

Freedom First

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THE LIBERAL POSITION

Economy  Governance

While the Economy soars, Governance plummets

The tragedy of being a farmer in India

Kanshi Ram R.I.P.

I am sure Kanshi Ram would have been mighty pleased with the wide publicity he received on his passing away on October 9, 2006.

Kanshi Ram and I were good friends. Between the late sixties and the late seventies he was a regular visitor to my office (the Central Office of the Swatantra Party) whenever he was in, or passing through, Bombay. He was, at that time president of BAMCEF – Backward and Minority Classes Employees' Federation. He enjoyed the confidence and respect the members of this organisation. This was very much in evidence when I was present at a meeting of BAMCEF held in 1968 or '69. But politics was in his mind even during those days though he did not divulge that he planned a political party.

I can personally testify to the fact that to Kanshi Ram politics was a numbers game. The moment he walked into my office, he would demand a cup of tea. And over tea, every once in a while, he would take a sheet of paper and prove to me that in sheer numbers the OBCs and Dalits were in a clear majority and therefore had the right to rule India! He scoffed at reservations as being a game indulged by upper-castes Hindus. He was determined, he told me, to make the leaders of most political parties (most of whom he pointed out belonged to the upper castes) to dance to his tune. He said many other things but it was often not easy to follow what he was saying – he was not the best of communicators.

By the late seventies our meetings got less frequent. In the early eighties I was out of the country and on my return in 1984 I found a

calling card from Kanshi Ram – a 154 page book he had written and which he wanted me to read and review in *Freedom First*: "The Chamcha Age – An Era of Stooges."

In my review of the book (*Freedom First* October 1985) I wrote:

"My friend Kanshi Ram, President of BAMCEF, has written an angry book with the rather fascinating title of *The Chamcha Age*. *Chamcha*, as Kanshi Ram explains is an 'indigenous word used for a person who cannot operate on his own'. In the book he uses the word synonymously with 'stooge', 'agent' or 'tool'. Essentially, he directs his ire at those members of the backward communities who have chosen to cast their lot, whatever be the reason, with caste Hindus. Such persons are described as being tools or *Chamchas* of the Hindus. He quotes Ambedkar, whom he admired, profusely.

"Kanshi Ram is a sincere person and whether one agrees with him or not, he deserves to be heard which is not something you can say about many members of his class who serve as show pieces of both the ruling and opposition parties."

He formed the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 1984. My letters to him after he had formed the BSP remained unanswered. His friends and colleagues in the BAMCEF felt betrayed. The organisation itself soon lost its elan. Kanshi Ram had entered the tribe of politicians and his aim was political power. He had no use for BAMCEF any more. Some years later, in the late eighties or perhaps the early nineties, I was at Bombay's Santacruz airport to receive a guest when Kanshi



Kanshi Ram 1934-2006

Ram accompanied by a gun-toting security guard came out of the arrival hall. He looked through me without any sign of recognition! He had no use for me either. He had indeed arrived.

Be that as it may, I may have felt hurt at that moment but not surprised. Kanshi Ram was a man almost totally devoid of emotions. He was totally amoral. He had no compunctions when playing around with his sworn enemies – upper caste politicians whether they belonged to the Congress, the BJP or with Mulayam Singh. His aim was power. His thesis as I mentioned earlier was simple, – in sheer numbers the OBCs and Dalits are in a clear majority and therefore have the right to rule India.

A columnist assessing Kanshi Ram's contribution wrote: "Our middle class discourse manufacturers tend to judge – and judge harshly – Kanshi Ram by Mayawati, her presumed character flaws and political frailties." I beg to differ. Kanshi Ram had taught her well. She was being absolutely true to her 'guru'. She acted, spoke and strategised exactly as he would have done. And as for the reference to the middle class Kanshi Ram was very much middle-class! Kanshi Ram put the OBCs and Dalits as a force to reckon with. That by itself was an achievement – it matters little whether one agreed with him or not.

BETWEEN OURSELVES...

The feedback on the 12-page monthly continues to be mixed though the new masthead on the September issue has been welcomed as an improvement over the previous one. However there seems to be a mistaken impression that the monthly signals the end of the 48-page quarterly. In fact one subscriber writes that he will not be renewing his subscription from 2007 as he does not like the monthly version. We would like to clarify again that there will be four issues of 48 pages each in the January, April, July and October and eight issues of 12 pages each in February, March, May, June, August, September, November and December. This should convince the disappointed subscriber and he will, in the light of this clarification reconsider his decision and renew his subscription.

This, the October issue has been delayed due to totally unforeseen circumstances and we were caught unprepared. We shall do our best to ensure that this does not happen again.

This issue's cover feature arises from a growing concern over the decline in governance even as the economy registers impressive growth. We begin a discussion to understand this phenomenon that bodes ill for our future if not corrected. Your views, on what are the factors contributing to the deterioration in governance and what needs to be done by us as citizens, are welcome. Also we shall keep debating the issue of Reservations. The rest is varied fare to covering a wide spectrum

Editor

Freedom First

A Liberal Position – 54th Year of Publication

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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*

Among the many uncharitable remarks made by Lenin, perhaps the most unfair was his description of bourgeois Parliament as a "pigsty". Pigs are certainly better behaved and – if they spoke our language – would have protested against being equated with parliamentarians.

Journalist Sumanta Banerjee,
Economic and Political Weekly, September 9

A voluntary suspension of disbelief is a prerequisite for enjoying 'In the Line of Fire' as the testament of a man whose ambition and adventure have made the world a little more dangerous – and his neighbour a lot more anxious.

S. Prasannarajan, *India Today*, October 9

The media is now the third party in every conflict. It can no longer be relied upon to be neutral. It takes sides based on the predilections of its owners. The media will also decide who will be declared the victor and who will be declared the vanquished.

Gurmeet Kanwal, *The Indian Express*, August 21

The whole point of a liberal society is that you don't force people to sing anything, whether it is *Vande Mataram* or *Jana Gana Mana*.

Vir Sanghvi, *Hindustan Times*, September 3

Non-violence worked against the British but not against the communal divide in the country.

Mr. Karan Singh, *Hindustan Times*, October 3

All of a sudden Gandhigiri has become the flavour of our nation. The very people who wanted to dispose of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to the garbage heap, have suddenly woken up to this brand new 'cool dude'.

Tushar Gandhi, *DNA*, October 2

The fanatics attacking the pope already limit the right to free speech among their own followers. I don't see why we should allow them to limit our right to free speech.

Anne Applebaum, *The Indian Express*, September 21

We don't want to blindly copy or imitate what the Chinese are doing. We are more discreet in our approach as we cannot do what the Chinese can.

Communist Party (Marxist) General Secretary Prakash Karat, *The Indian Express*, September 15

There are moments when he (Prime Minister Manmohan Singh) reveals that inside his khadi politician's garb, he is only a bureaucrat, and one of those came last week when he described the election results (in West Bengal and Kerala where the communists won) as a victory for secular forces.

Tavleen Singh, *The Indian Express*, May 14

Steeped in the mindset of the control raj, the RBI is increasingly revealing its unsuitability in developing and regulating modern market structures.

Ila Patnaik, *The Indian Express*, August 21

Being president of Iran is a busy job – dissidents to jail, blogs to post, nuke-building to oversee, Jews to wipe off the map.

National Review, September 11

Ethnic profiling? Racial prejudice? who's better at it than us Indians. We've been at it for centuries after all.

Shashi Baliga, *Hindustan Times*, August 27

West Bengal's intellectual class eats Karl Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right for breakfast. So when critics of the Left point out how hypocritical Bengal's communists are each time comrades are 'caught' participating in religious ceremonies, they are talking through their hat.

Editorial in the *Hindustan Times*, September 20

Non-government organisations that observe the law and do not disrupt public safety do not need a permit.

Nobel Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi commenting on the Iran government's declaring illegal a group calling itself 'Defenders of Human Rights Centre',
Mumbai Mirror, August 6

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Judiciary to the Rescue

On the morning of Sunday October 8, 2006 I had the pleasure of viewing on Doordarshan (DD) Anand Patwardhan's 1995 documentary "Father, Son and Holy War." The word 'pleasure' is used advisedly because this telecast was made possible by a Supreme Court order even if my sense of pleasure was sorely tested because the 2-hour documentary tends to drag and could do with better edited – in the cinematic sense and not in the censorship sense.

Though the documentary won two National and several international awards DD rejected it. Patwardhan took the matter to the Bombay High Court. In 2001 the court ordered DD to telecast the film but DD chose to appeal to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court asked DD to review the film. DD's own preview panel approved the telecast but Prasar Bharati, then dominated by BJP appointees, stepped in and rejected the film. Patwardhan moved the High Court again and won a fresh order to telecast in 2004. Prasar Bharati once again went to the Supreme Court in appeal. Finally on 25 August 2006 Justice Lakshmanan and Justice Panta of the Supreme Court upheld the High Court order to telecast the film *without cuts* within 8 weeks of the judgement.

Noting that several times in the past DD had rejected Patwardhan's documentaries until the judiciary forced them to be telecast, the Honourable Justices went so far as to pass strictures against DD and Prasar Bharati reprimanding the broadcaster for finding "flimsy excuses" time and again not to telecast Patwardhan's films.

"Father, Son and Holy War" is a two hour documentary that was shot from the mid 80's to the mid 90's and covers a wide spectrum of events, from the *Sati* in Deorala in 1987 to the Bombay riots and subsequent bomb blasts in 1992-1993. It is a critique of the male bias that permeates the dominant religions of the world, with specific reference to Hinduism and Islam in India, and a critique of ruthless politicians who use the communal divide to further their own ends.

*

When a Court Did Not Come to Our Rescue

This may be 'stale' but needs to be recorded in *Freedom First!* Five years ago Thane's

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



Singhania Hospital was gutted and destroyed by a mob *despite police presence*. On April 22 this year all 63 who constituted the mob were accused for want of evidence.

On August 21, 2001 Shiv Sainiks and followers Sena leader Anand Dighe turned up on hearing that their leader had been injured in a road accident. When he died of his injuries

His followers turned violent and destroyed the hospital. The defence lawyer crowed: "Though most of the witness were policemen they were unable to identify the accused as they claimed it was dark when the mob had gathered.... Only Shiv Sainiks were arrested which implies political vendetta by the ruling Congress-NCP government."

The well-run hospital was closed down by the Singhania's – and who can blame them.

Many years ago, Rajaji wrote an article in *Swarajya* entitled "The Killing of Charity". It was in the context of tax laws. What the Sainiks did in 2001 was another way to kill charity. But then who cares!

*

Secularism and all that

A professional dealer in stamps, coins and paper money discovered an Indonesian Rupiah carrying an image of Lord Ganesha alongside that of that country's president. An article "Ganesha, a global

Indian" in *The Times of India* (September 3, 2006) talks about how "the spice trade in the southern part of India and maritime trade from Gujarat to the middle-eastern countries" spread Indian art, culture and religious ideas to in these countries. We know of course of Angkor Wat in Cambodia or the Hindu population in Bali. But that is not the point of this comment. It is to underline the secular content in Islam, alongside the much publicised fanatical Taliban. During a recent visit to Tirupati this writer who is never curious about the religious affiliation of persons he meets was fascinated by a name Bhaskar Hussain Reddy. He soon discovered that the gentleman in question was not a muslim. In some parts of Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh such names were common. This is indeed secularism at its best. In Sri Lanka I am told many a Buddhist has a Christian sounding name. Our ancients were obviously more integrated than we 'moderns!'

*

"If it's a signal, jump it!"

A report in *The Statesman* (October 2, 2006) bemoans the fact that despite "regular traffic awareness programmes" by Kolkata's traffic police and 'punitive action taken against traffic violators, adherence to traffic rules is at an all time low in the city"

The report goes on to point out that "people are unwilling to follow even the minor regulations like wearing helmets and staying out of no parking zones." If it is any consolation to Kolkatans, Mumbaikars are no better. In fact it is a national phenomenon.

People coming to Mumbai, from Bangalore for instance appreciate the 'disciplined Mumbai traffic.' As a Mumbaikar I would add the words 'once upon a time' but not any more. Mumbai's traffic is as undisciplined as in any other metro. The Indian is basically not a natural respecter of the law. Traffic lights are obeyed only if there is a traffic cop to enforce it. Most cars stop on the zebra crossing compelling pedestrians to weave through the spaces between the vehicles. 9 out of 10 drivers are busy on their cellphones even while driving and of course most bike riders consider helmets a pain in the head.

There is however one area where the Kolkata scores and that is that "cases of negligent and rash driving the leading cause of road accidents, have decreased significantly over the last five years" according to *The Statesman* report. In Mumbai it would not be wrong to say that accidents arising from rash,

negligent and drunken driving are on the increase.

*

Preoccupation with Non-issues

Does it matter whether Belgaum is part of Karnataka (as it is now) or Maharashtra? Was it necessary to indulge in the *tamasha* of the Karnataka government having a session of the state assembly in Belgaum at a considerable and avoidable cost to the state's exchequer?

And take the issue of Tipu Sultan. The BJP considered until recently as an alternative to the Congress is fast vacating its position. As partners in the coalition government their education minister wants all references to Tipu Sultan removed from history books on the ground that Tipu Sultan changed the Mysore's court language from Kannada to Persian. Incidentally this was between 1782 and 1799! Can there be anything more ridiculous. It is unworthy of a party that claims not only a national character but also an alternative to the party in power. But look at the cost. In an editorial appropriated titled "BJP Bangalored" the editorial points out "Bangalore the acknowledged global capital of outsourcing, has been singularly unfortunate in its political masters....By dragging 20th century political agendas into a 21st century growth scenario, they are seriously undermining a state, the glory of which they claim to cherish and protect. Wednesday's 12-hour bandh called by the *Kannada Rakshana Vedithe* not only brought Karnataka to its knees, it shut down Bangalore's 700 odd IT companies."

Who cares if patients are deprived the facilities of a well-run hospital as the Singhanian hospital closure indicates or who cares if Bangalore loses its position as a global IT centre. The people do, but not the political termites who don't give a damn so long as they can play their games for political survival and one-upmanship.

SVR



"Who can we notify in case of emergency other than Josephine Bonaparte?"

Courtesy: *National Review*, January 26, 2006

While the Economy Soars, Governance Plummet

Dharma in Politics

S. L. N. Simha

In most parts of the world, including India, the standards of political behaviour, especially concerning political institutions, are declining fast, in terms of efficiency as well as integrity. Private benefit, individual as well as group, is getting the upper hand. In such a situation, ethical standards will decline rapidly all round and corruption will move up and up. Corruption will also lead to injustice in various ways, to individuals, institution and states.

Our saints, sages, *acharyas* and law makers, had a word to describe unethical phenomenon, namely, *Adharma*, the opposite of *Dharma*. *Dharma* is a Sanskrit word, of profound significance in the moral and religious literature of India, but it is well to note that the concept of *Dharma* has parallels in most religious and ethical systems.

The Meaning of *Dharma*

Etymologically, *Dharma* means something which supports and holds together. It is a scheme or code of laws or principles which holds together human beings in bonds of mutual rights and duties, in any organisation, big or small. The term is many-sided and stands for religion, law, usage, social welfare, virtue, righteousness, goodwill, justice, right, equity, sympathy, decorum, duty and excellence. Duty constitutes the most important element of *Dharma*.

The most fundamental aspect of *Dharma* is, the performance of one's duty, appropriate to the situation, as an individual, as a member of society, and of an organisation, as a citizen of a nation and as citizen of the international community. This duty has to be performed with the utmost efficiency, rather excellence, righteousness and joy, to achieve the goals fully, and in a manner that avoids harm to others, including nature. It calls for an attitude of trusteeship, of subjugating personal ends for the benefit of the group, organisation, institution and the community.

Yatha Raja, thatha Praja

Much emphasis is laid on the need for *Dharma* in politics, because it influences vitally *Dharma* in

every section of the people and all other areas of activity in society. Very broadly, politicians as a body may be equated to *Raja* and the rest of the community may be equated to *Praja*. The ancient saying is "*Yatha Raja, thatha Praja*" – as the ruler, so the people.

When government is incompetent and corrupt, people cannot be expected to be competent and honest. For corruption to take place, there has to be willing cooperation between government and people, like both hands being required to clap. Of course, not all corruption emanates from the government side. People are also responsible for dragging government into the corruption net. However, corruption comes mainly from the side that has power, namely, the politicians, especially those who hold important party positions and those who get into ministerial positions.

Limits to Judicial Activism

The constitutional arrangements are supposed to provide for efficiency and integrity, but in the majority of countries this does not prevail. The judicial system is not strong enough to keep the legislature and the executive within the four corners of the law effectively, apart from the fact that the judiciary itself may not have, uniformly, that degree of integrity to do its job fearlessly and efficiently. Even if it were totally excellent in its performance, there are limits to which the judiciary can go to keep the legislative and executive branches of government on the right track. There are limits to judicial activism.

