

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine



16th May 2014:

- A Milestone for Indian Democracy
- A Tombstone for Dynastic Rule



1st August 1959

- Back to the Future
- The Emergence of a Liberal Conservative Alternative



BACK TO THE FUTURE

The Present

16 May 2014 could well go down in history marking the end of an era and the beginning of a new one for our country. For the second time, in 37 years, the Indira Congress (Cong [I] calling itself the Indian National Congress, has been decisively beaten at the polls. This time round not only was it thrown out of power but was denied the chance of being the official Opposition in the Lok Sabha for it could not muster even the 10% of the total strength of the House to qualify for this position. In fact no other party qualifies for this position either.

It is equally important to note that the Bharatiya Janata Party, rode to victory on the plank of development, growth and the slogan of “Minimum Government, Maximum Governance” so effectively promoted by its leader Narendra Modi, who by the time you read this would have taken office as India’s Prime Minister.

Another outstanding leader, C.Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), a close associate of Gandhiji was alarmed when his erstwhile colleague Jawaharlal Nehru was intent on the one hand to deprive farmers in rural India of their land holdings and herd them into collective farms; and on the other declaring war on private enterprise by enforcing the thesis of the State occupying the commanding heights of the economy. All in the name of Socialism.

1 August 1959 is the date 55 years ago when he declared war on Socialism by founding the Swatantra Party. His slogan for the new Party “Farm Family, Freedom”. Defence of private ownership of land or peasant proprietorship in rural India and promoting free enterprise in business, industry and trade in urban India. “The Business of Government is governance and not Business” was the slogan coined by the Swatantra Party. For the first time Jawaharlal Nehru and his “socialistic pattern of society” was challenged. Rajaji’s Party presented to the Indian people economic policies that would bring about “prosperity through freedom.” Thirty years later when socialism almost pauperised India the policy prescriptions of the Swatantra Party were what saved India even if the policies were adopted by a Congress government...

Actually a common refrain about the Swatantra Party through the 15 years of its lifetime 1959-1974 was that it was decades ahead of its time. **Hence the title of this narration Back to the Future.**

In a short life span of 15 years (1959-1974) the Swatantra Party’s achievements were remarkable. Organisationally it covered more states of India acquired by its performance in the 1962 and 1967 the status of a national party, was treated as the unofficial opposition

in the Lok Sabha; led a coalition government in Orissa; was the official opposition in the state assemblies of Bihar, Gujarat and Rajasthan and had functioning party branches in a number of states. Above all it set an example of treating parliament and state assemblies as temples of democracy. Any disrespect shown by any member of the Party who was a legislator was severely dealt with.

After suffering a resounding defeat in the elections of 1971 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s Congress (I) swept the polls for defeating Pakistan in the Bangladesh war of liberation, the then leadership (Rajaji passed away in 1972 and Minoo Masani then Party president stepped down accepting responsibility for the party’s defeat) panicked and in 1974 at a national Convention decided to dissolve the Party.

But the Swatantra Party’s Maharashtra branch (along with four other branches) did not accept the dissolution, retained its identity and continued to be politically active. In 1990 when it became mandatory for political parties to register with the Election Commission of India the Swatantra Party, Maharashtra applied for registration and was in for an unpleasant surprise.

To understand this one has to go back to 18 December 1976 when taking advantage of the absence of the democratic opposition in parliament, as she had had them jailed, Mrs. Indira Gandhi (during her Emergency), rammed through the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution amending the preamble to the Constitution of India converting India from a “Sovereign Democratic Republic into a “Sovereign Secular, Socialist Democratic Republic.”

Based on the amended Preamble, the Congress government passed in 1989 an amendment to the Representation of the People Act introducing the concept of registration of parties for allotment of symbols and restricting registration only to those political parties that swore by socialism. A new section 29(A) was added which stipulates among others things that a political party seeking registration should swear in writing its allegiance to the principles of Secularism, Socialism, and Democracy.

This effectively bars political parties who do not subscribe to socialism from registering and participating in elections unless they are prepared to tell a lie. This the Swatantra Party, Maharashtra was not prepared to, so its application was rejected. The Party filed a writ petition in protest in December 1994 in the Bombay High Court. The petition was admitted but is yet to be heard even though 20 years have lapsed. For more details, turn to page 39.

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine
63rd Year of Publication

Number 564 – June 2014

Advisory Board:

Mr. Sharad Bailur
Mr. A. V. Gopalakrishnan
Mr. Firoze Hirjikaka
Mr. Ashok Karnik
Mr. Farrokh Mehta
Mr. Jehangir Patel
Mr. Nitin G. Raut
Brig. S. C. Sharma (retd.)
Mr. Kunwar Sinha
Mr. Sameer Wagle

Editor:

S. V. Raju

Associate Editor:

Prof. R. Srinivasan

Web Editor:

Sharad Bailur

Editorial Team:

Dr. Rca Godbole
Ms. Hina Manerikar
Dr. Jyoti Marwah
Mr. Nitin Raut

Cover Design:

Narendra Kotak

Administration, Accounts,

Subscription, Circulation:

Ms. Kashmira Rao

Contact:

Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom

3rd floor, Army & Navy Building
148, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Mumbai 400001
Telefax. 022 22843416 /66396366
Editor's Cell: 9820016392

Subscription:

Annual: Rs.200: Two years Rs.350

Three years: Rs.500

Overseas: Annual only US\$20 / £10.

Cheques/DDs in favour of ICCF

Email: freedomfirst1952@gmail.com

Web: www.freedomfirst.in

Published by J. R. Patel for the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and printed by him at Union Press, 13 Homji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400001. Tel. 22660357, 22665526. Typeset by Narendra Kotak, A-605/606, Mahavir Platinum, Next to Indian Oil Nagar, Govandi, Mumbai 400043.

In this Issue

<i>From Our Readers</i>		4
<i>In Memoriam:</i>		
K. Vedomurthy		6
<i>Editorial</i>		7
<i>General Elections 2014</i>		
● Modi's Tsunami	Ashok Karnik	8
● History's Verdict	H. R. Bapu Satyanarayana	10
● Is India's Electoral Democracy Deceptive	N. S. Venkataraman	11
<i>Cornucopia</i>	Firoze Hirjikaka	13
<i>Economy</i>		
● Don'ts for the New Government	Sunil S. Bhandare	16
● Their Concerns, Our Concerns	Neelakant Patri	18
<i>Foreign Relations in the 21st Century:</i>		
● 2014 Election Manifestos and Foreign Policy	B. Ramesh Babu	21
● India's Foreign Policy: Will it Become Muscular?	Ranga Kota	23
<i>Point Counter Point</i>	Ashok Karnik	26
<i>National Security</i>		
● Defence Planning – A Ticking Time Bomb Waiting to Explode	Probir Roy	28
<i>The Rural Perspective:</i>		
● A Separate State of Vidarbha	Sharad Joshi	29
R. C. Cooper – The One That Got Away	Sunanda K. Datta-Ray	31
When U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron failed to find a seat on a public transport		32
<i>A Soldier's Tale</i>		
● A Soldier's Father	Wing Comdr Venki Iyer	33
<i>Book Review:</i>		
● Collaborators or Conformists? The British Indian Editors of Bombay and Other Addresses		
by Aroon Tikekar, reviewed by	R. Srinivasan	34
<i>Educating Adults:</i>		
● The Boy with the Nose-ring - A Short Story	Ishita Marwah	36

From Our Readers

On *Freedom First* May 2014 Editorial

Have the May issue of *FF* with the most appropriate cover page for the times we are living with your edit page and late Masani's write up on the party which took its birth in dirty circumstances and calls it INC.

V. Krishna Moorthy, Mysore.
moorthy_vk@rediffmail.com

*

It is an immutable truth about the human condition that no matter how much we may desire and strive to be objective and impartial, we cannot prevent personal bias from creeping into expressed opinions. I freely admit that though I try to present a balanced view, I cannot disguise my personal antipathy towards Narendra Modi. Similarly, the editor's bias against Sonia Gandhi and what he derisively refers to as the "Dynasty" cannot be hidden. I find no fault with his observations and reasoned arguments, but the fact is that dynastic rule is a fact of life in India. Leaders of virtually all political parties, including the BJP, are guilty of sparing no effort to promote their progeny. One might argue that there is a difference between regional satraps and national leaders. However, since India is a federal polity, the rulers of individual states have perhaps even more impact on the lives of common citizens. Dynastic rule is indeed not conducive to democracy, as the editor contends, and the Family has more than its fair share of skeletons in the closet, but to single out the Gandhi dynasty for scorn and derision is perhaps unbecoming and a bit unfair. Modi counters and ridicules the *maa-beta* sarkar by proclaiming that he has no family ties, ignoring to mention that he does have a family and even a wife whom he has completely concealed from the public purely due to political expediency.

As for the economy, it has started to rebound in the past two months. Some would argue that this is in anticipation of a Modi victory, but that is debatable. The Congress can certainly be blamed for its timidity and desperation to hold on to coalition partners, which forced Manmohan Singh to defer economic reforms he clearly believed in; and it was only when the situation became untenable that he pushed some reforms through. These are just starting to show some results, though the spine strengthening came too late to help the Congress. It is presumed in some quarters that had the BJP been in power, the economy would be in better shape, but the cheerleaders forget that the BJP did everything in its power to endlessly disrupt parliament and thus must share in the blame. This disruptiveness has succeeded inasmuch as it has portrayed the Congress as impotent. However, if this practice were to become the aspired norm for the opposition, it does not augur well for Indian democracy.

Also don't forget that the BJP's apostle of development supported the economically retrograde step of opposing FDI in retail, merely to play up to popular sentiment and garner votes.

There is a perception that India needs a strong, even ruthless, personality to pull it out of the morass of corruption and sloth is floundering in. On an intellectual level, this makes sense. China after all, has become an economic powerhouse, because a handful of oligarchs rule by diktat. Towards the end of the election campaign, Modi has been trying to soften his image, but he is not convincing; his natural arrogance and self-importance, not to mention his temper, bursts through whenever an opponent is brash enough to disparage him or challenge him. His vitriol against Priyanka Gandhi stems mainly from his fury that this snip of a girl would dare to denigrate the anointed one. Equally alarming is the abject surrender of the BJP leadership to one supremo. They have happily subsumed themselves to Modi's absolute authority. Rahul Gandhi, on the other hand, comes across as an earnest and idealistic novice, who espouses causes that almost amount to political suicide in the viciousness and opportunism of Indian politics. Under his leadership, India would probable continue to muddle through, though hopefully with a little more decisiveness because of the elimination of a dual power centre. Personally, I would prefer that to a one-man regime that would give us better roads and uninterrupted power, but would brook no dissent or even constructive criticism. India's brief sojourn under an efficient system that virtually eliminated corruption and took quick decisions (the Emergency) did not end well. I hope history does not repeat itself.

Firoze Hirjikaka, Mumbai.
leonardo8_99@yahoo.com>

*

Transparent Corruption

Inspired by Mr. Pendse's note A New Tax Regime (*Freedom First* No.562, April 2014), I would like to share the following with readers of *Freedom First*: Transparency in business dealings is the buzzword with the Indian industry and business houses. I propose we follow a policy of transparent corruption also. In India, i.e. Bharat, we see corruption and corrupt practices in the holiest of our holy temples. So what is wrong if I suggest that corruption be legalized?

All government and semi government babus should be allowed to officially accept speed money. The only caveat: Let them issue an official receipt for the monies received by them. They should add the speed money to their income and pay income tax on the whole amount.

From Our Readers (Cont'd. from page 4)

The one who gives the bribe should be blessed with the said expenses being qualified as business expense. Such a step will convert black money to white money and also increase our tax collections.

Long Live Corruption. Jai Hind

Dharmendra Nagda, Mumbai.
dharmendranagda@yahoo.in

*

Speculations on the Appointment of the Army Chief

The PMO appears to have a finger in every pie – be it the Tatra vehicles, appointment of the next Army Chief or tenure of ambassadors. Does it have any constitutional validity and does the PM have the authority?

It is not the first time that speculation is rife about the appointment of the next Army Chief. Articles about virtues and faults of the contending individuals have been a constant feature in the past, perhaps at the initiative of the friends of the hopefuls. This time every issue is attributed to political parties. Speculations by the media cannot be banned but surely they can be advised not to defame any individual in the process.

Brig. Suresh Sharma (retd.)

*

The Message of Telengana

An irony of politics is that principles spouted by leaders lead to diametrically opposite results. Gandhiji's satyagraha could not prevent violence – a harsh reality of post-Independence politics. Whatever the merits of a political demand ultimately it is the killer application of violence that decides. This, because it creates the TINA (There Is No Alternative) factor – one of the two factors that bend political will. The other of course is cynical calculation of vote bank arithmetic...

*

All politics is local is an old adage. After the British left India we are experiencing the increasing assertion of regionalism. The demand initially was based on language. However Telengana has shown, the focus has shifted to economics. It is the economics-related grievance of Telengana being neglected which is the main reason behind the demand for a separate state. In short, economics is a centripetal force. Politics is a centrifugal force for regionalism and ethnic identity. That is the message of Telengana.

N. Vittal (former Chief Vigilance Commissioner),
Mumbai Mirror, December 28, 2009.
First cited in FF 513 of March 2010 .

A Gandhi Shows the Way

Stop Peddling the Family Name

WASHINGTON: Shanti Gandhi has not made up his mind yet. If he does decide to run again in the fall 2014 elections, he will seek votes as a Republican, a retired surgeon and a father of four. Not as his name suggests as a Gandhi. This great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi is a first time state legislator in Kansas (USA) and he abhors the idea of running on his name.

"I am proud of my heritage but can never take any credit for it", 70-year old Gandhi said in an interview, adding "I am just thankful for my good fortune."

When he first ran in 2012, he did the unthinkable for all those with marquee family names; "I requested the covering media to not bring up my family history at all". Reporters knew all about it, but acquiesced, "I wanted to win on a level field and I didn't want to take advantage of my heritage in any manner."

He is the grandson of Gandhi's eldest son Harilal Gandhi, whose troubled relationship with his father was the subject of that critically acclaimed film 'Gandhi, My Father'. Shanti Gandhi's father was Kantilal Gandhi, also a doctor. He came to the US after finishing his MBBS in Mumbai and stayed, becoming citizen in 1975. He has voted as a Republican since.

Though interested in politics he never considered himself running at least until 2012. He had just retired and the party did not have a strong enough candidate to field from his district. At the urging of some people he jumped in and won.

He didn't know that his uncle - Rajmohan Gandhi - was running for the Lok Sabha from Delhi East until told by this reporter. There are many others in this race with famous family names.

What will they say of Shanti Gandhi

By **Yeshwant Raj.** letters@hindustantimes.com

COURTESY: Hindustan Times, March 25, 2014. Contributed by Dharmendra Nagda.



K. Vedamurthy, R.I.P. (1939-2014)

Yet another man of outstanding scholarship, spiritual and liberal values has left us. K. Vedamurthy passed away in Chennai on 29 April 2014, of cardiac failure. He had undergone bypass surgery along with valve replacement at the Apollo Hospital in 2010 and though relatively incident free in 2011 & 2012 a recurrence claimed his life on 29 April. He was 75.

A science graduate of Madras University and graduate in Law from Bangalore University, he was employed in the Life Insurance Corporation and retired in 1998. Though in employment to earn a living, Vedamurthy was active in intellectual and spiritual pursuits. He was drawn to the politics and philosophy of Rajaji and contributed to their dissemination and that of the Swatantra Party. I still recall his report and assessment in *Swarajya* of the fourth national Convention of the Party in Bangalore in 1964 and Rajaji's appreciative response to that assessment. Between 1973 and 1975 he took a break from the LIC to assist the Rajaji Biography Committee constituted to assist Rajmohan Gandhi who authored the two volume biography "*C. Rajagopalachari: The Rajaji Story 1- A Warrior from the South*" published by Bharatan Publications and "*The Rajaji Story 2 - 1937-1972*" published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Vedamurthy was also actively involved in various religious and charitable endeavours and was an ardent devotee of the Kanchi Sankaracharya Sri Chandrasekharanda Saraswati Swamikal, the 68th pontiff of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam.

