

Freedom First

The Liberal Position

What *Price* Freedom of the Media?

The “Pernicious” Practice Called Paid News (2)

INSIDE

From Our Readers

Professor Amrik Singh, R.I.P.

Timid Candidates, Pampered Journalists (12)

Shivaji's Statue in the Arabian Sea (14)

Point Counter Point (15)

Gujarat at 50:

- An Introspective Look (17)
- Contemporary, Not Yet Modern (18)
- Education (20)

When the State of Maharashtra was Born (22)

Modi Throws the Gauntlet (24)

Cornucopia (25)

Environmental Policy in a Free Society (28)

Women's Quota Bill : Another Take (30)

Shouldn't There Be A Limit to Ministers
Making Popular Pronouncements (31)

“Stop Nuclear Disaster” (33)

Book Reviews (35)

Between Ourselves

From Our Readers

On *Freedom First*

You are probably aware that I am an old subscriber to *Freedom First*. I am painfully aware of the hand to mouth situation of the magazine which is essential for today's India. The liberal point of view alone can bestow light during these days of dark religious intolerance. Mr. V. V. Nori is correct when he says "A person whose conduct is ethical requires no religion and is a true patriot." (*Freedom First* No.511 January 2010).

You have also grown old with the Liberal Movement like me. I am touched by your editorial and enclose a cheque for Rs.10,000/- as my humble contribution to your great efforts to continue *Freedom First*.

With Happy New Year's greetings to you and the *Freedom First* Family.

A. P. Rastogi (Swatantrata Senani),
Khatima, Uttarkhand

*

Intelligence Oversight

I am impressed with the article by Shri Ashok Karnik "Intelligence Oversight". I agree with his views on the need for "Conceptual Shift from threat-based to vulnerability-based strategies" which will need a fresh orientation. At present our internal intelligence system is totally geared towards "political interests". Misuse of

intelligence resources towards attainment of political interests. Secondly there is no accountability of intelligence operatives and even of top bosses to any one. I have worked both with IB & RAW at different levels and areas including at the highest level in Delhi. I am afraid it is totally subservient to political and bureaucratic masters.

It is high time our Intelligence system, both internal and external, engages in "Anticipatory Threat Analysis" and "Predictability Threat Analysis".

As regards the article by Shri V. Balachandran it is historical and conceptual. Among our political masters as well as the bureaucrats there is a total lack of orientation towards strategic and external Intelligence. Most of our R&AW operatives take advantage of the shortcomings. I have worked with them in Punjab, J&K, Assam very closely combating insurgency & terrorism, even at Army HQ Delhi. I have nothing much to write about their achievements. We need to make them accountable. There are very few operatives and officials who are making the organization work. I feel there is need to appoint independent observers, assessors, analysts to monitor the performance of both IB & RAW. They need not be ex-officials from these services.

Lt.Gen. Dr. D. B. Shekatkar PVSM, AVSM, VSM
(Retd.), Pune.

*

Professor Amrik Singh, R.I.P



It is a sad commentary that most of the Mumbai papers did not report the passing away of Professor Amrik Singh (March 23, 2010) after a brief illness. He was 89. With his passing the world of higher education has lost an eminent academic and a seasoned university administrator. For over two decades he was active in teaching and was associated with Delhi University and became the Vice Chancellor of the Punjab University, Patiala. Trained in English literature, most of his books were on university administration. Not many in the world of higher education had his deep and close knowledge of the state of higher education in India. His *Journal of University Education* and his secretaryship of the Association of Indian Universities gave him a ringside view of university administration. He knew well the higher officials in the universities and would comment on them in crisp phrases. Deeply dedicated to academic values he knew of the shortcomings of Indian higher education and of their uncommendable aspects. Yet he had a deep faith in the future of University education. His books are candid assessments of higher education, warts and all.

We at *Freedom First* recall his participation in programmes organised by us and by our publishers the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and our sister organisations - the Indian Liberal Group and the Project for Economic Education. Whenever he was in Mumbai he would invariably visit our office and his express appreciation of our efforts in bringing out this journal against great odds.

R. Srinivasan

Pandering to Public Interest

Maoists butcher 76 in the worst blow to our security forces. They do it very smoothly.

And going by newspaper headlines, we are more worried about the sex lives of Tiger Woods and Sania Mirza.

M. B. Damania, Mumbai.
permin@vsnl.com

*

Pedder Road Flyover

Pedder Road residents are not objecting to the flyover for selfish reasons. If it were to improve and unclog the Arterial Road, it would benefit them also.

The objection is to the fallacy that it would improve traffic. To do so, the flyover has to come over a junction e.g. Haji Ali. (*This response is to Ashok Karnik's comments in Point Counter Point, Freedom First, No.514, April 2010*)

Rochelle D'souza, Mumbai.
Rochelle_1085@yahoo.co.in

*

Naxalite Violence

As regards the "Point Counter Point" on "Naxalite Violence" (*Freedom First*, April 2010), I would like to add that lack of consistency in thought and action on the part of successive Union governments and those of the Naxal-affected states has made matters worse over the years. Unanimity of purpose and action, irrespective of their political ideologies and compulsions or momentary electoral gains is called for both by the ruling parties at the centre and the states to successfully tackle this Left wing extremist problem.

Ranga Rao DS, Mumbai. dsrrao@rediffmail.com

*

Sugar Barons Rule Maharashtra

Two reports, 'Govt let sugar prices rise' and 'Vikhe Patil's power supply co-op owes state Rs.2,000 cr' in *DNA* dated March 25, 2010 confirm the popular impression that Maharashtra is ruled by the sugar barons. The first report states that the state government picked up only 46% of the allotted sugar quota in 2009-10 and that in 2008-09, only 5.72 lakh quintal out 18.54 lakh quintal, is a clear indication of the complicity of the government parties to help the sugar barons to profiteer at the cost of the common man, am admi.

That Mula Pravara Electric Co-op. Society Ltd.(MPECSL) promoted Padmashree Balasaheb Vikhe Patil,

a senior Congress leader has been paying only Rs.3crore a month while receiving power supply worth Rs.20 crore for 200 MW from Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (MSEDCL) is another scandal of the ruling dispensation. Your report clearly states that the recommendation of the Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission (MERC) to take over the assets of MPECSL in lieu of the dues of MSEDCL have been over-ruled by the political leaders is gross mis-rule by the government. No wonder Maharashtra continues to be power-deficit state. This is a fit case for a PIL to get justice for the people who suffer from power cuts and increased power tariff as even the opposition has failed to take up this issue.

It is reported that the loan waiver announced by the Central government prior to the general election benefited sugar farmers more than the cotton farmers.

Maharashtra government seems to be a government by the sugar barons, of the sugar barons and for the sugar barons!

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

This is Our India

1. Do not worry about those who have come thru boats...

Our forces can easily defeat them.

Worry about those who have come thru votes....

Those are our *Real Enemies*....

2. What a shame and disgrace to every citizen of India that the elite NSG Force was transported in ordinary BEST buses, whereas our cricketers are transported in state of the art luxury buses; these Jawans lay down their lives to protect every Indian and these cricketers get paid even if they lose a match; we worship these cricketers and forget the martyrdom of these brave Jawans.

The Jawans should be paid the salaries of the cricketers and the cricketers should be paid the salaries of the Jawans.

3. An ace shooter shoots and gets a gold medal, government gives Rs.1 Crore. Another shooter dies while shooting a terrorist, government gives 5 lakhs.

Who Deserves More? Huh. This is our India....

From the Net. Contributed by Col. T. S. Tanwar (retd.)

What *Price* Freedom of the Media?

The “Pernicious” Practice Called Paid News

As always, to share the liberal perspective with our readers, the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF), publishers of Freedom First organised a discussion on the subject on March 6, 2010. The discussion was sponsored by the Hilla and Dosi Vakeel Endowment.

During the last elections to the Maharashtra Assembly there emerged yet another variation to the purveying of “news” in the printed and visual media. This has been broadly labelled as ‘Paid News’. Freedom First first heard of this practice some years ago from a friend who was helping Sharad Joshi in the Swatantra Bharat Party’s election campaign in some taluka and district towns in rural Maharashtra. It surfaced again last year with Mr. Sainath’s well researched expose in *The Hindu*, followed by press releases on the subject by the Editors Guild of India in New Delhi who described it as “pernicious”, and a fairly detailed coverage in the *Outlook* magazine. In recent weeks some other leading personalities including some politicians have brought this to the notice of parliament.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Jehangir Patel, editor of the well known fortnightly *Parsiana*, and publisher of Freedom First.

What follows is a condensed report of the presentations made.

THE INTRODUCTION

Jehangir Patel

“A search on the web gives 15 million entries under the heading ‘paid news’. It is defined as the payment you make for what you read on the web. Currently, most of what one reads on the web is free. In fact, newspapers in the West are folding up because print is going out of vogue. The news media is looking for alternate means of revenue. News on the web saves printing costs, but does not generate advertising revenue. To be viable a site requires at least 10 million ‘hits’. The other option for the print media is to become only a news gathering organization. But here too one needs to pay the news gatherers. So, the question is, can paid news on the Web be viable? This is one definition of ‘paid news’ as understood in the Western countries.

“In the Indian context, ‘paid news’ has a different connotation. The public pays to buy a newspaper or magazine, which means they have already paid for the news they read. But, instead of getting news, they receive advertising in the garb of news. This is not a new phenomenon. In earlier days, an advertiser would book special impact features or advertorials. But such articles did not carry credibility. So newspapers and magazines started selling editorial space. And what was once an informal understanding of selling editorial space to promote individuals, institutions, corporates etc., became institutionalized and is now referred to as ‘paid news’.

“The trend of ‘paid news’ both in the print and the electronic media largely occurs during elections.

Owing to a cap on the amount one can spend on an election campaign advertisement space is booked under the guise of news. But, are readers convinced by this kind of news? During the days of the Emergency, the media was controlled by government and only the news that the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wanted, was published. Still, she lost the elections. Does the success or failure of a political candidate depend on the monies spent on ‘paid news’? How does the media account for this revenue since it cannot be shown as advertisement receivable or payable by the candidate?

“The public needs to be made aware so that it is able to differentiate between paid news and actual news.

An informed public can even bring pressure on publishing houses as it happened in the USA. Harper Collins (publishing house owned by Rupert Murdoch) wanted to publish O. J. Simpson’s book “*If I Did It*”. In real life Simpson killed two persons and was acquitted by a court. There was a lot of public pressure on Harper Collins to refrain from making money out of this injustice. Collins relented. Columnist Lionel Shriver wrote in *The Guardian* in November 2006 that “the American public still has the capacity to be offended and even Rupert Murdoch can be shamed.” Similarly, Indian publishers and owners of publishing houses can be “shamed” into distancing themselves from “paid news.”

“In India, there is still a sense of values attached

to being a media owner. To quote from a letter of the Indian Newspaper Society's (INS) Secretary General on the rising price of printing paper eroding the publishers' profit margins: "Publishers are emphasizing the fact that unlike other industries, newspapers have a duty to the society and are seen as conscience keepers to the nation, being at the forefront in safeguarding people's rights to freedom of speech, an invaluable part of a vibrant democracy. It goes without saying that if the growth of this industry is cut short, the "future will be bleak." INS still sees itself as being the conscience keeper and disseminator of news, but the reality today is that there is a contrary movement – the 'paid news' saga.

Jehangir Patel. info@parsiana.com

*

THE PRESENTATIONS

Krishna Prasad

"It is nothing less than journalism for sale. Paid News has brought Indian journalism to the Cliff of Credibility. It has erased the difference between news and advertisement, and reduced a once-serious force multiplier into a joke. It is widespread and what we have seen so far is only a sample. And we have travelled so fast, so far, so smoothly on this sad road without being stopped or checked to reach this point, that news consumers—newspaper readers, television watchers, radio listeners, internet surfers and the like, do not know what's happening, do not perhaps understand what it means, and probably do not care if we just tip over into the abyss.

"Unfortunately, in a self-defeating sort of way, the "Paid News" issue has been framed as if it is an activity restricted to election time alone, afflicting only the regional language press. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

"The truth is, "Paid News" is not just confined to politics; it has seeped into almost every bit of what a citizen-consumer receives – business, sports, cinema, celebrity, interviews, columns; even in fact the TV listings and cricket scorecards. The truth is, "Paid News" is not just a regional language phenomenon. In fact it was pioneered by the pathbreakers of the English language media. The truth is, it is not just newspapers that are guilty but television, too. It is not just the supplements or inside pages where the sacrilege is happening, it is the front page, too, starting all the way from the masthead down to the imprint line. And it is not just an election time activity, but a 24x7x365 practice.

"Worse, what at best used to be an individual

transgression earlier, at the hands of the black sheep of the business, has become an institutional practice — actively encouraged, promoted and practiced as a "monetisation" tactic by rapacious proprietors, promoters, managers and owner-editors whose eye is only on the bottomline.

"However, the key impact of 'Journalism for Sale' is clearly on our democracy. It fools the voter by slipping an advertisement as news. It shuts out parties and politicians who cannot afford to pay for their coverage, or do not want to. When the media is open and available only to those who have the money, there is a problem.

"Earlier we couldn't trust the advertisements, now we are being told not to trust the news either. Many Indian newspapers now run disclaimers on their advertisements. Soon, will it be time to run disclaimers on their news, too?

"The irony is Indian journalism has gone up for sale at a time when Indian journalism is at its most profitable. Whereas the media in the West, especially the United States, are seeing a southward dip in circulations, readerships and advertising revenues, Indian media is thriving on all those fronts. Indian media houses, listed and otherwise, continue to post creditable returns. So, the sale is happening not out of need, but plain greed.

"Or it is happening before the graph turns here, too.

"What is interesting to note is that, forget news consumers, even news producers cannot any more identify the intrusion between news and advertising. In other words, it is happening with a subtlety, at a level, degree, speed and in a manner you cannot notice.

"However it would be myopic to look at "Paid News" only as a nefarious election time activity in the regional press. We need to turn the spotlight on journalism being up for sale across the board, all the time, everywhere. We should look at not just the institutional virus but also the individual one that is now assuming a humongous form, threatening the very credibility of the profession.

"Allegations of extortion by editors before publishing news, the use of information as blackmail by reporters, the publication of false and potentially damaging news for a price at the hands of vested interests, the proximity between journalists and politicians in helping strike deals of mutual benefit, rumours of gigantic commissions paid to journalists for ensuring some kinds

of news see the light of day (or don't) are too many, all too frequent and all too scarily widespread to be dismissed as an exception.

"What is happening now to Indian journalism broadly coincides with four touch points in contemporary Indian media history. One, it seems to have taken off at great speed after liberalization began in 1991. Two, it seems to have rocketed after the headquarters of the Indian media moved from business hub Bombay to political hub Delhi. Three, it seems to have gained wider currency with the rise of owner-editors. And, four, it is happening at a point of time when the Indian news consumer now has other interesting distractions in life and has probably not noticed what's happening or doesn't care.

"Or doesn't expect better.

"Certainly, the media is not a charitable enterprise; it is a very expensive business. It has to survive (and even marginally thrive) if it has to tell the story. And it is a very foolish proprietor or promoter who doesn't want to do that. But a good question to ask is what are Indian media houses doing with the money from the sale of journalism? How much of the returns are they ploughing back into the business? How much is going back into editorial coverage, into the big stories of the day? How many new foreign correspondents from India have been posted abroad? How many new reporters and photographers go into Bharat to bring stories that India should listen to? Where are the big, expensive, time-consuming carefully investigated pieces?

"Do we have a story to tell any longer? Or do we just have a story to sell?



(L to R) Mahesh Vijapurkar, Krishna Prasad, Jehangir Patel, S. V. Raju, Meera Sanyal

"Of course, it is easy to get overly self-righteous about what's happening, but let us not pretend that Indian journalism was the most angelic profession before the sale of journalism began. It never was, isn't, and never will be at this rate. Let us also not pretend that journalism is being sold in India alone; it has happened elsewhere and is probably happening elsewhere even as we speak.

"The difference is that in other nations, proprietors and promoters have reacted positively to the backlash, taken corrective steps and put in place institutional mechanisms. Here, however, each expression of outrage at each new transgression, has only emboldened the offenders to get even more brazen. More importantly, unlike in the West, the brand leaders and market leaders in the Indian media revel in setting a low benchmark, leaving the rest of the industry with no other option but to take the low road. In this, the biggies have made a short-term pile, but they have done India a long-term disservice.

"While media leaders and media institutions are now scurrying around to put the paste back into the tube, while there is talk of regulation and legislation and all that, we must also ponder the role of others in the media ecosystem. Does the reader have no responsibility whatsoever in getting a more credible media? Do the advertisers, the image managers, the PR flacks, who have all contributed to the mess, have no role whatsoever in reaching out to a great audience through a more credible media? Are all the responsibilities on the shoulders of the media to stem the rot?

"What is happening to the Indian media today, as

The proprietors or owners of publications in the old days were really the pioneers who stood up and fought, for example, A. D. Gorwala for *Opinion* or Minoo Masani for *Freedom First*. You also had someone like Goenka of the *Indian Express* or Cusrow Irani of *The Statesman*, in the old days, fighting the Emergency, fighting Indira Gandhi. I am not sure whether it is the structure of the proprietor-owner or the institutionalized organization that is the greater threat. At one time, American newspapers never had an advertisement on the front page and they are now closing down. San Francisco may not have a newspaper soon. Right now, *San Francisco Chronicle* is selling for one dollar and many people appear to believe it is one dollar too much - who can spend a dollar on a newspaper which makes 365 dollars in a year.