That political inefficiency is bad for economic growth, prosperity and social justice is obvious, even in a country where the private sector is the

predominant form of industrial and business organisation. It is of course worse in a country where the government not only does not do what it should – education, health, infrastructure, law and order – but has a system of controls that obstructs and delays all industrial and commercial activity, why even in a type of activity such as education, the delays are terrible, generally. This raises costs, discourages enterprise and, equally serious, leads to corruption.

All this is done in the name of planning, balanced regional growth and welfare of labour and consumers. Happily, the regime of controls has diminished a great deal, in most parts of the world, in the past 15 years so, as part of the widespread phenomenon of globalisation, reforms of the various economic sectors are going on continuously, especially in developing countries, with denationalisation of public sector enterprises.

So far so good. This does not mean that corruption has ended. Corruption occurs over a wide range and what remains is still substantial. New sources of corruption are taking place, with the ingenuity that man possesses securing illicit wealth. In recent years, we have had much of this in India.

Consequences of a Corrupt Government

Even without any major public sector enterprises, the escape for corruption is large, through tax evasion, of all kinds – income tax, excise and customs. With a corrupt government, the total loss of revenue could be enormous, depriving funds for essential expenditure on welfare. A corrupt government provides a fertile ground for industry, business and high-income individuals to evade their dues to government. With a corrupt government, obviously, there is not enough money for developmental and welfare purposes, since the bulk of what is collected is used for “essential” expenditure like defence and administration. The international political situation is also such that defence expenditure goes on increasing every year.

When the government is corrupt, the private sector of industry, trade and finance, private institutions of a non-commercial character turn to corruption. We have seen this happen in every field – health, education, clubs, academies and charitable institutions, adding up to huge sums. It is

unnecessary to go into details, for everyone is familiar with what is happening.

In a democracy, the people, individually as well as collectively, should also do all they can to ensure a corruption-free system, whether it is concerning the activities of Government or the private sector of industry and trade. Without active public vigilance, debate and dissemination, democracy will not function to its full potential. This is an area where the legal profession can render much service.

Governance in India – A World Bank Assessment

While India may score high with the World Bank on growth, the story on governance is very different.

A report on Governance Indicators released at the IMF-World Bank annual meeting in Singapore puts India at abysmally low levels. In a data base of 213 countries that measure the political, economic and the institutionalized aspects of governance, the World Bank report ranks India at half of below half on most indicators.

The six facets of governance, each based on a number of underlying indicators itself, are Voice and Accountability, Political Stability, government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law and Control of Corruption. A score is given for each indicator based on a number of sources, and then each country is placed in one of the six groups based on its percentile.

The measures are based on surveys and margins of error are reported. They reflect the perception of a large number of respondents about the conditions prevailing in the country.

However, a look at where India gets placed as a consequence of the responses raises questions about the correctness of the use of such surveys for cross-country comparisons.

Consider Voice and Accountability looks at conditions like civil liberties, political rights, freedom of press and institutional. The reports put India in 2005 in the 56th percentile – the percentage of the peer group that India's score surpassed. India is also in the 56th percentile on the rule of law indicator.

This is measured crime, kidnapping of foreigners, enforceability of private contracts, crime, tax evasion, black markets and variables like judicial independence.

(Ila Patnaik, *The Indian Express*, September 16, 2006)

The Role of the Media

The press and the electronic media can also do a great deal to promote a vibrant democracy, with alertness, frankness and objective presentation of news, and views too, as to what is happening in the country, including in particular the functioning of the Government. I feel the news put out by the newspapers and other media can do much to stimulate action by individuals and non-government institutions to initiate action promptly to make government and other entities to give wrong policies and initiate review and reform. On the whole, the record of the press in India is very good and they must raise it to greater heights. In the developed democratic countries like the USA, the UK, Germany, Switzerland and Netherlands, their role is large and effective, and we can certainly rise to their standards.

Education is a vital channel to prepare people for the kind of effective role mentioned above, to achieve a sound democratic system, with full knowledge of the citizens' duties and rights. The benefits of education are many. Education is the best investment that a country could make, for lasting benefit.

Good Government Builds Confidence

So far, we have been talking of the domestic economic impact of the quality of the governmental and private sector governance. There is also an external impact. Good government creates confidence that the country will be stable politically and economically, justice would be administered impartially according to the rule of law and speedily. The country would be considered safe for investment from abroad, which would help us a great deal in economic growth and diversification. The country's creditworthiness will be high. In times of difficulty it will be easy to raise loans abroad. This is the secret, for instance, of the enormous flow of funds to the USA, notwithstanding the growing and severe deficits on its external account; the country's voice will be held with respect in international institutions – like UN, the IMF and World Bank.

We shall now round up this paper by returning to our magnificent concept of *Dharma*. It is clear that *Dharma* needs to be drilled into the minds of people from a rather early age. In the good old days, there used to be a lecture or two every week in the primary

and middle schools, on the subject of *Nitisastra* which is nothing but *Dharma*, to prepare the boys and girls for such a life when they grow to adult life.

All in all, we must, everyone of us, lift the complexion of our politics and the functioning of political institutions from the abysmally low levels at present to levels of a sort that we have seen in the past that would secure praise from every quarter, domestic and foreign. It may not be exactly *Ramarajya* but certainly it would be one endeavouring to move in that direction, slow as the pace may be.

Professor S.L.N. Simha has had a distinguished and varied career – University Teacher, Economic and Research Advisor to the Reserve Bank of India, a staff member and later a member of the Board of Executive Directors of the International Monetary Fund, General Manager of the Industrial Development Bank of India.

This article is an extensive excerpt from Prof. Simha's editorial in the *Southern Economist*.

COURTESY: *Southern Economist*.

No Justice for Undertrials

The Indian State has long been guilty of ignoring a terrible violation of human rights. In a country where those facing trial are to be presumed innocent until proved guilty, thousands of undertrials in our prisons have faced a worse fate than even those sentenced to life imprisonment (which carries a maximum of 14 years in prison). Cases abound of those who've been forced to serve three-four life sentences without being convicted, without the benefit of bail, sometimes without even a single hearing of their cases to courts. Years of agitation have finally produced remedial action in the form of an amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). This sets out that an undertrial prisoner – except those accused of an offence that can invite the death penalty – can be released by a court, with or without sureties, if he/she has served more than half the period of imprisonment specified for the offence.

The enormity of this amendment comes from the fact 66.7 per cent of the nearly four lakh total inmates in our already overcrowded jails are undertrials. Even more pathetic are the statistics reported by the National Crime Record Bureau that at the end of 2003 there were 1132 women undertrials whose children (approximately the same number) were growing up within the confines of our prisons.

While the Home Ministry estimates that the amendment could benefit as many as 50,000 inmates, it is unlikely there is a more widespread reform of the criminal justice system.

(From an editorial in the Hindustan Times, June 23, 2006)

"Things Fall Apart; the Centre Cannot Hold"

R. Srinivasan

Is this decline in governance and civil values a sudden development or has it been long coming? Have we suddenly become what we are? It is tempting to regard this as a global phenomenon.

Newspapers have reported that the Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri Kumaraswamy and his family have acquired an I.T. Park valued at Rs.36 crores and all this within 51 days of his coming to power. Earlier there was an allegation that the mine owners of Bellary had paid him Rs.150 crores and it was further charged that the bribe helped the family to acquire the property. The World Bank has indicated that among 213 countries, ours ranks at "half or below half on most indicators" – they being voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. This international endorsement of what most of us know through immediate experience should shame our leaders to improve their image. But will it ever happen? Wasn't it some time back that in one of our polls the politician and the *neta* ranked lowest in public esteem?

Governance has Reached its Nadir

One wonders whether there would be any one in our impressive democracy including the ruling elite and the party functionaries who would not agree that governance in our society has reached its nadir. Undoubtedly there had been a steady decline in our standard of governance over the decades, but things have come to such a pass that further lower levels cannot be plummeted. Whether it be members of the ministry and civil servants, or members of parliament (who, though totally failing in their parliamentary duties, yet unashamedly voted themselves generous salary hikes, pensions and other perks) or ministers resigning from the party and later forming a government as it happened in Jharkhand, turn where you will, you will find that salt has lost its savour.

No state can be regarded as being exempt from these shenanigans. Each in fact serendipitously competes with the other. Offering sarees to would-be voters is *passe*; now colour TVs are touted as a reward for voting for a political party. The State

Election Commission, the local *Lok Ayukts*, the State Human Rights Commission, the Minorities Panel all watch helplessly while every rule in the book of democratic politics is being violated with impunity. Individual greed has reached new heights whether it be of bureaucrats, leaders of public commissions or ministers. The police has become a byword for highhandedness and for indulging in behaviour not acceptable to any civilized society.

Venality is the Fashion of the Day

People have lived so long with irregularities and illicit dealings that these have ceased to outrage them. It is regarded as the natural order of social happenings. Brazenness has become the characteristic attitude of the public. Any illegality can be legalised and the builders' lobby is notoriously guilty in this respect. Members of the government in the Capital have had the tenacity to alter the structure of heritage buildings that they have been occupying for a while. The custodians of public property which was given to them on trust have vandalized the interiors, in the name of improvement. Since they have public responsibility one can imagine the wreckage that they must be visiting upon their portfolios. Whole areas and localities have been part of the venality of building illegal structures, pilfering electricity and siphoning off water, to all of which they had no right. Acres of land have been used for illegal constructions totally disregarding urban planning norms. When these have been exposed and the Courts called for their demolition the government stepped in to regularise them. What began in a distant Bombay suburb extended to a repetition of similar attempts at regularising the irregular and the illegal structures at Kalyan and Dombivli. Right now a civil war is being witnessed in the Capital leading to a standstill of civic life in Delhi. A near paralyzed Union government and a brow beaten State administration are helpless victims of this '*Satyagraha*'.

While earlier the political and administrative

elite were those that engaged in chicanery now it is the public itself which has become guilty of shamelessly engaging in this and beginning a caricature of the *Satyagraha* that the Mahatma inaugurated in a different climate and context. The public, the elite, the builders and the politicians are all conspirers in this assault on public civilities. They are insensitive to the irreparable damage that they are wrecking upon the entire community and the resulting long term consequences. Which aspect of public life is immune to this assault? Has the body politic become so rotten and termite ridden that the structure could collapse anytime?

Lack of Effective Leadership

What is striking in this assault on governance is the lack of an effective leadership at the Centre. It is regrettable that the last of the efficient leaders died with the passing away of Ms. Indira Gandhi. Though most reprehensible for the things she did, she yet provided an unchallenged leadership however daring or brazen. She could take decisions and dared with impunity the big powers. She has been condemned and rightly so for the weakening of the party, for destroying inner party democracy and for the draconian Emergency that she declared. But has there been a determined leader or PM since then who has been firm, who with a stern disapproving look could freeze the wrongdoers on their illegal tracks.

Is this decline in governance and civil values a sudden development or has it been long coming? Have we suddenly become what we are? It is tempting to regard this as a global phenomenon. Did not the poet write and does it not sum up the situation better than anything else?

"Things fall apart; the Centre cannot hold
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity"

(W. B. Yeats)

Every word in this quote is true of contemporary India. The first few decades of independence saw the prevalence of the spirit of civility in politics. In retrospect Y. B. Chavan, Kamaraj appear to be leaders of remarkable timbre. The

country lived in those decades on the interest drawn on the capital that the Mahatma and the old Indian National Congress had invested in modern India. This was to regard politics as a sacred calling and not being allowed to forget the poorest of the poor and of the downtrodden. People as different as Jayaprakash Narayan, Rajaji and Masani as well as thousands of others shared this vision of regarding themselves as trustees for the Community and carrying on politics on behalf of the poor and the helpless who looked up to them. This widespread sentiment touched them all who served in public affairs whether they were high or low. For instance, Kakkan, dalit minister in the Congress ministry after demitting office was to be seen queuing for a bus like others and lived on a modest pension of Rs.500/

They inherited a secularised religion of politics. They were spiritual in the best sense of the term though they may not have been regular temple-goers or acolytes of the godmen of those days. There was a high seriousness in the profession of politics to which they gravitated and served the public leaving very little by way of personal wealth once they disappeared from the scene. They would have fully subscribed to the statement of Edmund Burke:

"There is but one law, namely, that law which governs all land, the law of our Creator, the law of humanity, justice, equity – the law of nature and of nations".

It is difficult to believe that the edifice that they had built up is today in ruins. "Boundless and bare the lone and the level sands stretch far away". Look wherever around you see only the detritus of some idolized monument whether it be a cooperative society, a library, public associations, cooperative banks, local government institutions, orphanages, schools or other bodies. How rapidly and precipitately have they declined.

Where, and What is the Remedy

Being essentially a people suffused with religious feelings one wonders whether the remedy is in bringing back religion to the centre stage of things, reemphasizing the awareness that we are "in the great Taskmaster's eye" and that we are accountable to powers higher than the panchayat or the judiciary. Our religious leaders have failed us. Never in the history of India has there been so widespread an upsurge of

religion and we have hundreds of god-men, traditional religious leaders reminding and calling us back to the fold. But the emphasis has been only on personal salvation, only in individual fulfillment. Altruism and a larger sense of obligation to the wider world of people, animals and nature has not at all been sufficiently emphasized. It is timely to recall the words of a plain unlettered leader from another continent; he was the leader of his people with the sound instincts of a prophetic statesman –

“Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people.

Every hill side, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished.

The very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than to yours (that is the colonizing white man), because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors

and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch.

Even the little children who lived here and

rejoiced here for a brief season will love these sombre attitudes and at eventide they greet shadowy returning spirits...To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground...”.

Equally so our own land is blessed for we have lived here for centuries and we hope to leave it a better place than what we inherited.

This was the utterance of Chief Seattle and what makes it poignant is that he knew that he and his people were to be consigned to the Reservations for Red Indians forever. It reverberates the message of a noble religious humanism. A similar message has to be carried on to our people and more importantly to our leaders. It is this feeling of reverence for living things that people like Anna Hazare, Baba Amte, Sivaram Karanth, Bahuguna recapitulated in their lives and message. Will it percolate to our leaders and the elite?

DR. R. SRINIVASAN, Professor of Political Science (retd.),
Mumbai University, Associate Editor, *Freedom First*.

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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man studies all sides before deciding what is right. This is an attempt to present different viewpoints for your consideration.

Malegaon Blasts

There is yet no indication who was responsible for the Malegaon bomb blasts. The minority community was the target this time. This has undoubtedly created an apprehension whether this is the beginning of a communal divide on a new scale. The usual suspects like L-e-T/ISI are not out of reckoning as it is very much in their game plan to drive a wedge between Hindus and Muslims.

It is difficult to find some positives from such a disaster. However, both Hindus and Muslims should recognize that the adversary is without and there is no point in blaming each other every time there is a terrorist attack. Even if it turns out to be a dastardly attack by fanatic Hindus, both communities should again learn that the perpetrators are criminals; they have no religion. The adversary wants us to fight each other, as it cannot control this country through military might. It is easier to destabilize the country through fratricidal conflicts.

Tainted Politicians

The issue of tainted politicians is on the anvil again, since the Supreme Court has taken cognizance of the matter. It is well understood that a mere FIR is not enough to disqualify a person from contesting an election, as a rival could play mischief to get rid of an opponent. A police charge sheet, followed by framing of charges by a court would normally keep those charged with offences of moral turpitude out of the fray. The Government, no doubt under political compulsions, is inclined to plead that only those convicted by a court can be disqualified. It is unable to decide at which stage a person can be considered unfit to represent the people. It is true that a person should not be deprived of his democratic rights without proper trial. The concept of the verdict of people's court is also touted to claim immunity.

This is a major issue of probity in public life. Conviction in a court of law is a lengthy process and further appeals in higher courts would make it impossible to disqualify even the most infamous criminals. As of now, even those accused of heinous crimes like murder, rape, child molestation *et al* could become our representatives and possibly Ministers. Our electorate has failed time and again to consider moral rectitude as a prerequisite for electoral candidates. This is admittedly a failure of our democratic system. We have, therefore, to look for other means to ensure that at least decent people, even if not the brightest, govern us. It is futile to expect the Government to do anything. Can the courts rescue us?

The Indo-US Nuclear Treaty

The Indo-US nuclear treaty is creating controversies, although the common man does not understand what is going on. The scientific community appears to be opposed to it but a meeting with the PM has silenced most of them. Their initial opposition were based on the grounds that:

- a) US could not be trusted,
- b) the expertise developed by Indian scientists to progress on their own, in spite of international sanctions, would be lost,
- c) India would be tied down to a commitment not to test nuclear devices, which in turn would

The younger scientists who are untouched by the bitterness of the sanctions period take a more pragmatic view of the deal. They are not very vocal because their seniors speak in a different mode. Their largely unstated arguments are:

- a) India badly needs the nuclear fuel offered under the treaty, as without the ready availability of fuel (U 235) India's nuclear power programme would be jeopardized,
- b) Indian nuclear reactors are becoming obsolete and the country needs the second generation reactors

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prevent it from developing new weapons

- d) India would have to sign a treaty banning production of fissionable material whenever such a treaty becomes acceptable internationally, and
- e) India's Thorium utilization programme would be rendered infructuous. India has to depend on import of U 235 while Thorium is plentiful in India.

