

Freedom First

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A Liberal Quarterly

India's Foreign Policy

The Makeover

from Ideology to National Self-interest

Paradigm Shift by Instalments
Prof. B. Ramesh Babu

Making Friends and Influencing Nations
Sharad Bailur

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal
Maj.Gen.(retd.) Eustace D'Souza



H. D. SHOURIE

An Exceptional Man's COMMON CAUSE

Mr. H. D. Shourie, founder of COMMON CAUSE, passed away a year ago on June 28. We pay our tribute to his memory on the occasion of the first anniversary by reproducing an extensive extract from an article published in the Special Memorial Issue of COMMON CAUSE published last December.

"The voice of the common man must rise," said this soft-spoken revolutionary,

on his 91st year, after a quarter century of coaxing that voice out with the promise that he would ensure it got heard. H. D. Shourie, civil servant for 35 years and an agent of civil action for over 25, died on 28th June 2005, having lived a life that straddled many borders.

The most obvious boundary perhaps would be the one created across India in 1947. Shourie worked as a City Magistrate in Rawalpindi and then Lahore till the eve of Partition, when he was appointed Deputy Commissioner for Refugee Relief on this side of Punjab. His career, though successful, acquainted him with an uncomfortable paradox. Years later, he would say 'Throughout my career, I was faced with numerous complaints from ordinary citizens. But being in the government, I could not do much to ameliorate their plight.'

Another man might have adapted to the notorious inefficiency of governance. Or sunk, as many do, into what Shourie deplored as 'thinking only about oneself, never about others ... the *chalta hai* attitude'. But Shourie, fired by a sense of purpose often missing in much younger men, plunged almost immediately from retirement into civil action. Major General U. C. Dubey recounts with love and admiration how what began with repeated trips to DESU over incorrect billing and gathered steam over conversations between retired neighbours sipping afternoon tea eventually gave rise to COMMON CAUSE a forum for consumer complaints that, in its greatest victories, benefited millions.

Why am I sticking my neck out?

Because that is what a neck is for! Is it not?

Founded in 1980, COMMON CAUSE lists as its first important case the fight over liberalised pensions. Though of great benefit to pensioners, this liberalisation excluded those who had retired before its implementation in 1979. Shourie began by writing to the Government. When this failed, he wrote in newspapers, asking the disqualified pensioners to send him their stories. Letters poured in and, armed with a stupendous 15,000 representations, COMMON CAUSE returned to the Government. Once again, their appeal was turned down. Undaunted, Shourie approached a lawyer who drafted a Writ Petition. 'I did not even know,' Shourie later reminisced, 'What a Writ Petition was!' Two years later, the Supreme Court gave its decision. COMMON CAUSE had won, and the repercussions would affect 4 million people – 'one hell of a lot of pensioners,' as Shourie would later put it, with characteristic humour.

Shourie did not rest to savour his victory. In rapid succession, he took on cases that dealt with property tax, malfunctioning

blood banks, the Rent Law, electricity billing and telephone complaints, the inefficiency of airlines, the reduction of pending criminal cases and the financial accountability of political parties during elections. In all, COMMON CAUSE filed 70 Writ Petitions over 25 years, many drafted by Shourie himself, who began to appear regularly in courts, arguing his cases himself.

I cannot reconcile myself to the fact that there are problems around and I cannot solve them ... These are the things that push me. I have an urge within. If I can do it, why shouldn't I? If there is something that is causing inconvenience why should I not try and eradicate it? I cannot divest myself of the responsibility.

And the more responsibilities he took on, the more vital his existence became, despite his advancing age. He did not suffer from the weakness, frustration and anger that so often accompanies old age. Yet he was aware of the lonely debility that can plague the aged; and such thoughts led to one of his greatest passions, the morality of euthanasia. Shourie wrote extensively on the subject, fought its case in court and eventually produced a book, *Life's Finale: Voluntary Exit*.

At 90, he published a book of humour, *The Funniest Jokes in the World*, because 'one must never lose one's ability to laugh.' And he wrote, relentlessly. A small black notebook travelled in his pocket at all times, he would use it to jot down a line of poetry, or read out a particularly appropriate couplet. Friends, relatives and acquaintances, those who met him briefly, like reporters, and those whose interaction was more sustained, all remember Shourie with his notebook, and remember the lines he read out to them. His three children, Arun Shourie the former editor of Indian Express and Member of Parliament, Nalini Singh the television journalist and Deepak Shourie, the Managing Director of Discovery Communications, associate their upbringing with their father's pithy advice. 'You are eagles,' he would tell them. 'And you will soar to great heights. Contrary winds will only raise you higher.'

Such calm coupled with a magnificent simplicity characterised all Shourie's endeavours – the simplicity of flowers and water, the liquid clarity of jokes and shayari, the everyday relevance of the causes he undertook. His death even was almost effortless – he worked as usual the day before and died peacefully in his sleep. And all the emotion that followed the news – again a simple grief. Condolence letters and obituaries spoke of his wisdom, courage and dedication; and the authors' sense of loss was apparent. This 'man of many gifts' as Khushwant Singh called him, this 'messiah of the masses' to the newspapers referred to him, Hari to his friends and a man of almost divine powers to the millions he helped, H. D. Shourie left behind an uncommonly poignant legacy: "The voice of the common man must rise."

Freedom First

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

It is now over 16 years since India's 'U' turn in Economic policy began. The bankrupting of our economy almost coincided with the people's demolition of the Berlin Wall, and which signalled the destruction of the Soviet empire. The two were in a manner of speaking inter-connected so far as India was concerned. Our economy was modelled on the Soviet pattern minus the totalitarian apparatus and our relations with the outside world were largely dictated by an ideological orientation which went by the name of non-alignment. And our non-alignment was clearly dictated by what was convenient to the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union ceased to exist it was a double whammy, long in coming but come it did. Another fortunate coincidence was the fact that for the first time we had a government headed by someone outside the Nehru-Indira Gandhi family. This made it easy for him to jettison the economic junk that went by the name of policy. The accession to power by the BJP-led NDA enabled India to deal with the post-cold war situation and pursue new and more realistic relationships based on our national interests. Hence this issue's cover feature on India's foreign policy, a makeover from ideology to national-self interest.

By another coincidence, this time pertaining to this issue, we profile and pay our tribute to four men of substance the first three are no longer with us viz., The 'Common Cause' crusader H. D. Shourie; the Civil Servant and Parliamentarian J. M. Lobo Prabhu of the ICS; Public Intellectual, Novelist and Author Arthur Koestler and social worker Baburao Chandawar.

In the next issue we return once again to the subject of Reservations. Instead of being phased out, the scope of Reservations is widening to cover so many sections of our population that ultimately everyone will become part of one reserved category or another! We invite you to write in your views on the relevance of this strategy which even Dr. Ambedkar viewed as a very temporary measure to give a helping hand to victims of an unjust social order arising from the pernicious caste system. You can send your contribution by email at freedom@vsnl.com. You can also mail or fax your comments. **Deadline: Monday June 19, 2006.**

Editor

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WITH MANY VOICES

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

I am happy that for the first time we (Iranian women) will be allowed to enter the stadiums like ordinary human beings.

Iranian writer and activist Parstoo Dokouhki,
The Indian Express, April 25, 2006

In the age of Mandal-II everyone and everything has been tinged by quotas, including the rehabilitation work for families affected by the Narmada project.

Dhananjoy Mahapatra,
The Times of India, April 19, 2006

"We should learn from China". Chances are you've heard that quite often. But this one (clean environment) is different. All I want to say is: Let's not learn from China.

Bharati Chaturvedi of Earthwatch,
Hindustan Times, January 23, 2006

Leadership cannot be created...It has to be built slowly, brick by brick.

Rahul Gandhi, *Mumbai Mirror*, January 24

It is often forgotten that while we revel in blaming politicians, bureaucrats and exploitative businessmen for all the ills of society, we overlook the fact that all the 'villains' are citizens first and everything else afterwards.

IIM Ahmedabad Professor Jagdeep S. Chhokar,
The Times of India, March 17

India is the only region, in the arc from Morocco to Indonesia, to not have a Muslim majority. It also proves that forced conversions were rare, because of the Quranic injunction (2.256) "no force in religion".

Professor J. S. Bandukwala,
Economic and Political Weekly, April 8

We don't give a damn for heritage. People defecate and urinate here. There is just not enough legislation to protect such monuments unless it is spectacular like the (Victoria Terminus).

Heritage Studies teacher Kurush Dalal, quoted by
Nausher Bharucha of *The Times of India*
and cited in *Parsiana*, April 21

The upcoming generation, are attracted to a character like Nick Naylor, who is saying "Let's calm down and stop telling everyone how to live their lives".

Hollywood writer Director Jason Reitman cited by
Kristopher Tapley in the *New York Times*
and quoted in *Hindustan Times*, April 11

China is no longer a Communist country. It's a one party state. They do not talk communism any more. All they talk is profits, investment and competition.

Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram,
The Indian Express, January 6

In recent years, February has become a month of two secular festivals celebrated with a lot of hype. The first is St. Valentine's Day on February 14...The other secular festival that is much hyped is the budget presentation on February 28.

Former Chief Vigilance Commissioner N. Vittal,
Mumbai Mirror, March 6

Dangerous 'sarkari' is the underlying philosophy of the proposed Bill to amend the Indian Post Office Act of 1898. For while the stated intention is to regulate the functioning of private courier services (which obviously did not exist when the parent Act was legislated), in reality it sets out to strangle them.

Editorial in *The Statesman*, April 24

Politicians in all parties would like to continue to profit from the loot of the public exchequer. The consensus for sharing the booty may be a blatant fraud on the Constitution and on We, the people of India, who are completely insensitised to assert and speak up.

Editorial in *South Asia Politics*, a monthly, by its editor
and former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha
Subhash C. Kashyap, April 2006

I led you for 35 years and you order me out of the court?

Former Iraq dictator Saddam Hussein to
the Judge trying him, *Mumbai Mirror*, January 30

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

A Temple Opens its Doors to All

A welcome event is a report in the press that the well-known Venkateswara Balaji Temple at Phanaswadi in Mumbai has thrown open its doors to all human beings irrespective of caste, religion or nationality. The significance of this decision is that it is voluntary and not forced upon the temple management. They took this decision after reading the press report that the American spouse of a Hindu woman was denied entry because he was a foreigner. A very secular decision indeed on a religious matter.

*

The Perils of Pedestrians

Between January and November 2005 there were as many as 26,626 road accidents in the city of Mumbai.

Of these 576 were fatal. While a majority of those killed were pedestrians, motor bike riders accounted for 99 and pillion riders 24. Bad roads may account for many of these accidents but that is only one among other reasons. Driving in Mumbai city is no longer recommended for the faint-hearted. The tremendous increase in the number of two, three and four wheelers is compounded by near total absence of road discipline. Traffic lights whenever functioning are there to be ignored by both pedestrians and vehicle drivers. Most of the time obedience to traffic lights has to be enforced by traffic cops. Vehicles when they do obey the red light do so by stopping their cars on the Zebra crossing. A *Statesman* report (January 23) says: "It is impossible to use the zebra crossing at the Park Circus junction. The traffic just does not stop to allow pedestrians to cross...Ironically there is a notice saying that pedestrians should use the zebra crossing!" This is in Kolkata. Mumbai is no better. *Freedom First* office is located at 'Kala Ghoda' famously a Heritage precinct. The zebra crossing (though for the larger part of the year the paint on the zebra becomes invisible) is perhaps among the most dangerous in Mumbai – fatal accidents waiting to happen. Most of the time, this writer has noticed traffic cops indifferent to such open violation of rules. Another interesting observation is that the fancier the car the less willing is the driver (owner or chauffeur-driven) to obey traffic lights. Perhaps this is a manifestation of a greater malaise – growing indiscipline in all other spheres where humans are involved.

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



Tenzin Tsundue is not a Terrorist!

After the terrorist attack in Bangalore last December the Director of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) was asked by the press about an earlier incident in the IISc campus by a 'Tibetan Activist' (Tenzin Tsundue). The Director Mr. P. Balaram replied: First of all that incident was a political protest not directed against the Institute. He chose the location because the Chinese Premier was there." Well said Sir! You deserve to be complimented for underlining the essential difference between legitimate protest and cowardly terrorist acts.

*

Lenin's Cadaver

A *New York Times* reporter in Moscow has filed a story about the pitiful state of Lenin's cadaver. His report points out that "time has been unkind to Lenin, whose remains here in Red Square are said to sprout occasional fungi, and whose ideology and party long ago fell to ruins. Now the inevitable question has returned. Should his body be moved."

An aide to Russian president Putin supporting his chief's view 'that it was time to bury the man' said: "Our country has been shaken by strife, but only a few people were held accountable for that in our lifetime. I do not think it is fair that those who initiated the strife remain in the centre of our state near the Kremlin. But the surviving commies consider this suggestion blasphemous. Gennadi Zyuganov, a relic of the CPSU, described those who want Lenin's cadaver out of way as those "who do not know the country's history and stretch out their dirty hands and muddy ideas to the national necropolis."

Here's a suggestion for consideration by the communists in Russia and elsewhere and of course by our swadeshi comrades: why not cremate him and distribute his ashes in urns to be placed in a prominent place in communist party offices alongside Lenin's photo thus making their offices prayer rooms where the faithful can make their offerings.

*

Parliament's Own TV Channel

According to a press report (*Hindustan Times*, January 8) the Lok Sabha was to have started its own TV channel beginning April. This writer is not aware whether this is on the air. Perhaps like most government initiatives this has been delayed. According to the report "There'll be live telecasts of house proceedings and studio discussions. The fear of being constantly watched will restrain the trouble-makers, it is hoped."

Also, perhaps being seen on TV might ensure better attendance even when such dull items as discussion of grants are being debated.

At an initial cost of Rs.20 crores and an annual recurring cost of Rs.13 crores a year the project was, as on early January this year, "in an advanced stage." Funding presents no difficulty as the Speaker has "commitments from ministers for advertisements by PSUs and TRPs won't be a problem." This "brainchild" of the Lok Sabha Speaker, could be extended to the Rajya Sabha if the Chairperson of that House agrees.

This innovation that will bring parliamentary democracy in action, to the living rooms of citizens, is welcome and will contribute to a better understanding of how the system works. Perhaps it may even help, in the long run, to upgrading the quality of debates and, also in the long run, to the rejection of non-performing MPs by voters the next time round. Meanwhile considering the current level of debates and frequent display of indiscipline and disrespect for the Speaker, the Channel might consider warning viewers as is being done in the case of English movies that 'Parental Guidance is Recommended. Suitable for viewing by those above the age of 18!'

*

Attempt to "Strangle" the Courier Industry

The proposed Bill to amend the Indian Post Office Act of 1898 (no typo this) has one single aim – the survival of the Post Office by destroying competition and thereby return to the 'happy' days (but bad old days for the citizen) of state monopoly. Of the many comments in the press *The Statesman* editorial (April 24) is the most

forthright. It states *inter alia* : "By 'reserving' – fast becoming a dirty word – mail of less than 300 grams for the postal department, the draft amendment excludes the couriers from handling what the common man perceives as 'letters' and which provides the bulk of their business. Not a word is mentioned about the efficiency, the absence of which has cost the post office dear. Surely those drafting the Bill ought to have realised that the public is not downright stupid, and if it is prepared to pay more (from its own pocket rather than the exchequer) than double the postal rates, there must be a valid reason for doing so. That reason is simple, the letters are delivered, quickly at that."

SVR

Kalamandalam Hyder Ali

Readers of *Freedom First* might not have heard of the passing away of Hyder Ali in a motor crash on January 6, 2006. He was killed instantly, plunging the citizens into shocked grief.



Born in a poor Muslim family of basket weavers he began singing at the age of six, winning accolades and praise. "The people who helped me, a destitute Muslim boy, were a Hindu and a Christian" wrote Hyder Ali in his biography. The Christian was C. P. Anthony who funded him. He successfully completed the course but he had no chance of entering the world of Kathakali till the Hindu M. M. K. Nair a connoisseur of the genre offered him an opening in a Kathakali troupe.

He developed as an unparalleled singer, yet he had to fight against prejudices. But his genius could not be under a bushel. He had a repertoire that was unusual. He gained so much respect that a temple broke its compound wall to enable him to sing from outside the premises for a performance held within.

On hearing that he was killed in a road accident, people from all parts of Kerala rushed to have a glimpse of his body and the cortege. He was given full police honours at his funeral, while thousands joined the procession. As a person he was modest, noble, and highly regarded.

For the first time a Muslim began not only to participate but to be an important part of an art form which was until then a preserve and a monopoly of the Hindus.

RS

India's Foreign Policy – The Makeover from Ideology to National Self-Interest Paradigm Shift by Instalments

B. Ramesh Babu

Closest possible cooperation across the board between the US and India envisioned in the Joint Statement of 18 July 2005 is nothing short of a U turn – a paradigm shift – in the bilateral relationship between the long estranged democracies. The Nuclear Deal doing the Congressional rounds at present would have been unthinkable even two years ago. India has certainly moved far away from the Nehru era and the Menonesque invective against America at the drop of a hat. The radical transformation in our foreign policy is a transition from rhetoric to realism, from touchy independence to mature engagement with the altered ground realities of a globalising world.

There was a time when Prime Minister Nehru would wax eloquent on what was wrong with this country or that world leader's perspective, on global affairs, and offer his wise counsel on the challenges confronting humanity. The Parliament and the people at large greeted his perorations with the acclamation. Nehru and India enjoyed the attention they received for their contribution to the de-escalation of conflicts between the two super powers during the cold war era. However, it must be added that even in those halcyon days of non-alignment, there was informed dissent against and critical disagreement with the habit of hovering in the clouds and neglecting our real interests as a nation state. I still remember with glee, the rare courage of G.G. Swell, a Member of Parliament, who, fed up with the sermons of Nehru, politely enquired whether the honourable Prime Minister had ever considered the virtues of silence and added for effect "Sir, why don't you shut up for a change? "

NAM No Longer Relevant

To be fair to one of the founding fathers of the nation and the architect of India's foreign policy, it must be quickly added that the policy of non-alignment enjoyed the widest possible popular support among all sections of the people. History, our national movement and the correlation of forces on the world scene at that time ordained it. The concept of non-alignment was certainly an important contribution to the theory and practice of foreign policy and international relations. Be that as it may, time does not stand still. Change is the law of life and non-alignment and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) lost their relevance in the altered context of the post cold war world. The collapse of communism and the demise of the Soviet Union ushered in an era of radical reconstruction in the architecture of the global power structure. Liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) as championed by the West

became the new *mantras* of growth the world over. Naturally, India went along and never looked back after the bold and historic reforms initiated by the then Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and his Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, in the early 1990s.

The historic shift has an ancestry of its own and its beginnings can be traced back, of all people, to Indira Gandhi, the avowed champion of socialism. In her post-Emergency *avatar*, she realised that the days of gimmicks were over and her political future was sealed unless she delivered the goods. At the Cancun Summit, President Ronald Reagan and Indira Gandhi, the most unlikely pair imaginable, reportedly "hit it off". Subsequently Indira Gandhi went to the US on a State visit. The two leaders agreed that "mutual carping" would stop and both nations would exercise "reciprocal restraint" in their historically troubled bilateral relationship. Indira Gandhi declared that American investment is doing well in India and the Government of India welcomed more of it.

