

The Generals Versus the People In Myanmar Foreign Policy and Diplomacy in a Troubled Neighbourhood

B. Ramesh Babu

"In foreign relations, as in all other relations, a policy has been formed only when commitments and power have been brought into balance. ... The Nation must maintain its objectives and its power in equilibrium, its purposes within its means and its means equal to its purposes."

Walter Lippmann

That indeed is a delicate and difficult task even when legitimate governments deal with one another under normal conditions. The latest resurgence of mass protests by the Buddhist monks and other pro-democracy groups, and their violent suppression in Myanmar brings to the fore yet another time the classic dilemma in the conduct of diplomacy and the formulation of foreign policy. While the task facing the Government of India in dealing with the military dictatorship in Myanmar today is neither unprecedented nor unique, our posture of *business as usual* is less than adequate, to say the least. No wonder that some western observers characterised India's policy of going ahead with the huge arms deal at this juncture as "*craven subservience*" to the generals in command in Yangon. Naturally, the resistance leaders in Myanmar and the Burmese exiles in India and elsewhere fighting for the liberation of their hapless motherland are utterly disappointed and deeply resentful of India's failure to come out in their support at this juncture.

Government to government relations necessarily constitute the formal core of interactions between States. In the international arena this is the ground reality – the fact of life. A country can choose its friends, but not its neighbours. Myanmar is a next door neighbour and we share a long international boundary with this country in trouble. We have no choice but to deal with the Government in power there irrespective of the nature of the regime. We cannot wish away the devil on hand. In fact, to deal with such a sad reality is not new to India. In our troubled neighbourhood, dealing with authoritarian and unrepresentative regimes has been the rule, rather than the exception. Through much of its history Pakistan had been under the heel of the Army. Only recently Nepal overthrew its king, who was a usurper and a dictator. Bangladesh was ruined beyond redemption by the two power hungry women, who were fighting a no holds barred war against each other for decades. Endless chaos and violence stalks the land, which culminated in the military take over of the country. Sri Lanka is in a state of endemic turmoil for decades. We went in there under

the immature leadership of Rajiv Gandhi and burnt our fingers badly.¹ Even in the tiny Maldives, the regime seeks to perpetuate itself one way or the other. GOI is constrained to deal with these regimes all the time. Naturally, prudence and caution have become our watchwords. Once bitten, twice shy, as they say.

We had our own bout with arbitrary rule not long ago. Fortunately for us, the Emergency lasted long enough for us to hate it, and not so long as to get used to it!

Inside

- ▶ Nandigram: Where the Stalinist Face of the CPI(M) Stands Exposed
- ▶ Point Counter Point
- ▶ De-regulate to Prosper
- ▶ SRDD Newsletter
- ▶ Cornucopia
- ▶ Boycott Goods Made in Communist China
- ▶ From Our Readers
- ▶ Book Review
- ▶ Between Ourselves
- ▶ Many Voices

A state of crisis is the order of the day in many parts of our vast land and several regions are in the grip of the deadly combination of extremist violence and terrorism (internal and/or international). A number of home grown extremist groups are on the rampage. Excesses of our armed forces are a hardy perennial in the melee. Cross border terrorism and illegal migration of Bangladeshis by their thousands makes the cauldron spew more trouble all around. To make matters worse, all this happens often with the connivance of politicians (especially from the Congress party) in the region and beyond. One such problem area is our north-eastern region, the vast stretch of mountains and valleys east and northeast of Bangladesh bordering Myanmar. The country is in a big complex mess and only the people of Myanmar can bring the country out of the clutches of the military. That seems to be a distant prospect, as of now. Outsiders can help only marginally, if at all. Often “foreign” interference ends up strengthening the hands of the dictators, who wrap themselves with the flag and shout about sovereignty and patriotism from the house top.

We need to deal with the regime in Yangon and win and retain its cooperation, if we are to contain cross border terrorism, and check the armed militants sneaking back and forth across the international border, and so on. The complex danger of foreign militants establishing links with the extremist groups galore active in the difficult terrain spanning the India-Myanmar border region must be faced by us bravely. It is nobody’s case that India should undercut its vital territorial and nation state interests in the region (or elsewhere for that matter) on emotional or moral grounds. Furthermore, the fact that China is ever ready to fish in the troubled waters and that it has been consistently backing the military regime in Yangon over the decades makes the complex challenge confronting India all the more complicated. The communist dictators ruling China have no compunction to look the other way even as popular movements for the liberation of their motherland are suppressed with brutal force and without any remorse in Myanmar (or anywhere else). The Chinese regime does it to its own people (the Tiananmen Square massacre) and routinely suppresses the Tibetan rebels with an iron heel. The Chinese leaders are maintaining friendliest possible relations with the military regime in power in Myanmar. If India does not do business with the generals ruling the roost in Yangon, the Chinese will push us back further in the race for influence in the country. We have already been passed over on the big natural gas deal, which went to China. GOI is naturally worried and is not at all inclined to alienate the military junta in Myanmar. That is why India along with Russia and China did not favour sanctions against the regime being advocated by the West in the UN.²

However, our policy towards Myanmar and other undemocratic and anti-democratic regimes in power in South and Southeast Asia (say Thailand) should not be seen in a simplistic either/or mould or as a zero-sum-game. Even as we maintain a ‘correct’ government-to-government equation with the regime in Yangon, the projected defence cooperation deal could have been postponed, rather than signed and sealed while the monks and other pro-democracy activists were being slaughtered. We could also delay the actual delivery of the military hardware. Our displeasure can be conveyed in many ways. Our moral support and sympathy for the peaceful protesters could have been conveyed firmly in private and also aired widely. We could have publicly joined all the governments and people around the world in demanding the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, and the resumption of negotiations with the pro-democracy forces her and other as suggested by Mr. Ibrahim Ganbari, UN’s special envoy.³ Government of India could have taken advantage of our being a democracy and an open society. For example, the Congress party could have passed a resolution in support of the protesters reiterating its traditional support for democracy and civil liberties. After his return from the region, the External Affairs Minister could have publicly stated in India that he had privately conveyed the GOI’s displeasure with the way things are going on in the country. The other political parties could have come out in support of the pro-democracy forces more openly. Civil society groups in India and the Burmese exiles in the country could have been accorded more vocal and public support, and enabled to gain wider publicity and greater media attention.

Should India take care of its national interests? Or should we act on the basis of morality? people often ask naively. In the real world there are no such easy choices; nor are the two mutually exclusive. India should take care of its nation state interests first, obviously. But, that does not mean there is no room for action on the moral ground. Between the two dispositions there is a lot of room to play with. My complaint is that this is not even tried, let alone being done. What is important in diplomacy is not only to do things, but to be seen to be doing a lot more than what one actually does. The kind of dexterity or subtlety needed in dealing with the complex situation in Myanmar today is not forthcoming from the Mandarins in the South Block.

Some other enthusiasts ask even more natively “Should India not play the Big Brother? And put things right in our neighbourhood?”, as if such a policy option is available to India now or at any time in the past. Let me assert with all the sincerity at my command we in India better get out of the so called Big Brother syndrome once

and for all. Such an attitude is most inappropriate and totally dysfunctional. National freedom and sovereignty are explosive emotional issues and our small neighbours are as touchy (if not more) as we ourselves are vis-à-vis the mighty USA, the Big Brother of the world! The contortions we are going through on the civilian Nuclear Deal with the lone super power for two years and more are evidence enough. By any criteria, population, territory, scale of the economy, military might, scientific prowess and technological advance, India is the dominant nation state in South Asia. It is a given. There is nothing India, Pakistan, or anybody else for that matter can do about it. However, India *can and should choose not to dominate*. We should opt to lead by example, unilateral concessions and the firmness that befits the giant in a neighbourhood that is neck deep in civil strife, endemic dissension, and pervasive chaos laced with cross border terrorism. There is a world of difference between domination and leadership, between intervention and neglect, between being a Big Brother and sincerely seeking mutual benefit and the betterment of all the people in South Asia.

It is good to note that a few days ago Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi is allowed to come out of the house arrest, and escorted to meet the newly appointed Minister for Relations, retired Major general Aung Kyi at the State Guest House.⁴ However, it must be added that the generals had done this before and nothing much had come out of such forays earlier. Once in a while the military junta lifts the iron heel ever so slightly to let the bashed up protest movement get a breather. Then things would get back to normal, i.e. the merciless ways of the military dictatorship.

Outside intervention cannot tilt the balance in favour of freedom and democracy until and unless the people rise against the oppressive regime as one man. Emergence of Bangladesh is a good example. The overthrow of the King in Nepal is the most recent case in point. The national liberation movement in Myanmar has a long way to go before it can overwhelm the regime. In this context it is good to see reports of the protest march staged by the Buddhist monks in Pakokku, a town in central Myanmar.⁵ One can only hope that such pro-democracy protests gather momentum and the turn around will not take as long as it did in the apartheid South Africa.

