

Freedom First

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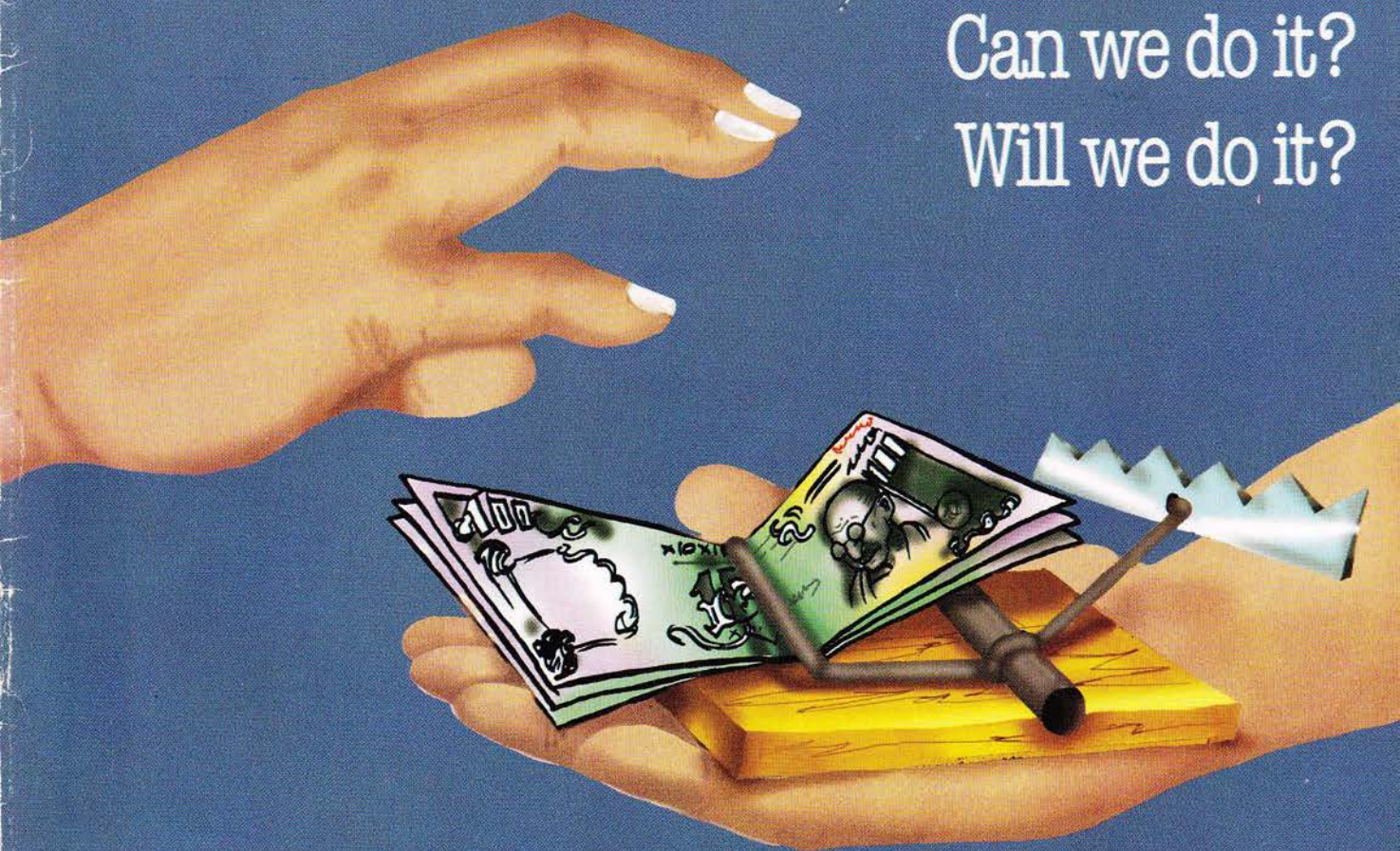
No. 447

RUPEES TWENTY-FIVE

CONTAINING CORRUPTION

Can we do it?

Will we do it?



Liberalism – A Contemporary View

JRD Tata – The Pragmatic Visionary

Justice M. C. Chagla – A Centenary Tribute

Dr. Usha Mehta

(25/08/1920 - 11/8/2000)



With the passing away of Dr. Usha Mehta, public life in the city has become all the poorer and many will miss her benign presence for years to come. Part of her life belonged to history and her name has been etched in the city's struggle for freedom. She identified herself with Bombay, was proud to belong to it and served in a number of public institutions but generally on the quiet.

She spent the formative years of her life as a teacher and a research scholar and was to influence generations of students; almost every institution has many occupying positions of responsibility today, who were once in her class. In spite of heavy engagements, she took part in academic conferences and congresses, never missed sessions and was ready with a paper which she presented in these.

After retirement, she found herself busier than ever and breathed new life into the Gandhi

Smarak Nidhi and made it a live centre for disseminating the ideals of the Mahatma and of humanist values. No figure passing by Bombay and involved in Gandhian ideas skipped visiting the Institute and interacting with her. Her colleagues and she built up one of the very best libraries of the city and one can get almost anything of significance relating to the Mahatma and the national movement. More, she also made it a vibrant centre of debate and discussion and it remained an irreplaceable body to remind the larger public of values in public life.

The Centre has been working sedulously and silently in programmes of rural development and has trained a number of workers, both academically and in the field. Gandhian ideas and their continuing relevance have been popularized through seminars, workshops, and lectures. Children from schools were some of the most enthusiastic of participants in programmes specially arranged for them.

What endeared Ushaben to many was her capacity to work with people, like-minded and otherwise, and with public institutions. Not a month passed by without her or the Centre being busy in some public engagement, whether it be a seminar or a meeting to discuss public issues. Ushaben would be there participating, lending her voice of reason and sanity in a world raucously loud with irrationality. She was distressed and pained, again and again, at the rapid decline of standards in public life. A deeply religious person, she had not a whiff

of communal prejudice and counted along her friends and close colleagues, people from all persuasions and beliefs.

If she had a shortcoming, it was her incapacity to say 'no' to a request. This made her put off what many regarded to be her obligation to later generations, i.e. to put on paper by way of recollections and reminiscences of the past. Often she allowed her enthusiasm to run away with her instant responses and positions that many felt were not consistent with her larger perspectives and commitments.

People who have been closely associated with her have seen her face reflecting her inner life – a life of ascetic habits, yet with appreciation of aesthetic sights and sensibilities and a gentle smile of welcome to all who continually visited her and even intruded but who always left her with a sense of having gained something by spending time with her. Never has the ancient saying been more appropriate: As the clear light is upon the holy candlestick, so is the beauty of the face in ripe age ... Always in white khadi one saw few to whom the apparel was so becoming. Above all, her whole personality reflected a sense of contentment, yet concern for tasks ahead and to be completed. Her deep involvement in social questions and conflicts far from making her cynical made her glow with a hope for the future. It is this hope that she so effortlessly conveyed that made the young flock to her and discover in her a comforting elder.

R. Srinivasan

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

We carry the second part of the feature on corruption. The level of participation in this discussion has been most encouraging.

By happy coincidence we received for publication articles on three outstanding individuals. Mr. Justice Chagla, Mr. Fareed Tyabji and Mr. J. R. D. Tata. Happy because these 11 were men of high purpose and integrity. Contrast this with the sorry story of venality that has engulfed India. We invite readers' comments.

Our Next Cover Feature PENALISING HONESTY - IN THE LAND OF GANDHI

We intend to focus on why it is so difficult to be honest in the midst of so much venality. We need to pay our tribute to those men and women who have stood up for what is right, both in the permanent and political executive.

Last date to receive your contribution: December 31, 2000

We accept contributions by post, Email: freedom@vsnl.com - or on a diskette (floppy)

Subscriptions Renewal: If you have not renewed your subscription or have not cleared the arrears for 1999 and 1998 please do so. Printing is expensive and we cannot afford to keep mailing copies to those who have failed to renew their subscription. Come January we will be compelled to delete from the mailing list all those whose subscriptions have not been renewed. We hope you will understand.

Bi-monthly Fund: We are still as far away from our target of Rs.12 lakhs as we were three months ago. Consequently the bi-monthly is still as far away.

Book Reviews Special: We attempted to publish a special issue exclusively devoted to book reviews. We wrote to around 150 publishers. Only two replied with a half page advertisement each. We are grateful to them for their response. The rest did not even bother to acknowledge our letter let alone consider advertising. We are disappointed no doubt but not disheartened. We'll try again next year! - who knows we may even have a flood of responses. It is good to think positive as prescribed by Management Gurus.

Editor

October-December 2000
No.447

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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*

Did you know that just one public sector steel plant in Andhra Pradesh has eaten up in losses, in the past few years more than it has cost us to subsidise food for the poor during the same period.

Tavleen Singh, *India Today*, May 15

Does the BMC (Bombay Municipal Corporation) exist for managing civic affairs and delivering adequate essential amenities to the citizens or it is there only to ensure the survival of some 1 to 1.5 lakh employees?

Editorial in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, October 16

One thing...Sonia Gandhi has done successfully; she has taken away and locked up the Congress' spine in some safe deposit vault and thrown away the key.

M. J. Akbar, *Asian Age*, August 27

The Congress which claims to be the most democratic party in the country, considers any effort for a democratic discussion or the contesting of elections, a rebellion

Abhay Mokashi, *MID-DAY*, November 10

The best thing about a possible presidency of Albert Gore Jr. is that after eight years of Hillary Clinton, Tipper Gore as First Lady would be a relief.

Noemie Emery, *National Review*, May 1

Marxism alone has a future

Recently retired Chief Minister of West Bengal.
Jyoti Basu, *India Today*, September 18

If there is any usurpation of the functions of one arm of the state by another, it is generally by the Executive – politician and bureaucrat – who presume to play the judge, without training, without scruples and in gross abuse of power.

C. R. Irani, *The Statesman*, November 16

Everything that should have been up is down – employment, GDP, the stock market. And everything that should have been down is up – unemployment, the deficit, inflation. Yet Finance Minister Yashwant Singh remains an optimist, promising another round of big ticket reforms to get the economy moving again.

T. R. Gopalakrishnan, *The Week*, October 29



N. S. REDDY (JUNE 20, 1998)

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Who Will be the US President

As we go to press it is still not clear who will be the next US President almost a fortnight after voting. The uncertainty is accompanied by court battles and much acrimony. The US is for the first time in the history of its undoubtedly virile democracy caught in a democratic dilemma. In India there have been comments in the press by correspondents and some public figures that that gave an impression of gloating over the difficulties. Cartoonists of course have had a field day and their humour is unexceptional. Even assuming there have been Americans taking a dig at our Laloos I think it is in poor taste to gloat over someone else's problems.

An Indian friend who teaches in a US University wrote to me recently: "Trust you are enjoying the political drama being played out in Florida. But at least no one is worried about riots in the streets or the army taking over or anything like that. The system is strong and stable and the issue will be resolved within the next month." Amen for that.

Better this than Breaking Heads

Outlook (October 23) carried a story on a worthwhile BJP initiative though the title of the story was rather unfortunate.

The Rambhau Mhalgi Prabhodini Trust has set up a training school for politicians. The Trust is named after Rambhau Mhalgi an outstanding legislator known for his personal integrity, who took his legislative tasks seriously. He was a member of the RSS and naturally the Academy (Prabhodini in Marathi) is an RSS effort. The aim of the school, the *Outlook* report says, "is to empower grassroots political activists. Its director general is quoted as saying, "There should be a learning process so that the elected representatives can deliver the goods"

The title "School for Caesars" translated into simple English means 'school for dictators'. *Freedom First*, being a Liberal Quarterly, may not quite agree with the RSS on many issues but cannot take exception



when its president Pramod Mahajan says: "This is to raise the general standard of Indian politics."

But this is by no means the first such initiative. Over thirty years ago *Freedom First* founder Minoo Masani took the initiative in setting up an institution that sought to impart training to young men and women in citizenship and in the philosophy of liberal democracy. He was joined in this effort by Col. Leslie Sawhny who had taken premature retirement. Originally christened Programme for Training in Democracy it was named the Leslie Sawhny Programme for Training in Democracy in memory of Col. Sawhny who died soon after the decision was taken to found the institution. The LSP as it is popularly known has its own training centre in Devlali in the Nasik district of Maharashtra. As its long time honorary secretary Mr. Arvind Deshpande points out the the LSP "was not for one party. It was non-partisan. Hundreds of political workers belonging to the Swatantra Party, the Praja Socialist Party, the Socialist Party, the Congress Party, and even the Jan Sangh and later the BJP and the Janata Party have received training at camps organized by the LSP."

Well Done Mr. Mayor But ...

Bombay's Mayor Mr. Hareishwar Patil merits a well deserved thank from the citizens for his attempts to clean up Mumbai and keep it clean. Hoardings all over the city in Marathi, Hindi and English exhort citizens to keep the city clean and warns that those "littering, spilling and urinating in public places" can

be arrested and fined anything from Rs.100 to Rs.2,500 if they do any of these offensive acts. But few seem to take this seriously. Only yesterday I saw a police constable spitting right in front of a hoarding and another 'citizen' urinating right on the wall where the Mayor's exhortation and warning had been very neatly painted! The practice of many owner drivers opening the door of their Opel, Benz or Honda City to discharge jets of tobacco spit continues unabated even as a traffic cops looks on.

If the Mayor is serious then the punishment must be a deterrent to fit the crime. Fine is no deterrent. What is, is to compel the person who spits or urinates at a public place to clean it up with his handkerchief or with his shirt if he does not have a handkerchief. This ought to do the trick.

*

On Voluntary Organizations and Cooperatives

I have before me three 68th Annual Report of The South Indian Education Society (SIES); the 1999-2000 Annual Reports of the National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India Limited; the National Dairy Development Board; Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited; and the National Tree Growers' Cooperative Federation.

Apart from the fact that these reports are very well produced they tell a story of the value of voluntary effort. These represent the essence of active citizenship even if there is government support in the form of financial assistance.

In the case of the SIES I have a confession to make. I have been very critical of the tendency of the management of the SIES to name their institutions after religious heads. Why not name them after educationists, I thought or why name them after anyone at all. But, if by naming them after religious heads without losing the institution's secular character, securing funds becomes that much easier, then why not. The spread of educational activities across a wide spectrum is to be commended. The latest was the opening of the SIES Indian Institute of Environment Management. A visit to their website <http://www.sies.edu.com> is recommended for those interested.

Dr. V. Kurien who is described as India's milkman continues to be as active as ever if we are to go by the two reports of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Federation and the National Cooperative Dairy Federation. More power to his elbow.

And Dr. Amrita Patel's work in the Tree Growers' Cooperative Federation is equally praiseworthy. Their report says that 476 tree growers cooperatives have re-vegetated 14249 hectares of the 35700 hectares of common land made available to them are planting 11 million trees. Impressive statistics indeed.

SVR

How the West Was Lost

For years and decades, the western media has looked condescendingly on the state of our nation at various times. Train crashes. Trains running late or not functioning at all. Floods disrupting normal life. Strikes grinding the country to a halt. Election malpractices.

It seems to me that the shoe is on the other foot now. In the last few months, Britain has been rocked by train accidents, train derailments, major floods which have meant people being relocated from their homes and trains being further delayed, and a huge petrol blockade which meant that the country had no petrol in its pumps for nearly a week.

Yesterday, as the USA and many parts of the world waited anxiously to find out who would hold the next post as "the world's most powerful man", there were murmurs about electoral malpractices and threats of lawsuits. On Tuesday, the American people actually voted for a dead candidate to their Senate. His wife will take the seat. (Anyone say anything about Laloo Prasad?)

A journalist from 'The Times' (London) who has just returned from Mexico wondered whether the media in the so-called third world would be writing pityingly about the state of affairs here and whether the UN would be rushing aid to flood victims.

From the Internet

Liberalism : A Contemporary View

S. V. Raju

Some of you may have read two articles entitled 'The Liberal Vision' (*The Times of India*, July 9) and 'Liberty and Equality - Freedom as the Supreme Value' (*The Times of India*, July 19). These two articles caused some consternation among members of the Indian Liberal Group who asked me whether the articles represented the views of the Indian Liberal Group (I.L.G.). To clear the air, I sent a rejoinder to *The Times of India* on July 24 entitled 'Liberalism - A Contemporary View'.

Two months later, on September 29 the article was returned with a covering note on a slip of paper (unsigned and undated) on which was written: "The Editorial Page Editor of

the *Times of India* regrets that he is unable to make use of the enclosed contribution". Of course a newspaper is fully entitled to reject any contribution that it does not wish to publish. That is not the issue here, though the reader or this writer is also fully entitled to draw his own conclusions. The issues here are: Why wait two months before returning the article; another is the manner in which it was returned indicating a lack of basic courtesies; a third issue is the question of fairness - but then that is a rather foolish expectation - these days particularly!

-SVR.

What is Liberalism all about? If it were a dogma or a doctrine a straight answer would be easy. That it is not, is, at once, its strength and weakness. The only dogma, if you can call it that, is the conviction that Liberal thought is anchored in freedom. The content of Liberalism has never been static. It is constantly evolving. At times it has meant the democratic state taking on additional tasks not strictly governance and, at other times limiting its role. But at all times it has been in and through freedom.

The most remarkable aspect of the liberal philosophy in the West has been its continuous evolution and vitality responding to social problems as they emerge and seeking to resolve them in a manner that would promote the rights and dignity of the individual. A political philosophy that developed in an agrarian context adapted itself to the requirements of an industrial society, thanks to political philosophers like Bentham, John Stuart Mill and T. H. Green. Liberals often asked the state to intervene on behalf of groups of people at the receiving end.

