

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

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The Value of Traditional Values

— C. Rajagopalachari

Religious Values and Human Society

— His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Religion and Society

— A.B. Shah

Religion and Politics

— Abe Solomon

Ban and be Damned!

— M.R. Sundareswaran

Education Versus Catastrophe

— B.B. Paymaster

Restructuring — A Global Process

— Viren Shah

The Tikait Phenomenon

— Bhanu Pratap Singh

What is Gorbachov Doing to Soviet Agriculture?

— Ramnath Narayanaswamy

Desikottama Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

— Prema Nandkumar

The Centenary of T.S. Eliot

— Elizabeth Reuben



Freedom First

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Dear Reader,

Ethnic assertion and fundamentalist communal manifestations have become a part of the present decade's permanent characteristics. These have resulted in serious civil strife in countries like Sri Lanka and Lebanon – a situation so much feared by the Greeks. Once peaceful countries like Malaysia now increasingly feel its impact. It looks as though another age of serious disorder and violence are descending upon the Third World. At the same time the victory of secular forces in the electoral politics of Pakistan and the successful holding of elections, though in a limited manner, in Sri Lanka provide the silver lining.

Politicians of various hues ever alert to devices that promise a short-cut to power or to keep them there, have been quick to grasp for their own selfish ends the return to religion, both of people who find affluence emotionally tiresome and of those in the poor nations who find no respite from the pressures of poverty.

Liberalism is neither for nor against religion. Both believers and non-believers have the right to call themselves liberals if they subscribe to the concept of the primacy of the individual vis-a-vis the state and society. Most liberals believe that the philosophic bases of religions are not only identical but contribute to the greater good of mankind. It is the interpretation given to the tenets of religion that give room for mischief permitting priests, preachers and politicians to befuddle the mind of the believer and set man against man. This lies at the root of the evil of religious fundamentalism.

Freedom First brings to its readers reprints from Rajaji, His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Prof. A.B. Shah their understanding of religion, values and society. The banning of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is a surrender to religious fundamentalism. M.R. Sundareswaran analyses the ban in some detail.

We acknowledge our debt to *The Statesman* for their permission to reprint Mr. Masani's comments on men and matters. However his article on Rama Swarup was exclusively written for our journal.

We wish our readers A Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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**Freedom
First**
A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

WITH MANY VOICES

"The deep moans round with many voices. Come, my friends
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world" — Tennyson

We are not creating a law and order problem. Let the police open fire on us and the children of all *Kisans* will be forced to become terrorists. If the Government wants to create another Punjab the onus will only be on them.
Mahendra Singh Tikayat, *The Sunday Observer*, October 30

You can write what you want; you can even mention my name: There's nothing you can do to me.
Virendra Kapoor, Duty Officer, Delhi Airport to columnist Talveen Singh, *Indian Express*, November 6

Some politicians seem to believe that exports are a matter of patriotic duty rather than business.
Financial Express, November 14

The politicians who are tigers here become sheep in Delhi.
Bal Thackeray, *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, November 2

The whole point of a democracy is that we must permit the existence of lousy newspapers, lousy institutions and lousy politicians.
Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyer, *Financial Express*, May 11

Road discipline cannot be expected from a folk constantly at battl with excavated pits, mounds of rubble and garbage, pavement dwellers and vendors.
Sarosh Bana, *Indian Express*, October 9
(contributed by reader A. H. Makeeha, Bombay)

Those who occupy the topmost positions of power may not read too many books, but they are certainly afraid of books.
Sunil Gangopadhyay, *Sunday*, October 16-22

If India can tolerate a Shahabuddin, why can't Shahabuddin tolerate a Salman Rushdie
K. R. Malkani, *Sunday*, December 11-17

The television screen, as it were, has been turned into a political family album for Rajiv and the Congress Party.
India Today, November 30

I feel all (screen) villains who are playing the role of politicians should go for a month or two to New Delhi, spend time with MPs and Ministers from all parties. They should then come back and deliver Oscar winning performances.
Shatrughan Sinha, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, November 13

Rajiv must know that for most passengers Indian Airlines is now a dirty word.
Sunday, December 11-17

The Prime Minister has mud on his face and is polishing the mirror.
M. Kalimuthu, *Aside*, December 16-31

Wall Street has Mikhail Mania.
Asian Wall Street Journal, December 9-10

When we give our distribution rights to any company we also authorise that concern to raid people.
Malati Tambe-Vaidya, *Showtime*, December 1988

Indeed, there is something gravely wrong about the democracy of a country whose Press is always in agreement with the government.
B. Ramchandran, *Express Magazine*, October 16

If you compared how much he (the Prime Minister) was on television to the total telecast time you would be surprised at how low the percentage is.
H. K. L. Bhagat, *Express Magazine*, October 23

We Invite

readers to contribute to this page. The family of *Freedom First* readers must be reading a large number of newspapers and periodicals.

When you come across an interesting comment, remark or observation on current affairs (not necessarily confined to politics or economics) which says it all, do share it with us.

Send us, preferably, the clipping, marking the lines that have impressed you. If this is not possible then send us the Quote typed or written in block letters. Please do not forget to tell us who said it, and the name and date of the publication.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

USSR lifts Index on 260,000 books

Perhaps the Vatican has the dubious distinction of having a catalogue of the largest number of books which have been censored for loyal Catholics. It has been in the trade for a long time and naturally the list is long and contains some of the most distinguished masterpieces of the world. When teachers in a local Catholic school had to teach Alexandre Dumas's *Three Musketeers* they had to take the permission of the Vatican.

Next only to the Vatican is the list of books censored by the Soviet Union. Here too there is a history of censorship going back to at least a century and a half, if not earlier. In the last century many eminent writers were on the 'Index' in Russia. But they could not touch Tolstoy and prevent his books from circulation, his reputation being what it was in the world of international letters.

The Soviets have been extremely well-organised in this and built up quite an impressive list of banned books, perhaps in length next only to the Catholic church. Among the books kept in a "special depository" and available not for the common Soviet citizen but for the specialist, were — "Nehru's *Charismatic Leadership in Asia*, a *Symposium*, and *India's Independence and Social Revolution*, Tagore's *Four Chapters* and Dandavate's *Marx and Gandhi*". These are among the two hundred and sixty thousand books written by foreigners which were restored recently to the general collection of libraries, to enable the average Russian reader to have access to them. Curiously, even as the U.S.S.R. is lifting its ban on books we are moving in the opposite direction and imposing censorship on books!

"the time has come," the
walrus said,
"to talk of many things:
of shoes—and ships—
and sealing wax—
of cabbages—
and kings—"

— Lewis Carroll



runners-up, but Bihar easily is among the winners. We recently witnessed the State in the grip of a strike of the State employees which lasted for nearly eighty days and transformed Patna and other towns into veritable hell holes. Its record as an ordinance raj is notorious.

In its quest for perpetrating malgovernance it has taken one more bold step which perhaps is unprecedented even in the annals of the dark politics of Bharat. And that is the total take-over by the State of all cooperative enterprises.

The 24th of October 1988 will rank as a black day for the cooperatives of Bihar for an ordinance was promulgated on this date by which all cooperative bodies "stood vested in the State government." With a stroke of the pen the nationalization of the cooperatives has been achieved — and one learns that even the totalitarian States of Europe have not gone to the extent that Bihar has gone. A kind of perestroika in reverse!

It now authorizes the State to nominate its members to the management committee and, in some instances, nominate the Chairman of the cooperatives as well. The State Association of Cooperatives has mounted a campaign again this and lovers of democracy and the cooperative movement will wish it all success — and keep their fingers crossed.

The Criminalisation of Politics

The fact that well-known dacoit Lakhan Singh guards Arjun Singh's election meetings and Chandrasekhar

hobnobs with Suryadev Singh a 'Don' of Dhanbad are well known. But the *Aside* of Madras has exposed the close connection between criminals and politicians in Tamilnadu which seems to have gone back to the days of Bhaktavatsalam. No party seems to be free from it and the charming Jayalalitha has her own gang of thugs and goons as do her opponents.

Wards and areas are clearly demarcated and each 'Don' who rules the area is courted by police and party chiefs alike.

The *modus operandi* of the thugs was revealed during investigations into the murders of "Auto" Shanker. A goon who was literally in the streets, he was a carrier of illicit liquor who promoted himself to the flesh trade for which there was a continuous demand — politicians being his regular customers. Not surprisingly the police were unable to do anything.

A complaint by a woman who suspected that her husband had been murdered found that appealing to the police and filing a complaint was as good as knocking against a stone wall. It was a personal appeal made to one of the assistants of State Governor Mr. P.C. Alexander that ripped open the gory details of six people murdered and buried and an entire network of corruption and criminality pervading the entire state with high connections rendering ineffective all attempts at reform.

Shri C. Subramaniam has called for organizing a campaign for clean politics. But the chances are that his appeal will go the way of similar campaigns earlier. For what makes for unity in India is criminality in politics — criminals are the only ones that operate throughout the land with no linguistic or communal barriers coming in the way of their activities.

RS

Bihar Nationalises Cooperatives!

In the Marathon race that our states run towards the goals of inefficiency, corruption and misrule, there are many

The Value of Traditional Values

C. Rajagopalachari



C. Rajagopalachari

I am a superstitious person in the etymological sense of the term, a revivalist, everything un-intellectual. I believe in some things not related to reason and rationality. I believe reason and rationality cannot cover all things and some of them are too important to be ignored. My irrationality is fairly well known now and therefore will not unduly disturb readers.

If one does not believe in a soul, individual or cosmic, one must wander in deep darkness. The world for such a one will be sun-less.

*asurya naama te lokaa
andhena tamasaaurtaa
taanste pretyaabhigachchanti
ye ke cha aatmahanojanaah*

— Isa Upanishad

Those who (in their minds) do away with the soul die their deaths (by that denial) and go about wandering in sun-less worlds, dense darkness overhanging.

If man has only a body and no surviving soul, there can be no values — only pleasure and pleasure-producing objects remain. Shall we hang on to life for these? Then remains the question why should we work for the good of humanity, that is, for future generations? Why must one do anything for them? What binds one to do it? And why should even humanity or future generations live and struggle if there is no soul but only body? Indeed, if there is no soul, all values disappear for each one of us and for all of us.

Let me get out of my superstitions for a moment. Let me talk the language of evolution, taking for granted that man

came after millions of years through countless accidental mutations of the genes during that period and that, through natural selection, he became man as he is today. Values such as honesty, fellow-feeling, respect for life, respect for contracts, the co-operative spirit, compassion, gratitude, etc., grew up and fixed themselves in man's mental make-up because they had all great survival value. If we reject them, it would be like the lion and the tiger discarding their reckless ferocity, or like the birds throwing away their wings, or the bull its horns or man himself casting away his brains and his upright posture. The values men so greatly cherish are evolutionary products and it is well we stick to them. They are all-important for man's survival and progress.

What go by the name of 'traditional values' are values prevailing all the world over but differing in degree from nation to nation. Where secular forces and institutions have come to cover the same values, the traditional character of some of them may have got blurred or forgotten.

If destructive scepticism develops over these traditional values and a movement to discard them should suc-

ceed, man would go back to the condition he emerged from by the grace of accidents; and he will be but a poor and feeble wild beast, and probably disappear from the face of the earth. What I have said must have been said by some people long ago, although I have not read it. I guess Herbert Spencer must have said it and must have said it much better.

But as could be guessed from what I have confessed at the outset, I do not accept the theory of blind blundering evolution. I believe there is design in it of some inscrutable kind and these values are therefore part of man's divinely designed being. They will not, I believe, be given up by mankind although some men may discard them and suffer for it. Secularly enforced laws can never adequately take the place of traditionally inherited values.

It is pretty easy to sit in one's study and indict traditional values in the light of modern life and reason, and derive therefrom intellectual satisfaction and a sense of conquest. We are safe as long as the mass of our people are loyal to these values, the criticism of intellectuals notwithstanding. The civilization and culture from which we derive whatever happiness we get in life is one knitted fabric. And what a sorry state a knitting is reduced to, when the yarn that runs through and holds all the loops comes out in one of the corners; to that same state will our civilization and culture be reduced and disappear if our traditional values are discarded by the mass of our people.

Swarajya, December 19, 1964

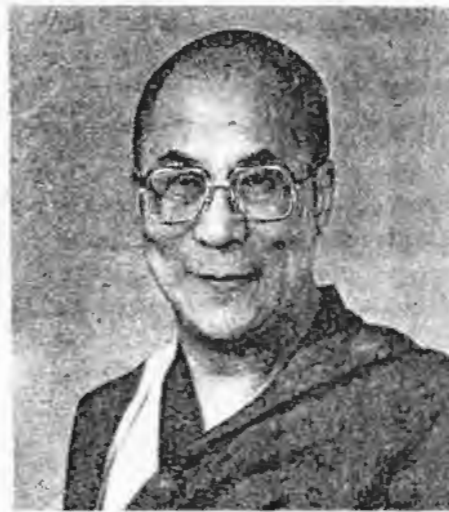
Religious Values and Human Society

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

In one way – in material terms – this present generation has reached a high level of development. Yet at the same time, we human beings are facing many problems. Some are due to external events or causes, such as natural disasters. These we cannot avoid. However, many problems are created by our own mental defects; we suffer due to an internal lack. I call these problems unnecessary ones, for if we adopt a right mental attitude, these man-made problems need not arise.

Often they are due to differences in ideology, and unfortunately different religious faiths are also sometimes involved. Hence it is very important that we have a right attitude. There are many different philosophies, but what is of basic importance is compassion, love for others, concern for others' suffering, and reduction of selfishness. I feel that compassionate thought is the most precious thing there is. It is something that only we human beings can develop. And if we have a good heart, a warm heart, warm feelings, we will be happy and satisfied ourselves, and our friends will experience a friendly and peaceful atmosphere as well. This can be experienced nation to nation, country to country, continent to continent.

The basic principle is compassion, love for others. Underlying all is the valid feeling of "I", and on a conventional level, there is an I – "I want this," "I do not want that." We experience this feeling naturally, and naturally we want happiness – "I want happiness," "I do not want suffering." Not only is it natural, it is right. It needs no further justification; it is a natural feeling validated simply by the fact that we naturally and correctly want happiness and do not want suffering.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Based on that feeling, we have the right to obtain happiness and the right to get rid of suffering. Further, just as I myself have this feeling and this right, so others equally have the same feeling and the same right. The difference is that when you say "I", you are speaking of just one single person, one soul. Others are limitless. Thus, one should visualize the following: On one side imagine your own I which so far has just concentrated on selfish aims. On the other side imagine others – limitless, infinite beings. You yourself are a third person, in the middle, looking at those on either side. As far as the feeling of wanting happiness and not wanting suffering the two sides are equal absolutely the same. Also with regard to the right to obtain happiness they are exactly the same. However, no matter how important the selfishly motivated persons is, he or she is only a single person; no matter how poor the others are, they are

limitless, infinite. The unbiased third person naturally can see that the many are more important than the one. Through this, we can experience, can feel, that the majority – the other limitless beings – are more important than the single person "I".

Thus, the question is: Should everyone be used for my attainment of happiness, or should I be used to gain happiness for others? If I am used for these infinite beings, it is right. If others are used for this single I, it is absolutely wrong. Even if you can use these others, you will not be happy, whereas if this one single one contributes, serves as much as he or she can, that is a source of great joy. It is in terms of this attitude that real compassion and love for others can be developed.

Compassion which is based on such reasoning and feelings can be extended even to one's enemies. Our ordinary sense of love and compassion is actually very much involved with attachment. For your own wife or husband, your parents, your children, you have a feeling of compassion and love. But because it is in fact related with attachment, it cannot include your enemies. Again it is centered on a selfish motivation – because these are my mother, my father, my children, I love them. In contrast to this is a clear recognition of the importance and rights of others. If compassion is developed from that viewpoint, it will reach even to enemies.

In order to develop such a motivation of compassion, we must have tolerance, patience. In the practice of tolerance, one's enemy is the best teacher. Your enemy can teach you tolerance whereas your teacher or parents can-

Whether you believe in God or not does not matter so much... You must lead a good life... A good motivation is what is needed; compassion without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy, just understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and respecting their rights and human dignity.

not. Thus from this viewpoint, an enemy is actually very helpful – the best of friends, the best of teachers.

In my own experience, the period of greatest gain in knowledge and experience is the most difficult period in one's life. If you go along in an easy way, with everything okay, you feel something is just fine. Then one day when you encounter problems, you feel depressed and hopeless. Through a difficult period you can learn, you can develop inner strength, determination, and courage to face the problem. Who gives you this chance? Your enemy.

This does not mean that you obey or bow down to your enemy. In fact, sometimes, according to the enemy's attitude, you may have to react strongly – but, deep down, calmness and compassion must not be lost. This is possible. Some people may think, "Now the Dalai Lama is talking nonsense," but I am not. If you practice this, if you test it in your own experience, you can feel it yourself.

The development of love and compassion is basic, and I usually say that this is a main message of religion. When we speak of religion, we need not refer to deeper philosophical issues. Compassion is the real essence of religion. If you try to implement, to practice, compassion, then as a Buddhist, even if you do not place much emphasis on the Buddha, it is all right. For a Christian, if you try to practice this love, there is no need for much emphasis on other philosophical matters. I say this in a friendly way. The important thing is that in your daily life you practice the essential things, and on that level there is hardly any difference between Buddhism, Christianity, or any other religion. All religions emphasize betterment, improving human beings, a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, love – these things are common. Thus, if you consider the essence of religion, there is not much difference.

I myself feel and also tell other Buddhists that the question of nirvana will come later. There is not much hurry. But if in day to day life you lead a good life, honestly, with love, with compassion, with less selfishness, then automatically it will lead to nirvana. Opposite to this, if we talk about nirvana, talk about philosophy, but do not bother much about day to day practice, then you may reach a strange nirvana

but will not reach the correct nirvana because your daily practice is nothing.

We must implement these good teachings in daily life. Whether you believe in God or not does not matter so much, whether you believe in Buddha or not does not matter so much; as a Buddhist, whether you believe in reincarnation or not does not matter so much. You must lead a good life. And a good life does not mean just good food, good clothes, good shelter. These are not sufficient. A good motivation is what is needed: compassion, without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy; just understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and respecting their rights and human dignity. That we humans can help each other is one of our unique human capacities. We must share in other peoples' suffering; even if you cannot help with money, to show concern, to give moral support and express sympathy are themselves valuable. This is what should be the basis of activities; whether one calls it religion or not does not matter.

In the current world atmosphere, some people may think that religion is for those who remain in remote places and is not much needed in the areas of business or politics. My answer to this is "No!" For, as I have just said, in my simple religion, love is the key motivation. Except for certain minor ones, all actions – all larger and deliberate actions – come with motivation. In politics, if you have a good motivation and with that motivation seek to better human society, such a politician is a right and honest politician. Politics itself is not bad. We say, "Dirty politics," but this is not right. Politics is necessary as an instrument to solve human problems, the problems of human society. It itself is not bad; it is necessary. However, if politics are practiced by bad persons, out of cunning and lacking the right motivation, then of course it becomes bad.

This is true not only of politics but in all areas, including religion – if I speak of religion with a bad motivation, that preaching becomes bad. But you cannot say religion is bad; you cannot say, "Dirty religion."

Thus motivation is very important, and thus my simple religion is love, respect for others, honesty; teachings that cover not only religion but also the

fields of politics, economics, business, science, law, medicine – everywhere. With proper motivation these can help humanity; without it they go the other way. Without good motivation, science and technology, instead of helping, bring more fear and threaten global destruction. Compassionate thought is very important for humankind.

At the present moment, if you look more deeply into society, you see that people are not as happy as might first seem. For example, when I first land in a new country, everything is very beautiful. When I meet new people, everything is very nice, no complaints at all. But then day by day I listen, I hear peoples' problems, and it is clear that everywhere there are many problems. Deep down there is unrest. Due to this inner feelings of unrest, people feel isolated, they get depressed, have mental uneasiness, mental suffering. This is the general atmosphere. Real justice and honesty are impossible within cunning feelings. Wanting to benefit others but deep down having a selfish motivation is again impossible. If you talk about peace, love, justice, etc., but then when things are actually affecting you, forget all about them and, if necessary, suppress others or even make war, this is a clear sign that something is lacking.

This troubled atmosphere is our current reality. It is very bad, but it is reality. People may feel that the opposite of this, the internal transformation about which I have been speaking, is merely idealistic and not related with our situation here on earth. My feeling, however, is that if this present atmosphere in which everything depends on money and power and there is not much concern about the real value of love continues, if human society loses the value of justice, the value of compassion, the value of honesty, we will in the next generation or farther in the future face greater difficulties and more suffering. Thus, although to bring about inner change is difficult, it is absolutely worthwhile to try. This is my firm belief. What is important is that we try our best. Whether we succeed or not is a different question. Even if we could not achieve what we seek within this life, it is all right; at least we will have made the attempt to form a better human society on the basis of love – true love – and less selfishness.

COURTESY *Kindness, Clarity and Insight*
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Religion And Society In India

A.B. Shah

One need not be a Marxist in order to recognise that stability and growth are invariably followed either by a new kind of equilibrium or by a steady decline and withering away of the old system. This is particularly true of ideological systems, and religion is no exception to the rule.

One of the major problems which has so far been neglected by Indian scholars is the way in which religion and society have interacted in the past and still interact with each other in India. In a country beset with poverty, ill-health and lack of the minimum amenities of civilized life it is understandable that the main emphasis in its developmental effort would be on economic growth. However, man does not live by bread alone, and even for producing enough bread it is necessary that those who are called upon to work for development have the right kind of attitude and value commitment. In their absence economic development itself is likely to be inhibited by the ballast of the past as has, indeed, been the experience of almost all the developing countries which became independent after World War II.

The historical relationship between religion and social change provides a fascinating field for inquiry. Most world religions arose as the harbingers of a social and cultural renaissance and offered to their followers a higher world-view than the one which was dominant till then. This is obvious in the case of Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam. It is not difficult to show that a similar statement would hold about Hinduism too.

The Birth of Religions

A new religion comes into existence in response to certain felt needs of its would-be followers. These needs may

be briefly formulated as follows:

1. Man comes across a variety of experiences which exhibit certain patterns of diversity as well as uniformity and which therefore call for a certain intellectual framework within which they may be unified in a satisfactory manner. Every religion worth the name has therefore a body of doctrine which claims to explain the origin of man and the universe, the processes of nature and the decline and fall of civilizations. This constitutes the intellectual core of religion.
2. Besides the need to understand what he experiences, man also feels the need to choose between different alternatives. He has therefore to have criteria for deciding what is in conformity with the world-view offered by his religion and what is incompatible with it. These criteria define the good life in terms of a code of ethics, which forms the ethical content of religion. Morality consists in living according to the ethical injunctions of religion, and immorality in flouting them in one's life.
3. Since religion is essentially a social phenomenon, in the sense that it is to be found only in organised human groups, the good life has to be realized through social institutions. Mysticism has always

been an exceptional phenomenon from the point of view of organized religion, which – as in Islam – has sometimes even condemned it as opposed to 'true' religion. Religion therefore also lends sanctity to such institutions as would facilitate a life in conformity with its dictates and condemns as immoral those which would imply a violation of its ethical norms. Every religion thus also functions as a sort of social theory for its followers.

The three functions mentioned above are necessary at any stage in the evolution of a society. When a society is in a stable state, its members find their inherited religion satisfactory on the whole. However, in periods of rapid transition the existing system of thought and values no longer serves its needs. Sometimes the social context has changed significantly from the one in which the prevalent religion arose and whose needs it met; on other occasions, a significant number of persons may develop new aspirations and a new view of life and the universe as a result of new knowledge or experience. In either case man feels that his religion is no longer adequate for his needs and begins to look for new thought and values.

At the same time, the state of knowledge and the tools of analysis and social change available place limits on the

Wherever in the world I fly,

it's
Marvel
for me

— Geeta Narayan
air hostess



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extent to which man can break away from his inherited culture. Consequently, what he creates by way of a new religion shows both change and continuity, which helps him go forward without developing a feeling of alienation from his past. Secondly, till the rise of modern science, but for a few exceptions man could not transcend the religious mode of thought. He could not, in other words, conceive of an intellectual and ethical system which did not depend for its final sanction on a transcendental authority. The change away from inherited religion could therefore only be in the direction of a new religion and not a secular theory of the kind which is characteristic of the modern age.

