FREEDOM AND DISSENT

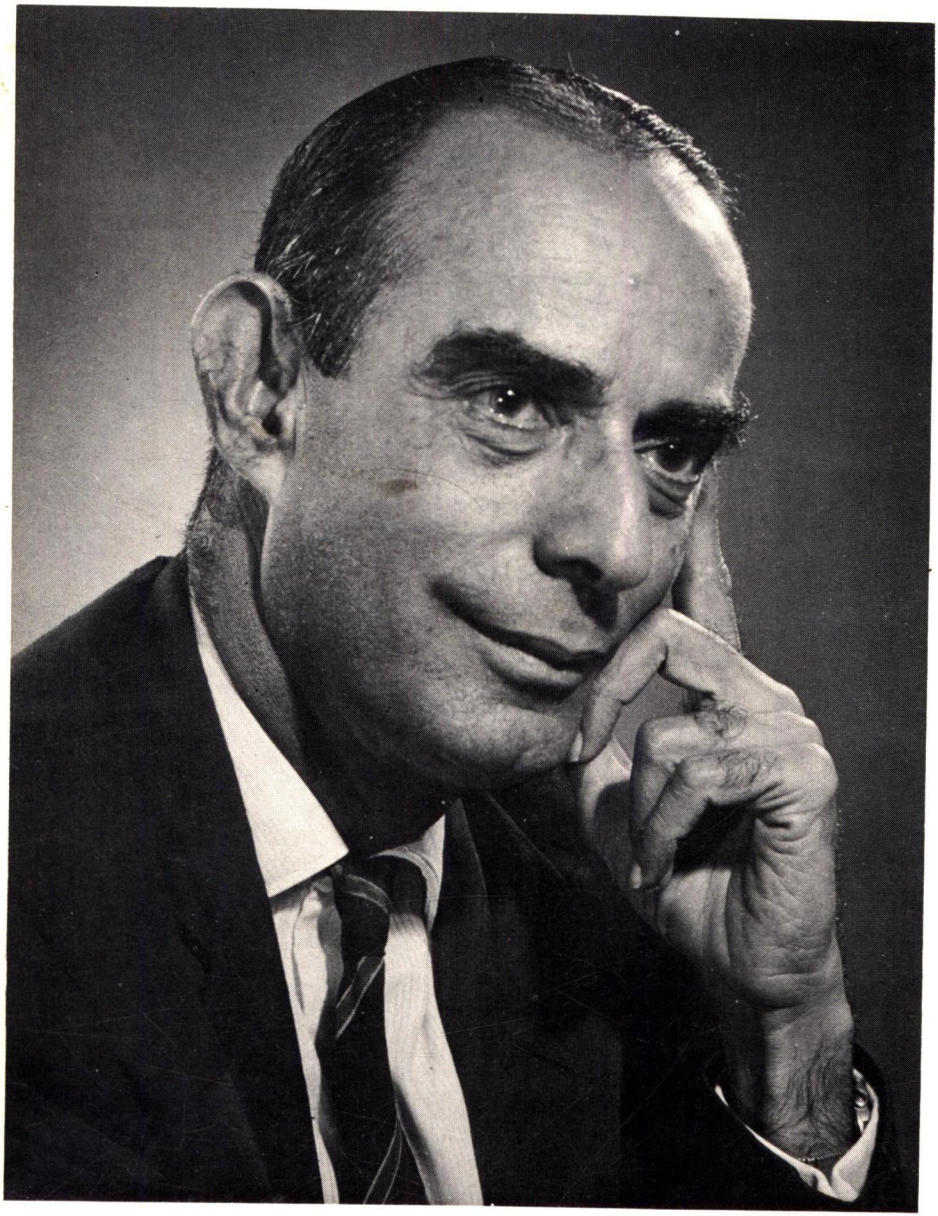
Essays
in Honour of
Minoo Masani

Edited by
R. Srinivasan

FREEDOM AND DISSENT

Minoo Masani Eightieth Birthday
Felicitation Committee

NAOZER AGA
ARVIND DESHPANDE
ANUPAM MEHTA
MADHU MEHTA
M. R. PAI
S. V. RAJU
R. SRINIVASAN
K. H. SUBRAMANIAM



M. R. MASANI

Freedom and Dissent

Essays in Honour
of
Minoo Masani

on
his
eighteenth birthday

Editor

R. Srinivasan

BOMBAY
Democratic Research Service
1985

© Copyright 1985 Democratic Research Service

First Published: November 1985.

Price: Rs. 120.00

PRINTED IN INDIA
PUBLISHED BY S. V. RAJU FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RESEARCH SERVICE,
MANECKJEE WADIA BUILDING, MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD,
BOMBAY 400 032. AND PRINTED BY HIM AT THE TATA PRESS LIMITED,
414, VEER SAVARKAR MARG, BOMBAY 400 025.

...It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognised; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition. There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not suspicious of one another nor angry with our neighbour if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant. While we are thus unconstrained in our private intercourse, a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws, having an especial regard for those which are ordained for the protection of the injured as well as to those unwritten laws which bring upon the transgresser of them the reprobation of the general sentiment... We are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes, and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness. Wealth we employ, not for talk and ostentation, but when there is a real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it. An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of a policy. The great impediment to action is, in our opinion, not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussions preparatory to action. For we have a peculiar power of thinking before we act, and of acting too, whereas other men are courageous from ignorance but hesitate upon reflection...

Speech of Pericles attributed by Thucydides tr. B. Jowett.

Introduction

When a group of friends met and thought of felicitating Minoo Masani on his eightieth birthday, there was unanimity of opinion that the most befitting way to honour him would be to present him a volume of essays to educate and to reaffirm the values that he had cherished all his life. Also, since a whole new generation is at the helm of affairs, it was agreed that it was only proper that they should be reminded of the contribution that an earlier generation had made to national development and freedom. Some of the ideas propagated by Masani have been more than vindicated by subsequent global events and they are too well established to need any further reiteration. Socialism and its varieties are no more the shibboleths that they were in earlier decades.

Masani has battled for some values and has affirmed the need for a pure public life, for freedom and for the right of the lone individual to assert his point of view. These of course, have a continuity in the modern Indian tradition of political discourse and one of the aims of this volume has been to present Masani as a distinguished heir and an exponent of the Indian Liberal tradition. Long before the classic assessment of Shonfield's *Modern Capitalism* and John Strachey's book on the same theme, Masani had been advocating the important role that it can play in Indian economic development; in a free and open society the predatory activities of businessmen can be controlled and capitalism shaped to keep to its social responsibilities. The importance of a free press, the right of small groups of citizens to assert themselves, the need to educate the 'freedom fighters' in values have been themes near his heart. In assembling this book of essays, it has not been possible to touch upon all the themes that have interested and engaged Mr. Masani. People who have been his close associates have contributed to this book. The essays in this volume are addressed to the general public, especially to the young men and women who will play a vital role in a crucial period of our development. To include in a book of this kind all the varied topics which

interested Masani would have made it encyclopaedic in its range apart from making it unmanageable.

Minoo Masani in many respects represents a vanishing species of public men and it is not unlikely that the next generation will see almost none of his type. He should be basically regarded as one of the remaining liberal intellectuals who dominated the earlier era of modern Indian politics. The earlier school of liberalism of the pre-Gandhian era was trained in politics by personal precept, example and interactions. The relationship between Ranade, G. V. Joshi and Gokhale is well-known; similar personal links were not uncommon. Gandhi almost missed being a member of the Servants of India Society; also, Pherozeshah, Wacha, Gokhale, Krishnaswami Iyer, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri were all tied by personal friendships. However, the generation of Masani had little of any direct contact with the earlier generation of liberals. In fact, they were intellectually in opposition to that school, and worshipped at new shrines.

Barring Gandhi, Masani seems to have been influenced by no elders of the national movement. Of course, his father was an important public figure in civic politics and his contributions to public life as well as to university administration were not negligible. Though perhaps Masani never met Gokhale, there are attitudinal and intellectual similarities between the two and dissimilarities between J. P. and him,—J. P. with whom he was so close personally and whose causes he championed with ardour. Very much like Gokhale trudging the dusty plains and hills of the Bombay Presidency raising funds for his institutions, Masani too in later decades was to wander through the distances of India mobilizing cadres and loyal partymen for his Congress Socialist Party. This was his *Bharat darshan*. This gave Masani an intimacy about the real conditions of the country which may not be immediately apparent to the observer.

In another respect too, Masani recalls the old Liberals. Basically an intellectual, he from his salad days has continually attempted to build institutions—it is quite likely that this belief in the importance of building institutions and extending civil ideals and civic education was perhaps the influence of his days in the London School of Economics when participation in Workers' Education

and similar activities were part of the obligation of academic intellectuals. It is here that the similarities with the older liberals is striking and he is so different from Jayaprakash. J. P. was basically a populist and one who was no builder of institutions like the older liberals. Masani experimented in the organizing of a political party and finding the limited use of this, tried to supplement this with the creation of voluntary organizations. Some of these were of course not destined to last long. Had he been born half a century earlier, he would have built up educational institutions and social reforms leagues. Like intellectuals in India in the nineteenth century, he had to do several things simultaneously.

Gandhi and following him Jayaprakash, being basically populist romantics, believed that nationalist politics would continually give rise to a race of public servants like themselves—visionaries, fired by a sense of enthusiasm for a public cause, unselfish, committed to cleansing public life and dedicating themselves to improving the country and its politics. But the liberals were generally more realistic and were not fired by any similar enthusiasms. While they were themselves impeccable in their honesty, they had very little of any illusions and stressed time and again the need for instilling civic values and the responsibility that came to them naturally.

The Liberal tradition had always emphasized the urgency of fully utilizing the existing political institutions and through creative use of these, extending benefits for the government, recruiting new participants to the political process, educating them in new values and making civic politics a co-operative endeavour. They were tireless in working in committees, local governments, co-operatives, legislatures etc. Masani too was to have a brief period of experience in local government as well as in many others and he excelled in several of them. His tenure in parliament was not only a bright period in his political career, but will also remain an important chapter in the history of India's parliament. He brought to bear the same passion to public affairs that Gokhale did in an earlier decade but free from the restraints which Gokhale had to labour—for he was an equal to the highest political officer in a free republic.

While the thirties and the forties saw him active in founding and strengthening a socialist party, the winning of independence and the consolidation of the forces of nationalism compelled him to stress the older values that the liberals had emphasised, and he began floating a number of organisations, the most significant of these being the Leslie Sawhny Programme*, the Democratic Research Service, the Adult Education Institute, the Indian Liberal Group etc. Masani's own experience had indicated the fatal attractions of communism and how easily it could become an extension of Soviet political designs. The Democratic Research Service was created mainly to educate Indians on the wiles of communist treachery. The Leslie Sawhny Programme was basically an updating of the dream of the Liberals to prepare an aware and alert citizenry which would be conscious of its rights, demand these and organize itself for asserting its civic rights. It is interesting to note that Masani and other public figures in the fifties began to reassert the very same values of liberal pluralism which de Tocqueville pointed out as informing the American democracy more than a century ago.

The running of institutions, the floating of voluntary organisations and the criticism of the powers that be are the essence of an open polity—the ideal of which was expressed by Pericles in his famous oration more than two thousand years ago. It is this speech that prefaces this *festschrift*.

In the long history of India, the values of an open polity, that of discussing politics in public, putting forward alternatives to the government, relentlessly criticising the government for its limitations and yet co-operating with it when found necessary were all practised by the Liberals from the last decades of the last century. During the nationalist movement, it was inevitable that some of these should be under a cloud. The opportunity for resuming these presented itself after independence, but the natural cupidity of the ordinary politicians, the passion for office laid waste the hope for freedom and for other civic values. It has been men in the opposition, men as different as Kripalani, J. P., Rajaji, Masani, Nath Pai and S. M. Joshi

*At the time of writing the good work of the LSP has earned it an award from the Indian Merchants Chamber.

and others who had kept the spirit alive and helped preserve the timbre of public life in the country.

It was during the Emergency that they had to face the greatest challenge. With leaders like J. P. and others imprisoned, it fell to people like Masani, N. G. Goray and others to fight the battle but through acceptable means. The decision to keep the magazine *Freedom First* going and challenging the censor in courts of law and exposing the Emgergency was the contribution of Masani and it should not be lightly brushed aside. Equally important was the support that he gave J. P. and to sustain his spirit when they were sinking low because of continuous deterioration of the health of the Lokanayak.

While those who are politically aware do know of Masani and his contributions, there is another Masani for many others; who know him as the author of *Our India* and other books that they read at school either in English or in translations. New consciousness and a new awareness were created in tens of thousands of school children who were educated for the first time in civic values but in so disarmingly an engaging manner. This brought some of the creative latent talents in him; for he has remained basically an educationist in the best sense of the term. His capacity for conveying complex ideas in a simple manner is enviable. Alone of our political leaders Masani is able to empathize with generations far younger to him. It is this rare quality that he shares with Rajaji that makes him have a wide rapport across different generations.

What is common to the Liberals, Gandhi and Masani, is the stress they lay on raising the tone of public life. All of them have emphasized the need to spiritualize politics and this can be done only in the full glare of public gaze. Closed politics or court politics as it is in India is basically the politics of kickbacks and concessions privately arrived at. Masani, both in the inner councils of the Congress Socialist party and later in the Swatantra has refused consistently to come to terms with what he regarded as evil or compromising with first principles. This stress on open politics, stresses other values which are central to Masani—the freedom to opt out, to choose and to stand by one's convictions; ultimately the values of individuality as understood and regarded

by J. S. Mill as the priceless possession of man. It is this that makes for man to be a moral person and for a society to be one based on free association and which ultimately maximises choice.

Masani's public life has been spent far more in the ranks of the Opposition than in the government. This was the lot of the Liberals in modern India and in a sense this is something that ought to be praised and commemorated. "In whose service is perfect Freedom" is more a religious sentiment and it does not smack of worldly wisdom; but often (and naturally so) it remains at the verbal level than in action. The liberals believed in a secular version of this and gave their best to the community which they loved so much and to which they gave willingly. What sustains people of the calibre of Masani is the sense of optimism which makes them champion at an age when others would rest on their laurels. One cannot better recapitulate this than in the words of Robert Browning:

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe

. . . . . .

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

R. SRINIVASAN

20 November 1985

Acknowledgements

The Felicitation Committee and the editor gratefully thank:

(a) Professor S. P. Aiyar for his continuous and enthusiastic support and suggestions,

(b) Professor Lord Bauer, Professor B. S. Yamey and the Editors of the *Commentary* 165 E, 56 St. New York, N.Y. 100 22, for permission to reprint the article on foreign aid,

(c) Mr. F. Bolkestein and Elsevier Publishers New York for permission to reprint the interview with Mr. Masani and reproduced in *Modern Liberalism,*

(d) The contributors who, at short notice and in spite of their other engagements agreed to write and sent their contributions on time, and

(e) The Tata Press Limited for helping get the book out on schedule.