In India, Liberalism evolved as a philosophy of liberation, liberating Indian society from a variety of social and political evils and commanding the educated public of the values of civility. In the early part of the twentieth century the Liberal Party of India could not make much headway but it leavened the Congress ideology in

many ways. The Indian Constitution, despite the many horrible amendments since 1949, still bears testimony to the resilience of liberal values - emphasizing liberty, equality, and justice as the cornerstone of the Indian Republic. But the emergence of the Swatantra Party (a party based on liberal principles and values) in the early sixties provoked Jawaharlal Nehru's ire. He denounced the Swatantra Party as a party representing capitalism and the philosophy of *laissez faire*. The party's strong defence of the right to property was given as evidence of Liberalism being pro-rich and anti-poor.

Despite the assassination of its character, the Swatantra Party, during its life-time, did not bother about being politically correct. On the other hand its policies were dictated by what it considered right in terms of ethical and liberal values. To give some examples: The Swatantra Party repeatedly demanded in Parliament and outside that India honour the pledge of a plebiscite in Kashmir; commended a confederation between India and Pakistan; opposed banks nationalisation; opposed the abolition of proxy purchases, fought the collection of an ad valorem tax levied in the 17th Amendment under the guise of cooperative farming; opposed the so called 'liberation' of Goa and demand the recognition of the Dalai Lama's

government-in-exile.

The party was able to expose the mantra of socialism for what it really was and to brand the statist policies of the then ruling Congress Party led by Mr. Nehru and his daughter as the Licence, Permit, Quota Raj. But despite Rajaji's and Masani's untiring efforts the Swatantra Party was unable to break the tag of a 'Rich Man's Party'.

The Swatantra Party secured 44 seats in the Fourth Lok Sabha (1967-71) (not 60, Sauvik Chakraverti 'The Liberal Vision', *The Times of India*, July 9). It was 2 more than what the Jan Sangh (now called the BJP) had. But there are two features to be noted in connection with this achievement: (1) Not one of these 44 was from a metropolitan city. All of them were from rural or semi-rural constituencies; (2) It was not due to a voter appreciation of the election manifesto of the Swatantra Party - a Manifesto steeped in Liberal values. The success arose from other factors mainly in the realm of realpolitik.

The Swatantra Party emphasised freedom as its basic value. Its Statement of Policy was titled "To Prosperity Through Freedom" and its slogan "Farm, Family and Freedom". Repeatedly the party emphasised that it stood for a mixed economy (in fact Atal Bihari Vajpayee is credited with pioneering this concept in a series of lectures to the Bombay University in 1947) where the State would run enterprises that were not attractive to

private investors and would leave the rest to private initiative and enterprise. Later, in both cases the Swatantra Party made it clear during parliament debates that it was opposed to all monopolies including state monopolies and demanded that the MRTP Act should equally apply to the State sector as it did to the private sector.

The Swatantra Party's economic policies were greatly influenced by Prof. B. R. Shenoy. For instance any one who cares to read the debates on the Finance Bills in the sixties will see Swatantra spokesmen advocating a floating rupee – a proposal that Professor Shenoy tirelessly advocated as was his opposition to deficit financing. At the same time the party did not oppose all subsidies. Subsidies to loss making PSUs were opposed; but the Public Distribution System had to be rationalised so that it did not subsidise foodgrains to the well-heeled.

It is this legacy of social concern even while advocating a free market economy that the Indian Liberal Group carried on even after the party's eclipse. In 1985 with Minoo Masani and Count Otto von Lamsdorff, an outstanding German Liberal, present, the Indian Liberal Group adopted a manifesto which, in a reference to equality had this to say:

"To try to eliminate poverty and social injustice is not to accept egalitarianism viz. the abstract right to rigid equality of conditions for all, independent of talent, work or forethought. While Liberals strongly support measures to reduce differences

in wealth to protect each citizen and to increase equality of opportunity, they decidedly oppose egalitarianism which degrades the individual, whereas the recognition of merit in conditions of social justice is stimulating." The Indian Liberal Group does not believe that freedom and equality are antithetical (a position taken by Sauvik Chakraverti, 'Liberty and Equality - Freedom as the Supreme Value', *The Times of India*, July 19).

The Indian Liberal Group values freedom and equality born out of that freedom – the equality of opportunity. Even Pandit Nehru who is quoted as saying that 'democracy and private enterprise are incompatible' had, in his later years to amend his assertion somewhat. Nehru may have had different notions of equality but let us not forget that it is because of his strong commitment to parliamentary democracy that we have in India today, a free society – with all its imperfections, a free society nevertheless.

As for Minoo Masani, (to whom Sauvik Chakravarty refers to in his article), this is what Masani wrote on December 1952 when naming the journal he founded, '*Freedom First*':

"We selected this title for our Bulletin because we consider Liberty, with the great historian Lord Acton, to be the supreme good. We do give priority to freedom – not in point of time, but in time of fundamental importance. The fight for bread and freedom has of course to be waged simultaneously. We want both for our

people – we want bread *through* freedom because that is the only way to get it."

Much later in, 1985, referring to socialism in his seminal article "Liberalism" he wrote *inter-alia*: "Socialism has failed to deliver the goods. It has produced neither equality nor a better life for the masses of the people. The aims of socialism are good. I am still a socialist in that sense. If you put it to me: 'Do you believe in Lenin's free and equal society?' I will say 'Yes'. If freedom and equality are the objectives of socialism, I am for it. But when I find that the weapon that I have used does not create freedom or equality, but creates tyranny and slavery on one side and inequality and poverty on the other, then I would be a fool if I stuck to that weapon."

In March this year the Indian Liberal Group reviewed the manifesto and incorporated in its Constitution the following, among other things, as the Group's Objectives: "The purpose of the ILG is to foster the values of freedom, responsibility, tolerance, social justice and equality of opportunity based on the liberal beliefs that liberty with individual responsibility are the foundations of civilised society; the State is an instrument of the citizens it serves; any action of the State must respect the principles of democratic accountability and the rule of law."

The bottom line is of course a better life for our people

This, in my view, ought to be the profile of contemporary Liberalism.



Liberals in our part of the world have two big handicaps. We have illiteracy on one side and poverty on the other. And these make for irrational and anti-democratic forces to get strong. The important thing is to try and hold the scales even and not to lean heavily one way or another

**Minoo Masani, *Democracy & Development*,
Published by the Indian Liberal Group, 1969**

The Enemy Within - II

Containing Corruption

Can corruption be cured? Can we have a totally corruption-free society where everyone does what is expected of him or her without expecting any reward other than what is legitimately due for the performance of specified duties?

Can a traffic policeman resist the temptation of accepting a small bribe from a driver who jumps a traffic signal. Can a lower division clerk at the rationing office resist a bribe to ignore a false declaration? In an essay that Rajaji wrote in the sixties he described these as petty corruption arising from greed, a normal human weakness. These will remain as long as humans are what they were.

But deplorable as these were, they did not endanger civil society. The amounts that changed hands were small and generally voluntary, taking the form of *bakshish*, often in kind. A basket of fruits or a box of sweets at festival time. And these are not confined to government servants alone. Purchase managers, particularly of manufacturing enterprises whether in the private or public sectors make a 'pile on the side' as the phrase goes. Even indenting clerks who are in charge of stationery items or printing letterheads, bill

books and the like, for instance, expect a 'cut'. The supplier provides for this 'cut' in his quote! It did not acquire dangerous proportions, because society learnt to cope with it and contain it within manageable limits.

But we are talking about the kind of venality that hurts and destroys civil society. That is the venality engendered by the permit licence raj which continues to plague us even while the state is loosening its economic reins. This explains the unholy nexus between politicians, businessmen, babus and trade union 'leaders' (as against genuine trade unionists) who seek to stall moves by the State to disinvest from undertakings where the State has no business to be in the first place. If the permit-licence-quota raj gave rise to a New Class of corrupt politicians, corrupt bureaucrats and corrupt businessmen; the same corrupt politicians, corrupt businessmen and corrupt babus are now joined by trade union 'leaders' whose power base in PSUs is threatened, to push the State back to the regime of permits, licences and quotas. The efforts of these reactionaries need to be fought back and contained.

Corruption Steals the People's Bread



Neither economic development nor social equity is possible if corruption is not rooted out. It is not merely an ethical question, though that is important. No nation can exist very long without morality in its political or public life. Corruption touches the very bread of the people. Crores of rupees have gone down the drain in the sense that what is meant for development for the welfare of the people has gone into the pockets of corrupt people. In Bihar, senior officials will tell you that at least 50% of government spending has leaked into corrupt pockets.

Jayaprakash Narayan *Towards Total Revolution, Volume 4*
(Popular Prakashan, Mumbai)

Containing Corruption

Cleansing the Augean Stable

K. K. Pathak

It is gratifying to note that Mr. Gulzari Lal Nanda, (Union Home Minister in 1964 when this letter was written to *The Hindustan Times*), is keen to curb corruption in the country. If the Augean stable is to be cleansed, the stream of public opinion must be effectively directed against the breeding spots of corruption. We have acquired the bad habit of disobeying the laws. This is a very sad state of affairs. Let us realize that the habit of lightly changing the laws weakens the very essence of the law. A stream of party resolutions weaving around amendment after amendment will lead to a crisis of democracy. How long can we indulge in these political extravaganzas in the name of welfare State?

Let us go deeper into the matter and analyse the causes of corruption. Let us have no ideological bias limiting our scope of investigation. The implementation of "a socialist programme" through "democratic processes" has weakened and will further weaken the very essence of the law. The votaries of a socialist programme aim at a revolution in the

economic and political relationship in the community through radical changes which might prove a threat to our political stability. Let us remember that any socialization of the community on the basis of permit-licence-quota will debase society, pollute public life and destroy all idealism that makes for culture and civilization.

Our long-term aim should be to cultivate a national outlook which includes a sense of duty and a sense of true values. To this end, let us think in terms of a complete reorientation of our system of education. The idea of citizenship should be effectively and vigorously incorporated into our educational programmes at the primary, secondary and university stages. Nationalisation of education does not mean indoctrination of any variety. Our educational programmes should not become instrumental in creating any type of 'cult' casting a long shadow over our national life. An idea which has failed to captivate the attention of the educated can never be intelligible to those ignorant people who have neither any share in the forming of public opinion, nor have any opportunity to

receive any instructions in the science of citizenship. Without the idea of citizenship, democracy cannot survive, nor even good government. If we sincerely want good government and fair distribution of the nation's produce, we must learn to foster civic sense.

As regards the short-term measures, let probes be made into the charges of corruption and it must be made clear that breeding of corruption would mean heavy punishment. Let these charges be tried and heard in the court of law. If need be, an article may be included in the I.P.C. amendment bill which is going to be introduced in the ensuing session of Parliament. Let there be a separate bench in every civil court for this purpose. Open trials be held all over the country. A reign of terror, with the consent of the people, and in the best interest of the nation, would do some good. Let us do all this without any delay. There is no use locking the stable when the steed is stolen. It would be too late if things are allowed to grow without any effective check from below.

Hindustan Times, 5th August 1964.

Kargil Donations Misused?

Ever regretted being patriotic? Eleven men in Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan say they are trying hard not to regret the sentiment that roused them during the Kargil war into donating over a lakh of rupees towards the Kargil Fund.

The reason is that to this day, they have no clue as to whom their donations have benefited.

The transporters who formed an umbrella group called Sri Ganga-nagar Tourist Bus Operators Association, had donated Rs. 1,11,000 towards the Kargil Fund on July 29, 1999. They never received a receipt from the District Transport Officer, Madanlal Meena, who had been raising the funds. When they later complained to the District Collector of Sri Ganganagar three months later, Meena immediately deposited Rs. 44,000 on October 27 and produced a receipt for the same. He had no explanation as to the delayed deposit. As for the rest of the amount, he maintained that he had received only that much.

But no action followed and no attempt was made to find out about the rest of the money.

Sreejatha Menon, *The Indian Express*, Mumbai, July 30, 2000.

Containing Corruption

A Nation of Self-Seekers

Ranjit Konkar

And the nightmare began. Under the 'new' social order, one had to be humiliated by one's own countrymen instead of by foreigners. That was all that was new about it.

This is the story of a nation of people with a 3000 year long unbroken ancestry who fell one day into the hands of the ruler of a tiny island half way around the globe. It hurt their self-respect and their sense of pride to be servants to a monarch sitting on a throne adorned by a diamond stolen from our own land. They began to fight for independence from the ruling tribe: they did not want to be subjects anymore, rather, yearned for self-rule, total independence. Around the turn of the century, it produced giants one after another who ultimately succeeded in winning for the citizens of their motherland the prized goal of self-rule.

Fruits of Freedom ...

These were the days for which the people had been waiting and fighting for over 50 years: when they would get the opportunity of framing a constitution for themselves, designing laws to govern themselves by, putting systems and institutions in place that would make the daily lives of people easier, assigning responsibilities to various people and organisations, of finally throwing out the yoke of the foreign ruler. Our money was now ours to spend or save, they thought with relief. Our efforts would now be used in building up our own nation, not someone else's. Now that we are going to rule ourselves, we need not fear any harassment, any persecution, any inconvenience. Everything will finally be alright, now that our own people are ruling us, *we* are framing the rules. We will ensure that daily living is made easy and convenient and as *we* want it. After all, don't people within a family make sure that they do not cause harm to each other? Familial arrangements are designed to meet everyone's convenience and to cause no one any trouble. Certainly, then, the people *we* elected at independence would have our best interests in mind when they design our constitution according to which the country must conduct itself. We can be assured that life will be easier and more prosperous now.

... a Mirage

So they thought. However, as the days of self-rule started passing by, the people were surprised and dismayed to notice that very little was changing around them. Daily living continued to be the same bureaucratic nightmare it was under the British: endless procedures, exasperating rules and regulations affecting every aspect of one's daily life.

unbridled powers given to the individuals who were running the administrative machinery. The same obstruction to free movement between cities in the guise of something called octroi. The same restriction to carrying material from one part of the country to another—one could not carry a sackful of basmati rice from Punjab to Bombay without permits! People were bewildered. Where was the relief that was to come once the *gora* (white) sahib went away? After all, wasn't he the source of all our troubles? Wasn't he the only impediment to our growth? Now that he is gone, why aren't things different? Why is it taking so long for things to change? The *gora* sahib has gone but our own man who is now occupying his seat is no different. He takes as long, talks as rudely, makes my life no less difficult. Is political freedom the only thing we gained on 15 August 1947? Was it not to be accompanied by an improvement in living standards, in the quality of life?

What was only inefficiency and procedural hindrances in the beginning, which people put up with while enjoying their new-found freedom, slowly grew into a cancer that turned a people for whom Mahatma Gandhi fought with his life, into one he would be ashamed to be associated with were he to come to life again. Unlike earlier plights of Indian society, which could be attributed to 'the invaders,' the 'foreign rulers,' this cancer was ingrown. Fifty years watched an honest, upright, idealistic people turn into a people who forgot basic values learnt on mothers' laps, like honesty and not-stealing. Slowly, that brown replacement of the *gora* clerk realised that he could lord over the populace – his own brothers and sisters – in no less fruitful – or difficult – a manner than the *gora* before him. Only, it was done with different instruments. Gone was the gun. And it wasn't needed. Blood would be too messy. Instead the government had placed it in his sole hands to disburse to the people important documents without which they could not avail of some important facility that the government had empowered itself to be sole providers of. Or without which some aspect of day-to-day life was to become extremely difficult.

The New Dispensation

All these people line up before me like mute lambs, he saw, to get that important document. And it is all in my hands to give it to them or not. Nobody demands much of me, they are all so docile, so timid, so meek. All of them

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obey my orders to bring this, bring that, come back to pick up, accept my excuses of This will take time, This is not my job. The few that do get angry and protest go to the superior officer. Who has either not come in yet, or has gone out, or is busy with someone, you will have to come back, sorry. So who does he go to complain to, then? The next superior officer? Whose office is half way across town!? And who himself is not guaranteed to be there on time? You have to be kidding. I have office to go to, family to feed, my own peace of mind to bother about. Public responsibility can wait. After all, no one came to my help in the queue when I was being told off by that clerk. One clerk against all of us. And no-one spoke up! How the clerk must be gloating over his own power and importance.

The clerk has another trick to play. Rules are rules. All paperwork *must* be produced. All entries *must* be correct. Here, your name is misspelt on this form. Go back and get it corrected by an authorised notary. [Excessive procedures and rules] You! I can't find your file anywhere. Come tomorrow. And what do *you* want? Sorry, that man hasn't come today. What can I do? It is not my problem. [Passing the buck]

Surely I can make some money out of this whole thing, the clerk thought. A realisation of the power that lay in his hands dawned upon him.

And the nightmare began. Under the 'new' social order, one had to be humiliated by one's own countrymen instead of by foreigners. That was all that was new about it. We saw the nation that had fought as one to earn its independence turn frighteningly quickly into self-seeking individuals who, instead of earning their wealth by honest, hard work and a respect for others, opting instead to cheat each other, exploit each other in precisely the other's moment of need. Compatriotism had no value. It didn't mean anything to anyone that the person he was cheating was his fellow-countryman, his co-inheritor of the country's fortunes. Our country, that must have had to churn millennia of its acquired virtue and *samskaara* to produce the galaxy of mahatmas and saints at the turn of the century to win independence and spiritual supremacy for us, was succumbing to the debilitating powers of the one quality – selfishness – in its people that a people blessed with a spiritual legacy should have been ashamed of. Aided by 'system' factors (amply represented by the over-empowered government official) which had the unintended effect of bringing out the worst in the people, the nation began its descent into a hell for its citizens, raised from childhood on fictitious stories of virtuous mythological heroes but finding nothing but the very opposite qualities in its leaders.

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Corruption in Education

J. B. D'Souza

Our children are being virtually schooled in crooked one-upmanship. Our evil generation was teaching them the lesson that honesty is the worst policy.

Some six years ago a group of persons came together on the initiative of Mr. Vinay Toshniwal, a well-known industrialist, and Mr. N. H. Athreya, an equally well-known management consultant, to think of how we, ordinary citizens, could help arrest the steep decline of ethics in public life. We were a small group – less than a dozen – and the problem was all around us. It was colossal, like the windmills that faced Don Quixote, and we were so puny. It was growing by the hour. We called ourselves Lok Hith. Our group is burdened neither with a chairman nor a secretary nor a constitution, yet we have made a few modest efforts in pursuit of ethical goals and practice. Our first endeavour concerned an election that was then imminent. We tried, with some success, to get the press to highlight the positive qualities that voters should expect of the candidates.

