives like Anna Hazare and Prashant Bhushan have to take up this issue before we become a banana republic with the corrupt and criminal taking over the Indian Republic. The election process has to be changed to restore legitimacy to our democracy.

Whichever system is adopted it should ensure transparency and accountability. Corruption is the greatest menace to India and Indian democracy.

M. D. Kini, Mumbai. Email: mdkini@kini.org

*

Republic Day Celebrations without the “Public”

Madhu Kishwar

The government of India has a strange notion of what is an appropriate way to celebrate the occasion; it not only shuts down all its offices but forces by law all commercial and corporate establishments to take a compulsory holiday.

I have never felt like celebrating 15th August, Independence Day. For me, coming from a family of Partition refugees, it marks the date of India's Partition. However, I do want to celebrate Republic Day because it is on this date in 1950 that the Indian Constitution came into effect. It is a document held sacred by millions of its citizens, including those of us who think its drafting was an elitist exercise and did not incorporate some of the key concerns of Mahatma Gandhi and his vision of institutions that would promote a culture of Self Rule or Swaraj.

But despite its limitations and flaws it offers each citizen – rich or poor – the promise of equality and many important freedoms as fundamental rights.

The government of India, however, has a strange notion of what is an appropriate way to celebrate the occasion; it not only shuts down all its offices but forces by law all commercial and corporate establishments to take a compulsory holiday. Public transport is also withdrawn. In Delhi for instance, the Metro and Delhi Transport Corporation run only a skeletal service – that too after the Republic Day Parade is over. Even flights are not allowed to take off from or land till the Parade is over and done with. Streets are deserted, markets are all shut and our usually bustling urban centres look like ghost cities.

There was a time, anyone could go and witness the celebrity Parade on Rajpath in Delhi by turning up early enough to get seats in the *janata* enclosure. Today, only VIPs are allowed access anywhere near Rajpath. The “people” who gather to witness the parade are overwhelmingly government officials, politicians and their families. There was a time thousands would gather *en route* to welcome the Parade as it moved from India Gate to Red Fort. Today, security scares have resulted in far fewer people venturing out of their homes to cheer the marchers. In smaller towns the celebrations are even more dull and grim, with bored school children brought in to sing the national anthem and applaud bored officials who do the flag hoisting ceremony while the population at large is excluded from any role on what is supposed to be a historic day for citizens' rights in India.

But nothing saddens me more than the pompous display of military might during the Republic Day Parade in Delhi. Instead of happy citizens we see contingent after contingent of military regiments – Punjab, Madras, Bihar, Assam Rifles, Gorkha *et al* – march past the President, Prime Minister and other dignitaries gathered at Rajpath. They are followed by the display of the muscle and might of our air force and navy. The soldiers are accompanied by armoured tanks, ballistic missiles, anti aircraft guns, torpedoes and other deadly weapons. These are followed by various contingents of armed police – the CRPF, Railway Security Force, Border Security Force, CRPF, CISF and the works. Why on earth did our post independent rulers choose this Soviet style display of the armed might of the Indian state on of all days, Republic Day? Is it meant to make the rulers feel secure from their own people? Or is this display of weaponry and military-police power meant to awe and frighten the citizens?

This is not at all to belittle the vital role played by our brave soldiers in defense of India but simply to point out that there are better occasions to celebrate our armed might. January 26 ought to be a people's festival. Instead it has become a deadpan *sarkari* ritual. It is significant that the colourful and lively contingents of school children and folk dancers come at the fag end of the Parade. In a genuine republic people come first. It is only where there are militaristic authoritarian regimes that the coercive arms of the state machinery take precedence over people.

After giving us a glimpse of the gung ho, macho Indian state, we are subjected to a series of mostly unimaginative tableaux put together by various state governments and Public Sector Undertakings.

Deprived of the life force and energy that ordinary people bring to any occasion with their participation, the Republic Day Parade has become such a sombre event that TV cameras hardly catch a happy or smiling face among the select audience, except when school children or folk dancers appear on the scene or *jaanbaaz* soldiers display

(Cont'd. on p. 11)

Monetary Easing for Recharging Growth

– The Opportune Moment is Now

Sunil S. Bhandare

This article is a sequel to the one published in the February issue of Freedom First which dealt with issues and challenges of key fiscal policy initiatives. We now seek to reflect on critical aspects of monetary easing for recharging growth.

The advance estimates of national accounts released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) reconfirm the worst fears of a downward drift of the Indian economy during the current financial year. Thus, the real GDP growth rate has contracted sharply from 8.4% in 2010-11 to 6.9% in 2011-12. As a consequence, the average growth rate during the Eleventh Plan (2007-12) works to just about 7.9% as compared to its aspirational growth target of 9% per annum.

Agricultural growth rate was expected to slowdown after an impressive recovery in the previous year. But a sharp deceleration in growth rates of manufacturing (3.9% in 2011-12 *versus* 7.6% in the previous year) and construction (4.8% *versus* 8%) sectors is certainly a matter of great concern. What has clearly become evident is the adverse impact of high interest rates policy along with several other factors damaging the overall investment and growth outlook. Thus, gross fixed capital formation as a ratio of GDP at current market prices, which determines the future growth potential of the economy, has decelerated from 30.4% in 2010-11 to 29.3% in 2011-12.

Such disturbing performance has several implications, especially when the Planning Commission firms up credible growth targets for the Twelfth Plan to be launched in Fiscal Year 2012-13. Surely, it reinforces the urgency of recharging India's reforms agenda. The issue of monetary easing, especially the imperatives of initiating the process of key interest rates reduction, has to be an integral part of this strategy; and indeed, it now comes to the forefront. But such a change in the Reserve Bank's policy stance is circumscribed by what the Finance Minister does to deal with his tough task of fiscal consolidation. Witness what he is reported to have said recently: "As Finance Minister, when I think of the enormity of the subsidies to be provided, I lose my sleep." Unfortunately for him, reduction and rationalisation of subsidies along with other expenditure controls and economic policy measures has to be at the core of his fiscal strategy.

Essence of Monetary Easing

Be that as it may! Let us turn to the issue of monetary easing. Why is there such a growing clamour for a prompt shift in the RBI's policy stance from inflation control to economic growth? Why does the RBI in turn, making such a policy change conditional to fiscal consolidation as well as to several other governmental policy initiatives? What would be the efficacy of monetary easing? Will it trigger off growth recovery? Given the complexity of the current economic environment, besieged as it is by domestic and global economic uncertainties, it is well-nigh impossible to be conclusive about the likely favourable impact of monetary easing. Hence, most of the issues raised need to be reflected upon in a contextual framework.

But before doing so, it is appropriate to offer a quick word about the essence of monetary easing. In simple terms, it is an action by a central bank of the country (RBI in our case) (a) to ease liquidity in the system, thereby expanding money supply growth; (b) to reduce interest rates; and (c) in a broader sense, to liberalise the financial sector within a sound regulatory framework. All these are instruments to stimulate economic activity. While lowering of interest rates fuels demand for commercial credit, the easing of liquidity accelerates supply of funds. Releasing liquidity in the market is facilitated by the RBI purchasing government securities in the open market. Also, these measures are designed to speed up the velocity of money, thereby providing external stimulus to the economy. While the first two actions are of immediate short-term relevance, the liberalization of the financial sector can be looked upon as an on-going medium to long-term program.

If the key policy rates like bank rate, discount rate and call money rates are already at low or near zero levels – as is the case with most advanced countries at present – then this policy framework is referred to as monetary or quantitative easing. As an aftermath of the financial crisis of mid-2008, the central banks of USA, UK, EU countries and Japan have been relentlessly pursuing such

a policy of quantitative easing for the past three years and more to prevent economic recession and regain sustainable growth momentum. Such a policy stance has undoubtedly delivered its objective in preventing financial meltdown and combating economic recession. But there are now major dilemmas confronting these economies about when and how to withdraw the monetary stimulus without dislocating the process of economic recovery or causing another economic recession. For all practical purposes, these countries have reached their ultimate space for monetary easing.

The Contrasting Indian Scenario

There is a clear difference in the Indian scenario. What matters the most in our case is effective deployment of the repo rate (the rate at which the RBI supplies liquidity to banks), and reverse repo rate (the rate at which the RBI absorbs liquidity from banks). For well over eighteen months, from January 2010 to September 2011, the RBI had raised key policy rates relentlessly. The cumulative increases in the interest rates over this period were: (a) 375 basis points in repo rate; and (b) 425 basis points in reverse repo rate. The pace of interest rate hikes accelerated since September 2010 in keeping with stubbornly high inflation rate. As a consequence, the key policy rates have now virtually converged with the inflation rate. The RBI is consistently signalling that in its quest for combating inflation, the prospect of economic slow down is inevitable. Indeed, it has consciously sought to steer the economy towards moderating economic growth. *[Please see the Chart below]*

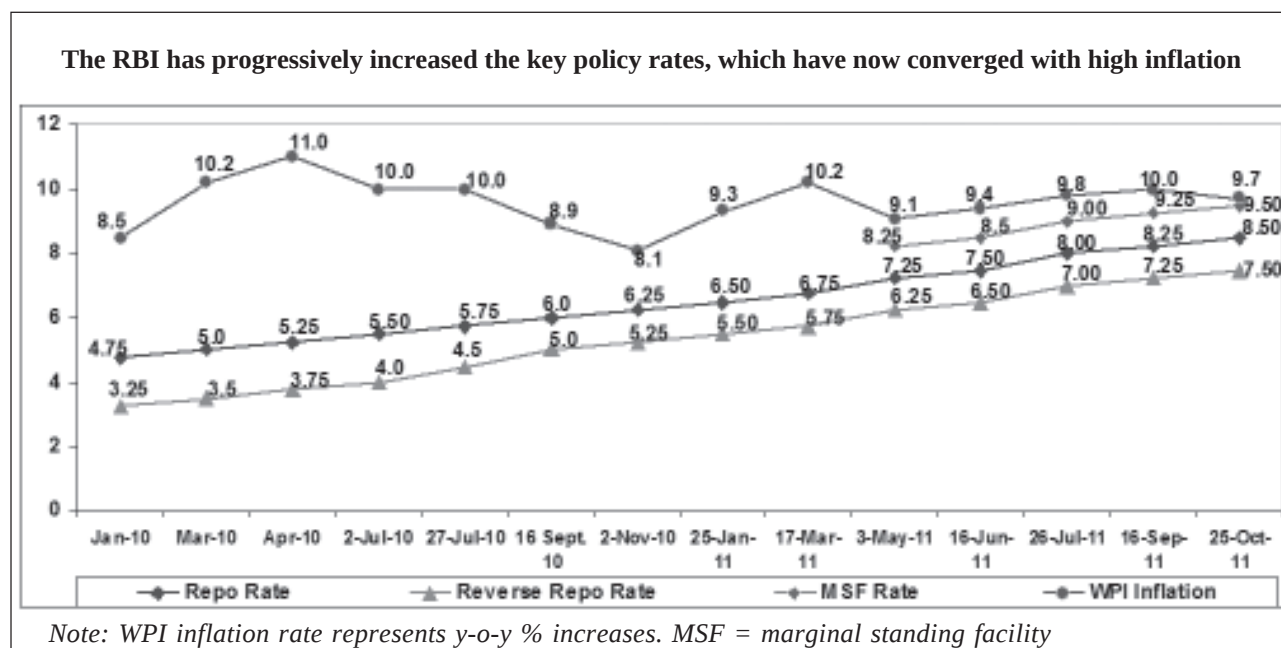
worrisome. Surely, the economy has paid the price for this war against inflation. Not only is there a sharp overall economic slowdown, but its worst manifestation is in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Also, consequential substantive erosion in corporate profitability during 2011-12 has had a dampening impact on investments sentiments, as is reflected even at macro level in terms of decelerating gross capital formation in the economy. Also, demand for bank credit, especially non-food credit is sliding sharply. Many sceptics and critics have raised doubts about the effectiveness of such a policy, especially when inflation is found to be driven largely by the structural supply side/cost side (e.g. prices of pulses, edible oils, etc) as well as external factors (e.g. global crude oil and commodity prices).

Rationale and Effectiveness of Monetary Easing

There are clearly several supporting reasons now for the RBI to go into reverse gear: (a) a perceptibly disturbing economic slowdown; (b) the cumulative impact of hikes in key policy rates is dampening demand and anchoring inflationary expectations; (c) the urgency of restoring buoyancy of investment outlook; and (d) affording a complimentary prop to the government's expected initiative of policy reforms in the forthcoming budget. There is a glimmer of encouraging news that with food inflation remaining in a constant negative zone (admittedly, largely driven by seasonal supply side factors), the rupee is regaining some of its lost ground and stock markets are displaying significant positive sentiments.

But now the outcome is becoming increasingly

(Cont'd. on p.23)



Restructure the Society

K. K. Pathak

I am firmly of the opinion that no set of laws can do away with the evils with which our society is afflicted today.

Anna Hazare has been getting importance he hardly deserves. He believes that by appointing a Lokpal on his lines will wipe out corruption. Nehru made the mistake of letting the State assume responsibilities it could hardly fulfil. He opened the floodgates, letting corruption become a prevailing note in every walk of our national life. Anna Hazare is preaching anarchy in the name of a strong Lokpal.

Can one Lokpal look into the cases of corruption emanating from a wide range of sources? If the top ladder is set right by a Lokpal, it will go a long way, sending a desirable message to the lower rungs of the administrative ladder. Things have already gone from bad to worse. It is not possible to do away with the rampant corruption in one sweep overnight. Things are to be done in phases, giving time to set the top rung right. Corruption started from the top and percolated down to the bottom. It took more than six decades to obtain the present unfortunate situation. Anna and his team want to wish away corruption in a twinkling of the eye!

I am firmly of the opinion that no set of laws can do away with the evils with which our society is afflicted today. If we trace the history of this affliction, letting our society go rot, we will find that it took decades to pollute social life and debase our social structure in which neither ideals nor civic virtues have any place. The entire society has got degenerated. After all, legislators, executive officers and clerical staff, judiciary and judicial staff, and religious preachers, social workers, and yoga gurus are the product of the rotten society we have come to be. What afflicts our society has its full effect on these wings of our federal republic.

The need of the hour is to think of ways and means for restructuring of our social order. What can laws achieve when disobedience and naked flouting of them is the order of the day? Anna knows nothing but pokes his nose in all national matters. He seems to have become a pontiff, sitting on the top of a hillock, posing himself as “a know-all, who has a master key to unlock all evils prevailing in the country. The people around him are professionals with NGOs, to sustain their professionalism. Politics and religion

have already become a lucrative profession in the country. Social workers have also gone professional, making social work a lucrative profession. Such professionals cannot remedy the evils we are afflicted with, as they themselves are hardly clean enough to be models worth following. We have hardly few political leaders who exercise some kind of moral impact on the people. So is the case with our religious and spiritual leaders. National life has become so miserable that people at large look to these religious and spiritual leaders for salvation! Most of them are frauds whose aim is to amass wealth, abusing the pitiable condition of the common man. When national life becomes miserable, people listen to the voice of the fake agitators whose sole aim is to exploit the unfortunate conditions, making their profession as lucrative as possible.

Whether it is Asaram Bapu or Sri Sri Ravi Shankar or Morari Bapu or Baba Ramdeo or Anna Hazare, all are out to make a capital out of the present unfortunate situation. Political leaders have progressively fragmented our society on caste, community and class basis without doing any good to any section of our society and amassing wealth disproportionate to their real assets.

In such a scenario, my good friend Dr. Manmohan Singh cannot work wonders. No leader from any walk of life is as honest and dedicated as Dr. Manmohan Singh. I say this with all the conviction of an impartial observer of men and matters in the country. I have seen several PMs from very close quarters and was shocked to find them naked, making the sight so obvious that I gave up all hope of national salvation through them. It is no use naming them and narrating incidents. It would need a tome-like book to record all that I have seen. Good people have become indifferent for valid reasons. But the time has come when they should come forward to the rescue of our ill-fated society being badly exploited by frauds and pygmies, posing as Messiahs and Gullivers. I have been making this appeal for over five decades now!

Awake, arise or be for ever fallen!

K. K. PATHAK is an educationist and a political commentator based in Bharatpur, Rajasthan.

“Show Me the Money”

Firoze Hirjikaka

Why is A. Raja still smiling, despite residing behind bars?

This ubiquitous phrase made famous by Tom Cruise in the movie Jerry Mcguire keeps running around in my head the more I learn about the now infamous 2G fiasco. Is it just me, or are the armchair experts and anti-corruption watchdogs missing a glaring omission. Where, indeed, is the money? Why is A Raja still smiling, despite residing behind bars? For that matter, Suresh Kalmadi, he of the Commonwealth Games loot, seems pretty happy too. What is going on? Are the prosecutors missing the wood for the tress? Let me attempt to explain my bewilderment.

Yes, the honourable Supreme Court has struck a massive blow for probity in public life by cancelling 121 2G licences that were obtained by less than sanitary means. Splendid! Although awakening very belatedly from its voluntary slumber, India has demonstrated that even the high and mighty have to eventually answer the consequences of their misdeeds. Kudos! The huge loss to the public exchequer is a *fait accompli*, but hopefully, the perpetrators of the financial swindle will be made to make at least partial restitution. A noble endeavour!