Economic Reforms – The Beginnings

Soon after returning home, Indira Gandhi decided to begin the unshackling of the economy and a policy of "de-control" was initiated. Industries were allowed to produce to their full capacity. Can you believe it; no "licence or permit" was required to do so! The roots of the future are discernible in the present, if only one is prescient enough to perceive them. The youthful pilot Rajeev Gandhi, who was in his mother's entourage, was more forthcoming. Addressing the prestigious National Press Club, the future Prime Minister of India, in effect, declared: We in India have decided to move rightward and away from the long accustomed leftwing perch. We welcome the US to come in a big way. If you come in with your investment and technology on a large scale, we will move rightward further!

Accordingly, when he became Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi moved forward from mere de-control to de-licensing, de-regulation and the then famous (but ineffective) policy of "one window clearance". Being a post-Independence born young man, he was not hindered by the ideological hang-ups inherited by his mother's generation. The short-lived governments that followed his assassination did their best to move forward along the road of dismantling hurdles to economic and industrial growth. Then came the historic foreign exchange crisis and P.V. Narasimha Rao felt that he had to act because there was no choice. Tons of gold was airlifted to London overnight to avert what was seen as a question of "life and death". It was soon realised that such *ad hoc* moves to tide over emergencies would not do. The *apara Chanakya* of our times, PV decided to take the plunge. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Geeta Krishnan and Manmohan Singh and others of the ex-World Bank-IMF vintage did the groundwork. It was felt that it was high time that the Government retreated from "*the commanding heights of the economy*" and unleash the Indian entrepreneurship. Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister, delivered his historic Budget speech in 1991, which marked a clear watershed and a courageous leap forward. If the bid failed Manmohan Singh would have been allowed to go and PV would have limped along for the rest of his term. Fortunately, the reforms succeeded and the rest is history, as they say. Fortuitously, the same Manmohan Singh is now in the driver's seat. But, let me get back to the paradigm shift as it unfolded.

Since the advent of the BJP led NDA government, Prime Minister Vajpayee and a dominant section of the top leadership (especially Jaswant Singh, and Brajesh Mishra) struggled hard to get close to the US. In fact to get closer to the US than Pakistan was their top priority. After the 1998 Pokhran test (a long standing public promise of the BJP) and the Kargil war (inevitable response to the ISI led terrorist attack on the Parliament House), the NDA Government's anxiety to be on the right side of the US and move very close to her grew deeper by the month. To be one up on Pakistan in Kashmir and on international terrorism were the immediate and urgent goals. On both counts the NDA government succeeded to a large extent, it must be added. That is how India became the first avowed supporter of President Bush's Global war on Terrorism and the highly controversial Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). In its eagerness to befriend the US, the GOI came out on the side of Bush on both the issues even before America's traditional allies and strategic partners in Europe declared their support. Fortunately, the NDA's over

enthusiasm on this score was checked in time. The nation was saved from the disaster and ignominy of sending troops to Iraq by a whisker. But for the nationwide public outcry and determined opposition from influential quarters, India would have been sucked into the quagmire of Iraq and become an enemy of the Iraq people forever, though unwittingly.

However, in foreign relations (as well as in domestic politics) the secular trend of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation gathered strength and momentum. Successive waves of economic reforms have acquired an aura of inevitability. We continue to move forward, though in our own haphazard manner. Gradually the process of global economic integration and the paradigm shift underway in our foreign policy and relations since the 1990s became mutually reinforcing. At last nation gave up forever the sterile and moribund policies of self-sufficiency, which degenerated into autarky. In the current age of knowledge, sustained and viable access to global advances in science and technology are most crucial. Infact over the last decade and half India has been successful in functioning at the cutting edge of knowledge and also contributing its share (and more) to the creation of new knowledge and processes in selected sectors. This would not have been possible, if we continued in our old ways of the bygone era.

In the wake of the collapse of communism and the demise of the Soviet Union, the strategic security concerns of the US and its allies lost their overarching primacy. Economy had come to the fore. Keeping in step with the global trends, India has been according top priority to strengthening economic and commercial relations with all major nations of the world, especially with our immediate neighbours in South Asia. Sidelining Pakistan, we succeeded partially to promote trade, investment and better relations with the other South Asian states. Going beyond reciprocity and mutual benefit, of late India has adopted a policy of unilateral concessions and special packages for each country in the region. Though the extent of success is not something to write home about, the policy shift is significant and has huge potential.

Similarly, the "Look East" policy of Gujral fame is reactivated and new initiatives are in progress vis-à-vis the ASEAN countries (especially with Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand). Despite the border dispute our relations with China are good and promising to be even better each passing year. Bilateral trade is growing by leaps and bounds. Rivalries over oil and

energy sources in Central Asia and elsewhere are yielding place to cooperation and concerted initiatives, even as we continue to be vigilant vis-à-vis the proximate hostile power. Our relations with Russia have always been good and both governments are doing their best to enhance them further. Russians giving us the nuclear fuel for Tarapur even before the US-India nuclear deal got the green signal is the latest instance of their solid support to us. In fact doing business (economic and political) with China and Russia even as we strive to improve our relations with USA is a prudent and sure way of promoting our overarching goal of multipolarity in the world politics.

Even as we reflect on the paradigm shift in India's foreign policy and relations since the 1990's, we should not ignore the downside of globalisation. It is a truism to say that when big changes take place and countries go through rapid and radical transformation, there will be winners and losers. But, this should not become a smoke screen for ignoring the needs and rights of the marginalized millions as it is happening in India (and elsewhere) today. There seems to be something in the very nature of LPG that the rich-poor divide within the country and among the nations is growing and the rich and the upper classes are getting away with it. The well educated, the highly skilled, and the employable are getting the benefits of globalisation, while the uneducated, the unskilled and the urban and rural poor are being forced to bear the brunt. As our markets are opened up to foreign capital (FDI), trade and industry, indigenous small and medium scale industries, individual entrepreneurs like shopkeepers and retail traders, etc. are getting edged out. If the rural areas are neglected, the agricultural sector is left in the lurch and the urban poor are impoverished further, there is every prospect of LPG being rolled back in the country. The recent electoral victories of the leftist parties in Latin America (and elsewhere), the anger of the desperate poor masses in other Third World countries, and the mass protests of the unemployed youth in Europe must be seen as warnings of things to come. If the unjust policies are not reversed soon, fundamental challenges to law and order, and peace and prosperity would follow. The most gnawing dimension of such a denouement is that it is eminently avoidable. The Liberal Budgets, the audacious and comprehensive alternatives to the Government of India's annual budgets: publicly espoused by the Indian Liberal Group, have shown in masterly detail how growth with equity is attainable in India. If there is the will, there is the way.

Let me conclude by returning to the ongoing radi-

cal transformation in the country's foreign policy and the economy. This is a secular trend in response to the phenomenon of globalisation underway since the 1990s and it will run its course. Indian economy is growing at a remarkable rate of 8 per cent annually. By all accounts even better pace of growth is in our reach. India's gigantic and rapidly growing consumer market is among the most attractive ones around the world. The national economy has become open and very hospitable to Indian business, industry, and entrepreneurship. Capitalists in the country have shown that they can withstand global competition, even though they continue to seek incentives and special treatment from the State. India is now a coveted destination for foreign enterprise, though the potential of attracting FDI is not fully realized. India today has the economic strength, military prowess, scientific and technological capability, skilled manpower, diplomatic clout and political ambition to leapfrog from being a regional *subedar* to a global player. That is why the Bush Administration is anxious to have India on her side and towards that end initiated a 180-degree shift in its policy towards India. Whether the US-India Nuclear Deal goes through Congress unscathed or not, the massive across the board cooperation with America already in place will continue to grow. There will certainly be a temporary set back, if the deal doesn't get through or Congress in its unwisdom adds unacceptable riders. The most remarkable thing about India-US equation is the extensive and intensive people to people relations between the two democracies that have steadily grown since the Immigration Act of 1965, notwithstanding the less than warm relations between the two governments over the decades. This is not true of our relations with any other country or people (including UK and the Arab countries where sizeable Indian population lives and works).

In the process of graduating from rhetoric to realism in our foreign policy and the economy, and moving away from socialism to liberal capitalism, India lost something precious along the way. We are no more a "model" of any sort to any nation, including the Third World countries. India is no more a credible spokesman of the poor nations in world politics. India today has a great deal to brag about on the economic and foreign policy fronts. But, sadly, we also have much in the arena of public welfare at home "to shut up about."

DR. RAMESH BABU is Adjunct Professor, School of Public Policy, The ICFAI University, Hyderabad. Formerly he was the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Professor of Civics & Politics, University of Bombay.

Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*



Foreign relations and international politics receive wide attention and informed comment in the print and audio-visual media. However, the country suffers from a palpable shortage of in-depth analyses, extensive and intensive research, careful reflection, and sustained academic specialisation in the fields of foreign policy, diplomacy, defence and security, politics of international eco-

nomics, and economics of international politics. It is in this context, that the launching of the *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* by the Association of Indian Diplomats is indeed most welcome. The objective of the Journal is to "provide an intellectually stimulating forum for the examination of various aspects of India's foreign policy" by seasoned diplomats and experienced decision makers. The Journal seeks to fill the void in "the availability of credible published literature" in the areas of crucial significance to our country's foreign policy and external relations. To include special sections called *Debate* and *Oral History* is very thoughtful. Sustained dialogue among the informed analysts and experts in the field with diverse perspectives is very much needed as our country prepares itself to play a more substantial role in global affairs. Personal experiences and the subtle insights of the political policy makers and the top officials in the bureaucracy will certainly add depth and substance to the policy process as the country moves from rhetoric to confronting realities on the ground.

As some one intimately involved with the origin and growth of academic specialization in international relations and area studies in the country, I wholeheartedly welcome the idea and its manifestation in hard copy. It is most appropriate that the very first *Debate* is on the Indo-US strategic partnership, and is led by K. Subrahmanyam, the guru of defence and strategic studies in the country. While the knowledgeable in the field can discern the positions of the protagonists in the *Debate*, the diverse perspectives offered help the uninitiated to understand the intricacies and implications of the policy options advocated.

It is heartening to see a clear endorsement of the paradigm shift on the anvil in the bilateral relations between the US and India by Arundhati Ghosh in her article on "India and the Non-Proliferation Regime". On the other hand Bharat Karnad, a distinguished defence analyst, warns us from becoming a part of the US strategic game plan. No great country helps another to become great and that is no way to become great any way, he points out rightly. Arundhati Ghosh is the best example of how a top official can quickly learn enough about specialized subjects like disarmament and nuclear proliferation to be able to negotiate as best as anybody else in the business.

Amit Gupta's advocacy of utilizing our *soft power* is highly appealing to a teacher like me. Over the last two or three decades we have become, on our own volition and also have been dragged by the international system to be a power like any other nation state. The *realists* call this loss of innocence or becoming mature as a nation. I do not agree. Power without a socially and morally redeeming purpose is a curse. We should now practice, what we preached in the past, especially *vis-à-vis* our near neighbours in South Asia. A sustained policy of unilateral initiatives (without getting bogged down by the sterile insistence on mathematical reciprocity) *vis-à-vis* our immediate neighbour spells the difference between leadership and domination. This is realism at its pragmatic best.

In a short review it is not possible to pay due attention to all the articles in the Journal. There is much to learn from the articles of Girijesh Pant, Satinder Lambh and G.V.C. Naidu. The Ten Point plan on streamlining the country's economic diplomacy is a novel feature and has much to offer on the practical side of coordination and advocacy in the functioning of the Ministry of External Affairs and other agencies concerned with the conduct of foreign policy and diplomacy. However the piece has all the characteristics of an official report anxious to offend nobody. Like all such exercises, it ends up by asking for more people (i.e., the generalists) like the ones they already have, whereas what the MEA really needs is a large scale and urgent infusion of issue based expertise laterally from outside. Though the Journal is a publication of the Association of Indian Diplomats, let us hope that the future issues will carry contributions from top "men in uniform" – a neglected but crucial constituent of the security and foreign policies of the nation. Unless these two and the various other dimensions (like the economic and cultural) reinforce one another, no country's foreign policy could be effective.

All in all, the new Journal is especially welcome because of the way it is conceived and what it promises to deliver. It is indeed fortunate that this venture of Foundation Books Private Ltd. is led by S. D. Muni, a distinguished specialist in international relations, who had the good fortune of being on the theory and the practical side of India's foreign policy and diplomacy. Nobody can ask for a more accomplished Editorial Board and the galaxy of the International Advisers is impressive indeed. The first issue is rich and promising in every respect.

Ramesh Babu

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Making Friends and Influencing Nations

Sharad Bailur

At the outset I must confess to being bewildered by Liberalisation and Foreign Policy being clubbed together on one platform for discussion. But, as pointed out by the editor himself, the emergence of a unipolar world makes them dovetail in a manner that would have not been thought of only a decade ago.

To understand why, let us, to begin with, imagine a scenario diametrically opposite to the one that exists today. Let us suppose that the Soviet Union had won the battle for world domination. What would it have done? I tentatively suggest The Soviet Union would have done the following:

1. Increasingly start to absorb neighbouring countries beginning with softer states, India among them, into the Soviet orbit of influence. Keep them "independent" but subservient.
2. Ensure that those countries repatriated to the Soviet Union as much of their resources and wherewithal as it would be possible to squeeze out of them. The Soviet Union did this between the end of the Second World War and its downfall, with all those countries that it had absorbed behind its iron curtain.
3. Simultaneously start to emasculate the military capacity of all countries.
4. Commandeer all research and its results for the exclusive use of the Soviet Union.
5. Gradually increase the pressure on freedom to stifle the communications revolution and make it available exclusively for Soviet military purposes.

In other words the Soviet Union, in the place of the United States, would have, over time, imposed on the world a latter day 1984, made more malign by developments in science and technology. Unfortunately for the Soviet Union and unless China reforms itself quickly, for China as well, this did not happen. The opposite did. Why?

A number of social scientists including Francis Fukuyama point out to the communications revolution as being the main cause. I have a more Marxian take on the entire matter. I believe that it was Economics that was responsible for the evolution of the unipolar world. Economics in a social Darwinian (or more accurately a Herbert Spencerian) context.

Economic Determinism Redefined

Karl Marx was not wrong. There is such a thing as Economic Determinism. It just must be interpreted differently in these modern times. The entire controversy over the bipolarity of world politics and even MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) was solved by just one basic factor – economic strength. By the time MAD became a reality the United States and its allies knew that the only way they could break the bipolarity deadlock was to get the Soviets to bankrupt themselves trying to keep up with the West. What did keeping up with the West involve? It was not just a question of military might alone as Mikhail Gorbachev also realised. The entire attempt at *Glasnost*, and more importantly, *Perestroika* was aimed at just one target – improving economic performance to reach the level of the West and eventually to best it.

Improving economic performance involved two things: Openness in information systems both up and down the line – hence *glasnost*; and the restructuring of the economy to improve efficiency – hence *perestroika*. It was a battle in economics to save the war in economics, fought by the Soviet Union on a battlefield, the open world market, over which it had no control. It did not succeed. Hence, no Soviet Union.

Survival of the Fittest Nations

No country or people will willingly impoverish itself and give up the benefits that such prosperity bestows, the consequences notwithstanding. There is therefore no question about the road being taken by mankind in its will to exploit the resources of the earth to its benefit for the sake of that prosperity. Some might do it more efficiently; others less so. This involves a basic question of the survival of the fittest nation, of all against all, in a world being increasingly ruled by the fittest nation which today just happens to be the United States.

International Law, or in the context of the after-

math of the Iraq war, the survival of the fittest nation, call it what you will, ensures that all nations decide, consciously or otherwise, to improve their economic lot over time. In the battle for the spoils of available resources, the US will garner the best and the most of what it needs and the others will follow in an ancient Darwinian ritual of economic hierarchy determined by economic and therefore military strength. Those nations that do not survive will not be fit enough to survive: Herbert Spencer in Marxian garb. It is Economics and the power that it bestows that determines fitness. And it is liberalised Economics, the WTO and all else that ensures that the US stays at the top of the pile. If the US can adopt it and reach the top, India and all other nations aspire to do the same. That is the logic of liberalisation, pure and simple.

As modern nations, much as we might feel proud of having invented for ourselves a mode of self-governance called democracy, the evolution of a world social order, unlike a national social order, is bound to follow the same path that led to democracy. From a single super power to the devolution of power among nations to a world democracy which will probably emerge in another couple of hundred years. This is because the emergence of a single super power is rooted in the logic of social Darwinism

Why This Interest in India?

The first thing we have to accept is that India is not in the position at present occupied by the US as the sole super power. And we have no means of challenging the present incumbent. Come to that, neither does anyone else. We are one of the large gaggle of nations crowding on the economic pile, using Darwinian rules, to reach the top, on which sits the United States. The increasing interest that the United States and the rest of the developed world show in India, arise from two factors: Its young and large population which will continue to be young and large for the next half century or more and the rate of its present economic growth. The first, oddly enough, has the aura of Mao about it. He is said to have famously said, 'We will always win an all out war. How many of us can you kill?' Meaning thereby that having a large and growing population is an asset. So long as economic development runs faster than population growth, we continue to create an increasingly powerful economic engine running the nation. Population growth therefore comes as a blessing, fueling economic growth.

The inevitable concomitant of economic growth,

especially for a large nation, growing larger, like India, is military strength. It is becoming increasingly clear to the United States that a country like India will begin to flex its military muscle in the foreseeable future. There are two ways to ensure that American supremacy on top of the pile is not challenged. One, to prevent India, among other nations aspiring to the same status, from acquiring that military muscle. The other is to befriend it. At the moment the US is on this two-track course. It wants to cap India's nuclear wherewithal, stop it testing any more and bring it into the community of nations that have voluntarily submitted themselves *via* the NPT to American hegemony. At the same time it is best to do this in an atmosphere of friendliness and bonhomie. Hence the talk about the two biggest and most powerful democracies.

Aims of Indian Foreign Policy

India has, at the moment, no answer to this two-track policy except to hold the US at bay. The only way it can succeed is to further power its economic growth, so that it can have an answer when it sees its own situation in the geo-strategic context as not merely a counterpoise to the United States but also as an ally.

Much as the United States will continue to think of Europe and the Americas as its sphere of influence, India shall have to increasingly consider evolving its own Monroe Doctrine. In this task, as Bharat Karnad says, we shall have to seek allies. Among them will be Japan, Vietnam and Australia on the one hand and Israel on the other. So long as the United States is confident that this side of the world is safe in India's hands and India is an ally, it will be relatively less difficult for us to achieve this goal. That should be the aim of our foreign policy in future. And it can only be achieved by rapid economic growth in the context of liberalisation.