We next held a workshop on the ineffectiveness of Maharashtra's Lok Ayukt. Sharad Pawar's government had just shocked an unbelieving public by promoting to top level in the police

department an officer whom the Lok Ayukt had found corrupt. We placed our findings, on what had to be done to make the Lok Ayukt a real ombudsman, before the new deputy chief minister, Mr. Munde promised us early action, but few of us expected him to keep that promise. Mr. Munde met our expectations; he did nothing. The Government of India then began to make noises about a Lok Pal Bill it was going to enact. It was the latest in a series of mirages: successive Lok Pal Bills that successive governments in Delhi have drafted to mislead the people into a belief that they are serious about fighting corruption. We arranged a small seminar on the latest Bill. Our recommendations went to Delhi, where they must be nestling cosily in a file in the archives.

Another of our efforts was aimed at inducing a bit of transparency into the murky affairs of Maharashtra's Medical Council. Most of you must have read of serious malpractices by some of our top doctors and the Medical Council's success in covering them up. In a petition to the High Court we, along with the Forum for Medical Ethics, have sought a writ requiring the Council to disclose its procedures and its decisions. The Court may soon hear the case.

* This is based on Mr. J. B. D'Souza's talk at a seminar to discuss how education could be rid of corruption, organised by the Nehru Centre and Lok Hith on August 5, 2000.

Containing Corruption

From LokHith's work, we have learnt the following lessons: First, we learnt how fully our people have come to take corruption for granted. Second, we noted with regret that our rulers are now institutionalising corruption - witness the grant to MPs of quotas for telephone connections, LPG assignments and the like, for each of which there must be a price. But worst of all, in each of our endeavours, again and again, we realised to our horror that the nation's children were watching; they had begun to copy their elders' dishonesty. They were being virtually schooled in crooked one-upmanship. Our evil generation was teaching them the lesson that honesty is the worst policy. We realised that the nation would sink deeper and deeper into this morass unless this generation could begin to give ethics a place in our schools, our colleges, in the classroom. It is to rouse our people to a beginning of such an effort that the Nehru Centre and Lok Hith have arranged this seminar.*

Meanwhile the rot has set in at the school and college level. There is no level of education in this country that is free of corruption. At the lowest level, my son tells me of a primary school he visited in Orissa. The teacher - there is only one - attends the school twice a month, one of those visits being on pay day. She survives because she shares her salary with the Inspector of Schools. That school is not unique; it is typical of our rural schools. At top level, here is a story from Bihar, a story I found in *The Statesman*: Misa Bharati, a student at the Patna Women's College, was found unfit by the college administration to appear at the university's Intermediate examination in 1992. She flunked the medical entrance test in 1993. Yet in 1999 Misa topped the MBBS exam with distinction in two subjects. This wonderful prodigy is the daughter of Bihar's Chief Minister, the colourful Rabri Devi and her distinguished husband, Laloo Prasad Yadav.

What happens at levels in between? You have to pay black money for admission to school. In the classroom the average teacher does not teach. You have to go to him for special tuition, which is very costly. If you don't, chances are that you will not pass. Unless, of course, you can buy the question paper in advance, or copy your answers from someone else, or fix the examiner. Some of our leaders believe that students have a right to copy. Just ahead of one election an aspiring Chief Minister announced that within twenty minutes of winning and assuming office he would legalise copying. Naturally, he won his election. And that was perhaps the only election promise he kept. Happily, he didn't last long enough to demand that the right to copy be added as a fundamental right in the Constitution.

Teachers who insist on private tutoring now convert individual coaching into small classes, which are more lucrative. That, of course, is just an intermediate step to well advertised coaching classes, which have now begun to control the top positions in public examinations. Or at least they claim to do so, supporting their claims with published pictures of 'toppers'. Some of these topping pictures are simply bought

from toppers who topped without the help of coaching classes, yet some toppers are already buyable at this early age. Of course, if despite the opportunities I have described you still don't get the degree or diploma you seek you needn't give up. Bombay's *Education Times*, a *Times of India* publication has several pages of coaching class advertisements. Here are three of them, printed on 10th July:

1. "ALL Failures in any class can easily pass Xth/XIIth Graduation/Post-Graduation Directly. (No previous qualifications required). Solve all educational problems of examinations, promotions, revaluation, OBC, Admissions in Medical, Engineering Management Courses, Colleges, Schools, etc. Pls phone Everest College" (phone number deleted! - ed.).
2. "PASS X, XII, FY, SY, B.Com., B.Sc., M.Com., M.Sc., MBA, Dip./Engg Courses without any previous qualification in 1 sitting solve your all problems. Call (phone number deleted! - ed.).
3. "ALL Failures in any Class can easily pass SSC/HSC, Graduation directly in one sitting. Solve all present/future Educational problems of Examinations, Passing, Promotions, Scoring, Admissions of Medical, Engineering, Management Courses, College, Schools, etc. We also undertake OBC/SC/ST, revaluation, reverification, coaching, PMT/CET/IIT works, etc. Please phone 'Everest College' (phone number deleted! - ed.). All correspondence courses available. Helping/promoting all failures our speciality."

On top of all this there are certificate factories in Hyderabad and in Mumbai's Dharavi that will award any degree, any qualification you want. Pramod Navalkar discovered the Dharavi plant, and displayed some of its products in the State Assembly. Are you surprised that many of our university degrees are not recognised outside the university campus? Perhaps Ram Manohar Lohia, who had helped frame our Constitution, was right when he later suggested that at birth every Indian should automatically get a certificate of university graduation? So much simpler, so much cheaper. Only it would cut out all the wonderful opportunities for graft that the present system offers.

Mr. J. B. D'Souza is a retired Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai and a frequent contributor to *Freedom First*.

Enter Mr. N. Vittal

Repeatedly, in all our activities, we came to realise how far our society - not merely our government - had fallen from any semblance of an ethical standard, what deep roots corruption had struck at levels from the top down, how strongly ingrained dishonesty had become, how rapidly we had become a nation of cheats and swindlers. In Transparency International's annual ranking of countries for corruption, we vied for the top position with only a few countries like Nigeria, Indonesia and Pakistan. The picture was one of intense and worsening gloom, from which we could see no prospect of relief - until, by some miscalculation, I believe, the Government of India chose for its Central Vigilance Commissioner, a missionary crusader, an outstanding civil servant, Mr. N. Vittal.

JBD

THE WORTH OF A STATE, IN THE LONG RUN, IS THE
WORTH OF THE INDIVIDUALS COMPOSING IT.

— JOHN STUART MILL



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Containing Corruption

Ungreasing Palms in India

Monika Halan

To be a common man in India is expensive.

Need a phone, or gas for your home or electricity for your factory? Pay up. The palms of corrupt government officials are outstretched.

Corruption is a public secret. Everyone knows, but no one has wanted to say anything about it. Until now. Nagraj Vittal took over the CVC in September 1998. The Commission had been sending annual reports to Parliament for 35 years, but they languished there.

Dealing with corruption need not be a one man, one time issue, though it is better than it being nobody's issue. Corruption and disregard of the laws, especially by those, whose job it is to uphold the rule of law, goes to the very heart of the issues that make India poor and backward. No amount of economic reforms aimed at reducing poverty and stimulating growth is ever going to work if investors fear losing their capital when the government and the legal system are unable to enforce contracts and property rights. If I have a million dollars to invest I am much better off earning 5% interest in U.S. bank deposit than investing in say building a house in Delhi for rental income or investing in a business in India, for the simple reason that it is just not worth the hassle of dealing with the corrupt in the Delhi Development Authority and the Delhi Electricity Board. If somebody wrongs me in my business or a tenant refuses to vacate my property there is no practical legal remedy worth the name to protect my interests, unless I am well connected or I have the nerve or the inclination to pass 100 rupee notes to court house clerks under the very nose of Your Honor.

Corruption and lawlessness in India are stifling enterprise and scaring investors more than the politicians'

attachment to socialism. Whether socialism causes corruption or not is not my concern here. Thankful as we are for one Vittal here or a T. N. Seshan there, these people will make little difference unless the government in right earnest goes about setting its house in order. Why should the public have to go to the CVC with their complaints. He may be a good man, but Mr. Vittal is not omnipresent much less omnipotent. We must demand, and we must get, a mechanism in each government office, department, police station and court house for people to be able to make a complaint against rogue public servants and get a response from a person with authority in a reasonable time. This is how government works in America and England and every other advanced nation of the world and this is how we must make it work in India, if we are ever to have the hope of saving our system from total decay and disintegration.

As things stand today, the public's access is totally cut off from the people in charge and authority. You need a broker to even get to see your legislator. I remember at one time the then DDA vice chairman Jagmohan used to hold a "Durbar" where the harrassed Delhites used to go with their grievances. Now the term "Durbar" itself was sickening, - in the second half of the twentieth century. What was really needed was a Public Relations Office or a Grievance Cell reporting to the highest official. It is important that local mechanisms exist in our government offices to handle people's complaints and they should work with transparency and accountability. A proactive judge in the Supreme Court or a sincere CVC with a website is not a lasting or complete solution to our mess.

COURTESY: *Industry Standard*, June 19, 2000.

Travesty of Justice

S. S. Bankeshwar

The former Prime Minister, Shri Narasimha Rao, is undoubtedly guilty of bribing JMM MPs to vote for the Congress Party to save his government, when the No Confidence Motion was moved in our Parliament. The Congress Party, which was the beneficiary, now wants to expel Shri Narasimha Rao. A defeated person is an orphan, while a victorious person has many parents.

Legal history has been created. The bribe-takers and collaborators have been acquitted, although there is sufficient (circumstantial) evidence against them. All of them are equally guilty.

When all of them are equally guilty with the same

motive, it is ridiculous to make a distinction between one lot of guilty persons, who enjoy immunity as members of Parliament, and another lot of equally guilty persons who do not enjoy the immunity.

MPs no doubt enjoy great immunity for their actions, activities, and speeches in Parliament in the discharge of their duties as MPs. However, by no stretch of even the wildest imagination can extra-parliamentary criminal activities such as taking bribes, committing murders, indulging in scams be legitimately called parliamentary activities in the discharge of their duties!

MR. S. S. BANKESHWAR is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

Containing Corruption

Need for Systemic Changes

F. T. Khorakiwala

Corruption has become almost a way of life, not only in government departments and in the public sector undertakings but also in the private sector.

Intellectual integrity and ethical values have to be restored. To my mind, this cannot be done merely through detection and prosecution of individuals. Systemic changes are needed so that the avenues for corruption are reduced. Corruption is a two-way traffic, though the receiver may be happy and eager to receive – the giver normally would not be happy to give it. Systems, to start with in government and public sector undertakings at all Central and State levels, need to be reviewed and changed so that the avenues of bribe giving are substantially reduced. For example:

- Why should there be so many trading licences that retailers have to secure? The number needs to be reduced.
- Why should these trading licences be restricted to one year? Can it not be for a longer period of 3 to 5 years? Authorities can thus collect more revenue at lower cost.
- More licences and annual renewals tend to increase corruption and bribe giving.
- In the judicial system, why should a certified copy of a judgement already pronounced, take, not only weeks but sometimes couple of months to be issued? Why can't it be made mandatory that certified copies should be made available within a week of the pronouncement of the judgement.
- Payment by cheque for supplies made to government or public sector undertakings should be made within a week of its sanction or an interest @ 15% should be paid and which should be recovered from the officer who is responsible for the default.

These are some of the system changes which need to be made in all the departments. If we make systemic changes then there will be greater transparency which would help not only economic growth but also better in-flow of Foreign Direct Investment.

Many genuine foreign charitable foundations would like to help Indian NGOs and other private agencies in India with donations for elimination of poverty and similar worthy social causes. This cannot be done unless the NGO is registered with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). It is amazing that even for such a noble charitable cause, a bribe has to be paid to get the registration.

Another area which would help to contain corruption is introduction of the "Right to Information" legislation by which, except for files on Defence, Foreign Affairs and Policy matters, all notings on other files should be made available

to any member of the public on payment of a nominal fee. As the economy gets liberalized, the discretionary powers of a government officer get reduced and the only way bribes can be asked for and paid is through delay. Many are forced to pay this bribe called 'speed money'.

One interesting procedure came to my notice recently, which I would like to share with you. When a building plan is submitted to any Municipal Corporation or local body, it has to be approved or rejected within 3 months, otherwise it will be deemed to be approved. The officer sends the objection letter stating frivolous grounds for rejecting within a period of 3 months and after this, the rejection letter is sent, there is no time limit prescribed for approving the plan. This is ridiculous.

Therefore I suggest that all procedures of government and public bodies should be reviewed and systematic changes brought about to make the officer concerned accountable to bring about efficiency and contain corruption.

MR. F. T. KHORAKIWALA is a leading businessman and a former Sheriff of Mumbai.

The Clout of a BMC Peon

The posts of peons may be the lowest in the grade of employees in the civic administration, but they are often in a position to dispense favours and even hand over classified information that could be of immense use to people who desperately need it.

"The BMC peon is an important cog in the wheel in a cesspool of corruption," says Sailesh Poojari (name changed on request), a builder who frequently "intereacts" with peons who help him take out crucial files pertaining to his projects.

"Nothing remains confi-dential in the BMC. For a small price, I can remove virtually any document from any department and get it photocopied without much trouble," he says.

The price charged can be as low as Rs 10 and as high as Rs 10,000 for contractors who want to find out the amount quoted by their rivals for a big civic project. A similar amount is charged for those who want a certain file to "disappear". "To an outsider, it may sound amazing. But it has become part of the job of those who deal regularly with the BMC," he adds.

The Times of India, 21st February 1998.

Containing Corruption

Bandit, not Robin Hood!

M. R. Pai

It is most distressing that two Chief Ministers are bending over their backs to please a bandit, and are seriously negotiating with him political issues!

There seems to be considerable disinformation to mislead the public into thinking that the bandit has a huge popular base, represents regional pride, is a sort of Robin Hood, whose compassion is not allowed to find proper expression owing to outdated laws, and a cruel society.

In popular perception, the reality is different. The bandit can be described as the CEO of a big Un-incorporated enterprise of which several politicians, bureaucrats, policemen and forest guards are shareholders, getting a dividend from his rich booty. How on earth can bulky sandalwood and elephant tusks be transported without the cooperation and help of such silent beneficiaries?

The difficulties of terrain etc. portrayed in making him appear unapproachable are bunkum. A journalist is able to reach him at will, but a mighty State cannot! He is known to visit several towns and cities freely, while the authorities turn a Nelson's eye, keeping in view the clout of the outlaw with those who wield levers of power. Once, when caught some years ago, he conveniently managed to escape from jail.

The Robin Hood comparison can be judged from the photo shown by a Kannada weekly *Taranga* (which ran a well-documented series on him some time ago) of a tree on which he used to hang his victims, feet up, and reportedly chop them to pieces, part by part.

It is apparent that the huge amount spent so far on a special task force etc. is really an attempt to see that he is allowed to remain free, lest if caught he should sing, and the names of his political and other beneficiaries become public knowledge.

Kudos to the courage of a sorrowing father of a policeman who was killed by the bandit. The law of the land, which is mocked at not only by the bandit but ignored by elected representatives, has asserted itself over the law of the jungle. The Supreme Court has truly restored the majesty of the Constitution, in a land where law-abiding citizens pay taxes to protect law-breaking criminals and their cohorts.

(This was written on September 13. As we send this to the press, the news is that Dr. Rajkumar has been released alongwith rumours in the press that Veerappan is richer by Rs.50 crores. – Ed.)

Cancer of Corruption Needs A Spiritual Cure - Maybe!

Savita Karnad

We boast about our functionary democracy, free press and independent judiciary. But what about the travesty of justice?

1. A traffic policeman takes a bribe of Rs.10, and he is penalised heavily and suspended immediately. Quick action and instant justice.
2. Phone subscribers fail to pay their bills before the due-date (a delay of a couple of days – thanks to our postal inefficiency). Their phones are immediately disconnected. Again quick action and instant justice!

Our VIP politicians, including many ex-prime ministers and ex-union ministers, have not paid their mind-boggling phone bills amounting to crores of rupees for years. MTNL dare not disconnect their phone lines!

3. Our VIP political parasites are involved in countless number of scams involving hundreds of crores of

Rupees. Not a single one of them is convicted so far! The cases against them will go on endlessly for more than two or three decades by which time the guilty persons would all be dead; the cases against them are then closed! Is this not travesty of justice?

I am a microbiologist, but unable to diagnose the causes for this cancer of corruption! No medical treatment is available or possible.

Corruption may be a disease but it is neither a physical nor a mental disease, and hence any cure for the cancer of corruption is beyond the realm of medical science, let alone microbiology! Maybe there is some spiritual cure for it! After all, did not Valmiki, the dacoit, turn a saint? Did not some dacoits surrender to Jayaprakash Narayan.

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J. R. D. Tata - A Pragmatic Visionary

Prem Vaidya



"RARE, right decision. Congratulations, Shri J.R.D. Tata for Bharat Ratna!"

Nana Chudasama's two hoardings during 1992 at strategic points on Mumbai's Marine Drive and Pune's Lakdi Pul.

I was assigned a documentary titled, '25' to mark quarter century of Indian independence. I planned this film based on interviews with a cross-section of Indians – right from nomads to known and established names in the country. One such was the pragmatic visionary, J.R.D. Tata (JRD) – 29th July, 1904–29th November, 1993.

Jehangir Ratanji Dadbhoy Tata, when I approached him was reluctant. I showed him the long list of the other people whom I was to interview for this film. He went through the list very carefully, and then called a few of his confidants to discuss the matter. Fortunately for me, all of them suggested that he should face the camera. And so, JRD agreed. For me this was yet another learning experience.