During my years as the Executive Secretary of the Swatantra Party I had occasion to interact with Vedamurthy in the sixties and the seventies. After the collapse of the Party we were out of touch for some years. In the mid eighties when I took on the responsibility of editing *Freedom First* and restructuring the Indian Liberal Group, we resumed our correspondence. Thereafter I recall with pleasure meeting him and his wife at his Adyar home on the few occasions I visited Chennai.

He wrote for *Freedom First* and rarely missed an opportunity to add or amplify or share his opinion on some issue or the other. Being associated with Rajaji he was also logical! On occasions he would write to me on something that he felt strongly about requesting that it was not for publication but to set the record straight or to keep me informed!



(1939-2014)

We reproduce excerpts from just three of the many occasions his comments appeared in *Freedom First* which speak for the man:

On the passing of G. K. Sundaram, an eminent Swatantra Party leader: "When the permit-quota-lisence raj laid its steel claws upon the nation's economy, GKS campaigned fearlessly in support of freedom. During his fateful years in the Rajya Sabha as a Swatantra member, and outside the House, he emphasized and re-emphasized the basic truth that socialism is to social justice what ritual is to religion and dogma to truth".

On the Rajaji-Nehru relationship: "...it was not as if Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajaji saw eye to eye on domestic policies to be pursued by the Government of free India to realize Gandhiji's dream of 'wiping every tear from every eye'. Even a casual perusal of Rajaji's scholarly study:"*Hinduism: Doctrine and Way of Life*", published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, before our Independence, will reveal to any lay reader, leave alone a keen student of modern economics, what a genuine Gandhian socialist he was all through his long, active political career, starting from his lawyer days in Salem town way back in 1901 to December 1972. They could not but part ways in politics, in free India, leading Rajaji to launch the Swatantra Party..."

Vedamurthy the Teacher: "No need to apologise". (*I was as usual apologising for a printing goof up.* – Ed.) "See *The Hindu* for the howlers it carries everyday! - late P. H. Seshagiri Rau (a leading member of the Swatantra Party in Karnataka – Ed.) used to tell me a story 44 years ago in my Bangalore days: when such a goof up occurred in *The Times* of London, its Editor regretting it the next day, added "may be, we are moving with the times!" Paalaar is not a perennial river - it is Paal (milk) Aaru (river) - not as famous as Cauvery or Tambhrabharani, the two major rivers of the State - there is another river called Pennaar-Pinaakini in Sanskrit near Tirukkoilur in South Arcot district... it is those springs which are meeting the water needs of Chennai from Guindy to Gummidipoondi. Water is so sweet- like milk- hence the name".

We at *Freedom First* are saddened by the passing away of Vedamurthy and convey our deep sense of sorrow and loss to his wife Sundari and her children Jayashree, Gayatri and Sriram. We share their loss and will miss him.

Editor.

Editorial

Congratulations to NaMo and the BJP on their Historic Win

So Narendra Modi has burst on the national scene with a victory that is wholly his, demolishing the “unofficial opposition” which is how, from now on the Congress (I) led UPA with its paltry 59 members [44 Congress (I) and 5 alliance partners] will be (or ought to be) referred to. He has, by and large, silenced his detractors.

We are mightily relieved that the Indian voter has not only spoken definitely but has spooked the voices of those who, over the last many weeks (particularly during the election campaign), have spared no abusive epithet to describe him. True, Narendra Modi has retorted in equal measure. The president and the vice-president of the Congress (I) have not taken their defeat kindly and their congratulatory message which neither names Modi nor the BJP (unless the TV channels erased these words as not being fit for the ears of their viewers) can be described as less than half-hearted at best or scurvy at worst. This is so with Mulayam Singh (of the SP) and Mayavati (of the BSP) as well.

On the other hand the three who have re-asserted their unqualified leadership, in no-uncertain terms from the three states of Orissa (Naveen Patnaik), West Bengal (Mamata Banerjee) and Tamil Nadu (Jayalalithaa), have congratulated the newly elected Prime Minister of the Government of India without rancour, and looked forward to interacting with him.

So, in one stroke of collective genius, the Indian Voter has voted for a stable and strong Centre on the one hand and for a strong federal structure on the other.

In my postscript to the editorial in the May 2014 issue of *FF* (see page 12 of this issue for the text) I explain why we welcomed the fact that the 2014 elections to the Lok Sabha was a Modi v/s Sonia confrontation in the following terms:

“August 15, 2014 will be our 67th Independence Day. Barring a nightmarish 18 months in the mid-seventies, democracy has survived to the extent that we can still choose our rulers through the ballot box. But it is at best an anaemic democracy because of inbreeding. We need fresh blood and men and women of competence to come forward to manage our country.

“Hence the emphasis on getting rid of family rule.

Hence the importance of Narendra Modi.”

This has happened and the climate is favourable for the emergence of a Liberal polity. But there is a fly in the ointment – in fact two flies in the ointment.

On 18 December 1976 taking advantage of the absence of the democratic opposition in parliament, as she had had them jailed Mrs. Indira Gandhi (during her Emergency), rammed through the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution amending the preamble to the Constitution of India converting India from a “Sovereign Democratic Republic into a “Sovereign Secular, Socialist Democratic Republic.” While this ‘illiberal’ amendment will continue to disfigure the Preamble to our Constitution, the second fly is a gift from her son Rajiv Gandhi who followed up to give flesh to his mother’s 42nd amendment.

Based on the amended Preamble, he got passed in 1989 an amendment to the Representation of the People Act introducing the concept of registration of parties for allotment of symbols and restricting registration only to those political parties that swore by socialism. A new section 29(A) was added which stipulates among others things that a political party seeking registration should swear in writing its allegiance to the principles of Secularism, Socialism, and Democracy. Every Party candidate filing his nomination paper has also to so swear. And this is the law as it stands today.

This effectively bars political parties who do not subscribe to socialism from registering and participating in elections unless they are prepared to tell a lie. The Swatantra Party, Maharashtra which was part of the Swatantra Party founded on August 1 1959 and which split in 1974, was denied registration by the Election Commission of India because it refused to lie that it believed in socialism. The Party filed a writ petition in protest in December 1994 in the Bombay High Court. The petition was admitted but is yet to be heard even though 20 years have lapsed.

Narendra Modi’s emphatic victory and the decimation of the Congress(I) can well prove to be the tipping point facilitating the re-emergence of the Liberal-conservative Swatantra Party on the political map of India. For more on this and how you can help, turn to the cover pages of this issue of *Freedom First*.

Editor.

Modi's Tsunami

Ashok Karnik

History is meant to give us lessons for the future and we should not get lost in its labyrinths; there should be a closure to all tragedies. The accusations that Modi would divide the country, persecute the minorities etc are rhetorical as no PM can defy the Constitutional provisions. Let us not create bogies to frighten ourselves.

Let us first congratulate the EC and ourselves for holding such a massive show of democracy. It was the writing on the wall that the Congress would be defeated but the tsunami of 330+ (NDA) vs 60+ (UPA) could not have been imagined even by BJP's staunchest supporters. There were some doubts that the anti-Congress wave would get splintered on the rocks that cropped up in the form of AAP/Third Front/Secular groups etc. That did not happen because of the hope raised by Modi of a decisive, strong Government that the country was yearning for after the non-functional government of Dr. Man Mohan Singh.

Campaign

Modi generated the confidence that he would be able to dig the country out of the morass. His image as a single-minded leader and no non-sense administrator overshadowed the allegations about his being a dictator, an ogre who would persecute the minorities and destroy the country secular fabric. It was a single man's victory, no doubt backed by a well-oiled machinery. If ever a presidential type of election campaign was conducted, this was it. People have placed faith in him and it is for him to deliver. The stigma of 2002 failed to deter the voters, although not his perennial critics. The critics would continue to find fault with him but in a democracy, there is time to denounce and time to applaud too. Modi has made people forget ideological classifications and overused words like socialism, secularism and communalism. What matters is development and jobs; aspirations for better living. Modi has not said a word about Hindutva so far but his critics presume that Hindutva would be back on his agenda. Why not wait and see. Far lesser leaders have been given chances.

Challenges

Modi faces an uphill task as his predecessor has left a mess to clean up. Modi has the goodwill but does he have sufficient time to meet people's aspirations? He will first have to clean the Augean stables and then attend to the incipient jealousies of leaders who expect to jump

on the bandwagon to claim their own place in the sun. L.K.Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Sushma Swaraj have already shown that they are not too happy with Modi's ascendancy. Can he handle them? Then there are the RSS die-hards who would insist on ideological purity and revive their pet projects like Swadeshi, Ram Mandir, Ram Setu, suspicions about foreign investments etc. Can Modi rein them in? Modi has won handsomely at the Centre but several States have their own oligarchs for Modi to contend with. He has indicated that he respects the federal structure and would like to carry the states with him in the national mission. Good luck to him!

The opposition is decimated but hopefully Modi will not make the mistake of ignoring and humiliating it. In a democracy, the opposition needs to be respected and carried along to achieve national goals. The Congress forgot this principle and treated the opposition with contempt; the Congress/UPA did not believe that it had to respond to the opposition. Its arrogance of power, led to non-accountability; clever legalese became the ready response to every criticism. Ultimately, it led to loss of credibility and electoral disaster. Regrettably, Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh who had the misfortune to preside over the down-slide had to carry the burden and pass into obscurity as a man who failed his country. The Congress is not likely to snap its umbilical chord to the Gandhi family but hopefully it will play the role of a constructive opposition and not become obstructionist.

The Left which is getting archaic by the day has yet to recognize its increasing irrelevance to Indian polity and would continue to believe itself to be the repository of all wisdom. Its electoral failure is not likely to affect its ideological arrogance.

The AAP failed to translate its euphoria into votes. Its abortive grab for a national role ended in disaster but it is happy with the crumbs it gathered as it started empty-handed. Its brand of politics is new to the country and many well-intentioned people believe that it offers an alternative. Its failure to go beyond flinging allegations

and picking up quarrels makes it a dubious alternative; its self-righteousness is disturbing.

The EC did a wonderful job but left lingering questions: Why were lakhs of names omitted from the voters' lists? True, voters are responsible for checking their names but can the EC not be more helpful? The EC acted in haste in getting the police to register FIRs in some cases while it acted differently in other cases. What happened to crores of rupees and liquor stocks seized? Who were the men behind these? EC would do well to streamline these investigations.

The Future

Modi's critics forget that Smt. Indira Gandhi overcame the stigma of being the enemy of democracy because of her recourse to 'Emergency' and re-emerged as a popular leader; why not give Modi a chance? Modi's pronouncements that he would not be vindictive and the hostile election rhetoric would be forgotten are reassuring. Modi has won the people's mandate and a true liberal would allow even his ideological opponent the right to

be different. Can we not extend the same courtesy to a man who has won overwhelming support of the people? Or do we insist on being petty minded and keep digging in to the past to vindicate our prejudices? The expectations from the new Government are high. It has to undo a lot of damage and no miracles can be expected. Is it fair to prejudge it?

The intelligentsia had predicted that BJP's selection of Narendra Modi was grossly wrong as he was a dictator, had no all India image, was divisive; the 2002 riot stigma would never allow him to emerge as a national leader. Attempts at character assassination were also made. The reason for this antagonism was that the intelligentsia tends to theorize its preconceived beliefs into deceptive dialectics. Since Modi did not suit the elitist thinking, they decided for themselves that people would also think alike. The lesson is that the more we interpret events to suit our ideas, the more we get removed from reality. We as a society are obsessed with disinterring the past to find the culprits of history. History is meant to give us lessons for the future and we should not get lost in its labyrinths; there should be a closure to all tragedies. The accusations that Modi would divide the country, persecute the minorities etc are rhetorical as no PM can defy the Constitutional provisions. Let us not create bogies to frighten ourselves. Let us also rejoice that we can have a stable government now. Will Modi deliver? Instead of being cynical, let us give credit where it is due and wish him well in a difficult task.

ASHOK V. KARNIK is formerly Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau, Government of India. Freelance writer and member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Ashokkarnik200@yahoo.co.in

Random Thoughts

- * Congress will reassemble the jigsaw, holding on to the dynasty, looking for scapegoats.
- * Communalism, secularism, socialism are no longer ideas, these are just stones to throw at opponents.
- * AAP will claim success in defeat. It had good candidates but a single-point programme of putting people in jail. Arvind Kejriwal will renew research on Crony Capitalism and issue charge-sheets against big industrialists.
- * Modi-baiters will predict dire consequences. Left will generate another seminal thesis to explain its near extinction.
- * Do not trust the opinion of TV experts
- * Opinion Polls are only sometimes right. .
- * Future will be full of sweat and stable cleansing.
- * No astrologer has yet claimed to have predicted the result.
- * RSS will start screaming Swadeshi again.
- * Advani will find another reason to sulk. Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi will start Astrology courses again.

Ashok Karnik

The Blasphemy of Raif Badawi

Raif Badawi is a Saudi Arabian blogger and the creator of the website *Free Saudi Liberal*

On 17 June 2012, he was arrested on a charge of insulting Islam through electronic channels, and in December of that year was also cited for apostasy, a conviction for which carries an automatic death sentence. Human Rights Watch stated that Bandai's website had hosted material criticizing "senior religious figures."

On July 30, 2013 Saudi media reported that Raif Badawi had been sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes for founding an internet forum that "violates Islamic values and propagates liberal thought." The court ordered the website closed.

The Open Society (Journal of the New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists) March 2013

History's Verdict:

He was Fortunate to Escape Being Impeached

H. R. Bapu Satyanaraya

In the popular perception those who are besotted by their allegiance to the Congress Party, on which the Dynasty has complete control without accountability, will naturally charge Sanjaya Baru of distorting facts in his book on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

However, a dispassionate analysis shows that actually it perhaps bails out Manmohan Singh because by and large the general impression is that he acquitted himself with credit during his debut as the PM. It would not be wrong to infer that his success was also due to the fact that in the public perception, it was the fact that he was considered a man of impeccable integrity and honesty that earned him all round goodwill despite the Dynasty having him on a tight leash. That is why the Congress rode piggy-back on the PM's record to electoral success by making him the mascot during the next campaign. However the Coalgate scam that came to light during the UPA-II period actually happened earlier when he was in charge of the coal ministry. The Central Bureau of Investigation, in order to protect the PM, targeted the coal secretary P. C. Parakh unfairly. Naturally Parakh, in his book, hit back saying if he is to be accused the PM is equally culpable. Besides, some important files are still missing.

If UPA-II's record is blighted, the Dynasty must own the major share of the blame. It stripped the PM of the dignity of high office he held by constantly putting pressure on him to ferret out what was going on in his turf making a mockery of his taking the oath of secrecy as the PM. Tragically, Manmohan Singh had no option but to play second fiddle as his innate gentle temperament would not allow him to assert his position when he found all those surrounding him were ignoring him and directly reporting to the Party President. That is what must have prompted him to say that he would be happy to serve under Rahul Gandhi!

During the UPA-II regime, the Telecom Spectrum and the Commonwealth Game scams made headlines. The brazen attempt made to shield the telecom minister Raja and the Commonwealth Games in-charge Suresh

Kalmadi by his silence and both his office and law officers defending them in the Supreme Court (SC) added fuel to the fire. It was left to the other ministers to claim that there were no losses to the exchequer! The farce of setting up a parliamentary committee was also gone through. It was only the unrelenting stand taken by the Comptroller and Auditor General, by the BJP – the main opposition, and the SC's verdict that finally nailed the lie. It was amusing to observe how the other ministers went to ridiculous lengths to defend them.

Probably, Manmohan Singh never realised how tragically he failed the country as a PM though there were a few occasions when he asserted his position like in the case of the Nuclear Deal. The overwhelming feeling one gets is one of sadness for he seemed to have lost the will even to resign and redeem himself when an opportunity presented itself. I am reminded of how President Bill Clinton escaped being impeached for his sexual escapade; but here in India, in spite of scam after scam and even the security of the country being jeopardised, no attempt is made to hold the PM accountable.

Those controlling him allowed him to take frequent foreign trips, probably as compensation so that like a swimmer he could breathe fresh air keeping his head above water from time to time before plunging into the darkness of water again compelling him to hold his breath. This analogy seems apt as whenever he was out he seemed so relieved and happy.

