

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

October-
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44TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

CTBT and all that



Liberalism in India

The Eleventh Commandment
Thou Shalt Not Disclose

In the Cause of Tibetan Freedom

OUR MISSION

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

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

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

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

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BETWEEN OURSELVES...

Some readers asked us why we were not carrying any articles on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, better known as the CTBT which India has refused to sign. Quite frankly, we felt that in the context of the many concerns facing India, the CTBT was a peripheral issue. We could well be asked: How can the threat of destruction of the universe itself by a nuclear holocaust be even remotely termed peripheral? We do not for a moment underestimate the devastating effects of nuclear warfare. But when almost every country has the know-how of nuclear technology, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence has lost its relevance, hence the primary task is to work towards a world free of barriers however romantic or idealistic this may sound. Mr. Bankeshwar, one of the three who has contributed to this discussion has perhaps characterised the CTBT correctly as an exercise in futility. However, we have yielded to 'popular demand' and featured the CTBT as this issue's cover story.

It has given us much pleasure to carry contributions on four eminent personalities, two of them (C. Rajagopalachari and Annie Besant) in politics and two others, (the husband and wife team of Shri Sadasivam and Smt. Subbalakshmi) in the realm of music. No ISO 9000 could have produced for us people of their eminence and accomplishment!

In our ongoing mission to promote the values of liberalism, we carry an essay on liberalism in India by Mr. Sharad Joshi, who has taken over the leadership of the liberal movement in India from Mr. Minoo Masani.

And, as our tribute to the steadfastness to freedom and human dignity shown by the liberal Friedrich Naumann Foundation by its refusal to yield to communist Chinese pressure to abandon a conference on Tibet held in Germany, we carry a report of that conference.

Editor.

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WITH MANY VOICES

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

It is quite wrong that any top establishment man should take his family on business trips. Such a happening can take place only in a banana republic.

Editorial in *The Afternoon Despatch & Courier*, November 27

What is it that makes people like K. Karunakaran, P. Chidambaram, G. K. Moopanar and Jaffer Sharief go and prostrate themselves at Sonia Gandhi's doorstep?

Tavleen Singh, *The Indian Express*, May 12

If economic liberalisation is teaching us how to manage joint ventures, political liberalisation may now teach us how to manage coalitions. It is part of our continuing love affair with democracy.

Gurucharan Das, *The Times of India*, May 12

What Karunanidhi had introduced on a cottage industry scale, was turned into a multinational scale by Jayalalitha. (The reference was to corruption under their respective regimes)

The Indian Express, May 12

I can hardly find a significant political difference between a conservative social democrat and a social-democratic conservative. Both have an ambiguous attitude towards individual freedom and self-responsibility.

Dr. Otto Count Lambsdorff,
London Aerogramme, June 1996.

There is something in the Indian psyche that tends to celebrate humiliation and defeat, institutionalising it in our collective national memory. Victory is a forgettable oddity, an amoral one at that.

Shekhar Gupta deploring the fact that India has forgotten the 20,000 Indians who were killed in the Bangladesh War of 1971, *Indian Express*, December 3.

Corruption among Indian bureaucrats matures with age.

Quoted from the book *Enough is Enough* by Mr. Amrit Lal in *Common Cause*, Vol.XV No.3

Freedom First 2

The arrest of Chandraswami and his incarceration in Tihar should to a great extent bring down the credibility of godmen.

Busybee in *The Afternoon Despatch & Courier*, May 6

Everyone aspires for the prime ministerial chair. Once there, everyone also tries to ensure his or her own political longevity and survival.

Mr. Arun Nehru, *The Pioneer*, September 30

In the emerging scheme of things in present-day India, there are only two castes: those in power and those out of power.

Mr. Deepak Seth of New Delhi in a letter published in the *Newsweek*, July 29

Two men, both renowned corporate high fliers and both thinking persons - Mr. Russi Mody and Mr. Vijaypat Singhania - have been made to eat humble pie by a Government which doesn't want to lose control and decentralise power.

Mr. Gargi Parsai, *The Hindu*, December 5

These black-robed, wig-wearing people are not saints. And they are definitely not underpaid.

Mrs. Margaret Alva during the debate in the Rajya Sabha over a bill to increase allowance for Judges.
India Today, August 11

Job satisfaction and appreciation rather than material luxuries, keep a creative individual happy. Without these the problem of brain drain cannot be solved.

Mr. J. V. Narlikar, *The Times of India*, August 10

The King of Pop (Michael Jackson), has met the Pop of Hinduism (Balasaheb Thackeray), the latter title being one that the BJP would hotly contest but in an age of shifting metaphors, what does it matter?

Editorial in *Business India*, November 4

October-December 1996



OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

My Friend Zamindar



Yet another friend, a valued comrade in the Swatantra Party, Mr. N. C. Zamindar passed away in July at Indore. He was 73.

What I vividly recall about Zamindar was his ever-smiling face, a delightful sense of humour and a serious sense of purpose. His sense of proper conduct and an obsession with the need for probity in public life always made me wonder what made him stray into party politics. The answer - his high regard and admiration for Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and his emphasis on *Dharma*.

Zamindar was an alumnus of the Agra University and a Gold Medalist at that. A voracious reader he was a writer and novelist in Hindi with over 15 books to his credit. He delighted in the company of intellectuals as his membership of a number of institutions testify - Indian History Congress, Indian Philosophy Congress; Indian Law Institute, Indian PEN, Authors Guild to mention a few. He founded the Gita Samiti, the Sansriti Kendra and the Vivekananda Hostel. Though intensely religious, he did not wear his religion on his sleeve. I can personally testify to the fact that he had no use for the peddlers of *Hindutva*. Though a Hindi litterateur of no mean calibre, he did not belong to the tribe that wanted to shove Hindi down the throats of those who spoke other Indian languages.

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



It was my privilege that he counted me as a friend. *Freedom First* salutes a thinker and a good human being. Our deepest condolences to Mrs. Vandana Zamindar and members of her family on their bereavement. We share with them their sense of loss.

Justice Delayed ...

Mr. D. H. Nanavati, Solicitor and Supreme Court Advocate to whom *Freedom First* owes much (He was our solicitor when we went to court against censorship during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Emergency) has written a letter dated June 10, 1996 to *Freedom First* founder Mr. M. R. Masani:

"As you may recollect, you had filed a writ petition in 1987 for permission for a television station. The matter has now come up on boardKindly give me your instructions in the matter."

And thereby hangs a tale - of justice denied.

The writ petition arose as a result of the Union Government's rejection of an application by Mr. M. R. Masani and Mr. P. C. Chatterjee (former Director General of All India Radio) for permission to set up an independent broadcasting station for radio and television in Western India with medium power transmitters. Details of the petition were published in the October 1987 issue of *Freedom First*.

The application for admission was filed by Mr. Atul Setalvad, supported by Mr. Navroz Seervai.

It took the Bombay High Court 8 years and 9 months to put the matter on board. In the intervening period, thanks to satellite communications the audio visual media has gone through a revolutionary transformation. It is no longer necessary to seek the court's intervention (which in any case was not available to Mr. Masani and Mr. Chatterjee) and Doordarshan and All India Radio have lost their monopolies not because wisdom, has dawned on our politicians but because of technology.

A most recent example of how the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and the Mandarins of Mandi House were shown their place was the response of Prannoy Roy when the Ministry and the Mandarins sought to shift his 'News Tonight' to a late night slot. Roy simply moved over to Star Plus and got prime time for his programme.

Saudi Justice

Readers may recall the mention in this column of the execution of Indian citizen Manickam Ramalingam. A subscriber has sent me a *Sunday Observer* report dated September 17, 1995 (somewhat dated perhaps but very much relevant even now) drawing attention to the poor role played by the Indian consular service in safeguarding the lives of Indian citizens overseas.

On September 8, 1995, seven Indians - Nuwas Jat Budania, Sguhan Muli Bihai, Manful Hamram Daqa, Wajbul Rudam, Mohammed Aoad, Raj Kumar and Hula Saram Jaghna - were beheaded for murder and robbery. A week later Mr. S. K. Bhatnagar, joint secretary, Gulf, Ministry of External Affairs, when asked what his ministry was doing about these executions replied that the decision (to execute) was that of the local administration, and we could not do anything about it.

And, by way of justification for the indifferent attitude of both the Indian Embassy in Riyadh and the MEA, Mr. Bhatnagar is reported to have said: "It is not Indians alone that are beheaded in Saudi Arabia. Many other nationals have also been beheaded".

On the other hand, Amnesty International has expressed concern over the incident and has stressed that under no circumstances should anybody be given the death penalty. Amnesty International has recorded that 171 persons have been executed in Saudi Arabia. Of these, 63 are Saudi nationals, 38 Pakistanis, 22 Nigerians, 11 Indians, 6 Somalis and 6 Afghans.

SVR

"Operation Jakarta"

The murky, sordid and wholly inexcusable story of the happenings in Indonesia after the September 30, 1965 massacre of half a million communists (some say a million) and imprisonment of one and half million, where many still are, has now been made public. All these years the Suharto government and the great powers were engaged in one of the most successful 'cover-ups' of these happenings. The role of the U.S. in this has been described succinctly by one of the most perceptive students of Indonesia George McT. Kahin, as 'subversion as foreign policy'. American foreign policy in this area from the mid-fifties would have done credit to the Byzantine methods of Stalin. The Eisenhower regime attempted to

'dismember the Indonesian Republic and transform the government in Jakarta'. Dulles and Ike ignored their own Ambassador in that capital by not only funding and arming but by extending aerial support as well and precipitated a civil war in the outer islands led by colonels. The duo pressed the CIA and part of the Seventh Fleet into service; the result was the death of 30,000 Indonesians and the total destruction of the naval and air power of the Indonesian state as well. When the Indonesian government got the better of the rebels, the U.S. on the one hand tried to strengthen the government and on the other gave "limited support to the rebels in the still unconquered north Sulawesi". Ironically, when the CIA began to dismember the government of Allende in Chile it was called 'Operation Jakarta'.

Our politicians can learn a thing or two from the manner in which Suharto's family controls the key sectors of the economy - one controlling toll roads, another the promotion of a car, a third to collect taxes on beer, a fourth to 'grant import protection to a petrochemical project'. The close family controlled economy as well as the bureaucratic-technologist state was able to attract foreign investment and raise the GDP nine-fold, but all within the parameters of a non-democratic society with no avenues for expression of dissent or protest.

Even as in Myanmar Suu Kyi leads a successful protest, Megawati Sukarnoputri (daughter of President, the late Dr. Sukarno) is attempting to focus attention on discontent. *The Hindu's* (August 15, 1996) comment on the developments is very appropriate: "The current turmoil in Indonesia must have rudely woken up the multinational corporations and their patron government to the reality that a civil society even with a weak government can provide more stability and much uncertainty. The self-serving regime of Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines which once looked invincible, but was uprooted by popular uprising is a case in point.

RS.

Dr. Indumati Parikh Honoured

Dr. Indumati Parikh, Radical Humanist, founder of Streehitakarini and president of the Centre for the Study of Social Change (CSSC) was honoured with the prestigious Dr. Jankidas Bajaj Award for work in the field of children's and women's welfare.

Dr. Parikh is a firm believer in the concept of integrated human development. The Human Development Campus coming up in Bombay is a multi crore effort to promote this concept in real terms. It is a gigantic venture which lesser mortals would be afraid to take on. But not Dr. Parikh. I had known about her for many years, but it was only in the seven of eight years that I have had the privilege of being associated in some of her activities - and I can assure readers that it is no longer confined to the welfare of children and women.

Streehitakarini is now an active organisation recognised the world over for its work among women. The CSSC has a much wider perspective. Among its objectives are to establish and support institutions devoted to creating a modern, humane and free society in India; promote the rational and critical spirit relying upon scientific knowledge and universal human values; and to promote the values of a free society amongst different sections of the Indian people.

The Human Development Campus will house a scholars' residential complex; a primary health care institute; a women's developmental and vocational centre; a computerised documentation centre; a non-formal continuous education gallery and a public library, to mention only a few of the activities on the anvil.

This is the task to which the 78-year young Dr. Indumati Parikh is devoting all her energies. She is a natural leader with the ability to delegate authority and responsibility in the best management tradition.

The ideal way to congratulate Dr. Parikh for the Award, would be for us in the *Freedom First* fraternity to offer her our support and co-operation in her endeavour to develop the Human Development Campus.

CTBT and all that ...

The Future of Arms Control

Rajesh M. Basrur

A closer analysis indicates that none of the P5 is really keen on a treaty that would be the first major symbolic commitment to a world in which nuclear weapons are marginalized.

The much-lamented collapse of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations in Geneva reflects the difficulties involved in the first major attempt to combine the hitherto separate processes of non-proliferation and arms control. Media reports from the United Nations Conference on Disarmament (CD) highlighted India's role as spoiler in not permitting the text of the draft treaty to be forwarded by the *ad hoc* negotiating committee to the plenary session of the CD. India had objected to the draft on two grounds: first, that it did not commit the five established nuclear powers (P5) to a concrete program of disarmament; and second, that it contained an "entry into force" (EIF) clause that made the signature of the three threshold nuclear states - India, Pakistan and Israel - a precondition for the Treaty to go into effect. Having co-sponsored the initial resolution proposing the Treaty, India appeared to have backed itself into a corner and left itself vulnerable to charges of insincerity.

Diplomatic Blunder?

Why India permitted itself to be caught in such an untenable position is not quite clear. Perhaps, it was merely a diplomatic blunder. At no time in the past has the Indian government assented to an arms limitation agreement that is not universally applicable. At Geneva, India apparently expected the Treaty to go through without its signature, like the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) last year. The United States was initially willing to go along, but was persuaded by Russia, China and Britain to intro-

duce the EIF clause. This was the turning point that led to India's decision to block the Treaty. It is also the telltale sign that the CTBT was derailed by more than just the obstinacy of a proliferator. A closer analysis indicates that none of the P5 is really keen on a treaty that would be the first major symbolic commitment to a world in which nuclear weapons are marginalized.

The non-proliferation component of the CTBT is of peripheral significance. The NPT has been indefinitely extended and now includes South Africa, which has rolled back its weapons program, as well as Brazil and Argentina. Maverick signatories Iraq and North Korea have been contained. Iran has its ambitions, but does not have the technical capacity to go nuclear for a long time. The US worries about rogue states, but these can break out of a CTBT just as well as the NPT. The EIF clause focuses on three "opaque" nuclear powers that have little or no incentive to carry out nuclear tests. Israel has by all accounts achieved "non-weaponized deterrence" with respect to its adversaries in the Middle East and does not need to test. India has lived without testing for all of twenty years. Both India and Pakistan believe there is a state of "existential deterrence" between them which rules out war in spite of their continuing antagonism. Above all, they are well aware that a nuclear test would invite more than the opprobrium of the international community. It would trigger economic sanctions, such as those required by the US Nuclear Proliferation Act, that would have a

debilitating effect on their economies, with unpredictable domestic political consequences. In short, there is little to be gained in terms of non-proliferation objectives by insisting that these three states sign the Treaty.

Real Commitment to Arms Control?

The arms control aspect of the CTBT is far more significant. With the end of the cold war, there was widespread consciousness of the fact that the moment was opportune for an initiative to marginalize nuclear weapons. In the United States, men of impeccable cold war credentials, such as Paul Nitze and Fred Ikle, advocated deep cuts and a radical rethinking about the role of nuclear weapons in national security. A ban on nuclear testing would be a landmark, indicating a fundamental reorientation of strategic thought away from the *necessity of nuclear deterrence towards the marginalization of nuclear weapons...* Unfortunately, the CTBT fell victim to the reluctance of the P5 to seize the opportunity. Had they approached the Treaty negotiations with a real commitment to arms control, the EIF clause would not have been decisive in negating the work of the CD.

For various reasons, the P5 have not been overly enthusiastic about nuclear arms control. All of them adhere tenaciously to the basic doctrines of nuclear deterrence, even though they are sometimes hard put to identify security threats, particularly to show how they would be threatened if everyone were to denuclearize proportionately. The flurry of arms control initiatives at the close



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of the cold war did not involve a comprehensive re-examination of cold war concepts. It was a case of trimming the fat and retaining the substance. The superpowers merely divested themselves of obsolete and unsafe weapons, focusing on elements of stability and safety, and shifted their attention to proliferation matters. The smaller nuclear powers concentrated on modernizing their arsenals. The CTBT was received less than enthusiastically by all but the US, which was a co-sponsor.

Status Symbol of Super Powers

For Russia, nuclear weapons are the last symbol of a superpower status in tatters. The Chinese see themselves as the next super-power and are steadily enhancing their nuclear capabilities while keeping their inven-

tory secret. The British and the French have also refined their deterrent capabilities. The first three were unwilling to accept the draft Treaty at Geneva without the EIF clause. The US approach at Geneva reflects an ambivalence about the CTBT. The decision to accept the EIF clause was clearly a "deal" to appease the reluctant nuclear powers. At the same time, it is evident that the US made no forceful effort to carry the others with it. This is in striking contrast to other significant decisions affecting other states, when it used sustained persuasion (the Gulf War, air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs) or disregarded their objections (the 1996 anti-terrorist law). The Clinton Administration has, in fact, produced a nuclear policy that shows considerable deference to the Penta-

gon's operational view of nuclear weapons, which has not changed since the end of the cold war. The guiding spirit of the Administration's defense policy - Colin Powell - is now closely associated with the Republican platform, which has explicitly opposed the CTBT. Domestic resistance to the CTBT is precisely because of its implications for arms control and the future of American nuclear policy. Events at Geneva may have placed India and the proliferation issue at the center of the failure of the CTBT negotiations. The politics surrounding the EIF question reveals a deeper problem. Nuclear arms control faces a difficult and uncertain future.

DR. RAJESH BASRUR is Reader in International Law, University of Mumbai.

India's Objections

E. D'Souza

By and large the majority of concerned Indians, estimated at 38% are fully supportive of the government's stance of not going with the CTBT; others are unable to offer a definite yes or nay

The approval of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) now under active consideration in Geneva, has been widely reported and commented upon at the national and international level, both in the print and electronic media. The cause *causa* has been India's steadfast and consistent objection to this flawed treaty in that it is certainly not comprehensive. The proposed comprehensive test ban does not cover laboratory, computer simulated and sub-critical tests; although the ban on tests above ground, underground, submarine and in space are catered for in the CTBT, the five nuclear 'haves' can continue to upgrade their nuclear arsenals. The other major flaw is that neither in the CTBT nor in the 61 nation

UN Disarmament Conference (CD), is the key term 'disarmament' even remotely discernible!

Consistent Stand

India's stance for total nuclear disarmament has been consistent since 1954 when the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made an impassioned and strident call for a moratorium on all nuclear testing after America tested its first hydrogen bomb far more potent than the 12 Kiloton bomb used on Hiroshima. In doing so he called for a standstill on all nuclear testing leading to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. The CTBT in its present avatar makes a mockery of this impassioned call in which Nehru saw it as a continuous process and not an end in

itself. Later, India and 28 countries of the developing 2/3rds world presented a blueprint for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons by the year 2020. If, as suggested, the nuclear five were really serious about global peace through the elimination of all nuclear weapons, they could well have focussed on this option instead of foisting on the world at CTBT which appears to serve two parochial purposes. Firstly, it will only confirm the nuclear monopoly at present enjoyed by Britain, China, France, Russia and the USA and legitimise this position.

The second reason is more subtle and may well explain why the U.S.A. is so keen to secure approval to the CTBT. Bill Clinton hopes to gain points



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in the forthcoming American Presidential elections by showing to the American electorate his diplomatic initiatives for a nuclear-peace-in-our-time-world.