This man of 68 was at the pinnacle of one of the most formidable industrial conglomerates in the country, yet how democratic he was! Before taking even a small decision, he wanted to know the views of his senior colleagues. One

could well imagine the sense of belonging such actions could inculcate in his organization. No wonder the House of Tata has reaped such bountiful harvests for over a century.

My choice for location shooting was not the air-conditioned office of the Tatas but against the backdrop of the Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO) at Jamshedpur. However, JRD's secretary, Mrs. Marion Hawgood, even after turning pages of his engagement diary found it hard to give me a date and barely an hour's time for filming the interview. JRD was fully occupied in India and abroad, and according to his diary, his time for the next six months was completely booked.

I pleaded that I had to meet the deadline for the release of the '25' documentary all over India. The secretary obliged with one afternoon on a working day, and JRD himself helped me out with an hour on a Sunday morning – provided I compromised on change of location. TISCO, Jamshedpur was out of the question. Finally, I suggested The Tata Engineering And Locomotive Co. Ltd. (TELCO) at Chinchwad in

Pune for the afternoon filming, and his residence in Mumbai for the one-hour Sunday morning shooting.

On the appointed day, date and time, I went along with my unit-members and equipment from Mumbai to Pune. I selected the spot for the interview right in front of the big and bold letters of the TELCO hangar. As the unit was setting up the camera and the sound recording equipment, we saw a small four-seater aircraft hovering over our heads, getting ready to land. Precisely at the appointed time, JRD faced the camera. Any prompting to JRD was absolutely ruled out.

I thought he would speak on the industrial progress of the country during those 25 years. The output of steel had gone up five times..., cement 10 times..., electric power 15 times..., employment had risen from 10 million to 25 million... and the total overall industrial output over four times, and so on. Instead, he kept these figures in low key as the camera rolled and blasted off:

"We have a long way to go. Such a large proportion of our population is below the poverty line. Amongst them, there may be 100 million living in abject poverty and ignorance – unemployed, uncared for. It is clear that we still have a

long way to go to achieve the minimum that this country must achieve in the way of economic growth. And what is wanted is, growth for these millions, hundreds of millions.."

With unerring accuracy he had put his finger on the nub of the problem; the one problem that nullified all our achievements. JRD had always felt strongly that excessive population growth is a major threat to our survival as a nation. Not a mere preacher, he had worked hard as the founder chairman of the Family Planning Foundation of India. His service in this field was recognised when he was selected in February 1992 for the United Nations Population Award for promoting family planning in the country.

Incidentally, in 1950, India was the first country in the world to propose at a UN meeting that some check on population growth was necessary to ensure the economic well-being of the people of the world. On December 1, 1993, Doordarshan, Mumbai repeated the telecast of JRD's interview taken after he was awarded the Bharat Ratna. Concerned very much with uncontrolled population growth, JRD recalled that as far back as 1951, he had urged Prime Minister Nehru to adopt a family planning programme for the country. The suggestion was not taken seriously as Nehru fondly believed, perhaps, influenced by China, that a nation with more people would be a mighty one.

After we completed filming his interview, JRD paid a brief visit - as second, to the TELCO factory. As the unit members packed up our camera and sound equipment, JRD asked me if we were returning to Mumbai.

"Yes," I replied.

"Come with me. You can put your things in the aircraft."

On our way from TELCO to Lohegaon Airport, we had to pass the Chinchwad level-crossing. At that time there was no over-bridge there. I saw two TELCO cars waiting on the other side. The arrangement was that if the gate was closed and there was still time for the train to pass, people could cross over on foot, and get into the waiting cars, thereby saving time. This was a common TELCO arrangement, and not just laid out for JRD. This was an insight into how time was valued in Tata enterprises.

Had it been any of our ministers, the attitude would have been to *keep the level-crossing gate open till the minister's convoy passed by without bothering about the consequences of hailing and delaying trains.*

As JRD was landing gracefully at Juhu airport, I had another flashback that took me back 40 years ago. On October 15, 1932, JRD, at the age of 28, had flown from Karachi, with a small mailbag in a Puss Moth aircraft and landed at the same spot. It was a historic day that established civil aviation in India. And thus begun Tata Sons Ltd.'s first Karachi-Ahmedabad-Bombay-Bellary-Madras airmail service in India. In JRD's words, "At that time there were no aids on ground or air, no radio, no navigational or landing guides, not even an aerodrome in Bombay." What they used for landing was just a mud flats ground at a fishing village at Juhu.

Later, the air services developed into the Tata Airlines in 1948, and further into Air India

International, as a joint venture with the Government of India in 1953. JRD continued to serve as a valued Chairman of Air India till 1978. His adventurous spirit was unaffected by his growing age and at 78, he set himself a challenge: To celebrate the golden jubilee of his first flight by repeating the feat. And he successfully did so in his Leopard Moth, on October 15, 1982. This time, while landing at Mumbai's Juhu Airport, he was escorted by two IAF helicopters.

The Pakistan Postal authorities as well as the Indian Post and Telegraph Department released special covers and stamps to commemorate the fiftieth year of the flight. JRD simply said, "I am old and just want to re-enact what I did 50 years ago."

At about this time, Akashwani Pune (AIR), in its Marathi morning special bulletin on the industrialist, stated that the report prepared by JRD on the expansion of the Indian Air Force at the request of the Indian Government was still being referred to at Air Headquarters. Very few knew that JRD was honorary Air Vice Marshal of the Indian Air Force!

Back to the filming of '25' at JRD's residence. I was amazed to learn that he lived in rented premises: "The Cairns" at Altamount Road in Mumbai on a rental of Rs.1,229 per month for more than 50 years! One of the corner rooms where we had to do the filming, was occupied with machine-tools. These were no decorative pieces. This was JRD's personal workshop, here he would work on lathe and drilling machines as and when he got the time. The lathe machine, I was told, was a present from his workers.

His office table displayed on

interesting steel device made by JRD himself. He called it a "tranquiliser". It consisted of a triangle with a rotating ring at its centre. When JRD felt stressed he would set it in motion with a flick of his thumb and watch it spin. He said, this had a tranquilising effect on his mind.

Years rolled by. On January 26, 1992, when I picked-up my morning newspaper, my eyes zoomed to the headline: "Bharat Ratna for JRD." I immediately rushed to my old notebook and file on '25' and came across an interesting coincidence. The grand old man who pioneered the setting up of steel plants, hydro-electric power plants, and an institution of scientific research and technology in India - Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata - died in May 1904. And in the same year, two months later, in July, was born Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata. To my Indian psyche it seemed as though the soul of the visionary Jamshedji had transmigrated into the body of JRD.

Be that as it may, whatever I had read about J. N. Tata and known about JRD showed many similarities such as extreme sensitivity, spontaneity and a passion for nation building. What Jamshedji desired and struggled for was followed up, and in a way, achieved by JRD in his lifetime. Both have many 'firsts' to their credit, closely linked with the country's industrial progress. Both worked hard in the field of arts, science and commerce for the welfare of the people of this country. Both are on record showing their association with a number of trusts engaged in philanthropic activities from 1892 onwards. Both had to fight with the rulers of their day to bring about industrial progress. The Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore was established by Jamshedji after fighting numerous battles with Lord

Curzon. JRD had to cope with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's attempt to throttle TISCO by refusing to sanction any export order to the company. The underlying reason being that Mr. Nani Palkhivala, one of the company directors, had declined to appear before the Supreme Court in her election appeal against the Allahabad High Court order. Also, during the Janata Government, a move was made for the nationalisation of TISCO. Incidentally, people were not impressed by the performance of the public sector steel plants at Durgapur, Bokaro and Bhilai, which operated at a loss and were a heavy burden to tax-payers.

It must be noted that in 1972, barring TISCO, there was not a single unit in the country - in the private or public sector - which supplied a full meal to workers for barely 19 paise. This continued for a decade despite price hikes. In fact, TISCO was a perfect example of the Gandhian principle of trusteeship in action. Within 53 years of his stewardship, JRD, with a team of excellent advisers around him, had raised the total turnover from Rs.280 crore to 10,000 crore by the time he handed over the Chairmanship to his nephew Ratan Tata, on March 25, 1991.

Way back in 1945, Nani Palkhiwala had said: "*It is difficult to speak of Mr. J. R. D. Tata. Nobody thinks of painting the Lily or of gilding refined gold.*"

Our film '25' was completed and released all over the country. The film ends with an interview with JRD. From that interview, I quote an excerpt.

"With the right policies of the government, with enthusiasm created on all sides, with unity, there is literally nothing that the country cannot

achieve. But it will need hard work by all and belief in the future of the country."

MR. PREM VAIDYA, a documentary filmmaker, was with the Films Division of the Government of India. Mr. Vaidya is a frequent contributor to *Freedom First*.

Expense Account

The best way of creating jobs is by allowing India to become prosperous. Prosperity will come when the Government realizes that its main role is to provide infrastructure - roads, electricity, drinking water, schools, hospitals - and not to run factories. Because no matter how many PSUs the Government controls, no matter how many extra peons and clerks it tries to employ in already overstuffed departments, there will never be enough jobs.

It isn't just socialists who oppose privatization, though. New power-hungry ministers and old, greedy officials are also against it. They want to cling to the patronage that comes from running vast companies. Civil Aviation Minister Sharad Yadav's recent attempt to dump some of his buddies on the board of Air-India is a typical example of this patronage. And he is a typical example of a minister who should not be in charge of a company like Air-India. If the Prime Minister has the courage to expose exactly what has gone wrong, he would be amazed at the support he could get.

Tavleen Singh, *India Today*, May 15, 2000.



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Justice M. C. Chagla - A Centenary Tribute

Arvind Deshpande

While paying my humble tribute to Mr. Justice M. C. Chagla, whose birth centenary is being observed, I would like to recall an event in which I was personally involved.

Some time in July 1979 when the then Janata Party government, founded and put together by the late Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan, was on the verge of collapse because of the 'dual membership' issue, I, along with one or two friends from the CFD and the PUCL, called on Justice Chagla, and suggested to him that to end this tangle, he should write a personal letter to the RSS Chief, Shri Balasaheb Deoras, and appeal to him to release Shri A. B. Vajpayee and Shri L. K. Advani from their (whatever it was) association with the RSS. As honourable men, they could not be expected to disassociate for personal/political gains.

Justice Chagla's response brought tears to our eyes. He said that it was absolutely necessary that the Janata Government should rule for five years to give a democratic, healthy turn to our polity. He said he would gladly write to Shri Deoras and was prepared to go barefoot to his place if that could save the Government from falling. He then signed the letter which was sent to Nagpur.

Unfortunately, some reporter from the *Indian Express* who was at Justice Chagla's residence to interview him probably overheard our discussion and flashed the news (as a scoop) on the front page, the next morning. So, even before the 'Personal and Confidential' letter

reached Shri Deoras, the entire country came to know about this. Naturally, Shri Deoras was upset (no fault of ours) and did not take any action.

Justice Chagla was also deeply upset but did not blame anyone. Later, in March '80, he, along with Acharya J. B. Kripalani, signed a statement (reproduced alongside) which was released to the Press. His whole attitude speaks volumes. It was a privilege to know and revere a leader of such integrity, nobility and character.

The statement is relevant twenty years after this great man passed away. Even today, we are racked by this debate on the RSS-BJP link.

No one who has faith in liberal democracy denies the right of the RSS to propagate its philosophy in a peaceful and constitutional way. As a non-political and cultural organization, it has a right to influence policies but not to exercise power or wield authority. Its motivation should be achievement, not power which is the domain of a political party (in this case, the BJP). Even now, if the advice of Justice Chagla is heeded, there will be less controversy and the BJP could develop on the lines of the C.D.U. in Germany. Perhaps, that would be a real tribute to Justice Chagla.

MR. ARVIND DESHPANDE is on the Editorial Board of *Freedom First*, and Hon. Secretary of the Leslie Sawhny Programme for Training in Democracy.

Press Release

We feel deeply concerned and perturbed by the continuous crisis dogging the Janata Party and the lack of unity in the opposition parties generally. The issue of dual membership continues to be a subject of endless controversy. A magnanimous gesture by the RSS leadership releasing ex-Jana Sangh legislators and members holding offices from participating in the day-to-day activities of that organization could have resolved the crisis, but this has not happened. Even now, a declaration by the ex-Jana Sangh leaders of severing links with the RSS, so long as they continue to be members of the Janata Party, should prove helpful. In the interests of democracy and effective Opposition, we would still appeal to leaders like Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Mr. L. K. Advani to make this gesture. A split in the party will prove suicidal for the country.

A viable national opposition based on values and ideals preached by Gandhiji is possible only when the different parties are prepared to come together which necessarily involves a spirit of sacrifice and humility. We, therefore, appeal not only to the ex-Jana Sangh leaders, but the leaders of the Congress (U), the Lok Dal and the CPM to read the writing on the wall (forget the past differences and recriminations) and desist from committing political hara-kiri. Or else the verdict of history will be that our political parties were not concerned with either people's freedom or their welfare. Total rout in the coming elections will reduce party politics to irrelevance and kill all hopes of effective opposition emerging in the near future.

Sd/-
(Acharya J. B. Kripalani)
Mumbai, 28th March, 1980.

Sd/-
(M. C. Chagla)

In Defence of Democracy

M. C. Chagla

In paying our tribute to a great Judge, we cannot do better than to reproduce the following from a speech during the 'Emergency' delivered extempore by the late Mr. M. C. Chagla while inaugurating the All India Civil Liberties Conference held in Ahmedabad (Gujarat State) on 12th October 1975 under the auspices of the Citizens For Democracy.

Jayaprakash Narayan said of this speech: "Justice Chagla's historic inaugural address at the All-India Civil Liberties Conference held in October 1975 reads like a classic and reminds one of the Magna Carta".

When I look at the present situation, I wonder whether I am dreaming or, to use perhaps a better expression, I am going through a nightmare. I rub my eyes to make sure whether I am awake or asleep and I find it is not a dream or a nightmare, but, it is a stark, grim, ghastly reality.

Friends, we live in a country which is called Gandhi's land. Gandhiji worked for our freedom and obtained freedom for us. Not merely freedom from the British Government, but also freedom from tyranny, oppression, injustice of every kind. In a message which he wrote in *Young India*, as far back as 1921, he said, "In a democracy, people are not like sheep. In a democracy, we must jealously guard freedom of expression and thought and action". Note the words "freedom of expression and thought and action".

What is the position today? Is anything left of civil liberties in the country? A man today can be detained without any reason being given to him, without his being told why he is detained, without his being able to give an explanation for his conduct or appeal to an independent body like an Advisory Council. Anybody like you and I, may be shut behind the bars (I do not know whether I will go back to Bombay, because they may shut me up and they need not tell me why they shut me up and might give the reason that I have delivered this speech today). Most people today in the jails do not know why they are there and they cannot defend themselves, because where there is no charge, there cannot be any defence. They cannot go to any other tribunal because all that has stopped.

Now friends, why has all this

come about? To my mind, the original sin, the fountain source and the origin of what has happened is the Emergency that has been declared in the country. In order to understand the Emergency, we must look into the background. You see, Emergency has been made non-justiciable legally. But it has not been made non-justiciable politically. And the speech I am going to deliver is a political speech, not a legal speech. I do not think I can be hauled up for contempt (of Court) or be proceeded against for trying to make justiciable that which is non-justiciable.

Now let us look at the history, the drama, the first scene when the curtain goes up on the 12th June 1975. If you understand what happened on the 12th of June, two historic events took place on 12th June. To my mind, these two events, when the historian of the future writes the history of our country will say, marked the turning point in our history. The first event was the decision of Mr. Justice Sinha, holding that the Prime Minister was guilty of corrupt practice. The second historic event which took place in this State when the results of election were declared and the Janata Party was found to be in a working majority in the (Gujarat) Legislature. These two events had a serious reaction on the Prime Minister. She felt her own position shaky. She did not feel assured of continuing to occupy the seat that she is now occupying, as a result of these two events. Therefore, it is from the 12th of June that the idea started maturing in her mind that she should do something to make sure of her position as the Prime Minister.

Now, friends, the next event to which I want to draw your attention is

to what happened on the 25th of June, when a public meeting was held of all the Opposition leaders, saying that the Prime Minister should not continue as Prime Minister, that political decorum required that she should quit the chair and that *satyagraha* will start from the 29th of month.

Let me say one thing to you: *satyagraha* is not violation of the law. The very word *satyagraha* connotes truth and non-violence. It is Gandhiji who has introduced this word in the political vocabulary of the world. But, why go to Gandhiji, only the other day the Supreme Court gave the judgement that *Satyagraha* is perfectly legal. The leaders wanted the Prime Minister to quit office. That was the main demand. Just analyse that: is it a sin in a democracy to ask the Prime Minister to quit office? Is Mrs. Thatcher's asking every day Mr. Wilson to vacate office of the Prime Minister, a sin? Did not Wilson go on asking Mr. Heath to quit office as the Prime Minister? After all, with great respect to the Prime Minister of the country, she is not a deity to be worshipped, she is not a deity who cannot be removed from the temple! Democratically every person has a right to say, we want a change of government, we want a new Prime Minister, we want a different Prime Minister, the present Prime Minister should not continue! What was her answer and what was the answer of these wonderful people who surround her? ... That in the present situation she was indispensable! Now, for anyone to say that a person is indispensable in a democracy is to sin against the light of democracy. To be disloyal to the faith of democracy.

(*From Roses in December* by M. C. Chagla, a Bhavan's Book University publication, Price Rs. 100/-)

Dharam Vira – Civil Servant *Par Excellence*

No words of mine could possibly express the grief I feel, over the death of my oldest and dearest friend, my husband's batch-mate, in the ICS. No two people could have been more different in terms of overt success in the Indian Civil Service. Dharma Vira, was born with the ability to climb. My husband often did things, which need not have gone so badly for him, if handled with more tact. Dharma Vira ended as a Cabinet Secretary. My husband, having been Home Secretary, Madras, retired as Collector, Nilgiris, which he enjoyed to the top of his bent, before leaving.