Common Features

All religions therefore exhibit certain common features regardless of differences in specific detail. For instance, every religion is based on a faith in the existence of transcendental reality. The existence of this reality is essentially a matter of faith and, secondarily, of experience which by definition is incapable of communication to others who have not had it.

It follows that in any religious system, there must be two kinds of knowledge. The empirical knowledge in terms of which man understands and to a certain extent controls, or adapts himself to, the processes of nature and of human life is too important to be denied by any religion. However, since such knowledge can only deal with the world of sensory experience, in the religious view it is of subsidiary, utilitarian value. What is more important is the other knowledge, the knowledge of the transcendental reality which imparts meaning and significance to human existence. The final authority of *this* kind of knowledge can only be faith, either in a revealed scripture or in the word of its official interpreters; such knowledge cannot be tested against logic and empirical verification.

In the religious world view, the criteria for judging this-worldly actions and for interpreting events have also to be transcendental in the final analysis. Thus not only natural events are interpreted as expressions of the transcendental order, but also ethics itself is defined in terms of conformity to transcendental criteria. In other words, ethics is not, as it should be, a system of norms to govern interpersonal relations

but a code of conduct to ensure grace in the eyes of the deity or liberation from the bonds of earthly existence. So long as religion functions as an effective matrix within which man's entire life moves, this does not create any problem for him. But when it ceases to be the sole or even the dominant concern of man's thinking self, a situation of conflict is bound to arise.

Not only ethics but art, science, literature – indeed, all pursuits of men – have to be evaluated in terms of moral criteria based on transcendental values. Moreover, since the human condition is constantly changing and man has to face a new situation at every turn, he needs authoritative guidance in order to reassure himself that he would not go wrong owing to ignorance or other weaknesses to which flesh is heir. It follows that those who are accepted as authoritative spokesmen or interpreters of the will of God come to exercise total power in all spheres of life.

In such a scheme of things there can be no autonomy for human reason. Transcendental values are by definition eternal and essentially unchangeable. If change appears inescapably necessary, it has to be within the limits approved by religious authority. There is no scope therefore in religious life for human creativity or for the rights of man by virtue merely of the fact that he is a human being. The human personality has no moral sanctity of its own.

Evolution of Religion

The history of every major religion shows a common pattern. In the first stage religion appears as a harbinger of change, often radical, and almost invariably seeks to lift society to a higher level of moral consciousness. It has to face the opposition of established interests, generally in the name of the currently prevalent religion, but succeeds because the new consciousness it reflects is better attuned to the changes which have already taken place due to the operation of non-religious factors in other spheres of life. The period of transition may be long as in the case of Christianity, or relatively short as in the case of Islam. In either case, unless the old order possesses sufficient vigour and is ruthless in suppressing dissent, a time arrives when what was once a protest movement becomes the religion of the new Establishment. This is followed by a period of

stability accompanied by steady growth and expansion. The world-view offered by the new religion and the value system associated with it meet the needs not only of the cultural but also of the political and economic development of society.

This does not mean that religious evolution comes to a stop; only, it proceeds with an imperceptible speed and does not therefore create a major disturbance in the thought and behaviour patterns of any significant number of its adherents.

Resistance to Change

One need not be a Marxist in order to recognize that stability and growth are invariably followed either by a new kind of equilibrium or by a steady decline and withering away of the old system. This is particularly true of ideological systems, and religion is no exception to the rule. In the course of time the cumulative effect of the changes that have been taking place in human thought and its social context assumes such proportions that the old framework of ideas and institutions appears basically inadequate to meet the demands of the new situation. A new period of transition sets in. This requires the now-well-entrenched religion to transform itself into a harbinger of fresh change or makes it appear as a block in the further progress of society. Generally, the second alternative is realized. But one cannot say in advance whether the forces of change will triumph over those of stagnation in a reasonably short period of time, or the socio-cultural context will prove basically unfavourable to change. In the former case, the conflict proves creative and religion accommodates itself to the challenge of the times. This is what has happened with Christianity during the past 400 years, though at a great but perhaps unavoidable cost. Hinduism too underwent a similar change on a smaller scale during the nineteenth century, and Islam has just started on this path after a rather long period of stagnation.

It is not only religion which has to meet the challenge of change; other human institutions also have to adapt themselves in the same way. What distinguishes religion from other institutions is the essentially authoritarian and non-empirical nature of its theory and the deep passions it can therefore

arouse whenever its doctrine or institutions are called in question. In the case of other institutions, there is no supernatural aura lending them a supra-human, divine sanction which makes them exempt from empirical study and critical evaluation. This is not the case with religion. Consequently, any proposal for going beyond its doctrines or even for reinterpreting them in the light of new experience and knowledge arouses unreasoning opposition which often borders on fanaticism. Considering that people react in a similar manner even when less divine things like property or untouchability are involved, one need not wonder at the attitude of the spokesmen of religion.

Gandhi and Azad

If one were to consider Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad as the best representatives of Hinduism and Islam in modern India, one immediately notices an important difference in their approach to religion. Each offered a new interpretation of his religion, but the differences between them were far more significant than the similarities that kept them together. Gandhi adopted a revolutionary attitude to religion and went to the extent of saying that if the Hindu scriptures went contrary to the dictates of reason and morality, he would go ahead without the scriptures. True, Gandhi tried to find in Hindu scriptures a sanction for his crusade against untouchability. But when he found that classical Hinduism did not provide such a sanction but, on the contrary, enjoined the observance of untouchability and the treatment of untouchables as worse than chattel, he did not hesitate to brush aside the *Dharmashastra* and define God as Truth. About cow-slaughter, too, his position was informed by a concern for the rights of those who did not regard the cow as sacred. Gandhi's followers and those who preside over the destinies of the country and use his name on all sorts of occasions have forgotten what he said about cow-slaughter. But Gandhi is not to blame for it; his language was clear and unforgettable in its simple eloquence.

Azad's attitude to religion was, on the other hand, cautious if not apologetic. It is well known that he was fond of the pleasures of the cup and was not always very particular about offering his five prayers a day as prescribed by orthodox

Islam. Mr Achyut Patwardhan, who once spent a few days with Maulana Azad, says that he did not see Azad offering *namaz* even once during this period. Azad also sought through his incomplete *magnum opus*, *Tarjuman al-Quran* to interpret Islam in a manner that would reconcile Muslims to the idea of secular territorial nationalism and a democratic state based on equal rights and obligations for all citizens regardless of sex or creed. However, all this had to be done without questioning a single statement of the Quran or the divine sanction with which it was invested. This was also the attitude of Dr Zakir Husain and it continues to be the attitude of most eminent Muslims even today. In private conversation they have no hesitation in adopting an enlightened, sometimes even Marxist attitude to religion, but in public they invariably swear by the Quran as the source of all the values they cherish. The explanation probably lies in the fact that Islam in India, as in the rest of the world, is still in the state in which Hinduism found itself in the days of Raja Rammohan Roy.

The Role of Reformers

Normally this would not have mattered. In the course of time the reform movement in Islam would gather momentum and perhaps by the year 2100 A.D. Muslim society would be as modern and liberal as Christian society today is. However, the pace of change in the modern world is altogether different from what it was before World War I. Muslims can no longer live in a world of their own, isolated from the currents of change that have been sweeping over the rest of the world. In India the dilemma they face is all the more acute. If the Muslim elite do not recognize the writing on the wall and refuse to emulate the example of the Prophet by standing against the prejudices of their community in its own interest, history will condemn them as selfish, short-sighted and lacking in spine. It would not do to argue that till Muslim society throws up its own Gandhi nothing worthwhile can be achieved by way of its modernization. Gandhi could succeed with the Hindus only because he was preceded by generations of radical reformers, some of whom even questioned the very basis of their religion. It was the spadework done by them that made Gandhi acceptable to the vast majority of Hindus. Except in Mahar-

ashtra, such spadework has not been even started among the Muslims and even in Maharashtra the Muslim élite, with the exception of Professor A.A.A. Fyze, have shown nothing but hostility to the work initiated by (the late) Mr Hamid Dalwai. But till preparatory work of this kind has proceeded a considerable way, it would be futile to expect a Gandhi to arise among the Muslims.

Even then the Gandhian approach will not be adequate. The fact that Gandhi's own followers, Vinoba not excepted, have failed to carry on his tradition of radical social reform and a majority of Hindus still practise untouchability and refuse equal rights to women in spite of the Hindu Code, points to an inherent weakness in Gandhi's approach. The weakness lay in his use of the religious idiom to put across his message to tradition-bound Hindus. When he talked of God, *Sanatana Dharma* and *Rama-Rajya*, what he had in mind had nothing to do with the accepted meanings of these words. So long as he was alive, he could ensure that his audience would get *his* meaning and not the traditional one of the words he used. But after his death, the logic of language asserted itself. His message was forgotten and buried under the centuries-old layers of traditional Hindu thought. If Hindu society does not today show a complete relapse to old attitudes, the reasons lie in such diverse factors as the plural structure of this society, the spread of liberal Western education and the rise of secular interest groups most of which have little to do with religion and some of which find religion an obstacle in their struggle for advancement. The Muslim society in India cannot claim the presence of similar countervailing elements which may compensate for the weakness of the Gandhian approach even if a Gandhi were to arise in its midst. What it needs more than anything else today is therefore a generation of radical, liberal, modernist reformers who will have the courage to go to the roots of the problem and subject everything Islamic to a rigorous scrutiny in the light of reason and knowledge.

The late Prof. A.B. Shah was an eminent scholar, educationist and writer. We are indebted to Mrs. Jashoda Shah for permission to reproduce the extract from Prof. Shah's book *Religion and Politics in India*, Somaya Publications, Baroda.

Religion and Politics

Abe Solomon

That religion preaches love and brotherhood is only a half-truth. Only those belonging to one's own religion are considered brothers, those of other religions are destined to hell. Those who reject religious beliefs are heretics and deserve to be burnt at the stake. There must be something wrong with a belief system which promotes such ideas. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

In an otherwise excellent article – entitled "India – Time for a Renaissance" (*Freedom First*– July 1988) I was surprised to read the comments in it on religion and politics, from so perceptive and clear a thinker as Mr. Minoo Masani. That he should have fallen into the usual confused thinking of apologists for religion and their conception of secularism, is difficult to understand.

Renaissance

Mr. Masani rightly says that "what India need today is both a Renaissance and a Reformation". Well, what is the essence of the renaissance which took place first in Italy and then in other parts of Europe, and which paved the way for the modern age? It was not merely the re-discovery of Greek knowledge, philosophy and the arts. More important it was the change in the outlook and attitude of the people from a "God-centered" to a "Man-centered" view. Basically it was the rebirth of the spirit of free inquiry and individual freedom. It was a revolt against ignorant faith and submissiveness to power. It was the affirmation of the dignity of man and his ability to solve his own problems which led courageous men and women to defy the "Holy Inquisition" and the power of the Pope. It was the demand for the freedom to know and think for oneself, to rely on one's own reason and not succumb to dogmatic authority. It was the revolt of authority based on

knowledge against authority based on fear and power.

It is indeed this attitudinal change which is so necessary in India today if people are to cease going from one leader to another for the solution of their problems; if they are to demand accountability and honesty from those who govern them, and if they are to stop awaiting new *avalars* for the salvation of their souls.

Religion

The various religions offer a concept of man and the universe, a view of life and a set of beliefs which arose from and were determined by the specific historical and social conditions existing at the time they were propounded or took shape.

Religion arose as a response to man's intellectual and emotional need to understand the world in order to survive, and his search for meaning and significance in life. But when the various religions which were, in fact, philosophies of existence, discarded or suppressed the faculty of reasoning applied to experience as an instrument in the search for truth and in understanding the problems of existence, they became dogmatic creeds based on blind faith and authority which could not be questioned. Religion today has become an obstacle to social and cultural progress.

Modern Concept of Man

From the point of view of modern scientific knowledge man is the product of nature and history. Man is at the same time a physical, social and cultural being. All his attributes are part of and within nature and subject to its laws. Man's capacity to reason applied to experience is the source of all knowledge and moral values. Moral principles and ethical values are the product of social living and inter-personal relations. Religion is irrelevant to moral principles and ethical values. It is in fact the progress and development of human moral and ethical values which has civilised and refined religious beliefs and practices. It is the human concern and moral revulsion against the burning of widows which led to the abolition of the religious practice of *suttee* which is based on the belief that a wife must also die with her husband in order to serve him in the next world.

Society expects all its members to observe the laws; to value and tell the truth; to subordinate narrow self-interest to higher impersonal interests; to respect other people's right to pursue happiness so long as they do not infringe the similar right of their fellow men and women. Society expects all this of all its members irrespective of whether they are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians or pro-

fess any other beliefs or none.

The evaluation and development of moral, ethical and cultural values is the criterion of human progress. Religions are born, they perpetuate themselves by demanding unquestioned authority, become antiquated due to the growth of scientific knowledge and are ultimately defeated by man's inherent human urge for freedom and the quest for knowledge and truth. While religions change, or die and disappear, moral and ethical values which are the product of man's rationality and experience endure and develop and contribute to social cohesion and co-operation. In modern society, religion acts as a divisive and retrogressive force — witness the present situation in India, Ireland and the Middle East.

Buddha and Mahavira did not start new religions. Their's was a search for the good life and a protest against existing false beliefs and obscurantism. Their's was a plea for moral and ethical values in day to day living. They gave moral importance to ethical behaviour in the present life rather than salvation in the next. It was their disciples and followers who deified them, perverted their teachings, added miracles to their lives and turned their teaching into dogmatic creeds.

The founders of all religions started as reformers and revolutionaries. The essence of their teachings was human welfare and a good life according to their own lights. Their ideas and teachings were conditioned by the level of knowledge of man and the universe and the social situation existing at the time they lived. To make their views and teachings eternal truths is to negate intellectual and social progress and the growth of knowledge. We must take the best in their teachings and reject the errors. What is needed is a critical reappraisal of our cultural heritage and not blind glorification of everything in our past.

Secularism

Webster's Third New International Dictionary describes secularism as a "view of life or of any particular matter based on the premise that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or purposely excluded (a policy of government); specifically: a system of social ethics based upon the doctrine that ethical standards and conduct

should be determined exclusively with reference to the present life and social well-being without reference to religion."

In India the word secularism has been perverted to mean "respect for all religions" — *sarva-dharma-samabhava*. What does "respect for all religions" mean? Does it mean respect for all the religious beliefs (the earth as the centre of the universe) all the religious practices (suttee, untouchability, inferiority of women to men) of all religions? In practice this view has resulted in support to all the dogmas, false beliefs, and discriminatory practices which exist in all the religions. It has meant promoting obscurantism, fundamentalism and antagonism and hatred between religious groups. *Sarva-dharma-samabhava* is really a glorified phrase for simple "tolerance" which is expected of everyone in a civilized society.

Secularism is not anti-religious. Tolerance is an essential feature of secularism, but also opposition to all beliefs and ideas which violate human rights and universal moral and ethical values. Secularism recognises the moral worth and dignity of all human beings regardless of religion, caste, creed, sex, nationality or circumstance of birth.

Dharma in Politics

Mr. Masani says that he is "not asking for religion as it is but more for *Dharma* in politics". I believe that what Mr. Masani is really pleading for is moral and ethical behaviour in politics, as well as in all spheres of life. And on that I am one with him.

Strong religious beliefs motivate ordinary good people to hate and even kill others and each other in the name of religion and God.

That religion preaches love and brotherhood is only a half truth. Only those belonging to one's own religion are considered brothers, those of other religions are destined for hell. Those who reject religious beliefs are heretics and deserve to be burnt at the stake. There must be something wrong with a belief-system which promotes such ideas. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

What India Needs

Yes, what India needs is a renaissance. A renaissance of the faith of man in himself and his ability to solve his own problems. We need a renaissance

of the spirit of free inquiry and adventure, of the quest for freedom and truth. The people of India must stop expecting and relying on political leaders to solve their problems and instead must rely on their own efforts. They must stop harking back to the past which is full of conflict and suffering, of war and hatred, but instead create a vision of the future, of peace and harmony. A vision of a future which can inspire all the diverse people of India and specially the youth to build a harmonious and peaceful social order, based on reason, truth, freedom and compassion, towards which all can strive. Because "where there is no vision the people perish."

Abe Solomon is President of the Indian Secular Society and a trustee of the Freedom First Foundation.

Tibetan Autonomy

On the eve of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China, the 'Friends of Tibet, Bombay' sent him the following telegram requesting that the issue of Tibet's autonomy and the withdrawal of Chinese troops from Tibet be raised by him with the Chinese government:

During your forthcoming visit to China it is of critical national importance that you raise the issue of Tibet's autonomy. India's national self-interest demands a buffer between China and India and is very much a part of our border dispute with that country. Asking for Tibetan autonomy and the withdrawal of Chinese troops from Tibet is in keeping with Jawaharlal Nehru's statement in Parliament on December 7, 1950:

"It is perfectly true that we have repeatedly admitted Chinese suzerainty over Tibet just as we have laid stress on Tibet's autonomy". Any negotiations which ignore the Tibetan question will be against India's national interests. Moreover as Jawaharlal Nehru observed in the same speech: "I see no difficulty in saying to the Chinese Government that whether they have suzerainty over Tibet or sovereignty over Tibet, surely, according to any principles, the principles they proclaim and the principles I uphold, the last voice in regard to Tibet should be the voice of the people of Tibet and of nobody else"

Ban and be Damned!

M.R. Sundareswaran

In the wake of the enormous success and acclaim that his previous two books have enjoyed in India, Salman Rushdie would hardly have expected the turn of events that encountered his recent book *The Satanic Verses*. Both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* enjoyed a fair share of critical notice and acclaim in India and therefore it was reasonable for Rushdie and his publisher to have assumed that *The Satanic Verses* too would be a best seller. Unfortunately the Government of India had other ideas and on October 5, 1988, banned the book under section 11 of the Indian Customs Act.

Rushdie was quick express to his disappointment in an open letter to the Prime Minister, the contents of which are well known and need not detain us. In an interview broadcast over the World Service of the BBC, he gave vent to his anger and regret over the Indian Government's action. He described the action as ill-advised and a response to the plea by three Muslim parliamentarians. He wondered how Syed Shahabuddin, the Janata Party MP., concluded that the book was a slanderous attack on the Prophet without even reading it. Rushdie added that such action of the government was all the more inexplicable because, in his opinion, Indian democracy is too deep rooted to take such an intolerant view of his book.

Political Expediency

The strong reaction to the book has diverted the attention of the media and the literary cognoscenti from the book's intrinsic merit. At a press conference presented on TV, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said that the ban order would not be revoked. Admitting that he had not read the book he said that the Home Ministry officials who had read the book were of



Salman Rushdie

the view that the import and sale of the book would cause offense to the religious sentiments of a section of the people.

The ban order has to be seen against the government's dilemma in not being able to solve the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi imbroglio which has left in its wake a trail of bloodshed in Uttar Pradesh. The many delegations to the Home Ministry, the attempts at reconciling the two sections to the conflict have not yielded any result.

It has been pointed out that with the general elections round the corner a possible hundred million votes would have had no small influence in the decision to ban the book. The Muslim community has, in recent years, been bitter over happenings in Aligarh, the police excesses in Meliana, Hoshiarpur etc.

The government knows fully well that in its electoral arithmetic, a solid block of Muslim votes is any day preferable even if it means incurring the displeasure of some liberal and articulate sections of society who, in any event, are

traditionally suspect in their support for the Congress (I).

Surrender to Fundamentalism

The intolerance of the present government to freedom of speech and creative effort in writing has cast a dark shadow on its democratic credentials. It is surprising that after forty years of freedom and after very many achievements to our credit as a nation, the present day occupants of the gaddi, should feel so insecure about their ability to maintain order and have fears of a communal backlash that they should have resorted to banning the book instead of allowing it freely to enter the country. Would it follow then that if someone were to write a book casting aspersions on other religions, government would similarly step in and impose a ban? It would appear that the government has surrendered to fundamentalist rabble-rousers and demagogues.

It is not quite honest to explain away the ban on the book as a statesman-like act, as editorials in some national dailies would have us believe. It has been speciously argued that had the government not acted, it would have been accused of conniving at offending a section's religious beliefs. It is further argued that non-interference would have led to the outbreak of social violence, if the past be any guide. The example offered was the aftermath of violence after the *Deccan Herald* published a short story allegedly offensive to Muslim sentiments. The free import of *The Satanic Verses* and its sale would have been viewed by the Muslim minority as an act of religious aggression.

Capitulation is the word that is most

Paying obeisance to all forms of religious bigotry has sadly come to be accepted as a secular creda by the Government of India. Theocracy and obscurantism are enthroned by such wordless acts.

Big Boost for Kannada and Regional Cinema from Government of Karnataka.

From 1966-67, the Government of Karnataka has actively promoted the cause of Kannada and other regional cinema. By providing handsome subsidies for the development of the film industry as a whole. To date the Government has contributed Rs. 703.50 lakhs for the production of over 750 films.

Generous subsidies for more and more films:

From fairly nominal amounts Government subsidies have been substantially increased. Kannada and regional language films made entirely in Karnataka now receive Rs 2.50 lakhs (for colour films), Rs 1.50 lakhs (for black and white films) and Rs 3 lakhs (for art films). The response has been tremendous over 60 Kannada films are produced every year now as against only 26 in 1967, when the incentives were first introduced.

Attractive tax exemptions:

- Entertainment tax exemption of 50% is given to Kannada, Kodava, Konkani and Tulu films made entirely in Karnataka.
- The quantum of Show Tax has been cut from Rs 100, Rs 60, Rs 40 to Rs 25, Rs 15, Rs 10 for A, B and C class centres respectively. for Kannada, Kodava, Konkani and Tulu films. Reduction in Show Tax for other language films also.
- Complete exemption from Show Tax for Kannada and regional language films screened in areas with a population of less than 15,000.
- 100% Entertainment Tax exemption for one year from the date of release for Kannada and other regional language films which have won national or state awards.
- 100% Entertainment Tax exemption for a period of six months for any other language films which have won the national Best Film Award.

Nominal shooting fees:

Shooting fees for public places is just Rs 100/- a day for Kannada and other regional language film producers. The fee ranges from Rs 400/- to Rs 1,000/- a day for other language films.

Awards and honours:

- The state Government has instituted the Puttanna Kanagal Award of Rs 1 lakh which goes to the Best Film Director every year for their overall contribution.
- Cash prizes and medals have also been instituted to honour the best film, artistes and technicians every year.

Infrastructural facilities for film makers:

- The Karnataka Film Industry Development Corporation has been set up to provide facilities for hiring outdoor equipment, film shooting, editing etc., at reasonable rates.
- The state-owned Kanteerava Studios provide 2-floor shooting facilities at reasonable rates
- A Film Archives has also been set up to preserve outstanding films for posterity

appropriate in describing this act of a government already badly battered and bruised by the controversy surrounding its earlier abortive attempts to muzzle the press through the Defamation Bill. It thought it fit to take the line of least resistance – an act increasingly seen as politically motivated.

Background to the Ban

The events leading to the ban need to be re-stated briefly at least for the record if not for enlightenment. Around the middle of September '88 when a review of the book and excerpts from it were published in the magazine *India Today*, Syed Shahbuddin is reported to have received numerous letters of angry protest from Muslims all over India. The letter-writers reportedly expressed their anguish at the purportedly offensive remarks against the Prophet and his wives. This made Syed Shahabuddin demand that the Home Ministry ban the book. Syed Shahabuddin admitted that he had not read the book. In a later interview when queried as to how he had asked for a ban when he had not even read the book, he is reported to have said that one need not examine the contents of a gutter to know what it contains. Mr. K.A. Khan and Mr. Suleiman Sait of the Congress(I) and the Indian Union Muslim League respectively, not to be left behind, pitched in. The Home Minister promised to look into the matter and is reported to have been anguished that the book contained passages offensive to Islam.

While these talks with the government were going on, it was brought to the notice of Syed Shahabuddin, that the book was already being sold in Delhi. By the time he made further appeals to the government, the mandarins in the ministry had read and supposedly satisfied themselves that the book did indeed contain offensive passages and with a touch of drama enshrouding its pronouncement, banned it under the Indian Customs Act. Incidentally, the sub-section of Section 11 of the Indian Customs Act, states that importation is banned if it threatens public order, conscience, morality etc.

While the government banned the book it gratuitously conceded that its action did not detract from the literary merit of the book! A cloak of respectability was thereby attempted to be draped over an act of appeasement

motivated by political expediency of not alienating the Muslim vote.