Contents

Introduction vi

Acknowledgements xii

Minoo Masani as I Know him
—J. R. D. Tata 1

The Maverick Crusader
—S. V. Raju 5

Minoo Masani—Parliamentary Leader with Calibre
—Ajit Jain 17

The Economics of Minoo Masani
—F. A. Mehta 27

Interview with Minoo Masani
—Frits Bolkestein 35

The Concept of Liberalism and its Relevance for India
—S. P. Aiyar 73

From Political Liberalism to Liberal Humanism
—R. Srinivasan 89

Incentives to Goodness in Public Life
—R. M. Lala 107

The Persistence of Unwisdom in Government and The Duty to Dissent
—N. A. Palkhivala 115

The Constitution and the Judicial Protection of the Rights of the Individual
—Soli J. Sorabjee 123

Academic Leadership: A Major Challenge in University Education
—C. D. Narasimhaiah 131

Opposition as a Luxury—the Theoretical Challenge from Africa
—Padma Srinivasan 147

Government and the Media
—Mehra Masani 163

Free Flow of Information: National and International Dimensions
—Cushrow Irani 173

Populism in Indian Politics
—Adi H. Doctor 181

Foreign Aid: Rewarding Impoverishment?
—P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey 205

The Consumer Movement
—M. R. Pai 213

The State and the Arts
—Nissim Ezekiel 221

Highlights in Masani's Life 227

Publications Written and Organizations founded by Masani 229

Contributors 231

Minoo Masani As I Know Him

J. R. D. Tata

Until Minoo Masani joined Tatas in 1941, I knew him only by name and reputation as a young controversial socialist politician who, starting as a militant advocate of Marxism, had gradually turned into an equally militant opponent, while claiming throughout to be a firm Gandhian and democrat. This baffled or infuriated many, including his political comrades and peers of various parties and hues, who, not unnaturally, considered him either as a dangerous revolutionary or a turncoat or opportunist whose debating brilliance, integrity and organising talents were, however, never doubted.

I was fascinated by these conflicting aspects of his personality and political philosophy, which my politically untutored mind interpreted as those of a born rebel who, while he saw in the Russian Revolution the dawn of redemption from the gross injustices and shameless colonialism of nineteenth century capitalism, was too intelligent to swallow, wholesale, Marxist dialectics. Yet, like many other dreamers of the time including Jawaharlal Nehru, he believed that, somehow, freedom could be made to co-exist with Marxism. Considering Minoo's early exposure to the Marxist fervour of England's youth after World War I, then to the turmoil and throes of the freedom struggle and, last but far from least, to the glaring economic inequalities prevailing in India, he seemed predestined to be the stormy petrel of Indian politics that he duly became.

Increasingly disillusioned though I myself grew to be with Indian politics where, apart from slavish acceptance of a misconceived socialism, the acquisition and retention of power

seemed to be the main motivator of Indian politicians, Minoo was one of the few I continued to admire and respect despite my disagreement with most of his political credo. I understood his denunciation of the Marxism which he had so fervently advocated earlier, and I admired the courage and honesty he displayed in admitting he had been wrong. I therefore had no hesitation, despite the doubts expressed by some of my colleagues and friends, in welcoming him into Tatas in 1941 when he retired from the political field. In those sixteen years that Minoo spent with us, my regard and affection for him grew. As I came into closer contact with him and listened to him and read his writings, I became increasingly surprised that a man of his intelligence, character and uncompromising integrity had been denied inclusion in the top leadership of the country.

In Tatas, Minoo played a variety of roles, always with competence and despatch, demonstrating a remarkable adaptability to ideas, tasks and problems wholly different to those he previously had to deal with. Although I was, therefore, happy to have him in the Tata team, I was delighted when the Prime Minister appointed him India's Ambassador to Brazil in 1948 as I hoped, in the national interest, that it would lead, on his return, to more important assignments, possibly within the Government itself. But that was not to be, presumably because his strongly independent character and the mistrust his radical change of political ideology had made him unacceptable to the Congress Party. Minoo would indeed have proved a difficult colleague in a Government and party so heavily infiltrated by Marxist fellow-members.

So Minoo came back to Tatas where, in charge of the Group's Public Relations Department, he filled increasingly valuable roles as an adviser on management, on human relations in industry, on personnel and labour problems, for which his earlier experience in the trade union field made him particularly helpful. In fact, I found his views and advice to the Firm so useful to me that I got him to join my personal

secretariat as 'chef de cabinet' where I could take full advantage of his practical and insatiably active mind, his wide-ranging experience of men and affairs, his sense of history, his authorship and his mastery of English. I could not have made a better choice.

Although our minds often operated on similar, if not common, wavelengths, we both were somewhat impatient by nature, and I sometimes baulked at the speed at which he wished me to take decisions which I usually did in the end, but only after pondering, perhaps beyond need, over possible implications or ramifications. Like all of us who, today, have the privilege of being able to look upon others from the lofty heights of advancing age, Minoo has mellowed and lost his earlier passion for immediate action.

We found no difficulty, however, in agreeing with each other on two matters. One, the need for industrialists to adhere strictly to their social responsibilities as trustees of shareholders, consumers, workers and society, all of which Jamsetji Tata himself had made a part of the Firm's philosophy from the start. The other, in regard to the need to develop a real partnership, based on mutual trust, between management and labour. In the first matter, Minoo was largely responsible for inducing me to get a paragraph included in most of the Tata companies' Articles of Association, declaring their mindfulness of their social and moral responsibilities. In the other, he played an important role in the development of a highly successful system of joint consultation in Tata Steel, which itself has been largely responsible for the unique labour relations prevalent at Jamshedpur for the past forty years or more.

One of the most striking traits of Minoo's character is his deep understanding of human relations, somewhat unexpected in an 'ex' fiery political activist. All in all, Minoo Masani was, and still is, a remarkable human being whose talents and character, sadly for India, failed to be recognised and used as they could have been to the country's great benefit.

The Maverick Crusader

S. V. Raju

In his preface to the first volume of his autobiography, Minoo Masani writes:

> Swimming against the tide became so much of a habit, almost a part of my nature. I wonder whether in later life, particularly in my political activities and attitudes, the patterns of my habit asserted themselves.

And aptly he titled the second volume of his memoirs *Against the Tide.*

In a twenty-five year association with him, first as Executive Secretary of the Swatantra Party of which he was General Secretary and later President; thereafter as an associate in his Management Consultancy business, and for the last five as a friend participating in a number of voluntary public activities, I can say with conviction that Masani is never happier than when he is swimming against the current. In fact among his favourite quotes is this one from James Russell Lowell:

> *They are slaves who dare not be*
> *In the right with two or three*

As General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, when confronted with the need to take hard decisions he would often say that his job was to be effective and accomplish the task and not seek popularity.

In the political game in India success is measured in terms of office achieved. If this be the yardstick then Masani like his friend Jayaprakash Narayan, has been a failure. But how does one measure a man's achievement if he deliberately

chooses to reject opportunities if acceptance means compromising with his beliefs? A clue is provided in his report of Sri Prakasa's encounter with Nehru who used strong language to pull up Sri Prakasa for daring to suggest the partition of Kashmir. Sri Prakasa who was then Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan, lumped the scolding and continued in office rather than annoy Nehru. Comments Masani: "Here was an example of one of India's biggest tragedies—the inability to stand up to someone in authority."

Immediately after India's independence, Masani was indeed very much a part of the then Congress establishment and close to Jawaharlal Nehru. Despite emerging differences with Nehru in economic and foreign policy matters, the latter recommended Masani as an expert on the UN Sub-Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities. When Masani crossed swords with the Soviet Union's representatives questioning their claims of having satisfactorily settled the minorities problem in the USSR, Nehru was far from pleased. When despite India's objections Masani was elected Chairman of the Sub-Commission, Nehru vetoed the election. However, as a Congress Member in India's provisional parliament Masani being a thorn in Nehru's flesh was sought to be removed by persuading Masani to go to Brazil as India's ambassador. Masani accepted a one-year assignment and at the end of it declined an extension or a posting to some other Latin American country. The rejection did not increase his popularity with Nehru whose need was for pliant men. Sri Prakasa, a fine gentleman though he was, was rewarded with a Cabinet Ministership and later the Governership of Madras; Masani's refusal to toe the line resulted in his drawing away from Nehru and with it his association with Nehru's Congress.

It is easy to be in the opposition if the individual concerned sees little prospect of power. But to be near it and yet reject it if it meant compromising with one's principles speaks for courage and integrity of a high order. And these qualities Masani has in abundance.

Masani was a founder-member of the Congress Socialist Party conceived in late 1933 in Nasik Jail in the company of Jayaprakash Narayan, Yusuf Meherally and others. Six years later in 1939 he resigned from the CSP. His campaign to get communists expelled from the CSP met with much opposition. But Masani was vindicated. In his *Memories of Yusuf Meherally,* Bertram Wolfe reported:

> The Congress Socialist Party of India was taken in by the fair words of friendship and not only accepted the Communists into its ranks but helped the Communist Party to enter into the Indian National Congress. The Indian Communists were under secret instructions to penetrate and try to capture the Congress Socialist Party and above all to discredit and destroy Mahatma Gandhi. Though the Indian Socialists, Meherally among them, were as candid and unsuspecting as the socialists of other lands, yet they proved to possess an anti-toxin which saved them from destruction.
>
> The only person, according to Meherally, who sounded a note of warning that the Communists were not morally fit to enter the Socialist Party or the Indian National Congress was Minoo Masani. 'Minoo was in jail with the rest of us at that moment.' Yusuf told me. 'We spent long hours and days and nights trying to convince him but we did not succeed. He insisted upon resigning from the Congress Socialist Party if it accepted the Communists into its ranks. When we failed to convince him, we decided to help him with his letter of resignation so that he would make it a really worthy document...
>
> 'Minoo was right, of course, although we did not know it then,' Yusuf continued. 'Sometime later when I got out of prison I discovered that the Communist Party was guilty of double-dealing and had constituted itself as a hostile conspiracy within our movement.'

For Masani, the last straw was the CSP's resolve to oppose the war effort. "I had no place in the leadership of a party

which did not know its mind or fundamentals." 'Fundamentals' again was the reason for Masani's resignation from the National Executive of the Swatantra Party twenty-nine years later in 1968. This time it involved the Party's failure to honour its commitment to an independant candidate who had been promised the party's support for election to the Rajya Sabha.

There was yet another reason apart from the vacillation of the CSP leadership which prompted Masani to not only resign from the CSP but quit politics, temporarily as it turned out. It was the very mundane one of the need to earn a livelihood. "I was tired of eking out a miserable existence on the meagre bounty of two friends who thought my being in public life worthwhile. I wanted the dignity and economic independence that came from earning one's own living. And I looked around for a job." When Masani became a socialist, his father Sir Rustam Masani disapproved of his son's activities. "His objection was to the fomenting of class struggle which he considered undesirable." When his father told him that he did not like "propaganda for class war being conducted from his home," Masani moved out. The "separation was friendly" Masani comments with evident relief.

This is in contrast to today's young men and women from affluent families with never a worry of where the next meal is to come from. Loaded with pocket money, dressed in mod clothes, many on drugs, mouthing socialist, communist or naxalite slogans they can afford to indulge in the rather fashionable game of radical politics, without any personal risk to themselves. If they are sincere and serious about their professions they would do what Masani did.

Many years later, based perhaps on his experience of being a full-time politician without an independent means of income, Masani would closely question anyone who volunteered to join the Swatantra Party, on the latter's source of income. He discouraged the unemployed, the businessman or professional still struggling to establish himself, from entering into politics. He advised them to first stand on their feet, ensure that they

did justice to their families and themselves and then participate in political activity. Be in politics by all means but do not live off politics, he advised.

Masani was that rare politician with the combined skills of an ideologue and an organisation man. This I feel, at least in India, is not such an attractive or a useful two-in-one. With a clarity of thinking which drew repeated compliments from Rajaji, who himself possessed a razor-sharp mind, Masani often took positions which either produced howls of protest or sighs of bewilderment. For example he was absolutely clear that the Swatantra Party should not compromise its basic principles. No action that even remotely smacked of expediency could get past him. Here the ends and means philosophy of Gandhiji probably played a key role. An example was the party's embargo on the formation of Swatantra fronts in the labour and students' movements.

Labour should not be exploited by political parties and students should attend to their studies first were the rationale behind this policy in sharp contrast to contemporary trends. On a number of occasions attempts were made by party members to get round this ban, which was depriving the Party of a gold mine of manpower. The rank and file drawn from these movements are the cannon fodder of political parties in India. With Rajaji's backing, Masani the General Secretary stood firm.

Another was participation in *satyagrahas, bandhs* and such forms of protest. He stoutly opposed all such moves. Every activity should be within the law. All protests should be within the framework of legality. If any member wished to participate in a satyagraha then he was free to do so provided he made it clear that he was doing so in his personal capacity and not as the party's representative. The most significant public protest that the Party carried out during his stewardship was opposition to the 17th Amendment to the Constitution. The Amendment sought to validate the imposition of ceilings on the holdings of agricultural land and to make it unnecessary for the government to compensate the owners for the surplus

land above the limit of the ceilings of which they were sought to be expropriated. The protest did not break the law even once but did create sufficient public impact. Through a fortuitous set of circumstances the Bill was defeated in the Lok Sabha. Nehru convened a special session for the sole purpose of getting the Amendment passed. Masani was not against public protest *per se.* What he refused to accept was extra-legal action.

There were many in the top echelons of the party's leadership who told me that Masani was a 'purist'. One of them was the late Mr. Dandeker. Mr. Dandeker was a man of great abilities and himself an organisation man of no mean calibre. He once told me, and I quote from memory 'Minoo has a first-rate mind but does he have to be so stubborn? Can't he realise that between the white and the black there is a grey? Isn't he aware we are functioning in India and not in England or the U.S.A.?' I could understand Mr. Dandeker's exasperation. Many friends and admirers of Masani in the Party shared this feeling. That is why I aver that the ideologue/organisation-man combination is not so useful. Masani initiated party policy and was also responsible for its implementation. Some of his critics in the Party used to say rather uncharitably I thought, that since these were his policies he had developed a vested interest in them! The fact was during debates in the general council and national conventions, members and delegates would support resolutions moved by Masani without adequately realising their import! The real difficulty was that Masani thought in long-term goals. Short-term perspectives are what India's politicians want. This can be seen from the sad state of the party system in India today. That Masani like Rajaji is invariably vindicated a decade later is poor consolation.

The pursuit of short-term goals was what ultimately destroyed the Swatantra Party in 1974. The results of the 1971 General Elections generally described as the 'Indira Wave' had all but decimated the Party. Morale was at a low ebb. In typical Anglo-Saxon tradition Masani, who was then the Party's President, resigned. Among other things he wrote

in his letter of resignation dated 7 April 1971 to members of the General Council of the Party: "...it is a sound principle of administration, whether in military, civil, business or political life, that when a disaster overtakes a country, army, or organisation, the man at the helm of affairs should take responsibility for the setback and hand over office to someone who may bring fresh ideas to the task and a new and open mind to bear on the problem..."