I came to know Dharma Vira, when he was appointed Governor of Karnataka. I vividly remember that he took me with him on tour, when he was fulfilling the many gubernatorial duties that made up his day. Though he could have chatted idly with me, he went on with his work, dictating orders on commitments he had made, at various stops. Under him, people preferred Governor's Rule to popular democracy! His hospitality to me and my husband was boundless, both at Raj Bhavan, Bangalore, and in his own "Raj Bhavan" (54, Anand Lok, New Delhi), where he continued to run a "darbar" for people, high and low, who looked to him for advice. Promises made, were meticulously

noted down, for follow-up. His friends became mine and mine his! One of the latter was the Vatican Ambassador H. H. Caviavillan, who happily came for Dharma's farewell party to me, on my verbal invitation.

To look at, Dharma was a short, squat, slightly dark man, who wore immaculate suits, topped with a rose in his buttonhole. He proved that it is charisma, not merely good looks, which attract from the charm he exercised at any gathering, he attended. He was always the King Bee of the guests! When he came to Bangalore, and I happened to be there, we would make it a point to keep in touch, at the Triveni Guest House, which was his "peid a terre". He outlived my husband by 16 months. With them, goes a great reservoir of modern Indian history – and two people who wrote that history as major, pre and post-Independence players.

*My very very dear Dharma
There will never be another you!
I cherish everything you did for me,
In precious and in hallowed memory.
I hope that, when this sad life ends,
The next one, brings reunion of old friends.*

History May Judge Narasimha Rao Kindly

It is perhaps indicative, of our collective cynicism, that corruption seems less of an issue, than misgovernance, and rampant communalism. Thus, Narasimha Rao's conviction in the JMM case, is not a surprise. In all the coalition governments which have, since followed, corruption (not just financial), is written into the running of such governments. Rao should be blamed, not so much for the above case, as for allowing his son to misuse his father's name. If his novel is an autobiography, he comes across as a coldly sensual man, (paradox?), he describes steamy sex scenes, in which the protagonist has no emotional involvement whatever. It is surprising that the cold sensualist, had so much paternal love. The last was seen in the undoing of the austere old moralist Morarji Deasai. Rao's other cardinal failing was the Babri Masjid episode.

A The Postive Legacy:

However, if for nothing else, he should be

praised, for breaking the Nehru-Gandhi hegemony, and managing to fulfill a full term of five years. Sonia, Priyanka and possibly even the latter's infant, may still be perceived as natural leaders of the Congress, but it has now been out of power, long enough, for dissent and rival claims to appear.

He is also the real father of economic reforms, carrying much further, the reforms process started by Rajiv. He was undoubtedly the most intelligent, and academically gifted, of India's Prime Ministers.

It was sad to read that this man, who straddled the offices, both of the Prime Minister and the Congress President, was sitting alone in an empty house, when the verdict was in. It reminds one of Cardinal Wolsey's lines: "I had it but served my God, with half the zeal I served my kind, he would not have left me in my old age – naked to my enemies."

The Need of a Polity for a Maverick

Ram Jethmalani's recent "quickie" book, *Small Men, Big Egos*, has more substance than is usually associated with this genre. If he is writing the truth, it is disturbing that he was a sacrificial offering by the Prime Minister, to the objective of smooth relations between the Executive and the Judiciary. As between the Opposition and the Treasury Benches, the relationship need not be too close, either.

Again, if he is writing the truth, the possibility of Advocate General Soli Sorabjee being connected with the Hinduja's, seems improper. However, an accusation, is not necessarily proof of guilt. It is however, a pity that Ram Jethmalani was shown the door so unceremoniously. He has his faults – his many and dangerous liaisons with parties, being one of them. The

other is, his acceptance of briefs from persons of doubtful reputation. He has taken the line that under our system of jurisprudence, every person is entitled to a fair trial. His two most noble and courageous actions, were his unequivocal stance against the Emergency, and his defence of Balbir Singh, Mrs. Gandhi's assassin. He is a spell-binding orator who has helped build a notable institution – The National Law School.

Consistency is not his *forte*, but this may be pardoned, as his career has seen him speak out, against the powerful and the mighty, with no fear of the possible harm they could unleash, even on his person. His book deserves to be taken seriously.

A New Nehru-Gandhi Power Centre

Another Nehru-Gandhi power centre may be forming with the launch of a slim poetry book by Pheroze Varun Gandhi, at the India International Centre. However, the guest list of invitees reflected his mother Maneka's circle of friends and allies. If the young man has turned out a volume of poetry, that too, at the age of 20, he is obviously of better mental stuff than Rahul and Priyanka. It reminds me of a story by Eric Segal, in which a Professor of English, gives credits to a student of nuclear science, saying, that if the hand that may press a nuclear button, has been humanized by poetry, he deserved course credits even if he was absent! Whether the books is inherently good,

or has a *success de scandale*, as the French call it, it makes Pheroze Varun, the first member of the dynasty, after his grandfather, to show some feeling for expression in the written word.

Less admirable, was the report, that he expressed a wish to enter politics, right away, and that Mama Maneka, is already talking this over with Amar Singh. If he joins any party, at the grassroots level, not at the top, this would be in order. If he starts at the top, then it will be the mixture as before, not leaving him or his mother, within any moral superiority over his cousins. Except, perhaps from his better intellectual credentials.



"Unquestionably the most beautiful things on earth are the flowers and the sweet notes of the birds, sunrise and sunset not being of the earth but of the sky. The grandest things are the great trees. Man's claim to beauty is only his mind and if that is sold out to groups who seize power and call themselves the State that claim is forfeited "

- C. Rajagopalachari in *Swarajya*, May 17, 1969.



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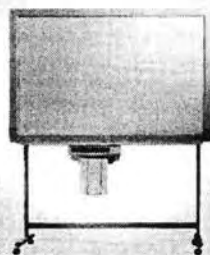
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Fareed H. Tyabji

A Genuine Gandhian and a True Citizen

Saad Ali



The author with Fareed Tyabji

A remarkable personality, Fareed Tyabji lived to be 97. He was the grandson of the late Justice Badruddin Tyabji, a co-founder of the Indian National Congress and its third President. Justice Badruddin Tyabji, besides his many achievements, became famous when he granted bail to Bal Gangadhar Tilak after three British Magistrates had rejected his application.

At the call of Mahatma Gandhi for young men to go out to the villages, a newly-married Fareed Tyabji decided to go in for agriculture and started in Ahmednagar district in 1926 with a small plot of 25 acres. The reason for choosing the village of Shrirampur was that the government had specially built a canal in 1913 and guaranteed permanent water supply for a 100 years for sugarcane cultivation. Initially he stayed in a small hut in the village of Wadala Pravara, adjoining to Shrirampur.

Fareed Tyabji was noted for

very brave acts. One of them was in Kihim near Alibag where his younger brother Azeem was caught in a current while swimming and shouted for help. Fareed Tyabji plunged into the water and dragged him out, saving him from drowning. In

another case, some robbers had come up and beat the villagers of Vadala and looted some shops. He went with his rifle and fired at least 25 shots to scare away the robbers. Some of the looted material was later found in Haregaon. Fareed Tyabji told the DSP that this could not have been possible without the connivance of the police.

Water supply problems from the canal started in 1960 and the supply became irregular due to a large number of illegal pumps installed in the upper reaches of the canal. Cane growers without scruples were able to bribe the Irrigation Department and get all their requirements. But Fareed Tyabji refused to part with a single paise of graft in order to get water to which he was legally entitled to, and watched silently as thousands of rupees worth of sugarcane withered due to want of water, causing immense financial losses.

Those who did not hesitate to bribe the Irrigation Department were able to get water for 10 acres

when they were entitled to only one acre. Due to this harassment by the Irrigation Department, he was forced to stop growing sugarcane which was the primary objective of going to Shrirampur and had to divert to other produce. As a matter of fact, the Land Ceiling Act had also adversely affected him, as well as many other companies. The Belapur Company, one of the best managed and efficiently run sugarcane companies, who had their own sugarcane farms, were forced to sell their lands and close down because they could not get sugarcane grown on their own farms! The shortage of water due to the installation of around 1,600 illegal pumps sponsored by a powerful member of parliament was mainly responsible for the water shortage in Shrirampur.

The MP gave all the water pumped by these illegal pumps to Sangamner while Shrirampur was starved. Sangamner flourished as a green belt at the cost of Shrirampur, and the MP (with his illegal pumps, got the credit!) Even Air Chief Marshal, Idrees Latif, who was the Governor, was taken in by this show.

Fareed Tyabji and his wife Fatima took great interest in the problems of untouchability as a response to Gandhiji's call in 1930. They started their campaign while living in the village and carried on the campaign later even after they moved out of the village. When they campaigned against untouchability in the villages, there was intense opposition and hostility

and even death threats. But they set an example by picking up brooms and joining the scavengers in cleaning up the village. They went to the village every week with brooms and spades and joined the so-called untouchables in cleaning the village.

Fareed and Fatima even went into the garbage and weed-choked gutters to clean them up. This entailed cleaning weeds, snakes, etc. The adjoining villagers simply closed their houses and shops and ignored these activities pretending they were not at home. But Fareed and Fatima gradually aroused the conscience of the villagers and some people started joining the campaign.

When they found that a large section of untouchables were unable to use the village wells, they made their own wells available to each and everyone who wished to draw water.

They were keen to promote literacy amongst the harijans. But they found that as the school was located in a temple, the harijans were not allowed to enter and had to sit out in the sun. As Fareed Tyabji was incharge of rationing, he used the profits from this activity to enable the harijans to enter the schools and receive equal education as others. When there were local disputes, he was always looked up to as the ideal arbitrator.

One such dispute concerned the Belapur Company. They had given a contract to some villagers to cut sugarcane. After the cutting was done, the villagers of Vadala Mahadeo would go to the farms to collect the left-over leaves. There would be some sugarcane left over by the previous contractor and they would take this also along with the waste leaves. When the General

Manager, Jamasji found out that some cane was being smuggled out along with the leaves by the villagers, he forbade villagers of Vadala Mahadeo to come to the farm. Because of a small group of villagers taking away the left-over cane, the whole village was being punished. The villagers approached Fareed Tyabji saying that since he knew Jamasji, he should persuade him to restore their right to take the leaves. Fareed told them that he would intercede on their behalf if they had a genuine case, but if they wanted to grovel at the feet of Jamasji, he would have nothing to do with it. In the event, Fareed Tyabji was able to restore the privileges of the villagers of Vadala Mahadeo.

In another case, a Muslim boy, Hassan, aroused intense jealousy because his shop had become very popular. The local villagers hatched a plot against him and alleged that two local girls had been abducted by him. It was alleged that he took the two girls on his bicycle at 10 p.m. to Ahmednagar, which is 90 kms. away and brought them back in the morning. Fareed Tyabji showed that physically it was impossible to carry two girls on the pillion of a bicycle for 90 kms. and return in the morning. Moreover, he was able to procure receipts from shops in Shrirampur where Hassan had been shopping in the late evening, and the whole plot against him was exposed. When the villagers complained to Fareed about this matter, he asked the villagers to accompany him to the shop where he had purchased the goods late that night. But not one of them had the courage to verify the facts, although the shopkeeper was willing to corroborate the event. The villagers later confirmed that this was a plot to implicate Hassan and that the

girls had never gone to Ahmednagar.

A large meeting of about 100 persons was held in the compound of his farm, to solve a local dispute. After the discussions, somebody suggested that they would like to have tea. Fareed Tyabji said that he would gladly provide tea, but reminded the assembled villagers that his servants are harijans and if she prepared the tea, they would have to drink it. There was considerable initial resistance. But one prominent villager declared that in Fareed's house, untouchability was unknown and they had to accept it. Thereafter, the entire congregation partook of the tea prepared by a harijan woman.

His success and dedication to agriculture was such that he would only offer the best produce in the market. His wheat and jowari fetched a higher price than any others. And every vendor selling mangoes on the roadside would claim that these were "Tyabji mangoes".

During the 1941 individual *satyagraha*, Fatima volunteered as a *satyagrahi*. Raosaheb Patwardhan who was the head of the Ahmednagar Congress Committee forwarded her name to Mahatma Gandhi. She was accepted, duly performed her speech and was jailed for 3 months. However, when she was taken to Ahmednagar jail, the jailor refused to accept her, as he had not received the arrest warrant. So they went to Rao Saheb's house, had lunch, and reported back to the jail in the evening, when she was accepted!

In the 1942 Quit India Movement, both Fareed Tyabji and his wife Fatima served jail sentences for making speeches each getting 3 month terms.

During the war period, an amusing incident took place. A military officer (Gen. Masood) in uniform descended late at night at Belapur railway station and asked the tonga driver to take him to the Tyabji farm. Such was the loyalty of the people that the tongawalla took him beyond the farm to the Irrigation Bungalow, thinking that the uniformed man had come to arrest Fareed Tyabji; that he pretended that he had lost his way and didn't know the Tyabji farm. So when this officer asked a passerby, whether he knew Tyabji, the caller at first denied that there was any such person. But when he saw the bedding roll, he asked more questions and was assured that the officer was a relative come to meet his cousin. Being convinced, he turned the *tonga* back and took him to Tyabji. The officer was astounded that after denying knowledge he now offered to take him to Tyabji. Patel explained that he had thought that the officer had come to arrest him!

During the Quit India Movement, he was a great help to the underground activist, Achyut Patwardhan, who was in disguise and grew a beard and was sheltered in the seaside village of Kihim for some time, by another cousin.

I was interned for an indefinite term as an A Class detenu (for the safety of the Realm!) along with all the top brass of the Bombay Congress who were arrested on 9th August 1942. Later on, when the Quit India intensified, the yard next to us got filled with B Class convicted political prisoners. I found that my uncle Fareed Tyabji was in the next yard (all housed in tents for want of barracks) and that my aunt Fatima Tyabji was in the women's jail across the road. Very soon, we had established a chain for transporting food parcels in the

middle of the night, for the other prisoners, as we were allowed to get food from outside.

One midnight, the jailers caught us red-handed, passing parcels over the wall to the other prisoners. I was sitting on top of the wall and most vulnerable. However, Yusuf Meherally and Raosaheb Patwardhan argued vehemently that we do not recognise these differences amongst political prisoners, and in any case, they were responsible for my acts.

The result was the transfer of Raosaheb to Dhulia jail and I missed his sweet bhajans with which he woke me up everyday.

My communication with my aunt Fatima in the women's jail also came to an abrupt end when the jailors discovered my letters hidden in the bindings of the books I sent her!

A few years ago, Fareed decided to visit his brother at Karachi. Although he was warmly welcomed by his various relatives, he considerably annoyed and embarrassed them by insisting on wearing his white Gandhi cap and Khadi kurta, as he had always done throughout his life. The conflict was partially solved when he agreed to refrain from criticizing *Imnah* in public. Many Hindu shopkeepers were delighted to see him and complained of their woes.

When he died at the age of 97 on 11th February 1997, he had wished a quiet and unostentatious funeral. But as it turned out, the entire town and the villagers of *Shrinampur* (I had driven their business and joined the funeral procession, which was 4.5-miles long. Everyone who participated was eager to lend his shoulder in carrying the bier. The body was

kept in the Gram Panchayat's office before burial and tens of thousands of local residents came to pay homage. Due to the huge crowd, the main roads were blocked for several hours.

MR. SAAD ALI, a freedom fighter, is actively involved in the work of the Bombay Environmental and Action Group.

The Crisis of Leadership

Nearly a century ago, when Sir Phirozeshah Mehta was told by some of his followers that "our people have many shortcomings, and hence the party suffered", he is reported to have thundered: "They are our people, and we have to work with them. We cannot import people".

The crisis of leadership has arisen because in earlier days, it was generated by service and sacrifice, and politics was an opportunity to service the public, whereas today, it arises mainly from three sources – brand equity of political families, mass appeal through media visibility gained by movie stars and sports people, and criminals who have lately discovered that rather than work through the proxy of political leaders, directly get into politics and share the booty of power and patronage while buying for themselves insurance cover from income tax, police and other authorities.

The earlier day route of political leadership was local municipalities (e.g. Jawaharlal Nehru in Allahabad Municipal Corporation, and Sardar Patel in Ahmedabad). Today, it is reckoned to be too slow for impatient people.

The failure of the Constitution makers to specify any qualification – a Government office *chaprasi* has to have some minimum qualification, while his political masters can be illiterate boors – is another reason for this crisis.

This crisis of leadership will bedevil all political parties in the days to come unless they evolve a system of selection and training, and ensure that years of public service and transparency in personal finances is a must for occupying any office.

~ M. R. Pai

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Rural Education

- The Need for a New Focus

Kusum Chopra

What is the use of universal primary education of the type on offer in India today, with its focus on urban life and needs, when all the while economists wail about the burden created by migration into the cities from the villages.

What is the use of universal primary education of the type on offer in India today, with its focus on urban life and needs, when all the while economists wail about the burden created by migration into the cities from the villages.

Statistics reveal that school enrollment is encouraging, but it bottoms out at the end of the primary levels, because education is quite meaningless to our rural kids.

What is needed is an entirely new focus for middle school education for rural India, to equip young people to tackle their problems, so that they make a decent living in the villages, rather than migrate city-wards to populate massive slums.

If care is taken in the texts to include some of the experiences that our people have collected during their journey from the hoary past, when India was the toast of the civilised world, this project could achieve another important objective as well. That of preserving our traditional knowledge and giving it such widespread, grassroots usage to the accumulation of traditional wisdoms that no foreign, scientific or otherwise, outfit, individual or organisation can claim patents on it.

Even the briefest pause to peruse the past would indicate that Indian agriculture must have been a highly developed, sophisticated system, to generate the surpluses

which made India a major exporter and a much-sought-after prize which attracted the attention of the Occidental pirates.

It was the deliberate decimation of traditional systems and practices, under the British which has led to the sad demise of that legendary ancient prosperity.