H. R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA is a freelance writer based in Mysore. Email: what_option@yahoo.com

Churchill's Use of Hindi

Before the start of WW-II, the French government asked Churchill for some aircraft. Churchill was in Paris and agreeable to the request; but like a true democrat, he was un-willing to commit without his cabinet's approval. He had no means of communicating in secret code so he hit upon a simple solution: he told his staff to communicate in Hindi with the people in London. Within a few hours he got the answer "Haa".

Contributed by Minocheher Damania, Mumbai.

Is India's Electoral Democracy Deceptive?

N. S. Venkataraman

The electoral process in India has become an expensive and costly affair, leading to several malpractices including generation and circulation of black money.

In a country of over a billion people, millions of people exercising their franchise to elect the government in an orderly way is certainly an impressive and extraordinary achievement. India can certainly be proud of its ability to conduct such a massive exercise which was carried out in nine phases over a period of five weeks in April and May 2014.

However, there are skeptics who are of the view that a massive election process by itself is not an indication of the *quality* of democracy. In spite of elections being conducted at regular intervals, some quarters think that there are grim possibilities of the democratic form of government getting derailed if it is not nurtured in a responsible manner by those who happen to occupy positions of power in the country. This would particularly be so in the present scenario, when the number of political parties based on region and caste has multiplied and a greater number of persons accused of corruption or with criminal background are contesting elections with many of them managing to get themselves elected.

Dynastic and Personality Centric Politics

The weakness of Indian democracy is reflected in the fact that several political parties are controlled by sons and daughters of leaders and other family members having a stranglehold in conducting the party's affairs and one family member succeeding the other in the party hierarchy like dynasty rule.

Except a few parties, like the BJP and the different versions of the Communist Parties, other political parties including the Congress Party are really centred around one family or one personality. This has created an undesirable situation, where there is no scope for others to move up the party ladder unless they pledge their loyalty to a particular family or a particular leader. Dissent is not tolerated; instead they are run and managed like a tightly controlled group. While these political parties contest elections in a democratic system, there is no internal democracy within these parties.

Role of Money Power

Money power plays a big role in the election process with massive campaigning by all political parties becoming the order of the day. Several political parties now own TV channels, employ advertising agencies to launch massive advertisement campaigns and organise expensive extravaganza in the name of public meetings and conferences to draw public attention and support. It is often heard that several political parties bribe the gullible voters, particularly those belonging to lower income groups to 'buy' their votes. A situation has now arisen when an individual or a political party cannot hope to win an election without money power. Almost all the political parties collect funds all the time to build resources for contesting elections resulting in a high level of administrative and political corruption. There is also coercion and threat to small, medium and large business houses by various political parties to extract money from them. Thus, the electoral process in India has become an expensive and costly affair, leading to several malpractices including generation and circulation of black money. The critics think that such an electoral process will really derail the quality of democracy in India and can tell upon the long term harmony and stability of the society itself.

Politics is Now a 'Business'

There are several politicians in India today who have never taken up any job, but have amassed huge wealth and assets and enjoy a luxurious life style. Many people wonder where they get their money from. Obviously, such wealth amongst politicians has become possible only due to extensive corrupt practices. Every political party maintains a large group of political workers, who have no worthwhile employment but are able to make money by using their political clout at local levels. Their political masters enable them to amass money by providing them government contracts and patronage in a variety of ways. Such political workers often behave like thugs, form gangs and work together for the 'common good' of making money, contesting elections and seeking power by fair means or foul. The dividing line between

business men and politicians is also becoming thin, as one often complements the other for mutual benefit.

Whither Indian Electoral Democracy?

The contest between political parties in India are no longer based on principles of economic or social issues but mostly on extraneous issues like caste, religion or family loyalties. It often happens that a number of political parties that align themselves and contest elections together fall apart immediately after the elections and quarrel bitterly for ministerial positions.

At the macro level the massive electoral exercise appears very impressive, but a deep and careful analysis of the electoral process highlights the rot that is steadily setting in leading one to conclude that India's electoral democracy may be deceptive. In such a scenario, critics are of the view that the future of Indian democracy may remain a question mark if the present trend is not checked.

N. S. VENKATARAMAN is Trustee of Nandini Voice for the Deprived, Chennai. Email: nsvenkatchennai@gmail.com.

The Congress (I)'s Bogeyman

The print edition of Freedom First goes to press between the 20th and 22nd of each month. The web edition goes out to those who are on our soft copy mailing list on the 1st of the month. This gives your editor an additional ten days to update developments. He does this through a Postscript. The postscript to the editorial in the May issue circulated on May 1 had this to add:

April 24 the day when over 117 constituencies went to the polls was also the day when that awesome "Road Show" took place in Varanasi when over a lakh, perhaps two, cheered Narendra Modi on his way to file his second nomination as the BJP candidate from Varanasi. That seems to have sent shivers down the spine of parties opposing Narendra Modi particularly the Congress(I).

It was amusing to see Congress (I)'s preference (one could even suspect some nostalgia) for a Vajpayee or an Advani! .

It was conventional wisdom that the 'key' to the success of a candidate in a large number of constituencies, is the Muslim vote. If in a voting population of 814.5 million 20% are Muslims there are approximately 162.9 million muslim voters. It was also generally accepted that such voters favoured the Congress(I) because of their belief that Congress alone safeguarded their interests.

But now, maybe I am wrong, I thought I noticed a new phenomenon. In many a constituency the Muslim voter has four suitors to choose from – the Congress(I) (the Congi of Sonia Gandhi), the Socialist Party (the SP of Mulayam Singh Yadav), the Bahujana

Samaj Party (BSP of Mayavati) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP of A.Kejriwal). All giving the same promise. This, say some political pundits is to the advantage of Narendra Modi). In other words there will be a consolidation of votes in his favour whereas the Muslim vote gets split four ways - in what proportion we will know after the 16th of this month.

The Muslim vote bank is a creation of the Congress. Low polling percentage plus multi-cornered contests in constituencies and a guaranteed Muslim vote was the Congress(I)'s recipe for victory. This explains to a considerable extent how Congress(I) majorities were totally out of proportion to the number of votes polled.

It is to be hoped that the 2014 voter will reject the recipe and we can look forward to elections based on issues of concern to the citizens and the country and not based on the bogus slogan of 'secularism'. This by itself would be a great victory attributable to the herculean effort of Narendra Modi even if he were not to become the PM.

August 15, 2014 will be our 67th Independence Day. Barring a nightmarish 18 months in the mid-seventies, democracy has survived in that we can still choose our rulers through the ballot box. But it is at best an anaemic democracy because of inbreeding. We need fresh blood and men and women of competence to come forward to manage our country.

Hence the emphasis on getting rid of family rule.
Hence the importance of Narendra Modi,

Editor



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

End of an Ordeal

Publishing deadlines compel this contributor to submit this piece well before the election results. So part of what follows is at best an educated guess. Please bear with me.

Publishing deadlines compel this contributor to submit this piece well before the election results. So part of what follows is at best an educated guess. Please bear with me. By the time you read this, India will have a new government, in all probability led by the BJP with you-know-who at the helm. I am not certain if the last minute surge anticipated by the BJP (they are talking about 300 plus seats) will have materialized, but even with around 180 seats, conventional logic says that they should have no problem in acquiring fair weather allies who want to be on the winning side. It is perfectly feasible that some “secular” parties will come up with creative excuses for effectively dumping their professed ideology.

In the April issue, I had elaborated on some of the reasons the Congress find themselves in the dire straits they are in. Since then they have only compounded the foolishness. They have become so shell shocked at the perceived ogreness of Narendra Modi that their election strategy is in total shambles. Their superstars are running helter shelter like agitated chickens. Their attempt to match the master orator Modi in spewing invectives is backfiring badly. Every projectile they launch at NaMo is being returned with double force. The electorate is perceiving their obvious desperation and turning away from the Congress in droves. The supposed whiz kids who are formulating Rahul Gandhi’s strategy have lost the plot. There is no logic in their approach. They simply react to Modi’s barbs with vindictive allegations, not realizing they are only giving an opportunity to the Fuehrer to run rings around their hapless candidate.

The biggest failure of the Congress and the dynasty has been their refusal to accept that their time is very probably up. There may be some substance in their claim that the opinion polls showing their rout cannot be taken at face value. However, they cannot ignore the overwhelming public sentiment against the Party. With a little acumen, they could have turned their underdog status to their advantage. It is human nature, in most cases, to instinctively root for the underdog. The Congress’s

dramatic decline and sense of hopelessness probably does evoke a certain sympathy and compassion, especially among those who still retain good memories of the Grand Old Party in its heyday. The Congress should have capitalized on this sentiment by showing a modicum of contrition and maybe acknowledging that perhaps the leadership did turn a blind eye to the excesses of its coalition partners; and even some of its own ministers. Modi has been indirectly aiding the Congress cause by his incessant and often personal attacks against the Family, but the Congress is foolishly not grabbing the opportunity to play the sympathy card. Remember that sympathy is big in the Indian political context; and that Rajiv Gandhi stormed to an impressive victory following the assassination of his mother. Rahul and Sonia Gandhi are squandering the party’s chances of at least a respectable showing by their tit for tat invective against NaMo, thereby adding to the general disgust voters feel towards all political parties.

It’s not as if the Congress and the Gandhis have exhausted the ammunition to use against Modi. Debunking NaMo’s development is a sound tactic, but the Gandhis are going about it the wrong way. Attacking Adani and making infantile remarks about a “toffee model” does not help their cause. It is ironical that it took a non-politician like Shobha De, in one of her columns, to hit upon the perfect needle to puncture Narendra Modi’s inflated claims about his achievements, most notably the “Gujarat model”, while the political pundits in the Congress are still running around like headless chickens. Speaking about a middle class Gujarati woman, Sarojben, who sources embroidered apparel for rich clients, De ask her a pointed question about whether Modi’s sarkar and his Gujarat model has impacted her life in a positive manner and whether she had benefitted from the much touted “progress” in Gujarat or benefitted from a single tom-tommed scheme. Sarojben’s emphatic NO speaks volumes in itself. This is the type of ammunition Rahul Gandhi and his whiz kids should be employing to defeat Modi’s relentless propaganda.

Of all the elections this country has undergone since Independence, this one has evoked the most disgust among the electorate, even those accustomed to mudslinging. The public perception of our politicians as a thoroughly despicable lot who will plumb any depths of venality to cater to fringe vote banks has been reinforced as never before. The kind of personal attacks and deliberately inflammatory rhetoric that are being propagated would shame the most depraved street hooligan. It is as if all sense of propriety and decency has been thrown to the winds. I need not elaborate upon the motivated invective that is being bandied about, since it has been sufficiently publicized. The Modis, Rahuls and assorted leaders profess to be horrified at the utterances of some of their party men and have voiced “strong” condemnation, but no concrete action has been taken against the culprits. I suspect the outrage is stage managed and the hate speeches are hardly spontaneous.

Take the “mammoth” rally organized by the BJP/Shiv Sena in Mumbai on 21st April. A Sena candidate Ramdas Kadam made a virulent anti-Muslim speech minutes before Modi took the stage. Uddhav Thackeray was also present. Either of them could have easily stopped Kadam as soon as his intentions became apparent. However they allowed it to go on because it suited their purpose. Kadam’s diatribe may be reprehensible, but it catered to the Hindutva hard liners who constitute a significant proportion of the BJP-Shiv Sena vote bank. The big guns don’t want to get their hands dirty and so they shoot from the shoulders of their henchmen. I am pretty sure Kadam’s speech was pre-planned and orchestrated. For the BJP/Shiv Sena leaders to later “distance themselves” from the action of one of their chosen party men is a farce and an abdication of responsibility. All political parties play this game. Modi in fact is pursuing a very clever strategy. Apart from the snide remarks against the Gandhi family (I suspect he can’t help himself), he is trying to project himself as a lofty statesman who is above petty bickering and mainly focused on development and progress. At the same time, he does not want to risk losing his headline Hindutva constituents. So he gives tacit approval to his hatchet men to do the dirty work for him.

Then there is the guru of charlatans who goes by the moniker of Baba Ramdev. He deserves a paragraph all to himself. He is emerging as one of Modi’s chief hatchet men; never mind that his “spiritual mission” has no connection to politics whatsoever. He seems bent on pursuing a personal vendetta against the Gandhis. He derisively calls the Congress a mother-son party, and

accuses Rahul of enjoying a “honeymoon” in the homes of Dalit women. To add insult to injury, a BJP spokesman defends this cretin by calling him a “saint”. Can politics possibly get any shallower? It is disgusting how this self-professed god-man and yoga teacher has forgotten his calling and is displaying all the venal opportunism of a run-of-the-mill politician. It is obvious that Ramdev has jumped on the Modi bandwagon not out of ideological conviction, but because he wants to be on the winning side. He is no doubt hoping that Modi will reward his loyalty with sops and concessions to his yoga business. And make no mistake, it is primarily a business for profit. Any altruistic intention of propagating yoga has evaporated long ago. Ramdev is entitled to his personal opinion. The tragedy is that thousands of his gullible “disciples” will blindly endorse his pettiness.

Towards the end of his campaign, NaMo has shifted his focus to Priyanka Gandhi. He may dismiss Rahul as a foolishly altruistic and bumbling novice, but he is astute enough to realize that the sister is made of sterner stuff and could prove to be a formidable opponent by the time the next general election rolls around. Indeed the Congress would be in less dire straits today if Priyanka had been groomed for leadership of the party. Her brother means well but he does not have the right stuff to be an effective player in the maelstrom that is Indian politics. Like any doting mother (in Italy or India), Sonia has allowed the traditional son-preference to cloud her better judgement. Her sudden spurt of activity towards the end shows that she has begun to recognize her son’s limitations, but it is far too late. Coming back to Priyanka, since Modi has failed to discover any personal ammunition to use against her, he is predictably attacking her husband. This egregious outrage over Robert Vadra’s real estate deals, despite the ring of truth, is the height of hypocrisy and pure politics. Perhaps barring NaMo himself, can you name one senior leader whose relatives have not misused their proximity to the power centre for personal financial gain? Even the saintly Vajpayee had to suffer the machinations of his less than honest son-in-law. Vadra’s misdeeds may be providing heaven-sent fodder to the BJP’s resident rottweiler Meenakshi Lekhi and others, but it is a storm in a teacup.

As the election approaches its climax, so does Modi’s hyperbole and self aggrandisement. He has already started referring to himself in the third person. His sycophant-in-chief Amit Shah, has already declared that the Modi wave is now officially a tsunami. The coup de grace came during the three ring circus NaMo led to Varanasi to file his nomination papers. Apparently the great

man was contesting from the holy city not because of personal calculation or because the BJP wanted him to, but because he had been called by Ganga mata. It made me want to vomit, but I am sure millions of his acolytes believed him. There is nothing wrong, I suppose, in the faithful being convinced of Narendrabhai's divinity. The danger would come if and when he starts believing it himself. He may be getting there; and he won't be the first strongman to be convinced he is on a divine mission. Part of his mission seems to be a determination to utterly crush the Gandhis for good and all. That is why, defying the long honoured convention of party leaders staying away from each other's constituencies, he is holding a mass rally in Amethi days before the election, where he knows his oratorical brilliance will show up Rahul's lack of charisma. Modi will not be content with winning the election. He wants to consign the Gandhis to oblivion. I am aware that many will be of the opinion that the Family will be getting their just desserts. On the other hand, an unbridled Modi with no opposition to speak of, may be a contingency the country may live to regret.

Like all megalomaniacs, Modi is in danger of getting carried away by his own hype. He has virtually announced that he has already won the election and it was all over bar the shouting. He is beginning to convince himself that he can win the election all on his own and

therefore does not need to be obliging, or even civil, to allies and potential coalition partners. In the short span of a few days towards the end of his campaign, he has managed to antagonize Mamata Bannerjee, Mayawati and Jayalalitha almost past the point of no return. So virulent and beyond the pale is the rhetoric being flung back and forth, that any post poll alliance would be impossible without losing face and serious credibility. If the BJP and its small fry allies fail to reach the magic number, Modi may yet see his imperial dream go up in smoke. A campaign that hitherto seemed like a sure thing may no longer be a foregone conclusion. Exciting times lie ahead.

