

Freedom First

The Liberal Position

The Anna Hazare Movement Against Corruption

A Pioneering Experiment in Participatory Democracy?

- *Hazar Voices for Anna*
- The IAC or 'India Against Corruption' Movement
- Jan Lokpal - A Supercop?
- How Corruption Spreads
- The USP of Anna's Agitation
- Invoking Moral Turpitude

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The Liberal Magazine – 58th Year of Publication
No.527 May 2011

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Between Ourselves...

It is not easy to be a Liberal! This fact comes out loud and clear from the tones of the articles in this edition's cover story – the Anna Hazare movement against corruption.

Everyone who has contributed his opinion is, we would say without a second's thought, a Liberal. Yet look at the different or varied perspectives ranging from downright scepticism (we won't use the word cynicism) to fears for the possible damage it might cause the constitutional polity of this country, to hope that the courageous Hazare stand might just help pulling our 64 year old nation out of the deep stinking "shit" (pardon the word) of corruption we find ourselves in. Hence we find our contributors saying 'well done' 'but'...

Hence the somewhat long title (with a question mark) for the cover story in this issue: "A Pioneering Experiment in Participatory Democracy." The one feeling that runs through the articles is an acceptance that our democracy begins and ends with the holding of elections; but this is not what democracy is all about. There is much concern even in quarters (the young educated middle class) that have been wallowing in their own comfortable cocoons.

The articles that have come to us for this month's feature, are all voluntary none were commissioned. This shows concern and is welcome. In fact space constraints have prevented the publication of two more articles. These two will appear in the June number. Readers might recall that the very first sentence in this column in January began with Liberal misgiving: "We get into the second decade of the 21st century with our democratic system in shambles. The symbol of our democracy, our parliament, has been dishonoured and made dysfunctional." Five months later the rot has gone from "shambles" to "stinking shit"

We Liberals fear whether in the name of cleansing our democracy, the movement "India Against Corruption" does not result in throwing the baby of democracy with the bathwater of the accumulated filth of corruption. We do not believe in shortcuts. We do not, must not, and need not follow those who point out to the ferment in the various Arabistans; nor have we to take our inspiration from them. Unlike most of those countries where unrest is described in terms of flowers and colours, we in India can "bark" without fear. The Arabistanis are only now demanding the right to "bark". All that we need to do is tread carefully though determinedly to reduce if not rid the country of the malaise.

We should lend critical support to any movement from whichever side of the political spectrum it emerges in what is going to be a long fight to dislodge those who would place personal interest above public weal. The process has begun let's keep it rolling.

Editor

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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.20 ● Annual: Rs.200 (Add Rs.50 for outstation cheques) ● Overseas (Ilnd Class Air Mail) Annual: \$20 or £10
Cheques to be drawn in favour of **ICCF** and mailed to the publishers at the above address.

From Our Readers

Does the Fukushima disaster imply that we do away with nuclear powered plants?

Fukushima nuclear disaster is an eye opener to all of us especially to the designers, technologists and proponents of this so called 'green' energy. One cannot and should not just ignore the safety issues involved in such a sensitive technology; nor we should postpone our decisions in this regard. One must strive hard to go into the minutest details of safety aspects - real or far-fetched or imaginary - and discuss them threadbare and come out with a solution. If there is an iota of ambiguity in the solution hold the action till you are satisfied.

Perhaps this was the bitterest lesson humankind has learnt at the cost of many lives in danger because someone did not think about Tsunami or some equivalent conditions in the past.

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Dr. Phondke's article is both lucid and explains the situation in patient detail.

There is one additional aspect that I think needs to be touched upon. It is non-nuclear and has to do with earthquakes. First those who protest against Jaitapur must know what a Richter Scale on which earthquakes are measured actually is and how it functions. Not many do. A Richter scale measures the intensity of earthquakes. That I think everyone knows. And most often we are told that a particular quake is 5 on the Richter or 6 on the Richter and so on. So the impression is that the quake that is 6 on the Richter is bigger than a 5 by a single order of magnitude. This is wrong. What many people do not know or understand is that the Richter scale is logarithmic. When we say that something is 10 to the power of 2 we mean 10×10 (not 10×2). If we say 10 to the power of 5 we mean $10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$. Clearly 10 to the power of 5 is far lower than 10 to the power of 6 (and not by a single order of magnitude). The same thing applies to a logarithmic scale. A 7 on the Richter is not bigger than a 6 by a factor of 1. It is bigger by many orders because of the multiplicative powers employed in the calculation. Fukushima faced a Richter 9. There is no Richter scale measurement beyond 10. Fukushima was the most powerful quake ever recorded, even in Japan, for the last many hundreds of years.

Next, "Even in Japan": The islands that constitute Japan, like the islands that constitute New Zealand, California, Baja, and further south along the western coast up to Chile constitute what is called the "Pacific Ring of

Fire". The entire Pacific basin is expanding due to a geological up-welling and pushing all those islands on its edge further apart. Japan moved nearly a couple of metres to the West as a result of the earthquake. Since this expansion is taking place in geological time it is hardly noticeable. However when a Fukushima takes place or the New Zealand quake a few weeks earlier, it can be disastrous.

Can that happen in Jaitapur? The answer is almost certainly NO. Reason: The Deccan Plate on which Jaitapur sits moved north after it broke from Antarctica many millions of years ago. It moved north to finally come up against the Northern Plate and pushed so hard against it that it gave rise to the Himalayas. That is why we have quakes in Quetta and Afghanistan and Kashmir and along the northern periphery of India right into Myanmar. However they are of an intensity that, compared to Fukushima, is derisory. The quakes in Koyna and other similar instances are merely local disturbances. Jaitapur sits on a plate that is one of the most stable in the world. Next, the location of the proposed plant is about thirty or forty metres above sea level. This means that any Tsunami below that level cannot affect the plant at all. Yet Jaitapur can take advantage of the plentiful sea water that is right at its doorstep.

Given these additional factors, the hullabaloo about Jaitapur is not just misplaced it is deliberately misleading.

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The Fukushima disaster illustrates very clearly what can go wrong with nuclear reactors and the price that must be paid when such a thing happens. That however takes a very broad view since there are many nuances to reactor operations and there exist several reactor designs. Therefore how each reactor might respond to a given situation is not something that is black and white. Simultaneously, the potentially enormous amount of power that can be generated by this method cannot be understated. Careful reactor operation can ensure that India can achieve significant generation of power and meet shortfalls with safety. Other than this, even ruling out disasters, there is of course the challenge of disposing end of life nuclear waste and if this cost is factored in then nuclear power is not quite as cheap as it appears.

(cont'd. on page 3)

Arvind A. Deshpande

(3rd June 1936 - 18th April 2011)



Mr. Arvind Deshpande was a great patriot and nationalist to the core. A protégé of the late Minoo Masani, one of India's greatest Liberals, he was greatly influenced by Masani's political ideology and his highly ethical approach to national issues.

These programmes encompassed a wide segment of participants drawn from among political and social workers, union members, women's organisations, you leaders *et al.* He was instrumental in training and motivating a large number of young people to be groomed for leadership roles,

As a person, he was amiable, disciplined and committed. He made a notable contribution to public life through his writings and teachings. He will be sorely missed by all those who had the privilege to know him and were associated with his life's work.

Minoo Shroff

Mr. Deshpande was inspired by the life and philosophy of Gandhiji and Jayaprakash Narayan and was a strong proponent of the concept of Trusteeship. He was actively associated with the Trusteeship Foundation.

I had the pleasure of working with him closely for over a decade since 1998 in the Leslie Sawhny Programme/Endowment, where he was an Honorary Advisor and Secretary of the Board of Management. He was the main architect of the numerous programmes which were conducted for over 30 years.

For over three decades from 1974 to 2007 Arvind Deshpande was a member of the Executive Council of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, the publishers of *Freedom First* and also on the journal's Editorial/Advisory Board. He was also a Trustee of Freedom First Foundation. His participation in these organizations was valuable in matters relating to policy.

Freedom First pays tribute to his memory and conveys our deepest sympathies to his wife Neela Deshpande and members of her family.

From Our Readers (cont'd from pg.2)

Coming back to the question then, the Greenpeace call of simply dumping nuclear power without weighing all pros and cons carefully is like throwing the baby out with the bath water. However, care must be exercised to ensure that political motives are not prime movers since the cost will be paid in lives and wasted generations should something go wrong. Therefore, India needs to continue its nuclear energy programme but with greater care of the consequences and environmental prudence.

Arvind A,

*

I still think nuclear power is both safe and essential. Only a few hundred will die after Fukushima. That many have died in a coal mine accident or when a dam producing energy breaks. Most of the Japanese who have died have died from a serious earthquake but that has happened before in Japan.

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Plato's Indian Connection

Dr. Nandakumar has written an appreciative review of my booklet, *Plato's Indian Connection*. I wish to clarify just one point.

Dr. Nandakumar writes that I give Kautilya's view of the 'ideal king as a practical administrator' and he quotes an imaginative remark (in my piece) wherein Kautilya says to Plato: 'we have to deal with real people, not angels'.

It seems that I refer to Kautilya's ideas with some approval. But Kautilya's recommendations are not only 'practical'; they are downright immoral, telling the King and his ministers to pursue crass expediency, even extreme cruelty to any opponents, for the sole purpose to keep the King in power and prosperity. I have tried to show this on pages 22-24.

S. K. Ookerjee

Anna Hazare Movement

Pioneering Experiment in Participatory Democracy?

Hazar Voices for Anna

Firoze Hirjikaka

Maybe a Lokpal bill will actually be passed, but whether it will cleanse the ethical rot in our system of governance is debatable.

So how does one describe Anna Hazare? Is he a modern day saint, or an opportunist who has seized upon the prevailing mood of disgust and frustration among a section of Indian society? Is he a naïve idealist seeking to implement Gandhian principles in an era when the Mahatma has become totally irrelevant in Indian politics? Will the thousand voices supporting his cause eventually translate into millions? Only time will tell, but if I were you, I wouldn't hold my breath.

The Hazare "movement" gained media mileage because the "revolutionaries" were not the usual suspects seen at political rallies; and more importantly, because they were articulate enough to provide sound bytes – no matter that most of the words were utterly predictable and inane. The day Anna ended his fast, his middle-class "warriors" went into paroxysms of ecstasy, proclaiming that they had won. They were a bit fuzzy, however, on what precisely they had won. Yes, they achieved the representation of a few eminent citizens on the committee to draft the Lokpal bill. They seem to have overlooked, however, that our ministers and bureaucrats are past masters at forming and controlling committees. Moreover, the committee will have equal representation from ministers and civil society. In the event, as is quite likely, the government and civil society hold opposing views on specific provisions, who will break the deadlock? The government is quite content because equal representation could easily translate into stalemate – and forcing adjournment after adjournment is meat and potatoes to our politicians.

One thing we can be reasonably sure of – our politicians will never enact any legislation that has the potential to put them in the dock. One recent example is the clarion call given by Congress President Sonia Gandhi urging Congress Chief Ministers to give up their discretionary powers. It was an astute political move, since it would have forced Opposition CMs to go on the defensive and tie themselves in knots trying to explain why discretionary powers were essential. Quite predictably, however, even the Congress CMs have belatedly discovered that abrogation of discretionary powers would

impinge on their "sovereignty" – and so the issue has died a national death. Never forget that the *raison d'être* of entering politics in this country is to make money; and giving up the power to allot flats and plum postings would dry up a major source of tax-free income.

I believe Hazare has asked the Lokpal committee to declare their assets. This may invoke a feel-good factor, but is a largely meaningless exercise. Countless ministers, for example, have declared assets which show a multifold jump since the time they assumed office. But hardly any have cared to explain the source of their new found wealth; nor have they been asked to.

Critics of Hazare's crusade have self-righteously declared that in a democracy, our elected representatives are supreme; and that their rights cannot be usurped. But what "democracy" are we talking about? Theoretically, the "people" are the masters. But do the people get to decide who will stand for elections? Do the people have the power to debar criminal elements from the electoral process? What sort of democracy is this where the people's choice is blatantly influenced by the freebies politicians dole out? And once the charlatans are "elected", they are virtually given a free pass to carry on their nefarious activities for the next five years. Hazare has suggested a "right to recall" – as they have in the United States – but there is no hope in hell of our political class agreeing to that measure.

So what's next? The chatterati and "activists" and *mangalsutra* sporting housewives have had their day in the sun; and have dispersed. Their enthusiasm will dissipate in direct proportion to media glare. The five "wise men" and their ministerial counterparts will have endless debates on the correct wording. Maybe a Lokpal bill will actually be passed, but whether it will cleanse the ethical rot in our system of governance is debatable. There will be one effect, of course. Of late, our politicians had become quite brazen in their acts of corruption. Perhaps they will now be more discreet.

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The IAC or 'India Against Corruption' Movement

Ranga Rao DS

Since Independence, the governments that ruled this country have consistently failed to bring about an effective institution like the Ombudsman (or Lokpal) of the European type to check graft.

As is well known, in the recent past, India has been rocked by several corruption cases relating to the arbitrary allotment of residential flats meant for war-widows in Adarsh Cooperative Housing Society, Mumbai, the conduct of Commonwealth Games-2010, the allotment of licenses of Second Generation Spectrum (2G Telecom), etc., What is worrying is the fact that these scandals involving lakhs of crores of Rupees of tax money happened right under the nose of democratically elected governments which not only failed to prevent them but also vacillated in investigating and prosecuting the accused. What is even more worrying is the fact that known and unknown individuals were involved in looting public money and reportedly stashing it abroad in secret tax havens thus severely denting the national economy.

As a result India has earned the dubious distinction of being one of the most corrupt countries with its already low rating of 84 has plummeting to 87 in a group of 159 countries and being equated with such bottom rung countries like Sudan and Swaziland in the Transparency International's ranking of nations based on the level of corruption (2008). Since Independence, the governments that ruled this country have consistently failed to bring about an effective institution like the Ombudsman (or Lokpal) of the European type to check the graft.

An impression has gained ground that anybody with right connections in the top political establishment or the bureaucracy can commit a crime and get away with it scot free. The Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia in December 2010 and subsequent mass upheavals in Egypt, Libya and in most of the Gulf countries against the oppressive dictatorships and monarchies have triggered the Indian masses along similar lines.