Jehangir Patel

evidenced by the phenomenon of “Paid News”, also tells us that the biggest threat the Indian “feral beast” faces is within its borders, not from outside. For years, the big players in the Indian media have blocked foreign direct investment by playing on the fear that “The Outsider” will subvert Indian democracy. Journalism for sale – on top of price-cutting, dumping, corruption and other mercenary tactics – clearly shows that the threat to India is from the Indian media.

“How ironic, therefore that the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Wall Street Journal*, was the first to take the issue of “Paid News” to a global audience just before the 2009 elections with these telling words: “The Indian media is holding Indian democracy to ransom.”

“In this the 60th year of our republic, all three pillars of our democracy – the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary – are wobbling. Now, the “Fourth Estate” too seems to be happily allowing the worms to eat into its vitals. For a few dollars more.”

Mr. Krishna Prasad, Editor, *Outlook*.
krishnaprasad@outlookindia.com

*

Darryl D'Monte

“Journalism was not all that hunky-dory prior to economic liberalization.

“One of my Editors, Girilal Jain, (one should mention his name since we are talking about Paid News) who ran both the Bombay and Delhi establishments was much reviled when the late Mr. Dhirubhai Ambani had an IPO, and he offered him some shares and he was not able to pay for them. So, Dhirubhai arranged with a bank for a loan on the pledge of those shares! And that attracted a lot of media attention in those days. Someone even wrote a piece on it in the *Sunday Observer*. Girilal got excited about it saying it was all middle class morality and we should be more pragmatic.

“What has changed is the institutionalization of that form of corruption. For instance, the concept of private treaties where the publication enters into an agreement with a company to buy a certain number of shares, and they are paid for by advertising. Just imagine a company which nobody knows about, enters into a private treaty with a known publication or a television channel and is up to any kind of skulduggery before the share offering; how will the publication or TV channel which owns, say, 5% percent of the shares possibly report such skulduggery? On the contrary, they would have a

vested interest in plugging it. So, it is a very institutionalized and serious form of corruption.

“When a newspaper accepts payment to write about parties and social events, we thought it was not the main business of journalism. When we saw a non-entity wanting to get into Page 3 of the newspaper, it was regrettable, but not that serious. But when it comes to private treaties, it becomes very serious indeed. It is also a matter of what is for sale and what is not.

“In 1975, when the Emergency was declared, we were woken up with a great shock as it had never happened to us before. On that day, June 26, 1975, it wasn't so much what the news had to say because the news was already censored, but what the papers had to say that was important. Newspapers have two kinds of functions: one is to inform and the other is to analyse. If I remember, it was only the *Statesman* and The *Indian Express* that carried blank editorials, whereas *The Times of India* carried as its first edit something about party infighting in France, or something as inconsequential as that. Other papers printed blank spaces on their front pages to emphasize that they were prohibited from carrying any news of the Emergency. So, what the newspaper reports and thinks becomes very important.

“In 2005, there was an Indo-British Literary Festival called Kitab at the NCPA in Mumbai where there were some British editors as well as some Indian journalists. I had chaired that meeting and I asked that since everything was up for sale, and since we were among friends, how much was the first editorial worth? Since it



Darryl D'Monte making a point to an attentive audience.

was only a matter of money, let's not be formal about it, I said. I thought there would be a titter but there was a kind of deathly silence as people thought, I presume, that it was such an affront to even suggest such a thing. Though I am out of newspapers, people tell me that it is not inconceivable nowadays for even editorials to be paid for. I am not sure that it is true, whether it's just one of those statements people make. But everything is tainted by this kind of corruption. You don't know what you are seeing is true or not, and that robs newspapers of its most important quality - its credibility.

"I mentioned at the Kitab Festival that in the good old days of the *Sunday Times* before Murdoch bought it, when Harold Evans was the Editor, he carried a tremendous investigative series on the drug Thalidomide which was given to pregnant women to provide relief from morning sickness, but the side-effect of the drug was that children born were malformed. United Distillers, the company which manufactured the drug, as its name suggests, was one of the biggest advertisers of liquor and certainly the newspaper would have suffered tremendously when United Distillers pulled out as a result of this campaign. But Harold Evans went on, regardless and the paper must have lost an endless amount of money from all these ads. that were pulled out, but he and the newspaper were responsible for the compensation of millions of pounds that were received by the victims of that tragedy.

"I think the corruption of the media has gone along with the diminishing of the role of the editor. This is also a very serious issue. You have certain examples. But, by and large, I can fully agree that editors of the past were reclusive and formidable figures with whom we did not have much contact, but they retained, for the most part, their integrity. Nowadays, one does not even know who the editors are and they are actually encouraged not to write because the *mantra* is that writers can be bought in the marketplace, but you need managers. So the function of editors has changed from writing to managing. The *New York Times* has been cited in this context – there was the well-known, distinguished journalist, Abe Rosenthal who was also a foreign correspondent in Delhi and has had a close association with India. He became the Managing Editor of the *New York Times*. It is understandable when somebody becomes a Managing Editor after a long career as a crime reporter, a chief reporter or as a foreign correspondent, since his job as a Managing Editor is to manage other journalists in their news. But to pitchfork somebody directly into that function and he does nothing, not even writes a line, except when a new

publication or a supplement is launched, is inappropriate.

"The very role of not forming public opinion is a very serious issue for Indian democracy. If we get our news and views largely from the media, or else we are left to people's hearsay, it is a very serious issue. Let me give you an example from the area which I am familiar with, which is environmental hazards. If you see opinion polls in the United States till 2007-08, something like 71% of Americans believed that climate change was a serious issue. A year later, it dropped to 58%. In other words, a vast number of Americans do not believe that it is a serious issue.

"We are discussing paid news which has all its ramifications which Krishna Prasad talked about. It is a very serious issue, as the media gives us our news and our views and if that trust is broken, that credibility is lost, where else do we turn?

"If the media loses its role as the chief vehicle for news and views, then we lapse into all this kind of make-believe and falsehood and distortion that has very serious implications for Indian democracy. News websites are important in America and Britain and in industrial countries where they are serving an important purpose. But in a country where literacy is just growing, all the media are flourishing because of rising literacy levels and increasing readership and viewership figures. If the media becomes suspect and its credibility is lost, I think the implications are absolutely incalculable because in the whole discourse of democracy, of issues being discussed, there is no other vehicle for these issues to be aired."

Darryl D'Monte, Chairperson, Forum of Environmental Journalists of India (FEJI) International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ). darryldmonte@gmail

*

Mahesh Vijapurkar

"It is wrong to assume that 'paid news' is a rash that somebody woke up with and it has now broken out as an epidemic in India. It goes back to the mid-90s and it started in smaller Indian language newspapers across the country. I still remember that in the context of limits to expenditure stipulated by the Election Commission, candidates found it easier and convenient to pay in black to small newspapers. A newspaper which probably printed 500 copies in a constituency would print a lac of copies and also took care of its distribution. The candidate did not have to account for the money nor take on the pain of distributing a pamphlet he would otherwise have had

to. Moreover it had the added advantage of coming as news in the newspapers.

“Recently, I saw on a business TV channel an advertising pundit saying that only 27% of readers believed in advertisements and therefore the craving for editorial space. But then we also have heard of newspaper publishers saying in the past – “news is the stuff you put between advertisements”. I would rather have this old-world definition to sustain now than to have paid-for-stuff put in-between advertisements. If that happens, I would be very happy if all of us decide to switch off the news channels and stop reading the newspapers because if it is not giving credible information verified by a professional journalist to the extent feasible and as factual as is possible it’s of no value to me.

“Having said this, **I would hold public relations (PR) institutions largely responsible for the manner in which corruption is growing amongst media professionals.** There could be exceptions of PR houses which manage their clients as well as the interests of the newspapers and the readers. But they would be very difficult to find these days.

“**What happens during Election time:** We are talking of election time, of people paying crores of rupees. I have heard this in 1995 about newspaper barons in certain parts of Maharashtra who run chains of newspapers. They hold meetings of their correspondents and stringers, who survive on Rs.500 or less a month. They are set targets particularly before an election of the volume of paid news they are expected to bring in and for which they would receive a 15% incentive.

“I remember trying to help small newspapers informally – when a newspaper editor from a major town asked could he have a correspondent in Mumbai, I just told a friend that an editor was looking for a good reporter, would he take it? He is taken but is sacked in three months because he did not lobby for advertisements in the government offices. He was needed, not for news-gathering but for lobbying. This is, believe me, the norm.

“In 1985-86, newspaper journalists would be invited for press conferences for IPOs - in those days, IPOs were called ‘new issues’. People like me in Ahmedabad who had no reason to attend a business related press conference would be persuaded to come and sit in because the PR Agency which had arranged the press conference wanted to show a sizable audience to the client. After the press conference was over, as the press persons walk

out they would be handed gifts. This came to such a pass that in 1994-95, I saw people being asked to sign for the gifts so that they don’t come again and claim! I can give you instances of press conferences held in Ahmedabad, when handpicked people were taken separately to a suite for a meeting with the promoters for assured coverage. I have known of Bureau Chiefs who left carelessly in their cupboards, promoters’ quota of shares valued in 1994 at some Rs.1.6 lacs at face value. How much it would be now is anybody’s guess.

“**We are talking of corruption as if it is prevalent only today,** but this is something which has been creeping on us and we have, as media and newspaper houses, just ignored it. There have been cases when somebody goes to Akbarallys to buy ten thermos flasks, he would be asked – “are you holding a press conference?” He would be told – please buy 150, because even if you don’t invite more than ten, 100 will turn up! That was the case in Mumbai. Credibility has been eroding for a long, long time.

“**In the mid-90s, there have been cases of politicians owing newspapers** who would go in for this paid news and then make a deal with political leaders to ensure space for the rival party, because the newspaper wanted to appear credible; but appearing credible is far different from being credible.

“**When I started as an apprentice reporter we couldn’t afford to eat out.** Our Chief Reporter had a solution. He would suggest we go and attend the local Rotary Club meeting. He would tell us “you are a bachelor, and here is the opportunity for you to have your meal at a five-star hotel and you are not required to file a report”. This was not an isolated instance, but as an industry, we should have known this was not right but we chose to ignore this then.

“**According to credible reports each candidate in western Maharashtra, had set aside Rs.50 lacs for media management.** In Andhra Pradesh, every evening during election time, a newspaper reporter had to go to the candidates’ constituency office and collect Rs.5000 in cash and a bottle of whisky. If a candidate holds a rally at a distant place which is crucial for his election, a PR agency herds journalists into an air-conditioned bus, takes them to the rally and bring them back. Why is it that newspapers have allowed this? If you go to a foreign country on a junket paid for by the host country’s Ministry of Tourism, shouldn’t the newspaper say that it was a sponsored trip?

In fact, when I was interacting with Sevanti Ninan on a very well-organized website called *The Hoot* about the impending issue of paid news, just before the elections, she asked if I could cite names? I told her it would be easy for me to mention the newspapers which would not normally indulge in this – *The Hindu*, *The Telegraph*, *The Tribune*, Some other newspapers too might be clean but I couldn't vouch for all of them, but I would suspect that they would be honest. But, no, because I am an individual, I couldn't name names. In fact, I would like to share a bit of correspondence with an eminent newspaper editor about the issues that needed to be looked at after the Sainath story broke, but nothing happened. The points are:

- A newspaper charged goodwill money up to Rs.20 lacs per serious candidate, it had little to do with the slant of the stories.
- One newspaper had a meeting of elected MLAs where they resolved and asserted that they did not pay any money to the newspaper. Each candidate in Pune, as I said earlier, had set aside Rs.50 lacs for media management. These elected politicians who went to the newspaper office and poured out their honesty had a problem: if they made deals with the management, some journalists were miffed. So apart from the paid news deals with the management, journalists also had to be paid separately.
- Television channels failed to mention that they were running sponsored interviews during the elections, but most of them did that. It's completely paid for – an advertisement which runs for 15, 20 or 25 minutes without any interruption or questions, it's just a monologue.
- The newspaper concerned did not say it was an advertisement, which was a time-honoured way of printing 'Advt.' at the top or the bottom which would mean we (the newspaper) are not culpable for the content. It said only 'election image initiative' or some such thing.
- Editorials in Marathi newspapers have been written on payment. They are known as great editorial writers – the newspaper is known only for editorials and written perhaps in the style of Mark Twain – writing

with the fist. They were all for sale.

In fact, we as individuals tried our best, probably not enough, but it did not seem to count because the entire industry is now awash with it. A speaker spoke about even cricket teams' names not getting mentioned. I believe, it started in Karnataka in the local League where if the team's name has to be identified, Rs.10 lacs per team was the price.

Where are we heading? I think it makes sense now not to be a journalist, it makes sense to be a newspaper publisher, because money counts and that's what they are looking for. Ask any person, perhaps a defeated candidate, the travails of getting media attention – the poor, the middle-class, the commuter, the consumer doesn't get media attention. A person who has everything can call the shots, can hire a PR agency, can just walk into a newspaper office and be treated with respect.

When the late C. R. Irani, then the Editor of *The Statesman* was part of a demonstration near Churchgate on the Black Bill of Bihar¹, I remember asking him – "You are all coming to the streets and you are demeaning or downplaying or discounting your newspaper's ability to present facts to argue your case. And, as editors, you don't even give a paragraph for the thousands of rallies that come to Churchgate every year." So what touches Caesar seems to be more important than what touches the plebians. And if newspapers don't want to touch the issues of the plebians, it had better cease being in this business.

Mr. Mahesh Vijapurkar, formerly Bureau Chief and Deputy Editor, *The Hindu*, Mumbai.
mvijapurkar@gmail.com

*

Meera Sanyal

"I was not a politician and it is quite interesting to hear this perspective from the media. I did get a lot of media coverage (which of course stopped ten days before the elections, so I got to see both sides of how the media works). As we were going through the campaign, someone asked me how much have I spent on the media. I spent nothing since I was funding my own campaign and I had decided to stick within the limit of Rs.25 lacs, there was not any money to spend on this.

"To try and understand the media coverage of my campaign, I started speaking to the young reporters and journalists, from the TV channels and newspapers, who

¹ The Bihar Press Bill was a fierce attack on the freedom of the press passed by the Bihar Assembly on July 31 1982 in just five minutes and without discussion. The press throughout the country and not only in Patna reacted with a Bihar Bandh and later, the first ever march by journalists to Parliament on October 31,1982. For more information visit www.jstor.org/stable/3516900.

came to interview me. I asked them what actually made them come and seek my interview. To me, the contrary view, from what is being said today, came from a young journalist who works with CNN-IBN. He looked straight into my eyes and said – we became journalists because we have a social conscience, otherwise I would have been a banker!

“My experience is that the media is looking for a story. I think I was in the media because it was a story. What I did was perceived to be unusual. There are other stories, real stories that are not being reported. If you are true to the calling which has brought you into journalism school, follow that purpose and follow those real stories, because there are real stories of India out there. The reason I stood for election is that I believe that we need to do something about what is happening. I believe the reason you are becoming journalists is that you believe there is something that you can do about what is happening. You don’t have to be forced to do something that goes against what you believe in. We are privileged to live in a country where you can do what you believe in. It does not, in the end, matter whether you succeed or not, because just trying, is itself a challenge.

Ms. Meera Sanyal, Banker, and National Convenor, INDIAN LIBERAL GROUP. ilg@vsnl.net

*

Manjeet Kripalani

“I have been a journalist for most of my life, and I am proud of my profession. I am also very proud to have worked on Meera Sanyal’s campaign. I would like to tell the journalism students here, you don’t always have to be with a newspaper all your life. You can, and should, get involved in other aspects of public service. It’ll be easy for you because journalism is a public service - and we must never forget that.

“It is true that the institution of journalism is in danger. This pillar of democracy is being eroded and it is being eroded by the power of money. But we can change it, because we have a younger generation in place - you. My generation’s job is to build the intellectual institutions that will allow you, the younger set, to fulfil your dreams and the work that is necessary to uphold our democracy.

“I have some solutions. I have worked in the Indian media and I have worked in the American media for a very long time. There have been comments of there being no ethics in the American media; this is not true. In the world

of US journalism, you can survive, you can do wonderfully and you will never be penalized for being ethical. It is one of the great privileges of being a journalist.

“The things we could do: Get under the SEBI scanner: Business journalism here in India began the trend of getting paid for news and here is one way of resolving it. SEBI (Securities Exchange Board of India) can, in its corporate governance code, include the business media, and state that all business journalists have to fall within that code. When I was at *BusinessWeek* and *Forbes Magazine*, every year, we had to sign an ethics statement. It is a very detailed code of conduct which then is part of the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) in the USA. If we digress, we go to jail just like company executives do.

“When our corporate governance code was being formulated a few years ago here in India, I gave a copy of our *BusinessWeek* code to one of its committee members, urging him to include business journalists in the code. I explained that we had access to insider information, that media companies had become publicly listed and therefore had the temptation to stay on the same side as the businesses they covered, rather than being watchdogs. However, the committee looked at the code but returned it to me, saying they would not include the media in it.

“This is something we must fight for - to help maintain public trust in our profession, as also to keep temptation at bay. Business journalists must be included in the SEBI Code and it must be punishable with imprisonment.