There you have it then. 16 May will mercifully bring down the curtain on an election like none other the country has witnessed before: a contest not so much between conventional political foes, but between a megalomaniac Supremo taking on all comers with a single minded determination to win at all costs and by any means necessary. Part of the populace will be relieved, whereas another section will miss the daily tamasha on television. As for the long suffering populace of India, they will witness a new dawn or a fresh nightmare. Only time will tell.

FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer, a blogger, a freelance writer and a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First. leonardo8_99@yahoo.com.

Freedom First

3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001.

Phone: (022) 2284 3416 • email: freedom@vsnl.com

SUBSCRIPTION FORM (In Block Letters Please)

NAME : _____

ADDRESS : _____

PIN

PHONE / MOBILE NUMBER :

EMAIL : _____

SUBSCRIPTIONS PAYABLE BY CHEQUE / DD DRAWN IN FAVOUR OF ICCF AND PAYABLE AT PAR IN MUMBAI. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE THEN PLEASE ADD BANK CHARGES RS.50 FOR OUTSTATION CHEQUES WITHIN INDIA. SUBSCRIPTIONS CAN ALSO BE PAID BY MONEY ORDER

Subscription

Within India & SAARC countries

☐ 1 Year : Rs.200

☐ 2 Years : Rs.350

☐ 3 Years : Rs.500

Overseas

(By Second Class Airmail)

Annual: \$20 / £ 10

The Economy**Don'ts for the New Government****Sunil S. Bhandare**

The Indian economy is at a critical juncture – it has to control inflation, but not at the cost of economic growth; it has to promote public investment, but at the same time not compromise on fiscal consolidation; it has to recharge the policy reforms, but at the same time not relinquish or relax the rigors of effective regulation.

The verdict is out for the 16th Lok Sabha.- and the clear winner is BJP- led NDA. In the days that follow political pundits will continue to explore and dissect every single detail, however minute, the poll results. Whatever may be their findings , what stands out is the triumph of democracy; the story of the Election Commission's competent management of a massive electoral process and above all the singular triumph of an indomitable spirit, Mr. Narendra Modi the new Prime Minister of the Government of India,

Setting the Perspective

The Stock markets have demonstrated their strong vote of confidence - and the Sensex at one point of time on the day of the results zoomed past the historical high of 25,000, thereby recording gains of about 8% during the current financial year so far! But the most critical issues that Indian citizens look forward to are: Will it lead to the triumph of good governance? Will it bring about rapid economic development?

Many experts argue that India is at the cusp of a major transition. And the challenges are far too numerous, as the new government strives to restore the political economy on a stable, sustainable growth path. Many of the issues at stake have already been debated upon vehemently in the course of the most intensely fought election campaign ever – be it inflation, loss of growth momentum, job creation, quality of education and health care, water availability, housing, access to adequate physical infrastructure, effective implementation of social welfare schemes, national security and, above all, clean, transparent and accountable functioning of institutions of governance. Doubtless, the next few months are going to be watched very anxiously!

Even as stock markets are fired up, there is nothing much to cheer about on the economic front. Fears of El Nino and its adverse impact on agricultural and overall

economic performance are looming large. There is no respite from stubbornly high inflation; and the industrial sector is going through one of the worst phases of slowdown in recent years. In the medium-term perspective of the next two to three years, there seems to be growing skepticism about India regaining its high 7 to 8% real GDP growth potential. Apart from global factors, there would be concerns about how competently the new government confronts the challenges of pushing economic reforms and transforming the current system of governance.

In this context mention must be made of two recent reports: According to the Deloitte's Global Economic Outlook report "economic growth is likely to improve in the coming quarters, but the pace of growth may remain gradual because of persistent challenges... One such recurring challenge has been high and rising inflation, which has afflicted the country for more than half a decade". It also speaks of policy uncertainty ... "In the past, reforms have been repeatedly watered down, which continues to frustrate the business fraternity and impacts investor sentiments".

In a similar vein, the leading international credit rating agency Moody's in its recent report observes that "even if the new government pursues a strong reform agenda, the depth of issues to be addressed means that India's economy is unlikely to return to previous growth rates of around seven to eight per cent in the near future". To what extent is this a reflection of irrational pessimism or is it rational realism? This aspect needs careful evaluation, and will become apparent soon once the new government gets going.

What Not To Do?

In this contextual framework, the purpose of this article is to reflect on what are the things that the new government must try not to do or temptations best avoided. The new government must govern and perform well. So

much has already been offered not only in the election manifestos of various political parties [including, of course, by the clear winner, BJP], but at numerous public meetings and media interviews by top party leaders. While their promises and proclamations [“the do’s”] on economic policy matters are, by and large, comprehensive and reassuring, what is equally important are “the don’ts”.

As is abundantly evident from our earlier observations, the Indian economy is at a critical juncture – it has to control inflation, but not at the cost of economic growth; it has to promote public investment, but at the same time not compromise on fiscal consolidation; it has to recharge the policy reforms, but at the same time not relinquish or relax the rigors of effective regulation; and so on. In substance, *what not to do* is as important – if not more important than – *what to do*! Here is a menu card for the new government of things that it must necessarily get out of.

- First and foremost, it must not pursue vindictive policies. This is critical to the objective of restoring confidence, credibility and the trust of stakeholders at large. More appropriate and desirable is to strive towards constructive politics and consensus building and confront multiple challenges of ushering in much needed economic resurgence.
- Second, there is no case or scope for reversal of existing and pending economic reforms – especially those that are slated to be real game changers be it GST, liberalization of FDI [including in multi-brand retail], evolving a flexible labour policy or implementation of demonstrable mega projects like the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor.
- Third, in the quest for economic growth revival, the new government cannot bargain the essence of fiscal discipline. There is urgent need to strictly adhere to the accepted norms of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act. There is no case for fiscal stimulus even if such cases were to be made in the name of public sector driven growth revival. There is no case for expanding ministerial overhang and/or bureaucratic over-projections. What is, indeed, called for is less government and more effective governance.
- Fourth, as a natural concomitant of the above, don’t expand the scope and commitments to “rights-based” social welfare schemes. It is imperative to generate enough non-inflationary budgetary resources for funding the existing “rights-based” socio-economic programmes – the Right to Education, Right to Employment; Right to National Food Security; before

enlarging the scope to cover new schemes.

- Fifth, as an offshoot of sound fiscal policy, there should be no retrospective changes/ amendments in the tax structure and provisions of tax laws that are adverse to the interest of tax payers. The experience of the last couple of years has been quite damaging to the overall investment outlook and for foreign direct investment in particular.
- Sixth, don’t tamper with the autonomy of well-established regulatory institutions like the RBI. This proposition assumes critical significance in the wake of recent repeated pleadings by various eminent people, including the statement by the former Finance Minister that the present RBI Governor should not be replaced. “The central bank governor was appointed based on his reputation... Every government must respect this appointment” pointed out Mr. P. Chidambaram recently. There is also an equally important issue of the new government setting an example by a hands off policy in RBI’s independent pursuit of monetary policy [key policy rates] in particular.
- Last, but not the least important, under the new dispensation, when after thirty years, there is one single party which can proclaim its own majority in the Lok Sabha, the Central Government must not try to steamroll the opposition or state governments., which are run by opposition parties. For inclusive and sustainable development of our country, we desperately require a new paradigm of participative democratic functioning and national consensus building on vital issues of the political economy!

SUNIL S. BHANDARE is a Consulting Economist based in Mumbai. Email: sunil.bhandare@gmail.com.

“Ab achhe din aa gaye hai”

I was out to buy some veggies, found a *larrywala* (hand cart). he was selling dudhi real cheap - got a big one for only Rs.5/- then I asked for the price of gourd (*galka*) and he said “take it, I am selling it real cheap”. I asked, “how come, is it not good quality?”

Guess what he said, “*nahi bahenji, ab achhe din aa gaye hai*” referring to Modi’s promise.

I said, “he has not yet become PM officially and acche din have already come?”

“*arre! aap dekhte jao, bahut acche din aane wale hai*. They (Congress) had made our life hell!” he said.

I went thru this experience just half hour ago (on 18 May 2014).

Hina Manerikar, Baroda.
hina.manerikar@gmail.com

The Economy**Their Concerns, Our Concerns****Neelakant Patri**

India is being pushed into a corner by the advocates of globalization and yet it seems that its concerns are no concern for the advanced countries

India's annual inflation rate still hovers above 8% and Indians should be wondering what the heck the international Monetary Fund and the Western financial experts were upto when they warned the world about the effects of alarming decline in 'global' inflation rate.

At a recent Washington meeting of world's top finance officials, the IMF's policy committee presented a report pointing out that the weak price increases over the last five years was dragging global recovery and action needed to be taken to combat low inflation that threatens consumption and also stymies debt reduction. It said: "Downside risks remain to the global outlook, including notably renewed market volatility, very low inflation in some advanced economies, high levels of public debt and geopolitical tensions?"

The Committee apparently focused its concern mainly on what is happening in the Euro zone, where annual inflation is just 0.5%, far below the European Central Bank's target of just below 2%. The ECB has been accused of being less aggressive than the U.S. Federal Reserve and other major central banks in rolling out programmes to attack the problem. The strong Euro is one of the reasons for weak inflation and which also is affecting exports. That is the concern of the developed countries, which dominates the thinking of the IMF officials.

Now let us look at India's concern. Just released official data shows that our retail inflation in March surged to 8.38% from about 8.14% in the previous month. As always, the figures for wholesale prices are more comforting in comparison and which are usually highlighted by the government – 5.70% for March, up from 4.68% for the previous month. May be there is a pattern to this as in March of 2013, the rate was 5.65%.

The breakdown of figures for the primary articles group (which has a weightage of 20.12%) shows the index 'Food Articles' group at 235.3, a rise of one percent and it was mainly due to an increase in the prices of jowar

(8%), ragi (4%), fruits & vegetables, maize, urad and moong (3% each), barley and bajra (2% each) and coffee, mutton, milk, fish-marine, masur and poultry chicken (1% each).

The fuel and power group also rose by 0.2% and the manufactured products group, which includes food products, also increased by 0.5%. The rise in the prices of coarse grains 'is particularly disturbing because production, according to the department of food, during 2013-14 is estimated at 41.64 million tonnes, compared with the previous year's 40.04 million tonnes. Of course, there has been gradual decline overall in this group of cereals production as the output was 43.40 million tonnes in 2010-11 and 42.01 million tonnes in 2011-12.

But total food production (that includes all cereals and pulses) in 2013-14 is estimated at 263.20 million tonnes, up from 257.13 mt in 2012-13. So, one cannot possibly explain away the rise in prices of cereals on production shortfall. The reasons for supply constraints must be elsewhere.

One guess about the reason for the March price rise is that there is a sudden increase in purchasing power of the masses! We all know money plays a big role in vote-catching and on the election-eve, all of the black money accumulated over the past five years is now being showered on the people. The seizure of more than Rs. 200 crores by the Election Commission is an indication of sorts. But why on earth the government is not managing the supply side to absorb excess demand? As it is there are enough stocks of foodgrains with the Food Corporation of India and the State agencies. As on February 1, 2014, official stocks totalled 41.138 million tonnes, comprising 16.938 mt of rice and 24.2 mt of wheat, way above the official safe limits.

Or is the price rise in-built in the system as it is being fashioned by a government bent on duplicating the financial system with its various speculative instruments that caused the 2008 meltdown? India is being pushed

into a corner by the advocates of globalization and yet it seems that its concerns are no concern for the advanced countries. That was evident at the Washington meeting, Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan listed some proposals for “better monetary cooperation” and creation of a global ‘safety net’ that could provide funds for emerging market countries in case of emergency. The unprecedented monetary accommodation in rich countries had created huge volatility with the big shifts in capital flows to emerging markets like India. “We should examine the situation and spillover effects, by all means empirically, to the extent we can ... This is not a healthy place,” he added pointing out that the message the IMF conveyed is: “Industrial countries are going to do what they have to do; emerging markets have to adjust. I think we need language which is more even-handed.”

But Rajan’s warning that “It’s not that emerging markets have infinite ability to adjust and, so, we should keep that in mind going forward,” went unheeded. ECB vice president Vitor Constancio said at the meeting that he “would not subscribe to the criticisms,” made by Rajan; His contention was that past efforts at global coordination failed in part because emerging-market economies refused to accept that their currencies would have to appreciate in the face of policy easing in the developed world. The euro zone, for one, is struggling with high unemployment and low inflation, and last week opened the door to more stimulus.” And that seems to be the final view of the Washington Consensus. So ‘adjust’ we should and there is no other way, it seems!

COURTESY: Mr. Neelakant Patri and the *Southern Economist*, Vol.53, May 1, 2014.

Indian Middle Class has attained Critical Mass

In analysing role of the middle class in the 2014 elections and in the in the future, the Indian middle class must ask itself how its behaviour compares to the leadership and public activism of its counterparts in other parts of the world. There is little doubt that in terms of size and influence this class has attained a critical mass that can make it a game changer in the making of a progressive, prosperous, inclusive and secular India.

To play that role it must engage with issues strive for a pan-Indian leadership, have a prioritised agenda of action an alternative vision, and the courage to question the behaviour of a largely defunct political establishment. The results of 2014 will reveal to what extent it has lived up to this expectation.

Pavan K. Varma, writer author and former diplomat, and adviser to the Bihar Chief Minister.
Excerpted from his article Middle Class Comes of Age, May 10, 2014 *The Times of India*.



VIRAT INDUSTRIES LTD.

(An ISO 9001:2008 Company)

**A Leading Manufacturer & Exporter of
EXCELLENT QUALITY SOCKS**

Our Export Markets include UK, Switzerland and U.A.E.

Our main customers are John Lewis, Ted Baker and
Jaeger in the UK, Migros in Switzerland and Shoemart in UAE.

We produce Mens, Ladies and Childrens Dress and Sports Socks.

We also produce speciality Football and Rugby Socks.

For more information, you may visit our website: www.viratindustries.com

Corporate Head Office:

605, Veena Killedar Industrial Estate
10/14 Pais Street, Byculla (West)
Mumbai 400 011 (India)
Tel: (022) 3294 4131 or 3294 4217 /
Fax: (022) 2306 0486
Email: sales@viratindustries.com

Regd. Office & Factory:

A-1/2, GIDC Industrial Estate
Kabilpore
Navsari 396 424
Tel: (91-2637) 265 011 or 22 / 325805

Email: factory@viratindustries.com



**Forbes
Marshall**

Trusted Partners.
Innovative Solutions.

If we can measure steam, gas, chemicals and water, then why not smiles?

A philosophy that drives Forbes Marshall's extensive social commitment program.

At Forbes Marshall, we firmly believe that an organisation should actively contribute to the community it operates in.

Our initiatives focus on community development, empowerment of women, education and healthcare for the underprivileged.

We also undertake extensive programs on HIV awareness and literacy, besides enabling underprivileged youth with sustainable skills to earn a livelihood.

Over 140 of our self help groups empower and

equip women with special skills and train them to become self sufficient entrepreneurs.

Similarly, the Shehernaz Medicare Centre at our Kasarwadi campus provides all-round medical aid while handling sensitive issues like de-addiction and substance abuse in the community.

Our commitment to society is unwavering as it is inclusive. In every initiative that we undertake, we aim to act as a facilitator for the betterment of lives.

To know more, and to get involved, email us at response@forbesmarshall.com.

Energy Conservation | Environment | Process Efficiency

www.forbesmarshall.com

P B # 29, Mumbai Pune Road, Kasarwadi, Pune 411 034, India. Tel. +91 20 27145595, 39858555, Fax. +91 20 27147413
A-34/35, M.I.D.C., H Block, Pimpri, Pune 411 018, India. Tel. +91 20 27442020, 39851100, Fax. +91 20 27442020

Forbes Marshall | Forbes Marshall Arca | Forbes Marshall Codel | Krohne Marshall | Spirax Marshall | Forbes Solar | Forbes Vyncke

Foreign Relations in the 21st Century

2014 Election Manifestos and Foreign Policy: Undeserved Low Priority

B. Ramesh Babu

The manifestos of the major national parties (the Congress and the BJP) did not devote much space nor have given due attention to the daunting external challenges confronting the nation.

The nation is caught up in the election fever for a long while and the much needed new policy initiatives at home and abroad are on hold. But the rest of the world is on the move as usual. Indian leadership has to move on the double after the elections to catch up with lost time.