So what happens to Non-alignment? Nothing. It never existed. It was merely *realpolitik* tricked out in the unctuous garb of "High International Ethics". We needed it for our own purposes. Now that those purposes have played themselves out we shall abandon it either openly or on the quiet.

Mr. Sharad Bailur is a freelance journalist.

There are few everyday sights which are more emotionally uplifting and morale boosting than of well-scrubbed, bright-eyed children setting out for school in the morning.

Dilip Thakore in *Education World*, March 2006

The Indo-US Nuclear Equation : Trick or Treat?

A Halloweenian Conundrum

Eustace D'Souza

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal is both political and strategic. That these two world democracies have reached this point after years of indifference, and at times even hostility, it is time the US reinvented such an attitude in its own global interests.

There is today, both in India and Congressional circles in the USA, much heated discussion on whether the Indo-US deal signed in July 2005 between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the US President George W Bush will emerge in the format as envisaged by them; that of providing nuclear fuel for civilian reactors with no strings attached. In other words will it be the Halloweenian Trick or Treat?

The intention of this article is to focus on the main issues which the US Congress will have to bear in mind before derailing this deal. On the Indian side the Prime Minister will have to convince the doubting skeptics in Parliament that the deal, when eventually forged, will be beneficial to India. Interestingly, there has been more controversy raked up in America than in India.

This issue was discussed at a seminar convened by the Baroda Forum For Policy Analysis on 20 April 2006 under the banner "Engaging India: The Prospects of India-USA Initiatives" as one of the items on the agenda. Among those participating were the US Consul General in Mumbai, and academics from Baroda, Ahmedabad and Mumbai; senior retired Services Officers from the Army and Air Force, businessmen, industrialists and students from the MS University Department of Political Science.

This paper will focus essentially on the proposed nuclear deal to supply much needed nuclear fuel for India's reactors, required to provide environmental friendly energy for its burgeoning economy, despite the fact that India does not belong to the nuclear club and has not signed the NPT. India has met the US half way in agreeing to place a specified number of civil nuclear reactors like Tarapore under IAEA safeguards.

It is common knowledge that Indian commentators like Bharat Karnad and Brahma Chellaney have voiced serious misgiving that India may cow down to US pressure. In other words, India needs to treat the deal as a trick, as it would eventually lead to India being forced to place all its reactors under IAEA safeguards.

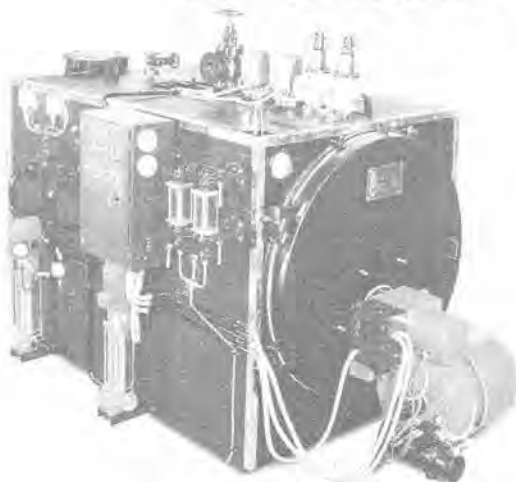
By so doing India would be denied its sovereign right to conduct nuclear tests to enhance its ability to use this weapon as a credible deterrent against the two nuclear armed nations sitting on our doorsteps to the immediate North and the East.

In an article in the *Asian Age* of 7th April, Bharat Karnad who has a reputation as a hawk, states explicitly that it is a 'trick'. According to him the US offer is to turn India into a nuclear cripple. The basis for his argument that the deal has little chance of approval by Congress short of India accepting additional conditions like putting all its reactors *without exception* under international safeguards and agreeing to immediate termination of all fissile material production.

President Bush has gone so far as to introduce draft legislation in both Houses of Congress to approve the waivers; in other words for the deal to be an acceptable treat for India. The debate is on-going and opposition to it in the United States is being "fired" by the Pakistani and Chinese lobbies, aided and abetted by the non-proliferation storm troopers, to ensure that these waivers are not signed. Both these detractors, sitting right on our borders, are determined to prevent India emerging as a dominant power in South Asia. Yet, these very same storm troopers, many of them scientists, opposing the deal, conveniently looked the other way at the infamous activities of Pakistan's Dr. Khan when he exported nuclear know-how to Iran, Libya and even North Korea.

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal is both political and strategic. That these two world democracies have reached this point after years of indifference, and at times even hostility, it is time the US reinvented such an attitude in its own global interests. The US realises only too well that a resurgent China, to some extent Russia and a violently exploding Islamic world, confronts it. In this sensitive region that is South Asia. The Chinese game plan in this scenario is to eliminate the US military presence in South Asia, nay South East and

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East Asia itself so that it can foster its claim to be the 'Middle Kingdom'.

President Bush understands the pivotal position of India, and that if India is to sustain its economic strength, it needs energy and what better method than 'environmentally clean' power produced through nuclear energy? Those doubting Thomases in the US Congress must be made to realise that though India is not a signatory to the discriminatory NPT, its track record, even in the face of extreme provocation as at Kargil and the attack on Parliament, she scrupulously refrained from nuclear blackmail, and, what is more, has made it abundantly clear that it will never resort to a nuclear first strike, but use its relatively small nuclear arsenal only against a nuclear power, as a credible deterrent.

Jim Hoag, the eminent columnist of the *Washington Post*, as recently as 20 April, has, *inter alia*, made some very pertinent observations on the Indo-US Nuclear deal, that merit attention, justifying why the US Congress should approve of it.

Hoag is of the considered view that the flaws in the nuclear draft are heavily outweighed by the advantages in reducing global pollution, easing pressure on the hydro carbon (oil) markets, and bringing a number-not all - of India's nuclear reactors under international supervision. He noted that the Indian Prime Minister has insisted that this new Indo-US relationship is not at the cost of its relationship with China. In relation to Iran, Prime Minister Singh made it abundantly clear that India does not want another nuclear power (Iran) in the region, but urged Washington to allow "maximum scope for dialogue and discussions". Hoag recommends that, in view of India's changed stance to the US, "the Senate and House should move expeditiously to set this transformation in motion".

The well known *Washington Post* correspondent, Selig Harrison wrote in an article as recent as 23 April 2006 that it is in India's interest to accept the proposed nuclear deal, but only as a treat with no new tricks attached.

- The Indo-US deal would be a good starting point to regulate nuclear weapons globally.
- Why should India with a spotless non-proliferation record be denied access to US civilian nuclear technology while China-which helped Pakistan and Iran in their efforts to acquire nuclear weapons - can have it?

- The inequitable structure of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has resulted in built-in discrimination in favour of China and against India.
- The NPT is based on a legalistic fiction that underpins this discrimination.
- According to Robert Gagan, the NPT "erected a gargantuan double standard; the membership of the existing nuclear 'club' was not based on justice or morality.
- India has accepted a rigid separation of nuclear civil and military facilities "in perpetuity.
- The Bush administration's agreement with India does not conflict with the NPT
- The 1978 law is a relict of earlier decades to stop New Delhi from acquiring nuclear weapons. India (rightly) felt that it was entitled to keep its nuclear options open given Chinese-assisted Pakistani nuclear capabilities.
- It is often forgotten that on June 9, 1988, India made an extraordinary offer to forgo nuclear weapons in exchange for the 'haves' long term commitment to nuclear arms reduction.
- What the US administration seeks from India is a "halfway house" that would give it implicit recognition as a nuclear power separating its civilian and military nuclear facilities.

These observations sum it all. India should resist any 'trick' being imposed on it that is not in its national security interests bearing in mind the threats posed by the two nuclear powers sitting on its doorstep, and accept the 'treat' of assured nuclear fuel for its civilian reactors to produce environmentally friendly much needed energy.

MAJOR GENERAL (RETD.) EUSTACE D'SOUZA, PVSM, Defence Analyst and freelance writer, is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

The Ayatollah as Miss Manners

I had thought that "fatwa" was a pronouncement of heavy import - "eliminate the heathen from our midst" - laid on the faithful by some ayatollah. I'm grateful to Philip Kennicott of *The Washington Post*, who has explained that this is not at all the case. One fatwa issued by Ayatollah Ali Sistani says that facelifts are permissible. Another Fatwa 2638 to be exact, says "there is no objection to swallowing the food which comes out from between the teeth at the time of tooth picking." All this sounds quite tolerant, but beware of Fatwa 2648: You should not drink water "from the side of a container which is cracked or chipped off."

Charles Peters, *The Washington Monthly*, April 2005

Our Imperial Democracy

Firoze Hirjikaka

Are we really a democracy, or is it a hoax that has been played on the great Indian public for the last five decades?

In many Western European countries, ministers going out in public with a minimum of fuss and security is a fairly common sight. In fact, a small item on a television news channel showed the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on a visit to the USA, getting down from the plane on his own. It was raining and he carried his own umbrella.

Status Symbols

Can you ever imagine our PM, or any other minister for that matter, behaving in a similar fashion? Every time our PM goes on a visit abroad, he is seen off by a phalanx of obsequious colleagues and underlings offering garlands and folded palms – and the same ritual is repeated on his return. Most ministers, politicians and even those who hold no official position, but have a perceived VIP status (Bal Thackeray is a glowing example) are given protection in the form of gun toting cops. It is no secret that these bodyguards have become more a status symbol than any guarantee of security. We have even been condemned to witness the unedifying spectacle of politicians literally prostrating themselves at the feet of a megalomaniacal Chief Minister.

It is a sad truth that the very trappings of British imperial power that our founding fathers fought so hard to liberate us from seem to be ingrained in the psyche of our so-called leaders. They feel incomplete without a horde of sycophants and bodyguards trailing after them. They are happiest when they are bossing their underlings around.

Misplaced Tolerance

The tragedy is that we, as a people, tolerate or, at best, turn a blind eye, to this blatant pomp and show displayed by these “leaders”. We put up with inconveniences like traffic jams whenever these latter day viceroys are driving by. We meekly accept being debarred from or shunted out of public places, lie on hospital floors, because some VIP has graciously deigned to afford that medical institution the privilege of removing his kidney stone. We grudgingly submit to the high handed and rude behaviour of our so-called public servants. When we were ruled by the British, we had no choice. But now we do, or are supposed to. We fought hard to achieve our democracy. Isn’t it about time we started asserting ourselves?

And it does not end there. Garbage litters the streets; preventable near-epidemics, particularly during the monsoon, have become routine. Municipal officers regard the general public – whose taxes pay for their salaries – as, at best, a nuisance or, more likely, an inexhaustible source of undeclared income. Relief supplies meant for the poor are regularly siphoned off by bureaucrats, shielded by politicians who, when they are awakened from their customary apathy and indifference, are only interested in scoring brownie points. This is the state of “the world’s largest democracy.”

But are we really a democracy, or is it a hoax that has been played on the great Indian public for the last five decades? The most succinct and

unambiguous definition of democracy was stated by Abraham Lincoln in his famous Gettysburg address. “Democracy,” he said, “is government of the people, for the people, by the people.” Let us evaluate these criteria in the Indian context.

So-called “Representatives”

First, “of the people.” Technically, our “leaders” are chosen from among the general population. But do they really represent us? Are they an accurate microcosm of the society we live in? It is well known that a significant percentage of our elected leaders have criminal backgrounds or, at the very least, been associated with fraudulent schemes. Then again, a majority of them have no qualifications whatsoever to occupy the office they are seeking. Do these “worthies” really represent us, the people? Are we no better than these venal, corrupt, apathetic and conscienceless jokers we elect? We ought to hang our heads in shame.

Second, “for the people.” This is the cruelest irony of all. Out of the hundreds of MP’s and MLA’s the country is saddled with, one can count on the fingers of one hand the number of “people’s representatives” who give more than a passing thought to the people who voted for them. Instances of street vendors and even local ruffians who acquire all the trappings of wealth a few months after being elected are legion. The inference is obvious and need not be elaborated. We must be the most tolerant people on earth.

Lastly, “by the people.” This

is one area where we, the people, have only ourselves to blame. After all, no one is holding a gun to our heads when we go to vote, that is, if we go to vote at all. Why, then, do we elect the same bunch of callous, avaricious, even criminal mountebanks election after election? And, if we do, do we really have the right to grumble afterwards?

Money or Muscle Power Matter

The unedifying truth is that, in a country where a large percentage of the population is illiterate and lives in abject poverty, universal franchise just doesn't work. Can one realistically expect an individual, whose main concern is where his next meal is coming from, to give reasoned thought to his rights and duties as a voter? He will gladly sell his vote to whoever offers him a hundred rupees or a cheap sari for his wife – or threatens him with dire consequences. That is why winning an election in this country is all about money and muscle power. It has very little to do with national or local issues.

So is there any solution? Filing PILs to try and keep a check on politicians' misdeeds is a small step. But if we increasingly rely on the judiciary, can we call ourselves a democracy? The media, too, does an admirable job in exposing corruption and other of our leaders' innumerable sins of commission. But does it really have an effect? Our politicians have the thick hide of a rhinoceros. Anyone who thinks that our leaders can be "shamed" into acting responsibly is living in a fool's paradise.

Catch-22 Situation

Politicians can be made accountable only if appropriate laws, without bureaucratic loopholes, are amended to impose stricter penalties on erring officials. A common citizen, caught in a criminal act, would probably find himself behind bars. But not a "servant of the people." At most, he will get transferred or suspended with pay – and quietly reinstated within a few months. With

this type of laughable deterrence, it would be ludicrous to expect a change of heart. The catch-22 situation is that, in a democratic set-up, laws can only be amended by an act of parliament. And who peoples our parliament? The very individuals who need correcting. You see what I mean?

Do Our Duty as Voters

So is there no hope at all? Certainly there is. It involves us "patriots", who delight in moaning and groaning, to put our votes where our mouths are. We read the newspaper articles; we attend talks given by social minded citizens from NGO's like AGNI but, when voting day arrives, we always have better things to do. After all, voting involves maybe an hour of our time every few years. Is that too much to ask? If we don't help ourselves, you can rest assured that our politicians are not going to. In Australia, voting is compulsory. Maybe we need that in this country.

The Jessica Lal Murder Imbroglio

Subverting the Law

In this whole Jessica Lal murder imbroglio, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the key player in this drama has been, not the Delhi police nor the magnanimous judge – who has since been elevated to the High Court for his selective legal acumen – but a highly talented gentleman by the name of D. P. Yadav. One may loathe and decry his morals and his methods, but one cannot but hold a grudging admiration for this master manipulator.

Consider this worthy's achievements. He not only persuaded the investigating officer to indulge in selective – but obviously remunerative – bungling, but also induced such amnesia in him that he "forgot" to inform his superiors till a full eight months later. Next, he succeeded in getting the CFSL ballis-

tic expert to tamper with the possibly incriminating revolver cartridges, thereby virtually assuring that the case against Yadav's *ladla beta* and his friends would not hold up in court. Incidentally, this "expert" promptly retired after he had achieved Yadav's purpose and is now living in his native village in Himachal Pradesh, no doubt in a style wholly inappropriate to his meagre government pension.

And now that Mr. Yadav's shenanigans have been exposed in the media, do you imagine he is a worried man? Hardly. He is a politician in a state where one minister has been exposed on camera as a drug dealer, another has issued a "*fatwa*" against the editor of the Danish newspaper who published the offensive cartoons, and yet both continue

to enjoy the power and privilege of their office.

Yes, it is true that due to media attention, all the right noises are being made by the authorities. However only time will tell whether this 'righteous indignation' translates into concrete results. The 'honourable' judge continues to enjoy his recently elevated position. In fact, no legal authority is questioning how and why circumstantial evidence, which now is seen to be so blatantly apparent even to a law student, was blithely ignored by this 'legal luminary'. Has anyone bothered to investigate if there has been a sudden improvement in the judge's lifestyle?

Yes, legal notices have now been served on the witnesses who turned hos-

tile, but what precisely is that going to achieve? You can be sure that the "acquitted" are not losing any sleep about recent developments. They are secure in the knowledge that the law of the land does not permit them to be tried twice for the same offence - and they are well aware that it will not be long before some fresh scandal erupts to hog the headlines and the current media heat will die its inevitable death.

This will also suit our politicians just fine. Only the really naïve would believe that the 'moral outrage' now being exhibited by our leaders is anything more than playing up to the prevailing public opinion; that they are genuinely interested in censuring one of their own. Quite the contrary. It is in these netas' interest to foster the belief that political "connections" are worth their weight in gold, literally; that their patronage confers on the privileged few a general immunity, almost a licence to commit and get away with any kind of wrongdoing, even murder.

One only has to look at the recent Meher Bhargava shooting, as well as countless cases of this kind, where the perpetrators either have enough money to buy themselves out of trouble or know the right people. First, there is the extreme reluctance on the part of the police to even file an FIR until their hand is forced either by media attention or a political rival looking to even scores. Even then, the attempts to subvert justice carry on relentlessly. In the Bhargava killing, the police "apprehended" a convenient scapegoat who initially confessed to the murder and even trumpeted his reasons. It was only public outcry and realization that he was being made a patsy that caused him to retract his statement later.

A further example is the incident where a Stanchart VP ran over and killed a watchman. First, the offence was registered under the lesser charge of rash and negligent driving. Significantly, perhaps intentionally, no immediate breathalyzer test was conducted, even

though the driver was clearly inebriated. After eyebrows were raised, the police self-righteously declared that they were waiting for the blood test reports and would then promptly book the gentleman for culpable homicide not amounting to murder. Well, the test reports verified that the driver was drunk. Suddenly, to no one's great surprise, the cops did a volte-face and stated that the original charge of rash driving would suffice and they are proceeding accordingly. The gentleman is currently out on bail.

This, in short, is India; where we have replaced our erstwhile British rulers with a new form of imperialism - that of the rich and powerful and influential.

MR. FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer. He has taken up freelance writing after retirement.

Internet Companies Assist Censorship in Communist China

Google's launch of a self-censoring Chinese search engine is the latest in a string of examples of global Internet companies caving in to pressure from the Chinese government. The service curtails the rights of Chinese Internet users to the freedom of expression and freedom of information enjoyed in other countries.

Speaking from the World Economic Forum in Davos, Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan said: "While acknowledging that Google has taken a number of steps to ensure access of Chinese users to the Internet, Amnesty International is nonetheless dismayed at the growing global trend in the IT industry."

"Whether succumbing to demands from Chinese officials or anticipating government concerns, companies that impose restrictions that infringe on human rights are being extremely short-sighted. The agreements the industry enters into with the Chinese government, whether tacit or written, go against the IT industry's claim that it promotes the right to freedom of information of all people, at all times, everywhere."

Last year, Microsoft launched a portal in China that blocks use of words such as 'freedom' in blog text. The company recently closed down the blog of Zhao Jing, who used the blog name Michael An Ti, after he supported a strike against the politically-motivated sacking of an editor at the *Beijing News*.

Yahoo has admitted revealing email account details of the journalist Shi Tao to the Chinese authorities, who was

peacefully exercising his right to impart information, a move that contributed to his prosecution and sentencing to 10 years in prison.