“Have strict internal codes of ethics: While working in the US, during Christmas time, companies would send us gifts - just like they do here during Diwali time. We were not permitted to accept anything. The note in our Ethics Statement said – “no, not even that \$20 bottle of wine.” I never took even a pen from a press conference that I went to. The reason that *BusinessWeek* had the reputation it did in India was largely because everybody knew the correspondent could not be persuaded or bribed. Publications like the *Economist*, *Financial Times*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* also adhere to these standards. Paul Beckett, India bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, is a very strong editor and enforces it.

“Establish a global bureau system: The top foreign publications of the West are globally relevant because they have a bureau system which spans the world. Their correspondents are everywhere, and their voice is heard

and respected not only in their countries but around the world.

“However, that wonderful system introduced by the western publications is under pressure. In fact, the bureau system is collapsing. The main reason is expense. The US newspaper industry spends a lot of money on the bureaus. My company spent a huge amount of money just supporting me here in India so I was able to file stories that were on the ground in India and report back to the US with an authentic - and legally accountable - voice. But with the recession, new technology, and the West having to cover two very expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, money is being diverted away from the bureau system. Now reputable publications are using freelancers who do things online and aren’t always motivated to do proper reporting.

But we can do that.

“India has a marvellous opportunity waiting to be captured. Indian newspapers can actually show the world what kind of democracy India can be by building up the bureau system. Our publications should send out correspondents to foreign countries – Tokyo, Washington, Seoul, or even just in Asia – Islamabad, Colombo, Dhaka, Kathmandu, Taipei, Tokyo, Beijing, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Sydney. It will have multiple benefits:

- a) India is globalizing, our companies are everywhere, our assets are overseas, our students are abroad, and our development model is admired.
- b) Because we speak, read, write and think in the global language of English, our voice can replace the western voice, our views can replace the western view. It will create a world through which not only Indians see themselves as global players, so that the Indian voice, more representative of the emerging world, can be the dominant global voice. We tend to view India, our own country, through the eyes of the west, and the western media does a great job of that as they keep analyzing, reporting, informing on India – but through their eyes.
- c) It will create a prestigious career track for young journalists within the organization; they too should aspire to become foreign correspondents like Christiane Amanpour.

“We must try within our own organizations and press for this bureau system to be established. It’s the best way to exert India’s influence and India’s own sense of public diplomacy. Our junior minister, Mr. Shashi

Tharoor, cut short a trip to South America on January 12 when he heard about the earthquake in Haiti, went instead to Port-au-Prince, and, standing on the rubble of the United Nations building, emotionally pledged \$5 million to Haiti’s relief efforts (through Unicef). This is the kind of great press that India can get - if we start to look outward. Tharoor’s was an act of public diplomacy and could have also been a great story for our foreign correspondents. (This momentous gesture was only covered in one newspaper, *The Telegraph* of Kolkata).

“Keep media companies private: Being publicly listed is a great temptation. The press should resist it. Over the last five years, media companies in India have galloped to the stock exchanges, keen to be locally listed. This creates a vested interest with owners who started out as editors and reporters but became owners. It puts them on the same side as the stock market – and the entities and people they cover. It is a conflict of interest. It also subjects media companies to the vagaries of the stock market; in fact, as a public service, we should be insulated from the market, just like the BEST bus system is. We must try hard to keep media companies as private as possible because they should be accountable first to stakeholders i.e. the public and society, then to their shareholders. Here, the listed media companies have been tainted by the issue of pledging of shares just like Satyam was; many have sold their souls for money and journalists who I knew ten years ago, lived in the outskirts of Delhi and earned a modest income, are now in the public glare themselves, living in elite residences in the best real estate in Bombay and Delhi, and are sending their children abroad to study in American schools! It bothers me. I believe being a journalist is a profession of high prestige and low income, but more importantly one had a moral authority that nobody ever questioned.

“The great media empires were built on private money – Katharine Graham of the *Washington Post*, the families of *New York Times* were all private owners and they did this, and including *BusinessWeek*, the McGraw and Hill families. *BusinessWeek* was the flagship of the group; the whole group made money – the magazine, the book publishing, the financial information. In fact, the financial institution, Standard and Poor’s, did really well but the flagship was *BusinessWeek* because we had the moral authority in society. Even *The Times of India* is still largely family owned.

“We must be careful not to fall into the same trap as US media companies, which are now fighting for their lives. They fell into the same trap when, a few years ago, Morgan Stanley bought a piece of the *New York Times*

and started demanding 20% returns for a newspaper industry which only gets 8% to 10%. That's when the trouble began.

“Stay a public service: become a dot.org: We can save our journalistic and democratic souls if we work to make the newspapers or the media business a “dot.org” rather than a “dot.com” That way, the media industry becomes a not-for-profit business like NGOs are, and can serve without the pressure of being commercial entities like banks which are compelled to produce profits by their shareholders. This will ensure that they can continue to provide a public service. We should become NGOs because journalism is a public service and we should go back to those basics. In a sense that is already happening to journalists. I am a member of the Board of the Overseas Press Club in New York which has an annual big luncheon in which companies buy tables for the right to see and hear the brightest young journalists between the ages of 20 to 25 getting recognized for their overseas reporting. Two years ago, at one such luncheon, I found that the companies, because they were collapsing under the recession, had bought only half a table and three companies would buy and share one table. What was happening instead was that the room was flooded with NGOs – Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the climate change NGOs were all in the room and they had come to watch the young journalists – may be those who had covered the detention of prisoners or climate change. As soon as the meeting was over all the award winning journalists were offered jobs by these NGOs, because everybody knows what journalists do really well: we get access to different sources, we know how to string a story together, we collect information, we gather all the different threads of a story and then we talk about the trend we see, we talk about the story. This is a skill that nobody has, only journalists know how to do this. No one can do it better. So the NGOs are finding that while they have very good people that work with them, their heart is in the right place, but they don't know how to present their findings.

‘The NGOs have corporate sponsors who want reports that they can read and understand and don't want to analyze raw data. So NGOs are hiring journalists who are now putting together these wonderful reports. You may have noticed that Human Rights Watch now has excellent presentations that they can take straight to the press and send it to their clients. They're hiring journalists: The head of Human Rights Watch in South Asia is Meenakshi Ganguly who used to be with *Time* magazine in Delhi. So, journalists are useful, and even though the newspaper industry is in bad shape, it doesn't mean that a skill called journalism is not necessary or unused.

“Keep church and state separate: Lastly, about editors being proprietors. I worked at *Forbes* magazine in the great old days when Jim Michaels was the editor. He was the man who broke the story of Mahatma Gandhi's death to the world. He was a witness to it. Later he joined *Forbes* and worked with Malcolm Forbes and they made a great team. Malcolm was the man who got the advertising and Jim Michaels got the editorials. Jim Michaels never ever socialized with CEOs. He never saw them and his view was it was unnecessary to socialize with the people he covered because it was a terrible conflict of interest.

“Now, as you know, editors and businessmen are in the same room, all fraternizing together and that's why you don't have objectivity. We must make sure that we try and get back to the old-fashioned ways of being journalists where we really don't have to socialize with our subjects at all. Journalists have faced occasions when they had overtures made by businessmen and you simply have to refuse to socialize with them. You can socialize with your own kind and other people, but preferably not with businessmen and politicians (even if they are independent). They should be observing, they should not be involved.

Ms. Manjeet Kripalani, Executive Director, Gateway House; Indian Council on Global Relations. Former bureau chief, India, *BusinessWeek*. manjeet.kripalani@gmail.com

Participants

Benazir Badsha ● Sunil Bhandare ● R. N. Bhaskar ● Neha Dhuru ● Darryl D'monte ● Allwyn Fernandes ● Manik Hiranandani ● C. S. Kallianpur ● Ashok Karnik ● Manjeet Kripalani ● Abhijit Metha ● Farrokh Mehta ● Aspi Mistry ● Jeroo Mulla ● Sanjay Panse ● Jehangir Patel ● Dr. Girdhar Patil ● D. R. Pendse ● Roger Pereira ● Aditya Phatak ● Krishna Prasad ● S. V. Raju ● Kashmira Rao ● D. S. Ranga Rao ● Asha Sandelia ● Meera Sanyal ● S. C. Sharma ● Jane Swamy ● Hetal Thakkar ● Usha Thakkar ● A.Thyagarajan ● Mahesh Vijapurkar.

30 students of journalism from the Xavier Institute of Communications and Sophia Politechnic also participated

Timid Candidates, Pampered Journalists

Aroon Tikekar

The fact is, that today's Marathi journalism can, by no means, be called healthy.

Some questions that are agitating in the minds of media watchers of late are: Why has there been this year a sudden spurt in the number of awards announced for Marathi language journalists? Also, why is there almost a mad rush for starting new newspapers or new editions in the Marathi language at a time when every other newspaper house is facing a financial crunch? And lastly, is the Marathi readership really growing so fast despite the harbingers of tomorrow predicting a slow end for the "printed" word?

The fact is, that today's Marathi journalism can, by no means, be called healthy. Many of the recent Marathi newspapers started, without proper readership profile and without proper infrastructure, are facing constant danger of abrupt closure. When professionals abandon the slow and sure path in search of shortcuts to success, they are likely to encounter a bumpy road. Then strange and shocking things happen.

The unprecedented increase in the number of media awards in Maharashtra this year is only one such shocker. Close to 1000 awards were announced by various media organizations and others this year around 6th January, a day which is celebrated every year all over Maharashtra as "*Patrakaar Din*", it being the birth anniversary of Balshastri Jambhekar, the Father of Marathi journalism. It was almost difficult for any journalist to escape from getting some award! No journalist in position was spared, not even those who have spent hardly a couple of years in the profession. The fact that some journalists survived in this profession for long, even without any worthwhile contribution, was enough qualification to get the Lifetime Achievement Award. Surprisingly, for years now, the Marathi media persons have ceased to figure in the lists of national honours.

A closer look at the Marathi journalistic scene today reveals that the sudden rise in the number of awards closely follows the scandalous allegations of "paid news" coming to light during or immediately after the recently concluded Parliament and Assembly elections. Therefore, to insiders, the spurt in awards is not at all surprising. It is obviously yet another step down the hill of credibility for the Marathi media. In Act One of the shameful episode,

candidates contesting elections were so timid and nervous about their election prospects that they could not resist the offers of 'pay offs' from some avaricious newspaper-proprietors or on their behalf by some over-enthusiastic and ever-willing-to-do-anything-for-the-management journalists for publishing convenient news and comments. In Act Two of that despicable episode, Ministers or M.P.s or M.L.A.s or even local leaders/ businessmen in their mood of generosity "sponsored" awards for journalists for maintaining silence over their misdeeds. Every district of the Maharashtra State invariably has a Press Club or Press Union, some even two or three in a city, started with the blessings (read as funding!) of local politicians or businessmen spreading warmth and friendliness who are hell bent on pampering local journalists for obvious reasons. Ministers of the State Government who are convinced that a "strong fourth estate" is a pre-condition of any democracy, are ever willing to solve all "problems" (read as needs!) of journalists from his electorate, lawfully or even otherwise, such as acquiring a plot and constructing a building for the Press Club and donations for the "general fund" in cash or kind towards the running expenses of the Club. Why are they so sympathetic towards journalists? They are, again for obvious reasons, afraid of incurring the displeasure of the media persons who can, if displeased, harm their "fair" name.

Marathi journalists perhaps have never had it so good in the entire history of Marathi journalism. They are enjoying power without much of a responsibility at the cost of political leaders who shy away from inviting media displeasure and also rich local businessmen who are crazy about publicity. That takes us to the second question: Do we require so many newspapers? Some districts have registered as many as 75 or 100 newspapers. It is difficult to believe that all these so called newspapers are carrying out the responsibility entrusted to them in a democratic set up. The time has come to define once more what a newspaper is and what it is supposed to do. For starting a "newspaper" has become an honorable profession to launder black money, or to acquire a political clout, even to blackmail. It was pathetic to see the young inexperienced brats along with "seasoned" and insolent representatives of the Fourth Estate strutting around at election time asking opinionated questions to one and

all. For most of them journalism appears to be a privilege and not a responsibility, a power and not a duty. Being awarded too quickly and too easily is a sure way to get a bloated ego and that is a danger to society.

For sure, there is no need to lose heart. Every beginning fortunately has an end. That is the law of

Nature. The days when credibility of a newspaper is of utmost importance will be here again.

DR. AROON TIKEKAR is a well-known journalist and an author of books in Marathi and English. He was editor of the Marathi daily *Loksatta*, for over a decade and advisor to two other Marathi dailies. aroontikekar@gmail.com



This month in May 1953

Common Endeavour

By Prabhakar Padhye

On countless occasions, man has deluded himself with the belief that at last the truth about himself and the universe was in his grasp. Repeatedly, man has cherished the illusion that he was in the possession of the secret of life and the universe. Out of this belief have been born numerous systems of thought and sects of religion which promised man his ultimate salvation either here or in heaven. There have been periods when these systems and sects have created illusions of progress. There have been times when they have helped man to take a leap of progress.

But this leap has been a leap in the dark. For no falsehood can solve the real problems of man. The whole history of science has been a crying proof of this. Science may or may not have made for human happiness. But it certainly has done one great thing. It has permanently posited the value of truth. For no proposition of science can be formulated by abandoning – ever so slightly – the irreconcilable adherence to truth. Therefore no amount of illusion can secure real progress. It can certainly produce illusions of progress, but a stage comes when the illusions burst and the inner life of man lies exposed, forlorn and frustrated.

Excerpted from the lead article in
Freedom First, May, 1953.

*

A Fallen Angel

Pablo Picasso, the communist painter of the “Dove of Peace” fame has painted a portrait of Stalin which last month caused a flutter in many a communist dove-cote in France and Russia. In Paris the Soviet Ambassador to France protested to the French Communist Party against its publication in the communist literary weekly, *Les Lettres*

Francais while in Moscow the Soviet Minister of Culture came out with a statement which said the portrait “does not correctly represent the soul of the great Stalin.



However, the French Communist Party, which taking the cue hastily passed a resolution disapproving of the painting, was more specific in its reason for the disapproval. The Party’s grievance is that Picasso’s portrait of Stalin is “in the vein of his dove” wherein Stalin is presented as “an idealistic but bothered young man...with a stove pipe neck” and moustaches “of daily convenience but not of majesty.” To which Picasso naively protested that it was “an expression of my great respect and affection.”

Thus Picasso who had soared to dizzy heights of fame on the wings of his “Dove of Peace” has crashed to the ground with its antithesis.

*

Many Voices

In Budapest, where the portly Matyas Rakosi holds sway, they tell the story of an old man who walked down Stalin Avenue one day, mumbling to himself: “The fat scoundrel ought to be hanged. The fat scoundrel ought to be hanged.” Soon a firm hand grasped the old man’s shoulder and spun him around. It was an agent of the Secret Police. “Whom are you calling a ‘fat scoundrel’?” he demanded. “Who do you think ought to be hanged?” The old man thought for a moment. “Tito, of course” he finally said. “And whom were you thinking of?”

- George May in the *New York Times*, March 29, 1953

*

Shivaji's Statue in the Arabian Sea

Viewed from the Security Angle

P. M. Kamath



There has been much public comment and criticism of the Maharashtra government's plans to erect a Shivaji Statue in the Arabian Sea. Recently one Mr. Joe Eruppakkatt, Society of St Paul, New York has initiated on the internet, the demand for a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the Maharashtra government's plan. The PIL speaks about waste of resources involved in an expenditure of Rs.350 crores to erect the statue. The cost is bound to escalate once the work starts. The suggestion for a PIL is based on the background of insufficient rains and consequent drought in over 27 districts in Maharashtra. I understand that a petition has been submitted to the Bombay High court.

A similar public plea was made by Kumar Ketkar, Editor of *Lok Satta* in his editorial on June 4, 2008. Its English version. "All the problems have been solved. Now let's build a statue" appeared in the *Indian Express* on June 6, 2008. While highly impressed by Ketkar's critique of the Maharashtra government's plans to erect a statue of the great Maratha warrior in the Arabian Sea his criticism of the Maharashtra government's proposal is purely from a domestic perspective and makes a convincing case that it was a waste of scarce resources when there were hundreds of suicides of farmers, cases of death by malnutrition and thousands of children were denied the benefit of free education.

However, both these public pleas have ignored the tremendous potential of such a Shivaji statue in the Arabian Sea in promoting international and domestic tourism on the one hand and at the same time its potential to function as the first line of defence and as an intelligence gathering centre. What comes to mind is the significant role played by the Statue of Liberty in promoting tourism in New York. Though the statue was gifted by France to the US, when the US erected it, she was neither economically nor politically a major power. But the Statue of Liberty helped diverse nationalities in New York to unite.

What really changed my approach to the Shivaji Statue was not only its potential in promoting national and international tourism but also the significant role it can play in our security planning after the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks. None could have anticipated in June 2008 when Ketkar wrote his piece that something like 26/11 could happen in Mumbai. Neither Indian policy makers had any clue on the impending attack, nor did the Americans have any clue of 9/11. Both the countries had intelligence, but that was ignored.

The Mumbai attackers used the sea route, a first in the history of terrorism as was the use of civilian airplanes by Al Qaeda terrorists in 9/11. This unique fact must change every right thinking Indians' approach to the proposal to erect a statue in the Arabian Sea. We should now see it not only from a tourism angle but also from a security angle as well. Mr. Ketkar's piece referred to above when he concluded by saying "such a statue, standing in the middle of the sea, warning all terrorists to keep off Mumbai..." might have been said mockingly, but it is truly an important function that can be performed by intelligence and security set up that could be located at the site of the Shivaji statue.