It is in this context, that the moment produced the man in Anna Hazare former army sepoy-turned Gandhian, a Padma Bhushan and a Ramon Magsaysay awardee. He, along with his followers launched a movement under the banner of 'India Against Corruption'(IAC), a collective of a group of eminent people from different walks of life to fight the growing menace of corruption in public life and to bring about transparency and accountability in

governance. The IAC includes Kiran Bedi, Arvind Kejriwal, both Ramaon Magsaysay Awardees, Shanti Bhushan and Prashanti Bhushan, the father-son duo both Supreme Court advocates, Karnataka Lok Ayukta Santosh Hegde and Swami Agnivesh, a social activist among others. The IAC activists studied the government's version of the Lokpal bill, and rejected it as being merely advisory in nature, powerless, utterly ineffective and inadequate to punish anyone if found guilty of corruption. Instead, the IAC group prepared a draft 'Jan Lokpal' bill vesting investigative and judicial powers with the Lokpal at the centre and Lok Ayuktas in the states, bringing the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) under the purview of the Lokpal at the Centre and the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and the Departmental Vigilance bodies under the Lok Ayuktas in the states, which, barring Karnataka, are only recommendatory in nature.

Towards the end of 2010, the IAC submitted the draft of their 'Jan Lokpal' bill to the Union government as an alternative requesting to consider replacing the government's failed Lokpal bill. But the government was unresponsive.

Civil society in general and the IAC in particular were furious over this lack of response. On March 7, 2010 during a meeting with Anna and his IAC colleagues, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reportedly told them that he had no time to read the 'Jan Lokpal' bill and asked them to wait as he was busy with the ongoing session of Parliament and elections in five states.

Disappointed, Anna Hazare reportedly conveyed to the PM that that if the government would not allow the civil society to partner with government in redrafting the Lokpal bill before April 5, 2011 he would go on a fast unto death. Matters precipitated with both sides maintaining their respective rigid postures and, on April 5, as scheduled, Anna began his indefinite fast at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi demanding the government enact the 'Jan Lokpal' bill.

As the news spread, the press, the electronic media and the cyber world went all out in support of Anna. What

started as a drizzle with a motley group of supporters soon assumed mass movement proportions with people from all walks of life, young and old, irrespective of their caste and creed finding a common cause in the anti-graft crusade. Anna who called it a second war of Independence from corruption. The Indian diaspora abroad also demonstrated wholeheartedly in support of Anna. As the days rolled by the support to Anna grew, the government felt cornered and bowed down to the “power of the powerless” (masses), to quote Vaclav Havel, the first President of the Czech Republic. He was referring to earlier people’s movements elsewhere in the world that humbled oppressive and venal governments.

On April 8, 2011 the government agreed to constitute a joint 10-member committee of government and civil society representatives to draft a fresh Lokpal bill by June 30, 2011 and introduce it in the monsoon session of Parliament. After the government of India issued a notification to this effect Anna Hazare broke his fast describing it as a victory for the people.

This victory has many claimants, but it has also produced many Doubting Thomases! Some ask what if the proposed all powerful Jan Lokpal turns out to be a dictator. Some others have doubted the infallibility or incorruptibility of the proposed Jan Lokpal. Some even went to the extent of questioning the representative character of the IAC and its constituent members. Some others have started whispering ‘Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely’. These doubts and apprehensions are legitimate and cannot be brushed aside. It’s all in the characteristics of an attempt for social change from a prolonged corruption-ridden and corruption-afflicted society to a corruption-free society. That change

is inevitable in the life of a man or a nation cannot be denied. But where, one can ask, were all these critics when the public exchequer was being plundered by the high and the mighty in scam after scam and the booty spirited away abroad? What were they doing when the three pillars of democracy, i.e., the legislature, the executive and the judiciary were reduced to a farce with the legislature not legislating anything worthwhile, the executive not in a position to govern and the judiciary bogged down by the enormous pendency of litigation unable to deliver justice to anyone on time? And where were they when all sorts of law breakers got themselves elected to law making institutions by dint of sheer money and muscle power making a mockery of our ‘fair and just electoral system’? If anything, the Anna movement has only reduced the credibility gap and the trust deficit between the government and the people to a great extent.

The urgent task before the IAC is to be united and work for a workable and deliverable system of governance that we have been deprived of all along. The IAC has made it clear more than once that there was no final draft of the Jan Lokpal bill as such and it was open to suggestions with suitable checks and balances to safeguard its independence and impartiality. The success of the yet to come Lokpal lies in its working. The yet to be born Lokpal is not going to be a panacea for all the ills of our country. There are a lot more ‘pals’ to be brought in with regard to electoral reforms, judicial reforms, educational reforms, social reforms and reforms in many other spheres.

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A Hundred Dollar Story!

An Indian tourist walks into a curio shop in San Francisco. Looking around at the exotic, he notices a very lifelike, life-sized bronze statue of a rat. It has no price tag, but is so striking he decides he must have it.

He takes it to the owner: “How much for the bronze rat?”

“Twelve dollars for the rat, one hundred dollars for the story,” says the owner.

The tourist gives the man twelve dollars. “I’ll just take the rat, you can keep the story.”

As he walks down the street carrying his bronze rat, he notices that a few real rats crawl out of the alleys and sewers and begin following him down the street.

This is disconcerting; he begins walking faster. But within a couple blocks, the herd of rats behind him grows

to hundreds, and they begin squealing.

He begins to trot toward the Bay, looking around to see that the rats now numbered in the millions, and are still squealing and coming toward him faster and faster.

Concerned, even scared, he runs to the edge of the Bay and throws the bronze rat as far out into the Bay as he can. Amazingly, the millions of rats all jump into the Bay after it, and are all drowned.

The man walks back to the curio shop.

“Ah ha,” says the owner, “You have come back for the story?”

“No,” says the man, “I came back to see if you have a statue of an Indian politician in bronze!!

From the Net. Contributed by Dr. Surendra Dhelia

Jan Lokpal – A Supercop?

Shyam Ashtekar

We are fond of creating institutions when most institutions are fast eroding by the day.

We cannot invent new laws for non-implementation of old ones.

The recent Andolan by septuagenarian Anna Hazare and the group (Agnivesh, Kejriwal, Kiran Bedi and Prashant Bhushan) has so far been successful in its campaign against governmental corruption with massive support of the mass media. The popular discontent against endless scams – from Bofors to 2G – came handy for the *Andolan*. This also catapulted Anna Hazare to the national level, replacing the rather corrupt image of Maharashtra with that of a sincere Gandhian. We must support this anti-corruption movement, and I did my bit by participating in the *dharna* outside the Nashik collectorate and the candle march.

However the draft of the Jan Lokpal Bill (JLPB) has raised legitimate concerns among journalists, political parties, legislators, human right campaigners and liberal thinkers. One wonders how the lawyers in the Andolan have drafted the JLPB in the first place. Here are some facts and points of concern:

- JLPB drafting committee consists of 10 members, five of whom are from the Andolan side. The inclusion of two Bhushans was best avoided as it does not send a healthy message. However since this only a two month business, but even then some other legal minds could have been included.
- The next is the selection committee which will recommend the JanLokpal bench to the President of India. Strangely this consists of five members from civil society and the JLPB draft recommends criteria such as Megasessy awardees, Bharatratnas, Nobel laureates etc for this. These can't be objective criteria for qualifying for membership and it may so happen that even such persons may not have the right attitude to recommend names for the bench. These are extra constitutional elements so far as selection of the constitutional JLP bench is concerned.
- The combination of all powers of complaint registration, trial, justice, and execution in the hands of the JLP bench is described by some as a new Frankenstein. The Indian Constitution can now allow such kangaroo courts at any level, least at the level that leaves no possibility of appeal to any authority like the SC. Anna also talks of death penalty (fansi). All this is serious stuff. The inclusion of 'delay' in action by the accused widens the scope of incrimination beyond imagination. The focus should have been only on monetary corruption. Soon the JLP will be paralysed with all kinds of complaints filed by people and the bench itself will be just another problem. The Judiciary suffers from the paralyzing backlog of cases. The JLP will meet the same fate.
- The recommendation of collecting 10% fee from the confiscated money is kind of keeping with the 'market economy', which many of the Andolan activists are opposed to. How can, the JLP cash on corruption refunds? It is not even an ethical dilemma. I suggest that the bench members should get no salaries besides Das. Anyway most of them are going to be retired judges.
- The JLPB is rather innocent about the Parliament being the supreme body in the Indian Constitution, no matter how Gandhi berated it. Dr Ambedkar (and also Mahatma Gandhi) fiercely protected individual freedom as the basic principle of the Constitution and lent a balancing role to the Judiciary.
- The Government's Lokpal bill had no teeth, but JLPB is being seen as a polar opposite, almost draconian. The JLP can be an extra-constitutional center of power over individuals. I wonder whether CVC with some more powers was a better option. The existing laws for preventing corruption can be good enough if they are implemented with speed and honesty. We cannot invent new laws for non-implementation of old ones. A new Lokpal cannot be a guarantee for preventing/booking corrupt practices. It might end up as a supercop.

The Congress may use these trump cards in the passage of the JLPB, and the BJP is of course watching the game closely and will attack it in some subtle but lethal ways. Anna Hazare's war cry against politicians does not provide a constitutional answer against corruption, but tries to circumvent it. We are fond of creating institutions when most institutions are fast eroding by the day. Will JLPB be a NGO solution to what is essentially a larger political issue, despite the best intentions of these great men and women and a groundswell of a 'radical' middle

class as some put it. Media can't carry the torch any further than this. I am doubtful if even Gandhi with all his old trappings of village-based economy and swadeshi has much to offer as a significant direction to a modern Indian nation. Inventing a new Mahatma is hardly a solution; we need new paradigms for development and bridging the India Bharat gap. Can we move on?

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How Corruption Spreads

Ali Khwaja

Highly qualified MBAs, lawyers and post-graduates would gladly pay lakhs to get into "lucrative" jobs like police inspectors or in other "executive" posts.

Now that Anna Hazare's campaign has stirred up not only the conscience of the masses, but to some extent the governmental functionaries also, there is a need to look into a deeper aspect of corruption i.e. on the principle of Prevention is Better than Cure.

Taking advantage of the awakening and awareness that has swept society, can we now look into the fact that majority of the politicians or bureaucrats either get into the field to make illegal money, or are sucked into the corruption of the system? I would like to share two recent incidents to highlight this fact:

1. A Commissioner of a very "powerful" department told me of Probationers of their All-India service who had come for orientation to her office. There was a long weekend, and the Commissioner arranged for them to spend three days at a near-by resort. An officer of the department, who belonged to a "subordinate" service, but who was old enough to be their father, accompanied them. The young probationers actually expected and instructed the subordinate officer to carry their bags and do menial tasks for them. At the resort they persuaded him to tell the management that since they were budding Commissioners, they should not be charged the regular room rent, and they will pay the rate they are charged in government guest houses. This, before even they have been confirmed in service!

2. A young manager in an NGO I am associated with, and who comes from a very poor rural background, narrated

how he made attempts for 3 years to become a police sub-inspector, because he thought that way he can genuinely serve society. Despite getting one of the highest merit ranks in the qualifying exam, he was not called for interview, the next year an exorbitant demand was made that he should pay a few lakhs. When his father approached their local politician who was a relative, he demanded that the boy should get married to his mentally challenged daughter, and he will see to it that he gets the job!

It is obvious that the malaise starts from the roots. Highly qualified MBAs, lawyers and post-graduates would gladly pay lakhs to get into "lucrative" jobs like police inspectors or in other "executive" posts. And more so because they know that once they are selected into a particular service, they cannot be removed or demoted, even in the extreme case where Lok Ayukta raids uncover crores of rupees of unaccounted wealth. In fact, even if an official does not actually demand a bribe, on a daily basis he callously ignores the rightful applications of citizens, knowing fully well that he will not be held answerable.

The other aspect starts with our education system itself. Recently Prof. C N R Rao, Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister said, "India is said to have an examination system but not an education system." If in our early and impressionable years we are drilled with the concept that we should be answerable to the examiners, and not bother

(cont'd. on page 14)

The USP of Anna's Agitation

Girdhar Patil

Let it be clear this entire event is not as simple as it is made out to be. At its root the movement implies radical changes in Indian democratic polity.

The political storm in Delhi was so sudden, unpredictable and severe that Anna, the central government in Delhi and many of us, were initially dazed at the tremendous response Anna Hazare evoked when he decided to lead the movement against corruption. Neither the state nor the civil society could have predicted the fast pace of events provoked by Anna's fast.

Anna's anti-corruption crusade and his Gandhian way of protest are not unknown to Maharashtra. It was for the first time Anna, decided to go national and chose Delhi to go on an indefinite fast. Anna has gone on indefinite fasts in Maharashtra and the state government has managed to persuade him to end his fast by meeting him half way on his demands. This perhaps made the government in Delhi that it could strike a deal with Anna Hazare and his team without too many political complications.

But there was an error of judgment. This event was similar and yet different in the sense that, Anna was fasting, but the entire scene was strategically managed and controlled by Arvind Kejriwal, Swami Agnivesh and Kiran Bedi. Their meticulous planning and strategic moves were supported by enormous coverage by both the print and electronic media which resulted into a mammoth success. Much preparation had already done on Facebook, Twitter, SMSs, as a result of which an effective network developed which included NGOs, activists and volunteers all over the country. The managers of this movement were helped in no small measure by an atmosphere vitiated by mega scams in which the main actors were political heavyweights and the sum involved were lakhs of crores. What made it easier for the IAC leadership was the weak and lethargic inability of the government at the Centre to deal with these issues firmly and effectively. On the third day of Hazare's fast the whole country became part of this agitation. This gave enormous confidence to the Anna camp, and, at the same time, created a feeling of fear, worry, anxiety and tension for the government. In short, this agitation was perfectly timed and led to perfect results.

Let it be clear this entire event is not as simple as it is made out to be. At its root the movement implies radical changes in Indian democratic polity. Indian democracy based on electoral activity has failed to yield the desired fruits. Once the people have voted those elected did little to honour their electoral pledges; on the contrary the voters found that they were no longer part of a participatory democracy and watched helplessly as even constitutional provisions were being violated by those whom they had voted to power. This led to numerous agitations and movements amongst the people in all walks of life protesting. The government had accumulated massive power and security and the system appeared to be self-perpetuating. People tried to get some relief from the judiciary, but that too proved to be futile. The politicians in power became adept at overcoming judicial interference, even challenging its jurisdiction. The existing system under the pretext of sovereignty of the country built a wall to protect its powers and privileges. When the IAC movement put forwards a Jan Lokpal Bill which had teeth unlike the weak bills put up by the establishment it was met first with indifference and later criticised as a measure that would paralyse governance and weaken democracy.