However, amidst all the brouhaha, reams of newsprint and eons of television time being expended on the 2G imbroglio, one name that gets mentioned only in passing is that of A. Raja. Yes, he is the chief crook – the saintly Prime Minister and his smirky Finance Minister were bypassed. Yes, he doled out munificent largesse to his favoured ones – but why? Out of unconscionable generosity? Because the beneficiaries were his bosom buddies? No! His motives were exclusively financial. A *quid pro quo* was expected and given. Unofficial estimates put Raja’s cut at a mind boggling Rs.3,000 crores. And yet, nobody is talking about this. Raja may be currently languishing in jail, but he will get out – probably sooner than later. And in all probability, the Rs.3,000 crores will be waiting for him. I have yet to hear any substantial comments about steps being taken to divest Raja of his ill gotten gains. I don’t know if it is even being contemplated. So can anyone claim with a straight face that the punishment will fit the crime?

The same scenario applies to the hirsute and

unflappable Suresh Kalmadi. He recently returned to a hero’s welcome to Pune. It looks like he is going to get to hang on to the CWG loot. If the trade off is a spell of imprisonment that is anything but rigorous, I don’t think he will be too downcast.

One can understand the method behind the madness, of course. In India, politics has very little to do with ideology or conviction; and nothing at all with a desire to serve the public. Before every election, there is a mad, unruly, no-holds-barred scramble to obtain that all important ticket. The underlying motive is purely financial gain. If they get exposed later on, they may face public approbation, dismissal and even imprisonment. But they will retain the illegal wealth they have amassed. If there was a risk of that being confiscated, the passion for politics would suddenly die down.

One irrefutable fact in this country is that politicians and their trusted lieutenants will always take care of themselves. Lokpals and CVCs may come and go, but any legislation that would seriously impede their money-making talents will never be enacted. They are the ones making the law, after all. You can’t realistically expect them to slit their own throats.

FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer, a blogger and freelance writer. He is a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: leonardo8_@yahoo.com

We Indians are the most racist, casteist, xenophobic and hypocrite people in the world. Nowhere on this planet would you be discriminated against in your own country on racist grounds than in India. Those northerners who don’t agree with me should live in the south for a while and vice versa. I lived in Chennai for nearly two years and it was there that I realised for the first time that I was an ‘Aryan’ and not ‘Dravid’. It is no secret that political parties in India not only exist but also thrive on these racial and caste divides.

Ashish Deodhar
www.indianliberals.org

Soldierspeak : Thy Corruptible Self!

Soldierspeak

What intrigues then, is why did we wait for a frail looking man clad in whites to come on the street and tell us what we knew all along?

It indeed was a pleasant surprise to watch millions come together to stem a prehistoric malady “Corruption”, which is almost as ancient as the advent of social organization.

These are times of unprecedented prosperity, staggering poverty and stark inequality.

Notwithstanding, the nauseating figures all across the globe of a 10% cornering 45% of wealth, the bottom line emerges that the world always had a population of “Have’s” and the “Have not’s” and will always do?

Corruption, in itself is not a very easily definable term. Most of us know it, when we see it. In simple terms, it is said to be an abuse of power vested, for personal/collective benefit.

What intrigues then, is why did we wait for a frail looking man clad in whites to come on the street and tell us what we knew all along? This is a very pertinent worry! People need to be led, the majority though aware either lack the conviction that others will follow suit or are too focused to justify or ensure their existence?

Corruption has been endemic, since time immemorial. There is no concrete evidence to indicate that it has climbed to insurmountable proportions only in the recent past. It has always been present in some form or the other; what has changed is that the masses have become more aware and less tolerant – firstly because of a pro-active media who have taken upon themselves to bring the issue and its practice to the fore and secondly because governments and institutions have largely been unable to keep it under wraps and successfully conceal.

That, this bears heavily on the most ill equipped people (to handle it) and adds to the grotesque distortions and deprivations has been agreed to, by all. As has been the case with all maladies, the poorest get the share in abundance.

Notwithstanding the preceding, about the past and

present of corruption, what prompted this verbal diarrhea, was the amount of passion this issue generated in the country. A billion were woken up from their reclusive slumber, largely because of unparalleled publicity and positive coverage from a famished (for news) and pro-active media, as also the volcanic potential of the apparent impotence in action, of a largely indifferent populace.

Realistically speaking, elimination of corruption in its entirety is a mythical proposition. To be honest, it might become too expensive to eradicate it! Let’s say hypothetically, that even if an attempt were to be made to eliminate it completely from the scene it would have a cascading negative effect on the very pillars of free society. It might also encourage rigid and unresponsive governance along with adversely affecting freedom and human rights. The doomsayers would advocate that harsh times demand harsh actions; but in effect an ethnic cleansing of corrupt souls and practices would be a harbinger of a sense of insecurity, and will, in all probability, evoke voluntary inertia both in thought as well as practice-among other things.

Most unfortunately, we Indians have a knack of eulogizing and edifying mortals to divinity. The drab old routine of existing unceremoniously without any news value has led us to manufacturing issues and personas with tumultuous leanings, around which we can knit a web of half-truths and cooked truths, so as to indulge in a sudden volcanic virile outburst, which is derisive enough to justify our hitherto mundane and impotent existence.

Notwithstanding, the very fact that the populace could churn out the phlegm which was congesting the breath of the society and its people in itself a momentous occasion. With due care though, because we have a checkered history of creating and burning demons; year after year after year!

Email: soldierspeak@gmail.com

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.

Indian Democracy – Confused Values

1. India is in a dilemma over demands for bans on various 'offending' writings or remarks anywhere in the world. It is struggling between the emotional upsurge of a few and the ideal of freedom of speech and expression. After 65 years of independence, India has not learnt to handle the protests of a few against real or perceived insults to their beliefs. In recent months, we have had problems with the Internet, a BBC documentary on Indian hygiene, Jay Leno's comments on the Golden Temple, proposed ban on the Bhagvad Gita in Siberia (Russia), Salman Rushdie's intended visit to the Jaipur Lit Festival or even his video address to the Fest and Taslima Nasreen's book release in Kolkata (Feb 1). In each case, some group threatened to protest violently. The Government bowed to their pressure. Its policy is to avoid confrontation with an agitated group and buy peace. A new twist is that instead of the Government banning an event, the organisers are prevailed upon to cancel it due to fear of violence. If a foreign government is responsible for unacceptable comments, there would be some logic in the Government of India lodging a protest. In case of private entities, the Government needs to evolve a more pragmatic policy. Tolerance of views opposed to one's own is the hallmark of democracy and India has been found wanting in striking a balance between action and calculated indifference. A country's culture is not so fragile as to be destroyed by some ignoramus making stupid comments about it. The culture which has lasted thousands of years despite invasions and foreign rule is not so perishable.

1. In most cases, the Government gets carried away by politics of religion. The Chairman of the Press Council, (retd) Justice Katju gave a green signal to moral censorship of the internet. Kapil Sibal, Minister for Science and Technology is already considering measures to control social networks. The Delhi High Court took one further step by warning the internet world that it could ban offending access providers like the Chinese have done. If in nothing else, India is trying to keep pace with China in this field! We protested to the British Government against the BBC documentary and to the US against Jay Leno's frivolity. We made surreptitious attempts to get Rushdie to cancel his visit to the Lit Festival and pressurised the organisers to cancel even his video speech. The Government lost sight of the larger picture of India's reputation of being a plural society. The Government should not bow to threats of violence. The Supreme Court has clearly held that "freedom of expression cannot be suppressed on account of threats of violence". The important point is that all the draconian measures put together would achieve little. An expunged twitter would be a grater attraction than the original. China has found to its dismay that bans do not work in the internet-connected world. It is the duty of the State to ensure that lawful activities are allowed to be conducted without hindrance.

The General's DoB

2. The unseemly controversy over Gen. V. K. Singh's date of birth (DoB) affected the reputation of all those involved: Government's inability to resolve a sensitive issue through dialogue underlined its dysfunctional status; the Army Chief's protestations that he was more interested in establishing his honour rather than getting one more year of service sounded meaningless and the chasm between the Defence forces and the civilian bureaucracy was exposed. The Army Chief's decision of go to court against Government's rejection of his demand to rectify his DoB was not a mere matter of an individual trying to prove his point but placed the high office occupied by him in an embarrassing position. The dispute arose because Gen.

2. The Army Chief might prove to be right that his DoB recorded when he joined NDA was a clerical error and that the correct date as shown in the matriculation certificate (as May 1951) should have been accepted by the Government. The problem is that while a solution was being worked out he went to the Supreme Court to prove his contention. Where did the high tradition of the Army disappear then? His acquiescence in 2008-09 looks opportunistic in hindsight. Since he was not interested in obtaining an extra year in service, he could have resolved the issue more honourably by retiring as per Government decision but without giving up his claim that his DoB was wrongly recorded. Most Defence officers related the Chief's

Singh gave a wrong DoB (May 10, 1950) while joining the National Defence Academy as a cadet due to a 'clerical error' and tried to correct it (May 10, 1951) 5 years later. The General's contention is backed by many documents. One office of the Army corrected the error while another stuck to the earlier DoB. To compound the error, Gen. Singh accepted the wrong date thrice in 2006, 2008-09 at the time of his promotion. Later, he claimed that he had done so under pressure and in the highest tradition of the Army. The Government trotted out the rule that any such correction can be made within two years of service, not later.

It is not the want of power at the centre, but the failure to exercise firmly and in time such power as it has, that led to many difficult situations.

**M. C. Setalvad, former Attorney-General,
The Times of India, April 13, 1969
(cited in Freedom First, May 1969)**

fight with the bureaucracy to the age old grouse that the civilian bureaucracy always treated service officers with disrespect. The grouse may be well founded. The Defence Ministry mandarins could have handled Gen. Singh without offending his dignity and the matter could have been resolved 'in house'. The civilian bureaucracy (read IAS) is always busy in one-upmanship games with professionals, particularly with defence service officers and it should not surprise anybody if they did the same with Gen. Singh, leading to the ugly row. The Supreme Court rejected the General's plea while lauding his integrity. The General withdrew his petition claiming that his honour was vindicated. In fact it was never challenged. Even if the Chief had won, he would have ultimately exited as the one who brought his high office into dispute. It is shocking to find the prime defender of the country fighting with the Government of the country. It is a case where everybody is a loser.

Unfazed or Shameless?

3. In the New Year (2012) the Government suffered two blows from the Supreme Court: in the first, the Court held that the PMO had unduly delayed sanction for prosecution of A. Raja for 16 months and ordered that such sanctions should not take more than 4 months; in the second, it held that the allocation of 2-G spectrum was illegal. It cancelled all 122 licenses granted by A. Raja. Both cast serious aspersions on the probity of the Government. The rejection of the complaint against the Home Minister by a Special Court only underlined that the judiciary is absolutely objective.

3. The Government welcomed both Supreme Court judgments as if it had not played any role in either event. The first was passed off as some indiscretion on the part of a low functionary in the PMO and the second as a policy (of no auction) inherited from the NDA since 2003. It is easy to point a finger at the opposition but the people are not concerned whether the BJP was initially at fault; they want to know what the UPA II did or did not do. Sibal's or Singhvi's clever attempts at misdirection do not absolve UPA II. The refusal to accept accountability requires a lot of chutzpa or lack of shame. Which is it?

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

Republic Day Celebrations without the "Public" (Continued from p.4)

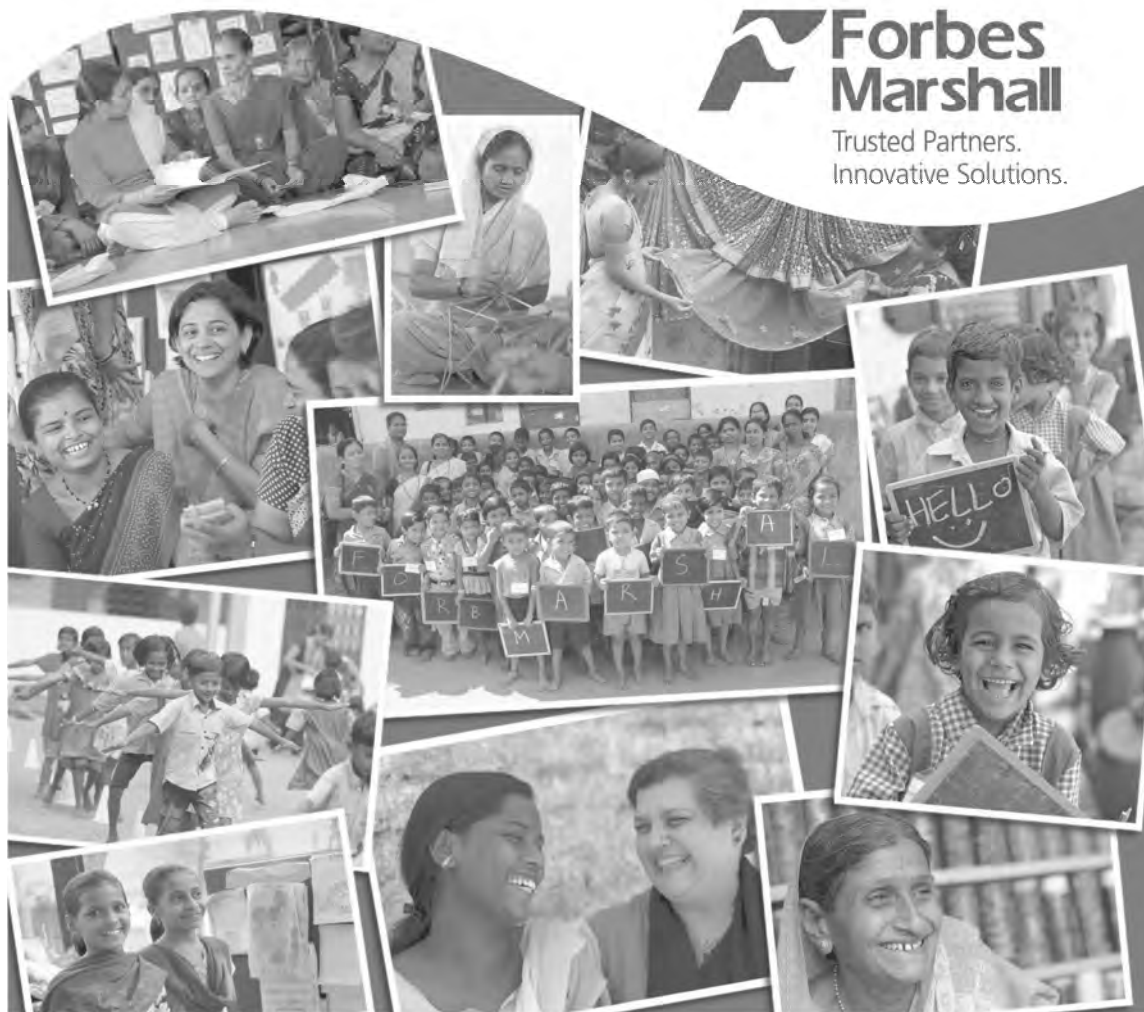
their acrobatic skills on motor cycles. Our ministers and bureaucrats look bored as though going through a tough ordeal. The most telling moment of this year's Republic Day Parade in Delhi was when the VIPS followed by the President and Prime Minister began leaving the venue of the flag past ceremony. They looked as sombre and miserable as people do when they are returning from a funeral.

POSTSCRIPT: One of my young friends, Wahid Parra from Kashmir, happened to be in Delhi on 26th January – his first experience of Republic Day in Delhi. He went to Connaught Place thinking the city centre will be in a festive mood. His shock at what he saw is aptly summed up in the following words: "Madhuji it was like being in Kashmir on Republic Day. There everything shuts down due to

hartal call given by terrorists/ separatists. But here the government is enforcing a *hartal* on the entire population. Strange country indeed!"

Why don't we put our heads together and start thinking of ways in which citizens can reclaim the Republic Day? May be before January 26, 2013, we will be able to propose alternatives to like minded citizens. We look forward to your creative suggestions.

**Madhu Kishwar is the founding editor of Manushi. The print edition is temporarily suspended but is available in its web edition from which this article is published with her permission. Ms. Madhu Kishwar is a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), in Delhi.
Email: madhukishwar@manushi-india.org.
Web: www.manushi.in**



Trusted Partners.
Innovative Solutions.

If we can measure steam, gas, chemicals and water, then why not smiles?

A philosophy that drives Forbes Marshall's extensive social commitment program.

At Forbes Marshall, we firmly believe that an organization should actively contribute to the community that it operates in.

Our initiatives focus on community development, empowerment of women, education and healthcare for the underprivileged.

We also undertake extensive programmes on HIV awareness and literacy, besides enabling underprivileged youth with sustainable skills to earn a stable livelihood.

Over 140 of our self-help groups empower and equip women with special skills and train them to become self-sufficient entrepreneurs.

Similarly, the Shehemaz Medicare Centre at our Kasarwadi campus provides all-round medical aid while handling sensitive issues like de-addiction and substance abuse in the community.

Our commitment to society is as unwavering as it is inclusive. In every initiative that we undertake, we aim to act as a facilitator for the betterment of lives.