At the present what India can and should do is to extend its moral and material support to the freedom struggle in public, do a lot more unofficially, even as we deal with the regime in power to protect our security interests. The trick in diplomacy is to utilise our democracy and pluralism so as to be always ready to do business with the next government in Myanmar (and all other countries). This is easier said than done,

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¹ B. Ramesh Babu, "Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: Anatomy of a Failure," *World Affairs*, Vol.2 No.3 (July-September 1998), pp.132-145.

² *The Hindu*, 25 October 2007, p.12

³ *Ibid.* 23 October 2007, p.12

⁴ *Ibid.* 26 October 2007, p.18

⁵ *Ibid.* 1 November 2007, p.17

A Dream Only Partially Fulfilled

Extracts from a speech by Minoo Masani delivered in Calcutta on 9th January 1965 under the auspices of the Swatantra Forum. The subject: "First Swatantra Budget"

Let us imagine that the Swatantra Party and its friends and allies were able to form a new Government ... What would be the effect on taxation, on the food shortage, on prices, on the economy of the country and the living standards of the people?

If we came to power we would take three major steps. The first would be a Holiday from Planning, a suspension of the Five-Year Plans...The second would be to cut out controls, to abolish the permit licence raj...to restore the free market in food and industrial goods....The third would be to scrap the current foreign policy of so-called non-alignment and to accept a policy of interdependence, of realising that the world is one, that we cannot live in isolation from our friends and neighbours...

The first consequence would be a tremendous spurt in production.. When the climate in India changed, foreign capital will pour into this country... The result of this production spurt would be more goods and more services... and with the same amount of money in circulation it would mean stable prices...Today there is a food shortage for two reasons. One is that the farmer has no incentive to produce and the second that he has no incentive to sell what he has produced. The reason for this is that the disparity of prices between agricultural produce and manufactured goods is unfair to the farmer... the result of price stabilization would immediately be an incentive to the farmer to produce more and bring more into the market. ...The result of more agricultural production and more industrial production would be an acceleration of the rate of growth of our economy. ...When there is more growth, a large cake, everyone's slice of the cake will be bigger than it is today which means a rising standard of life, a richer life for all classes of our people.

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

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

India – A Soft State?

1) Most political analysts believe that India is a soft state – unwilling to take tough measures to protect its own interests. Withdrawal of POTA is often made an issue. While the free world is adopting tougher laws to meet the terrorist threat, India, which is the biggest victim of terrorism, is hindered by populist notions and does not want to take strong action under the apprehension that it would adversely affect certain sections of its population. The Government also argues that normal laws are sufficient to deal with all miscreants; no special provisions are needed to tackle terrorism. India's eagerness to normalise relations with Pakistan, formation of a joint mechanism to tackle terrorism, its willingness to negotiate with militants in J&K etc., are also seen as a drift into indecision and lack of firmness. It needs to be understood that these are merely moves on the international chessboard. These need not be taken as signs of weakness. Similarly, coalition politics imposes certain limitations on the decision-making process. The failure to push through the nuclear deal is cited as the latest example of a non-functional government. This invites the rejoinder: Is the deal worth losing power for?

1) It is not only the security implications that are worrisome; India's overall attitude of "*Chalta hai*", inability to keep the country together on any issue, corruption, crime, judicial delays, attempts to appease any and all agitating groups, giving into pressure on vital issues etc., leave an image of a dithering, vacillating administration – not of a strong Government in control of the situation. It is wrong to argue that TADA/POTA did not stop terrorist attacks. It was not a preventive legislation; it was an aid for security forces to be more effective. Has punishment for murder stopped murders? Strong measures are meant to send a strong signal to the adversary and create confidence among the people that the Government is on top of the situation. Weak responses weaken the national will too. Prevarications on the nuclear deal, the Sethusamudram Project, SEZs, economic liberalisation, *et al* leave an impression of a Government locked in indecision. The economy is booming in spite of the Government, not because of it. A weak state is unsure of the direction to follow. Call it a soft state or a confused state! The fate of the nuclear deal should not be seen as "Deal equals Loss of Power" but as "Will to Govern vs Capitulation".

The Myanmar Maze

2) Political developments in Myanmar have aroused worldwide indignation. The US and ASEAN countries have expressed the hope that India would exert its influence in promoting democratic transition in Myanmar. They hope that being a strong democracy and a big neighbour, India can influence events in Myanmar. All that India has done is to call for "broad-based process of national reconciliation and political reform". India has made it clear that it will not interfere in the internal affairs of Myanmar nor is it prepared to impose sanctions on that country. This is seen as failure to support a legitimate movement for restoration of democracy in Myanmar and turning a blind eye towards human rights violations in that country. This is a different India from Nehru's India, which was keen to take a moral stand on all international issues and tell the world what was wrong with it. India overdid the preaching then. Has it now decided that ethics has no place in international affairs?

2) India played the political morality card earlier in 1988 when the junta first seized power in Myanmar. It even awarded the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru award to Aung San Suu Kyi who was placed under house arrest by the junta. This show of displeasure failed to move the junta and India realized that its own security interests were jeopardized. China was rapidly filling the vacuum left by India. Pakistan was not far behind. Since 1992, India has been trying to improve its trade relations and engage the junta in taking action against the militants from the North East finding shelter in Myanmar. It lost the deal for natural gas to China but hoped for better relations with Myanmar. Now the international expectations that India should do what it did in 1988 might be high-minded ethics but not diplomacy. India is all for Aung San Suu Kyi but her cause has to be supported through persuasion and not confrontation. Would the US like India to support the movement for democracy in Pakistan? It is easy to preach morality when it suits them, but for India its national

India awarded the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Award to Aung San Suu Kyi who was placed under house arrest.

interests come first. It has to deal with whosoever is in power in any country, whether it approves of the power wielder or not.

Chain of Failures?

3) In the last one year, apart from J&K, terrorism has visited us with near metronymic regularity in Malegaon, Hyderabad, Hyderabad (again), Ajmer and Ludhiana. The Central Government issues alerts and warns State Governments of the possible attacks at various targets; tightening of security at "sensitive" installations is talked about. One has lost count of installations that are sensitive. Government offices, religious places, railway stations, airports, police officers, political leaders all are potential targets. After such alerts, the place and time of attack is still not known. When the blow falls, the Centre immediately claims that the State was warned and the State police meekly explain that they had tightened security. The State also declares seriously that it is enhancing its intelligence capacity. This has become sickeningly familiar, particularly when it is found that nothing had been done after similar pious declarations made earlier.

3) Is there a way to break this logjam of Center- State 'pass the buck' game? Lives are lost, people's confidence in the Government is shaken and still nothing is done. Nobody is held accountable and life returns to normal. Everybody hopes that the worst is over and the blow will not fall again. That is India's stoic nature. The Government can bank on absence of any long-term resentment. Nothing really needs to be done except dispensing a lot of verbiage. Security experts are shouting hoarse that the Centre must take full responsibility of dealing with terrorism and such serious offences with trans-regional ramifications, by forming a federal crime unit on the lines of the FBI so that there is no shirking of responsibility and better accountability. The Center is requesting the States to accept this 'interference' in their autonomy. Will they oblige?

Vigilantism

4) The Vaishali (Bihar) killing of 10 men suspected to be thieves has brought into focus the recent trend of vigilante action by citizens to deliver summary justice. It began with the lynching of a criminal by women in court premises in Nagpur. Since then such action has been seen in Delhi, West Bengal, UP, Lonavala (Maharashtra), Kerala, with Bihar leading the way as usual in anything unsavoury. Supreme Court judges have themselves observed that these are signs that people are fast losing faith in the judiciary. The criminal justice system is collapsing under its own weight. Courts take years to convict a criminal, if the police ever arrest him and then find enough evidence to prosecute him. The people have decided that summary justice is the best way out, undermining the very foundations of a civilized society.

4) This is not a sudden development. For years, voices have been raised against police inaction and judicial lethargy. There are excuses and excuses for both shortcomings but people are not interested in the litany of excuses. If the authorities cannot act, they will. The Justice Malimath Committee had warned in 2003 that the criminal justice system was virtually collapsing, that it was slow, inefficient and ineffective. Among its various suggestions, it advocated replacement of the Evidence Act requirement of "proof beyond reasonable doubt" with "clear and convincing standard of proof"; audio/video recording of witness statements to prevent witnesses from retracting their statements. These would have prevented criminals from escaping the clutches of law on the flimsiest grounds. The recommendations got buried in the usual protests over possible abuse of power by the police. The result is that we now have vigilantism!

The Judiciary Needs to Adapt to New Realities

The judiciary continues to be a keeper of the peoples' Will but it needs to adapt itself to the new realities of a rapidly changing India. From generating employment to creating infrastructure to setting up new businesses, legal reforms are critical for a resurgent economy. India needs to weed out antiquated laws, create a modern infrastructure and build a system of judicial accountability without compromising the judges' independence.