This attitude by the government is what led to the anti-corruption movement. The people in general are disturbed, worried by mammoth scale of corruption, without any remedial and preventive measures.. Generally the common people are not interested in devious political moves. But the way government treated the section of civil society, which was apolitical and trying to do something to relieve the present situation was treated as a challenge by the government.

The common people identified themselves with the demands of civil society, relating them to the process of real democratization. Considering the justice, and seriousness of the issue has resulted in an intense wave of support for the movement from the people. The impact was so intense and widespread that government had to succumb to the demands of civil society without any pretext.



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Government claims, 'we, the elected fraternity alone have the right to make the laws.' As a statutory right, nobody can object to it. But if one analyzes the nature of this 'elected fraternity' the number of votes one gets to get elected is not quite the people's mandate – in the first past the post system a candidate getting about 21% of the votes can be declared as elected. The votes which have elected the candidates are too tainted with castiesm, populist measures, use of money- muscle power and absence of agreeable options in choosing the candidate. The winning candidates too are well aware of this harsh reality.. The votes given on policy matter are lost and generally not reflected in election results.

Once elected, the incumbent has a lot of security the level of which depends on the person's position and tenure of representation. This also in a blatant misuse of power a passport to do the things according to one's whims and desires. This gives rise to scams involving crores of rupees. There is desperate need for electoral reforms. The Anti-corruption movement has given priority to the Jan Lokpal bill; Nevertheless it is to be hoped that the Lokpal is in a manner of speaking the beginning of the process with same direction and with the same importance.

It would appear that the first battle has been won by civil society but the war to cleanse the system is still on. Politicians will resist by all means, directly or indirectly. Once they succeed in creating chaos and situation of confusion, they will seek to evade what they have conceded when persuading Hazare to give up his fast. Members like Kapil Sibal have already started moves to mislead the public about the Jan Lokpal Bill. Government will not control or disown what Kapil Sibbal and others of his ilk say to sow more confusion. On the other hand government will use this opportunity to prolong the desired action. Sensational accusations (short of character assassinations) on civil society representatives have already begun by giving free rein to political jokers. This 'system' will use all means at its disposal to affect the normal functioning of this joint committee on the Lokpal bill

In short government will not take its defeat, lying down in the first round by agreeing to a joint committee. You can expect many more obstacles which may lead to the next agitation, when a fed-up Anna Hazare declares his next dates for an indefinite fast.

DR. GIRDHAR PATIL is a medical practitioner and a freelance writer and journalist. girdhar.patil@gmail.com

Hazare's Fast

Anna is a dedicated activist on the Gandhian model. His achievements are many, apart from the fight against corruption. He has been able to mobilize public opinion, letting people rise to the occasion and rally round him in his fight against corruption. Will this fight end with the Jan Lokpal Bill becoming a law of the land? Will corruption disappear as soon as the Lokpal Bill is given enormous power to tackle corruption in the country? All of us know the answers to these two questions are a big "NO". If laws could make sense in the country, Nehru's efforts to usher in Socialism in the country through amendments to the Constitution, enacting laws and giving enormous arbitrary powers to the Executive for implementing his plans, should have borne abiding fruits for people's delight more than 45 years ago.

The malady of corruption is deep enough to defy any surface treatment like the Lokpal Bill. So long as there is a giver of bribe there would always be a taker; make as many laws as possible. Let us have no givers of bribe. Selfishness is a chief motive behind all efforts to give bribe.

Laws will not make citizenry less selfish than it has so far been.

Corruption has pervaded all sections of our society in a big way. It has been going on for these last six decades without any effective check. When all are wrong, all are right. In a village of thieves, none will call another a thief! Anna's fast has just shown a way. An uprising from below for wiping out the rot at the top is a sure and certain treatment of the malady. In a unit like family, the head in every home has to re-emphasize his or her authority, making the young ones responsive to those time-honoured civic values which make for the much-needed change in our social ethos, re-establishing ethical and moral standards which go a long way to make a people great in the history of mankind. I trust Anna is well aware of all these handicaps and will not give up his fight till a moral revolution of ideas takes place in the country.

K. K. Pathak, Bharatpur, Rajasthan

Invoking “Moral Turpitude”

Kashinath A. Divecha

The mild and vague term – Moral Turpitude – should be able to serve as the thin end of the wedge to expose the scams and scandals, which at present seem to be tumbling out of the government’s closet.

There are at least two recent judgments on the topic of ‘Moral Turpitude’, explaining the meaning of the term and elaborating on its implications. One of the judgments is of the Madras High Court [2010-III-LLJ-792 (Mad)], and the other being of the Supreme Court [2010- IV-LLJ-297 (SC)].

Both the decisions pertain to the conduct, or rather misconduct, of employees concerned, who were dismissed from service by their employers. In one case, the employee – in an industrial undertaking – was found to be indulging in manipulation of entries in respect of receipt of carbon-dioxide cylinders for illegal gratification. The other individual, a peon in one of the nationalized banks, failed to deposit in the post-office an amount of Rs.5,000/- given to him towards payment of a telephone bill.

Penalties Imposed

The employers, in both the instances, construed the misconduct of the employees to be an offence involving moral turpitude, resulting in the withholding of the gratuity dues in the case of the industrial employee, and dismissal from service of the bank employee.

Informatively, under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 the gratuity payable may be wholly or partially forfeited for an offence involving moral turpitude. Similarly, the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 provides that no banking company shall employ or continue the employment of any person, who has been convicted by a criminal court for an offence involving moral turpitude.

There is no need to go into any other details or merits of the above two cases beyond trying to understand the true import and meaning of the term ‘Moral Turpitude’.

Judicial View

Placing reliance on various decisions, the Division Bench of the Madras High Court quoted relevant observations and noted in its judgment in respect of industrial employee –

“The term ‘Moral Turpitude’ is a phrase which can hardly be accurately defined. It can have various shades of meaning in various sets of circumstances and will have different meanings in different contexts. No absolute standard can be laid down for deciding whether a particular act is to be considered as one involving ‘Moral Turpitude’. The said term is rather vague one, where it is virtually important not to be vague.....‘Moral Turpitude’, in the normal sense, is understood only with reference to an act or behaviour of a person, which, in turn, would amount to an offence. In criminal law, it is a phrase used to describe the conduct that is considered contrary to the community’s standards of justice, honesty and good morals.”

Referring to a judgment of the Federal Court, the High Court quoted as follows –

“.....If parties intend such (a contract to promote public wrong, short of crime) wrong, as where they conspire against the public interest by agreeing to violate the law or some rule of public policy, the act doubtless involves moral turpitude.....The American Encyclopaedia of Law refers to the term ‘Moral Turpitude’ as anything done contrary to justice, honesty, principle or good morals, an act of baseness, vileness or depravity in the private and social duties which a man owes to his fellowmen or society in general, contrary to the accepted and customary rule of rights and duties between man and man.....The tests which should ordinarily be applied for judging whether a certain offence does or does not involve ‘Moral Turpitude’ appear to be (1) whether the act leading to a conviction was such as could shock moral conscience of society in general, (2) whether the motive which led to the act was a base one, and (3) whether on account of the act having been committed the perpetrator could be considered to be of a depraved character or a person who was to be looked down upon by the society”.

The Division Bench of the Supreme Court while hearing the appeal of the bank employee referred to Black's Law Dictionary (8th Edn., 2004) for the meaning of the term 'Moral Turpitude' and quoted,

"Conduct that is contrary to justice, honesty, or morality; in the area of legal ethics, offenses involving 'Moral Turpitude' such as fraud or breach of trust, also termed moral depravity." It also stated that 'Moral Turpitude' means, in general, shameful wickedness, so extreme a departure from ordinary standards of honest, good morals, justice, or ethics as to be shocking to the moral sense of the community.

Again, citing from an earlier decision, the Division Bench, *inter alia*, quoted,

"Every false statement made by a person may not be 'Moral Turpitude', but it would be so if it discloses vileness or depravity in the doing of any private or social duty which a person owes to his fellow men or to the society in general".

Seeking Remedy

Having ascertained from recent judicial pronouncements as to what could constitute 'Moral Turpitude' and that too in respect of individuals, who were mere employees; we should apply the aforesaid parameters laid down by the judiciary to the overall behaviour of our ministers, politicians, bureaucrats, government servants and individuals belonging to their ilk while dealing with public funds. Therefore, in the absence of specific law to ensure good conduct of such men, of course including women, should not the civil society seek to impose fear of open, in-depth and authoritative scrutiny, if not judicial intervention as such, at every stage for all their actions?

For, if a mere wage earner could be deprived of his entire dues or even his employment itself if he indulged in a behaviour involving 'Moral Turpitude', why the individuals identified above along with all those involved in the decision making process and dealing with public funds and huge finances belonging to the state exchequer should not be made answerable to the society at large through *suo moto* invocation of some authoritative intervention without involving the state at all or seeking "permission" from it, which, as has been our experience so far, dithers and dithers, advancing spurious arguments till eternity, in taking action where the issues over gross misuse of power, irregularities, manipulations, misappropriation of funds, and so on are involved.

What is suggested here is not novel for two reasons. First, just consider whether but for a mere 'petition' of Dr. Subramaniam Swamy – a citizen, a member of the society, community – to the Prime Minister seeking permission, yes, permission, to prosecute A. Raja, without any substantive response from the said high office, would the raging telecom scam involving Rs.1.76 Lakh Crore have snowballed into such glaring exposure? Conversely, if there had existed an enabling authoritative procedure to straightaway launch the proceedings without there being any necessity to seek "permission" of the state, in all probability, there would not have been such nonchalant indulgence by anybody, let alone A. Raja or Suresh Kalmadi.

Enabling Civil Society Initiatives

The second aspect is when an employee indulges in any type of identified misconduct; the employer has inherent authority to issue him either Show Cause notice/memo or Charge-Sheet, and then also conduct an inquiry, if the misconduct is serious enough, without having to take permission from any source. Hence, the ministers, bureaucrats and other government employees being Public Servants in the truest sense of the word, the public, that is, the civil society should have a duly laid down procedure under which the delinquent public servant could be called upon to undergo scrutiny and be answerable for his conceived misdeed/misconduct.

Summary Proceedings

Further, since a bank employee cannot be continued in employment for commitment of an offence involving Moral Turpitude under the specific provision of law as pointed out earlier, civil society also must ensure and insist on an enactment of a provision under which any public person, meaning minister, politician, bureaucrat or government servant, committing an offence arising out of his deliberate action, including even inaction, with full knowledge involving Moral Turpitude, is *suo moto* and summarily brought under scrutiny without having to take "Permission" from the state. The need for such summary process can be justified on the ground that if one cannot obstruct the government servant from carrying out his duties, he too should not indulge in illegal, unauthorized and manipulative activities, that is, his activities should ensure transparency.

For this reason, civil society must have the legal right to haul up and question anyone in authority in a due process, which should start at the lowest decision making level inasmuch as the state, for a number of well-

known partisan reasons, hesitates, or rather refuses, to move against favoured politicians, and of course, bureaucrats, much less take any punitive action. In fact, the state prevaricates to keep a tight lid over – i.e. prevent leakage of – any information available with it in any situation which involves mismanagement – to use a very mild expression – of financial affairs. Precisely for this reason, civil society in fact knows nothing in specifics so far in respect of enormous public funds extravagantly disbursed and distributed within the close circle of friends and acquaintances, who were otherwise totally ineligible so far as the CWG scam is concerned. Fortunately, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) was able to scan and expose the 2G misappropriation, and estimate the quantum at Rs.1.76 Lakh Crore.

It may be added that so far as the bureaucrats and other government servants are concerned, they will in all probability seek to invoke protection and immunity available to them under Article 311 of the Constitution. But what is suggested herein is not only a strict but open, in-depth and official scrutiny, which is not prohibited under the said Article. The purpose of this authoritative scrutiny will be to ensure open and public exposure of the misdeed/misconduct. It should neither pose any hurdle, nor the individual concerned raise objections, if his hands are clean.

How Corruption Spreads (*Cont'd. from page 8*)

about whether we are gaining knowledge, doing our work, or taking responsibility – then obviously that is the message we carry into our adult life.

Maybe Hazare-ji can take up the mantle, or maybe we need another dynamic reformist, who can persuade the government to revamp the working conditions of people in power. It is not just a matter of corruption. It is the fact that tax-payers are paying through their nose every year to sustain this gigantic government machinery which is a law unto itself. If a police officer commits a heinous crime, his own senior is asked to investigate. In Karnataka we are witness to a situation where the Governor has given permission for prosecution of the Chief Minister, and the

Thin End of the Wedge

The purpose of such public exposure ought to put the government of the day in the dock, so to say, and compel it to initiate further proceedings in respect of the government servants including imposition of punishment, if any, as soon as possible. Fortunately, as the ministers are not covered under Article 311, they cannot seek shelter under it for protection and immunity. Hence, they can be and must be proceeded against *sou moto* by the government.

Under the circumstances, the mild and vague term – Moral Turpitude – should be able to serve as the thin end of the wedge to expose the scams and scandals, which at present seem to be tumbling out of the government's closet one by one. It could be that the threat of initiation of summary, open and authoritative probe may deter the predatory elements, be they ministers, politicians, bureaucrats or anyone else within the ruling establishment, and keep them away from their indulgence in future.

Let us hope so.

MR. KASHINATH A. DIVECHA is a veteran trade unionist, since retired.

High Court has stayed the proceedings. If it is finally cleared, after how much delay no one knows, a police inspector would be expected to file an FIR, or arrest the Chief Minister. Do we not see the irony of this situation, when the Chief Minister can throw the inspector into oblivion without even a written order?

They say that even a thousand mile journey starts with the first step. The first step has been taken. It is now up to every Indian to see that the march does not stop.

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“I am no longer the current coin, I fancied I once was”.

Mahatma Gandhi to his private secretary V. Kalyanam
a few weeks before his assassination.