As India could not have achieved her pre-eminence, if she had not been stupendously productive, Why not now? Why can't past experience and that knowledge not be applicable now? The shift to the commercial agriculture of the Green Revolution and the almost total reliance on foreign systems of agriculture, overlooking native store of knowledge, based, on our climate and soils, built up over the centuries, has proved quite disastrous. After the mass suicides by farmers in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, how long before the farmers of the rest of the country's farming regions join suit? They have become so easy prey to the purveyors of "miracle" seeds, pesticides and fertilizers, as they have almost totally lost touch with their own native experiences and knowledge of these phenomena.

In many parts of Gujarat knowledgeable farmers are today planting the old, *desi* seeds in reserved plots of land, where none of the modern chemical fertilizers or pesticides are used. The grains from these plots are used for home

consumption, to avoid offering the contaminated stuff to their own families. And farmer's wives complain that whenever their men come back from the fields planted with the new crops for which new fertilisers are used, their clothes have to be washed separately as they are covered with all manner of insects, which is never the case after walks through fields of old style *desi* crops.

Has anybody studied this phenomena?

The order of the day may not be that celebrated "thrust" to rejuvenate agriculture, with the classical economic prescriptions of more credit, better seeds, access to markets, cold storages etc., but a whole new system of education which reaches out to the rural child, the farmer of the future, bringing him abreast not merely with the latest planting and marketing techniques on the internet, but which will tell him how his forefathers drew legendary riches out of the soil.

What is required is the input of researches into our past from the grand institutions, into a series of textbooks geared for our rural schools, which will teach the village children how to recognise the weather signs - rain, wind, sun, moon, stars, the direction of the wind, the clouds and animal behaviour, rather than the all-too-wrong Met. Department forecasts; books which will teach them how to recognise soils, organize water

resources and plan crop schedules according to climate, soil and natural protection available, instead of expensive chemical inputs which will take them out of the clutches of the old fashioned money lender into that of the modern credit agencies.

If they learn simple repair techniques for their implements and how to run a clean and hygienic home, give their children adequate nutrition and first aid, the load on inadequate services would reduce and parents may be tempted into keeping their children in school longer than the mere 4 to 5 years that have become the standard now, if at all.

Perhaps, if our young children in the villages are again exposed to all the dos and don'ts that many farmers themselves are forgetting, they may make more successful farmers.

A number of institutions are doing research into traditional knowledge systems and culling ancient scriptures such as the Vedas for the knowledge they have to offer us. But the majority of them offer this knowledge to establishments meant for the older generation, to multinational producers and R&D divisions etc., whereas, perhaps the need of the hour is to pass it on to the younger generation in rural India and to make it once again a working part of their lives.

It is a question of efficient culling of knowledge for a set purpose and the proper organisation of that information in a series of model textbooks, which cannot be standardised for the whole country, with its wide spectrum of natural phenomena, ... *please note.*

Such books may perhaps serve a better purpose than our present texts

which make the majority of rural children school drop-outs and the rest misfits in the villages, yet not quite fit for urban life either!

What is the use of universal primary education of the type on offer in India today, with its focus on urban life and needs, when all the while economists wail about the burden created by migration into the cities from the villages.

What is needed is an entirely new focus for middle school education for rural India, to equip young people to tackle their problems, so that they make a decent living in the villages, rather than migrate to the cities to populate massive slums.

Ms. Kusum Chopra is a freelance journalist and a frequent contributor to *Freedom First*.

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The Dalai Lama



I am a Buddhist and my whole way of training is according to the Buddhist teaching or Buddha *Dharma*. Although I speak from my own experience, I feel that no one has the right to impose his or her beliefs on another person. I will not propose to you that my way is best. The decision is up to you. If you find some point which may be suitable for you, then you can carry out experiments for yourself. If you find that it is of no use, then you can discard it.

The basic fact is that all sentient beings, particularly human beings, want happiness and do not want pain and suffering. On those grounds, we have every right to be happy and to use different methods or means to overcome suffering and to achieve happier lives. These methods, however, should not infringe on the rights of others, nor should they create more suffering for others. It is worthwhile to think seriously about the positive and negative consequences of these methods. You should be aware that there are differences between short-term and long-term interests and consequences. If there is a conflict between the short-term interest and the long-term interest, the long-term interest is more important. Buddhists usually say that there is no absolute and that everything is relative. So we must judge according to the circumstances.

I believe that the idea that all human problems can be solved by machines or by matter is wrong. Of course, material facilities are extremely

useful. At the same time, it is quite natural that all our problems cannot be solved by material facilities alone. In a material society there is just as much mental unrest and frustration, if not more. This shows us that we are human beings after all. We are not the product of machines and our bodies are different from purely mechanical things. Therefore, we must think seriously about our own inner abilities and deeper values.

I believe that if someone really wants a happy life then it is very important to pursue both internal and external means; in other words, material development and mental development. One could also say 'spiritual development', but when I say 'spiritual' I do not necessarily mean any kind of religious faith. When I use the word 'spiritual' I mean basic human good qualities. These are: human affection, a sense of involvement, honesty, discipline and human intelligence properly guided by good motivation. We have all these things from birth; they do not come to us later in our lives. Religious faith,

however, comes later. In this regard, I believe that there are two levels to the various religious teachings. On one level, religious teachings talk about God or the Almighty, or, in Buddhism, about Nirvana and the next life. Yet on a different level, all religious teachings and traditions teach us to be good human beings, to be warm-hearted people. These religious teachings simply strengthen the basic human good qualities which we have from birth.

As humans, we all have the same human potential, unless there is some sort of retarded brain function. The wonderful human brain is the source of our strength and the source of our future, provided we utilize it in the right direction. If we use the brilliant human mind in the wrong way, it is really a disaster. I think human beings are the superior sentient beings on this planet. Humans have the potential not only to create happy lives for themselves, but also to help other beings. We have a natural creative quality and it is very important to realize this.

- Extracted from *The Power of Compassion*.

The Tibetan in Mumbai

*The Tibetan in Mumbai
is not a Foreigner.*

*He is a cook
At a Chinese 'take-away'.
They think he is Chinese.
Run away from Beijing.*

*He sells sweaters, in summer
in the shade of the Parel bridge.
They think he is some retired
bahadur.*

*The Tibetan in Mumbai
Abuses in Bambaiya Hindi,
With a slight Tibetan accent
And during vocabulary emergencies
he naturally runs into Tibetan
That's when the Parsis laugh.*

*The Tibetan in Mumbai
Likes to flip through MID-DAY
Loves FM, but doesn't expect*

*A Tibetan song.
He catches bus at a signal,
Jumps into a running train,
Walks into a long dark gully
And nestles in his kholi.*

*He gets angry
When they laugh at him
'ching-chong-ping-pong'*

*The Tibetan in Mumbai
Is now tired.
Wants some sleep and a dream.
On the 11p.m. Virar fast
He goes to the Himalayas,
The 8.05 a.m. fast local
Brings him back to Churchgate
Into the Metro & New Empire*

-Tenzin Tsundue

MR. TENZIN TSUNDUE is a Post-Graduate student in Philosophy at the University of Mumbai.

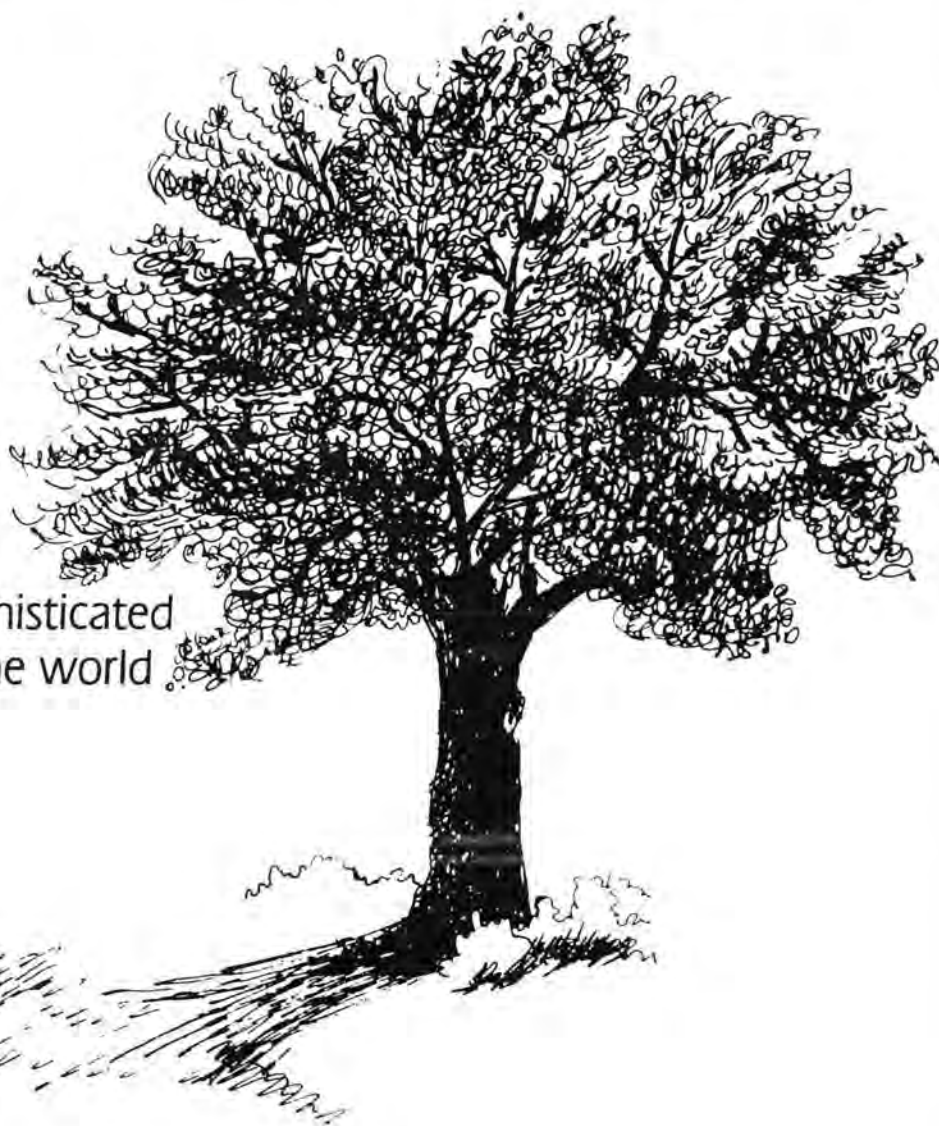
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Crimes : The Electronic Way

R. V. Chari

It is now possible to perpetrate any number of crimes by staying within the four walls of one's home.

Until not so long ago, crimes were largely limited to such things like theft, assault, murder or land grabbing. Since the commission of crime was circumscribed within a smaller area, detection was relatively easier for the authorities, to close in on the perpetrators. The advent of the Industrial Revolution, followed by the commercial and transport revolutions wide opened horizons for the would-be culprit.

With the advent of the computer, a whole host of new products have been thrown up – what with the credit card, the internet, the e-mail, the cyber café, world wide web, etc. This has knitted the nations of the world into one entity, and with the globalisation of trade and commerce, crime too has been globalised. It is now possible to perpetrate any number of crimes by staying within the four walls of his home, making it that much worse for the law to catch the thief.

Computer crimes involve access to a computer. The access may be unauthorised or the individual may be transgressing the powers that were permitted to him. This unauthorised access enables him to steal, alter, destroy, tamper, substitute computer software programmes, storage devices such as hard disks, floppies, CDs, etc. resulting in the defalcation and embezzlement of funds with consequent loss to individuals, companies and governments.

The following are some examples of computer-inspired crime:

Sabotage of the computer, operating systems and programmes. In July 1997, Timothy Allen Lloyd who was

employed as a computer programmer by Omega Engineering Corporation, New Jersey, set off a software bomb, after his dismissal from service by the company. In March 1999, the Melissa virus was unleashed into the internet and the operations of 60 major corporates were brought to a standstill. However, a Computer Emergency Response Team, supported by the Pentagon succeeded in restricting the damage. David Smit, the creator of the nasty virus pleaded guilty to causing damages to American businesses to the tune of \$ 80 million, but it is estimated the actual cost could be more than \$ 400 million.

Theft of data, intellectual property, marketing strategy and the like. In February 1995, Kevin Mitnick was arrested after a hacking spree of two years, during which time he stole software property of leading companies like Motorola, Novell, Fujitsu and Sun Micro etc, involving millions of dollars.

Blackmail through access to stealing of information. The computer may also facilitate crime by being used in any of the following ways:

Misuse of ATM cards, accounts and credit cards. An American pays through credit card at Geneva Airport for a first class ticket to fly by British Airways from Delhi to Singapore. Next day, at Frankfurt, he changes the ticket to Delhi-Hong Kong by economy class. He also makes a few purchases at Frankfurt through his credit card. The card is stolen in Tokyo when it is found that it was forged in Rome and sold to the American in Beirut, who has by now returned to America. There will now

be a long drawn litigation between the bank, the police and the various authorities.

Fraudulent Crediting of funds through electronic transfers.

Telecom Frauds. In March 1997, a juvenile hacker broke into the computer of a local telephone company, incapacitating the systems for hours. He also successfully broke into a pharmacy file carrying away patient-related records.

Threat to National Security. In February 1998, Ehud Tennenbaum, an Israeli citizen broke into the computers of military and government installations in the US and Israel. He also succeeded in hacking the information of academic institutions, but was arrested before he could inflict further damage.

Cyber Frauds. On November 30, 1999, *The Times of India* reported the arrest of one Kala Krishna Mohan Rao, for defrauding investors to the tune of crores of rupees by posing as a winner of Rs.87 crores in the Euro lottery. He was able to fool the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu. He first created an e-mail address from where he "leaked" a news report to the Telugu daily, the *Andhra Jyothi*, about his having hit the jackpot in the Euro lottery. This was followed by a string of press interviews on the basis of which he was able to get substantial funds from gullible investors. Then followed a period of lavish living until the police arrested him in Hyderabad.

PROFESSOR R. V. CHARI, a freelance writer, is a Professor of Commerce and Management.

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Visions, Stars and Spirits

J. B. D'Souza

Some years ago the Chandrapur jungles south of Nagpur periodically received a visitor, a senior ICS officer, in search of bears' genitals. Some supernaturally inspired quack had vouched for their effectiveness as an aphrodisiac.

In the last months of the last millenium, a mysterious leaflet came into circulation in or outside the churches in Mumbai. It bore the ominous title **The World will be destroyed very shortly. So be alert — says our Lady of Fatima**. It was the third message from Fatima. "Whatever is standing will be swallowed up", it threatened. "Millions of people will die. Only one-third of mankind will survive. ... That night will be very cold, and earth will begin to shake. At home close all the windows. Do not look outside. ..." Thus spake Mary, the Lady of Fatima, in a 1917 apparition, to Lucia dos Santos, a ten-year old shepherdess, seventh child of a drunken farmer in a Portuguese village.

Actually, said the leaflet, an earlier Pope, Pius XII, had put this third message into cold and secret storage, but it has since been declassified, and now menaces all of us with destruction and doom.

The big question is 'When'? When will our poor planet begin to squeak and shake? Ever obliging, our indigenous astrologers unwittingly offered an answer. Had I not read J. V. Narlikar, I wouldn't have known that they expected this world of ours to come to an end on 5th May. For that's when some six planets were to fall in line — a catastrophic alignment that could destroy most of us. Narlikar was sceptical of the May 2000 prediction. Narlikar is a learned scientist, but he had evidently not run across the confirming Fatima forecast. I was confused, the more so after

seeing a June 1999 article, where Khushwant Singh wrote of "1962, when eight planets were in conjunction and every single astrologer pronounced that the end of the world had come. Nothing happened. The planets were in similar conjunction earlier this year. This time soothsayers did not predict doomsday and were saved from making asses of themselves again. ... Nevertheless we go on calling astrology a science, which it most certainly is not." But Khushwant too had not taken Fatima into account.

In the last millenium, experiences like those of Fatima's Lucia overtook imaginative little children, particularly girls, with great frequency, particularly in Europe. In July 1867 three 8-year old girls in a German village called Marpingen saw a shadowy figure in white who claimed to be Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ. As James Sheehan, a history teacher at Stanford University, wrote, "the villagers' piety and deep devotion to Mary, combined with their pride in being chosen for this holy visitation and their growing sense of its commercial possibilities (a local innkeeper telegraphed his beer supplier with a request for 150 gallons: 'Marian miracle in Marpingen. Enormous pilgrimage. Send seven hectolitres immediately') inspired a hope that Marpingen could be the German equivalent of Lourdes, the French town where Mary had appeared in 1858 [now a flourishing pilgrimage centre]."

Marpingen's prosperity

eventually petered out. So may the fortunes of the hundreds of hawkers who flourish weekly on Fatima novena days on the sidewalks of Mahim, Mumbai. Astrology, Khushwant Singh and Narlikar notwithstanding, is more serious business than fanciful visions in the sky. More serious, more verifiable, to the extent of its reliance on planetary dispositions instead of little girls' imagination.

So it has a pseudo-scientific camouflage that takes in most of our national leadership. We had a Prime Minister, Deve Gowda, insisting on entering his official residence in New Delhi at a star-determined time, which turned out to be a wee hour of the morning, long before the hour Narasimha Rao's soothsayers thought it wise for their client to depart. Deve Gowda also had the residency altered to provide seven steps for entry; that was obedience to the rules of "*vaastu shastra*". Alas, those auspicious observances didn't work for him. He didn't exactly tumble down those seven steps, but he did leave in a hurry.

Some years later, and a few months before the September 1999 Parliament elections, Deve Gowda's pet astrologer predicted a second prime ministerial avatar for his client. The client had himself vowed that he would 'rise from the ashes'. Sadly the ashes reined him in, the stars let him down. Possibly seeking fresh astrological talent, Gowda may find urgent relief in someone like RJ, a recent "*Times*" advertiser, who promised "Love Marriage. Divorce,

Any problems solved within two days!"

Astrology is not only for the birds, even lovebirds, and for our powerful politicians. Even the otherwise respectable Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan shocked me with its recent merger with the Bombay Astrological Society! At the merger function a so-called Eminent Astrologer was the Chief Guest. "What a fall was there, my countrymen!" was a comment I heard from a disgusted Bhavan – and Shakespearean – fan.