The Muslim Intelligentsia

The majority of the Muslim intelligentsia, who have either written to newspapers or have been interviewed, have welcomed the ban. They point out

that there are clearly identifiable passages which are grossly offensive to their religious sentiments.

Even those who have not read the book but only extracts or reviews of the book, have written letters criticising it and its author and welcoming the ban

When Premchand was Proscribed

An extract from the eminent writer's autobiography.

In 1909 a collection of five stories was published with the title 'Sufferings of the Motherland.' At this time the partition of Bengal had taken place; in the Congress the radical faction had developed. In these five stories I practised devotion to the country.

At that time I was a deputy inspector in the Department of Education in Hamirpur district. One evening, six months after the stories had been published, while I sat in my tent I received a summons to go at once to see the District Collector, who was then on his winter tour. I harnessed the bullock-cart and travelled between thirty and forty miles through the night and reached him the next day. In front of him was placed a copy of my book. My head began to throb. At that time I was writing under the name of Navabrai. I had had some indication that the secret police were looking for the author of this book. I realized they must have traced me and that I was being called to account.

The Collector asked me, 'Did you write this book?'

I told him I had. He asked for the theme of each one of the stories and finally losing his temper said, 'Your stories are full of sedition. It's fortunate for you that this is a British government. If it were the Mughal Empire, then both your hands would be cut off. Your stories are one-sided, you've insulted the British government.' The judgement was that I should give all the copies of the book into the custody of the government and that I should not ever write anything else without the permission of the Collector. I felt I'd got off lightly. Of the thousand copies printed, hardly three hundred had been sold. The remaining seven hundred copies I sent for from the 'Zamana' office and had them delivered to the Collector.

I assumed the danger was past. But the authorities could not be satisfied so easily. Afterwards I learned that the Collector had discussed the matter with the other officials of the district. The Superintendent of Police, two deputy collectors and the deputy inspector – whose subordinate I was – sat to consider what my fate should be. One of the deputy collectors, using quotations from the stories, asserted that in them there was nothing but sedition from beginning to end, and not just ordinary sedition but a contagious variety. The demi-god of the police said: 'So dangerous a man ought to be severely punished.'

The deputy inspector was very fond of me. Afraid lest the affair be long drawn out he made the suggestion that in a friendly way he would sound out my political opinions and present a report to this committee. His idea was to explain to me and to write in this report that the writer was violent only with his pen and had nothing whatever to do with any political disturbance. The committee accepted the suggestion, although the police chief even at this moment was still blustering and threatening. Suddenly the Collector asked the deputy inspector, 'Do you expect that he'll tell you what he really thinks?'

'Yes, I'm intimate with him.'

'By pretending to be friendly you want to find out his secret views? But that's spying! I consider it vile.'

Losing his wits the deputy inspector stammered, 'But I...Your Excellency's order...'

'No,' the Collector interrupted, 'that's not my order. I had no intention of giving any such order. If the author's sedition can be proven from his book, then he should be put on trial in an open court, otherwise dismiss the case with a warning. I don't like the idea of a smile on the face and a knife in the hand.'

Translated from the Hindi by David Rubin
COURTESY: *Free Press Journal*

Even among those who have welcomed the ban, are two identifiable types. First, are the politicians and religious leaders who vociferously criticise the book in violent and intemperate language including such epithets as *shaitan*, guttersnipe, idiot and scavenger to describe Salman Rushdie. The other identifiable group is academicians and journalists whose language is more temperate. Despite their aversion to the ban, they cannot bring themselves to extend support to *The Satanic Verses*. It will therefore be naive and foolish to tar all those who favour the ban as fundamentalists. Nor would it be correct to call all those who oppose the ban as secularists.

Some Basic Questions

Some basic questions that need to be examined are:

1. Was the ban necessary?
2. How far is the ban reflective of the government's desire to take the line of least resistance when confronted by fundamentalist opposition and what political mileage does the ruling party hope to reap by banning this book?
3. Does the ban contravene constitutional guarantees for the free dissemination of news and views?
4. Is the ban order violative of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
5. Whether support for the ban portends illiberal trends?

In an article in the *Express Magazine*, Syed Naqvi points out that there is an entire corpus of literature which has denigrated the Islamic faith, and more importantly the Prophet himself. Satirical verses have been written mocking the fervour of Islam. Seen against the existence of such literature and its easy accessibility the act of the government in banning the book is puzzling. It is conceded that irreverent references are made about the Prophet and his wives. But should not a writer have the right to question beliefs and values even if these be held dearly by many? Is religious belief so sacrosanct that it does not lend itself to be satirised by a creative writer?

Shame on the Opposition

The role of political parties in the opposition is disheartening. To their discredit and shame not a single opposition leader spoke or wrote

A Betrayal of India's Tradition of Tolerance

It is unthinkable that one can condemn a book as a gross insult to religion and clamour for its suppression by proudly proclaiming: "I have not read it, nor do I intend to. I do not have to wade through a filthy drain to know what filth is. My first inadvertent step would tell me what I have stepped into..."

Such self-indulgence may be pardonable when you are debating whether to buy a book, or having bought it, should throw it away. It is indefensible when the issue is suppression of thought and expression and putting the criminal law into action.

It is difficult to accept that any writing, though not vile or abusive, if it hurts the religious sentiments of any religious community or upsets its members must be suppressed irrespective of any other considerations. In a country whose Constitution guarantees the freedom to profess, practise and propagate one's religion it is implicit that a person is entitled to persuade others to accept his or her religion. In other words, it is not improper to convert a person, not by means which smack of fraud or force, but by discourse and mainly by writings which are meant to convince him about the error of his religious beliefs, or lack of them, as also the truth and beauty of the religion whose message he is persuaded to accept. Christianity and Islam both accept conversion.

Such writings from their very nature are bound to hurt the feelings of different religious communities. Writings by Christians disputing the validity of the Prophet's credentials and his message will clearly injure the religious feelings of the Muslims just as books by Muslim thinkers rejecting the divinity of Christ and his miracles, particularly the Resurrection, will offend sizeable sections of Christians. The cherished belief of the Bahais that after Muhammad another prophet, Baha'ullah has appeared in the chain of revelation is plain heresy in the eyes of Muslims.

Under the existing law you cannot pour foul abuse upon a religion or its founder with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of others. But it is not an offence to portray — be it in a novel or a play or a film or a historical work or a theological tract — founders of religion as ordinary mortals subject to the ills that human flesh is heir to even though such notions may be unpalatable to the members of a religious community. Remember we are living in secular India, not in a theocratic dictatorship. To ban such works is nothing short of censorship in the realm of arts and ideas.

What is involved is a vital principle. Can our right to read and receive information and form our own opinions be made dependent upon the hypersensitivity and over-reaction of those who feel morally oppressed to suppress any derogatory or irreverent or unfavourable reference to their religion or its founder, "lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph"? When will it be realised that "time has upset many fighting faiths... that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas"? Bad precedents have a tendency to be infectious.

What is intolerable is that freedom of expression can be sacrificed to blackmail and intimidation. A firm government wedded to the rule of law should resist the threat from forces of intolerance rather than yield for reasons of expediency and thereby encourage them in all classes and communities. True there are risks involved in this. But that is a price we have to pay if we really believe in secular democratic values.

Remember the memorable words of Justice Chinnappa Reddy in the National Anthem case: "Our tradition teaches tolerance, our philosophy preaches tolerance, our Constitution practices tolerance, let us not dilute it."

Soli Sorabjee

COURTESY: *The Times of India*

against the ban. When questioned, Mr. V.P. Singh is reported to have said that he does not want to comment and that he has not read the book. Translated this would mean that he does not want to say anything that might be remotely construed as being offensive to the Muslims, the very same constituency that the government is assiduously wooing.

What perhaps is more disheartening than the ban itself is an analysis of the reactions to the ban. There is a deep divide between the Hindu and Muslim reactions to the ban. But for a lone Muslim academic, most of the published Muslim reactions support the ban. The lone exception was the president of the Indian Muslim Youth Conference (IMYC) Mr. Mukhtar Abbas Naqri who said that "the government's decision to ban Salman Rushdie's book was a big blow to secular and nationalist forces. It appears writes Mr. Naqri, that the Muslim fundamentalists are more vocal and strong in India than in any other Islamic country." (*Times of India*, October 24, 1988.)

Certain questions relating to the freedom of a writer also emerge:

- Can a writer be deprived of his rights on the ground that what he writes ridicules religion?
- Are there subjects so sacred that they are beyond the range of a writer?
- On the apprehension of the possibility of offence can we prohibit

creative writings that have already been published?

Rushdie's Style

The literary style of Rushdie is admitted to be of a very high order and comparisons have been drawn with Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino, Gabriel Garcia and Marquez. It is unanimously conceded in reviews that the book is a literary *tour de force* and the narrative style and imagery of Rushdie truly breathtaking. Facts and fiction, the real and the imaginary are so very neatly mixed and served that it appeals to the literary palate of the discriminating reader. A reading of the book is an experience in that the style of using words, magically as it were, is fully exploited by Salman Rushdie in a *genre* that is now defined by the pundits as 'Magic Realism'.

Comparisons are made, incorrectly in my opinion, between Rushdie and Naipaul. It is said that both of them pour their venom on India and that both of them stand accused of cultural aggression against India.

Academic and literary circles in India have drawn parallels between the two writers. In an essay on Gunter Grass, Rushdie gives a clue to his own literary beliefs which among other things questions the certitudes snugly held by most of the people and to argue with the world and after having done this to start again. In Rushdie's interview to *The Hindu* he has stated that he had not called the Prophet, Muhammad and the city is not Mecca but a fictional and a highly fabulated city.

He goes on to add that he has not created a work of history, or scholarship but only a tale of narrative fiction which uses as its starting point certain historical events. The names of many persons and places are fictional. Historical persons and events are sometimes conflated and at other times presented in chronological disarray.

A Major Literary Event

It is acclaimed by all the reviews that the book is an outstanding success and is a major literary event of the year. The issue is whether such creative writing should not be made available to be read and savoured by those interested. It passes one's understanding as to how a great world religion like Islam can be threatened by the publication and sale of *The Satanic Verses*. The *Times* of London reviewed the book thus.

"This book is better than 'Midnight's Children' because it is more contained – but only in the sense that the Niagara Falls are contained."

Another reaction to the ban and the events thereafter ascribe the halo of greed and avarice to Rushdie. In fact the protagonists of this line of thinking state that Rushdie picks on a controversial theme for each of his books with the sign of the dollar dancing before his eyes. Controversy is built in to each of his books so that it ensures that both the author and the publisher hear the sweet clink of the dollar. *Midnight's Children* originally had an 'offensive' passage about Mrs. Gandhi, which was

Let the Courts Decide

Most of those who have supported the ban on Salman Rushdie's book have allowed themselves to be led into a discussion of what his book has to say. I have not read the book and quite frankly I am not primarily concerned with its contents.

The 'basic issue is one of censorship and George Bernard Shaw said the last word on it when he wrote long ago that censorship is bad and there can be no exception to this because, otherwise, who is to censor and where is the censorship to stop?

The right to write nonsense is also

a fundamental human right and if some one doesn't like what is written, he or she doesn't have to read it. In any event, the government of the day is the most unfit to exercise censorship. For example, Mrs. Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister banned the import into India during the Emergency of a biography of hers written by my son Zareer Masani. The book was detained at the docks throughout the Emergency but when Mr. H.M. Patel, as Finance Minister of the Janata Government, cancelled the Notification banning the book from entering India and the book was put on the market by the Oxford University Press, it was found that there was nothing objectionable in it and all it did was to enter into fair

and mild criticism of Mrs. Gandhi's authoritarian trends. This illustrates the danger of allowing the men in Delhi to exercise such a ban.

If a book is to be banned, let it first come into India. Let the courts of law be approached to ban the book as happened in the case of D.H. Lawrence's *'Lady Chatterley's Lover'* in Britain. Let the court hear every point of view and then decide. To that there can be no objection, but certainly to allow the executive of the day to sit in judgement over a work of literature or art is absolute nonsense and worthy of an authoritarian society.

Minoo Masani

deleted in later reprints on pain of being hauled to court. *Shame* was an allegory on Pakistani politics with some choice caricatures of Benazir Bhutto.

Is the Ban a Secular Act?

True secularism does not seem to matter any more to the Government. It has taken to a week-kneed policy of appeasement of all religious bigotry. Paying obeisance to all forms of religious zealotry has sadly come to be accepted as a secular credo by the Government of India. Theocracy and obscurantism are enthroned by such wordless acts. Its shocking attitude was witnessed when the Gujarat Government banned a reportedly scholarly article by an academic on the *Swaminarayan* sect. The Central government instead of pulling up the Gujarat government for its lapse has chosen to follow suit.

As pointed out by Iqbal Masud in an article (*Express Magazine* 31 October 1988) the debate on the book is more interesting than the book itself. For the book is not history but the debate certainly is — a cardinal point that has escaped many. He further argues, and significantly so, that the controversy is mainly on issues raised by the elite and the common man's view has been ignored. To them there is a sense of hurt and grief at the book. The book might tickle the artistic palate of the west but to the faithful it is a stab in the back. They are not aware of the cultural aggression of the west which is mainly a preoccupation of the elite.

To sum up, the ban should be seen as an act of short term expediency in utter disregard of liberal sensibilities. If one is in anger one can call it Philistinism. It is contrary to the spirit of the Rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The Government could have referred this to a judicial scrutiny before its decision. Its ban is a shameful capitulation to fundamentalism and political expediency.

Mr. M.R. Sundareswaran is a bank official and a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

On the Banning of Books

Human nature is notoriously perverse. One has but to forbid a thing or taboo it to make it attractive. And out of fear of taboo and its fascination arises the eternal conflict in man, the age-long struggle to escape from the wiles of the evil one. But, alas, escape is difficult, for Satan peeps in at every corner and beckons to the unwary, and perhaps even more so to those who have been fore-warned. Even saints are not beyond his reach, for legend tells us that the holy rishis were sorely tempted by the *apsaras* of Indra's court, and all the great ones of the earth have had to go through the slippery valley of temptation. On this conflict the scientists of the modern age have built the structure of psychoanalysis and we are told that all the ills that flesh is heir to arise from this conflict and repressed desire.

What then is to be done? Is evil to be allowed to flourish unchecked lest the very checking of it increase its fascination? For undoubtedly, the sins of this world would lose half their flavour if they were not forbidden to us. It may be that their chief attraction lies not in them but in the red livery that society makes them put on. Discard the livery and see them for what they are worth — naked and unbeautiful and unattractive. But it is not easy to do away with the livery and its fascination. Centuries of taboo have engraved it on our minds and hearts and only a long and laborious course of instruction can right our perspective.

But let us leave these high problems to philosophers and psychoanalysts and the like. I am concerned at present with the banning of books. The papers have recently announced that the Viceroy or the Home Minister or the Governor-General and his whole Council put together have proscribed a recent addition to the 'Today and Tomorrow' series. I have a soft corner for this series and have read and enjoyed a goodly number of its books, and I am afraid I am a little prejudiced against the Viceregal crowd. My sympathies were therefore entirely with the book without knowing in the least what it contained. With the perversity of human nature to which was added the perversity of the Indian politician I determined to read the book in case chance threw it in my way. Subsequent researches, however, led me to the discovery that the book was largely a record of the adventures of the author in the brothels of Calcutta and from his ripe experience garnered in these surroundings he had judged India and prophesied about her future. He informs us that he encountered honourable members of the Council in these haunts of his. Perhaps his experiences were confined to the pre-reform days; otherwise he might have encountered even bigger fry. For, may we whisper it, those whom viceroys and governors delight to honour are seldom known for anything except ignorance and incompetence.

Presumably, the government has banned the book to protect the good name of India. There was I believe a cry for the banning of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* also. But I must confess that I see no logic or sense in this suppression or proscription of books in any country, much less in India where the official happens to be a foreigner. But even apart from this, if India is to be protected from the evil effects of the book it should be proscribed in other countries. No one in India is likely to be misled by a journalist's account of Calcutta brothels and his deductions therefrom.

It is a dangerous power in the hands of a government: the right to determine what shall be read and what shall not. And it almost always fails to achieve its object. Those who wish to do so can usually get hold of the proscribed book. We have to be careful therefore lest one right use of the power is held to justify its misuse on scores of occasions.

Jawaharlal Nehru — Selected Works — Vol. 3

Swadeshi Hindu Satanic Verses

In Tamilnadu there has been a tradition of *Ramayana* baiting for a long time. A long poem of epic proportions called *Ravana Kavyam* was written by a poet which extolled Ravana and his rule and described the treasonable activities of Vibhishana the brother of Ravana in acting as a mole.

The then ruling Congress Party in the old Madras Presidency banned the book on June 2, 1948. After 23 years, on May 17, 1971 the DMK government lifted the ban.

More recently the Saraswathi Mahal Library in Tanjore was in trouble. It reprinted an old Tamil folk song collection called *Siva Vak-kaiya Veda Sastha Ramani*. Several Hindu religious organisations alleged that the book should be banned as it hurt the susceptibilities of the Hindus. Many of the things mentioned in the song were derogatory to the Hindu religion. On December 19, 1988 Hindu organisations decided to burn copies of the book in front of the Library.

The Library stopped selling copies of the book.

In the B.B.C. television series, *The Ascent of Man*, there is a memorable scene of the author, Bronowski, bending down and picking up a fistful of mud from the Auschwitz prison pond where many of his family members had lost their lives in the Nazi holocaust. It is not science, says Bronowski, which dehumanises people but arrogance, dogma, ignorance, the itch for absolute knowledge and power, all of which spell intolerance. Similar to the principle of uncertainty in science, the principle of tolerance in human relations implies that all knowledge, scientific and otherwise, can be exchanged between human beings only within a play of tolerance i.e. all knowledge is limited and fallible.

It is from this principle of human fallibility that Karl Popper starts his discourse on Toleration and Intellectual Responsibility in this thoughtful, relevant and refreshingly vital collection of Morrell Memorial Addresses given at the University of York. The fact that knowledge aspires to attain truth implies the need for toleration since it recognises that in our search for truth we might be wrong. Intolerance is therefore a form of intellectual arrogance. Probing further, Popper divides his formulation of toleration into three parts. (a) I may be wrong and you may be right. (b) By talking things over rationally we may be able to correct some of our mistakes. (c) If we talk things over rationally we may both get nearer to the truth.

However, if the justification of toleration lies in the importance of truth, then it would be self-defeating to extend toleration to those who assume their own infallibility. Thus, there have to be limits of toleration and Popper concludes that it may even be dangerous to extend toleration to intolerant minorities who will themselves never be tolerant. This is a perfectly logical though disturbing conclusion. Amongst the other writers, Hayek similarly wonders whether we can really tolerate a wholly different system of morals within our own community.

To frame the same question differently, Mary Warnock asks, is tolera-

tion a virtue, a good in itself? She argues that by its very nature, toleration means tolerating the disagreeable the distasteful or the immoral. "The intolerable is the unbearable". Is toleration then a virtue which allows things that are bad? Is it a necessary evil? How can it be good to allow what is bad? Yet, in practice, the issues are not at all clear. We may believe that pornography and homosexual practices are evil but the law allows them. What about research in human embryos? Where do we draw the line? What, in other words, is the justification of toleration? This is the central theme of many of the lectures.

Lord Scarman's address pertains to the legal viewpoint and to the exigencies of contemporary British society. For a hundred years Britain has been a tolerant society. However, this negative kind of toleration, "to live and let live," is no longer enough. The law today gives a person positive rights which are enforceable against the state, against his employer and against the rest of society. These positive rights can easily be translated into duties owed to an individual by others and this in turn leads to the problem of positive discrimination in favour of minorities. For example, in a plural society like Britain, a Muslim teacher sought to take Friday mornings off because he wished to go to the mosque. The headmaster declined because he felt this would put an intolerable burden on other members of the staff. His decision was later upheld by the Court of Appeal. The teacher wanted the positive right to practise his religion but he could do so only at the expense of others. This, says Scarman, is an interesting illustration of the principle that every time the law creates a positive right, there is somewhere a denial of choice of another. This can easily degenerate into a system of burdensome privileges with all the implications of injustice and intolerance that one associates with privilege.

By all standards concludes Lord Scarman, a plural society offers immense opportunities for expanding human horizons. But this has to be done in keeping with democracy i.e. a cherishing of human rights of those who are

in a minority and whom some of us dislike. Tolerance cannot be extended only to the virtuous. It is with the sinner that our tendency to become intolerant may become a temptation – a temptation to be resisted. Needless to say, much of what Scarman says is directly relevant to our diverse, plural but somewhat disintegrated and chaotic Indian society.

Tolerance of the sinner, says Lord Fitt does not necessarily imply cultivation of rare and saintly qualities. Ordinary people should consciously develop greater sensitivity and understanding, responsibility and candour. Fitt deals with the issue of tolerance in Northern Ireland and shows how here the working of democracy and the ineffectiveness of the opposition are bound up with the prevalence of intolerance in a society which has led to untold waste and suffering.

Maurice Cranston's address is concerned with John Locke and his epistle on toleration. Interestingly, Locke argues that toleration should be extended to the French Huguenot refugees for economic reasons because their labour and skill would prove to be assets to England i.e. on grounds of prudence. But the argument cuts both ways. If intolerance can bring peace, then intolerance or suppression is what prudence requires. Hence the 'prudential' argument has to be supplemented by other arguments based on rationality or moral right.

In the last lecture, Mary Warnock discusses a definition of toleration according to which 'toleration is the virtue of refraining from exercising one's power with regard to others' opinion or action although that deviates from one's own, over something important and although one morally disapproves of it.' It implies toleration must be of things which are immoral. Warnock takes issue with this and claims that toleration can be of those things which are immoral as well as distasteful.

The contributors to this marvellous publication are all eminent and learned personalities. Each discusses the subject from the point of view of his own discipline. Yet the book is rarely, if ever, abstruse or dull. On the contrary, it is admirably lucid and readable, for which credit has to be shared by the editors.

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Long Live such Anti-National Madcaps!

The uproar in Gujarat over the Narmada Project is pointer to the sad state of public life in our country. I do not know anything about the project and cannot say whether or not the environmentalists who have asked for its re-examination are on sound ground. That is not the issue.

It is the vulgar abuse and vituperation showered on them not only by Congress (I) politicians in power in Gujarat but also by many Opposition politicians which calls for comment. Vying with each other in demagoguery, these politicians have attacked reputable public figures of being hostile to the interests of the people. They have even joined to call this group as anti-national 'madcaps' and trouble-makers.

The Chief Minister of Gujarat has asked Mrs. Mrinalini Sarabhai, one of the signatories to resign from an official position because of her signing the memorandum to the Prime Minister seeking re-examination of the Narmada project. That memorandum was signed by outstanding public figures like Baba Amte, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Mrs. Mrinalini Sarabhai and Prof. P.G. Mavlinkar. The last two, being citizens of Gujarat, have been singled out for attack in the Gujarati press. Their crime was to request re-examination of the project which is going to cost hundreds of crores to this country. Is that a crime? The campaign in Gujarat is worthy of the politicians with whom this country is infested. It is an attempt to intimidate everyone from discussing the merits of the matter.

Meanwhile the populist politicians have been paid back in their own coin by a mass fast by more than a thousand small people who are

threatened with being ousted from their land for proceeding with the Narmada Project. The hunger strike is the launching of the decisive phase of the agitation and applying unrelenting pressure on the authorities to force them to scrap the Project. So now what happens to the politicians' claim that the Narmada Project is all for the poor!

What is Wrong with Indian Airlines

When I was a member of the governing body of the National Productivity Council in my days in Parliament we had a very competent Executive Secretary named H.D. Shourie. Later Mr. Shourie retired and has carried on some excellent work as the man in charge of a voluntary agency called "Common Cause".

I am delighted that my friend Mr. H.D. Shourie has filed a public petition against the Indian Airlines before the National Commission on Consumer Affairs in respect of the recent accident near Ahmedabad airport which took 135 lives and the generally miserable state of affairs in the Indian Airlines. Maintenance of aircraft in Indian Airlines is deplorable and leaves a great deal to be desired. For instance, the plane that crashed near Ahmedabad airport had been grounded a day or two earlier in Coimbatore because of its instrument panel not working. The pilot of the ill-fated plane has been blamed for not making an instrument landing. But how do we know that the instrument landing equipment was in order? Supposing the pilot found it was not in order somewhat belatedly and therefore had to rely on his own eyes.