Not only should we welcome a Shivaji statue off the Mumbai coast, but I also suggest that every Indian state government blessed with a chunk of coastline and EEZ, should erect statues of regional historical figures with the help of the federal government. Beginning from Gujarat on the west coast and West Bengal on the east coast, states should create a chain of statues to look like a necklace of pearls around India's vast coastal lines joining at Kanyakumari. Indian history is full of stories of the valour of various rulers. The pendant in the necklace of statues could be an attractive statue of Jhansi ki Rani at the confluence of the Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

These statues, apart from acting as the first line of defence will promote national tourism. It would help in promoting national unity through equal respect for the nation's major regional heroes.

DR. P. M. KAMATH, formerly Professor of Politics, Mumbai University is currently Hon. Director, VPM's Centre for International Studies, Mumbai. pmkamath@vsnl.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.

The Headley Affair

1. David Headley, US citizen of Pak origin, is in the news as his involvement in L-e-T's nefarious designs brings into focus a new tactic used by the terrorists. Persons who would normally not be suspected of being associated with 'jihad' are being used for attacks on the unsuspecting world. Headley came to India, stayed as a guest, made friends, carried out recce of various target areas and fed his controllers information to plan their attacks. His arrest and prosecution in the US raised doubts about his background. It was speculated that he was a US agent who had been turned around to become a double agent, helping the terrorists and betraying US intelligence. He was connected with the Mumbai carnage (26/11) and could be involved in plotting many more attacks in India. There were allegations that the US was protecting him from Indian interrogation to hide his US intelligence connection; that he would be allowed to escape punishment etc. Even after Headley's plea bargaining, there were conflicting reports that he would be available for questioning by Indian police but not for prosecution, that they would not have direct access to him, that he was bound by the agreement to tell the truth. Headley's confession has revealed the role of serving Pak army officers in terrorist training and planning, which is what India has been claiming all along.

1. There are extreme reactions to the US treatment of Headley: One section believes that the US is hoodwinking India by raising legal barriers. Another section argues that US has already provided relevant information to India and there are judicial constraints in allowing foreign agencies to interrogate Headley as long as he is in court custody. For India, it is necessary to have Headley in custody to unearth his network in India. Sending a questionnaire to the US would not be an effective interrogation. In the shadowy world of spy and counter-spy, simple things get complicated. Whether or not Headley was a double agent should not matter to India as long as his L-e-T links are exposed. He will not be available for extradition according to his plea bargain but it is claimed that he can testify as a witness in an Indian court. His confession has already substantiated the charge that L-e-T was behind the 26/11 attack. The Headley case goes beyond the issue of his interrogation. It is a test case for judging US credentials on strategic cooperation with India. Shortly, we should know whether Headley is allowed to escape lightly despite his role in the death of 5 US citizens in the 26/11 attack. It would also clear doubts whether the US is willing to embarrass Pakistan, another strategic partner, by exposing the role of Pakistan's serving officers in terrorist activities. Let us withhold judgment on US sincerity and willingness to cooperate with India.

Untouchable Amitabh

2. Political prejudices have reached a new low. There was great ruckus in the Congress Party because Amitabh Bachchan was invited to the inauguration of the second lane of the Bandra-Worli Sea link in Mumbai. The Chief Minister and Amitabh were seen sitting next to each other at the ceremony, which was highly objectionable, according to the Gandhi loyalists. The Big B is no longer a friend of the Gandhis as he was in the days of Rajiv Gandhi; in fact he is in the opposite camp. He is also a Brand Ambassador for Modi's Gujarat, which is the ultimate no no. To the limited vision of the palace guards of the Gandhis, this is as bad as being a terrorist. How was he invited for such a 'sensitive' function? Who invited him? Why did the CM attend such a function? Is Amitabh prepared to denounce Modi for the 2002 riots? These were the angry questions raised all the way from the national

2. One wonders if the 'Palace' (10 Jan Path) is really that paranoid. It is hoped that Sonia and Rahul have enough maturity to ignore such happenings. After all it was only a civic function, not a political conclave. Amitabh is an icon in this country, even if he is perceived to be in the opposite political camp. He deserves to be invited to all civic programmes; in fact he adds to the grandeur of any function with his presence. Whosoever invited him needs to be congratulated. Hopefully, the 'Palace' will clarify its stand on the matter for the edification of the Praetorian Guards that the leaders of the present day India have not lost their broadmindedness and sense of proportion. We waited with bated breath to be assured that common sense prevails even in politics. No specific reaction came from the 'Palace' but congressmen were apparently asked to go easy on Amitabh as the whole shenanigan had become

capital. The CM backtracked and confessed that had he known that Amitabh was to be present, he would not have attended the function. The CM proved his undying loyalty to the Delhi throne and his chair has been saved (?)

counter productive. Asking Amitabh to pass the ultimate test of denouncing Modi can be likened to the Stalinist requirement of ratting on one's dear ones to prove loyalty to the Communist Party. Leave it to the courts to judge Modi's culpability rather than compel everybody to declare his verdict on Modi.

Indo-Pak Talks Revisited

3. The Foreign Secretary level talks which began on February 25 amidst recriminations and Pak one-upmanship have been buried without any regret. There was no hope to start with; one wondered why India agreed to the talks when Pakistan had not initiated any measures to control terrorism. Pakistan was itself completely disinterested and had indicated that it was India which had climbed down and sought the talks. With such deficit of goodwill, the talks had no hopes of success. It is good that India has put an end to the charade.

3. True that in a civilized world, all disputes should be solved through negotiations; Violence and recriminations do not solve any problem. They only create more problems. Ultimately, India's differences with Pakistan will have to be resolved by sitting across the table but that cannot be done when one side treats the willingness to have a dialogue as a sign of weakness. Unfortunately, Pakistan treats India's reasonableness as a sign of weakness. Pakistan which was desperate a year back is presenting an aggressive facade knowing that the US needs Pakistan's help to get out of Afghanistan. Therein lies the rub!

Intellectual Chicanery

4. Last month a question was raised in this column whether a war on naxalites was justified. In this century, the state of war concept is changing fast. Can terrorism and Maoist violence be considered a state of undeclared war? Both are an attack on the State. International law has to do a rethink about defining war. Sri Lanka waged a war on the LTTE without worrying about world opinion and put an end to secessionism. The massacre of 76 CRPF men at Dantewada (April 6) demands an answer to this question besides raising questions about the will of the Government to meet the problem head on. It does not inspire confidence that it would take up the challenge and finish the job. There are too many voices making a lot of noise but not much sense.

To come back to the question as to whether M. F. Husain would have dared to paint the Prophet, it is possible that as a good Muslim the idea didn't occur to him. So how come he took such scandalous liberties with Hindu deities? Could it be because the artist thought he intuited the true nature of Hinduism, that in it there are no scandalous liberties deserving of censorship? By bearing witness to its capacity of tolerance was the artist willy-nilly demonstrating that, good Muslim apart, he was also a good 'Hindu'?

To bad he was proved wrong about the tolerance and had to exile himself. Has that 'strengthened' Hinduism or 'weakened' it?

Jug Suraiya, *The Times of India*, March 24, 2010

4. The Dantewada massacre is a part of an undeclared war. There is still lack of consensus on how to tackle it. If the Union Home Minister talks of strong action, some Chief Minister has an opposite view. The Union Home Minister's colleagues in the party, like Digvijay Singh and Manishankar Aiyar are not far behind in sabotaging his action plans. When the Government talks of keeping all options open to use the Defence Forces if needed, the Air Force Chief promptly declares why the Air Force should not be used; the Army Chief declares that the CRPF was not well trained. The CRPF is found to be working without proper water supply, medical facilities et al. Is this the way to fight a war? The country needs to show a deeper resolve and will to fight. To add to the confusion, white-collar supporters of Maoists still argue that in a 'sham democracy', violent reaction against security forces is understandable. Nothing fazes those blinded by ideology! The fact that even after such gruesome mass murder, certain intellectuals are allowed to support the Maoists on national TV speaks volumes for the state of democracy in India. The debate rages how the grievances of the adivasis need to be resolved but no wise man has any plan of action. Platitudes abound. The problem is that we believe in the power of the spoken word but do not realise that discussion and debate are no substitute for action. We must thank the BJP for supporting any strong action by the Government – for once!

Readers are invited to send in their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokarnik2001@yahoo.co.in

The problem in India, particularly since economic liberalisation in 1991, is not wealth creation. Nor is it democratic institutions. It is governance, the inability to deliver freedoms for the vast majority of its people. Politics and business have worked together to use power as a means of enrichment. The comfortable classes could have been active in the public realm. Unlike in authoritarian states, they would not have been punished for causing trouble. They chose not to. The level of complicity is, therefore, surely higher.

John Kampfner, CEO, Index on Censorship, London in *The Times of India*, January 24

Gujarat at 50

An Introspective Look

Amit Dholakia

As part of the only-one-of-its-kind federal Union of India, Gujarat has everything that the other Indian states can feel delight or embarrassment about.

Political accommodation of the linguistic-cultural identity of Gujarat within the Indian Union fifty years back was an event of enormous significance for the enterprising people of this diverse land. Gujarat confuses as well as interests its observers. As part of the only-one-of-its-kind federal Union of India, Gujarat has everything that the other Indian states can feel delight or embarrassment about: Rapid industrial growth and striking failures on human development front, deepening democracy and crass charismatic populism, powerful globalizing thrusts and strong assertions of exclusive cultural identity masked in sub-nationalist terms.

Again, like the other Indian provinces, Gujarat has interwoven streaks of pluralism and intolerance. It has its fair share of communal-minded and secular-minded people. It also comprises of people who realize that all vital elements of Gujarat's civic life need not be viewed from the extreme angles of an unsophisticated prism of communalism and secularism. There are millions of Gujaratis who deify its longest serving current Chief Minister Narendra Modi for everything that he does and doesn't, while a lesser quantity of them vilify him for exactly the opposite reasons in chorus with a large number of secular activists within and outside India. Besides, Gujarat has a cluster of people who understand that it is outrageous to identify the society and culture of Gujarat with the ideology and actions of its present ruler and fall in the trap of lumping civil society with the political class.

Gujarat has had a neat and stable two-party system for the most part of the last five decades. Nevertheless, leaders matter more than parties in Gujarat politics. Morarji Desai, Chimanbhai Patel, Madhavsinh Solanki, Shankarsinh Vaghela and Keshubhai Patel have dominated the political sector and determined its nature and outcomes at different junctures. Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party have been exercising clear supremacy for more than fifteen years now in the electoral contests at local government, state legislative assembly and parliamentary polls. Ideological penetration of soft *Hindutva*, the staggering power of Modi's charisma and his aggressive pursuit of

the development agenda have cut through the decades-old caste boundaries of Gujarat politics and put together a coalition of forward and backward castes, including a sizeable chunk of the tribal population, under the *Sangh Parivar* umbrella. The leadership vacuum and ideological stupefaction of the state Congress party further legitimize Modi's larger-than-life image among the masses.

Gujarat has steadfastly avoided any flirtation with regional parties and rabid provincialism. Experiments in creating regional parties have failed miserably in the past. The BJP has instead got regionalized and serves the need for the articulation of regional aspirations and anti-Centre ranting when required. The broadening of development has also nipped the scope for separatist political sentiments in the sub-regions of Saurashtra and Kutch. A salient feature of the state's politics is the vibrant *panchayati raj* institutions that have catalyzed valuable political change and democratic mobilization in the rural areas.

All macro-economic indicators (per capita income, reducing poverty, double digit growth rate, contribution to national GDP, investment proposals, number of SEZs, share in stock market capitalization, availability of infrastructure, uninterrupted power supply, state-wide gas grid, conducive investment climate and so on) put Gujarat at the top spot in the economic performance among the Indian states. These rapid strides taken in the past three decades have been propelled by the entrepreneurial potential of Gujarat's society, proactive leadership and high index of economic freedom. Few Indian states rejoice and reward corporate capitalism the way Gujarat does. This deeply religious society worships all Gods and god-men, but the chase for *laxmi* supersedes all reverence. Indeed, Gujarat presents a fascinating instance of a happy marriage of *Hindutva* with capitalism, of religion with globalization.

But one cannot miss the fact that economic liberalization has not been matched by a commitment to the ideal of a non-interfering state in other spheres of life. The state government as easily bans books and movies as it facilitates free market. The Cooperative sector, where

Gujarat has been a trend-setter, suffers from soaring bureaucratic controls and partisanship. In the same way, the quality of education at the school and higher education levels has witnessed steep fall due to denial of autonomy to academic institutions and stifling politicization.

The social sector and human development call for urgent attention. Gujarat needs to catch up with other forward states in the areas of literacy, health, nutrition and gender justice. The high incidence of unlawful female foeticide underscores that economic modernization is no guarantee of change of a medieval mindset. Inadequate attention paid to ecological balance in the crazy rush for growth has caused serious environmental challenges in the form of depleting forest cover, salinity ingress, pollution of rivers and other natural resources, concentration of toxic industries and so on.

As Gujarat celebrates five decades of its statehood, the potent alliance of the state power with the corporate power raises grim concerns of preserving the autonomy of Gujarat's civil society from the both. The diminishing room for political dissent and healthy discourse should not be overlooked in the dazzle of economic statistics. Contemporary Gujarat has left Gandhi far behind. The old-

fashioned model of value-based politics that the Mahatma started experimenting with on this very soil ought to be rescued from the maddening talk of economic growth by all means. Last felt during the *Navnirman* movement and in the appeal of Jayprakash Narayan on the state's youth (including the present Chief Minister) in the mid-1970s, the romance of the ideal of a corruption-free, gentle, non-violent and inclusive Gujarat sensitive to the needs of common men waits for enough adherents among the political class.

Anniversaries are an occasion to look back and look ahead. Gujarat's golden jubilee is a time for celebration of the spirit of its people as well as a time for sober reflection and stock-taking. Stereotyping the state as a *Hindutva* laboratory and Modi-land, or as the economic powerhouse - and in the process sweeping the complexities of its political and social existence under the carpet - has no meaning. It is the time for Gujarat to emerge out of the paradoxical processes of economic liberalization and create a sound base for political liberalism and moderation.

DR. AMIT DHOLAKIA is Associate Professor of Political Science at the M. S. University of Baroda and a member of the INDIAN LIBERAL GROUP.

Contemporary Gujarat – Not Yet Modern

R. C. Saxena

Contemporary Gujarat, prosperous and flourishing, is not necessarily a modern Gujarat though I sincerely wish it was so.

My surname, perhaps, belies my Gujarati origin. The truth is I am a third-generation-born Gujarati and, therefore, Gujarat is not my surrogate mother (land) though surrogacy flourishes in Gujarat in, what people say, a benign and humanitarian way.

To commemorate 50 years of Gujarat, I was tempted to fill this article with statistics which could make the other states of the Indian Republic green with envy. I chose not to do so in the firm belief that Gujarat, blessed as it is, is still a part of the larger picture that is India. When *Freedom First* requested me to contribute an article on Gujarat from a liberal perspective I first thought that I must write of, or about, the modern Gujarat since historically, and metaphysically, modernism is associated with liberalism. On serious contemplation, I concluded that I would write of the contemporary Gujarat which is not yet a modern Gujarat.

On modern Gujarat, there is a seminal work in the shape of a book "The Shaping of Modern GujaratPlurality, Hindutva and Beyond" by Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth published by Penguin in 2005, which is an authentic account of Gujarat's road to modernity covering different periods of history. It is, however, my opinion that while Gujarat may be sitting on the cusp of modernity, it is not modern in the literal, and liberal, meaning of the word. Contemporary Gujarat, prosperous and flourishing, is not necessarily a modern Gujarat though I sincerely wish it was so.

Contemporary Gujarat is the land of promise. High on the livability scale, life in Gujarat is the cynosure of all eyes. No power cuts, at least in urban Gujarat, round the year running water in urban homes, now piped gas too, excellent infrastructure in terms of surface transportation, great connectivity with other states, better

than good education facilities, a very high per capita mobile phone ownership, easily, even if costly, availability of domestic help, healthy and peaceful industrial relations, higher GDP than the national average, higher per capita income than in other states, floods of FDIs, booming markets, prospering industries, busy ports, perceived safety of its people and multitude of factors exist which make up for a land of promise.

Contemporary Gujarat is the transition from salwar kameez to the ubiquitous jeans, from revered khadi to denims and polyesters, graceful garbas to svelte catwalks, from two-wheelers to four-wheelers ownership, auspicious festivals to westernized fetes, solemnity to irreverence, classic culture to pop culture, rich to the neo rich, from serious to trivial and so on. The list of transitions is long. Yet all these do not make contemporary Gujarat modern.

It is the middle class which is said to define modernity. Gujarat has, in comparison to other states, a wider, and more affluent base of the middle class population which is steeped in social and historical prejudices. These prejudices do not allow for a conscious breaking away from the past which is so essential to be called modern. It is these prejudices which are exploited and appealed to by politicians, across party lines, restraining Gujarat from becoming truly a modern state. Not only the politicians but also the wealthy have appealed to these middle class prejudices to cater to their ulterior motives. As a result, a large segment of the population is content in having a better life style, keeping their prejudices intact, even defending them if questioned.