To know more and get involved, email us at socini@forbesmarshall.com

Energy Conservation | Environment | Process Efficiency

www.forbesmarshall.com

A-34/35, MIDC Estate, 'H' Block, Pimpri, Pune 411 018, India. Tel.: +91 20 27442020, 39851100, Fax.: +91 20 27442040
P.B. # 29, Mumbai Pune Road, Kasarwadi, Pune 411 034, India. Tel.: +91 20 27145595, 39858555, Fax.: +91 20 27147413

Forbes Marshall | Forbes Marshall Arca | Forbes Marshall Code! | J N Marshall | Krohne Marshall | Spirax Marshall | Forbes Vyncke

DRAFTFCB + ULKA 988935

Is It Desirable to Stop Migration of Workers?

T. H. Chowdary

Migration is a historic phenomenon. It can be seasonal, for short periods or permanent. Any scheme that is designed to contain India's rural population in the village of their birth itself is a retrograde step.

The Government of India is to spend Rs. 88,000 crores on rural development this year. About Rs. 40,000 crores are under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Government spokesmen and media fed by the government are propagandizing that the NREGA and some other schemes are meant to stop the migration of workers from rural areas. This aim is irrational and against historical experience.

- Had there were no migrations from overcrowded Europe to the newly discovered Australia and America, Europe would have been pauperized and the world would have been less prosperous without the wealth of these two continents.
- The less prosperous Spanish-speaking South American workers are migrating to the US and thus satisfying the need for manual workers in the USA. A few million skilled persons like electricians, masons, carpenters, fitters, plumbers, welders, drivers and construction workers from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu are working in the Gulf countries. If these people are not migrating to where work is, they could not have been fed and housed and uplifted here in India. It is their remittances that are adding to the prosperity of their families at home.
- Lakhs of Indian engineers and other professionals are migrating to the US and to some other developed countries in search of jobs. Their remittances are helping India. The skills of the returning people add to the talent pool in India.
- Punjab's agriculture will wither if workers from Bihar do not migrate to that state. Here, within Andhra Pradesh, farm workers migrate from one district to

another for so many agriculture operations like transplanting and harvesting.

- Tens of thousands of workers both men and women migrating from Srikakulam and Prakasam districts are engaged in the construction activity in Hyderabad.

Migration is a historic phenomenon. It can be seasonal, for short periods or permanent. Any scheme that is designed to contain India's rural population in the village of their birth itself is a retrograde step. Villages cannot sustain so many unskilled labourers and not-so-literate labour. By creating useless "work" we are promoting dependency among the unfortunate rural, illiterate and unskilled population. This is indeed a social crime.

The example of my village Angaluru in Krishna district will illustrate how good money is being thrown after bad. Out of 1000 families, 800 had registered themselves as BPL, seeking work under NREGA. So far, it was 100 days at Rs.100 per day. Even at this rate, 80,000 man days of useful work in a year is impossible in a village and that too, year after year. Now this is sought to be doubled. The result is, wages for agricultural labour have gone up by 2.5 times and agriculture is becoming increasingly unviable. Farmers feel that it is better to sell the land and put that money in Fixed Deposit (FD) in a bank. For instance one acre of agriculture land sells for Rs.10 lakhs at the least. If this is sold and the money is put in FD, the annual return is Rs.90,000. By cultivating that land, no farmer gets more than Rs.10,000 to 15,000 in a year. What incentive is there for cultivation?

Those who are registered for NREGA are just mustered for attendance and since there is no work that is required to be done, they go home. They are paid for no work or little work. This easily-obtained money is spent largely on consumption of liquor. Liquor worth Rs.15, 000 crores per year is being sold in Andhra Pradesh. One can easily guess where the NREGA money is going. This is a social crime.

Armchair economists and do-gooders are in the

The problem is not that rural consumption has risen; but, that it has risen for the wrong reasons and without commensurate increase in productivity or by creating productive assets. That is the flaw in the design of NREGA. It is a rural entitlement programme and not a rural opportunity programme.

Vishal Kumar Singh. Posted on Facebook

National Advisory Council, an unconstitutional body presided over by Smt. Sonia Gandhi. It is at her instance that more and more schemes of welfare are being launched. Most of this money is being looted and some of it spent away in the consumption of liquor. We are promoting dependency and idleness and destroying the work ethic. We are also promoting parasitic welfarism. The late Rajiv Gandhi had said that 85% of the money spent for welfare schemes was not reaching the target. It is estimated that excluding the subsidy on fertilizers, Rs.4 lakh crores of subsidies and throwaways like pension for the old are spent under welfare. 85% of that is about Rs.3,40,000 crores every year, turning into black money, shared by government servants, businessmen and politicians. More the welfare, more the black money and greater is the destruction of the work ethic.

In the pursuit of power, winning elections by spending huge sums has become necessary. These sums

can be generated by the vast amounts of money spent on “welfare”. The discourse about welfare and the trickle that reaches the poor are acting as opium for them. The poor get the crumbs. Those for whom politics is a profession and government power is the goal, welfare and the poor are the enablers. Welfare spending for the poor cannot be criticised on moral grounds. It can be shown to be the instrument for aggrandizement by a few. We are not building an egalitarian society. Wealth is being created by the educated and enterprising. Much of it is accruing to politicians in power and their crony businessmen getting at the levers of power. Inequality and inequity are increasing. These are not good for the country.

DR. T. H. CHOWDARY Currently: Director, Center for Telecom Management & Studies; Chairman, Pragna Bharati, Andhra Pradesh; Fellow, Tata Consultancy Services. Formerly: Information Technology Advisor: Government of Andhra Pradesh; Chairman & Managing Director, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. Email: hanuman.chowdary@tcs.com. Website: www.drthchowdary.net

Now Sari Cancer !

Chennai: The next time you drape a sari, you might want to re-tie that petticoat knot. According to an article in the November issue of the Journal of the Indian Medical Association, doctors at Grant Medical College (GMC) in Mumbai have reported cases of what they are referring to as sari cancer.

We have treated three women for waist or sari cancer in the past couple of years, says author of the article Dr.G. D. Bakhshi, who is an associate professor of surgery at GMC. He authored the piece with colleagues Dr. Ashok D. Borisa and Dr. Mukund B. Tayade. While two of the patients diagnosed a couple of years ago are mentioned in the article, the third was detected three months ago. All the women were above the age of 40.

The sari petticoat, if tied in the same place day after day, can cause chronic irritation along the waistline, says the report. The constant irritation can result in scaling or pigmentation. But most sari-wearers don't notice it until it gets chronic, says Dr. Bakhshi. He adds that women need to be cautious because waist dermatoses can turn malignant as it did in the case of the three women treated at GMC.

Dr. Bakhshi advises sari-wearers to tie their petticoats looser or switch from the usual rope-like belt to broader ones that reduce pressure on the area. He also suggests that they keep changing the level at which they tie saris. This kind of cancer does not really affect those wearing pants or belts because the pressure is spread over a larger area, unlike in the case of a petticoat nada or string, he says.

Treatment depends on the stage at which the cancer has been diagnosed. If detected early, it can be treated with reconstructive surgery. But if the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes then we need to remove the malignancy, says Dr. Bakhshi. He adds that if detected early the cancer is curable.

Chennai-based dermatologist Dr. Maya Vedamurthy says that around 3% of sari-wearers who come to her have waist dermatoses but she has not seen any cases where it has turned malignant. The moment I notice it, I tell the patient to start wearing the nada a little looser or switch to a broader string, she says. Like sari cancer, there are several lifestyle-related cancers that are increasingly being seen in India, such as breast, ovarian and tobacco-related cancers. There are many types of tobacco-related cancers from lung and stomach to bladder and pancreatic. The cancer is also lifestyle-related, caused by smoking as well as increased levels of pollution in the environment, says Dr. T. Rajkumar, professor and head of molecular oncology, Cancer Institute, Adyar.

Safe Rather Than Sari

Tie your petticoat string looser ● Get a broader string so the pressure on the waist is less ● Keep changing the position of the string each time you wear a sari ● If you notice scaling or pigmentation at the waistline, consult a doctor

Courtesy: Kamini Mathai TNN on the net.

Contributed by Sunita D'Souza

Need for the Chief of Defence Staff in India

Furdoon S. B. Mehta

It is possible that one of the reasons why our government may be hesitant in bringing about the necessary re-organisation, affecting the unification of its armed forces under a single Chief of Defence Staff, is the obsessional fear of a military coup.

It is heartening that at last, possibly as a result of Pakistan's testing of their Haif Vaka, Ghauri missile, our Government has at last woken up to the necessity for the formation of a National Defence Council (NDC), which will undertake the first ever strategic defence review of the country. A task force under the chairmanship of Mr. K. C. Pant, former Defence Minister, had been instituted to work out the modalities for this. It is contemplated that although the NDC will be based on the American pattern, unlike the US model, it will not be a part of the government, but it will only be an Advisory Body. And secondly, the integration of the three Services will remain outside its orbit. Thus this will be a cosmetic exercise to placate and fool the nation regarding its defence preparedness.

The Defence Ministry has already conveyed to the Parliament's Standing Committee through an office memorandum that "the Government has ruled out the formation of the three defence Services under the Chief of the Defence Staff, as the existing system has been found to be ideal in the Indian context." The government always tries to fool itself and the nation.

In its defence, the Government has taken the stand that unlike the US and the UK, the integration of our three Services takes place under the National Defence Academy (NDA), followed by another inter-Services training like the Defence Services Staff College and ending with the National Defence College. The government goes on to proclaim that even at the apex body, we have the Chiefs of Staff Committee with its Chairman being elected in rotation thus ensuring inter-Service hegemony. But here again, it has never functioned as a team.

On the face of all this, it gives an outward appearance of having a well-knit inter-service organisation, a model for other countries to copy, but there the picture ends. The irony is that in spite of all the above, for all intents and purposes, we still fight as separate and independent services under their respective individual Service commanders. To square this, the Chief of Defence Staff is absolutely necessary.

For better liaison and coordination, it is suggested

that India should follow the United States and have a building like the Pentagon where the Defence Ministry and all the Defence Services should have their headquarters in one building.

The attendant disadvantages of the present system namely indecision, lack of cohesiveness, loss of time and in fact all the inherent defects which one normally must expect when there is no central unitary control and direction, completely precludes its retention in the present day warfare, when any delay and indecision is more or less certain to prove disastrous. This will specially be so in a case like ours where any war will be short and intense, as such there will be very little time for any adjustment before it ends. Thus in our present set up, co-operation between the various services depends not on any unified operational command and control, but on the art of liaison and luck.

Most countries have now introduced unification of their defence services at the top by appointing a professional expert as the Chief of Defence Staff. In India, in the absence of any such arrangement, we are forced to rely on civil servants in the Ministry of Defence to resolve any conflicting claims or recommendations of the Services. Not unnaturally, the Ministry of Defence has gradually assumed the duties and status of an inter-service arbitrator and director – a responsibility for which it is not constituted or competent. In this context, the Defence Secretary, virtually functions as a Chief of Defence Staff. No matter how brilliant an administrator he may be, it is asking for the impossible and indeed unfair to expect him to convert himself overnight into the Chief Executive of the nation's fighting forces.

In the past, different constituents of the nation's armed forces developed independently and during war, inter-services coordination was somehow managed, though with considerable difficulty and heart-burning. Even during the last 14-day war in Bangladesh, although wide publicity was given to the "intimate" cooperation of the three services, the Army and the Air Force in particular, did not work as a team, the co-operation boiled down to one service in distress, calling for help, to which the other services

responded, though not always without reservation. In an interview after the Bangladesh War, Field Marshal Manekshaw stated: "Although I got very good co-operation from the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Nanda, I did not get it from the Air Chief, Pratap Lal, as he had a chip on his shoulder". Luckily, that War was too short to test the strength and durability of this type of co-operation. In fact, it was entirely due to the efforts of Maj. Gen. JFR Jacob, Chief of Staff Eastern Command, that Army-Air cooperation was obtained due to his personal relationship with Air Marshal Lal, the Chief of the Air Staff.

At the apex of our Defence High Command is the President, who is the Supreme Commander of our armed forces, who exercises the command through the Cabinet. It is axiomatic, that in a democracy, the civil must be supreme. In the Western democracies, this implies the supremacy of the elected members of the government, namely the cabinet ministers and the Parliament. In India, unknowingly, we have gone a step further, in that, under the civil government we also unconsciously also include the civil servants, about whom there could be no doubt that this was never the intention when we became a Republic. Possibly one of the reasons for this fallacy was the fact, as in other democracies like the US and the UK, their ministers are known as "Secretaries". Our civil servants believed that this was synonymous with their own ranks, namely "Secretaries" of the IAS cadre.

It is high time that we call off this "bluff" to this myth of inter-service co-operation, as for all practical purposes, in our set up, it just does not exist. It is possible that one of the reasons why our government may be hesitant in bringing about the necessary re-organisation, affecting the unification of its armed forces under a single Chief of Defence Staff, is the obsessional fear of a military coup. After the Bangladesh War, there was a rumour going the rounds that Manekshaw would lead a coup and take

over the country, to which Manekshaw wittily replied, "which idiot would like to take over our Government and get his hands messed up in dirty Indian politics". Judging from what has happened in the past in many parts of the world in general and in almost all our neighbouring countries in particular, perhaps that fear is justified. However, it is ironic that whenever a military coup has taken place in other nations, it invariably did so in a country where there was inter-services rivalry, where each service functioned as a separate entity like we do. Strange as it may seem, a coup has seldom taken place in any country where services were unified and closely integrated. Of course, the fact that the IAS bureaucrats would not like to lose their hold over the generals, is a major factor why they do not advocate the formation of a Chief of Defence Staff concept.

Today, India can claim to possess the fourth largest army in the world. Independently, the three services are prepared for battle, but the organisation needed to mould them into a unified efficient fighting machine is lacking and urgently requires re-orientation. This can only be achieved by complete unification of the entire defence organisation in all its various aspects under a Chief of Defence Staff. The National Security Council must have in its charter to bring this about sooner the better, as that will serve as an integrated nodal point for military preparedness.

If the Government still wants to act dumb and/or stupid, the least they can do is to evolve the next best system – the Theatre Commanders System. If the Government still does not even do that, this country will face a military disaster, sooner than later.

This article by Brigadier (retd.) Furdoon S.B.Mehta is based on extracts from the Military Papers left behind by the late Brigadier Noshir Grant, an eminent Military Engineer, with the permission of his widow Mrs. Minnie Grant.

Some Suggestions for Rationalization of Individual Taxation

1. Simplify the entire personal issue to make it easily understandable to a man on the street by doing away with all mumbo-jumbo and legal jargon. 2. Take the basic deduction to Rs.5,00,000 and index it on the same lines as Indexing for Long Term Capital Gains. 3. Do away with deductions for donations, long term investments, insurance, bonds and the like. 4. Make PAN more easy to acquire; as it is we have in addition Election, UID Cards, Pass Port and other proofs of identity and residence. On submission of any of the other proof the PAN ought to be issued across the counter after due verification. 5. Remove TDS on Individual Bank Deposits on the same lines as Corporate/MF dividends and Interest on Corporate Bonds. 6. All this will take a lot of small tax payers, senior citizens, pensioners, women off the tax records - they are only required to pay taxes to claim refunds of taxes collected which needs to be done away with. 7. Concentrate more on the big fish - HNI, UHNI and collecting the taxes and not allow them to go into protracted disputes. 8. With the Health Insurance premia for senior citizens shooting through the roof the deduction to be taken to Rs.50,000. 9. Bring in Estate Duty, Wealth and Gift Tax with much higher thresh holds.

Nagesh N Kini, B.Com (Hons) FCA, Chartered Accountant, Mumbai. Email:nageshkini@hotmail.com

The Sad Story of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF)

Suresh C. Sharma

*It was one of the biggest political and military debacles suffered by India and the Indian Army.
No enquiry has been held... Political leadership, military brass, diplomats and Intelligence
agencies have decided to sweep the IPKF disaster under the carpet.*

Facing discrimination in employment and education, the Tamils in Sri Lanka took to violence on 23 July 1983. The escalating violence by the Tamil Tigers [LTTE] forced the Sri Lanka Army [SLA] to lay siege to Jaffna town, largely inhabited by Tamils, in June 1987. This resulted in hardships and casualties to civilians. Unarmed ships carrying relief supplies sent by India were intercepted by the Sri Lankan Navy. On 4 June 1987, twenty five tons of supplies were dropped by Indian planes escorted by fighter aircraft. This demonstrated India's concern and, if need be, the option of military intervention. The resulting talks between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India and President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka led to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord which was signed on 29 July 1987.

It envisaged guarantee of the integrity of Sri Lanka, devolution of power, merger of Eastern and Northern provinces subject to referendum and the security interests of India. The Tamil language was to be given official status. LTTE had committed to hand over arms and Sri Lanka Armed Forces [SLAF] were to withdraw from Tamil areas so that the political process could be started. The real reason behind India's move was left unsaid – elections in India. Sri Lanka had taken assistance from Pakistan for counter-insurgency operations which had added to the concerns of India.

The Indian Peace Keeping Force [IPKF] was inducted into Sri Lanka on 30 July 1987 to help in implementing the Accord. The 54 Infantry Division commanded by Major General Harkirat Singh was assigned the responsibility. The only direction received by the IPKF was a copy of the Accord with instructions that it should be read out to all ranks.