"Agreements between global corporations and the Chinese authorities has entrenched Internet censorship as the norm in China," said Irene Khan. "Internet companies justify their actions on the basis of Chinese regulations. In fact, such agreements and the resulting self-censorship, violate both international standards and China's own constitution, which protects freedom of expression."

International law guarantees the right to freedom of information and the free flow of ideas across borders. While some restrictions on these have been developed over the years, the manner in which IT companies are freely submitting to opaque Chinese policies, is unacceptable.

"The Internet heralded unfettered access to information in a borderless world. Instead, companies are helping governments build borders to prevent their citizens from accessing information," said Irene Khan.

Read Amnesty International's letters to Yahoo and Microsoft at <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/internet-index-eng>. For more information on Amnesty International, please visit <http://www.amnesty.org>;

Amnesty International India, C-161, 4th Floor, Hemkunt House, Gautam Nagar, New Delhi-110 049, Phone: 91-11-51642501 / 26854763, Telefax: 91-11-26510202, Email: cam-@amnesty.org.

The Role of Politics in India's Economic Development

A. Vaidyanathan

This is the second and concluding instalment of Mr. Vaidyanathan's Fifth Dr. Ambirajan Memorial Lecture. The first instalment dealt with how political parties and politicians have been operating or distorting the Indian democratic system. In this, the concluding part, Dr. Vaidyanathan discusses the manner in which political parties and politicians have "shaped or mis-shaped the course of the country's economic development. - Ed.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes

One of the most significant achievements of our democracy is to bring latent and deep seated socio-economic inequities and conflicts into the open thereby forcing the polity to confront and deal with them. Positive discrimination has made some difference to the conditions of the least privileged segments of society. Successive elections have made the under privileged groups - scheduled castes and tribes, backward classes and minorities - increasingly articulate and assertive in voicing their grievances and demands. This has led governments at the center and the states to launch a variety of special measures and poverty alleviation programmes to help augment employment, productive assets and income earning opportunities for different segments of the poor and underprivileged.

Impact of Democratic Pressure

That these programmes are given not merely in the rhetoric of party manifestoes but are backed by large financial allocations (on a rough estimate Rs.40,000 crores, accounting for nearly a fifth of total public sector plan outlay in 2004-5) shows that the political class has come to recognise that, by sheer weight of their numbers, these classes have a crucial role in determining electoral outcomes, and have found it necessary to go beyond slogans to demonstrate the credibility of their concern for the 'downtrodden'. At one level this shows the efficacy of democratic

pressure in influencing priorities in favour of the poor. But the story is different when we look at how these priorities operate on the ground level.

In concept the programmes reflect a welcome recognition that the poor and the underprivileged are a heterogeneous group requiring different interventions. Problems however arise from the tendency with every change in the party in power to announce schemes without adequate preparation resulting in proliferation of schemes with similar or same objectives under different names and packaging. To make matters worse, in far too many cases separate agencies are set up to execute the programmes. Examples are galore of the same functional activity being undertaken under these programmes by different agencies with parallel hierarchies each acting independently of others. There is no mechanism to track what each one does, where, how efficiently and with effect. Records of actual expenditure and works taken up and completed under different schemes in different locations do not exist or are incomplete. There is no independent assessment of the veracity of reported achievements. And since the records of implementing agencies at the ground level are not accessible to the public, civil society criticisms, though based on first hand local knowledge, are easily dismissed for want of hard, documented evidence.

All this cannot be attributed to mere administrative failure. The political class has shown scant interest

in addressing these aspects. One reason is that most of these programmes are sponsored and funded by the Centre often with rigid specifications of their content, priorities and procedures. States do not have a sense of ownership for these programmes and tend to view them primarily, if not exclusively, as a source of funds. It is not uncommon for them to divert these funds for other purposes. Knowing that these practices are widespread and that reported achievements by the state level agencies concerned are unreliable, the Centre has chosen not to undertake or insist on independent validation of such reporting. This is despite ex-post evaluations of some programmes high lighting these deficiencies.

This indifference of the political class to transparency and accountability has much deeper and not so edifying reasons. Programmes for the poor and the under privileged cover wide areas, numerous villages and towns and a huge number of potential beneficiaries. Many of the programmes also have sizeable loan and subsidy components. Detailed administrative monitoring is inherently difficult. Since elected panchayats have no role in making or implementing decisions, or do not know what is done, there is no local mechanism to ensure accountability.

Under these conditions, there is a great deal of scope for parties in power to give their elected representatives and local cadres a significant say in decisions regarding where and who should be given the

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loans or subsidies, who should be given contracts and also for party and its functionaries to benefit personally from cuts and kickbacks. This scope has been systematically exploited by all political parties to create, over time, a widespread and institutionalized network for political patronage and corruption. This is a public secret. Everyone knows it but no one speaks publicly about it.

The poor feel cheated and there is widespread cynicism, rapidly turning into anger, at the huge waste and inefficiency and corruption in these programmes. This is palpable in any encounter with village level leaders. Their views are receiving increasing, though still anemic, attention in public discourse and in the reports of some governmental committees. But this has not as yet made any dent on the political class' attitudes or behaviour.

Burgeoning Subsidies

The other key element of the electoral stratagem used by the political class is to provide a variety of goods and services provided by or through the public sector at below cost prices and a deliberate policy of keeping prices charged to users unchanged or not raising them in step with rising costs. In some cases – electricity being a prime example – rates have been in fact reduced with some states opting for free power. The deficit between costs and recoveries has increased nearly six fold during the decade 1987-1998. There is of course a strong case for free school education, basic public care services, water supply and sanitation, social welfare expenditures and poverty alleviation programmes on larger social considerations. Leaving these aside, the magnitude of implicit subsidies on 'non-merit goods (which include among others fertilisers, canal irrigation, electricity, higher education) have been soaring. By 1998-99

– the latest year for which estimates are available – they are estimated at a whopping Rs.133,000 crore constituting 8 percent of the GDP, almost equal to the fiscal deficit, and about 80% of public sector plan outlay of the Centre and the states in that year. The situation has undoubtedly become much worse since.

The unabated increase in implicit subsidies is a major reason for the high and increasing fiscal deficits of the centre and the states, and the inability of governments to fund much needed investments in expansion and improvement in infrastructure. More important, but less widely recognized, is the fact that subsidized provision of goods and services encourages their wasteful and inefficient use. Besides raising costs of production, it leads to excessive use which in turn causes or aggravates environmental degradation and resource depletion. Thus under-pricing of fertilizers and water has contributed to increasing incidence and intensity of pollution of water sources, water logging and salinity. Low prices stimulate larger demand and faster growth of demand. When the supplies are short of (in relation to) demand, conflicts over access to limited supplies and inducement to theft increase: over exploitation of renewable resources leads to resource depletion and degradation. These problems have already assumed serious proportions in the case of water, electricity and forests. The political class is quite aware of them but none of its constituents is willing to act or even willing to consider action.

Compulsions of competitive electoral politics in an era of governments based on unstable coalitions and uncertain tenures are usually cited by politicians as the reason for their unwillingness and inability to take 'tough' decisions. While there is considerable force in

this alibi for inaction, it does not quite explain why governments continue to yield to pressures for more and more concessions of one kind or another to appease sectional interests. The usual justification for such concessions that they are meant to help the poor and vulnerable segments is totally specious.

Benefiting the Well-to-do

The fact of the matter is that only a small fraction of the total usage of products (like canal water, electricity for pumping ground water, fertilizers, technical and higher education) that are so heavily subsidized out of public funds is accounted for by the poor. The bulk of the use is by the well to do. Thus only half the rural cultivating holds have access to irrigation. Holdings of less than 0.5 hectares with irrigation account for barely 10% of all holdings and account for 6-7% of both surface and groundwater irrigated land. Holdings with more than 2 hectares having access to irrigation account for a fifth of total holdings and over 60 percent of irrigation from each source. Fertiliser use is similarly concentrated in the larger holdings. Theft of electricity – estimated at about a fourth of total consumption – is mostly by industrial and commercial establishments and affluent households. Similarly the majority of youth getting higher education (college plus) are in urban areas and in the households belonging to top 10-20 percent of the population.

Despite the fact that subsidies are strongly biased in favour of the top 20 percent of the population, the political class, including those who profess to be socialists, is unwilling even to consider seriously, let alone implement, measures to reduce the subsidy burden. The needed measures are obvious: improving the efficiency of public agencies and enterprises to reduce the costs of

providing services and their quality; raising the prices that users are charged to cover costs at reasonable levels of efficiency; stricter, fairer governance to check thefts, and ensure proper assessment and full collection of user charges and dues.

Public Sector Inefficiency

Improvement in the efficiency and accountability of public systems and enterprises is crucial to improve tax and non tax revenue collections, get more per unit of public expenditure and generate more resources for development. This calls for major changes in the way public sector organizations are structured and managed to permit more streamlined and flexible deployment of their work force and also incentives to induce better performance. Trade unions in the organized sector oppose these reforms.

*

The strongest and staunchest opponents of any change in labour laws are the public sector unions. They also exert strong pressure to extend guaranteed life time employment to those appointed for specific works. Being crucial for the smooth functioning of the state, they are strategically placed to stall major reform. The political class is most reluctant to confront the key instrument for exercise of their power. Recent attempts by a few states to take a hard line proved unsuccessful and all have had to backtrack by restoring status quo.

*

Union pressure is, however, not the only reason for the current state of the public sector. The political class has contributed to it significantly in several ways: (i) Using the power of appointing chairpersons and directors of public and even quasi public undertakings (like cooperatives) to reward their party functionaries. This practice has become nearly universal resulting in

the Indian equivalent of the 'spoils system'. (2) Disabling or dismantling internal check and control mechanisms to ensure that public funds are spent for approved purposes, without corruption and in an efficient manner. This has led over the years to widespread political interference in government administration at all levels and emergence of a pervasive system of corruption in government and public agencies marked by and growing collusion between political functionaries in positions of power and sections of the bureaucracy. (3) Using the executive's power of appointments to public service commissions, judicial officers, vigilance commissions, members of tribunals and inquiry commissions and other watchdog institutions to 'pack' them with party favourites. This has considerably weakened their independence and integrity. (4) Denial of information, selective use of information and providing misinformation are widely used to prevent civil society organizations to promote informed public discussion of policy decisions, scrutinise their implementation and seek to correct wrongdoing.

Impact of New Economic Policy

The apparent success of the new economic policy in increasing the rate of GDP growth during the last decade and a half seems to have persuaded a significant section of the political class in governments that free trade in goods and services and free flow of capital will generate rapid growth, will reduce poverty faster and also help the fiscal situation by faster increase in revenues. This has made them less concerned about the need for and urgency of internal reforms. Practically no government in power is willing to take the drastic measures needed to contain the fiscal deficit and improve the efficacy of public enterprises and services. Practically all of them are favourably

inclined, even if in varying degrees, to seek foreign funding, including direct investment, in infrastructure sectors. More and more of them are also willing to consider privatization of existing enterprises and facilities in the public sector and leaving their expansion and improvement to the private sector. This complacency is misplaced for several reasons.

The euphoria about accelerated overall growth ignores the fact that most of it has occurred in organized sectors of industry, trade and services even as growth in agriculture and related activities, which remain the main source of livelihood of the large majority of the population, has been much lower and has tapered off. Agricultural growth has to be stepped up to and maintained at around 4 percent per annum (compared to long term average of around 2.6 percent and less than 2 percent during the last decade) if the dreams of 8 and 10 percent annual GDP growth are to be realized. The key to it lies in better management of land and water, revamping the research system to generate varieties and technology to make better use of inputs especially for rain fed areas. This is not merely a matter of increased investments in the aggregate but requires redefining priorities, ensuring more effective implementation and management of watershed programmes, irrigation facilities and research. All these call for major restructuring of existing institutions that deal with these tasks.

Second shortages and poor quality of infrastructure facilities and services are a severe constraint on the growth of the rest of the economy. Their privatisation remains politically controversial. Even its ardent supporters recognize that the public sector will have to continue to bear the major responsibility for these activities. The lack of internally generated resources to fund expansion

and improvement is basically due to inefficient management compounded by perverse government policies and sheer failure of governance. These can be overcome by institutional reform to eliminate governmental interference in the management of these undertakings and leave them free to manage their facilities with reasonable efficiency and determine their pricing policy to earn a reasonable rate on investment subject only to review by independent regulatory authority.

The unwillingness to grasp this nettle has led the political class to bank on FDI. The optimism about massive FDI flows into infrastructure is quite misplaced. No foreign investor will risk his funds unless the government is prepared to guarantee a reasonable return on investment. This means giving them freedom in technology choice and pricing backed by strong governance to enable them to collect dues fully and promptly. The dangers of the former course have been dramatized by Enron. The alternative would be to agree to purchase their output at prices that give a guaranteed return but retains the responsibility for determining and collecting user charges. Judging by the way public sector utilities now function, the latter course would only lead to larger deficits and add to the burden on the general budget.

The third problem is that recent growth has been highly uneven between sectors, across regions, between rural and urban areas. Much of this growth has been in the organized, modern sectors of industry and services. Agricultural output has always grown much slower than in nonagricultural activities, but this differential has increased sharply because of a deceleration in agricultural growth to near stagnation in the last few years. Value added per worker in agriculture has also been much lower than in

non agricultural sectors. With non agricultural employment not increasing fast enough to reduce dependence on agriculture for livelihood, the trend for widening disparities in output per worker between the two sectors has been greatly accentuated. This and the fact that the impact of government programmes for rural development and poverty alleviation has fallen far below promises and expectations, has aggravated the sense of neglect and deprivation among the rural population.

With the non-agricultural sector, the rapid growth in 'modern' organized sectors (including especially the IT-BPO boom) and the growing lucrative job opportunities in the developed countries for Indian professionals have mostly benefited urban educated classes and professionals. A growing number of young people in families of public sector employees and workers in the organized private sectors also aspire to take advantage of these opportunities. And their families are willing to invest heavily in education – much of it in the private sector – to equip them for this purpose. Wage and salary differentials between the

organized and the informal sectors and even within the organized sector have palpably widened. A large segment of population in the urban informal sector not only feel left out but also have little or no chance of accessing opportunities it promotes.

The upwardly mobile middle classes, and those aspiring to get on the bandwagon, are strong supporters of the new economic policy. This new elite and influential opinion makers in the media and the bureaucracy have become so preoccupied with making it in globalizing India that they have little interest or involvement in addressing these larger issues. So have significant sections of the intelligentsia. Some of them see no virtues in the public sector, consider it impossible to make it function better and even question the justification for wasting huge amounts on employment guarantee, poverty alleviation and helping the underprivileged. (concluded)

DR. A. VAIDYANATHAN is a former Member, Union Planning Commission and Emeritus Professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai.

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WHAT MINOO MASANI SAID BEFORE
INDEPENDENCE WAS "FREEDOM FIRST".
AFTER INDEPENDENCE NOW WHAT WE
NEED IS THE "SAME FREEDOM" FROM OUR
OWN ELECTED RULERS



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J. M. Lobo Prabhu. I.C.S.

- A Daughter's Tribute



(24.2.1906 - 14.5.1999)

Joseph Mathias Lobo Prabhu (JM) hailed from a prominent Roman Catholic family of Mangalore with a long and distinguished record in government service. One of his ancestors was handpicked by Sir Thomas Munro for implementing an agenda of Revenue Reform in the early 19th century. It was a natural impulse for him to attempt the foremost intellectual challenge of his time – cracking the ICS, immediately after his intermediate at St. Aloysius College. A self-assured young man sailed to England on a P & O Liner, and took up lodgings in London's Half Moon Street. He studied at the British Museum to save on heating and the purchase of his text books.

In her short memoir "A Man for All Seasons" on her spouse, the late Dr. Louella Lobo Prabhu recounts: "At the famous London School of Economics, which he attended, Harold Laski and Lionel Robbins were his professors, Minoo Masani, later to be a party colleague and a fellow-liberal, was a student. Krishna Menon was also a contemporary. Menon borrowed JM's notes, having skipped lectures to attend socialist meetings."

She records further "Having finished the written and oral parts

24th February, 2006 marked the Birth Centenary of the late J. M. Lobo Prabhu, I.C.S., and a member of the Fourth Lok Sabha. An outstanding Liberal, he served his country with distinction both as a civil servant and a parliamentarian. *Freedom First* pays homage to his memory and is privileged to carry this tribute on the occasion of his birth centenary.

of the Examination, he put them out of his mind and holidayed on the continent. While passing a newspaper kiosk in Paris, he picked up the British papers, quite casually, and found in them, the results of the ICS Examination. He had made it: passed at the first shot, at the age of 21, without even having finished his graduation!"

Initiation into District Life

After his training in Haileybury College, JM would commence the practical aspect of probation at Gorakhpur in 1927. Though he had joined the elite band of men who would govern a sub-continent, he was nevertheless surprised to be met at the Station by the Collector, G.M. Harper, who took him home in his horse carriage. JM later donned his evening jacket to join the small dinner party which his memoirs recall "was as good as one at the Savoy in London."

The next day, he assumed a seat on the dais of his court, passing 20 orders on petitions right on his first day at work. He received different classes of officials and noted that the higher class of officials customarily brought fruits and flowers. Afternoon tea with the Collector was a daily ritual.

JM was also introduced to the itinerant lifestyle of the ICS in the districts, which was aimed at receiv-

ing petitions from those too poor to travel to the headquarters and to oversee the functioning of subordinate officers. His memoirs describe camping as an elaborate exercise. Bullock carts carried tents which would be pitched in advance in a grove, while the officers journeyed on horseback and checked revenue records at different villages on the way. Touring was for ten days at a time. The visiting officers were honoured with receptions in villages. In smaller villages, the Rajas and landowners called, and the visits were returned, "sometimes with foreign presents for which the Rajas had showcases."

Back at the district headquarters, JM played tennis, golf and polo when the day's work was done. For polo, Harper organized the purchase of an Australian horse for Rs.800. The horse which had raced for a few years was relatively intractable and went down a disused well with JM who broke a collar bone. Later, JM bought a second horse, an Arab Grey from Philip Mason, an ICS colleague and historian, the famed author of "The Men who Ruled India".

JM's probation also included a stint at the Moradabad Training College. The Kadir Cup on the river-side near Hasanpur was an important event "where the Viceroy and the top brass rode on their horses after wild boar, in which more horses were maimed perhaps than

Giselle Mehta

pigs. It was a big durbar with champagne cocktails."

Riots were obviated with the identification of the troublemakers in advance during sensitive festivals. They were ordinarily compliant in furnishing bonds under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code. In 1931 he faced picketing which related to breaking the ordinary law that he was charged to uphold. Information was brought to him that the Congress flag was hoisted on the Congress building and Records of the Court were being burnt. His memoirs record that in his two seater car he drove to the town hall. A mob stopped to tell him that the police van taking arrested persons to Moradabad had knocked down some one. A much larger mob later swamped him. He explained he was doing his duty and was assured that a small flag hoisted by urchins had been taken down and only waste paper was burnt. The lawyers he addressed started to move away when reminded there was an order prohibiting crowds. Leading citizens joined him at the Town Hall. Effective communication and the sheer force of personality stalled further chaos. There was no need for further lathi charges or arrests and the agitation ended with the signing of the Gandhi Irwin Pact. He was commended by his superiors for his tactful handling of an inflammable situation.