Vipul Mudgal, Hindustan Times, September 24

Nandigram : Where the Stalinist Face of the CPI (M) Stands Exposed

Nitin Raut

The Communists in West Bengal are on a rampage and their partners in Delhi the UPA led by the Congress(I) are deafeningly silent.

In Nandigram, the agriculturists and villagers whose land – their only source of income – is sought to be taken over for SEZ purposes, have put up unprecedented resistance. Although the situation is explosive it has hardly attracted national attention given the gravity of the situation. No UPA national leader or the prime minister or any top leader of the Congress found time to visit Nandigram. It was cynical indifference of the powers that be, where the UPA government sat in smug silence – uttering not even a word.

The reason is not far to seek. What is happening in Nandigram is a total collapse of the constitutional machinery. Cadres of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) with the open connivance of the CPI(M) led government in West Bengal, is illegally using firearms to suppress the democratic right of Nandigram's residents to dissent or oppose an administrative action detrimental to their interests. The police and the administration aided and abetted the CPI(M) cadre instead of maintaining law and order. Nandigram is a battleground where the State of West Bengal and the CPM cadre are at war with the citizens. The Centre is a mute spectator – obviously. The survival of the UPA Government with CPM support is of supreme importance. The CPM and its Left allies knew therefore that its unconstitutional politburo diktat can be enforced brutally, with impunity and without any fear of action by the Central government. Scores of villagers have been killed by CPM goons in what is now described as a "war zone" by the Governor of West Bengal. In this cauldron a religious group is adding fuel to the fire. CPM gangs have destroyed homes and forced its inmates in Nandigram to flee.

As if this is not enough there is the death of Rizwan ur Rehman in Kolkata. The investigation is hampered by the West Bengal government. Neither the chief minister nor his government is being held accountable nor is even repentant. The political parties who otherwise remember the rule of law and the Constitution when it suits them are suffering from selective amnesia. How can these be issues - after all the CPM is secular!

terror. The murder of political opponents by CPI(M) vigilantes has gone unpunished. The State has studiously refrained from prosecuting its trigger happy cadre. The perpetrators of the Marad massacre have not even been booked.

When similar disturbances occur in other parts of India, there is instant demand for imposing President's Rule, dismissal of state government and demonising its leaders. The self-appointed custodians of the rule of law would have, overnight, churned out 'investigative reports' painting gory scenarios, writ jurisdiction would have been invoked for judicial intervention and public interest litigation would have been the order of the day. TV talk shows would have paraded their 'celebrated opinion makers' who would have shed tears on the 'death' of secularism, persecution of minorities, rising intolerance and lawlessness. Page Three party poopers would have held placard protests in the lobbies of five star hotels.

Where are these NGOs and the so-called human rights outfits or for that matter the National Human Rights Commission, all whose hyper activity otherwise is in marked contrast to the sphinx like silence on West Bengal. Do they believe in the values of human rights and democracy out of conviction? Nandigram proves that they have their own axe to grind. And none of the human rights outfits have a modicum of courage to investigate in West Bengal or Kerala, knowing full well the fate that will await them in these lawless states ruled by the communists.

The issue however is not just of contrasting approaches of the NGOs, political parties and the press. The malaise is deeper. It is the shallowness and bankruptcy of a fossilised ideology called Communism – discarded in the erstwhile Soviet Empire and kept in deep freeze in communist China – that is rotten to the core. Although irrelevant to the democratic process, the communists are cleverly exploiting the weakness of the UPA coalition. For the communists it is not democracy and freedom but manipulation of power politics, not the

In Kerala too the CPI(M) has unleashed a reign of

cont'd. on p.18

De-regulate to Prosper

Uppili R.

The Story of Guru

One of the movies which had a decent run in Bollywood during recent times is a movie called "Guru". The movie is about a villager named Gurukant Desai, whose ambition is to establish a world class petrochemical factory in India. Gurukant Desai knows the nuances of making money, than earning a higher education. He leaves for Turkey and gets a job of a delivery boy in a Distribution Company which is part of Royal Dutch Shell. While selling lubricants and oil samples, he is possessed with the idea of setting up a similar petrochemical factory such as Royal Dutch Shell in India. Driven by entrepreneurial urge to establish a factory in India, he relinquishes his job in Turkey. He returns to India and utilizes the dowry as the seed capital for starting a yarn trading business in Mumbai. During that time, India was governed by the License Raj which caged entrepreneurship.

Gurukant Desai's power of ideas coupled with entrepreneurial zeal surmounted the bottleneck imposed by rules and regulation by the License Raj. He moved from yarn trading business to textile business and then eventually he achieves his ambition of establishing the largest petrochemical factory in India. During this transition from yarn trading to establishing a petrochemical factory, he had to circumvent various rules and regulation to achieve his ambition. The fourth estate exposes his circumvention of rules and regulation to the public. As a result, the Government establishes a Commission to ascertain whether rules and regulation were violated by Gurukant Desai and his company Shakthi Corporation. Gurukant Desai justi-

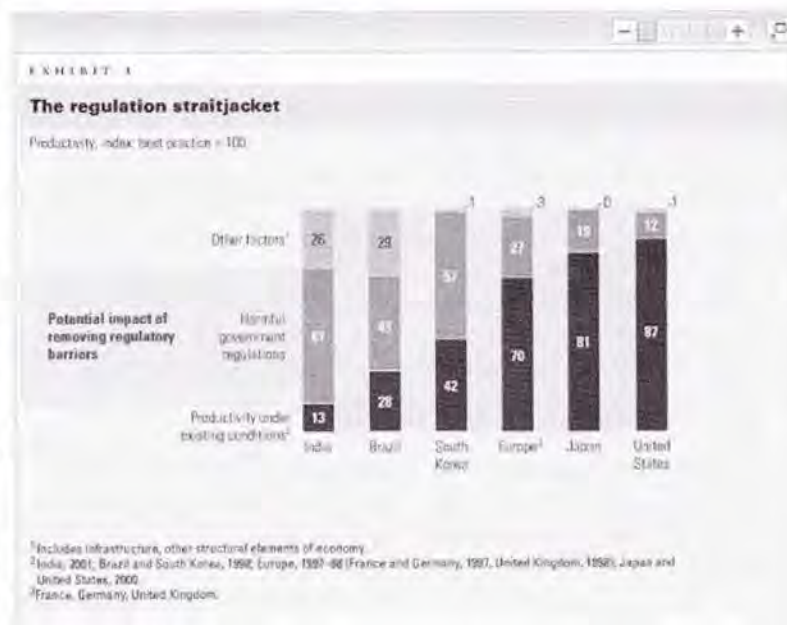
fies his circumvention of rules and regulation by stating that they were not business friendly. He points out that rules and regulation stifled his growth rather than fostering growth. After more than a decade of reforms is India's growth still retarded by rules and regulation?

Mckinsey Study on India

Mckinsey report "India – Emerging to Surging" in 2001 points out that India's growth is retarded primarily due to plethora of regulations governing product market coupled with government ownership of business. The removal of these barriers could accelerate GDP growth by about 4.0%. In addition, it could enable the country to achieve faster growth than countries such as South Korea, Japan and Brazil. (See illustration)

The removal of these barriers could lead to creation

of about 75 million new jobs. The millions of jobs created on account of this process could result in absorbing the rapidly growing workforce. In addition, it could result in re-absorbing the majority of the workforce displayed by productivity improvement. The removal of barriers could result in the creation of more jobs which could enable India to tap the benefits of demographic



dividend. On the sidelines, the reduction in rules and regulation could reduce corruption and red tapism. So it is clear that removal of regulation would enhance India productivity and reputation among world nations. The effect of deregulation can be understood by analyzing two sectors namely Automobile and Agriculture.

Two A's – Automobile and Agriculture

As a part of the reform process, the government relaxed the licensing requirements for car manufactures and restriction on foreign entrants. The government delicensing process resulted in creating intense competition which led to pre-reform automobile plants losing market share. However, the reform process led to a surge in demand for new, cheaper and higher technology vehicles. This resulted in vehicle production increasing from 2 million in 1991 to about 9.7 million in 2006. The surge in production led to increase in employment by about 11.0% of the workforce engaged in the production of automobiles during the last decade. The reform paved the way for India emerging as the fourth largest commercial vehicle producer and eleventh largest passenger car producer. According to Industry sources, India's growth in automobiles is likely to outpace China. Recently Carlos Ghosn CEO of Renault Nissan had opined that "India is a market where we learn to be frugal. The statement is an ample testimony to the productivity standards achieved by Indian automakers such as Maruti, Tata Motors and Mahindra. One of the major reasons for India emerging as a global hub for automobiles can be attributed to the delicensing policy adopted the government.