Accepting arms and ammunition from the LTTE and separating the two hostile parties was taken to be a simple task. Initially both, Tamils and SLAF, expressed euphoria at the prospects of peace. Yogi, second-in-command of LTTE, handed over a pistol as a symbolic gesture of surrender of weapons by the LTTE. The letter granting amnesty to LTTE was handed over to him. LTTE started handing over weapons in a trickle and SLAF started

withdrawing from positions occupied after May 1987. The local population started returning to their homes. The medical services of IPKF performed superbly in facilitating reopening of hospitals and providing medical cover to the needy.

But the Accord was termed an infringement of Sri Lanka's sovereignty by Prime Minister Premadasa. It caused a rebellion in the South. Sri Lanka Army was able to suppress it as the IPKF had taken over the responsibility in the North. Prabhakaran, the LTTE Chief, had been a reluctant participant in the Accord terms and he criticized the delay in the release of prisoners. The Sri Lankan Army intercepted seventeen LTTE personnel on 3 October 1987. One of them was Pulendaran who was alleged to have been responsible for killing all the Sinhalese passengers in a bus in April 1987. The Sri Lankan Government declined to release them and the captured LTTE personnel swallowed cyanide capsules while being escorted to Colombo. The IPKF was a mute spectator to the incident. The reaction of the LTTE was swift and savage. They killed 200 Sinhalese in reprisal. General Sundarji, Chief of Army Staff [COAS] of India, flew to Sri Lanka and ordered the use of force against the LTTE on 7 October. The advice of Army Commander Lt.General Depinder Singh not to use force was ignored as a defeatist attitude. India had become a pawn in the cleverly manipulated move by the Sri Lankan Government who began to dictate the pace of events.

Operation Pawan was launched on 6 October 1987 and Jaffna cleared by 22 October after a tough fight. The Indian Army suffered 319 killed and 1039 wounded during the period 1 October to 30 November. The IPKF got stuck in counter-insurgency operations and its strength was increased to 70,000. Most of the LTTE cadres had escaped into the forests. The civilian population started returning to their homes, only to find most of the houses destroyed or badly damaged. The pressure from IPKF and alienation of civil population had some effect and LTTE made a conditional offer of cease fire, suggesting withdrawal of IPKF to pre-10 October positions. The Army Commander's recommendation to start negotiations was not accepted. New Delhi agreed with the Intelligence agencies' views

that the collapse of the LTTE was imminent. This proved to be a fallacy as the casualties inflicted on IPKF were to show. LTTE proved to be a formidable fighting force with incredible motivation and skills. General Harkirat was posted out and Lt General Kalkat assumed command of operations in January 1988. The Military role of the IPKF ended with elections in Sri Lanka in October-November 1988 but it continued to stay on. Premadasa took over as President and wanted the IPKF to leave. Prabhakaran, head of LTTE, collaborated with Premadasa to compel India to withdraw the IPKF. It came to the notice of Lt General Kalkat in 1989. Premadasa went to the extent of threatening force by the SLA to evict Indian troops!. A clear warning by Lt.General Kalkat made Premadasa withdraw such orders. V. P. Singh took over as Prime Minister and ordered the withdrawal of IPKF which was completed by March 1989. A detachment of SLAF played *Auld Lang Sine* as the last contingent sailed away. Every jawan was relieved to go back. He was weary, battered and demoralized. A superior and proud military force of a regional power came back vanquished and disillusioned. They had suffered heavy casualties, 1157 killed and 2984 wounded. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu declined to receive the returning troops though the Governor and Defence Minister did show up. Lt General Kalkat stated that they felt humiliated not in Sri Lanka but in India.

The Government of India has not erected any memorial for the IPKF martyrs in order not to upset the feelings of the DMK party in Tamil Nadu. Nor did the Prime Minister of India consider it fit to attend the inauguration of a memorial in Colombo constructed by Sri Lanka to honour the memory of Indian soldiers who gave their lives for the integrity of Sri Lanka.

What had gone wrong? Counter-insurgency operations require good intelligence, support of local population and denial of resources from outside. The Intelligence Bureau had stated during the planning stage that the LTTE were their boys and they would abide by their direction. This was an illusion. Elements in Tamil Nadu were helping the Tigers even when they were at war with IPKF. There was lack of faith on both sides. Intelligence agencies were supplying arms to other Tamil groups while LTTE were handing over their arms. This could not be concealed from the Tigers. This added to the determination of the LTTE not to hand over arms. The political leadership ignored the advice of military commanders when things were not going according to plan. General Sundarji remarked to Depinder Singh “*Woh sunta nahin hai.*” [He does not listen]. Harkirat has commented he declined to

eliminate Prabhakaran when he came for a scheduled meeting as desired by Dixit, India’s High Commissioner in Colombo. Dixit further claimed that the Prime Minister wanted to discredit the LTTE in the eyes of the local population. Depinder and Lt General Joshi who was DGMO supported Harkirat. Dixit has denied these allegations. He has blamed the high casualties suffered in Jaffna to the foolishness of Harkirat—unusual words for a diplomat. Was he trying to protect himself from allegations made by Harkirat? Sundarji certainly underestimated the fighting potential of the LTTE and did not insist on a clear political and military objective. Was he too keen to please the political masters or did he want to assume the honour of projecting India’s military strength overseas? The Army had been used as a pawn by New Delhi. Lt General Sardeshpande, who replaced Harkirat commented:

“A soldier does not hesitate to militarily contribute to an endeavour of the type undertaken in Sri Lanka or in the projection of military power abroad...but as a human being and citizen he has the right to expect a thorough thought being given to such enterprises by the powers that be”.

It was one of the biggest political and military debacles suffered by India and the Indian Army. No enquiry has been held. Records have not been made available for study. Colonel Anil Kaul Vr C who lost most of his left hand and right eye when hit by an anti-tank weapon and went through multiple grafts, has mentioned about the visits by VIPs to the injured soldiers in hospital. Most puzzling was the gift of two oranges by the wife of the Defence Minister Pant. Political leadership, military brass, diplomats and Intelligence agencies have decided to sweep the IPKF disaster under the carpet. The only bright spot was the conduct of India’s soldiers who did not hesitate to fight with the same élan as they had been doing for the defence of their motherland.

The Government of India has not erected any memorial for the IPKF martyrs in order not to upset the feelings of the DMK party in Tamil Nadu. Nor did the Prime Minister of India consider it fit to attend the inauguration of a memorial in Colombo *constructed by Sri Lanka* to honour the memory of Indian soldiers who gave their lives for the integrity of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka operations do not find any mention in the national military history.

BRIGADIER (Retd.) SURESH C SHARMA is adviser to the telecom industry, a freelance writer and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*.



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

Caste Is Not Only About Reservations

Sare jahan se accha, Hindostan hamara? Really?

The topics of caste and reservations are once again in the limelight due to the impending elections in many states. Sundry contenders are scrambling to obtain caste certificates to improve their chances to obtain tickets and an opportunity to “serve the people.” In the rest of the world, people aspire to improve their social status. Only in India do you have folks clamouring to be classified as “backward”.

In politics, caste is associated with reservations. There is no concept of a level playing field. If you are “backward”, you go to the head of the queue regardless of your abilities or competence. “Backward” politicians gleefully flaunt their “humble origins”, even as they continue to acquire mansions and wads of cash.

Caste, however, has implications more sinister than politics. Hitler formulated the ideology of a “master race” which mercifully was extinguished along with his Nazis. In India, the master race is alive and well. It is not based on ethnicity or genealogy, but on the caste one is born into. After independence, these supermen have been supplemented by a political elite where, ironically, the traditional caste divide has been turned on its head. If this statement seems fanciful and outrageous, consider the facts.

How often have you read newspaper reports of servants being subjected to inhuman torture? Branding

with hot metal, scalding with boiling water and merciless beatings have become all too common. The perpetrators are not necessarily sadists or monsters. They are inured to attacks of conscience and guilt by the belief in the superiority conferred on them by virtue of their birth. They believe that the victims have the misfortune to be born inferior – perhaps due to bad karma – and it is their lot to do penance.

Then there are the infamous *khap panchayats* who have no compunctions in visiting unspeakable horrors, even cold blooded murder, on members of their own tribe who have the gall to cohabit with those not deemed fit. The principal motivation is caste; everything else is secondary. Even when a horrendous crime has been discovered, the police loyalties and bias is based largely on caste, rather than exacting justice.

It is not all one-sided of course. Politicians belonging to “lower” castes take advantage of the advantage of reservations to acquire power and exact retribution on the overlords who have traditionally tormented them. Mayawati is a shining example of this. The unheralded shame of India is that the very people who are elected to govern us cynically exploit caste differences to serve their nefarious ends to grab and retain power.

Sara jahan se accha, Hindostan hamara? Really?

The Power of Hype

What the heck. Even if they can convince a fraction of the great Indian middle-class that drinking a can of cola will make them feel like Shahrukh Khan, it is money well spent!

There is no fool like an avaricious fool. This modified maxim often comes to mind when I read the burgeoning advertisements for “bigger” and “better” televisions. One is bombarded by images and hype about Plasma, LCD, HDTV, 42 and 60 inch flat screens. One series of advertisements for a popular brand even manages to turn envy, one of the seven original sins, into a virtue.

The manufacturers and ad agencies, it seems, have a model for every sucker, who happily forks out the price of a small car for a monster TV that essentially displays

the same content as that viewed by his cleaning lady in her poky little apartment, on her 20 inch set costing less than Rs.5,000/-

So you are now the proud and envied owner of a super-duper 42 inch Plasma TV. So what? Is it going to make those soap operas any less predictable, or more bearable? A boring program is a boring program, no matter what type of TV you watch it on.

Lagging not far behind the TV purveyors are the

vehicle honchos. Change the front grill, slightly modify the shape of the headlamps and last year's model miraculously becomes "all new". And it does not stop there. A car or a motorbike is no longer about getting you from one place to another. It's about glamour, sex appeal, equality of the sexes ("why should boys have all the fun?") and magically transforming a dull day into bright sunshine (Santro Xing).

Ad agencies, those staunch disciples of Dr. Goebbels have, it seems, perfected his proposition that if you tell a gullible public long enough and often enough that this or that product is something he simply cannot do without, they will start to believe it.

Remember the early days of advertising, when an ad displayed a picture of the product, its price and what it could do? An ad like this today would be greeted with derision and scorn. Modern advertisements have become an art form. The objective is to make the most mundane

product appear glamorous, an object of envy and a must-have; and to reveal as little information about the actual product as they can get away with.

Hence, you are led to believe that consuming a popular brand of cigarette, far from slowly killing you, is likely to make you look suave and smooth. Or, splash on a particular brand of after shave and you will be fighting off screaming females queueing up to kiss you.

The only saving grace is that some of today's better produced ads are slick, stylish, mini-productions that are definitely more appealing than their predecessors. And they cost a bomb to make. But, what the heck. Even if they can convince a fraction of the great Indian middle-class that drinking a can of cola will make them feel like Shahrukh Khan, it is money well spent.

FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer, a blogger and freelance writer. He is a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First. Email: leonardo8_@yahoo.com

L'Affaire Rushdie

Salman Rushdie is a well-known literary personality – loved and admired by many non-Muslims and hated by many Muslims whose feelings were hurt by his *Satanic Verses*. He was and is a highly threatened non-Government personality in the world. The threats to his life arose from individual Muslims angered by his book and from the intelligence agencies of Iran where religious clerics had announced a handsome reward for his assassination.

Though the threats to him remained high, the intelligence and security agencies of different countries, including India, had no difficulty in ensuring his security. He and his hosts also facilitated their task by maintaining a low profile about his visits and by avoiding advance publicity.

Ensuring his security for his participation in the Jaipur Literary Festival that started on January 20 became a complicated affair because the fundamentalist Deobandi group came to know of his planned visit much in advance and made a public issue of it. Statements and comments emanating from the Deobandi office-bearers and some sections of the Muslim community amounted to open, verbal intimidation meant to intimidate the Government of India into not allowing him to come and intimidate him into not coming.

The situation became sensitive and complex. One would have expected the Government of India to stop this intimidatory campaign initiated by the Deobandis in the bud and make it clear to them that the Government of India was determined to protect him and would not succumb to the intimidatory campaign.

The Government of India did nothing of the sort. It adopted what seemed to many as a deliberately ambivalent attitude by highlighting his right to visit to India as a person of Indian origin, but maintaining a political silence on the intimidatory campaign against him. The Government and the Congress seem to have seen political advantages in such an ambivalent attitude on the eve of the forthcoming elections in UP.

As it normally happens in such an increasingly-charged atmosphere, reports started flowing to intelligence agencies of alleged plans of some elements to assassinate him when he came to India. The reports were of a general and not specific nature.

These clandestine reports called for three actions by the Government of India:

- (a) The Government of India taking over the responsibility for strengthening and co-ordinating his security.
- (b) Informing Rushdie of the clandestine intelligence reports.
- (c) A formal assurance to him that security for him would be strengthened and that he need not cancel his visit just because of these reports.

It is apparent that the Government of India only informed him of these clandestine intelligence reports. It did not take any other action to give him confidence that it would do everything necessary to protect him. The Government of India's deliberately ambivalent attitude continued.

In the face of this ambivalence of the Government of India, he decided to cancel his visit.

L'Affaire Rushdie is not a moral issue. It is not a question of the right of Rushdie to freedom of expression. It is pure and simple an issue of the obligation of the State to protect a highly-threatened person by whatever means possible and not to let itself be intimidated by extremists. The way the whole affair has been handled by the Government of India would legitimately strengthen the suspicion that the handling of the affair was vitiated by partisan opportunism, which encouraged the creation of a crisis in the hope of reaping electoral dividends.

Courtesy B. Raman. This is an excerpt. For the full text Visit <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers49/paper4873.html>.

Contributed by reader Kunwar Sinha

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

His glorious spiritual conquest of the West and triumphant homecoming

B. M. N. Murthy

The World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September 1893 was one of the most significant events in the cultural history of mankind – an event which brought back to one's memory the Great World Religious Council held by Emperor Ashoka in the city of Patna more than 24 centuries ago.

Although the Parliament was only a part of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America, it acquired far greater importance than what the sponsors envisioned. The original intention of its sponsors was to bring all main religions of the world on a common platform in order to consider with sympathy their main differences and relative merits. Ten religions were considered major religions and these were Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Catholic Christianity and Puritanism. But when the Parliament concluded, not only had a foundation for the harmony of religions been laid but a new understanding of religion itself emerged. It is now widely admitted that the chief architect of these developments was Swami Vivekananda who represented India at the Parliament as its representative of Hinduism.

When the news reached him that the World's Parliament of Religions was going to be held in Chicago in September 1893, Swamiji was touring South India. His close disciples in the South like Alasinga Perumal and others wanted Swamiji to take part in it but he wanted divine guidance. After visiting the Sri Kanyakumari Temple and meditating on the rock [now popular as 'The Vivekananda Rock'], for three days and nights consecutively, Swamiji got divine inspiration to go to the West. Further, one night while half asleep he saw Sri Ramakrishna walking into the ocean and saying to him "Go". Swamiji then wrote a letter to the Holy Mother at Calcutta for permission. The Mother readily agreed and sent her blessings. Swamiji now felt sure that his mission of going to America was ordained by God.

On 31st May 1893 Vivekananda sailed from Bombay in the ship 'Peninsular'. He reached Vancouver, Canada on 25th July 1893 and from there he left by train and reached Chicago on 31st July 1893, nearly a month and a half ahead of the Parliament.

As Swamiji had no letter of introduction and also as the last date for applying to participate was over, many

difficulties arose. Disappointed at the turn of events, he practically gave up the idea of active participation and decided to go to Boston where living expenses, he was told, were much cheaper. At Boston, he met Professor Wright of Harvard University who was deeply impressed by Swamiji's vast erudition. Learning of Swamiji's difficulty in applying for the Parliament, Prof. Wright said "To ask you, Swami, for your credentials, is like asking the sun to state its right to shine". He then wrote a letter of introduction to the organizers of the Parliament of Religions, saying

"Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together".

With this letter, Swamiji returned to Chicago on the evening of 9th September 1893. The Parliament of Religions lasted for 17 days from 11th Sept 1893 to 27th September 1893. All the delegates had donned the traditional dresses of their respective countries. Swami Vivekananda had put on the deep orange robe presented to him by the Maharaja of Khetri. On his head was the saffron turban of Rajasthan. There were 24 lectures in all. When Swamiji's turn came up to speak, he stood up, bowing down to the Goddess of Knowledge, Devi Saraswathi, he began his address with



Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions, 1893

five words “Sisters and Brothers of America”. These five words of address electrified the audience and 7,000 people rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what.

The words that he spoke rose from the depth of his heart and touched the innermost recesses of the American people. When the noise of clapping which lasted for more than two minutes subsided, Swamiji commenced his speech.

From the very first day of his speech, Swamiji became a celebrity. During the whole session he delivered a few lectures but the noteworthy among these lectures was his paper on ‘Hinduism’ read on 19th September 1893 and a short talk which he gave on 20th September 1893. His address at the Final Session on 27th September 1893 impressed the American people and the press so much that the famous American newspaper, *The New York Herald* reported “He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him, we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to his learned nation. They should send missionaries to our country”. Another newspaper, *The Boston Evening Transcript* said “He is a great favourite at the Parliament from the grandeur of his sentiments and his appearance as well. If he merely crosses the platform he is highly applauded”.