USA Pressures

On the face of it would seem that India's interests would be well served to go along with the CTBT for two reasons: The US has the clout and expertise to restrain global terrorism and subversion from abroad to which India is threatened; secondly, the USA is the largest single investor in India's economic expansion. These two carrots are being dangled in front of us. But there is also the stick, as pointed out by Sunanda K Datta-Ray in his very perceptive article published in the *Straits Times* Singapore under the title "India takes moral stance against nuclear pact". He says that the stick which may well be used is the 'entry into force' (EFI) clause in which the 44 key states demand endorsement by India, leaving India no option but to apply the veto. The implication of this stick may lead to the application of 'suitable measures' (read 'sanctions') at a later date. Proof of such a step was clearly manifest when US Secretary of State Warren Christopher sent for 'our man' in Washington to issue an 'or else' warning. John Holum, Director, US Arms and Disarmament Agency gave endorsement to this stick when he landed in Geneva and spoke of 'trouble makers' obviously referring to India.

Expect Advice

Why then should India take this uncompromising stand by refusing to go the way as enunciated in clear and unambiguous terms by the President of India in his pre-Independence Day address to the nation; by our Prime Minister when addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15 making it abundantly clear that the nation would never tolerate any dilution of its national interests

and security; by political parties of all hues; and by such erudite and knowledgeable defence analysts as K Subramanyam, C Bhaskar Rao and Air Commodore Jasjit Singh of the Institute of Defence Analysis who have made it abundantly clear that India should *not* sign the CTBT in its present form and that we should keep our options open in our national interests. There are a few individuals however who feel that we should carry out a second Pokhran and then sign the CTBT of which more later. This question of being unhappy about CTBT affecting national interests is manifest in the reservations expressed by China, Pakistan and Iran.

Moral Stance

There are some, and who these are need not be spelt out, who feel that India has pretensions of becoming a nuclear power. If this was so India could well have declared its intentions after the first test explosion in 1974. India did not do so. Datta-Ray rightly says that our concern for a nuclear free world transcends national aggrandizement, a point of view that the nuclear powers just cannot grasp. That influential newspaper *The Washington Post* in a recent editorial, sharply critical of India, admitted in a back handed manner that India did have security concerns based on its nuclear-armed geopolitical rival China, and its nuclear-armed sub-continental rival Pakistan. In rather deprecating terms the *Post* implies that India historically is flaunting its higher moral code and a mission of international leadership! What's wrong in introducing the question of morality which seems to have been placed on the back burner by the nuclear powers? Nowhere has the moral aspect been raised during the run-up to the endorsement of CTBT. This is evident in the disguised ploy of the Americans to create diversions by bypassing the consensus requirement to send the CTBT to the UN General Assembly where it would not be dif-

A most comical element

For more than three decades, India has had to live in dread of the weapons of mass annihilation in its immediate neighbourhood. When in the mid-1960s, India broached the subject of nuclear-umbrella protection, it was laughed out of court by the US, Russia and Britain. The US indeed joined with China in unleashing coercive diplomacy against India in 1971. Today, it seems inconceivable that any power would provide a NATO-style nuclear guarantee to India merely to bring the CTBT into force. However, holding out ill-defined promises could be a method to being a prolonged talk feast with the intent of undermining Indian resolve, knowing that India's closing window of opportunity is short.

Renewed attempts will also be made to sell India the idea of a non-weaponised, non-tested "deterrent". As India is a land of miracle gurus, who produce diamond rings and other objects out of thin air, it attracts officially sponsored gurus from overseas peddling such Nirvana as "non-weaponised deference". The bewitching logic of the alien gurus is that without testing or building weapons India has already achieved deterrence, a feat which escaped the nuclear powers presumably because of their lower intelligence and spiritual standards. Only if Mr. Richard Nixon had known about the miracle prowess of India he would not have - in his words 14 years later - "considered using nuclear weapons" in 1971 to halt any Indian military move to decimate West Pakistan.

The most comical element of the strategy relates to the use of moral arguments to claim that a global anti-testing "norm" has been established, although the CTBT may never take legal hold. The tables are being turned on India, the inveterate moral-card player, by countries which break even legally binding commitments with impunity. The great powers' record can be seen from the way they have breached international conventions (1925 Geneva Protocol) allowed treaties to lapse by failing to ratify them (SALT I, SALT II) and held up pacts designed to disarm them (1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, 1990 US-USSR Chemical Weapons Destruction Accord). Today, the US charges China and Russia with violating the 1972 Biological Weapons convention, while Moscow sees the US anti-missile defence programme as impinging on the 1972 ABM Treaty.

Mr. Brahma Chellaney,
The Pioneer, November 5, 1996.



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difficult for them to drum up the required majority with its economic clout and awesome military power.

This conflict of principle and politics calls to mind an incident when India stood against the world on apartheid, related by Datta Ray. In 1947, Pandit Nehru nominated the charming and articulate Vijayalakshmi Pandit to present India's stand at the UN General Assembly against apartheid. Before doing so Mahatma Gandhi asked her to seek the blessings of his old South African adversary Jan Christian Smuts, which she did. Smuts blessed her but cautioned that although India would win, it would be a hollow victory! This victory was long delayed but, after 25 years of incarceration of Nelson Mandela, it did eventually become a reality. India's present moral stance for total nuclear disarmament may take time but there is no reason why it cannot also become a reality if other nations who see the writing on the wall aim for real disarmament by rejecting a fraudulent and lop sided CTBT.

Sunanda Datta-Ray's penetrating comments in the *Straits Times* Singapore drew an unusual comment in a letter to the Editor by Dr. Lau Tek Soon, Member GPC Defence and Foreign Affairs, Singapore who cautioned that Singapore should not take sides for other countries (read India) as "it will confuse our citizens besides antagonizing other countries (read China)". The editor in his note on this letter stated rather significantly, that the *Straits Times* felt that publication of such articles are efforts on its part to better serve its readers, and that earlier it had published on July 10, a piece by Prof. Ramesh Thakur of the Australian National University where he advocated that India should sign the Treaty.

Prof. Thomas Schelling, a former consultant to the US Departments of

State and Defence, in a Lee Kuan Yew Distinguished Visitors address spoke on the "Balance of Terror : 50 years Without Use of Nuclear Weapons". This writer happened to be present at the Singapore University where he noted how very persuasively Schelling impressed a captive audience that an unwritten taboo on the use of nuclear arms exists, and that even enemies avoid nuclear weapons. What he did not say was the mind boggling cost factor and why such an overkill of nuclear weaponry! As is customary of most Americans of his ilk, the anti-nuclear tradition of the use of nuclear weapons as demonstrated by the USA, he said, was not followed by potential nuclear nations like North Korea, Pakistan, Iran, India and Iraq! Significantly, no mention was made of Israel, known to possess nuclear warheads, or other such nations on the nuclear threshold. Observe the efforts of American diplomacy to discredit only Asian nations as being unreliable and irresponsible. In passing he hinted obliquely on India's intransigence in approving the CTBT.

Yet another American attempt to brainwash individuals became manifest in an article by John FD Burns in a recent article in the *New York Times* reproduced in the *Straits Times*. It predictably pertains to India's refusal to go along with the CTBT in its present avatar as manifest in Prime Minister Deva Gowda's Independence Day address. It would appear that Burns was present in Delhi. He comments on the Indian Government's decision to continue to oppose the CTBT on the Nehruvian stand of 1954, consistently upheld by India, that curbing nuclear arms be linked to total elimination, and with it, the nuclear monopoly of the five 'haves'. It would appear that the Americans are floating the idea (is it a face saving device?) that, to quote Burns, "the fear of China spurs India to reject the Test Ban Treaty". He goes

on to say on traditional demands that "India's public explanations for rejecting the test ban treaty more than 40 years after Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru became the first world leader to call for a ban on nuclear blasts, have been linked to their total elimination, and with it, the 'nuclear monopoly' held by the acknowledged nuclear weapons states". He even quotes Air Commodore Jasjit Singh of the Institute of Defence Analysis as stating: "China, rapidly and recently had emerged as a super power of sorts with one of the world's fastest growing economies and nuclear forces to match, and this has forced India to re-evaluate its strategic posture". China today has 205 Ballistic capability at the moment but it is now learnt that Pakistan, with Chinese blue prints, proposes to manufacture missiles. He goes on to say that Pakistan has 20 nuclear warheads as against India's 60 to 100 though India outguns Pakistan vastly in conventional forces. Disinformation?

Popular Support

What was equally surprising was the obnoxious attitude of the British representative at the Treaty talks. He had the gall to state, presumably in exasperation at India's implacable stand, that it was "wriggling like a worm on a hook", forgetting that the days of the Raj are far behind us. Surely this statement reflects the desperation of the five nuclear powers to get the CTBT as it now stands, approved! Our Ambassador at the talks stood unmoved.

Whereas America and its cohorts do not hesitate to be critical of India's missile programme, it has enabled Israel to test fire the US financed Arrow 2 anti missile missile! National interests?

By and large the majority of concerned Indians, estimated at 38% are fully supportive of the Government's stance of not going with the CTBT; others are unable to offer a



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definite yes or nay.

One More Pokhran

Recently, the Forum of Foreign Affairs, Mumbai Chapter, invited Mr. A. Venkateswaran, erstwhile Foreign Secretary and 'our man' in Washington and Peking, very knowledgeable in matters of nuclear disarmament, to address an interested Mumbai public on the nuclear problem. In the Chair was the well-known Gandhian and freedom fighter Dr Usha Mehta. This erudite and well informed ex-bureaucrat and ambassador surprisingly came out with the recommendation based on his involvement in such matters that India should embark on a second nuclear test and then sign the CTBT.

He admitted that India had a history dating from 1954 of opposing nuclear arms and calling for a total ban on nuclear weapons. Yet, he added, by carrying out the first nuclear test in Pokhran, India sent out a signal to Pakistan not to embark on any adventure against India. According to him this warning worked until 1989 when Pakistan developed its own nuclear capability. It was only then that Pakistan felt secure enough to launch its low intensity campaign in Kashmir knowing full well that its newly acquired nuclear capability would deter India from unleashing a conventional attack against it, not even against the training camps for militants. Perhaps this argument would be acceptable but he failed to comment on the Chinese nuclear threat with its 3000 nuclear warheads. Would our deterrent be a credible one? Is it not a fact that the main threat to India's stability is from China? This writer questioned him on whether India today was politically stable and economically viable to launch yet another nuclear test and what would we achieve by so doing when we had already proved our capability of becoming a nuclear weapons state after the Pokhran explosion in 1974. Would we, in this land of Gandhi ever resort

to a nuclear first strike? Our track record in four post independence wars speaks otherwise.

Lieutenant General S. K. Sinha, is known for his erudition and grasp of national affairs. He endorsed Mr Venkateswaran's proposal to carry out one more nuclear test and then sign the CTBT. His argument took the tack that the people of India would not tolerate an invasion from wherever. In the past various invaders crossed our borders and were to some extent successful. This should not happen again. This writer pointed out to him that in the hoary past it was possible for invaders to do so as India was not one nation but a number of principalities where the divide and rule game could be played. Today, India is one nation of 950 million people, the world's largest democracy, with a secular constitution, and with the ability of drawing ranks when its security is endangered, making it very difficult for a foreign hostile power to occupy it.

Surprisingly, Dr Usha Mehta, a known and dedicated Gandhian, supported the recommendation to go nuclear on the plea that Gandhiji, who was always conscious of India's security, would have agreed. Would he? Gandhiji condemned in the strongest possible terms the catastrophic indignities heaped upon mankind when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, followed by a second on August 9, 1945, on Nagasaki which was not even the projected target! This writer called upon his experience to describe the horrors he was privy to when he visited the hospital in Hiroshima. Would a nation like India ever undertake a first strike?

Defending India

There can be little doubt that India's stance in not approving the CTBT as it now stands is vindicated. There can be little doubt that it will

do so if a time bound programme for total nuclear disarmament is incorporated in the treaty.

What then should India do to prove it's bonafides? Firstly, it should uphold its stand, even at the expense of using the veto and facing the consequences stated earlier and the possibility of being excluded in the revamped council of five permanent members.

Secondly, knowing full well that it could be a target for a first strike attack by a hostile power and that the chances of a second strike retaliation are remote, it should address itself to developing a credible and effective damage limitation system which is totally lacking today even in a prime target like Mumbai. Realistically, we do not have the wherewithal to totally eliminate nuclear peripheral powers in the absence of a massive nuclear deterrent.

As the immediate nuclear threat may well be a free dropped nuclear device by aircraft flying in a lo-lo configuration over the Arabian Sea, we should seriously consider investing in an AWACS type aircraft.

We must use diplomatic initiatives to win over our immediate neighbours by impressing on them that we are not interested in territorial aggrandizement.

We would streamline and hone our conventional armed forces and equip them with efficient high tech weapons and reduce the existing tail to teeth ratio.

We should improve our unifying secular structure to present a united front to any possible transgressor. The message that it should carry is that 950 million Indians cannot be taken for granted.

We should flex our potential economic muscle to ensure a good



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quality of life for our people.

We should stamp out ruthlessly all attempts to destabilize the country through communal conflict.

Then and only then can India stake its claim to use its moral authority.

Such measures can and will ensure our security even against potential nuclear powers.

One cannot but state in conclusion the very spirited and dignified performance of our ambassador at the CTBT talks in Geneva, Ms Arundhati Ghose who refused to be intimidated by the likes of Stephen Lodgegar, John Hollum and the so called heavyweights representing the nuclear 'haves' who did all in their power to pressurize her. That she stuck to her guns is a

tribute to her.

Postscript

That India has taken this conscious moral stance may be gauged from the fact that it knows full well that it may be outvoted for the single vacant seat for an Asian Nation, against Japan, the other contender. This may result in a temporary setback but in the final analysis, its stance will be more than vindicated.

Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, at a recent talk to the youth of Mumbai, asked for his views on the CTBT unhesitatingly upheld India's position on the ground that the nuclear 'five' had no business or moral right to arrogate to themselves the nuclear monopoly: After all India is the largest democracy

in the world and its 950 million people cannot be ignored. He implied that we should not bow to the "I'm OK you're OK" syndrome.

(Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza (Retd.) was present in Hiroshima a few months after the first atomic bomb was dropped on hapless Hiroshima, when his unit, 1/5 MLI was part of 268 Indian Infantry Brigade Group, British Common Wealth Occupation Forces Japan. In 1955 he attended a tactical exercise with troops with the 11 Armoured Division, British Army of the Rhine on Luneburg Heath West Germany in which the use of tactical atomic cannon was being studied. He has been an ardent advocate against nuclear weapons in the print and electronic media both in India and abroad, and through talks to groups like the Rotary. He is an active member of the World Consultative Association of Retired Generals and Admirals head-quartered in London actively pursuing, inter alia, a total ban on nuclear weapons).

MAJ. GEN. E. D'SOUZA (Retd.) is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

An Exercise in Futility

S. S. Bankeshwar

It is only the nuclear powers, especially the United States of America, armed to the teeth, which are keen on nuclear non-proliferation. They do not want any inroads into their nuclear monopoly. They are prepared to give any aid - economic, financial, industrial, technological, and even arms or military aid - to potential nuclear powers like India, provided such countries give up their nuclear option. They would not mind if such countries become economically powerful like Japan.

The economic power or wealth of such non-nuclear nations will however be a myth if they have no nuclear defence against nuclear blackmail by nuclear powers.

Nuclear Disaster Inevitable?

All talks of nuclear non-

proliferation or nuclear treaty are useless and a waste of time, even if all nuclear arsenals belonging to the nuclear powers, are destroyed, if there is no guarantee that the world will be free from nuclear wars, because what has been invented cannot be disinvented! We cannot avert a nuclear war; we can only postpone it. We should, therefore, be prepared for nuclear disaster.

All said and done, 'Might is still Right'. The world respects only Power. Mighty powerful nuclear nations can do anything and get away with it, defying international opinion.

The United States has so far carried out 1149 tests, Russia 1100, France 209, Britain 45, China 43, as against India's solitary explosion at Pokhran!

Although China has the worst record in human rights violations, and has carried out 43 nuclear tests, the United States has rewarded it with the 'most favoured nation status'. The same United States has, however, threatened to punish India, if the latter were to carry out a second test at Pokhran!

It follows that India too will be rewarded with the 'most favoured nation status' by the United States, if she carries out another 43 nuclear tests, i.e. one test more than what China has carried out so far!

Now that both Benazir Bhutto, the sacked Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Nawaz Sharif, her predecessor, have confirmed that Pakistan does possess nuclear bombs, how are we to confront their nuclear blackmail or



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nuclear menace? By issuing bold and brave statements on the floor of our Parliament or delivering pompous speeches from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day?

The Issue of Morality

India has never been defeated in the past for lack of military skill or bravery. It was always the superior military equipment of the enemy on the one hand and the disunity of her people on the other that caused her defeat.

But now, if India is defeated, it will no longer be for want of unity or bravery, but the need for clear thinking and the need for parity, if not superiority, in the area of nuclear weaponry, and because of her indecision, motivated by her obsession for foreign aid and investment, and her concern for 'international opinion'.

Now, to be moralistic about the nuclear bomb while acquiescing in the making of conventional bombs or weapons is to set one's face not against the killing, but the mode of killing. When death is a certainty, it is no consolation to the victims to be asked to choose between death by a nuclear bomb or death by a conventional bomb. Nor is the seeking of external nuclear protection any less immoral than nuclear production at home.

In fact, to seek nuclear protection or advantage on the cheap is a miserable masquerade for our cowardice. This in fact means that, while we shall not defend ourselves by using our own nuclear bombs, we would not mind our allies retaliating on our behalf against our enemies by using their nuclear bombs!

Only if we were to abjure all methods of warfare, which end in the destruction of human lives and property, can we adopt a moral posture on the issue of the nuclear bomb. But, can we? In the situation created by Pakistani or Chinese nuclear blackmail

India has only three alternatives:

1. To do nothing and leave everything to god and fate, which is the policy of our Gandhian moralists.

It is only the nuclear powers, especially the United States of America, armed to the teeth, which are keen on nuclear non-proliferation. They do not want any inroads into their nuclear monopoly.

2. To ask for the nuclear umbrella from nuclear powers.
3. To make nuclear bombs ourselves and be self reliant to defend our country.

Making vague statements that we shall keep our nuclear options open or that we shall use our nuclear know-how only for peaceful purposes cannot ensure our defence against nuclear attack by China or Pakistan. There is no time to lose.

The major lesson that we have learnt from our past wars with Pakistan is that there is no substitute for self reliance. We can no longer rely on the guarantees of other countries, when our freedom is threatened.

There is no defence against nuclear attack except a massive counter attack - the very fear of which prevents the attack. If we do not want India to be destroyed by Pakistani or Chinese nuclear bombs, and if we do not want India to become a nuclear protectorate degenerating into a political protectorate, then the one and only deterrent against a Pakistani or Chinese nuclear attack is for India to be a nuclear power herself.

It is the balance of terror that made

both America and the former Soviet Union realise the need for peaceful co-existence and *detente*.

No price is too great for our country's defence. It is not a question of whether we can afford to make nuclear weapons, but whether we can afford not to. Nations are not defended without tears. The burden of slavery under Pakistani or Chinese vassalage would be much more galling than the economic burden of manufacturing nuclear bombs.

The nuclear powers should first diagnose the cause of nuclear proliferation before thinking of a remedy. If they are genuinely concerned about the dangers of a nuclear war, let them first destroy their own nuclear arsenals, before pontificating about nuclear war or nuclear proliferation.

MR. S. S. BANKESHWAR is a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First* and Feature Editor of Research Feature News Service.

Why India Should Sign the CTBT

The CTBT as it is proposed now does not . . . in any manner restrict India's traditionally accepted concept of 'keeping the options open'. The CTBT bans only nuclear tests. But then since India does not have a policy, and has never stated any desire or need to conduct any such test, it can take any other action it may want to take to 'keep its options open' without violating the CTBT. Therefore, unless India is serious about its nuclear options, and that implies further tests, there is no justification for not acceding to the CTBT under the rationale of national security.

G. Balachandran,
Times of India, June 26, 1996.

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Liberalism In India

Awaiting a Hitler?