In comparison to contemporary Gujarat, the Gujarat of yore was indeed, contemporaneously speaking, modern. An excellent article by Prof. Niranjana Bhagat in the October 1998 issue of *Seminar* titled “Gujarat from Far and Near” chronicles the role played by the ‘mahajans’ of Gujarat. The ‘mahajans’ were the merchant guilds which propelled growth, not only in the economic sense but also in the social and educational sense in Gujarat and even outside Gujarat. The ‘mahajans’ were enterprising business leaders who brought societal changes not merely by philanthropy but also by conviction. They did this despite the adversarial presence of the Moghuls, the Portuguese, the Marathas and the British in different times of Gujarat’s history. In recent history the efforts of the mahajans were complimented by a guild of a very different and opposing persuasion called the “majoor mahajan”, a labour union of which Mahatma Gandhi was a founder member. It is these mahajans, including the majoor mahajan, which can be credited with the strong business, industrial and cultural base in Gujarat.

The mahajans in contemporary Gujarat no longer exist. They are replaced by cartels of business houses that trip over each other in currying political favours to ensure their own growth. The recent infighting in the apex Chamber of Commerce in Gujarat, resulting into even filing of criminal complaints, is a sad reflection on the failure of the business class. The present business class has, no doubt, contributed to the overall development of the state. But when it comes to removing the social and historical prejudices of its people, they have failed. Likewise the intelligentsia has failed. The prominent universities in Gujarat are bogged down with misplaced ideologies. Politics and nepotism have reduced the once famous universities of Gujarat to political *akhadas* where academic excellence takes a backseat. The M. S. University of Baroda is a case in point.

Language of a society, it is said, determines its status. Gujarati is a rich language. From Narsinh Mehta who wrote “*vaishnava janato*” to Mahatma Gandhi to K. M. Munshi to Umashankar Joshi, Gujarat has had very tall literary figures spread all across its boundaries. Kavi Narmad from Surat and Meghani from Saurashtra, wrote eloquently of the Gujarati pride. The list of prominent Gujarati poets, writers and dramatists would fill several pages.

The phonetically sweet sounding Gujarati language, particularly the nuanced accents of people in Saurashtra, is rare to be heard now-a-days. The contemporary Gujarati language spoken by a majority of the population is dismembered by hyphens, atrophied by abbreviations and corrupted by English words thanks largely to the media and Information Technology. Very few discourses and seminars are organized in the Gujarati language except for the “*hasya kavi sammelans*” and these too are aired by the media into the homes of the people.

While the middle class has grown in wealth and in numbers, there is a total disconnect between it and the dalits, the adivasis and the minorities. The minority is “shown its place” is a common refrain. Prejudices against the dalits continue to exist in the rural areas whereas in urban Gujarat though the dalits can be said to have made economic progress, the bias exists in many subtle forms. No visible effort is made by the middle class to narrow the social divisions. The state government’s mantra of development with inclusive growth must translate into the creation of a secular society. It is secular thinking which will usher inclusive growth and not claims to antiquity.

Mr. R. C. Saxena is an advocate practising in Vadodara and a member of the INDIAN LIBERAL GROUP. liberals@sify.com

Education in Gujarat

– A Personal Review

Jyotibhai Desai

Having spent over 60 years working in the field of education, I have chosen to relook at only Education for an assessment of Gujarat as it completes 50 years of its existence as a State.

I started working in Gujarat in 1950. Hence to begin, I am presenting pre-state organisations situation of rural Gujarat.

1950s

I started teaching in the 5th Standard in a primary school that was conducted by a Gandhian group in a village 52 miles off Ahmedabad.

Somewhere in November of that year, there came an inspector from the District Education Department. He found me wild, which I was, as I did not follow the expected practices of teaching. His annoyance was fanned by my refusing to change my ways of working with my children. Hence, it was, that he asked the Director of the Ashram, unless this unruly man, who has some fancy educational concepts, is removed, the school's grant will be stopped. This was conveyed to me. I said to Navalbhai, our head, that the choice is yours, I have no problem in joining some other group somewhere else. Navalbhai Shah, who in 1975 became the State Education Minister, chose me over government money. I also have to note here that after almost 20 months all the money due to the school were paid by the government. That was possible then because our centre was recognised as providing positive services to over forty five surrounding villages. This was possible in Gujarat as the State valued inputs of voluntary organisations in creating a healthier and just society.

1960s

I was now with Lok Bharati, a prestigious Gandhian Higher Educational Institution. We had a department where we conducted a two year Diploma course in Agriculture on behalf of the Government of India's Rural Institute Scheme.

An official visited the institute and instructed us to stop using Gujarati as a medium of instruction at the

Institute. Shri Nanabhai Bhatt, our founder, could not accept such a step. Hence he inquired of his accountant, "How much money have we received from the Government of India for this program?" The figure came to somewhere over a lakh of rupees. The official was handed over the cheque of that amount by Nanabhai saying, "My friend, we have chosen our ways of educating, we cannot compromise on the question of medium of instruction. We will always use Gujarati, the mother tongue of our people." The then education minister of Government of India, Dr. Shrimaliji came down all the way from Delhi to the village of Sanosra in Bhavnagar District. He said to Nanabhai, "Respected Nanabhaiji, the Government of India and myself too consider it a matter of honour that Lokbharati and you Sir, are helping us in developing rural education. Your decision to hold on to the mother tongue is welcome. Please forgive the inconvenience caused by misunderstandings of our officials!"

1970s

I was now at Vedchhi, a tribal village where Gandhi Vidyapeeth was established in 1967 and inaugurated by the then President of India, Dr. Zakir Hussain.

I was given the responsibility of developing a Graduates Basic Teacher Training College by the founder of the Vidyapeeth, the veteran Gandhian, Shri Jugatram Dave.

I got away in bending rules and taking almost full liberty in creating a curriculum to suit the needs of the wider society.

I disregarded high norms in admission for youths from very interior villages, especially for those who came from villages that were displaced by the Dam on Tapi river, the Ukai Dam.

One of our unusual features of training these youths was to involve them in participating in efforts all over India, where efforts were being made to meet the disasters, whether natural or manmade. Thus we were in North Bihar - Mushari where respected Jayaprakashji was involved in a face-to-face peace work with Naxalites, in floods of Surat and Jaipur, in anti-pollution drive by

activists in Karnataka, in Madhya Pradesh to help dacoits to get back as normal socially acceptable citizens. These dacoits had voluntarily surrendered to JP in 1970. In 1971, we were working to help the hundreds of thousands of refugees who had arrived from East Pakistan!

All this was possible because there was a strong support of the society in Gujarat. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi gave away the Certificates to the graduates of Gandhi Vidyapeeth and came to Vedchhi recognising the efforts to give education by “on the job training”. Education was looked upon as a dynamic input in creating a better society.

1980s

In 1984, UNESCO published a report of a Multinational Study of some Developments in Teacher Education in the perspective of “Life Long Education”.

The report included our Vedchhi Institute’s efforts (as India’s) and of Australia, France, Phillipines’ institutes.

Following are some notable points presented regarding the Indian Case Study:

The theory and practice, training methods and evaluation, the staffing pattern and organisations are so closely integrated that the whole program presents a unified phenomenon which has to be lived to be experienced in view of its complete totality. One can attribute only for the sake of analysis in innovative practice to the area of curriculum, training methodology or evaluation. Otherwise, all practices are highly integrated and overlap as far as various areas are concerned. In fact, this blending of innovative practices itself is the main feature of the teacher education programme of the Gandhian Vidyapeeth which looks not only to teacher preparation in all its totality but also to all innovative changes in the same way.

By contrast (to other cases studied), the pattern described in the Indian Case Study involves the student “living the role of the teacher” almost from the outset. After a period of observing school in action, including the work experience of the pupils, the student commences a period of internship. The student is involved in all the activities of the school which occupy the regular teachers. Following the principles of the Vidyapeeth, the student teacher does not consider that he has to teach and the children have to learn. “For him to teach in the classroom is to present a problem. This problem-solving approach stimulates self-learning, group learning and inter-learning among children”. Teaching practice is also for community

service and includes agricultural practice.

The integration of the curriculum of a teacher training institution received little attention in the case study reports. ... The one marked exception is the Gandhi Vidyapeeth, where the course is thematic or problem-based.

Let me say this teaching to be noticed by UNESCO was possible because there was a base of creating live education created by the stalwarts like Nanabhai, Jugatrambhai, Moolshankerbhai and others.

1990s

The graph started coming down. The virus of ‘recognition and support of the government’ had now taken its grip. In the year 1994, the bug was invited by Nai Talim leaders to get their schools integrated with the State Secondary Board.

2000s

The State decides, whom you employ, how much you pay, and what you teach.

The State wants the number of faculty to be reduced. Not providing any replacement of retirees. The method of working to be strictly strait-jacketed.

Universities are controlled by politically convenient Vice-Chancellors. The para-teachers who are paid meagre salaries (less than the daily wagers) are appointed at all levels at the discretion and whims of the State.

Any child receiving secondary education is compelled to pass the Board’s English examination if s/he has the possibility or means for higher (even 11th and 12th) studies.

And yet the State runs a campaign to “Save the Mother Tongue, Gujarati”.

Yes, now the State alone knows what’s best for the children, and the youth of Gujarat. What to teach, how to teach!

Forget learning.

Indeed this is a personal view of a person who decided to devote his life to understand learning and attempted to forget teaching.

Mr. Jyotibhai Desai is a retired teacher, educationist based in Vedchhi, Dist. Tapi 394641.

When the State of Maharashtra Was Born ...

With Great Expectations

The ICCF in association with the *Sadhana* Weekly organised a seminar within days of the Foundation of the State of Maharashtra on May 1, 1960. While we are proud that our founding members were in the forefront of this initiative, we cannot but feel a sense of disappointment at the present state of the State of Maharashtra.

Soon after the formation of the State of Maharashtra on May 1, 1960, a three-day seminar on “Problems of Maharashtra” was held on May 13, 14, and 15 under the auspices of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, the Asian Office of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and *Sadhana* Weekly on the “Problems of Maharashtra”. The 80 participants were virtually a ‘Who’s Who’ of Maharashtra.

A Report edited by Mr. B. K. Desai, with an introduction by Professor Gangadhar Gadgil was published by the Indian Committee in August 1960.

The then Chief Minister Mr. Y. B. Chavan, delivered the inaugural address, Supreme Court Justice P. B. Gajendragadkar the presidential address and the concluding speech Mr. C. D. Deshmukh then Chairman of the University Grants Commission.

The subjects covered and papers read and discussed were: General Pattern of Economic Development – Gangadhar Gadgil; Pattern of Industrial Development in Maharashtra by K. R. Ranadive; Agriculture in Maharashtra by S. H. Deshpande and V. M. Rao; Development Work in Adivasi Areas by Thakurdas Bang; Social Problems of Maharashtra by T. K. Tope; Emotional Integration and Power Politics by P. Y. Deshpande; Problems of Universities in Maharashtra by S. R. Dongerkery; Journalism: Present and Future by D. B. Karnik; and Politics in Maharashtra by N. R. Deshpande.

To give readers a flavour of what went on, on these three euphoric days marked by great expectations for the future of the State, we reproduce excerpts from Professor Gadgil’s introduction.

“The decision to establish a unilingual state of Maharashtra created an atmosphere of expectant enthusiasm and a sense of unity and responsibility among the Marathi speaking people. This was both an opportunity and a challenge. It was necessary to direct the enthusiasm into proper channels and to make a constructive use of

the new sense of responsibility. The intellectuals among others, could make a contribution towards this end. ..

“A seminar seemed to offer a most useful platform from which the intellectuals could make this contribution...the willingness of the leaders of different political parties to come together on a common platform opened out new possibilities...Bhoodan leaders like Raosaheb Patwardhan...looked upon the Seminar primarily as a means of establishing mutual understanding among different social groups and political parties.

Shri S.M.Joshi had been thinking for some time of the necessity of a non-party moral tribunal for the new state. He believed that such a tribunal of eminent and universally respected ensure political fair play, help in the elimination of corruption and other malpractices and be a prop to our young democracy...

“...The establishment of a new state within the Indian Union had provided the occasion for the Seminar...the idea of holding the seminar had given rise to varied expectations and had obtained the support of a galaxy of intellectuals and leaders working in different fields...

“...The proposed Seminar had been widely talked about and also discussed in the press. The people at large had got keenly interested and wanted to participate in it... After all it was the objective of the Seminar to properly channelize the enthusiasm of the people. Moreover, the proposed Seminar had been developing into much more than a discussion among the intellectuals. It was therefore decided to hold two public meetings, one to inaugurate the Seminar and the other to place before the public the reports of discussions at the Seminar

“The Seminar more than fulfilled the expectations of the sponsors and the participants.” Professor then went on to briefly highlight the main points from the speeches made by the speakers at the public meetings. The Seminar was divided into three Groups: Group I dealt with the

‘Problems of Economic Development’. Chaired by Dr. S. K. Muranjan, then Member Tariff Commission, Government of India. The Group critically examined the economic prospects of Maharashtra under the Third Plan. Dr. Muranjan suggested that transport, education and family planning should be accorded high priority in the State Plan. Attention was mainly devoted to problems of decentralized development.

Supreme Court Justice P. B. Gajendragadkar was the Chairman of Group II which discussed the “Problems of Integration” The discussion centred round the problems of emotional, social and administrative integration including the administrative and other difficulties experienced by Vidarbha and Marathwada, the two newly integrated regions of Maharashtra. Professor Gadgil records in the introduction: “The Group decided to recommend to the Government to set up an Administrative Reforms Committee to ensure that useful administrative practices developed in each region are preserved and not destroyed in the name of uniformity”.

Group III concerned itself with “Problems of Education and Culture” and chaired by Dr. C. D. Deshmukh. Prof. Gadgil records: “The need for greater coordination between the different universities was stressed and it was suggested that a joint board of Vice-Chancellors and other representatives of the Universities should be set up for that purpose. There was general agreement that the medium of instruction in the Universities should in the course of time be Marathi. ...It was generally regretted that the spirit of idealism was declining in the field of journalism. Yet it was recognised that commercialisation of newspapers was inevitable...The growth of yellow journalism was generally bemoaned. It was, however recognised that to suppress the evil by law would be a remedy worse than the disease. It was agreed that a slower but better method of removing the evil would be spread of education and culture...

“The administrative machinery of the state came in for considerable criticism. It was characterized as wooden, slow-moving and unsuitable for developmental purposes in a democratic state. The real evil, it was thought, was the structure of the services which has become almost authoritarian. It was suggested that the whole administrative machinery should be overhauled and that there should be devolution and delegation of powers.

“Before dispersing the concluding session decided to set up a small committee to explore the possibility of establishing a permanent organisation to hold such such seminars from year to year and to develop a non-party platform for intellectuals. Dr. C. D. Deshmukh (chairman), Justice P. B. Gajendragadkar and Dr. S. K. Muranjan were

elected members of the committee. Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil, Prof. Vasant Bapat and Barrister P. N. Karekar were elected secretaries of the Committee.

“The press gave exhaustive coverage to the proceedings of the seminar. Its work was reviewed in the editorial columns and the comments were generally favourable...A member of the Maharashtra Cabinet attended all sessions of the seminar. The Government was also represented by a civil servant who attended as an observer. Some of the recommendations of the Seminar have been accepted by the Chief Minister.”

Freedom First on the birth of Maharashtra and Gujarat

“We welcome the emergence of Maharashtra and Gujarat as the two new States of the Indian Union. Acceptance of the principle of linguistic reorganisation of States and its application to other parts of the country there was no reason why an exception should have been made in the case of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The demand of the two linguistic groups has now been accepted, after a lot of controversy, under the impact of powerful popular movements. The result of the 1957 elections, more particularly in Maharashtra, had left no room for doubt that the people as a whole in both parts of the bilingual Bombay State desired the formation of the separate States of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The Government of India and the Indian National Congress ought to have accepted that verdict of the people. The able and efficient administration that the Chief Minister Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan provided to the bilingual State did not assuage the feelings of the people and in the end their demand for bifurcation had to be conceded. The two new States of Maharashtra and Gujarat are coming into existence on the first of May. It is gratifying to note that all issues relating to bifurcation were settled between the two States by a near unanimous agreement. That augurs well for both the States. We wish the two new States all success. We further hope that the remaining problem of the border areas between the States of Maharashtra and Mysore will be soon settled on the basis of some principles. and after taking into consideration the wishes of the local population.

**Editorial comment in *Freedom First* May 1960.
Editor: V. B. Karnik**

Modi Throws the Gauntlet

Bapu Satyanarayana

Chief Minister Narendra Modi appearing in person to be grilled by the Special Investigation Team set up in the post Godhra mayhem has confounded the opposition, probably including some in his own BJP. That he submitted himself for more than six hours of intense questioning without any aides shows his self-confidence and guts which is unique in the political history of India.

His statement that the Indian law and Constitution are supreme and that he is bound by it is perhaps the first instance in judicial history that Modi by his personal example has given meaning to the dictum that nobody is above the law.

The Congress has been particularly vicious in mounting the campaign against Modi spreading all sorts of disinformation. It has never lost an opportunity to paint Modi as the incarnation of evil and the spokesperson for the Congress takes the merest of reasons to divert discussion on any subject in public debate to harp on Godhra. The intention clearly is to show him as the nemesis of the Muslim community and to score political brownie points. On the contrary an unbiased examination would reveal in what way Modi has helped Muslims. To his critics dismay Corporate heads are praising Modi and rushing to invest in Gujarat for his administration has been free of bureaucratic hurdles and approvals are given without creating hassles. Modi is personally incorruptible and shows by example what good governance is all about.