DNA, 9 April 2011

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

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

Fight Against Corruption

1. As individuals we find ourselves helpless to fight the obtuseness of the Government but a non-political movement which raised its voice, “India Against Corruption” (IAC) succeeded in overcoming the Government’s obduracy. It funneled the collective anger of the people against corruption. It planned to force/request/persuade/pressurize the Government to enact the Jan Lokpal Bill as an effective deterrence against corruption. Anna Hazare’s indefinite fast from April 5 on this issue received unprecedented apolitical support, not because of Anna’s popularity but because corruption is an issue which has been agitating the people in the scam-filled recent past. It forced the Government to concede ground proving the power of the people again, although the goal is yet to be achieved. The Government’s usual tactics of obfuscation did not work this time.

It is disturbing to see a manipulated campaign against Hazare’s movement. One may disagree with Hazare, Bhushans and Kejriwal but this reminds me of the campaign against JP in 1975 dubbing his movement as anti-democratic. The same thing is happening now. The sudden eruption of tapes and digging up old cases against Anna are all reminiscent of the old times.

- Ashok Karnik

1. IAC was a movement in search of a national leader. Anna Hazare, although not known outside Maharashtra, emerged as a rallying point because he espoused a cause that is uppermost in people’s minds. The earlier movements led by Jayaprakash Narayan and VP Singh succeeded in displacing the Governments in 1977 and 1989 but did not go far. JP failed because the leaders who gathered around him showed that their lust for power overrode their righteousness and VP Singh proved to be a counterfeit messiah. This time too, differences of opinion started appearing immediately after the fast began. A collection of individuals, howsoever honest and well meaning, unless bound by discipline, always falters at crucial times. Critics of the movement argued that the movement was fascist in nature and undermined the institution of Parliament. This is hair-splitting at its worst as the IAC merely wants participation in drafting the Lokpal Bill; it is the Parliament which will have to pass or reject it ultimately. There is no doubt that such a movement was needed to wake up the Government from 42 years of dithering; at least somebody did something other than just talk. Otherwise, the Government as personified by the Prime Minister would have remained unmoved by the stench of corruption all around.

Politics of Appointments

2. The appointment of PJ Thomas as Chief Vigilance Commissioner raised a storm and was ultimately turned down as illegal by the Supreme Court. The question remains why the Prime Minister and Home Minister were adamant on Thomas’s appointment when Sushma Swaraj, Leader of the Opposition, had vehemently opposed it. Was it sheer arrogance of power or was it something more? Why was the selection process so badly manipulated? Not giving the full service records, hiding the corruption case and then defying Sushma Swaraj’s request to defer the proceedings for a day to re-verify the allegations against Thomas defeats logic. The PM claiming that he was unaware of the corruption allegation is beyond comprehension. The Prime Minister of the country did not know what everybody knew!

2. Political arrogance apart, there is something more sinister in the whole affair. Kiran Bedi, retired senior police officer, alleged that such appointments are predetermined to choose ‘convenient’ officials for such posts; the criterion is that the official should not cause trouble for the government in such posts as the posts are Constitutional appointments; the incumbents go out of the administrative control of the Government and can become difficult to handle. The choice is therefore to be made to ensure that the incumbent should not have tendencies to break free and must remain beholden to the Government. If Thomas’s selection was so pre-determined, the whole unholy manoeuvre becomes clearer in a perverse way. It is unfortunate that Government’s every action has to be watched with suspicion. It has squandered the goodwill it had.

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Wikileaks Again

3. WikiLeaks raised its head again (March 17-18, 2011) at the wrong time for UPA II, which was already stymied by scam-a-week phenomenon. The old wound of 2008 was reopened by revelations in US diplomatic cables that money had changed hands to secure survival of UPA I on the issue of the Nuclear Deal. A majority vote was managed over a combined opposition to secure a very important national goal of ending India's isolation from the nuclear club. A great achievement by foul means! The issue had boiled over in 2008 because of a sting operation showing MPs being offered money to cross vote in favour of the Government; it was followed by MPs pouring sacks of money in the House to show that they were offered cash for vote. A JPC had gone into it and, as is common in this country, came up with zilch. The matter was supposedly buried and forgotten till the leaked cable showed that the US was also aware of the shenanigans in the Indian Parliament. The PM's response to the furore, was sublimely inadequate – as is usual these days. Great legal but sterile defence but we expect more forthright answers from our leaders; even if there was a whiff of truth in the allegation, the PM needed to be bold enough to institute a high level enquiry to get to the bottom of it. To make matters worse, he claimed that UPA's victory in the 2009 election had rendered the issue redundant. If electoral victory is to be considered absolution from past offences, every goonda being tried for murder and dacoity would prefer to contest an election to prove his innocence rather than face the hangman.

3. The nature of diplomatic communications needs to be understood. A mission official sends cables to his headquarters to keep them informed about developments in the country of his posting. WikiLeaks has exposed the US State Department communications by 'stealing' the cables. Without going into the morality of the operation, it can be argued that the US Government would never authenticate the cables and would perforce refuse to comment on their contents. What the cables contain is the perception of the mission official about a particular event. In 2008, the US was naturally vitally interested in what was happening in Parliament *vis a vis* the Nuclear Treaty. The assurance that the UPA Government had made all arrangements to buy the required votes would be soothing to the ears of US officials. Cables mentioning 'cash for votes' have to be viewed from this angle and should not be taken as the gospel truth. If buying and selling of votes is the issue, we have to search for evidence elsewhere and not in WikiLeaks cables. The Opposition's attack on the Government, based on the cables, was misplaced although its suspicion that votes were bought might be correct. The sting operation done by a TV channel and the cash thrown on the Lok Sabha table were more direct and authentic evidence of the wrongdoing. If WikiLeaks cables are to be taken as the truth, we would be accepting whatever a US diplomat claims to know about us. Some other cables may be equally embarrassing to the Opposition as US officials must have passed on their perception of the Opposition stance to Washington. Are we going to ask every politician to explain what a US diplomat reports about him?

Plea-Bargaining

4. Dozens of senior functionaries are being hauled up these days of scams. These include politicians, senior bureaucrats and business tycoons. What is common is that all of them claim injured innocence; each one proclaims that he is sure to be vindicated in Court. If evidence is available against them, they claim that they are being framed. Not one has shown remorse and willingness to come clean. They have the confidence that our judicial system will never close all its doors to them; if convicted in a lower court, he will appeal to the higher court. In the interim of 15-20 years, the dictum that one is presumed to be innocent till proved guilty operates. The 'criminal' continues to enjoy his ill-gotten wealth and power.

4. In order to save the society from this perverted morality and ineffective justice delivery system, we have to consider the provision of 'plea bargaining' adopted in the US. It saves a lot of time and even if the criminal gets away with a lighter sentence, the case comes to a closure as the criminal is encouraged to accept his guilt. The society needs to see that the guilty are punished; if not, people will lose all faith in the law; India is on the brink of such a disastrous disillusionment with law. 'Plea Bargaining' would reduce the court load and preclude endless investigations and court adjournments.

Making law is the right of governments, no matter how ineffective or corrupt these governments may be.

Tavleen Singh

The Sunday Express, April 10 2011

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

India Wins World Cup 2011

Some Rambling Reflections

D. R. Pendse

I am ignorant of many subjects. Cricket is one of them. So, I have no qualms about reducing a few thoughts to writing. Read them at your own risk!

I had been watching the India matches on and off on TV at home. Ever since I watched the tie between India and England, I somehow felt that India was heading for the World Cup. I did not know why I felt so. It was not merely a patriotic wish. It was not a forecast. It was not a studied judgement either. It was some sort of an intelligent (!) mental assessment. Even when we lost to South Africa (by, what I thought was, a silly last minute change of bowling), I still felt the same way. I expressed this to some friends; they asked me, why. I could not give any reason.

Tables Have Turned – Sports

Cricket is the favourite sport of the British. It spread wide along with the British Empire. England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – the traditional whites dominated the game for over a century. The ‘ruled’, e.g. India under the British (which included today’s Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh), the West Indies, etc. were all ‘coloured’ and followed behind. Now the whites or the rulers have all fallen behind and India, the coloured, the ruled has emerged the winner.

Tables Have Turned – Economy

Ditto in industry. On the conquest of India, the British and then the so-called developed (white) world, exploited the economies and industry of India and other (coloured) countries in the so-called poor (read, impoverished) third world. Now the native industrial groups from these same poor countries are buying out companies and manning top managements in these developed countries and the poor are their largest creditors. It is the U.S. President who now comes all the way to India requesting Indian industry to bring its capital and know-how to the U.S. and help create fifty thousand jobs there.

How Was the World Cup Won

What was the difference in the winning India team and the losing teams of the past? On repeated thinking,

I now think that for the first time, India was a team. All these years, it was eleven players brought together in the field. I could feel this difference, watching any Indian World Cup match. In fielding, particularly. Winning the World Cup was undertaken and executed like a serious A Class private sector industry project. They were not just one match after another. They were chapters in the execution of one single project. Dhoni was the M.D.

Interestingly, after the victory, one of the players, (I do not remember who) in fact said so in an interview. He said, about a year ago, they discussed as to how to proceed to win that particular match. Then, they said, “We have to play the WC in a year. Why should we not plan right away for winning the World Cup? The strategy, training each one of them the exact role he should play, and all that. And that is what they did. Bravo. I do not know, nor understand, the details. But surely, the coach, the captain, the organizers all put in a year’s hard work.

Security

Security. It worked! A serious or very serious untoward security incident taking place in the stadiums at Mumbai or, more so, at Mohali, was always a possibility. Something, or, anything could have happened at either of these colossal highest profile gatherings. But nothing untoward whatsoever happened. The world was amazed! I too am still clueless as to how exactly this could have been managed. Were all the terrorist groups sanctioned casual leave for March 30 as well as April 2? Who sanctions C.L.s?

A Determined Government

Another point became clear to me. If the Government is aggressively determined, it surely can get results and maintain perfect law and order. Remember the Commonwealth Games 2010? A few weeks before the inauguration, even petty things were going wrong. I was in the U.S. then and witnessed Western media churning out frequent depressing stories. But then the aggressive

determination took over and the actual inauguration ceremony was *par excellence*, a feast for the eyes. (It is another matter that most of the US media had no space even to mention the ceremony).

I have never seen in my whole 80-year life, my countrymen, the whole country, so much in joy as after the World Cup win, except on the midnight of August 15, 1947, when India became independent. The whole country was drowned in joy and ecstasy, on both occasions.

It is good that my country has something which can make all the people come together to celebrate in joy, forgetting all their differences and forgetting all their individual woes.

An Intriguing Paradox

It is an intriguing paradox that for my country this 'something' is a gift left by the British. The same British who exploited us for centuries and whom we treated as enemies and whom we successfully drove out in 1947. Yes, they retreated, but successfully: turning their India enemies into their friends, grateful for leaving such a wonderful gift which can bind the nation together in joy. Not many countries have ever achieved this feat. In fact, quite a few would spend billions, win battles and yet leave behind permanent enemies with deep hatred.

I remember that some years ago, Indian beauties achieved striking success for three consecutive years in worldwide beauty contests. What is common between India's success in the Beauty Contest then and in the World

Cup now? The common feature, I guess, is that our Government is totally absent from either. No Budget provisions; no long chapters in Plan documents; no committees for selection. Most important, no ministry for World Cup Affairs.

How To Ruin a Good Thing

But who knows? Don't be surprised if, enamoured by this success and the public interest, the Finance Minister in his next Budget speech for the year 2012-13 unfortunately, has this to say

"Our striking success in World Cup cricket in April 2011 has shown the tremendous ability of our young players. We are proud of them and the team. To give a boost to this skill and to exploit its potential fully, the Government will set up a 'Department of International Cricket Affairs' to devise and implement schemes and to identify, train, and develop Indian cricketers. Special attention will be given to aspirants from the minorities, from those below the poverty line and from those from less developed states. I am pleased to make an initial allocation of Rs. One thousand crores for this purpose. More funds will be provided when necessary ..."

If this happens, that will be a sad day for my country. For, never in the next twenty five years, India will then have any hopes of the World Cup reaching our shores!

MR. D. R. PENDSE is a well-known economist and was, for a number of years, Chief Economic Adviser to the Tata Group.

Ai Weiwei: Making of Another Liu Xiaobo?

"Why is Ai Weiwei – one of the most famous and internationally acclaimed Chinese artist and architect being detained and persecuted with no information about him to even his family members, ever since he was taken away into the custody ...

Ai Weiwei has answered this question several times on his own blog and slew of interviews he has given to the western media in the past.

"They crack down on everybody who has different opinions — not even different opinions, just different attitudes," he told CNN last year. "Simply to have different opinions can cost your life; you can be put in jail, can be silenced and can disappear."

Ai Weiwei is not a revolutionary, neither does he challenge the authoritarian communist regime nor does he want a change in the political system of China. He merely asks for basic rights of people from the authorities and wants to know the details and reasons of several hundred young students who died in the ill-built school buildings when a devastating earthquake smeared the surface of Sichuan three years ago.

His major crimes? Questions! He just asks questions and then answers it himself too. "To ask a question against the authorities is anti-China. If people catch hold of a corrupt, rapist official—then the act is anti-China." Children in the earthquake were killed because of the shoddy school buildings and if you ask a question then it is anti-China.

Excerpted from Dr. Yukteshwar Kumar's, C3S Paper No.771 dated April 8, 2011. Dr. Yukteshwar Kumar is course director of Chinese Stream at University of Bath, United Kingdom. His e-mail is yukt123@gmail.co.)

The Untouchables of Dharamsala

Tenzin Tsundue

My Gandhian guru, Rajiv Voraji, once told me a tale of a small kingdom ruled by a brute who'd break his subjects' backs with heavy taxes while he made merry. The poor farmers, unable to revolt, left for a jungle. When the king's rations finished, he realised his mistake and journeyed to the jungle, knelt down and begged them to return, saying, "I am not your king but your servant."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has done the opposite: he's decided to abdicate his political powers to an elected leadership, committing the 400-year old institution of the Dalai Lama to history. At a time when street revolutions are afoot and despots are fighting to retain their last bastions, the Dalai Lama and his people are engaged in a polite pingpong exchange. He wants his people to choose their own leadership while they – unable to rise above their emotions – are pleading with him to continue.

As a child, my first image of the Dalai Lama was on a postage stamp. He was holding a child, so we were envious and our parents said we were the unfortunate ones. For Tibetans, he is the reincarnation of *Avalokitesvara*, the *bodhisattva* who vowed to be with us until we all achieve nirvana. So when he's making fundamental changes – terminating the Ganden Phodrang government that's existed since 1642 – it's a deeply emotional moment and the change is unlikely to be easy.