Nor is it only in the Old World that astrology has its clientele. There are plenty of devotees in the New World as well, even in high places. Nancy Reagan regularly guided her husband's policies and decisions after discreet consultation with a California astrologer. Which may, of course, account for the polite irreverence with which Americans regarded their President.

Homage to the supernatural is even more rampant south of the border. Rio's Copacabana and its central district have plenty of shops offering crystal balls, magic herbs and soaps, incense and love potions, jaguar and alligator teeth, bat's wings and dried cockroaches — all guaranteed to bring good fortune into your life. And if you went to Rio's desolate Inhauma cemetery at night you would, according to your respect for the spirit world or otherwise, be either impressed, bewildered or disgusted by the black magic and witchery practiced there. There are nightly offerings to the Devil and a hierarchy of other spirits, of headless chickens and goats, or of cachaca liquor flung in a frenzy — offerings by government ministers, generals, lawyers, architects, police chiefs, civil servants, pop stars, the rich and upper classes as well as the poorer illiterate people in this entirely Catholic country.

Compared with such frenzied spiritism our indigenous astrological cults seem tame and feeble. Witches too are rare in India, their activities covert — although one of them, I. R. Chakraverty, has just published her diary, *Beloved Witch*. In the countryside, witch doctors are plentiful, their prescriptions and brews bizarre. And their clientele can be just as high-placed. Some years ago the Chandrapur jungles south of Nagpur periodically received a visitor, a senior ICS officer, in search of bears' genitals. Some supernaturally inspired quack had vouched for their effectiveness as an aphrodisiac.

Quacks, spirits, apparitions and astrologers keep this world of ours going, until the dawn of the doomsday some of them prefer to predict.

MR. J. B. D'SOUZA is a retired civil servant.

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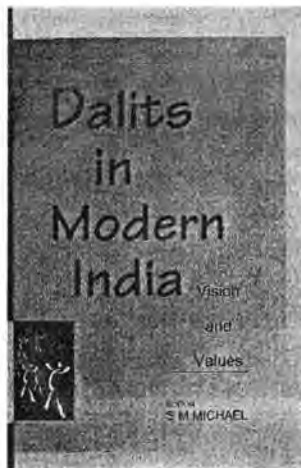
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BOOK REVIEWS

DALITS IN MODERN INDIA – VISION AND VALUES edited by S. M. Michael; Vistaar Publications, 32-M Block Market, Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi; 1999; pp.354; Rs.425.



**Reviewed by
Professor H. A. Gani**

Indian society has been witnessing a remarkable Dalit transformation. The inferiority complex that stems from being a Dalit is fast disappearing give way to increasingly vocal self-assertion by the Dalits. Today the word Dalit represents a new heightened level of self-awareness and identity. The upsurge of Dalit-consciousness has also brought about a great change in their perceptions. They are tending to acquire socio-political aspirations and a sea-change is easily discernible between the aspirations of Dalits in modern India and those of Dalits in traditional India.

Besides, Dalits are becoming more and more aggressive and are demanding a just share, not only in political and economic power, but also in the higher echelons of the judiciary. Dalit self-assertion is likely to go a long way in

transforming the contours of the socio-political situation in Indian society. The book under review is a study of the socio-economic and cultural content of this transformation and attempts to examine its possible implications in a larger national perspective. In his contribution "untouchability and stratification in Indian civilization", Shrirama argues that in order to understand the full ramification of untouchability, one has to study the practice of untouchability as a part of the social structure of the caste system in India. After explaining social stratification in traditional India, the establishment of Aryan supremacy and the fourfold *varna* hierarchy, he shows how the supremacy of Brahmins and Vedic Brahmanical traditions was challenged by the other *varnas* and subsequently by Buddhist literature and how the *Smiritis* especially *Manusmriti* came to the assistance of a beleaguered Brahmanical tradition. The impact of *varna* knew no bounds and it permeated not only the traditional legal system but it is also clearly evident in today's legal system. The example of inheritance among Hindus which was governed by the principles of *Smiritis* till the enactment of Hindu Succession Act, 1956, can be cited here.

Shrirama, no doubt, gives a beautiful historical account of the practice of untouchability, however, he failed to see the challenge posed to modern Brahmanism. As a result of education and reservation, intellectual forces have been emerging among Dalits who have been leaving no stone unturned to defeat modern Brahmanism in different walks of life, despite the latter's stranglehold on various structures of power.

The discussion on untouchability and stratification leads us to the genesis of the term Dalit. In fact, Dalit history has evolved several concepts like lower castes, downtrodden, harijans, sudras, depressed castes, scheduled castes, untouchables and so on. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who fought for the cause of Dalits till his last breath, did not stick to a single term. He began to use depressed castes, then Scheduled castes and gradually switched over to Dalit.

Having highlighted how the term Dalit is used in a narrow and a broader sense, John C. B. Webster says that there are two predominant views as far as Dalits are concerned, i.e. class analysis and communal analysis of Indian society. Refuting these views, he concludes that caste alone determines who is a Dalit, not class or religion, social stigma and a variety of disabilities that are based on caste. There were and, to a significant degree still are characteristics which define Dalit, even if he moves up in the social class or changes religion. There is much substance in what Webster says. The mass conversion of Dalits to Islam in Meenakshipuram (Tamil Nadu) in 1981 did not wipe out their caste stigma. They were given backseats and treated as Dalit Muslims.

Mahesh Gavaskar depicts the historiography as presented by Jotiba Phule and shows how Brahmins usurped the privileged position, leading Jotiba Phule to take up cudgels against Brahmanical religion and have he admonished the British rulers for neglecting the welfare of the downtrodden; formulating policies that were detrimental to the interests of the toiling masses.

Nevertheless, the complete neglect of the conquestorial intent of the colonial rulers is a serious lacuna in Phule's historiography.

As against Hindu revivalism which seeks to identify the nation and national culture with Hindus and Hindu culture and also against the Gandhian approach to caste and varna, S. M. Michael examines the alternative vision of Jotiba Phule, Dr. Ambedkar and Periyar. They staunchly advocated the idea of a cultural revolution and a total transformation of Indian society. They rejected outright the upper caste vision of Indian society which ran counter to the principles of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity and endeavoured to construct a society based on a non-Aryan and low-caste perspective.

However, the Dalit vision of Indian society is difficult to realize as Dalits do not see eye to eye on the means to achieve this. Apart from this, there are intra-Dalit conflicts based on divisions among the Dalits along sub-caste lines which "like the proverbial crabs keep clawing at each other, pulling down those who move up, so that all of them remain in their lowly position".

Gopal Guru's paper entitled, "The Dalit Movement in Mainstream Sociology" centers around concepts like relative deprivation, social mobility and reference groups which are to be found in the writings of liberal scholars. He concedes that the concepts of relative deprivation and social mobility have some relevance to the new educated employed Dalit class that is emerging from among the Mahars and Mangs in urban Maharashtra. This sense of deprivation is reflected in the feeling of hatred, contempt and jealousy towards those who are

fortunate in raising their material status and ultimately it may lead to the formation of a sub-group or a social category.

Referring to the deceitful elevation of Dalits at the laying of bricks during the Ram *Shilanyas* at Ayodhya in the recent past, Guru illustrates how the Hindutva forces without having a genuine desire to remove the relative deprivation of the Dalits, have taken the initiative in accommodating the Dalits in the Swarna culture. There is much truth in what Guru argues as the RSS, a couple of years back, requested the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad to survey Dalit hostels, interview their leaders and incorporate Dalit issues in their slogans and writings. This was obviously attempted with a view to co-opting Dalit activism without any desire to tackle the real issues of social justice.

What is important to note here is that unless the Dalit intelligentsia tries to build a transformative cultural movement addressing the twin issues of human dignity and social justice, the Dalit masses might be taken over by these non-reformist, status-quoist mode of social mobility where they will be coopted essentially at a lower level in the resurgent Brahmanical order of our society.

K. P. Singh has drawn a parallel between the Dalit movement in India and the Black movement in the US and proceeds to examine what they have gained through these movements. He says that with a view to achieving self-respect, social dignity and equity, the Dalits and Black movements followed the protest ideology and civil rights ideology seeking to reform or re-interpret religion or, as a last resort, going to the extent of rejecting parental religion. The

examples of Dr. Ambedkar's rejecting Hinduism and embracing Buddhism in 1956 and likewise, Elijah Mohammad's rejecting Christianity and embracing Islam are cited here.

However, the questions that can be raised are: Does conversion make a difference to the social status of Dalits who continue to follow their traditional occupations? Does it lead to any change in the social conditions of the Dalits? It is also a moot point whether embracing Islam by Black Americans or mass conversion of Dalits to Islam as in Meenakshipuram (Tamil Nadu) in 1981, has served their purpose of social dignity and equality. The study of "Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India" by Imtiaz Ahmed indicates that there is social stratification among the Muslims in India which can to some extent be compared to the Hindu caste system. Even the sense of equality enjoined by Islam on all its adherents is sometimes seen as being flouted by certain segments in the Muslim community. R. Srinivasan in his paper in the book "Religion, State and Politics in India" lends support to this argument when he says that caste persists even after conversion to Islam. In the mosque, the ex-scheduled castes have been seated separately.

K. P. Singh says that in 1960, a new ideological phase began and protest movements led by the Black panthers in the US and the Dalit panthers in India assumed militant and revolutionary overtones. What he fails to see here is that although the leaders of Dalit panthers gave an apparent impression of their being radical, militant revolutionaries, they lacked the revolutionary characteristics of commitment, a spirit of sacrifice, etc. like the Black Panthers in the US

who were willing to die and kill, if necessary. Besides, the Dalit panthers' militancy could not stand up to the oppressive measures adopted by the authorities. The way the Dalit panthers' militancy retreated and its stance shifted from militancy to complacency and even supplication during the Emergency period substantiates this point.

K. P. Singh concludes that in the last two decades, the status of the Blacks in the US has changed and politically correct terms like 'African-Americans' or 'Black Americans' instead of Negroes are used. While in India various structural-functional changes have been effected and Dalits have achieved a good deal in their struggle for socio-economic and political rights, though atrocities on them have increased. Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with K. P. Singh when he suggests that the laws need to be made stricter to wipe out caste-based discrimination and the practice of untouchability. There are obvious limits to what the law can do to remove the prejudices against Dalits.

S. Selvam's paper attempts a critique of two dominant trends in the study of India and Hinduism set in motion by M. N. Srinivas and Louis Dumont and deals with their key concepts. While conceding that cultural process, which has been designated by Srinivas as Sanskritisation, is an important hegemonic process, Mr. Selvam says that Srinivas' analysis makes this process appear as though it takes place outside the realm of ideology, politics and economy by projecting it as an in-built, self-propelling process.

Selvam also explains the process of Dalitisation in India by which members of higher castes – individually or in groups – become

Blangis, Chamars, Bhambis, Jatavs, Bairavis and so on, thereby losing their high caste names and membership. Referring to the writings of Prabhati Mukherjee, the Jatakas, Ketkar, Ghanshyam Shah and others, Shyam Lal ably demonstrates how the higher caste people belonging to different *varnas* right from Brahmins to Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were degraded to the position of untouchables and thereby multiplied the number of Dalits. Among several factors like foreign invasions, local conquests, economic constraints etc., it is mainly ritual purity and pollution which contributed to the Dalitisation.

Traude Pillai-Vetschera's paper is devoted to the discussion of Mahar Women in the Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra. It is a micro level study based on field work. She pleads that the impact of Sanskritic values on Dalit women is strong; that it has put their life-style upside down, i.e. the traditional freedom enjoyed by Dalit women is under constraint, the woman has become subordinate to man and under his control, bride price is replaced by dowry, divorce now seems to be difficult for women, etc. Thus, Dalit women have become victims of the higher caste patriarchal system. Nonetheless, Dalits have retained some of their traditional practices such as sending their women outside their home for manual labour.

She says that since the Dalit movement has put Dalit women's issues under the carpet, she suggests that Dalit women should take the initiative to set up their own movement to address their issues. The formation of the National Federation of Dalit women in August 1995 to liberate Dalit women from all types of oppression

indicated that Dalit women have woken up to this fact.

The New Economic Policy, introduced in July 1991, is touted as a magic wand that would liberate the Indian economy from the shackles of inefficiency and poor performance. However, B. L. Mungekar while examining the impact of the NEP from a broader macro perspective, asserts that it is likely to tell upon the socio-economic interest of the weaker sections in general and Dalits in particular, as it relegates the welfare state into the background, thereby putting the reservation policy into cold storage. Hence, Mungekar suggests that the Dalits and all the disadvantaged and dispossessed sections should come under one umbrella and resist tooth and nail the move for the erosion of the welfare state.

Needless to say politics is one of the most important instruments of the Dalit struggle for their upliftment. In addition to this, today Dalit politics has been facing unique challenges in maintaining their internal coherence and the compulsions of wider mobilization of the disadvantaged communities. From this point of view, although this study mainly pertains to sociological and anthropological analysis, some papers on Dalit politics would have helped readers gain a better perspective on Dalit issues and would have added to the value of the book.

However, the book contains a wealth of information, and it will be extremely useful to all those who wish to have a deeper understanding of Dalit issues.

DR. H. A. LALJI is Professor in the Department of Political Science, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University.



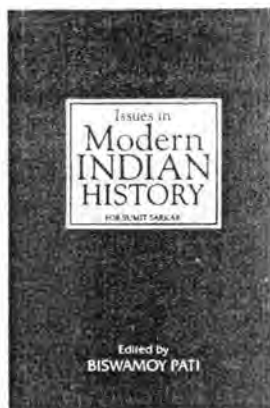
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ISSUES IN MODERN INDIAN HISTORY (FOR SUMIT SARKAR), edited by Biswamoy Pati; Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., 35-C, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Marg, Tardeo, Mumbai 400034; 2000; pp.360; Rs.400.



Reviewed by Professor S. V. Kogekar

This volume consists of twelve essays written by thirteen writers (one being authored jointly by two of them) put together as a tribute to Professor Sumit Sarkar. Professor Sarkar taught and inspired many students by his lectures at Delhi University on various aspects of modern Indian history. In particular he taught them to question the narration and/or conclusions as presented in the traditional writings on history. He was closely associated with the movement for writing the 'people's' history as against the elitist or rulers' history of India. The essays presented here try to break new ground in the way they have been written. Unfortunately, as often happens in such *festschrifts*, each essay is in no way related to the others in the collection. The only common strand which binds them together is the esteem in which their authors hold the subject of their tribute. The writings therefore appear fragmentary in character. One way of avoiding this result

would be to get all the contributors to write on different facets of a common theme. But that perhaps makes the task of the editor all the more arduous considering the current interests and preoccupations of the various authors!

Of the twelve articles in the volume, four are reprints of earlier writings published elsewhere. The only reason for their inclusion seems to be the desire of their authors to be associated with the laudable object of paying a tribute to their Guru.

Modern Indian history covers a wide panorama of events, personalities and periods in different regions of a vast sub-continent. The present collection is an attempt to deal with a few of them indicating the complexity and arduous nature of the task. Five of the essays are directly or indirectly related to historical developments in Bengal, while two are concerned with Maharashtra, one each with Orissa, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh and two with all-India questions. A remarkable feature of the collection is that a majority of the writers are teachers in various colleges affiliated to Delhi University and are seriously engaged in research along with their teaching duties. The inclusion of Professor David Arnold of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, among the authors is both a recognition of the scholarly works of Professor Sarkar and an illustration of the non-traditional writing of history. In his essay entitled 'Disease, Resistance and India's Ecological Frontier, 1770-1947', he shows how the inter-relationships between 'Adivasi resistance', changes in the approach to containing disease and ecological factors need to be viewed in a holistic manner in order to get the right perspective.

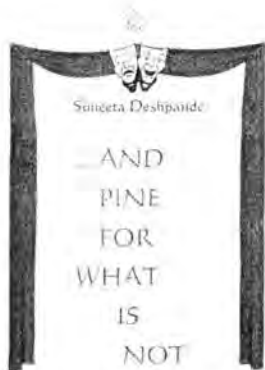
The important role of women in the shaping of history, long suppressed in a male-dominated society, is brought out in two essays relating to Maharashtra. One draws attention to the role of Baizabai, the Regent of the domains of Scindia, after the death of her husband Daulat Rao in fostering the anti-British sentiment culminating in the heroic exploits of 1857 in which another Royal woman - The Rani of Jhansi - played an illustrious part. The second throws fresh light on the status of slave girls in the 18th century and brings out the exceptionally influential role played by one of them who happened to be included in the retinue of Shahu Chhatrapati of Satara after his release from the Mughal court where he was held captive by Aurangzeb following the defeat and death by torture of his father Sambhaji Maharaj.

The forces at work behind the Bhil rebellion of 1881 in the State of Mewar are explored in another essay throwing fresh light on the triangular conflicts between the Bhils, the rulers of Rajasthan and the colonial power. The States' peoples' struggles for democratic rule and the ambivalent role of the Indian National Congress have been highlighted in yet another essay dealing with events in Orissa. The landlord domination in Telangana and its consequences for the common cultivators and landless workers is the theme of another interesting essay.

This is merely an illustrative list of the contents of this volume which deserves to be read by all those interested in the new approach to historiography in relation to the modern period.

PROFESSOR S. V. KOGEKAR, Professor of Political Science, retired as Principal of Fergusson College, Pune.

... AND PINE FOR WHAT IS NOT
by Suneeta Deshpande, translated
from the Marathi by Gauri
Deshpande; Disha Books, an
imprint of Orient Longman Ltd.,
Kamani Marg, Ballard Estate,
Mumbai 400038; 1995; pp.249;
Rs.145.



**Reviewed by
Dr. Leela Salgaonkar**

In the passing away of Shri P. L. Deshpande, Maharashtra has not just lost a great humorous writer, but a man endowed with a variety of gifts. Though music was his first love, he was equally successful on the stage in his one-man shows. A dramatist of great capacity, an eminent humorous writer, a celebrated music director, an able film-script writer and above all an actor *par excellence* – these are the various facets of his genius.