Sharad Joshi

There is reason to believe that ancient India was the cradle of tenets that form the core of modern day liberalism. Traditional Indian societies were generally pluralistic.

Liberalism is far from being the dominant or even the mainstream school of thought in India. Worse still, most consider liberalism as an idea imported from abroad, derogatory to national pride. Within the country, the cry goes that liberalism suits the convenience of the affluent and the strong minority and militates against the welfare security net that the weaker masses of society need so badly. The defunct Nehruvian socialism is being replaced not by the vibrant forces of liberal entrepreneurship but by lumpen chauvinistic and communal jingoism. Socialism is yielding place to fascism and the fastest riding comets on the Indian horizon flaunt unabashedly their admiration for Hitler.

The liberals, on the other hand, are handicapped under the electoral laws which require that to be eligible for registration and recognition political parties must swear allegiance to socialism and so reaffirm in a specific affidavit before the Election Commission. The situation is serious and fraught with grave consequences. If India goes the wrong way, even if temporarily, the cost could be very high and the long term consequences could well spread to other regions as well. The doctrine as also the 'realpolitik' of liberalism in India would bear close scrutiny.

Seven Centuries of Liberal Eclipse

Is it true that liberalism is an alien transplant on Indian soil? Liberal writers are partly to be blamed for this mistaken impression. Most of them come from the city-based English-speaking western-cultured class of elites. In their writings, they trace the beginnings of liberalism to J. S. Mill

and Adam Smith and of Indian liberalism to Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale, Raja Rammohan Roy, Narmad, Phule, Agarkar, *et al.* These great masters remained briefly on the centre stage in the early days of British rule between 1860 and 1920, and were swept aside by the tide of nationalist-chauvinistic and socialist forces. Liberal writers have left an impression that the pre-British indigenous culture was one of despotic authority tyrannizing subjects resigned to their pre-ordained fate. Apart from being untrue, this notion has given rise to a broad feeling that this alien phenomenon is unlikely to take roots here. Indian liberals are, at least partly, responsible for their predicament.

The 'despotic rulers and tyrannized masses' scenario certainly fit the situation in India after the Muslim invasions in the 13th century. Aggressors can never rule a conquered territory through liberal democracy. Power in occupied territories, not only political but also educational, economic and even cultural, tends to get centred in the political government. Liberalism in India got stamped out as far as the non-muslim subjects were concerned, except perhaps at the village level.

Early Polycentred Society

That does not mean liberalism was unknown to India. In fact, there is reason to believe that ancient India was the cradle of tenets that form the core of modern day liberalism. Traditional Indian societies were generally pluralistic. The king, kshatriya by caste, was the unquestioned sovereign who was venerated as the very incarnation of super-god 'Vishnu' but had little power over the seats of learning and

over the poor but scholarly brahmins. Rajaji was fond of quoting a Gujarati proverb meaning, 'Where the king is a trader his subjects are paupers'. The political head had little to do in matters of learning and trade.

This polycentrism may not, because of its caste basis, pass modern day scrutiny; but it constituted, at least in theory, a rare combination of muzzled monarchy and social prestige divorced from both wealth and power. The reality might not have been fully as rosy as all that; that such values were cherished at all so early in history is itself remarkable even when compared to the situation then prevailing in Europe, China or Japan.

Cradle of Liberal Tenets

The liberalism of ancient Indian society does not appear to have been limited to superficial social and political structures. The ancient Indians, particularly of the mainstream 'Vedanta' school propounded theses that came very close to the philosophical assumptions of modern liberalism - uniqueness of the individual, rejection of absolutism, skepticism of authority and trust in the efficacy of competition.

Firstly, the 'Vedanta' system held all qualitative attributes to be illusory and refuted all claims of authority by temporal institutions claiming divine contacts. Truth, beauty and goodness represent eternal pursuits - paths and not stations - on which even the mighty 'Shiva' wends his way.

Secondly, since the journey is the thing, every individual charts his course according to his own light. Despite the illusory nature of all existence one is

not to renounce action but pursue with full devotion all undertakings without any attachment.

Thirdly, there is no contradiction between the unitary and the holistic. The lights of an individual are consistent with the object of the Universe. All intermediaries like Church and Planning Commission are pointless and counter-productive.

The tyranny of a monarch or of a church would have been inconceivable in the 'Vedanta' society. It is a pity that those wise men sought to increase their degrees of freedom through abstinence rather than through generation of affluence. This made them vulnerable to attacks by barbarian hordes. Worse still, they succumbed to the vainglory that they had come to the end of history and could not do better than continue in static equilibrium till the end of time. Thus they ordained the disastrous caste system - division of labour by accident of birth - resulting in internal contradictions that were to prove so disastrous.

Plethora of Statists

The British who, unlike the Muslim invaders, had a liberal background, established the rule of law and in many ways treated India as a laboratory for model-building. Their efforts to bring equality in the caste-ridden land were effectively thwarted by the revolt of 1857 and, thereafter they limited their rule to administration and colonial exploitation. Maintenance of the Raj, naturally, had overriding priority. Consequently British rule, though soft by colonial standards, was far from being a liberal democracy.

The coming of the British gave rise to the grand masters of Indian liberalism, who generally held the view that freedom without equality would be pointless and that a period of probation under the British would help in removing the inequities of Indian society. It would also give birth to a genuine nation of unified people in a new era of freedom. But there were other schools which pandered to popular chauvinistic cravings more effectively.

Socio-Religious Movements

Firstly, there were a number of socio-religious reformist movements which argued that there was nothing basically wrong with Hindu society. All it needed was some face-lift and a few corrections here and there. Hindus were divided and needed to be forged into unity through community activities. These movements prompted various activities like community or mass prayers on the lines of the Christian prayers and Muslim 'namaz'. This was tantamount to abandoning the essence of the Hindu's individualistic relationship with one's personal God. There were others like Tilak who used public worship of God Ganesha for political mobilization.

Secondly, there were movements that sought to glorify indigenous traditions and history in order to concretise the idea of a Hindu nation - yet another attempt to follow the example of the victors. They were ostensibly upholding Hinduism, but in fact jettisoning its precious core frightened by the engulfing storm. The present day communal forces - BJP, RSS, VHP, Shiv Sena - are descendants of these movements.

Oppressed Communities

A third force that sprung up was basically a reaction to the attempts of the high-castes to arrogate to themselves the leadership of the entire Hindu people including those castes and communities that were not allowed to enter Hindu temples or to touch Hindu scriptures. These were denied all access to education, decent livelihood and were considered untouchable. Ambedkar, Periyar, Ramaswami Naicker and others organised certain castes and communities from the backward classes. The oppressed communities have traditionally been artisans, and largely self-employed workers. A programme for the de-strangulation of village industries would have been appropriate for the general advancement of these people. It is strange that the leaders of the oppressed classes failed to evolve an economic programme of this type. To this date, the modern day descendants of this movement are infatuated with

reservation of jobs.

Gandhian Platform

Gandhi represented a platform much truer to Hindu thought that upheld at the same time some sort of ecumenism - the identity of all faiths. The Mahatma worked actively for social reform, propounded a village-based constructive programme for economic advancement and introduced a spiritual dimension in political activity which was to become his hallmark. Truth and non-violence were his creed and he was opposed to the very idea of a state which could not exist without violence. Gandhi was as close as one can come to the idea of an anarchist society. Faced with the harsh realities of life, he made concessions and compromises in his later years to such an extent that he accepted at one stage the need to nationalize all basic industries. Nevertheless, Gandhism essentially stood for minimal and decentralised Government.

Failure of the Nehruvian Model

The Russian revolution, claims of socio-economic achievements by the new czars there and the anti-imperialist tirades of these latter had struck a sympathetic chord and endeared socialism to the Indian masses as also intellectuals. The Congress Socialist Party was formed within the Congress itself, Nehru was himself full of social effervescence since his visits to the USSR. Socialism in India meant not nationalization but rather ownership by the toiler. But the State was to be the instrument of this transformation.

In sum, the 'Vedanta' tradition of liberalism got suppressed under successive foreign rulers and the forces that participated in the freedom movement were all statist in the sense that they looked upon the State as the instrument for the desired transformation. All of them favoured a strong interventionist State. Gandhi's anarchism proved to be little more than the scoring point of an obscurantist vision. Independent India, instead of marking the first step in the direction of dissolution of the State, as the Mahatma envisioned, became an infamous example of the licence-permit

regime with all its inevitable consequences: poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, indebtedness, an inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy, criminalisation of politics etc. The end of the Cold War pulled the rug from under the feet of many a tinpot socialist regime. The Nehruvian socialist edifice had begun to crumble.

This ought to gladden the hearts of all freedom-loving people who have suffered for almost half a century under the heels of a moth eaten planning regime. A regime which worked, in effect, as crony capitalism - everything is banned unless you have the necessary contacts. Unfortunately, they find themselves caught between the devil and the deep sea.

The fall of the socialist brand of statism, however, holds little promise for liberal democrats. The socialists are fighting a not so valiant last ditch battle advocating welfare programmes, protection of the environment and a policy of doles. The economic *impasse* has caused disillusionment in the public mind over the capacity of any government to do any collective good.

The situation is very similar to the post Versailles situation in Germany. The foreign exchange crisis that forced the then ruling party into start talking of economic reforms has been overcome, at least for the time being, without any improvement in the balance of trade. The fiscal deficit is running uncontrolled. Political stability is a thing of the past. It only needs one reversal, economic or political, to put the people in a mood to welcome any comic-book Hitler. A good number of aspirants are already hovering around stoking the fires of age-old animosities and preaching communal and caste hatred.

Fascism to Replace Socialism?

Out of the various political forces which emerged after the advent of the Raj, the anarchist Gandhian school has fallen by the wayside and become irrelevant. Nehruvian socialism stands discredited but the dynasty continues to be venerated all the same. Left-of-Centre parties are trying to sensitize the nation to the issue of 'reverse in-

justice' through reservation of jobs in a bureaucracy that has become the most difficult burden for the country. It is the Hindu chauvinistic parties capitalising on issues like desecration or demolition of this temple or that, the absence of a common civil code, Bangladesh immigrants, or the status of Jammu & Kashmir, to mention a few, that appear to be benefiting from the situation.

The Hindu political parties are understandably taking a protectionist position in their economic programme to reinforce their patriotic image. They are drawing good response to their opposition to the entry of multinationals into India.

Where do the liberal forces stand in all this? Organising liberals is almost a contradiction in terms and hence a formidable task in any country. How does one set about organising a highly individualistic people opposed to the very idea of authority?

The Swatantra Party

Rajaji, who had a very high standing among the followers of Gandhi and who became the first Indian Governor General of independent India, had correctly foreseen the disaster that Nehru's licence-permit quota Raj would produce. He founded the first liberal political party in India, the Swatantra Party. It started off well but was swept out in the Indira wave after her Bangladesh triumph in 1971.

Swatantra Bharat Party

In 1994, an attempt was made to create a new liberal party, Swatantra Bharat. It polled over a million votes in the elections to the Maharashtra State assembly but secured only two seats. Its chances in forthcoming elections are negligible since its cannot even register itself without dishonestly swearing allegiance to socialism.

Economic reforms have come to a grinding halt. The government considers itself under obligation to take recourse to blatantly populist measures. A serious programme of liberalisation will need to restore law and order, clear the Augean stables of the judiciary, cut down the forest of eco-

nomic regulations, dismantle bureaucracy, restore fundamental rights under the Constitution and work out a reasonable exit policy. Such a formidable agenda would require a strong government. There is no prospect of this happening in the near or distant future.

Chances for a Liberal Polity

In fact, very few appear to be interested in a liberal polity. The beneficiaries of the socialist epoch are trying hard to thwart reforms in every possible way. Political leaders have got used to earning commissions for securing government favours. Industrialists think they cannot do without state protection. Employees with their cushy jobs and side-incomes want the bureaucracy to expand and are not enthusiastic about privatization. Mafias control politicians and governments and would not like to see their underground empires demolished through liberalisation. The only two categories of people who would be interested in liberalisation and globalisation would be the farmers who have suffered hefty negative subsidies and consumers who have been fleeced by the socialist monopolist and have had to pay exorbitant prices for shoddy goods. The prospects are far from bright.

The Indian Liberals' only Ally

But history gives ample evidence that liberty blossoms in the most unexpected of places and at seemingly impossible times. The world is moving towards demolishing walls that have fragmented and distorted the world. India could not remain for long an island of statism. Indian history shows that our people believe in a minimal decency and are capable of fighting against tyrants if an Indira Gandhi comes along. An Indian Hitler will have to be exceptionally lucky to survive for any length of time. This much hope ought to be enough for seekers of liberty and equality.

MR. SHARAD JOSHI is the founder of the Shetkari Sanghatana and the Swatantra Bharat Party.

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India's Premier Typewriter.

In the Cause of Tibetan Freedom

The People's Republic of China shut down the offices of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in China. The Foundation's commitment to the Tibetan struggle thus forced it to sacrifice its long standing work in China.

Addressing the Second International Conference of Tibet Support Groups at the historic Wasserwerk (the old Parliament building) in Bonn, Germany, His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasised that the Tibetan freedom struggle should not be viewed as anti-Chinese or anti-China. He considered the international support more pro-justice rather than pro-Tibet. To further clarify his point, His Holiness said: "A clear indication of this is the growing support for and solidarity with the non-violent Tibetan freedom struggle from among the Chinese people."

This was in sharp contrast to the rigid stand the Chinese Government had adopted in opposing the Conference. They forced the German Government to withdraw financial support to the Conference; they banned the activities of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in China when the Foundation stood its ground to go ahead with the Conference. His Holiness's words were more like a demonstration to the whole world that "the issue of Tibet cannot be resolved through the use of force." It is only "through negotiation we can find a mutually acceptable solution." He also found fault with the Chinese belief that the entire Tibetan struggle relied on one person, the Dalai Lama and if the Dalai Lama died, the entire Tibetan struggle would collapse.

Dr. Otto Count Lambsdorff, the Chairman of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in his address pointed out that His Holiness's sense of direction had been clear, his loyalty to non-

violence and democracy consistent. He cautioned the audience by saying that international bodies and other institutions had failed to give effect to their resolutions, and economic gains had continued to override humanitarian concerns. This was compounded by the world's silence on these issues. The time had come, he said, for non-governmental organisations like the Friedrich Naumann Foundation to shoulder greater responsibility to help Tibetans in their legitimate political demands and their right to individual freedom with dignity.

The Conference

Sino-Tibetan Dialogue, Democracy and Future Tibet, Tibet Support Groups (TSGs): their Achievements and Expansion, Presentation of Strategies and Plan of Action, Lobbying Strategies, Campaigning and Networking were some of the themes the conference touched upon. Among the

Jurgen Axer, Regional Representative South Asia, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Mr. Tim Nunn, TSG UK, Stewart Johnson TSG Australia, MsEva Herzer, International Campaign for Tibet, Washington, and Dr. Jan Anderson. At the end of the two and a half days conference, a joint plan of action was adopted by the Tibet Support Groups to be implemented in their respective countries. More than 250 delegates from 56 countries participated in the Conference convened to review the accomplishments of the Tibet Support Groups in the past six years, and to establish a more co-ordinated network for future campaigns and strategies.

The Conference was jointly organised by the Tibetan Government in Exile and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

During the Closing Ceremony both Mr. Rabi Ray the former speaker of the Indian Parliament and Mr. Schwarz-Schilling Member of the German Parliament lauded the steps taken by the TSGs and commended the organisers for the courage they had shown in hosting the conference. A most encouraging statement for all the Tibet Support Groups was made by Mr. Rolf Berndt, the Executive Chairman of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, when he offered the

Foundation as a platform for the third Tibet Support Groups' Conference after three years.

Pressure from China

There was tremendous pressure



COURTESY: Liberal Times, Vol.IV, No.2, 1996.

prominent speakers were Kalon Tashi Wangdi and Mr. Tempa Tsering both from the Tibetan Government in Exile, Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, Chairman of the Tibetan Assembly in Exile, Dr.

from the People's Republic of China to cancel the Conference. The German Foreign Ministry too expressed its reservations on the Conference and the financial support for the Conference was withdrawn by the Ministry of Development Co-operation. The Foundation still remained resolute in its stand and went ahead with the Conference in full vigour. Press appeals were made to the German public for donations to finance the Conference. Though there is a long way to go before the required amount is collected, thanks to the sympathetic public and Tibet supporters, funds are still trickling in. Many of the Overseas Tibet Offices have also helped by collecting donations from local Tibetans. In retaliation the People's Republic of China shut down the offices of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in China. The Foundation's commitment to the Tibetan struggle thus, forced it to sacrifice its long standing work in China. The retrograde steps by the People's Republic of China and the German Government evoked strong protests in the media.

Fall Out of the Conference

During the national convention of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) a joint resolution was passed condemning the pressure exerted by the People's Republic of China and applauded the Foundation for the decision it had taken to organise the conference despite the pressures it was subjected to. The resolution stated that those who live in freedom have the responsibility to speak for the right to freedom of those who are deprived of it. The FDP invited the German Government to intensify its request to the Chinese Government in Peking to react to the efforts of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile for a constructive dialogue. A similar resolution was also passed by the Young Liberals.

German Parliament Resolution

A German parliament resolution which was hanging fire for several months, was unanimously passed and supported by the German Government a few days after the second Tibet Support Groups Conference. The three

page resolution which was passed by the members of Parliament belonging to the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, and the Bundnis90/The Greens, accused China of eradicating Tibet's cultural identity and perpetuating human rights violations. It called on the German Government to increase its efforts to persuade the Government of the People's Republic of China to respect human rights which are accepted world-wide and stop human rights violations against Tibetans. It also called on the Chinese Government to react positively to the efforts of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile for a constructive dialogue.

Beijing's Retaliation

In retaliation, Beijing cancelled the visit of the Foreign Minister Mr. Kinkel to China, while Germany cancelled the visit of some Cabinet Ministers to Beijing. Clearly Bonn and Beijing were caught in a political feud, ripples of which have spread through the whole range of Sino-German relations. China found Germany's low key Tibet policy acceptable, but the recent developments came as a shock. Germany, in China's view seemed to be moving closer to recognising Tibet. This feud could harm Germany's position as China's major European trading partner. Bilateral trade stands at DM 27 billion. German investment in China include a huge Volkswagen project, a credit line for building an underground railway in Shanghai and a DM 6 billion BASF plan to build an integrated petrochemical plant in Nanjing.

To the Friedrich Naumann Foundation it was more than just organising a conference, it meant standing by its beliefs, its liberal principles to support and promote basic freedoms of the people and democracy not only in Tibet but around the world. This Conference clearly succeeded in highlighting and bringing the Tibetan struggle for freedom not only amongst the German public but to the media and the German Government, who may now like to rethink some of its policies.

COURTESY: *Liberal Times*

TIBET : THE FACTS - I

INTRODUCTION

TIBET existed as an independent state for almost two thousand years before the communist Chinese invaded and occupied the country in 1949.

Tibet is situated at the very heart of Asia between China and India, covering a total area of 2.5 million sq.km. It is inhabited by the Tibetan people with a culture and way of life totally different from that of the peoples of the neighbouring countries. Tibetans have developed a unique and extremely rich culture and spiritual traditions, a distinct language and a large body of literature and exquisite works of art. Tibetan civilization, which goes back to thousands of years, is a sophisticated and valuable contribution to the heritage of mankind.

Today, it is in danger of complete destruction at the hands of the Chinese authorities. Tibet's culture and national identity are being systematically destroyed and replaced by Chinese substitutes. More than 1.2 million Tibetans, about one sixth of the total population, have died in Tibet since 1949 due to political persecution, imprisonment, torture and famine. Over 6000 of Tibet's rich religious and other cultural centres have been destroyed. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, spiritual and political leader of the six million Tibetans, was forced to leave Tibet in 1959 and seek asylum in India. Around 85,000 Tibetan refugees followed him at that time and sought refuge primarily in India, Nepal and Bhutan.