This revolutionary change is a continuation of the previous Dalai Lama's reforms of the early 20th century, which were also resisted by the aristocrats and clergy. The Dalai Lama recently told the media that as a teen, he witnessed how his officials scolded people away instead of hearing them – he already felt the need for change. And in exile, aged 28 and guided by Indian leaders like Nehru and Sardar Patel, he introduced democracy in 1963. After carefully nurturing this democratic culture, today as he is retiring, a system of elected leadership is already in place.

But our 43-member Parliament's rejection of his retirement is not just an emotional gesture; it reveals a complex relationship at play.

I sat through the two-day deliberations. Every member knew it was the Dalai Lama's final decision and was bound to be returned to them – perhaps with a good scolding. And yet Parliament voted he should remain. It made me ask: Why do politicians lack confidence in carrying out the Dalai Lama's wishes, and fear their easy

acceptance will be misconstrued as over-enthusiasm? Some politicians, including the prime minister-in-exile, Prof Samdhong Rinpoche, alerted everyone to be wary of Tibetan writers who pen "criticism of the Dalai Lama". Besides his nuanced interpretation, others suggested the retirement has been triggered by such writers. This isn't new. In the 1980s, when the first batch of India-educated intellectuals started to speak out against blind faith and superstition, their English was nothing like the usual reverential Tibetan prose. In 2002, when Tibetan intellectual Jamyang Norbu wrote in *Newsweek* that "The Dalai Lama is like a banyan tree under which nothing grows," there was uproar and goading to be "faithful, obedient and loyal".

The late historian Dawa Norbu hid on a Delhi-bound bus among vegetables and shoeboxes to escape Dharamsala when a mob went berserk about his statement, in a magazine he edited, that "Tibetan leadership is not dynamic enough". Norbu taught history for 19 years at JNU and continued writing. Fellow writer-activists Pema Bhum and Norbu left for the US, while Lhasang Tsering stayed in Dharamsala calling himself the 'resident devil'. That makes two devils in Dharamsala. The other is the Dalai Lama, dubbed by Beijing "the devil in monk's robes". He laughs this off by posing with his index fingers as horns above his big sunny smile. My friend Lukar Jam is the latest devil on the prowl. He is famous for his cutting comments that infuriate critics. This former political prisoner had to resign as a researcher from the exile government's security department for his vocal support for independence (as opposed to autonomy).

Writers become heroes if they criticise China but become 'unfaithful' if they criticise domestic policies. Our community is largely conformist and traditionalist, so free minds and non-believers are often misunderstood and labelled 'anti-Dalai Lama'. Some politicians do this to look loyal. But I haven't met a single intellectual who doesn't respect His Holiness. The situation is better today but people still cower in fear of getting the 'anti-Dalai Lama' tag.

The biggest protest since the 2008 uprising happened last year by students and intellectuals protesting China's policy of replacing Tibetan school books with Chinese ones. Beijing is now cracking down savagely on Tibetan writers, poets, singers and artists since they provide leadership by their creative expressions. Recently, both the Dalai Lama and prime minister-in-exile praised these heroes' courage and demanded their release. One such jailed hero-writer, Shokdung, was once hated by some in our community for being too vocally a non-believer and speaking against Buddhist practices ridden with ritualism.

Thank god it is the Dalai Lama himself who's calling for change. He understands that 400 years of faith in him has become a culture of dependency. Thus only he can liberate their minds. Our politicians defend Tibetan

democracy by claiming that since the majority has faith in His Holiness' leadership, it is democratic to insist that he continues as our leader. But conversely, the Dalai Lama wants elected leaders to completely democratise the system – I believe a thinking Buddhist reasons and finds no place for blind faith. For him, democracy is the missing wing, else 'faithfulness' is mistaken as the wish of the majority.

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Courtesy: Friends of Tibet - A people's movement to keep alive the issue of Tibet through direct action. Our activities are aimed at ending China's occupation of Tibet and the suffering of the Tibetan people. Friends of Tibet supports the continued struggle of the Tibetan people for independence. Friends of Tibet is also one of the principal organisers of World Tibet Day around the world. To know more, visit: www.friendsoftibet.org

Nibor Dooh: The Bane of India

As any Indian, who loves cricket, I rejoiced when India won the IIC World Cup after almost three decades. Living abroad, I got up at 3 am in the morning, drove twenty miles with a child and dog in tow to my friend's house so that I could watch the action live. My cry of anguish was heard by all in that room when Gambhir lost his head at 97 and hoops of joy filled the room when Dhoni hit that winning sixer. It's all stuff of history, no doubt.

I knew that the players would also hit a well-deserved financial jackpot. Endorsement deals, prize money would flow. What I was not prepared for the Nibor Doohs of India - our politicians - would raid the state treasury to transfer wealth from the poor (the Indian taxpayers) to these rich, pampered players. For starters, the state of Uttarakhand has announced that it will give a plot of land or a house to Sachin Tendulkar and Mahendra Singh Dhoni. Not to be outdone, the Chief Minister of Karnataka has promised a residential plot in Bangalore for each team member. Maharashtra's Chief Minister has announced that the state government will honor players from Maharashtra Sachin Tendulkar and Zaheer Khan with a cash prize of Rs one crore and a citation while two members of the team's support staff will be honored with Rs.50 lakhs each. Most state governments have offered their home-town players cash gifts of between 10 million and 20 million rupees.

As the legend goes, Robin Hood robbed the rich and gave the loot to the poor. It was his way of fighting against social injustice. Nibor Dooh, dear reader, is Robin Hood spelled in reverse. The Nibor Doohs of India raid the state treasury, money that belongs to the people of the state, generally poor and barely living above subsistence level, and then give it to the rich and powerful. The Nibor Doohs of India have been bleeding the country for quite a while – consider all the scams. They take what is not theirs and line their own pockets. What is more scary than this open corruption, is that the Nibor Doohs have directly assaulted the viability of Indian institutions. The police, the courts all have been affected. I am hard pressed to think of a single Indian institution that has not been untouched by scandals and scams. So it is indeed a small step for our Nibor Doohs to raid the larder and grab what is not theirs and give it away to those who are nowhere close to the poverty line. It does not even jiggle their conscience. They have, indeed, become, the bane of India.

**– Saibal Mitra
From the Net Contributed by Melanie Silveira**

Self-reliance : the keynote of our independence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Self-reliance is both a means and an end.

For Godrej it is the essence of independence.





Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

It Pays To Be World Champions

The largesse they are dishing out with open hands is not theirs to give.

India has conquered the world. Well, actually, the national cricket team has won an international competition, but to hear our politicians shouting hosannas and showering bounty on the players, one would be forgiven for thinking our country has ascended to world domination.

It is indeed touching to see our Chief Ministers doling out crores in cash and property to India's already obscenely rich cricketers - and patting themselves on their backs for their generosity. There is one small problem, however. The largesse they are dishing out with open hands is not theirs to give. It comes from you and me, the taxpayers - and I don't recall any of these exalted personages asking our permission beforehand. And of course, the gullible Indian public is applauding them instead of calling them to account. *Chak de, India.*

For me, the more disturbing aspect of this "grand gesture" is the parochialism on display. Each Chief Minister has singled out the team members hailing from their respective states as the beneficiaries. In a game where team spirit is of prime importance, this type of selective generosity smacks of divisiveness. If the CMs want to score brownie points, the least they can do is be even handed. Either reward the entire team, or none at all.

Naturally, it is expecting too much of our politicians to display any maturity or conscientiousness. Ideally, the Indian cricket team should show its sense of solidarity by refusing the money unless it is evenly distributed. But then, refusing money is just not in the Indian genes - no matter how much wealth you may have already amassed. Just ask A. Raja.

The Fractious Parsis of Bombay

The tragedy of today's Parsis is that they expend a lot of infructuous time and energy debating matters which have no bearing on the spiritual and physical well being of the community.

True to form, the tiny but fractious Parsi community of Bombay is riddled with self-created controversies. The latest one is a debate, if it can be called that, about the dwindling number of Zoroastrian priests, due to the reluctance of potential new initiates to take up the family profession. There is also a prevailing complaint that many of the novices tend to memorize the Avesta prayers by rote, without making any effort to understand their meaning. They are referred to, rather uncharitably, as "mumbling priests." Then, of course, is the ongoing and never ending battle between two groups who identify themselves as "Traditionalists" and "Reformists".

On the subject of priests, I tend to take an opposite view to the concern that their numbers are dwindling. In my opinion, there are already too many. How many priests does a microscopic community of 40,000 need, after all? Moreover, far from providing spiritual salvation, these "mumbling priests" are affording lay Parsis an opportunity to salve their religious conscience at very little effort to themselves. Why bother to try and understand your faith, when you have a battery of priests mouthing incomprehensible phrases on your behalf? By this means, you can conveniently convince yourself that you have

performed your religious duty. And anyone who has witnessed, during the *Muktad* prayers, three platoons of *mobeds*, side by side, mumbling unsynchronized sets of prayers would have to be really naive to believe that the resulting cacophony of sound would be pleasing to Ahura Mazda or Zoroaster. A short simple prayer, said from the heart, would bring you far greater spiritual rewards, trust me.

One prominent Parsi gentleman has opined that "Parsi priests have failed in their duties". That may well be true, but the harsh reality is that a majority of Parsis, particularly those living in Bombay, have failed in their fundamental duty as followers of Zarathustra; a philosopher and saint who preached tolerance above all things. For me personally, being a Zarathusti is a matter of pride and happiness, because I belong to a religion that does not forbid this and that (like Islam, for instance), but encourages its followers to simply adhere to the basic tenets of good thoughts, good words, good deeds - and then go out and enjoy themselves. That, in a nutshell, should be the overriding principle and should far supersede petty issues like mumbling priests reciting incomprehensible prayers (not out of genuine conviction, but because it is a job).

It also overrides petty controversies over who can or cannot be considered a Zarathusti. Who gave these priests and self-styled “experts” that authority anyway? It is certainly not a mandate passed down by the Prophet. The true scholars of the Zarathusti religion (not necessarily Parsis) have repeatedly shown that the Gathas - recognised as the one authentic record of Zarathustra’s teachings - pay no importance to issues like conversion and proselytising. Indeed, they are rarely mentioned. And yet, these “authorities” continue to divide an already dwindling community with these trivialities for no other reason than to satisfy their overweening ego. It is politics at its most venal level. And what do the “enlightened” Parsis do? They fall right into their trap by taking sides and demeaning a community that was once renowned for their philanthropy, enterprise and staying above petty squabbles.

Coming to the war of the factions, two particular groups that periodically invite the ire of the “Reformists” are certain Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) – two in particular, who shall remain nameless – and the grandiosely-named World Association of Parsi Irani Zarathustis (WAPIZ). Personally, I endorse the prevailing and unflattering opinion of these two groups held by the “Reformists”. However, I would like to respectfully submit that the frequent attacks on them are not only failing to penetrate their rhinoceros hides, but may actually prove to be counter-productive. The attacks give these worthies an opportunity to project themselves, to a distressingly

large proportion of gullible Parsis, as martyrs to the “cause”. Moreover, the attacks are merely serving to inflate their already bloated egos. These gentlemen have shrewdly set themselves up as “defenders of the faith”, who are heroically deflecting the “irreligious” arrows shot at the ancient faith of Zoroastrianism by “radical free thinkers” (like me). Their insidious and self serving seeds have already found fertile ground with a majority of Parsis, who have neither the time nor inclination to try to understand the joyous and tolerant religion gifted to them by Zarathustra, but are quite content to take as gospel what they are told by their “leaders.” The best course of action would be to ignore these “saviours” with the contempt they deserve.

The tragedy of today’s Parsis is that they expend a lot of infructuous time and energy debating matters which have no bearing on the spiritual and physical well being of the community. The important issues are virtually ignored. I have nothing against Parsis enjoying good drink, good food and sound sleep. Zoroastrianism is a celebration of Ahura Mazda, after all. But if some of them have nothing constructive to contribute towards the religion, they would be doing the community a great service by shutting their collective mouths

The enemy is not out there, my friends. He is within us.

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Singed by the Dragon

The Philippines discovers that it doesn’t pay to appease China. Appeasing a rising hegemon carries a risk that one’s national interest will disappear down its maw. This is a lesson the Philippines is only now beginning to learn. On March 2, a Philippine vessel exploring for oil near islands controlled by the country found itself harassed by two Chinese patrol boats. Manila exercised restraint in avoiding an immediate conflict, but is otherwise upping the ante, diplomatically and militarily. The government registered a strong protest with Beijing last month, and this week its military chief announced defenses near the islands will get an upgrade.

This assertiveness marks a different tack from the way Manila has curried favour with Beijing until now. When U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signalled greater American engagement in the South China Sea disputes last July, Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo was the only leader in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to publicly demur. In December, the Philippines was one of only 19 nations that refused to send a representative to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo’s Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo. Then in February, it sparked a diplomatic row with Taiwan by extraditing 14 Taiwanese citizens to the mainland, which claimed jurisdiction over them.

Why all this kowtowing? Since he came to power last June, President Benigno Aquino may have been motivated by domestic politics. The Philippine public is concerned with the welfare of the country’s large population of overseas workers, and so the administration hoped Beijing would grant clemency to three Filipinos sentenced to death for drug trafficking in 2009. Despite Manila’s pleas, China executed the three Wednesday.

So it will be significant if the events of the last month prove to be the beginning of a more realistic approach toward Beijing. At the very least, it’s encouraging that the Aquino administration is reaching out to Washington and acknowledges it as its “sole strategic partner.” That’s an overdue recognition of the geopolitical reality of the day – America is the only country that can preserve the status quo in Asia.

Excerpted from the *Wall Street Journal* , April 1 ,2011. Brought to the attention of *Freedom First* readers by Ram Narayanan.

Unrest in Bahrain

S. C. Sharma

People who start a revolution are seldom left in charge of it.

Bahrain comprises of a chain of thirty islands with a population of 1.2 million. In 1783, al Khalifa captured it from Persia and founded the present dynasty. About 81% of the population is Muslim of which 70% are Shias. There are 9% Christians and 10% follow other religions. It became a British protectorate and gained independence in 1971.