The Parliament concluded on 27th September 1893. Swami Vivekananda stayed in the West for about three and a half years making an extensive tour of America and England and preaching the essence of Indian religion and culture. People called him ‘the cyclonic monk’. Gradually Vedantic centres were started in New York and London. When Swamiji saw that his main mission of spreading Vedanta was going on steadily both in America and in England, he returned to India by ship after covering several places en route like France, Italy and Egypt. He finally reached Colombo on 15th January 1897.

As Swamiji’s programme was known, both the Hindus and Buddhists of Ceylon formed a joint Reception Committee and welcomed the Swamiji wholeheartedly. An unprecedented crowd had gathered at the harbour. It took quite sometime for Swami Vivekananda to disembark from the ship and get into a steam launch. When the launch reached the jetty, roar of shouts and clapping of hands from thousands of people drowned even the noise of the breaking waves. Hats, umbrellas and handkerchiefs were thrown into the air and people were in a mad rush to have a glimpse of the great patriot at close quarters. A triumphal arch and a pandal at Barnes Street had been erected and a horse-drawn carriage took Swamiji to the pandal. Leaving the carriage at Barnes Street, Swamiji walked in procession with thousands of people to another pandal. As the Swamiji reached this place, a beautiful artificial lotus

unfolded and a lovely bird flew out.

From Colombo, he went to Anuradhapuram, a centre of ancient Buddhism where in 245 B.C. a branch from the Bodhi tree from Bodhgaya was planted. From there he went to Jaffna on his way to Pamban [Rameshwaram] by steamer and reached Pamban on 26th January 1897. He was received at Pamban with full honors by the Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskar Sethupathi, who came to the steamer with a beautifully decorated state boat to receive the Swamiji. As soon as the Swamiji entered the boat, the Raja and his staff prostrated before the Swamiji and thereafter the Swamiji was asked to sit on a beautiful chair. The Raja, with his own hands, put a pair of Padukas [wooden sandals] on the Swamiji’s feet, saying that he considered it a sacred act, an act which he considered as a greater privilege than wearing a crown.

After three and a half years of hard and strenuous work in the West and the long sea voyage, he was naturally tired and felt like taking some rest. But the moment he set foot on the soil of Mother India, all his fatigue vanished and he felt he was invigorated with a new lease of life. That is the greatness of our Motherland, Bharathavarsha. At the jetty, the Raja gave a brief address of welcome and in reply, Swamiji made an impassioned speech. What he said, in fact, formed the essence of his message for the regeneration of India. This was a message which he was to repeat in various ways in the months to come. After the meeting was over, Swamiji was asked to enter the Raja’s state carriage and was taken to the Raja’s palace while the Raja himself walked behind the carriage with state officials. At the command of the Raja, the horses were untied and the people along with the Raja drew the carriage through the town. For three days he stayed at Pamban and visited the Rameswaram Temple. The next day he delivered a speech to thousands of devotees in the courtyard of the temple.

From Ramnad, Swamiji went to Paramakudi and then to Manamadurai where he was accorded a citation of honour in Sanskrit. Swamiji replied to the felicitation in Sanskrit as well as in English. From there he went to the famous Temple city Madurai where he was taken in a procession led by elephants. After addressing several meetings in Madurai, he went by train to Kumbhakonam via Trichy. At Trichy railway station more than a thousand people had assembled to present him with a welcome address. After staying in Kumbhakonam for three days, he left for Madras by train.

At all the stations en route to Madras, he was accorded the same enthusiastic reception. Just before a few miles from Madras, a dramatic incident took place at a wayside halt. The train was not scheduled to stop there but the crowd which had gathered at the station requested

the Station Master to make the train stop at least for a few minutes. That was of no avail. At last, seeing the train approaching, hundreds of people lay on the railway track determined to stop the train. The Station Master was panic-stricken. The guard of the train understood the situation and at once ordered the train to stop. The people at once rushed towards Swamiji's carriage, raising shouts of joy in his honour. Visibly moved by the affection and display of emotion by the people, Swamiji appeared for a few minutes at the door of the carriage and waved to them whereafter the crowd dispersed. The train reached Madras on 6th February 1897 morning.

Thousands of people had gathered at the railway station right from early morning. As soon as he got down, he was profusely garlanded with fragrant Madras Jasmine garlands and taken in a decorated carriage to Castle Kernan, now popular as The Ice House or Vivekananda Illam near the Marina Beach. All through, hundreds of triumphal arches were put on the roads. Two white horses drew the carriage followed by a caravan of carriages. All the houses en route, the windows and roadside trees were tastefully decorated and a sea of humanity welcomed the Swamiji. As soon as the carriage reached the South Beach station, the people untied the horses from the Swamiji's carriage and themselves pulled the carriage right up to Castle Kernan, with such enthusiasm as if they were participating in a Ratha Yatra. 20 Welcome Addresses were presented to the Swamiji en route in different languages including

English, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu. One leading newspaper reported that in the living the memory of the people Madras had never witnessed such a rousing reception accorded to any person either a Britisher or an Indian.

Swamiji delivered 4 lectures in Madras to overcrowded assemblies. With a view to controlling the audience for further lectures, the Reception Committee introduced tickets for admission at Re. One per person and even then the meetings had unprecedented rush. He stayed in Madras for 9 days from 6th February 1897 to 14th February 1897. The city wore such a festive look all these nine days that a newspaper reported the event as a special kind of 'Navaratri'. Swamiji boarded the Ship S.S. Mombasa on 15th February 1897 and reached Calcutta on 18th February 1897.

Swami Vivekananda's spiritual conquest of the West and returning home as a war hero marked a turning point in Indian History. Rajaji rightly observed "But for Swamiji, we would have lost our religion and would not have gained freedom. We, therefore, owe everything to Swami Vivekananda"

B. M. N. Murthy retired as Chief Engineer of the Life Insurance Corporation of India. Over the last many years he has been writing weekly articles recalling India's great heritage. Email: bmmurthy@gmail.com

Monetary Easing for Recharging Growth *(Continued from p.6)*

There can never be a risk-free perfect pitch for the key policymakers to initiate right action. There is no chance for the inflation rate to drop to 5% in the short-run, which is considered to be the RBI's comfort zone. Yet, the RBI has cautiously initiated the process of monetary easing recently by reducing the CRR by 50 basis points to 5.5%, thereby releasing much needed additional liquidity of Rs.32,000 crores for the banking system. But this would not cause any softening of interest rates unless credit demand decelerates further and/or public sector borrowings requirements come down – the latter is most unlikely in the context of the current fiscal situation. The shortage of liquidity with banks is stubbornly visible.

Going forward, therefore, the RBI needs to take a major lead – if not before the budget at least immediately thereafter. There is an urgency of envisaging a strategy for a substantive reduction in key policy rates by at least 150 to 200 basis points spread over the Fiscal Year 2012-13 to provide much needed impetus to the economy. Indeed, a couple of "double baby steps" involving reduction of 50 basis points each in the first half of the year would

distinctively change the credit and investment scenario. This may be followed by more calibrated periodic "single baby steps" in the latter half of the year. Needless to add, the ball is also in the Finance Minister's court to show how he manages fiscal consolidation, so as to prevent further "crowding out" effect in the market liquidity.

To sum up, the time for monetary easing is now more opportune than before. The efficacy of such a policy surely cannot be prejudged in the prevailing complex economic situation. Just as high interest rates and tight monetary policy *per se* are not sufficient to combat inflation, so also the effectiveness of monetary easing would be circumscribed by various other supporting factors. But if the RBI stumbles too long with a view to furthering its goal of achieving a comfortable inflationary target, we would be confronted with yet another sub-seven percent economic growth in the very first year of the Twelfth Plan. A bad omen indeed for resuscitating the India growth story!

SUNIL S. BHANDARE is a Consulting Economist based in Mumbai. Email: sunil.bhandare@gmail.com

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 Ardesir 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.

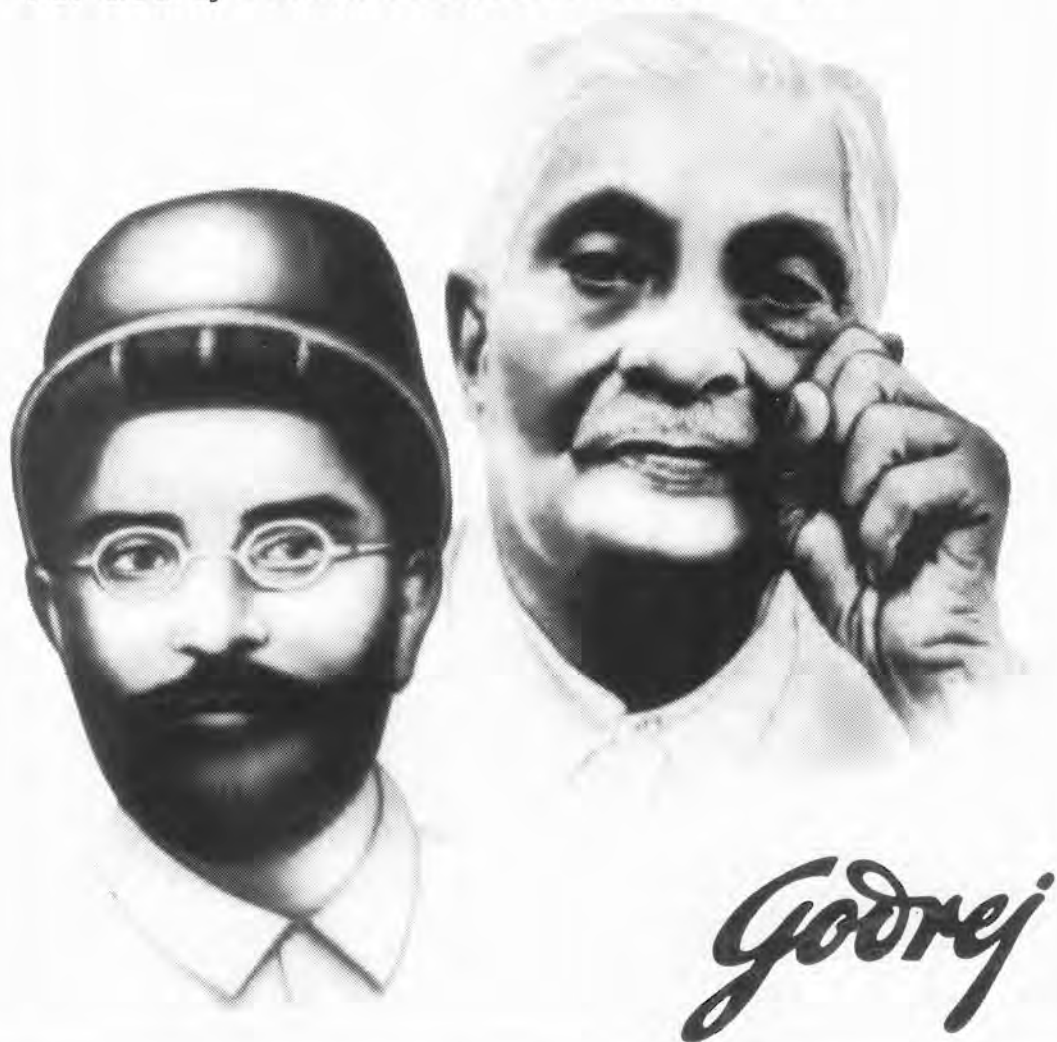
Made to international standards and backed by continuous technical innovation, their products range from locks and security equipment, machine tools, forklift trucks, architecture and furniture, typewriters, refrigerators, computers and electronic business

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.



Almora's Forgotten History

M. A. Haque

The Almora jail which should have been a pilgrimage for people who love the country and who are enjoying the fruits of the freedom struggle during the British rule is in a dilapidated condition

The town of Almora, though the district headquarters of the district of Almora in Uttarakhand is not very well known to people beyond Delhi and nearby areas. Mountain enthusiasts from far off places go to Almora on account of the beautiful view of Himalayan peaks they get from this town. About 35 km from Almora is Binsar a wildlife sanctuary. Jageshwar close to Almora has many temples which were built between the 9th and 13th centuries. Almora has all the potential to become a popular tourist destination in its own right. There is much more to Almora than the one page devoted to it on its own website.

For instance its association with the Independence Movement. Almora has a jail which is now called the District Jail. The jail was there during the British period as well although the building that housed it is in a dilapidated condition. The present jail was added later. The old jail was at a slightly higher point than the rest of the town. Earlier, it was outside the town limit as well. But in recent decades the town has grown beyond the point from where a narrow side road goes to the jail. To reach the jail premises one has to take the side road which is a few hundred meters in length. At the junction of the side road and the main road there is a small sign board which is totally unimpressive and most of the passersby may not be even bothering to read what is written there. In fact on looking

at the board it becomes evident that though repainted in recent years the over-writings are clear which make the board even less legible and totally shabby. But if someone makes an effort to read the names mentioned on the board, he or she will be taken by surprise to read names of the past inmates of the jail - personalities like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (commonly known as Sarhadi or Frontier Gandhi), Pandit Gobind Vallabh Pant, Acharya Narendra Dev, Shri Hari Vallabh Pant, Saiyyad Ali Zaheer There is one more name which is almost impossible to decipher due to overpainting! Obviously, the board was repainted without wiping the earlier writing. Even the repainted board is rusting and so shabby as if it contains the names of criminals who were kept in the jail. Our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was lodged there twice once in 1935 and second time in 1945. He spent more than a year in that jail and he did many of his famous writings there. The other names which are written there are of famous freedom fighters who lived in that jail for different durations. Almora is visited by foreigners as well as Indians from other states. The board is in Hindi only and hence cannot be read by many. Obviously, they can never discover that the Almora jail had the distinction of being home to so many famous freedom fighters whose sacrifices were instrumental in bringing freedom to the nation.



Entrance to District Jail, Almora



Board outside the District Jail, Almora

That jail should have been a place of pilgrimage for people who love the country and who are enjoying the fruits of the freedom struggle. Sadly, we have almost forgotten them and do not want to pay them due respect.

Recently, in July 2011 when I had a chance to visit Almora, I went up to the jail building and came back. Later, when I mentioned about this to my friends, they were taken by surprise. They were not aware of the fact that the jail was used by the British government to keep such important personalities. Even the official website does not elaborate beyond just one sentence about the jail. My friends made it a point to visit the place and one of them even talked to the guard at the main gate of the jail. He later told me that when he enquired about the rooms etc. where the freedom fighters were lodged, the guard informed them that the portion is now almost destroyed. When he enquired about the records etc. of the time when those famous personalities were lodged in the jail, the guard revealed that in those days records used to be in Urdu.

As people could not read them anymore, no one is aware of their whereabouts. Maybe he was not totally correct as some of them might have been preserved in some archives. This is just my presumption. People associated with the local administration seem to be unaware of the situation. It may surprise many that as early as 1871, a newspaper with the name “*Almora Akhbar*” was started from there. The newspaper played an important role in the freedom movement. I am not sure if copies of the newspaper have been preserved somewhere.

That is how we treat such important places which were closely associated with the freedom struggle. Still, year after year we celebrate the Independence Day with so much fanfare and also spend huge amounts of money on the celebrations, merely as a ritual.

DR. M. A. HAQUE is a retired civil servant and a freelance writer based in Gurgaon, Haryana.
Email: asrarulhaque@hotmail.com



VIRAT INDUSTRIES LTD.

(An ISO 9001:2008 Company)

**A Leading Manufacturer & Exporter of
EXCELLENT QUALITY SOCKS**

Our Export Markets include UK, Switzerland and U.A.E.

Our main customers are John Lewis, Ted Baker and Jaeger in the UK, Migros in Switzerland and Shoemart in UAE.

We produce Mens, Ladies and Childrens Dress and Sports Socks.

We also produce speciality Football and Rugby Socks.

For more information, you may visit our website: www.viratindustries.com

Corporate Head Office:

605, Veena Killedar Industrial Estate
10/14 Pais Street, Byculla (West)
Mumbai 400 011 (India)
Tel: (022) 3294 4131 or 3294 4217 /
Fax: (022) 2306 0486
Email: sales@viratindustries.com

Regd. Office & Factory:

A-1/2, GIDC Industrial Estate
Kabilpore
Navsari 396 424
Tel: (91-2637) 265 011 or 22 / 325805
Email: factory@viratindustries.com

The Perspective of a ‘Worker Communist’

Is Secularism Enough?*

Azar Majedi

We the defenders of women’s equality and emancipation need to deal with two political trends: (1) those who are so obsessed with Islam and its reactionary rule, that they are ready to side with the devil, here, state terrorism led by the US in order to get rid of Islam; these I call the right secularists; and (2) those who are supposedly on the left spectrum of politics and are mainly concerned with imperialism. Their main goal is to fight against what they call imperialism; They are willing to shut their eyes to any inequality, violence, suppression, misogyny as long as their main enemy, i.e. imperialism is in the picture.

Last time I spoke in a conference on secularism in Paris, I talked about right and left secularism and the necessity to organise a left secularist movement. A movement which not only defends a radical form of secularism, which takes stand against religion’s interference in the state, the legislation and education, but also stands against what since September 11 2001 we have called two poles of terrorism, state terrorism led by the US and armed by NATO, and Islamic terrorism whose main leader is Islamic Republic of Iran but by no means is limited to this regime.

This speech created polarized reactions both among the public at the conference and later when it was published in French, English and Farsi. Today almost one year after the first wave of mass protests in the Middle East and North Africa, this point has become even more urgent. Why is it important to discern these two trends and side with one and condemn the other? This is an important question.