(to be continued)

The Eleventh Commandment

'Thou Shalt Not Disclose'

N. B. Grant

"Security restrictions - foreign nationals not allowed", says a notice in one of the Service Golf Clubs in Pune. There seems to be a fear that, some top secret military secrets may pass hands on the 19th hole - the club bar. If Moses gave the world the Ten Commandments, the Ministry of Defence has promulgated an eleventh one - "Thou Shalt Not Disclose".

Recently, while giving a talk at the Defence Services Staff College, Mr. Khuswant Singh was brutally frank when he said that, in India, there was a vast gulf of incomprehension, mutual ignorance and distrust between the general public, the media and the armed forces, and also between the military and the bureaucracy. Whereas with the media representing the lay public, there is an apparent paucity of even common military knowledge, leave alone a desire to acquire any specialised knowledge of the armed forces, with the defence department, there is a deliberate attempt to suppress information from reaching the public whom it is supposed to protect.

Secrecy and Security

We seem to have mixed up secrecy with security, and do not seem to know the difference between information and secrets. Possibly, ours must be the only country in the democratic world where, in this age of satellite imagery, it is still forbidden to take photographs at aerodromes, dams sites, bridges and even railway stations, lest we give away some secrets of James Watt's steam engine, which by the way, we still use. If one totals up such areas, there will be hardly any structure or place left in this country which remains unclassified. What a contrast with the USA, where one is allowed to visit and take photographs of satellites, missiles, and even the unoccupied rooms of the Pentagon. With us even to enter South Block is a feat in itself.

It is not for a moment being

advocated, that we as a nation must not be concerned with security - far from it. How can we afford not to be, when Pakistan and China are continually breathing down our necks, and the countries of the developed world are forever seeking opportunities for thwarting our endeavour to succeed. However, when security becomes an obsession, and tends towards mysticism, it not only becomes counter-productive but even dangerous. Just one example should suffice to bring out the absurd lengths to which this is carried out.

Absurdities

Take the case of the liberal use of the APO address of our military formations. A typical case is that of a regiment located in Delhi Cantonment. Even though the official address of the unit is 56 APO, scores of mail, specially from local civilians, invariably come addressed to:

Commander X Regt
Chitral Lines
Delhi Cant. c/o. 56 APO.

Little is it known that, although 3 years have since passed the casualty list of Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka still remains on the secret list and has not been published. So far, there is not one authentic book, or an official report, published on the Bangladesh war of 1971. However, the one that takes the cake is, that even after 30 years, the Henderson-Brooks' report on the Chinese 1962 debacle, is still top secret, although almost everyone connected with that fiasco is now dead and gone.

One does not realise that suppression of desired military information ultimately boomerangs on the armed forces themselves. For example, due to lack of information on the deployment of the army in the Punjab, J&K, and Assam, we have come under the scrutiny of Amnesty International (AI) and even in the UN. To make matters worse, by not allowing AI to come anywhere near these areas, we have only made the false charges of troops atrocities stick.

Needless Censorship

It is bad enough that publication of military matters is discouraged in the press, however, even articles in Service journals are subject to severe scrutiny and censorship, as no serving officer may publish anything, anywhere, without literally each word of the text being approved by the Military Intelligence Directorate. Even an article on gardening would have to be so scrutinised, lest it has some top secret military overtones hidden in the names of the flowers.

A glance at some of the foreign journals, which we are still fortunate to receive will show that if anything they encourage officers to write boldly and give out their views even on policy matters, no matter how controversial they are. What is even more surprising is, that in these journals, no attempt is made either to conceal their organisations or even their order of battle. In this connection, it was not surprising to read the other day an article appearing in the *American Military Review*, wherein not only the exact

locations of their cruise missile sites were given, but even the type of equipment which they contained. Such information would not only be sacrilege to our journals, but the officer author would be in danger of being court martialled!

Keep the Public in the Dark

One of the most telling effects of these types of secrecy, is in keeping the tax paying public in the dark regarding defence matters over which they have no control, but which they should. Whereas in countries like the USA and UK, parliaments, and more so the media, debate for months on end defence spending, including defence strategy and purchase of equipment, in our Lok Sabha, the entire defence budget is passed without a murmur in just an afternoon session. This has often resulted in the past, purchase of the world's most expensive defence equipment system of doubtful military value - the purchase of the third aircraft carrier is a classic example of this. It has now become a standing joke that, if our 'kept in the dark' public or media want any information on the Indian army, they can get it over the counter from the British or US Institute of Strategic Studies, and of course, from Jane's fighting series.

The Vietnam Experience

We haven't yet learnt the lesson of Vietnam in suppressing information. Although the US won every battle there, yet it lost the war. This was a direct result of the US government, but more so the then US President, of not taking the American public, and even the army, into its confidence, regarding the true aims and objectives of that campaign. President Bush however saw to it that Vietnam would never be repeated in the Gulf war, where right from the word go, the nation was taken into complete confidence and kept in the picture at every stage of Operation Desert Storm. The administration, the military, and the public media, formed, as if it were, a joint command structure, by allowing it to share its battle experience in its own living rooms.

To conclude, the weakest link in

our defence armour today is not of military hardware, knowledge or skill. It is not even the fighting spirit of the Indian soldier, which is as high as ever. The biggest weakness in our defence set up is a false sense of security, whereby public information has been made synonymous with military secrets. By over-classifying and placing wrong emphasis on security, we always seem to be giving away more than what we seek to conceal. After all, who are we afraid of - the enemy or ourselves? It is a well known axiom, that the weaker and less prepared a nation, the more emphasis it lays on false security. The more powerful a nation, the less it tries to conceal its military hardware; the idea being to instil fear, rather than being afraid of the enemy.

We have today the fourth largest, and certainly the biggest volunteer army in the world. Our approach to security should therefore be to publicise our strength and confidence, and not hide our weakness and insecurity. In this, the media will have a big role to play in the future.

BRIG. N. B. GRANT (Retd.) is a freelance writer, who contributes to *Freedom First* occasionally.



"You can see, he's busy with his advisers"

COURTESY: *The Pioneer*, November 4, 1996.

AMBUSH

An avalanche of soldiers is on the move,

Some in armoured cars, some on foot.

They are armed with carbines, mortars, cannons.

They are hiding behind thickets and bushes,

They are marching in the dark stealthily,

Now they are dispersing gradually.

They are forming groups and lurking in the shadows

Shadows are moving through sound;

the scene has kept creatures spellbound,

Shadows are moving towards a particular object with determination

The shadows abruptly halt

They turn into crouching shadows

The distance between destination and shadows is diminishing,

In a fraction of a second, a deafening sound renders the air,
Clattering of carbines, bursting of mortar shells,

Sputtering of blood, gasping for air, blood chilling cries

Vengeance is wrought, a battle is fought

Lust of victory has led to many deaths,

Lots of destruction,

There is celebration and jubilation in the camp

A mission is completed called "Night dream"

The enemy post and battalion is nowhere to be seen

Victory has been achieved by a clever ambush

But at what cost?

K. R. Thadani.

C. Rajagopalachari

The Man and His Vision

G. Narayanaswamy

There are two kinds of men: men of success and men of values. Men of success are those who take more out of society than what they give to them. Men of values are those who give to society more than what they take out of it. Undoubtedly Rajaji belonged to the latter category.



December 10, 1996 is the 117th birth anniversary of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, better known to a generation gone by as Rajaji. 1996 is also the year when the credibility of public figures in general and of politicians in particular has sunk to an all-time low. We felt it appropriate to remind our readers that there was a time not so long ago when there were persons in public life who set an example of probity by personal behaviour. One such person was Rajaji - Ed.

Rajaji occupied several positions in his full span of years, first as a successful mofussil advocate from Salem, later, a revolutionary Chairman of the Salem Municipality, a freedom fighter, political leader, Chief Minister of Madras, Minister in the central government, Governor and Governor-General of India. He occupied all of them with fine distinction and left a lasting mark in each of the

positions he held.

I have, for the purpose of this talk*, confined myself to the following aspects of his life:

Attitude to life;

Personal qualities;

Concern for the poor and down-trodden;

Respect for law; and

Economic philosophy.

Rajaji's Attitude to Life

He firmly held the view that God had a purpose in creating every living being, especially a human being, and therefore every one must perform his duties consistent with his talents and capabilities. The following passages from his writings give an indication of his philosophy:

"When a man performs his proper duty, he worships Him from whom the world issued and by whom all that we see is pervaded. It is better for one to do imperfectly the duties that fall to his lot than to do those of others perfectly. One should not abandon one's natural duty even if evils seem to adhere thereto. Every human activity involves some evil as fire carries smoke. He who works with mind detached and free from selfish longings is the real sanyasi".

"The ideal citizen should perform his tasks and duties with detachment. His activities should be in the general interest, not for selfish gain. This is the great teaching of the Gita that has justly made it as famous in modern

times as it is a classic in the Vedantic tradition. Out of the Upanishad teaching and its doctrine of the ultimate reality, the modern citizen can derive a fearlessness of spirit which, added to the detachment and rigorous execution of duties preached by the Gita, could make of every citizen a veritable giant in the service of society".

"Yoga is not tricks done with our muscles or our breath or exhibitions of physical skill and practice. Yoga is the effort to purify our character. Yoga is the general name given to those mental operations which we should practice in order to make the mind clean and remain pure without difficulty."

"You may often fall in these efforts. But every effort adds strength to your soul. These efforts are to the soul what physical exercise is to the body. You may not see immediate results, but they strengthen the soul."

To my knowledge, he conducted himself in his private life and public life exactly in the manner he preached. He had a keen intellect and a keener memory and the wisdom to distinguish between good and evil. He used these qualities for the benefit of the country.

As a lawyer, he was extremely successful. He became Chairman of the Salem Municipality at an early age and as Chairman, introduced some radical social reforms. He joined the freedom movement, became a conscious follower of Mahatma Gandhi giving up his legal practice and never looked back. Even while actively in-

* Rajaji Birthday Lecture, December 5, 1992.

involved in the freedom movement, he continued to be a prolific reader, writer, social reformer and intellectual.

Concern for the Downtrodden

His concern for the poor and the downtrodden was deep and abiding. Right through his life, he was concerned with uplifting the lot the poor. In 1937, as chief minister, he introduced reforms which opened temples to Harijans. The Meenakshi Temple at Madurai was the first to be thrown open. V. P. Singh has been claiming that the 27% reservations was intended to bring the backward classes into the mainstream of society. Rajaji did this nearly 50 years ago - long before Mandal - a reform that brought the Harijans into the mainstream. He brought about an economic revolution with his Debt Relief Act where debts of agriculturists who had paid off a substantial portion were statutorily written off.

His obsessive championing of prohibition is well known and was intended to improve the lives of the poor. Rajaji knew that the consumption of liquor and arrack by poor people denied them and their family members a normal life and the basic necessities of life. He was the first to conceive of prohibition as a social and economic measure, as early as 1937.

In 1938, Harvey Mills, an English owned company in Ambasamudram, had declared a lock-out because of a labour dispute. The then Labour Minister in Rajaji's Ministry, V. V. Giri was unable to help in resolving the dispute and the management arranged for re-opening the mills with loyal workers. Rajaji issued orders prohibiting the reopening despite opposition from the English Governor.

The Swatantra Party had inherited a two-ground plot of land at Egmore, Madras, which Rajaji wanted sold. As the administrator of the estate, I arranged for the sale of the plot of land which also involved the eviction of nearly 100 scavenger workers' families who had encroached on the land. I informed Rajaji of my proposal. Rajaji wanted to know how I proposed to resettle the scavengers. I replied

that it was not our problem. But Rajaji's response was typical of his concern for the poor. "It is a human problem. First arrange for their alternate accommodation, meet their expenses for shifting to alternative sites and then sell", he said. Tears swelled in my eyes and I wondered: How could such a man be charged with being a capitalist and a friend of princes and rajas!

Respect for Law

Rajaji's respect for the law, both in letter and spirit was unique - whether he was in office or out of it. This contradicted his role as a satyagrahi during the freedom struggle. Probably he would have justified it by saying that he was a mere soldier in the army of the freedom movement and the laws he contravened, deserved to be opposed, as they did not have the sanction of the moral law. It is equally possible that he may have, in retrospect, seeing the blatant misuse of satyagraha in post-independent India, decided that satyagraha was one of the causes for the people's disrespect for the law. Be that as it may, his adherence to the Rule of Law as a citizen of free India was unflinching. Let me recall a few instances.

When he was chief minister of Madras in 1952-53, a sub-inspector of police from Madras had - while chasing a criminal - crossed over to neighbouring Mysore and accidentally shot the criminal who died. The Mysore State Police remanded the police officer into custody. Rajaji took personal interest in the matter and requested Mr. V. L. Ethiraj a highly respected but every expensive barrister at that time, to personally argue the bail petition in the Mysore High Court. Mr. Ethiraj acceded to the request of Rajaji and had the sub-inspector released on bail.

At about the same time, the constables of Madras city police had gone on strike but Rajaji dealt with the strike very severely and the strike was practically broken within a day. When he was congratulated the next day by members of the Madras State Assembly - which was then in session - he requested members not to discuss the matter as it related to the police, hence

too delicate to be discussed and to treat the matter as closed.

These two instances clearly indicate that as an administrator he would go all out to defend an officer who was in trouble while he was discharging his duties and, at the same time, would not tolerate the slightest degree of indiscipline, particularly, in a force where discipline was most crucial. He was also aware that any excessive public criticism of civil servants would demoralise the services as a whole. Hence, his plea to the Madras legislators not to discuss the strike.

Compare this with the present day situation. How many ministers would go all out to defend their officers in the discharge of their duties? On the contrary, we are witnessing the sorry spectacle of ministers joining other members in publicly criticising officers. This is one of the reasons for the steep demoralisation that has set in in the civil services.

Integrity of Legislators

Rajaji always held the view that if one wished to enter politics or public life, he should have an independent income of his own, as otherwise, he would be forced to make money out of his public office or to cling to it at all costs. To highlight this point, he once observed at a public meeting, (it was, I think, in Chandigarh), that as most of our politicians did not have any ostensible source of income of their own they could be apprehended by the police under the criminal procedure code to explain their source of income.

Members of the Andhra Legislative Assembly took umbrage and initiated contempt proceedings against Rajaji. He could have easily ignored the proceedings or sought a stay order in law or done something else to express his displeasure. No Assembly would dare touch him. But he did none of these things. He submitted to the jurisdiction of the Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly and made written representations, explaining the circumstances under which he had made the observations and that he did not mean any disrespect to the

legislature or its members. He also deputed a leading constitutional lawyer from Madras to Hyderabad on his behalf to make a personal representation.

I recall his pointing out in his representation that the conduct of legislators themselves is a better protector of their privileges and authority and the more they sought protection by punitive action, the worse it would be for their image and credibility.

Concern for the Poor.

About seven or eight months before he died - that was the last occasion he called me - he made certain dispositions which had attracted a tax liability of less than Rs. 15,000. I knew - he also knew - that this was a large financial burden on him, and, in fact, beyond his means, though he had been a Governor-General, a Union Minister and the State's Chief Minister. As I did not want him to be burdened with this financial liability, I suggested a simple and lawful alternative. He did appreciate my legal approach and paid me tributes which naturally made me happy. But to my surprise, he added: "You have made yourself clear, but this is not my intention. My intention is to do it here and now. Here is the cheque for the tax. Please pay it off. A businessman can do what you have suggested; not you or I."

These words still ring in my ears. In his opinion, a person in public life or a professional should maintain standards of ethics higher than that of others and should be prepared to bear the consequent additional burden.

While his compliance with the law was unhesitating and absolute, his resistance to inequity - either legislative or administrative - was equally absolute. But he did not take his resistance to the streets. He was confident of his intellect and persuasive powers and always tried to rectify the position through constitutional means.

For example, the government of Tamil Nadu had levied a profession tax on pensions. He represented to the government that a pensioner can

by no stretch of imagination be considered to be carrying on a profession. In fact, he does the reverse and hence cannot be taxed. His representation and writ petition in the Madras High Court failed. But he took it to the Supreme Court and obtained a verdict in favour of the pensioners. The sum involved, in his case, was less than Rs. 100. But the fight was for a cause.

A Matter of Principle

This incident indicates Rajaji's determination to fight for a cause and exhibits equally his willingness to reverse his stand if he was so convinced. In fact, it was only after this incident that he showered his affection on me.

The Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, however, had held that the sums received by him for the sale of his copyright in his publications like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, were exempt from tax because they were in the nature of capital receipts. Taking the reasoning out of this order, he claimed that a sum of Rs. 100 he had received from All India Radio for his broadcast was exempt because the copyright of such talks vest with the government. In fact, I argued with him that the amount involved was so small that we need not embarrass the department. He did not agree. On the contrary he wrote to the department: "The argument that relief prayed for is small and that any relief being given to me will result in a similar relief given to a large number of citizens is no justification for denying me this relief". The then Commissioner, after consulting the Central Board of Direct Taxes, exempted the income.

Compare this with the present day men in public life:

- How many former Governor-Generals/Presidents and former Chief Ministers would find a sum of Rs. 15,000 an unbearable financial burden.
- The Speaker of a State Assembly refuses to receive notices from the

Supreme Court to obey its directive.

- A State government faces contempt proceedings from the Supreme Court for not obeying its orders.
- A State government refuses to implement the award of a River Waters Tribunal despite directions from the Supreme Court.
- Processions are taken out by the ruling party with the support of the police and chief minister to condemn/appreciate Supreme Court decisions.
- The Governor of the Reserve Bank admits that the chiefs of nationalised banks had not followed the guidelines laid down by the Central Bank and disbursed crores of rupees.
- Account payee cheques of crores of rupees are credited to the accounts of persons other than the payees and justified as a commercial practice.
- The ruling party orders a *bandh* against the orders of the Court
- The Speaker of a State Assembly assumes that he has absolute powers, even to order the hanging of a person.
- The exchange of physical blows by legislators inside the Assembly is now a common phenomenon.
- There are more walk outs and legislators rushing to the well of the House than well argued debates.
- The question whether a legislator can claim immunity in respect of criminal acts, is actually being debated!

Such illustrations can be multiplied but I remember the famous words of Acharya Kripalani: "If you want to break a government, break its laws first". Fortunately our law makers and enforcement authorities have not left the job to us. They are doing it themselves and doing it extremely well.

The Mind's Eye

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The Path of Dharma

Rajaji's philosophy on all matters (including matters relating to economics) was the same i.e. one should lead a life of *Dharma* and he should be enabled to do so and anything that comes in the way of doing his duty should be demolished. All his thoughts on economic matters were on these lines. For example, the abolition of foodgrains rationing by him in 1952 when he was Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and his campaign against the permit, licence, quota raj are instances of this thought. Food rationing was in force in 1952 when he became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He was aware that though rice was available in plenty in the black market, politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen had developed a vested interest in the black market and they would not permit dismantling this system corrupt as it was.

Therefore, he abolished rationing overnight - against the advice of civil servants. The result was rice became available in plenty and the black market collapsed.

Similarly, he felt that the permit, licence raj was the fountain of dishonesty and corruption and people had to bribe or be bribed to do their normal duty. He went to the extent of starting a political party, The Swatantra Party, at his advanced age to oppose the monster of corruption and to encourage the rule of Dharma.

Rajaji was dubbed a pro-capitalist reactionary. The history of the permit, licence raj has now become a part of history. This system of permits, licences and quotas which was based on Nehru's theoretical political philosophy of social justice may have been well conceived but, over a period of years, it made the government all powerful and a centre for the grant of patronage.

In the beginning, licences were issued on the basis of competence as judged by government officials and ministers. Later, they became instruments of those in authority to favour their near and dear ones. Later, it was used to secure political donations,

ostensibly for political parties but actually paid to ministers and politicians, the destination of which people are not sure. Now it has become a permanent source of patronage, a tool in the hands of ministers, politicians and civil servants for self-aggrandizement. People no longer consider it evil, but a fixed cost which is added to the price of the products.