"I believe that the present plight of the Party is the cumulative result of several shortcomings in the way of the organisation and more recent mistakes in appraisal and strategy insofar as our joining in January 1971, in the conditions then prevailing, the four party front to fight these elections. As President of the Party for the past fifteen months, I feel I should take my full share of responsibility for those mistakes".

The irony is that Masani need not have taken responsibility. He had put in much effort to work out with Mr. Nijalingappa, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee and Mr. Charan Singh, the Presidents of the Congress (O), the Jan Sangh and the Bharatiya Kranti Dal respectively, a proposal for a United Front based on a common programme which would seek the people's mandate in the General Elections then due in 1972. Mrs. Gandhi suddenly dissolved parliament in December 1970 and called for a snap General Elections in early 1971. All his work went up in smoke when Madhu Limaye, Raj Narain and George Fernandes of the Samyukta Socialist Party were able to scuttle the common programme and persuade the three venerable presidents that a common programme was quite unnecessary and all that was required was a simple slogan of "Indira Hatao". Mrs. Gandhi replied with her "Garibi Hatao" and the rest is history. Masani walked out of the talks but not before warning Madhu Limaye *et al* that they were "making a gift of the general election to the Prime Minister".

I was present at the National Executive meeting on January 8 and 9, 1971 in Madras when Masani and Dandeker sought to get their resolution not to become part of the Alliance but seek only seat adjustments, adopted. This was vehemently

opposed. The attack was spearheaded by no less a person than Professor N. G. Ranga, and sadly enough, supported by Rajaji. Masani for the first time was not able to carry through a resolution. The defeat also signalled the Party's decline.

Yet again in August 1974, Masani then holding no office in the Party pleaded with the then President Mr. Piloo Mody that to merge the Party with the BKD was illadvised and bound to come a cropper. I was also present at the last national convention of the party and recall Masani's plea for patience. He warned that zero plus zero would still be zero (the two zeros being the Swatantra Party and the Bharatiya Kranti Dal) and the Swatantra Party should bide its time and await Jayaprakash Narayan's call whose movement was gathering increasing momentum. Once again Masani's was a cry in the wilderness. This time even Mr. Dandeker opposed him, not to mention everyone else in the National Executive. A year before he died, Mr. Dandeker told me that the dissolution of the Party was a mistake. Mr. Piloo Mody at a meeting in Bombay in 1983 is reported to have made a similar admission. Masani was vindicated all the way. However, the damage was done.

The Swatantra Party was the only national party to have its central secretariat outside Delhi. As General Secretary, Masani was my Chief and insisted that the Office be run efficiently and without the sloppiness associated with offices of political parties. There has been and continues to be a notion that offices of political parties are like coffee clubs whose main function is swapping of political gossip over endless cups of tea or coffee; no regular hours need be observed. Party office premises are used as a motel for stray visitors who may land in the city. This, Masani would not tolerate. The Swatantra Party's office on the other hand gave an impression not so much of a political party office but that of a well-run office of a business house. Regular office hours were observed. Salaries were paid on time and efforts were made to attract the right talent. No up-country visitor was ever allowed to spread his holdall for an overnight stay. This naturally did not endear Masani to political workers who came

to the city on party work.

Masani's obsession with time and punctuality continues to this day. Even a two-minute delay in keeping an appointment would invite a rebuke. The status of the person did not matter. Nor could anyone call on him without an appointment. For party leaders in India to meet people by appointment is *infra dig.* There were many occasions when people from the outback would drop in to meet Masani without prior intimation. It required all the tact I possessed to persuade the General Secretary to make an exception. The problem was that such cases turned out to be the rule not the exception! After much grumbling and a swipe at me for being soft, he would meet such persons but not before telling them how wrong it is to barge in without appointments. 'Our people have no sense of time,' he would explode when someone would suggest a meeting between 10 and 10.30. 'Make up your mind. Is it 10 or 10.30.' With our lack of time consciousness this was, for the visitors from the mofussil, difficult to understand. There is all the time in our villages and small towns. They could not understand all the fuss Masani was making about minutes and hours. It was the same story at public meetings. He would arrive at the venue of a meeting at the time announced even if the only person at that time were himself and the organiser. He did not mind the absence of an audience. But woe be to the organiser of a public meeting who suggested to him that though he really wanted the meeting to start at 8 p.m. he had deliberately announced the start a half-hour earlier as people generally took their time.

Whether it was the Budget debate in Parliament or a meeting of the National Executive of the Swatantra Party, Masani did his homework well. Immediately the budget was announced he would be in Bombay for discussions with economists, business men and industrialists and prepare his speech with great care. Well in advance of meetings of the Party's committees and councils, he would review the agenda item by item. A demon for paperwork with the disconcerting habit of putting *everything* down on paper he would be fully

prepared with the background in respect of whatever was coming up at the meeting. The first couple of years with Masani at such meetings were for me, a harrowing experience. He had the uncanny knack of asking for just that file that I had not brought along. The result was that for the rest of my career in the Party I would travel to such meetings with a trunkload of files generally half the filing cabinet, just to be on the safe side!

As Chairman of meetings Masani is hard to beat. While everyone who wanted to speak got the chance, he was ruthless in enforcing the time rule. *The Conduct of Meetings.* (Oxford University Press) written by G. H. Stanford of Toronto, Canada was adapted and abridged by Masani for use in India. After having sat through numerous meetings both political and otherwise, I can confidentally say that he really practised what he preached. There is however one aspect where he faulted. This arose from his impatience. The large majority of our people love to ramble and take some time before coming to the point. Masani would cut them short and ask them to come to the point. At times he could be positively rude. He was right nine times out of time but a little more finesse would have achieved the same result without ruffling features.

His inability to suffer fools gladly was as chronic as Rajaji's. His "don't be silly" or "come to the point", cutting of a person in mid-sentence turned away not a few potential friends and supporters.

Masani could be and is very charming. But that is after a meeting has ended or a business concluded. He has that very un-Indian trait of keeping issues and personalities apart. He would vehemently disagree with Mr. K. M. Munshi during a meeting but once outside he would be charming and genuinely solicitous over Mr. Munshi's health. I have gone through this experience myself hundreds of times. One minute blowing me up for some thing or the other not done to his liking. The next minute with that subject disposed of receiving kudos for something else. Being an average Indian it took me a while to

understand this kind of behaviour. It was not a question of blowing hot and cold but a compartmentalised mind responding to specific issues. Alas, not all had the time and patience to understand him. He earned epithets ranging from a mild 'he is a difficult man' to the more angry 'he is an arrogant man'. 'Difficult' Masani certainly is but not arrogant. Strong-willed perhaps would be closer to the mark. Masani is clear in his priorities, clear in his objectives and does not hesitate to spell them out in unambiguous terms. He does not make any conscious effort to be liked.

To work with Masani, if one can put up with his insistence on discipline, is an education in itself. For me personally it has proved to be so. Use an incorrect expression and he stops you, corrects your grammar, explains the meaning of words and proper usage. He is a stickler for the right expression. For some time he carried on a public debate on the use of the word "secular". India he pointed out was not "secular" and drew attention to the word's meaning in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* which was "sceptical of religious truth or opposed to religious education". The Indian State he insisted was Non-Denominational. He would explain complex problems in such simple terms that it could penetrate even the dullest brain. Though a Management Consultant he has an abhorrence for jargon.

I have always found that he is happiest among young people in a gathering. Liberal in his thinking I am unable to recall any attempt to preach or moralise. At such meetings of young men and women he appears to fill the generation gap with ease.

Masani quit active party politics in 1971 but is as active today as he was twenty years ago. It is impossible for him to be indifferent when he feels that things in society are not going right. Not only does he have definite opinions but he does something about them. Soon after independence when the communist threat to the country was real and present he founded the Democratic Research Service which did yeoman work in exposing communist undercover activities. When he was convinced that what the young generation needed

was training in citizenship he started the Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy which is doing excellent work in the furtherance of its objectives. Right now he is in the middle of a controversy which he himself stirred up demanding for the terminally ill their right to ask for withdrawal of life support systems and to die with dignity.

I have often wondered what would have happened if the Swatantra Party had, by some miracle, come to power in Delhi. I am convinced that we would have found Masani not on the Treasury Benches but leading the Opposition! Governments compromise and programmes and policies of parties when not in office get considerably diluted when they assume office. In such a situation Masani might have agreed to a small change here or a minor modification there, but would have refused to compromise on fundamentals and left the Government.

I have yet to see anyone (other than Jayaprakash Narayan) so totally disinterested in office and its perquisites if it involves sacrificing principles. He proved this by resigning from the Chairmanship of the Minorities Commission when he was convinced that the then Janata government was not serious about the work of the Commission. The basic assurances given by the Janata government for the effective working of the Commission were not honoured – that of being consulted in all matters relating to the minorities; that they would be a statutory authority recognised by the Constitution and thirdly that it would be independent of the executive authority. Masani resigned in protest on a matter of principle.

As long as Masanis keep sprouting up from time to time the voice of Dissent, the life blood of a democracy, will continue to course through India's veins.

Minoo Masani – Parliamentary Leader with Calibre

Ajit Jain

Courage of his Convictions

Minoo Masani, a firm believer in parliamentary democracy, the main theorist of the Swatantra Party in Parliament, always carried the courage of his convictions in his conduct as parliamentarian. Not even once, if my memory is not letting me down, he appeased the opposition parties or hit the ruling party below the belt for temporary political gains.

At the same time, as a member of the Lok Sabha and leader of the Swatantra Party, he kept up an "unrelenting pressure" on the government. He was invariably one step ahead of other opposition leaders in "strategy, tactics and debate." Through his contributions in the Lok Sabha he demonstrated his belief in the liberal values of a free society.

"To carry conviction" and to "place principles above expediency" Masani many a time crossed swords with his own colleagues in the Swatantra Party and at times was a solitary figure brandishing his own sword. He did not hesitate supporting the government when the opposition stood according to him on a wrong footing. He was alone when he found it difficult either to support the opposition or oppose the government. This he justified often quoting Mahatma Gandhi: "reject both evils – as the choice cannot be the lesser evil."

To quote a few instances: The Swatantra MPs were openly divided over the no-confidence motion which the opposition parties had tabled against the government of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in April 1970. To him toppling was an "indecent act" a "disgusting phenomenon in Indian politics arising out of a

lack of political development." He withstood his ground when Professor N. G. Ranga and others were keen on joining the opposition parties in support of the no-confidence motion. He said he was "unwilling to bring down Mrs. Gandhi's government without a viable alternative." The motion, according to him, "would be counter-productive." He has stood for a change of government but only by democratic means:

> You cannot fight something with nothing. You have got to fight something with something better. I do not want to remove Indira Gandhi until I can put in her place a better Prime Minister and a better government. I do not want to bring chaos to the Centre as there was chaos in the States of North India under the SVD.

Masani's opposition to the Members' Salaries and Allowances Bill earned him disfavour from most parliamentarians including members of the Swatantra Party. That did not deter him from speaking out—

> MPs' perquisites . . . (is) . . . about Rs. 28,000 per annum tax-free for producing a lot of hot air and yet they had the impertinence to raise taxes on the incomes of honourable and hard working engineers, technicians . . . calling them exploiters and enemies of the people.

He asked sarcastically "if they were exploiters so were MPs."

The disfavour that he earned in the Parliamentary lobby did not deter him from brandishing his sword even thereafter. He could be alone, contented, and persistent in his crusades.

In spite of my deepest appreciation of Masani's intellectual leadership, his far-sightedness, I have often wondered whether his political acumen was not out of tune with the popular feelings in the country with an electorate seventy percent of them illiterate. Was he not invariably disregarding not only

the opposition but senior members of his own party as well and by implication not playing adequately the role of an opposition leader? Instead of leading the opposition he was dividing the opposition! At least Professor Ranga was often at loggerheads with Masani's thinking. So too was P. K. Deo (of Kalahandi) and his flock from Orissa.

Devaluation of the rupee in June 1966 was a very important issue that caused deep consternation in the country. Subsequent to the Ordinance on the subject, Mrs. Gandhi invited opposition leaders to come to her to discuss its implications. All parties declined the invitation but Masani held a different point of view: "It was the obligation of Opposition leaders in Parliament to tender advice to the Prime Minister when asked for it." Professor Ranga was steadfastly against Masani's stand as "she had faced the country with a *fait accompli* and that there was nothing left to discuss." Masani, as usual, was inflexible. He must see the Prime Minister even if he had to go alone. Professor Ranga relented though was very troubled within himself, and joined Masani. Masani gave his homily to Mrs. Gandhi on economic issues: the eschewing of any further inflationary policies, reduction in non-developmental expenditure, reduction in direct and indirect taxes, dismantling of the entire structure of controls, etc. Devaluation to Masani was a "neutral weapon which could be used for good purposes or bad, and everything would depend on whether the necessary follow-up measures were taken."

I wonder whether Masani was very wise in opposing Professor Ranga on the moral propriety of Mrs. Gandhi dissolving the Lok Sabha in December 1970, two years ahead of its normal term of five years! To him Mrs. Gandhi was within her "right to dissolve Parliament whenever she found it convenient to her and her Party and it was for the opposition parties to be prepared with the answer."

Should it not be regarded as proper for the Prime Minister of a democratic country to not only legally but morally justify her stand on such a serious issue? "Democracy" implies the majority "dispassionately listening to the point of view of the minority."

Efforts at Building a Bloc

Minoo Masani tried hard for many years to form a respectable and effective bloc of democratic opposition in the Lok Sabha but his efforts were in vain. Alas the Janata coalition in 1977 was a motely crowd and no wonder it disintegrated fast and its leaders became instrumental in ensuring Mrs. Gandhi's staging a come-back soon after she was rejected by the people. The opposition, I feel, had a better following in the country before the Janata experiment. To quote Masani—

> My main preoccupation by the end of 1969 was to bring about a bloc consisting of democratic parties, leaving out, besides the communist parties, Prime Minister Gandhi and her Party. While almost everyone agreed that this was the only way to prevent the country drifting to dictatorship, getting concrete agreement was altogether another matter. Personalities and party selfishness, which have always been a strong feature of Indian public life, were not to be easily overcome.

Masani was able to persuade Morarji Desai (Congress-O) and A. B. Vajpayee (Jan Sangh) to his point of view. At the urging of the leaders of the Concress (O) and Jan Sangh, Masani drafted a common programme for the proposed bloc for approval of the three parties. This bloc was to function under a "common leader and a common discipline"—the main planks on which Masani wanted the bloc to be mounted. "The basis of the strategy was to present the country with a democratic alternative and a shadow cabinet which would have nearly 150 MPs behind it who would be seen working together smoothly and harmoniously in pursuance of a 'middle of the road' policy."