Bahrain is situated between two powerful neighbours, Iran and Saudi Arabia. It has to play a balancing act. A strong Iraq was a buffer between these two states which is no more the case. A government controlled by the Shias in Bahrain will tilt the balance in favour of Iran. 40% of sea borne oil passes through the narrow Strait of Hormuz. Iran is on one side of it. With cooperation from Bahrain on the other side, Iran could disturb the global economy by mining the channel. Iran, Saudi Arabia and the world powers are interested in the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. The USA has acquired rights to station the 5th Fleet in Bahrain due to its geo-political importance. The Base facilities are more of a convenience since only 2300 personnel work there and make little use of port facilities. The major warships stay mainly at sea. The two militaries do train together and it is a popular leave station as alcohol is freely available!

Due to the decline in oil yield, Bahrain turned to petrol refining and development as an international banking centre. The Shias complain of marginalization. They are banned from recruitment in the security forces. The police are largely manned by Sunnis from Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Pakistan. About 50% of 20,000 personnel in the security apparatus are from Pakistan. There has been talk of granting citizenship to foreigners in the security forces which is opposed by the Shias. There are a large number of foreign workers including about 260,000 Indians.

In 1999, King Hammad bin Isa ended a twenty five year emergency and promised constitutional monarchy. Elections were conducted but he reneged on his promise in 2001 and appointed legislative house which curtailed the powers of the elected one. This gave undue advantage to the Sunnis and the Shias boycotted the 2002 elections. Discontent amongst the Shias has been simmering and

there have been protests in the rural areas since 2009. They demanded release of political prisoners. In the 2010 elections, the Shias political party, Al Wiqaf, won the largest number of seats.

The wave of unrest which swept away the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt surfaced in Bahrain too. In February 2011, thousands of protesters gathered in the capital, Manama. For the first time, they were led by religious leaders and not by politicians. They demanded a change of regime and a non-sectarian democracy. The riot police opened fire. There were skirmishes between the police and the demonstrators. The King tried both – the carrot and the stick. He offered USD 2700 to each family, released some political prisoners and also deployed the riot police. Students, teachers and lawyers joined the protestors. The people were not convinced about the sincerity of the Government and more than one hundred thousand people poured into the Pearl Square. It was the first time that such a large gathering had collected. The King went to Saudi Arabia for consultations and help. The Saudi King promised all help. There were sympathetic demonstrations by the Shias in Iraq. The Shias in the oil rich Eastern province of Saudi Arabia too became restive and carried out demonstrations in the Shiite town of Qatif on 10 March. The protests were put down and 15,000 security personnel were deployed to deter any protests. The Bahrain Government also decided on forceful repression. Martial Law was declared for three months on 15 March. Prominent Shia leader Hassan Mushaima who had returned from exile in February was arrested for having had talks with foreign countries. The monument erected by the protesters in Pearl Square was torn down and the Square cleared. Additional 2000 troops from Saudi Arabia and neighbouring countries were brought in. Iran has called the entry of Saudi troops as invasion and has claimed Bahrain to be part of Iran. By 6 April, the movement had collapsed.

A revolution launched by the civil society is unlikely to succeed unless the security forces come over to their side as happened in Egypt. This is not likely to happen due to the sectarian divide and willingness of neighbouring countries to send Sunni troops. The Bahrain Foreign Minister Khalid al Khalifa visited Pakistan on 29 March 2011 and has asked Pakistan for 1000 security

personnel. Pakistan is looking for a role in the security apparatus of the GCC. The security of the Royal family and key installations has been assigned to Pakistanis. Saudi National Security Chief visited Pakistan on 11 March and is reported to have discussed a new agreement on security.

It is unlikely that there was a conspiracy behind the unrest. A conspiracy over a wide area would have been detected. The important point is not who started it but who is going to benefit. People who start a revolution are seldom left in charge of it. India has wisely kept aloof.

The USA faces the dilemma of strategic interests against promotion of democracy. It is concerned to keep its privilege of a base for the 5th Fleet and does not want a weakening of Saudi position against Iran. Their support for democracy has been only lip service so far and stability is their overriding objective. Iran will try to take advantage though for the moment the movement has been suppressed.

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Redefining Sustainable Development

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks to the World Economic Forum Session at Davos (Switzerland) on 28 January 2011

For most of the last century, economic growth was fuelled by what seemed to be a certain truth: the abundance of natural resources. We mined our way to growth. We burned our way to prosperity. We believed in consumption without consequences.

Those days are gone.

In the 21st century, supplies are running short and the global thermostat is running high. Climate change is also showing us that the old model is more than obsolete. It has rendered it extremely dangerous. Over time, that model is a recipe for national disaster. It is a global suicide pact.

So what do we do in this current challenging situation? How do we create growth in a resource constrained environment? How do we lift people out of poverty while protecting the planet and ecosystems that support economic growth? How do we regain the balance? All of this requires rethinking.

Here at Davos – this meeting of the mighty and the powerful, represented by some key countries – it may sound strange to speak of revolution. But that is what we need at this time.

We need a revolution. Revolutionary thinking. Revolutionary action. A free market revolution for global sustainability.

It is easy to mouth the words “sustainable development”, but to make it happen we have to be prepared to make major changes – in our lifestyles, our economic models, our social organization, and our Political life.

We have to connect the dots between climate change and what I might call here, WEF – Water, Energy and Food. I have asked President Halonen of Finland and President Zuma of South Africa to connect those dots as they lead our High Level Panel on Global Sustainability... I have asked them to take on the tough questions:

How we organize ourselves economically? How we manage increasingly scarce resources?

Those same questions guide our discussion here. I have asked them to bring us visionary recommendations by the end of December so they can be fed into intergovernmental processes until Rio 2012. But as we begin, let me highlight the one resource that is scarcest of all: Time.

We are running out of time: Time to tackle climate change. Time to ensure sustainable, climate-resilient green growth. Time to generate a clean energy revolution. The sustainable development agenda is the growth agenda for the 21st century.

To get there, we need your participation, your initiative. We need you to step up. Spark innovation. Lead by action. Invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy for those who need them most – your future customers. Expand clean energy access in Developing countries – your markets of tomorrow.

Join our UN Global Compact, the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world. Embed those sustainability principles into your strategies, your operations, your supply chain. To government leaders sitting here and elsewhere around the world, send the right signals to build the green economy.

Together, let us tear down the walls. The walls between the development agenda and the climate agenda. Between business, government, and civil society. Between global security and global sustainability. It is good business – good politics – and good for society.

In an odd way, what we are really talking about is going back to the future. The ancients saw no division between themselves and the natural world. They understood how to live in harmony with the world around them. It is time to recover that sense of living harmoniously for our economies and our societies.

From the Net

The Committee and America

by Prabhakar Padhye

Fundamentally, the Indian Committee stands for the values of freedom, democracy and the sovereignty of the individual. As the Declaration of Cultural Freedom (which is a document of paramount importance with us) says, we believe that "Culture can only flourish, find its best expression and be secure in a free society. Society is free in which the integrity of the individual is recognised and respected as a primary ethical value, with all the guarantees of social justice, including equality of opportunity, which this principle implies." The recognition of the integrity of the individual as a primary ethical value provides the basic condition for the prevalence and perfection of cultural freedom. We further believe that the modern totalitarian tyranny which denies this basic condition "is more insidious and destructive than any tyranny in the past, in as much as modern tyranny of totalitarianism seeks to dictate not only the form in which truth, both aesthetic and scientific, may be expressed, but truth itself." We are convinced that "the new tyranny founded on the theory and practice of totalitarianism is the gravest challenge man has faced in civilised history" and that "indifference or neutrality towards this totalitarian tyranny amounts to a renunciation of the Indian tradition and our human heritage and a betrayal of all spiritual values."

N O T E S

Dr. Mathai's Reminder

Dr. John Mathai has done well to emphasize the necessity of a study of the humanities even in an institute of science. In the course of his presidential address to the Indian Institute of Science he said: "The study of science alone provides at best an imperfect and incomplete education. If education is a preparation for life it must have a twofold objective. On the one hand, it should equip students with certain skills and an understanding of one or other branch of accumulated knowledge and, on the other, it should develop in them a sense of values and of individual responsibility. It will help the latter objective effectively if some provision is made in an institute of science like ours for the study of the humanities." It is undeniable that, as pointed out by Dr. Mathai, "we have now turned almost unreservedly to a utilitarian approach with its emphasis on vocational and professional training." Scientific and useful knowledge is no doubt necessary but, warned Dr. Mathai, "such knowledge may become synonymous with spiritual ignorance and poverty, if we

set ourselves to a limited and utilitarian objective." This warning given by Dr. Mathai deserves to be kept in mind when lakhs and crores of rupees are being spent over the establishment of technological institutes and laboratories. We are not against those institutions, but would not like them to exhaust all the available resources to the utter neglect of the study of humanities. It is the study of the humanities that contributes to the growth of "that balanced judgement, that spirit of free inquiry, that sense of corporate loyalty," which according to Dr. Mathai "mark an educated man."

Rajaji's Future Role

Rajaji's last public act as Chief Minister of Madras was characteristic of the high position he occupies in the cultural life of this country. He spoke at a function at which the Presidential Award for Carnatic Vocal Music was handed over to Sangeeta Kalanidhi K. Vasudevacharya by His Excellency Mr. Sri Prakasa, the Governor of Madras. Members of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom cannot but recall with gratitude the inspiring address Rajaji delivered while inaugurating the last Annual Conference of the ICCF. The *Manchester Guardian's* view that the retirement of such a figure cannot be allowed to pass "without salute being made to his great qualities" has been universally echoed.

The Indian people will not, however, permit this great Elder Statesman to withdraw altogether from public life where his mature judgement, mellowed wisdom and restraining influence are more than ever needed in these delirious days. Rajaji, we are confident, has still a vital role to play.

Jeevan Daan

Jayaprakash Narayan's life has always been a dedicated one, even when he worshipped at the shrine of that "False Goddess" of Dialectical Materialism whom he was at last publicly to renounce in his epoch making article "Incentives For Goodness" in the September 1952 issue of *Freedom First*. His dedication of his life to the cause of *Bhoodan Yagna* has been rightly described as historic by Dada Dharmadhikari, who has renamed the recent All India Sarvodaya Sammelan in Bodh Gaya as "Jayaprakash Sammelan". Mr. S. N. Agarwal, General Secretary of the A.I.C.C., has urged that, following on this important conference, attended by no less a person than the Hon'ble Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Head of our Republic, "co-operation between peaceful and democratic forces in India is very essential" for safeguarding India's free way of life.

Calling General Kayani

India's Needs to Strategically Engage with Pakistan Army

Pravin Sawhney

Realpolitik demands that the Indian National Security Advisor (Kayani may disregard invitation from his Indian counterpart) invite the Pakistan Army Chief to visit India.

The good news is that New Delhi has finally woken up to the need for a communication channel with the Pakistan Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani. The bad news is that the Indian establishment is ignorant of the protocol and the new diplomacy: how to do business with the Pakistan Army when a civilian dispensation sits in Islamabad. ... In July 2010, Gen. Kayani gave himself (though the US is taking credit for this) an unprecedented three-year extension starting November 2010 – who will outlast both his President and Prime Minister to oversee Pakistan's next general elections; leads his country's strategic dialogue with the United States at a time when President Obama's next term in office depends on Afghanistan, and controls Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

The media report quoting external affairs ministry officials said that the Indian High Commission in Islamabad has been told to establish contact with the Pakistan COAS. This means that the Indian Defence Advisor would go to the Pakistani Military Intelligence branch seeking an appointment for his boss with Kayani. This was on the day when having received the much-publicised Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's invitation to witness the India-Pakistan Cricket World Cup semi-final at Mohali (Chandigarh) on March 30, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani was waiting for Kayani's clearance before responding to Manmohan Singh's missive. Having learnt the Zardari lesson, Gilani would not dare bypass his COAS. To recall, after 26/11 attacks, President Asif Ali Zardari, believing that he had inherited his predecessor's powers, announced without checking with the General Headquarters, Rawalpindi that Pakistan would send its Director General, ISI to help India to investigate the attacks, Zardari was both oblivious of his own army's involvement in 26/11, and surely out of his depth. Within months he was cut to size, so much so that the entire Pakistani civilian leadership is in disarray and lacks credibility.

For India, talking with Kayani is long overdue; it should have happened when he took over as the army chief in November 2007. The 26/11 attacks, one year after he took charge, perhaps were his reminder that Delhi needed

to reach out to him. He even sent his DG, Lt. General Shuja Pasha to the Indian High Commission under the pretext of attending an Iftar party in October 2009 to signal his growing impatience with the stalled Kashmir resolution dialogue. It has finally fallen on a lowly Indian brigadier (in the Indian High Commission) to invite Kayani to probable bilateral (backchannel) talks. This will be a naive and flawed move. Realpolitik demands that the Indian National Security Advisor (Kayani may disregard invitation from his Indian counterpart) invite the Pakistan Army Chief to visit India and maybe speak at the National Defence College in Delhi; the backchannel signal should be that the Indian Prime Minister would be pleased to meet him. ...

Were this to happen, it would slowly transform India's conduct of its national security; a necessity considering that the military in both Pakistan and China is part and parcel of their national security policy-making. Hypothetically, if Kayani were indeed to visit India, as part of protocol, he would also meet with the Indian military leadership. This could be the moment of introspection for the three Indian service chiefs to assess glaring discrepancies in relative levels. In Pakistan, all corps commanders function at both operational and strategic levels; while preparing their command for war, they are key advisors to the COAS on national security matters. In India, even the service chiefs are operational players. For example, after 26/11 attacks, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met the three chiefs only once to know their views on conduct of war. ... After the 1998 nuclear tests when India declared itself a nuclear weapon state, for service chiefs to remain operational players when they are responsible for the delivery of strategic (nuclear) weapons is a fatal national security shortcoming. The government knows what reforms and corrective measures need to be taken. It is however afraid that they may make the military bold enough to seek a larger role. And hence the hesitation to invite General Kayani, Pakistan's real power centre, to India.

COURTESY: Mr. Pravin Sawhney and excerpted from *Force*, the journal he edits (April 2011).

Bridge the Distance between Police and Public

V. Balachandran

To be effective, policemen should place themselves as close to their society as possible.

Filmmaker Priyadarshan's film *Tej* faced unexpected problems while shooting in London because the local authorities felt that some scenes portrayed the local police in a derogatory manner: "The hoodlums in *Tej* were running amok in London without the police in the film being aware of their activities." The shooting could be resumed only after the script was changed. The same situation does not exist in Kerala, Priyadarshan's home state, which usually portrays the police in a disparaging manner in its films and TV soaps.