At least these are the objections that have been voiced in public fora. There may be other objections beyond the pail of unscientific minds.

offered by the advanced countries,

- c) India has itself put a moratorium on further nuclear testing and therefore the treaty does not add any new restrictions,
- d) the ban on production of fissionable material is not feasible in the near future and India need not worry about it at this juncture,
- e) use of Thorium as fuel is yet a distant dream; nuclear power programme cannot be kept in abeyance till Thorium technology is developed or U 235 is obtained from non-traditional markets like Africa, f) India's defence related research centers will not come under international scrutiny as feared, g) Instead of considering the treaty as India's surrender to the US, it could be viewed as a US climb down from a regime of sanctions to recognition of India as a *de facto* nuclear power.

There may be more valid arguments on both sides. If so, readers should welcome a more balanced debate on the issue than what is seen so far.

India-Pakistan 'Havana' Deal

The Havana declaration by India and Pakistan to have a joint mechanism to tackle terrorism is intriguing. Does it mean that Pakistan, which was so far considered a perpetrator of terrorism in India, has suddenly become an equal victim of terrorism? Have we fallen in line with the US perception that Pakistan is a valuable partner in the fight against terrorism? Then what about Pakistan's refrain that Dawood Ibrahim is not in Pakistan and that Jamaat-ud-Dawa is a charitable organization and not the dreaded terrorist one as the world has come to believe it to be; that Jehadi Council Chief Salahuddin's fulminations against India from Pakistan soil are religious teachings? Will Dr. Manmohan Singh clarify how he has changed from the hardline after the Mumbai train blasts (July 11, 2006) to accepting that Pakistan may be a victim of terrorism?

The saving grace in what appears to be a diplomatic withdrawal from a hawkish position to a dovish one is that the parameters of the joint mechanism are yet not defined. Hopefully, there will be no sharing of intelligence and the joint exercise would amount to no more than sharing of anxieties. It will mean reduction in acrimony. Even otherwise, our shouting hoarse about Pakistan harbouring terrorists was leading nowhere. Is it therefore a matter of Machiavellian cunning in appointing a thief as *daroga*?

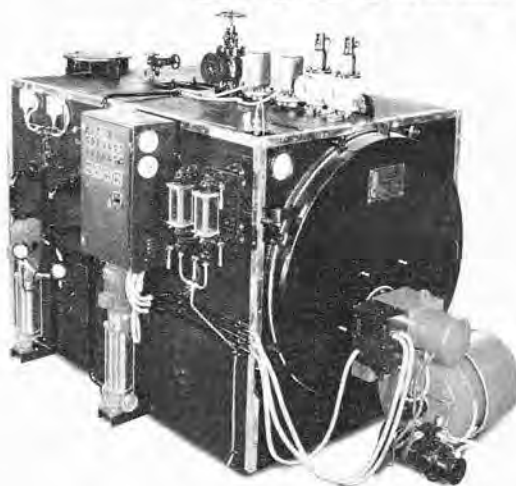
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The Tragedy of Being a Farmer in India

Why are Farmers Committing Suicide?

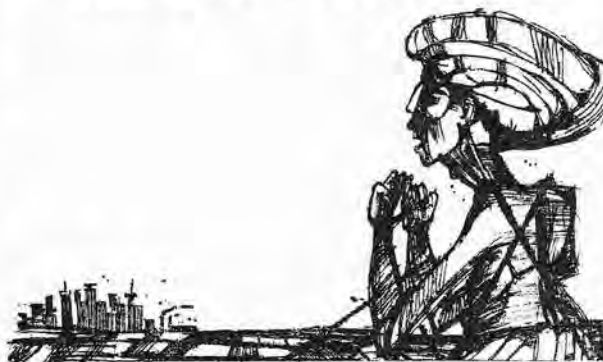
Sharad Joshi

I have accepted the editor's suggestion to keep the readers of *'Freedom First'* informed about my interventions in the Rajya Sabha. I am the only Member of Parliament of the Swatantra Bharat Paksha (SBP), India's only liberal party that proudly claims to be the successor of the erstwhile Swatantra Party of Chakravarti Rajgopalachari. Every party in Parliament is allotted a quota of time depending upon its numerical strength in the Parliament. No quotas are given for alliances like UPA or NDA. Fortunately, even the minor parties get a minimum of five minutes in each debate. This is a serious handicap and also an opportunity. On most subjects, as an activist of the farmers' movement and the national President of the SBP, I have something to say that marks a different paradigm. Hence, considering the time limit, there is no scope for any explanations, elaborations, and elucidations and much less for ornamentation. The paradox is that parties like the Congress and the BJP who have been in power at the Centre and, hence, responsible for the present sad state of affairs in the country, get the maximum time most of which is consumed by one or two senior leaders of the party to indulge in soapbox oratory, accusations and counter-accusations. The SBP's turn comes invariably at the end of the debate, mostly late in the evening, when the Rajya Sabha often wears a deserted look. In the last two years there is growing awareness that the liberal point of view that I put forward is always original and, hence, quite a few members from all sides make it a point to be present when I get up to speak. Since I have little respect for the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty and an unconcealed antipathy for leftist economists, there are often interruptions and rowdy sloganeering from their benches during my speech. My speech, published below, for the readers of *Freedom First* was marked by intermittent interruptions from the Congress benches and a spirited defence by Mrs. Sushama Swaraj – Sharad Joshi.

For the last two years farmers have been committing suicide practically every hour. It is not just a matter of social tragedy or a tragedy for the whole of the farmers' movement, it is a personal tragedy for me. The fact that the Prime Minister himself went to Vidarbha supported by so many eminent economists but could not forge a solution that could give the farmers hope enough to, at least, postpone the decision of suicide by a couple of hours or by a couple of days, is a personal tragedy for me.

Thirty years back, we launched the first farmers' movement in India after the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution had increased the productivity of

The Rural Perspective



agriculture by 10 to 15 times and farmers had reached a state where the more they grew, the less they got and that was when the farmers' movement began. We took an oath, extracts of which are saying that we will secure for the farmers remunerative prices for their produce, the full reward for their toil so that they can live a life of self-respect and happiness exactly like any other citizen in

this country. Now, I confess that I have failed. Because, 25 years after I took that oath, for the first time I find that the whole of India is strewn with bodies of the farmers who found it impossible to make a living and had no hope that their conditions would be any better.

In the 1960s, Lal Bahadur Shastri's slogan of '*Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan*' and the accompanying Green Revolution started two processes:

- ♦ the *Jawan* went on the war-front, sacrificed himself and became a martyr;
- ♦ the *Kisan*, on the food front, fought and tried his best to contribute to the foodgrains production in the country.

The Green Revolution succeeded; productivity increased. But, at the same time, the government failed to see that for his added effort would the farmer get an adequate reward. While productivity grew, while production grew, the farmers were not able to cover even the cost of production and it is this wound which has gangrened over the last 50 years. This was the policy which was followed regularly over the last 55 years. We do not need to find out whether the BJP government followed policies that hurt the farmers or whether the successive Congress governments did it. All that you have to see is during which period was the farmers' subsidy negative. If the Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) was negative, that is to say the farmers' prices were less than the cost of cultivation, that means that government is guilty of the ongoing genocide by farmers. In which case, governments are also guilty of murder. The simple index is, did you have a negative AMS or a positive one. C. Subramaniam, the minister of Agriculture under Lal Bahadur Shastri recognised, for the first time, that agriculture was a losing proposition and that to make with the Green Revolution a success, farmers have to be given adequate remunerative prices.

He appointed an Agricultural Prices Commission (APC). That was a creation of Bharat Ratna C. Subramaniam. For the first five years, the Agricultural Prices Commission did succeed in giving comfortable prices to farmers which resulted in not only agricultural growth in Punjab, but even industrial development in that State. But, after those five years were over and after Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister, the Chairmanship of the

Agricultural Prices Commission was given to one of the Leftists, who are by their dogma, against the farmers, calling them *kulaks*, and so the Commission was used systematically against farmers. It is the appointment of Leftist Chairmen which resulted in farmers getting inadequate prices.

I am not putting these things on record to criticise this or that government. The farmers' present critical state is a gangrene wound of more than 50 years. Before giving suggestions one has to do the diagnosis. How can one give a prescription without diagnosis? Whether the government was good to the farmers or not, can be examined by an objective criterion, i.e., whether during that period, the AMS was positive or negative. This is a very positive criterion. When you examine it, you will find that all this period the AMS was negative. A calculation shows that from 1980 to 2000 alone the loss caused to the farmers by government policies was of the order of Rs.300,000 crores.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that the gangrened wounds of the farmers over these 55 years are now expressing themselves in the form of mass suicides.

Now, I will come to the prescription as to what has to be done, and, these are some very concrete suggestions. I think, what the Prime Minister could not achieve in going to Vidarbha, you will be able to achieve, if government is sincerely concerned about the lot of the farmers and is prepared to show the necessary courage to act on these suggestions.

1. Providing additional credit is

not going to help. When the Prime Minister declared from the Red Fort that the supply of credit has increased from Rs.87,000 crores to Rs.1,68,000 crores, a senior officer of NABARD was declaring that not only has refinancing come down, but cooperative banks are also not giving loans at 7% because they have certain apprehensions about the policy of 7%. At the same time, the same officer declared that even though the amount of credit had increased, the number of beneficiaries had not increased. That means that the same people were getting the new loans as well. Now, if this is the situation, additional credits are not going to help the farmers. On the other hand, additional credits will get them into further indebtedness and suicides.

2. There is a finding of a very respectable body that 40% of our farmers want to leave agriculture because they find that it is no more possible to live in it. And, I had made a suggestion and this is something that I am prepared to convince the farmers about. The farmers, even though they talk of the black mother, the mother earth, etc., in fact, whenever they get an opportunity, they quit agriculture. They vote with their feet. I think, what needs to be done is, (as happened before the Green Revolution, that when the farmers got a chance to quit because of the tenancy legislation, because of the Land Ceiling Act, etc., on the threshold of the coming agricultural revolution) they have to be given some kind of a way out, a kind of a golden

handshake, a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) by developing a land market where the farmers can offer a land for sale and those who think they can do better in agriculture in the new atmosphere, can purchase the land and come in. That is going to be the best solution, giving a ray of hope to the farmers, if the Minister for Agriculture shows the courage.

3. A point particularly about Vidarbha. The accentuating factor in Vidarbha, where a thousand farmers committed suicide in 2006 so far, has been the forcing of Vidarbha, for political reasons, into Maharashtra. This resulted in the imposition of the Cotton Monopoly Procurement Scheme which has resulted in a massive exploitation of the cotton-growing farmers in Vidarbha and in the diversion of irrigation funds from Vidarbha to Southern Maharashtra on the pretext that if water there is not saved, it will go to Karnataka or

Andhra Pradesh. If the present government makes an announcement, (it is already talking about Telangana,) that they will also give serious consideration to the separation of Vidarbha, that itself will be a good signal and will stop most of the farmers' suicides which are mainly due to indebtedness.

4. I am glad that the Agriculture Minister's party has already given a sort of green signal to the idea of a separate Vidarbha, provided the people there support it. I hope, ultimately, it will result in the formation of a separate Vidarbha. From that day onwards, I am sure there will not be a single farmer suicide in Vidarbha.
5. Prepare a Helpline network so that farmers, who feel desperate, can contact the competent official who should see them and find out what precisely are the problems that the family is facing and try to resolve them.
6. Last but not the least, the

government should stop paying compensation for people who commit suicide because that actually encourages suicides. People find that if the bereaved family is to get the money, then, it is worthwhile committing suicide so that, at least, the rest will live happily. In fact, there are doubts that, at least, in some cases, old and invalid members of the family have not been dissuaded sufficiently energetically from committing suicide. This is a very dangerous precedent. If payment of a lumpsum compensation, results in encouraging suicide it is, in law, a crime. Giving them Rs. One lakh as compensation is bad in law, bad in public policy. And I hope the Minister for Agriculture will review the situation and take some positive steps that will put an immediate halt to suicides.

[Extracts from Sharad Joshi's speech during the debate in the Rajya Sabha on 23 August 2006 on Farmers' Suicides. Mr. Sharad Joshi can be contacted on sharad@mah.nic.in]

Globalisation Favours the Upper Class

"But even as the upper class has become empowered under the regime of globalisation, the common people continue to have little voice. Front organizations of the upper class calling themselves citizens' groups have acquired considerable clout in recent years and are increasingly asserting themselves making constant demands on the bureaucracy and the political class. They are obsessed with seeking the ouster of slum dwellers and hawkers. It is an irony that Mumbai has enough space to meet the demand for high class housing and shopping malls that take up millions of sq. ft of land but the upper class would not let the poor occupy even the most degraded land available that is vulnerable to landslides and water logging.

The trouble with Mumbai is that not only the politicians and the bureaucracy, it is also the upper class that failed the city."

Vidhyadar Date, *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 12, 2006

WHAT MINOO MASANI SAID BEFORE
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TAKING REFORMS TO THE POOR LIBERAL BUDGET 2007-08

Entitled "Taking Reforms to the Poor", the Liberal Budget 2007-2008 (LB4), was released at a seminar in New Delhi on November 3, 2006. A joint effort of the Indian Liberal Group and the Project for Economic Education, this is the fourth such budget in as many years.

Constraints of Coalition Politics

LB4 points out that, currently, economic reforms are being diluted because of the constraints of coalition politics, particularly attacks from the government's own Left Front allies. The latter have succeeded in impeding privatization and disinvestments; stalled labour reforms; attempted to limit the role of foreign direct investment (FDI); and pushed through fiscally unsustainable social welfare programmes.

The Reforms So Far – The Liberal Perspective

The document reiterates the Liberal belief that an honest attempt at liberalisation should provide evidence of better fiscal governance through transparency and accountability, fiscal consolidation, productivity, growth and equity, that a liberal economy needs a different kind of budget – a budget that is de-mystified and made simpler, highly transparent, and above all, brought in tune with reality. A liberalising economy needs a truly Liberal Budget.

Even while taking this essentially Liberal Position, the LB4 concedes that even in respect of what has been achieved so far the ruling coalition establishments past and present deserve to be complimented for broadly keeping on track the direction of reforms, even if the pace has been excruciatingly slow. This is a creditable achievement considering the fact that India is a real democracy and has been able to achieve an 8.5% growth despite the many hurdles the government has had to face from within and without.

India, has indeed, emerged as the second fastest growth economy globally after China. Alongside the services sector, the Indian manufacturing sector is experiencing growth

resurgence over the last three years. Exports are on a sustained high growth path, despite a progressive widening of the trade gap thanks to a rapid increase in imports. Yet, the foreign exchange reserves are rising continuously, supported by India's success in expanding invisible receipts, especially the exports of computer software services. At the same time, capital inflows have gained new momentum, not only due to FIIs' inflows, but on account of increased foreign direct investment.

India Inc. is gradually gaining global recognition largely reflecting the competence and credibility of the corporate sector. In turn, the Indian corporate sector has displayed remarkable resilience and is exuding unprecedented confidence in its capacity to ride the new wave of investment driven growth as well as seize opportunities unleashed by the process of globalization. Outbound direct investments, including mergers and acquisitions in the global markets by Indian corporates, are as inspiring as FDI inflows into India.

The Challenges Ahead

At the same time, on the external front, there are several major challenges confronting the Indian economy. The most critical issue is the on-going behaviour of crude oil and petroleum product prices. Despite the recent sharp fall in international crude oil prices, most forecasts tend to suggest that the average crude oil prices will remain more or less unchanged at the current level \$55-65 per barrel in the coming year.