At the eleventh hour, when Masani thought that the opposition flowers were about to bloom, the buds of which he had tended and nurtured for so long, there came a storm which scattered the flowers and uprooted the plant. The SSP leadership, headed by George Fernandes and Madhu Limaye, was instrumental in bringing a change in the weather

conditions. The Party that never involved itself in the discussions actively put its spoke in the wheel. It persuaded the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh leaders to agree to form a bloc without a common programme or even a common name for purposes of fighting the 1971 general elections. This was a negation of all that Masani had stood for. A Press conference had been called at Nijalingappa's (Congress-O President) on 3 January 1971, for a formal announcement about the formation of the bloc.

When Masani witnessed Nijalingappa and Vajpayee giving in to SSP's demands, he became furious and walked out of the meeting at Nijalingappa's residence, late that night.

As desired by him I had arranged a Press conference at his residence at Tughlak Road. He justified to the Press his action in withdrawing from the discussions with the opposition parties "due to vacillation and re-thinking" among the Congress (O) leaders and the tactics of the SSP. He said:

> 'For a long time now, the Swatantra Party's stand has been well-known that a democratic alternative to the present government is what the country needs. It is our view that nothing less than a full-fledged alliance with an agreed programme and one agreed candidate in each constituency throughout the country supported by all parties to the pact can provide such an alternative'.

Frankly at that time I, who closely witnessed those developments, was uncomfortable. Most press correspondents—not many correspondents were sympathetic to the Swatantra Party—were to relish the division in the Opposition ranks that had been caused by the selfish behaviour of the opposition leaders.

Masani of course was motivated by a totally different attitude. But at times he could be impatient and lose his cool. Even though he was pushed to the wall by vacillation of other leaders I feel even now, after a lapse of 14 years since then, he could have waited and persisted in his argument. Who

knows he could have brought the Congress (O) and Jan Sangh to his point of view. The SSP then would have been isolated. The political picture of India today in that eventuality perhaps would have been so very different. Subsequent efforts of Shri Dandeker and Shri R. C. Cooper on behalf of the Swatantra Party to negotiate with the opposition parties did not amount to much and Masani was able to justify his withdrawal from the discussions, much to the chagrin of Professor Ranga. Of course, Ranga himself has crossed the floor and now sits on the Congress benches. Masani has not done that.

Minoo Masani was the one MP who on major issues did not take the floor of the Lok Sabha without doing his home-work adequately. As a good parliamentarian he was always careful in choosing his expressions, weighing each word and had his facts and figures ready and his supporting documents in his brief case. Therefore, he hardly allowed himself to be contradicted on factual grounds.

In one of his speeches on economic affairs, he recounts in his memoirs, "I allowed myself to describe Jawaharlal Nehru as a 'half-baked communist'." Later on he thought his remark was "offensive". He wanted to relent. Before taking such an initiative he consulted some Congress Party Members. To his utter surpirse they supported him: "What an accurate description of our leader!"

As Swatantra's principal spokesman on economic issues, specially on the Budget, Planning, etc. Masani often accused Congress politicians and bureaucrats as members of the *New Class,* quoting the Yugoslav Communist leader Djilas. To him "socialism meant moving towards a more prosperous, a more free and more equal society" and not following the "command economy" dictated by a group of half-baked Marxist planners sitting in New Delhi. He effectively and repeatedly supported "indicative planning" as against "centralized, comprehensive planning of the Soviet pattern." "We are for a mixed economy. We are for regulation but on a minimum basis, and we are for Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship to be put into effect."

Chairman, Public Accounts Committee

As the first opposition leader to be nominated Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of the Lok Sabha, Masani at the end of his two year term had totals made of the waste of public money, as indicated in the reports of the PAC issued under his signatures. This was done for the first time. The "infractuous and wasteful expenditure, added up to the rather alarming figure of Rs. 950 million in two years." This figure, he revealed on the floor of the Lok Sabha, made even Congress MPs uncomfortable.

It must go to his credit as a parliamentarian that not once he allowed members of political parties with different shades, including Communists and Congress, to feel that the PAC was not one cohesive group working for a common cause. "Throughout the two years, I found that the Committee was determined to do the right thing .... this enabled it to function effectively and harmoniously, giving unanimous reports on all subjects, irrespective of the party affiliation of members."

My friends from the Lok Sabha Secretariat who were responsible for assisting the Committee always talked highly of Masani as he had enhanced the prestige of the Committee and energised the bureaucratic machinery: Financial Committees to Masani were "redeeming features of our Parliamentary life, which did not as a whole present an edifying picture those days; that these financial committees were able to function, away from controversy and the glare of publicity, as a microcosm of all that was best in Parliament," was indeed due to his relentless efforts.

Masani's parliamentary performance was superb during 1968 when the Warsaw Powers, headed by the Soviet Union, invaded Czechoslovakia, only because the Czech Communists "wanted to give a human, decent face to what they called socialism."

I can vividly recollect Masani summoning me to his residence early on the morning of 21 August, the day the invasion

took place. He was deeply disturbed and wanted some public disapproval of Russian intervention that put an end to the "Prague spring". Dozens of MPs, including Congress MPs, like Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani, shared his indignation. In his speech on 22 August, Masani said:

> It had all happened earlier in November 1956 in Hungary when in similar circumstances Soviet tanks had invaded Budapest, destroyed the legitimate Government of the country, imposed a puppet regime under Kadar and silenced the voice of Hungary even though it had a Communist Government. Was there to be no end to this kind of naked imperialism even in the second half of the 20th century .... they (Russians) do not want freedom to raise its head anywhere on the other side of the Iron Curtain in case it spreads into their own homeland.

Masani sought to "condemn the naked agression of the Soviet Union and its accomplices." He was indignant over the "colourless motion (that) was moved from the official benches for not taking the developments in Czechoslovakia into consideration."

Champion of Unpopular Causes

Masani's stand on Pakistan, Kashmir, on Sheikh Abdullah, minorities, etc. were out of line with the general feelings in the country. In stating this there is no denunciation of his intellect or political acumen but only a statement of fact. He knew how to stand alone and speak out not because of some ulterior motives or dictates from the outside but because of his deep convictions.

Once in the Consultative Committee of the External Affairs Ministry after Sardar Swaran Singh, the then foreign Minister, had given a factual assessment of 1970 general elections in Pakistan that resulted in majority of the Awami League in East Pakistan, which appeared like a mandate for "autonomy",

Masani took his chance to strike back at the so-called then 'ever lasting Minister':

> Years of imprisonment of Abdullah on one side and ten years of shooting at the fighters for the Naga Federal Republic on the other .... with what face he (Swaran Singh) could support the Awami League demand for an extreme measure of autonomy. Were he and his government even now prepared to concede to the people of Kashmir and Nagaland the same measure of autonomy that Mujib was demanding? If not, he was practising a dangerous double standard of morality and inciting in East Pakistan activities which he and his government were denouncing as disruptive and treacherous when voiced by a section of the people within the Indian Union.

The Press in India has no access to the deliberations of the Parliamentary Committees. Or else Masani's observations would have made head-line stories in newspapers with its long-term implications. Not that he talked of Kashmir's autonomy for the first time. The context in which it is stated would have been misconstrued in the country.

Masani did not hesitate even once on the question of whether India should acquire atomic weapons. "We invite the two nuclear powers who could exercise that deterrent on our behalf—the U.S. and the USSR—to enter into an agreement with us separately to protect us from nuclear attack (from China). There was no reason why we should give a veto to either of them." Masani has opposed India acquiring atomic weapons. To him one bomb would be like a toy sitting on the shelf of the Defence Forces. The Delivery system was complicated and expensive. Without a delivery system a bomb would be useless.

Impressive Parliamentarian

The Swatantra Party's performance in the Lok Sabha was

impressive during 1963-70 mainly due to Masani's leadership and intellect. He was assisted by Professor Ranga, Shri Dandeker and some younger hard working Members like D. N. Patodia and N. K. Somani. It was a pity that Masani decided to retire from active politics after his defeat in 1971 general elections, which was mainly due to the activities of the local Jan Sangh and Congress (O). That experience to him was disgusting.

India's Parliament today is deficient indeed in talent and it does not speak well that intellectuals like Masani, in spite of their shortcomings, should not be allowed to return to the Lok Sabha. Such gestures should magnanimously come from the ruling party. If only in the interest of strengthening democratic institutions the Congress should ensure that some knowledgeable opposition leaders are elected to Parliament. They would surely elevate the level of debates in the Lok Sabha.

Where are the parliamentarians of the calibre of Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Satyamurthi, Vithalbhai Patel who made nervous the British members on the Treasury Benches of the Legislative Assembly? In the more contemporary period of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, where are the people of the calibre of Minoo Masani, Dandeker, Vajpayee, Hiren Mukherjee? I am not denigrating the 'youth' or the present Lok Sabha. Speeches in the Lok Sabha, as I read in the Press, are without any excitement. Much of dross, without much substance. That unfortunately is the intellectual calibre of what is left in India's Lok Sabha without Minoo Masani and parliamentarians of his level.

The Economics of Minoo Masani

F. A. Mehta

I cannot think of a better way of insulting Minoo Masani than to say that I agree with all his views, all the time. If I were to make such a statement, not only would it be untrue, but it would make both of us appear false in the claim that we have always made about ourselves, namely, that we are staunch believers of Liberalism, with its concomitants of individual freedom and a pluralistic society. We believe in the right to disagree—even amongst ourselves.

Nevertheless, I have never ceased to be surprised at the extent to which Minoo Masani is being proved right by the tidal wave of liberalisation that is sweeping nearly all the major countries of the world, Soviet Russia not excluded. One could produce statements after statements from the speeches of the great Chinese leaders of today, which bear a striking resemblance to what Masani has been preaching relentlessly for the last forty years; one can also make a reference to quotations from the speeches of leading Indian politicians and bureaucrats, which again indirectly (albeit softly) reproduce the basic tenets of the economic philosophy that he has propounded right from 1944 to-date. One wonders whether Masani, celebrating his 80th birthday, is rejoicing over his 'last laugh' or is lamenting the fact that it should be only after forty years of constant preaching that his plea of liberalisation and liberalism is now being heard in so many countries of the world. Knowing Masani as we do, he would be saying, "better late than never".

I would like to begin my exposition with two quotations, which have one central theme, namely, the achievements of the peasants in bringing about the agricultural revolution

and in emphasising the role of agriculture in the economic growth of developing countries. The first quotation comes to us from *The Economist* of February 2, 1985:

> The world's largest and poorest industry is suddenly the one in which productivity can increase fastest. In the 1970s, just when a United Nations conference was intoning 'the worst famine in history has already begun', extraordinary increases in output by peasants in Punjab, Burma and Sri Lanka were instead creating a hitherto unprecedented surplus of food in the Indian subcontinent. Now peasants in China have doubled their wheat production, through increasing productivity per square inch on their tiny plots by an annual average of 12% in the past seven years. By retreating from communism, China has almost instantly become the world's biggest wheat producer.

The Economist then goes on to say that while Chinese peasants have increased their wheat output by an annual average of 12% in seven years from 1977 to 1983, the Japanese car workers have shown an annual improvement in productivity of only 2% during this period, even though they got many new robots. In the seven years upto the start of their strike, the productivity of the British coal miners increased by an annual average of 1.3%, whereas during the same period the profits per employee of the American banks have declined.

More relevantly, Mr. Prem Shanker Jha, in his article "A Food Surplus Economy" published in *The Times of India* of 14th October 1985, speaks of the emergence of India as a major agricultural power in the world, but in so doing significantly states: "After China has privatised agriculture in 1982, it has increased its output in spectacular leaps. As a result, not only has it become self-sufficient in foodgrains but the Government has announced that it intends to start exporting grains in a small way this year".

The thrust of all this will be almost totally lost on the great majority of Indians below the age of 30—and they constitute today over 60% of our population. Irony of ironies, both the right wing and the left wing economists in the world in the early 1950s virtually wrote off agriculture and placed what in retrospect can only be said to be a blind faith in the marvels and miracles of industrialisation. Within India itself, barring a few economists like Professors Vakil, Brahmananda, B. R. Shenoy and myself, the great majority of Indian economists in the 1950s, irrespective of their political beliefs, genuinely believed in the marvels of industrialisation. It was argued that the productivity of agriculture per worker was very low compared to that of industry (in fact, both Rosenstein Rodan and Ragnar Nurkse believed that marginal productivity of the rural worker in densely populated areas was negative); that capital investments in agriculture would, therefore, nowhere have the same rates of return as they would have in industry; that steel was the index and instrument of a modern industrial civilisation; and that only after a solid industrial base was laid (hopefully within a period of 15 to 20 years) would there be time to give to the problems of agriculture.

Industry, meanwhile, would in fact help agriculture by "siphoning off" its surplus labour, and though this would create problems of urban conglomerates, it would relieve rural areas of the burden of excess labour and thereby raise productivity. What is even more, the creation of a large urban industrial class would begin to provide agriculture with a wide and growing market, so that if one began the process of economic growth by stressing industrialisation, one would end up hopefully within a period of 15 to 20 years by actually benefiting agriculture.

At the politico-economic level, no one opposed these assumptions more vehemently than did Minoo Masani on the one side, and Mr. Charan Singh on the other. According to Masani, the neglect of agriculture was a betrayal of Gandhian economics. Minoo would quote Gandhi's famous

saying "we of the cities will do everything for the peasant, except get off his back". Minoo thought neglect of agriculture was not only a betrayal of Gandhian economics, but a betrayal of political democracy, in so far as a population of nearly 75 to 78% living in the rural areas would be condemned by this model of industrialisation to neglect for at least 1½ to 2 decades.

Finally, Minoo Masani contended that even elementary economic principles were sacrificed in the type of a model of economic growth, in which agriculture was either neglected or made to wait its turn. This model ignored two simple benefits: firstly, per unit of capital, the employment generated in agriculture would be at least 3 to 5 times those in industry in the initial stages, and yet unemployment was the supreme problem before most countries at the starting point of development. Secondly, the potentialities of agriculture to vitalise industry were systematically played down by most economists who did not have a clue to the productive potential of agriculture in general and of the peasants in particular.

I have, therefore, deliberately reproduced the above two quotations, one from the London *Economist* and the other from Prem Shanker Jha, just to show how perceptive Minoo Masani was as far back as the 1950s. He challenged not only the Mahalanobis model of economic growth, but also the philosophy of "joint co-operative farming".