The Myriad Faces of the ICS

Later as the Collector of Gorakhpur, he earned renown and popularity for the zeal and resourcefulness with which he fought the floods.

He had commandeered boats to rescue 50,000 people marooned by gushing waters, and thereafter staved off an epidemic of cholera with the pouring of lime. His first wife, the Frenchwoman Noelle Manon toiled relentlessly by his side. In his mem-

oir "Journey of a Soul" he records, "Nehru came to criticize but stayed to praise." Governor Haig conveyed his commendation in a letter to the press.

A heart warming farewell included a purse of Rs.501/- from the zamindars which he ordered to be kept in permanent fixed deposit for awarding scholarships. A Coronation Medal in 1937 to Mr. & Mrs. Lobo Prabhu was a singular distinction considering the fact that the award was given in cognizance of merit, bypassing the usual norm of 10 years' service.

His career typically comprised alternation between the State Secretariat and the districts. District postings in far flung areas were punishments for uncompromising forthrightness in his functional style. He accepted them gamely, and sought to transform his administrative space as best he could.

At Independence, he was in Delhi, one of three in the control room to deal with the horrors of Partition. As dead bodies lay for days on the banks of the Jamuna, he hit on the idea of fire engines spraying kerosene to light arguably the greatest pyre of all time. Shortly after, he was Custodian of Evacuees' Property in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. Decades later, his family would meet a young Congressman from Delhi on a trip to Mangalore who gratefully recalled the house allotted in Lajpat Nagar when his family came as bedraggled refugees from Lahore.

After Independence, his cadre was changed to Madras. In 1950, he proceeded on a tour of 25 countries with a view to studying possibilities of expanding India's foreign trade. He was present at the Coronation of the King of Siam in Bangkok. The highlight of his visit to Japan was a fifty minute interaction with General Macarthur, the Supreme Commander

of the Allied Forces in the Pacific, whom he found affable and pleasant in the time that they spent discussing the future of Asia.

He represented a benevolent vision of the bureaucracy as a committed champion of the rights of the common people. He started the first Cooperative Cane Marketing Society in the country at Deoria in U.P. His blueprints for 24 Food Processing Industries furnished new employment opportunities for thousands. His mode of spotlighting delays by means of red ink was taken up by the Centre and many State Governments as a measure to reduce corruption that stemmed from lethargy in administration.

His career as a civil servant was marked by thoughtful oratory on the different platforms he graced. Back in the thirties itself, he utilized Broadcasting as a technique of disseminating awareness for developmental ends in rural areas. Simultaneously, his literary impulses utilized playwriting as a tool for reflection on public issues among the intelligentsia. The most well known of these is "Mother of New India" for which Sir Maurice Hallett, Governor of the United Provinces wrote the foreword. The heroine of the play surmounts personal tragedy to emerge as a catalyzing force for feminine energies in achieving rural uplift. He won prizes from the Government for his thesis on Democratic Decentralization & Grain Marketing. He also wrote the book "New Thinking", an incisive analysis of the times and a pointer to fresh directions for the nation's progress.

The Pathway to Politics

The civil servant, steeped in the Rule of Law that governed pre-Independence India was disheartened with the breed of politicians who would hold the reins post-independence. His intrepid individualism was opposed to the

emerging norm of opportunistic servility to masters in the newly ordered political disposition. He famously challenged Bhaktavatsalam, an erstwhile Chief Minister of Madras with an imminent entry into political ranks, that the Chief Minister could never change places with the ICS. The Swatantra Party appealed to his ideological leanings. He held Rajaji in deep reverence, and found a certain significance in the coincidence that both their fathers were born in December 1878.

He was elected as President of the South Kanara District Swatantra Party in 1959. From personal experience, his inaugural address was scathing about the growing interference of the State in every sphere, particularly the combination of executive and legislative functions in Ministers whose unprincipled leadership undermined the experience of the executive.

For three months, he edited *Swarajya* and later on Rajaji's suggestion, commenced publication of *Insight* in 1961.

In 1964, Minoo Masani informed JM that he had been nominated as the Swatantra Party's candidate from the Udupi constituency. JM was, by then, married a second time to the highly accomplished Louella Castelino, who would be the Associate Editor of *Insight*. His political agenda also inspired the vernacular *Gaon Sevak* as a mode of communing with his future electorate. Subsequently, his victory at the hustings in 1967 preceded by meticulous groundwork was assured. He was the recipient of unprecedented ovation on his victory, with a two mile long motorcade and procession from an ecstatic electorate.

The Fourth Lok Sabha

Mr. Lobo Prabhu was elected the Secretary of the Swatantra

Party's Parliamentary Party at its very first meeting. Apart from his zealous lobbying for development in his constituency, which contributed among other things to the foundation of the New Mangalore Port Trust, he expended much eloquence in Parliament on the burning issues of the day.

He was vociferous in raising unstarred and starred questions on everything from the malodorous toilets at Mangalore's railway station to the squeeze on Indian traders in East Africa. The Member from Udupi was particularly active during the Budget Sessions, typically moving cut motions wherever he found expenditures extravagant. Like the other stalwarts who studded the Fourth Lok Sabha, there was a genuine passion to address the problems of a floundering economy and an insensitive administration. Though the representative of a Party that was unfairly stereotyped as elitist, JM justified all his perceptions from the standpoint of "the common man" victimized by the audacious incursions of intrusive State controls in all aspects of life.

He sparred as much with the retrograde revolutionary ideation of Leftist legislators as with the pernicious populism of the ruling Congress. His speeches were rigorous academic exercises that analyzed relevant issues threadbare and then suggested solutions from the well-spring of his own administrative experience and interest in public finance. Perusal of his interventions reveals a remarkable grasp of facts and figures that put the ruling regime on the mat. He also perused the text of Bills and Acts in the thorough manner that gave way for proposed amendments to mitigate the harsher excesses of law. His more emotional speeches related to the ICS Bill and his objections to the control on foreign missionaries.

His wife Louella was active in

the press gallery and a distinguished visitor to the Central Hall of Parliament. At the time, they were probably the Capital's pre-eminent political couple.

Political Sanyas

In 1970, he was re-elected to the National Executive of the Swatantra party. The achievement of Louella Lobo Prabhu was perhaps more remarkable, in as much as at a mere 25, she was the youngest person to be elected to the National Executive, with a score even higher than that of her husband.

Unfortunately, the electorate that spontaneously showered him with garlands on his victory in 1967 was carried away by the emotive slogans of Indira Gandhi and did not repeat its wisdom by re-electing him in 1971. In true sportsmanlike fashion, he digested his shock defeat in a game of tennis.

He and his spouse continued to write in *Insight* on the issues that concerned them – active crusaders for beliefs which were not widely shared at the time. In her last published article for *Freedom First*, Dr. Louella Lobo Prabhu would recall, "During the infamous Emergency, we did not submit our weekly *Insight* to censorship, but continued to publish as independently as before. We lost advertising and subscribers."

As age and ill health enfeebled him, his better half would be the lone voice in the wilderness, championing the causes they both passionately believed in. M. V. Kamath, wrote in *The Telegraph* in 1987, *Insight* edited by that excellent husband and wife team JM and Louella Lobo Prabhu is hard hitting ... and has a distinct literary flair... there is hope for the country as long as there are citizens who are willing to give of their time for worthwhile causes like Mr. Shourie or the Lobo Prabhus."

The Passing of a Titan

J. M. Lobo Prabhu left behind the tumult of the world in May 1999 at the age of 94. Much of the economic ideology that he and the Swatantra Party had espoused was being rein-

vented by the political expediciencies of former opponents.

As he was laid to rest, the greatness of the man was apparent, as leaders of all political formations in his city, including his erstwhile

adversaries, vied with each other to pay him tribute and claim him for their own.

MS. GISELLE D. MEHTA, formerly an officer in the Indian Revenue Service. Currently an entrepreneur.

People's Union for Civil Liberties The Vadodara Violence

To: 1. Collector, Vadodara, 2. Municipal Commissioner, Vadodara, 3. Commissioner of Police, Vadodara, 4. Mayor, Vadodara

Demand for immediate action by your Department to restore normalcy in Vadodara City

Dear Sir,

We feel that your handling of the demolition of the Fatehpura dargah on May 1, 2006 and the aftermath of those events warrants deep concern. Given the known potential for communal conflict in Vadodara city, the authorities should have taken extra precaution to address the situation in a sensitive manner.

Instead, the authorities deviated from established norms to be followed during these types of events. The Mayor arrogantly and aggressively threatened to use the army of VHP and BJP workers to demolish the Dargah in the absence of cooperation from local police. The tense situation was created by the statements of the Mayor that and the rashly organized demolition drive – both meant to instigate. Rather than effectively restoring peace and calm, the police in fact incited further violence by aiming fire directly at the public.

Many innocent citizens who were accidentally present at the time in Fatehpura were at the receiving end of the inflammatory actions of the politicians and the immature reaction of the police. The inept action of various authorities suggest a lack of seriousness. Indeed it appears that the casual approach to demolition of a sensitive dargah, the over-eager attempts to carpet the road thereafter – speak of an underlying plan to keep the minority community under constant leash and a sense of siege.

We strongly feel that the demolition of such crucial and sensitive structures should be done after taking the sentiments of people into account and such moves need to be negotiated over an extended period of time. And the moment the rioting mob began to terrorize the public it was the duty of all authorities to act immediately to control the situation and protect the people. Instead of fulfilling its responsibilities to the community, almost all authorities acted in a way to escalate fear and intimidation in the riot-prone areas. The behaviour of authorities demands a complete reorientation of the methods of the police and other governmental offices.

In such tense times, it is important that the people be heard and their grievances addressed. As long as the complaints of the people fall on deaf ears, the people's faith in the system will be shattered and distrust will grow. This will only feed fear, and incite more violence. It has been our experience over the past two days that the Police Commissioner and his office are not reachable via phone, and that the department is not taking even the complaints of the PUCL seriously. This leaves little hope for common people to be heard. Effective and non-partisan action is incumbent on the police; dereliction of duty in such life and death circumstances is absolutely unacceptable.

It is discouraging that we are forced to make these complaints again and again, especially as they relate to the negligence in fulfilling the most basic responsibility of the state authorities. The Supreme Court has also repeatedly chastised the state powers on these same grounds. It appears that the experience of the 2002 carnage did not teach any lessons. Various authorities and politicians communalised the ambience unnecessarily. For instance, the Mayor should have been prevented from continuously making provocative statements publicly given the socio-political context. The communalised atmosphere is now detracting attention from more important issues at hand such as the issue of rehabilitation for demolition-affected families. It tarnishes the good name of our state when the authorities continuously antagonize its citizenry by neglecting its duty.

In the present context, we demand:

- 1) The resignations/transfer of the Mayor, the Commissioner of Police and the Municipal Commissioner.
- 2) Setting up a redressal cell for an effective and immediate response to distress call by communities under attack and siege.
- 3) Systematic and planned rehabilitation of all whose homes/hutments have been burnt and/or demolished in the last few months (not only the last few days).
- 4) Compensation to families who have lost their lives in police firing and had their shops, *lari gallas* and factories burnt (for example in Sardar Estate).
- 5) Criteria of what is legal, illegal, authorised, unauthorised constructions and/or encroachments to be put in public domain and simultaneously a plan for preservation of religious and historical monuments in the spirit of Gaekwads of yore.
- 6) Demolition, if at all required, only after openly and publicly negotiating with communities and civil society representatives.
- 7) A master plan for promoting communal harmony in the city so that such incidents never repeat.
- 8) Opening up for public discourse the long-term master plan for development of the city of Vadodara and the way urban renewal mission funds are going to be used transparently.

Sincerely,

Kirit Bhatt • Rohit Prajapati • Chinu Srinivasan • Trupti Shah • Shobha Shah • Issaqbhai Chinwala • Rita Choksi • Nagin Patel • Magan Desai • Jagdishbhai Surti • Rameshbhai Rathod • Jahnvi Andharia • Kantibhai Mistry • Amrish Brahmabhatt

MPs, MLAs and Offices of Profit

P. R. Dubhashi

There does not seem to be as yet any common understanding about the way the law should be formulated under Article 102 of the Constitution

There does not seem to be as yet any common understanding about the way the law should be formulated under Article 102 of the Constitution, which gives authority to Parliament to make exceptions to the general rule that Members of Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies should not hold any office of profit under government.

The order of the President terminating Smt. Jaya Bachhan's membership of the Rajya Sabha opened up a veritable Pandora's box in Indian politics. Soon thereafter Yerram Naidu of the Telugu Desam Party and Ananth Kumar of the BJP petitioned the President of India that Smt. Sonia Gandhi too held several offices of profit including the Chairmanship of the National Advisory Council and several foundations receiving government grants and therefore should be disqualified under Article 102 of the Constitution.

The possible disqualification of Smt. Sonia Gandhi led to a panicky reaction among the senior Congress Ministers who thought of getting an ordinance promulgated to exclude the offices held by Smt. Sonia Gandhi from the category of office of profit. To facilitate the issue of an ordinance, Parliament was adjourned *sine die*. The perturbed leaders of the BJP met the President and urged him not to sign the ordinance merely to save the parliamentary membership of an individual. The leftist parties also opposed the issue of the ordinance and wanted Parliament to be con-

vened to pass a suitable law. Sensing that an ugly situation was developing which might tarnish her political reputation, Smt. Gandhi, on the advice of her children, dramatically announced her resignation both from the post of Chairman, NAC and membership of the Lok Sabha. At the same time she announced that she would stand again for election from the Rae Bareilly constituency. She soon visited her constituency and got a rousing reception. The issue of an ordinance was abandoned.

The Jaya-Sonia cases were soon followed by a spate of petitions to the President and several Governors of the states for disqualification of MPs and MLAs. These have been forwarded to the Election Commission as required under the Constitution. Nearly a hundred such cases are reported to be pending. They pertain to MPs and MLAs of different political parties. Initially happy at the discomfiture of their rivals, they are all now concerned about a major problem with which all of them are confronted. The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs got in touch with the leaders of the opposition parties seeking their views for passing a suitable law.

There does not seem to be as yet any common understanding about the way the law should be formulated under Article 102 of the Constitution, which gives authority to Parliament to make exceptions to the general rule that Members of Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies should not hold any office of profit under government. There

could be two possible approaches: 1. To make individual exceptions and 2. to lay down general criteria. If the former approach is adopted, there will be no end to the individual cases included under the exception clause. This would mean that the exception becomes the rule making a mockery of the Constitutional position. As regards the second approach, some guidelines have been laid down by the Supreme Court in individual cases, which came before it in the past. Offices where appointments and removals are made by government and remuneration if any is payable from the treasury of the government, are considered to be offices of profit. This is really tautological and provides no basis for determining the criteria of exception from disqualification.

The basic question is whether any exceptions should be made at all. The Left parties have expressed their view that since MPs and MLAs are public personalities, they should occupy such positions so that their experience and knowledge would be available for public benefit. On the other hand George Fernandes has taken the categorical view that no exception should be made at all. MPs and MLAs should give all the benefit of their experience in the work of the legislature of which they are members.

Which is the correct view? In considering this, one has to go beyond mere legalities to the basic considerations relating to the working of our democratic polity and its system of parliamentary democracy.

These are as follows: 1) the legislature, executive and judiciary are three limbs of the state 2) they have their own distinct spheres of work which should be kept separate from each other. In other words, legislators and judges are not executives 3) the political executive consists of the Council of Ministers which is accountable to the legislature and holds the Civil Service accountable to itself 4) the Council of Ministers decides the policies and programmes of the government and 5) the Prime Minister/Chief Minister heads the Council of Ministers and the government as a whole.

The appointment of legislators as heads or members of different authorities and bodies under the government is inconsistent with point two mentioned above. When they are so appointed the working of these bodies is likely to be affected in terms of objectivity and efficiency in performance. As George Fernandes has

insisted, only those who are prepared to be governed by rules and conditions of service and be accountable to the government should be given such positions. His stand is logical.

We have gone far beyond this by ignoring the five basic principles mentioned above. For the first time we have a body like the NAC which is not envisaged in the Constitution but whose decisions are almost binding on government. Major policy initiatives like the Employment Guarantee Act and Right to Information Act have been initiated by this body and not the Cabinet. However laudable these initiatives may be, this position is inconsistent with the fourth principle mentioned above.

As head of the NAC, Smt. Sonia Gandhi has been able to guide the government and has been the repository of papers of government of even confidential nature including

intelligence reports. Undoubtedly the perception is that she is *de facto* super Prime Minister, again not a position envisaged in the Constitution. Even though Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh has maintained a smooth relationship with Smt. Sonia Gandhi, the inherent untenability of the situation remains. This has led to incongruities from time to time, the most recent of which was, while the government servants were working overtime through the night devising an ordinance after the abrupt *sine die* adjournment of Parliament, Smt. Sonia Gandhi resigned from the post of Chairman, NAC and as Member of Parliament on the basis of the advice of her children. What is required therefore is not just removal of disqualification but ending this anomalous situation, which is inconsistent with the basic scheme of India's parliamentary democracy.

DR. P. R. DUBHASHI, formerly Vice Chancellor, Goa University.

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Funding Elections: Some Reflections

Adi H. Doctor

The subject of state funding of elections has been extensively debated all over the country and over a fairly long time. When the coalition government (of the BJP and its allies) included comprehensive electoral reforms in their National Agenda for Governance, most people felt that at last comprehensive electoral reforms were now being taken seriously. In June 1998 it constituted a multi-party parliamentary committee under the Chairmanship of Indrajit Gupta of the CPI to look into the issue of state funding of elections. It submitted its report in early 1999 to the Union Home and Law ministries. Unfortunately, no concrete action followed thereafter, largely because no consensus could be reached and parties and scholars are still debating the issue. In this brief article, I raise several questions pertaining to state funding of elections and seek to answer them.

Why State Funding?

The very first question that arises is why should the state fund elections at all? The answer is straight and simple. A strong case exists for state funding of elections because political parties perform a vital public function to sustain democracy.

Who Qualifies?

The second question is who should qualify for funding? I think state funding should be confined to parties, recognized as national parties or state parties by the Election Commission and to candidates fielded by such parties. If funding is extended to independents, it will

encourage non-serious and frivolous candidates to stand for elections. Also, the state simply will not be able to afford funding all candidates, including each and every independent.

Creating an Electoral Fund

The third question that arises is how to create the Election Fund? The corpus of the fund should be built up by annual contributions by the central government. The formulae for calculating the central

A strong case exists for state funding of elections because political parties perform a vital public function to sustain democracy.

government's annual contribution could be the total number of registered voters multiplied by Rs.10/-. Taking a population figure of 60 crores, this would mean the center contributing Rs.600 crores annually to the Election Fund. Given the sad economic health of most states and their inability to exercise fiscal discipline, it would make little sense asking state governments to contribute to the Fund. The center should try and raise its annual contribution to the Election Fund by way of a special cess on corporate and individual (high bracket) income tax payers

Nature of State Funding

A fourth and related question pertains to the nature of state fund-

ing. Should it be total or partial? Should it be in cash or in kind? While the ideal situation may be that the state provides total funding of elections, financial constraints and the prevailing economic conditions may not permit this. Hence it is important that the state decide to fund some essential expenses of political parties during election campaigns and provide them administrative support during the period between elections.