The 11th Plan Approach Paper – A Liberal Critique

A fundamental liberal belief is the commonsensical postulation that you cannot distribute what you don't produce. You need to earn to be able to spend. Even while stressing the Liberal

aim of building an equitable society in its very first Liberal Budget four years ago, the ILG in keeping with this maxim, stressed on income earning growth. We are not there fully yet; however we have now reached a situation where we can and must take on seriously the many issues of serious concern such as (i) prolonged stagnant growth of the agriculture sector; (ii) growing regional imbalances; (iii) declining effectiveness of social sector expenditure; (iv) inadequate infrastructure development, especially power, irrigation, rural connectivity; about which we dealt with in our earlier three budgets

LB4 analyses at great length the official data on poverty, inequality, employment and unemployment as well as critically reflects on the 11th Plan Approach Paper in three separate Chapters before outlining its policy recommendations. Specifically, LB4 highlights the following worrisome and challenging tasks:

- *First*, the goal of eradication of poverty appears quite distant on the basis of current trends. The absolute number of poor is still large and quite sticky. The number of people below the poverty line was over 32 crores in 1993-94, which has come down to around 30 crores in 2004-05. Going by the current rates of population growth and reduction in poverty ratio, India could still have more than 22 crore people below the poverty line in 2020.
- *Second*, in the last eleven years, the poverty ratio declined at the rate of just about 0.75 percentage points per year. At this rate, it will take over 35 years to eradicate poverty. This kind of a stretched time frame is certainly not acceptable.
- *Third*, the force of government intervention in alleviating poverty appears to have been blunted in recent years in terms of the composition of government expenditure on social sector programmes as also the quality of governance in implementing the programmes. The process of asset building through capital expenditure has slowed down and there are reports of significant leakages and poor administration of government programmes, affecting their effectiveness.
- *Fourth*, while there is conclusive data on the widely held perception of growing inequalities, LB4 is concerned over the rural-urban divide and the widening gap in per capita income across

States. While some States are trying to position themselves as emerging giants of Asia, a few States in the heartland are still struggling to come out of the BIMARU tag.

- *Fifth*, the 11th Plan Approach Paper has been candid enough to point out various kinds of inequalities – the rich-poor divide, the rural-urban divide, the regional divide, the gender divide. Undoubtedly, some glaring or stark inequalities exist in the economy today, which have contributed to social incohesiveness. However, LB4 wants to stress that it is not the reform process *per se* which has accentuated these inequalities. There were wide inter-state inequalities even before the reforms. The fact of the matter is that interstate inequalities have been accentuated, not by market forces, but by the failure of the governance. It also needs to be recognized that some advanced states have surged ahead because they are following at least some reforms to create an investor-friendly climate, institutions and even improving some badly needed infrastructure facilities.
- *Sixth*, there is a noticeable structural change in the Indian labour market, manifesting itself in a shift of labour from the organized sector to the unorganized sector. This shift towards the unorganized sector obviously leads to deteriorating quality of employment. Thus, job security and other labour welfare benefits available in the organized sector are conspicuous by their absence in the unorganized sector. In turn, this has adverse implications in the sustained growth in productivity and standards of living of the working population.
- *Seventh*, the unemployment rate has been growing faster during the post-reforms period. Further, open unemployment is more acute in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Along with unemployment, the problems of under-employment (both visible and invisible) also pose a daunting challenge.
- *Finally*, considering the incremental labour force being added to the existing backlog of the unemployed, it is necessary to generate at least 10 million new jobs every year. Moreover, the ongoing demographic change in India where the economically active population in the age group of 15-59, is rising at a higher rate, adds urgency to the task of job creation.

Does this Government have the Inclination and the Will?

Under these circumstances LB4's major concern is: How to ensure rapid growth that would ensure wider distribution of prosperity and rapidly reduce chronic poverty. If even an unprecedented 6.5% annual GDP growth is not going to bring about even 1 percentage point of annual reduction in poverty, then there are very serious issues which need to be addressed by the policy-makers.

LB4 welcomes the 11th Plan Approach Paper's overwhelming emphasis on the role of private investment, with about two-thirds to 70% share envisaged for private investment.

However the crucial question really is whether the government has both the inclination and the will to create an environment capable of handling such a high magnitude of private investment. If, reliance on private investment is likely to accelerate and, as a consequence, public investment takes a back seat – LB4 considers this is a desirable strategy – then the government must create a conducive environment for this to happen.

Sadly, the ground reality does not allay the Liberal's misgivings on this score. The present ground reality is that within the ruling coalition there are serious differences on major economic policy-issues. Witness the many confusing signals emanating from Delhi on such matters as petroleum-pricing, Special Economic Zones; or the publicly known differences between the Finance Minister and the Planning Commission on FRBM; and between the Finance Minister and the RBI, on interest rates – all creating uncertainties that are proving costly to private entrepreneurs and investors.

The nature of coalition politics and, in particular, the excessive dependence on the CPM and on the other Left-wing partners is proving to be a major stumbling block. The Left strategy is to cause delays in decision-making on almost all substantive issues, ranging from disinvestment to Pension Reforms to FDI. In fact the government has all but turned its back on all future disinvestment.

The Liberal Recipe: A Fifteen-point Package of Economic and Fiscal Policies

It is against this backdrop that LB4 sets out the following *fifteen-point package of economic and fiscal policies*, which must guide and determine the formulation of the Central Budget 2007-08:

- One: LB4 considers fiscal discipline envisaged in FRBM legislation as sacrosanct and rejects any compromise on this score except in the event of a fiscal emergency or unprecedented counter-cyclical considerations. It does not support the 11th Plan Approach Paper's recommendation for the dilution of FRBM;
- Two: Expenditure reforms and management assume utmost priority given the intractable problems of phasing out non-merit subsidies; the impact of the on-going social sector expenditure; and the imminent burden of the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission. LB4's strategy in this matter is to concentrate on a substantive shift in expenditure composition – freezing the growth of revenue expenditure and emphasizing on delivery of public services on matters concerned with social sector spending;
- Three: LB4 stresses vigorous disinvestment and privatization of public sector enterprises and progressive expansion of revenues from such efforts to about Rs.35,000 crores immediately and to Rs.50,000 crores in the following three to four years;
- Four: At the same time, LB4 wants "ring-fencing" and "earmarking" of the disinvestment proceeds for specific infrastructure and social sector expenditures as well as for the repayment of existing high cost public debt.
- Five: While once again making several specific recommendations for simplifying and rationalization of the tax structure and tax administration, LB4 reiterates its conviction that what is needed to bring about stability in the tax system. Specifically, LB4 yet again underlines the recommendations of the Kelkar Committee, including their most significant recommendation: the General Sales Tax as a powerful tool for reforming the domestic indirect tax structure.
- Six: As part of the task of streamlining and simplifying the tax structure, it calls for the withdrawal of the Fringe Benefit Tax, the abolition of the Minimum Alternative Tax and the merging of some of the cesses in the existing tax framework by compounding and simplifying the respective main tax rates;
- Seven: LB4 has formulated a scheme of Agricultural Income Tax as an integral part of the Income Tax Act;
- Eight: LB4 emphasises on promotion of

investment in key infrastructure areas. To this end it suggests aggressive pursuit of the public private partnership (PPP) mechanism, viability gap funding and Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs).

- Nine: LB4 endorses the objective of the 11th Plan to extend access to essential public services such as health, education, clean drinking water, and sanitation. which are currently denied to large parts of our population especially in the rural areas. It is also the Liberal view that "resources are only one part of the problem. It is equally important to ensure that the existing system can deliver quality services." LB4 believes that real GDP growth rate cannot be an end in itself; it should be the outcome of right policies and right choices.
- Ten: LB4 insists that alleviation of poverty should assume centre-stage. In prioritizing efforts and allocation of funds, the prime focus should be on reducing poverty at the earliest. The rate of reduction in poverty ratio, which has been around 0.7-0.8 percentage points per annum in the last two decades, needs to be at least trebled so as to substantially remove the scar of poverty from India by 2015 - if not earlier.
- Eleven: From a macroeconomic perspective, a combination of high growth and low structural inflation can be considered to be the most conducive for tackling the issue of poverty. For this purpose, Government policies need to pursue vigorous growth and ensure monetary policies to keep inflation well under control. This calls for speedier implementation of the second-generation reforms, such as further lowering of tariff barriers, flexibility in labour laws, a more conducive investment climate, thrust on infrastructure, move towards unified goods and services tax, and the removal of barriers on internal trade, among others.
- Twelve: LB4 underlines the need for urgency in government policy to bring about agricultural resurgence from the perspective of poverty reduction. The stagnation in this sector has been reflected in the sad spectacle of farmers' suicides and rising rural distress levels. In order to correct this situation, among other things, it recommends model Special Agricultural Regions as part of Agriculture Vision 2020 to jump-start broad-based agricultural growth.
- Thirteen: While highlighting the urgent need to reform obsolete labour laws and introducing

much needed labour flexibility, LB4 believes that if these are dealt with fearlessly conditions will be conducive to the creation of 10 million new jobs every year. This can be made possible by encouraging labour-intensive manufacturing industries such as textiles, toys, food processing, transport services and leather.

- Fourteen: LB4 recognizes the need to enhance the employability of labour and identifies the gaps in the educational infrastructure – not just in terms of expenditure requirement in relation to GDP, but also in terms of enlarging the scope of vocational training.
- Fifteen: LB4, after reflecting on the 11th Plan Approach Paper, strongly recommends that the success of the Plan will rest crucially not only on governments abdicating their economic role in favour of the market and the private sector but also ensuring equity through better governance, appropriate fiscal management and through the creation of an investment friendly environment.

To conclude, if the reforms process translates itself into a better life for our people particularly those in rural India where 70% of India live; if the farmers are no longer compelled to commit suicide as a way out of their indebtedness; if we no longer have starvation deaths; if India enjoys medical care comparable with the best that the world has to offer (and not merely, perhaps ironically, an ideal destination for 'health tourism!'); if our education is not only universal but of high class quality; if we have world-class infrastructure, then we can say with some degree of legitimacy that we are on the road to becoming a world power. Meanwhile our expectation is more modest: *To take the reforms to the poor.*

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Bombay : The Dowager Empress

Firoze Hirjikaka



Our political masters who talk so glibly about transforming Mumbai to another Shanghai would do well to recall that Bombay was already the premier metropolis in the eastern hemisphere at a time when Shanghai was little more than a messy fishing port.

P*rima urbs in Indis*; gateway to India; door of the East with its face to the West...these words of my old school song seem appropriate for the Bombay that once was: stately, elegant, benevolent, fun loving and, above all, classy. Bombay was an oasis of elegant promenades, where old-world charm mixed effortlessly with modern conveniences – remember, it was this city that saw the first suburban train, the first tram...the list is endless. Our political masters who talk so glibly about transforming Mumbai to another Shanghai would do well to recall that Bombay was already the premier metropolis in the eastern hemisphere at a time when Shanghai was little more than a messy fishing port. As far back as the reign of the Moghul emperor Aurangzeb, Bombay was the principal trading post of the East India Company and later became the diadem in the jewel in the crown of the British Empire. Yes, if the sons-of-the-soil who now rule us had any interest in the history of their city, they would reflect on this – and admit to themselves that they, to a large extent, are responsible for the present decline.

The Dowager Empress

Alas, the dowager empress has lost most of her sheen and lustre – thanks to politicians who have exploited her and profligately squandered her resources and talent over the past

five decades; and given nothing back. Even the name change to Mumbai, nullifying at a stroke centuries of glorious history was effected for purely populist reasons. Then there are the marauding hordes who descend upon the metropolis in the thousands every year and suck out her life juices; sacrificing her gentility at the altar of crass commercialism. And yet, like an old soldier, the *grande dame* of this nation refuses to die; nor is she quite ready to fade away.

Those Were the Days ...

For an old timer like me, the very name Bombay conjures up memories of clanking trams and seven-seater taxis; of horse-drawn victorias with faded upholstery and the “C” route BEST bus where one sat on the upper deck and traversed the entire length of Marine Drive, luxuriating in the fresh, unpolluted sea breeze; of picnics to Versova, when it was a pristine beach and the seven bungalows actually existed; of excursions to Mount Mary church, trudging up the steep hill and smiling at the appropriateness of the bungalow named “At Last”; of the quaint bungalows along Cuffe Parade and the elevated promenade that one strolled on, all the way South to the mangrove swamps (now destroyed by monstrous high-rises) to sample the delights of the renowned *bhelpuri wallah*; of elderly gentlemen with

ornate walking sticks and *sola topees* which they doffed respectfully every time their path crossed those of a lady; of school lunches at the Bombay Gym, where even unruly boys like us were awed by the colonial surroundings and could be brought to an abrupt silence with one glance from the genial but stern *maitre d’*.

... of Metro Cinema

Those were the days when the Sunday evening show at the Metro cinema was a social event; the men in suits, the ladies meticulously coiffed and attired. Whatever be the merits of the film being screened, the high point of the evening was gathering around the ornate soda fountain during the intermission, under the benevolent gaze of large portraits of Greer Garson and Clark Gable; the ladies sipping coffee and the new-fangled Coca-cola, tittering over the latest scandal and surreptitiously memorizing the outfits of the well-heeled, (Page 3 hadn’t been invented yet) so that they could get copies made from the *darzi*; the gentlemen pulling out sleek metallic cigarette cases from the inside pocket of their jackets and enjoying a puff while giving and receiving tips on the ‘sure thing’ at the Mahalaxmi racecourse the following weekend. Regal and Eros had its adherents too, of course, but nothing quite compared to the grandeur of Metro.

... of P&O and The Taj

Memories of an uncle arriving from London on the P&O liner "Chusan"; the excitement of receiving him on the ship, eyes wide open at the magnificence on display; guiltily flicking the tiny golden arrows that speared the olives in cocktails; sneaking to the auditorium to watch a snippet of the first James Bond movie, Dr. No, yet to arrive in city cinemas.

This particular uncle always stayed at the Taj; and this opened up fresh vistas. Sauntering up and down the grand staircase (running would be unthinkable); affronting the grizzled attendant behind the counter of the tiny bookstore by asking if he had Archie comics; sniggering at the elaborate couture on display in the show window of Madame Pompadour (the name alone reduced me to hysterics). A special treat was lunch at the first floor Ballroom, with the spotlessly white Irish linen table cloths and the bewildering array of laid out knives and forks. Years later, I took my wife-to-be there on our first date and was pleased to discover it had lost none of its charm. The Taj, of course, was for the moneyed and privileged. For lesser mortals, there was Green's hotel next door and it's ground level restaurant, Gulmohur, which believe it or not had live gulmohur trees in its courtyard.

More memories of weekends spent at an aunt's palatial mansion on Pedder Road; 8000 square feet of marbled halls and colonnaded verandahs to run riot in; high tea on the first floor terrace with finger sandwiches and pink lemonade; beating georgette-sari and heavenly scented ladies at "mah-jong" (I was too young then to know it was not a 'manly' game, but old enough to delight in being smothered in their perfumed embraces.)

... of Pastries and Peach Melba

What else: pastries from Gourdon at Churchgate; an occasional treat of 'peach melba' at the Parisian Dairy (where Pizzeria now stands) and tapping feet to "Buttons and Bows" on the jukebox; feeling adventurous by boarding a double-decker tram at Sassoon Dock and venturing all the way to Dadar TT. Dadar was pretty much the outer limit of civilization in those days; the suburbs, as we know them now, were just exotic picnic spots.

Years of Decline

So what went wrong? How did the Empress of the East turn into "Slumbay"? Up to less than 50 years ago, Bombay had a population of less than half a million. The quaint, chalet-style Churchgate station was a tenth of its present size and yet did not invoke a feeling of claustrophobia within its premises. Bombayites took pride in their city, in their heritage, in the elegant colonial architecture fronting its main thoroughfares (undefiled by ugly hoardings); in belonging to a city that was the envy of its less cosmopolitan neighbors. Bombay's principal activity has, of course, always been commerce, but it was more genteel then; not the cut-throat rat race it has now become. Central Bank was almost entirely populated by laid-back Parsees; big business houses like Tata, Birla and Mafatlal carried on their commerce discreetly, with a modest self confidence in place of the in-your-face aggressiveness displayed today.

But, above all, the citizens of Bombay gave back to the city that had allowed them to prosper. Great philanthropists like the Jeejeebhoy and the Petits and the Jehangirs not only provided funding for hospitals and schools and institutes of higher learning

(without demanding advertising rights), but took personal interest in their upkeep and functioning.

Bombay has always attracted migrants, of course, but back then they respected the city that gave them an opportunity to improve their lot. They did not come in torrents, as they do now, taking over public land with impunity, pitching their *zopadpattis* indiscriminately, defacing the very ground that gave them shelter. The phenomenon of 'vote-banks' hadn't reared its ugly head yet and citizens were still held accountable.

Can Mumbai Revive Bombay

Can Bombay regain its former glory? Perhaps, although the past can never be recovered. The buzz word these days is 'infrastructure'; and flyovers and sea-links and the like are undoubtedly essential. But it is going to take a lot more. It is going to require enlightened leadership. It is going to require our rich and powerful to escape for a while from their air conditioned cars, offices and homes and actually step foot in the city that has made them prosperous. They need to see how the other 90 percent lives; maybe then they will be shaken out of their lethargy and indifference and make their voice heard where it counts.

The dowager empress has been dozing for far too long. It is time to shake her awake, violently if need be, and make her demand her rightful pre-eminence. It took the Great Fire to transform medieval London into a livable city. One does not wish a similar calamity on Bombay, but something drastic needs to be done and soon. Time is running out.

Mr. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA, is a freelance writer and retired Civil Engineer.