Minoo Masani also felt exactly around this time that not only was a major limitation placed on Indian economic growth by the relative neglect of the rural sector, but that the entire structure of India's political economy was in danger of becoming ideological due to the new acceptance at Avadi of the philosophy of 'socialistic pattern of society' in 1955. In this area Minoo Masani was the first to propound the theory of 'mixed economy'. In his path-breaking booklet "A Plea for a Mixed Economy", Masani argued as early as 1947 that what emergent, new India needed was to find a new path for its own economy, and in so doing both the public sector and the private sector had to work in harmony,

instead of each claiming superiority over the other. The old cliches about 'nationalisation', 'socialism', 'capitalism', 'free enterprise' and so on—all needed to be abandoned; India had to strike a new path of compromise and confluence, in which every single sector could grow in a mutual and beneficially interacting manner to form a 'mixed economy'.

This little booklet had obviously an enormous impact on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who presented to the country its first "Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948". This Resolution made it clear that there was no mutual antagonism between the various sectors of the economy and that both the public and private sectors had to grow jointly; secondly, it added that "the Government of India feel that for some time to come, the State could contribute more quickly to the increase of national wealth by expanding its present activities wherever it is already operating and by concentrating on new units of production in other fields, *rather than on acquiring and running existing units. Meanwhile, private enterprise, properly directed and regulated, has a valuable role to play*". (Italics mine).

It was in this spirit when the articulate members of the Socialist and Communist Parties cried for the nationalisation of the Indian private sector steel industry in the early 1950s, that Pandit Nehru very wisely rejected the whole argument for nationalisation as being politically unwise and economically unsound. Instead of paying out valuable capital as compensation for nationalisation of the steel industry, wisdom demanded that capital be invested in a complementary public sector steel industry. There was nothing that nationalisation could achieve, which could not be achieved by 'the mixed economy'; only in the latter case, there would be more production, and perhaps more productivity. A far better solution in the spirit of the 'mixed economy' would be to allow the public sector also to grow simultaneously with the private sector.

It was not surprising that when the three public sector steel plants were being conceptualised in the mid-1950s, Tata Iron & Steel Co. Ltd. itself went out of the way, as

the foremost private sector Company in India, to promise to train the personnel for these public sector steel units. 'Mixed Economy' represented harmony, mutual growth, and at the same time that it promised complementarity, it has also the potential of promoting a friendly competition between the public and the private sectors. Nationalisation, to paraphrase Pandit Nehru's words, would achieve nothing; it was bad economics, bad politics and bad management.

Unfortunately for Masani, the initial success of his various principles of 'mixed economy' were virtually swept aside after Pandit Nehru's visit to China, subsequent to which was introduced the famous Congress Resolution at Avadi, of the 'Socialistic Pattern of Society'. Predictably, the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 now gave way to a new Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956, which, for all practical purposes, established the theory of "the commanding heights" of economy being vested in the public sector enterprises. Masani was clear that what the country would come to have under the high-sounding goal of the State ownership of "the commanding heights of the economy" would be a vast unproductive sector, economically unacceptable for its absence of profitability and productivity, and politically undesirable for creating "State Capitalism". He also feared that this pre-occupation with State ownership would have the further disadvantage of diverting the limited administrative resources of the State away from its fundamental tasks of creating the right infra-structure for economic development.

I believe that these three factors came together to induce Minoo Masani to take what perhaps may have been the most monumental decision of his life, namely, to cease being a peripheral politician and to take up politics as his full-time career. By a coincidence, all these factors came together in the mid 1950s—the passing by the Congress Government of the Avadi Resolution, under which the 'mixed economy' was surrendered in favour of the "socialistic pattern of society"; the passing by the Congress Party of the resolution favouring "joint cooperative farming"; and the introduction of the

Second Five-Year Plan, under which heavy industry was enthroned as the most favoured sector of the economy, and agriculture relegated considerably to the background. On each of these aspects, as I have shown, Minoo held very strong views, and never lacking the courage of his convictions, he decided to surrender his executive job to join the Parliament, which he did on his election to Parliament in 1957. I am, therefore, right in saying that most of the issues that persuaded (or compelled) Minoo Masani to dedicate his life to full-time politics, were political in their consequences but economic in their content.

I have recapitulated the intellectual ferment through which Indian society in general and the Indian intelligentsia in particular passed during the decade of the 1950s, as I find that so many of our compatriots amongst the younger generation are almost totally unaware of the great battles fought in that era, of the great passions aroused, and of the preparedness of several people to sacrifice their careers to take up a stand for or against certain principles. Those were the days when it was expected of Members of Parliament to come prepared with facts and figures, and it has been my privilege that persons like Minoo Masani, Narayan Dandeker and Nath Pai, all of whom played such a great role in the evolution of the political thought of the country, not only have been my personal friends, but have all come from my Alma Mater, the London School of Economics. It does not matter whether on several areas Mr. Nath Pai had views sharply different from those of Minoo Masani, but it was important that both presented their case with great skill and with great scholarship. Both Mr. Narayan Dandeker and Mr. Nath Pai are dead, but while I praise them, I certainly cannot forget the living Minoo Masani, who is now celebrating his 80th birthday; more years to him, and may he see more of his ideas come true, albeit at the latter end of his life!

Interview with Minoo Masani

Modern Liberalism (Conversations with Liberal Politicians) edited by Frits Bolkestein, the Netherlands' Minister for Foreign Trade which consists of conversations with leading European liberals (the only non-European being Minoo Masani) received little publicity in our country. We reproduce here his dialogue with Masani. It highlights the intellectual and personal influences on Masani and sums up his ideological position rather succinctly. This interview took place in The Hague in May 1979. —Ed

1. Gandhi

BOLKESTEIN: Was Gandhi to you an example to follow because of his moral qualities or because of his political ideas?

MASANI: I don't think I would dare to follow his example in life. There was nothing like him. He was an outstandingly great man: a bit of a prophet, a bit of a saint and an extremely great statesman. It is not given to us to have those qualities combined, so I wouldn't even dream of trying to copy him, but certainly learn from him, yes. I started knowing Gandhi in 1934 when we had just established the Congress Socialist Party in India and Gandhi, to whom I was introduced by my father, thought he would save this young man from wasting his time. So he said: 'Come and walk with me for ten days', on a tour which he was carrying out in Orissa, 'and let's discuss your ideas and mine'. This was a great privilege because I walked with him, with his hand on my shoulder and somebody else on the other side. Every morning and evening for ten days, for about an hour each time, so I got about 20 hours of solid conversation, which was quite a privilege for this brash young man. I was then full of nationalisation and the traditional Socialist way to

the future. I tried to sell this to Gandhi but Gandhi just refused to buy any of it. Once he said: 'Do you know my concept of nationalisation? It is that the people who work on the machines, the managers and the workers, should run and own them. Not the way the government own property in Russia, which is the bureaucratic way, but own them as trustees for the community'. When I went to Yogoslavia in 1955 long after the old man had died, they told me that workers' control meant that the managers and the workers own the factory as trustees for the community and not for the government. I said: 'Do you know Mahatma Gandhi told me that first? You gentlemen are twenty years behind the old man. He was well ahead of all of us and we did not know it then'. So I would say that he was right from the point of view of social justice: a kind of participatory running of a plant with an ultimate responsibility to the community which Ludwig Erhard called social enterprise, a combination of private enterprise and social responsibility. This I think is the answer to the problem of social justice and that of advancing towards a more free and equal society.

I stood up to Gandhi for the best part of ten years but by the end of the ten years he converted me and I said: 'Marxism is wrong, Gandhi is right'. I wrote a little book in 1945, that was ten years after I first met him, called *Socialism Reconsidered*. where I discarded Marx and the Soviet Union and turned to Gandhi as the example of a better social order.

Of course Gandhi was a tremendous democrat. I have never known a man who was so humble and unassuming with young people. For his time he was very modern and as far as his democratic approach is concerned there were many instances where he was generous to a fault. You could say the most critical things to him and he never reacted the way Nehru or others did by saying: 'How dare you'.

For instance, in 1934 he indulged in a kind of political

manoeuvre which I thought was not fair. I was sitting in the All India Congress Committee and I sent a little note to him which read like this: 'Dear Gandhiji, is there a printer's error in your draft or have you gone back on your word?' I signed it and sent it up and I saw Gandhi put it in front of him. After about an hour he answered me and said: 'My friend Masani is somewhere in the audience and has upbraided me for breach of faith. Today I am presenting the resolution of the Congress Executive and I want to tell him that I was overruled. What we had agreed on, he and I and Jayaprakash, I couldn't deliver. I'm sorry but I can't deliver the goods. I have been outvoted in my own cabinet'. So J. P. and I went to him at tea time and we said: 'We don't accept this. You don't tell us you have been outvoted when you really have made a commitment. You have let us down very badly because we have done something on the strength of your assurance and you have not delivered'. I said as I parted: 'I think this is subtlety unworthy of a Mahatma'. It was very cheeky of me. I was only about twenty-seven or twenty-eight. When we got back, thinking that we had rather offended the old man, he started by saying 'Gentlemen, I have been thinking over the tea-hour interval and I have come to the conclusion that this draft has to be altered overnight. I suggest that we appoint a committee of six or eight people'. The last two names were those of Jayaprakash and myself, although we were not on the Executive. We voted and Gandhi got our opponents defeated. Now this showed the greatness of the fellow, that if two young chaps would go and cheek him, he would say: 'By God, you're right, I have been rather too clever and that is not fair', and eat his words.

That is one example. The other was his modernness. He was extremely modern. He looked very patriarchic and archaic, but he wasn't. He was a very modern man and I loved him because being also modern we were on

the same wavelength. For instance, I would never go to him without an appointment which he appreciated very much. He said: 'You know, you are the only chap who writes and asks: 'Can I come on such and such a day'? People just walk in on me. They have no consideration for me. They think I am always waiting for them with nothing to do'.

The other thing was his punctuality. He was a wonderful man for time. He had a big kitchen clock in front of him. You asked for half an hour and you got it. You walked in at ten thirty and your time finished at eleven. When it got to eleven, he interrupted and said: 'Masani, your time is over'. Of course your face dropped because you hadn't finished what you wanted to say. But Gandhi said: 'Never mind, go to my secretary and get in the queue again. There is a man waiting whose time this is. Your time is over. You can't pinch his time but go and come in again in the afternoon'. So I would go out and ask for another half hour and when you came in again in the afternoon Gandhi would say: 'Now this morning you were saying', and he would pick up that half sentence and say: 'Please continue'.

I got into trouble with the British in 1935. They took away my passport when I was in London. I was going to the Soviet Union when this happened. R. A. Butler, who was then the Home Secretary, said in the House of Commons that I was a dangerous Communist who had preached violence. Next morning the London papers carried a reproof from Gandhi who said: 'The Secretary of State should know better than that. He is utterly ignorant. Mr. Masani is one of my men. He is no Communist. He preaches non-violence. Mr. Butler had better restore the passport with an apology', which I got. Now this was the greatness of the man. He didn't need to be asked for help. He rushed to your aid even though you were not so much his man as a cheeky young Socialist.

BOLKESTEIN: If one looks at Bombay and Calcutta today one sees the industrialisation that has taken place and one wonders whether the message of the spinning wheel hasn't been lost.

MASANI: One shouldn't oversimplify his attitude to the machine. He said many things about the machine. He said: 'I'm not against machinery as such. For instance, take a sewing machine which lightens a woman's labour. I think it is a wonderful invention and I think that every woman should have a sewing machine. I am all for electric power which lightens the burden of manual labour but I am against the craze for machines for the sake of machines, what with India having a large population and very limited capital resources. The man-to-capital ratio being as adverse as it is, one of the ways to improve this is to have technical advancement slowed down so that labour-intensive machines are used rather than capital-intensive machines'. Now I think that is legitimate. Nor do I think that it is completely lost. Mr. Charan Singh, who is a kind of farmer's leader, has taken over Gandhi's mantle on this. I do not agree with him because he takes an absolute position. In 1978 when he was Home Minister he said that the entire Indian cloth market should be reserved for hand looms which is one step ahead of the spinning wheel. I thought it was an outrageous proposition. I said: 'You know, your idea is to create employment'. Yes, he said, labour-intensive as opposed to capital-intensive. I said: 'Yes, but not this way. India has a very large modern textile industry, you can't just scrap it now. You could say that all future expansion should be reserved for hand-looms. I'm prepared to look at that, but to say that the entire labour population of thousands of people and their machines should all be scrapped, people thrown on the scrap-heap, that is no way to create employment! The first thing you create is a law-and-order problem

of 500,000 people without jobs. Surely one doesn't start with this kind of absurdity? You had better re-state the whole thing'.

On the other hand the amount of money Nehru spent on the development of atomic power was a waste. He could as easily have waited for the rest of the world to develop this and then adopt it. We don't have to be autonomous or autarchic in every development like space or nuclear power. Surely we can let the rest of the world lead us. So I would draw a line and say I am Gandhian on atomic power. I don't see any point in these white elephants eating up capital while there is no drinking water in the villages. There has to be a sense of proportion, so I would urge a middle path.

2. Time

BOLKESTEIN: In your autobiography, *Bliss was it in that dawn,* you comment on the lack of punctuality in the Indian mind. Some people have noted that the Chinese and the Japanese have a very strong sense of history and that they are able to date historical events with great precision. They have also noted a lack of feeling for history in Indian thought and they have come to the conclusion that Indians lack a sense of historical perspective. I mention this because it appears to me that management has to do with a sense of time.

MASANI: I think it is unquestionable that we are a very unpunctual people. We are not unique—I shall give other examples—but we *are.* People will ask me to help them with a job. I will say: 'Come and see me', and you would think that was one interview where they wouldn't keep you waiting. But no, they turn up twenty minutes late. I say to them: "You are twenty minutes late when you want a job. How late are you when you don't want a job? I am very put out. I really have lost all my

enthusiasm for helping you. This is a very poor start'. 'Oh, the bus was full'. I said: 'I know the bus was full but do you know what I would do in your place? I would get here fifteen minutes before time. I would walk up and down the footpath and I would ring the bell at the right moment. I do that quite often with busy people. I am sure you can do that'. This is a very good example of the utter lack of respect for time.

Having said that, let me also say that I have known worse. I was in Brazil as Ambassador many years ago. The Carioca has no sense of time at all. People will accept invitations for dinner and either come very late or not turn up at all, without an apology to the hostess.

It may be that the Chinese and the Japanese have a better historical perspective. The Indian is very vague. He talks of his glorious past but hasn't the foggiest idea what period he is talking about.

I think it a function of the agricultural way of life. In agriculture you go by the sun. In the fields it doesn't matter whether it is seven thirty, quarter to eight or eight o'clock but in our daily lives every minute matters. Time is money. Now this concept that time is money is not part of a rural way of life. I would say that all rural peoples, may be the Chinese are an exception, are unpunctual and lack a sense of time, whereas industrial peoples jolly well learn to accommodate themselves to time.

3. Metaphysics

BOLKESTEIN: Another thing that has been said about the Indians is that of all the people in the world they have the most aptitude for metaphysics. In your autobiography you ask: 'Is the Indian mind traditionally more dialectical than that of other people around the globe?' Then you run into this problem of time. The contribution of the Indian mind to philosophy and metaphysics is enormous whereas the Chinese and the Japanese are very much of this world.