To sum up, the four aspects of Rajaji's life were:

- (i) simple and noble thoughts
- (ii) a genuine concern for the poor and the downtrodden
- (iii) respect for Law, and
- (iv) an economic philosophy based on *Dharma*.

It is for you to decide to what extent present day political leaders conform to these standards. Ostentatious living and a show of authority are considered prerequisites for stature. The law makers and administrators have no respect for the law but believe in achieving results by agitation or by personal violence or through some superstitious methods. If Rajaji's economic policies are accepted today by the party in power, it is not out of conviction, but from the need to get more money from the World Bank.

There are two kinds of men: men of success and men of values. Men of success are those who take more out of society than what they give to them. Men of values are those who give to society more than what they take out of it. Undoubtedly Rajaji belonged to the latter category.

This article is based on the Rajaji Birthday Lecture 1992 delivered by Mr. G. Narayanaswamy in Bombay on December 5, 1992 under the auspices of the Rajaji Foundation, Bombay.

MR. G. NARAYANASWAMY is a chartered accountant and Chairman of the Chennai-based Rajaji Institute of Public Affairs.

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- Rajaji



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"Clear light upon the holy candlestick"

M. S. Subbalakshmi and T. Sadasivam - A Life of Fulfilment

R. Srinivasan

"As the clear light is upon the holy candlestick;

so is the beauty of the fare in ripe age."

Eccl.,xxvi,17A (Apocrypha)

A couple of months ago, crowds were packed in a vast concert hall to felicitate the most renowned of couples in the city (Madras, now called 'Chennai'), Sadasivam and Subbalakshmi. The crowds, the sense of happiness being present, clearly spoke volumes of the great esteem that they are held in the city. Tributes, floral presents - all testified to the affection that they had elicited from the public. For Sadasivam was 95 and Subbalakshmi 80. This was a memorable event of the year. Others, not so lucky, have to be satisfied with the book "A Life of Fulfilment", which is full of the good things and reading which elevates the mind. The tributes from friends and well wishers all over the land, the lovely photographs make this book well worth preserving.

For sixty years and more, Smt. M. S. Subbalakshmi has been reigning the world of classical music. She has graduated from one type of music to another, and has spread the serenity and quiet happiness that only music can bring to millions of lay listeners as well as to the *cognoscente*. In short, classical music to most Indians is equated with this singing marvel. During the last sixty years, many musicians have dominated the scene had their brief day or days and have joined the ancestors. Different fashions have had their day. But she continues to be supreme. Even the jeans-clad, chewing gum addicted teens discovered that there was unforgettable magic in her music and remained rapt listeners when they heard her for the first time in the St. Xavier's Col-

lege, Bombay, a couple of years ago. People have their opinions, tastes and antipathies in their musical inclinations. But all are unanimous in their voting her to be the greatest songster of the present century. The uncrowned republican emperors of India have been rapt listeners of her music. So has been even the Mahatma, whose one shortcoming was perhaps his insensitivity to music.



Not many may know that she began singing for the public even when she was in her pre-teens. It was fortunate that by then a discriminating public had grown in the small towns and larger cities of South India and they, not the closed world of petty kings and zamindars, were her patrons. Along with democratisation of modern social life, there was a new public that could support artists of the calibre of Subbalakshmi. Making

a name for herself in the towns of south-east Asia and Burma, her name spread to distant villages because of the revolution in the cutting of vinyl records and the strains of her songs were familiar to countless people and they have been preserved for posterity.

She assiduously improved her repertoire and patiently learnt with many masters, gaining knowledge in depth and the nuances of the grammar of Car-natic music; the libretto in many languages and above all, correct enunciation.

She began her musical career when women would not be concert singers. It can be said that her example, and her excellence, encouraged several women to follow her footsteps. Today, about half of the concert artists in the South are women. From the small, ill-equipped halls of the towns of the south, to the performances in the festivals at Edinburgh and at Carnegie Hall, New York, the steady progress of Subbalakshmi is not only a record of the coming into its own of the ancient music of India, but also of compelling the attention of the world of aesthetic sensibilities to the artistic treasures of India.

Classical music in the south has remained by and large inspired by religious emotions and imagination and the great names of music have also been names of religious composers. It is not, therefore, surprising that the bulk of the music of Subbalakshmi is religious in inspiration, and the compositions are in different Indian languages. To a people who are by and large religious by temperament, the music of Subbalakshmi has elevated religious emotions to very great aural heights; but such is the

magic quality that those not religious too are equally transported by it.

Since her concert performances are record performances with enviable collections at the gates, and since her recorded music sells by the hundreds of thousands, one should have expected her to have built for herself the Indian equivalent of a mansion in Capri. But Subbalakshmi, compared to fellow musicians, is certainly not affluent, if one were to take the long decades that she has served the cause and earned the millions. This has been mainly due to her giving away in charity, donations, and benefactions to institutions that need a collection. She has earned like the medieval Indian merchants, who crossed the seas, but like them, she has given away all of them. And this has made her doubly dear to those who hold her in admiration. She sings, not for wealth, but for the sheer happiness that music of the highest sort evokes; and equally earnestly, she donates all of it to causes.

Almost the entire credit for the person that she is goes to Shri Sadasivam, now the grand old man of India, and Subbalakshmi's husband. She often says that all that she is, is due to the efforts of her husband, who has guided her and helped her in every stage in her musical development. This might appear to be a conventional, Hindu wife's statement, reflecting the values of a patriarchal society. But those who know of the lives of both, have amply testified to the truth of this.

One may quickly conclude that he is the manager of Subbalakshmi, administering the hundred and odd things that need to be looked into, in the life of a professional concert artist in very great demand. Those who dislike him or are cynical will describe him as a Svengali to a Trilby. This would be grossly unfair. It is true that Sadasivam manages the musical affairs of his wife. It would have been chaotic and her career would have come to a stop long ago but for his careful nurturing of her genius and guiding her firmly and carefully. But he is no mere manager.

For, by the time he had married

Subbalakshmi, he had made a mark for himself as a nationalist and a dauntless fighter for the freedom of India, a salesman *nonpareil* of Khadi over the length and breadth of Tamilnadu, one who had cut his political teeth in the politics of extremist nationalism under Subramania Siva and one who marched, singing the inspiring political songs of Subramania Bharati in the streets of the town of India, inspiring and recruiting numerous followers to the nationalist cause. Like many of his generation, he broke the laws, participated in the Salt Satyagraha and had his spells in jail, where again he formed abiding friendships and life long contacts.

Later, he was to join the most famous of the Tamil weeklies, the *Ananda Viketan* and the manner he went about raising advertisement revenue for the journal was fantastic and was to surprise even professional advertising agencies.

Breaking off from the journal he, along with like minded colleagues and friends, started a weekly in Tamil which was to break records in circulation and in attracting talent. He had, as his colleague and editor, the famous Kalki, and together, they made a perfect match. Since both were devoted followers of Rajaji, the magazine began to feature the imperishable re-telling of the epic tales by this modern Vyasa. A whole generation went to school in the pages of the journal and imbibed the values of humanism reading the *Kalki*.

Later, he made *Swarajya* the vehicle for Rajaji, offering a forum to reach vast numbers and teaching the alphabet of a public philosophy. Never was there more need than then for political education. Sadasivam found very able editors to run the *Swarajya* and his pages distilled the essence of modern liberal democratic politics to a generation that was lured by the siren voices of socialism and collectivism.

It was to fund these journals that Sadasivam asked Subbalakshmi to act in films. And the height of her acting career was in Meera, which, both in

its Hindi and Tamil versions, was to capture the imagination and the emotions of millions of people. Having presented Subbalakshmi as Meera, Sadasivam did not want that image to be effaced from the memory of the public with a mere gross cinematic role. And, in this perhaps, he has good reason. No later Meera retakes have appealed to the public as Subbalakshmi's.

The vast bungalow at Kalki Gardens was not only the home of this pair, it was also the rendezvous of many who decided to visit the city. Many a figure that passed by, paused to accept the hospitality of the Sadasivams and they remained friends for life.

Principled to the littlest bone, Sadasivam took the adversities that came their way stoically, and sold off the entire property, to settle the dues of the workers who had in a moment of pique, declared a strike and persisted in it. Moving to a small residence, he pursued his interests with the same intensity of pursuit. The concerts of Subbalakshmi continued, but not for augmenting the income, but for causes dear to them, the founding of a eye hospital with super specialities or some other equally worthy cause.

Both Subbalakshmi and Sadasivam now live a life of contentment, what with a host of dear friends and colleagues, a growing group of a younger generation devoted to them. Theirs surely is a life fulfilled and in Erikson's phrase, they have given back to the community, more than what they received, and this is the fulfilment so eloquently expressed by Browning

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the
first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God:
see all, nor be afraid!'

DR. R. SRINIVASAN is a retired Professor of Politics, Mumbai University, and Associate Editor, *Freedom First*.

Profiles of Indian Liberals

Annie Besant

D. Anjaneyulu

"To see India free, to see her hold her head high among the nations, to see her sons and daughters respected everywhere, to see her worthy of her mighty past, engaged in building a yet mightier future - is this not worth working for, worth suffering for; worth living for and worth dying for?"

We don't seem to know or remember many of our nation builders. With the possible exception of those whose birth anniversaries are celebrated under governmental auspices. Even among these, there are quite a few, the significance of whose life and work is hardly familiar to the younger generation. Those born after our political Independence. And for no fault of theirs either. Because, they are presumably fed on the exploits of the current immortals, they might go away with the impression that the history of modern India begins in 1947 or 1967, or even later still.

Let us remind ourselves of two chronological facts whose inner meaning we may not know, not fully, at any rate. Dr. Annie Besant was born on 1 October (1847); and Mahatma Gandhi on 2 October (1869). Forgetting the gap in years, it is worth noting that Besant was born a day before Gandhi. Not all of us may be aware of the mystic significance of this temporal juxtaposition. But in terms of commonsense, one may be permitted to conclude by way of a surmise that Gandhi was destined to complete the work, political, social and other, done by Besant. It is possible that he had improved upon it, at least tried to, in some respects; superseded it in some others, destroyed it in yet others, with disastrous results.

The Early Years

Political activity was only one aspect of her many-sided personality. To describe it as dynamic, charismatic



Dr. (Mrs.) Annie Besant was born in England on 1 October 1847 and died in India in 1933

and inspiring would be doing inadequate justice to it. With no great advantages of birth, wealth or education, Mrs. Besant made a mark in public life, against many odds, in her path-breaking work as a lieutenant of Charles Bradlaugh. Their fields included free thinking, socialism and birth control. These covered the first 45 years of Mrs. Besant work, all of which were in England.

Theosophist

Her meeting, about this time, with Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society and the reading of her work "The Secret Doctrine", her *magnum opus*, proved a major turning point in the career of Mrs. Besant. It gave her a new vision and she decided to capture and propagate that vision.

In pursuit of this vision, she left for India in 1892, staying on here till the end of her life. For those forty odd years, she dedicated her energies to the service of India. In fact, she identified herself so totally with the welfare and progress of India that it would be difficult to think of any native-born Indian who could equal her in this respect.

In a lecture delivered on 6 November 1893 on "The Birth of New India", Mrs. Besant said :

"When I think of India, I think of her in the greatness of her past, not in the degradation of her present. ... To me she is in very truth the Holy Land, the land whose great philosophy has been the source of all the philosophies of the Western World, the land whose great religion has been the origin of all religions, the mother of spirituality, the cradle of civilization..."

Rebuilding India

Her all absorbing aim was to awaken India from her age-long slumber and stimulate her to capture the greatness of the distant past. For this purpose, she planned her programme of work in four different fields: Religious and cultural renaissance; education with social harmony; promotion of discipline; and character building at the personal and national level. Some degree of overlapping is perhaps inevitable in the classification of these categories.

These are summed up by her chief lieutenant, Dr. G. S. Arundale in three

compact phrases: right individual citizenship; right nationhood; and right world citizenship. She applied these principles to the task of rebuilding India, which she undertook on the command of her superiors.

Dr. Besant was all for a proper study of religion, with special reference to the main religions of India, Hinduism in particular. She believed it necessary for social harmony towards the idea of 'national unity or integration' (an expression that came into vogue during the prime ministership of Nehru). She saw three cultural heritages in the history of India (1) Vedic or Hindu; (2) Buddhist; and (3) Islamic. She took care to point out that these heritages were not mutually exclusive. Hindus went to Buddhist monasteries and Buddhists learned from Brahmin sages and Vedic scholars. Because learning was valued and honoured.

We have it on her authority that Prophet Muhammed set the ink of the scholar above the blood of the martyr. She reminded us how the torch of science was carried aloft by Islam during the period of the dark ages of Europe. At the height of Islamic power, tolerance was shown for all religions. Hindu *Shastras* were translated by Hindu pandits for the good of all. Amir Khusro and Dara Shikoh were notable examples of religious understanding, apart from Emperor Akbar, who encouraged inter-religious discussions, which led to the evolution of his Din-Ilahi.

As an ardent theosophist and a dedicated servant of India, she looked forward to a revival of India's spiritual life. For this she wanted Indians to welcome the latest, and the most ancient, expression of the spirit - Theosophy, the supreme science. According to her, India can never again be great, save as she is religious, save as she gains the spirituality that she has lost. She said :

"It is the spiritual sight which is the true vision. That spiritual consciousness always speaks for unity, for brotherhood, for service and for sacrifice; as it unfolds, it will bring

the materials for a nobler social State".

Next to spiritual revival, Dr. Besant laid the greatest store by education. But, she wanted to build the edifice of education also on sound religious and spiritual foundations.

The object of education was, according to her: To train the body; to train the emotions; to evolve and discipline the mind; to subdue body, emotion and mind to the spirit, the Inner Ruler Immortal. She put all this in a nutshell, when she said it was "to make a man a good citizen of a free and spiritual Commonwealth of Humanity".

Education

She reiterated the point that "Religion is necessary as the basis of Morality - "as the inspiration of Art" as the foundation of original literature. "For disciplining the mind, she emphasised the value of right thinking, discrimination, judgement and right memory. To translate these ideas into reality, she started the Central Hindu College at Benaras in the early years of this century. It became the nucleus of the Benaras Hindu University, in due course.

Later, she founded the National University in Madras, with Rabin-dranath Tagore as the Chancellor.

On the ideal of national education she said: "You may dig your gold wherever you like - in Australia, America or India - but you must stamp it in the Indian mint". She wanted to Indianise education in this country; not take it away from the roots or regionalise it, with the danger of divisive and isolationist forces taking the upper hand.

Two allied institutions stand to her credit. One is the Bharat Scouts and Guides for instilling discipline among the students, without alienating them from their native ambience and national sentiment. The other is the Y.M.I.A. (Young Men's Indian Association) in Madras, meant to provide an avenue for social life and recreational facilities for the students and other

young men, with no denominational overtones and other angularities.

Freedom Movement

It was over two decades (22 years, to be exact), after her arrival in India and sustained work for Theosophy and education that Mrs. Besant began to take active interest in Indian politics. She chose to take the plunge in 1914; identifying herself with the struggle for freedom. But this had deep roots in her psyche. As early as 1883, writing on 'Civil and Religious Liberty', she said:

"Liberty is immortal and eternal, and her triumph is sure, however it may be delayed - and hers is also the triumph of tomorrow if only we who adore her, can be true to ourselves and to each other. But they who love her must work for her, as well as worship her, for labour is the only prayer to liberty, and devotion the praise. ..."

She campaigned for Dadabhai Naoroji in the British General Election in 1892, before leaving for India. In 1914, she started an English weekly, *The Commonwealth*, to strengthen her plea for India's freedom and her membership of the British Commonwealth, with the grant of Dominion status. Purchasing an English daily, the *Madras Standard*, she renamed it *New India* to widen her campaign for Home Rule for India. She also sought to bring the two groups in the Indian National Congress, the "Moderates" and the "Extremists" together and succeeded to an extent in 1916.

It was in the same year that she started the Indian Home Rule League, to press her demand, treating England's need in the war as India's opportunity (anticipating the strategy of Subhas Bose in 1939). Her whirlwind campaign across the country provoked the Government to penalise her journals and intern her in Ooty. Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders threw their weight on her side. She was released soon after E. S. Montagu's announcement of the policy of encouraging responsible self-government in India in gradual stages.

Congress President

She reached the zenith of her political career towards the close of 1917, when she was elected President of the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. That was her finest hour. She was the first woman to be elected to that august position. Outlining the objectives of her service to the Nation, she said in her address, incidentally the longest and most comprehensive:

"To see India free, to see her hold her head high among the nations, to see her sons and daughters respected every-where, to see her worthy of her mighty past, engaged in building a yet mightier future - is this not worth working for, worth suffering for; worth living for and worth dying for?"

On the Montagu-Chelmsford Constitutional Reforms, published in 1918, contemplating Dyarchy in the Provinces and virtual *status quo* at the Centre, Mrs. Besant rejected them as "unworthy of India to accept". They were described as "disappointing and unsatisfactory". But on second thoughts, she finally supported the Liberals who were willing to accept them and wanted to ask for more later.

Relations with Gandhiji

Dr. Besant's relations with Mahatma Gandhi were ambivalent. It was a case of mutual understanding, to begin with, marked by his respect of her; and her admiration and affection for him. But the events of 1920 and thereafter acted as a rude jolt. The Rowlatt Act, the Jalianwala Bagh massacre, the Khilafat agitation, the non-cooperation movement and the Triple Boycott (of Councils, Courts and Colleges) drove a wedge between them which grew wider and wider.

Gandhi was all for direct action and mass agitation. He had no patience with the slow and gradual process of parliamentary activity. He could be described as a kind of "political anarchist". Besant was a constitutionalist by conviction, who believed in law and order. Though Gandhi asserted repeatedly that he followed a policy of "non-violent non-coope-

ration", violence could not be avoided in 1920-21, 1931 or 1942 and later. Besant feared that this policy of his would stir up hatred between the government and the people and foment race hatred, which was even more dangerous. She also felt that non-cooperation would mean a "reversion to anarchy, a violent breaking of all the mutual ties which bind men together".

It is a sad thing for us to reflect that all her fears came true. She had often warned Gandhi and other national leaders against the indulgence of youth in acts of sporadic violence. She told them that "brickbats will be met by bullets". But the excited youth of the day and their misguided leaders turned a deaf ear to the voice of reason from her.

Reason versus Populism

Another basic ideal of Gandhi was the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity. The idea was commendable. But it did not work out in the manner envisaged by him. He extended Congress support to the Khilafat agitation (pan-Islamic in its aspiration), initiated by the Ali brothers, though the National Congress had nothing to do with it in principle. Gandhi probably wanted to earn Muslim goodwill for his own movement, but he did not succeed, as was evident from later Congress campaigns. Muslim participation began to decline and almost diminished towards the end. She had always been sceptical about this.

Popular response is not always based on reason, and discrimination. It is more often just the reverse. As Gandhi's impact rose, Besant's influence began to decline. Even so, she remained true to her convictions and went ahead with her life's mission of service to India. In keeping with her ideal of self-government through self-determination, she drafted the Commonwealth of India Bill with the help of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, among other constitutional experts. Though it was introduced in the Commons by George Lansbury, the Labour leader, it was not pursued.

While giving Gandhi his due for patriotism, courage and integrity,

Besant was quite frank about his methods. She was far from happy about the violence of his "non-violence".

Explaining herself, she said:

"The non-cooperation movement has produced an unparalleled crop of hatred, violence, and lawlessness, as all of us who have lived through it know".

Lasting Contribution

Mrs. Besant, who died in 1933, at the age of 86, was denied the satisfaction of seeing India attain freedom in 1947. But those of us who cherish her memory and remember her services to the country of her adoption have reason for satisfaction that two of her major objectives were ultimately achieved - India attained Independence, largely through constitutional means; and she has chosen to remain in the Commonwealth. Indo-British relations continue on quite friendly terms.