It is often said that films or plays represent the public impression about contemporary life. The film "LA Confidential" starring Kevin Spacey and Russell Crowe was made at a time when the Los Angeles police was being rocked by corruption, racism and criminal nexus (1997). The situation compelled a federal judge to take the unprecedented step of placing the entire LA police under federal supervision in 2001. This was lifted only in 2009.

Kerala policemen are often portrayed as drunks, rapists, brutal, inefficient, gender insensitive and corrupt. They are also shown to be inflicting corporal punishment publicly. In "Daivathinte Magan", actor Jayaram, an IPS officer, beats his demanding wife publicly. Kerala's "Robin Hoods" entertain the public by assaulting corrupt policemen. In "Chaturangam", superstar Mohanlal (the local Robin Hood) goes one step further and taunts a lady IPS officer with lewd gestures. Kerala's commendable experiment for better public relations under "*Janamaitri Suraksha*" and the recent Global Conclave on Community Policing do not seem to have affected this prejudiced perception of the police. This is sad. The Mumbai police has a long standing relationship with Bollywood film producers in getting police leadership's suggestions on its image before releasing such films without this process being considered as additional censorship.

To be effective, policemen should place themselves as close to their society as possible. The legendary Sir Robert Peel's nine principles (formulated in the 1820s) gave overwhelming importance to public approval on policing. The seventh principle said: "The Police are members of the public who are discharging their official duty to secure the welfare of the public." Unfortunately, India's colonial

police tried to maintain a distance from the public. They also injected needless militarism in police training, uniform and behaviour. This may have been necessary to control the Freedom Movement. Unfortunately, free India's police continued with this tradition. "Public relations" became a mere slogan. During our training (1959-60), a "mess kit" with "Wellington boots" and horse spurs – a needless accoutrement resembling military uniform and costing over one month's pay – was prescribed. This continued till Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri asked our senior officers not to ape the military. But the mindset and feeling of superiority in dealing with the public continued.

In the 1960s and 70s no police officer could install red lights on their cars to announce their rank. In fact, the late A.G. Rajadhyaksha, one of the longest serving inspectors general of Maharashtra (in those days we did not have directors general) pulled up a senior deputy inspector general (DIG) of police for the red beacon on his car. He said that the only legally permitted red lights were tail lights. Nowadays, all police officers flash red beacons even when going home. In the late 1970s, the police started imitating the armed forces by fixing stars on number plates. Now even police officers on deputation to intelligence organisations display red beacons when they are supposed to be incognito. As far as I know, such beacons are allowed to be installed only on emergency vehicles and patrol cars all over the world and not on police officers' staff cars. Not to be left behind, our civil bureaucracy too started using coloured beacons on their vehicles for ferrying them to office and back by amending motor vehicle rules. This was to indicate their higher rank and exclusivity. I once noticed a senior civil service officer in Mumbai using a government vehicle with beacons flashing to go shopping during office hours. It is gratifying that the Madras High Court has recently issued strict instructions to stop the "misuse" of red beacons. It would have been better if all the high courts issued instructions reserving such coloured beacons for emergency vehicles only and not for announcing the status of the persons travelling.

MR. V. BALACHANDRAN, formerly Special Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, New Delhi.

COURTESY: *Sunday Guardian*, March 20, 2011

The Ramakrishna Order

– The Math and The Mission

B. M. N. Murthy



Belur Math

At the beginning of the 19th century, Western culture, with its glorification of reason and science, and proselytizing zeal, posed a great challenge to Indian tradition and culture, while their secular values such as individual freedom, social equality and justice attracted the intelligentsia of the land. It was then that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda rose and met the challenge by revitalizing Vedanta and by incorporating the best elements of Western culture into it. Since the Western world itself had been in a critical situation caused by the erosion of moral and spiritual values owing to the onslaught of materialism, the lives and messages of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda had a terrific impact on the society and people became more and more drawn towards Vedanta.

Ever since, the messages of Sri Ramakrishna and the Swamiji are being spread by founding two organizations called Ramakrishna Math [originally called Ramakrishna Order] and Ramakrishna Mission – each institution is more than 100 years old. The main purpose of both institutions is to set in motion a non-sectarian, universal spiritual movement to catalyze the spiritual regeneration of humanity. The chief catalyst in this ongoing transformation is India's ancient religious philosophy known as Vedanta which has remained the dominant philosophy of religious tradition from Vedic times to the present day.

The Ramakrishna Math took its birth as the

The main purpose of both institutions is to set in motion a non-sectarian, universal spiritual movement to catalyze the spiritual regeneration of humanity.

Ramakrishna Order and was founded by Sri Ramakrishna himself. Shortly before his death in 1886, Ramakrishna asked that ochre robes be given to his young disciples who were planning to renounce the world and devote their life and energy to spread Vedanta. Ramakrishna entrusted the care and guidance of these young disciples to Vivekananda. After Ramakrishna's death on 15th August 1886, these young disciples took informal monastic vows on the Christmas Eve of 1886. 14 of them joined the Ramakrishna Order on that day and two more joined them later. The chief among them were Swamis Vivekananda and Brahmananda. The original monastery was housed in a dilapidated building in Barranagore in Calcutta. It was later moved to a better building in Alambazar, Calcutta. With the funds provided by a Western follower of Swami Vivekananda, a big plot of land was acquired on the Western bank of the Ganga at a place called Belur and the monastery was finally shifted there on 2nd January 1899. This is the now famous Belur Math.

Vivekananda and Brahmananda were affectionately called as 'Swamiji' and 'Maharaj' respectively. They were the natural group leaders of the Ramakrishna Math. The two had been friends since their boyhood and both were 23 when the Ramakrishna Order was founded. Handsome and athletic, Vivekananda was the embodiment of physical and intellectual energy. Well read in Western philosophy and science, he brought to his religious life all the good concepts of the West. If he had not visited Dakshineshwar which was a turning point in his life, he might have well become one of India's foremost national leaders.

Brahmananda, on the other hand, was more a mystic figure. Few knew him intimately and those few also confessed to the inadequacy of their knowledge about Brahmananda. He was a great mystic and a saint and his wisdom and love seemed superhuman. His brother disciples did not hesitate to compare him to Sri Ramakrishna himself. "Whatever Maharaj tells you" said one of them "comes

directly from God". Brahmananda was elected Head of the Ramakrishna Order in 1902 and held that office until the end of his life in 1922.

After staying in the monastery for two years, Vivekananda spent a few years traveling all over India as a wandering mendicant or *Parivrajaka* as it is called in Sanskrit. During these travels he was deeply moved to see the appalling poverty and backwardness of the millions of poor people in India. However, he also saw that, in spite of poverty, the people still clung to religion, and the ancient spiritual culture was a living force in their lives. At a time when social reformers in the country were busy with such problems as widow remarriage and abolition of idol worship, Vivekananda perceived that the real cause of the country's backwardness was the neglect and exploitation of the masses who produced the wealth of the country. In order to improve their economic condition it was necessary to teach them improved methods of agriculture, village industries and hygienic way of life. But owing to centuries of exploitation and social tyranny, the poor people, especially those who belonged to the lower castes, had lost their sense of worth, hope and initiative. The people therefore needed a message of strength that would infuse faith in themselves. Vivekananda found this message in Vedanta. Thus Swamiji saw that in order to uplift the masses it was necessary to spread both secular and spiritual education among them. And for this, what was needed most was an organization, machinery which will bring noble ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest. This became the fertile soil to sow the seed for the birth of the Ramakrishna Mission.

After spreading Vedanta in the West for nearly three and a half years, Swami Vivekananda returned to India in January 1897. In response to the enthusiastic welcome he received everywhere, he delivered a series of lectures in different parts of India. Through these lectures, Swamiji attempted

- To rouse the religious consciousness of the people and create in them pride in their cultural heritage
- To bring about unification of Hinduism by pointing out its common bases
- To focus the attention of the educated people to the plight of the downtrodden masses, and expound his plan for their uplift by the application of Vedanta in practical life.

In Calcutta, Swamiji convened a meeting of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna Math on 1st May 1897 and inaugurated a new organization bearing the name Ramakrishna Mission. He intended it to be a unique organization in which monks and lay people cooperated in providing educational, medical and other forms of social service especially to the poor and the disadvantaged. After setting in motion machinery for the propagation and practical application of the life-giving principles of Vedanta lived and taught by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda left the mortal world on 4th July 1902 at the age of thirty nine and a half years.

MR. B. M. N. MURTHY is a retired Engineer. Over the last ten years he has been writing weekly articles recalling India's great heritage. Email: bmmurthy@vsnl.com

Libya Climax or Anti-Climax?

B. Raman

The Western campaign – by exploiting the fig leaf cover of the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 for protecting civilians in Libya – to work for a regime change in Libya has come face to face with three disturbing ground realities within a fortnight of the launching of the military campaign:

- Ground Reality No.1: The campaign has been exploited by Gaddafi to skillfully transform what was a civil war between his supporters and opponents into a war of national resistance against foreign invaders from the West, who are projected as the modern day crusaders. ..
- Ground Reality No 2: US military commanders have started developing a feeling of disquiet that they have rushed to the help of a rebel army about which they know so little. The disquiet has been caused by a gnawing realization that some of the rebels had fought with Al Qaeda in Iraq and are Iraq returnees. There was never much love lost between Gaddafi and Osama bin Laden. They strongly disliked each other. Gaddafi saw to it that Al Qaeda did not develop roots in Libya. He prevented those Libyans who had gone to Iraq from coming back to Libya. The suspicion that some of these Libyans of Iraqi vintage have now come back to Libya and have joined the anti-Gaddafi groups has created fears that the Libyan misadventure might provide fresh oxygen to Al Qaeda. The good rebels vs the bad rebels syndrome has started haunting NATO military commanders.
- Ground Reality No 3: An unanticipated outcome has been the feeling in Iran and North Korea that Gaddafi was unwise in surrendering his nuclear option under Western pressure.

Excerpted from Mr. B. Raman's paper. Formerly Additional Secretary (retd), Cabinet Secretariat, Government. of India, New Delhi. He is currently, Director, Institute For Topical Studies, Chennai, and Associate of the Chennai Centre For China Studies. Visit c3sindia.org for the full text

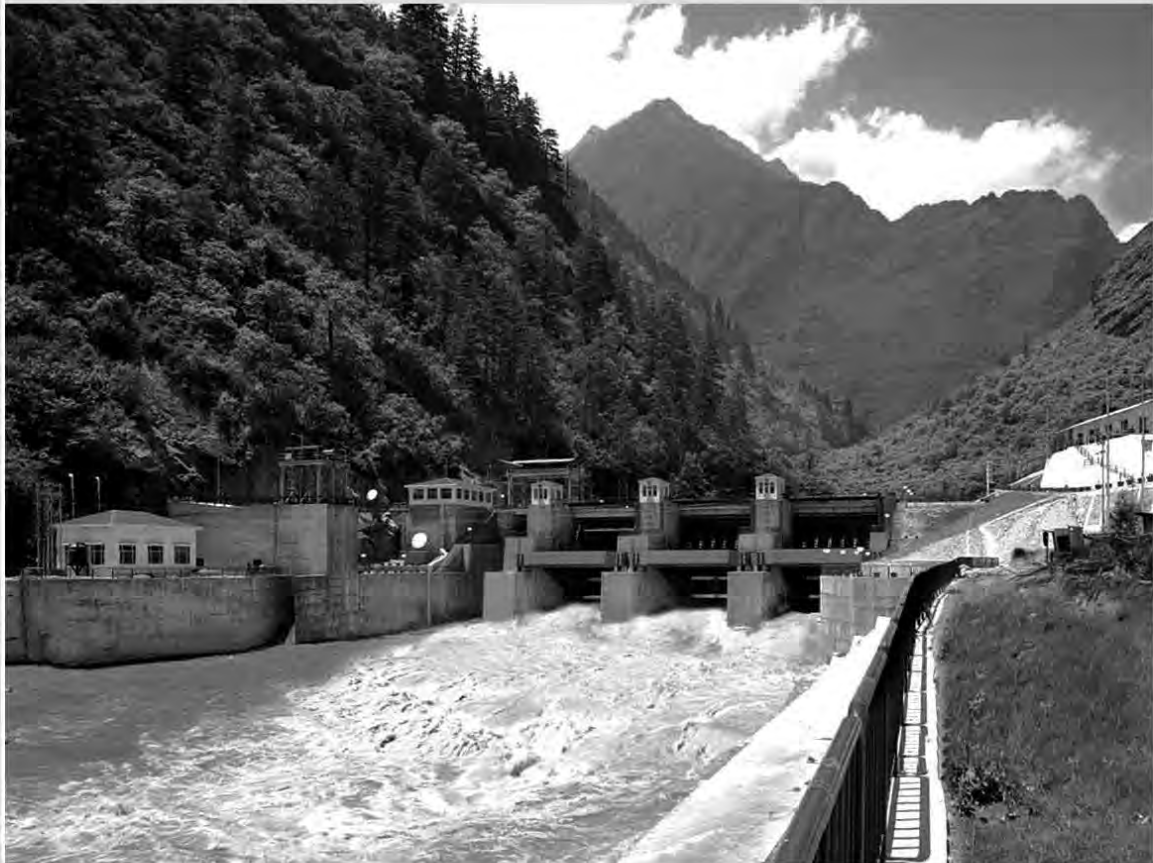
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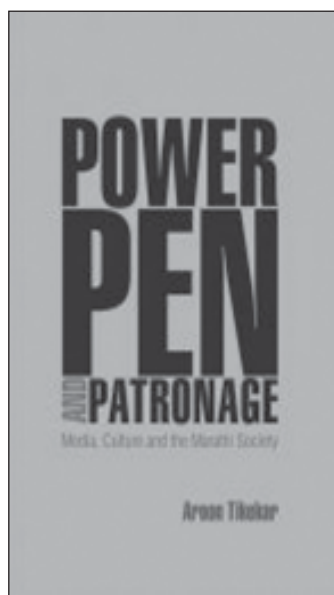


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BOOK REVIEWS



POWER, PEN AND PATRONAGE by Aroon Tikekar, Rohan Prakashan, Dhavalgiri, 430, Shaniwar Peth, Pune 410 030. ● 2011 ● Pp.204 pages ● Rs.205/-.