MASANI: Well, I am not a scholar of the subject but it seems to me that the Hindu mind is dialectical and that black and white simply do not exist. Everything is grey. Everything is more or less equally good or equally bad. You are eclectic, you swallow everything and absorb it. Communism isn't bad, there are many good things about it, let's be tolerant, let's be neutral about it. So you sit on the fence about everything.

I believe that Nehru's policy of non-alignment, which we are still carrying on, somewhat tongue in cheek, is a policy of indecision, of sitting on the fence and not taking sides. I remember once in 1948 or 1949, before Nehru paid his first visit to Washington, he said: 'You know the Americans want me to go to Washington and I am dodging it'. So I said: 'Why?' And he replied: 'Well, they are a peculiar people. They want a yes or a no'. So I said: 'What is wrong with that?', He said: 'I don't want to say yes and I don't want to say no!' This whole theory of non-alignment came out of saying: why must I choose, let me sit on the fence between these to big chaps and keep both of them fairly happy, which we are still doing. So I think the Indian mind is involved and incapable of a decision. I am a management consultant and one of my conclusions is that the weakest thing in Indian business is decision-making. Everyone is stalling, everyone is waffling, everyone is trying to put-off, passing the buck up and down. It is carried to such an extent that the decision-maker stands out a mile. Most Indians do not want to take a decision because they do not want to face the consequences. The bureaucrats are exactly the same, so are the politicians and I think this comes out of the metaphysical nature of the Hindu or the Indian mind.

Salvador de Madariaga who was our great Liberal doyen and who died in 1978 came to Bombay as a guest of ours for the Congress of Cultural Freedom in 1951. After the conference he went to Australia and on his way back

he passed through Bombay. We had breakfast together and he asked me: 'Masani, something bothers me. Can you explain this: you chaps are so intelligent and so articulate, we admire this. I have just been to Australia and the Australians are not very bright. But look at the contrast: you had a beautiful garden and you made a desert out of it. They have made a garden out of a desert. Now who is intelligent, you or they?' So I said: 'I think both. There are different kinds of human intelligence. The Australian is the constructive kind that builds, shears the sheep, digs the land and makes water-works. We are the articulate, lawyer-type of intelligence, playing with words and arguments, who are not very good at construction.' So I would say that the Australian has a constructive kind of intelligence and we have dialectical kind which is not very constructive.

BOLKESTEIN: In *An Area of Darkness* V. S. Naipaul writes: 'The Mahatma has been absorbed into the formless spirituality and decayed pragmatism of India. The revolutionary became a God and his message was thereby lost. He failed to communicate to India his way of direct looking'.

MASANI: The Indian has made Gandhi in his own image, he is all things to all men and they use his name quite cynically. Gandhi said: 'There is no such thing as Gandhism. Gandhism is what I say from time to time. Since I am not very consistent and change my mind often, those who really want to know what to believe should take the later statement on a particular subject. Since I do not believe that consistency is good' — he used to call consistency the virtue of the ass — 'if I drop something and change my mind then please listen to what I said later because that is what I think'. People like Jayaprakash have picked up what he said and tried to interpret it. I would say that this is correct, though we have not

learnt the things from Gandhi that we should. Take ends and means. Indian politics today is in direct contradiction of Gandhi's statement that the end does not justify the means. Almost every Indian politician thinks it does and quite shamelessly says: 'Well, my aim is good so you mustn't quarrel with my method'. I would say Gandhi has failed on the biggest issue which he tried to put to the Indian people, but so did Jesus Christ, judging by what was done in his name.

4. Caste

BOLKESTEIN: There is a third factor in Indian life: the sense of social stratification. It is the policy of the Indian Government to try and abolish caste. Is it happening?

MASANI: It is probably fading out very slowly, not because the government wants it to go but because of the industrial way of life. You can't have untouchability in a factory; people working together and eating in the canteen, drinking water from the same water fountain, these things do not permit of that kind of discrimination. The caste system is breaking down slowly because of the change in the way of life. Also young people refuse to obey. There are Hindus and Muslims marrying Parsees and Hindus marrying Christians and foreigners and nobody gives a damn any more and the parents are there grinning from cheek to cheek quite happily, when twenty years ago they would have said: 'I won't look at your face again if you do this'. In my time when I was a student it was considered absolutely unthinkable that you let your people down by marrying someone outside; you broke faith, you were destroying your community, your religion. So I would say that this is much more important than what the politicians say.

The politician, unfortunately, is thoroughly dishonest about it. Today caste is more important as a vote bank

than it has ever been since Independence or before. Ideological things have faded away, but are you a Harijan? Are you a Jat? Are you a Brahmin? Are you a Sudra? People vote more or less according to caste. Jayaprakash said that caste is the biggest party in India. Indian politics have become almost caste-centred. The ideological fights that we carried on when the British were there have faded out. No one gives a damn about any 'ism'. All they care about is: What caste does he belong to? They gang up by caste. Charan Singh is a Jat. Jagjivan Ram is a Harijan. Morarji Desai is a Brahmin. Mrs. Gandhi is a Brahmin. The Brahmins and the Harijans combine against the middle orders, and *vice versa.* So I would say that caste is breaking down socially and economically but politically it is still very much alive, unfortunately, much too alive and no thanks should be given to the politician.

BOLKESTEIN: Naipaul quotes the Gita: 'Do thy duty even if it be humble rather than another's even if it be great. To die in one's duty is life, to live in another's is death'. He adds the following observation: 'Every man is an island; each man to his function, his private contract with God. This is the realisation of the Gita's selfless action. This is caste. In the beginning a no doubt useful division of labour in the rural society, it has now divorced function from social obligation, position from duties. It is inefficient and destructive; it has created a psychology which will frustrate all improving plans. It has led to the Indian passion for speech making, for gestures and for symbolic action'.

MASANI: This is harsh, but I think that it is basically true. Caste interferes with social mobility. It interferes with a democratic society. Gandhi used to say that caste started without this freezing into compartments. He said: 'I have no objection to caste, if a Brahmin can be a Harijan and a Harijan can be a Brahmin depending upon his

intelligence and his way of life, that's fine'. But that is not what caste is about. The essence of caste is that it freezes you into a compartment. So we must accept that Naipaul is right in his denunciation of caste. It is something that may have had sense or meaning thousands of years ago, but which has lost all of it.

BOLKESTEIN: The Goans are Catholics and have been under Portuguese rule for centuries. Even there you find castes. Is there something in the Indian mind that has given rise to this social stratification?

MASANI: Let's not ignore the factor of colour. Caste started largely as a distinction of colour. The Sudras and the untouchables were dark Dravidian peoples and the upper class who came from outside India, from Central Asia, were fair. There is no doubt that the Caucasian people drove down the Dravidian people who were more urban and more civilised than these nomads but the Northerners had the horse and the Southerners did not. In other words the tank was on one side and not on the other. So it was a military superiority but intellectually the South was more civilised.

BOLKESTEIN: Isn't Madras one of the centres of Hinduism? Yet the people in Madras are on the whole darker than the people up North.

MASANI: Yes, the Brahmin/non-Brahmin feuding has nowhere been as bad as in Madras. That is where the Brahmins have oppressed the non-Brahmins in the past so much that government circulars now keep Brahmin boys of the greatest brilliance out of positions. All jobs in government, barring a small minority, are reserved for non-Brahmins. The non-Brahmin, no matter how dull, is given priority over the Brahmin. This is retaliation for centuries of discrimination. This is 'affirmative action'.

In Tamil Nadu a dark man has priority over a white man, as in America. Brahmin boys are punished for the sins of their fathers who kept the non-Brahmins down. Now the Brahmins are paying for their guilt by being kept out of the medical profession, judgeships, government jobs. You can't become Cheif Minister if you are a Brahmin in Madras or in Maharashtra. Rajaji was the last such to get to that position.

BOLKESTEIN: Do you see the position of the Harijans improving?

MASANI: We abolished untouchability by a stroke of the pen in the Constitution when I was a member of the Constituent Assembly, but that made very little difference because Hindu society as a whole has never abolished untouchability. In the villages, although no longer in the cities, the Harijan is discriminated against. In many cases he and his women are not allowed to draw water from the common well because they would pollute it. So there is another well where they can go. If they try to go to the village well, then sometimes they get away with it, but there have been assassinations over attempts by harijans to establish equality. Now mind you, if he did not revolt nothing would happen. The examples which have come up in the last few years are an encouraging sign that the Harijan is trying to assert his right. Let us not idealise them either. They can ill-treat isolated people of the upper class just as cruelly as they have ever been treated by the upper class. There are examples of both.

BOLKESTEIN: It is said that Charan Singh favours the landowing classes and that the landless classes have become more oppressed.

MASANI: This is basically communist propaganda. There is an element of truth but not more. Charan Singh represents the landed farmer and communist propaganda is that he

is the kulak leader. The kulaks were the salt of the earth. They were very good farmers whom Stalin killed because they came in the way of his wretched collective farming system. Now our kulaks are very small men because we abolished the feudal landlord system even before Independence. The zamindari system was abolished. Peasant farming alone remains. Now peasant farming is not equal; somebody has two acres and somebody has twenty acres and perhaps somebody may have fifty acres. We have middle-class farmers. We had a big convention in Delhi a few months ago and the reporters who interviewed the farmers found that mostly they weren't kulaks at all. They had two or three or five acres of land and had come to back Charan Singh politically. This myth is really left-wing propaganda which sells throughout the world. The Director General of the Indian Institute of Agriculture, who is one of our leading agricultural scientists, said to me: 'We have made a study of this and we are going to publish papers to show that the benefits of subsidies and of fairer parity of prices do trickle down, even to the landless worker, but it takes a few year's time. You can't have it overnight'. Therefore it is not true that the green revolution only benefits the richer farmer. The green revolution is going to trickle down but it will take a generation.

BOLKESTEIN: How have Charan Singh's policies affected the Harijans?

MASANI: The Harijans are not all landless either. Most people in the West probably believe that the pattern of land-ownership is a pyramid with an apex and a very broad base. It is not so: it is an inverted triangle. There are more landed people in India than there are landless. If 'one man one vote' is worth anything, then it is more democratic not to be against the landed! It is true that the quantity of land is unequal. Among the landed, one

would include a man with half an acre of land but that does not mean to say that psychologically he is not a landowner. Nehru made the point in a debate with me, when he was in favour of collective farming, saying: 'Mr. Masani talks about the landed but how much land? Half an acre!' My answer to the Prime Minister was: 'Sir, a Mother loves her child however small it is, so the farmer loves his half acre as much as you might love forty acres, and you can't take it away like this'.

BOLKESTEIN: What about the Adivasis, the tribals? Are they becoming integrated into national life?

MASANI: Alas, yes, and I am against it. The Adivasis are the original inhabitants of India. That is what Adivasi means: the original inhabitant. They were the people who were there before the Dravidians. The tribals are the Gonds, the Bhils, the Murias, the Nagas and a hundred more. I am not an expert on tribals but I did stand for and represent in Parliament a tribal constituency in Bihar. The Adivasis wanted a separate state from the other people of Bihar who were caste-Hindus and I stood for them. They elected me. It is quite clear that they have an entirely different cultural pattern. I wore grey bags and a felt hat with an open shirt. In no other constituency in India could I have been elected if I had dressed like that. I was advised that if you put on a Gandhi cap you were a dead duck. The Gandhi cap and the khadi-dressed Hindu were the enemy of the tribals. They call him a *dacoit.* You would be taken for one more *dacoit* who had come to exploit them. This was in 1957. I got elected. Nehru came and opposed me, but he couldn't make a dent because the tribals didn't care what the Hindu wanted. They said: 'This man looks like the Sahib, the British who were here were our friends. They gave us hospitals'. The missionaries have done a wonderful job for the tribals. Throughout India the tribals have been

looked after by the Christian Missionary. The Nagas are Baptists. They are more civilised than the North Indian Hindu. Their women are free. When our soldiers started rape they said: 'You are barbarians. How can we be Indians? we don't rape women! We wait for them to accept us'. It would be a great pity if they did integrate because they don't want to, they want to have their own way of life. They would be more modern and civilised if they were allowed to come into the modern stream without going through the traditional Indian way.

5. Character

BOLKESTEIN: In your pamphlet *Too Much Politics and Too Little Citizenship* you mention Indian character. You write about the moral preaching of Indians.

MASANI: This lack of character is a lack of discipline and of home and school training. There is nothing wrong with the Indian child when it is born, but the conditioning at home and in school and college is all wrong. Let's start with the home in North India. We think of the Gangetic Plain as being typically India. As you go South we think that we are more civilised and more down to earth. We look down on the Northerner. We think that India's evils come from the fact that all the Prime Ministers have come from U.P. which we think of as a sink of backwardness. That is true of literacy of education or the position of women. Bengal and the South are well ahead in all these things. They are cleaner, they are more decent, their women are freer. The social degradation is worst in the North. Now let's take the Northern home. In educated bourgeois families the boys are spoilt beyond redemption. These little brats are pampered from the time they are born because they are valuable. The girls don't matter. Formerly they used to bump off the girls. Now they just neglect them. This is still going on. This

neglect is not a joke. India is one of the few countries where the male population is in the majority. The boys are looked after, but as the brat grows up he is spoilt. I have known Hindu families to send their boys to school in cars while the girls walked.

Nothing is denied to the male child, everything is laid on for him, he is the future boss, while the girls are neglected. Now the interesting thing is that in family after family of that kind, the girls wear the pants. The girls have character and back-bone. I think that the North Indian woman is twice the man and Indira Gandhi is no exception. I find in the bourgeoisie as a whole that the women are very much people, while their brothers are not. I am not saying that this is a good thing but this is how nature has rewarded or compensated for the injustice.

BOLKESTEIN: Would you say that this is why Indians tend to moralise?

MASANI: There is the difference between profession and practice which you are hinting at. We say one thing but don't practice it. I think this comes of being spoilt. Now again there is no discipline in school. There is rank indiscipline. In the last few years students have beaten up Vice-Chancellors with impunity and nothing has happended to them. There is also indiscipline in Parliament. They don't listen to the Speaker. They shout the Speaker down because they have a louder voice than the Speaker and then the Speaker says: 'What can I do.' and the Prime Minister doesn't name them because he or she is frightened of losing their support. So we have rampant indiscipline and blame it on bad up-bringing. The Battle of Britain was won on the playing fields of Eton. Well, we have no playing fields of Eton. We have got about twelve Etons in the whole of India and the politicians are busy destroying them on the ground that public schools

are not compatible with socialism. In other words everyone must have an equally rotten education.