Funding in Kind, Not Cash

State funding, again, should not be in cash but in kind. This is because subsidies paid in cash could be misappropriated. It is better to extend assistance in the form of facilities. Principal among these should be (a) providing a prescribed quantity of fuel or petrol to vehicles used by candidates; (b) payment of hire charges for a prescribed number of microphones used by candidates (c) Doordarshan and AIR should provide sufficient free time to recognized political parties for election broadcast, and the facility could also be now extended to private TV channels in order to ensure fair and balanced coverage; (d) supply of a predetermined quantity of copies of electoral rolls and (e) distribution of voter's identity slips, now being done by the contesting candidates, should be exclusively undertaken by the EC and all candidates should be prohibited from issuing such slips. The EC should be consulted from time to time regarding other facilities that may be provided and, the manner and mode of state assistance to political parties in general.

To *buy*, or not to *buy*, that is the question.

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Formula for Funding

The fifth question that needs to be raised and answered is what should be the ceiling on, and formula of funding state elections? Regarding ceiling the best course would be to lay down provisions enabling the Election Commission (EC) to revise the ceilings of election expenditure to realistic levels on the eve of every general election, whether to the Lok Sabha or State Assembly. Thus empowering the EC will help de-politicize the issue of fixing limits on election expenses. With regard to the formula of state funding, I think a reasonable formula would be a system of grants in aid to be given by the government to recognized political parties on the basis of the twin criteria of the votes polled in the preceding election and the size cum population of the constituency.

Accounting Election Expenses

The sixth question we need to discuss is what should be the method of accounting of election expenses. The present system is that a simple declaration of expenses incurred is given in the return of expenses. It would be desirable instead to require the candidate to furnish a declaration in a prescribed form of affidavit with an oath sworn before a judicial magistrate or oath commissioner owning responsibility for the correct and true account of the election expenditure. The period of accounting should strictly be between the date of notification of the election and the date of declaration of the result of the election. Such accounts must be audited by agencies appointed by the EC. The punishment for submission of false accounts should be an electoral offence punishable with at least two years imprisonment. Violations must be severely punished, if honesty in accounting is truly desired.

Candidates' Declaration of Income

Seventhly, should prospective

candidates be compelled to declare their income, educational qualifications and past criminal record/antecedents/associations? It is a well known fact that most politicians obtain finance for contesting elections from the underworld. The Election Commission's Order of 28th June 2002 (in pursuance of the Supreme Court directive) tried to break this nexus by requiring all candidates to disclose their past criminal records if any, income and educational qualifications in an affidavit along with their nomination papers. The direct effect of the order would be to keep criminals out of politics; the indirect effect would be to discourage the politician-criminal nexus where the politician uses the underworld (money and muscle) to help win elections. As Prem Shankar Jha writing in *Outlook*, July 22, 2002, observed, "under the laws that govern political and particularly electoral funding, politicians have no option but to climb into bed with black marketeers, smugglers and criminals of all kind to find the money and muscle they need to fight an election".

Parties' Reluctance

Unfortunately 21 political parties unanimously rejected the EC's order. The reasons given by parties ranged from some like "a forty page affidavit was too cumbersome" (Advani, Dy. PM) to accusations like the order gave room to "politically motivated returning officers" to disqualify candidates. The Government/Parties also argued that the Supreme Court and EC could not arrogate to themselves legislative powers that belonged solely to Parliament. Parliament has therefore decided to add/subtract to the candidate's qualifications by bringing forward its own electoral reforms legislation. In fact the EC's order was a healthy one. It did not give the Returning Officer powers to dis-

qualify or reject a nomination because the candidate has a criminal record/association. The EC's order only insisted on full disclosure that would give the voters the chance to reject the candidate, by making an informed choice possible. Thus under the EC's order, candidates had the choice between disclosing their criminal record and having rival political parties exploit it, or, hiding their past record and risking disqualification.

No Direct Corporates Funding

The eight and final question that needs to be raised and discussed is, should companies and private corporates be allowed to fund elections? I have already indicated earlier that the center should set up an election fund by levying a cess on corporate and high income tax payers. Implicit in this, is the stance that private corporates and companies should not be allowed directly to fund elections or any party candidate. There are many reasons why funding by corporates needs to be discouraged in India.

Preventing *Quid Pro Quos*

Firstly, special interests, which have money, will fund only such political campaigns and candidates, which will be agreeable to their agenda and interest. Now some may say that there should be no objection to this in theory since many special (monied) interest groups/lobbyists actually bring new ideas and information to the country's leaders. As they say in the USA, "sometimes what is good for General Motors is good for the USA". However in the USA the funding is transparent, for example fund raising dinners. Thanks to widespread literacy, a free and powerful media and strong NGOs, people know who gave what, how much and to whom. What is more people are able to keep a vigil over the legislation introduced

in the House to determine if any unhealthy *quid pro quo* (or conflict of interests) exists between the corporate providing funds and the party/candidate.

In India the situation is very different. Given political apathy, widespread illiteracy, caste vote banks, institutionalized socio-economic exploitation of the poor, and comparatively weaker and always suspect NGOs, the transparency that makes corporate funding acceptable in the USA, will not hold good for India. Given the infrastructure and peculiar sociology of India, corporate funding in India, can only encourage unhealthy bargaining and a *quid pro quo* being struck between the corporate house/s and politicians.

Secondly, in India there exists a large amount of unaccounted black money, which has always been a major source of corruption in all walks of our public life. *Tehelka* has only revealed the proverbial tip of the iceberg. For years together, all political parties had been taking money under the table for party funds. Thirdly, allowing corporate funding may encourage loss making and even sick units to contribute to party funds to obtain a *quid pro quo* by way of a revival package. Fourthly allowing corporate funding will encourage competitive trade union funding of political parties, further vitiating the political climate and the far from cordial relationship between management and labour. Finally, in India, very few business houses would be inclined to fund political

parties, which heavily or exclusively represent the interests of the socially and economically weaker sections. Even at the best of times, the disadvantaged sections/parties often have limited and or no access to big donors. For these reasons, for the present, it would be best to ban corporate funding of elections.

This brief note, as stated at the beginning, has raised questions pertaining to state funding of elections and attempted to provide answers. The answers, hopefully, may help parties arrive at a consensus in preparing a blueprint for a comprehensive electoral reform in the domain of funding elections.

MR. ADI H. DOCTOR is Emeritus professor, Department of Political Science, Goa University.



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Religion and Child Abuse

An Unacknowledged Global Phenomena

N. Innaiah

Over the years, the abuse of children has received a lot of attention worldwide. The United Nations, through its member organizations such as UNESCO, has focused on this issue, recognizing the worst forms of such abuse, including child labour, where an estimated 250 million children are engaged in some form of labour; the practice of slavery; bondage linked to family debts; serfdom; forced recruitment and involvement in armed conflicts; child pornography and prostitution; production and trafficking of drugs.

The International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and UNESCO hold regular discussions at various levels, organize international conventions and have adopted a world declaration for protection of children.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The human rights of children and the standards in which all governments must aspire in realizing these rights for all children, are most concisely and fully articulated in one international human rights treaty: The Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention is the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history – it has been ratified by every country in the world except two, the United States and Somalia. It places children center-stage in the quest for the universal application of human rights. By ratifying this instrument, national governments have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights and they have agreed to hold themselves account-

able for this commitment before the international community.

While it is unfortunate that a powerful country such as the United States is yet to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UNO's efforts are salutary and place much needed emphasis on improving the lives of children globally.

An area where religions contribute to child abuse is through explicit and implicit gender discrimination that leads to unequal rights between boys and girls.

Influence of Religion

However, despite all the effort and rhetoric about protecting the children and their rights, there is one big gap and a severe shortcoming in the global campaign to protect children; the influence of religion and its continued contribution to many forms of child abuse all around the world.

Such abuse begins with the involuntary involvement of children in religious practices from the time they are born. All religions, through daily practices and through preaching and religious texts, seek to bring children in day-to-day religious practices. This gives holy books and scriptures as well as those who teach them an early grip over the minds of young people, leaving an indelible impression on their devel-

oping minds. In many cases, especially in the Catholic Church, this forced and prolonged exposure of children to religious institutions has also been a key reason for the physical and mental abuse of children by priests.

This early grip is so strong that very few people ever get an opportunity to change their mind, despite being exposed in science and rational thinking. Religious beliefs thrive by subtly inculcating blind adherence to certain dogmatic practices on impressionable minds. In some ways this lays the groundwork for sustained psychological abuse of young children by allowing adults the use of religion as a pretext for various other forms of abuse – be it wars in the name of religion and ethnicity. During 2004, about 300,000 children served as soldiers in national armies – or genital mutilation of young girls.

When it comes to the forcible influence of religion and resulting abuse of children in the name of religion, the U.N., all its affiliated organizations and almost all national governments, remain steadfastly silent.

U.N.'s Reluctance

In one form or another, all religions violate the rights of children. Yet a body like the U.N. which allows the Vatican to be represented among its member countries, is unaware or more likely, unable and unwilling to stand up to the religious abuse of children. There is significant pressure from the Vatican to pull back on or dilute any reso-

lutions that point to religion as the cause of abuse and strife. And the unwillingness of the U.N. to face up to this issue means that member countries, especially those in the Muslim world, can also exert a lot of pressure on issues related to the abuse of children by religious schools, or *Madrasas*, where for example, very young children are forced to memorize six thousand verses of the Koran, is a form of both mental and physical abuse.

As a result, the U.N. and its affiliated agencies tend to focus on addressing just the symptoms rather than the root causes of some insidious forms of child abuse. While everyone speaks out against genital mutilation, the UNICEF is unwilling to acknowledge and condemn it as a religious practice. Instead, it talks about educating communities and spends millions on medical kits to treat those children who have already been mutilated. By not forcefully pointing the finger at the real culprit – religious practices – the U.N. is not only missing a good opportunity to stem the problem at the source but also putting band-aid on a much deeper malaise.

Gender Discrimination

Another area where religions contribute to child abuse is through explicit and implicit gender discrimination that leads to unequal rights between boys and girls and contributes to abuse, especially as it relates to lack of equal opportunity. While economic factors are also to blame, the roots of inequity lie in religious and social mores. How can the U.N. hope to tackle the problem of child labour or lack of educational opportunity among the 130 million children in developing countries who are not in primary school, the majority of them being girls. In the Islamic world, some female students are also allowed to attend certain

madrasas however they are forced to sit in separate classrooms or buildings.

There is a global unwillingness to acknowledge that all religions use their educational institutions and programs, be it via Sunday Schools, *madrasas*, The Jehovah or Hindu temple programs, to indoctrinate children. Sometimes this is in the guise of good moral values but while it might be much more overt in say, a *madrasa*, it is no less influential on young minds in a Sunday school. Ultimately, all such programs try to instill a belief in the superiority of their religion and inculcate an unquestioning belief system.

Child Marriage

Just as we all stand up against child marriage because it is an institution meant for adults and just as we don't let children participate in certain civic duties – such as voting – until they are of a certain age the time has come to debate the participation of children in religious institutions. While some might see it as a matter left to parents, the negative influence of religion and subsequent contribution to child abuse from religious beliefs, begs the question as to whether organized, religion is an institution that needs limits on how early it can access children.

There is no doubt that this will be a controversial position. However, nothing prevents the U.N. from organizing a world convention on the issue of Religious Abuse of Children, a forum where the pros and cons of religion and its influence on children can be openly debated. The world body cannot remain silent on this vital issue just because it is a sensitive and difficult subject, especially given its member nations and their religious interests.

However, a Convention like this will also be an opportunity for those who might want to argue – and prove – the positive influence of religion on children so the U.N. should not shy away from debating the issue.

If such a convention clearly shows how religion contributes to child abuse globally, the U.N. must then take a clear stand on the issue in terms of the forced involvement of children in religious practices; it must speak up for the rights of children and not the automatic right to religious beliefs and re-examine whether an organization like the Vatican should belong to the U.N.

Until this happens, millions of children globally will continue to be abused in the name of religion and the efforts of the U.N. will continue to address the symptoms but not the disease.

(Paper presented at the conference on New Enlightenment, 26-30 October 2005, Center for Inquiry, Amherst, New York, USA.)

Mr. N. Innaiah, Ph.D. is Chairman of the Center for Inquiry, India and General Secretary, Indian Radical Humanist Association.

Koca Cola Classic !!!

A disappointed salesman of Koca Cola returns from his Middle East assignment. A friend asked, "Why weren't you successful with the Arabs?"

The salesman explained, "When I got posted in the Middle East, I was very confident that I will make a good sales pitch as Cola is virtually unknown there. But, I had a problem I didn't know to speak Arabic. So, I planned to convey the message through 3 posters..."

First poster, a man crawling through the hot desert sand ... totally exhausted and panting. Second, the man is drinking our Cola and Third, our man is now totally refreshed. Then these posters were pasted all over the place"

"That should have worked," said the friend.

The salesman replied, "Well, not only did I not speak Arabic, I also didn't realize that Arabs read from right to left..."

Contributed by Bhalchandra Patankar

Baburao Chandawar

The Selfless Sarvodaya Activist

V. C. Phadke



Baburao Chandawar, a close associate of the Late Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, is a well-known Sarvodaya activist of Maharashtra and Bihar. He hails from Maroda Village in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra. When he was just a 14 year boy, he left his home in anguish due to some differences with his father. V. G. Apte, the then Director of a Khadi School at Mul Village in Chandrapur District nurtured Baburao for some time. Later the famous Sarvodaya leader Annasaheb Sahasrabudhe became his mentor. He asked Baburao to join two Rashtra Seva Dal camps held at Pune and Mumbai. There he came into contact with the three Acharyas namely Javdekar, Bhagwat and Narendra Deo and also Jayaprakash Narayan.

When Vinoba Bhave started his famous *Padayatra* (travel on foot) for his Bhoodan Movement in the nineteen fifties exhorting the landlords to donate their surplus land to the landless, Baburao joined him when it was passing through Orissa. His close association with Vinoba for over six months greatly influenced his personality and character. His strenuous work in Chandrapur dis-

Being a staunch believer in Gandhian and Sarvodaya principles, he remained aloof from power politics.

trict from 1953 to 1958 resulted into the distribution of nearly 50,000 acres of donated land among the landless Adivasis. In 1969, Baburao had to launch a Satyagraha for redressing injustice caused to the Adivasi farmers in Chandrapur district as they were forcibly deprived of their own land. He was imprisoned thrice during the prolonged agitation. As a famous social worker was a party to this dispute, Vinoba intervened in the matter and the usurped land was returned to the farmers.

Baburao launched experiments to test Gandhiji's concept of "*Gram Swaraj*" (Village Self-Government) in Jawahar Taluka of Thane District from 1971 to 1973. Then, at the behest of JP, he went to Bihar to organize an anti-corruption movement against the state government in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Vaishali and Sitamarhi. A huge protest march led by JP to the State Assembly building in Patna on 4th November 1973 was confronted by the police force. At that time, Baburao was severally wounded, while shielding JP from the brutal lathi charge.

As the Naxalbari movement became very intense in Bhojpur district of Bihar in 1974, Baburao personally met the Naxalbari leaders to collect information and prepare a report for JP's perusal. He also offered Salyagraha in New Delhi on 2nd October 1975 against the Emergency and was imprisoned in Tihar Jail for 9 months. Being a

staunch believer in Gandhian and Sarvodaya principles, he remained aloof from the power politics of the newly formed Janata Party in which many of his friends took active part. However, all of them became disillusioned after the fall of the Janata Government in 1979.

Baburao went to Belchi in Bihar in 1977-78 at the instance of JP for an on-the-spot study of the mass massacre of Harijans. He went on a seven day fast in Mumbai when he came to know about the policemen's atrocities on the suspects in Bhagalpur Jail in Bihar. Similarly, he began an indefinite fast in Delhi to protest against the alleged misappropriation of the JP Amrit-Nidhi collected from people. He ended it after 10 days only when he obtained a written promise assuring proper use and accounting of funds.

In the May 1984 communal riots, Baburao who was staying in the powerloom city of Bhiwandi, promptly visited the localities of the victims of the communal riots and consoled them. He went to Amritsar after the Blue Star operations against the Sikh terrorists, contacted some of them alongwith other people and prepared an objective report on the issue of Khalistan. He also prepared studied reports on social and religious tensions and conflicts affecting communities in the cities of Pune, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Amravati and Bangalore.

On an invitation from the India Foundation in America, Baburao

visited that country in 1987 and gave lectures on Gandhian Philosophy. He also addressed the Peace Marchers in Michigan State. When he went to Jackson, the capital city of Mississippi, he was surprised to see that the college in that city which admitted black students due to efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King (Jr.) in the nineteen sixties consisted only of blacks as the whites had opened another college for their students! This was indeed segregation policy in reverse!

Chandawar who left his home in his teens and later renounced any legal claim to his ancestral property, could not complete his formal high school education. The principles of Gandhism and Sarvodaya and JP's

concept of Total Revolution are his special forte. He has good command over Marathi and Hindi languages. He is a regular contributor to various periodicals published at Delhi, Kolkatta, Varanasi, Nasik, Solapur, Nagpur, Mumbai and Pune. He had ably edited a Marathi weekly "Mitra" and a Hindi fortnightly "Pratibuddha Lokswarajya". He has written a book in Marathi entitled "Swatantrya Ani Lokshahi" and three books in Hindi namely "Sangharsha Kyon", "Sumpurna Krantiki Rananiti" and "Antarik Swar" besides many pamphlets in Hindi.

Baburao lives in Pune with his wife Vanita, a retired school teacher, without whose wholehearted co-operation he could not

have donated his life to the cause of social education and societal transformation. At 71, he frequently travels to Bihar for removing grave injustice done to the farmers displaced from their lands by the erstwhile donors of the Bhoodan movement. Nearly 21 lakh acres of land in undivided Bihar state received in Bhoodan by Vinoba was distributed among the landless during the nineteen fifties. But 5 to 6 lakh acres was later forcibly taken away from them by the original landlords. Baburao is assisting his Sarvodaya friends in Bihar in reclaiming the usurped land.

Mr. V. C. Phadke is a retired teacher of political science and a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

Are We A Nation Worth Dying For?

Freedom First's attention has been drawn to two instances of our (We Indians) indifference, to put it mildly, to remembering those who laid down their lives for the nation.

The first, arising from an article of Maj. Gen. D'Souza's on General Thimayya (*Freedom First* January-March 2006) is a letter from Brigadier N. B. Grant AVSM entitled "Tribute to the War Dead". He writes:



"The article by Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza in the January-March 2006 issue, on the life of General Thimayya, ends by stating that, *quote* Whereas the world recognised this soldier Statesman's rare qualities, it was not so in his own

country. At his last rites, there was none from Delhi present, not even the Army Chief *unquote*.