In contrast, productivity growth in agriculture growth is still encumbered by a plethora of rules and regulations. A recent study undertaken by the Consortium of Indian Farmers Association (CIFA) points out that most aspects of agriculture such as prices, exports, processing, storage and transportation remain in the clutches of government control. The study points out after initiation of reforms 35 new models of car were introduced but only one tractor model. The banks constrained by government regulation had provided only 11.0% of the targeted loans to the farmers during the previous decade. The regulations and control had led to middlemen controlling the market resulting in unremunerative prices. The unremunerative prices coupled with rising interests cost (moneylenders are still the predominant source of funding for farmers) had resulted in a spate of farmer suicides. The study points out that Indian government rules and regulations had led to agriculture achieving only a paltry growth rate of about 2.5% during the previous decade.

Strong Weak or Weak Strong

The Government policy in the automobile sector can be denoted as strong weak model. A strong weak model can be characterized as environments where enterprise and initiative are made to flourish and the role of government is that of a developer. The emphasis is more on development and the role of regulation is to facilitate

and enable such environment. The adoption of the strong weak model in sectors like Automobiles, Information Technology, Telecom had resulted in unleashing entrepreneurial energy resulting in higher rates of growth. In contrast, the agriculture sector model can be denoted as strong state model where the government acts as a controller than a developer. The adoption of the strong state model had resulted in some of the important sectors like agriculture (which provides employment to more than 60.0% of the population) lagging compared to other sectors such as industry and services. With the result, development appears to have been skewed in favour of 25.0% of the population while the remaining 75.0% are eagerly waiting to reap the full benefits.

It is clear that the adoption of strong weak model in more sectors could result in creation of more employment generators such as Gurukant Desai and unleash an entrepreneurial vibrant spirit throughout the country. The strong weak model could accelerate India's transition from developing to developed country in decades rather than centuries by tapping the key resource namely the entrepreneurial spirit of the people. The choice is therefore left to the government to decide whether to make the transition from developing to developed nations in decades or centuries?

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"Why Denning is an Ass"

"It is the right of every man, in Parliament or out of it, in the Press or over the broadcast, to make fair comment, even outspoken comment, on matters of public interest. Those who comment can deal faithfully with all that is done in a court of justice. They can say we are mistaken, and our decisions erroneous, whether they are subject to appeal or not. All we would ask is that those who criticise us will remember that, from the nature of our office we cannot reply to criticisms. We cannot enter into public controversy. We must rely on our conduct itself to be its own vindication."

These great observations were made by Lord Denning on a case where a politician as eminent as Michael Foot said: "Denning is an ass." And the *Observer* gave the headline "Why Denning is an Ass."

Justice Krishna Iyer, in the course of an article on Contempt Power and Some Questions, *The Hindu*, October 1, 2007



They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

R. N. Bhaskar

This was the name of a film that won several awards. Unfortunately it did not do very well at the box office. It was a movie about the right to die when life is not worth living. And the defence was simply that if you can shoot down an ailing racehorse, and justify it as mercy killing, why not allow the same right to human beings.

But movies apart, I have always been fascinated with the arguments that people make about life and death. And in all my readings, there is no argument that has been made as eloquently, or even quaintly than the one put forth by Albert Camus, the well-known philosopher, author and thinker during the post World-war period.

In one of his essays he raised the question about what living and life ought to be like. He remarked, that once all the questions had been asked, and all the answers provided, one questions would still continue to baffle all. It was: "Is life worth living?" But as Camus pointed out, the question was absurd. If Life indeed was worth living, one would not have asked the question. And if it were otherwise, one should not be alive to ask it.

Celebrate Life

Behind this absurd reasoning arising from this equally absurd question, was Camus' belief that life needed to be celebrated at all costs, provided it did not become a burden to the one living his own life. The proviso was important because it is only when life is worth living that people begin to think about value systems that should be encouraged, sometimes even enforced, to ensure that the positive attitude towards life never becomes negative. That is why, when pain (physical or mental) threatens to cloud one's perception of life as being positive, either the cause should be remedied, or the person be given the option to remove himself from the scene. What is true of pain, is also true of any disability, debility, or catastrophe, which compels one to believe that living with dignity – as one understands it for himself or herself – is no longer possible.

At the heart of the entire debate on euthanasia is the fundamental issue: should people have the right to decide what kind of life they should have for themselves? The traditional belief that has lasted for centuries – in not a few millennia – is that life does not belong to the person living on this planet. This belief holds that a man's life is not his own – it belongs to God, or his parents or even the state. It is based on the premise that there are boundaries laid down for everything. Even freedom is circumscribed by a set of beliefs that are beyond the realm of questioning or challenge.

Contrary to this is the concept that a man is born free, and that he has the freedom of choice. It is the natural progression of ideas that comes with evolution. The more primitive a society, life belongs to someone or the other. One is the master and the other the slave. A slave has no rights and no claims. As societies evolve, they begin to realize the need to respect the inalienable rights of man – and this includes the right to life and liberty.

Common law

If life is free, it also invokes another right – the right to decide how life could be made more meaningful, provided such liberties do not constrain the liberties of others. That is where the concept of morality begins, and common law begins to gain root. The concept of 'common law' is that once one accepts a core set of values – say liberty, the right to life and the right to property – then any other law that is created is fair so long as it does not trample or violate the basic values that that to be protected at all costs. That is why, when politicians talk of "the will of the people" to justify any bizarre demand, they forget that bigger than "the will of the people" is the core set of values. Had the beliefs of the majority been allowed to hold their sway, the world would never have believed that the Sun, and not the earth, is the centre of the solar system.

And, as one pursues the relentless logic of common law and freedom, there is only one conclusion that one

can arrive at – that it is inhuman to expect a person to continue suffering and not give him the benefit of finding a way to rid himself of the agony.

Unfortunately, this is the very logic that escapes most people. They focus instead on how this freedom could be misused. They often forget the analogy of the surgeon's scalpel, which too can be used for remedying an ailment in the body, or for killing. They often forget that the answer to such a situation is to develop a body of laws and regulations around the use of the scalpel so that it is only used for healing and curing, not for killing.

The other roadblock is, obviously, the conventional belief that your life does not belong to you. Unfortunately the survival of such a belief even in times when almost every other primitive belief about individual rights and freedoms has been discarded and been done away with, remains anachronistic. It goes against the very notion about what dignity in living ought to be, and how people should be given a right to decide the way they wish to live.

There are times when the laws become so absurd that it leaves even bystanders seething with rage. There are times when they see a person crying out for deliverance, but are incapable of doing anything, not because they cannot help them out, but because the laws won't let them.

A Painful Death

A very good example was when a friend informed me of the painful way his mother died in Canada after years of agonizing pain. Even the little bit of comfort that painkillers could have afforded her were not administered by doctors because these drugs would have reacted against other medicines that were being given to her, and could have prematurely ended her life. All the relatives had to keep watching her writhe in pain day after day, month after month and year after year till deliverance finally came. The patient wanted to die, the relatives wanted her to pass away in peace so that her suffering would cease. But nobody could do anything because the laws did not permit it.

Undoubtedly, there are stories of miracle turnarounds. But those are miracles, and should not be regarded as a norm. If a miracle were to happen, even the corpse could sit up and begin life anew. That is why they are called miracles. They are not to be expected, and human beings can only cope with the predictable. That is why they have to ensure that their insurance premiums are paid regularly, and that their doctors' bills are never ignored or, for that matter, those of their lawyers. If the predictable were to be ignored in anticipation of a miracle, nothing

would get done.

The right to die is one way of coping with the predictable, without clinging to the straw that a miracle might still happen. If the patient believes in miracles, so be it. He has a right to live if he wants it that way. But if he does not want to live, there can be no justification for prolonging his stay on this earth.

That is the reason why some of the most practical advocates of the Right to Die with Dignity have time and again categorized mercy killing into two categories: the first is Euthanasia which may be conducted passively, without any aggression or the use of force. The other is active euthanasia.

Passive Euthanasia

Passive euthanasia is legal in most countries. The simplest form of euthanasia entails the withholding of common treatments – antibiotics, painkillers or surgery – so as to permit nature to take its own course. The argument is that since death is an inevitability, any means that allows nature to bring on that inevitability – in the natural way – cannot be called a crime. This is the method adopted by many saints who go into meditation and give up their 'spirit' in the conviction that they will be united with their 'God'. If denying oneself food is a crime, then society would not be allowed to have its saints; as they deny themselves the comforts of life, sometimes even food and water, in the quest for enlightenment and 'moksha'.

The primary difference between this type of euthanasia and active euthanasia is that in passive euthanasia the decision to end life is taken by the person himself, and is not acted upon by someone else. It is not technically suicide, because the person is not forcing an end to his life. Yet, if a doctor decides to terminate the life support systems of a comatose patient, that would be someone else taking another's life, even if the patient had given his consent during his conscious hours before going into a coma. In passive euthanasia, it is the triumph of the mind over the body when seeking the goal of deliverance from life itself.