Mr. M.R. Pai, a good friend of the consumer has, in a letter to the Press on 25th October listed the many

things that are wrong with the Indian Airlines. I mention some of them below:

An audit by the Comptroller & Auditor General of India has revealed that there were neither norms nor proper monitoring of workshops. Leave and absenteeism as percentage of normal accountable hours in workshops had gone up from 15.65 in 1981-82 to 20.36 in 1985-86. Overtime in the same period had doubled. Premature and unplanned removal of engines due to their failure has increased phenomenally.

"It is sad that the Civil Aviation Ministry tried to mislead the Comptroller & Auditor General in May 1987 saying that norms for Airbus workshops had been set up. A check on June 1987 indicated that this was not true!

The causes for this sad state of affairs are:

Flogging of these aircrafts round the clock; consequent poor maintenance and inevitable accidents;

Politicians and the Civil Aviation Ministry have treated airlines as an area of power and patronage and not as a public utility. The airlines management kowtows to these overlords, but entertains a healthy contempt for passengers.

International confidence in Indian carriers has been shaken and tourism will be affected. For Indians, air travel is no longer a joy ride, but a dreaded necessity.

Legislators' 'Privileges'

The other day I was asked to speak at a public meeting organised by the Citizens Action Committee in Bombay. This new group has come up to defend the rights of the citizen against misuse of parliamentary privileges at the central or state level. The origin of this institution was the attack on Justice Lentin of the Bombay High Court, Mr. N.A. Palkhivala

*“WE MUST REBUILD
OUR LOST ARISTOCRACY,
NOT OF BIRTH OR NOT OF
WEALTH OR EVEN OF
INTELLECT, BUT OF
CHARACTER”*

Rajaji



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A Pat on the Back for Gorbachov

A great deal of material is appearing in the Indian press about current developments in the USSR. To anyone who wants to be better informed on this subject which is of world importance, I recommend the October issue of *Freedom First* which is devoted to this subject and among the contributors are two men of international repute. One is the great Yugoslav thinker Milovan Djilas and the other is my friend Bernard Levin of the *London Times*.

Although I am very fond and proud of this Quarterly, which I had the privilege of establishing way back in 1953, I find the articles of these two eminent writers and some others somewhat too cautious. What they say about the dangers of Gorbachov failing or taking us for a ride is not to be brushed aside. On the other hand, the man has done enough to justify a good pat on the back and at least two cheers if not three. I appreciate that the failure to agree to a second political party is a major blemish on the new order. There can be no real democracy without a functioning and effective Opposition.

But Rome was not built in a day. Nor can the horrible Soviet monolith be demolished overnight at one stroke. A big step forward in human freedom has been taken and we have every reason to rejoice.

The issue of *Freedom First* appeared before the recent meeting of the CPSU Central Committee in Moscow. The proceedings of that meeting perhaps justify my more optimistic view. The step forward by which Gorbachov has become President of the USSR in place of the Stalinist Gromyko, the KGB has been brought under control and Ligachev has been demoted was very timely. Perhaps it pre-empted an attempt at a coup by the Stalinist elements in the Party.

and other leading lawyers and the action of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly in asking them to appear at the bar of the House in December to face a charge of contempt of the Assembly. The guiding spirit of this group is a fine young man, Mohan Iyer, who happens to be an engineer.

Without going into the merits of this particular privilege motion I am constrained to say that in the last decade or two, Members of Parliament and State Assemblies have become more and more prone to touchiness, which comes out of a sense of inferiority, about critical remarks about them. That was not the purpose for which parliamentary privileges were devised in Britain. They were meant to protect Members of Parliament from arrest or other action by the King. These privileges were never meant to be used against the people. John Wilkes became a national hero in the eighteenth century by defying Parliament and spending some time in the Tower, and as a result he was elected Lord Mayor of London and a Member of Parliament.

The trouble is that many of our Members of Parliament are ignorant of the Constitution. When I was a Member of the Lok Sabha I repeatedly heard Members refer to "our sovereign Parliament". The Union Parliament in India is nothing of the sort. It is a *subordinate* Parliament, subordinate to the judgement of the Supreme Court about its laws and limited to the Union sphere. This euphoria about the "sovereignty" of Parliament makes it difficult for legislators to maintain a sense of proportion. I am glad therefore that the Citizens Action Committee has embarked on a campaign to educate public opinion about the real nature of parliamentary privileges and the need to codify them and thus make them subject to Chapter III of the Constitution and the Fundamental Rights of the citizens.

The CBI and Mrs. Ameeta Modi

I am not in the habit of reading glossy magazines but a friend put a copy of *Savvy* of October 1988 in

my hands with a cover story entitled 'I believe' of an interview given in Lucknow by Mrs. Ameeta Modi. Being impressed with the stamp of truth in what Mrs. Modi had to say, I was grateful to my friend, Mr. Madhu Mehta of the Hindustani Andolan, for his courtesy in making it possible for me to meet Mrs. Modi when she was in Bombay recently to spend some time with her parents.

I discovered that she was a granddaughter of a friend of mine, Mr. Umakant Bhende, the publisher of Padma Publications, who had published my book *Socialism Reconsidered* way back in 1944. The impression I had got of Mrs. Modi's courage and honesty was confirmed by my meeting with her. She appears to be a young woman of considerable dignity and grace but obviously with a lot of guts as proved by her standing up to the harassment of the Central Bureau of Investigation to which she was subjected.

What bothers me is the behaviour of the CBI both in this case and the earlier one concerning Mr. Rama Swarup in Delhi. In both cases they behaved like a "Department of Dirty Tricks" and not like an arm of the law. I am sure the majority of CBI officers are not lacking in decency or chivalry. How then does one account for this tragic development? I think the answer is that in both these cases they had been ordered by politicians in office to 'fix' certain persons. They could of course have refused to play this game at the risk of their jobs. But can one blame these officers if they would rather keep their jobs and do what they are told even if it is contrary to law and justice? After all, Chief Ministers and Ministers cling to their jobs in similar circumstances. So why should these police officers alone be blamed? But what is one to think of their masters and mentors who do not hesitate to use the intelligence agencies in this country for their own political or personal ends? They are, in my view, the real culprits.

Rama Swarup – A Plea for Justice

Minoo Masani

The issue here is not merely Rama Swarup. It is the much wider one of civil liberties. Are we or are we not a free society?

It is now 38 months that Mr. Rama Swarup has been in jail. He was arrested in October 1985 and charge-sheeted 10 months later in August 1986. In October 1987 the Delhi High Court ordered his release on bail. The Supreme Court disgraced itself by cancelling the Delhi High Court order and gave Rama Swarup partial bail limiting him to house confinement. *Freedom First* (October 1987) reproduced Rama Swarup's appeal for help. In that letter he expressed the hope that the case would be decided in 5 to 6 months. He was optimistic as it turns out, for he is still under house arrest – a year later – and the trial still drags on at bullock cart speed.

Rama Swarup it will be recalled has been charged with a breach of the Official Secrets Act. The Government has yet to prove its case – if they have a credible one.

In his latest communication to the outside world on September 17 Rama Swarup writes:

"It is now three years – my so-called 'Spy Drama' started. And, I am under house arrest. Government is spending Rs. one lakh every month to keep me silent. Twenty police people are at my house day and night – for what? To make the Russians happy.

In three years, Government have produced only 11 witnesses out of a total of 49 ... where are the (remaining) witnesses. If it is a crime to promote friendship with USA, Federal Republic of Germany and Taiwan, then it is also a crime to promote friendship with Russia, Libya and the so-called Socialist countries.

"My call to the free press of India is to find out the truth and seek justice for me. My office lock was broken open and property looted. Court is taking its own time...

"My other office at Jor Bagh is closed – Bank Accounts seized, water and electricity cut-off so are the telephones,

cable address, telex and even the Post Office Box. This is free and democratic India of free press and freedom loving people like you;

"... I am prepared to face any lie-detector of the world. KGB should not be permitted to dictate terms ...

"The police says that five sheets (marked) 'restricted' (belonging to the Defence Ministry) in 1978 were recovered in 1985. But the two witnesses of the Air Force and Army H.Q have said in the Court that they never lost or misplaced any paper said to be recovered from me and no enquiry was held. How these papers came to me or who gave me? Answer is simple – they were planted by police to make me spy.

"The Police script of 'Spy Drama' is that the conspiracy started for spying in June 1964 – But my co-accused and ex-employee was born in July 1964!

"What a shame, I am treated like a slave in my country – for a crime which was never committed."

It is indeed shameful that an accused has been in jail while under trial for the last three years which in itself amounts to punishment even though the charges are yet to be proved.

It may be small comfort for Rama Swarup to know that he is not the only one in jail for long periods without trial. There are others placed in a similar predicament. This appears to be the standard practice of our post-colonial rulers.

For instance the *Indian Express* of September 26 reported that one Mr. Anant Tukaram Salaskar charged with murder has been in jail without trial since January 1986. He has now challenged his detention as violative of his fundamental rights under articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India.

His petition was admitted by the Bombay High Court on September 22. The hearing at the time of writing, had not commenced.

I hope Rama Swarup's legal counsel will file a similar petition in the Supreme Court and put an end to the continued incarceration of an Indian citizen who is presumed to be innocent until found guilty. As I said in my note in *Freedom First* of October 1987 I am not in a position to comment on the charges brought against Rama Swarup; but even assuming they are true, the denial of bail for three years and the restraints to which he is subjected are a disgrace to our democracy and reflects poorly on the course of justice in our country. There is an old British saying that 'justice delayed is justice denied'. Evidently this wise comment has not trickled down to New Delhi.

Meanwhile my attention has been drawn to a very forthright editorial by Mr. K. Narendra editor of the Urdu daily *Pratap* and the Hindi daily *Arjun* of Delhi on September 21. The editorial states *inter alia*: "Three years ago the world press reported on the front pages that police had arrested Rama Swarup for spying for several governments. Everybody was shocked. So was I because Rama Swarup was close to me also. But now after three years the truth is coming to light and Rama Swarup continues to be a victim of government high handedness."

The issue here is not merely Rama Swarup. It is the much wider one of civil liberties. Are we or are we not a free society. If we are, then every Indian citizen irrespective of his or her views, political or otherwise, is entitled to the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Only fascist dictatorship, and communist totalitarian countries deny civil rights to their people and pack their courts. If our government continues to put people behind bars and keep them there indefinitely without trial there can be only one conclusion – that we are well on the road to dictatorship.

Education versus Catastrophe:

Are we losing in the desperate race?

B.B. Paymaster

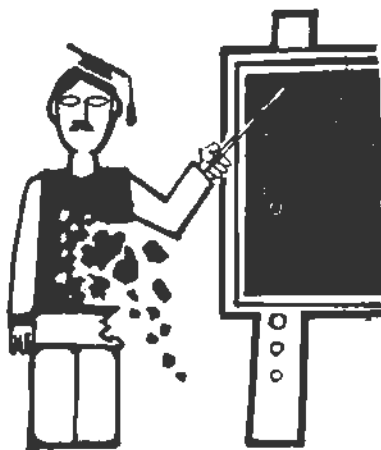
"Human history", said H.G. Wells, "is a race between education and catastrophe". It is sad to note that we are not doing at all well in this desperate race. Let us examine the position.

Our Constitution enjoins in Article 45 that "the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children till they complete the age of 14 years." Yet, after 40 years of independence, it is a shameful fact that over 60 per cent of our population, and nearly 70 per cent of our women, are still illiterate. We have failed utterly in achieving the universal primary education enjoined by the Constitution. And we are reaping the results of the universal adult suffrage that has been conferred on a population of which the majority is illiterate.

The relevant figures, derived from the Census Reports, show that in 1901 the literacy rate of the country was 5.35%. In 1981 it was still only about 36%, consisting of about 47% male literacy and about 25% female literacy. As regards educational levels, in 1961 over 61% of our population was illiterate, 11.2% had primary education, 5.68% had SSC level education, and only 1.43% had a graduate degree and above. According to 1985 estimates, only 1.6% had graduate degrees and only about 5% had SSC level education.

How Rural India Votes

Rural India still constitutes nearly 68% of our population, and the typical village voter is in no position to understand the programmes of the rival political parties or exercise an enlightened choice amongst the various candidates offering themselves for election. They vote mostly according to intimidation by local goondas hired by the candi-



If we want to escape the catastrophe towards which we are heading, it behoves all of us to think urgently about how to upgrade the priority accorded to education in national planning at the top political level. The capacity to appreciate the paramount importance of education is itself the result of education.

dates, or material gain in the shape of money or sarees, etc., offered to them, or according to the mystical charisma of some political leader (often the Prime Minister), or sometimes purely at random. And they often do not know for whom they are voting, and merely put their cross against the symbol (a hand or a cow or a lamp, etc.) as they have been instructed to do.

Some village voters were interviewed in a village in U.P. after the 1985 elections to the State Legislative Assembly. One villager recalled that before the elections a party candidate proclaimed at the Hanuman Temple in the village, with his arms raised and palms turned outwards: "If I am selected, I promise to

instal a deep tube well in the village".

He was elected, and a few months after, when the village Pradhan and the Munshi travelled a long distance to meet him at the Circuit House where he was staying he made them wait outside his room for several hours. When he met them and they told him about the tube well he had promised them, he replied: "Yes, well, next time I am in Lucknow I'll think about it and speak to the Irrigation Minister, but the quota is finished and it is not as simple as you think."

Another villager, when asked why he voted, replied: "The candidates spend so much money, work so hard and appeal for votes. So it does not look nice if I don't vote." Another replied: "The party workers pull us out of our beds on winter nights. We are very confused as to whether we should say 'yes' to thakur sahib or masterji. So we say 'yes' to everybody". A third villager said: "If I vote, I vote. I don't think why."

In the result, the electoral process throws up strange representatives of the people, in spite of the theory that the village voter possesses something mysterious called "horse-sense" which enables him to vote for the most suitable candidate. And we then see the open alliance of the anti-social elements with those in influential positions high above, in the desperate race for political power.

The Vicious Circle

To what is this grave failure in education due, and who is responsible? Perhaps the whole blame cannot be laid upon the government, as it is difficult to attain high levels in literacy and education in the background of a proliferating population. The mere problem of numbers is overwhelming, especially when it

is spread over lakhs of scattered villages in rural areas. I believe nearly seven lakh students took the SSC Examination in the State of Maharashtra alone last year (I am not sure of the exact figure, but it is certainly very large). But isn't this high rate of increase in population mainly a result of the failure of our family planning programme? We are told that the rise in population will automatically slow down with the increase in literacy, particularly female literacy. But this is very slow progress. We are caught in a vicious circle. We cannot slow down the rise in population without a rapid increase in literacy. And we cannot achieve such literacy without first halting the population.

But, apart from the rapid increase in population, the main reason for failure in literacy is the failure in the value judgment relating to priorities in the allocation of financial resources for which, in a centrally planned economy like ours, the political administration at the top must be held responsible. Prof. Galbraith has always emphasised that the best form of investment, and that which

yields the greatest return in the long run, is investment in the human resources of the country. This is particularly so in a country with a vast population like ours. But our planners do not seem to have realised this, with the result that the financial allocations made for education in the various five-year plans have been woefully inadequate.

This is indeed the case with all social services, including health. Whenever it is decided that there should be a cut in governmental spending, the axe usually falls first on the social services. But even within the financial resources available, there has been a grave failure in the implementation of educational policy and programmes, for which the responsibility rests squarely upon the bureaucratic administration. This is particularly so at the village level, where no single authority was given the responsibility for seeing that adequate school buildings were constructed, proper teachers appointed, properly and regularly paid, and proper text books supplied to the students.

Operation Blackboard

The new education policy's "Operation Blackboard" for providing essential facilities in primary education, aimed at covering 15% to 20% of all the community blocks in the country during 1987-89. The main objects of this programme are to provide two-room buildings for primary schools, a second teacher for such schools, and minimum essential equipment.

But of the 6,20,000 odd primary schools in the country, it is estimated that over 10% are without any buildings at all, and over 30% more are housed in crumbling buildings which need urgent repairs. To cover this 40% backlog, and also provide another room to one-room buildings, is likely to cost over Rs.1500 crores on a rough estimate, while the funds available from the National Rural Employment Programme and the Rural Employment Guarantee Programme for providing new buildings and repairing old ones are very much less. And the Education Ministry has provided no money for the acquisition of land for buildings and their maintenance but

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has thrust the burden of providing the land, and the money for their maintenance upon the local community, the likely results of which can well be imagined!

The "Blackboard" part of "Operation Blackboard" involves equipping every primary school in the country with a long list of essential items of equipment such as maps, globes, science kits, blackboards, audio equipment, dictionaries and reference books and a library. Worthy as these aims are, the sum budgeted for in the Plan is likely to prove quite insufficient. As regards providing two teachers in every primary school, at present over 30% of rural schools have only one; and several have none. It is quite unlikely that the extra number of trained teachers required to attain the target will be available, at least for some years, and incompetent personnel are likely to be recruited.

The Plight of Rural Teachers

The devaluation of education and its low place in the scale of priorities is reflected in the low pay given to village teachers; and even this has remained in arrears for several months in many cases. Village teachers have till now been paid less than some other village functionaries with lower qualifications, often doing work of a menial nature. A newspaper editorial says:

"Under the guise of national services village teachers are made to keep a count of the cattle in the villages, compile various similar statistics and prepare reports on the toilets and hygienic conditions. They are even made to dig pits for animal compost. Primary teachers are exploited by both the Government and the political parties."

I hope the "compost pits" allegation is not true. I am glad to know that the salaries of village teachers are now being revised upwards; and high time too! What heart can we expect village teachers to put into teaching the children of other people, when they can hardly afford to feed and clothe their own children adequately?

The Union Minister for Human Resources and Health is reported to have said that "computerised education" is proposed to be introduced at the secondary school level all over the country as part of the curricula of school children, but only schools "with all amenities" will be selected for the

purpose. This presumably means that only a few urban children in elite schools will benefit. Then, realising that the goal of universal primary education laid down in Article 45 is not at all likely to be achieved by the year 2000 (let alone within 10 years from the enactment of the Constitution), the Education Ministry has evolved a scheme for "non-formal" education which, in case my understanding of it is correct, envisages education through the media of the radio and the TV. According to some educationists, this is a fraud on education, as it is not practicable to teach small children the three "R's" through these media, though they could play a useful part in supplementing formal education.

A recent report highlights the non-performance of the staff entrusted with the maintenance of rural TV sets. In the event of the TV sets going out of order, the schools are expected to report the fault directly to Doordarshan, which is not always prompt in repairing them. The teachers and deputy inspectors of schools also reported that the sets supplied to the schools were old ones, with very poor reception. The low voltage of electricity in the villages was another factor responsible for poor reception. The report, prepared for the CET (of NCERT), describes the utilisation of CET programmes by schools as dismal. The report further states that most of the custodians who had been recruited to operate the sets had not been paid their monthly remuneration of Rs.50/- for several months. According to the Phutela Report on the utilisation of school TV programmes in Delhi, "only about 38% of the schools possessing TV sets were found utilising these programmes". The Report goes on to say: "Many teachers do not find these programmes useful... and the programmes are not presented in such a manner as to motivate the students."

If, therefore, we want to escape the catastrophe towards which we are heading, it behoves all of us to think urgently and seriously about how to upgrade the priority accorded to education in national planning at the top political level. The capacity to appreciate the paramount importance of education is itself the result of education.

Mr. B.B. Paymaster, retired as Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra

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A Declaration Of Interdependence: A New Global Ethics

Preamble

There is a compelling need to define and proclaim a new global ethic for humankind.

It is dramatically clear today that our earth is made up of interdependent nation-states and that whatever happens on one part of the planet affects all the rest. Whenever human rights are violated, all of humanity suffers. The basic premise of this global ethic is that each of us has a stake in developing a universal moral awareness, each of us has a responsibility to the world community at large.

The Need for a Global Moral Consensus

We wish to maximize human freedom, the autonomy of the individual, and personal creativity. We believe in mitigating human suffering and in ensuring positive social conditions so that all people will have the opportunity to achieve happiness and the fullness of life. We do not defend unbridled license; rather, we encourage moral growth and the highest reaches of human discovery and achievement.

The world is divided into diverse ethnic and national communities; each of us has specific moral obligations incumbent on his or her role in these communities. There are, however, basic moral decencies that are commonly recognized as binding in virtually all civilized communities of the world. These ethical principles embody the collective heritage of humankind. They have been tested in the crucible of human experience by their consequences for human good. They include the need to be truthful; to keep our promises; to be sincere, honest, loyal, and dependable; to act with good will; to forbear from injuring other persons or their property; to be beneficent, compassionate, and fair; to show gratitude; to be just, tolerant, and cooperative; and to use peaceful methods to negotiate differences.

The great religions of the past have often preached universal brotherhood. Unfortunately, intolerant or divisive faiths have made this moral ideal almost impossible to implement. Narrow parochial doctrines of salvation have made it difficult for those outside particular denominations to be fully entitled to moral consideration from those within. Secular political ideologies have likewise asserted the universality of their ideals, yet they have often resorted to force to impose their views on those who differ with them.

Regrettably, however, many nation-states have violated the rights of their citizens, or they have resorted to violence to achieve their national purposes: the bloody wars of history demonstrate that the "rule of the jungle" often prevails on the international level. For there does not as yet exist a body of world law, universally recognized and respected by all countries of the globe and supported by the force of law on a transnational level.

Fortunately, there have been efforts at economic and political regional cooperation. There have been pacts and treaties between countries and regions. Rules of civilized behaviour have emerged to govern these interactions, recognizing mutual interests. Unfortunately, they do not go far enough. The negative consequences of nationalistic chauvinism have been vividly demonstrated. balance-of-power politics and economic exploitation, racial strife and religious bigotry, hatred and violence.

There is an urgent need to develop new political, economic, cultural, and social institutions that will make possible the peaceful coexistence and cooperation of the various regions of the globe. Before this can be fully achieved, however, it is essential that we reach a genuine worldwide ethical consensus that recognizes our responsibilities and duties to the world community.

Human Rights

The beginnings of a new global ethic are now evident. Universal declarations of human rights enunciate the rights of all human beings. We strongly support these declarations. We here reaffirm the following:

1. All persons are born equal in dignity and value.
2. They are entitled to rights and freedoms without any distinction of sex, race, language, religion, politics, creed, national or social origin, property, or birth.
3. The right to personal security and self-protection.
4. The fundamental right to personal liberty. This includes (a) freedom from involuntary servitude or slavery, (b) freedom from harassment, (c) freedom of thought and conscience, (d) freedom of speech and expression, and (e) moral freedom to express one's values and pursue one's lifestyle so long as it does not harm others or prevent others from exercising their rights.
5. The right to privacy, which means that the rights of others should be respected regarding: (a) confidentiality, (b) the control of one's own body, (c) sexual preference and orientation, (d) life stance, (e) reproductive freedom, (f) birth control, (g) health care based on informed consent, and (h) the desire to die with dignity.
6. The right to intellectual and cultural freedom, including (a) the freedom to inquire and to engage in research, (b) the right to adequate education, (c) the right to cultural enrichment, and (d) the right to publish and express one's views.
7. The right to adequate health care.
8. Freedom from want, which means that society should guarantee (a) the right to work, (b) the satisfaction of basic needs when individuals are unable to provide for themselves, (c) care for the elderly, (d) care for the handicapped, and (e) the right to adequate leisure and relaxation.
9. Economic freedom, including (a) the right to own property, (b) the right to organize, and (c) protection from fraud.
10. Moral equality, which entails equal opportunity and equal access.
11. Equal protection under the law, which is vital in a free society: (a) the right to a fair trial, (b) the right to protection from arbitrary arrest or unusual punishment, and (c) the right to humane treatment.
12. The right to democratic participation in government, which includes a full range of civil liberties: (a) the right to vote, (b) the legal right of opposition, (c) the right of assembly and association, and (d) the right to hold religious beliefs or not to hold such beliefs.
13. The rights of marriage and the family: (a) the right to marry or cohabitate, (b) the right to divorce, (c) family

planning, (d) the right to bear and raise children, and (e) child care.

14. The right of children to be protected from abuse and physical or cultural deprivation.

Human Responsibilities

Concomitant with the recognition of universal rights is the obligation of individuals to develop moral responsibilities. Individuals have responsibilities to themselves, to their own health care, their economic well-being, and their intellectual and moral growth. A person has a basic duty to become all that he or she is capable of, to fully realize his or her talents and capabilities.