One of the glaring inadequacies of the unusually protracted 2014 election season (conducted in nine phases spread over five weeks) is the low priority given to foreign policy by all the political parties. The manifestos of the major national parties (the Congress and the BJP) did not devote much space nor have given due attention to the daunting external challenges confronting the nation.

Naturally, manifestos of all the parties in the fray focused on vital domestic issues of the day (price rise, unemployment, economic slowdown, poverty, hunger, health, safety of women, reservations, corruption, policy paralysis and performance failure). Equally naturally, the manifestos are full of tall promises of what all they would do, if they came to power. The vital need to reformulate foreign policy to meet the transformational changes in global affairs hardly figures in the speeches and remarks of the top leaders of the major (and minor) parties. This certainly is an example of undeserved neglect of an important constituent of national policy.

BJP and the Congress

The leading contender for heading the national Government after the elections, Narendra Modi of the BJP, for example, told China “not an inch of our land” with a passionate patriotic flourish. He also warned Pakistan on cross border terrorism. The party’s manifesto promised to pursue friendly relations with our immediate neighbours in south Asia. But, significantly added that where required it will not hesitate to take “strong stand and steps.”

The BJP manifesto called for an “objective” review

of the ‘No First Use’ of nuclear weapons or ‘non use’ of them against non-nuclear powers. It promised to strengthen SAARC and ASEAN and also work closely with BRICS, G-20, IBSA, and SCO. In a welcome departure from the past, the party’s manifesto promised to expand the pool of diplomats and Foreign Service personnel and also enhance their role in foreign policy formulation. In a typical touch of Hindutva, the manifesto says that Hindus persecuted in their homelands are welcome to seek refuge in India! The foreign policy plank is placed at the end of the 42-page document, just ahead of the hurried half page on the traditional Hindutva agenda (Ram Mandir, Uniform Civil Code, and Article 370.)

The manifesto of the Congress Party is equally guilty of according low priority to the nation’s foreign policy. It declares that India should offer an alternative universality to the world and that the idea of security is not just safety from armed aggression and violence. It should rather include human security, security from hunger and indignities, access to necessities of life and livelihood. The manifesto reiterates the party position on a long list of issues including Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, all possible aid to rehabilitate Tamils in Sri Lanka, time bound inquiry into allegations of human rights violations in the island nation, working with China on the border dispute, and mobilizing support for India’s permanent membership in the UN Security Council, and support for overseas Indians. The manifesto ends by declaring it will continue to support the goodwill nurtured for decades among socialist countries!

There is no need to discuss the foreign policy planks of the other parties (CPI-M, CPI, AIDMK, TMC, and AAP) in a short article of this nature. There are no surprises on their stand on key foreign policy issues. In any case none of them are likely to play a major role in the Government at the centre if the BJP or the NDA win a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha.

Challenges Ahead

It may not be out of place to take a brief look at the challenges ahead for the nation on the foreign policy front. The situation in our immediate neighbourhood is highly unsettled. Our bilateral relations with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Maldives need urgent overhaul! The initial euphoria of Nawaz Shariff coming to power died quickly and our relations with Pakistan are back to square one.

China has been and continues to be our most dangerous enemy across the Himalayas. We cannot belittle the threat posed by the Chinese “string of pearls” around us in the Indian Ocean. Lest we forget, China is involved in border disputes on land and at sea with over 20 countries around the world. Its impressive economic rise has turned into highly charged chauvinism and aggressive expansionism. In recent months China has activated its long dormant maritime and jurisdictional disputes with many of its neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region. Recently China escalated her dispute with Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands to a high pitch. The US is anxious on this score because it is treaty-bound to come to the rescue of Japan if the hostilities escalate into a military conflict. America is urging caution on Japan. However, under the dynamic and forward looking leadership of Prime Minister Abe, Japan is determined to hold onto the islands come what may. In fact Japan is ready and willing to play a leading role in regional and global affairs (discarding the wartime shackles imposed on her military buildup and foreign affairs).

While India does not want another war in the Himalayas, it is important not to fall into the Chinese trap of blowing hot and cold on the border issue. In fact this is the most opportune time to build a coalition of concerned countries to deter China from selective targeting of her

neighbours (including India). Abe’s Japan is ready and willing to join hands. President Obama’s “pivot Asia” policy of re-balancing the strategic security scenario in Asia-Pacific is in place, though the country is in a retreating mode.

India should be absolutely clear in its priorities. Close cooperation with China on the global issues of economic revival, trade and tariffs, climate change, and farm subsidies etc. is very important in itself. But if the chips are down on the Himalayan front all bets are off. Such a message to China should be loud and clear.

Another area of vital importance for the country is the deteriorating situation in and around Afghanistan. Not much thought seems to have been given to the region’s future after the imminent withdrawal of the US and the western forces from Afghanistan. All the stakeholders in the region (Pakistan, India, Iran, China and Russia) should take charge and cooperate with one another to prevent anarchy and chaos in the region. In this context it is necessary to prevent back seat driving by the US after it leaves the field.

India’s economic and political relations with sub-Saharan Africa and key countries in Latin America are on the upswing and should be nurtured further. Over the years India has grown into a significant donor of foreign aid, a fact that needs to be highlighted at home and abroad.

Let us hope that the next Government at the centre will meet the challenges ahead with confidence and competence.

DR. RAMESH BABU is a specialist in International Relations, American Politics and Foreign Policy. He is a Visiting Professor at the University of Hyderabad, 2013-2014. He is the Scholar in Residence, Foundation for Democratic Reforms, Hyderabad. Formerly, he was the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Professor of Civics and Politics, University of Mumbai. Email: brameshbabu08@gmail.com.

Sentiments of loyalty over past sacrifices, ... cannot last forever

...elections after Independence...was dominated by the sentiment of gratitude towards those who led the country to freedom...death of Nehru resulted in contention for leadership among many equals ... Indira Gandhi could claim Nehru’s legacy through the bloodline, making it easy for the people to transfer their emotional loyalty from ...to Indira... Her tragic assassination triggered the emotion of respect for sacrifice, which continued after the assassination of her son the successor, Rajiv Gandhi....

With each passing generation, India’s memory of its freedom struggle is less sharp. Sentiments of loyalty over past sacrifices, too, cannot last forever.

...the spectre of a communalist Modi did not scare voters because the Modi associated with the Gujarat riots...did not show up during the election campaign. The Modi people voted for espoused a vision for bullet trains, efficient government, economic opportunity and modernity.

Husain Haqani, *Indian Express*, Ahmedabad, 19 May, 2014.
Contributed by Hina Manerikar, Baroda. hina.manerikar@gmail.com

Foreign Relations in the 21st Century

India's Foreign Policy: Will it Become Muscular?

Ranga Kota

India's diplomatic power will mirror its economic power. The new government should put all its might behind faster economic growth and internal security.

These days, there is too much rhetoric about the economy and governance. The Prime Minister-in-waiting promises a sort of economic miracle in the next decade. The incumbent finance minister challenges the new one to match his government's performance of the last decade. Some distinguished economists from India and abroad have joined the chorus.

But not much is heard about what the likely contours of diplomacy will be, both strategic and economic, of the new government (if it's the NDA) expected to be in place by the end of May 2014. Someone wrote that the neighbours could expect some muscular policy from the new government, though, no clear outline of this muscular policy was evident from the article.

Trust Deficit in the Neighbourhood

The UPA government, according to hawks, was too soft with our neighbours and gave avoidable concessions without getting anything in return. The BJP and its supporters believe that India did not put enough pressure on Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai to book. They accuse the outgoing government of not acting strongly when some Indian soldiers at the LOC were beheaded last year.

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) felt the UPA was bartering away the interests of West Bengal to Bangladesh in the Teesta water treaty and the land agreement covering exchange of enclaves to settle the long pending border issue between the two nations. The TMC, as a part of the coalition, ensured that India was hamstrung on its commitment to Bangladesh.

The Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu, in their competitive populism, have ensured that the UPA government does not enter into a constructive engagement with Sri Lanka. They wanted the government in power to shun Sri Lanka till it delivers justice of their prescription to the native Tamil population.

No one seems sure about what the incumbent government should have done to get the occupied land back from China or how it should have reacted when the latter's army ran past Indian defence posts in Ladakh last year. Some corporate interests wish India to correct the trade imbalance and restrict imports from China.

There is a perception that even minnows like Nepal and Maldives do not care about India. No doubt, India with the third largest economy in Asia and fourth largest army in the world appears helpless with its neighbours who take her for granted.

No Leverage

But then what is India's leverage with them? Pakistan has no economic interest in ties with India. Nor do they see any real security threat from India. They have China as a bulwark against India.

With Pakistan armed with a nuclear arsenal, India's unilateral initiative across the border to flush out the terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan would most likely escalate into a full blown war with consequences no one is sure about. Pakistan uses India's inability to mount any surgical strike across the border, *a la* Israel, to indulge in an asymmetric war. Frequent skirmishes across the Line of Control and unstinted support for terrorism in India are a low cost but high return game for them. There is no reason why Pakistan would change its current policy in the near future. The new government will not be able to accommodate Pak demands on Kashmir. All other initiatives amount to nothing in redrawing Indo-Pak relationship.

Bangladesh wants a water treaty and a more balanced trade. Even if Mamata is not part of the coalition, the new government is unlikely to be soft towards Bangladesh, as the BJP, the principal actor in the NDA, will retain its hard rhetoric on illegal Bangladeshi settlers.

The prospective PM may find Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka a good person to do business with if his

government does not depend on the support of Dravidian parties. The war-ravaged northern part of Sri Lanka would provide a good opportunity for India to economic reconstruction. But it has to face tough offer from China which can neutralize its efforts with a more impressive economic package but without political baggage.

Afghan Dividend

The Afghan government wants India's diplomatic support and economic assistance to get the war ravaged nation on the course of sustained development. Pakistan would like to ensure India does not have a strategic presence in the nation, post US withdrawal. Pakistan will push hard for a Taliban takeover of Kabul. Taliban has no love lost for India. India will not risk its men to protect the present Afghan establishment. If Taliban gets control of Kabul, India's economic opportunity will vanish.

There is very little the new government can do to influence events in Afghanistan post US withdrawal. It would continue to remain an active supporter of the US led initiatives to ensure that Taliban does not capture power in Afghanistan.

Limit the Damage

With China, India can only limit the damage by not taking an aggressive posture. It is unlikely that India can physically engage China on its borders. The terrain, the economic strength and the conventional military superiority of China will give them a definite advantage in a land war. India has to continue to engage China in talks that will have only one purpose – of improving the atmosphere and maintaining the *status quo*.

It is in the economic sphere that India can act a bit more decisively. The government should actively encourage India Inc. to move away from Chinese imports. Any trade controls will be difficult to defend internationally but corporate Inc. can decide against doing business with China. The present policy of Indian strategic interest will keep China away from Indian governmental big ticket projects.

The Chinese have a great interest in the Indian economy. The new government can deal a tough economic card to China. Though the current trade is not of great significance to them, the future is what interests them. They know their loss will be a gain for their competitors. The new government can hurt Chinese economic interests subtly to make it more accommodative towards Indian interests.

Unhappy Uncle Sam

The new government will have to work very hard to mend its ties with the US who feels India has not done enough to pay for the support it got in getting India out of the nuclear dog house. The Nuclear Liability Act puts American companies at a disadvantage for the supply of reactors for future nuclear plants in India. The opposition in parliament during the UPA-II tenure forced the government to enact the present law. The NDA has to eat its words if the law is to be diluted.

The Indian Patent Laws and compulsory licensing is a red flag for the US drug multinationals. They want India to amend its laws to protect their interests. The insistence of local manufacturing content in Indian Government contracts is another bone of contention. The rejection of American long range fighters by the UPA government has not gone down well with the US government either.

Finally India's tit for tat and the sabre rattling on Devyani Khobragade has put diplomacy on a rocky course.

The new government has to address all these US concerns; the domestic compulsions would make rapid rapprochement with the US difficult. Any concessions to America or its companies by the new government will be dubbed as a sell-out of Indian Interests by the opposition in parliament and the Indian left leaning intellectuals. Besides, there is a section of the Indian diplomatic fraternity that believes India's touchy stance on Devyani had made the US run for cover and would like India to keep the aggressive stance going forward.

The Putin Factor

Mr. Putin of Russia seems to be pushing the world to another cold war like situation. His audacity in Ukraine has made the US and its European allies see red. While a physical engagement with Russia is ruled out in the near term, the progressive tightening of sanctions against Russia may lead to a cold war like situation that could mirror, to some extent, the one that existed earlier between the US and the erstwhile USSR. That poses a difficulty for Indian diplomacy. India may have to comply with some of the US sanctions against Russia which can affect energy supplies to India and may make it difficult to import military hardware and critical spares from Russia. The present nuclear cooperation between the two countries could get affected. India will have to walk a tight rope if the relations between the two nations turn worse.

Putin's emphasis on 'Russia First' may resonate well with the prospective Prime Minister's vision of 'India First'. I am sure a considerable number of his fans would like him to emulate Putin in so far as Pakistan is concerned. He can oblige them with costs that the nation can ill afford. The nation knows the cost it paid for the nuclear brinkmanship the earlier NDA government indulged in. Strategically or economically we are nowhere near Russia. Nor is Pakistan a walk over like Ukraine.

The African Safari

Africa is touted to be the next destination for the fortune hunters. Resource rich nations in Africa would provide the much needed energy and food to the rest of world whose appetite for these is growing unabated

Africa needs capital, technology and skills to get their unexploited resources to the world. Doing business there looks appealing, but negotiating the political and regulatory land mines is not easy. China has made enough head way in the continent and India's efforts mostly related to the private sector has yielded mixed results. China's economic might will outwit India's efforts to get big ticket government contracts in energy and mining sectors. Besides, the government's reputation in some nations for probity in economic matters is suspect and the award of government contracts will lack transparency. Whether India should go in for questionable deals in Africa is a matter the new government has to seriously reflect on.

The government can, however, encourage India's private sector initiatives in Africa with enhanced economic and diplomatic support.

No Money – No Muscle

The third world or the first world – all chase money. Principles and ideologies are more for public consumption. China, with its political dispensation that is not open to domestic or international scrutiny, uses its huge economic leverage to get most of the third world eating out of its hand. It provides a compelling destination for the manufacture of goods of the first world. It has a place in the Security Council and its vote counts in world matters. The US treasury owes big money to China and this makes it less vulnerable for all its sins of commission and omission.

With 300 billion USD as reserves which is not enough to cover its international debt and a trade deficit close to USD 200 billion, India's ability to buy diplomatic support is just non-existent.

India's diplomatic power will mirror its economic power. The new government should put all its might behind faster economic growth and internal security. Make the Indian economy count. Make India a safe and secure place. Make India a market of one billion people the rich nations cannot ignore. Buit this is difficult to achieve.

The government could find an easy way out on the diplomatic front! Frequent sabre rattling against Pakistan and brinkmanship like 'Operation Parakram' with dubious gains can pass for a muscular policy of the new government and will keep its supporters in a state of delusion. Beyond semantics and sound bites, we can expect no significant shift in India's foreign policy in the near term.

MR. RANGA KOTA is adviser to Clearsep Technologies (I) Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai and an independent consultant in the Logistics and Supply Chain Area. Email: rkota123@yahoo.co.in.

The Role of the RSS during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Emergency

The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) on which Mrs. Gandhi directed her venom, constituted the backbone of the underground Resistance (during the infamous Emergency imposed on June 25 1975) Much to Mrs. Gandhi's chagrin, the subterranean operations of the RS spread rapidly after June 1975; and she acknowledged this at the Chandigarh session of the Congress in December that year. There were thousands of RSS workers who were arrested and thousands also went underground and worked in close cooperation with the Lok Sangharsh Samiti headed by Jayaprakash Narayan. The RSS helped in feeding information to the underground leaflets and bulletins. It produced, or helped produce several booklets and pamphlets and many of them had a wide circulation. These were distributed in universities and colleges, cinema theatres, seminars and conferences; they were slipped through the door of residences at night, and even reached the delegates of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference which met in Delhi in October 1975'

A Friends of India Society established in London in April 1976 with Subramanian Swamy as its President enlisted the support of Indian students for building up opinion in England

Excerpted from the book *When the Wind Blows, India's Ballot-Box Revolution* by S.P.Aiyar and S.V.Raju

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise person examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Pakistan's Jugular

1 In the midst of Elections 2014, Pakistan started making noises about its security. Its anxiety about Modi's victory was clear but it should have had the statesmanship to keep its anxieties to itself. Interference in another country's democratic process is not acceptable. Its Chief of Army Staff revealed the real fear when he pointed out that Kashmir is its jugular vein and therefore, obviously Pakistan cannot ignore Kashmir. He was most probably referring to Pakistan's river waters. Strategically the river sources are under India's control in Kashmir but then Pakistan has to accept the reality and realize that good relations with India alone would secure this strategic resource. Hostility should be the last thing on its mind. Musharraf's proposal to demilitarize the river sources and jointly administer it was a part of the strategic design but Pakistan was not mature enough to give up the idea of annexation of Kashmir and learn to live with Indian Kashmir as a de facto and de jure reality. Musharraf's grandiose plan did not work for various reasons and the jugular vein remains under India's control.