But when a person chooses to refuse food and starves himself to death, there are many who argue that this is akin to suicide as it forces the body to discard food, albeit voluntarily. Why should that be different from a person who slashes his wrists to allow his blood to drain away, or another who holds his breath and thus deprives his lungs, and therefore his brain, of oxygen? These, consequently remain grey areas in the realm of passive euthanasia.

Active Euthanasia

On the other end of the spectrum is active euthanasia. This could be with consent or without consent. The first can be justified morally, the second remains highly controversial, but can be justified on moral grounds under exceptional cases.

Euthanasia with consent could involve a patient who is suffering gravely, and asks the doctor to end his life – in much the same way a man may choose to request his doctor to end the life of an animal who is in great pain. In some countries this remains illegal, even though the patient has given its consent.

More controversial is euthanasia without consent because it is often carried out without the permission of the person who is slated to die. It is at such times that this kind of euthanasia is invariably equated with murder. But there are times when such euthanasia can be justified

on moral grounds. Take the case of a patient who has suffered an accident and is living the life of a vegetable for years, and is also in great pain. The patient is unable to speak because his mind may be a total blank. It can at best, sense pain in much the same way as a jellyfish does. If a doctor or a relative opted to end this method of living by administering a painkiller in a very large dose and thus prevent this 'charade' of living without dignity, the action could be justified, even though some countries may still call it illegal and therefore a crime.

Eventually, it comes back to value systems. Does a person's life belong to him? If yes, then he also has the right to die with dignity. On my part I do believe that people should have the right to die with dignity.

MR. R. N. BHASKAR is the Chairman of E-convergence Technologies Limited and Consulting editor, DVV Media Ltd. He is a member of SRDD's Executive Committee.

Organisational Matters

The 9th General Meeting of the Society was held in Mumbai on 10 June 2007.

General Secretary and acting Chairman Dr. Nagraj Huilgol chaired the meeting. The proceedings began with a tribute to Professor Sadanand Varde, Chairman of the Society who passed away on January 29, 2007. Dr. Nagraj Huilgol, in his remarks said that Prof. Varde did much to propagate the ideals of the SRDD. The meeting observed a minutes silence in honour of his memory.

Reporting on the activities of the Society, the General Secretary drew attention to a detailed story on the SRDD in *The Times of India* in April and which elicited considerable interest from different parts of the country. As a result of this renewed interest several new members had been enrolled. The Society has 195 members on its rolls.

The Audited Statements of Accounts for the period ending March 31 2007 were adopted.

One-time Membership fee

The General Meeting amended Rule 5 relating to membership of the SRDD. Arising from this amendment members who wish to join the Society will be required to pay a one time subscription as follows:

Membership below 65 years:	Rs.1,200;
Conjoint with Spouse:	Rs.1,500

Membership above 65 years:	Rs.1,000 ;
Conjoint with Spouse:	Rs.1,200

Programme of Work

Arising from a discussion on the programme of activities for the current year, the General Meeting welcomed Dr. Huilgol's suggestion that panels of doctors be set up to counsel those who approach them for advice on specific cases where there was a desire on the part of someone who was terminally ill to end his life. The meeting agreed with Dr. Huilgol that the Society should educate the public on both passive and active euthanasia and on the concept of the Living Will but that, for the present, the Society should propagate euthanasia only in the context of terminal illness and not stray into other areas such as suicide for reasons other than terminal illness; nor should the Society get involved in issues relating to euthanasia from the philosophical or religious perspectives. What should be the SRDD's policy on such matters should be considered by the new Executive Committee which can make its proposals at subsequent General Meetings. Meanwhile it was necessary for the new Executive Committee to network with organisations with similar aims; have its own website and renew the publication of the SRDD Newsletter.

New Executive Committee

Chairman:	Dr. Nagraj Huilgol
General Secretary:	Dr. Surendra Dhelia

Joint Secretaries: Ms. Bernadine Pramodhan
Ms. Sharmila Ghuge

Members: Mr. Feroze Patch
Mr. N. V. Khote
Mr. Mohan Hirdwani
Mr. M. V. Ramanathan
Mr. R. N. Bhaskar
Capt. V.C.Jaitly
Mrs. Kalpana Choudary

The Executive Committee invites: (a) suggestions from members regarding the proposed website, (b) the raising of funds for conducting the Society's activities and (c) articles from members on the subject of dying with dignity for publication in the SRDD newsletter, newspapers and periodicals.

Obituary

Mr. N. V. Khote who has been on the Executive Committee of the SRDD for a number of years and was re-elected to the new Executive Committee, passed away in October. He was visiting his daughter in Paris and suffered a fatal heart attack. The Society deeply condoles his demise and considers it a great loss to the society. The Chairman and the General Secretary have conveyed the SRDD's deep sense of sorrow to Mr. Khote's family.

As we go to press comes the sad news of the passing away of Mr. Pinakin Shah a long time member of the Society in Mumbai in October. The Society conveys its deep sense of sorrow to Mr. Shah's family.

A Writ Petition in the Supreme Court to legalise "The Living Will"

On April 24 2005 Mr. H. D. Shourie filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court (it was to be his last. He died two months later on June 28). The writ was a plea to the Supreme Court to declare the 'right to die with dignity' (not 'right to die' per se) as a fundamental right and that "persons of deteriorated health or terminally ill should be able to execute a document titled 'My Living Will and Attorney Authorisation' which can be presented to the hospital concerned for appropriate action." The following are excerpts from the synopsis that accompanied the writ petition published in Common Cause April-June 2007.

"It is submitted that the citizens who are suffering from chronic diseases and/or are at the end of their natural life span and are likely to go into a state of terminal illness or permanent vegetative state are deprived of their rights to refuse cruel and unwanted medical treatment, like feeding through hydration tubes, being kept on ventilator and other life supporting machines in order to artificially prolong their natural life span. This sometimes leads to extension of pain and agony both physical and mental which they desperately seek to end by making an informed choice and clearly express their wishes in advance, (called a living will) in the event of they going into a state when it will not be possible for them to express their wishes. This Hon'ble Court has observed in the case of Gian Kaur vs. State of Punjab and in other connected matters (1996) 2 SCC 648 that right to die with dignity is a part of right to live with dignity. This Hon'ble Court has observed:

"A question may arise, in the context of a dying man who is terminally ill or in a persistent vegetative state that he may be permitted to terminate it by a premature extinction of his life in those circumstances. This category of cases may fall within the ambit of the right to die with dignity as a part of

right to live with dignity, when death due to termination of natural life is certain and imminent and the process of natural death has commenced. They are not in the cases of extinguishing life but only of accelerating conclusion of the process of natural death which has already commenced."

This Hon'ble Court has held that right to life does not mean a mere animal existence of a human being. It has been held that right to life will mean right to live with dignity with basic amenities of life like food, shelter, health etc. (Kindly see Francis Coralie Mullin vs. Administrator, Union Territory of Delhi reported in (1981) 1 SCC 608).

It is a common law right of the people, of any civilized country, to refuse unwanted medical treatment and no person can force him/her to take any medical treatment which the person does not desire to continue with.... The right to be free from unwanted life-sustaining medical treatment is a right protected by Article 21.

Even the right to privacy which has also been held to be a part of right to life is being violated as the people are not being given any right to make an informed choice and a personal decision about withholding or withdrawing life sustaining medical treatment.

In the present regime of laws even clearly expressed wishes of such patients to be permitted to die with dignity are not respected and it is difficult for the medical practitioner to take a decision in accordance with these wishes due to the fear of facing penal consequences. This situation is depriving the citizens of the country of a precious fundamental right guaranteed to them by the Constitution namely, the right to die with dignity, which is implicit in Article 21 of the Constitution.



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

Has the 'Gujaratis' World View Changed?

Ever since my school days, some of my closest friends have been Gujaratis. They were – and remain – warm, friendly people. They also have a delightful sense of humour and are not in the least offended by 'Gujju' jokes, or friends making fun of their pronunciation. They have varied interests and hobbies and – if they have one passion to be singled out – it would be commerce and the art of making money. One thing that does not particularly excite them is politics – except when it impacts the stock market. I have never known any of my friends to mouth off about Hindutva, or any of that fundamentalist nonsense.

However, in recent years, the average Gujarati Hindu – post Godhra – that long time devotee of Laxmi, has been transformed into a vengeful Vishnu; with an urgent compulsion to defend his faith. It is well known that the post Godhra carnage was initially instigated by the VHP and the Bajrang Dal. That is perfectly understandable. Fomenting communal tension is, after all, their principal agenda, the primary reason for their existence. Without it, people like Praveen Togadia would have remained a nonentity instead of the self-proclaimed, fulminating Brahma he claims to be. The pseudo-secularists in Gujarat have been around for a long time, of course, but before Godhra, the majority of Gujaratis regarded them with amused tolerance. They were fringe groups providing occasional entertainment; nothing more.