Last but not least is the need to recognize that each of us has responsibilities to the world community, for each of us is (a) a member of the human species, (b) a resident of the planet Earth, and (c) an integral part of the world community.

The Ethics of the World Community

Humanism, we believe, can play a significant role in helping to foster the development of a genuine world community. We recommend the following for consideration.

1. Moral codes that prevail today are often rooted in ancient parochial and tribal loyalties. Absolutistic moral systems emerged from the values of the rural and nomadic societies of the past; they provide little useful guidance for our post-modern world. We need to draw on the best moral wisdom of the past, but we also need to develop a new, revisionary ethic that employs rational methods of inquiry appropriate to the world of the future, an ethic that respects the dignity and freedom of each person but that also expresses a larger concern for humanity as a whole. *The basic imperative faced by humankind today is the need to develop a worldwide ethical awareness of our mutual interdependence and a willingness to modify time-hardened attitudes that prevent such a consensus.*

2. Science and technology continue to advance rapidly, providing new ways to reduce famine, poverty, and disease and to improve the standards of living for all members of the human family. The great imperative is to extend the benefits of the scientific revolution to every person on earth. We need to guard against the population explosion, the destruction of the environment, and the reckless use of technology.

We face a common challenge to develop scientific education on a global scale and an appreciation for critical intelligence and reason as a way to solve human problems and enhance human welfare.

3. The awesome danger of thermonuclear war is held in check only by the fear of "mutually assured destruction." Fortunately, the great powers have entered into an era of negotiation for the reduction of nuclear arms, which is welcomed by men and women of good will. Still, these negotiations are no substitute for a broader diplomacy that promotes more fundamental understanding and cooperation. We have not yet learned how to control warfare, for there does not exist any supernational sovereignty with sufficient power to keep the peace between nation-states. We submit that it is imperative that such a sovereignty be created.

4. The disparities in economic wealth between various portions of the globe widen. Economic development in the Third World is now virtually stagnant. Massive debts to foreign banks, runaway inflation, and uncontrolled population growth place a heavy burden on fragile economies and threaten to bankrupt the world's monetary system. We believe, however, that the more affluent nations have a moral obligation to increase technological and economic assistance so that their less developed neighbours may become more self-sufficient.

5. Economic relations today are such that many corporations are multinational in scope, and some of these have been successful in promoting inter-cultural tolerance. All regions of the globe – socialist and non-socialist alike – are dependent upon the continued flow of world trade to survive. Interest rates, deficits, capital investments, currency and stock market fluctuations, commodity prices, and import quotas in any one nation can influence trade on a global scale. The loss of industries in some countries the consequent rise in unemployment are a direct function of the ability to be productive and to compete effectively for international markets.

The governments of the separate nations nevertheless continue to prepare their budgets in haughty isolation and primarily in terms of national self-interest. Full-scale cooperation among countries is still limited, and competitive rivalries rule the day. A new global economic system based on economic cooperation and international solidarity needs to emerge.

6. The vitality of democratic societies over authoritarian or totalitarian regimes has been vividly demonstrated. Democratic institutions make possible higher standards of living and provide more opportunities for creativity and freedom than their alternatives. Genuine political democracy still eludes much of the world; unfortunately, many countries are ruled by dictatorial or authoritarian elites that deny their citizens basic human rights. We need to firmly defend the ideals of political democracy on a worldwide basis, and to encourage the further extensions of democracy.

7. Each of the regions of the world cherishes its own historical ethnic traditions and wishes to preserve its national identity. We should appreciate the richness and diversity of cultures, the values of pluralism and polyethnicity.

8. We all inhabit the same globe; we have a vital stake in helping to preserve its ecology. The contamination of the atmosphere, damage to the ozone layer, deforestation, the pollution of the oceans, the increase in acid rain, the greenhouse effect, and the destruction of other species on this planet adversely affect us all. We urge the establishment of an International Environmental Monitoring Agency and recommend the development of appropriate standards for the disposal of industrial waste and for the control of toxic emissions.

The overriding need is to develop a new global ethic – one that seeks to preserve and enhance individual human freedom and emphasizes our commitment to the world community. Although we must recognize our obligations and responsibilities to the local communities, states, and nations of which we are citizens, we also need to develop a new sense of identity with the planetary society of the future.

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Restructuring – A Global Process

Viren Shah

Restructuring in the Chinese economy is now a decade old. China has been open to foreign technology and investment since the late 1970s. More than 4000 enterprises have been set up with foreign capital and still more opportunities continue to be offered. Private family enterprises have been flourishing in rural China. The process of restructuring has received new impetus recently.

The new law on state industrial enterprises, which became effective two months ago, marks a determined effort to loosen the stranglehold of governmental bureaucracy on state enterprises and to guarantee them operational autonomy. It allows enterprises to retain a part of the profits they earn and also penalises failure to make profits. Closure of enterprises and bankruptcy are allowed. It empowers factory managements, among other things, to formulate plans, to evolve their own managerial structures and to administer rewards and punishments to workers and staff.

The new law also confers on managements the right to take their own business decisions in the choice of inputs, pricing of products and in entering into contracts including those with foreigners within the overall framework. The fact that the restructuring has involved large scale redeployment of the workforce and even significant unemployment has not impeded the steady progress towards greater market orientation in the Chinese economy or its continuing quest for 'four modernisations'.

The struggle for reform has an even longer history in countries like Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Political compulsions apart, the 'demonstration effect' of perestroika and glasnost in the USSR will predictably renew the urge for restructuring in the whole of Eastern Europe. Romania and Albania have been the laggards in the movement for reform and the results

are there for all to see. The communist parties in Western Europe have their own history of revolution marked by efforts to give communism a human face'.

Non-communist World

Non-communist 'leftist' parties in the West have been showing remarkable willingness to free themselves from ideological rigidities of the past in response to contemporary realities. Socialist Mitterand is leading France in its remarkable drive for modernisation and technological advance despite the massive re-deployment of manpower it involves. As many as 26 enterprises, including some that were nationalised when the socialists came to power in the early '80s, are now being privatised in France. New Zealand is another instance in point; the country has moved towards economic liberalisation under a government led by a Prime Minister of clear 'leftist' orientation.

The capitalist world, too, has been going through its own version of perestroika. Restructuring of the economy has been at the heart of 'Reaganism' in the United States and 'Thatcherism' in the United Kingdom. If the pattern of voting in the recent internal elections is any indication, the British Labour Party under Kinnock is decisively moving to

"Restructuring is now a truly global process. Its direction is the same everywhere and is based on the same realisation: 'The individual in our society wants to be a part of everything... He does not like situations where his opinion is not sought, where he is merely looked upon as manpower...'"

the centre and will become a party of modernisation. The rising tide of privatisation is steadily sweeping the economies of many countries regardless of the political complexion of the governments in power. Selling of state-owned enterprises is catching on everywhere: in the United Kingdom, in Japan, in Brazil, in Argentina, in Mexico, in Turkey, to mention only a few.

The labels may be different. Restructuring is now a truly global process. Its direction is the same everywhere and is based on the same realisation: "The individual in our society wants to be part of everything, and this is a good thing. He does not like situations where his opinion is not sought, where he is looked upon merely as manpower and his human and civic qualities are not appreciated. The collective contract and the democracy which is linked with it are precisely what support a person's sense of being a citizen and a master. If personal interests are disregarded, nothing will come of the effort, and society will only stand to lose" (Mikhail Gorbachov in his book *Perestroika*).

Perestroika and India

But where does all this leave us?

The process of opening up the economy in a purposeful way started in India in 1977. The change of government in 1980 did not mark, despite ideological protestations to the contrary, a wholesale reversal of the policy. The gains from the process of liberalisation were obvious and the compulsions not to abandon it were strong internally as well as externally. The present government, when it came to power, sounded a distinctly modern, liberal note on issues of economic policy and took policy initiatives in several areas like licensing, taxation, technology imports as well as foreign trade and investment. There seemed to be a clear desire to loosen the shackles of over-regulation.

All this now seems to be a thing of

the past. The policy initiatives got fragmented and lost all coherence in the process of execution. We need to begin again. The way to go about it is to do it the perestroika way, on a broad front and with determination. A short agenda:

- ★ Genuine, and not self-serving, reform of the electoral law that enables effective assertion of the popular will is the best way to begin urgently needed repairs to India's battered polity.
- ★ We are a large nation of many races, languages, religions and cultures. We need to strengthen the federal structure by dealing with the issues of sub-nationalism with the same understanding and tact that Gorbachev speaks about.
- ★ We need to effect a new distribution of emphasis in the structure of our foreign policy. We need to resist the temptation to look at troubles in our neighbourhood as opportunities to influence our domestic politics, particularly electoral politics. While we need to ensure adequate defence preparedness, we must seriously explore possible cuts in military spending.
- ★ We still have a judiciary the working of which at least at the top echelons, does us proud. We need to free the judiciary from the pulls and pressures of interference.
- ★ Unlike in the Soviet Union, we do have a role for official opposition parties. Even so, internal democracy in the dominant political party in the country is a matter of substantial importance to the citizenry. It will help bring about better balance in our political system.
- ★ The civil service has grown flabby and has lost much of its initiative. It needs to be trimmed and encouraged to take responsibility under clearly articulated guidelines. The guidelines must not have in them too many 'ifs' and 'buts' for officials to hide behind. We need to foster in our civil servants a culture of 'khoz-raschot' (final accountability), as Gorbachev would say.
- ★ We need to free the media from governmental control. What we need in this age of glasnost is autonomy for AIR and 'Doordarshan', leaving questions of fame and defamation to the normal process of

law and to the power of truth to prevail. ('Satyameva Jayate')

- ★ We need to devote greater attention and more resources to alleviation of rural poverty and the fight against urban blight. This is essential on grounds of humanity, if not anything else, and certainly for the stability of the system.
- ★ Today, our pretensions to detailed physical planning have only negative consequences: they serve only to deny licences and obstruct market-directed growth. It is advisable to give up the pretensions and disband the army of licensing officials and inspectors of this and that who now roam the whole range of our industrial economy. Regulatory functions are better entrusted with autonomous 'boards' or 'commissions', run on professional lines, the government departments being responsible only for policy coordination.
- ★ Government already occupies 'the commanding heights of the economy'. In fact, it occupies large chunks of the low valleys as well. It is trying at enormous cost to the economy to produce goods and services of every description. It must quit the valleys and some of the heights.
- ★ 'Nationalisation' and 'take-overs' by the state continue to be the Indian response to industrial sickness. We need a fresh approach: heal, if we can or deal with it as we must.
- ★ We must explore a fresh approach even with regard to healthy, state-owned enterprises. Once set up and fairly stable, why not sell the units to the public and recycle the proceeds for investment in areas of priority?
- ★ Tax reform, begun in earnest, has

lost its steam. The effort needs to be resumed. And have we done all we can prudently do to attract advanced technology and the foreign investment we need for modernisation?

- ★ The wages of profligacy is indebtedness. Our external debt has grown and internal debt has grown even faster. Knowledgeable observers of the financial scene have pointed out that in about four years from now we shall be in the domestic debt trap, that is to say, what the government borrows internally would be adequate only to pay interest on what it has already borrowed. We need to put our borrowed funds into enterprises which can earn a surplus over repayment. A saving rate of 21% is not low in a country where half the populations lives in poverty. These savings should not be allowed to be swallowed up by the government for fattening itself or wasted in unproductive ventures.

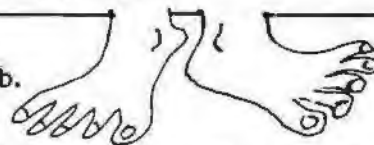
We used to look to the Soviet model in the 1950s. We must now take courage in both hands and learn the lessons of experience: theirs as well as ours.

Our government has grown needlessly obese and now sits heavy on the backs of the people. The growth of the government is now the biggest impediment to the growth of the economy. This, too, is a part of the message of perestroika.

I realise that I have not said anything new. Novelty has not been my aim. If more of us keep saying over and over again what must be said, some day, who knows, it may make a difference.

Extract from a statement by Mr. Viren J. Shah, Chairman & Managing Director, Mukand Iron and Steel Works Limited at the Company's Annual General Meeting.

Barefoot in the Club.



Reader Devprasad Ghosh, South Ramnagar, South 24 Paraganas, West Bengal 743 387, writes that the action of a Bombay club in insisting that Artist M F Husain wear some footwear has caused him much anguish. He has, in this connection, sent us *The Telegraph* (November 1) article by Mr. S. Sahay. We reproduce below the concluding part of Mr. Sahay's article which says it all.

"The President, Mr. Venkataraman, has admirably offered to lead Harijans into the Nathdwara temple. I would implore him to go barefoot to

those clubs which disdain barefeet. The Prime Minister does wear kurta and pajama and he too could go barefoot to one of these clubs, if invited. It can be said in favour of the southern priests that, howsoever wrongly, they at least have the courage of conviction. They did keep Mrs. Gandhi out. I would like to see how many clubs would have the courage to keep out a barefoot President or Prime Minister. The *koihais* know which side their bread is buttered."

The Elusive National Alternative

S.S. Bankeshwar

I agree with my friend, Minoo Masani, that all our present political parties are not only irrelevant but satellites of either the Congress or the Communist parties with whom they have no really fundamental disagreement. The BJP which has opted for 'Gandhian Socialism' (a contradiction in terms, as Gandhiji was firmly opposed to the very concept of socialism) also cannot be considered a national alternative.

In these forty years of Independence the Indian people have developed contempt for our politicians who have lost all credibility. They are, today, a subject of ridicule and the cartoonists' delight. As Khrushchev once rightly observed politicians all over the world are the most untrustworthy, as they promise a bridge even where there is no river! Our politicians can go one better. They can even promise a river where there is none!

All our government enterprises have been making horrendous losses. If a private company was to suffer such losses, the burden would be on the owners of such a company and its employees, not the general public as is the case with government undertakings.

Our country has invested over Rs 10,000 crores in government undertakings which yield a miserable return of 2%. A large number of these undertakings have been headless for years now. 90% of such enterprises have been incurring losses for the last thirty years and additional taxes are levied to make good these losses.

To take just two examples: The National Textile Corporation has been incurring an annual loss of Rs.200 crores for several years now. The coal industry (which was making a profit before nationalisation) has been losing at the rate of Rs.500 crores per annum.

This national "kachra" (loss-making government undertakings), should, as Mr. Masani observed, be deposited in the national dustbin or sold to the public provided, in the latter case, there are buyers.

On the political front the hilarious drama of 1977 is being re-enacted with

new actors. The roles of Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram, Charan Singh, Raj Narain, Madhu Limaye and others are now being played by Chandrashekhar, Bahuguna, Ajit Singh, Subramaniam Swamy and others. What we witness today is only an action replay of the 1977 drama with new actors.

What our people want is an alternative programme, and not an alternative party or an alternative leader or an alternative joke. A mere aggregation of parties without any agreement on any policy, domestic or foreign, can hardly inspire our people to vote for such a party.

The opposition parties have now offered us a new 'national' party - The Samajwadi Janata Dal. What a clumsy and mouthful name indeed! According to press reports Patnaik's Naxalite group and Dr. Datta Samant's party will be admitted into this party. Will any sane voter plump for such a party of jokers and opportunists, a party with perennial internecine fights over leadership, the party flag and even its very nomenclature, but with hardly any debate on its programme?

We are being entertained to even more jokes. A National Front of seven or eight parties has been formed with a 72-point programme as a national alternative! I wonder how many of its leaders will be able to recite these 72 points without referring to their notes.

What is important is not the number of points in a party's programme, but the essence of a party's programme. Another party may emerge tomorrow with a meaningless "million point programme." Should we vote for such a party?

How can there be a national alternative to the Congress, when all political parties worship at the same shrine of socialism, now being discarded by all progressive countries of the world; when even Russia and China are having second thoughts on socialism. Mr. Irving Kristol, an eminent intellectual has rightly predicted that socialism will meet its natural death by the end of this century. *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* are the harbingers of this change.

As Rajaji rightly pointed out, the seeds of corruption lie in the permit-livelihood-quota system, the father of Socialism. Socialism is today being ridiculed rather than being criticised all over the world. To be ridiculed is worse than being criticised.

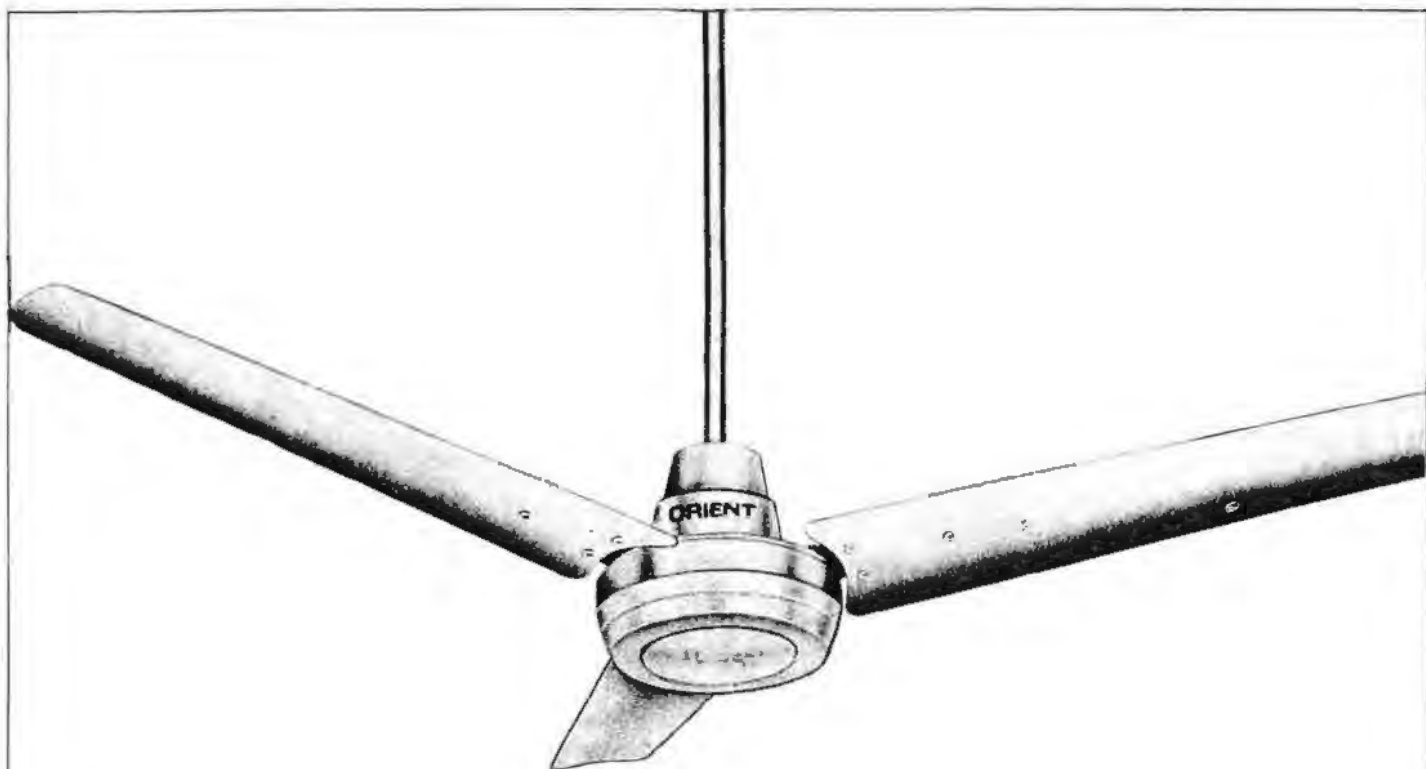
There are many reasons for the problems afflicting our country. Firstly, the failure to control our population. Secondly, the failure to make heavy investments in afforestation which could have prevented the perennial problem of floods and droughts, the failure to create conditions that will lead to the employment of millions of our rural population and thus greatly reduce their influx into the cities. Thirdly, the failure to make heavy investments in labour-intensive schemes like road building, well-digging and fisheries to name a few. Populism and politics have unfortunately been the determining factors in our economic decision-making.

What a poor choice our people are faced with in the next General Elections! Either vote for the Congress, the regime which has become a by-word for scandals or an opposition party like the Samajwadi Janata Dal, a party of jokers and opportunists.

Thirty years of socialism has pushed 60% of our population below the poverty line. It will require a mere twenty years more to bring our entire population below the poverty line and achieve real socialism, truly 'the philosophy of poverty'.

There is a third alternative. There are decent politicians in all parties. They should leave their respective parties and form a party opting not for a mouthful twenty or seventy-two or a thousand-point programme but for competitive free enterprise, an independent and pragmatic foreign policy guided by national self interests, a free press, an independent judiciary, and an autonomous Radio and T.V.

Mr. S.S. Bankeshwar is a free lance journalist.



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The Tikait Phenomenon

Bhanu Pratap Singh

Many urban-based intellectuals are bewildered at what is described in the press as the 'Tikait phenomenon'. They are unable to understand how an uncouth, almost unlettered person, who cannot even articulate his demand in a rational manner, has been able to gather round him such a vast and dedicated following. His blowing hot and cold in quick succession, making strident demands one day, and becoming almost tame the next, makes him all the more intriguing. If, despite lack of leadership qualities, Mr. Mahendra Singh Tikait has succeeded in winning the hearts of so many farmers in western Uttar Pradesh there must be very good reasons. To understand the Tikait phenomenon, one must understand the plight of the country's farmers even after forty years of freedom.

The farming community has been suffering in silence for a very long time. They feel cheated at every turn, be it in the sale of their produce; in the purchase of daily necessities; in the education of their children; in medicare when they fall sick; in the supply of electric power when they need it most; by banks when they ask for credit; by courts of law when they seek justice; and last but not least, by politicians who promise them everything at the time of elections, and do nothing thereafter to ameliorate their economic condition.

The failure of the government to adopt a morally sustainable incomes and prices policy has widened the gap between farmers and others, particularly government employees. This can be seen in the following table, which compares the rate of growth in the emoluments of public sector undertaking employees, the general price index, and the procurement prices of wheat and paddy, during the decade 1976-77 to 1986-87.

	1976-77	1986-87	Percent rise during the decade
Annual Average Emoluments of Public Sector employees*	Rs.8,940	Rs.28,887	223%
General Index of Wholesale Prices	176.6	376.8	113%
Procurement Price of Wheat (per quintal)	Rs.105	Rs.166	58%
Procurement Price of Paddy (per quintal)	Rs.74	Rs.146	97%

(*Source : Economic Survey 1987-88)

From the table, it is evident that the increase in emoluments of public sector employees has far outstripped the general wholesale price index, whereas procurement prices of wheat and paddy, which determine the farmer's income, have lagged behind considerably.

The other factor, that is often overlooked is that low prices of farm products not only make life miserable for farmers, but also drastically reduce their capacity to invest in land, and thereby increase their productivity. It is the growing disparity between the prices of farm inputs and farm output, which is responsible for the failure to achieve any of the targets of inputs-use as fixed for the terminal year of the VIth plan, even three years after the completion of that plan. Whatever Krishi Bhawan (Ministry of Agriculture) may claim, the fact is, that the average annual growth rate of foodgrains production, based on five yearly averages has been declining. It was 3.44% during 1970-75, 3.11% during 1975-80, 2.85% during 1980-85 and is likely to be only 2.27% during 1985-90, even if the targets of produc-

tion set for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90 are fully achieved.

Generally speaking, the disparity between prices of farm inputs and output is inversely proportional to growth in agricultural production. The slow growth in agricultural production, which is now only marginally ahead of growth in population, together with the growing imbalance in prices received and paid by farmers, is bound to further impoverish farmers.

Quite often, even knowledgeable persons ask the question: "What will happen to the poor, if foodgrain prices are allowed to rise?" They ignore the fact, that the technology currently available for foodgrain production is expensive. Therefore forcing farmers to supply foodgrains at prices, which the poor can afford, is like asking steel and cement mills to supply their products to the poor, at prices which would enable them to build their houses. Poverty is a socio-economic problem, the solution of which is the responsibility of society as a whole, and not only of farmers.