"The above is nothing new. At the last *Vijay Diwas* wreath laying ceremony at the National War Memorial in Pune, inspite of 25 invitations being sent to top officials of the government, except for a lady major, not a single civilian official attended the function. However, it is worse still that, although similar invitations were sent to all the retired army officers' societies, and individually to forty General Officers of the three Services, only four attended the ceremony. It will be agreed that, if the Service Officers don't pay homage to their own dead, it is asking too much for the civilian society to do so.

"To conclude, a nation that does not remember those who laid down their lives for it, cannot always remain a nation worth dying for."

The second is from reader Bhalchandra Patankar, Chief Consultant, Institute of Strategic Management who forwarded an

email he had received from Ms. Kavita Chowdary which he titled "Will *Freedom First* publish it!"

This is what Ms. Kavita Chowdary had to say: "During the attack on Akshardham temple on 24th September 2002, N.S.G. Commando Surjan Singh Bhandari was seriously injured. Sadly, after 600 days in a coma, he died on 19th May 2004. His family members were hoping that one day their hero would open his eyes but he didn't. It was the longest wait for the family of this brave man. When the whole of India was busy guessing who will be the next PM of the country - will it be Sonia or will it be Manmohan Singh - this man was battling for his life.



"It is so sad that in the hype relating to the political drama being played in Delhi, the news of his death was lost like a needle in a haystack, mentioned somewhere in the inside page of some newspapers! But leading newspapers & TV news channels failed to highlight the story of this Commando's sacrifice for his country.

"In those 600 days apart from his family members the only item on his bedside till he died was our National Flag - the *Tiranga* (tricolour) silently saluting him for the Great Cause for which he gave his life. Absolutely no words can suffice to pay our gratitude to him."

Yes indeed, in the words of Brigadier Grant, "a nation that does not remember those who laid down their lives for it, cannot always remain a nation worth dying for".

Arthur Koestler

A Man Who Knew His Century

David Pryce-Jones



In a slightly dingy side street, not far from the center of Budapest, stands a house with a plaque on its brick wall recording that on September 5, 1905, Arthur Koestler was born in an apartment on the first floor. The course of his life was to dramatize the epoch's defining struggle between democracy and totalitarianism. His world-famous novel *Darkness at Noon*, and then his groundbreaking essay in the collection *The God That Failed*, powerfully dispelled the appeal of Communism. In return, throughout the Cold War the Soviets and their mouthpieces attacked him as an Enemy of the People, and it was too dangerous for him to revisit Budapest. What a revolution that they are proud of him now in his native country! That plaque signifies that Hungary has regained its freedom, and Koestler's courage and genius are recognized at last.

Koestler liked to say that he was a typical Central European blown about in the storms of the century. This was true in the sense that the coming Age of the Dictators was unimaginable in families like his. His father was a businessman

with quirky and loss-making ideas, for instance developing radioactive toilet soap and a machine for cutting envelopes open. That family apartment, Koestler recorded, was "stuffed with plush curtains, antimacassars, tassels, fringes, lace covers, bronze nymphs, cuspidors, and Meissen stags at bay." Social claustrophobia, his Jewish heritage, curiosity about everything under the sun, and above all a supreme intelligence set him off on a lifelong existential inquiry.

Arrow in the Blue and *The Invisible Writing*, his two volumes of autobiography, document like no other books contemporary intellectual fashions and passions. As a young man at the University of Vienna, Koestler became a Jewish nationalist, a Zionist. In 1926, in the first of a series of steps motivated by ideological belief, he emigrated to British-controlled Palestine. He learned Hebrew. Chance brought him a job as a journalist with the Ullstein press, Germany's leading publishers. This meant moving back to Europe, and he reached Berlin on September 14, 1930, the day of the elections that sealed Hitler's rise to power. The age of reason and enlightenment, he was to write, was drawing to a close.

Communism appeared to oppose Nazism, and that naturally attracted Koestler. But he makes it clear that for him the doctrine fulfilled the much wider task of answering his existential doubts, in particular the inferiority complex he

ascribed to himself. A closed system, Communism relieved the believer of responsibility for himself. The Party commissioned him to write a travel book about the Soviet Union. Now he learned Russian, and in July 1932 he took a train to Kharkov in the belief that once more he was emigrating to a promised land. Much later – long after the commissioned travel book – he wrote an account of that journey to analyze how he could so have deceived himself, but it still comes as a shock that someone of such superior intelligence could have observed the victims of Stalin's enforced famine in Ukraine and rationalized the horror away. (The Party published only an expurgated version of his original travel book. Some KGB archive must have the complete manuscript of what would be a major literary curiosity.)

Luckily Koestler was allowed to leave the Soviet Union. In Paris he then became part of the Comintern propaganda outfit directed by the inventive but sinister Willi Miinzenberg. In that capacity, he was sent undercover as a war correspondent for a British newspaper to the Franco side in the Spanish civil war. In *Spanish Testament*, yet another classic, he describes the series of events in which he was detected as a Communist agent, and held in solitary confinement under sentence of death for over a hundred days. In a characteristic phrase he speaks of the "oceanic feeling" that the prospect of execution induced. A committee of the great and the good made a scandal of his plight, and he

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was then exchanged for one of Franco's pilots who had been shot down.

Communism in fact proved not the opposite of Nazism, but its kindred spirit. In obedience to Stalin, the German Communist party played Hitler's game by helping to destroy the moderates, the Social Democrats, in a tacit collaboration with Nazism that the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 brought into the open, and that made world war inevitable. In the last years of peace, living in Paris, Koestler came to realize that Communism was essentially a religious rather than a political phenomenon; it was a new faith based on Soviet mythology. The doctrine held that the ends justified the means, and that, he concluded, was the root of its evil.

Liberated from the Party and in possession of inside knowledge of its workings, Koestler sat down to write *Darkness at Noon*. He modeled his hero Rubashov on Bukharin and Radek and other victims of Stalin's recent and terrifying show trials. They were palpably not guilty of the accusations against them but confessed nonetheless. An astounded world wondered why they had consented to their own judicial murder. In Koestler's account, the Party has higher but hidden reasons for demanding that these men confess to crimes they could not have committed. Since by definition the Party can do no wrong, their self-incrimination is a last service to it. "Die in silence" is a refrain running through the novel. The reality was far simpler: These unfortunates were tortured and their wives and families victimized because a paranoid Stalin saw them as rivals. Nonetheless this imaginative depiction of Communism in practice proved more powerful than any number of polemics, and soon gave Koestler his international reputation.

The Enemy of Red Terror

On the outbreak of war, the French police did not distinguish between foreign Communists and foreign ex-Communists, but arrested the lot. Koestler spent some months in the concentration camp of Le Vernet, until yet another committee of influential people had him released. A few days before the blitzkrieg of May 1940, Koestler mailed the manuscript of *Darkness at Noon* to his London publisher. After a long and dangerous circuit through Spain, Morocco, and Portugal, he escaped to England only that November, and for the third time in a few years he was imprisoned without trial. Once more friends went into operation on his behalf. Afterwards he always claimed that British prisons were preferable to others, and that England was "the best country to sleep in."

The more the Red Army advanced during the war and afterwards, the more enthusiastically European intellectuals turned to Communism. Koestler was appalled that so many educated people could ignore Soviet reality. On the basis of personal experience, he campaigned to give anti-Communism an irrefutable intellectual framework. Along with James Burnham, John Dewey, Sidney Hook, Melvin Lasky, and others, he was a moving force in the Congress of Cultural Freedom, an organization sponsored by the United States in defense of democracy. Symbolizing his seriousness of purpose, he broke very publicly with fellow-travelers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, both of them former friends.

In the front-line exchanges of the Cold War, Communists vilified him, bracketing him with George Orwell, whose novel *1984* is the other great imaginative exposure of Communism, and sometimes they called for the two of them to be put to death;

at one point Koestler had police protection. Orwell thought that *Darkness at Noon* was a masterpiece that "reaches the stature of tragedy." He noted how Koestler had evolved to "a position not far removed from pessimistic Conservatism," detecting with his own inimitable puritanism that Koestler's weakness was a "hedonistic strain."

Too restless to settle, Koestler hopped from a farmhouse in Wales to Jerusalem to write about the foundation of the state of Israel, and from a house in the Loire valley to an island in the Delaware River, and a retreat at Alpbach in Austria. By nature a Don Juan, he was a difficult husband. One of his wives, the beautiful Mamaine Paget, wrote letters – now published – to her sister, in which she regularly brings up his bad temper and "fits of madness" but forgives everything out of admiration for his genius.

An English Gentleman

By the time I came to know Koestler, in 1960, he was very much the English gentleman in appearance, a compact figure beautifully turned out in handmade clothes. Considering that he had switched to writing in English around the age of 40, the versatility of his language is striking.

By then, he had more or less given up on politics. The West, he thought, had lacked the moral fiber to resist Nazism and for the same reason would eventually succumb to Communism. England was in the process of committing slow suicide through socialism; Europe was a lost cause. He had decided to fill in the interval before the apocalypse by returning to subjects that had always interested him: the history of science, evolution, the nature of creativity, parapsychology, and the study of coincidence. Cynthia Jeffries had

(cont'd. on page 46)

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BOOK REVIEWS



THE POLITICS OF AUTONOMY

Edited by
Ranabir Samaddar

Published by
Sage Publications, B-42, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110 017.
Year of Publication: 2005 No. of Pages : 312 Price : Rs.360/-

Reviewed by
**S. V. Kogekar, retired Professor of Political Science and former
Principal of Fergusson College, Pune**

This interesting volume is the result of group research in the subject of Autonomy. Twelve scholars have participated in this project, funded by the Ford Foundation. As many as eight of them are College/University teachers, two are drawn from the field of Journalism, while one is a human rights activist. The editor is Director of the "Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group", Kolkata. All of them met together in three discussion sessions held in Shillong, Varanasi and Darjeeling respectively. The various aspects of the work were thoroughly discussed before finalizing the text.

The book is divided into two parts following a comprehensive introductory statement by the Editor. The first part entitled "Geneology" provides a historical and philosophical discussion of the concept of 'Autonomy', while the second part deals with the "Practices of Autonomy" analyzing the working of the institutions established to give effect to that concept in India, with special reference to the North-Eastern states. The case of Kashmir and the problem of women's rights are also included in the discussion in two separate chapters. A brief discussion of the experiences in regard to autonomy in the outside world like Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is also included to highlight the difficulties of 'regional' au-

tonomy in practice. The book is concluded with a chapter on the problems of resources available for autonomous institutions as well as for local bodies covered by the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India.

Though included in the first part of the book, the Chapter on women's autonomy provides a succinct account of the growth of the women's movement in India and the difficulties in the way of making adequate institutional arrangements for the empowerment of women in a male dominated and tradition-ridden society.

The first part of the book is mainly theoretical and attempts to explain the concept of autonomy. It brings out the paradox involved in the concept in the context of 'national' and 'democratic' aspirations of the larger units of the country, state or society. Such aspirations emphasise the integrative and participatory aspects of political and social organizations, while autonomy releases centrifugal forces demanding ethno-specific and/or territory-specific authority in certain or all matters within the purview of political/social organizations. Such a dichotomy is inherent in the concept of autonomy which can become only the first step in the demand for regional self-determination or seces-

sion from the larger unit of which it forms a part. And yet there does not seem to be a way to escape from such a paradox.

From the philosophical point of view, as elaborated in the Editor's Introduction as also in the first chapter of the book, some form and degree of autonomy is inherent in human societies and begins with the individual himself/herself. The Kantian dictum of the individual being an end in himself views human society as a "kingdom of ends", all other social entities being of secondary importance. From such a view of society to the Greek concept of a complete identity of man and society and its culmination in the modern day notion of national sovereignty, later tempered by the needs of fundamental rights and the participation of people in the decision-making process, is a long journey to tackle rather than ignore the many shortcomings in the actual working of social organizations, the recognition of "Autonomy" (and in practice, of "autonomies" of various kinds) is inescapable. To succeed, such autonomy must be widely appreciated and honestly implemented by those who have striven for it as also by other who function in the larger social and political entities. This, however, is easier said than done and calls for sustained effort.

Turning to specific issues, the book brings out a number of factors which are at work in the operation of autonomy in certain parts of India, viz., Kashmir, Darjeeling and the North-Eastern States of Mizoram, Tripura and other tribal areas in the plains and hills, inhabited among others by Bodos, Karbies, Chakmas etc. It is quite rightly pointed out that the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution covers only a few of these tribal areas. It does not address the problem of preserving, protecting and promoting ethnic cultures in all parts of the country. Even within the areas covered, political interests of the leadership at state and national levels distorted the whole process of autonomy or decentralization of power. In almost all the cases studied, a violent struggle by the local people appeared to be necessary for their demands being taken seriously. But the interests of smaller but distinct minority communities continued to be neglected even when an accord was reached between the militant groups and the Central and/or State governments. In the case of Kashmir, the autonomy movement left the Pandits at the mercy of the hostile militant organisations and ultimately they had to go into exile *en masse* from certain areas. The Hindus of Jammu, the Ladakis and the Muslims in the border regions had a feeling that their legitimate claims to autonomy were ignored. In the North-Eastern states, the minorities within the autonomous districts had a similar grievance.

The most alarming situation brought out by the Study appeared to be in the Autonomous District Council of Darjeeling Hills. Here, once the necessary legislation was passed following an accord between the Gorkha League and the Central and State governments, the leaders of the Gorkha militants lost their earlier enthusiasm for the improve-

ment of the condition of their followers and treated Autonomy as a long-awaited opportunity for flaunting their own power and importance. They occupied themselves with the pursuit of personal benefits and the perquisites of office. In one instance, a member of the Executive Body of the Autonomous Council imposed his own tolls on the road passing through his constituency and used the proceeds for giving financial assistance to those whom he favoured, without any authority, sanction or scrutiny. This open violation of the rule of law caused widespread dissatisfaction amongst the rest of the Hills people. No regular meetings of the elected Hills District Council are held and the members' problems and views cannot be aired. The State Government of West Bengal does not appear to be particularly eager to step in to undo the damages for fear of giving an additional handle to the vested and entrenched minorities for agitation to demand the status of a Union Territory or of a separate State!

The question of providing adequate resources for much needed local infrastructure like roads, schools, medical centres has also assumed importance and there is a widespread complaint against the State Governments concerned for neglecting their responsibility in the matter. One way of dealing with the problem is to confer larger powers of taxation on the autonomous bodies. But State Governments are reluctant to support such proposals. They would rather continue the practice of providing grants for specific purposes. But grants are often delayed, upsetting the legitimate expectations of the autonomous bodies. A lot of politics at the State level must be at work and priorities get skewed.

All these are highly sensitive matters and constitute a potential

threat to peace and security of the States and ultimately of the whole country. The study of these problems presented in the book under review, though confined to a few States, also brings out the importance of properly fixing the borders of autonomous districts based on both ethnic-cultural and territorial principles. Within an autonomous district, there are also minority groups who feel that they are being suppressed by the predominant group, and wish for a measure of autonomy for themselves. Such problems appear to be intractable and demand great patience, tolerance and understanding – among those in power at various levels. In a sense, this appears to be a good example of the success of the democratic system which enables people to give voice to their grievances and demands. In another sense, this may put a premium on narrow, parochial and communal loyalties to the detriment of national integration so necessary for the peaceful development of society at large.

All things considered, this study makes a highly important contribution to the analysis and understanding of the problems of autonomy in the context of the working of our federal democracy.

Men are Not Virtue Machines

The problem with government is that it is run by people, and people are flawed. They are not virtue machines. We are all of us, even the best of us, vulnerable to the call of the low; to greed, conceit, insensitivity, ruthlessness, the desire to show you're in control, in charge, in command.

If the problem with government is that it is run by people and not, as James Madison put it, angels, the problem with *big* government is that it is run by a *lot* of people who are not angels. They can, together and in the aggregate, do much mischief. They can and inevitably will produce a great deal of injustice, corruption and heartlessness.

Peggy Noonan in the, *The Insider*,
a publication of
The Heritage Foundation, USA



OPEN SECRETS: INDIA'S INTELLIGENCE UNVEILED

By

Maloy Krishna Dhar

Published by

Manas Publications 4819/XI, Varun House, Mathur Lane,

24 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002

Year of Publication: 2005. Number of Pages 519. Price: Rs.795

Reviewed by:

Mr. Ashok Karnik, retired Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau and currently a freelance writer.

The book came out with a pre-publication hoopla that it would expose the 'misdeeds' and political shenanigans of intelligence agencies. M. K. Dhar's (Retired Joint Director, Intelligence Bureau) declared aim is to make the intelligence agencies in the country (Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing) accountable. A laudable aim but Dhar makes it an excuse for trumpeting his involvement in all epochal events during the course of his career. Although his experience is vast and his knowledge of certain events intimate, he falls for the usual bureaucrat's notion that, but for him, history would not have moved and if only his advice had been accepted it would not have moved so disastrously.

The book received instant publicity because it promised to reveal the conspiracy behind the demolition of the Babri masjid on December 6, 1992. It does nothing of the kind and ends up contorting the confused situation further. More of it later.

Dhar draws on his vast experience of dealing with difficult situations in Manipur, Sikkim, Nagaland, Punjab and the Pakistan counter-intelligence unit. He emerges as a loner who had no use for his colleagues and little regard for his seniors. His brilliant efforts apparently failed to help the country

because he was hemmed in by political idiots. He has the highest regard for Indira Gandhi and R. K. Dhawan. No one else, including Sanjay Gandhi, Maneka Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Arun Nehru, Satish Sharma, Zail Singh, Buta Singh, V. P. Singh, Devi Lal, Chandrashekhar escape his hatchet. Having joined a political coterie himself (led by R. K. Dhawan), Dhar sees political coteries everywhere, out to belittle his achievements and cut him down to size. He forgets the hundreds of senior IB officers who were able to distinguish between their personal political opinions and official duties and did not offer their loyalties to powers that be. Dhar's attacks on those around him are in bad taste and become tiresome after the initial salvos.

A great revelation made by Dhar and blown up by the press proves a dud. Dhar claims that a BJP/RSS meeting 'bugged' by him in February 1992 gave him evidence that these organizations had decided to demolish the Babri masjid. The actual language used by Dhar is ambiguous. He writes, "The February meeting proved beyond doubt that they had drawn up the blueprint of the Hindutva assault in coming months and choreographed the *pralaya nritya* (dance of destruction) at Ayodhya in December 1992, that has disfigured the India I knew. The RSS, BJP, VHP and the Bajrang Dal

leaders present in the meeting amply agreed to work in a well-orchestrated manner." (Page 434) The words can mean anything or nothing. Whether RSS/BJP leaders had conspired in advance to demolish the Babri masjid is a question agitating the CBI, the courts and the Liberhan Commission for the last decade or more. Why was Dhar silent for so long? More pertinently, what were the then succeeding Directors of the Intelligence Bureau (M.K.Narayanan, the present National Security Adviser, and V. G. Vaidya) doing? Why were the RSS/BJP/VHP leaders not arrested immediately? Knowing the diligence and professionalism of both Narayanan and Vaidya, it can be emphatically stated that they could not have overlooked such intelligence. Is Dhar embellishing the truth? Fortunately, Dhar contradicts himself in a later chapter stressing, "There was no pronounced conspiracy... The meeting (on December 5, 1992) discussed the practical details of the Ayodhya meeting and clearly opined that the *kar sevaks* should be deployed in-depth to prevent... - agent provocateurs from...disturbing the mosque." (Page 468)

Among the pompous self-assertions Dhar's tome does offer some nuggets of advice:

- The talents of IB's own recruits

need to be better harnessed. They need to be trained as intelligence operators and not as police officers.