Only the other day it was interesting to watch on TV how Amitabh Bachhan was grilled about his being the brand ambassador for tourism in Gujarat. The intention of the interviewer was to see that somehow Bachhan criticises Modi and though Bachhan stood his ground making it clear that his being a brand ambassador had nothing to do with the politics of Modi. However, the interviewer was coming back again and again with frustration lit large in his face unable to trip Bachhan.

It only shows how the mainstream TV media and even the newspapers by their conduct have clearly shown how biased they are. The suspicion is that most of the owners of the media are people belonging to a certain group who seem to favour the Indira Congress presumably for ideological reasons. That is how we hear of planted news and how they are paid to advertise etc. It is really a pity that they have given a go by to journalistic ethics.

Modi's action should shame all those specially the Congress party which has tried hard to see that those involved in the 1984 Sikh genocide are protected. Whether Modi will be indicted by the findings of SIT is beside the point but whatever be the outcome of the findings, the feeling is that it will push the political popularity of Modi zooming in particular and of the BJP in general.

MR. H. R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA, Mysore is a free lance writer and a frequent contributor to *Freedom First*.
what_option@yahoo.co.in

Billion Idiots Homage

The astonishing box office success of Bollywood's latest super hit film *3 Idiots* which has reportedly grossed a staggering Rs.382 crore, raises disturbing questions about the national IQ. Although widely acclaimed by mainstream media as a telling critique of India's education system. *3 Idiots* is a flawed and naive representation of the ills afflicting the country's anaemic education system.

It tells the story of three youth floundering under pressures of exams, projects, and parental expectations in a professional engineering college. Absurdly, in this college which the much-hyped director Raju Hirani in several media interviews says is modeled on an IIT, the director bristles at the very mention of words like innovation and creative thinking. Stereotypically, in the black-and-white Bollywood tradition, the college director derives sadistic pleasure in tormenting students, often driving them to suicide.

The scary outcome of the runaway success of *3 Idiots* is legitimisation of the bollywoodisation of education. Already Bollywood's simpleton icons loom large in national development debates, and 'cultural events' hosted by education institutions are flooded by tacky Hindi song-dance jigs. Now as testified by smash hits such as *Taare Zameen Par* and *3 Idiots*, they are all set to hit upon education.

At best an average film, the stupendous popularity of *3 Idiots* is testimony to the sheer desperation of audiences who long accustomed to trashy cinema, have transformed a middling movie into the greatest digital story ever told, a homage to Bollywood by a society of a billion idiots.

Courtesy: *EducationWorld*, March 2010



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

Narendra Modi is No SIT-Ting Duck

Many people, including activists like Teesta Setalvad, regard Narendra Modi as a cruel, inhuman despot with no conscience. They are wrong. Modi is not immoral, he is amoral.

Quite predictably, the media is going overboard with Narendra Modi being summoned by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for questioning. It is being touted as a historic moment, a delayed vindication of India's justice system. The Congress party is gloating at what is perceived as Modi's discomfiture. They have both missed the plot.

Narendra Modi is not the least bit discomfited. He is probably very satisfied with the turn of events. For a long time now, he has been uncharacteristically absent from the national stage; and now he is back in the spotlight again. The national news media is all over him and he is glorying in the opportunity to play the noble martyr and to enthrall reporters – not to mention thousands in the television audience – with his witticisms.

Mere months after the post-Godhra carnage, Modi faced national elections. Logic dictated that the Gujarat populace would be so horrified and revolted by the atrocities perpetrated on the state's Muslims – with the painfully apparent complicity of the Chief Minister and his government – that Modi would be shown the door. The opposite happened. Modi was returned to power with a thumping majority. How does one explain this dichotomy?

Many people, including activists like Teesta Setalvad, regard Narendra Modi as a cruel, inhuman despot with no conscience. They are wrong. Modi is not immoral, he is amoral. Every public action of his is meticulously planned for the desired effect. Perhaps his cleverest ploy has been to equate himself with the state of Gujarat. During his interaction with the media, during and after the SIT questioning, he repeatedly portrayed the proceedings as an attack on Gujarat and its people – with Narendrabhai being merely the spokesman. This worked beautifully during the last state elections; and it will allow Modi to emerge from this apparent humiliation smelling of roses. It works because Modi has, quite inexplicably, succeeded in transforming the mindset and attitude of the average Gujarati.

The average Gujarati Hindu that long time devotee of Laxmi, has been transformed– post Godhra – into a

vengeful Vishnu; with an urgent compulsion to defend his faith. This is indeed remarkable because, although fundamentalist outfits like VHP and the Bajrang Dal have been fermenting their Hindutva agenda for decades, the majority of Gujaratis did not subscribe to their extremist views. If anything, they were regarded with amused tolerance. So did Godhra ignite some long dormant militant spark within the Gujarati populace? Like me, I am sure many Indians were astonished at the alacrity with which the man-in-the-street in Gujarat took up knives and scythes; and not only killed their perceived enemies, but slaughtered them like animals – the same Gujaratis who profess to be so fastidiously vegetarian that they recoil with horror at the sight of a piece of meat.

I am not denying that the Hindus in Gujarat had sufficient provocation. The truth about who – or what – set alight those train bogies at Godhra will, perhaps, never be fully revealed, but it is not surprising that the Muslims were perceived to be responsible. The simmering tension and mistrust among the two communities has been around for decades. What was surprising was the disproportionate reaction. Gujarat is now literally a deeply divided state, with physical walls separating the two communities in many areas. And not just divided. Many Hindus in Gujarat now regard themselves as some sort of master race, with Gujarat as their exclusive birthright. If the Muslims are allowed to remain, it is only at their sufferance. The Muslims are second class citizens and it would be better for them if they recognized and accepted the new reality.

They say that fortune favours the brave – and even the audacious. After the SIT questioning, Modi's political opponents are tying themselves into knots. The Congress, in particular, in its zeal to demonize Modi, is shooting itself in the foot. On a recent television panel, I was amazed to hear Manish Tiwari self-righteously asking Amitabh Bachchan to clarify his views on Godhra. Why Bacchan? Because he has been appointed the brand ambassador for Gujarat tourism. The connection between his function and Godhra is tenuous, at best. All the Congress is succeeded in doing is reinforcing the prevalent belief that the Congress is out to get Modi at any cost. There are no prizes for guessing that Modi has emerged the victor in this confrontation.

Narendra Modi has one purpose in life – and one purpose only – to remain in power for as long as possible; and to eventually rise to national prominence. Everything he does is directed towards this goal. He is an atypical Indian politician in the sense that money does not fascinate him. Hence, he can afford to be incorruptible and wears this like a badge of honour that hardly any of his peers

can emulate. He keeps his constituents happy by concentrating on development and creating opportunities for them to make even more money. This also serves the purpose of obliterating Godhra from their memory. And in his case, fortune does indeed favour the brave. His political opponents regularly lend him a helping hand by shooting themselves in the foot.

Mayawati's Grand Garland

We Indians may have achieved our independence from British rule, but the Dalits continue to remain second class citizens in their own country.

The multi-thousand rupee note garland worn with such aplomb by Uttar Pradesh's grande dame, Mayawati, has predictably made headlines all over the country. But for Mayawati-madam, such ostentatious displays are par for the course – and as predictable as the criticism from the elite.

By any standards of propriety, integrity and just plain class, Mayawati is the epitome of shamelessness. And she makes no apologies for it. Rather, she seems to take a positive delight in flaunting her brazenness and low bred origins in the face of more “refined” leaders like Sonia Gandhi, Advani and the like. They may express contempt for her, but they cannot get rid of her. She remains an ever present thorn in their sides.

So what accounts for her air of invulnerability? Why is it that in spite of her excesses and blatant lack of scruples, her core constituencies of Dalits and Scheduled Castes continue to adore her? It is certainly not because they are stupid. As they have proved in election after national election, they are very smart in seeing through the empty promises our politicians are so good at disseminating. And yet, in their eyes, she remains almost a goddess who can do no wrong. Who is responsible for this strange state of affairs? Ironically, it is you and me; the people write letters to the editor

and send their children to English-medium schools; the so called upper and middle class of India.

Ever since the civilization of Bharat evolved, it's people have divided themselves into upper and lower castes. And the lower castes are never allowed to forget their position in society. They are the servant class, almost by a natural order of selections; the *mochis* and *bais* and others without which the “superior” classes cannot survive, but remain invisible to them. And it does not matter if a Dalit, through dint of effort and hard work, has achieved a high level of education or corporate position. With few exceptions, they are always reminded of their inferior status. If your boss happens to be a Dalit, you may call him sir in the office, but it is unlikely that you will invite him home for dinner.

We Indians may have achieved our independence from British rule, but the Dalits continue to remain second class citizens in their own country. And so, when one of them, like Mayawati, achieves a position of national prominence and cocks a snook at their historical oppressors, they are delighted. They love her for it; and they are loath to grudge her any extravagance. Yes, Mayawati is here to stay; and the rest of us better get used to it.

Is Commitment Going Out of Style?

The last few decades have really spawned a new world, although whether it is brave or not is debatable.

There is a television reality show currently enjoying high ratings in India, called “Emotional Atyachar (Suicide)”. It's not a talent contest; and the participants are everyday people. The premise of the show is this. Applications are invited from young couples who are supposedly in a committed relationship, running from a couple of months to a few years. It's supposed to be a sort of loyalty test, where one partner suspects the fidelity of the other – usually the male. The television crew sets up an encounter with an attractive young woman planted

by them; and then secretly records their interaction with hidden cameras, over the next few days. The recorded footage is then shown to the partner who has doubts. I believe that, so far, not a single guy has passed the test.

The sequence of events usually follows a similar pattern. There is an obvious and instant physical attraction towards the “undercover agent”; and the man makes every attempt to get close to her, emotionally and physically. The female plant deliberately asks him if he

is currently in a relationship. He either denies it outright, or admits he was in one but it's all over now because he was never really into her. And in a transparent attempt at physical intimacy, he declares his love for the plant, or invites her to be his steady girlfriend. Naturally, his committed partner is appalled to watch all this; and the television crew obligingly escorts her to 'catch them in the act'. The ensuing drama can be guessed.

The show blatantly exploits the secret voyeuristic tendency in many of us to grab its audience. But that is not the point here. What grabs my attention is how casually one partner denies the other; just grab a few kisses and cuddles. The couples featured on the show have, so far, all been in their twenties, so I'm not sure if this recent phenomenon is restricted to that demographic; but I don't think it is. Commitment seems to be treated with increasing casualness these days. This is partly borne out by the statistic that almost half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. The wedding vows still contain the phrase "for better or worse", but it seems that few couples take the "for worse" part seriously. In India, the generation in their 40s and above generally stays "committed" in a sense – usually out of a sense of duty or obligation – but the young ones seem to ape the Western desire for instant gratification.

So what accounts for this change in attitude? It's

hard to pinpoint one cause, but I think sex is a major factor. Most relationships, especially among the young generation are initiated on the basis of physical attraction. Not really surprising, since we are living in a decade which places disproportionate emphasis on physical appearance; and 'looking good' is everything – not just romantically, but even career-wise. Upto around 50 years ago, the only way a man could get physically intimate with a "decent" woman was to marry her. That was also a motivation to stay with her and, over time, this developed into caring and commitment. These days, the sexual motive has become largely irrelevant and, to some extent, so has marriage. You cohabit with your partner almost on a trial and error basis. If things don't work out, or he/she doesn't give you what you want, you simply move on. No big deal.

So is this a healthy trend? It depends on one's attitude, I suppose. The last few decades have really spawned a new world, although whether it is brave or not is debatable. The music is loud and hard, same sex unions are celebrated, getting pleasure any which way is almost a fundamental right; and old-fashioned romance is for wussies. So I guess commitment is a concept whose time has come and gone. Personally, I miss the old days.

MR. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA can be contacted at leonardo8_99@yahoo.com

Ten Reasons why India will not and must not become a Superpower

During his animated one-hour lecture on ten reasons why India will not and must not become a superpower, at Toronto's Munk Centre, Dr. Ramachandra Guha lamented that in the present lower house of the Indian Parliament, not more than five members would have read a 1949 speech given by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of India's constitution, that advised the citizens of a yet-to-be-born republic to eschew three pitfalls:

- Abandon the bloody methods of revolution because that leads to anarchy
- Abandon *Bhakti* (devotion) in politics because that leads to dictatorship, and finally,
- Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy

In the speech made to the Constituent Assembly in 1949 (that led to the formation of the Indian Republic in 1950) Ambedkar had cautioned, "In politics, we will have equality, and in social and economic life, we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognizing the principle of one man-one vote and one vote, one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man, one value. How long shall we continue to

live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we shall do so only by putting our political democracy in peril."

*

According to Dr. Guha, the ten reasons that India will not and must not become a superpower are:

- Maoists extremism • Right-wing fundamentalism • Corruption • Institutional degeneration • Growing gap between the rich and the poor • Environmental degradation • Chimera of a socially conscious press • Fragmentation of the polity • Border disputes • Disturbed neighbourhood

He explained that but for business magnets, editors of national newspaper chains and federal politicians, not many in India really share the grandiose vision of the nation becoming a superpower.

Dr. Guha concluded that India would have a more pronounced role in global affairs as a "bridging power" rather than a superpower.

<http://www.generallyaboutbooks.com/2010/04/10-reasons-why-india-will-not-and-must.html>

Contributed by Mr. Mahesh Vijapurkar

Come On, Liberals: Let's Change India!

Environmental Policy in a Free Society

Sanjeev Sabhlok

Bad stewardship of the environment harms both our health and wealth. Toxic waste, polluted air and filth harm our health, but the economy suffers as well.

The liberal is deeply committed to a clean and healthy environment. Sadly, India's continuing fascination with socialism and centralised approaches has converted the country into a toxic garbage dump: our rivers and lakes are badly damaged, our wildlife and rare fauna are threatened with extinction.

Bad stewardship of the environment harms both our health and wealth. Toxic waste, polluted air and filth harm our health, but the economy suffers as well. For instance, we don't get as many visitors to the Taj Mahal as we could have because the moment they enter Agra, obnoxious stink overpowers them. Similarly we lose many economic opportunities because we can't develop nature sports or tourism in ravaged and filthy natural habitats.

Socialism, the enemy of the environment

Nehruvian socialism harmed India's environment in many ways. Despite so-called family planning, socialist policies directly led to a dramatic increase in India's population. For details please see *Breaking Free of Nehru* (page 233, <http://bfn.sabhlokcity.com/>). While a large population can be very good for a nation, it can prove fatal for the environment if the government is corrupt and incompetent and does not hold this large population to account for the harm caused.

Also, while wealthy societies have the wherewithal to clean up their rivers and lakes, socialist societies like India can't afford to do that. And our governments lack *any capacity whatsoever* to enforce *any* law. Instead, our corrupt lawmakers and their cronies have looted our natural resources for 60 years, and connived with industries that harm the environment.

Freedom is not license to harm

What would happen differently if India were to some day become a free society? In a free society everyone is accountable for the harm they cause. There is no freedom to pollute. Negative externalities are essentially ethical and governance failures (not 'market failures', as economists like to call them). The free society governance system does

not tolerate failures of ethics (accountability).

This task – of environmental stewardship in a free society – is not trivial. The harm caused cannot always be easily attributed to a particular individual. Those who cause harm do not voluntarily come forward to disclose their polluting activities, either. Indeed, in some cases entire societies collude to pass on costs to future generations! Harm such as acid rain can also spread across national borders. Environmental policy is thus a very challenging area. But by carefully investigating incentives, the free society can achieve reasonable solutions and maintain a healthy environment without reducing economic activity unnecessarily. Let me outline some of these solutions.

Non-regulatory solutions

The mere existence of negative externalities should not be assumed to call for government intervention. Where affected parties can identify each other clearly and the cost of negotiation is low, the externality can be mitigated through bargaining (see Ronald Coase's 1960 paper, *The Problem of Social Cost*). The government must therefore seek to clarify property rights and not rush into taking direct action. The use of intelligence, not brute force, is called for.

This also applies to the preservation of flora and fauna. If businesses are allocated property rights to rear and sell endangered species, then the supply of these species will increase, removing the threat to their survival. It is beyond belief that we even try to lecture others to stop using ivory, rhino horns or tiger skins. By the time we stop our puerile lectures to Chinese smugglers, all our precious animals would have died.

When have prohibitions ever worked? Legalising (and appropriately regulating) trade in environmental goods is crucial if we want a healthy environment. Let India earn an honest living from its fauna, not endanger its tigers and rhinos through puerile socialist policies that only end up benefitting smugglers and arms dealers. I have absolutely no doubt that without well-regulated property rights and legalised trade, *all* endangered species in the world will die out.

Regulatory solutions

The property rights option may not be feasible in all cases (although its applicability is quite vast). Where direct government intervention is considered necessary, the costs and benefits of all options should be carefully scrutinised and only the most effective (and efficient) solution deployed. Options include:

- a) **Market based instruments:** Creating markets for externalities, such as cap-and-trade schemes, can sometimes be viable. In these schemes, polluters receive signals directly from the market about whether they should spend money to reduce pollution or simply buy permits to pollute.
- b) **Mandatory change in behaviour:** After a cost-benefit analysis, a government could, in some cases, mandate the use of non-polluting technologies. This direct approach can minimise economic harm while reducing pollution. Mandatory restrictions or standards could be relevant for positional arms races in which it is not in anyone's interest to stop the harmful activity unless everyone else gives it up. Thus, athletes would use increasingly greater amounts of anabolic steroids unless everyone was prohibited from using them.
- c) **Mandatory insurance and good behaviour bonds:** Where the risk of environmental harm is considerable, mandatory insurance requirements can be imposed as part of licence conditions for starting a business. In some cases, good behaviour bonds can be mandated in lieu, although these tend to lock up valuable capital.
- d) **Pigovian tax:** In this case a tax is imposed on the polluter. The tax is equal in value to the harm caused. The polluter internalises the costs imposed on others, and is therefore motivated to reduce the pollution. Where specific polluters can't be readily identified,

Pigovian taxes can be imposed on upstream activities that contribute to the pollution (for instance, a general tax on all cars regardless of the actual pollution caused by a car). It is important that Pigovian taxes are offset by reducing taxes elsewhere, else resources will be transferred from the private sector to government, leading to a drop in productivity.