In the last year we have observed how these two tendencies have reacted to the events unfolding in the Middle East. The right under the guise of the danger of Islamists and concern for women’s rights apologetically defended the actual status quo. I participated in an online conference entitled: Arab’s protests and women’s rights, some of the participants were expressing only worries about the downfall of Mubarak’s and Ben Ali’s regimes. And later on, the right also defended the NATO’s involvement on the ground fighting for the coming to power of the NTC in Libya. However, now that the Islamic sharia is about to become the national law in Libya, they claim NTC has fooled NATO!

Religion and religious organisations are a source

* Speech at the Conference on Secularism, Freedom and Equality, Paris, France, 2 December 2011

of reactionary policies. This is true. But this is only half of the truth. Religion is an integrated part of the dominant reactionary and misogynist ideology. But the dominant ideology is there to defend a system that is based on discrimination, inequality, economic exploitation and lack of freedom. That is capitalism. If we needed to elaborate on this issue in the 90s we do not need to do so now, when capitalism has ruined our lives, when millions are out of jobs and incapable to house and feed themselves and their families; when the anti-capitalist movement has become global; when the capitalists are getting richer and richer at the expense of the workers and ordinary citizens. Do we really need to conceptualize on this issue and carry on long debates to prove this point? I don’t think so. We know that the source of inequality, discrimination and present misery of our societies is capitalism.

In essence the mass movements in the Middle East and North Africa for Freedom, equality and prosperity for all are anti-capitalist just as all the other movements against present situation, what is been called as the 99% movement. This is why when state terrorism led by the US could not push people back home, it sent Ben Ali into exile and got rid of Mubarak to keep the state apparatus as intact as possible. This is why in Libya, since it did not have this power of manipulation it got involved militarily to make sure that after the fall of Gaddafi’s family the state would not fall in the hands of people. This is why state terrorism led by the US has taken a more positive approach towards Palestinian statehood and is pressuring Israel to back down.

The West has decided to compromise with Islamists in order to stop the development of the situation into a worker’s revolution or prevent the power falling into the hands of the people and the left and communist tendencies. This is exactly what happened in Iran in 1979 when Western governments in fear of the left gaining power brought Khomeini, an obscure clergy, into Paris and made him a

leader and unleashed this monster against the people in Iran. If not exactly the same kind of Islamism, a so-called milder kind, the Turkish kind of Islamism is being strengthened in the region.

People in the region are being pushed towards the same trap, as was Iran in 1979. We need to see this and help to stop it. For this reason we need not to only be a good secularist, but someone who is passionate about freedom, equality and justice. Someone who is politically clever enough not to think that one must side with one pole in order to get rid of the other pole. We must take a firm stand against both poles: state terrorism led by the US and Islamic terrorism. We must clearly fight for freedom, equality and prosperity for all. We must categorically defend women's equality and emancipation.

In this regard, we, the people who are being suffocated by the like of Islamic regime in Iran, we the Worker – communists who are struggling to liberate humanity from inequality, discrimination, poverty and economic exploitation, we the defenders of women's equality and emancipation need to deal with two political trends: (1) those who are so obsessed with Islam and its reactionary rule, that they are ready to side with the devil, here, state terrorism led by the US in order to get rid of Islam; these I call the right secularists; and (2) those who are supposedly on the left spectrum of politics and are

mainly concerned with imperialism. Their main goal is to fight against what they call imperialism; They are willing to shut their eyes to any inequality, violence, suppression, misogyny as long as their main enemy, i.e. imperialism is in the picture. There are so many examples of these groups condemning people's fight against a brutal regime, because they thought the US or the west has supported the people's movement. One recent example was siding with the Islamic regime in 2009, and recently siding with Gaddafi's regime against NATO.

These two poles even though in two extreme opposites, play in each other's hands and against the just struggle of the people, the workers, the deprived, the disfranchised, or in today's language the 99%.

We need to stand against both poles. Our only compass in political standpoint must be people's freedom, equality and prosperity. The total freedom and real equality of all citizens. let's build such a movement to promote freedom, equality and prosperity for all in these dire times.

Courtesy: Atheist, February 2012. This monthly is the journal of the Atheist Centre, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

Normally, we do not promote collectivist thinking because we value individual liberty and the rule of law above all else. In this case, the perspective is interesting on the 'Communist Left's' dialectics vis-a-vis the Arab Spring, Capitalism, Islamism, Terrorism and Imperialism. - Ed

Freedom First

3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001.
Phone: (022) 2284 3416 • email: freedom@vsnl.com

SUBSCRIPTION FORM (In Block Letters Please)

NAME : _____

ADDRESS : _____

_____ PIN

PHONE / MOBILE NUMBER :

EMAIL : _____

SUBSCRIPTIONS PAYABLE BY CHEQUE / DD DRAWN IN FAVOUR OF ICCF AND PAYABLE AT PAR IN MUMBAI. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE THEN PLEASE ADD BANK CHARGES RS.50 FOR OUTSTATION CHEQUES WITHIN INDIA. SUBSCRIPTIONS CAN ALSO BE PAID BY MONEY ORDER

Subscription

Within India & SAARC countries

☐ 1 Year : Rs.200

☐ 2 Years : Rs.350

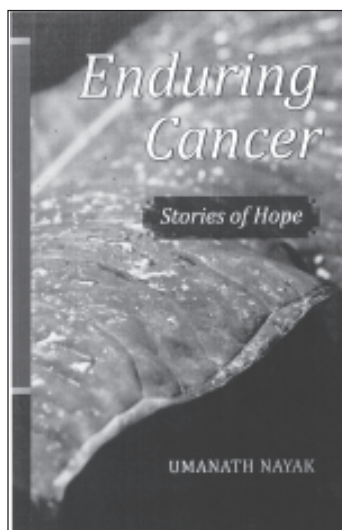
☐ 3 Years : Rs.500

Overseas

(By Second Class Airmail)

Annual: \$20 / £ 10

BOOK REVIEWS



ENDURING CANCER – STORIES OF HOPE by Umanath Nayak • Published by Byword Books Private Limited, GF-15, Virat Bhavan, Mukherjee Nagar, GF-5, Virat Bhavan, Mukherjee Nagar Commercial Complex, Delhi 110009 • 2011 • Pages 124 • Rs.175

Reviewed by R. M. Lala author of the “*Celebration of the Cells – Letters from a Cancer Survivor.*” Author of a number of outstanding books, he was a Director of the Dorab Tata Trust. Email: lalarussi@yahoo.com

The subject matter of this book is grim but its presentation is light and cheerful. The writer, Mr. Umanath Nayak, has an eye for detail and has drawn upon the experiences

when she was very sick and the Principal of her school came to visit her at the hospital, in a stupor she said: Just make sure I am promoted to the next class.” She not only got promoted, she topped per class! Her mother lives in dread of a relapse into the disease but when she watches her daughter playing and laughing everything pales into insignificance.

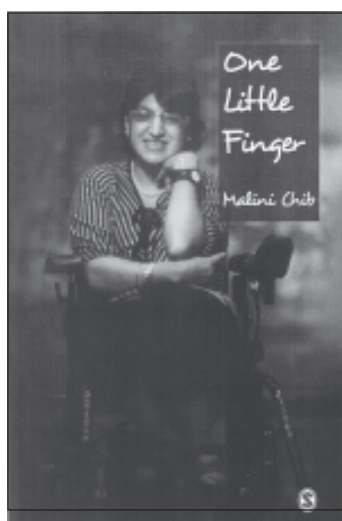
of different doctors dealing with cancer at the Apollo Hospitals all over India.

The subtitle is ‘Stories of Hope’ and indeed it is. He has kept a human touch. For example, it was moving to know that a 36-year old oncologist was suspected of cancer and he looks to his son and wife for the same medicine he prescribed his patients, and wondered what the future held for him. Mercifully it did not turn out to be cancer.

The stories of heroism also feature. Drastic treatment of chemotherapy was experienced by a young lady called Zahra. While taking it she was memorizing paragraphs from her textbooks and battling high fever. Once

One of the important sections of the book is on coping strategies which includes keeping open communication with family and friends, frankly acknowledging the existence of the problem. Spirituality too plays an important role. Dr. Nayak writes: “Spirituality can also be of major value in dealing with incurable cancer. Introspection into the meaning of one’s existence can provide an oasis of calm for the troubled mind and help deal with the pain and suffering. Spirituality can lead to a state of transcendence and is a useful strategy for coping.”

The book wisely says: “What is important is to enrich the patient’s quality of life as long as he or she is alive.”



ONE LITTLE FINGER by Malini Chib • Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110-044. • www.sagepub.in • second printing 2011 • pages xi+198 • Rs.350.

Reviewed by S. V. Raju, editor, *Freedom First*. Email: jurasv@gmail.com

The blurb on the jacket of this wonderful little book is clinically accurate. It is the autobiography of Malini Chib who has Cerebral Palsy and how she triumphed over her crippling disability. The title “One Little Finger”

refers to her ability to type with her little finger and speak through the ‘Lightwriter an innovative new text to speech aid which helps the user to communicate widely and to control their environment.

“As life becomes a tear and a smile for her, Malini tells us the story of her heroic battle against adversity, prejudice, stigmas, stereotypes, of her will to succeed and her search for an identity in a contrary world,” says the blurb.

Close to my residence which until even the nineties was a lower middle class area, there is a school for 'mentally retarded children' and often when I walk past that school I see these children being escorted to from the school. Apart from a feeling of sympathy for them and their parents I never gave it second thought. This is typical of the urban dweller who is so absorbed with his or her own survival that he has become inured to human misery and suffering; not to speak of the doctrine of Karma to explain away all forms of suffering. Reading the book was, therefore for me a humbling experience.

The language is simple and there is no attempt to resort to euphemisms. There's never a dull moment except when the author goes into details about relations and holidays which may not be of interest to all readers. In fact the crisp prose suffers a bit because of these digressions. Fortunately these are not many and she is able to sustain the reader interest.

How did Malini become a victim of Cerebral Palsy. She does not explain it away that she was born with the debility but explains: "I was told that my mother was in labour for a lengthy 40-hour period. During the process, the umbilical cord got stuck around my neck, resulting in a lack of oxygen to my brain and a few seconds of that (known by the term *anoxia*) eventuated in giving me a lifetime of a severe disabling condition (*condition not disease*) called Cerebral Palsy". Her paediatrician "kept repeating to himself" it was a mistake I should have carried out a caesarean...let's see if she survives ...I am not sure if she will ...at the most 72 hours". She not "only survived but managed (perhaps "managed" is an understatement) to lead a more than active life.

What was it like for the parents of a child affected by Cerebral Palsy: "Like most parents Malini's parents too "went berserk with anxiety" because as a new born child "did not play" and "remained passive. Her parents "moved from one doctor to the other and saw over a dozen specialists for a correct diagnosis. My mother clung to the hope that everything would be alright."

Throughout this narrative Malini comes up with statements that not only give an insight to her physical but also her mental condition and the understanding of those around her giving her strength to take on the outside world. This was also facilitated she observes frankly by the fact that she "came from a privileged and well educated family". Her grandfathers had been educated in England and her great aunt was Lotika Sarkar – the first woman from India to have gone to Newnham College, Cambridge and a widely-known pioneer in the fields of law, women's studies and human rights. Malini's father and her uncle

had their higher education in Cambridge.

Her uncle a Physician working in a medical school in London was told by a leading paediatrician "that the Indian doctors did not know much and were extremely negative about my condition which they had diagnosed as spastic with mental retardation. Considering it as brain damage, they had concluded nothing could be done, even in England." Nevertheless her father resigned his job and decided to take his daughter to England for treatment. An understanding and helpful employer, Tatas, and a friendly family in England with whom they stayed made this possible. Malini joined a special school. In an IQ test she was judged above average and diagnosed as having irreversible brain damage but not mentally handicapped. "In fact I was pronounced normal and above average in intelligence. A graphic description commonly used to describe children like me in England was 'an intelligent mind with a disobedient body'. Clearly, the doctors in India were wrong to have said that I would be a vegetable."

The special school in London provided her "the best treatment and she progressed immensely. "I began to crawl and pulled myself; up to furniture and could walk when aided" she recalls with pride tinged with justifiable exultation. The new approach treated parents differently than they did in India ... My mother stopped weeping". In fact her mother too became a "professional special education teacher and began work with mentally handicapped adults at an institute in London.

Back home after six years, they were in for a "rude shock". When Malini was taken to a leading Children's hospital for treatment she recalls "they spoke about me in front of me, often directly addressing me. They poked and examined me as if I did not feel any pain." It was so distinctly different from her experience in England where she was treated "as a child first, not a handicapped child." She was then six years old and she remembers being treated by the paramedical staff in the children's ward in Bombay.

"These people were rough, hierarchical, domineering, intimidating and wanted to prove they were superior professionals. Their treatment made me weep. My mother and grandmother wept with me."

Technology was of great use in Malini being able to lead a reasonably normal life. One such was the 'Canon Communicator which was the size of a calculator where her words got printed on a strip of paper, which could be torn off and handed over to a listener. And later the internet which made it possible for people with poor speech

to interact with ease.

Then there is the wheelchair about which she writes “Initially I hated being on a wheelchair because I felt disabled, but I was; when I was young I was never taught to value my disability. The charity model predominated and I was fixed and expected to fit in a round peg hole. If one was disabled, it was expected of him or her to overcome their disability and fit into the able world. This is an oppression that continues till today.” From wheel chairs moved by the occupants pushing with their feet she moved to electric chairs on the eve of her second trip to London to complete her school education so that she could qualify with a General Certificate for Secondary Education for admission in a Bombay college in Bombay. “With the electric wheelchair I was extremely mobile..Who cared if I could not walk? With the electric wheelchair I could run.”

She secured the requisite certificate and admission to Bombay’s St.Xaviers College but it was not all smooth sailing. Even the then Vice Chancellor of Bombay University wanted to know “Why do these students want to give this exam.” The reference was to the BA degree course which involved four years and clearly in the context of Malini’s disability.

“A question that I am often asked by journalists is whether I felt it was different. I most certainly did. I think it was in Xavier’s where the differences hit me,” she observed in a matter of fact manner.

There was the fear of how she would be viewed by students. Would they accept her? St.Xaviers was a regular college and not a special institution as in London.

She describes her first day entering class – 12th standard. “I entered the classroom. There was stunned silence. The silence was interrupted by the irritating, incessant noise of the motor of my electric chair. There were whispers and unsure shuffles. The professor himself looked most scared and apprehensive. They must have

wondered who this heap of undulating mass in an electric wheelchair was...I parked myself in the front row. The class began. At least the entrance was over with.

‘Your name please’. “Malini Chib, I said my name, which I know sounded completely garbled to all around me. The professor looked perplexed. He asked again. I spoke again. He thought I had not understood the question. He was irritated. So were 88 other students. I tried spelling my name. He did not get me. I began to panic. I tried again. My speech was getting worse and worse. He looked away impatiently. He had not understood. I heard a cry from a student from behind. She said ‘Malini’. Eureka!

“I had held up the class for 15 minutes. The professor smiled reluctantly but I did not care. Now 88 of my classmates knew my name. They also knew that I had a speech problem. Although it was awful to have all those piercing eyes staring at me I was happier than before I came in. Now I had some identity. I was not a lump of chair on a wheelchair.”

Another problem Malini had to face was her inability to write with a pencil and take down notes. Her mother came up with a method to overcome this – a pad with a sheet of carbon paper which she gave to her classmates!

There was the problem of socialising with her classmates - and plenty more of the challenges that Malini had to face and did overcome. More importantly how she and her mother moved on to share their experience and their role in pioneering institutions for the spastics.

She acknowledges her debt to her mother. “If I did not have my mother who always pushed me, and my entire family who always challenged me, I would not be alive intellectually or physically to tell this tale.”

Highly recommended reading and instructive too.

The big themes of history may be written by the victors, but it is the observant bystanders who will fill in the details. When Hosni Mubarak was overthrown in Cairo a year ago, among those watching was Ahdaf Soueif, a novelist born in Egypt and mostly resident in London... As a liberal leftist she is at best a partial victor, given that Islamists took control of the streets after the big battles were won.

So her view of the revolution may never dominate the new text books now being prepared in Egypt. The bearded men will most likely dictate what is in them..

In years to come it (*Cairo My City, Our Revolution* by Ahdaf Soueif, Bloomsbury) will be a reminder to liberals – now once again in the opposition following the recent election victory of Egypt’s Islamists – of their most glorious hour.

Excerpted from *The Economist*, January 28, 2012

Culture And Freedom

U Ba Nyunt

[The following is an extract from the inaugural speech delivered by U Ba Nyunt, the Mayor of Rangoon, at the Inaugural Session of the Conference on Cultural Freedom in Asia held in Rangoon from 17th to 20th February 1955.]

Culture is the precious possession of man. It is what distinguishes him not only from the beast but, in a finer sense, distinguishes one individual from another. Man is moved not merely by material needs. He is equally moved by intellectual and emotional needs. These intellectual and emotional needs of man have created the cultural growth of mankind. That is why they say that man does not live by bread alone. It is true that it is bread that makes living possible, and that to a starving man God appears in the form of food. But the moment man's basic material needs are satisfied his spirit is released and it starts roaming over the entire expanse of thought and imagination. When it is said that culture is the fruit of leisure it only means this. It means that the possibility of culture arises only when the minimum basic needs of man are satisfied. But these needs are what man shares with beasts. He does not share with them, or rather the beasts cannot share with man, culture. That is one thing which is man's peculiar glory. It is entirely the creation of his spirit.