BOLKESTEIN: To return to the matter of India, you know Nirad Chaudhuri's thesis as he put it in his book *The Continent of Circe.* Let me give you a quotation: 'To put the matter briefly, the Hindu is the European distorted, corrupted and made degenerate by the cruel torrid environment and by the hostility both real and imagined of the true sons of the soil' (page 149) and again on page 170 he talks about the Hindu outlook and he says: 'That outlook is possible only among those who have been beaten by nature and broken in spirit. All of it boils down to one simple fact, collapse of courage and vitality. There is no hint anywhere that anything is happening in the moral or spiritual sphere—all the suffering is placed in the secular order, in one word, in the torturous Indogangetic plain'. Nirad Chaudhuri obviously looks to the harsh climate of the North Indian Plains as an important factor in the Indian mental make up.

MASANI: There is no doubt that the climate makes people what they are. Extreme heat and humidity undoubtedly contribute to the lassitude and the low vitality of the Indian in many instances. Combined with malnutrition it becomes very marked, so I do not at all disagree with Nirad Chaudhuri; he is a very good observer. I think that his description of the Hindu being the European spoilt by the environment is a very good one. After all when the Aryans came, they were sturdy dynamic vital people and you see this in the Punjab and in Haryana where the Aryan has not been affected much by the climate and the resistance of the people around. The Punjabi and the Haryana people are still the most vital people in India. They are the sword arm of India. They are the best farmers. They produce crops of grain which are out of all proportion to anyone else's. They have

the only surplus state and the green revolution has caught on. Everyone there is part of the green revolution but in the rest of India it still touches only the fringe. The Punjabi and Haryana farmer has big crops and makes a lot of money and feeds the rest of India. You do have this contrast between these two Northwestern states and the rest of India.

6. Politics

BOLKESTEIN: What is your opinion of the role of political parties in India?

MASANI: They started well. I was Member of Congress Party at Independence, the party of Gandhi and Nehru. I left in 1952 and started the Swantantra Party with Rajagopalachari in 1959. I think by and large the party system has decayed instead of developing. Every hope that a two party system would emerge gets frustrated. The atomisation and the splintering are part of the Indian temperament. Now in India we have a tremendous prejudice in favour of the two party system because we adopted our ideas from the British and the Americans. There was a variety of little groups: two Communist Parties, two Socialist Parties, the Jana Sangh, the Swantantra Party, all coming and going but never any chance of getting into power. The result was an irresponsible opposition. In March 1977 we thought: At last Morarji Desai and the Janata are in power. Mrs. Gandhi has got a good minority position. Now we can have a two-party system. But it is not happening. I think this is part of the Indian nature.

I said this to Sardar Patel, in 1947 or 1948, before he became Deputy Prime Minister. In a Committee of the Constituent Assembly we were discussing the system of election and I moved P.R. and Patel said: 'No Masani, we can't have P.R.'—this was in a committee where we

could talk freely—'we want the British two-party system. I know it is unfair, you might get a lopsided parliament but that is exactly what India needs: a strong government with 80% of the people behind it in Parliament doing things and the others waiting their turn'. I said: 'But Sir, you won't get this', and he said: 'Why not?' I said: 'Because we are Latins and not Anglo-Saxons'. He replied: 'Explain that'. I said: 'We are the splintering, disputatious kind. We do not have this great thing of compromise which the Anglo-Saxon has. They know how to submerge minor differences for the sake of cohesion and therefore they can afford to keep two parties going, which are coalitions but fairly disciplined. In India you won't have it because we will quarrel and we will split. All our societies, all our universities, all our trade unions bear witness to that. These parties will not stay together because of personal rivalries and factions'. This is what happened. The Socialists split and then we have three communist parties, the CPI, the CPI(M) and the CPI(ML). I wouldn't be surprised if there were two Jana Sanghs in another two years, a moderate and an extreme. I would say that being Latins we must have a multi-party system and to have the British electoral system is nonsense because it distorts the whole thing.

BOLKESTEIN: Do Indian political parties have a clear identity?

MASANI: There is nothing to distinguish any two parties ideologically except the Communist and a slight Hindu orientation among the Jana Sangh. I would say the rest are completely footloose and opportunist and shift from time to time because of power considerations.

7. The Jana Sangh

BOLKESTEIN: What do you think of the future of the Jana Sangh?

MASANI: This is beyond any political prognosis at present. There are people who think that out of all these realignments the Jana Sangh will emerge as the Hindu Conservative Party on the one side and the Communist and the Marxists on the other. That could happen, but when you have got all these racial minorities which hate the Jana Sangh because they are Hindu and if you add to the Muslims and the Christians and the Tribals and the Harijans a certain modicum of anti-clerical Hindus, if I may put it in Western terms, then you get a majority that way, so I don't think I should like to venture any guesses on the future of the Jana Sangh.

BOLKESTEIN: Elsewhere in the world there has been an Islamic revival. Is Hinduism gaining in intensity?

MASANI: There is a tremendous spiritual revival of Hinduism, a kind of grass roots thing which is decent and noble and prepared to open its arms to include non-Hindus like Christians and Muslims. That is a good thing, but most Hindu manifestations of late have been rather unpleasant. Take for example the Freedom of Religion Bill which was introduced by a Jana Sangh Member of Parliament. It professes freedom of religion but achieves exactly the reverse because it says that any conversion obtained by force, which is all right, or fraud, which is all right, or inducements, material or spiritual, is illegal and a crime. Now naturally all conversions are induced by spiritual inducements, otherwise why should a man want to change his religion? It is heaven after all and salvation for his soul that he does it for, so by definition this bans all conversions. This has been strongly resisted by the Christian churches and the Christian laity who say that this is an anti-Christian measure, and there are many of us who support them as a minority. The same with cow slaughter because the old man, Vinoba Bhave, threatened to die if the banning of cow slaughter was

not made statutory throughout India. In Kerala and West Bengal which are ruled by Communist governments it is not. These two governments refused quite rightly to be influenced by the old man's fads. He has threatened to die and now they are going to introduce a constitutional amendment, with the banning of cow slaughter, which was a State subject, transferred to the Union where the Hindu majority can legislate against it. Both these are extremely dangerous symptoms of revivalism.

Take the Aligarh Muslim University Bill. When I was Chairman of the Minorities Commission in 1978 we unanimously reported that Aligarh is a Muslim University and should get the benefit of article 30 of the Constitution which says that minorities should have the right to establish and run their own educational institutions. Morarji Desai is a bit of a Hindu, though a moderate one. He considered this very dangerous and now they are trying to pass a Bill which says that Aligarh is not a Muslim Institution. I think that this is very objectionable as it is of great importance to keep it alive. This is a most reactionary move of the Janata Government. Fortunately the Upper House has passed a Bill saying that it is a Muslim institution, a private member's Bill backed by Indira Gandhi and the Congress Parties. Altogether these are not very pleasant symptoms and therefore the anti-Jana Sangh feeling among decent Indians and even Hindus is strengthening.

8. The Swatantra Party

BOLKESTEIN: You are co-founder of the Swatantra Party. How would you describe its fortunes?

MASANI: We came into existence in 1959 as a reaction to the fact that all parties in India were either Communist or Socialist and that there was no non-socialist party worth mentioning, except the Jana Sangh which was a

denominational party. So Rajaji and I decided that it was time to have a Liberal-Conservative party. Rajaji was conservative and I was liberal. Professor Ranga, who was the President for many years, was an agrarian who belonged to the Green International. So there were three trends. Rajaji was the conservative Hindu, Ranga was the agrarian, a farmer's man like Charan Singh, and I represented the Liberal bourgeoisie. These three elements came together to form this party. Rajaji wanted to call it a conservative party but Ranga and I both objected on the ground that we were not prepared to join a conservative party. Jayaprakash wanted it. He said that India needed a conservative party, it was a conservative country, but we thought it was a non-starter. In the end Rajaji invented the word *Swatantra* meaning self-determined. *'Swa'* is self and *'tantra'* is a mechanism, so this means individual self-determination, freedom from within.

The Party grew for two reasons: ideologically the people wanted something which was non-Socialist. We gave the electorate a change to vote against socialism and they made good use of this. We became the biggest opposition party straightaway, which was quite something. We got 21 seats in the first House and we were neck to neck with the Communists, who had been financed by Moscow for about thirty or forty years and were well organised. We outstripped the Jana Sangh, just like that, on coming into existence. By 1967 we had 45 seats in Parliament and I became the Leader of the Opposition.

This was the first reason for our success: people were getting sick of Nehru-Socialism which was statist, sterile and counter-productive. People were beginning to get fed up being overcontrolled. The other reason was our relative political competence. We made the best of our limited resources. The other politicians of India lived in a different world. I was brought up in the Labour Party in Britain and I introduced modern techniques of

publicity, propaganda, films and posters. After the first election we started nursing constituencies, which was absolutely unknown in India. In India all parties adopt their candidates a few days before nomination. There is trouble between different castes and groups as to who should get what seat. It is done on a purely opportunist basis. Now I said: 'Nonsense. That is not how you should run a parliamentary democracy. You nominate your candidates the day after the last election and you give him five years to nurse his constituency and get known. You give him resources and an office to work in and an agent'. All these British concepts which I introduced were absolutely revolutionary. My party disagreed. They said: 'We must watch the other candidate and then appoint a man of the right caste'. That was considered smart: you oppose a brahmin by a non-brahmin and so on.

From 1962 until 1967, being General Secretary of the Party, I was able to say that anyone who nominates a candidate will get so much from the central office for an agent, whom we would approve of and who would report to us every month. Of course this was a great temptation to the average candidate so we nominated candidates from the word 'go' and by the middle of the term half of our candidates were in position. This paid dividends because many people got elected simply because they had worked in the constituency for three or four years which nobody else had.

BOLKESTEIN: And then what happened to the Swatantra Party?

MASANI: Well, what happened was very sad. In the 1971 elections Mrs. Gandhi had this 'Indira wave'. She won the elections hands down not so much in votes but in seats and we were decimated. We came down from 45 to 8. Well, that is part of the game and I was quite prepared for it but I found that the Party was demoralised because

In India everyone thinks in terms of immediate gains. They thought that this was the end. I stepped aside and I let younger people take over. My first successor was H. M. Patel who was Home Minister in Delhi in the Janata Government. He lasted a year or two and then he gave over to a young man called Piloo Mody who was very immature and brash. Mody made a deal with Charan Singh, who then had a party called the B.K.D. Charan Singh was a Jat and he was a regional leader. We were a national party with support from all over the country, however small it was, but the demoralization was so intense that the Party outvoted me. It was decided to dissolve the Party and merge with the B.K.D. This I condemned as very short-term move. I said: 'The day will come when India will need the Swatantra Party, for God's sake keep it alive'. This happened in 1973. I refused to join the B.K.D. I stayed out and I have not joined any other party since. I thought that this was a great tragedy because, when March 1977 came, the Swatantra Party could have been the hard core of the new Janata Party. It might well have kept the Janata Party from going the way of all flesh, kept it a principled ideological party of the middle of the road, a Demoractic Liberal Party.

BOLKESTEIN: Do you think the Swatantra Party can be resurrected?

MASANI: I don't quite see it. Indian politics have gone down an awful lot in the last ten years. Skulduggery has become absolutely normal. Mrs. Gandhi has destroyed standards. Now everyone is behaving like her and says: 'Well, she does it, why not I?' So I think it would be very much more difficult now to form a Liberal Democratic Party with high moral standards and clean hands, considering how low we have sunk.

As I see it the choice between Indira on the one side

and the Janata on the other is a terrible choice for any country to be driven to. Many people will vote for Indira Gandhi as a reaction against Janata, just as they voted Janata as a backlash to Indira. It is not good because they will move from the frying pan into the fire and back again.

I imagine that it will take much more of this kind of decay before people say: 'For God's sake, let us put an end to it now'. This may lead to another dictatorship or to a military intervention, I don't know. So meanwhile we can go on talking about the principles which we espoused. For instance, I said to the traders of Maharashtra in Bombay: 'You know, Rajaji was a great admirer of the trader. He said he was the salt of the earth but you gentlemen, misled by the big capitalists, have become cowardly. You have never stood up for yourselves. I am very glad that for the first time you are prepared to fight for your right to live, all honour to you, we are with you, because we Liberals believe in the small entrepreneur, the self-employed man being the salt of the earth'. So I think we ought to keep the spirit alight and I hope that somebody will say: 'To hell with all these controls, let's go the Singapore way, the Hong Kong way'. Our day will come but it may not be very soon.

BOLKESTEIN: Do you think that your Party has left its mark on Indian politics?

MASANI: I think so. The reactions to statism that are taking place would not have happened if there had been no Swatantra Party for ten years, putting free enterprise on the map of India.

9. Nehru

BOLKESTEIN: Returning to an earlier period and to Nehru whom you knew well, what did Gandhi see in him?

MASANI: Nehru was Gandhi's spoilt child, in a way. He was very fond of him. There is a tremendous contrast which Gandhi probably found attractive. One was Hindu, the other was modern; one was conservative, the other was a fellow-traveller. Nehru was everything Gandhi wasn't. They quarrelled of course a great deal but Nehru was a very smart politician and whenever they quarrelled Nehru gave in. Unlike Subhas Bose and Rajagopalachari and M. N. Roy, who fought Gandhi and left, Nehru never allowed his differences with Gandhi to come to the top. He gave in and Gandhi liked this. Sardar Patel was very bitter about it. He was really Gandhi's loyal lieutenant. He felt this injustice very much and he used to complain to me about it. He said: 'Gandhiji has a soft spot for him, he is spoilt, he is well educated, he is rich, he is bourgeois, he is anglicised, he is smart and I am not'. Sardar Patel was a farmer's man.

BOLKESTEIN: What was the effect of Nehru on Indian political life?

MASANI: I think it was disastrous and more and more people are now beginning to see that Nehru has ruined the future for India. Nehru was not a practical man. He never earned his living for one day in his life. He was a Brahmin, pampered by his father. I don't say that that was his fault, but I think it is a very great handicap in life not to know what it means to make good. Secondly, he was pedestrian. He was greatly over-rated as an intellectual. He was very derivative and Krishna Menon dominated him intellectually. He put things more clearly. Nehru was a confused man: half democrat, half Stalinist. Nehru was a political democrat and an economic Stalinist. He wanted a complete Stalinist society including collective farming but without violence, by democratic plebiscitary democracy. Krishna Menon knew that you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. He was a

complete Communist and he led Nehru step by step along the path which Nehru was only too happy to follow. But Nehru used Krishna and when the time came in 1962 Nehru dropped him into the waste-paper basket without any scruples. There was a tremendous upsurge in Parliament to demand Krishna's resignation as Defence Minister on the ground that he was losing the war and that he was not to be trusted. That morning at the Party meeting when Nehru was asked to drop Krishna, Nehru said: 'Well, in that case I'll have to go also'. Now whenever Nehru had said this during his whole career, people had backed down but on this occasion they did not and a man called Tyagi, a junior minister, said: 'All right Sir, in that case you may also go' and everyone kept quit, meaning that was all right with them. Nehru then realised for the first time it wasn't only Krishna—his own neck was at stake.