It is learnt from those who had heard Mrs. Besant speak in public that she was meticulous in organising her speeches.

Her meetings would start on time. She would speak for exactly one hour. The speeches were all extempore. Ancillaries like welcome address and vote of thanks would precede, not follow her address. She was particular that the effect of her address should not be spoilt by anything that followed it.

These are all conditions more honoured in the breach than in the observance in our time. In this, as in many other features, her practice is worthy of emulation by speakers in this country, irrespective of the language used by them.

In the forty-odd years of her tireless service to India, Mrs. Besant always strove for the evolution of a new India. This meant: good citizenship, marked by discipline, including punctuality, consideration for others, integrity of character, and social harmony, contributing to national unity. Can we expect more of any nation-builder?

DR. D. ANJANEYULU, an author and journalist, is a frequent contributor to *Freedom First*.

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Aung San Suu Kyi

awarded the Liberal International's Prize for Freedom 1995

In a statement communicated by telephone from Rangoon to London, the Burmese democratic leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi spoke of her wish to develop a liberal society in Burma "... which encompass the hopes and aspirations of the different ethnic peoples and diverse political forces that make up our nation".

Her statement was made to Sir David Steel on the occasion of the presentation of the Prize for Freedom 1995 on 9 July 1996 at the National Liberal Club in London. At the request of Aung San Suu Kyi it was accepted on her behalf by the former secretary general of the Commonwealth, Sir Shridath Ramphal.

Ms. Suu Kyi said that the word liberal with its connotations of open-mindedness and lack of prejudice, is one which she had always associated with those whom she most admired: "To be a liberal is to have a vision of the world which is based on respect for the opinions of others and on an appreciation of diversity. In my country and in many other parts of the world, there is an urgent need to promote ideas and values that will enable all of us to work together to establish an international community bound together with harmony by a shared liberal vision".

Sir David Steel reminded those present that she was released exactly a year ago to the day.* "She had already exhibited outstanding courage in leading street demonstrations and facing down the might of the military forces. Since her release the misnamed SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) has refused to enter

into constitutional dialogue with her and the NLD. Instead, their members are harassed and imprisoned. Meantime, the Burmese government tries to encourage overseas investments and visitors. Aung San Suu Kyi has herself

opposed such contacts as simply reinforcing the regime. I'm glad that the British government has withdrawn support for the trade mission which was due to go last month, but I deplore that unlike other tour companies, British Airways is still running tourist charters to Burma".

He said that in the 1988 uprising, thousands lost their lives in the struggle for democracy and human rights. "The 1990 democratic parliament was snuffed out. Hundreds are still imprisoned without charge. The least we can do is give public support by acknowledging the heroism of Aung San Suu Kyi".

In his reply, Sir Shridath Ramphal spoke of the enormous importance of international support for struggles such as hers. "I ask you - as I believe she would have asked you if she were here - not to forget Burma, not to forget the struggle of its people for freedom and democracy, not to make this Prize a gesture of where our heart is, but a promise of where our deeds will be". He then presented the Prize to Ms. Suu Kyi's husband Michael Aris.

Following the 1990 elections won by the National League for Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi, the military junta continued their grip on power, jailing a large number of MPs and placing their leader under house arrest for six years. The Liberal International Prize was presented a year



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late to the Burmese democratic leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The Prize for Freedom was awarded to Ms. Suu Kyi in January 1995, when she was still under house arrest. Ever since that time, Sir David Steel, who was President of Liberal International until June this year, was refused permission by the Burmese authorities to travel to Rangoon to present the Prize to her. She was unable to travel abroad to receive the Prize, for fear that she would not be allowed back into her country. It was finally agreed that the presentation would take place in London, and the Prize would be received by a representative on her behalf.

In previous years, the Prize for Freedom was awarded to Sadako Ogata, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (1994), Mary Robinson, President of Ireland (1993) and to Maria Elena Cruz Varela, the Cuban poet (1992). In June this year, the 1996 Prize was presented to Martin Lee, the leader of the Democratic Party of Hong Kong.

**As this issue goes to press, comes the news that Aung San Suu Kyi is again under house arrest. Ed.*
COURTESY: *London Aerogramme* - a publication of the Liberal International.

Suu Kyi Appeals for International Support

The Myanmar Opposition Leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, saying she had not been allowed to leave her home since the student protests in Yangon appealed for moral and practical support for her party.

Speaking by telephone to the former Commonwealth Secretary General, Mr. Sonny Ramphal, in Cape Town, Ms. Suu Kyi said: "I would like the world to know that the repression in Myanmar is getting worse".

She said she had been prevented by police from leaving her home since the student protests, resulting in the arrest of 300 demonstrators.

The students were protesting against what they called unfair police handling of a brawl between some of their colleagues and restaurant owners in October.

"We as a party are subjected to so much persecution that it is almost

unbelievable. We are supposed to be a legitimate party, duly registered, and yet we are not even allowed to do regular party work", she said in a call taped and played to reporters.

"My house is barricaded off every weekend and today it is barricaded off and probably they will close the street for a few days to come. Members of our party are subjected to very, very severe persecution all the time. People are evicted from their homes, people have been threatened with loss of jobs and our elected Members of Parliament are forced to resign", she said. "We would welcome the moral and practical support of right-thinking people..." she said.

Mr. Ramphal promised to broadcast Ms. Suu Kyi's appeal adding "where better to send that message to the world than from South Africa".

COURTESY: *The Hindu*, December 5, 1996.

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The Taliban of Afghanistan

Santishree D.N.B. Pandit

The Taliban have been in the headlines these last few weeks after their capture of Kabul. As this issue goes to press, come press reports that the Taliban are being counter attacked by the combined forces of Brigadier Dostum and Masood. Afghanistan is strategically an important region. Throughout history, this region has been the scene of much fighting. And history has shown that whoever has tried to annex Afghanistan has invariably burnt his fingers. From the days of British imperial policy - the tragic Afghan Wars - to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, this has proved to be so. The latest external power seeking to control Afghanistan is Pakistan.

The dismemberment of the Soviet Union did not immediately lead to the fall of President Najibullah. His sudden exit took place in 1992 when it was feared that the battles might spill over to the streets. Najibullah took refuge in the U.N. Headquarters office in Kabul. He thought he was safe there until the Taliban captured Kabul. Ignoring diplomatic niceties, they pulled him out of the U.N. safe haven, shot him and his brother and hung them on a traffic signal post.

Afghanistan no longer exists as a single country but is divided into separate homelands controlled by different militias, led by Mujahideen groups. No single faction has been able to control the entire country. Of the several wars that were fought in recent years in Afghanistan - the Mujahideen versus Najib; Pashtun Mujahideen versus non-Pashtun Mujahideen; Shia versus Sunni; mercenary versus nationalist; Peshwari versus local commander. The Masood-Rabbani versus Hekmatyar-Dostum battle assumed alarming proportions. At the time of the Soviet withdrawal,

Hekmatyar managed to forge ethnic links with the Pakhtia group within the ruling Watan party, that led to the abortive coup by General Tanai. Najib was successful in preventing a coordinated attack upon his forces by buying out non-Pashtun forces like Dostum's, who saw in the circumstances, a greater role for themselves in shaping Afghan's political destiny. The Hekmatyar-Dostum rivalry after the fall of Najib further worsened the situation and in-



tensified the fighting. It renewed old animosities which worsened the situation leading to thirty five thousand battle related deaths.

Who are the Taliban?

The Taliban is the creation of Pakistan. Taliban students who are spread over the *madrassas*, resumed their Islamic studies after their eleven year *jihad* against the Soviet supported regime. They are war veterans of sorts. The movement led by the Talibs began to be noticed in 1994 when they began attacking border posts inside Afghanistan to stop the flow of narcotics. The principal supporter in Pakistan of the Taliban is the Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), led by Maulana Fazlur Rahman. He has a strong influence in Baluchistan, from where the first soldiers were recruited for this operation.

Early successes led to the dramatic rise of the Taliban and its numbers soared. Beginning with the capture of the small town of Doorahi on the outskirts of Kandahar, they were soon in control of the southern and eastern regions, and humbled Hekmatyar. The leaders of the Taliban are Maulvi Ishanullah, Mullah Mohammad Abbas, Dr. Abdullah and Mullah Rabbani. So far, they have been functioning as a mass movement, sweeping away established warlords and Mujahideen factions and functioning on a plane of ideological purity. They have shown themselves to be a reactionary group, using religion to violate human rights, especially that of women. In reality, the Taliban have hijacked Islam to suit their power manipulations.

US and Pakistani support

A disturbing factor is the free flow of sophisticated weapons into this volatile region. Access to these weapons has increased the fighting capability of the Taliban who enjoy the covert support of Pakistan and its benefactor, the United States. It is this vital help that enabled the Taliban develop itself into a disciplined fighting force, where religious and political ideologies of the Talibs, who study in the *madrassas*, owing allegiance to different sects, were submerged under the umbrella of ideological and religious purity. The motivating factor for the Taliban's success has been their antagonism towards the Mujahideen, whose internecine fights were perceived as power struggles, far removed from the concept of *jihad*. These Mujahideen groups served Pakistan's policy, for the options were between channelising their energies into Kashmir or back into Afghanistan. Leaving them idle in the refugee camps on meagre wages led to the rise in the sectarian and ethnic battles, now raging throughout Pakistan.

Internal Compulsions

The Kashmir experiment with the Afghan mercenaries was a miserable failure for they did not understand the cultural ethos of the Kashmiri people, thereby effectively proving that Islam is not a monolith. The recent successful conduct of free and fair elections and the landslide victory of the National Conference under Dr. Farooq Abdullah called the Pakistani bluff which has not held elections in the last fifty years in their occupied part of Kashmir. Therefore, there was little choice but to involve the

Mujahideen in the Afghan conflict. The necessity of ridding Pakistan of these destabilising elements led to the myth of ideological purity, which focussed on the formation of an Islamic government in Kabul to be run on the principles of the Shariah, but whose definition was wide enough to incorporate all sectarian strains.

The second important factor is the lofty one of nationalism of liberating Afghanistan from the terrible civil war and from the clutches of warlords, drug dealers and other such elements. This sentiment has been well manipulated by the ISI by changing a motley crowd of disenchanted fighters into a fighting force that knows the terrain, the use of all kinds of weapons and, most important of all, indoctrinated with a new ideology based on Islam to liberate Afghanistan. Though the Taliban, initially, openly flouted its foreign connections, it has now decided to play down the role of external powers like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.

This is clear from the statements made by the former head of the ISI, Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul, who also had a crucial role to play in the burning down of the Char-ar-e-Sharief in Kashmir. He told reporters in Jalalabad that the Taliban "are actually a phoenix who have returned to be the masters of the Afghan chessboard. The rise of the Taliban is the protest exclamation of the aggrieved commoners in Afghanistan who had been tired of the intra-Afghan power strife".

Drug Trafficking

The Taliban does not have a definite leadership or policy except plain revenge and going back to the middle ages. If they were merely interested in ousting "criminal elements", like the Mujahideen and cre-

The Taliban have been in the headlines these last few weeks after their capture of Kabul. As this issue goes to press, come press reports that the Taliban are being counter attacked by the combined forces of Brigadier Dostum and Masood.

ating conditions for the return of peace, then why are they resisting joining the UN peace plan? The reason is deeper to seek. The creation of the Taliban has been a major achievement of the Pakistan's premier intelligence agency, the ISI, but seeking to push the Taliban may prove fatal, as the fault lines in the battlefield are on ethnic lines, between Pashtun and non-Pashtun. The Taliban is purely Pashtun with ethnic links with Pashtuns in the North West Frontier province of Pakistan. Regardless of all this, Pakistan, especially the ISI, saw in the creation of the Taliban, a continuation of its own policy of being the power behind any leader controlling Kabul and of using them to eradicate the drug menace that has created over 2.5 million heroin addicts in Pakistan alone.

India's Concerns

Other countries in the neighbourhood, like the Central Asian states and Russia have viewed the recent developments with concern and have reviewed their security policy vis-a-vis Afghanistan. They may help their northern warlord General Dostum to fight the fundamentalist Taliban. India is worried over the presence of a reactionary regime in Kabul and the continued instability in the region. Though India has taken a wait and watch policy, most non-official opinion has condemned the policies of barbarity – the way Najib was killed and the restrictions imposed on women. Initially, the US did endorse the Taliban, but were later soft pedalling their support as it was embarrassing to support openly

a regime that violated human rights though there has been no official condemnation of the Taliban.

The US is still playing its cold war politics in the region, though covertly. It is indirectly supporting fundamentalist forces. What is paradoxical is that even a state like Iran has condemned Taliban's human rights violations. Indian hawks are relishing the involvement of Pakistan, as history has proved that it is disastrous for an external power to intervene in Afghanistan. This will occupy Pakistan's energy and attention, and ultimately prove its nemesis, *a la* Vietnam.

Pakistan's Vietnam?

Internationally, it would be very difficult for the Taliban regime to gain acceptability, leave alone legitimacy. Even their Pakistani benefactors have been internationally disowning any connections with the Taliban. Saudi Arabia has been totally silent and the USA, which initially welcomed the Taliban capture of Kabul, later, on saner advice, refused to support a regime that is against human rights and refuses to adhere to civilized ways of behaviour. India has been a supporter of Najib and Rabbani, and never supported the Taliban. Though the Taliban claims to be a peoples' movement, its strength has not been tested by democratic means. It usurped power and is now struggling to hang on.

For the time being at least, Afghanistan, due to its strategic importance and landlocked status, has been the eye of several storms and is going to remain one, at least in the near future. Its multi-ethnicity has proved time and again that Islam is not a monolith. Islam has failed to unite the Pashtun and the non-Pashtun tribes. History has time and again proved that any outside interference has spelled disaster for the external power. The battle-lines are along the fault lines of ethnicity and only a government that represents the diversity of Afghanistan can survive in the future.

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Running the World

Ian Tickle

A few months after Boutros Boutros Ghali became secretary general of the United Nations, we wrote that he had ended his honeymoon and was already heading for divorce. With the refusal by the United States to back his re-election, it may be said that divorce is now nearing completion.

But the truth is that his honeymoon at the UN did not last for even 24 hours. From the day he took over he made it clear that he had arrived with a new broom. His first act was to streamline the administration, getting rid of large areas of bureaucracy by merging the economic and social offices into a single department, thinning out drastically as he went along. He was supported in this by countries who like efficient administration, i.e. much of the western world. This is why the new secretary general gave the fleeting impression that he intended to work mainly with western support.

But Boutros Boutros Ghali did not particularly want to be liked either by the west or by any other section of the world's governors. It was not by flattering people that he got to the top of the Egyptian foreign ministry and stayed there for so many years. Nor was it though flattery that he was able to take Sadat and Begin by the hand and bring them to Camp David. He is certainly a supreme diplomat - but he does not possess the shady diplomatic

attribute, that desire to please by bringing people together for a little while with promises that ultimately fail. He impresses by the depth of his knowledge and his ability to run a travelling show - which is what the United Nations has to be in order to meet the challenges of this uncertain world.

Bosnia was Boutros Ghali's nemesis. The United Nations was unable to solve the Bosnian problem. So the powers that be kicked it out and said they would do it themselves. It had no part in the Dayton peace process. So far, however, this has not fared any better. A year after the UN's darkest moment at Srebrenica, the perpetrators of that abominable crime are still at liberty. This is the responsibility of those who took over from the United Nations.

And it is true, as the secretary general has often pointed out, that an immense fuss is made every day about Bosnia and very little about the series of holocausts which have afflicted Africa. Boutros Boutros Ghali has said many times that a choice should not be made amongst these problems, but that all of them must be dealt with, and at once, and together.

The only organisation which can do this is the United Nations, and the world body must be given every support in terms of human and financial

resources and in terms of diplomatic support. It must be universally recognised as the senior peace-keeping organisation in the world - not a junior partner expected to take orders from a rich men's club.

It may that the time of Boutros Boutros Ghali is up. It may also be that no one should ever serve two terms in this position, which is at the same time so highly exalted and so deeply depressing. A secretary general of the United Nations cannot do his work without rubbing powerful people up the wrong way. He (or she) should be able to act without having to worry about re-election. Leaders of strong powers want to hold centre-stage and do not see the United Nations as much more than a convenient roof organisation. But world peace needs a strengthened United Nations and a strong and widely respected secretary general.

There is such a whiff of Munich in the air, a desire for peace in Europe at any price. A world eager to go about its business, looking neither right nor left. Avoiding the hard choices. But what we want is a new ethic, a new sense of solidarity and - yes, I am afraid so - a new secretary general ready to rise to the occasion.

COURTESY: *Swiss Press Review*

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What's In A Name? Everything!

M. S. Kilpady

The mere fact that the English and other persons have contributed to the city's development cannot be the sole criterion to retain the name as Bombay.

It is a pity that we Indians are not inclined to appreciate our own tradition and culture. Some of the opinions expressed in the print media in connection with restoring its traditional glory to Mumbai, have been made well with commendable restraint without any sufferance of a *koopā mandukal* mentality. If patriotic fervour to restore the tradition is tantamount to bigotry, sophistry, parochialism and chauvinism, and further playing to the gallery, I would say unhesitatingly that patriotism itself is a pathological megalomania. It would not be conducive to amity and harmony if the opponents of Mumbai treat the sentiments of the proponents derisively.

Marathi is the official state language of Maharashtra which

includes Bombay as its capital city, yet, in vogue it is Mumbai (Marathi), Bumbai (Hindi) and Bombay (English). Even the name boards of our suburban railway stations are in Gujarati, English and Marathi, a very strange phenomenon indeed. In practice, the central leaders unfailingly refer to the city as Mumbai in their correspondence. The opponents are doing incalculable disservice to the cause of a predominant cross-section of the city's population by referring to the Englishman's idiosyncrasy as a historical fact. But what about the history much before Mumbai was given on a platter to the British by the Portuguese?

The mere fact that the English and other persons have contributed to the city's development cannot be the

sole criterion to retain the name as Bombay, lest it should hurt the Maharashtrian psyche. It would not be out of place to mention here that these persons are not the things of the long-forgotten past, because they have been getting their due share and encomiums in society. It is also not a fact that the names of only a handful of countries and cities have been changed, because there is a staggering list of such changes. If it is not due to the national ethos but on account of bigotry, chauvinism or sophistry that these changes are effected then there must be something wrong with straight thinking.

In the box on the next page is a list of old names and new names given to countries and cities. The list is not exhaustive.

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sometime,
you'll meet
the
complete man.



raymond

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In its long and chequered history, the Bombay peninsula consisted of a cluster of seven islands, (since extended upto Dahisar and Mulund. Its early inhabitants were the Kolis (fishermen). It is recorded that some 2,200 years ago, it was ruled by Mauryan kings. In the 9th and 13th centuries, it was brought under the rule of the Silhara kings. In the 16th century, it was ceded to the king of Portugal by Sultan Bahadurshah. It was said to have been given in perpetuity on a yearly 'quit rent' basis to Dr. Orta, till it was captured

and looted by an Anglo-Dutch fleet. In the 17th century, it was reportedly given as dowry by the Portuguese to the British when King Charles II of England married Princess Catherine of Portugal. Thereafter by royal decree, it was transferred to the East India Company. It earned unprecedented prominence as an 'entreport' after the Suez Canal was opened in the 19th century.

Bombay is a distorted derivative of Mumba Ai or Maha amba, the patron

Goddess of the Kolis after whom the city was reportedly named 'Mumbai'. When it came under Portuguese hegemony, it was changed to Bombaim (good bay in Portuguese). Known for their originality so as to keep all shades of opinion at 'bay', the British reportedly changed the name to Bombay (after Bombeli- Bombay duck) and the name stuck.

MR. M. S. KILPADY is the editor of the Research Feature News Service.