The Cloister's Pale

150 Years of the University of Mumbai (nee Bombay!)

S. V. Raju



A second edition of the history of the Bombay (now Mumbai University, re-published after quarter of a century brings the narrative up-to-date to coincide with the sesquicentenary celebrations of the founding of this great institution. Histories of well-established institutions are always of interest and this is particularly so of the University. For it records simultaneously the rise of a city to prosperity, of the onward march to modernity, of the new currents of thought influencing a new generation, of the rise of new social classes. The city opened up opportunities for all and access to education was the means of moving up in the social hierarchy and to positions of responsibility and power.

Even before the establishment of the University, the city witnessed the emergence of an in-

Histories of well-established institutions are always of interest and this is particularly so of the Bombay University for it records simultaneously the rise of a city to prosperity, of the onward march to modernity, of the new currents of thought influencing a new generation, of the rise of new social classes. The city opened up opportunities for all and access to education was the means of moving up in the social hierarchy and to positions of responsibility and power.

fluent intellectual group which took advantage of the limited educational opportunities and make a mark for itself in society and public life. The names of Bal Shastri, of Dadboha Pandurang and of Nana Shankershet are part of Bombay's history and their work was to be furthered by the new generation which had the benefit of Western higher education. (Both Bal Shastri and Dadboha were deep into education). The very institution in which some of them studied was to later develop into one of the most renowned educational centres in Western India – the Elphinstone College. Western education was indispensable for social betterment and the only centres that could offer this were the colleges affiliated to the Bombay University. Thus the history of the University is simultaneously the history of the development of modern ideas and opinions that flowed from the West.

The earlier chapters of the book have a romantic flavour of their own with the Town Hall (now housing the Asiatic Library) witnessing the pageantry of the Convocation Ceremony of the nascent University with the entire "beauty and chivalry" of the city turning up to witness the digni-

fied yet colourful proceedings. Ranade, rustic and unsophisticated, clad in stiff and starched robes receiving his certificate from the Governor, reminds us of the later developments when men covered in the roughest of coarse wear, were to pull down the carefully built up edifice of the *Raj*. The fact that Bhandarkar's name and person not being along with that of the future *Nyayapathi* (Justice) Ranade because of a clerical bungling which declared him failed is all of a piece of the visible 'tradition' of our bumbling bureaucracy which hallowed practice continues to this day in many a public institution!

Right from Mountstuart Elphinstone collecting Marathi primers to study the language to Bartle Frere, the governors of the province took a genuine interest in the promotion of education of the subjects under their charge. They were involved in educating new generations in the "right ideas". The University was the site of contestations between the Indian educated elite and officialdom. The author does not spare the imperious attitude that informed some of the Chancellors. Lord Sydenham was one among

Dr. John Mathai : The Courageous Vice-Chancellor

The College of Physician and Surgeons of Bombay had decided to confer Honorary Fellowship on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was then Prime Minister of India, and on Morarji Desai, who then was the Chief Minister of Bombay State. Although the College was under the jurisdiction of the University of Bombay, the University authorities were not consulted before deciding to honour the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister. Dr. John Mathai, on learning about this proposal wrote letters to both dissuading them from accepting the honour. Prime Minister Nehru replied to him on 24th May 1956:

"...The College of Physician and Surgeons in Bombay have been at me for a long time pressing me to accept the Honorary Fellowship of the College. I did not wish to encourage them and I have been putting this off repeatedly. Ultimately I agreed because I did not wish to continue to be discourteous.

"While broadly speaking, I agree with what you have written to Morarji Desai, perhaps you have taken too strong a view of a practice which unfortunately prevails in every country. Universities give honorary degrees to persons whom they consider important in public life. Even the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in England confers its honorary Fellowship on persons unconnected with surgery and medicine. I have myself honorary degrees from Universities in Asia, outside India, in Europe and in America. Next month I am receiving an honorary doctorate at Hamburg in Germany.

"I do not think that, for instance, an Oxford or Cambridge Doctorate has lost its value because they have granted it to public men. Everybody knows that an honorary degree has no special significance and does not take away from the value of the real degree.

"I wish all Universities and like bodies stop giving honorary degrees, except on grounds of pure merit. But as this happens to be almost a universal practice, it is difficult to become too virtuous about it and for me to refuse it. It makes no difference to me. I have received a dozen doctorates or more and a number of freedoms of cities. I wish you would agitate to put an end to this practice."

"As post-script Nehru had added: "Winston Churchill is of course a great man, but he is neither a surgeon nor a scientist. Yet he is an honorary F.R.C.S. and F.R.S. so also others."

Chief Minister Morarji Desai also in his short reply on 28th May 1956 said that he too agreed to receive the degree as he could not refuse on persistent request.

Dr. Mathai had something different in mind when

he wanted both of them to decline the Honorary Fellowship. He replied to the Prime Minister Nehru promptly on 28th May :

"The distinction I make is somewhat as follows. If you were still the leader of the freedom movement, I would not for a moment object to your being given an honorary academic title. Similarly, if you were not today the Head of the Government but an elder statesman without a place in Government, I would not object either. What makes the difference is the fact that you and Morarji are in positions of the highest authority in respective spheres which enable you to confer favour upon other people. The occasion for my writing as I did was that a similar suggestion had been made to me in the Bombay University by certain members of the University, mainly of the opportunist class that unfortunately find their way into every academic society and I set my face firmly against it. So when I received notice of the holding of a special Convocation of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in the very heart of the University's jurisdiction, I naturally felt a bit let down.

"I am well aware of the practice in other countries. But I still attach importance to this distinction in the present conditions of the country. When we are a maturer people democratically, the question may assume a different aspect."

The last word in the controversy was, no doubt, that of the Vice-Chancellor, because none including the Prime Minister could have refuted the logical argument of the Vice-Chancellor. In a letter to Pandit Nehru, dated 2nd June 1956, Dr. Mathai wrote -

"Since writing my second letter to you regarding your acceptance of the Honorary Fellowship conferred by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, I have gathered a considerable amount of information regarding this College. The undue relaxation of the standards of medical education required for qualifying titles which this institution has consistently pursued since its inception is already hampering the efforts made by the Universities like ours to maintain reasonable standards. You and Morarji, by accepting Honorary Fellowships without so much as the courtesy of a previous consultation with the University (nor if my information is correct, with the Ministry of Health) have in my judgment weakened the hands of those who are striving against heavy odds to maintain academic standards. I regret to say that in doing so you have done a disservice to the cause of University education."

(Page 203-205, *The Cloister's Pale*)

them who took his paternalism sedulously and wanted the eager students to study Mathematics rather than dangerous subjects like British or Constitutional History lest the 'native' be infected with dangerous, heretical and muddled notions.

Again, the attempt at reducing the Universities to one more department of the Government administering harmless but useful examinations was resisted by men like Pherozechah Mehta and his friends who came out with flying colours. These pages in the book illumine both, the darker corners of modern colonialism and the continuous skirmishes of Indians against the hectoring masters.

It also has pages of enduring value in highlighting the role of the Vice-Chancellors who adorned the University and guided the destinies of higher education in the province. men like John Wilson, Principal Wordsworth, F. G. Selby and Telang. However, not all of them were of this timbre. There was Rev. Mackichan who tried to instil his own notions in the seat of higher learning which certainly were not appropriate to the requirements of a country in its growth or for education itself. On the other hand, the long tenure of Chimanlal Setalvad whose sagacious, firm and tactful handling of sensitive issues held aloft not only the values of a University but managed to put the government gently in its place. Dr. John Mathai carved for himself a unique niche and his courageous and dignified stand to protect the autonomy and dignity of the University needs to be carved in letters of gold. (See Box facing page 26).

Apart from the Vice-Chancellors, the office of the Registrar, lynchpin of the University system has been analyzed and discussed

with insight. Professor Dastur who had a distinguished academic career and was Professor of Mathematics in the Elphinstone College became the Registrar and served the University with devotion and made it run on well-oiled grooves; he set precedents that were to last for decades. A man of principles, he set high standards and his devotion and deep love for the University is well attested by the letter that he wrote to the Vice-Chancellor a couple of days before his passing away. It will serve the epigoni very well indeed if they were to read and ponder over it. After his tenure, the task of his successors, S. R. Dongerkery and T. V. Chidambaram became light. Chidambaram's two-volume report on the administration and its reorganisation of the University has been emphasised by the author and testifies to his firm grip of the administration and his overall and comprehensive knowledge of its intricacies.

Equally valuable are the several pages devoted to the building of the University Library, its munificent donors and the beautiful buildings. The brilliant triumvirate who shaped the Library, P. M. Joshi, Marshall and Anderson get their due. The continuing of the Marshall tradition by A. C. Tikekar for nearly two decades are also dwelt upon. Apart from the Library buildings and Rajabai Tower, the other architectural jewel, the Convocation Hall, its genesis with a grant from a philanthropist, its careful planning, the long years of gestation and its final building are described in detail.

The development of the second campus at Kalina, its bold conceptualisation by G. D. Parikh, its late start,

and its numerous buildings including the Library are recorded as are other institutions. The University Department of Chemical Technology (which ante-dated the Kalina Campus) continues to take place of pride among its institutions and many a student as well as the faculty who won global recognition. The account of the genesis of the institution testifies to the far-sightedness of Dr. Visvesvaraya. The School of Business Management, once a pioneering centre and its evolution, the later institutions like the ICSSR, the WIRC, the Garware Institute all belonging to the University, are given their due.

The life-blood of the University are the eminent scholars that were fostered by affiliated colleges and the Departments – P. V. Kane, R. P. Kangle, G. S. Ghurye, M. Venkatarangayya, M. L. Dantwala and Brahmananda would do honour to any centre of learning. There were many more and they find a central place in the narrative.

A distinguished University has indeed found a distinguished historian in Aroon Tikekar.

The Cloister's Pale, a biography of the University of Mumbai by Aroon Tikekar, Popular Prakashan, 35C Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Marg, Mumbai 400 034, pp.357, Rs.550.



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Outsourcing and India

Sharad Bailur

It is the combination of English, the Internet and Indians that has made for outsourcing. In hindsight it appears that the biggest error the British made while ruling India was to teach English to the Indians, for even they are not able to exploit this opportunity the way the Indians seem to be doing.

Back in the fifties, I was told, a snowstorm once snapped all communication links between England and the Continent. Newspaper headlines in London the next day screamed, "Continent Isolated"! The English-speaking world, including we in India likewise, like to think of us, English speakers, as the world, and the rest as outer darkness. This is not true. The whole of the Americas, except for the US and Canada speak no English. The whole of Europe except Britain and minorities on the Continent speak no English. The whole of Asia: Ditto.

The problem of outsourcing seems to be confined to the English-speaking world that includes those minorities in countries like India. English, it is true, is increasingly being spoken in a large number of countries and is increasingly becoming the international language of choice but it still has a long way to go. We must take this as the first factor in any discussion about outsourcing.

Then there are a number of countries with sizeable English speaking populations that seem to face no controversy as regards outsourcing. For example there is very little international attention being drawn, if at all, to countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and even Bangladesh and Indonesia, or for

that matter Hong Kong and Singapore. The thrust and centre of all attention seems to be India, with others being merely peripheral players, even China. Let us therefore take this as the second factor.

Third, India seems to have emerged as a source of cheap, high quality labour for tasks that require skills on computers, especially software, and through the Internet. Let us take this as the third factor.

Speaking 'Indian' in the US

I was on a visit to the US first in 1983, then in 1993 and last in 2002. The change in the attitude of most Americans in the street towards people from India was revealing.

In 1983 it was evident that I was a stranger from a strange country that was considered of a piece with Rwanda and Burundi or Cambodia (then on the top of everyone's mind). I was often seriously asked if I spoke "Indian", and whether I kept tigers for pets. I was asked repeatedly if I spoke English. When I said, "Of course.", most were taken aback. The editor of a literary magazine when told that I came from India turned around and said, "Oh! Indira Ghandy, eh?"! That, to all intents and purposes, was the extent of his knowledge about my country. I was, most often,

mistaken for a Mexican till they found I did not roll my "R"s. And my intonations were, to put it fairly, outlandish. That they found strange. It made them change their minds.

In 1993, I visited New York again and Houston. In both places there seemed to be a wary awareness about people from Asia in general, that had been completely missing earlier. Students from India, China, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, were increasingly dominating convocation ceremonies for doctoral degrees at universities in Austin and Albany especially in the sciences, with a bare sprinkling of a white American presence.

People on the street went out of their way to talk to me for reasons that I found curious. I was asked if most people in India dressed as well as I did. Clearly, the quality of my clothes must have been impressive in a state like Texas where the normal clothes worn in summer by most people, both men and women, seemed to me to consist of an under-shirt and short pants always un-ironed and scruffy.

And yet even highly educated friends, like Vern Gill, an engineer who specialised in constructing lifts for skyscrapers above 70 floors, remarked that India had only its long history to

offer to the world; not much else.

Changing Attitude

In 2002 the change was dramatic. I spent exactly a month in Michigan and later again in Texas, travelling, deliberately by Amtrak from Chicago to Dallas, just to see the countryside. I met with cordiality at a level that I found unexpected. For once people recognised me as someone from India, as distinct from being mistaken for a Mexican. They expressed no doubts about my ability to speak to them in English. And most gratifying of all, the very fact that I came from India often caused them to reach the conclusion that I was highly educated, highly intelligent (today's word for it I am told is "geek") and probably fairly well off by American standards. That none of it was true was something only I knew, and I had to take trouble hiding it.

This change of attitude says a lot of things. The Indian Diaspora in the US has made a mark for itself in both business and intellectual pursuits that is far greater than the number of Indians in the US would lead us to believe. These Indians were the people who went out of the best Indian scientific, technical and business schools to rise to the top in the US.

Exporting Jobs?

The WTO, of which the US is the chief patron, has mandated the progressive lowering of trade barriers. This can only mean that goods made all over the world find their way to the US. If the US is to keep a check on its trade deficit it must either manufacture cheaper and better or find ways to bring down its costs of production. Since labour forms probably the largest proportion of such costs, it is evident that it is labour costs that

must be reduced. If they cannot be reduced in the US, the only alternative left is to send the jobs to those places where labour does not cost as much.

The "cheapness" of Indian labour is the result of the internal purchasing power of the rupee. While a dollar costs about Rs 45, it buys, in the US, just about what four rupees buy in India. In other words, the internal purchasing power of the rupee is about ten times more than its exchange value against the dollar. If therefore an Indian is paid a fifth of his counterpart in the US by an American firm that outsources work to him, he is still earning twice as much as he would if he were to take up another job. This does two things: First, it offers to American employers a source of labour that does their jobs at a fifth the price they would have had to pay had they got it done in the US. And it offers to Indian willing to do the work, salaries twice as high as they would normally earn. Both make money in the process.

Unfortunately Economics is no respecter of social problems. The fact of the matter is that certain things need to be got done and they get done cheaper when they are outsourced. This affects the bottom lines of companies in the US and of individuals who work for them in countries like India. Hence outsourcing.

The Internet

But this would not have been possible on the scale that it is today were it not to be for the Internet. The development of the Internet and the new opportunities that it offers for the flow of information and commerce across the world, unhindered, has added an entirely unsuspected dimension to the issue.

It is this combination of English, the Internet and Indians that has made for outsourcing. In hindsight it appears that the biggest error the British made while ruling India was to teach English to the Indians, for even they are not able to exploit this opportunity the way the Indians seem to be doing.

Importing Workers?

As for importing workers into the developed countries the sum total of the logic of free trade and the WTO is for the free movement of goods and services across international borders without let or hindrance. Since labour is a factor of production, it too should be able to move freely across borders. This is anathema to all countries that have reached levels of prosperity that others have not.

Let us suppose developed countries did import workers by the million. It could cause major problems for those who would be rendered jobless, quite apart from the social unrest that it would unleash. It is therefore perfectly understandable that, if only to protect their way of life and their prosperity, the US, Britain, Canada and Australia wish to have quotas and visas for intending immigrants. Despite this a steady trickle of the best talent from countries like India continues to seep into the EU, the US and countries like Australia and New Zealand. While the host countries would like to make the best use of those who enter, it is perfectly understandable if the US for example wishes to avoid being inundated by a tidal wave from India looking for a higher standard of living. Hence immigration quotas.

The Backlash

John Kerry, the Presidential candidate in the last US election,

sells Heinz tomato ketchup in India. But he does not want jobs to be outsourced to India. Neither does George W. Bush. This is because democracy dictates that irrespective of how incompetent or expensive their own people are at the jobs being outsourced, each of them still counts for one vote.

As a result Unions in the UK, for example, have started talking about privacy laws in India being lax. This is to prevent jobs from the banking industry going to India. Everybody knows that the logic of free trade on which the main premise of the WTO rests will, in the long run, make such outsourcing inevitable in spite of any backlash.

Having the Cake and Eating It Too

If immigration quotas have to be maintained or even tightened, outsourcing is the only way out. In the present atmosphere of free trade and the WTO you cannot stop outsourcing and, at the same time, have immigration quotas for skilled people.