- IB's TechInt needs drastic overhaul.
- The misuse of IB for election assessments and selection of candidates must be stopped. (Not that such assessments have helped any government). IB's help in toppling state governments is a gross misuse of intelligence and an assault on democracy.

- Use of IB for political enquiries must be stopped. Bugging of Maneka Gandhi's house, burglary of the 'Surya' office, bugging of Home Minister Zail Singh's meeting with extremist Sikh leaders and that of PM V. P. Singh's assistant's office amount to clear misuse of the IB.
- Unintended by Dhar but extremely important is a lesson from Dhar's own predicament: It is that political coteries should be kept out of intelligence agencies. Dhar's own experience with the ISRO spy case shows how

political interference destroyed a case built up assiduously by him. If you thrive through political manipulations, others can use similar tactics against you.

To remedy the above ills, a parliamentary committee needs to 'oversee' intelligence agencies. Considering the state of our parliament today, very little faith can be reposed in the proposed mechanism but in the long run, it may be the answer.



THE ARGUMENTATIVE INDIAN
Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity
by

Amartya Sen

Published by

Penguin Books India (Pvt.) Ltd., 12, Convention Centre,
Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110 017.

Year of Publication: 2005 No. of Pages: 432 Price: Rs.650

Reviewed by

Dr. Devadatt Dubhashi, Professor of Computer Sciences at Chalmers
Institute of Technology, Gotenberg, Sweden.

This is a collection of essays written over the last decade on Indian history culture and identity. With gentle wisdom, scholarly erudition and relentless logic, Sen comprehensively demolishes many stereotypes, misconceptions and misrepresentations - both Indian and Western. He also recalls the best from Indian (and other) culture and tradition with lessons that the contemporary world would do well to digest.

As the title indicates, the unifying strand that runs through all the essays, is that the well known Indian trait of being loquacious is deeply rooted in a tradition of discussion and debate that has profoundly shaped India's philosophy, culture and civilization. This is illustrated

in the essays by many concrete examples, ranging from the Vedas and Upanishads, to Asoka and Akbar. Sen expresses the hope that this tradition of informed debate could form the bedrock of modern Indian democracy. This is bound to strike one as rather fanciful, especially witnessing the action packed proceedings in our Parliament and Assemblies, and the standard fare of what passes for debate on TV and the media.

The essays in Part One under the rubric of "Voice and Heterodoxy" argue passionately that Indian thought and culture has had diverse sources and has been enriched by many interactions and cultures from the outside world. These essays have as one of their basic goals, to rescue Indian culture

and thought from the narrow sectarian boundaries that recent trends in India, notably the "*Hindutva*" movement, have tried to shoehorn it into. Indian civilization is at root Hindu, it is claimed, it is home-grown and predates all other civilizations. One by one, Sen dismantles these specious claims. In a wonderful chapter on "India through its Calendars" (which contains many other insights), Sen demonstrates that the *Kaliyuga* calendar is one of several others that were in use in India at various points of time, and does not date back as far back as claimed. The Vedas are a magnificent repository of literature and philosophy, but there is not much to "Vedic mathematics". The true world beating achievements of Indian science date much later to Aryabhata and his

disciples, who engaged in much give-and-take with the world. By the time Sen is done, the "*Hindutva*" position is well and truly in tatters. "*Hindutva*" has a formidable opponent in Sen – in stark contrast to their almost total ignorance of Indian culture, here is a scholar of Sanskrit whose first-hand mastery ranges over all the classic literature.

Sen believes that the tradition of reasoned discussion and debate is vital to maintaining the healthy tolerant traditions on which the country was founded. He admits to being an unreconstructed secularist but points out that within this framework, there can be many different interpretations respecting basic symmetry to all religions, ranging from a strict separation of state and religion (the French model) to an equidistance from all religions (the Indian position in practice).

In Part Two titled "Culture and Communication", Sen discusses amusing but instructive examples of both communication and miscommunication between India and the world. The Iranian scholar Alberuni visited India in the eleventh century. He mastered Sanskrit, studied Indian science and mathematics and wrote a very informative book on India. In stark contrast, the British historian James Mill in his book published in 1867, dismissed India as barbaric and uncivilized before the arrival of the British. In the preface, he proudly declared that he had not learned a single Indian language and never left the shores of England! We may not find such crude supremacist views displayed openly today, but every once in a while, the sentiments hidden shallowly beneath the surface pop up – as for example, when Robert Skidelsky in a recent review in the prestigious and liberal *New York Review of Books*, discussing the impact of China on

the world today, informs us that China is just "a culture, not a civilization".

In typical discussions of the east and the west, Sen notes, perceived contrasts are emphasised, rather than similarities. Thus, while the west is the seat of reason and rationalism, the east is all spiritualism and mysticism. Even if this might be espoused by well meaning romanticists as a favourable comparison with the west, Sen argues at length that it is nevertheless deeply mistaken. He gives many examples of the long reach of reason and rationalism in the Indian tradition: scepticism and doubt in the Vedas, comparative analysis of different philosophies in learned treatises, and the world-leading, pioneering science and mathematics of Aryabhata. Among modern examples, he has an essay on "Tagore and his India". Tagore was an amazingly multi-faceted genius – poet, artist, philosopher – but also a true child of the enlightenment, placing reason above all else. It brings a smile to read that western intellectuals such as Yeats initially embraced him as the saviour of humanity, perhaps impressed by his sage-like looks and garb, only to drop him like a hot potato when he started preaching the supremacy of reason!

Another claim often heard is that liberty and freedom are inherently western concepts in contrast to "Asian values" of order and discipline. Sen clearly enjoys demolishing this nonsense. While Aristotle extolled freedom and liberty, though not for women and slaves, Asoka championed the same values, but did not exclude women and slaves. If Kautilya stressed order and discipline, Plato's conception was much harsher. While Akbar was expounding religious tolerance in Agra in 1592, Giordano Bruno was

burned at the stake in Europe in 1600.

Two essays in Part Three titled "Politics and Protest" are particularly noteworthy. Euphoric claims are trumpeted these days about India's emergence as a superpower. The authors of such claims would do well to read the shocking facts highlighted by Sen: undernourishment in India is worse in India than many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. More than fifty years after independence, illiteracy rates are an amazing 40 % and the situation of primary education in rural areas is particularly dismal. Hardly the stuff that superpowers are made of.

Another occasion for euphoric celebrations was Pokhran II, when India openly proclaimed its status as a nuclear power. Apart from the ethical aspects of this decision and the loss of the high moral ground, Sen makes complete mincemeat of the decision from a purely strategic point of view. It resulted in the impositions of sanctions, it gave Pakistan the much sought after opportunity to test itself and allowed it to make claims of "parity" which it could not before. Sen argues persuasively that the Bomb emboldened Pakistan in its Kargil misadventure and significantly reduced the military options Indian had in response. The essay was written before the recent Indo-US nuclear agreement, so the Bomb champions could lay claims to a full vindication of the decision, at least from a strategic point of view. However, the US record on respecting other countries' sovereignty is notorious, the agreement is already in some trouble, and we will have to wait for the eventual denouement. The chapter is very persuasively argued, but unfortunately the effect is somewhat spoilt by Sen's outrageous claim that Bangladesh might well be the safest place to live in on the sub-continent!

In the final chapter entitled "The Indian Identity", Sen explores the theme of globalization and its impact on India. He points out that globalization is by no means a new phenomenon as much contemporary hype would have us believe. "Around 1000 CE, globalization of science, technology and mathematics was changing the nature of the old world ... even though typically in the opposite direction to what we see today". He also stresses that in itself, it is necessarily neither folly nor a virtue. He discusses at length the efforts of Jamshedji Tata to employ globalization to India's advantage – by importing modern science and technology to establish India's industrial base, and setting up institutions of higher education such as the Indian Institute of Science.

Sen then turns to the so-called "anti-globalization" protests starting with Seattle and continuing, most recently, in Hong Kong. He commends these protests for drawing attention to the problems of global inequality, injustice and dis-

parities. But strangely, here his voice is very muted and his arguments lose their force. He blithely notes the problems, but makes no analysis of its causes. He remarks that the slogans of the protestors are easy to refute – hardly remarkable since that is in the very nature of slogans. But he does not mention the vast and well informed debates that range on these matters at the World Social Forum taking place annually for several years now – arguments that are not quite as easy to dismiss. Distinguished mainstream economists have now started to speak out quite explicitly about the systemic features of the world economic system at the root of the problems, most notably former World Bank Chief Economist and Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz. As a fellow Nobel prize winner and leading economist who, at the same time has first-hand knowledge and experience of third world problems and perspectives, Sen's silence is both remarkable and disappointing.

Asoka and Akbar make repeated (and well deserved)

appearances in defence of Sen's themes, but other examples would have made his case even more convincing (and also less repetitive). At several places, Sen is at pains to point out that for about a thousand years at a point in Indian history, it was Buddhism, not Hinduism that was the dominant religion. However, missing is the reason for its later eclipse and the eventual restoration of Hinduism as the predominant religion. It is a remarkable chapter of Indian history that this transformation occurred without military conquest or state patronage. Rather it was the single-handed efforts of Sankaracharya who engaged in intellectual debates with the rival schools throughout the length and breadth of India and eventually triumphed over them. That this most argumentative of Indians finds not even a mention in a footnote in the *Argumentative Indian* is puzzling. It will unfortunately give fodder to critics who accuse it of anti-Hindu bias. This is a final reason for reaching the verdict that the book is magisterial but still incomplete in important respects.

(cont'd from page 38)

Arthur Koestler – A Man Who Knew His Century

... entered his life as a secretary as early as 1948 and she became his third wife in 1965. They lived in a stately house in one of the grander London squares. At midday on Sundays their friends used to gather, mostly like-minded editors and journalists with an anti-Communist background such as Melvin Lasky and Leo Labedz, as well as Hungarians including George Mikes, the Nobel Prize winner Dennis Gabor, and Paul Iqnotus, author of *Political Prisoner*, a book that ought to be better known, about his persecution by the Communists.

The aura of history accompanied him. He had inter-

viewed Einstein, Freud, Thomas Mann, King Faisal of Iraq, and Faisal's brother King Abdullah of Jordan; he had hobnobbed with Communist leaders and victims who were household names in their day; he had known as an equal Andre Malraux and Albert Camus; and Andre Gide had praised him as "a supreme journalist." Primo Levi saluted him as the teacher of then-generation. Afflicted by leukemia as well as Parkinson's disease, he took his own life in 1983. Out of a devotion that he was powerless to stem, Cynthia chose to die with him. They fell on their swords, it can be said, in the manner of ancient Romans.

The Soviet Union is no more; that once-awesome enemy simply folded and crept away. He would have been astonished, and skeptical too, in the awareness that this was only one victory and democracy must always fight to win, and few of us have his spirit for the fight. There ought to be some way of fixing a memorial plaque in his honor on the whole murderous 20th century.

An extensive extract from an article by novelist David Pryce-Jones, senior editor of the *National Review* in New York.

Courtesy: David Pryce-Jones and the *National Review*



COWBOY CAPITALISM

Edited by

Olaf Gersemann

Published by

Cato Institute, USA

Year of publication : 2004 No. of Pages : 260 Price : US\$ 22.95

Reviewed by

Sukrit Sabhlok, freelance writer and editor of Young Liberals of India.

For a long time, certain Europeans haven't liked certain Americans. Some Europeans feel the United States is using its superpower status irresponsibly, and they feel it their duty to constrain American power when it isn't to the benefit of Europeans. And, as *Washington Post* columnist Robert Kagan pointed out during a lecture hosted by the Centre for Independent Studies, in this way they deny America the legitimacy it needs to become a force for good in the world.

In an article titled 'Power and Weakness', Kagan notes that "on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus". But it's not just foreign policy where there are stark differences.

When it comes to economic issues, at times it seems a broad river divides the two streams of thought. Whereas Americans begrudgingly accept a society where everyone earns their keep and private ownership is the norm rather than the exception, many European nations run along social capitalist lines, where the welfare state plays an exceptionally large role.

Olaf Gersemann, in his book *Cowboy Capitalism: European Myths, American Reality*, explores these concepts in detail; Gersemann is the Washington correspondent for *Wirtschaftswoche*, Germany's largest economic and business weekly.

His book can best be described as a comprehensive review of the

differences between the American economy and three European economies – France, Germany and Italy. His analysis rests on the idea that the developed American economy has reaped the benefits of sticking with pro-market policies, whereas its three European counterparts have suffered as a result of their more socialist outlook.

By putting in context various microeconomic and macroeconomic indicators, *Cowboy Capitalism* empirically evaluates whether there is indeed a basis for the seemingly irrational European fear of "American conditions". The author's findings are consistent with economic experience so far. America, the more flexible economy, has fared significantly better than the more rigid models of France, Germany and Italy.

Even though the intent of this book is to counter the arguments made by the likes of Michael Moore and Paul Krugman with concrete evidence, at times it feels like Gersemann is gloating on behalf of America's wealthier (and presumably happier) people. But perhaps he has reason to be sure of himself, as it's a fairly simple matter to prove this book's *raison d'être* by selecting just one or two of the many economic indicators discussed.

The unemployment rate is a perfect choice, as it gives an indication of the effectiveness of economic policy in creating gainful employment. Here Gersemann frames the situation very frankly, reminding readers that when unemployment in the United States reached over 6 percent in 2003, it was at a level "that Italy, Germany and

France don't even reach anymore under the best of economic circumstances."

Deregulation of the employment sector has meant American workers can be fired more easily than their European counterparts. However, they usually find new work in less than six months, whereas European workers tend to remain out of work for a year or more.

No one doubts these three European countries have a high standard of living. They do. But what are the reasons for this relative state of prosperity? The answer, according to Gersemann, lies squarely in the past: "The French, Germans and Italians got rich during times in which technological progress was relatively slow and the pressure to adjust quickly was accordingly low." In other words, the emergence of the competitive age of globalisation has meant their industries haven't been able to cope on government subsidies alone.

We know now that increased international competitiveness comes primarily from innovation and productivity growth. Subsidies – even carefully targeted ones – are not the answer to waning exports for two main reasons. First, subsidies promote inefficiency among the domestic industries receiving the subsidy because a regular gift of taxpayer dollars removes some of the incentives to stay competitive. Second, subsidies have the potential to create artificial demand in an area where no domestic industry should have specialised in the first place, due to a lack of comparative advantage.

In the early chapters the reader

is provided a history lesson that tracks the progress of France, Germany and Italy in the past century. After World War II, much of Europe was in shambles. Winston Churchill described Europe as "a rubble heap, a breeding ground of hate". Perhaps the economic climate could have been worse, had it not been for various strokes of luck. Germany, for instance, experienced a brief economic boom after the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990. And America's \$13 billion Marshall Plan had certainly helped.

The American Congress passed the Marshall Plan in part because of a fear that the poor and unemployed in Western European nations would turn to communism; some would say the lack of libertarian values in France, Germany (although post-war Germans were fairly liberal in economics – the *Ordo* liberals) and Italy are what place them in their predicament today. Indeed, through interpretation of data obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the International Monetary Fund, the author concludes that in the early 1980s France, Germany and Italy were healthy economies converging with America.

Yet, things have taken a turn for the worse after years of political spinelessness in the face of demands from lobby groups for subsidies, tariffs, quotas, wage manipulation and other enemies of allocative efficiency.

Where the statistics plainly contradict value judgments on equity of income or prices of patent drugs, Gersemann weighs up the costs and benefits. This cost-benefit analysis method is used effectively in Chapter 14, where he concedes that "the lack of universal access to decent health care can with some justification be considered the United States' biggest social problem." But he goes on to explore the benefits associated with high patent drug prices and a lack of price controls.

Because of the temporary market monopoly power that patents provide, American drug companies have added billions to the economy by

increasing the longevity of millions of peoples' lives. In parts of Europe where patent drug prices aren't left to forces of supply and demand, profits for drug companies are slim, leaving little manoeuvring space to invest in the research of profitable patent drugs. Hence, politicians in Germany and elsewhere have ensured their nations form part of what is known as the 'free-rider' effect – they benefit from America's unrestrained capitalism through the influx of new beneficial drug research, but bear little of the political and social burdens.

Cowboy Capitalism sidetracks into social issues such as immigration, aging and visions of the American dream. The notion that public perception still views America as a land of opportunity where one comes to realise dreams of becoming wealthy is examined through Gallup polls, which "regularly show that more than 30 percent of Americans are convinced that one day they, too, will strike it rich".

The impact of an aging population in the aforementioned European countries is revealed to be greater than America, which takes in more immigrants and has a higher birth rate. America is among the few industrialised nations that, instead of experiencing a population decline over the coming years, will experience the opposite, with population tipped to grow to 300 million in this decade.

The late Julian Simon argued that people are the ultimate wealth creating resource. This viewpoint on population ties in with the debate over levels of debt. As far as debt is concerned, the facts appear have been overtaken by hype. Gersemann's findings show the growth of wealth has outpaced debt, as the average American family increased its net worth by 50 percent between 1989 and 2001.

Still, none of this explains why many Europeans despise America's clearly healthier economy. Could the reason be that they have been misled? Populist politicians know it's easier to promise equality for all, instead of equality of opportunity but inequality

of outcome. The local media too, through its dealings in stereotypes, may have cultivated an unfounded distrust of American style "cowboy" capitalism. Gersemann says the situation has become such that debate between leaders is no longer about creating growth as much as it is about maintaining the standard of living already in existence.

It's disappointing that Gersemann hardly mentions America's own struggle against the welfare thinkers of the early 20th century – those who provided America's ill-conceived social security system, and those who continue to block reform today. For the European nations under Gersemann's microscope, economic and legal reforms are long overdue. Sadly, reform has become a dirty word; the reforms needed to respond to globalisation are criticised as "Americanisation".

But incentives to remain unemployed have recently been cut back in Germany. During December last year, the first steps toward ending government dependency were approved through the cutting of welfare payments for a million jobless and making qualifying for welfare payments harder. The changes, if properly implemented, are intended to help halve unemployment by 2010.

Policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic would do well to peruse Gersemann's findings.

The British Simply Widened It

The most frequently mentioned cause for the Hindu-Muslim animosity is the British policy of 'divide-and-rule', which is really not the whole truth. In fact, it would be more appropriate to say that the Muslim elite in order to protect and further their own interests created this divide. The British simply widened it.

Makkhan Lal, in
South Asia Politics, April 2006

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

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