New Name	Old Name	New Name	Old Name
Ethiopia	Abyssinia	Shimla	Simla
Lesotho	Basutoland	Bharuch	Broach
Botswana	Bachuanaland	Thane	Thana
Sabah	Br. N. Borneo	Pune	Poona
Belize	British Honduras	Vasai	Bassein Road,
Kampuchea	Cambodia	Kanpur	Cawnpore
Sri Lanka	Ceylon	Guwahati	Gauhati
Zaire	Congo	Oslo	Christina
Benin	Dahomey	Volvograd	Staingrad
Indonesia	Dutch East Indies	Kinshasa	Leopoldville
Surinam	Dutch Guyana	Kisangani	Stanleyville
Loro Sac	East Timor	Sambhaji Nagar	Vasco-da-gama
Taiwan	Formosa	Kochi	Cochin
Ghana	Gold Coast	Thriuvananthapuram	Trivandrum
The Netherlands	Holland	Udhagamandalam	Ootacamund
Bharat	India	Harare	Salisbury
Ireland	Irish Free State	Maputa	Lourenco Marques
Malagasy	Madagascar	Karnataka State	Mysore State
Malaysia	Malaya	Tamil Nadu	Madras State
Manchuria	Manchukuo	Udupi	Udipi
Iraq	Mesopotamia	Banjul	Bathurst
Zambia	Northern Rhodesia		(Gambian Capital)
Malawi	Nyasaland	Burkina Faso	Upper Volta
Iran	Persia	Djibouti	French Somaliland
Hawaiian Islands	Sandwich Islands	Guyana	British Guiana
Thailand	Siam	Korea	The Hermit
Namibia	South-West Africa		Kingdom
Tanzania	Tanganyika & Zanzibar	Istanbul	Constantinople,
Ankora	Angore		Byzantium
Cape Kennedy	Cape Canaveral	Laos	Lanxang
Panaji	Panjim		(The Land of a million elephants)
Varanasi	Benaras	Malabo	Santa Isabel
Beijing	Peiping, Peking	Myanmar	Burma
Leningrad	Petrograd	Nauru	Pleasant Island
Ho Chi Minh City	Saigon	Tasmania	Togoland
Dyushambe	Stalinabad	Tuvalu	The Ellice Islands
Kozhikode	Calicut	Vanatu	The New Hebrides
Nashik	Nasik	Yangon	Rangoon
		Zimbabwe	Southern Rhodesia

Point of View

Hussain's Paintings : Artistic Freedom or Licence?

The paintings of the Hindu Goddess 'Saraswati' by M. F. Hussain has evoked conflicting reactions. For some, it is freedom of artistic expression. For others, it is an assault on religious sentiments. In between lies the crux of the issue, whether artistic freedom can degenerate into licence and can bonafide criticism be dubbed as fascist? A pluralist society presupposes not just a healthy debate but an equal respect for dissent as much as moral and religious values.

It is not the support to Hussain that matters. A view like that by itself is the essence of a free society. It is the double standards of a section of the Indian intelligentsia that smacks of hypocrisy. Such intellectuals do little service by their partisan attitude. The problem with such intellectuals is that they see 'red' when the Hindu majority protests but maintain a selective silence over the cause of similar such occurrences. In the process, bonafide and fair arguments against such Hussain's paintings get lost in the same way as some extremists lost their bearings and destroyed some of his other paintings.

The provocation does not lie in a painting. Hussain has been doing that for years. Nobody has raised as much as an eyebrow. It is the depiction of Goddess Saraswati - revered by millions of Hindus - in nude poses that is demeaning. In terms of the law, Hussain can be charged under Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code for promoting or attempting "... to promote, on grounds of religion ... disharmony or feelings of enmity ... between different religious communities".

It cannot be hard to argue that Hussain would have been unaware of the sentiments of the majority. In scandalising a religious figure, the inevitable consequence is promoting

disharmony among different religious groups. It would be a misplaced argument that critics of Hussain lack a "secular and broad outlook or criticism amounts to suppressing the creativity of the artist". Hussain, and for that matter, anyone cannot be above the law or valid criticism. And neither can healthy criticism be dubbed as fascist or fanaticism. In fact, it is the partisan attitude one way or the other, that will imperil the values of an open liberal society.

It is the misuse of art that is dangerous. The fascists have used or misused art methodically to promote ethnic and religious animosities. Hitler, during the days of the Third Reich, used the art of cartoons and print media against the Jews, by depicting them in caricatures as inferior race and wicked traders. The Arab media drew inspiration from Hitler in their campaign against Israel and the misuse of art against Jews touched its nadir on the eve of the 1967 Six Day War. History is replete with examples of how art has been misused to create enmity and disharmony.

A few years ago, the short-lived daily, *The Indian Post* published from Mumbai, carried a sketch of Prophet Mohammed praying to Allah. There was nothing offensive by itself. But Muslim fanatics barged into *The Indian Post* office and destroyed their press equipment, and forced the newspaper to tender an apology. None of the intellectuals came to the defence of press freedom, much less taking Muslim communalism and religious bigotry to task. Neither did any politician visit Mumbai.

Still earlier, in the face of Muslim uproar, the Indian Government banned Salman Rushdie's book, *Satanic Verses*. And how many had read it or even knew the contents thereof. Was it not smothering free expression and sup-

pressing works of creative art. And those who did protest against the ban however maintained a deafening silence over such overt manifestation of Muslim fanaticism and intolerance. On the contrary, many professed secularists defended the ban and justified the Muslim demand for such a ban. And it was the very Mr. V. P. Singh who has defended Hussain and who was then at the helm of national affairs who supported the ban.

Recently, India's ex-cricketer captain, Mohammed Azharuddin, while endorsing the Reebok shoe, had affixed his signature and name on such pair. The Muslim clergy forced Azharuddin to tender an apology, by affixing the word 'Mohammed' on the shoe, the Prophet stood upon. Was it not also religious bigotry that interfered with freedom of artistic expression. But none of those who have now come out in defence of Hussain had a word of condemnation for the religious obscurantism of the Muslim clergy. Nor did any politician in support of Azharuddin.

Similarly, some years ago, a galore was ticked by a group for two or three days, purporting to be defying the Prophet Mohamed. It was the book titled "Mohammed the man" which depicted a fictitious character and had nothing to do with Prophet Mohamed. Yet, such irrational vigilantism did not attract any real reaction.

It is such double standards that lack credibility. If we light one wrong, while the other wrong is rampant, we set dangerous precedents. With the similar liberties with the fate of Rushdie's book. For those who have called for Hindus for getting

ought to have realised that in spite of their anger, there is not going to be any *fatwa* against Hussain. And neither can such archaic and medieval religious obscurantism be justified in the twentieth century, irrespective of any religious denomination.

In fact, when the Shiv Sena mouth-

piece, *Saamna* in its usual acidic editorial asked if M. F. Hussain would draw similar paintings of Muslim icons, some Muslims sought to register a case against *Saamna* at a police station and the Raza Academy threatened to institute legal proceedings against the Sena chief, Bal Thackeray.

Given such a piquant situation, what would such intellectuals do? Would they defend *Saamna's* right to freedom of the press and speech or would they express concern over the provocation that hurts Muslim religious sentiments. Charity does not always begin at home.

Nitin G. Raut

Sullyng India's Ethos

The celebrated Indian artist, Maqbool Fida Hussain, who has contributed handsomely in putting our country on the map of the world in the realm of art, has become the target of not only vilification and violence by mobs in some Madhya Pradesh towns like Indore, Ahmedabad and even the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai but also possible criminal prosecution on a charge of creating enmity among different groups of people on religious grounds. The complaint was registered by the Mumbai police on the basis of a letter from Mr. Pramod Navalkar who goes by the designation of cultural affairs minister in the Maharashtra government. We are reminded of what a vegetarian Nazi in Hitler's Germany said, "whenever I hear the word 'culture', I reach for my gun".

If such ignoramus and vandals had been in existence in Mahakavi Kalidasa's times, they would have burnt his epic work, *Kumarasambhavam* and also perhaps stoned him to death, because Kalidas describes the body of Parvati, also a Hindu deity, from top to bottom dwelling in some detail not only on her breasts and thighs but also the navel.

It may be recalled that "what is today taken to be immutably Hindu was foreign ten or twenty centuries ago. Greek and Persian hands have shaped icons of Vishnu and Surya. By the same token, the kitsch iconography of calendar art that many Hindus are now adopted is no older than a hundred years: its origins lie in the oleographs of Raja Ravi Varma who modelled his Sitas and Draupadis on the overblown Greco-Roman Women

in the paintings of the 19th century history painters like Alma-Tadema".

The RSS periodical, *Organiser*, has taken exception to the likening of the bigotry and intolerance of Hindutva activists with "Islamic fundamentalism in Teheran or the onslaught of Taliban (in Afghanistan)." But bigotry is no monopoly of Muslim fundamentalists and it is small consolation to find a quantitative distinction between the two offshoots of diseased minds. Of the same family the Ayatollahs' death sentence on Salman Rushdie is the treatment being meted out to Professor Mushirul Hassan of Jamia Millia who, as pro-vice-chancellor, had been hounded out of the university premises and still has to stay out as acting vice-chancellor. (It may be recalled that Professor Hassan stated during an interview that while he fully appreciated the fact that Muslim sentiments had been badly hurt by Salman Rushdie's book, *Satanic Verses*, and also that the book is offensive, on principle he was opposed to the banning of books in a democratic country. Ideas should be fought with ideas, not with swords, he added. This statement made a section of students and teachers in Jamia attack him physically and he was threatened with death. The then Congress government appointed an inquiry committee to go into Professor Hassan's statement and the charges made against him. The committee cleared him. One wonders, though why should a committee be appointed at all. Was it to find out whether freedom of expression is an acceptable ideal!

Courtesy: GSB, *PUCB BULLETIN*, November 1996.

Artist Tortured for Paintings in Tibet

A Tibetan who has specialised in paintings of the exiled Dalai Lama was found cowering in a public restroom in the Tibetan capital Lhasa recently after his release from police custody, a monitoring group said.

Yungdrung was discovered traumatised, emaciated and shaking in the restroom near his home after spending 58 days in a police detention centre, the Tibet Information Network said, quoting a witness who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"He was unable to recognise his friends and did not know where he lived", the group quoted the witness as saying.

Yungdrung may have gotten into trouble for his portraits of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, accused by the Chinese of fomenting independence sentiments among Tibetan Buddhists who revere him as their spiritual leader. In recent years, the government has tightened a ban on public, and in some cases private, displays of the Dalai Lama. The London-based monitoring group quoted the witness as saying that the police had ransacked the artist's home and confiscated all his paintings.

Courtesy: *The Asian Age*.

Debate

Nationalism, Secularism, Communalism

Sarto Esteves

Readers will recall that in the last issue of our journal, we had carried a letter from Mr. Ashtekar and Mr. Bery in our 'Debate' pages. While doing so, we had stated our intention of requesting Mr. Sarto Esteves to respond to the debate which arose from a review of his book, Nationalism, Secularism and Communalism. We carry below Mr. Esteves' response. This debate is now closed. Editor.

Since the editor expects me to respond to the debate on my book, I will do so briefly, although I generally do not engage in polemics of this nature.

It is very unfortunate, but true, that very few of us seem to make an effort to distinguish between national, socio-economic-political problems, or issues of national importance, and other issues like religion which may be of importance to some, or to a section of the people or to a religious community, but may not concern the nation as a whole. The book under reference deals with issues of national significance. They affect the whole nation and, therefore, every citizen of India should be concerned about them. It can hardly be challenged that from the nation's point of view, some of the issues discussed are *per se* highly divisive, destructive and debilitating, and, therefore, must be controlled in the interests of the nation. They contain the seeds of the erstwhile "divide-and-rule" policy of our colonial masters and more. If allowed to grow, they can lead to national disintegration. The communal violence, internecine religious and casteist wars, politician-produced hatred and discord among people, are all taking the nation in that direction.

The book has nothing to do with any religion, with religious tenets or beliefs, with any religious philosophy, or any religious community as such. There is reference in it, no doubt, to religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc. or to their teachings and philosophies or to religious communities in India, but that is only with regard to the problems afflicting the nation and the use made of religion by certain political parties or groups to further their electoral prospects, or to justify their actions, their policies and their ideologies. The disastrous effects

that have been produced by communalists in this manner are obvious to even the most casual observer or disinterested individual in the country. Therefore, reference is made to such activities where it is required so that the discussion becomes more concrete, meaningful and precise, and vague abstractions are avoided. Such an approach cannot be construed either as a justification for the actions of any religion or community or as an attack on any religion or religious beliefs of any community.

To practise any religion is not a crime in our country. Religion is recognised as an important, wholesome and sobering human activity and is a fundamental right in our Constitution, which enables every Indian to practise and propagate any religion one likes. But that right can be misused and it has been misused by many during the last 50 years. For all practical purposes, religion has been turned by some into a political ideology on the plea, more recently in particular, that what they are referring to is not religion but "cultural nationalism", "majoritarianism", "civilisational outpost", "national ethos", etc. What should be to some extent a personal relationship of man with his Maker, has been taken to the market place and mixed with politics.

This gives them a platform to rouse a religious frenzy among the followers of some religions, secure electoral support and even denigrate and malign the minorities, call full-fledged citizens of India "foreigners", "slaves", "second class citizens" and "worms", and move towards establishing a theocratic State in our midst. If some such matters are discussed in the book, it is not an attempt to defend any minority, its actions, its policies or its behaviour, but to show that religion is being used by our so-called political leaders to divide the nation, when millions of our people in every nook and corner of India do not want politicians to teach them to practise any religion but only to help them to get a meal at the end of the day, a piece of cloth to cover themselves with and a roof over their heads. If at all any of them have been involved in any riots or such activities, it is because in many

cases they were either provoked or paid to do so.

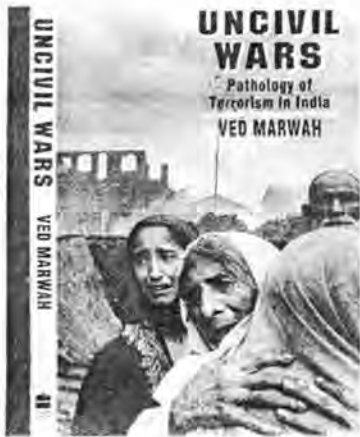
If this is to a large extent the purpose and content of the book, then one fails to understand why "many champions of *Hindutva*" should be up in arms and bring in my religion or my religious beliefs in a debate on the book or mount an attack on Christianity. The reviewer may have referred to my writings in some Catholic publications for some reason or the other, but all types of publications throughout India have found a place for my writings during the last nearly 40 years and several of my books have been published which have nothing to do with the Catholic religion, but have a lot to do with our nation. I refer to this, not because it is a pleasure to do so, but because most of what has been published about my book in the last two issues of *Freedom First* deals precisely with this aspect. There is neither an attack on any religion in the book nor is there any attempt to justify any actions or policies of the Church.

To attack Christianity (apart from being unconnected with my book) by referring to certain actions or policies, particularly of some Protestants during a brief period of about three centuries when that sect was trying to set the pace for Christianity, is well-known but has never been considered to be in the right spirit. It has no doubt been the habit with many to treat that brief but unfortunate chapter in the history of the Church as the real history of two millennia of Christianity. The official Church has largely closed that chapter. It has forgiven all those connected with it as also all others, and the recent Popes have themselves been visiting every part of the world to meet the leaders of every sect or group, as also the followers of other religions, asking for forgiveness and pardon for whatever may have happened in times past and "offering the other cheek".

It is also not fair to judge, with today's knowledge, wisdom and maturity, and with today's enlightened, civilised concepts, those who lived centuries ago, when even elementary education was the preserve of a few".

BOOK REVIEWS

UNCIVIL WARS: PATHOLOGY OF TERRORISM by Ved Marwah, IPS (Retd.); Harper & Collins, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 022; first published 1965; third impression 1996; pp:472; Rs.395.



Reviewed by
Maj.Gen.(Retd.) E. D'Souza

Terrorism, in one guise or another is now a global syndrome. Even security conscious countries like the USA are prone to it. A glance at the print and electronic media makes this syndrome easily manifest. India has not been spared. In fact, sad to say, it has been prevalent in various avatars since the Kashmir conflict erupted in 1948. Terrorism has now become a byword. We have had terrorism in J & K reaching unprecedented heights after 1988, followed not necessarily in that order, in the Punjab, the North East, Assam, Tripura, Manipur, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra (Naxalites), and Tamil Nadu (LTTE).

Although now approaching its 50th year, very few attempts have been made to probe analytically, this debilitating syndrome in its entirety. Ved Marwah, a distinguished retired Indian Police Service Officer of the Delhi Cadre with wide ranging experience of terrorist related activities in the Punjab, Mizoram/Nagaland, J&K, and at the Centre, has produced through this publication perhaps the first com-

prehensive work on this subject. The reviewer recalls meeting the author when he returned from a UK posting with our High Commission in London, to one in Delhi. His interest in this bright IPS Officer continued when he was appointed as Advisor to the J & K Government.

A few comments on the presentation. The foreword is by V Pai Parandiker, Director of the prestigious Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, who describes this work as "perhaps the first study on the live subject to provide a greater debate to thought on terrorism and how to deal with it". This detailed work is presented logically and holistically beginning with some general observations on the subject. It then covers terrorist related activities in Kashmir, the Punjab, the North East, Naxalites, and the LTTE, and ends with thoughts on counter-terrorist strategy. There are a number of annexures giving detailed statistics relating to these activities in all terrorist affected States, and appendices A: on the Shimla Agreement; 'B' on the Punjab Accord; 'C' on the Assam Accord; 'D' on the Nagaland Accord; and 'E' on the Mizoram Accord, ending with an alphabetical index. Each sector has been covered logically, beginning with the genesis of the problem, examples of terrorist activities and the *modus operandi*, steps taken to counter them, and thoughts for the future. Perhaps readers may find the examples mentioned in each chapter too numerous and the statistics equally so. The large number of names and incidents mentioned are perhaps unnecessary.

There are a number of avoidable errors, and the use of the indefinite article and expressions used leave much to be desired in such a serious work. But these minor omissions do not detract from the completeness and importance of this work.

The chapter on Terrorism in J&K draws attention to the lack of political will, political and bureaucratic bun-

gling, lack of cooperation between the various security forces involved, demoralization of the police through inept handling, indecision at critical moments, Pakistan support to the militants, poor public relations, using the Border Security Force in a local police role as at Bijbehara, suspicion among decision makers, and prevarication where speed is of the essence. The author's closeness to the *dramatis personae* and involvement at all stages sheds new light on personalities and events.

In regard to the Punjab, the main issues were the use of religious places, the initial encouragement given to Bhindranwale, the hasty launching of Blue Star, covert and overt Pakistan support to Sikh terrorists including effective use of the electronic media from across the border, fake encounters, anti terrorist measures adopted including floodlighting and fencing of critical areas of the border and the financing of the terrorists by Sikhs abroad. Marwah is right in highlighting the fact that terrorism survives with public support as was evident in the Punjab at one stage. The author warns, and rightly so, that terrorism in the Punjab though contained is not over and that relaxation may prove counter productive.

As IGP Mizoram, this talented IPS Officer gained a detailed insight into the insurgencies in NEFA. He does not confine himself only to Mizoram but extends his comments to insurgency in Nagaland, Assam (Bodoland), Tripura and Manipur, tracing in the process, the commonality in tactics mainly through ambushes, targeting the administration and security forces, training in the areas bordering these states i.e. Myanmar, China, and Bangladesh, supply of sophisticated arms from neighbouring states, and the efficient use of the terrain peculiar to these states, ideal for insurgency. Perhaps the most telling point made is that the situation can best be controlled by winning over the minds of the people of this once forgotten part

Lal Bahadur Shastri

Some Recollections

L. K. Jha

As I look back on those eventful months, which already belong to history, my most outstanding impression of Shastriji is that he combined in a unique way, what might superficially seem to be two contradictory qualities. He was a man of deep humility, ready to listen to others, valuing their opinion and advice, seeking at all times to learn rather than to lay down the law. He was also a man of deep convictions, who knew his mind, who formed his own decisions after pondering over all the points of view presented to him and once he had made up his mind he would not waver but stand steadfast on the position he had taken.