If you want both you shall have to repudiate the WTO and the free trade agreement. For the US this could be disastrous, since four-fifths of all the dollars it has printed in these last three decades go to finance world trade and are not used inside the US. Retreating into a new isolationism by repudiating the WTO will mean a drastic reduction of the world's trade

with the US. The Euro might then become the currency of choice. All those dollars now lubricating world trade will then come home to roost, like so many hundreds of billions of chicken. The US will then become as noisome as only a gigantic chicken-coop of hyperinflation can become – a prospect that the Federal Reserve understands only too well.

The US has painted itself into a corner. It cannot repudiate the WTO. Yet it must continue its present immigration policies. It therefore has no alternative but to outsource jobs. To a lesser extent neither does the rest of the developed world.

MR. SHARAD BAILUR, a freelance journalist, can be contacted at sharad.bailur@gmail.com



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Copper, Cu	2.195	mg	Aspartic acid	1.795	g
Manganese, Mn	1.655	mg	Glutamic acid	4.506	g
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Vitamins			Proline	0.812	g
Vitamin C	0.5	mg	Serine	1.079	g
Thiamin	0.423	mg			
Riboflavin	0.058	mg			
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Ethical Issues in Affirmative Action

Vir Narain

For affirmative action to succeed in its mission of achieving justice and social harmony there can be only one general prescription: The fruits of good governance - adequate health and education - must be made available to all.

Few questions of public policy are as politically sensitive, socially divisive or emotionally charged as those of affirmative action, or positive discrimination. Affirmative action seeks to redress historical wrongs whose effects are seen to afflict identifiable groups of people even today. Given the background of its ancient caste system - highly stratified, highly iniquitous and highly persistent - India carries a larger (and more complicated and unwieldy) burden of such historical wrongs than perhaps any other nation or society. Caste remains a dominant factor in Indian politics even today; so it is not as if the redressal comes from a neutral or disinterested party. The victims and the beneficiaries (most intermediate castes are, in varying degrees, the victims as well as the beneficiaries!) of these historical wrongs are locked together in a complex - and often chaotic - process of democratic power-sharing and decision making.

Serving Electoral Politics

Emotive issues of guilt and grievance, retribution and atonement are pressed in the service of electoral politics. Political parties of all hues exploit divisions where they exist, and try to create them where they do not, to encourage the politics of group grievances and vote banks. Even political leaders who belong to groups which have been the beneficiaries of historical wrongs - ostensibly driven by ideology - are no less keen on the politics of grievance than those who belong to the wronged classes. As elections approach, communal passions and caste antagonisms, cloaked in the rhetoric of social justice, are whipped up for political gains. As Breytenbach said, and our politicians know by instinct, "*Humans are fragile. It is not difficult to bring out the worst in them*".

In the scramble to secure benefits in terms of quotas and reservations, questions of fairness and equity, and issues of larger national interest, are being

ignored. Irreversible changes have already taken place; and the pursuit of divisive policies for political gains seems to be gathering pace. Still, it may not be too late even now to look again at the ethical aspects of affirmative action.

Hardly any one disputes the need for affirmative action to redress historical wrongs. But sharp differences of opinion arise regarding the fairness or effectiveness of specific steps taken in the

name of affirmative action. Perhaps the best starting point for our inquiry is Rawls' two principles of justice for *institutions*:

First Principle (the *Liberty Principle*)

Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

Second Principle (the *Difference Principle*)

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*)

The Difference Principle has a direct bearing on affirmative action. Equality of opportunity is the key. If the victims of past injustice are to move towards greater equality of opportunity certain compensatory steps have to be taken. But first, the victims of historical wrongs (not as individuals, but as groups) have to be identified, and the degree of deprivation or injustice for each group assessed. Unlike the situation in the USA - where blacks are a comparatively undifferentiated wronged group - the incredibly complex caste-differentiation in India makes it practically impossible to tackle this task in a fair manner. As compensatory action becomes more specific and precisely targeted, this requirement



becomes more critical. Where more general and broadbased compensatory action is planned, the question of comparative deprivation or injustice tends to lose its salience. Here education is the key.

Even apart from the requirement of affirmative action, it is the responsibility of the State to provide free and compulsory education at the primary and secondary levels to all. Where adequate schooling (which is the minimum obligation of any State) is provided to the general populace; and extra resources are invested in the healthcare and education of deprived classes, the first critical step in providing equality of opportunity can be said to have been taken.

"Imagine a college admissions committee trying to decide between the white [son] of an Appalachian coal miner's family and the African American son of a successful Pittsburgh neurosurgeon. Why should the black applicant get preference over the white applicant?"

It is widely acknowledged that the Indian State has dismally failed in the area of primary and secondary education. It has failed similarly in providing primary health care. The biggest victims of this failure are the very groups who are to be provided relief and redress through affirmative action. Faced with this failure, and unable to remedy it (for remedial action requires the honest application of resources) the government has to take recourse to other means. The handiest tool is a policy of quotas and reservations. It has many attractive features: it is a great political stimulant, it has populist appeal, it diverts attention from the government's failure to provide adequate health and education to the poor and backward sections of society, and it relieves the government of the entire burden of affirmative action. This burden now falls on individuals belonging to purportedly privileged castes (regardless of their own personal situation) who are thus directly and personally deprived of positions which they would otherwise merit.

Affirmative Action has to be Collective

One critical feature of the Difference Principle is that it clearly excludes a "zero-sum" outcome; where one person's (or group's) gain is another's loss. Another feature of Rawls' two principles is that he enunciated them as "*two principles of justice for*

institutions". (emphasis added.) Where identifiable individuals are involved in a zero-sum exchange, as in the case of quotas and reservations, the ends of justice are clearly not met. The costs of atoning for collective wrongs in the past must be shared *collectively* by those who belong to groups that benefitted from the unfair dispensation at that time. It must not be left to 'innocent' individuals to pay the price. Affirmative action has to be at the *collective level*; and should never be allowed to 'degenerate' into a choice between two individuals. Affirmative action is based, at best, on aggregated data and statistical averages. But, as one commentator has said: "*it is individuals, not statistical averages, who gain or lose in admissions determinations and employment selections.*" An interesting example of this from the USA is the oft-quoted "coal miner's son" question. In India it translates into the creamy-layer question. "*Imagine a college admissions committee trying to decide between the white [son] of an Appalachian coal miner's family and the African American son of a successful Pittsburgh neurosurgeon. Why should the black applicant get preference over the white applicant?*"

Apart from the issue of injustice to individuals – which in itself is a decisive factor – there is the vital, and deeply ethical, question of social integration. To paraphrase US Supreme Court Justice Blackmun's observation in the famous 1978 Bakke case: *The legitimacy of caste preferences is to be measured by how fast using them moves us towards a society where caste doesn't matter.* The undeniable fact is that affirmative action through quotas and reservations will only serve to harden and perpetuate caste-divisions in Indian society. For affirmative action to succeed in its mission of achieving justice and social harmony there can be only one general prescription: The fruits of good governance – adequate health and education – must be made available to all. In addition, adequate extra resources must be provided in these areas to identifiable groups who are still suffering from the effects of past discrimination. Reservations and quotas should be the last resort, and should never be applied at the individual level to competitive positions.

MR. VIR NARAIN, Editor, *Humanist Outlook*, Journal of the Indian Humanist Union.

A Correction

On page 19 (*Freedom First*, No.470, July 2006), the last sentence in the second column should read: "The Tamil Nadu Backward Classes (A. N. Sattanathan) Commission of 1970 clearly showed the nine backward *castes* (not *classes*, as printed) had cornered a sizeable chunk of reserved jobs and educational seats".

Misreading the Constitution

Shankar M. Patil

While soliciting views on the currently simmering topic of Reservations, in the last issue, you have, perhaps, unwittingly made a statement that even Dr. Ambedkar viewed the strategy of reservations "as a very temporary measure to give a helping hand to victims of an unjust social order arising from the pernicious caste system". If this statement refers to the provisions in the Constitution of India, providing the helping hand to the victims, to the SCs, STs and OBCs, it is a half truth, nay a fractional truth; looking to the focus of the raging controversy, the statement is not true.

One can discern a well orchestrated campaign of disinformation to brainwash the gullible. The dialectic of dissimulation is so very craftily employed that even the sympathisers of "the victims of an unjust social order" are misled into believing that the Indian Constitution provided a time limit for the provisions "for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes".

A cursory look into the Constitution of India, will make any reasonable man to realise that the

Constitution does not provide for any timeframe for the provisions:

- (i) directing the State (Article 46), or
- (ii) empowering the State (Articles 15, 16), or
- (iii) enjoining the State (Article 335)

to adopt measures for the advancement of the SCs, STs and OBCs, by way of providing access to education and entry into public services.

The only provision in the Constitution of India, granting special privilege to SCs and STs that has a time limit is the one pertaining to the Reservation of Seats for the SCs and STs in the House of the People (Article 330 read with 334) and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States (Article 332 read with 334). These provisions are rarely criticised, for the simple reason that the provision is harmless, being toothless.

The factual position being so evidently clear, one can only infer that it is an insidious campaign of disinformation, to attribute temporariness to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, only to obfuscate the discourse on the issue of Reservations.

MR. SHANKAR M. PATIL is a retired public servant and a resident of Kolhapur.

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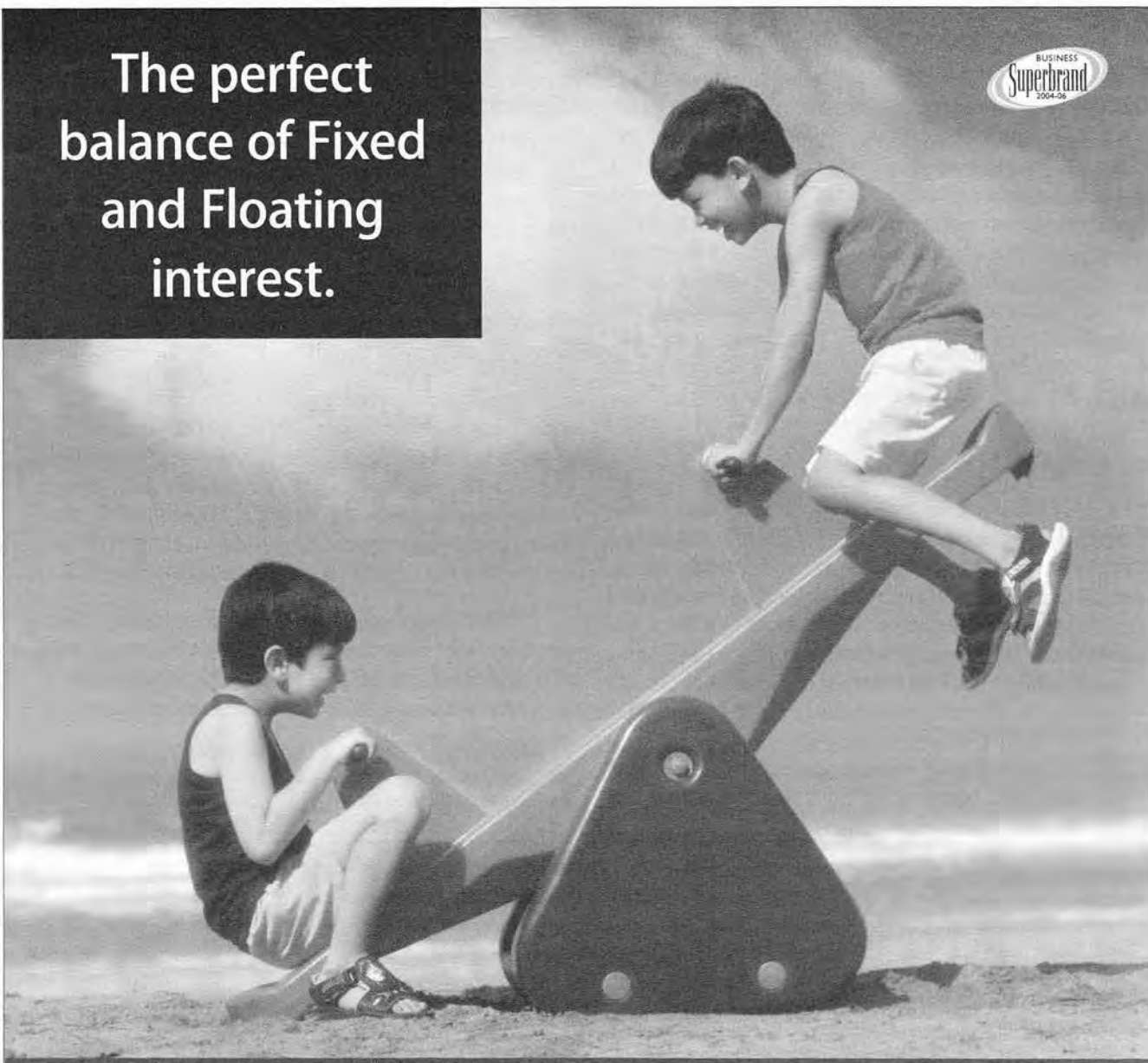
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The War in Lebanon

Nitin Raut

The new facet of West Asian conflict is essentially between Hizbollah terrorism and Israel and not between Israel and Lebanon.

It was in 1975 that Lebanon was plunged into a civil war when the PLO like the Hizbollah used South Lebanese territory to attack Israeli civilian settlements. For fifteen years, Israel had to fight PLO and Syria while a civil war between Lebanese Shities and Maronite Christians raged alongside. It was only in 2005 that Syria pulled out after twenty nine years its 40,000 troops from Lebanon. Syrian hegemony however has deeper significance. Syria has always considered Lebanon as part of South Syria and therefore its fiefdom, either directly or through proteges like the Hizbollah.

assumed that the Lebanese Army would take control of South Lebanon to ensure that it is not used to attack Israel, in compliance with U.N. Resolution. But during the past six years, the Shite dominated Hezbollah used the power vacuum to entrench itself in South Lebanon and stockpile arms with the aid of Shite majority States like Iran and Syria, while an inept Lebanese government watched helplessly. In the June 2005 Lebanese elections, the Hizbollah won seats in the Lebanese Parliament and has created a State within a State, over which the Beirut government has no control.

unprovoked attack against Israel and abducted Israeli soldiers triggering a massive Israeli ground and air attack against the Hizbollah stronghold in South Lebanon and Beirut.

Israel's military objective was to destroy Hizbollah's military bases and infrastructure as diplomacy in the context of the U.N. Resolution No.1559 of 2004 failed to assert itself. Resolution No.1559 calls for the disarming of the Hizbollah and cease using South Lebanese territories by them for attacking Israel. However the Hizbollah (Party of God) formed in 1982 has sworn to destroy Israel. Trained and armed by Iran, it is also backed by Syria. Iranian President Mahamoud Ahmed-

When Israel withdrew from South Lebanon in 2000, it was

On 12th July 2006, the Hizbollah carried out an

Middle East : The Wider Picture

Your editor attended recently a meeting addressed by Professor Shlomo Ben-Ami of Tel Aviv University and former Minister for Foreign Affairs. Prof. Ben-Ami made several observations which presented a wider picture of the erstwhile war in Lebanon:

- Israel is fighting a two-front war – Hamas in the south, Hezbollah in the north
- Both are political parties and also militia. This is what Fascism is all about. Israel's quarrel with Hamas is political. It is all about space (land) for Palestine. There are no political issues with Hezbollah because Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon in 2000.
- The abduction of two Israeli soldiers was not the

cause of the conflict. It was merely the trigger. Israel had to fight to uphold the legitimacy of its border with Lebanon. The border was settled by the UN. Hezbollah, a Shia outfit, does not accept the Israel state. They do not recognise the border.

- Israel is not at war with Lebanon but with the Hezbollah. She is fighting to protect the Jewish State and spearheading the war against Islamic Terrorism.
- Israel's conflict is not with the governments of Palestine and Lebanon. Both are weak neighbours. The conflict is with Hamas and Hezbollah, both of which are freelance organisations with their own militia and at the same time part of the Palestine and Lebanese governments.

nijad's infamous remark that Israel should be wiped off the map is a bizarre pointer to the present crisis. Today, Hizbollah is waging a 'jihad' against Israel as a proxy of Iran and Syria.

Soon after Hizbollah's victory in the June 2005 Lebanese election, its chief, Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah had announced that the Hizbollah had northern Israel within the range of their 1200-Katyusha and Kasam missiles, having a range of 20-40 kilometres. Operating with impunity, the Hizbollah attacked across the internationally recognised Israel-Lebanon border. Therefore the new facet of West Asian conflict is essentially between Hizbollah terrorism and Israel and not between Israel and Lebanon. Lebanon has no control over Hizbollah and the latter, although a part of Lebanon, operates *de hors* the Lebanese government.

The Hizbollah belligerency shows that peace in West Asia does not hinge only on the Israel-Palestinian issue but rather, it is a complex problem of co-existence of two irreconcilable systems – democracy and open societies on the one hand and closed religious feudal structures on the other. Significantly, Israel is not shown on Arab maps – a chilling symbolism of a West Asia without Israel. It is terrorism rooted in denying Israel's right to exist.