So did Godhra ignite some long dormant militant spark within the Gujarati populace? Like me, I am sure many Indians were astonished at the alacrity with which some Gujaratis took up knives and scythes. I am not denying that the Hindus in Gujarat had sufficient provocation. The truth about who – or what – set alight those train bogies at Godhra will, perhaps, never be fully revealed, but it is not surprising that the Muslims were perceived to be responsible. The simmering tension and mistrust among the two communities has been around for decades. What was surprising was the disproportionate reaction. What is even more surprising is that, years after the initial passions have cooled, the bitterness and resentment is just as strong.

Gujarat is now literally a deeply divided state, with physical walls separating the two communities in many areas. Narendra Modi is a modern day political phenomenon. That the post Godhra carnage in Gujarat would actually catapult him to near absolute power in his state, is one of the most astonishing episodes in post-

independent India. Gujarat, on the other hand, has always been one of the most prosperous states in India. The Gujaratis seemed content with their way of life; and doing what they do best – making money. It amazes me that the same people have now elevated a very shrewd politician – who cleverly utilizes rabble-rousing as a means to an end – to the status of a folk hero. All these years later, Modi's hold on the general populace remains as strong as ever.

Recently, there has been a buzz about the Tehelka sting operation, where communal leaders have been caught on tape, bragging about their key role in the post Godhra killings. The veracity and legality of the tapes may be brought into question but even then one shudders to think of the inhumanities perpetrated without any remorse. What is surprising is the belief, even among the BJP's political opponents, that the revelations may actually benefit Modi in the upcoming state elections. The debate among Modi's political opponents is about whether there is electoral advantage in beefing up or playing down the confessions. Well, the Indian public long ago gave up their expectation of our political leaders – irrespective of party affiliation – adhering to any moral or ethical principles; so that is par for the course.

To any right thinking citizen, possessing even a modicum of human empathy, it would seem absurd to imagine that complicity in the most heinous of crimes would somehow benefit the perpetrator. That this is being even contemplated is an illustration of the warped mindset of politicians. I have spoken to some well-educated Gujaratis about this phenomenon. The usual explanation is that, while they are distressed at the excesses carried out under government patronage, the crime is somehow exculpated because Modi has done a lot for the economic and infrastructural development of the state. That is an established fact; and Modi does indeed deserve credit for his government's achievements in that sphere.

My question is, do the rights and wrongs in this case cancel out each other? Is there even any relation between the two? Students of history may recall another 'gentleman' who did a lot for his nation. He built the *autobahn*, trains again ran on time; and the standard of living of his people improved dramatically. That 'gentleman's' name was Adolf Hitler. I leave you to draw your own conclusions.

Our Corporate Emperors

On Thursday (September 28, 2007), for the first time in 22 years, I did not receive my copy of *The Afternoon* newspaper. When *The Afternoon* did not appear for the second day running, I knew something was wrong. Soon thereafter I read the news in another Mumbai evening paper that *The Afternoon*'s CEO, Farzana Contractor, had been sacked by the paper's proprietor/publisher, Mr. Kamal Morarka. Other newspaper CEO's and editors have been sacked or replaced in the past, but I cannot recall a precedent for an established newspaper ceasing publication so abruptly.

And what was the immediate provocation for Ms. Contractor's dismissal? Apparently, a caption, under a picture showing the lady being presented with an award, mistakenly designated her as the editor, instead of the CEO. This annoyed Mr. Morarka so greatly that he promptly dispatched three of his henchmen to *The Afternoon* office to impress the staff that Mr. Morarka was now solely in charge. This, in spite of the paper publishing a corrigendum a few days after the offending caption appeared.

Of course, Mr. Morarka has now graciously clarified that Ms. Contractor was dismissed because 'she does not know commerce and he has lost confidence in her'. However, the timing of the dismissal leads one to conclude that the immediate provocation was the mistaken caption. Apparently, Ms. Contractor was commanded to issue a corrigendum immediately and she took her time over it. I believe this was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

During my previous career as a consulting engineer, I have had the opportunity to deal with the heads of several large business houses. One thing that soon becomes apparent is that these gentlemen – with the notable

exception of Mr. Ratan Tata – have very massive (and very fragile) egos. Not that they are entirely to blame. In their domain, they are virtual emperors. Their every wish is literally a command for their minions. I have seen even vice-presidents fall all over themselves – often at the cost of their self respect – to ingratiate themselves with the big boss. Ms. Contractor committed the cardinal sin of not responding promptly to an imperial command.

I have been an avid reader of *The Afternoon* since its inception. Its founding editor Behram Contractor was a journalist in the truest sense, to whom the value of the written word meant far more than advertising revenue. I was also proud that *The Afternoon* did not succumb to crass commercialism I was therefore greatly distressed – as would have been countless others when *The Afternoon* was forced to cease publication altogether.

As for Ms. Contractor's competence, there is no denying the fact that the main consideration for her taking over the reins was the fact that she was married to the late editor. However, since there has been no dramatic decline in the quality of the newspaper after Behram's demise, one has to give her credit for that. Perhaps her business acumen was not up to scratch, since she has herself admitted that *The Afternoon* had been losing advertising revenue. However, I am old fashioned enough to believe that the principal function of a newspaper is as the purveyor of news – and not commerce.

Ms. Contractor, of course, did not stand a chance. In myths and fairy tales, David defeats Goliath and the underdog always triumphs in the end. Alas, the real world is not like that. Much as I wish it otherwise, the lady was no match for the heavy artillery Mr. Morarka would have brought to bear.

Man – The Political Animal

The brain neurons of liberals and conservatives fire differently when confronted with tough choices, suggesting that some political divides may be hard-wired, according to a study published in the British journal *Nature Neuroscience*. Aristotle may have been more on the mark than he realised when he said that man is by nature a political animal.

Dozens of previous studies have established a strong link between political persuasion and certain personality traits.

Conservatives tend to crave order and structure in their lives, and are more consistent in the way they make decisions. Liberals by contrast, show a higher tolerance for ambiguity and complexity, and adapt more easily to unexpected circumstances.

Wonder what would be revealed if such a study was made of Indian politicians.

Boycott Goods Made in Communist China

China is now the biggest polluter in the World just above America and their growth is due to soar as companies in the West outsource their product base.

"Some people wonder and even ask what difference a few individuals can make by not buying 'Made In China'. What we can gain or achieve through this campaign is not our primary concern. The first and most important consideration is that it is morally wrong to support in any way such an oppressive regime – especially one that is becoming an increasing threat to global peace and stability. But even from a practical point of view – just as the longest journey must begin with a single step so also a mass movement can only begin with a few or even a single individual".

Lhasang Tsering, Advisor to MIC
(Made in China) Boycott Campaign

It's coming up to that time of year again and instead of doing the usual ethical Christmas present list despite how successful they have been in recent years, this year we wanted to put our efforts into a campaign that is going to need everyone to act and act now before shopping for Christmas gifts and trimmings starts.

In every major store you walk into you will find a mass of goods with the tag at the bottom saying, 'Made in China'. In TX Maxx the designer store in the UK almost all the goods are made in China. Next is another store, as is Argos and countless others. It seems these goods have been thrust upon us in nearly every High Street store and why because they are cheap to make but at what cost!

Human Rights Abuse

What is the cost of these imports on the people of China. Workers get paid a pittance and work in appalling conditions, they have unprotected work clothes laying them susceptible to injury and toxic chemicals. The majority work a sixteen-hour day and many die from these conditions, yet there is no room to complain, there are countless others who can take their place to make a few Yuan to feed their family. There is such a high demand for toys, clothes and place to make a few Yuan to feed their family.

China is renowned for its human rights abuses which include sweat shops, abuse by officials which go unreported, severe restrictions on freedom of speech and expression. Many Tibetans have been tortured and most

of you may recall the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 which called for democracy, 200-300 civilians were killed and thousands were injured. The abuse of women in their own homes where many cannot escape. Women abducted and sold into prostitution. The figures are not accurate but there is reported to be around 15,000 cases of kidnapping and trafficking of women and children.

In 2006 3,400 executions took place in China but this is a closely guarded secret and could be as much as 8,000 prisoners with 6,000 prisoners on death row, many for minor offences. These people will more than likely face a firing squad or electrocution and it does not end there for the people whose lives have been taken. In June 2001 Wang Guoqi, a Chinese former military physician had worked on executed prisoners removing the organs of 100 patients without any consent from relatives. According to Wang and reported in the Guardian (UK), along with organs being used for 'paying foreigners', the use of skin from these bodies were used in the cosmetics industry for sale in Europe and the UK in development of Collagen - used in the Western World for diminishing wrinkles and to puff up thin lips, second to botox as the most popular cosmetic surgery.

Toxicity And The Cheap Goods

Is your Christmas 'must have toys' from China? And more importantly are they safe and even more importantly with recent checks coming in amid fears of toxic chemicals in toys being recalled, how safe were last years toys that are still hanging about the house?