This spirit cannot be caged without destroying its most fine and valuable elements. Its operations cannot be confined to a set pattern. Culture fixed to a set pattern is like a pool of stagnant water; which might, for a moment create an impression of serenity and tranquility, but which ultimately must create an atmosphere of disease and death. Developing culture is like a running stream whose rhythm symbolises the rhythm of life. The mind of man is the most sensitive instrument of culture and unlike stomach or sex its needs are not fundamentally physical. Nor are they limited. They are limitless both in quantity and quality. That is why culture cannot grow without freedom – freedom to expand and freedom to explore. Unless man's mind is left completely unfettered in its innate quest for variety, for viewer experience, for experience for its own sake, it would not function fruitfully. This is the basic condition of cultural growth. Therefore when you gather here to fathom and measure the problems of cultural freedom, I would say that you have gathered really to discuss the fundamental needs of culture.

Culture and cultural freedom are identical things. There is no culture without freedom and freedom is meaningless without culture. A man whose needs of the spirit are not satisfied, who, therefore, lives on the level of beasts, cannot be called free.

But the necessity for freedom itself imposes certain obligations. The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wanted the winds of all cultures to blow freely on him, without of course being swept away by any one of them. It is indeed a tragedy that so many division walls have arisen in the modern world that the free flow of cultural winds has become almost impossible. It is to be hoped that your deliberations will go a long way in demolishing these ominous walls that have been disfiguring the international landscape.

Another point we should not forget is that in the wake of political emancipation from alien rule, the peoples of Asia today are trying to bring about better economic conditions. Some of our governments lean towards the principles of the modern Welfare State. In this endeavour there is the danger of the State becoming absolute, unless, of course, the principles of democracy are strictly adhered to. In some parts of the world we are witnessing today that the implementation of the Welfare State principles requires the suppression of all opposition. The governments become insensitive to public opinion. In fact the individual exists for the State and not vice versa. And the State authority is vested entirely in the hands of one or a few selected individuals. These are done all in the name of the all-powerful State. Eventually the iron grip of such a State extends beyond its own frontiers and a new form of imperialism appears, which has been fittingly described by our Burmese leader, U Kyaw Nyein, as being "even more degrading and more dangerous (than old-time imperialism) because it is more ruthless, more systematic and more blatantly justified in the name of world communist revolution."

Educating Adults

Gender Discrimination

India's Unwanted Girls

Dr. Jyoti Marwah leads a discussion on sensitizing the youth to the girl child issue

'Baby 7 billion' was regarded as a milestone signalling comprehensive action towards survival of girls. Plan India launched 'Let Girls be Born' (LGBB) and 'Because I am a Girl Campaign' (BIAGC) a two-year old abandoned and badly battered girl child Falak battles for life in Delhi's AIIMS trauma centre. Suddenly the whole country is anxious about her well-being and she becomes 'India's most wanted Baby'. The question is why do we want her alive? Is it to unleash another spell of misery and torture. Similar insecurity awaits innumerable Falaks at every nook and corner of India's cities and villages as they wander aimlessly without shelter, food, water and privacy. The sadness that underlines the entire episode is the fact that only when issues become hypercritical and a victim of cruelty beyond imagination, that time, energy and resources get pumped in.

Baby Falak epitomizes the plight of many others like her who are abused, abandoned and brutalized by a system that has failed to ensure the safety of our young ones.

Delhi alone has recorded the abandonment of 745 children in 2010 at crowded market places, railway stations and hospitals besides the large number that are trafficked and go missing despite the laws that are passed to protect them. Studies conducted by the reputed International Institute for Population Studies at Mumbai has revealed that high female mortality is due to sustained discrimination and neglect in the areas of food and nutrition, health care and emotional well-being. In the 2011 census the sex ratio dropped to an all time low of 914 girls to 1000 boys between 0-6 years.

UN-DESA (United Nation Department of Economics

and Social Affairs) data for 150 countries over 40 years shows that India and China are the two countries where female infant mortality is higher than male infant mortality though biological factors make girls better survivors in early infancy when given equal access to resources. Ironically infant girls aged 1-5 years are 75% more likely to die than infant boys. Infant and child mortality rates are declining elsewhere in the world but India heads the gender difference in child mortality and remains the most dangerous place for a baby girl. World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality says 'missing' girls at birth and excess female mortality after birth is estimated at 3.9 million each year of which 1 million are in India.

UN Data on child mortality indicates that a campaign against female foeticide is not a complete solution as this dispensation is a socio-cultural vice and needs correction at the individual level. We need a multi-pronged approach involving the State, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Voluntary Organisations (VOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

Dr. Jyoti Marwah, Head of the Department of History, ICLES' Motilal Jhunjhunwala College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Navi Mumbai.
Email: jmarwah01@yahoo.in

*

Save the Girl Child

Rita P Bhambi,

It is said that God created mothers because He could not be present everywhere. Becoming a mother is the greatest gift of God; treasure this gift regardless of the fact whether you have a baby boy or a baby girl.



A Feature Sponsored by

Adult Education Institute,

Registered under the Public Trusts Act N.E-4282

Contact: Email:freedomfirst1952@gmail.com

Our country has witnessed advancements in all fields, but bias against the girl child continues. The shocking fact is that technologies such as ultrasound and amniocentesis devised to detect birth defects are misused for killing the girl child. Moreover traditions and rituals bind the girl child. Amidst uproars of gender equality and law enforcement, female infants are found dumped in trash while unborn fetuses are or sniffed in the womb.

Satyabrata Pal, member of the National Human Rights Commission claimed that seven lac girls are aborted every year in India. It is very painful that states like Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab are notorious for practicing female foeticide and infanticide. Besides this, the girl is discriminated against and her basic nutrition, education and living standard are often neglected. The nation of mothers follows a culture where people welcome a son but mourns if it is a daughter.

If such practices continue, a day will come when Mother India will have no mothers, and no life. The need of the hour is to realize our responsibility and take steps to root out the practice of girl discrimination. Girls must enjoy the right to birth, freedom and education and receive adequate nutrition, health and care facilities.

This is an appeal to India's Youth that the Girl Child is the future of a nation and India is no exception. A little amount of care, handful warmth and a heart full of love for girl child can make a big difference. Close your eyes, free your thoughts and hear the voice of God, He is saying something to all of us, "Save me".

Mrs. Rita P Bhambi, Head, Department of History, G. N. Khalsa College, Mumbai.
Rita_bhambi@yahoo.co.in

*

Three of Mrs.Bhambi's students when asked to share their views,had this to say:

The Girl Child is a Gift of God

Varsha Tripathi, FYBA.

A girl is one of the most beautiful creations, a joy which can never be defined in words. If we have a little girl in our home it not only makes our home full of joy but also gives us that feeling of true happiness. God has given beautiful grace only to a girl to become the mother of a child. After God, only a girl can give life, which itself is a blessed gift. She is the shadow of God; don't ever

think of living without your god -"A GIRL CHILD".

Varsha Tripathi, First Year BA, Khalsa College, Mumbai. Email:Varsha01@yahoo.com

*

A Girl Child is a Blessing Not a Curse

Khusbhu Kori, FYBA,

People generally ask the question whether a girl child is a curse or a blessing. I think it is a stupid question. How can a girl be a curse? A girl is always a blessing. Girl is worshipped as 'Devi'. Women are the pillars of the society. How can they be a curse? – That's my question to the people of this world. The Girl is a mother who takes care of her children. Are girls really equal to the boys? It ought to be so; But in reality Girls are not treated as being equal to the boys. It is a male dominated society .I think we must raise our voice against those doctors who are killing innocent girls before their birth and we must raise a voice against those parents who go for abortion because they believe a girl child is a curse. Only then can we expect a good future for the girl child.

Khushbu Kori, First Year B. A.,Khalsa College, Mumbai. Email:Whiterose_khushbu@yahoo.co.in

*

"Educate a woman and you educate a whole family."

Anjali Fernades, FYBA

It was truly said by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that "educate a man and you educate a person but educate a woman and you educate a whole family." A woman is the architect of society. She establishes the institution of family life, builds the home, brings up the children and makes them good citizens. She is the basic brick of a home. Her strength contributes to the making of an ideal family, ideal society and an ideal state. The development of women in India has occupied the centre-stage in our development planning since independence. As the women are the better half of the nation, they deserve a better share in every facility.. Women are the building blocks of nation building. They therefore hold a key position and their role in shaping the future of the nation must be recognized and respected.

Anjali Fernandes, First Year BA, Khalsa College, Mumbai. Email:angiferns@gmail.com

*

The Indian Mindset**R. K. Gupta**

Female foeticide, infanticide, sexual abuse, nutritional deprivation, lack of healthcare and education, violence and bias against women in social, political, economic and religious structures of society are issues of serious concern all over the world even today. The problem is multi-dimensional, but the root of such discrimination and bias, against the girl child, lies in the customs, traditions and the typical mindset of the society, which looks upon the girl child as an inferior being.

This mindset in India is based on the patriarchal structure of the society. The age-old perceptions and societal practices need to be revolutionized through sensitization and perhaps the best platform would be to make effective use of the youth power. The social change shall be manifest in recognizing girls as equal to boys by offering them the same privileges reserved for their male counterparts by way of education, prohibition of dowry, abolition of child marriages, involvement in day-to-day decision making and participation in social chores. The youth can create an environment, which will show positive and vibrant images of girls in every walk of life. This should be propagated by demanding equal education and learning opportunities for girls and allowing them to achieve professional and economic competence. The youth in India must develop a mindset to accept the fact that with proper education and other support facilities, a daughter can be equally empowered. This in turn will make daughters equally capable of taking care of their parents and also sanction them the right to perform their last rites, contrary to what the spiritual texts preach. While reinforcing these positive images of girls, the youth today, must recognize the fact that oppressing girls, has had a direct effect on the falling sex ratio which beyond doubt adversely impacts the workforce and thereby the nation's economy.

Campaigns, workshops, symposia, awareness camps, street plays and cultural meets with such themes, organised by the youth themselves, will impact them sufficiently to generate sensitivity over this issue. While the urban populace is already showing signs of recognizing the importance of girls' education and their empowerment, the campaign has to quickly move on to the rural areas in right earnest. The older folks may remain chained to their own self-belief, but it is for the youth to

show the way for a revolutionary transformation

**R. K. Gupta is a retired Scientific Officer, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. (BARC).
Email: rkg@indiatimes.com**

*

Role of Youth In Sensitizing People on Gender Issues**Arpana Kulkarni**

"India Is The Most Dangerous Place For a Girl Child To Be" screamed the front page headlines of *The Times Of India* (1st February 2012), quoting from a recently released survey document of UN UN-Dept. of Economics & Social Affairs, which collected data from 150 countries for over 40 years. The report shows that the female mortality rate in India is 100/96 compared to 100/120 in western countries. It is a shameful proof of the prevalence of female infanticide in India.

Gender inequality, in India manifests in the most horrifying forms of violence against women: female infanticide, dowry death, sexual abuse, rape. The root causes may be the patriarchal system, mind set, culture, and alcoholism among other things.

The efforts of the government and NGO's would never be successful unless there is people's participation. This is where Youth can play a major role in creating awareness and sensitizing people to these issues and changing their mindset. Educational institutions can be centers for holding workshops, street plays and mobilizing the society to stop this crime against another human being called - 'woman'.

**Arpana Kulkarni is Head of Department English, ICLES' M. J. College, Vashi, Navi Mumbai
Email: arpana.kulkarni@gmail.com**

*

Adoption: A Revolution on the Cards**Priya Joshi**

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam former President of India said India will be a developed country by 2025 but what about the social condition of women? Will they be looked upon with respect, allowed to own property, get proper medical aid, and enjoy educational and professional equality? ‘

Today there are too many families who look down upon the birth of a girl child. As sex determination tests are banned, cruelty begins after birth and a girl child is accepted as a *fait accompli* and is condemned to live a life of being discriminated against; or is compelled to find shelter in an orphanage. In other countries there are fewer boys going to orphanages, but in India it is the other way around. There are also girls in orphanages who are unwed mothers. Here is my question to female readers: what are you doing to improve this in your country? Just as a woman plays an active role in bringing up her own children then can't a woman who has had an unsuccessful marriage or is unmarried take care of a girl child or children and make their life more meaningful? She should not be looked down upon but should be given respect, as she is contributing towards improving the social condition of India. Being a woman herself she will

surely give her best to make her adopted daughter's life secure giving her the right to own property and thus a sense of security.

There are laws on adoption including one which permits adopting a child of the same sex for the second time with the right to carry the middle name of mother instead of the father in the case of a single parent.

To improve India, the social condition of women must be improved.

Priya Joshi, Second Year BA student.
ICLES' Motilal Jhunjhunwala College,
Vashi, Navi Mumbai
Email: priya22joshi@gmail.in

*

Congratulations Dhanashree Patil !

Dhanashree V. Patil who was selected by Dr. Jyoti Marwah to participate in the seminar on Leadership organized by in November last year December us was elected to the prestigious position of General Secretary of the Mumbai University Students Council and as a consequence also a Senate Member of the University of Mumbai. Her candidature was supported by the Yuva Sena the youth wing of the Shiv Sena. In a message sharing this happy news with us she writes "I would like to thank all the members of *Freedom First* for their proper guidance and encouragement during the seminar on the "Growing Leadership Deficit in India." I also thank all of them for giving me inspiration, motivation and for lighting the spark

within me. I now really believe in the sentiments expressed at that seminar that it's not necessary to have a political background when you possess the qualities of leadership, a sense of responsibility, and the determination to work for the betterment of the nation to which you belong and the people with whom you live. I look upon this achievement as an opportunity to work for the welfare of the students and teachers in Maharashtra".

The *Freedom First* fraternity will be happy to read this message from you and wish you a successful tenure. Well Done Dhanashree Patil!

Keith Tantlinger, Inventor of the Shipping Container

For centuries, ships transported goods in small units, which were loaded and unloaded by laborers. But in the 1950s, an engineer named Keith Tantlinger invented a way to ship cargo in more efficient units: the modern metal shipping container. The innovation allowed hundreds of containers and tens of thousands of tons of cargo to be stacked on one ship, and the goods to be moved from ship to rail to truck almost without manual labor. Tantlinger's invention changed the world. First, it encouraged one of the most important waves of globalization: As the cost of shipping goods around the world dropped dramatically, ordinary consumers gained access to international goods while American industries had to face new competition from abroad. Second, there was no longer a need for nearly as many longshoremen and stevedores to unload the cargo. The container marginalized their unions, which were infamously portrayed in *On the Waterfront* and represented the worst of organized labor, known for corruption, intimidation, and violence. Tantlinger's invention evinces the dramatic progress and destruction that technological and commercial innovation encourages. A revolutionary engineer, dead at 92. R.I.P.

Courtesy: *National Review*, October 3, 2011.

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd) advisor to the telecom industry and a member of Freedom First's Advisory Board will be writing on various aspects of school education beginning with funding under the Right to Education Act. In subsequent issues he will be dealing with 'Implications of compulsory education; Choice of schools; Quality and content of education; and Infrastructure and Management. – Ed.

Funding the Right to Education Act

Suresh C. Sharma

Education is the foundation of success of individuals and leads to prosperity of the society. Right to Education [RTE] Act envisages compulsory and free education for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. It is a commendable thought.

Some impediments may be faced in the implementation of the scheme. Availability of adequate funds is essential for the success of any project. The funds will be provided by the Central and State Governments. 25% seats will be provided in private schools to students from economically backward sections. These students will not be charged any school fees or asked to pay for books, transport, uniform and mid day meals. The government will compensate the unaided private schools to meet the expenses incurred in the education of such students. The quantum of amount will be determined perhaps on the basis of average expenses incurred in the government schools or by the particular school, whichever is lower. It is interesting to note that in some of the private schools expenses per child are lower than those in government schools. A significant uncovered balance will be left over where it is not so. To take an example, fees in some of the private schools in Mumbai are Rs.2,000 per month or more.

The major source of funds in unaided private schools is fees from students. To meet the expenses of one fourth of the students of the specified category, fees of the other students will have to be increased by 33%. This will be resented by the parents concerned. It is a mistake to presume that all students in private schools come from the affluent sections of society. It is more a choice by parents to give priority to children's education and suffer hardships themselves. It is not unusual for some families to opt for continued stay in a place with good schools when the head of the family gets posted to a small station with poor education facilities. Enhancement of fees from three-fourth of students is an uncalled for penalty on those who are striving hard and suffering hardships to bring up their children as responsible citizens. Economic condition is directly related to the size of the family. Parents

of one or two children can afford better education for their kids. It is desirable that free education in private schools where part of the budget will be met from fees by other students should be limited to two for any family. It is well accepted that there should be no discrimination against any category of children. It may be difficult to control all students from making some undesirable remarks about children whose study is being partly financed by them. We understand that some schools have filed a petition in the court against the compulsion of allotting 25% seats to children from economically weak class. The Court decision is awaited.