Because of his modesty, there were many who thought that it was his advisers who really shaped his policies. This impression got strengthened because it seemed that he was setting up a secretariat which was much larger and consisting of more senior people than Prime Minister Nehru had.

For anyone to occupy the chair which had been filled by an illustrious world personality, like that of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was not an easy assignment. Shastriji never tried to be another Nehru. He was content to be himself and gave his best to the service of the country.

Another area in which Nehru had excelled and in which Shastriji had no prior involvement in any significant measure was India's foreign policy. He made Sardar Swaran Singh his Foreign Minister, knowing that he had in the past handled some delicate issues. However, as Prime Minister he had to handle such problems as had to be taken up at the level of the Head of Government. At the Non-Aligned Summit in Cairo, within a few months of his becoming Prime Minister and at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in the following year, I witnessed how his soft voice, free of rhetoric, was listened to with such profound respect. At the Cairo Summit, the Non-Aligned leaders who had been close to Pandit Nehru - President Nasser, President Tito, President Nkrumah and Archbishop Makarios - accepted him without reserve and exchanged thoughts with him as friend and equal. Only President Sukarno of Indonesia tried to assert his own and his country's superiority over Shastriji and India by saying to him that he had decided to rename the Indian Ocean as the Indonesian Ocean. Shastriji replied: "Mr. President, in our country too, parents give their children names of great persons in the hope that they will have all the qualities of the person they were named after, but such expectations are rarely fulfilled."

In the conduct of foreign policy, Shastriji gave priority to two things. Firstly, he wanted to improve and strengthen India's relations with neighbouring countries, and secondly, he was deeply conscious of the importance of safeguarding India's security.

However, there were other forces at work in Pakistan. They thought that with Nehru's death India would not be able to withstand a Pakistani assault to capture Kashmir by force.

It was at that point of time that Shastriji had his second encounter with President Ayub at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in London. President Ayub said to Shastriji that India should not have attacked Pakistan. Shastriji replied, "Mr. President, I do not understand military strategy, in which you are a past-master. But do you really think that if India wanted to attack Pakistan, we would have chosen to do so at a place where the Indian Army had to face tremendous difficulties in moving men and materials while Pakistan had no such problem?" As witness to this conversation, I can say that President Ayub was quite taken aback by this comment which I left him wondering whether his own people had not fed him with incorrect information.

"We cannot go from ceasefire to ceasefire and wait till Pakistan breaks it," declared Shastriji in a broadcast to the Nation. When and how the conflict would come to an end was the question which still remained open. While Shastriji was ready enough to the withdrawal of troops by both sides where they had crossed the international boundary, in Punjab and in Rajasthan for example, he was not prepared to ask our forces to withdraw from the parts of Jammu and Kashmir beyond the ceasefire line which they had succeeded in liberating. There was a deadlock.

Shastriji made it clear in Moscow that he was on no account prepared under international pressure to tell the Indian Army to pull back to the ceasefire line giving up those parts of Kashmir which had been freed from Pakistani occupation, unless Pakistan accepted the ceasefire line as an international boundary which could only be modified by agreement and not by force. President Ayub pleaded that a categorical acceptance of this condition could lead to his ouster. It was the patient work of the Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin and Foreign Minister Gromyko which resulted in the idea being reformulated in somewhat guarded terms which President Ayub was prepared to accept.

(Extracted from *Lal Bahadur Shastri and Parliament*)

There are a few inaccuracies: for instance the 16th Battalion Rashtriya Rifles is referred to as the 16th Division. It would have helped if a list of all the abbreviations for the various factions involved was included for ease of reference. One final observation of importance. The author has commented on the adverse impact of postings of administrative and police personnel to this neglected part of India considered to be a sort of punishment, resulting in apathy, and consequent disenchantment and interest in the job at hand.

The LTTE brand of terrorism is based on the exploitation of ethnic links between the Tamils of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, a situation the Indian Government cannot afford to ignore because of its wider ramifications. The author rightly feels that the LTTE has now established links with various political and administrative functionaries and the renewed operations against the faction in Sri Lanka may well have repercussions in the south, making South India the hinterland of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka; a nexus has been established between the LTTE and the NSCN and the ULFAs in the North East, a position we can ill afford to ignore.

October-December 1996

MAJ. GEN. (Retd.) E. D'SOUZA, PVSM, is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.



COURTESY: *Gomantak Times*, November 19, 1996.



**LAL BAHADUR
SHASTRI
AND
PARLIAMENT**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI
1993**

His historical positioning is not very comfortable. Sandwiched between the stalwarts of the Nehru family, who were blessed with long, too long, terms Shastri did outshine his predecessor as also his successor. He successfully asserted himself against the syndicate of party bosses who had helped him mount the throne, and resisted all efforts by the pigmies who attempted to browbeat him thereafter. His death at the climax of his glory and popularity was genuinely mourned by the dumb millions in India. He is probably the

best illustration of Chanakya's dictum that softness is the sharpest weapon because it overpowers all and everything.

Divided into four unequal parts, the volume begins with a short resume of important landmarks of his life and ends with condolences and obituaries expressed in various legislative bodies in India. The third and the longest portion (nearly two-thirds of the volume) consists of verbatim reproduction of the speeches delivered by Shastri in Parliament. The tributes and the reminiscences by his colleagues and associates comprise the most important and the most interesting section of this volume. The articles are penned by a galaxy of heavyweights and to list them all would be to prepare a Who's Who of contemporary Indian politics. The bouquets offered here are of plastic flowers, decoratively beautiful and scented with synthetic perfumes. All the articles are in the proper form with appropriate phrases and the right kinds of things said on such occasions.

The entire effort is impressive, more on account of its voluminousness rather than its quality. What is written about Shastri, both as a person and as a leader has a ring of formality which completely overwhelms the touch of sincerity. The story of his life and the tributes paid to him make Shastri a paragon of such perfection that he almost ceases to be human. The editor should have remembered Cromwell's exhortation to his biographers to paint him with all his warts and moles. Only such portraits survive long after the panegyrics have been dumped on the dungheaps of History. Such an official, even officious, presentation would hardly do justice to a personality who proved himself to have the strength of a giant without using it even once for self aggrandizement.

PROF. NAGINDAS SANGHAVI is retired professor of Political Science and a commentator on Indian politics and issues.

SOME MEMORIES

I once asked Lal Bahadur if he had ever heard of Chequers. He said "yes" but when I suggested he find a place outside Delhi where he could retire for week-ends and where he should not allow even good friends like me to disturb him, he said this was impossible for him as he was habituated to meeting people whenever they called on him, throughout the day or night.

Lal Bahadur was an excellent parliamentarian. Unlike other Indian politicians, he did not resent criticism. I once made a speech criticising his policies in regard to tourism. Mr. Somnath Chibb, who was the Director General of Tourism, told me later that when they walked out of Parliament House, Lal Bahadur asked him, "Somnath, did you brief Masani?" Picking up courage, Chibb said that he had. "Good," said Lal Bahadur, "It was an excellent speech and you did the right thing".

M. R. Masani

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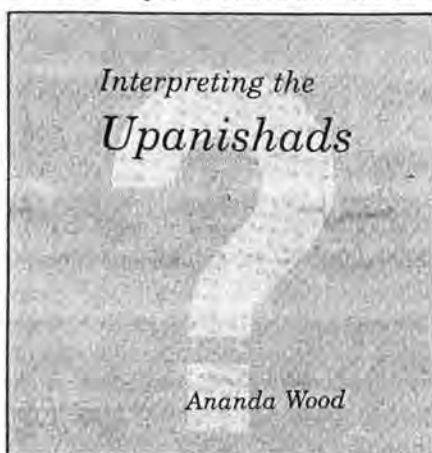
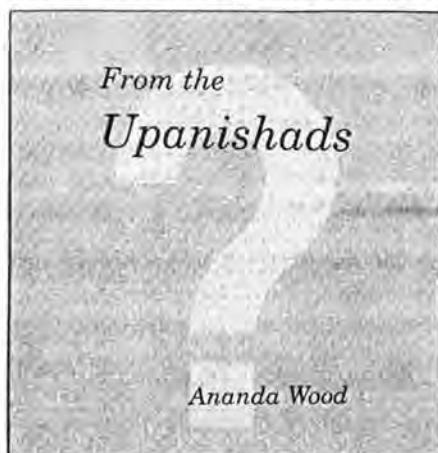
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FROM THE UPANISHADS, Ananda Wood; 1996; pp.288;Rs.150.

INTERPRETING THE UPANISHADS, Ananda Wood; 1996; pp.206; Rs.110.

(Both published by the Author, 1A, Ashoka, 3 Naylor Road, Pune 411 001)



**Reviewed by
Dr. Prema Nandkumar**

Ananda Wood is not the first to be fascinated by the Upanishads, nor is he going to be the last. Anyone who has those immortal longings to know about existence gets plenty to hold on to only in the Upanishads. All the philosophical thought in India and a good deal of it abroad (the Albigenian 'heresy', T. S. Eliot's 'what the Thunder Said', to name but two examples) have Upanishadic filiations. According to Sri Aurobindo:

"The ideas of the Upanishads can be rediscovered in much of the thought of Pythagoras and Plato and form the profoundest part of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism with all their considerable consequences to the philosophical thinking of the west, and Sufism only repeats them in another religious language. The larger part of German metaphysics is little more in substance than an intellectual development of great realities more spiritually seen in this ancient teaching, and modern thought is rapidly absorbing them with a closer, more living and intense receptiveness which promises a revolution both in philosophical and in religious thinking."

Sri Aurobindo himself considered the Upanishads and the Gita as the sole sufficing foundations for his philosophy of supramental transfor-

mation of consciousness. However, it should not be thought that the Upanishads are merely philosophical theorems, concepts, underpinnings of logic. There is the vibrancy of action in the Upanishads, the upward movements of sadhana, the double vision of the near and the far, earth and the beyond, death and immortality.

Each Upanishad is a world by itself, a renewable experience for the aspirant. The student has a participatory status in evolving the teaching and finalising it and then handing over the torch to another student, another generation to mark another new beginning. Ananda Wood has realised this:

"Having received such a statement of condensed philosophical teaching, a student was meant to think about it over and over again, through a sustained process of individual reflection and enquiry. Eventually, after passing through many stages of thinking and rethinking the questions involved, the student was meant to come at last to a thorough and independent understanding of the statement, in his or her own right."

"Condensed philosophical teaching" because the sages rigorously eschewed surplusage. The student of

the Upanishad is never allowed to be bogged down by sheer descriptive mass. He has to structure his own spiritual life. This is how the several Vidyas projected in the Upanishads are presented in terse forms. It is we who are to live the Truth, garner experience and transform ourselves on the basis of such experience.

To underline the need for a personal build-up, the Upanishads usually posit a memorable tale. So we have the immortal scenes of Sanatkumara speaking to Narada about *bluma* in Chandogya, Vajashravas giving away Nachiketas to Yama in Katha, Uma Haimavati teaching Indra the nature of Brahman in the Kena. The images make it clear that the Upanishads were not a turning away from the Vedic hymns but were meant to be an experiencing and explication of Vedic truths.

T. V. Kapali Sastriar, after a thorough study of the major Upanishads concludes that "the Brahmanas and the Upanishads are the records of a powerful revival which took the sacred text and ritual as a starting-point for a new statement of spiritual thought and expression. If the Brahmanas represent the conservation of forms, the Upanishads the revelation of the soul of the Veda."

Interpreting the Upanishads follows Shankara's Advaita as expounded by Shri Atmananda. It is an attempt to convey the Upanishadic thoughts in contemporary idiom. *From the Upanishads* has large chunks from twelve Upanishads which includes the Kaushitiki, Prasna and Taittiriya. Without going into the why and wherefore of each term used by Ananda, it is enough to say that here is a readable, easy-flowing version, undisturbed by elaborate footnotes, unpunctuated by Sanskrit words and phrases, unadorned by the dramatic contexts. *Interpreting the Upanishads* juxtaposes several passages from this version along with conventional (literal) translations so that one who has been drawn into the Upanishadic world by Ananda's version could strike out on his own.

The matter in *From the Upanishads* is poetic, natural and exquisitely simple. Thus the Katha on meditation:

"When mind and senses cease to act,
no seeming object can appear.

Then, consciousness shines out alone,
unmixed with those appearances
that make it seem what it is not.

This state of unmixed consciousness
is said to be the highest state;

and meditation is the art
of holding mind and senses back
to reach this state by act of will."

It is a good explicatory prose-poem and Ananda underlines the need for such enlargements as a literal translation of the Sanskrit will leave us high and dry. *Interpreting the Upanishads* justifies his course well enough. But the problem with Ananda is that in his enthusiasm he often reduces gods like Indra, Prajapati and Brihaspati into concepts. This "replacement of mythical metaphor by philosophical interpretation" often leads us to arid areas of mere logic whereas the Upanishads were to be helpful explication of Vedic concepts that lead one to experiential realisation.

Sometimes Ananda's translation gives up even hovering around the original and moves apart for a long explanation. Thus the Ananda version of the Upanishadic two-birds image is really a philosophical doctrine by itself unconnected with the original. The sap of the Upanishads (Svetasvatara, Mundaka) dries up when the two birds do not appear in the new version. The triumph of the Upanishadic sages lay in their entwining metaphor and philosophy into an experiential helix, the one sustaining the other to help the progress of the individual.

All the same, Ananda's way has its own logical progress. *Interpreting*

the Upanishads makes us re-examine some of the Upanishadic phrases like Prajnya Pratishtha ("consciousness is the foundation") and pratyag-atman ("the turned-back self"). It puts up parallels with modern physics. Now akasha which is "a cosmic symbol for the continuing background of experience" can be seen as the "space-time continuum": the "living energy" that holds together a changing universe is no doubt *prana* described in Katha, presented in Ananda's explanatory version:

"This boundless store of restless cosmic energy has terrible destructive power. It's like an upraised thunderbolt: to petty ego's fragile life, identified with little body, sense and mind.

But if, transcending petty ego, all the world is known as life — as only living energy — then how can death arise at all?

For one who knows the world like this, as only life, there is no death. In truth, there's only deathlessness."

From the Upanishads concludes with the creation hymn in the Rig Veda. Though the passage does not belong to the Upanishadic group, Ananda has presented it as it shows "a transition of thought from the mythical imagination of the Vedas to the more abstract philosophy of the Upanishads." *Interpreting the Upanishads* takes up the hymn for special consideration. Ananda wonders at the proliferation of hymns of creation of the phenomenal world. Possibly it is because of man's innate desire to understand an ongoing process by getting at the underlying reality. The physical reality is itself but a starting point for reflecting on phenomenal reality and whether the reality will change in some way. Ananda comes very close to an intuitive interpretation of the Rig Vedic hymn:

"... this is an immediate, mental creation of the world's appearances, as they are manifested in an individual's experience. Through the correspondence that was conceived between the macrocosm of the external universe and the microcosm of individual

experience, traditional descriptions of cosmic creation can often be interpreted as metaphors for the creation of appearances from underlying consciousness."

Each one of us, if we are blessed with an enquiring mind like that of the author, do create our own vision of the Omnipresent Reality and the underlying principle and go for our own vision and experience to deal with the phenomenal world as best as we can. The Upanishads are but signposts. We need them since we cannot work or progress in an abstract existence, in pure Nirvana or an impersonal intellectuality. Caught in the net of "the world of changing things", we need sustenance for the body and the soul. Hence the Upanishadic statements like Annam Brahma and Prajnaanam Brahma. Also guide-posts like these two volumes, intensely motivated and excellently produced to launch us on the *vicara*: "Who am I?"

PREMA NANDAKUMAR is an author and journalist.

ORPHANED CASH

One of the politicians whose raided premises were found to contain a huge cash hoard has declared that the money did not belong to him. The political party to which he belongs has also disclaimed any ownership to this hoard which is now orphaned. Instead of rewarding the person by a misapplication of law that part of the unaccounted cash can be kept by the raided person, the old rule that the treasure trove belongs to the ruler should be involved and entire amount confiscated by the State.

There is said to be a rule that no one is supposed to possess legal tender (Rs. 20 in the case of coins) and currency notes beyond one's reasonable requirements. If so, what happened to such a rule? If it does not exist, is it worth adopting, particularly in view of the spread of the banking habit, with nearly 65,000 bank branches and 500 million deposit accounts?

M. R. Pal



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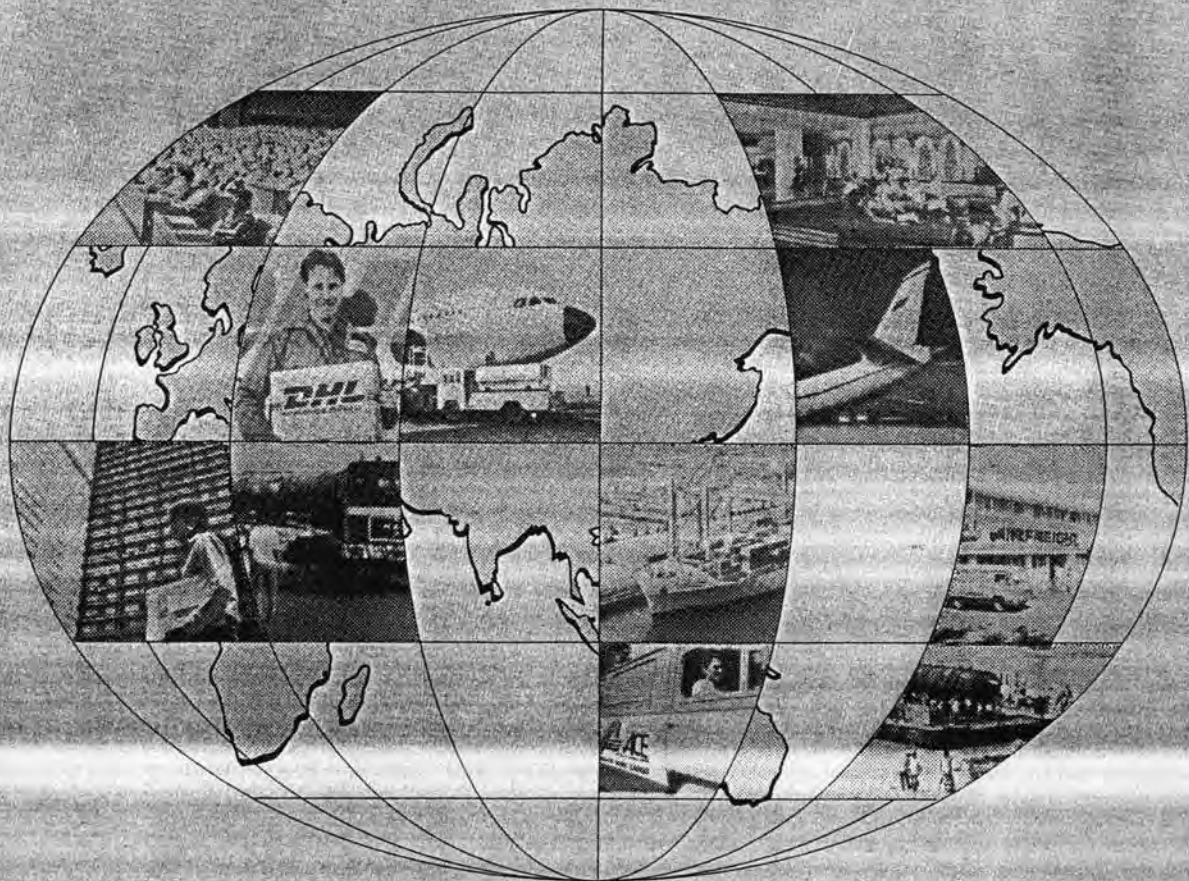
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