There is indeed a better way to help

the poor. It is to identify and provide them direct financial aid to enable them to buy their foodgrains from the open market. To elucidate the point, some relevant data are given here. An average Indian consumes about 167 kgm. of foodgrains annually. The difference in prices of foodgrains in the open market and fair price shops has generally remained below Re.1 per kgm. Therefore, the identified poor if paid annually Rs.150, as food-aid, will be better off buying good quality foodgrains from the open market, instead of having to buy half-rotten ones from fair price shops. The subsidy of Rs.2,200 crores, paid to the Food Corporation of India in 1987-88 would have sufficed, at the rate of Rs.150 per person to provide food aid to 14.7 million persons. Instead, in the year of the severest drought, only 19 m.tons of foodgrains were actually sold by fair price shops, which provided relief to only 11.4 million persons, at the rate of 167 kg. per person. The amount that is being currently wasted on maintaining an unsustainable system, can be more effectively used to help the poor, without disturbing, open market prices. In fact, the free

movement and trade in foodgrains would actually lower open market prices, as had happened during the Janata regime, when free trade was permitted.

There is another development, which is responsible for heart-burning among farmers. Formerly, the government village level workers were economically only a shade better off than the rest of the villagers. Now, with fat salaries paid to them by government, and the 'speed-money', that they themselves extort from villagers, their standard of life has risen much above of what most villagers can afford. This is equally true of contract and political workers, whose ill-gotten gains make them conspicuous. In addition to all this, there is yet another cause for resentment. In rural areas, there is an almost total collapse of the administrative and judicial apparatus of government. It is no exaggeration to say, that *Goonda-raj* has prevailed over *Swaraj*, in most parts of our country.

The only remedies offered by the ruling party for these mounting difficulties

of farmers are promises of more credit, a new crop insurance scheme, and more food processing plants. These, the farmers know will not reduce their poverty and harassment. Loans have to be repaid with interest. Insurance schemes, as announced by the government provide cover to bankers for the risk that they take in advancing money to farmers, and not to the farmers themselves for the risk in growing crops. Food processing will not help farmers unless undertaken on the lines of the Anand Dairy, which is a cooperative of farmers, and not by industrialists. Credit and insurance are no substitutes for profitability in agriculture. If the government maintains that there is sufficient profit in agriculture, let them publish the working results of the State Farms Corporation, a Government of India Undertaking, which has been losing money all along, except in 1981 when it made, for the first time, a grand profit of five rupees per acre. Can farmers survive on this kind of profit?

Gandhiji once said that the urban-oriented politicians would do everything

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for villagers, except get off their backs. His prophecy has come true. The government is resorting to all kinds of camouflage to cover its true intention of draining the profits of the farm sector to appease others. The government should either stop interfering in farm prices, or link it directly to the cost of living of farm workers, as they have done in the case of the salaries and wages of organized workers in urban areas.

How the government and its allies are riding on the back of agriculturists becomes clear when the price indices of "Fuel, Power, Light and Lubricants" (Category I – all produced in the public sector) are compared with the weighted average of cereals and natural fibres (Category II – farm produce, prices of which are controlled by the government). In 1987-88, the index of Category I products was 642.0 and of Category II, 296.2 against the price index of 423.0 for "all commodities excluding cereals and fibres" (Category III – prices for which are allowed to find their own levels). This was the price situation in 1987-88, when due to drought and shortfall in agricultural production, farm prices tended to rise.

Not only the ruling party, but opposition parties too have failed to announce unequivocally that they would get off the backs of farmers. They also talk loosely about farm prices, and seem to have no clear cut alternative incomes and prices policy. Under these circumstances, when political parties have failed to espouse the cause of farmers, they have no choice but follow a leader, who is one of them, and who speaks their language. It is the failure of politicians, particularly those in the opposition, which has brought into prominence leaders like Mahendra Singh Tikait. It should be realized, that when the majority in villages are in distress, somebody is bound to emerge as their leader. In the words of Robert Kennedy, "Revolution is inevitable. It would be peaceful, if we are wise enough; humane, if we care enough; and successful, if we are involved enough". But if we are not, the inevitable revolution will be bloody, senseless, and may even fail to achieve its objectives. In short, if politicians fail, Tikait will appear, and if they also fail, Naxalites will take over.

Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh is a farmer and was Union Minister of State for Agriculture in the Janata Government 1977-79.

Ideology and Agriculture

Few relationships between political systems and economic conditions have held as consistently during the last half of the century as that between socialism and national food deficits. Under socialist systems, agriculture has invariably gone downhill. Until recently, a socialist economy was, almost by definition, a food importer. China, Cuba, East Germany, Ethiopia, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam are obvious examples. China recently altered this relationship, however, when it broke ideological ranks and replaced its state-controlled agricultural system with a market-oriented one, in a successful move to achieve food self-sufficiency.

A comparison of farm production trends in China and the Soviet Union, the world's largest food-producing countries after the United States, graphically illustrates the influence of ideology on agricultural productivity. In a recent review of Chinese agricultural development, China analyst Frederick Surls observed that by the late seventies, "the (agricultural) policies of nearly two decades has created indifference among farmers; misuse of land, fertilizers and other inputs; and declining productivity." This same language could have been used to describe Soviet agriculture.

— State of the World, 1986

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What Is Gorbachov Doing To Soviet Agriculture?

Ramnath Narayanswamy

Agriculture has traditionally been known to be the weakest sector of the Soviet economy – according to official sources, labour productivity in Soviet agriculture is lower than in any other form of economic activity. It is consequently not surprising to find agriculture playing a major role in Gorbachov's plans to modernise and improve the efficiency of the Soviet economy. Even while the paradox confronting this sector is well-known, it is worth recalling it here: the country with the largest agricultural area at its disposal and being one of the world's leading producers of not only wheat, oats, beet, sugar and potatoes, but also of tractors, combine harvesters and mineral fertilizers, the Soviet State is still unable to feed itself and is dependent on periodic imports of foodstuffs from the West.

There are predictably a number of reasons for this state of affairs. Despite its huge territorial boundaries, the proportion of arable land in the Soviet Union is only 10 per cent of its total area. About 60 per cent of ploughing is effected under uncertain climatic as well as cultivation conditions. Natural constraints like extreme cold and drought only aggravate the dependence of the agricultural sector on climatic conditions. While the rural population accounts for 36 per cent of the total, about 20 per cent of the working population is employed in agriculture.

Pattern of Land Holdings

Land is formally owned by the state, euphemistically referred to as 'ownership of the whole people'. There are three principal forms of ownership: state, cooperative and private. *Sovkhoz* or state farms are organised under the aegis of state ownership which exist alongside *Kolkhoz* or collective farms

It is significant to note in all the socialist countries that are experiencing substantive economic reforms in the post-war period, the reform initiatives almost invariably began with agriculture. This is as true of the Hungarian reform as much as it is true of the Chinese and Soviet cases. In the case of the Soviet Union, the reform in agriculture has, for all practical purposes only just begun.

which were established on lands given to them by the state which they further hold in permanent tenure. The latter is considered an 'inferior' form of 'socialist ownership', as a result of which one of the objectives of the Soviet state is to bring this sector progressively closer to state ownership. Under the last category can be included *peasant plots* which are in fact a form of private ownership.

Kolkhoz

A *Kolkhoz* on an average is a conglomeration of several villages roughly numbering five hundred families. It is governed by a president who until the recent past was supposed to be elected by the members of the *Kolkhoz* but which in practice often meant being nominated by the local party organisation or the *nomenklatura*.* Work is

usually organised through brigades. While a part of *Kolkhoz* production goes as deliveries (that are in principle compulsory) to the state, the latter pays for these deliveries according to procurement prices that vary from zone to zone. Prices are raised by about 50 per cent for all supplementary sales above the state quota. All these sales taken together, along with the surplus which is sold on the *Kolkhozian* (free) market, form the revenue of the collective. Individual incomes are disbursed after the deductions for various social and economic funds are made.

Sovkhoz

A *Sovkhoz* on the other hand is a state enterprise organised in a manner very similar to an industrial unit. The director of a *Sovkhoz* is nominated by the administration. As in industry, wages are dependent on the national wage scale and is consequently not directly concerned with production results as in the *Kolkhoz*, but is also better-equipped and more specialised, especially in areas like cattle-breeding, etc.

Private Plots

The last form of ownership are the famous private peasant plots which constitute an essential feature of the agrarian system in the USSR. Despite their low area - 3 per cent of cultivated area in the USSR, private exploitation according to official figures accounts for more than 25 per cent of total agricultural production. In 1980, for example, it provided 64 per cent of the potatoes, 42 per cent of the fruits, 23 per cent of the vegetables, 32 per cent of the eggs, 31 per cent of the meat, 30 per cent of the milk and 21 per cent of the wool produced by Soviet agriculture. It is clear from these figures that

* The *nomenklatura* in Soviet-type economies is a semi-secret state list comprising a variety of privileged sections of Soviet society, including party apparatchiks, enterprise managers, academicians, bureaucrats, technicians and engineers. There is as yet no indication that the system is changing under Gorbachov but it is reasonable to assume that it will undergo important modifications in the years ahead, being dependent principally though not exclusively, upon the extent and pace of the current reform in other sectors of the economy, notably industry.

private plots play an important role both in the economy as well as in the rural way of life. They account for roughly one quarter of the total income of the family. While a considerable part of the produce from a private plot goes in self-consumption, the remainder is commercialised on the *Kolkhoz* market which has free prices though these latter are closely regulated by the state.

Cultivation in private plots is characterised by a low level of mechanisation, the use of particular intensive methods (when and where available) and is heavily dependent on labour provided by retired persons, children and women. The private sector is in some measure dependent on the collective sector since it is dependent upon the latter for fodder. But its fate considered as a whole is largely dependent on the restrictive policies of the state though with the coming of Gorbachov, the authorities have been more appreciative of the role and contribution of private plots and the potentially important role they play in times of acute shortages.

Food Production Shortfall

It was principally the declining rate of agricultural performance and poor functioning that led the Soviet leadership to declare agriculture as a major priority sector as a result of which, the agrarian front has witnessed a number of successive measures and campaigns to improve economic performance. Yet despite the wide range of agricultural decrees and reforms that have been passed over the years, food production has been a problem whose resolution has eluded successive Soviet leadership, including the present one headed by Gorbachov. Despite the fact that Gorbachov is himself both an agricultural expert and a strong advocate of private farming, agricultural performance has yet to witness a dramatic improvement over the past. The grain harvests for the past two years (1986 and 1987) of approximately 210 million tonnes indicate an improvement but they still fall short of the planned target.

Much of this shortfall was due to a food programme policy adopted by Brezhnev in 1982 entailing huge capital investment (a third of all investment) in agriculture and increased procurement prices. Another millstone was the agro-industrial complexes. All these came

into disrepute with the election of Gorbachov.

It is necessary to labour these details at some length if only because they help to show why most of the earlier schemes such as the massive extension of land reclamation proposed by Brezhnev during his last years were uncereemoniously dropped when Gorbachov came to power on the ground that existing lands ought to be better utilised before spending huge sums on extension schemes. This was followed by the adoption of a major agricultural policy document by the Central Committee in March 1986 and, according to none other than Yegor Ligachev, Gorbachov's conservative rival in the politburo, 'this fundamentally important document was worked out on the initiative and with the most direct participation of comrade Gorbachov'.

The New Agricultural Policy

The new agricultural policy introduced a number of important changes. These include (1) output targets of farms will henceforth remain stable throughout the five year planned period in contrast to the earlier practice of the Brezhnev years when targets were frequently moved upwards each time the target was attained; (2) farms are now given the right to sell produce in excess of the plan target as well as dispose about thirty per cent of planned production of potatoes, fruits, and vegetables – these sales must be effected through the cooperative trade network or at collective farm markets at market oriented prices; (3) private plots are encouraged, and their produce sold through the cooperative network, will count towards procurement plans of state farms; (4) work on farms is to be organised principally through self financing autonomous 'contract teams' or 'contract brigades' – this is a form of labour organisation in which teams of farmers or families are provided with land, equipment and seeds under a specified contract and are then left free to produce a crop to the best of their abilities. Payments are based on actual results obtained and the profit is subsequently divided among the members of the team; (5) managers of farm enterprises can no longer sit back and blame workers for sagging output since the wages

of not only managers but specialists and *rapo* officials* themselves would also henceforth depend on productivity.

The five features outlined above constitute the main elements of the Gorbachov programme of agricultural reform. The central argument in favour of the entire project consists in the idea that if farmers are able to produce meat more efficiently than the state, then they deserve to be paid handsomely for their labours. An equally important element of the reforms is the 'agrarian-industrial combine' or the *kombinat*. These are self-financed units (very similar to the *rapos* but unlike the latter operate within a larger framework of rights and with greater flexibility). Once their production commitments to the state have been fulfilled, these *kombinats* retain complete control over the remaining produce by often marketing the latter through their own retail outlets and in the process even setting their own prices.

The reforms in their implementation still leave much to be desired – but they are still in the initial stages, with a bureaucracy not always cooperative with the reformers. Immediately, it has led to an increase in food prices e.g. of potatoes in Moscow. But what is significant has been that planners were able to anticipate the possible effects of specific policies and give a chance for the reforms to prove themselves. That further reform and measures will be ushered in the coming years is on the cards.

Increasing Role of Private Farming

It is easily evident on the basis of the remarks outlined above that private farming is likely to play an increasingly significant role in the Soviet and East European context in the years ahead. Before we go on to examine its future prospects in the bloc considered as a whole, a few remarks on the history of the private farms in the Soviet Union would be relevant. The brutal collectivisation of Soviet agriculture initiated by the Stalinist leadership in the late twenties had resulted in the virtual disappearance of private farming in Soviet agriculture by the end of the thirties. In the wake of widespread peasant resistance (the campaign had resulted in over twenty million casualties) which took the form of burning foodgrains

* Bodies established at various levels to constitute activities within a given area beginning with the *rapon* (district) agro-industrial associations known as *rapos*.

and livestock, the Soviet leadership decided to permit personal 'subsidiary plots' as a concession to peasant hardship. By the end of the fifties however, several countries in Eastern Europe too had begun to tolerate the existence of a limited private sector – privately owned individual farms – in addition to the plots. Among the more centralised economies of Eastern Europe, Poland is perhaps a singular exception since more than 75 per cent of agricultural land remains in private hands.

Until the recent past, Soviet officialdom has blown alternately hot and cold towards private plots – otherwise frowned upon they are usually encouraged when the planned sector is unable to fulfil its production commitments, which is frequent. About 43 million families are currently involved in the exploitation of personal plots – practically every farmer in a collective farm has a plot. What is important to note here is the well-publicised fact stated earlier, that despite the fact that private plots occupy barely 3 per cent of arable land, they account for about 25 per cent of total agricultural output. In 1984 for example, they accounted for 3 per cent of sunflowers, 58 per cent of potatoes, 30 per cent of vegetables, meat, eggs and milk and 24 per cent of wool. Figures are much higher in Hungary, for reasons that largely stem from its liberal approach towards personal plots and private farming. Personal plots account for about 11 per cent of agricultural land while private farms account for about 1 per cent and between them, they produce about 30-35 per cent of total agricultural output.

After 71 years of socialism, bungling and neglect, Soviet agriculture has become the nation's rotten potato.

Food is rationed in eight of the 15 Soviet republics. One out of every seven farms is losing money. At one end of the food chain, cows and pigs line up for days outside slaughterhouses because there aren't enough cold-storage facilities to hold their carcasses. At the other end, consumers line up for hours outside stores because there isn't enough meat to go round.

Although Russia was a major grain exporter before the 1917 revolution, the Soviet Union today is a major importer, largely from the U.S. under an agreement that has just been extended.

Asian Wall Street Journal, Dec. 7

Gorbachov's Real Test

The one country where both plot holders and private farmers have a really hard time is Romania, where even while they account for about 15 per cent of agricultural land, they produce nearly half the country's food. While farmers can officially own three heads of cattle, 15 sheep and goats and unlimited numbers of pigs, poultry and rabbits, there is such an acute shortage of fodder and party rulings so arbitrary, that it is often difficult to maintain the plots. In recent years, the state introduced legislation to enable it to dictate which crops should be grown on the plots as well as determine the prices at which these should be sold. The state then attempts to buy surplus plot output at prices lower than those prevailing in village trade. Being further dependent on the state for essential inputs and consumer durables leaves the peasant in a situation where the terms of trade are firmly set against him.

From a larger point of view, it is significant to note in all the socialist countries that are experiencing substantive economic reforms in the postwar period, the reform initiatives almost invariably began with agriculture. This is as true of the Hungarian reform as much as it is true of the Chinese and Soviet cases. In the case of the Soviet Union, the reform in agriculture has for all practical purposes only just begun – this does not of course mean that that were no reforms initiated in the agricultural sector prior to Gorbachov. These there certainly have been – the introduction of 'contract brigades' for example, dates back to Khrushchev, but the programme never really took off. These are still early years but it would, in this context, be no exaggeration to state that Gorbachov's attempt to reform the almost permanently depressive state of Soviet agriculture might well prove to be the litmus test of his overall attempt to reform the economy as a whole.

(This research was assisted by an award for the Social Science Research Council of an International Fellowship Programme for the development of Soviet Studies. The author is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies of the University of Birmingham.)

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DESIKOTTAMA Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

Prema Nandakumar

Kamaladevi successfully taught all of us to cherish beauty and sincerity in our everyday life. She taught us to avoid the bourgeois life of 'success' that is a never-ending movement of on and on and up and up. She taught us to be simply ourselves.

One of the sanest voices in the commercialized culture of independent India, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay fused into an artistic whole emotional idealism and tough commonsense. It was so even with her private life. She had often received emotional injuries but she never talked about them. Let me not weep in resentful hurt, I will not mope around clouding the atmosphere! Such was her credo. Hers was a life that strove for positive action and positive results as the right adoration for her motherland. A full life. A life of fulfilment.

Kamaladevi was born on April 3, 1903 in an enlightened Mangalorean household. She had a happy childhood typical of the Indian ethos: festivals, flowers, handmade playthings and art objects, colourful weddings, numerous relations, puppet shows, Bhuta rituals and folk dances. There was also an untypical strain in this world because of her mother who was much ahead of her times. Her mother did not harp upon the conventional glories of womanhood – marriage, children, housewifery. She preferred to speak of Maitreyi and Gargi and often reminded Kamala that she could become a crusader like Pandita Ramabai or Annie Besant.

Kamaladevi absorbed the best from her early influences. Marriage had brought misery to her only sister. A good education was a must to become self-reliant. After a convent education, Kamaladevi sold her jewellery and set sail for England and gained admission into Bedford College, London. As she wanted "to be educated to serve society", she took the sociology course which included subjects like social science, psychology, economics, hygiene,

and practical training in social work. Those were the days when "sociology had not become a discipline to turn into a bookish affair, as now", and Kamaladevi received the training she needed to become a tough and efficient social worker. She spent the afternoons in educational and corrective institutions, in workers' clubs and East End slums.

Kamaladevi returned home after an interesting trip to Europe. Already drawn to the Freedom Movement by the personality of Mahatma Gandhi, Kamala had the welcome opportunity of spending sometime with her brother-in-law, Virendranath Chattopadhyay, the famous revolutionary. She also met Madame Bikaji Cama who served the cause of India's freedom with exemplary courage at the International Court in the Hague and the Second Socialist International Congress at Stuttgart. While these meetings clarified her ideas and helped her decide the course of her active career, the immediate result was

the cancellation of her passport the moment she returned home.

But Kamala was not unduly perturbed. She got involved in India's theatre movement along with her husband Harindranath. More important, she awoke to the importance of handicrafts in the daily life of the Indians. It was Gandhiji who explained to her this connection:

"Association is the essence of relationship which endears articles of everyday use to the user. This endearment finds ways of enhancing the aesthetic values in these articles, just as we love to dress up our loved ones, so we love to embellish our homes. Here the craftsman employs his ingenuity through creative imagination. We are mostly carried away by a finished product, may be excited by watching the process, but remain unmindful of the deep chords within us that are stimulated when we create something with our own hands. Therefore in the Indian tradition, craftsmanship does not mean making novel and exotic articles to please one's fancy, but *endowing* everything we use in our daily life with beauty. Therefore nothing is created without a purpose".

Kamaladevi owed her initiation into politics to Dr. Hardikar and Umabai Kundapur. They drew her into the Seva Dal of the Congress. The Seva Dal training was meant as a preparation to face the rigours of a Satyagrahi's life. And the training was almost militaristic: a precursor to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh of today. In Kamaladevi's words, "A central training academy for thorough systematic all round training



Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

functioned at Bagalkot in the Hubli region, where a band of young men and women were hard at work to carry out the courses carefully prepared towards these objectives. Physical culture was equally important. Included in this were several indigenous exercises handed down through generations, such as *lathi, danda, bhala*, sword and dagger play, *suryanamaskars* and various *yogasanas*. When adapted for mass performance, they appeared almost martial. A whole Hindi vocabulary for giving orders had been worked out".

The Congress flag was to be revered as a national symbol with religious fervour. The two extremes, the sublime world of art and the mundane one of the Seva Dal, coalesced admirably in Kamaladevi. Soon she took up the secretaryship of the All India Women's Conference and proceeded to make it a businesslike, purposive instrument to better the life style of Indian womanhood. She travelled throughout the country getting her message across: political independence, equal opportunities for all, the welfare of children, the

promotion of traditional indigenous foods, encouragement to cultural expressions like folk dances and the revival of indigenous art. This was work that engaged Kamaladevi completely.

Very soon she became a Secretary of the Social Reform Conference and the parameters of her work widened. She travelled abroad – Frankfurt, Berlin, Denmark, Prague – and took in all that she saw and heard so that her work in India could proceed apace in the light of this global experience. She was stimulated by ladies like Madame Charaoui Pasha of Egypt, Jane Addams and Molly Carol of the United States. Nothing that could help women in their lives ever escaped her watchful eyes. Why, she even arranged for an exhibition of modern kitchen gadgets to help reduce household drudgery. It was also during this time that she planned a Home Science Institute for women in India and set it up in 1932. The Vicerene, Lady Irwin, gave her invaluable support in this venture.

Kamaladevi had to bid goodbye to this work which engaged all her ener-

gies when the Mahatma announced the Dandi March. Dressed in spotless khadi, sporting her orange-white-green badge, she took her place in the first batch of Law-breakers. She made tiny packets of illicit salt and sold them with gay abandon. Arrest. Lock-up. As she recounted the ugly experience years later:

"Lock-ups in India are by no means model dwellings. I found myself in a dark gloomy room, full of murky air and putrid smell; bats hanging from the ceiling occasionally startled the room by sudden flights from corner to corner. Women crouched all over the floor and huddled into every nook; young and old, all sizes and shapes, some in dowdy clothes and tinsel, some in rags. They hardly stirred when I entered. They must have become much too accustomed to doors opening all night to land new cargoes. I sat down on my box as the heavy door clanged. So I was a prisoner. It seemed like a weird dream".

The salt Satyagraha announced the triumph of Indian women. They turned out to be more intelligent, tougher

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propositions than men! When she came out of prison, Kamaladevi was asked to take over the Women's Department of the Seva Dal as the Dal was being taken over by the Congress. She brought her familiar cheer and hard work to this job as well, organizing Congress *sevikas* by the thousands. She was again imprisoned, this time in Belgaum, went down with jaundice and suffered much. But her enthusiasm for building institutions continued even in that bleak place. Before long she had put up a hospital in the prison for the inmates!

Out of prison in 1933, Kamaladevi joined the Congress Socialist Party founded by Jayaprakash Narayan, Minoo Masani and other like-minded Congressmen. According to her, though intellectuals like Purushottamdas Tricumdass joined it, Jawaharlal Nehru kept himself aloof:

"Before the first Socialist Conference, Minoo Masani as Party Secretary, discussed the proposed move with Pandit Nehru who recorded in a letter his pleasure that a Socialist group would function in the Congress and influence the ideology of that body and the country. Nehru's reaction was sought as in his political writings Nehru depicted the Indian struggle in a world perspective, stressing the clash of class interests as part of a global phenomenon. But at no stage did he instigate, encourage or support the Party as such nor did the Party seek his patronage."

However, Gandhiji welcomed the Party and Kamaladevi settled down in Mangalore to create a base in rural areas. As a beginning, she conducted a success-

ful strike for better implements to help women labourers engaged in cashew-nut curing. She travelled from Kashmir to Courtallam and was arrested at Travancore.

The variety one comes across in Kamaladevi's career is unbelievably amazing. For instance, who could equate a social worker clad in rough khadi moving amongst illiterate rural women with the glamour world of filmdom? That adventure too was hers. She acted in the English version of *Mrichakatika* produced by Bhavnani; and also acted in the Hindi film, *Bikhare Moti*. Always a lover of the written word, she managed to produce seminal volumes on the Indian women's movement, travelogues, political commentary and a well-documented autobiography, *Inner Recesses Outer Spaces*.