- e) **Criminalising the harm:** Where extremely severe harm can be caused, such as by the transportation of dangerous goods without appropriate precautions, criminal penalties can be imposed. Prohibitions may also be appropriate where identifying a specific polluter is difficult or a single polluter causes only a small part of the harm. An example is the ban on smoking in bars where no specific individual can be held responsible for cancer that a bartender may develop after working in a smoke-filled environment.

In addition, there are many other ways to preserve the environment. The problem that India faces, however, is that none of these ideas are either tried, or if tried, implemented faithfully by its corrupt governments.

Freedom Team of India

The solution for India is for its liberals (such as the readers of this esteemed magazine) to take responsibility for India and work to directly improve India's governance. The Freedom Team of India (<http://freedomteam.in/>) is a team of leaders who will, when ready, contest elections under the banner of liberty and provide good governance to India. Unfortunately, the team has struggled over the past two years to find enough leaders to start a serious political movement. I trust you will help in some way.

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

Agricultural Development in India

"The inaugural issue (November 2009) of Journal Of Emerging Knowledge On Emerging Markets has published a long paper by two economists, Amarnath Tripathi and A R Prasad, on "Agricultural Development in India: A Study on Progress, Performance and Determinants."

The paper evaluates performance and progress of Indian Agriculture since Independence. The paper also analyzes sources of agricultural growth and determinants of agricultural production. The authors use the decomposition test to analyze sources of agricultural growth and the production function approach to analyze determinants of agricultural production over the period 1950/51 through 2005/06. The study indicates that there is scope to increase both net sown area and gross sown area. The decomposition analysis indicates that rising output per hectare is the predominant source of agricultural growth for most of the crops and crop groups. The estimation of aggregate agricultural production function with both intercept and slope dummy indicates that land significantly affected the agricultural output growth during 1950/51-1964/65 and after that land became less significant and now labour and capital are significantly affecting the agricultural output growth.

The paper can read at: http://www.icainstitute.org/ojs/index.php/working_papers/article/view/15/12

Contributed by Ram Narayanan. ramn_wins@roadrunner.com

Women's Quota Bill : Another Take

Keshav Rau

The paradox is that our record of treatment of our women folk is abysmally poor.

When the Bill providing for 33 per cent reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha was passed by the Rajya Sabha, there was a lot of euphoria, dancing and merriment, particularly amongst the prominent women Members of Parliament like Sushma Swaraj, Brinda Karat. The Congress President, Sonia Gandhi, in interviews in quick succession to several TV channels, made it a point to emphasize, in the, by now characteristic style of the Gandhi family, the immense efforts put in by the family to ensure passage of the Bill, despite stiff resistance and opposition. The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Arun Jaitley, spoke of his party's commitment to the passage of the Bill. In short, all except, the Yadavs – Mulayam, Lalu and Sharad – and Mamata Banerjee, bent backwards to drive home that it was through the efforts of their respective parties that yet another historic milestone could be reached in the history of Indian democracy.

However, the vociferous support voiced by the BJP and the Left came with a caveat: There should be a full-fledged debate in the Lok Sabha without the Marshalls throwing out the dissenters as was done in the Rajya Sabha. According to Arun Jaitley, a full debate could have been possible in the Rajya Sabha also had the Treasury Benches resorted to the tactic of *just tiring out* the dissenters. Perhaps, Mr Jaitley wanted the House Chairman to sit back coolly while the MPs wrenched microphones, tore up official papers and indulged in slogan-shouting. Ultimately, the Chairman's silence and patience would have tired them out, if one is to believe Mr Jaitley. Do our MPs really tire out that easily!

In all parties, there are a sizeable number of male MPs who are opposed to the idea of reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha. With one-third of the seats not being available to them, they will find the going tough to enter the Lok Sabha once the Bill is made a law. Mulayam Singh Yadav said so in so many words. The leaders of all the parties are also aware of the opposition within their own ranks. Consequently, could there be a better way of putting off/delaying the passage of the Bill than demanding "a proper and full-fledged" debate without taking the help of the Marshalls against the MPs trying to disrupt the proceedings? Sure enough, the strategy of all the parties,

with the exception of the Congress, the DMK and a few other UPA allies, but including the Trinamool Congress (TC), NCP and the National Conference (NC) was made clear at the all-Party meet called on April 5.

The upshot of the April 5 meeting was: (a) the BJP was open to the idea of parties implementing the quota by way of ticket distribution, with the Election Commission overseeing the process and also open to the idea of revisiting the percentage itself (b) the TC, NCP, and NC, setting aside their role as constituents of the UPA Government, wanted the sub-quota demand for the Backward Classes and Muslims put forth by the Yadavs and Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) to be given a serious thought and not brushed aside lightly (c) the Left Parties, in a complete about-turn, went to the extent of being willing for a discussion of the sub-quota demand, however constitutionally untenable it may be.

Given this type of thinking, which cuts at the very root of the Quota Bill, all the parties might as well have demanded that they would allow their members to vote as per their conscience – reminiscent of Indira Gandhi's "Vote-as-per-Conscience" Call during the 1969 Presidential elections, when the Congress candidate Neelam Sanjiva Reddy was pitted against the then Vice President V.V. Giri, who resigned to contest as an Independent candidate. A vote as per one's conscience without any party whip would clearly show where the Members stand on this issue.

Ours is a country which bristles with paradoxes and also lop-sided priorities. In many of the Western countries, women got the right to vote at a very late stage of their existence; we, however, gave it from the very beginning; we elected a woman as our Prime Minister long before Britain did; the USA still cannot boast of a woman President; Germany has got a woman Chancellor only recently; within the first two decades of our Independence, we could boast of having two women Chief Ministers; in the very first Union Cabinet sworn in after Independence, there were some women ministers. We could go on expanding on this list of achievements.

At the same time, the paradox is that our record

of treatment of our women folk is abysmally poor. Demands for dowry, threats, persecutions, compulsive suicides and murders if such demands cannot be met, honour killing, female infanticide resulting in skewed male-female ratio in several States, child marriages, denial of education to the girl child, unequal distribution of family property – these are some of the ways in which the women folk are treated in this country. It was not many years ago that people in a certain village in Rajasthan egged on – or may have been forced – a young widow to fling herself on to the funeral pyre of her husband to observe the practice of *sati* – which practice the country thought had been abolished long time back. Such instances are not peculiar to Rural India; in Urban India also – and that too amongst the educated middle and upper classes – the mindset as regards women has not changed substantially.

So where are our priorities: Having more women Members of the Lower House of our Parliament or improving the plight of our women folk – in real terms? A dispassionate look at the manner in which our MPs perform would reveal that they – male and female both – are disinterested in raising such issues either in Parliament or in their respective constituencies. At any rate, how will Indian democracy be strengthened by this measure? As a matter of fact, it will only diminish the stake of the elected

representatives – male and female – in their constituencies. This is because of the rotational provision introduced in the Bill. Sharad Joshi, the sole member who opposed the Bill in the Rajya Sabha merely because he didn't like the provisions of the Bill, has come out with certain suggestions to overcome this shortcoming in the April issue of this Magazine. But it's doubtful whether the suggested solution would be any better.

In the view of this writer, no compulsive provision will either work or be beneficial for Indian democracy. The solution lies in merely sending out an advisory to all parties that they should lay down a fixed percentage of tickets to be allotted to women in every election: 10, 20, 25, 30, 33, or even 100 per cent as it thinks it fit. The matter should be left to the better judgement of the parties. This can be easily done through a process of consultation, persuasion, debate, acceptable consensus and voting. This is what democracy is all about. In all major parties, there are powerful and influential women at the helm of affairs: Sonia Gandhi in the Congress, Mayawati in the BSP, Mamata Bannerjee in the TC, Jayalalitha in the AIDMK, Sushma Swaraj in the BJP, Brinda Karat in the CPM. Aren't they sufficient to bring about the desired change? In case any party is unwilling to accept the prescription, so be it. Let the electorate judge such parties.

Shouldn't There Be a Limit to Ministers Making Populist Pronouncements?

According to Jairam Ramesh, there was no hurry in according approval to the cultivation of Bt. Brinjal. The issue, according to him, could wait. Perhaps, he was right – at least in this country where time has no value.

First, it was the issue of commercial cultivation of Bt. Brinjal. After research had been conducted on it for nine long years by scientists in various Agricultural Universities/Institutes, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee [GEAC] approved the vegetable for commercial cultivation in October 2009. Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar also endorsed the stand of the GEAC.

However, the moment some NGOs launched their protests over the green signal given to the cultivation of the vegetable, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh, with a clear eye on his popular rating, initiated a public discussion and debate in several States – virtually encouraging some more groups to voice their dissent to the approval given. In one statement of the Minister announcing a moratorium on the cultivation, the hard labour put in by several eminent scientists for nine years was made a butt end of ridicule. By implication, the GEAC lost the confidence of the Government – more specifically

the Minister concerned. Sure enough, the name of the GEAC was changed by the Minister: from "Approval Committee" to "Appraisal Committee".

According to Jairam Ramesh, there was no hurry in according approval to the cultivation of Bt. Brinjal. The issue, according to him, could wait. Perhaps, he was right – at least in this country where time has no value. Nine years of intense research could be dismissed and rubbished even without pointing out flaws in the research conducted or the methodology adopted. All because, the conclusions reached by the researchers did not conform to the popular belief.

Jairam Ramesh justified his decision by saying that he had to "balance science and society, centre and state, production and conservation". Experience has shown that in this country such a balance is rarely possible – given the type of frivolousness/bias with which each interest group concerned handles or looks at such issues. The

Minister now wants the GEAC to consult top scientists, draw a fresh protocol for specific tests that need to be conducted to “generate public confidence”. After all this stink raised against the GEAC – with the Minister being actively party to it – can there be any confidence left in the GEAC? In an unusual departure from the principle of collective responsibility of the Cabinet, another Minister in the Manmohan Singh cabinet – and that too an eminent Constitutional lawyer to boot – Kapil Sibal termed Jairam Ramesh’s decision as populist.

While clamping the moratorium and saying that there was no hurry at arriving at a decision, the Minister could well have said that he was prepared to wait till eternity. Having declared that he was the final arbiter in such matters, perhaps nothing more would be heard about Bt. Brinjal and the “fresh tests required to be conducted to generate public confidence”.

Now, the same Minister has come out with another display of populism. On Good Friday, he was called to speak at the 7th Convocation of the Indian Institute of Forest Management [IIFM] at Bhopal. Till his turn came to be called up to the lectern to deliver his address, he was quietly sitting, like all others, on the dais with his convocation robes on. The students who had come to receive their degrees also were sitting with their robes on. However, the moment Jairam Ramesh came to the lectern, he indulged in a dramatic act of “disrobing” himself: taking off the convocation gown, which he was wearing along with the hood, he thundered “I fail to understand why we stick to the same colonial practice even 60 years after Independence.” He also went on to term the practice of wearing convocation gowns as “barbaric”. He later tried to temper his outburst by telling newsmen that his utterances had “nothing to do with *swadeshi* and *videshi* debate” nor was there a need to “give the colour of East or West to make your headlines”.

No doubt, the temperature at Bhopal’s Convocation venue had touched a scorching 38 degrees Celsius on the day and time in question. No doubt, the Minister was profusely sweating. But so were the others on the dais as also in the audience. Probably, sufficient cooling arrangements may not have been provided for at the venue by the IIFM authorities. However, this could not be justification enough to brand the entire convocation ceremony as barbaric. As the Vice Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi rightly commented: “Barbaric is not the right word. If it’s to be considered barbaric in India, it should be barbaric in Oxford, Cambridge, European and American Universities also.” (Mind you! Jairam Ramesh has studied in American Universities, too.) The uncalled for outburst amounts to

terming European society – from where we have adopted this practice – as barbaric.

This apart, the Minister needs to be reminded that donning/wearing special type of robes/dresses on convocations is not an exclusive custom of the Western World. In China also, there is a significance attached to the academic dress – almost akin to robes of officialdom: long robes with long sleeves worn with a cap. Another simpler form also was introduced there: simple every day dress but with caps to indicate their status. With the passage of time, the convocation attire in China is almost similar to the practice followed in European/American Universities. The Japanese, too, love to put up a big show on such occasions and do not countenance any change year to year.

Convocation functions/graduation days symbolize significant milestones in the scholastic evolution of a student. Even the shift of a student from the secondary level to the college means something for him/her. It matters little that the country’s huge population brings to the fore large number of students in each school or college or university. For the student – from whatever strata of society he may be – such occasions matter. And, should it really matter to the Minister if some amount of pomp and regalia are associated with them?

The Minister should also remember that in every country – whatever the form of government – there is some amount of pomp and show. In our own country, there is a lot of pomp and show associated with the Republic Day, Independence Day, Beating of the Retreat functions etc. Passing out parades at the Defence and Military Academies have a meaning for the cadets passing out, and they as well as the crowds enjoy the elaborate ceremony that is observed on such occasions. In our law courts also, there is a dress code for the lawyers and judges – whatever the weather conditions.

Jairam Ramesh’s remarks at the Bhopal convocation, were promptly endorsed by BJP’s Murali Manohar Joshi, but that should not come as a surprise to any one, known, as he is, for his *swadeshi* views. However, surprisingly, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also endorsed the view, but qualified it by saying that there should be a national debate on the issue. It may not be a bad idea for Nitish Kumar to dig into the old records of that great seat of learning in his own State, Nalanda University, to ascertain the type of functions that were organized by that University on such occasions.

KESHAV RAU is a Bangalore-based free-lance writer. His e-mail ids: keshav.rau@gmail.com & keshavrau@yahoo.com

“Stop a Nuclear Disaster”

Demand for a Public Debate on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Bill

Sharad Bailur

My good friend Dr. L. S. N. Prasad of Guntur in Andhra Pradesh sent me a petition launched by Greenpeace which he had signed and invited me to sign too. The Petition's covering note said “Don't let U.S. Corporations off the hook. Our government is churning out one hazardous bill after another. This time it is a bill called the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, and it's coming up for a vote in a couple of days. The bill lets U.S. corporations off the hook for any nuclear accidents they cause on Indian soil. They'd only have to pay a meagre amount, and Indian taxpayers would be stuck paying crores for the nuclear clean up and to compensate the victims.” As I take requests received from friends seriously, I decided to send the petition to Mr. Sharad Bailur who, Freedom First readers are aware, is our ‘in house expert’ on such matters. This is his response, which we share with our readers, in view of the importance of the subject. Editor

“I think the nuclear disaster business is being taken too far. In the last 65 years since the first atomic explosion in New Mexico there have been three “disasters” if they can be called that at power generating plants - and I am here specifically excluding atomic explosions for military purposes: At Sellafield in England, at Three Mile Island in the US and at Chernobyl in the former USSR. The first two were not actual disasters, they were leaks and they were dealt with promptly. Chernobyl was the only real nuclear disaster to date. That of course does not mean that nuclear disasters cannot happen, or that if and when they do they cannot have horrific consequences.

“But a nuclear electricity generating plant is statistically speaking (and there can be no other measure) around twenty thousand times safer than even an ordinary coal or gas generating plant. In fact it is even safer than a meteorite hit. The fail safe devices are not just one tier but in a number of tiers. If one or two fail there are other back up fail-safes to shut down the plant safely.

Second, the bill proposed by the Government limits the compensation of the supplier of equipment to \$500 million. This is the international norm. There is nothing special about us. The limit of \$500 million does not say that further compensation cannot be given. Only that above that figure the compensation will be given by the user,

not the supplier of the equipment. This also is the international norm.

Third, the compensation from suppliers is in the event of a disaster. Such a thing can happen due to any number of factors, including earthquakes, or terrorist bombing. If the equipment is proved to be at fault there is no compensation limit. This is important.

Fourth, the norm set is about in the middle of all international norms. China for instance has norms that are much more lax. The compensation limit for suppliers of faulty equipment is \$200 million.

And lastly, the issue is what would happen if a disaster does occur, the \$500 million is imposed, and it is *not* due to faulty equipment. Compensation over and above will come from the International Atomic energy Agency to the extent of \$2000 million (or SDRs). Anything above that will have to be borne by the Indian Government.

It is also not true that the bill is supposed to protect the interests of the USA. All countries who supply us with plants will demand the same regimen. If not they will refuse to supply us the plants

Now to the issue of what happens if the bill is not passed:

First, nobody will supply us nuclear plants - not the US, not France, not Russia, not Canada, nobody. Nobody is interested in being bound down by an *unlimited* liability *for ever*.

Second, this entire movement to prevent the bill from being passed has quite a different motive. The idea is that if and when the BJP government comes to power, it will get the bill put through and then bask in the glory of having brought nuclear powered electricity to India.

Third, we shall be playing into the hands of the “nuclear Ayatollas” of Washington.