1 It is true that the source of Pakistan's water life line is located in Kashmir. Rivers Indus, Jhelum and Chenab flow from Kashmir south into Pakistan. While these rivers to the West flow into Pakistan, those on the East (Satlej, Ravi, Beas) flow into India. However, India has signed the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 as per international norms and has abided by it despite serious provocations from Pakistan. To name a few, there were the wars of 1965, 1971, Kandahar hijack, the Kargil War, attack on the Indian Parliament and the Mumbai attack (26/11) and all kinds of terrorist attacks which amounted to an undeclared proxy war by Pakistan. Despite all these provocations, India did not cut the jugular that Pakistan is now worrying about. India stuck to international norms as any civilized country would. Pakistan should feel safe instead of doing the sabre rattling. Its jugular is really safe-guarded by India, not threatened. It should pray for a friendly India. Its anxiety about Modi's victory is a prelude to the lament that it is threatened and needs international aid.

Accidental PM

2. PM's media adviser Sanjaya Baru's book on PM Dr. Man Mohan Singh came in for a lot of criticism. We are not used to people writing truthfully about important personalities on the basis of inside information. To Baru's credit, there is no betrayal, only an expose of what went behind the scenes in official relationships inside the PMO. He does not reveal any classified information or matters entrusted to him in confidence. What he reveals is a Prime Minister who is not capable of acting on his own and a man hemmed in by his own loyalties to the Gandhi family or self-imposed limitations; a renowned economist, a scholar and a man of great personal integrity made helpless by his own choice. Baru tries to show the PM in good light, without success. He credits Dr. Manmohan Singh with UPA's victory in 2009 and argues that had Manmohan Singh fought the 2009 election, he would have emerged as a strong PM. A weak PM was his real qualification in the eyes of the 'family'; had he emerged stronger, he would not have become PM for the second term! That is the paradox of the life of Dr. Man Mohan Singh.

2. PM's media adviser Sanjaya Baru's book on PM Dr. Man Mohan Singh came in for a lot of criticism. We are not used to people writing truthfully about important personalities on the basis of inside information. To Baru's credit, there is no betrayal, only an expose of what went behind the scenes in official relationships inside the PMO. He does not reveal any classified information or matters entrusted to him in confidence. What he reveals is a Prime Minister who is not capable of acting on his own and a man hemmed in by his own loyalties to the Gandhi family or self-imposed limitations; a renowned economist, a scholar and a man of great personal integrity made helpless by his own choice. Baru tries to show the PM in good light, without success. He credits Dr. Manmohan Singh with UPA's victory in 2009 and argues that had Manmohan Singh fought the 2009 election, he would have emerged as a strong PM. A weak PM was his real qualification in the eyes of the 'family'; had he emerged stronger, he would not have become PM for the second term! That is the paradox of the life of Dr. Man Mohan Singh.

Art of Debate

3. At last, the season for abuse and mud-slinging is over and we can see a little decency returning to the political arena. Election 2014 was full of verbal assaults and empty rhetoric. Words like liar, butcher, terrorist, dictator, scamsters, donkey were common coinage. TV channels gave constant 'breaking news', not about important happenings but what dirt somebody threw at somebody else, making it look as if seminal developments were taking place that would alter the face of this country. Debates raged every evening with people shouting at each other, making no particular sense. It was baffling. What was important was lost in the last one month's high decibels; one could recall only the aggressive fury of the debate and nothing more the next morning.

3. We will soon be back to Government bashing as soon as one is formed. Experts will analyze endlessly what it should do or not do. What they say is of no import but every TV participant would go home happily having shouted the loudest and out-shouted the other side. In the discourses in the past few months, there was total absence of contribution to political vocabulary or thought. Apart from the abuses and empty rhetoric, there was no Churchillian phrase that would linger in the mind, wit that would make one chuckle over or rejoinders that would register in memory. Has the gift of the gab, meaningful play of language and acerbic response to provocation vanished from our public speech? What one remembers is bad words and bad manners!

Readers are invited to email their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in.

Readers who do not have the facility of a computer can also post (mail) their points of view on serious issues of the day to "Point Counter Point", c/o Freedom First, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai, 400001.

An Accurate Prediction by Swaminathan Aiyar

Voters can't be fooled

Collapsing economic growth, high inflation and corruption explain why the Congress is heading for its worst defeat ever. GDP growth averaged 9% for much of UPA rule, but has halved to 4.5% in its final two years, crushing incomes and opportunities.

The Congress manifesto explains this away by using long-term averages. It says GDP growth in 10 years of UPA rule averaged 7.6% annually, against 5.9% under NDA rule. Independent observers (like economists Maitreesh Ghatak and Sanchari Roy) repeat this, and add that poverty declined by an average of 0.74% annually under the NDA, and by 2.18% under the UPA.

Hence, Congressmen and misguided analysts say Modi has hoodwinked voters into believing that UPA rule was terrible, and that he has a superior development model. Sorry, but voters can see the reality more clearly than analysts and Congress apologists.

Using averages is sometimes enlightening, but sometimes ridiculous, even suicidal. There's an old saying that many people have drowned trying to cross

a river just three feet deep on average. What matters is not the average depth but whether you can get through the deepest parts. Those relying on averages will sink, a fate awaiting Congress.

You reap what you sow. The UPA produced brilliant economic growth in 2004-09, and so got re-elected in 2009. It then performed miserably in 2009-14, and so will get hammered in 2014. That's the simple story. Forget obfuscation by those using 10-year averages to declare the UPA period to be the best ever.

Voters don't calculate averages for even five years, let alone ten. They focus on the latest trends and problems. Every newly-elected government has a honeymoon period with voters for two years, but then must deliver in the second half of its term. If it fails to do so, not all the averaging in the world will save it.

<http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Swaminomics/entry/upa-s-10-year-averages-are-just-statistical-spin>

06 April 2014, Excerpted from Swaminomics <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com>

Defence Planning

– A Ticking Time Bomb Waiting to Explode

Probir Roy

Zero based Budgeting (ZBB) and Program, Planning & Budgeting System (PPBS) have been given short shrift in the corridors of Sena Bhavan and South Block in Delhi

There is something faintly dubious about a recent report in a reputed publication (*Business Standard*, February 3, 2014) that the Armed Forces of India have two major problems (a) the annual capital budget, (for acquisitions/procurement of weapon systems, hardware and platforms), in which just 5 percent is earmarked for new acquisitions (i.e. Rs.2,955 crores in FY 14) with the balance going for payments due on account of the previous year's acquisitions and purchases, and even then, (b) the forces are able to spend just 50-60% of that remaining balance capital allocation!

Just for a perspective, the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) pothole fixing and road maintenance budget for 2014-15 is Rs.2,500 crores – nearly as much as the entire Indian Armed Forces capital budget! Is this not a travesty for one of the world's most admired profession, the military, and a favourite institution of all Indians!

This is what we do in Information Technology (IT) when evaluating a technology. We look at TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) where capex, opex, upgrades, and almost everything (including 'known' hidden costs) is itemized, costed and then added up over its life cycle, and then matched off with alternative options. This by and large leads to a fairly correct decision – even with hindsight.

I wonder how after decades of procurement and defence planning, basic principles which were enunciated by Robert McNamara as Defence Secretary of the USA in the 60's/70's such as Zero based Budgeting (ZBB) and Program, Planning & Budgeting System (PPBS) have been given short shrift in the corridors of Sena Bhavan and South Block in Delhi?

What is ZBB? Every year the entire budget is reviewed afresh item wise without any reference to the past sanctions or outlay as if it is a brand new budget with no memory! It validates therefore whether there are

increases or decreases in that particular line item from the previous year and what provisions are to be made for the current year – less, more or same.

PPBS is a tool which the US Department of Defense uses for long range forecasting to establish strategic priorities by costing, tracking expenditures and achievements against this during a budget year or over its long range defence plan. Typically, raising of a Mountain Strike Corps, or Carrier Battle Group (CBG) or new Strategic Air Command (SAC), etc., would ideally be matched off with concomitant expenditures and achievements till date, and then prioritised.

So why are we not using these tools, or some Indian *jugaad** variant of it?

The issue is a cultural one. Armies generally measure their strength with boots on the ground. This is hardwired into their pride and their DNA. So opex is the key. Navies and Air Forces are equipment, technology and hardware intensive – so capex is the key. Force projection for these two arms is a multiple of such capital assets, and not how many people they have on their payroll!

Now you have between these three services lopsided ratios of capex to opex or teeth to tail ratios which are inherent in nature which cannot serve as a common reference point.

So what do we need to do? Clearly defence planners need to reconcile this. So while an Army marches on its stomach and in their boots, it does not mean that all responses lie in that direction, for example, the formation of the new Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) for China response. What ought to have been done is square off with alternate plans and strategic options viz. cyber warfare, use of tactical battlefield 'low yield' nuke weapons, use of air force elements, long range missiles, satellite imagery, weapons and early warning, blocking off the

* *Jugaad* is a colloquial Hindi word that can mean an innovative fix or a simple method of solving problems.

Cont'd. on page 32

A Separate State of Vidarbha – For a Prosperous and Wealthy Bali Rajya

Sharad Joshi

I started evaluating the subject of cotton exploitation in Vidarbha in the last phase of my venture of building the Shetkari Sanghatana. By that time the Cotton Monopoly Procurement Scheme was well set in the Maharashtra state. And herein lies a story!



behind the demand for a separate Vidarbha state.

The Vidarbha region, consisting of 11 districts that formed the Central Provinces and Berar under the British Rule, should have been constituted as a separate state according to the recommendations of the Fazal Ali Commission on the Re-organisation of States. However, due to circumstances that developed, particularly on account of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, the Vidarbha leaders had no alternative but to accede to Maharashtra on the basis of a covenant called the “Nagpur Pact” which, *inter alia*, conferred on the city of Nagpur the status of a second capital of Maharashtra.

Experience since 1960 has shown that the accession of Vidarbha, primarily a raw material producing region (cotton, minerals and electricity), to the industrially advanced Western Maharashtra, has worsened the terms of trade for Vidarbha. The developmental backlog of the region has been evident for a very long time.

The Cotton Monopoly Procurement Scheme (CMPS) compelled the cotton growers to sell their produce exclusively to the state government. The cotton thus procured was made available at a cheaper rate to the cotton mills in Mumbai in an auction. The cotton mill owners benefited the most through this arrangement. Prior to the introduction of this Scheme, the mill owners used to stock the cotton. But once the scheme came into existence, the mill owners did not find it necessary to buy the cotton in advance and store it. This enabled mill owners to earn huge profits by exploiting the cotton growers who hardly earned anything from the crop.

Exploitation of Vidarbha

Vidarbha is endowed with mineral and forest wealth, fertile soil and assured rain compared to other parts of the state; yet it has remained one of the poorest regions of Maharashtra. Bauxite found in Vidarbha is used widely in the construction industry in India. It is said that every one building in ten is built by using Bauxite from Vidarbha. Minerals like manganese, coal, and iron ore are used for the production of energy which is supplied to the entire country. The whole of Maharashtra uses electricity produced in Vidarbha but the irony is that it has to face load shedding. It is ironical that the farmers born in a land, which is rich in the minerals, are committing suicide. This paradox is the main reason



The *modus operandi* of the neo-colonial exploitation of Vidarbha are to depress prices of the region's prime produce – cotton and paddy; paltry compensation for the resources such as coal and electricity, and the grossly inadequate budgetary allocations for the development of water resources and infrastructure. However, the budgetary remedy (development) which was a key feature of the Nagpur Pact has no relevance today as the terms of trade have now become very important today.

History of the Demand for a Separate State

Fifty three years ago Vidarbha merged into Maharashtra state in the hope of freedom. Historically Vidarbha is well-known for its culture and civilization. For this reason an economic, social and political system suitable for its Vidarbha culture is required. C. Rajgopalachari always propounded small states for better administration. To put this idea into practice, the Shetkari Sanghatana in 1996 demanded the installation of Bali Rajyaⁱ in Vidarbha to end the stifling of Vidarbha.

The demand has a history. The demand for a separate state of Vidarbha does not mean dislike for the rest of Maharashtra. Before British rule, Vidarbha was under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The British took various districts of Vidarbha on lease from the Nizam and merged them into the Central Province. After India became free, the people of Vidarbha were nervous. They thought that the end of British rule would mark the end the leasehold agreement and they would once again come under the tyrannical rule of the Nizam. This fear gave rise to the movement for an independent Vidarbha even before the establishment of Maharashtra state.

Many Committees and Commissions were appointed post-independence to look into the issue of creation of an independent Vidarbha state. At the time of the re-organisation of states, large regions of bi-lingual Maharashtra state were merged into Gujarat or Karnataka. In doing so, Vidarbha was forcibly merged with Maharashtra state for the political convenience of many,

i Bali was a king of the Asuras. However, he was very religious, was respectful to priests and performed the Vedic Aswamedha ritual to enlarge his kingdom and like his grandfather (Prahlada), was one of the devout devotees of Lord Vishnu on Earth as he sacrificed his kingdom for the Lord. The King was greatly respected in his kingdom and was considered to be wise, judicious and extremely generous. It is said that Kerala (his capital) witnessed its golden era in the reign of King Bali. Everybody in his kingdom was happy; there was no discrimination on the basis of caste or class. There was neither crime, nor corruption. People did not even lock their doors, as there were no thieves in that kingdom. There was no poverty, sorrow or disease in the reign of King Bali and everybody was happy and content. So the legend goes.

especially the Congress. It was a compromise, and not a welcome act. This is evident from the fact that conditions were stipulated in the Nagpur Pact. But these conditions remained only on paper. Even if they had been implemented sincerely, the plight of Vidarbha would have remained the same. Some people would have got jobs. We would have seen cotton emperors in addition to the sugar emperors. The people, who dreamt of Vidarbha's development through government planning and budgetary allocation, could see it being achieved only through the Nagpur Pact thanks to the incompetent leadership in Vidarbha.

Political Callousness

The real reason for Vidarbha's backwardness lies in the loot of its natural resources which the Central Government in Delhi pursued and the state government supported. The state government pursuing a socialist economy always paid *Ulti Patti* (Negative Subsidy) to the Vidardhaites in respect of the raw material and electricity produced there by imposing commercial terms that were detrimental to the interests of Vidarbha. Some people tried to become Vidarbha's cotton emperors at the cost of Vidarbha's interest under the pretext of the CMPS. Under this scheme, Vidarbha lost its freedom to store, sell and process the white gold produced by it. The farmers in Vidarbhas have sustained a loss of more than Rs. 40,000 crore due to the Maharashtra CMPS. This is the main reason behind farmers' indebtedness and their suicides. No political party has listened or prepared to listen to their problems.

It is also true that the problems of Vidarbha will not end with the establishment of a separate state. It is not possible to establish a state dreamt by people in Vidarbha merely by having a second capital in Nagpur and having a Chief Minister of Vidarbha. If the interests of Vidarbha are to be protected then a system which would match the culture of Vidarbha needs to be built. At present an alliance of politicians, babus and Gunda's has spread across Maharashtra like poisonous venom. Since 1996 the Shetkari Sanghatana has been organizing various agitations like 'Vij Roko', 'Koila Roko', and 'Jay Vidarbha Pad Yatra' in which the common people of Vidarbha have participated in large numbers with the dream of a prosperous and wealthy Vidarbha. The Bali Rajya Vidarbha will be a state where the government will be poor but the people will be prosperous in all respects.