We bought our own books. Why burden the schools with this responsibility? It would be prudent to continue that practice. As for free transport, the schools can discontinue responsibility for operating buses. This facility is primarily available only in metro cities and is not applicable to small towns. The Act lays down that free transport will be provided when the school is at a distance of more than 1 km for classes I to V and 3 kms for classes VI to VIII. The Act does not specify the responsibility for provision of transport. It is not clear whether free transport should be arranged when parents admit a child to a school other than the neighbouring institution due to seats not being available or due to compulsion on minority schools. The schools could wash their hands off transport completely. Further, what transport can be provided in villages and hamlets which are not connected by a road and have to rely on tracks?

The mid day meals are already being arranged at Government expense.

The Government has every right to mobilize resources for the noble task. It should not be discriminatory

against any particular section. They are welcome to increase the education cess. In USA, finances for universal education are provided by the Centre, state and local bodies. Some of the local bodies and states have indicated their inability to continue to meet their obligation. It is to be

seen whether the Centre would allot additional grants or the schools would be scaled down. A similar situation may arise in India in some of the states. It would be prudent to plan realistic objectives.

Why the World is on the Boil

Sunita Narain

2011's person of the year, according to *Time* magazine, is "the protester". Clearly, this is the image that has captured the world – from dissent against the lack of democracy and repression in large parts of West Asia to anger against economic policies in vast and disparate parts of the world. People, all over, are saying enough is enough. But what will happen to these voices in the coming years? Will the movements of protesters be enough to change the way the world runs its business? Do these movements even know what they want?

It is important to understand that there are similarities and yet huge differences in protest movements against economic policies in the rich and the getting-rich world. The US-born Occupy Wall Street movement's slogan is "we are the 99 per cent who will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1 per cent". The movement, which began in New York and then spread across many states, has been squelched in many places by aggressive city governments. But protesters say they will be back. They will overcome.

It is difficult to gauge how this will pan out in the coming year. The movement prides itself in being leaderless and people-powered. It has no manifesto and no actionable agenda on how Wall Street must be reformed or how the global economy must be restructured so that it can meet the needs of all...

But there is another possibility. The fact is that this movement – as with many similar movements in the rich-but-economically-troubled world – has struck a chord. Today, the same rich world, which was secure in its consumption and comfort, is finding the going tough. Things it took for granted are no longer easily available – from homes and medical facilities to education and jobs. Ordinary people are being hit by what governments call necessary austerity measures. They are hitting back in every way they can.

In Atlanta, the occupy-our-home movement wants to take over houses of people who will be thrown out by banks because of default in mortgage payments. It says the current assessment of property values is too high and banks have too much power to throw out people, even if they default on one payment. In Washington, the occupy-the-vote-DC movement is demanding electoral representation for the federal city. The list goes on.

These movements represent many uncomfortable and inconvenient issues that are refusing to go away. ... The problem is that the world's economic managers do not believe there is any real option to restructure economies so that they consume less, pollute less and still grow in wellbeing if not in wealth. The problem is that we are wedded to this one ideology of growth. It is for this reason that in spite of all the perturbations and upheavals, the same people who have put us in this place continue to be in charge of fixing the problems of growth. It is no wonder that the protest movements are also on the rise...

The movements of protests in the emerging world are of many kinds and by many kinds of people. On the one hand, we have protests happening on the streets of urban India against corruption. This has certainly captured popular imagination and media attention. But there are many more protests – mutinies against displacement and pollution across the country – we rarely hear about and forget too soon.

These movements of small groups of people fighting for survival are real and intensifying. In a democracy there will be some hearing. Many of these protests – against land acquisition, water takeover, mining, dams, power projects or pollution – are getting some measure of official response. This is not to say that every protest will be successful. Far from it. But it is also a fact that these movements represent voices that are asking for different ways of development. These movements stand for rights to land, water, forest and mineral resources...

Therefore, even if these protest movements do not have a ready blueprint for future economic model, they have enough practice of prompting us to think of different ways. Most importantly, these movements are a response to real survival threats. They are here to stay until we find big answers to the big questions they raise.

This is then the challenge of 2012 and beyond. The world is on the boil and the steam of anger will not dissipate. The question is whether these protests can be channelled to etch new, better pathways of growth.

Courtesy: CSE's Fortnightly News Bulletin (January 3, 2012). Excerpts from the editorial : "From Protests to Where in 2012". Email: CSE cse@equitywatch.org

Social Networking – Promise or Peril?

Merlin R. Joseph

“People used to the quick pace of online social networking may soon find the real world boring and unstimulating, potentially leading to more extreme behaviour to get that sense.”

- Himanshu Tyagi, MRCPsych, MBBS

A student preferred to walk out of the classroom than hand over her cell phone when asked by her teacher as a reprimand. This can be seen as a trivial incident when we consider the recent incident where a girl committed suicide because her boyfriend publicized their breakup in a social networking site. The incessant march of communication technology has wedged completely into the lives of its users. Nearly 30 million Indians are members of social networking sites, making it the fourth largest country in the world in terms of its users. The declining cost of information processing and communication represents a powerful new technology, with social networking as the most recent service to be provided at modest cost.

From permeating the flames of the Jasmine Revolution to catching up with old buddies, the helping hand of social networks is ineluctable. The users of social networking have been blessed with the advantages, such as, to make easier contacts with friends, increased chances to make new friends or create a community. Along with such well known pluses, it also provides a very good platform for facilitation of identity exploration, provide social cognitive skills and develop or reinforce a brand or image. Proponents of social networking sites argue that benefits provided by sites such as Facebook have made human beings better off as a society and as individuals, and that, as they continue to be adopted by more diverse populations, there will surely be an increase in their utility. Anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes from these technologies – such as political activities organized via Facebook or jobs found through LinkedIn – is well-known.

Nevertheless, research studies have been increasingly forking out negative repercussions as well. Right from our breakfast table conversation to our goodnight wishes, we are more than ever playing out our day to day schedule in a digital realm. Communication technology instills a ‘connected presence’ which gives a feeling that we are with someone when we are not. Couples exchanging ‘I miss u’ texts about 50 times a day, youngsters keeping their cellphones under the pillow so as not to miss a single call, all these might be considered extreme

by most of the people but there is no denying the fact that communication technology is gradually creating an intrusive culture. This affects not only a man’s persona but also his psyche. It has become so difficult to have a sort of ‘non attachment’ towards these gadgets that many people react like twitchy addicts denied their drugs when forced to give up access to social networking and other electronic media. A Melbourne University Professor was of the opinion that Gen Y is lonelier because people don’t know how to be alone hence the irony here is, the more lonely a person is more will he indulge in several forms of social media to maintain friendships. Susan Greenfield, Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Oxford stated in her speech to the UK House of Lords that “social networking sites might tap into the basic brain systems for delivering pleasurable experience. However, these experiences are devoid of cohesive, narrative and long-term significance. As a consequence, the mid-21st century mind might almost be characterized by short attention spans, sensationalism, inability to empathize and a shaky sense of identity”. This raises many questions that need to be looked into. Is communication technology just an illusion of allowing us to communicate better but in reality isolating us from real human interactions? Or is cyber-reality a poor imitation of the real world? It is possible that young people who have no experience of a world without online societies will put less value on their real world identities and can therefore be at huge risk in their real lives.

Considering all these glitches, still there’s no denying the fact that social networking is here to stay. There are many challenges to work through when it comes to the increasing commercialization of this space. Weighing the pros and cons, it’s very much debatable whether social networks are amicable or not. However, a sound mind would be able to distinguish the white from the grays.

MERLIN JOSEPH taught sociology at Mumbai’s Mithibai College of Arts. Currently working on a Research Proposal titled “A sociological study On The Impact Of Communication Technology On The Youth Of Mumbai” for his Ph.D thesis under Prof. S. M. Michael (Professor of Sociology), University of Mumbai.

India's Growing Leadership Deficit

We shall keep addressing this subject time and again. Right leadership is the key to good, transparent and effective governance. The article on this page by M. R. Pai surfaced during the ongoing digitising process. Perhaps it is even more relevant today than when it was first published in *Freedom First*, 43 years ago in its issue of July 1969. M. R. Pai's name is intimately connected with the Consumer movement and the Forum of Free Enterprise the institution founded by A. D. Shroff and nurtured by Pai. Both are no more but they are remembered today as legends in their own right. *Ed.*

The Leadership of 1970s

M. R. Pai

It is necessary to examine why a country like India, which has produced giants in public life, is today having mostly pygmies. The contrast between the past and the present will be instructive and give us the guidelines for the future.

A brief study of some aspects of leadership from the lives of the great leaders of the past will help us.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the great social reformer, was asked by the King of Delhi to prepare a memorial on his behalf, seeking to redress some grievances from the East India Company. When the memorial was prepared, a publication alleged that Ram Mohun Roy had stolen some documents from the East India Company to prepare the memorial. He immediately petitioned the Company to hold an inquiry into this allegation, and having compelled the Company to do so, publicly cleared his name and vindicated his honour. By this act, he showed that integrity is the first and foremost requirement of good leadership. This is sadly lacking today in our public life.

The second aspect of good leadership is the ability to win over loyalty of people. An instance from the life of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a great patriot and leader, will illustrate this. While he was undergoing his sentence in a jail in Burma, at that time part of India, a convict from Ratnagiri had also been put in the same jail to attend upon him. But Tilak never treated him as a servant. Once when the convict fell ill, he would not allow the former to prepare food or to attend on him. On the other hand he prepared food for the convict and nursed him for a number of days. Tilak treated the convict in such a way that when the convict received an order of release, he petitioned the authorities to allow him to stay for two more years so that he may have the opportunity of attending upon Lokamanya Tilak! In sharp contrast, one finds that leaders have today, to buy the loyalty of followers rather than win them over. The sad fact that about 14% of legislators defected after the 1967 elections, one of them as many as 7 times, shows how far public life has deteriorated.

The third quality of leadership, namely, taking the public into confidence and being straightforward in one's

dealings with the public is illustrated by the life of Sir M. Visveswaraiya, the great engineer, administrator and statesman who introduced the idea of planning in India. When he was an engineer in the Poona Irrigation District, he found that considerable water was wasted by agriculturists. He instituted a new system which resulted in better utilisation of water. There was resentment over this and a number of people in Poona who were owners of land started an agitation. They started a campaign in the local papers saying that they were being harassed. Sir Visveswaraiya collected all the clippings and forwarded them to the Government of the then Bombay Presidency, giving his reasons for the new system. The Government backed him saying that what he had done was correct. After this, he called a public meeting of the citizens where he explained the old and new systems and reasons for the change and the benefit of the system. He also had caused all officers to be present there and asked the agriculturists whether they had any specific complaint of harassment against any one of them in which case they would be required to answer them. There was none. This straightforward approach was very much appreciated by the citizens.

The fourth quality of leadership is that of being well-informed. Leadership is a great responsibility, and an ill-informed leader is like an unqualified driver on a public transport – a menace to society. Look at the leaders of yesteryears like Phirozeshah Mehta, Ranade, Gokhale and Mahatma Gandhi. Their predecessor, the Grand Old Man of India, Dr. Dadabhoy Naoroji, was a model for all. In the evening of his life, after unremitting service to the motherland, even a few hours before his death, he was having important news read to him by his grandchildren: What an avidity for knowledge, the basis for public service!

Most of our leaders today have ceased to read and think. They have discovered a new formula – verbal Niagara is a substitute for thinking.

It is this type of leadership which has brought the country to the brink of disaster.

Freedom First, No.206, July 1969.

Freedom First

Freedom First speaks for the silent majority - the majority that wants to be left in peace to pursue its goal of improving its quality of life, but has been suffering in silence, the indignities heaped on it by insensitive governments who have abrogated to themselves the right to decide what is good for the people. In the process, the whole country has been turned into a cesspool of corruption. Public morality and character have reached an all-time low.

Freedom First affirms that much of the unrest and ferment in our society is a direct result of excessive State intervention in the day-to-day lives of our people. While the people's initiative has been stifled, the economy is in shambles. The Journal believes that while India needs a strong government that ensures the rule of law what India does not need is a meddlesome government – the system so far that has led to impoverishment, insecurity and instability.

Freedom First therefore stands for minimum government and maximum freedom, tempered by a sense of individual responsibility, in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow.

Freedom First rejects any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another, be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

Do A Favour

to your friends
send them
a sample copy of
Freedom First
with your compliments.

Freedom First

3rd Floor, Army & Navy Building,
148, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Mumbai 400 001.

Please send a sample copy of
Freedom First to the following with
my compliments:

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Pin _____

*

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Pin _____

*

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Pin _____

*

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Pin _____

*

Name: _____

Address: _____

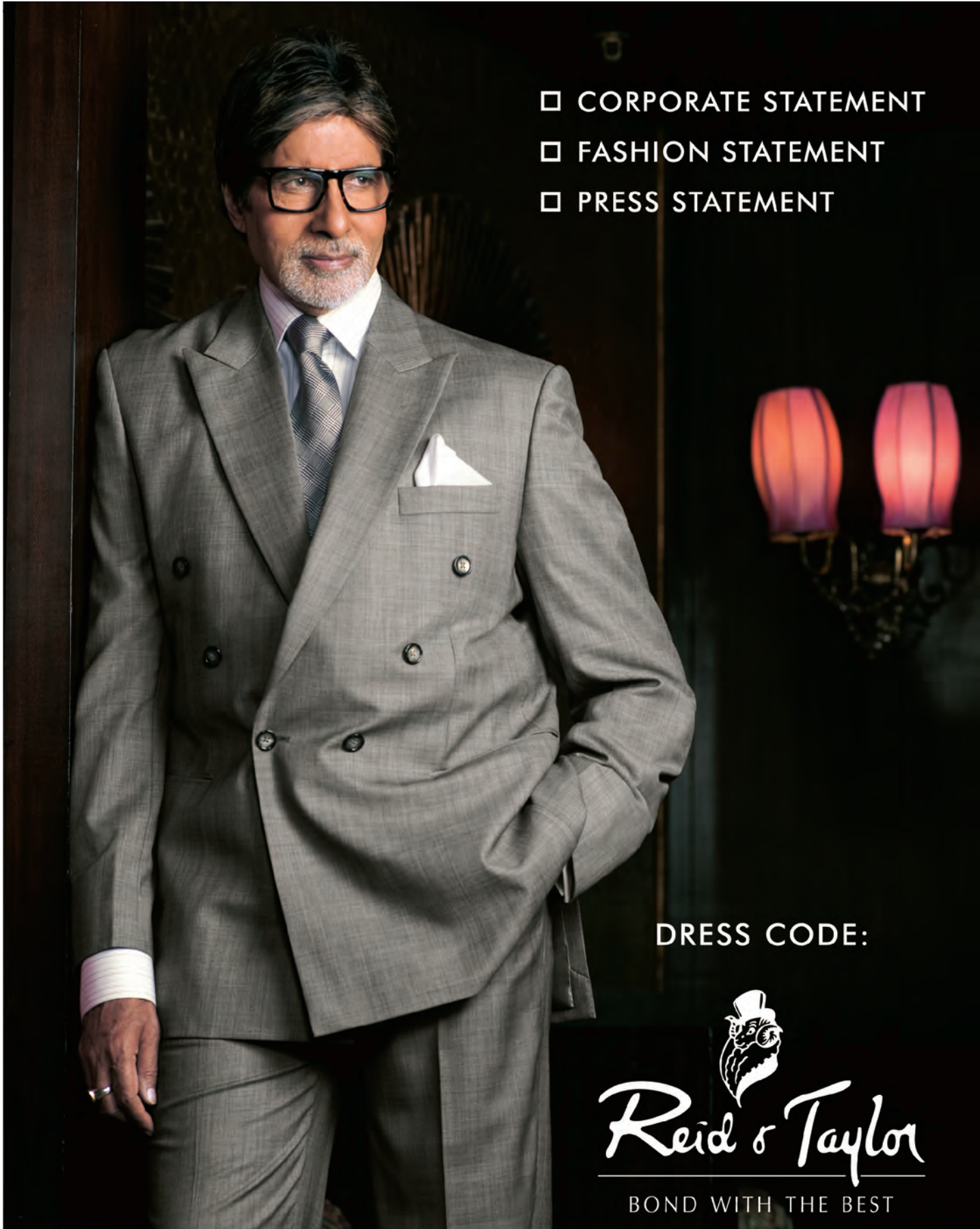
_____ Pin _____

Sender's Name & Address

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Pin _____

- 
- CORPORATE STATEMENT
 - FASHION STATEMENT
 - PRESS STATEMENT

DRESS CODE:



Reid & Taylor

BOND WITH THE BEST

Not for publication or distribution, directly or indirectly, outside of India. **Disclaimer:** Reid & Taylor (India) Limited is proposing, subject to market conditions and other considerations, a public issue of its equity shares and has filed a Draft Red Herring Prospectus ("DRHP") with the Securities and Exchange Board of India. The DRHP is available on the website of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in and on the websites of the global coordinators and book running lead managers at www.jmfinancial.in, www.ubs.com/indianoffers, www.jpml.com, and www.religarecm.com and on the websites of the book running lead managers, at www.antiquelimited.com, www.edelcap.com, www.hsbc.co.in/1/2/corporate/equities/globalinvestment and www.idbicapital.com. Investors should note that investment in equity shares involves a high degree of risk and for details relating to the same, see the section titled "Risk Factors" on page XII of the DRHP. The equity shares of Reid & Taylor (India) Limited are not being registered under the US Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act") and may not be offered or sold in the United States unless registered under the Securities Act or pursuant to an exemption from such registration. There will be no public offering of the equity shares in the United States.