Hizbollah in the long run is also a potential beneficiary of Iran's nuclear weapons, and Hizbollah's attack against Israel is a natural corollary as Iran's client protege. It is also aimed to divert international attention from the Iran-International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stand-off on the issue of nuclear proliferation.

There is also another angle to the Hizbollah's carefully orchestrated attack on Israel. The gameplan is to scuttle U.S. attempts to democratise Iraq and Afghanistan. Any conflict with Israel is bound to undermine this objective in Iraq and Afghanistan. Destabilisation of Lebanon is a test case to determine the resolve of the U.S. and also the future of West Asia peace.

Hizbollah as part of Lebanon's Government and Hamas leading the Palestinian Authority are undermining the peace process by using the facade of elections and government participation to gain legitimacy while subverting peace. The aim is to achieve political objectives through terrorism under the smokescreen of State power. In order to gain respectability, both are attempting to shed the stigma of terrorism by trying to reinvent themselves through the democratic process. Both have embraced terrorism not for liberation or self determination but as a strategy to achieve political

objectives.

For a country like Israel with a healthy economic growth, increasing economic opportunities, stable price front and comfortable forex reserves, such military expeditions are more hurtful for its economy which is not dependent on the munificence of oil revenues like its Arab neighbours who bankroll the Hizbollah and the Hamas.

Lebanon in fact has become a test case for the future of peace in West Asia. Much will depend on the attitude of Iran and Syria towards its protege, the Hizbollah as Lebanon with a population of 40% Shia is combustible enough to plunge West Asia into another bloody and senseless mayhem. When *intifada* becomes a tool to frustrate peace, it ceases to be a liberation movement and assumes the naked characteristics of fascism and fundamentalism.

The West Asian conflict and the Lebanese crisis requires much more than the ritualistic U.N. resolutions and the stop-go international diplomacy if this microcosm of the future clash of civilisations is not going to be yet another head of the hydraheaded monster of terrorism.

MR. NITIN RAUT is a lawyer.

Everything is subject to change in this world. It is constantly changing and becoming new. What then does revolution or revolutionary change imply? One implication is that the process of revolution or revolutionary change is very rapid, very far-reaching and radical too, and sometimes it leads to qualitative change in the object of change. For example, water when heated becomes steam.

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Peter Sager: A Portrait

Ian Tickle



Peter Sager a Swiss Liberal a good friend of Minoo Masani and Freedom First and author of the seminal book "Moscow's Hand in India" passed away on July 1, 2006. He was 81. We honour his memory by reproducing two extracts from a book of essays in his honour published in 1991. The first by Ian Tickle the author of the Festschrift and another by Minoo Masani.

Switzerland is a land of modest statesmen. When we study the history of our century we are struck by the number of Swiss citizens who have spent their lives working for peace and freedom without any thought that their names might be consigned to posterity – unlike political figures in other countries who spend much of their time thinking about their place in the history books. Peter Sager is one of the former...

The ending of the Cold War and the liberation of Eastern Europe came with astounding speed. But they took years of preparation. Though Mikhail Gorbachov was the instrument, he was preceded by many thousands of figures, some unknown, some a little known, inside the Soviet Union but also in Western Europe and in North America – figures whose lives' work was to keep the torch of freedom burning by disseminating truth in a world polluted by [propaganda]. Peter Sager was one of these.

Peter Sager was 14 when World War II broke out. When the War ended the Nazi threat was replaced by the Stalinist threat, and when the communists took power in democratic Czechoslovakia in 1948 it became absolutely that one totalitarian tyranny in Europe had been replaced by another, even more insidious and dangerous to peace.

While other wasted time worrying about an impossible

Nazi comeback, Sager concentrated on the Soviet Union... (He was) one of the first influential thinkers in Western Europe to accept that Gorbachov was a new political animal.

Peter Sager studied at the Swiss universities of Lausanne and Berne, and at the latter he obtained his doctorate with a thesis on Stalinism. I first met him in 1958 when he conducted a seminar on the theories of Hungarian economist, Jeno Varga, at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

In 1959 Sager founded the Swiss Eastern Institute. This was the organisation to which he (gave) most of his working life and which he used to fulfil his object of countering Communist propaganda – not by counter-propaganda, but by truth. As a political organisation this could not receive government assistance; and Sager the academic had to develop a new personum, Sager the public relations expert. Over the years he was able to secure the funds, from sources within Switzerland without exception, to finance his institute...

Though not greatly interested in domestic matters, Sager did hold the opinion that neutrality should not prevent his country from playing a wider role in international affairs. To this end, and also because he thought that it would increase the prestige of the institute, he was persuaded to stand for Parliament in 1983, and, to his own immense surprise, he won a seat with a respectable majority. He was re-elected for a second term four years later... He devoted his parlia-

mentary work to foreign affairs. He became a member of the Swiss delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Commuting between Berne and Strasbourg was exhausting, and his friends worried about his health. But he achieved a lot, and it became his great aim to help with the integration of the former Communist states of Eastern Europe and even the Soviet Union into the common European house. With this in mind he became chairman of the Committee on Relations with European Non-Member States and finally in his last year one of the vice-presidents of the Parliament Assembly. In 1991 he retired from all his posts, including that of director of the Swiss Eastern Institute and went to live in Ireland.

Peter Sager (was) a writer, a political thinker and a publicist... The financial success which he brought to the institute – though very little to himself – was due to the last quality... It is often said about outstanding people that they go do not suffer fools gladly. This is a polite way of saying that they have achieved their success by riding roughshod over others. Sager (was) a man who suffered fools gladly – a little too gladly for some of his supporters. He (was) seldom seen without a warm smile on his face.

I found it surprising that he and I had so rarely differed on political matters over the years. He smiled and said: "It is because we are both of us kind of liberals. We know where our values are. He (had) hit the nail on the head, as so often."

Peter Sager's Moscow's Hand in India

Minoo Masani

Peter Sager has done outstanding work by organising and developing the Swiss Eastern Institute in Bern, together with the *Swiss Press Review and News Report* published by it. I entitle my present piece 'Moscow's Hand in India' in tribute to the book he published on that subject some two decades ago.^{*} In it he described Soviet disinformation operations in India very well, and it has left its mark on my country.

Indian ideas about the Bolshevik Revolution were extremely elementary. Lenin and even Stalin were considered to be idealists, great liberators and lovers of freedom. The extent of ignorance of the facts and the damage this ignorance has done was illustrated when Czechoslovakia was taken over by the communists in 1948 and Jan Masaryk killed himself or was murdered. I was having breakfast with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and observed that these developments showed that we still had something to learn about Stalin. Nehru lost his temper, banged the table and accused me of being "perverse" because I had dared to mention Stalin critically.

According to NEHRU, Stalin was progressive... Even Khrushchev's famous 20th Congress speech in 1956 did not cure Nehru of his blind admiration for the man who, according to Gorbachev, killed 14 million Soviet citizens.

During World War II, Moscow persuaded the Indian Communist Party to support the war as "a people's war", since the Soviet Union and Britain had become allies in 1942. The result was that the Communist Party of India supported the British war effort, and some of its members even served as informers to hand over "Quit India" activists to the British police

in India.

After independence Moscow exploited Indian credulity by persuading the government to enter into a trade agreement with the Soviet Union in which all transactions were in rupees. The result was that Moscow paid India in rupees, then sold Indian goods in Western markets for hard currency and pocketed the difference.

Since independence Moscow has functioned in India through its paid agent, the Communist Party of India. This was used to flood the country with Soviet books and other literature in order to spread disinformation. For instance when I published Lenin's Testament about Stalin, it was denounced by the Communist Party of India as a forgery. I have told the whole story of the Soviet fifth column in India in my book 'The History of the Communist Party of India.

For years some of us in India have tried to through our 'Democratic Research Service' established in the early 1950s, and with our journal *Freedom First* to counter Soviet disinformation in India. But we have to confess that we have not been able to do this with the effectiveness shown by Peter Sager and his associates. India still remaining in the periphery of the free world, the activities of our Swiss friends have brought us a great deal of encouragement for which we are grateful.

I would like to conclude with some words which I wrote as long ago as 1944 about the "false dawn" which I mentioned earlier. I believe that they also apply to the present time and that they adequately describe situation to which Peter Sager and his colleagues have contributed to no small extent.

"It is said that in certain parts of the world when it is still

night the darkness seems to lighten and men are misled into thinking that it is dawn. It turns out, however, that this mysterious light fades again and the night goes on, and it is not till some hours later that the sun actually rises. In time to come, the historian will perhaps describe the Russian Revolution as a false dawn... We live, in Mathew Arnold's phrase "between two worlds, one dead, The other powerless to be born."

These two articles, as mentioned earlier, were written for the *Festschrift* for Peter Sager published fifteen years ago. Out of the blue we received a letter from him in January last year. He wrote: "Due to ill health and old age, I have lost contact with old friends, for which I apologize. I shall in the next days send you my subscription." This he did. In late September this year his wife, Mrs. Bea Sager, informed us in a letter "I have the sad duty to inform you that my husband died on July 1. He had become very tired and went very calmly to sleep at home surrounded by the whole family".

On behalf of *Freedom First* we convey our deepest condolences to Mrs. Bea Sager and her family and share their sense of loss. We shall miss Peter Sager.

^{*} This article by Minoo Masani appeared in a *Festschrift* (a German word meaning a collection of writings/essays in honour of a scholar/ intellectual) published in 1991. The *Festschrift* is titled 'Freedom First'. Ian Tickle the editor of the *Festschrift* explains why this title: "The title of the *Festschrift* is intended as a tribute to Minoo Masani, one of the fathers of modern India and a tireless fighter for freedom. Born in 1905, he has been engaged in the struggle for longer than most of us and is still engaged in it. Thirty-eight years ago, he founded India's first liberal magazine, *Freedom First*, which has kept the torch blazing through many dark hours. The cause of democracy in India and all over the world owes him a debt that can never be repaid."

With a Begging Bowl to Saudi Arabia

T. H. Chowdary

Sri Arjun Singh, the Human Resource Development Minister went to Saudi Arabia and concluded an agreement under which the Saudi government will give a few billion dollars to the Jamia Milia University in Delhi and the latter would establish an Arabic centre and hundreds of Saudi and other Arab students will come to study here and disseminate Arabism and Islam in the world. Of course, India will be the primary target.

India from times immemorial has been glorying in the Upanishadic wisdom *Aanoh bhadraah, ritavo yantu viswatah* (let noble thoughts come from all quarters of the world).

What we have always been welcoming are noble thoughts but we cannot welcome and facilitate the growth of ignoble thoughts and ignoble ideologies and theologies on our soil with our assistance. Saudi Arabia is a fundamentalist Wahhabi Islamist state. Tens of thousands of Indians – Hindus, Christians, Muslims – are working in various ranks and capacities in Saudi Arabia. Christians from other countries like the Philippines are also working there. While these people belonging to non-Islamic religions are allowed to work and build up that country's wealth, Saudi Arabia does not permit any freedom of religion. Christians and Sikhs cannot publicly profess, practise much less propagate their religion. At the immigration counters in the sea and airports itself, Saudi officials confiscate any religion-related literature, picture or paintings or any other material. Such is the intolerance that the Saudi state practices on people of religions other than Islam.

Even after the US asked the Saudi government to expunge all matter in their textbooks sowing hatred against people of other religions, only a small part is removed but the textbooks still contain absolute contempt and hatred for and intolerance of all other religions. The so-called reformed text books in current usage in Saudi educational institutions had been got translated by Arabic scholars in Washington into English and to the horror of Americans, they are seen to still contain hatred and intolerance towards other religions and even *jihad* is extolled.

Arjun Singh is a Minister in the Government of India which is secular. When he went to Saudi Arabia, why did he not take up with the Saudi government the question of religious freedom for Hindus, Sikhs and Christians of India working in Saudi Arabia? Why did he not ask Saudi Arabia that India's treatment of Saudi interests will be on a reciprocal basis and not unilaterally submissive to the sentiments and demands and wishes of Saudi Arabia?

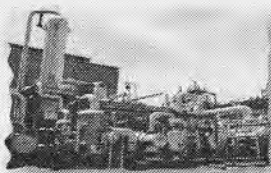
India is currently subsidising the Haj pilgrimage of Indian Muslims to Mecca to the extent of Rs.250 crores a year. And that amount is increasing; the numbers are also increasing. Why could he not cite this liberalism and respect for minority religion of India and ask Saudi Arabia to show reciprocal respect for Hindu, Christian sentiments and their desire to profess and practice their religions while working in Saudi Arabia?

The Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad wanted to open a campus in Singapore. The government of Singapore was all smiles and it welcomed this idea. But Arjun Singh ruled against the IIM having any campus in Singapore. There was criticism of this restrictive practice. Then IIM, Bangalore ventured to open a campus in Singapore. Singapore welcomed it. It was inaugurated by the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore. This is a signal achievement of our higher institutions of excellence. It is not only the American universities like Harvard, MIT and Stanford that can open campuses and promote their brand abroad; Indian institutes are venturing to do so. They deserve government's support and encouragement. Arjun Singh did not go to Singapore; on the other hand, he crawled to Saudi Arabia which has nothing to offer to us in the realms of science, technology, management and other professional faculties.

DR. HANUMAN CHOWDARY is Director, Center for Telecom Management & Studies; formerly Chairman & Managing Director, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. and Information Technology Advisor, Government of Andhra Pradesh. Dr. Chowdary can be contacted on thc@satyam.com.

We were there ...

When



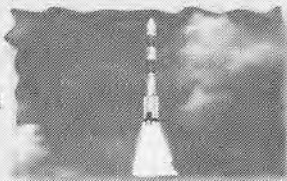
fertilizer projects triggered the 'Green Revolution' • When power

plants unlocked the energy of the



atom • When India took a giant

leap in



aerospace • When our defence services



guarded the nation's honour • When



oil platforms tapped the riches

below the ocean bed • When refineries transformed crude oil into black

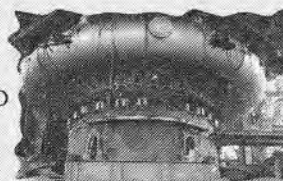


gold • When



bridges and highways knit the country together

• When steel plants provided spine and sinews to



industry • When

IT carried



the Indian tricolour around the world.



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BOOK REVIEWS



POVERTY, GENDER AND MIGRATION ♦ Edited by Sadhana Arya & Anupama Roy ♦ Published by Sage Publications, B-42, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110 017 ♦ Second Volume: 2006 ♦ No. of Pages: 261 ♦ Price: Rs.320

Reviewed by S. Arunajatesan, formerly Deputy General Manager, State Bank of India.

The book on *Poverty, Gender and Migration* by Sadhana Arya and Anupama Roy is the second in a series of five volumes on the subject of Women and Migration in Asia. It is based on papers presented in the conference on "Women and Migration in Asia" held in New Delhi in the year 2003 and the themes that emerged in the discussions.

Migration is a common phenomenon in the history of mankind in all ages. The book under review deals with the migration of women from the Asian countries during the twentieth century. While the major portion of the book deals with women folk from India on their migration both within India and to foreign countries, the issues relating to migration of women from Sri Lanka, Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal have also been dealt with.

Migration always results in movement from familiar turf to an alien land and consequently causes uncertainty, fear and vulnerability. The compulsions of migration and the resultant consequences of an undesirable nature have been well documented with detailed analysis from socio-economic and cultural angles.

It is evident from the presentation that the prime movers in this regard are poverty and unemploy-

ment. However, they have not ignored the inter play of other factors of social, political, cultural and religious origin. Most people on most occasions are impelled to move away from their native place or the settled locality for monetary gain.

The urge is stronger when the situation in his/her place is oppressive and discriminatory with or without ill treatment and loss of self respect. It is true that they escape from many of these ills when they migrate to a new place. Unfortunately in the alien land or the new place of settlement many other problems visit them. They are paid less than what is promised, meet with inhuman treatment, suffer violence and sexual exploitation. The absence of community support and family backing render the immigrants helpless and weak.

In the matter of migration there is not much difference in the number of persons between men and women who migrate. And in many cases women earn more than men and support the family back home. However, women are always given a secondary position and less importance. Male domination continues in one form or another. The findings revealed in the book although interesting and satisfying in a few cases, are, by and large, disturbing. In cross border migration the countries which are sending people and the other which are receiving them have got a vested interest in such migration. However, it turns out to be a bargain between unequals. The mi-

grating people and their sponsoring countries are poor and desperate. On the other hand those who employ them and their countries are rich and powerful. Besides sponsoring countries, despite having laws that are meant to safeguard the interests of migration labour, do not take sincere interest, more so in the case of unskilled and not so well educated workers.

The developed and rich countries which employ migrant labourers in large numbers despite their preaching on human rights, dignity of individuals and human welfare, do very little in concrete shape to protect the immigrants. They are treated like slaves, and worse than their pet animals. The problem is little less in case of educated women workers such as nurses, teachers, etc.