Fourth, if we cannot have nuclear power how does Greenpeace propose to make up for the growing deficit of power. Or is Greenpeace suggesting that India should for ever remain backward and then sink back the hellhole it came out of? There is no

alternative.

Lastly, countries like France and Japan generate electricity from nuclear power plants to the extent of 70 to 80% of their total needs. Our present generation is barely 2% They have never had

nuclear generating plant disasters to date. Are we that supremely incompetent as users?"

**MR. SHARAD BAILUR, author, freelance journalist, and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*.
sharad.bailur@gmail.com**

Quake-Hit Tibetans Want Dalai Lama to Visit & Console Them

B. Raman

Tibetan monks and others, who have survived the April 14, 2010, earthquake in the Qinghai Province, the birthplace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, have appealed to President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to allow His Holiness to visit the quake-hit areas to supervise the rescue and relief efforts and to "offer salvation for our dead and prayers for the victims."

Their petition, which has been carried in the Chinese language by boxun.com, a website run by a group of Chinese political dissidents and exiles, states as follows: "Dear President Hu and Premier Wen. When we suffered the enormous natural disaster of the earthquake, your Party and government immediately dispatched officials and soldiers and forces from all areas of society to rescue us, the victims, and we in the disaster area are extremely thankful for the government's help. But we are masses with a religious faith and for generations upon generations we Buddhists have believed in Gwalya Rinpoche the Dalai Lama. At such a time as this when we have suffered such a terrible blow we are in urgent need of the Dalai Lama to come to our disaster area and provide salvation for our dead and comfort for our wounded souls. President Hu and Premier Wen, we request that in your gracious benevolence you may satisfy the wishes of the people in the disaster area.

Over 11,000 Tibetans have been injured by the quake. The deaths of many of them have pushed the total number of fatalities to 2000. It could go up further as more injured die. Despite the deaths of a large number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, the surviving monks and nuns have mounted a massive rescue and relief effort on their own without depending on the rescue and relief campaign of the Government. They were among the first to reach the

quake-hit areas before Government officials could reach there. They have been complaining that while the rescue and relief efforts of the Government and the Chinese Red Cross have been highlighted by the Chinese and international media, the stupendous efforts of the monasteries and monks have not received the attention they deserved.

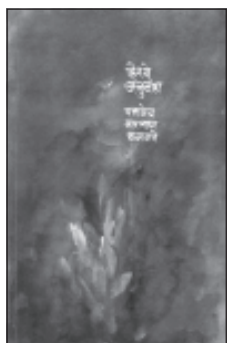
Apart from the massive human tragedy, Tibetan Buddhism and culture have also suffered damages due to the destruction by the quake of a number of monasteries and Tibetan cultural heritage sites in the area and the deaths of a large number of monks and nuns. No estimate of the monks and nuns killed are available, but their number is believed to be high.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his officials have appealed to the Chinese to allow His Holiness to visit the quake-hit areas, but it is certain the Chinese will not allow him. Nor will the international community exercise pressure on Beijing to allow His Holiness to visit the areas. It is important for international broadcasting stations broadcasting programmes in the Tibetan language, including the external services of All India Radio, to broadcast the prayers of His Holiness to the people of the area.

Courtesy: Mr. B. Raman and c3sindia.org. Excerpted from his article on the subject.

Mr. B. Raman, is Additional Secretary (retd.), Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of India, New Delhi, and, currently, Director, Institute For Topical Studies, Chennai. He is also associated with the Chennai Centre For China Studies. E-mail: seventyone2@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEWS



Verdant Memories (हिरवे अनुबंध) by Dattatray Narayan Dhanagare • Mauj Publishing House, Khatauwadi, Girgaum, Mumbai 400004 • 2009 • 123 pages • Rs.100

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

Dr. D. N. Dhanagare, a professor of Sociology, is known in Maharashtra's educational circles as an energetic teacher, diligent researcher, indomitable administrator and a proficient writer. In his latest book (in Marathi) 'Hirve Anubandh' (Verdant Memories) published by the prestigious Mauj publications Dr. Dhanagare reminisces about six secular Muslim scholars he interacted with during his sojourn in and outside India. He also recalls his brief visit to Lahore in 2005 and his childhood days in his native town Washim in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

Prof. Nurul Hasan taught History in Aligarh and Delhi universities and took great interest in politics. Forgetting his commitment to the leftist ideology of his younger days, he accepted a seat in Rajya Sabha offered by the Indira Congress in 1971. He also became a minister of state for education during the internal 'emergency' and was subsequently appointed Governor of West Bengal. Prof. Hasan, according to Dhanagare, was a split personality – a staunch communist and a liberal professor and a great researcher, interested in politics. The author refers to a whole generation of historians being deeply indebted to his monumental work on agrarian structure in medieval India. He recalls how he was requested to give a lecture in Oxford and how with a few scrappy lines written on the back of an envelope he gave an unforgettable lecture to an avid audience.

When Dhanagare was the Vice-Chancellor of Kolhapur's Shivaji University, Dr. Abdul Kalam, then Prime Minister's adviser in science and technology was invited to grace the convocation ceremony in January 2005. The few hours Dr. Dhanagare spent with the honorable guest revealed many facets of Dr. Kalam - a devout Muslim who never missed his daily *namaz*, yet had great faith in Indian spiritual thought, values and culture and a true symbol of India's unity in diversity; a voracious reader of books who felt that reading newspapers was a waste of time!

Dr. Munis Raza was Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research when Dhanagare was its member-secretary. A well-known researcher and a

Geographer, Raza disliked discipline in his daily routine. Nevertheless, he was a gallant, fascinating, reckless and a spendthrift Nawab. When he was the Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, he spent almost one crore rupees on the statue of Jawaharlal Nehru and the rose plants in the campus to commemorate the Nehru centenary year! What surprised the author was when Dr. Raza was confined in a Delhi hospital for more than two years he never thought of resigning from the Chairman's post and enjoyed full salary and other benefits including medical expenses amount to Rs. Three lakhs!

Prof. Hamza Alavi, born in Mumbai and educated in Pune, was a Marxian theorist who was against the application of the materialistic interpretation theory to the Indian subcontinent. He was an officer in the Imperial Bank of India before he migrated to Pakistan in 1947. His proficiency in Marxian theorization made him an adviser to President Yahya Khan but he left for England before the Indo-Pak war in 1971. He was a lecturer in economics at Leeds University where he was an external guide of Dhanagare who doing his doctoral dissertation on the peasant movement in India. Liberal and tolerant, Alavi was far removed from Muslim fanaticism.

Dr. Dhanagare was a colleague of Dr. Ali Asharaf, professor of Political Science at I.I.T. Kanpur and later the Vice-Chancellor of the Jamiya Miliya Islamiya University in Delhi. He was a shy, simple and thorough gentleman who had to make many adjustments under mental pressure leading to his early death at 66.

Dr. Arif Mohammad Gayyur and Dhanagare were alumni at the University of Massachusetts in America. Simple and affectionate, Gayyur had deep respect for Indian democracy. He was the only Muslim student who attended the condolence meeting to mourn the death of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. A non-vegetarian Gayyur respected Dhanagare's vegetarian principles and stopped eating non-veg food every Thursday, a day of fasting for Dhanagare!

As an honorary member of the executive body of the Centre for Education and Communication, Dhanagare attended a three day seminar at Lahore in March 2005.

He recollects in the first chapter his impressions about that city and its people. No women on the streets of Lahore then were veiled. A stall at the book exhibition he visited at night was supervised by a lady and his guest-car was driven by a young girl who held a post-graduate degree. The women of Pakistan, the author felt, were changing slowly but surely. He was surprised to see the idols of Lord Ganesh, Hanuman, Christ and Buddha installed on the different floors of the Cuckoo's Den restaurant. He talked to many important and common people who besides being cordial and hospitable discreetly avoided any reference to controversial subjects like Kashmir, Kargil or terrorism.

It will be wrong to consider the book under review as essentially delineating the lives of Indian Muslims who were secular minded though the portraits of all of them are crisp and engaging.

Even more interesting and insightful is the last chapter which in a sense would have been better as the first chapter introducing the entire book. This chapter describes his growing up in a small town on the border of Maharashtra and the Nizam's State, in a predominantly Hindu dominated urban setting with a sizable Muslim minority. It provided an assured vote-bank for power hungry politicians. Almost all the Muslims, engaged in odd jobs, were dependant on Hindu patronage for their livelihood. They lived in a society precariously poised between stability and uncertainty; for often communal

disturbances would erupt into minor and major skirmishes compelling them to disappear from their miserable hovels and return once things settled down. Yet in this social instability, amicable relationship between the two communities persisted and an enduring social relationships.

Dhanagare's father, Narayanrao, was a successful pleader who had cordial relations with the Muslims in Washim although he was an influential R.S.S. leader. A unique case of Mandir-Masjid dispute, resolved peacefully by him and the other sensible local leaders of both communities is worth mentioning. A phallic symbol of Lord Shiva was found inside the Jumma Masjid, constructed during the reign of Aurangzeb. An ancient text referred to the existence of a temple and an observatory at the same place. The excavation of the nearby fallow land owned by a Muslim lady displayed relics of a ruined temple and an observatory. This was confirmed by the archaeological department. The said land was duly purchased and a new Shiva temple was constructed. This happened thirty one years before the demolition of Babri Masjid! This new temple surrounded by Muslim homes was unaffected during the riots that broke out testifying to the Indian's attitude of live and let live.

The author is an excellent narrator of events and persons he encountered and his style of writing is simple, lucid and engaging.

A Novel Way to Fight Petty Corruption

A Zero-sum game is one in which the gains of one player are exactly balanced by the losses of another. In India a local non-governmental organisation has invented a new sort of zero sum which, it hopes, will leave everyone better off: The zero-rupee note.

What on earth is the point of that? The note is not legal tender. It is simply a piece of paper, the colour of a 50-rupee note with a picture of Gandhi on it and a value of nothing. Its aim is to shame corrupt officials into not demanding bribes. The idea was dreamt up by an expatriate Indian physics professor from the University of Maryland who, travelling back home, found himself harassed by endless extortion demands. He gave the notes to the importuning officials as a polite way of saying no. Vijay Anand, president of an NGO called 5th Pillar, thought it might work on a larger scale. He had 25,000 zero-rupee notes printed and publicised to mobilise opposition to corruption. They caught on: his charity has distributed 1m since 2007.

One official in Tamil Nadu was so stunned to receive the note that he handed back all the bribes he had solicited for providing electricity to a village.

Mr. Anand thinks the notes work because corrupt officials so rarely encounter resistance that they get scared when they do. And ordinary people are more willing to protest, since the notes have an organisation behind them and they do not feel on their own. Simple ideas like this don't always work. When India's government put online the names of officials facing trial for corruption, the list became a convenient guide for whom to bribe. But, says Fumiko Nagano of the World Bank, transforming social norms is the key to fighting petty corruption and the notes help that process. They are valueless, but not worthless.

From *The Economist* January 28 2010

Visit 5th Pillar, the organization behind the zero-rupee note: <http://www.5thpillar.org/>



CELESTIAL WEDDING by Bei La ● A. P. H Corporation, 5 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002 ● 2007 ● 245 pages ● Rs.250

Reviewed by Ms. Humera Ahmed, Chief Post Master General, Himachal Pradesh.

Bei La the author of this novel, according to the blurb is described as “one of the most famous novelists in the Chinese world”. Born in Shanghai she is now a Canadian acclaimed by the Chinese media as “Lady D.H Lawrence of the new century” and “The Goddess of Love.” With such acclaim one wonders what her novel Celestial Wedding has to offer!

The novel begins on February 8 2002 with the protagonist Wang Chunje a thirty seven year old Chinese journalist and writer on a flight from New York to Shanghai, to meet her mother after the tragic death of her fiancé, Graham, a wall street business man and, an American of mixed blood, who died on the day of their wedding. Grief for her dead lover triggers off memories of a chain of unhappy events in the past in her desperate search for “true love;” her unhappy marriage and subsequent divorce from AhGen her Chinese husband who goes mad after she deserts him; her love affair with her Japanese boy lover resulting in his suicide and the death from AIDS of her best friend Shang Yangzi.

Ironically while the men in her life love her madly she loves only Graham for whom she deserts her Japanese lover on their wedding day. She is however also indirectly responsible for Graham’s death since it is to change the lipstick smeared tie from her kiss that he goes up to his office in the World Trade Centre on September 11. While she moans his death and contemplates suicide, her sorrow does not prevent her from reliving the orgasmic pleasures

she derived from her husband and Japanese lover or from getting involved with her fellow passenger an American with whom she intends to live as indicated by her in a letter to her mother in which she reveals her wish “to be a woman and love the man she is with.”

While the plot is simple, the delineation of the character of the protagonists is quite complex. The intention of the novelist was to project Wang Chunje as an epitome of beauty and purity- a white rose whose beauty is a fatal attraction leading to her suffering. However a reader would perceive her differently. She is seen at one level as a Chinese girl of oriental sensibilities, yearning for sexual liberation, envious of the Japanese women’s sexual freedom, and exhibiting a deep attraction for the American man. At another level she will be seen as a woman of pretence who is able to stealthily plan an escape to Japan , blaming her mother in law for her rift with her husband even though she does not love him and seduces a Japanese boy, deserting him after enticing Graham on his honeymoon! The protagonist despite her alluring beauty and much proclaimed innocence is not likely to appeal to the reader and her grief therefore would not be considered sincere..

Since the whole focus of her narrative - laced with titillating and graphic details - is on sexual pleasures, one finds hardly any justification for the title of the novel: “Celestial Wedding”, .Further the sequence of events are contrived and the style sentimental and melodramatic .Hence the romance is not inspiring. The novel can at best be summarized as an attempt to awaken the sexual desires of Chinese women which probably earned her the title of “Lady DH Lawrence of the 21st century” from the Chinese media.

One commentator compares China to the Hollywood thriller, Speed, in which a bus had been planted with a bomb set to detonate if the vehicle slows to below 50 miles per hour. This seems apt. Were China's economy to slow below Beijing's 8% growth target, bad things are likely to happen. Much of the new infrastructure would turn out to be otiose; excess capacity would linger in many industries; the real estate bubble would burst and the banking system would face a rash of non-performing loans. Investors who are immersed in the China Dream ignore this scenario. When the China juggernaut eventually stalls, they face a rude awakening.

Edward Chancellor, a member of the asset allocation team at GMO, in his White Paper titled China's Red Flags. Cited in *The Wise Investor*, April 2010

Between Ourselves ...

May 1, each year, is observed the world over as Labour Day. For those of us who live in Maharashtra or Gujarat it is also our States' Foundation Day and that Day this year is of even more significance. It is their 50th "birth-day". In the April issue we carried a rather frank critique of "Maharashtra at Fifty" by no less a leader than Mr. Sharad Joshi. This time we go back to May 1960 when our publisher the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom along with the legendary *Sadhana* Weekly of Pune organised a gathering of formidable intellectuals and laid down benchmarks for the development of Maharashtra. That these benchmarks were largely ignored is another matter. The question that arose in your editor's mind was "why was such a gathering of wise men not organised in Ahmedabad?" My frank answer: "I don't know". But we have made up for this omission with an assessment of Gujarat at 50 by three men of Gandhian/Liberal persuasion. We hope you will find them of interest and await your comments.

"Paid News" has taken more space in this issue than we had allotted, for this ailment that has taken its toll of our "Fourth Estate" needed a comprehensive diagnosis! Incidentally Wikipedia (the modern gateway to information and knowledge) tells us that these two words were appropriated to the Press by Thomas Carlyle in his book *On Heroes and Hero Worship* when he quoted

Edmund Burke who while speaking in the British Parliament observed there were "Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all." The seminar was well attended by the old and the young and more importantly so much was spoken, at times with sad frankness, and with remedies to get rid of the illness, we could not resist sharing the presentations with *Freedom First* subscribers and readers in the hope that you too would participate with your comments. What is reported is only half the proceedings. The other, half, the discussions will come to you in a subsequent edition of this journal.

Now a reminder to our subscribers: Please send in your renewals without waiting for a reminder, individually, by post. If you have already renewed, what you send will be adjusted towards your future dues! If you are a Life Subscriber (a category which we had to give up a few year ago) then what you send will be treated as your contribution (or donation if you will) to keep Freedom First afloat. After all, you, dear reader, are the reason for our continued publication these 57 years! Money Orders accepted and so will cheques to be drawn in favour of "ICCF" We have marginally increased the subscription as can be seen from the form below.

Editor

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

Founder: Minoo Masani • **Editor:** S. V. Raju • **Associate Editor:** R. Srinivasan • **Advisory Board:** Sharad Bailur, R. V. Chari, A. V. Gopalakrishnan, Firoze Hirjikaka, Ashok Karnik, Farrokh Mehta, Jehangir Patel, Nitin Raut, Brig. (Retd.) S. C. Sharma, Kunwar Sinha, Sameer Wagle
Publishers: Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF), 3rd Floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001.
Phone: +91 (22) 2284 34 16 • E-mail: freedom@vsnl.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: 22660357, 22665526.
Typeset at **Shubham Print & Web** 59, Dr. V. B. Gandhi Marg, 1st Floor, Fort, Mumbai 400 001. Phone: 2284 2619 • Mobile: 98929 21277
Single Copy: Rs.10 • Annual: Rs.150 (Add Rs.50 for outstation cheques) • Overseas (IInd Class Air Mail) Annual: \$20 or £10
Cheques to be drawn in favour of **ICCF** and mailed to the publishers at the above address.