15 August, 1947, Kamaladevi has described in her autobiography the mangly "obsequies" that led to the partition of India, "a deep emotional atrocity that would lacerate the people for generations". At the crucial moment, Mahatma Gandhi advised the Socialists not to oppose the decision. Enough was enough for the spirited human being in Kamaladevi. She raised her hand in opposition at the session of the All India Congress Committee called to give final endorsement to the agreement. With that, the brave woman broke her links with politics.

But she would not sulk in the tents. Her work for the rehabilitation of the Partition refugees is now legendary. She set up an Indian Co-operative Union that has now become the successful township of Faridabad. She opened a

Theatre Crafts Museum. When the Sangeet Natak Akademi was formed, she became its Vice-Chairman. She was an Indian delegate to the UNESCO Assembly Session at Beirut. Never an inactive moment in her life though she declined the plums of political office (Chief Minister? Central Cabinet Minister?) that might have rewarded her for her self-sacrifice. As she told a representative of the Arab League:

"When I joined the political struggle it was not to claim a right to a high office. I began my political career as a humble volunteer. I worked as such throughout my political career. I neither sought nor held any office in the Congress organisation. I served in the Congress Executive in the last phase through sheer compulsion. I am by vocation and training a social service worker and I mean to remain so. Arts, crafts are my grammar, the medium through which to express myself. Politics as a career does not mingle with my blood-stream".

That explains why she valued most the '*Desikollama*' title from Vishwabharati University. An apt award too: *the noble teacher*. For, Kamaladevi successfully taught all of us to cherish beauty and sincerity in our everyday life. She taught us to avoid the bourgeois life of 'success' that is a never-ending movement of on and on and up and up. She taught us to be simply ourselves, be true to our own selves that have been nurtured through two thousand years of a superb civilisation in this dear, dear land.

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar is a frequent contributor to newspapers and journals.

Accords are Meant to be Broken

After running a coach and four through the Constitution in the State of Nagaland by declaring President's rule in an entirely unwarranted manner, the Union Government has repeated this performance in the case of Mizoram. In this case the breach of the Constitution has been confounded by a breach of the Accord which was reached between the Union Government and the guerillas led

by Laldenga who was persuaded to lay down arms and offered the democratic path. Alas, this has proved to be illusory because, before long the Congress(I) members of the Mizoram Assembly intrigued with Laldenga's supporters to destroy his majority in the Assembly and created a situation where they could get President's Rule unconstitutionally declared.

This is not the only Accord that the Union Government has broken. The Accord in the Punjab was also violated by the Union Government

with the result that terrorism from which Punjab unfortunately suffers, has increased. Mr. Laldenga who now realises that he was taken for a ride, has declared in desperation "I have to become an outlaw again." At the same time he had sent an emissary to open talks with the Opposition Front. 'Put not all trust in Princes' is an old adage which applies with special force to those who place their trust on the occupants of the throne in Delhi these days.

Minoo Masani

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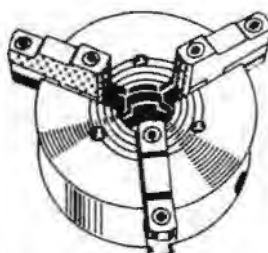


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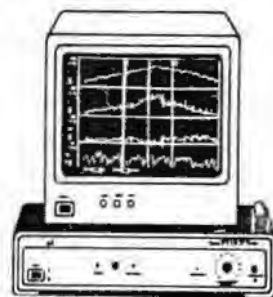
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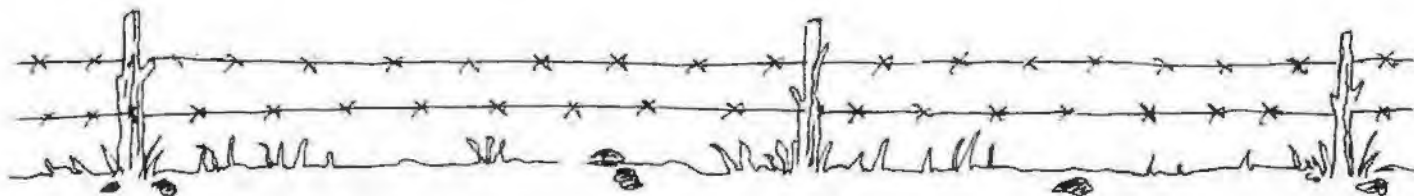


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Is Privatisation a Dirty Word?

S.V. Raju

A seminar was held in Agra recently to discuss Public Sector Undertakings and Privatisation.*

Despite determined efforts by Indian Airlines to scuttle the seminar (who would want to buy Indian Airlines anyway) as many as seventeen, successfully made it to Agra. At Jaipur (the flight was via Jaipur) after a wait of 90 minutes some twelve of us were piled into a bus and almost 6 hours later delivered at a hotel in Agra at 1.00 a.m.

A fitting beginning I thought, for a seminar discussing public sector undertakings.



As it turned out the two-day discussions were well worth the midnight bus ride courtesy the IAC. Participants who made it to Agra included Economists Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil, Prof. P. Brahmananda and D. R. Pendse; Industrialists Viren Shah, D. N. Patodia and P. Gupta; Consumer activists H. D. Shourie and M. R. Pai; Journalist Swaminathan Anklesaria Aiyar and Parliamentarians Jaswant Singh and Minoo Masani. We even had Union Energy Minister Vasant Sathe who, in a manner of speaking, set the tone for the discussions with a speech à la Gorbachev. He

chose this forum (quite appropriately) to release his book *"Restructuring of the Public Sector in India"*.

Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil in his paper "maintained that it was not only the commitment of the political leadership to socialism but the economic climate and socio-political considerations that had led to the development of the public sector and its dominant role in our economy. Yet, what was accepted as inevitable and socio-economically necessary, had now become an obsession and a dogmatic belief resulting in harmful economic consequences."

There was little, if any, quarrel with Prof. Gadgil's assessment. In fact the consensus view was that public sector undertakings had performed poorly "created vested interests and led to lack of accountability, lack of competition, outdated technology, financial indiscipline and overstaffing."

There was also a general acceptance of the fact that it was quite unnecessary for the State to have entered a whole lot of areas ranging from the baking of bread to hoteliering.

But here the consensus seemed to end because there was a fairly strong minority view that the State had no business, in the first place, to enter the world of business, industry and trade.

Turning to the question of Privatisation, Mr. D. R. Pendse took the view that privatisation did not merely mean divestiture and de-nationalisation but had a much wider concept which included:

- a) Divestiture and De-nationalisation;
- b) Any measure of economic policy which reduces the role of the State sector and permits involvement of the private sector;
- c) Franchise financing, cooperation of the private sector to take up contracts for building infra-

structure facilities;

- d) The closure or liquidation of sick state sector units;
- e) Transfer of management and control of state-owned enterprises to more efficient private agencies;
- f) Widening progressively, areas of operation for private and voluntary sectors and their replacement of government departments.

One could argue over what, in my opinion, is the watering down of a clear concept: To me privatisation means the State selling of all or part of an enterprise it owns, to the public. This is what British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher had done and is doing. But then it is the prerogative of economists to make the simple sound difficult! But even this diluted description is acceptable for starters.

However what really saddened me was a discussion on the need to find a better word than "privatisation". Why? Because the word would not be "popular"; because people are liable to misunderstand it (as a move away from socialism to capitalism).

Way back in 1959, when the Swatantra Party was formed and its Statement of Policy was being discussed, I recall the concern in the face of some ex-Congressmen, who had joined the new party, when the policy statement categorically repudiated socialism. "Oh no you can't do that" they said. We'll never be popular. Why not instead state that the Swatantra Party believes in *Gandhian Socialism*, they pleaded. To the eternal credit of the then leadership, Rajaji and Masani among them, this plea to hoodwink the public by pinning a misleading label was turned down. The Party did well and thus was publicly broken the myth of the *mantra* called socialism. If the Party collapsed fifteen years later it was not because it challenged socialism but because it was stabbed from within by a pusillanimous

* Public Sector Undertakings and Privatisation: A Seminar organised by the Foundation for Economic Education and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung at Agra on December 3 and 4 1988

leadership afraid to face political wilderness for a while.

Those thoughts came rushing to my mind when the advisability of the label 'privatisation' was being discussed. In our personal lives we use the word 'private' without any sense of guilt. Ask any small *paanwala* and he will with pride proclaim it to be his *private* business. Ask any small farmer and he will say it is his *private* farm or land. Most of us jealously guard our *private* possessions be it a woman's jewellery or a young man's cycle.

The people understand perfectly what the word 'private' means. There is no stigma of any kind attached to it. Then why the dry debate? I could only conclude that many of us are still prisoners of words. We have been successfully sold not only what words like socialism, capitalism, profit and private ought to mean but have come to accept unthinkingly value concepts attached to such loaded meanings. The debate also reflected (what should be the prerogative of politicians) that the label is the thing irrespective of content – an implication that by and large, peo-

ple are fools and all one has to do is package the thought or sugarcoat the pill. The pity is that while people the world over (including our own) are moving away from ideology to reality which is what *Glasnost and Perestroika* is all about we are still clinging to outdated notions of what is or is not acceptable to people. Ask anyone who has to deal with a government department or agency or undertaking (and that means most of us) and he will say privatisation is not a dirty word – not anymore anyway.

The Anatomy of Discipline

Discipline, explains the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, is "a system of rules for conduct; a mental and moral training." There are other meanings as well, but these two are the basic imperative for the effective progress of any organisation from a Boy Scout Troop to a Nation.

Discipline dictates almost every action of our lives. Millions of ordinary people follow a daily routine – get up at a certain fixed time in the morning, make their way to their places of work whether it be field, classroom, workshop or office. Drivers of vehicles and trains obey traffic regulations. Everybody gets to his place of work by a specific time, or tries to; everybody does his job to the best of his or her ability according to their sense of responsibility. In being guided by an ordained set of rules, each one of these millions is subconsciously behaving as a disciplined human being. This is the instinctive or Survival Discipline. If you don't observe these behavioural patterns you become a social dropout.

In addition to Survival Discipline there are three other main patterns; Institutional Discipline which is sub-

ject to the rules and regulations of service, training and penal establishments; the Private Discipline of religion and conviction; and most important of all Public Discipline which enjoins civic, social and moral obligations as embodied in the laws of the land. Survival Disciplines are self-mandatory; Institutional Discipline subject to choice, commitment or compulsion; Private Discipline is self-obligatory; Public Discipline is essential to the existence of the State and therefore enforceable by law with penalties for non-compliance.

In the enforcement of Public Discipline legal and punitive action must be proportionate, swift and firm as without these, the administration of government becomes farcical and meaningless. Nobody, regardless of rank or status may be exempted from the common disciplines applicable to all, and it logically follows that those charged with the imposition of discipline must themselves be exemplars of discipline.

It is also axiomatic that discipline can only be effective when it begins at the point from which it emanates – from the TOP! For whilst discipline thrives on example and imitation, in-

discipline is a dread disease which inexorably spreads downwards and outwards. And once this contamination infects the masses to the extent where normally disciplined people begin to equate National *Indiscipline* with responsible government, disaster looms ahead.

Our Country is witnessing a serious breakdown in the essential disciplines with dangerous tolerations towards those in power and irresponsible pressure groups – political, linguistic, religious, labour and immoral business tycoons. India, largest democracy in the world, has achieved the ultimate in collective freedom. A regrettable aspect of this latter-day utopia is the strange conviction of large segments of its people that personal freedom is supercomprehensive, above the national interest, and includes freedom from *all* disciplines except those which suit *them*. Such beliefs, if not corrected quickly and firmly, must lead inevitably to the destruction of society and the disintegration of the State.

It is not too late. But correction must start from the TOP!

C.L. Proudfoot

The Centenary of T.S. Eliot

Elizabeth Reuben

T.S. Eliot has been called passionless, life-denying, nihilistic, evasive, a poser. Not do his ideas any longer dominate the critical or cultural worlds. But the music of the verse remains and the sense of place, working together to create images with a mysterious power.

In a way it's surprising that someone so formal and restrained, such a believer in tradition, so disciplined, so precise as T.S. Eliot should stand in most people's minds as typifying the very spirit of modernism, which glories in being free, unconventional, uninhibited, iconoclastic. And yet they are right of course, for in the quick-changing flicker of today's rhythms and sounds and styles, their contrasts and juxtapositions, one sees everywhere something that is quintessentially Eliot. It's the measure of the greatness of his work that it thus contains as well qualities to complement, balance and control.

Early Life

Born in St. Louis, Missouri on 26th September 1888, Eliot grew up in a cultured, scholarly and sheltered atmosphere. The family were Unitarians, a form of belief so nearly what we in India call 'secular' that he later considered that he had not been brought up a Christian. He studied at Harvard, and later abroad at the Sorbonne and at Oxford, reading English and French literature, and philosophy. In his early student days he wrote poems in a late-nineteenth-century melancholy romantic manner, but soon discovered the work of the French symbolist poets, and with them the possibilities of the contemporary world as poetic material and the power of what is left unstated. This inspired him to remould his own style completely and make poetry out of the genteel futility and decaying cityscapes he saw around him.

By 1915, becoming absorbed more and more into the intellectual worlds of Paris and London, he decided not to return to Harvard and collect the Ph.D degree awarded to him for his thesis on the philosophy of F.H. Bradley, but instead, abandoning the academic life, to

stay on in London and be a poet. For some years he supported himself by working in a bank, which he felt allowed him the time and energy for his real work more than teaching would, and later with the publishing firm of Faber and Faber, which proved to be a fruitful association of 40 years.

Creative Years

The year 1915 also saw the publication of his poem in a startlingly new manner, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, with its modernistic opening image of

"the evening ... spread out against the sky/like a patient etherised upon a table".

And in the same year Eliot made the momentous decision to marry a vivacious young Englishwoman, Vivien Haigh-Wood.

The marriage proved extremely unhappy. Vivien suffered from a nervous disorder which grew progressively worse, and Eliot left her in 1932. Two years later she was committed to a mental home, where she died suddenly



T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

in 1947. Eliot said little about his personal life, but themes and imagery in his writing hint at the misery and guilt feelings of these years. Yet they were also the years of his greatest creativity, and of growing influence and prestige as poet, critic, publisher, editor of the literary journal *Criterion*, and writer on matters social and cultural. His poetry began to concern itself with the new brash elements taking over the modern world, which he personified in a series of grotesque figures headed by one "Sweeney", and satirized in sharp, cryptic verses. Then in 1922 came *The Waste Land*, the one poem of his, whose name everybody knows, and which most critics still regard as his greatest achievement.

'The Waste Land'

Its style was a revolutionary departure. It had jazzy rhythms, it set side by side snatches of talk, quotations, bits and pieces from different languages and epochs, learned references, high culture and the everyday chatter of the times as well as images of a desolate land – set them side by side to work their effects of contrast, or parody or irony without any commentary by the poet. But the movement of the poem, full of thwarted echoes of Eliot's early romanticism, wove the whole into a haunting representation of a restless world with a void at the heart thirsting for renewal.

The poem shocked traditionalists, but to the enthusiastic young people who welcomed it, it seemed to express the modern sensibility as nothing else had, as it hurtled from.

"... the dead tree gives no shelter,
the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of
water."

to:
 "O the moon shone bright on Mrs.
 Porter
 And on her daughter
 They wash their feet in soda water."

The note of yearning sounds very clearly in the religious imagery of the next group of poems, like *Ash Wednesday*. "Only Christianity helps reconcile me to life, which is otherwise disgusting", Eliot said once. He formally became a Christian in 1927, and adopted a form of worship as far as possible from the simple rationalistic creed of his childhood. In the same year he detached himself from his origins in another way by becoming a British citizen, but the serious and responsible attitudes he had been brought up in were never abandoned. His writing addressed itself increasingly to questions of culture and society, not only in works like the *Idea of a Christian Society*, but also in seminal literary ideas like that of the damaging "dissociation of sensibility" which he felt had taken place after the seventeenth century, and the need for a disciplined kind of poetry rather than romantic self-indulgence. "Poetry", he memorably wrote, "is not a turning loose of emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality"

Poetic Drama

His attempt to revive poetic drama, too, stems from a wish to bring poetry into some larger harmonious and healthful relationship with society, like that of Greek drama. Beginning with a historical theme, the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, in *Murder in the Cathedral*, he later tried to unite the great myths and their profundity with the upper-class drawing room settings of contemporary comedies in plays like *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*. Eliot's plays did achieve popular success, but perhaps the time of his deepest appeal to the average non-literary public was during the war years, with the set of poems he called *Four Quartets*. The name signified his attempt "to get beyond poetry, as Beethoven in his later works, strove to get beyond music" – to reach towards something that would give meaning to the destruction of European civilization everywhere around. Once again the technique involved a mosaic pattern, but this time with a smoother blending, more use of memories and of history,

and no scraps of direct speech. To Eliot the only solution was a Christian one, but the poems are more than mere doctrine – they provide a living example of that process of thinking and making a meaning out of chaotic experience which is the duty of any civilized person. Nor was this just an individual's escape route; the critic Helen Gardner has described how, giving a course of lectures during the worst period of the war, she found the *Quartets* were the only texts that restored a sense of meaningful struggle to people grown cynical about the whole war effort. And this in spite of the riddling style and strange mystical conclusion:

All manner of thing, shall be well
 When .. the fire and the rose are one"

This final vision was not the result of any personal good fortune and security; it is a hard-won balance always conscious of "the rending pain of re-enactment of all that you have done and been". As for personal happiness it came to Eliot only towards the end of his life, after his marriage to Valerie Fletcher nearly 40 years his junior, who had come to work as his secretary drawn by some sort of inner compulsion almost as if in a fairy tale happy ending.

Eliot died 8 years later in 1965, eminent, honoured and serene at last. Inevitably, there have been reactions and reassessments – he has been called passionless, life-denying, nihilistic, evasive, a poser. Nor do his ideas any longer dominate the critical or cultural worlds. But the music of the verse remains and the sense of place, working together to create images with a mysterious power.

"And voices singing out of empty
 cisterns
 and exhausted wells
 the dark cold and the empty desolation.
 The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast
 waters
 of the petrel and the porpoise"
 and above all, those that evoke the
 atmosphere of modern cities anywhere
 in the world:

Men and bits of paper whirled by the
 cold wind
 That blows before and after time."

In the end, the only appropriate summing-up seems to be in the words of the memorial tablet in the church at the little village of East Coker from

T.S. ELIOT AND INDIA

The poetic sensibility of T.S. Eliot was perpetually modified not only by the best of European, English and American culture but also by the best of Indian thought and tradition. As early as 1911 Eliot enrolled himself in Charles R. Lanman's India philology course. During the second year of his course he applied himself to a study of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* under the direction of James H. Woods. As late as 1933 he acknowledged; "Two years spent in the study of Sanskrit under Charles Lanman, and a year in the mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics, under the guidance of James Woods, left me in a state of enlightened mystification". The statement confirms Eliot's association with Indian thought and religion. He explains here his approach to Indian metaphysics in terms of an intellectual identification combined with an emotional detachment. Eliot did get an intellectual understanding of the text but none could help him to get at the *anubhava* of the text. If someone had communicated to him the *anubhava* of the very first *sloka* – *Yoga Chitta Vritta Nirodha* – that alone would have ensured the spiritual salvation of T.S. Eliot!

Going through Eliot's poetry, one is in a position to detect his irresistible attraction for the wisdom of ancient India. In the threefold message of 'What the Thunder Said' in *The Waste Land* – Da Da Da – one is able to infer the message of *Datta*, *Dayadhavam*, *Damyata* (Give, Sympathise, Control) of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

In the first of the *Four Quartets* – 'Burnt Norton' – Eliot has obviously the Dance of Shiva in mind, when he refers to the dance at 'the still point of the turning world'. In the same poem there are frequent references to the thought of the *Bhagavad Gita* which Eliot called 'the next greatest philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy* within my experience'. In *Four Quartets* – 'Dry Salvages' – Eliot admonishes: 'Consider the future/and the past with an equal mind'. Eliot wonders whether this was what Krishna meant, when he admonished Arjuna on the field of battle: 'Think of me at the hour of death'. The Hindu doctrine of *Karma* as enunciated by Krishna in the *Gita* is echoed by Eliot.

From the examples given above, it is obvious that Eliot's poetic sensibility was moulded to a certain extent by Indian thought. It must, however, be remembered that Eliot's interest in Indian thought did not take him away from his professed religion. The complexity of Eliot's poetic sensibility enabled him to omit nothing en route and write with a full historical awareness of not only the mind of Europe but that of the whole world without losing his own religious or cultural or poetic identity.

Dr S. Kandaswami

where Eliot's ancestors went away to America

"Remember Thomas Stearns Eliot,
 Poet"

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The Role of Religions

The book consists of eleven chapters of varying lengths, ranging from a minimum of 10 pages (ch.4) to a maximum of 59 pages (ch.2). This is a work of scholarship and not of journalistic writing. The range of topics discussed is both vast and diverse: from the position of women in Islam; the Muslim Women's Bill; the situation in the Punjab; the riots following Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination; the politics of the Punjab Accord and Jinnah's two-nation theory; the situation in Assam (three chapters); and secularism (in the final chapter).

Religion provides the unifying thread. Despite this, the book retains a somewhat heterogeneous character, considering the variety of topics dealt with by Shourie. I do not say this in disparagement but only to bring out a reviewer's difficulty. It is simply impossible to critically assess Shourie's treatment of each theme, as much due to lack of space as due to the limitations of the reviewer. Some basic ideas, informing the whole book, will regrettably have to suffice.

Shourie sets out his ideas in the first chapter. He very effectively argues, in his characteristic style, that an act or a thought cannot be deemed good only because it is found in one's own religion but the same act or thought be deemed bad if found in another's religion. It is a deceptively simple idea that we should judge others and ourselves by the same standard and not be *selective* in our praise or blame. People will then see virtues in others' religions and defects in their own. (This, of course, does not exclude seeing justified virtues in one's own religion and defects in another's, established by some logical or objective criteria).

Imagine the fantastic tolerance that the practice of this one simple idea can produce and how many of our seemingly intractable problems will just

dissolve, as if they never existed. Alas, that is not the way we function. A mere rumour or a trifling incident is enough to trigger a riot, leaving people dead and property destroyed and one more bitter memory added. Is this inevitable or is this avoidable? Inevitable if you think only you are (can be) right; avoidable if you think that the other person may also be right.

While Shourie's formulation of the golden rules for the humanist and the secularist (pp. 27-28) are admirable, his judgement that "the example to follow is that of the Buddha and Jesus, not of Elisha and Mohammed" is both unfortunate and questionable. Is it possible to come to a competent (and forthright) judgement on four world religions in nineteen pages? Even if Shourie can perform this arduous intellectual job, how does he hope to persuade others to accept it?

RELIGION IN POLITICS by Arun Shourie; Roli Books International, New Delhi; 1987; Pp.334; Rs.95

No, Mr. Shourie, managing a society is a very complex matter; managing a complex, multi-religious, multi-ethnic society is infinitely more complex. No

simple prescription will do. Irrationality unfortunately has a very tenacious reality in our mental life. Reason is not always the sunshine that quickly evaporates the mists of irrationality though reason is our most powerful ally in this battle and we must always strengthen it. But not by overlooking the strength of unreason. Mr. Shourie is, of course, much too realistic a student of Indian society to harbour any romantic ideas.

He details (pp. 288-289) the unfortunate developments once communities are on collusion-course. Moderates in each community find it difficult to contain the influence of the fundamentalists and the extremists. Ignorance of our own religion is as much true as prejudice towards another religion. We think in stereotypes, of ourselves and of others. Religious identities are strengthened, leading to a feeling of insecurity. Shourie blames modernization. Not the group (religious, linguistic or whatever) but the individual must become the unit of account, but this cannot be the beginning of the process of modernization but its end. A prolonged and concerned debate is required to clarify the issues so ably and sometimes provocatively presented by Shourie in this book.

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A Minaret of Hope

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad was one of the brightest stars in the galaxy of the nationalist movement during the first half of the 20th century. He was admired and respected by the stalwarts of the nationalist movement, particularly by Gandhi and Nehru, not only for his unflinching adherence to the nationalist cause and to the ideal of Hindu-Muslim

unity, but also for his deep religious commitment, as well as his strength of character and courage of conviction. The fact that he failed in his life-long mission – preserving the unity and integrity of India from the ravages of religious chauvinism – epitomizes the failure of our nationalist leadership. However, Azad's intellectual, religious,

and nationalist legacy still shines as a minaret of hope and optimism in the expanding darkness and gloom of our times. The book under review is based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to Oxford University in 1969 by Ian Douglas, who was a Catholic theologian associated with the Henry Martin Institute of Islamic Studies in Hyderabad during the 1960s and who suddenly expired in 1975. The book has been edited, with an excellent introduction, as well as a postscript which incorporate recent researches relating to the theme and background of the book, by Christian W. Troll and Gail Minault.