Strangely women who migrate to developed countries are respected in their Motherland but not those who go to developing countries including Gulf countries. Yet another serious issue arises, when the women of the house migrate to a foreign country leaving behind husband and children, who go astray. But in many cases women send home money. And it helps them to lead a better life. In quite a good number of cases, extended family also gets support.

Migrations within Indian border also bristle with several problems. There are multiple types of migration viz. seasonal, temporary,

permanent, whole family movement, individual movement leaving family at home, rural to rural, rural to urban especially to Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi which attract people from almost all the states in India. All those who migrate are Indian citizens enjoying certain rights and status in the place of origin. They lose the power and status in the new place. They become vulnerable to exploitation of women. However, a silver lining in the process is that the backward caste and Dalit women gain better status and freedom in the city. They also enjoy a better social

life than in the villages. We may call it lure of the city. But it is satisfying.

Another disturbing trend relates to tribal displacement and migration. Whenever construction of irrigation dam, power project, and mining and similar other developmental works are undertaken they are generally in the forest area and hence tribals are disturbed. There is an influx of non-tribals. While the tribals out migrate the non-tribals, it results in intermingling of tribals who are affected. Their livelihood, culture and tradition are destroyed.

This calls for serious attention of the development authorities. In many respects the tribal culture is more liberal and will get destroyed by the impact and influence of non-tribals who are mostly Hindus.

I consider the book as an interesting and informative work on the gender difference in migration. I hope this book and similar other publications will spur the Government and NGOs into action to mitigate the problems of migrating women.



Even as the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi were explored and disseminated by the common man, inclusive economics has been attempting to provide a method of study which tries to combine the benefits of secondary and primary analyses to find solutions from the perspective and experience of an honest researcher. The ideas of the author are set in the economic environment of the '70s when researchers in economics were battling with the relative advantages and disadvantages of secondary and primary data. Historical data while permitting statistical rigour does not accommodate the fruits of empiricism. This book makes a systematic approach to an inclusive method which tries to put together as many methods as possible in a

INCLUSIVE ECONOMICS - Gandhian Method and Contemporary Policy
 ♦ By: Narendar Pani ♦ Published by Sage Publications, India Pvt Ltd.,
 M-32, Greater Kailash, Part I, New Delhi 110 048 ♦ Year of Publication
 2001 ♦ No of pages:194 ♦ Price Rs 380

Reviewed by Dr. U. Jayalakshmi Srikumar, Faculty Member, ICAI Business School, Chennai.

meaningful research exercise. The author has put this method to the test in his attempt to study the impact of land reforms in the State of Karnataka and has come out with reliable conclusions. An attempt has been made to look into Gandhian ideas to provide a framework for inclusive economics.

As a testimony to the application of Gandhian thought the author tries to apply this method to the Indian Budget of 1991 which was introduced at a time when India was going through a very serious economic crisis. The author feels that the Gandhian alternative would have done away with the practice of simplifying complex realities into mundane economic models. Particularly, it would have given the rural economy more prominence.

In attempting to do so, it would have focused attention to those who were not beneficiaries of the Green Revolution, particularly,

dryland farmers who have no access to large scale technology. The Gandhian alternative while looking into individual gains from development would have also examined the environmental, social and displacement costs. Gains from advancement in technology would have also reached the remote villages with the help of satellite linkages and a good turnout of computer programmers.

The Gandhian method of development would have thus made the Indian economy more competitive in the global environment. The inclusive method would have reaffirmed the fact that the reforms process is not just reduction in government control but that it involves a series of other initiatives for the market to become more efficient than now. Even in terms of generation of revenue the inclusive Gandhian method would have gone farther ahead than what Manmohan Singh did.

The author very rightly points out that the methodology of economics cannot foresee a crisis and given that the consequences of crises are complicated, many economic models deliberately leave them out. This is the outcome of the fact that mainstream economics has a strong tendency to swing between monetarism, Keynesianism and a number of other models belonging to the Left or Right.

The inclusive method by combining the methods which lists out objectives and their consequences makes possible the choice of an alternative to choose appropriate action for policy by a right evaluation of consequences. The Gandhian method while evaluating consequences based on the premise of morality, duly recognises the fact that defining of morality is indeed slippery. It therefore takes recourse to the concept of relative morality, though the author very correctly points out that relative morality must not promise to society what it cannot deliver.

The method makes a reference to tolerance which emanates from the fact that a consensus is difficult to reach when addressing the question of empowerment of the different groups in society. To do the same the method should attempt at improving the quality of subjective judgment. The essence of the Gandhian method recognises the important role played by the scientific method in the economy and society as a whole. But ironically, he did not come up with a scientifically proven analysis. However this should not be taken as a cause for inaction. On the contrary, in areas dominated by faith, conscientious efforts must be made to improve the quality of subjective judgements

The inclusive method is quite open to abstraction especially in cases where one has to view the

economy as a maze of relationships. Abstraction is useful in analysing action-consequence relationships, wherein isolating a particular relationship gives a clearer picture of the relationship which is far superior to the method of reducing reality to a single relationship.

The Gandhian method takes a detour from conventional economics when it attempts to lay emphasis on finding answers to questions which depend on the premise of building up our case. The author concludes most appropriately that economics becomes more inclusive by recognizing the Gandhian method of analysis.

The Gandhian method is not free of drawbacks. The first danger according to the author is that it can be called disguised absolutism. In

dealing with pluralism the sanction to use all elements, including rhetoric and moral force to convince others can eventually lead to one's faith in that position becoming absolute. The second major source for errors of judgement is the role of ideals which suffer criticism as they are far from reality.

This book is a must read for all academicians, researchers and policy makers. The relevance of the book is further enhanced by the fact that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has made a deliberate attempt to incorporate the concept of 'inclusive economics' in the 11 Five Year Plan by emphasising the fact that the rural sector must be included in the wide gamut of activities planned for the rapid development of the Indian economy.

Coca-Cola's "Ethical" Alternative Virgin Cola!

The University of Sussex in England has banned the sale of a certain substance in its student union, citing concerns about human-rights abuses in Colombia. According to student protestors, the producers of this substance in that country routinely mistreat their workers, ruthlessly attack their competitors, and sell an addictive product that poisons the bodies of consumers. Now his might be reasonable enough if we were talking about Coke. But Sussex has banned Coke. You see, the anti-corporate Left has been waging a publicity campaign against the soft drink giant for years, making all sorts of wild accusations that have never been substantiated. In fact, the Coca-Cola Company is a much-needed source of stability, employmen and tax revenue in Colombia's struggling economy. But this doesn't matter to the anti-Coke movement, which is primarily about posturing – against globalization, against capitalism, and especially against American capitalism. So Sussex has replaced Coke with various "ethical" alternatives, including a brand known as Virgin Cola. It's a fine product, we're sure, but isn't the name a bit puritanical for the modern university?

National Review, September 11, 2006



More than two decades have passed since Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* swept the Oscars and conjured up this moral titan for general understanding. Mr Nazareth's book rekindles memory, highlighting the many contributions of Gandhi that transcend the yet extraordinary historical feat of liberating a sub-continent.

Mr. Paschal Alan Nazareth had a distinguished career in the Indian Foreign Service. In his retirement, he felt the need to make a continuing contribution to public life. The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi gripped him with epiphanic intensity; the result was the founding of the Sarvodaya International. Distinguished luminaries, nationally and internationally were aligned to his way of thinking and this forum has emerged into a forceful think tank in articulating issues of national and global concern. The fruits of his thinking and writing are crystallized in the book: *Gandhi's Outstanding Leadership* which seeks to revivify the Gandhian legacy for inspiring leadership in our corrupt and turbulent times.

A particularly interesting segment of the book relates to Gandhi's impact on Intellectuals, Exceptional individuals, Nobel Laureates, Liberation and People's Power Movements, anti-nuclear and Green initiatives at the grassroot and global levels. A chapter especially lauded by President A.P.J. Abdul

GANDHI'S OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP ♦ Editors: Paschal Alan Nazareth ♦ Sarvodaya International Trust jointly with Gandhi Centre of Science and Human Values and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan ♦ Year of Publication : 2006 ♦ No. of Pages : 127 ♦ Price: Rs.200

Reviewed by Ms. Giselle D. Mehta, an entrepreneur and freelance writer.

Kalam has been the author's examination of the Gandhian influence on Management Theory and Practice – concepts of Total Quality Management, Corporate Social Responsibility and the aspirational Level 5 leadership of People Capable Maturity Model of which the Gandhian persona is the epitome.

The author evaluates Gandhi's impact on Science and Technology, albeit on an idealistic level that is not necessarily correlated with the actual progress of the Indian nation. The Gandhian vision has been the very reverse of Nehru's with its emphasis on high technology and large industries. India has come a long way from Gandhi's utopian dreams founded on the spinning wheel and self sufficient rural economy; its emerging status as a global powerhouse for services is derived from the innate genius of the Indian people that is more in line with 19th century theories of Individualism.

But I offer some observations of my own that would partially endorse the author's views. Some years ago, a beauty queen who went on to become Miss Universe won her crown with the novel statement that Indian fashion began with Gandhi. This naïve statement negates sartorial traditions stretching back millennia but ironically validates that '*the half naked fakir*' is an unlikely high priest of expensive *haute couture* that utilizes rural craftsmanship.

Gandhi's doctrine of Trusteeship accepted the reality of industrialization but sought a social ownership of the fruits of Enterprise. The author sees this philosophy in action in the enterprises of the Tata

Group and the socially minded lifestyles of Narayana Murthy and Azim Premji. Equally, I perceive the recently announced munificences of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet as embodying a very Gandhian spirit. But I note a small irony that these fortunes have been founded on a technology that is both empowering as also displacing of manpower in a manner that Gandhi most abhorred.

The recent film *Lage Raho Munnabhai* brings to popular parlance the concept of '*Gandhigiri*' as the very opposite of *Dadagiri* – moral force to resist oppression. Quite coincidentally, I arrived at the last chapter of the book *Vindication of Gandhi's Vision and Strategy in a Global Scenario* the day after the blasts in Mumbai were gorily etched in the mind. The author attributes such events as 9/11 to a culture of violence rooted in Western insensitivity, and the implicit solution to him is adherence to the Gandhian ethic of non-violence. Arthur Koestler attributed the success of Gandhian tactics to the fact that the British were a fundamentally decent adversary in contrast with the brutal Nazis. He derided Gandhi's futile commendation of Satyagraha to Jewish inmates of concentration camps destined for the gas chambers; the climate for effective soul force presupposes an opponent amenable to reason and fair play. I was intrigued to come across the Rosenstrasse Prison Demonstration in 1943 providing an outstanding instance when the Gestapo blinked – a vociferous non-violent protest in Berlin by the wives and mothers of Jewish men with Aryan kin that secured them an unexpected release from the certain horrors of Nazi detention.

A logical perception in general understanding is that a soft state makes innocent citizens vulnerable to terror if an appropriate firmness of response is not displayed, especially since the tactics of Jihad are seemingly governed by a zealotry not answerable to the norms of civilized society. Interestingly, Jeffrey Sachs in *The End of Poverty* recommends that American security policy should focus more on poverty alleviation to eliminate global terrorism – Weapons of Mass Salvation over those of Mass Destruction. The profile of terrorists emerging from the spate of blasts to rock our country would indicate the disturbing truth that disaffection emerging from poverty and unemployment makes a sinister bedfellow with fundamentalist religious precept in swelling the ranks of footsoldiers to Terror's armies from hitherto unlikely locations.

Reading through the book took me back to my own poem Ar-

mageddon, whose concluding lines resonate with a Gandhian influence I had not previously supposed –

Terror's new trophies are tentacles that spread

Haunting many societies with hatred and dread.

As the wheels of vengeance constantly roll and rotate

There's perennial renaissance of retaliatory hate-

Chilling past prophecies wake to their dawn

In the tragedies of an Armageddon;

The aggressed and aggressor will know no distinction

As victim and victor both fight to extinction.

Priced at Rs.200, this extensively researched book by Mr. Nazareth has enjoyed releases by eminent persons in different cities over the past few months. Former Prime Minister I. K. Gujral, who released it in New Delhi lauded it as 'remarkable and enlightening'. He duly handed over the first book in

the release package to Mrs. Tara Bhattacharya, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and Chairman of the National Gandhi Memorial and Exhibition Trust.

The book was released in Bangalore, the author's home city at Raj Bhavan, by Karnataka Governor T. N. Chaturvedi. An eminent speaker on this occasion was Justice M. N. Venkatachaliah, former Chief Justice of India, who also wrote the Foreword to the book. An eventful release also took place at the Landmark Bookstore in Mumbai, graced by Mr. Shyam Benegal M.P. who is Producer/Director of the film 'Making of the Mahatma'. He described the book as "a veritable gold mine on Gandhiji's ideas, evolution and broad spectrum impact on India and the world". In the words of Raj Mohan Gandhi, grandson of the Mahatma, Mr. Nazareth's analytical offering makes for a 'fine and much needed book.'

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Although first published, in Gujarati, way back in 1943, with the first English edition coming out in 1999, this volume continues to have relevance to Parsi and Irani Zarathusti's and should be of particular interest to the younger members of the community who are rediscovering their roots and who are eager to go beyond the routine rituals of their religion and find out a bit more about their history.

Mirza, who passed away in 1996 at the age of 90, belonged to one of Udvada's oldest priestly families. He was the head priest at the Mirza Daremeher (fire temple) at Jamnagar for many decades. This book is essentially a compilation of letters Mirza penned to his sister over an extended period. Mirza's prose does tend to get rather flowery; eg: "Motherland! Oh who would be ignorant of the marvelous effects of one's dear country? Which man's heart would not be touched by the sacred attraction to the motherland?" However, if one can get past that, the book does contain some rather interesting material.

As Mirza points out while referring to the Parsi holy of holies at Udvada, Shree Iranshah "is the link between the past and present times of the Parsi community", a watershed as it were between two epochs; the first in Iran and the later one in India. Mirza's avowed hope is that Parsees reading this history "would be filled with pride in their religion." Mirza admits to taking a

THE HISTORY OF THE HOLY FIRE IRANSHAH • By Ervad Faramroze Phiroz Mirza Published by: Rustom Phiroz Mirza

Reviewed by Firoze Hirjikaka, freelance writer and retired Civil Engineer.

few liberties with strict historical events in order to make the book simple and interesting.

The book touches briefly on the so-called golden age of Zoroastrianism in Iran during Sassanian rule in the early part of the first millennium, but really takes off from the decline and eventual fall of the dynasty in the seventh century owing to the gathering forces of the new religion of Islam. An interesting fact to emerge is that, although the Arab invasion of Iran in 637 A.D led to a near extinction of the Zoroastrian religion in Iran, Dastur Dinyar, a religious leader at the court of the Sassanian Shah Noshervan, was counted by the prophet Mohammed as one of his principal advisers.

As Mirza's account relates, in the immediate aftermath of the Arab invasion, a group of Zoroastrians initially fled to the Iranian province of Kohistan to preserve their religion. However, as Arab control gradually extended over the whole of Iran, they forcibly compelled all Iranians to accept their religion. A graphic passage in the book describes how "to make the Parsi parents accept Islam; the Arabs threatened to slaughter their infant children before their eyes and tortured the women before the eyes of their men." Inevitably, those Iranians who were determined to preserve their ancient religion had no alternative but to flee the country and head towards India.

As Mirza points out, India was not entirely unknown to those Iranian refugees. Indeed, Cyrus the Great and his successor Darius had conquered what is now Punjab and Sind as early as the sixth century B.C. Moreover, at the time of the

Zoroastrian exodus, there was a flourishing trade between Iran and India and, in fact, a small Parsi state already existed in Kathiawar in Gujarat. Perhaps these factors influenced the 'boat-people' to seek refuge in India.

It is now well known that the first settlers landed at Diu. They stayed there for 19 years before moving on to Sanjan and the tryst with King Jadhav Rana that is now part of Parsi folklore. After settling in Sanjan, the Parsees quite logically wanted to establish a sacred Atash Behram, to serve as the focal point of their Zoroastrian religion. The King granted them permission and a small plot of land in Sanjan. Mirza then goes on to give a description of how the holy fire was consecrated using 16 different types of fires.

The Parsees settled and prospered in Sanjan for almost seven hundred years, before that state was attacked by the armies of Mahmud Tughlaq in the early 15th century. The Parsees sided with the local rulers but could not prevail against the overwhelming odds stacked against them. In an effort to protect Shree Iranshah, they shifted the holy fire to a secret place atop a mountain called Bahrot, about ten miles from Sanjan. The remaining part of Mirza's book deals with the Iranshah's eventual journey and establishment in Udvada.

All in all, then, a fairly interesting, slim volume for those Parsees curious about their origins in India. Readers expecting great prose may be disappointed but, if one can filter out the chaff, a significant amount of historical data can be gleaned.

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