SHARAD JOSHI, Founder of the powerful farmers' movement 'Shetkari Sanghatana' and National President, Swatantra Bharat Paksha. Email: sharadjoshi.mah@gmail.com. This article is based on his column in the popular Marathi daily Loksatta of 25 December 2013. English translation by Supriya Panse.

R. C. Cooper – The One That Got Away

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Many countries benefitted from R C Cooper's expertise. It is a pity India couldn't house the noted economist's talents

The news of R. C. Cooper's passing away last June (see *Freedom First* No.554 August 2013 – Ed.), which I heard only recently, recalled an episode from the Shah Commission. Indira Gandhi was giving evidence or, rather, refusing to give evidence and insisting on reading out a prepared statement in which she accused the Supreme Court of striking down bank nationalisation because some judges owned bank shares. Red in the face, Justice J. C. Shah exploded he had never held any. She responded sweetly she hadn't said he did. She had only said "some" judges.

That exchange, repeated from memory after nearly 40 years, took place only because Cooper, a director and shareholder of the Central Bank of India, successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to stay the Ordinance on bank nationalisation. Obviously not a man to give up easily, he sued the government when Gandhi struck back with the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act. I was living in England then but read how Nani Palkhivala, appearing in R. C. Cooper vs. The Union of India, mesmerised everyone with his erudition and eloquence.

I feel all the more deprived, therefore, at not having made Cooper's acquaintance during all those years we overlapped in Singapore. I think he and his wife gave us a lift home once after UCO Bank's annual party. If so, he was a man whose bubbling cheerfulness showed no trace of the pomposity one expects from Indians of eminence. Cooper was a successful British-qualified chartered accountant, a noted economist, general secretary of the Swatantra Party and, I gather, totally devoted to the public cause. The interests of "the common man and the small shareholder" explained his spirited stand against bank nationalisation. Without him the government may not have provided any compensation at all.

I came upon a letter he wrote to the *Straits Times* in 1979 when the paper sent a senior editor to India.

Cooper commented on how education had deteriorated in 32 years of independence and of 700,000 graduates among 21 million were unemployed...,

I quoted the letter in 'Looking East'. Cooper's daughter Farida happened to read the book and wrote to me to say her father had lived in Singapore for 38 years. He "actually moved to Singapore in 1975 on the advice and with the help of J R D Tata and late Naval Tata." Those two men were responsible in a way for Singapore's initial industrialisation. Way back in the early 1970s, they set up the Tata Precision Industries and the island's first technical training institute. Freddie Mehta, fiercely pro-free market despite being educated at the London School of Economics where he became friendly with Goh Keng Swee, who was as instrumental in Singapore's modernisation as Lee Kuan Yew, helped.

This is a belated tribute to someone of distinction who died nine months ago. It saddens me to think that a man such as Cooper should have felt obliged to take his considerable talents abroad. Singapore, the Ivory Coast, Maldives and Indonesia benefited from his professional guidance. India didn't.

COURTESY: Sunanda K Datta-Ray, *Business Standard*, March 31, 2014. Contributed by Dara Acidwalla.



(Left to Right) Dahyabhai Patel, Lalchand Hirachand, S. V. Raju, R. C. Cooper, and Minoo Masani at a National Executive Meeting of the Swatantra Party.

When U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron failed to find a seat on a public transport

In India can we ever imagine politicians travelling in a public transport?

London: “Excuse me, are you the Prime Minister?” a stunned 27-year-old Indian woman inquired from David



Cameron, who chose to travel in a tube train during rush hour.

The Prime Minister, travelling on the London Underground to keep an appointment because it was quicker than going by car, tried to make a good impression with commuters by complimenting a young mother on her baby. But the conversation stalled somewhat when the

baffled woman had to ask her husband who the strange man was enquiring about their child.

Sanyogita Mayer, who has featured in eight Bollywood films was travelling with her husband Yanko, 31, and their three-month-old daughter Sayama, told Cameron that politicians in her native India would never travel by public transport, the *Daily Mail* reported.

Mayer, who recently moved to Westminster from India, said: “We were on our way to go shopping. This man got on at Westminster and came past me and said: “Is it your baby?” “I said ‘yes’, and he said: “Your baby is really beautiful.”

I thanked him for saying that and he moved away but stood near me. I asked my husband: “Who is this man complimenting my baby?” “When he told me it was the Prime Minister I told him to stop joking. “But my husband insisted so I went up to Mr. Cameron and I said: “Excuse me, are you the Prime Minister?”

He said “yes” and I started laughing. Then I apologised for having to ask him the question.” He responded by “striking up a conversation about my home country”.

Mayer, who said she felt compelled to take a photo of the meeting, added: “I was so surprised that a man like him would travel on the Tube. I was very struck by how down-to-earth he seemed.”

**From the Net via Ratna Magotra <ratnamagotra@gmail.com>
Contributed by D. S. Ranga Rao, Mumbai.**

Defence Planning (Cont’d. from page 28)

Mallaca straits with Naval battle groups, getting staging/berthing rights in Vietnam, Japan for maritime forces, etc

So, for perhaps lesser revenue outlays (which is the pain point of the moment) it may be possible to have more effective response while keeping the teeth to tail ratio sharp.

PROBIR ROY is the son of late Vice Admiral M. K. (‘Miki’) Roy PVSM, AVSM, and grew up in a close naval family. From an early age he had a natural and keen interest in all things Navy and took every available opportunity to absorb, see, experience, share and often talk with his father on defence matters, naval profession and the like. He

currently runs his own Company in information Technology called ‘Paymate’, a leading player in the area of mobile payments.

A Correction: In the May issue of *Freedom First* a boxed item on page 27 titled “Defence Planning – a ticking time bomb waiting to explode” erroneously crept in with the by-line “Contributed by Brig. Suresh C. Sharma.” in the article by Mr. Probir Roy on “Band of Men in their Yellow Submarines.” This boxed item was actually the first paragraph of a second article on “Defence Planning” which was held over for lack of space and which you have just read. We are mystified how this could have happened; nevertheless our apologies to Mr. Probir Roy for this error. *Editor.*

A Soldier's Father

Wing Comdr Venki Iyer

"This simple farmer has contributed more to our country's defence than all of us combined."

The helicopter appeared over the late morning horizon. We were to receive Mr. Lachhman Singh Rathore who was visiting our Flight Unit to perform the last rites of his son, Flying Officer Vikram Singh.

Only the day before, I had sent the telegram, "Deeply regret to inform that your son Flying Officer Vikram Singh lost his life in a flying accident early this morning. Death was instantaneous." It was the first time for me to meet and manage the bereaved next of kin, in this case the father of the brave officer.

While most of the desolate family members insist on seeing the body, many a time there isn't a body to show. Flying Officer Vikram Singh's remains were only a few kilos – scraped from what was left in the cockpit. We had to weigh the wooden coffin with wood and earth.

The pilot brought the helicopter to a perfect touchdown. Soon Mr. Lachhman Singh Rathore was helped down the ladder. A small and frail man he was, maybe of 80 years, clad in an immaculate dhoti. As I approached him, he asked in a quiet and dignified whisper, "Are you Venki, the Flight Commander?" "Yes Sir." "Vikram had spoken to me about you. I'd like to speak to you alone for a minute."

We walked to the edge of the concrete apron. "I have lost a son, and you have lost a friend. I'm sure that you have taken great care in arranging the funeral. Please tell me when and where you want my presence and what you want me to do. I'll be there for everything. Later, I would like to meet Vikram's friends, see his room and, if it is permitted, visit his work place. I then would like to return home tomorrow morning."

A commander couldn't have given me clearer instructions.

The funeral, with full military honours, was concluded by late afternoon. After the final echoes of the 'Last Post' faded away, Lachhman Singh spent the evening talking to the Squadron Pilots. Vikram's roommate took him to see Vikram's room. Lachhman Singh desired to spend the night in his son's room instead of the guest house

we had reserved for him. Early next morning after a tour of the squadron area, my boss took him to his office.

A while later, the staff car took Lachhman Singh to the civil airfield two hours away.

As the car disappeared round the corner, I remarked to my boss, "A brave man he is. Spoke to me like a General when he told me exactly what he expected from us during his stay here. I have never seen a more composed man on such an occasion. I admire him."

"Yes, Mr. Lachhman Singh Rathore is a warrior in his own way. He sired three sons and has laid to rest all three of them.

His first son Captain Ghanshyam Singh of the Gurkha Rifles was killed in Ladakh in the 1962 War. His second son, Major Bir Singh, died along the Ichogil Canal in 1965 in an ambush. His youngest, Vikram Singh, who had the courage to join the Air Force, is also gone now. This simple farmer has contributed more to our country's defence than all of us combined."

Yes, he is indeed a brave Indian; in fact he is more Indian than anyone else. His sacrifice can never ever be repaid by the country! He is almost a martyr himself!

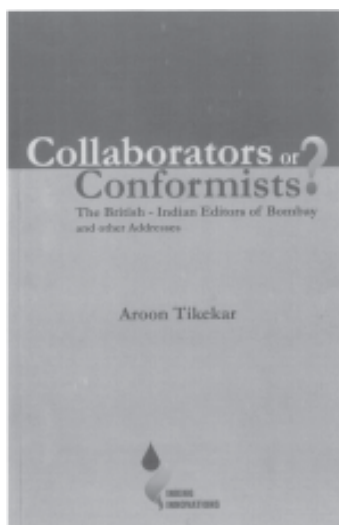
But our great nation does not know this simple Giant. India only knows that super rich cricketers need to be conferred Bharat Ratna while a bunch of actors and actresses need to be conferred Padma Vibhushans and Padmashrees!

Yes, they are so called 'Achievers'; achieved fame and fortune mostly for themselves and a wee bit for the country. (Ever wondered how on earth do actresses bring glory to the Nation?)

But what about the 'Losers'? Those who have simply lost their everything for the Nation – Like this Father of Three Brave Soldiers.

From the Net. Contributed by V. Krishna Moorthy.
moorthy_vk@rediffmail.com

BOOK REVIEW



COLLABORATORS OR CONFORMISTS? THE BRITISH INDIAN EDITORS OF BOMBAY AND OTHER ADDRESSES by Aroon Tikekar • Published by Soniya Khare, Inking Innovations, India Printing House, Mumbai 400031 • email: ipw@vsnl.net • 2014 • pages 158 • Rs.200.

Reviewed by Professor R.Srinivasan, associate editor *Freedom First*, and retired Professor of Politics, University of Bombay.

The book by and large is on Bombay and its place in the Indian world of letters. Bombay refers to the vast territory extending from Sind to Karwar. Anglo Indian refers to the English community in India which socially

Elphinstone he establishes the verisimilitude making it a valuable historical document. Many have commented on the accuracy of the narrative where all civilized norms are given a go by. Another novel that was widely read was Meadows Taylor's 'Memoirs of a Thug'. Reprinted in the World's classics it can be described as unique and the only novel of the period that stands out. It is waiting for new generations to discover and savour its pages.

C.A.Kincaid and his son Dennis occupy a place of importance. Dennis before his untimely passing away even before he was thirty years of age wrote novels centring on Maratha history and the author is in deep appreciation of him. Interestingly, the author does not dwell upon Charles Kincaid who was dominant in the earlier decades of the century and wrote a fascinating and detailed history of the Marathas.

The author keeps away from political or administrative developments but dwells on currents of thought and intellectual sensibilities. He tries to map out some of these perspectives that were dominant during the second half of the nineteenth century more in the byways rather than in the main thoroughfare. It fills gaps in our knowledge of developments in the literature in the peninsula and the city.

Though printing came to the city in 1674 the very year of the coronation of Shivaji yet for one hundred and twenty years there was no newspaper in the city. It was only in mid-century that civic affairs began to engage the attention of the public; the Bombay Gazette and newspapers in the modern senses made their debut in 1854. One of the intellectual families began writing open letters in journals – Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkhadhar. He was to bemoan British India describing the company's rule as 'the most bitter curse that ever visited India;' this was long before the Drain theory of Dadabhai Naoroji. In this, the policy of Lord Metcalfe, the Governor General, in initiating the freedom of the press was fully taken advantage of.

Besides the Gazette a number of journals were started and many of them disappeared after a brief while. Able editors served on them; some were exemplary

dominated the country. This group produced a literature which today is totally forgotten and it was written by a people who isolated themselves from the majority "protecting their identity from pollution of a stranger unwholesome and deviant India": It cocooned itself and the Indians who flitted through its pages were either butlers or 'boys' doing the humdrum, dreary tasks for the sahibs. The literature of these people is described by the author as "transplant literature and cannot be understood outside its social order. The author divides the period into some divisions. Some of the novelists who were prolific like P.C.Wren are today forgotten. Was he the same Wren who authored a school text in English grammar and composition? All of us had to compulsorily con through this.

He also refers to Victoria Cross who attempted mild titillation of eroticism. There are others too gathering dust in libraries. He writes most interestingly on Professor F.W.Bain who was a rara avis among the brilliant group of teachers of the Deccan College, Pune. The "Professor used to announce in class: "It is your duty to fight for your country and it is our duty to behead you."" He kept in the library books on bomb-making and students could avail themselves of these. One hopes that the new generation would discover and savour his ironical delights in his novels. They remain a category themselves without a parallel.

The author spends a few pages on the novel Pandurang Hari" (1829) which interested the Bombay Governor who encouraged its reprint. It is a thriller and the central figure is an artist in crime. The novel reeks of murder every few pages. By comparing a report of Lord

professionals but disagreements among them persisted.

By 1840 the *Bombay Times* modernized its printing machinery. The city by 1854 had three dailies, three bi-weeklies and four weeklies. One of the newspapers antagonized the Parsi community mainly because the *Bombay Times* supported the proselytization of its people under the influence of the Rev. John Wilson. *The Bombay Gazette* featured strongly written letters on the issue.

The Times of India since those days those days was an influential newspaper and it remained dominant though there were others too. These were run by enthusiastic and talented amateurs rather than professionals. Thomas Bennett one of the dominant members was unique in shaping the *Times* and in enrolling Lovat Fraser and Stanley Reed both of whom remained important newspapermen having long innings in the establishment. They were proponents of the official point of view. In contrast, the *Bombay Chronicle* founded in 1913 was nationalist to the core. The *Chronicle* was founded by Pherozeshah Mehta. The city had to be to wait till 1931 for an evening paper, *The Bombay Sentinel* which was nationalist and had the legendary Benjamin Horniman as editor and dominated the world of newspaper for decades.

He was without a peer and a legendary figure for nearly three decades and put effectively the nationalist case in his paper. This was a nationalist challenge to the dominant *Times of India*. He made a name for himself and had a devoted Indian clientele.

Indian nationalism was to witness another newspaper *The Free Press* established by S.Sadanand. From the 1930s it had a place of its own and had to compete for readership against other nationalist papers. It was deliberately priced low. Its resources were meagre but Sadanand had his own acolytes. However the *Times*, the Old Lady of Bori Bunder continued to dominate the Bombay newspaper scene

The folklore of the Asiatic Society is an absorbing chapter of the book. It should be mentioned that this is one of the few studies on what has remained the pre-eminent of scholarly and research institutions of the city also hallowed by time. One is thankful for popularising this landmark in the city. Not only is this a treasure trove of books and antiquities but its collection of manuscript and rare prints is without a parallel in Western India. One of its rarest possessions is the valuable manuscript of Dante's *Divine Comedy* which belonged to Lord Elphinstone. There are only five copies; Mussolini offered to pay ten thousand pounds for this. One of the curiosities is that Indians were not allowed to be members of the Society. An eminent citizen Manekejee Cursetjee applied

several times for membership only not to be allowed and one of those who objected to his admission was Dr. John Wilson whose name is commemorated by the Wilson College. Only when he became a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain (when he was in England) was he allowed into the precincts of the Bombay institution. Obviously the exclusive arrogance of the ruling classes was not confined only to the clubs and gymkhanas but to scholarly institutions as such. It is again ironical that the college in Bombay that bears the name of John Wilson has remained one of the most liberal of institutions of the city.