With companies outsourcing their production to China no one seems to be monitoring the end product. With recent recalls of products such as melamine-tainted cat food found in at least a hundred pet food brands killing a number of cats and dogs in North America, a dye farmers used to improve the look of their eggs was found to contain cancer causing properties – in response 5,000 ducks were culled! In Panama fifty people died last year after using cough syrup containing diethylene. An industrial grade chemical used as glycerin was found to be in toothpaste, soaps and cosmetics, another incident of toothpaste laced with antifreeze. So the governments say that China needs to clean up its act especially as Christmas is on its way and orders have been placed. The

most recent case was where 250,000 Sponge Bob toys were found to be laced with lead in the US.

It has been reported that the water has been to blame in some of these productions and is heavily polluted. Once the product has been made it is hard to get the toxins out. In June of this year inspections were carried out on products such as foods, fertilizers and machinery. Toxic levels and bacteria were mainly found in food items such as canned and dried foods and juices. Worth noting that a staggering 200,000 people in China die of food poisoning each year and in 2006 150,000 food production factories closed.

The Environment, The Rainforests And A Global Catastrophe Waiting To Happen

China's record on illegal timber imports is reaching catastrophic levels but is China to blame for this as the demand for fashionable furniture such as 'the shabby chic look' is bought by the West. Ebay is being flooded with new furniture being sold with this 'shabby chic' tag - the majority of the new furniture sold with this title is mahogany and from China. We contacted eBay a while ago and asked them to ban new mahogany from its site stating that it was illegal and from an unsustainable source causing destruction to the Rainforests - they never replied. We wondered if the people buying these goods actually knew what destruction they were contributing to!

A majority of the countries China imports timber from - are destroying their sacred Rainforests, unbelievable considering the world is trying to save them to combat global warming and protect its inhabitants to which more and more animals and insects are becoming homeless and extinct each day. So remember next time you want that dresser, chest of drawers, 'shabby chic' chair, dining table and even sofa, chances are unless stated it will be from China and that means destroying a Rainforest. can you live with that?

China is now the biggest polluter in the World just above America and their growth is due to soar as companies in the west outsource their product base. With this demand, China is becoming a land of polluted water, noxious air and acid rain. Parts of China are suffering from drought which leads to erosion of the soil. Eighty percent

of China's electricity comes from coal! This is a country who's technology was second to none and you would expect far reaching ideas of how to power China but it seems we are returning to the 1800's and we can see by the films and records why the people then were glad when other forms of power came in. The smog and pollution must have been so great. China knows about the pollution and you would think that they would have looked at new ways to supply that 80 percent of electricity right - wrong they are opening 554 new power stations to meet the growth of the country. We know in the west what mistakes we have made and are trying to change that and are trying to encourage China to act more responsibly with regards to its energy and coal fields but the West is also dependent on oil and China is using that as a 'if you aren't changing why should we' card. God only knows what the costs will be worldwide on the environment.

Now with the Olympics looming in Beijing in 2008, China is looking to make rich pickings and in doing so they are destroying peoples' homes and their lives with abuse and murder to get the people of China out of these old homes to make way for high rise flats and houses for the rich, foreign investors and visitors. These people, many being over sixty, have lived in these homes all their lives and are tossed out on the streets with nothing and no-one to listen to them - if they try to act they are punished and threatened. China needs to be stopped before it self destructs, taking many of us along with it.

We must stress that this campaign is not an attack on the people of China rather an act of support for all the people and animals being abused systematically every year. We want to show China we don't want their goods until they clean up their act on the above issues. Please do not stop going to your local Chinese outlets whether they be restaurants or shops as many of these people have left their country of origin to escape persecution - show your support to them.

DON'T buy goods made in China. This Christmas tell your family about this campaign and ask them not to buy you goods made in China. If you can do it now for Christmas and we can show the governments it is morally wrong to support such a regime country.

Excerpted from the website: www.saveourearth.co.uk

George Orwell's 1984 failed to materialise but Keith Bradsher of the *New York Times* recently wrote how Wall Street has been colluding with the Chinese authorities to turn China into a total surveillance society. Bradsher wrote: "China Security and Surveillance Technology, a fast growing company that installs and sometimes operates surveillance systems for Chinese police agencies, jails and banks, among other customers has been approved for listing on the New York Stock Exchange...the latest signs of ever closer ties among Wall Street, surveillance companies and the Chinese government's security apparatus."

N. D. Batra in his column Cyberage in *The Statesman* of 19 September

From Our Readers

Indo-US Nuclear Deal – Thorium is Not the Answer

This letter is from Mr. B. P. Rastogi who worked in the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre for 36 years and understands the problems.

In my view N. S. Venkataraman has not fully understood the problems associated with thorium in his article on the US-India Nuclear Deal entitled “It will put India backwards (*Freedom First*, September 2007).

He has talked about thorium as an alternative fuel. It is well known that thorium does not have any fissile isotope and requires an external source of fissile material to be useful as fuel. However not many know that thorium requires *three times* the fissile material compared to uranium to have similar characteristics. For example, a light water reactor requires about 4% enriched uranium fuel which is enriched in an enrichment plant. On the other hand, a thorium-based light water reactor would require 12% enrichment of pure fissile material i.e. plutonium or uranium-235. Of course it is not necessary to mix fissile material with thorium; it could be put in the reactor as spikes. However the quantum of incore fissile material would be the capital cost of the reactor, making unit cost very high. It should also be noted that plutonium fuel would always add to the unit cost as it is prepared in the glove boxes. If it is decided to use Uranium-233 produced from thorium for recycling then there would be an addition to the unit cost due to the fact that the fuel would require a fully shielded facility for fabrication, a requirement due to the intense radiation of uranium-233. In view of these facts, it is doubtful that thorium would be used as fuel for nuclear energy so long as uranium: natural, discharged from reactors or depleted rejected from enrichment plants, is available.

Another point raised is that nuclear power contribution in India is only 3% today. Why is it so? Let us consider the history of the generation of nuclear power. Fuel for the Apsara reactor was initially supplied by the UK. The Cirus reactor was Canada's gift with heavy water from the USA. At that time the USA supplied the Tarapur reactors, and Canada the Rajasthan 1st and 2nd Units. After Bhabha, Vikram Sarabhai negotiated with France for fast breeder reactor technology. He was also thinking in terms of 8 to 10 light water reactors each of 800 Mwe which was standard at that time. He sent a team to Canada to study 500 Mwe heavy reactors. After his death, a policy shift took place. Nuclear explosion became priority activity and after Pokhran-I international sanctions were imposed and India was cut off from the rest of the world in the field of nuclear power generation. Today world nuclear installation generation capacity is 3,70,000 Mwe and 95% of it is based on low enriched Uranium fuel which has been found economic.

Very exciting developments are taking place in this field. Unfortunately, India is cut off from these activities. The basic aim of the US-India nuclear deal is to bring India into the mainstream. Lastly, people who want to know the full picture of the nuclear power industry should access the website of the World Nuclear Association at <http://www.world-nuclear.org>

B. P. RASTOGI,
Mumbai

Congressional Medal for The Dalai Lama

US Congress deserves to be congratulated for awarding the Congressional Gold medal to His Holiness The Dalai Lama for whom people around the world have high esteem. As the *New Indian Express* points out China routinely protests any honour to The Dalai Lama and terms it, unjustifiably of course, an interference in China's internal affairs. It must not be forgotten that the US on more than one occasion refused visa to the Dalai Lama when it suited its purpose.

The international community should be informed of China's atrocities on Tibetans for over five decades. We are witnessing how a distinct culture is being destroyed systematically before our own eyes. One wonders what the International Human Rights activists are doing in this matter?

S. C. Panda,
Bhubaneswar

India's China Policy

"Indians are Useful Idiots" – Chou En Lai

The "Welcome Address" of C. A. Kallianpur, National Coordinator of Friends of Tibet (India) which he would have given in the normal circumstances at the India International Centre, New Delhi on September 13, 2007 during the panel discussion "India's China Policy – Need for An Overhaul".

We felt the need for such a panel discussion as it struck us that groups who are very vocal when it comes to western colonialism are unusually silent when it comes to eastern especially Chinese colonialism and attempt to confuse by linking it to unconnected issues. As a result of which China has escaped the scanner and even sixty years after the formation of the United Nations there are large parts in Asia that do not have freedom and there still remain many remnants of colonial rule in need of de-colonisation like Tibet, Manchuria, Inner i.e. Southern Mongolia, Eastern Turkestan, Yunnan and Guangxi-Zhuang. This silence has to be shattered if India has to come to grips with the real issue and not go around in circles.