Another aspect to be noted about his humour, is that it is based on contradictions in human nature, and as an author he would never hit below the belt. The characters in his most popular play – ‘*Tuze Aahe Tujapashi*’ meaning ‘you have it with you’ are true to life. Acharya, with his Gandhian principles, presents a sharp contrast to Kalaji, who likes to enjoy life to the full. The last soliloquy of Acharya, is thought-provoking. The persons who live in ‘*Batatyachi Chawl*’ were indeed some

of us. It is no wonder that some of his books like ‘*Apoorwai*’ – a travelogue and ‘*Batatyachi Chawl*’ have run into sixteen editions. That is why, his demise was lamented by all sections of society, whom he had endeared with his pen and acting, though all knew that he was ailing for some time and the end was inevitable.

He was very fortunate to have Suneeta as his wife. She was not just a wife, but a talented companion, who could play a role with him on the stage or on the screen and could also be an able partner in his poetry-reading. It may appear that both of them were made for each other; but alas! perfection is a dream of the mind! Her book of bitter-sweet memories was published in 1990 under the title ‘*Aahe Manohar Tari ...*’ which means ‘though it is fascinating ...’ The half-line which is dropped from the title is ‘*Gamate Udaas*’ meaning ‘it is gloomy’.

Suneetabai was a student revolutionary, who left her home and education at a tender age, to take part in the freedom movement and was a firebrand worker, who could handle bombs. Being a person of high principles, she was fearless to turn down the offer of a minister – Shri Bhausaheb Hirey to work at Malegaon, as she had seen some shady financial transactions and power politics, when she had put in some hard work at the institution earlier.

She was more than a private secretary to Bhai – P. L. Deshpande. She used to prepare the presscopy of Bhai’s books and go through the proof of every page. She also kept the accounts of the household. Her husband was often cheated by people in the film industry. In William Wordsworth’s words, “A perfect woman, nobly planned to

warn, to comfort, and command”.

Yes, ‘command’ – the last word in the quotation is her last word in their married life. She is honest to the core and her self-analysis brings out the limitations of both of them. Her observation on P.L., ‘his childish dependence and my capable even bossy motherliness’ is a key to understand their married life. She writes about herself: “He is as close to a perfect husband as a man can be. I am sure, it is I, who am to blame for being so far away from the ideals of a ‘wife’. The unquenchable rebellion in my blood is the real obstacle to my becoming an ideal wife.”

It is common experience that in a long married life, the angularities of human nature manifest at times and most of the time, adjustment is the only solution to the problem, but should the adjustment be made by one partner all the time? Suneetabai gives credit, where it is due. “Fortunately, his nature yearns with every breath to compromise – to go with the untroubled flow of life”.

Therefore, whenever there was any kind of disagreement, it was Bhai, who had to compromise. It is not true that the person, who wants to make peace, is necessarily weak, but he can be wiser of the two. Besides, the perfectionist in Suneetabai made Bhai humble all the time. She had earned that respect, due to her hard work. In a man-dominated society like ours, a gentleman like P.L. is a real ‘Purushottam’ – ‘the best of man’. Suneetabai had realised this, when she wrote: “But I am sure he suffered enough at my hands and I am very satisfied. But he never complained. It is not in his nature to whine and complain. There is fundamental goodness in him”. This aspect of Bhai’s personality is often

forgotten when she criticises him for lack of manners, for instance. She has firm opinions while Bhai's open-hearted acceptance of others opinions is considered by her as his 'intellectual laziness'. His happy-go-lucky attitude was a matter of annoyance to her. She is an intensively private person, while Bhai always loved crowds around him. Her strong likes and dislikes about persons and things stand in sharp contrast with Bhai's broad outlook and friendliness. One wonders, why Lord Brahma or for that matter, Life should bring such two persons together, who are so different in their outlook.

"I realised that we were attracted to each other, not because of our similarities but because of our differences; opposites attract". Though this observation of the author is true, there is one thing common that binds them together. Love of poetry. This was the silken thread that brought them and kept them together. "There were tensions and troubles, but there was never a real rift between us". The credit for this may go to both of them. Bhai deserves the lion's share.

As trifles make the sum of life, Suneetabai often exaggerates some incidents that may have hurt her though one can understand the humiliation she has suffered. When a deal with a film producer was struck at ten thousand rupees, the person after going to Pune, finally settled it for five thousand rupees. But at times, she makes much of trifles and one feels there is nothing but a communication gap. 'I am obsessed by the idea of perfection in an imperfect world', she says. The incident took place ten months after their marriage. As she suffered from 'morning sickness' and could hardly eat anything, her mother-in-law gave her a red pomegranate. She, with her meticulous way,

picked the seeds, while others were having their dinner. Afterwards, she offered the seeds to them, expecting them to exhort her to eat them first. This I think is clearly a case of a communication gap.

Another interesting point Suneetabai has emphasised is a 'hidden Rama in all husbands'. There was a beautiful friendship between the writer and Bhaiya - Mir Asgar Ali, when she was an underground worker, during the freedom movement. She introduced Bhai to Bhaiya - Mr. Mir Asgar Ali, after her marriage. Both of them liked each other. But Suneetabai feels that Bhai always referred to him as 'my friend' and never as 'Suneeta's friend'. She says, "I do understand that behind these subterfuges lies his desire to protect me from nastiness but I am angered by his cowardice". With due respect to Suneetabai's faith in individual freedom, one feels what Bhai did was an instinctive or rather traditional way of doing things. Though she is ahead of her times, Bhai had traditional views on these matters and respected the norms of social morality. Just as one cannot understand a genius from a distance, so also persons, who live close to him also fail to appreciate his greatness at times.

There are two divergent views on the book. Some think that it is a landmark or the last word in women's autobiographical memoirs. They admire the author for her bold stand. But there are others, who consider it as an ego trip. This is quite natural; because we take our personality with all our deep cultural impressions called *sanskaras* when we evaluate a writer. As for me, I think it is an eminently readable book. There are tender memories like the one, when a shower of delicate fresh parijat flowers fell on the newly married

bride when Bhai shook the tree. There are splendid pen-pictures of the author's parents and the grandmother. The book carries a lot of funny incidents - how the 'muslim' caps finally became secular caps. It also brings out how a woman feels humiliated when the husband compromises with a situation to please others.

Suneetabai is an extremely sensitive soul. Once while playing rummy, she won almost every game and then talked loudly and excitedly, only to be hushed by someone. "That chastisement pierced me to the heart". Thereafter she never played the game again. Though I admire her personality, I fail to understand how such a sensitive person imposes her wishes on her husband. Two incidents stand out when I feel she crossed the limits of personal liberty. Just as I do not like women who are like doormats, similarly a domineering woman does not earn my respect. After the Emergency had ended, Ms. Durga Bhagwat and Bhai were invited to Delhi. She simply refused the invitation saying that Bhai does not belong to any party. Even when his name was announced in a rally at Pune, and in spite of his wish to address the meeting, her command was final. Another incident that was reported to me took place in an Engineering college, Pune. A large number of students were eager to listen to Bhai. It was announced that nobody should carry a tape-recorder, but boys are boys. Suneetabai found out that one student had a tape-recorder. Without consulting Bhai, she announced that P. L. Deshpande would not deliver his lecture, much to the dismay of the students and the staff. She calls herself a benevolent dictator; but a dictator cannot be benevolent all the time.

The style of the book is

engaging. Suneetabai is supremely confident about her opinions. That is why this unrestrained rumble through memories bring out all facets of her personality.

Ms. Gauri Deshpande deserves to be congratulated for her fine translation. It is so perfect that little is lost from the original. I wish Suneetabai instead of pining for what is not, rejoices that she could play a very significant role in the life of a towering genius of Maharashtra.

Anyway, we are grateful to Suneetabai for her frank narration of some memories that bring out her aspiration for perfection. There is no mention of all the donations conferred on worthy people and institutions by the Deshpande couple. This modesty of the author is noteworthy as well as her social consciousness in the motto "*muktangana*", – "save money by living in a frugal manner and give it to others without attachment".

DR. LEELA SALGAONKAR is retired professor of English, Ismail Yusuf College, Mumbai. She specialises in English and Sanskrit Literature.

A Correction

In my article on Sane Guruji (Sane Guruji - A Saint Among Politicians, *Freedom First*, No.446, July-September 2000) it has been stated that Sane Guruji was elected to the highly honoured post of the President of the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan in Pune in 1949.

Elsewhere in the article, it is stated "he joined the Forward Bloc and became the first President of that party's Maharashtra branch".

Both these statements are incorrect. He was not elected as the President of the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, and he did not accept the Presidentship of the Forward Bloc."

The errors are deeply regretted.

- V. C. Phadke

SANE GURUJI'S SHYAM'S MOTHER 'SHYAMACHI AAYEE'
- A condensed English version by V. Sivaramakrishnan, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai 400007; 2000; pp.95; Rs.80.



**Reviewed by
R. Srinivasan**

Originally written in 1933, *Shyamchi Aayee* has remained a favourite for generations of Maharashtrians, reflecting the flavour of traditional Hindu family traditions, the deep loyalties that make it an immemorial institution and the persistence and tenacity of certain values. Essentially a book for adolescents, it tends to be sentimental, but sentimentality is a strong factor in family and community relationships. The book went through several reprints and editions; its great potentialities captured memorably in a film by the famed Acharya Atre, delighted new constituents and capped it all by winning the newly instituted President's Gold Medal. Both the book and the film have remained important icons in Maharashtrian culture.

In this sense, this book is the quintessential unchanging India, the India of the rural areas preserved for posterity translated evocatively by K. S. Venkataramani in English.

by Gorur Ramaswami Iyengar in Kannada and above all, by Sarat Chandra in Bengali. Rural India has always upheld the centrality of the Mother as the Goddess and as one who symbolized fertility, life-giving sustenance, and celebrated in numerous festivals. But the mother as a living person and as one who upheld the values of an unchanging India was to be the theme that found Sarat Chandra commemorating in many of his works. In this book, Sane Guruji honours not only the memory of his mother but of the patient, long-suffering Indian womanhood. The different episodes in the novel glorify the wisdom of the patient matriarch, her concern for values and her deep abiding faith in the power of an Almighty. Each is a lesson in the moulding of the character of the young hero.

This book reveals the essential Sane Guruji, his genius in simple narration, recalling of village life in its simplicities, the deep bonds of the close-knit families of the poor, the customs, rituals, festivals that have an appeal all their own. It is the story of growing up, of the gradual widening of one's experiences and horizons and yet the centrality of family loyalties beckoning the straying adolescent.

While in prison, Sane Guruji had an enviable gift for telling stories, listening to those narrated by others and recapitulating them for later generations. The small books that he authored for children issued out of these. In *Shyam's Mother*, too, he resorts to the same techniques of narrating the events in Shyam's life, in 42 after-dinner story sessions to his hostel mates. These loosely structured narratives form the novel.

The editor has selected 35 of the 42 stories and presented these in small chapters and addressed to an adolescent audience. The

abridged version retains the spirit of the original and will help new generations empathise with older values. This needs to be done. For these days, the world of advertisement has taken over. The memories of the mother celebrated in the book are far from the gifts that are peddled on Mother's Day. It will form an ideal gift for the young and will keep evergreen the contribution of Sane Guruji to a new India.

DR. R. SRINIVASAN is Professor of Political Science (retired), and associate editor of *Freedom First*.

I WILL LIE DOWN IN PEACE, by Usha Jesudasan; East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Ltd., 1998; pp.157; Rs.150.



**Reviewed by
Mrs. Neela D'Souza**

Usha Jesudasan shares with us memories of the anguish and pain of the last year of her husband's life, and the realization that suffering could either be "a wilderness in which we could be lost or a pathway to God if we could accept it ...". A difficult choice and the acceptance was not immediate or simple.

This is the story of young Kumar Jesudasan, fresh out of medical college and looking forward to an exciting career as a doctor, perhaps in America; in the

meanwhile, appointed epidemiologist in a leprosy research institute in South India. It was not easy work but Kumar gave it his best, learning all he could about the disease in his field trips to the villages around Vellore. It was here that he found his calling – to reach out, to touch and to heal those suffering from leprosy. It was a commitment to give of himself, and his naturally caring and generous nature enabled him to do this wholeheartedly. It was the making of an unusual young man, who brought intelligence, compassion and sensitivity to a demanding and difficult yet deeply satisfying vocation.

Usha begins her narrative on a day in late October '96, when Kumar was about to leave for Viet Nam and instead slipped into a hepatic coma necessitating hospitalization in the intensive care unit at the Vellore Hospital. In those frightening and lonely early morning cold hours outside the ICU not knowing what the outcome would be, Usha turned to prayer and to her memories, recalling her growing years in England, her courtship and marriage which brought her to the leprosy research institute in Karigiri, near Vellore.

A frequent and ready blood donor all through his years as a medical student, Kumar had contracted hepatitis B probably through a contaminated needle. The eighteenth time he gave blood was to be the last; the next time he tested positive for the hepatitis virus. He did not attach much importance to this and assuming it would resolve itself in time, forgot all about it and a decade later, a routine medical check revealed an enlarged liver and spleen, pointing to active chronic hepatitis which would ultimately lead to cirrhosis of the liver – an

irreversible condition. Terminal. Work had taken him to Papua New Guinea at the time, far away from home and family. Brooding over his terrible secret, his world and everything he held dear seemed to be crumbling around him.

Usha was shattered when she came to know but found the courage to be the source of strength Kumar needed. Together they resolved to carry on as normal as possible in the time they had, Kumar to do everything he had always wanted – work and research and travel to the extent his health permitted. Time was against them but they would live their life the way they wanted, the way that made sense to them.

Reading the book was a humbling experience. There is no miraculous healing here, no cure or disappearance of the disease, no health regained but the painful – unbearably painful at times – experience of a second and third coma, of Kumar being strapped down to the bed with restrainers around the hands and feet, the frustration and anger at the trauma of intrusions of tubes and needles and bowel washes, the indignity of being reduced to a state where he could not help himself, was not even aware of what was happening to him.

Finally he would have no more of this. The anger, the fury and the rage – why me? – had subsided. He was almost lost in the wilderness when he stumbled back on the pathway to God. The inevitable had to be faced. Death is a subject we avoid talking about but Kumar with his deep Christian moorings faced it and gently persuaded Usha to accept his decision. He wanted to go home where she and their children would look after him, surround him with their love and care. If he lapsed into a coma, he did

not want to be shifted back to the hospital or forcibly revived. He wanted to die at home he told her. Nothing would make him budge from his stand as the doctors attending on him soon found out.

Meanwhile there were practical things to attend to and plan with Usha : Where the family would live, financial arrangements, what to do about schooling for the children, preparing them for the death of their father ... You share intimate, wrenchingly emotional moments when he talks frankly with his young sons, holding back nothing. "Don't let my illness cut you off from God ... The point about my illness is not why it happened but all that we learned from it. How God provided for all of our needs, gave us strength, brought me to this point of healing and acceptance so that I can die in peace".

"*I Will Lie Down In Peace*" is a story of faith and trust in God, even if there was no possibility of physical healing for Kumar. Healing came in the acceptance that death would be a release from pain and suffering. Kumar was filled with a new inner strength and spirit, talking about death and facing it positively. Friends and colleagues stopped by to spend time with him, there were visits from family, messages from the many friends he had made in other countries where his work with the Leprosy Mission had taken him. The thanksgiving service and lunch for his staff that he and Usha arranged – he did not want, he said, a mournful memorial service with tears and sorrow after his death – turned out to be truly a celebration of life with Kumar radiating good humour as he joked and laughed with the people he had worked with and some of his old beloved patients.

It was a time for togetherness

for the family, of "intense sharing", drawing closer to each other as they discussed faith and the mysteries of life and death. It was a time for serious reflection and surrender of whatever disturbed and rankled. Usha writes, "... he wanted to make his death a gift for us, a time when we would remember not only the sadness, but also the dignity, the peace and the courage with which he faced his end". "Every night was a time of rejoicing and thanking God for one more day". Close friends took turns to stay with them so that there would always be help at hand for Usha and the children. Kumar died quietly on a February morning in '97 surrounded by his loved ones.

The writing of "*I Will Lie Down In Peace*" could not have been easy. In her epilogue, Usha describes the darkness and despair as grief and self-pity overwhelmed her. Where was God when she

needed him most to comfort her in her sorrow? Comfort came in the support of friends and family, the many expressions of love and concern, help with the sorting out of legal and financial matters, gifts of poems Kumar had written for her to be read after he had gone. And in a call to comfort others in their times of trouble and grief.

In telling her husband's story, Usha reaches out with a message of hope that faith and love can triumph over the despair of death. A brave book that is a testament to the courage and integrity of Kumar Jesudasan.

(The proceeds from the sale of this book will go towards the work Dr. Kumar Jesudasan dedicated his life to: The caring of those suffering from Leprosy).

MRS. NEELA D'SOUZA is a.....

Good Wins Over Evil

Kamal Thadani

In the past many decades
always Good has won over Evil.
Angels have won always
There is no chance for the Devil.
Sometimes, money seems to rule.
Though good may be the essence of life,
Power may seem to have importance in life,
but always good has won over evil.
History has always shown the dominance of virtue
When there is cruelty, inhumanity, and injustice
it is said that Evil takes birth
When good wins in this world
There is jubilation, joy and mirth
The Lord Incarnate Krishna
destroyed the cruel Kamsa
Good won over Evil.
Virtue won over power
In the Mahabharata, Pandavas won over Kauravas
Duryodhana had power and money
Pandavas had virtue and justice on their side
When there is good, you have nothing to hide
There will be no sign of the Devil.
Always, Good wins over Evil.

Mr. Kamal Thadani, a regular contributor to *Freedom First*, is a poet.

Freedom First

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

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 meddling government - the system so far that has led to impoverishment, insecurity and instability.

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Whatever.

Whenever.

Wherever.

At AFL, we move anything and everything to anywhere.
Now tell us when, where and what.