A valuable chapter *Foreign Friends of India* reminds the epigone of the incalculable service of this group to the exploration, popularising of the learned treasures of an antique civilisation; the most well known of these savants was Max Muller and many of us have gone to school with his once celebrated "India- What Can It Teach Us?" This Chapter is a roll call of the great names who have kept the flame of Indian civilisation, thought, and philosophy alive and burning. It is comprehensive in that it includes many names and briefly comments on them. One gets introduced to a variety of people positively oriented to our country whether they are Emerson or Thoreau. Newspapermen and editors as well remained genuine and abiding friends. \

Several scholars mastered the difficult and strange language, translated the Sanskrit books and astonished Europe. In his extremely comprehensive chapter he details the travellers, folklorists, anthropologists, historians and briefly estimates them. They reminded the fact that Hinduism was already a thousand years old when Christ was born and the continent did not persecute people of other faiths and persuasions. Under British Rule even a supercilious Governor General like Lord Curzon was the first to recognise the ageless and precious heritage that was India's and tried to save the historical monuments which otherwise would have been permanently lost for posterity. All of us owe fealty to Max Muller who is held in reverence. He of course remained one of a galaxy of Sanskritists and the Deva Bhasha penetrated Oxford and was taught there even as in some of the select universities of Europe. Venerated classics were translated to European languages, dictionaries of the language as well as Pali and other Indian classical tongues were translated. Newspapers in a later decade too were to write of Indian nationalism with rare understanding and with warm empathy. Tikekar chronicles these and being a newspaperman, his pages glow with appreciative warmth.

This book is a must for those interested in the mental life of India, its variety and the abiding values that inform it.

The Boy with the Nose-ring – A Short Story

Ishita Marwah

A sweltering hot May afternoon in Poona and a small woman lies on a metal cot, sweat soaking the sheets that line the harsh crisscross mesh underneath her. She sweats much too much even for the hot Indian summer and this has to do with the unseemly, quaking mound rising steeply off of her small-boned middle; her labour has begun and her womb is contracting at intervals that get shorter by the half-hour. The local midwife bustles around her officiously, swabbing her dripping forehead from time to time and regularly ducking under the chaste rough blanket that shields the site of action, the place between the petite woman's spread-wide-open, bent-at-the-knees, delicate golden legs.

Though this is not her first labour, the woman is afraid. Her large kohl-rimmed eyes, shaped like the bodies of the little silver fish that dart in the shallows of the Karha, are wide open and fixed on the mud-plastered ceiling. Swathed in her fear, she cares little for the midwife's admonition that she is not pushing enough, not trying nearly hard enough. She wishes her husband Vinayak were with her, but it is inappropriate for men to witness sordid, bloodied affairs of women such as childbirth. He is off at work to take his mind off things instead, wearing his starched khakhi uniform and tramping down the streets of dusty Baramati, armed with a satchel full of letters.

He is afraid too, she knows. She pictures him dropping off letter after letter, making small-talk with people whose names he cannot care to remember for his mind is focused on the magical things happening in a warm place nestled deep inside of her.

"Push, Laxmibai, you lazy woman, push!" The midwife says, patting her sweat-lathered tummy hard, thwack, thwack, thwack. Though her words are severe, the midwife is not unkind, and Laxmibai tries to please her by feebly contracting her perineal muscles in concert with the next insistent push of her womb.

In between the contractions, she finally confides in the midwife.

"I'm very scared Tai."

"Of what, Laxmibai?" The midwife raises bushy brows, "You've done this enough times before; your thaili must now be as loose as that woman Kavita's morals! Have you heard the latest on her?" She guffaws at her own witty word-play and waits expectantly to be asked what the latest is, but Laxmibai is lost in her own world.

The midwife sighs and philosophically accepts that her patient is in no mood for gossip. She hastens to comfort Laxmibai, so sure she knows exactly what the to-be mother is dreading that she does not care to ask again. After all, doesn't every pregnant woman fear the same thing?

"Do not be afraid Laxmibai, I can tell by the size of your bump that it's a boy!" She says reassuringly, running her hands lightly over the taut belly before her. "Why, he must be an elephant! And look at the patches on your face, a sure indication!"

Laxmibai closes her eyes and moans softly, her toes curling as the pain spreads through her body like electricity. Wisps of downy black hair escape the neat bun she ties at the nape of her neck every morning and stick wetly to the side of her face and her nose-ring lies cold as ice against her parched, sighing lips.

She wants to tell the midwife that what she is afraid of is not that it won't be a boy, but that it will. That it will be a perfect little boy, the spitting image of his father. A boy with a penis the size of her little finger and pale mauve grape-sized balls.

But the contractions come faster now, leaving her gasping for breath and the midwife is doing a million things at once and does not want to listen anymore.

Laxmibai's first little boy was born premature and



A Feature Sponsored by

Adult Education Institute,

Registered under the Public Trusts Act N.E-4282

Contact: Email:freedomfirst1952@gmail.com

his lungs could not hold out for long outside of her. She blamed herself for months after for pushing him out too early, for being so selfish as to try to end the ordeal of her pregnancy before her due time, for killing her child; she was a murderer, a wicked blot on womankind. She begged the Gods for a second chance for months after she lost the child; she wept and prayed and fasted and hoped.

They blessed her with a son the second time around and she was delirious with happiness. She carefully held this little one in her womb for as long as she was meant to and sang praises of the Gods to him as he gurgled sloppily while she worked around the house.

She thought she had righted her wrongs and completed her penance and that she had been forgiven.

The child died in his sleep, not long before his first birthday. She woke one morning to find him lifeless by her side and her screams roused the entire neighbourhood.

Her next child was a girl, a lovely little thing with peach-tinted skin and exquisitely shaped fingers and feet, but a girl nonetheless.

Laxmibai began to believe she was truly cursed when her next baby boy was taken by Mata, the Goddess, who entered his body slyly and burst through his soft skin in painful, oozing boils. Though Laxmi did everything they said you could to drive her away, from avoiding lighting the oil-lamps to spreading a dense bed of neem leaves around the ailing child, the Goddess carried him away when he wasn't much older than the departing summer.

That was when she understood; the Gods had never really forgiven her callousness during her first pregnancy and now they would punish her, not by striking her barren, but by blessing her and cursing her with boys who would not survive.

And now here she is, pushing out what the midwife is sure will be yet another doomed boy. She too knows it in her bones that this is a boy, knows it in the way her breasts have filled and drooped sullenly, in the way the line of hairs that trickles south from her belly button has become shrubby-dense over the duration of her pregnancy.

The contractions are so close now she can hardly tell them apart and her hand and feet grip the metal sides of the bed as she pushes and screams and bleeds.

The midwife leans all her bulk on the supine woman's swollen stomach and talks without stopping but

her words are gibberish in Laxmibai's breathless ears.

A boy it will be, a little boy, and she will fool the Gods this time, trick them out of stealing her angel.

This time, she has a plan.

The pain is so fierce that she feels delirious, her mind floating through her previous pregnancies to when she was a girl in her father's house and her mother lovingly oiled her hair into jet-black braids and called her Godavari, her name before Vinayak changed it to Laxmi when he married her. She is Godavari again now, a little girl in terrible pain, calling for her mother over and over, screaming for release.

And then he suddenly slides out of her in a self-satisfied way and the midwife smacks his purple back and he breathes for the first time and then he cries and the cord is cut and she is back to being Laxmi, her feet and back drenched in warm brown blood. She tries to sit up to see him better. The midwife is already wiping the slime off him and he is the most beautiful thing she has ever laid eyes on.

There is no way she'll let them take this one away from her.

The midwife lays him on her bare stomach and she smells the wisps of hair on his oblong head for the first time. He smells of life and blood and of her.

"My little Ramachandra", she whispers, already deciding to name him after her favourite hero God, the ruler of people's hearts, the set-righter of wrongs.

But the Gods must never know of him or they will snatch him away.

"Ram..." She coos softly, kissing him, hugging him to her breast.

The midwife begins to wash the soiled bedclothes in a basin of water.

Laxmibai knows what she has to do. She pulls at the sari she wore just this morning and then unwrapped hastily when her water broke; she drapes one of its blue-edged corners around his head like a scarf.

She is satisfied with what she sees. He will pass as a pretty girl.

She chuckles in delight.

The Gods will never know he is a boy; she will bring him up as a girl. She will dress him in magenta and green and gold and adorn his wrists with a hundred

bangles. She will pierce his ears and plug the holes with pure gold.

Her precious little Ram.

She will give him the nose-ring she wore as a child to complete the disguise. She has it stowed away in the miniature silver box her mother gave her when she got married. He will have to have his nose pierced, but the piercings will fill over time as he shrugs off his girl clothes and grows into a young man.

As he grows older, it will earn him the name Nathuram, Ram with the nose-ring.

Nathuram Godse.

Nathuram Vinayakrao Godse.

What she doesn't know is that when he turns thirty nine, she will witness the day the Gods find her out, the day they punish her for her deceit by seizing her baby boy at last.

Nathuram Vinayakrao Godse will hang to his death. And a defeated Laxmibai will cry, cry and cry some more.

Nathuram (Ramachandra) Vinayakrao Godse (19th May 1910 – 15th November 1949) was the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the Indian freedom struggle against the British and the Indian Father of the Nation.

Nathuram Godse was born in Baramati, Pune (erstwhile Poona District in British India), to Vinayak Vamanrao Godse and his wife Lakshmi Godse, who named the child Ramachandra. Before his birth, Lakshmi had borne Vinayak three sons and a daughter, of which all the boys died in infancy. It is rumoured that this convinced little Ramachandra's parents that their male children were cursed and they brought him up as a girl instead, which included his being made to wear a traditional nose-ring ('nath' in Marathi, the Godses' native tongue). This is how the nickname 'Nathuram' (literally translated as 'Ram with a nose-ring') is said to have been adopted; a name that stuck with Ramachandra through life and for posterity. After his younger brother was born, Godse's parents supposedly began treating him like a boy but the name Nathuram remained.

As a child, Godse revered Gandhi, who was working at uniting the Indian masses against the British through non-violent protests. Vinayak was transferred to Ratnagiri and it was here that a young Nathuram first made the acquaintance of Veer Savarkar, the foremost champion of Hindutva. Godse chose to give up his formal education and joined the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) instead. He ran the Hindu Mahasabha's Marathi newspaper, which was called Agrami and later re-christened Hindu Rashtra (The Hindu Nation).

Godse pointedly renounced Gandhi in adulthood, believing that the Mahatma emotionally manipulated Hindus and was flagrantly partial to India's Muslims. Godse held Gandhi responsible for the partition of India on religious lines and the consequent two-way exodus which left a million people dead; this is understood to be one of the chief motives behind his resolution to kill Gandhi.

Nathuram plotted Gandhi's assassination along with six others, including his younger brother Gopal Godse; he carried out the plan in New Delhi barely five months post-independence, on the 30th of January 1948. On the evening of the assassination, Godse pushed his way through the crowds thronging the grounds where Gandhi was to begin offering his evening prayers and bowed to Gandhi before shooting him in the chest three times. Gandhi died almost instantly; ironically, his last words are said to have been "Hey Ram", translated as "Oh God", Ram being the same Hindu deity that Godse was named after by his parents. Godse made no attempt to escape but instead courted arrest by shouting for the police to be called. He was captured by the crowd around him and was subsequently arrested.

After a year-and-a-half-long trial in which he defended himself, Godse was sentenced to death by hanging. Prime Minister Nehru and Gandhi's sons put forward pleas for the commutation of the death sentence, claiming that if carried out, it would tarnish the memory of the Mahatma, a man who had been a staunch proponent of non-violence and had strongly opposed capital punishment. However, the ruling was upheld and Nathuram Godse was hanged on the 15th of November 1949. His parents were alive at the time of his death.

DR. ISHITA MARWAH M.B.B.S, after completing her Masters in Immunology, is working with Radcliffe Hospital at Oxford University.

The Great Election Circus: Silence on Real Issues

India's General Elections have the touch of the circus. There is a sense of performance, of spectacle but also a comedy of distractions. If one looks for real issues, there's little about sustainability, knowledge, innovation or justice. Education is not a priority. Because we have no theory of knowledge India is being out-thought and bested intellectually in all global forums and league tables

Shiv Vishvanathan, *Education World*, May 2014.

THE WRIT PETITION

Some Excerpts

The Petition was filed by (the late) Mr. L. R. Sampat, General Secretary of the Maharashtra Swatantra Party and by S. V. Raju, Editor of *Freedom First*.

OUR APPEAL

We need to persuade the Bombay High Court to expedite the Hearing. Will you join us by impleading yourself in this case?

If you are interested we can send you the writ petition in full

We look forward to hearing from you.

You can reply to S. V. Raju at jurasv@gmail.com

Or write to him at *Freedom First*, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001.

The Swatantra Party will not Swear a Lie

“The stipulations of Section 29(A) create problems of conscience and principles which the petitioner No. 1 (The Swatantra Party) does not wish to circumvent by prevarication and falsehood as has been done by other parties in the country. For example, the extreme leftist revolutionary parties have apparently constituted themselves by a memorandum which contains a provision to the effect that they bear allegiance to the principle of democracy; crassly communal parties have sworn allegiance to secularism and the ruling party despite its declared objective of liberalization and globalization has pledged or at any rate continues to pledge its allegiance to the principle of socialism. Section 29(A) poses no problem that cannot be overcome by recourse to pliable conscience. There is no provision for any verification of the truth of the memoranda or regulations nor is there any instance of registration being denied to or withdrawn from any party on the basis of proven falsehood of the provisions in the memorandum of association of any party. The petitioner No.1 party has no wish to resort to such unconscionable procedure followed quasi-universally.

Democracy and Secularism YES! Socialism NO!

“The petitioner No. 1 has no difficulty whatsoever in confirming its allegiance to the principles of democracy and secularism as also to uphold the territorial integrity of the Republic. It encounters insurmountable difficulty in declaring allegiance to the principle of socialism. The term socialism has not been defined in the Constitution of India or in the said Act. The requirement to declare allegiance to a tenet so shrouded in vagueness can serve no possible purpose. If the provisions contained in the Constitution represent, in the view of the authors of the stipulation, the essential content of socialism, the specific requirement of the Section 29(A) is unnecessary since the oath of allegiance to the Constitution as by law established would more than cover the requirement.

“On the other hand, if the dispositions of the Constitution of India are entirely socialistic but are a little less or a little more, there would arise a contradiction between the declaration of allegiance to the Constitution and that to the principle of socialism.

Why the Writ Petition is not Against the Amended Preamble

The petitioners’ grievance is not against the amendment

to the Preamble incorporating therein a reference to socialism. The Constitution contains many dispositions not all of which need be uniformly acceptable to any given individual or association of individuals. What is essential is that a citizen must have the right and the possibility at par with any other citizen to act and to canvass by constitutional means, for changing the dispositions of the Constitution in accordance with his inclinations howsoever unreasonable they may look to others at a given point of time. Section 29(A) of the Act prevents committed and sincere non-socialists from agitating as an organized force in favour of getting the Constitution modified in their favour by entering the Legislature - State Assemblies as also Parliament - and influencing the persuasions of the other members of the Parliament.

Thus, without going into the question of the precise definition of the term socialism, the right of a non-socialist citizen to hold his personal views and be entitled to all the privileges enjoyed by the socialist fellow-citizens cannot be denied. In particular his access to the legislative body as an individual and as a party cannot be hindered by denying him the privileges of registration as political party.

Socialism is not part of basic structure of Constitution

“It is submitted that the right to amend the Constitution so as not to change its basic structure having being upheld and socialism not being part of the basic structure of the Constitution, the restriction imposed by Section 29(A) has the effect of virtually denying the right to attempt an amendment of the political philosophy of the Government of the day reflected in the Constitution of India.”

The Petitioner wants the Court to:

- strike down Sub-Section 5 of Section 29 (A) of the Representation of the People Act 1951 as being ultra vires the Constitution of India to the extent it requires the memorandum and rules and regulations of the association or body desiring registration to contain a specific provision that such an association and body shall bear true faith and allegiance to the principle of socialism; and
- direct the Election Commission to register the Petitioner as a political party under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

1 August 1959

C. Rajagopalachari inaugurating the
Preparatory Convention of the Swatantra Party

A view of the delegates.

Seated on the dais:

L / R Acharya N. G. Ranga, C. Rajagopalachari,
Minoo Masani, Homi Mody, V. P. Menon,
Bhailalbhai Patel