I am reminded of a small incident that happened in Dharamshala. When I was there for about six months in 2003. At the Library they normally invite scholars to give talks and one such invitee was Dr. Alex McKay from the London University's School of Oriental and African Studies and now, I think, with the Wellcome Foundation who has come out with virtually an encyclopaedia on Tibet. In his talk he was trying to minimise Britain's role in the Tibetan tragedy in the first decade of the previous century. During the Question and Answer session I had to remind Dr. McKay that things were not so cut and dried as he has made out. After the session we met personally and I introduced myself. His first question to me was about Dr. Alastair Lamb! I told him frankly that Dr. Alastair Lamb started out as a promising academic but that today he is just a lobbyist, no one takes him seriously. When I mentioned that

he laughed and said "Yes" and added "What with the Pakistani Embassy sending him their staff car!" The point I am trying to make is that a whole generation in India has swallowed hook, line & sinker Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* based largely on Dr. Alastair Lamb's early works, as if it is final and binding.

No wonder in spite of overwhelming new evidence surfacing about the political status of Tibet, India's establishments continue to wallow in their old thinking. One editor-in-chief of a so-called national daily from the south talks about Greater Tibet but does not talk of Greater China which even a Chinese academic talks and warns about. Another regular contributor to *The Indian Express* says that India should not antagonise China but does not mind China antagonising us. This gentleman does not even know what constitutes actual China and what constitutes the minority areas it rules which are virtually nations. The late Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Chou-en-lai is reported to have said that Indians are "useful idiots". It looks like this country is crawling with them.

Gandhi had given his entire life to get rid of and not preserve western colonialism. Gandhi's successors should not end up legitimising eastern, especially Chinese, colonialism.

MR. C. A. KALYANPUR is the national coordinator Friends of Tibet, India. He was drugged by robbers as he was travelling by train from Mumbai to Delhi to attend the conference held at the IIC centre and was missing for a number of days. When he came to, he found himself in a government hospital in Mathura.

Nandigram : Where the Stalinist Face of the CPI(M) Stands Exposed (cont'd. from p.4)

responsibilities of coalitions but alliances of convenience, not transparency but policies veiled in secrecy and deceit that are defining the characteristics of its machiavellian and unscrupulous politics.

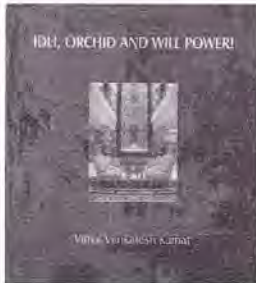
Nandigram represents the struggle of common Indian citizens against communist brutalities. Violence and suppression of democratic process is the creed of the communists and the mainline communist parties – CPI(M) and CPI – are perhaps, for the first time, using state power in Nandigram so brazenly which till now was tactically left to the Naxalites and the Maoists with their patronage. The democratic mandate is deviously abused to subvert democracy. The power of blackmailing and proximity to power has emboldened the CPI(M) to make West Bengal a laboratory not of the proletariat revolution but of a dictatorship of what Milovan Djilas, the intrepid Yugoslav dissident, called "The New Class". Nandigram personifies the ideologically anachronistic and murderous aspect of the communists. Nandigram is the antithesis of the

dictatorship of the proletariat. It has exploded the myth of communists as champions of the poor. If Stalin is now confirmed to have massacred thousands to consolidate his power, the CPI (M) is merely leaving its blood stained footprints in Nandigram to demonstrate its undying allegiance to Stalin.

Today West Bengal with its brute majority of CPI(M) and Left Front is as economically backward and impoverished as was the Soviet Union which in spite of its military power was economically weak – a factor contributing to its disintegration. Again if the road to peace lighted up after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is hoped that the road from Nandigram will herald the collapse of communism in India. Nandigram demonstrably affirms the communists' lack of commitment to peaceful and democratic processes. But does Nandigram symbolise the ideological collapse of communism?

MR. NITIN RAUT is a lawyer, a freelance writer and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*.

Book Review



IDLI, ORCHID AND WILL POWER by Vithal Venkatesh Kamat • Published by Orchid Books, The Orchid, Vile Parle (East) Mumbai 400 099 • Email: vithalkamat@orchidhotel.com • Year of publication 2005 • Pages 246 • Price Rs.150.

Reviewed by Professor Chari, retired professor of commerce and management and a freelance writer.

The year was 1999. The place Durban, South Africa, the venue of a world conference of organisations connected with the hospitality industry attended by some 6000 executives all anxious to know who would be the winner of ECOTEL the most environmentally friendly hotel. The result was announced, and it was The Orchid, the hotel that Vithal Kamat had built brick by brick. He was elated but kept his cool satisfied that his efforts had at last been rewarded.

From the beginning, Kamat was a person bubbling with energy, ingenuity and initiative. He was one of the six siblings of Venkatesh Kamat. He was brought-up in a strictly conservative environment. From the book authored by him we find him to be dynamic and pragmatic. His main strength was a cool temperament betraying no sense of tension or emotions.

A few instances of how he handled difficult situations are cited in this review of his book involving issues ranging from menus to money.

Eager to widen his horizons in the hospitality industry, he sought his father's permission to visit the

U.K. and Europe. Reaching London, he scanned the yellow pages, noting down the phone numbers of hotels and restaurants. He secured a job at the Shaan Restaurant, of which Mr. Tanna was the owner. Various dishes prepared in the restaurant were not quite tasty. For instance *Idlis* were made without being properly fermented, thus making them hard and difficult to the palate. He set this right with proper fermentation of the well-ground *udad dal* and rice. After joining the restaurant business soared.

One fine morning a Sikh gentleman turned up and urgently wanted 2000 *laadoos* for his Daughter's marriage the next day. Tanna simply refused pleading lack of time. Kamat intervened and accepted the order. He hired two hefty assistants to help him with the job, and produced the goods much to the pleasure of the Sardarji. There are many such episodes sprinkled across the pages of this very readable and very well presented book which the author has dedicated to the late 'Busybee' Behram Contractor, himself an avid gourmet.

A must for all those entrepreneurs who aspire to the top - not necessarily confined to the hotel industry - what grit, determination, singleness of purpose and a willingness to learn can achieve.

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Between Ourselves ...

The communists are getting increasingly arrogant by the day. It is not only we who are saying it but their own ex-Minister and ideologue Mr. Ashok Mitra (see 'Many Voices' below). They [the CPI(M)] are heading a state government, not, mercifully, the government in Delhi. But they behave as if they are ruling India. In a manner of speaking they have good reason to feel that way. In the first place the BJP is responsible for this state of affairs when they stupidly abdicated their role as the leader of the Opposition. The UPA government desperate to survive after putting up feeble resistance succumb to the overlordship of Karat, Mrs. Karat, Yechury and their ilk. When the UPA government very mildly protested the shooting down of farmers by CPI(M) goons, the commies asked Manmohan Singh and his government to shut up and not to interfere as if West Bengal is not a state of the Union but a sovereign nation. It is in this context one has to ponder over the question whether the commies do not present a clear and present danger to India's

security and integrity as a nation – and by default also UPA.

The April 2008 issue will deal with the future of parliamentary democracy and the *kind* of political party or parties needed to preserve and protect our liberal democracy.

With the changeover of *Freedom First* from a quarterly to a monthly we have reverted to the renewal of subscriptions 12, 24 or 36, months from the date when the subscription started.

Reminders have been sent to those who have not renewed their subscription for the years 2006 and 2007. If the renewals are not effected for these years on or before 31 December 2007, we may have to suspend mailing copies till such time as the renewal is received. Thereafter it will be for a period of 12, 24 or 36 months from the date the subscription is received.

Editor

Many Voices

Till death I would remain guilty to my conscience if I keep mum about the happenings of the last two weeks in West Bengal over Nandigram. One gets torn by pain too. Those against whom I am speaking have been my comrades at some point of time. The party whose leadership they are adorning, has been the centre of my dreams and works for the last 60 years and more.

Former CPI(M) minister Ashok Mitra,
Hindustan Times, November 19

Mamata Banerjee is the safest insurance for the current ruling party. Urban and rural masses may have become discontented with the Left Front but whenever they imagine Banerjee's ascent to power, the sheer terror of that possibility has made them vote for the Left Front.

Former CPI(M) minister Ashok Mitra,
Hindustan Times, November 19

In the early '90s, it was hard to find a copy of the Wildlife Protection Act, no one knew what was in it. Today, everybody has heard of it – thanks to Salman Khan.

Wildlife activist Ashok Kumar, *Outlook*, September 10

Nasser Hussain quit as (cricket) captain in 2003 because he was being forced to think more about Robert Mugabe than about the opposition.

Harsha Bhogle, *The Indian Express*, September 22

The stunning differences in the living standards in East and West Germany, or North and South Korea, offered conclusive proof that capitalism delivers the goods, while communism doesn't.

Niranjan Rajadhyaksha, *Mint*, September 19

Mahatma Gandhi is the one we miss the most at the Nobel museum. I think that's a big empty space where we should have had Gandhi. I think it was a mistake.

Nobel Museum curator Anders Barany,
Hindustan Times, October 3

Nandigram has now become a political opportunity for everyone: It has given Mamata Banerjee new life; the Congress is now smiling... assorted NGOs see in this crisis another opportunity to indict global capital.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *The Indian Express*,
November 13

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