The main thrust of Douglas' book relates to the question of continuity in Azad's views on Islam and nationalism and on the participation of Indian Muslims, along with their Hindu brethren, in the nationalist movement. Douglas emphasizes the element of continuity in Azad's ideas, and maintains that he never wavered in his religious and national-

ist commitment. In fact, as Douglas observes, the theme of religious tolerance and communal harmony and the vision of a united India, which emerged in Azad's early life, continued throughout his life.

Douglas brings out in an illuminating manner the evolution of Azad's personal life and career. He sheds light on his early years under the watchful eye of his authoritarian father, the early atheistic and libertarian phase, his inner conflict, his subsequent recovery of faith and his involvement in educational, religious and nationalist activities in the beginning of the 20th century. Douglas then focusses on his *al-Hilal* and *al-Balagh* years, and his emergence as an ideologue of the Khilafat movement during the 1920s. This is followed by a discussion of the mature intellectual and nationalist phase of his life, culminating in the dawn of Indian Independence and the eclipse of his life-long vision of a united India.

Douglas brings out, in a perceptive manner, the outstanding features of Azad's personality: endurance, clarity of judgement, tolerance and broad mindedness, firmness of resolve, sense of dignity and of historical realism. He does not fail to take note of his frailties as well, such as his exaggerated self-consciousness which often seemed to border on conceit, and his aloofness from the mass of people. The profile that emerges from Douglas' study is that of a human figure, imbued with a deep sense of idealism. However, at times he seems to be a little too critical and uncharitable, as when he indulges in facile generalizations about certain aspects of Azad's character on the basis of slender and fragmentary evidence.

Douglas succeeds in delineating the dominant motifs in Azad's life and career. He perceptively observes that "Azad saw no conflict between being an Indian and being a Muslim. In fact, he saw these two aspects as mutually

The Maulana was Right

I knew Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and had great respect for his dignity and his beautiful Urdu which I enjoyed.

I am therefore glad to be in a position to document his charge that Nehru was largely responsible for what he did in 1937 and 1946 leading to the partition of India. There is no danger of hindsight because what I have to say is recorded in my earlier Memoir *Bliss Was It In That Dawn* published as far back 1977.

On page 109 of the book I have recorded an incident which happened when I was at Jawaharlal Nehru's breakfast table some time in 1937:

"During another of my visits to Allahabad, the results of the United Province State Assembly elections had been published. The Muslim League had done very well. At breakfast one morning, Sayed Mahmood, one of Nehru's proteges, came in from Lucknow. He reported on the discussions some of the Congress Muslims had had with Chowdhury Khali-

quzzaman, the Muslim League Leader. Khaliqquzzaman had suggested that a couple of Muslim leaders be taken into the Cabinet that was to be nominated in the United Provinces under the new Government of India Act, so that the Muslims of the United Provinces might not be left out of the administration of the Provinces. At this point, Jawaharlal lost his temper and, in somewhat choice and colourful Hindustani, he swore not only at the Muslim League Leader, but also at poor Sayed Mahmood for having carried such an outrageous message. The victim's plea, appeared to have no effect on Jawaharlal's indignation. The League offer of coalition was duly turned down and the Congress formed its own Cabinet. Many have expressed the view that this act of Nehru was a turning point that led to the alienation of the Muslims of the United Provinces, gave rise to the 'Two Nation' theory and led to the partition of India.

Thus Maulana Azad's charge that Nehru prepared the ground for the partition of India by his churlish atti-

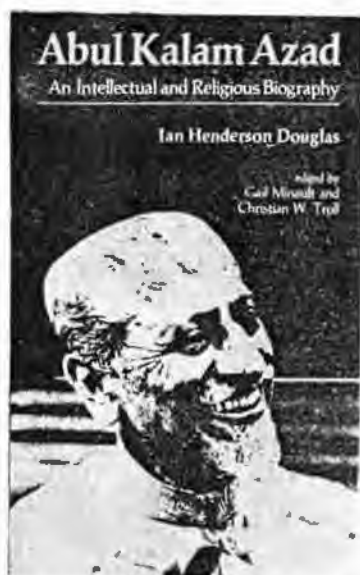
tude as far back as 1937 is absolutely justified.

On page 201 of my Memoir I have recorded that "I distinctly recollect Gandhiji's unhappiness at a brash speech or statement denouncing the plan made by Jawaharlal Nehru on July 10, 1946. J.P. happened to be visiting Gandhiji in Panchgani. When he returned to Bombay he told me how Gandhiji was in tears at the manner in which Jawaharlal had sabotaged the effort to keep India united. Many years later, I checked with J.P. about this recollection, and he wrote back to me on August 2, 1971:

"I fully recollect the incident you mention... I do distinctly remember that Gandhiji was deeply perturbed over the rash statement of Jawaharlal which he thought had dashed all hopes of settlement on the basis of undivided India, even though divided into three autonomous zones."

Thus Jawaharlal Nehru's sabotaging the last effort at the unity of India is documented by Java Prakash's confirmation.

Minoo Masani



ABUL KALAM AZAD: AN INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY by Ian Henderson Douglas; Oxford University Press, Delhi; 1988; Pp.358; Rs.190

strengthening." In the final analysis, Azad emerges as a towering apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity and religious tolerance.

Though Douglas succeeds in bringing out the quintessential features of Azad's intellectual and religious orientation, his analysis tends to suffer from a lack of depth. His review of Azad's magnum opus, *Tarjuman al-Quran*, is quite unsatisfactory. Douglas makes a conceptual obfuscation in characterizing the Wahhabis in India as Waliullahis, since the former, though significantly influenced by the ideas of Shah Waliullah, also deviated in certain doctrinal matters from the Waliullahi tradition. The same mistake is repeated by the editors.

Azad's intellectual and religious legacy has an unquestioned relevance for contemporary India, and especially for Indian Muslims. Two related issues currently engage the minds of Indian Muslims: the preservation of their religious-cultural identity, and participation in national life within a pluralist framework. Azad's life and work can provide a valuable model for their aspirations and strivings.

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Dissecting the Tamil Ethos

Even the general reader, with a limited interest in its Tamil theme, may find this book enlightening for its treatment of ethnicity. Starting with his definition of culture as "a repertoire of symbols," the author describes elaborately his conviction that "all humans participate in the construction of ethnic identity systems." It follows then, that some groups formulate their systems more strongly than others. In appropriate historical circumstances, they develop "revitalisation movements."

As indicated by the sub-title, the book deals with Tamil cultural history, social order, literary tradition, the Dravidian movement, the village as a special setting for ethnic concepts in practice, and what is called their "dramatisation" in response to timebound as well as timeless needs. Granting that there are universal elements in ethnic identity systems, "the systems themselves are parochial." It is the nature of this parochialism in the Tamil context that is the book's main subject:

In the Introduction, the author identifies three symbols in the Tamil literary tradition: language purity, chastity, the land; and three others in the village: the mother goddess, the central house, the council of elders. These symbols have "endured for millennia." The first three of them are discussed in chapter four, and the other three in chapter five as exemplified in the 20th century Dravidian movement.

CASTE, NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY: An Interpretation of Tamil Cultural History and Social Order by J. Pandian; Popular Prakashan, Bombay; Pp.170; Rs.150.

The author surprised this reader by claiming that he believes in "the parsimonious use of scholarly vocabulary," while in fact he uses it quite freely. He states that his book was written out of frustration with the terms used "in Indian scholarship and at the confusions they have engendered." I found no justi-

fication for this self-laudatory belief, which turns out to be an illusion, particularly when the author adds that he had developed his "own cultural system."

Again, at one point, it is announced that "social scientists should be committed to exploring the positive as well as the negative function of symbols." This seems to imply that they normally define and discuss only the latter. In the second chapter, though, on "Hindu Social Order, Brahmanical Priesthood and Sanskritisation," a dissenting line is offered which is well worth studying. Refuting the view point of many distinguished authorities in the field, the author asserts that "there are no identifiable cultural forms that constitute a distinguishable Sanskritic system."

He adds vehemently:

"Sanskritic tradition is not an ontological reality. Any cultural form can be considered Sanskritic. Economic and political power largely determine and define what should be considered Sanskritic: depending on how a cultural form is conceptualised by the believers, any cultural trait can be considered Sanskritic." (P.32)

While this illustrates the author's tendency to exaggerate and to be reckless instead of being balanced and persuasive, it does demonstrate that he has his own perspective on the subject. In every chapter, apart from the range of data assembled, of great interest in itself, there are major as well as marginal views likely to be found provocative by most readers. They should be taken seriously because they are based on some fieldwork in addition to the relevant studies. An unusual Appendix consists of notes and essays by students of a Tamil Nadu Public school, contrasting the culture of India with their own culture in relation to important values and beliefs. Many of the convictions expressed even if naive and disconcerting, affirm the nature and power of Tamil ethnicity.

Nissim Ezekiel

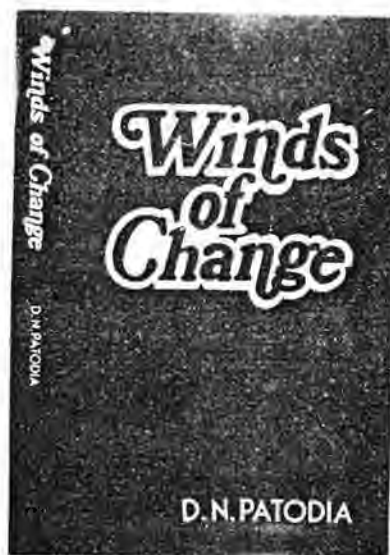
Analysing Indian Economic Policy

An important feature of the discussions on the Indian Economy since the eighties is their complete uprooting from ideological moorings. The Liberal enthusiasm on the one hand and the Socialist admonition on the other which dominated writings on Indian economy in the fifties and sixties have almost entirely been forgotten with the coming of the New Economic Policy.

Mr. D.N. Patodia's *Winds of Change* typifies the advantages and drawbacks of this new kind of writing and writers. At the outset it must be said, to the credit of Mr. Patodia and those like him, that introspecting and analysing one's profession and environment is not only a commendable intellectual exercise but also an extremely useful one. As an industrialist and a President of FICCI, his views are enlightening and even necessary to students of the subject, as also to the government, the planners and indeed to the business community itself.

He begins with a few panoramic chapters that at a macro level, trace the fundamental problems of the Indian economy and then goes on to analyse key areas viz., the private corporate sector, the public sector, the small scale sector, agriculture, exports, trade, energy etc.,

His analysis of the problems that beset the economy viz., the cascading taxes, the resource crunch, the high cost of credit, the poor and eroding infra-structure and the falling productivity of capital and labour are informative. The chapter that analyses trade is particularly brilliant. One or two points that Mr. Patodia makes are note-worthy. For instance, his observation that whenever



WINDS OF CHANGE – New Economic Challenges by D.N. Patodia; Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi; 1987; Pp. 121; Rs. 125.

industry touches a 60% growth rate inventories accumulate, is a discerning and significant point that policy makers cannot ignore any longer. Similarly, his observation that our R & D investment is so poor that even after ten years of imports we are unable to generate matching indigenous technology is an honest and harsh comment on his own community.

Yet, Mr. Patodia's panacea to 'almost all ills is to turn the economy over to the private sector. Indeed, the book, at several points seems to be almost an unbalanced plea for more liberalisation without any concern whatsoever for the ills of this elitist consumer-oriented growth. He speaks fondly of cutting taxes and easily blames the fiscal structure for the huge parallel economy. Apparently, in his view business has not even a responsibility to be honest.

The prime problem of the economy is not merely its high cost structure but the lack of demand, as Mr Patodia himself admits. Naturally the concern of the government should be to alleviate poverty and generate employment so that purchasing power is disseminated to the rural millions. But such questions like those on equality, income distribution and employment are completely ignored by Mr. Patodia. In fact he bluntly admits that Indian labour should not expect the manufacturing sector to employ all of it, but must concentrate on down-stream activities. In reality the Indian economy has woefully failed to employ its millions and this is its fundamental failure. For, this widespread unemployment ensures the perpetuation of poverty on the one hand and the steep vertical mobility of a very small urban industrial core. On this seminal paradox, not merely Indian Business, but the entire new generation of economic thinkers is virtually bankrupt.

When it comes to micro questions, however, Mr. Patodia is at his very best. The book has a fund of suggestions on improving exports, energy conservation, FERA deregulations, co-operation in Indo-U.S., Indo-Soviet and Indo-Japanese trade and collaborative projects. There is also a brilliant chapter entitled 'The Third Industrial Revolution', which gives the book a certain depth and perception. These suggestions and prescriptions alone make the book a valuable buy for their relevance will continue well after this decade, which is in itself an achievement.

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One up for the 'Idiot Box'

Perhaps Orson Welles echoed the sentiments of scores of T.V. viewers accurately when he said, "I hate T.V. I hate it as much as I hate peanuts. But I cannot stop eating peanuts". So also a

majority of viewers. This electronic medium with the support of big business has become respectable. The 'idiot box' is gradually gaining recognition as a pseudo-intellectual box. It also

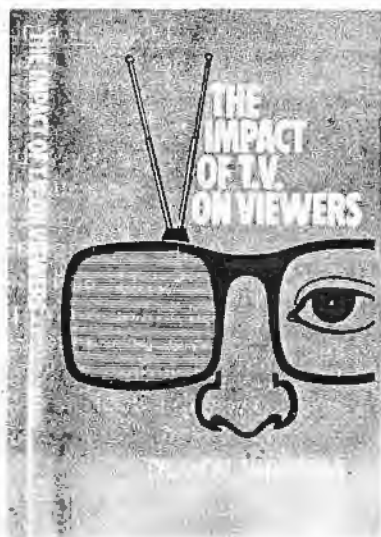
adds to your social status. The costlier the T.V. set the higher you are socially. The neo-rich Brahmins own the VCRs, the upper castes the colour T.V. and the 'sudras' the black and white. Gone are the days of public debate whether we should attend to drinking water on a basis of priority; all of us are sold on nuclear technology, space expansion programme and progress in our country, and T.V. is an absolute necessity, no

longer a luxury item.

It is natural that T.V. should attract communication research scholars in analyzing its social impact. The present book under review is one such serious attempt.

Much of what passes off as communication research in India is highly mediocre, anti-intelligent and very dissatisfying. A study on the impact of newspapers on public policy, for instance would tend to end up in a summation of editorials that appeared in newspapers. It will be an edited version of editorials. Otherwise the study would be packed with quantified data killing instantly the interest of readers. Very few have been able to establish and study the link between communication and policy change.

THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION ON VIEWERS by Andal Narayanan; Somaiya Publications, Bombay; 1987; Pp 159; Rs 110



The work of Dr. Andal Narayanan is however an exception to the rule. It shows how the spirit of genuine scholarly pursuit is not quite dead in India. This book analyzes the impact of T.V. on Bombay viewers. An elaborate explanation for the reason for choosing Bombay, a detailed write-up on the methodology, a comprehensive survey of similar research undertaken elsewhere and lucid explanations about various communication theories all form a prologue to the main body of the findings.

Using the random sampling method the author collected the views of selected Bombay T.V. viewers through

a set of well-prepared questions to solicit information about the impact of T.V. on social life.

Several decades ago Lippmann pointed out how newspapers tend to perpetuate the prejudices of the readers rather than educate and change them. But T.V. in India according to the author seems to have had a more positive function. She points out how T.V. in India has more or less been successful in removing prejudices against family planning, carried the message of social welfare schemes, advised people on the importance of public health and is acting as a conveyor of government policies. One wishes that she had put more emphasis on the last issue and studied it in full analysing the implications involved in a government monopoly of the media, in the context of freedom of opinion within this medium.

The conclusions that are drawn from the study are interesting, positive and add cheer for T.V. lovers. Thus T.V. does not incite violence. In fact it is a passive medium. Most parents do not think T.V. affects the education of their children. In fact, most of the brilliant students are also those who watch T.V. regularly. There is no truth that excessive T.V. watching is bad for the eyes. It has increased a person's commitment to the family. The family spends more time together now reducing outside

contacts. It is also interesting to note that language is no barrier for the viewers and many of them view eagerly, programmes presented in other languages. This is contrasted with the allergy of many educated people to read anything in a language which is not in their mother tongue. Clearly the visual medium has out-smarted the printed media.

But it is the 'entertainment aspect' of T.V. which is valued more by the viewers, than its 'educative aspect'. This point should cause concern, and all those who are seriously interested in using T.V. as a medium of education should ponder about this. There are many related issues which have gone unexamined in this book. One such is the use of T.V. in propagating religious values which might weaken the secular foundations of our society. We have the problem of video piracy eating into the profits of the cinema. The most devastating effect of T.V. is on broadcasting. No one listens to A.I.R. anymore. So also the tendency for people to read less. In the long run it will definitely make people lazy, go for soft options and settle for short cut methods. An intellectual paralysis would result from this excessive dependence on the idiot box.

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A Biased Account?

The study of caste conflicts and untouchability in Indian Society is of perennial interest. The book under review is an attempt to examine this phenomenon under the rule of the Peshwas. The author, having described the historical background, social institutions, customs and practices, proceeds to highlight caste conflicts and the problems of untouchability. There is also a separate chapter on slavery.

Although the social structure relating to castes and sub-castes remained intact, caste conflicts however went on increasing during the Peshwas' rule. For

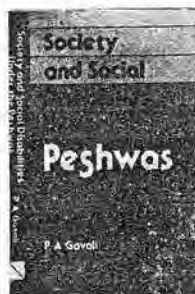
this Mr. Gavali blames the State which played a decisive role in the restoration of the caste status of individual persons and enforcing the social code of conduct with an iron hand. Inter-dining and inter-caste marriages were strictly prohibited, and often such violations resulted in excommunication. He regards the notion of superiority, privileges and the influence of social maxims and conventions as causes for caste conflicts.

Under the Peshwas, *Mahars*, *Mangs* and *Chamars* lived outside the villages. Sometimes the Government even

moved the original sites of the untouchables. For example, in 1989-90, the houses of *Mahars*, *Mangs* and *Chamars* at Kataraj in Tarlkanyat, Mawal, being too near the village, were moved to another site and the government bore the cost! Moreover, while awarding punishment to criminals, their castes were taken into account rather than the nature of the crime. For instance, in Sawai Madhavrao's time under Nana Phadanvis untouchables or lower castes like *Ramoshis*, *Bheels* or *Mangs* had their limbs mutilated as punishment. This reminds us of Manu's codes and therefore, the author is justified in saying that the Peshwas' period saw a revival of a large number of old principles and practices.

It is worth noting that the Brahmins seemed to be continuously engaged in intra-caste or or inter-caste feuds during this period, e.g. *Deshastha* versus *Konkanastha*, *Chitpavan* versus *Deurukhe* Brahmins *Karhade* versus *Chitpavan* etc. or with other castes such as *Shudras*, *Sonars*, *Sutars* etc. The author is not oblivious of the conflicts within other castes and makes special mention of the conflicts among the *Shudras* and *Athishudras*.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL DISABILITIES UNDER THE PESHWAS by P.A. Gavali; National Publishing House; New Delhi; 1988; Pp 186; Rs.150



By and large, the Peshwas' rule was known for the revival of many ancient institutions and even the institution of slavery was not an exception to this. Although the author frankly admits that the detailed account of the manumission of slaves is not available during this period, a cursory look at this period indicates that more or less the manumission of slaves which was in vogue in ancient times was followed with slight deviations. According to Manu, "a slave could not have any property, the wealth that he earned belonged to his master" but during this period a slave could not only earn but he could inherit property.

The slaves were often permitted to purchase their liberty.

It is also important to note that the author seems to have tactfully avoided holding muslim rule in India as responsible either for perpetuating or aggravating the caste system. He says: "It is stated that the Peshwas imposed the laws of the *Smritis* and revived many institutions that were relegated to the background during the Muslim rule in India." However, Mr. R. K. Kshirsagar in his recent book on "Untouchability in India: Implementation of the Law and Abolition," asserts that during the muslim period (medieval period) the caste system became rigid and the institution of untouchability was deeply rooted due to the indifferent attitude of the muslim rulers towards the caste system and untouchability. On account of this, one is likely to get an impression that the author has examined this phenomenon with pre-conceived bias against the Peshwas' rule.

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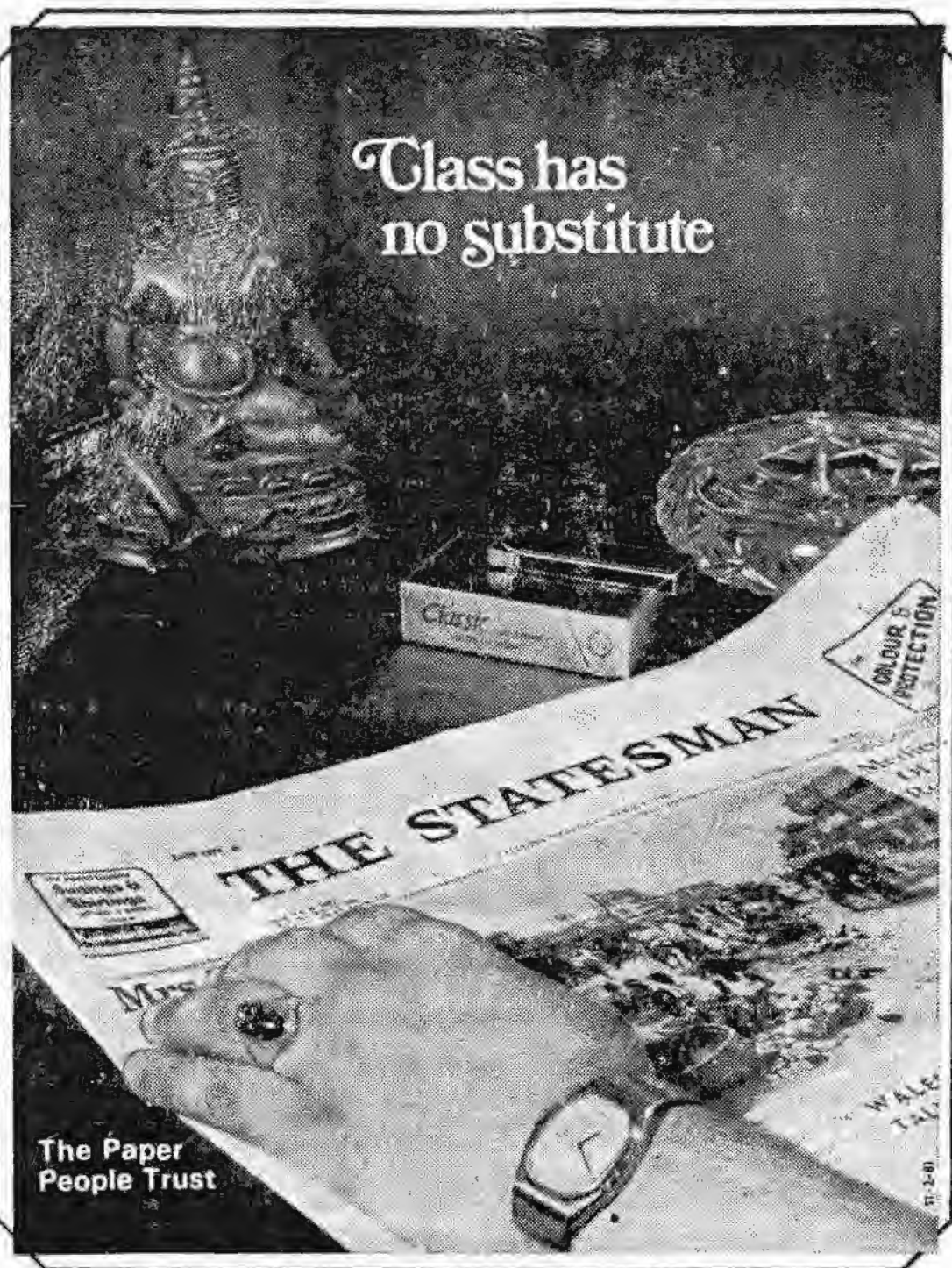
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