Reviewed by Dr. R. Srinivasan, retired professor of Political Science, University of Mumbai, and Associate Editor of *Freedom First*.

We are all secularists now and the old gods have been displaced. But in contemporary society, some institutions are regarded as sacred and inviolable. The judiciary of course is non-*pariel* and almost very near comes the daily newspaper. As Hegel once said, the

morning newspaper has replaced the morning prayer. And newspaper editors have been invested with a responsibility of public trust while others do not seem to have an equal halo. Dr. Tikekar argues that some of them have discharged their responsibility with earnestness rarely to be witnessed. He extols the role of Prakash Karadley, once the Poona Editor of the *Indian Express* who remained for many years the Tribune of the People, and a quintessential journalist. He is brought alive in the pages and one regrets one did not meet him.

Karadley belonged to a generation of great journalists comparable to the best among their Western counterparts and they set for themselves high standards and did not swerve from their self-defined narrow and straight path. With independence this strong sense of independence softened towards the political elite for they had battled against the colonial masters at great sacrifice. It is inspiring to learn of senior members of the fraternity who set examples to the younger ones to emulate. One of the senior editors of a famous newspaper politely turned down the offer of the government for an European tour.

This collection of essays has a number of valuable pieces on Contemporary Maharashtra, its culture and social thought, intellectual currents and politics in general. It also has valuable chapters on the practice of history, the nature of historical enquiries and approaches to the study of history. Its perspective is historical and the emphasis is on the latter half of the twentieth century. Students of social sciences and journalism courses will find these

chapters instructive and educative as well. The chapters on the media are of particular value and the author himself being a journalist of long standing writes with great insight as an active participant. The need to promote a cultural policy for the state of Maharashtra is looked into in some detail. In all these both cultural pluralism and furthering of social justice is not lost sight of.

One of the most educative of pieces is on the producing of a newspaper from the perspective of a senior staff – the constant constraints under which they work and the razor's edge on which they delicately balance themselves all the time keeping an eye on the legal experts which might affront and make them liable for court injunction and perhaps prosecution.

Since the newspaper is a social trust and not a commercial venture like the selling of shampoo or soap, the practitioners and others involved should regard it akin to a religious calling. From the 18th century in the Western world, the newspaper along with the Church and the Legislature was invested with social responsibilities and they have risen to them admirably more than fulfilling the expectations of the concerned public. They have been the watchdogs of the conscience of the people and with modernisation and the enlargement of the public sphere, their responsibility has increased proportionately. Modern competitive media like the TV have not adversely affected the sale and the influence of newspapers. The electronic media if anything strengthens the tendency to read newspapers rather than supplanting it.

Maharashtra along with Bengal has been has been responsible for many things that have shaped modern India, whether it be in the world of journalism, theatre, literature, music, etc. He reminds the reader that the Maharashtrian cannot rest on its past achievement; one cannot be atavistic for it might turn negative. He strongly advocates the need for looking ahead and cultivating professional skills and an ethos. This is not to minimise its resplendant past but to come to terms with modern realities as well. Another social fact that will remain central to Indian politics and society is emphasised - "The bitter

conflict between the Brahmins and the new political class (which) is the essence of modern Maharashtra” (p.198). This is true of other regions as well and it appears that it will continue for a long time and determine political outcome at the State level. Yet there are limits as to what such a confrontation might result in the long run. Mayawati’s attempts to enter into Maharashtra has illustrated this. She has a vested interest in backwardness.

The author reiterates the culture that ought to guide and govern the higher journalist echelons and these are indeed valuable, for the temptations in the staid path of journalism are many. With economic development careening at a dizzy pace, the challenges to journalistic integrity from the corporate sector, such as subsidies, lavish advertisements, paid news, supplements and of course fabulous parties; and many of these are hard to resist. Tikekar writes on the credo that he has abided by to keep the spirit of independence and these cannot be better formulated. He also has extremely valuable pages on the court cases to which journalists, particularly senior editors, can be summoned, and reminds us of the thorny paths that they have to tread. These can be extremely trying and the irritations both petty and serious can be wearisome

and easily wear out the patience of the average editor or journalist.

These are indeed heavy crosses to shoulder but with the onset of populist politics the assaults on the journalists can indeed be extremely unbearable. Intimidations, innuendos can break the spirit of the journalist and even the best of them like Acharya Atre could not resist the temptation to wield their pens like rapiers. With Bal Thackeray and his immediate followers became uncomfortably irksome and trying indeed. The uncritical public who are putty in the hands of such leaders can be easily provoked or egged to visit violence on the printing presses, one of the occupational hazards of the journalistic profession whether in the small towns or the larger cities. Almost all language papers are subject to such attacks and the author instances these in Maharashtra and one can easily recollect similar happenings in the other states – the Rama Sena and its actions come to mind.

The last section, Father Figures, has interesting vignettes of some dominant public figures of Maharashtra, as varied as Jamsheji Jeejeebhoy, Gangadhar Gadgil, T. N. Shanbag, etc.



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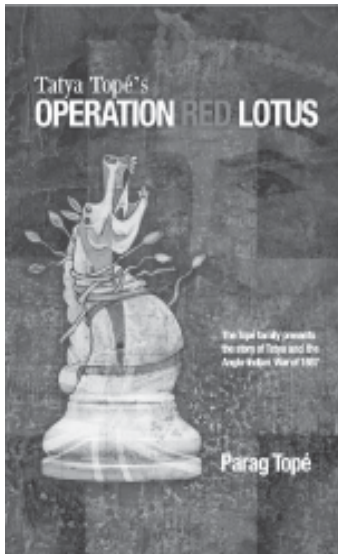
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“TATYA TOPÉ’S OPERATION RED LOTUS” by Parag Topé ● Published by Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002; www.rupa.co.in ● 2010 ● Pp.268 ● Rs.595.

Reviewed by Col. Ravindra Joshi (Retd.)

What could a proactive descendent of a hero do if he believes that official history has given the hero – his ancestor – a raw deal? Well, he could ferret out the authentic story of the hero and present it. That is precisely what Parag Topé, a fourth generation

descendent of Tatya Topé, has done through his book entitled **“Tatya Topé’s Operation Red Lotus”**.

The book is a noteworthy addition to the history of what the British called the “Sepoy Mutiny” and what to most contemporary Indians is the First Indian War of Independence, waged against the British in 1857. This review will henceforth refer to this armed conflict, simply, as ‘the War’.

The book is a serious body blow to the British-centric narrative of the ‘sepoy mutiny’ put together mostly by British historians and fervently reiterated by many an Indian offspring of Macaulay’s education policy. Parag Tope effectively debunks what generally passes for authentic history of *the War*. It shreds to tatters the depiction of this insurrection as a series of spontaneous, unconnected rebellions by Indian troops in the English East India Company (EEIC)’s employ, at different geographic locations. The book, on the contrary, makes out a strong case that the uprising was a well-planned and centrally directed effort, by a galaxy of ‘leonine’ leaders’ to rid India of the rule of the EEIC. The ‘rebels’ fought *the war* according TO a well-considered strategy, a definite purpose and a noble vision. It seriously challenges the perception that the uprising of 1857 was a conspiracy hatched for personal gains by petty chieftains and assorted malcontents. It also shows how fallacious it is to view the uprising as either a ‘tax rebellion’ by landlords and merchant princes or a religious war on the one hand and a ‘people’s revolution’ or ‘an uprising by the dispossessed and deprived’ on the other.

Here are some of the other so-called ‘historical facts’ that Parag Topé rips into: Hanging of Tatya Topé by the British; Rani of Jhansi’s jumping off a cliff on horseback to break out of the British siege; the Gwalior

ruler’s loyalty to the EEIC being one of the major causes of the Indian defeat; a comparatively small army of the EEIC vanquishing a numerically superior force of Indian rebels through sheer grit, valour, strength of arms and superior war craft. The book contends that Tatya Topé was killed in action; Rani of Jhansi broke out of the British siege with the help of an Afghan – then called ‘Vilayati’ – cavalry unit, while Tatya Topé cleverly drew off the EEIC’s troops; the ruler of Gwalior only feigned loyalty to the British but secretly remained loyal to the Indian side; the ‘rebels’ though initially superior in numbers, were later vastly outnumbered by the EEIC soldiers. In fact, Parag Tope adduces evidence to show that, for most part, *the War* was an unequal contest between about 58,000 ‘rebel’ troops (not 200,000 as claimed by several historians) and about 100,000 troops of the EEIC. So much for the British strength of arms!

Ironically, though, it was not the troop strengths that eventually decided the outcome of *the War*, the book argues. Ultimately, it was the effectiveness of the logistics system that each side fielded to keep their troops supplied that proved a vitally important deciding factor. Thus, like many military conflicts before and since, this *War* too proved to be more a war of supply lines than the strength of arms.

The British managed to keep their supply lines open and the supplies flowing without let or hindrance from their supply base at Calcutta to wherever the EEIC’s troops were located. However, lacking an established logistics system, the rebels had the daunting task of improvising one quickly. They came up with a system that depended on receiving supplies from the villages and towns lying on the routes of their movement. Assurances were secured from these villages and towns that they would provide supplies to a particular number of rebel units. Though this was good improvisation, it was no match for a well-established and dedicated supply chain.

The EEIC’s army grasped this flaw in the rebel logistics quickly and exploited it to the maximum. In one fell swoop they blew to smithereens the whole logistics apparatus of the rebel army. In a campaign of demoniacal ferocity and ruthlessness the EEIC’s army looted the villages and towns on which the rebels had planned to depend for their supplies and then torched them. They set on fire standing crops in the fields and killed as many residents of these villages and towns as they could lay

their hands on. Neither women nor children were spared. Thus deprived of food, ammunition and other essential military supplies the rebel army could neither hold out for long nor put up the kind of fight they would have otherwise put up.

The author has devoted an entire chapter to describe this officially sanctioned genocide and destruction of Indian property by the EEIC's army. While carrying out this 'shock, awe and destruction' campaign, some zealous soldiers and officers of the EEIC's army went so far as to give vent to their macabre sense of artistry by stringing up bodies of Indians from branches of a tree so that collectively the bodies formed the figure of eight. Some others driven by a burst of sadistic poesy nick-named the Indian dead bodies hanging by trees 'acorns'. The account of this legally sanctioned savagery and carnage makes one's blood run cold and at the same time makes one marvel at the British skill at keeping unpleasant facts, such as this terrible genocide of 1857-58, under wraps.

The book describes in great detail Tatya Topé's valiant efforts to turn defeat into victory, after the EEIC had wrested Delhi and the Doab region out of the hands of the freedom fighters. Tatya tried to turn the tide by attempting to build 'a full-fledged army that could fight the English on equal terms' but could not quite succeed. Finally, seeing Tatya and his small army of diehard freedom fighters as the only thorn in the flesh, the EEIC focused all its military might on their destruction. The English made a desperate and all out bid to trap Tatya and his army in an ever-tightening noose of converging columns under the command of reputed and battle-hardened officers. For almost a year, Tatya fought a guerilla war with the EEIC's much larger and well-supplied army with consummate skill till, as the book claims, he died in action. The book gives a skirmish by skirmish account of this final phase of *the war* in which Tatya shines as a magnificent guerilla leader.

All in all, Tatya Topé leaps out of the pages of the book as an extraordinary man of many parts and a larger-than-life figure. He comes across as not just a noble visionary and an inspirer of men but also a master strategist, an astute planner and a Machiavellian man of intrigue all rolled into one. The versatility of the man did not just end there, for he was also a competent field commander and a wily guerilla leader. Indeed, a great man of reflection and action!

The structure of the book reminds one of a set of Russian dolls - a doll within a doll within a doll. First, there is the broad narrative of the War. Nesting within it is the story of the 'leader extraordinaire' – Tatya Topé and within the story of Tatya Topé nests a historical detective story: the story of red lotuses that had reportedly been

distributed among the native army units which later rose in revolt (hence the 'Red Lotus' in the title of the book); the chapatis that did the rounds in the areas where the uprising burst out later and caused so much consternation among the British and the slogans, '*sab laal ho jayega*' and '*sab laal ho gaya hai*'. Much has been said about these mysteries. Benjamin Disraeli, who later rose to be Prime Minister of Britain, had commented extensively on the chapati mystery in the British parliament at that time.

Parag Topé very convincingly suggests that the red lotuses were a device to seek a vital feedback; the chapattis constituted secret messages through which a simple logistics system to support *the War* was secretly set up and the mysterious slogans were coded messages of sorts. In fairness to the future reader, one desists from going any further on the subject! The very simplicity and elegance of these contrivances sends a frisson of admiration down one's spine. The logic that the author has employed to unravel the mystery is impeccable and, indeed, ingenious.

Apart from historiographic skills, the author, who has a Master's degree in engineering and an MBA in Strategy, has brought the skills and tools of several other disciplines to bear on the subject of his book. The author's extensive use of maps, matrices, tables and other graphic devices add considerable value to the book.

The author supports his narrative and his several off-beat theories with convincing arguments and a rich array of facts, some of them discovered only very recently and some available for long but generally neglected by historians. Copious end notes, a wide variety of data on subjects ranging from caste wise participation in *Pathshalas* (indigenous schools) in Madras Presidency in the eighteenth century to location, movement and level of participation in *the War* of each of EEIC' regiments bring clarity and credibility, to the narrative Parag Tope weaves. An appendix to the book contains his critique of the two books on *the War* written by Indian historians, S. N. Sen and R. C. Majumdar and published in 1957. It provides an excellent backdrop against which to cast Parag Topé's narrative for greater insight into *the War*.

A work of outstanding research and reflection, this book deserves to be read by every history aficionado. One awaits with bated breath a rebuttal of the book by the champions of the official history, though. For only then would the true picture emerge.

Freedom First

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

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Freedom First

Digitisation Project

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

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

All these were issues that were discussed in ***Freedom First*** in articles spread over 500 editions (including this one) in about 19,0000 printed pages reflecting the times they were written, by men known for their integrity and competence.

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

Dear Reader, in response to our appeal for your assistance in persuading Charitable Trusts, Foundations and similar organisations to help fund the cost of digitizing, we were deeply touched when we received from Dr. (Mrs.) Harshida Pandit wife of the late Mr. Ramu Pandit a contribution of Rs.1 lakh in his memory for the digitizing project. Mr. Ramu Pandit was a valued member of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and a member of its Executive Council from 1975 till his untimely demise in 1993.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Editor