Now I happened to be involved in this because Nath Pai, a Socialist M.P., came to see me and persuaded me to go and see Nehru before lunch that same day saying: 'You must go to Nehru and make him realise that he can drop Krishna without being thrown out himself. Krishna is telling Nehru that you and Lohia and Kripalani are out for his blood. He says you are only attacking him for the moment but that as soon as Nehru drops him you will demand Nehru's resignation as pro-communist and you want an anti-communist government', which of course we did. If we assured Nehru that we would stand by him if he dropped Krishna, he would do so. So I went along to Nehru and we had an amusing talk. I said: 'Jawaharlal, I want you to know that you have old friends like me and Kripalani and others. We have nothing against you but we are very much against you allowing Krishna to run this country and this war. If you fight the Chinese communist aggression as we want you to, the whole country and we will rally around you and behind you and see the war to its conclusion'. And he smiled

and very unhappily said: 'Thank you' because I'm sure he didn't like this at all. But the point is that that evening Nehru had accepted Krishna's resignation. So I would say that Nehru was quite unprincipled. Instead of saying: 'Right, we were together, we did it together, we go together', he was quite prepared to remain Prime Minister and sacrifice Krishna. So in a way all the evil was not on one side. I think they were very close to each other. They were as thick as thieves ideologically. But Krishna led Nehru by the nose intellectually.

BOLKESTEIN: Your verdict on Nehru is quite harsh.

MASANI: Well, it is what I think. He was a disaster for India.

BOLKESTEIN: Was Nehru instrumental in causing partition?

MASANI: No, there he was not to blame. All of them, except Gandhi, were on the same wave length. All wanted a partition of India to become masters in their own home. They were sick and tired of the coalition with the Muslim League. Nehru joined the other politicians in demanding immediate partition when Mountbatten was prepared to offer it to them. Gandhi and Jayaprakash were both against it. I was against it also. I remember asking J.P. to plead with Gandhi to fight it. J.P. came back and said: "No—Gandhi says: 'I will remain passive, you do the same'". We were a hopeless minority among a nationalist upsurge. Gandhi told J.P.: 'Don't oppose it when it comes up in the Congress Party. These men represent their constituency. The people of India have had enough of it, they want partition. I don't want it. I want independence with a United India, but we have lost the battle for the people's mind, let them have it and don't come in the way'.

BOLKESTEIN: Could it have been avoided at all?

MASANI: I think so. I think if Mountbatten had not been sent by Britain to do this cheapjack act of withdrawing and leaving us to kill off a million people on each side, India could have been free and independent in another five to ten years. Mountbatten did an excellent job for Britain and a lousy job for India, and that was what he was sent to do, to scuttle. The Belgians did the same in the Congo and the Portuguese in Mozambique and in Angola. I think that a great power has no business to withdraw and leave the people to chaos after making its situation such that it can't do anything immediately. It must stay and see its responsibilities through.

BOLKESTEIN: You say that it is a feud but it is a feud between brothers. Would you say that some time harmonious relations will come into existence between Bangla Desh, India and Pakistan?

MASANI: Well, you've shown the way. I mean if France and Germany and the others who are not blood brothers and have had a feud for centuries can come together in a European Community, this is what we should do. We should have a sub-continent which is a community.

BOLKESTEIN: There are about 50 million Muslims in India. Are they discriminated against?

MASANI: Yes and no. I would say that they are definitely not oppressed. To say that they are oppressed would be unfair — as the Hindu has been oppressed in Bangla Desh and Pakistan, no. But there is discrimination. I would say that certainly many Muslims in India feel that they are second class citizens but I don't think there is any question of ill treatment. Of course, they certainly have justice, but historically they are made to feel that they are not quite trusted. There are people in the Jana Sangh who say that the Muslim must be Indianised before

he can be accepted as a real Indian and I say: 'What do you mean. Indianised, they are just as much Indian as you or I', and they say: 'Yes, but you can't trust them. If Pakistan were not there, then the Indian Muslim would be all right, but as long as Pakistan is there, we can't trust them'.

BOLKESTEIN: If you look down the period that the British were in India what would you say about it?

MASANI: Well, when they were in India I was very much opposed to them on nationalist grounds. I went to British prisons in India three times. I supported Gandhi without any reservations. I wanted independence, but after it came I saw no point in being nationalist anymore because its purpose had been served and to be nationalist after freedom means to be a victim of communist 'neo-colonialist' propaganda, because that is how the Communists influence the third world: by making them imagine that their freedom is in danger, which it isn't. So I evolved a world view and, looking back on it now, I think that British rule had its benevolent aspects and in some ways was a good thing for India. It gave us certain things we never had or probably would not have developed without them. The biggest, of course, was a common language and a common national feeling. I think H.G. Wells said that nationalism was nothing but a common aversion to a common enemy. Well, the British by being there gave us a catalyst against whom we could gang up and people of entirely different kinds who could never have combined did combine under Gandhi to throw them out. So I would say to the extent that India has developed Indian nationalism as opposed to linguistic or religious sub-nationalism, which are very alive, the British certainly contributed to it. The other thing they gave us was the rule of law. We had no concept of the rule of law or of civil liberties. When Nehru founded

the Civil Liberties Union in 1935 or so under the British, a friend said: 'Sir, do you realise that civil liberties are not understood in India, that the good old Nawab did what he liked and people don't understand this? It is an alien concept'. He was not opposing it, he was just explaining the difficulty of trying to explain. Thirdly, they brought a decent Civil Service and administration which we had not known. I would say that they did play a part in creating a modern nation. To what extent it is I don't know, but to the extent we are a modern nation the British certainly helped the process.

BOLKESTEIN: But you regret the way in which they left?

MASANI: I only regret the speed with which they left. I'm very glad they left the way they did because they left without bloodshed between them and us, without hatred, and there I think the credit goes both to Britain and to Gandhi for playing a game with gloves on. They played cricket, they sparred in accordance with the Queensbury Rules. What would have happened under the Japanese or Hitler or Stalin is quite easy to imagine. It would have been quite different. There is a strong pro-British feeling in India. There is more anti-Americanism than anti-English feeling, to the extent that you can generalise like that.

BOLKESTEIN: Why is that?

MASANI: It is a world phenomenon. I once mentioned it to an American, who was very bitter and resentful of this injustice, after all the aid they had given. I said: 'That is exactly why you are disliked: because you are helping us' and I quoted Confucius who writes that one man said to another: 'Why do you dislike me so much, I have never done anything to help you?'

10. Communists

BOLKESTEIN: Kerala has the highest percentage of Christians, of literates and also of Communists. Is there a connection between these facts?

MASANI: Well, it is difficult to say. Bengal comes a good second. You know the saying 'A little learning is a dangerous thing'. I wonder if the literacy of the kind and nature that we have in Kerala and Bengal does not play a subversive social role. You give people a certain amount of knowledge or access to knowledge, not really wisdom with it, and what is otherwise acceptable becomes unacceptable. The Indian mass is docile and resigned to its fate because of *karma.* You must have done something to deserve your present lot. Now that is the old Hindu philosophy which makes a man live in a hovel and see a big mansion and not throw that fellow out and occupy his place—which he well could. He doesn't because he thinks: 'Well, that is his lot and this is my lot, I must have deserved it—God made it like this'. I think that in the Middle Ages in Europe you must have had the same thing, the rich man in his castle and the poor man in his hut, and people accepted this feudal system. The *seigneur* was here and you were there. Now that was broken up by the French Revolution. I think that a similar process or catalyst is working in Kerala and Bengal. The fact that there is more literacy and perhaps more Christianity, which is also a modernising element, makes people more reluctant to put up with things that are not acceptable to them. This takes a Communist form but it may not necessarily be evil in so far as its motivations are concerned. They are very intelligent people, both the Kerala and the Bengal people.

BOLKESTEIN: Are the three Communist parties a potent force in India today, either singly or separately?

MASANI: I never really thought that there was any early danger of India going Communist. In the last paragraph of my book on the Communist Party of India I wrote that in themselves the Communists were too weak ever to take over India but certain extra-territorial loyalties and a disciplined dedication to their cause made them a dagger pointed at its heart. I think they are a threat to our freedom and our way of life but I can't see them ever taking power by themselves. They are much too peripheral and much too alien.

Incidentally I should like to record my caveat against the words 'left' and 'right'. They are very dangerous words and I find that the Western intellectual is a sucker for using these words and doing a lot to help Communist propaganda. What does it mean? To me a man who is 'right' is a Czarist. I accept the term right-reaction and I think that the Communist Parties of the world are the embodiment of right-reaction because they want to carry on the tradition of the Czar: absolutism, to use the human being as a serf or robot. To me Gandhi represents the extreme left of a near-anarchist individualist libertarian order where you have minimum government and maximum individual liberty. The Italian Liberals led by my friend Malagodi are always called right-wing party by American and English journalists. I think they are crazy. These words only help the Communists because they make everyone look 'reactionary' while the Communists look 'progressive'. There is nothing more reactionary than a Communist, when you consider his ideas of human society and of the role of the individual. So one must be very careful in using these words. When my Party was called rightist I said: 'Nonsense, we are extreme left because we want to liberalise Indian society'.

BOLKESTEIN: Why is Communism an alien force in India?

MASANI: The CPI has been financed and directed from Moscow right from the start. Not so much the CPI(M) at the moment, or the CPI(ML), but certainly the official party has been known to have an extra-territorial loyalty. This is documented in my book on the Communist Party, documents by Philip Spratt and others, who took their money and said they took it from Moscow, through Britain. You know, it is very interesting, the Soviet Empire in India was run through the British Empire while the British were there. The Communist Party of Great Britain ran the Indian Communist Party for Moscow. They were viceroys, and Palmdutt and Pollitt, whom I used to meet and talk with, were the people who gave the line to the Indian Party.

11. Two Nations

BOLKESTEIN: There has been quite a spate of articles in the Western press about the fact that India seems to develop into two nations, an urban developed one of maybe 150-200 million people which is like the industrialised parts of Brazil or Mexico or Italy and then 500-600 million people in half a million villages. Do you see this cleavage?

MASANI: I don't think that this is a likely development. It is true that there are two nations, to follow Disraeli's words. He talked of the rich and the poor, we talk of the urban and the rural, which is the main divide in India because, by rural standards, even the working urban class in India is privileged. So it is true to say that the real proletariat is rural and the urban classes are the ruling race. But I think that the Janata Government and Charan Singh particularly have been pulling the other way. Apart from Charan Singh there is B. P. Singh, who was Minister of State for Agriculture. He was a Swatantra man. These people are trying hard to narrow the gap by creating a new parity of prices, as rural prices are lagging painfully

behind urban prices. They are trying to equate them. I published recently statements from B. P. Singh showing how much urban prices have shot up compared to rural prices. But there is a very conscious effort to put more money into rural projects.

If only enlightened policies were followed, India could become a raw material exporting country, which it should be. We are still trying to sell steel at uneconomic prices and coming a cropper. India should export processed foods, fruit, fish, rice, foodgrains and so on and buy manufactured goods with it. India can more than feed itself, if we don't neglect agriculture as Nehru did. We want to reverse those priorities: heavy industry, consumer goods, agriculture. We want to put agriculture first, then consumer goods and heavy industry last. Charan Singh was on the right track as a Green International man. He is the nearest to what we stood for because we were also an agrarian party. So I feel that the trend now is to heal this rift and not to allow it to develop, I don't think the Western press would be right if it didn't bring out that there is rural urbanisation and rural industrialisation going on.

BOLKESTEIN: A famous phrase of Engels is: *'Die verdammte Bedürfnislosigkeit'*, which means: 'This damned lack of desire for something better'. Do you think this is still a factor of rural life in India?

MASANI: Well, yes and no. This theory of *karma* makes the average Indian, whether urban or rural, extremely docile. He accepts his lot, even the worker, to the extent that he has not been wound up by propaganda. He is still prepared to accept that the boss is the boss and he is what he is and that is how it should be, so there is no real discontent. Now, how to inspire discontent when people don't feel it? I'm not sure that just inspiring discontent without adding the capacity to feed it or to

meet the needs would be such a good thing. It might only lead to what is happening in Iran without giving anything better. I personally believe that discontent is divine and that people should try to improve their lot, but I don't know whether just having the psychology without the production would be such a good thing. It is probably good that people are contented until they can really get more.

The Concept of Liberalism and its Relevance for India

S. P. Aiyar

Origins and Outlook

Any one who sets out to prove the relevance of liberalism for England or the United States or for any of the established democracies of the Western World would appear to his contemporaries as a curious and interesting crank. In these countries the social and political philosophy of liberalism is now part of the institutional framework and constitutes the ethos in which government functions. On the other hand in large parts of Asia and Africa liberalism is often regarded as an out-moded philosophy with little or no relevance to the problems of economic development. In Communist countries, of course, liberalism is hardly spoken of, being synonymous with bourgeois subversion. The relevance of liberalism arises precisely in those historical situations where the rights of men are suppressed or in countries that live under the menacing threat of tyranny in one form or another.

In the history of ideas, liberalism has presented two faces. It has been a philosophy of revolt as well as an affirmation of human freedom. As a philosophy it has dominated the intellectual life of Europe since the beginning of the Reformation and has sought to liberate men from medieval conceptions of authority. In its origins—and indeed, throughout its history—liberalism has sought to encourage individual initiative as the motor-force of all progress. It began in a mood of revolt in an era when Europe was poised for great changes. It revolted against State-dominated feudal interests but it also represented the outlook of the commercial and other new

classes which were emerging during the end of the Middle Ages. Liberalism set the ambit of political authority and sought to confine the functions of government within the framework of a legal system emphasizing the freedom of new economic interests. In his *Rise of European Liberalism* Harold Laski attempted to provide an economic interpretation of this movement of thought. He attempted to show that liberalism was merely an aspect of European history in a period of which, it was, to quote Ruggiero, "a by-product of the effort of the middle class to win its place in the sun." It was Laski's intention to prove that liberalism had lost its relevance but it has outlived him and the passing phase of European history when he flirted with the prevailing currents of thought. Laski's Marxist interpretation had many valuable insights but it did not prove the irrelevance of liberalism. On the other hand, it merely served to underline the contribution liberalism had made. It had freed men from the numerous restrictions which had been imposed on trade and commerce and helped the growth of the industrial society in a formative period. Liberalism gave a new lease of life to the activities of men in all spheres and helped the growth of science. In the first flush of enthusiasm created by the growth of the physical sciences and the grand idea of Progress, liberalism attempted to pattern its world view on that of physics by trying to explain society as a system governed by its own laws. The social order became part of the "natural order" and any *interference* with the social system was believed to be detrimental to its smooth functioning.

I have already stated that liberalism was a revolt against the restrictions and privileges of feudalism. It placed the individual at the centre of its philosophy and emphasized his ability to reason out social arrangements and sort things out for himself. It stressed his right to trade and enter into contracts, his freedom to bargain and the freedom of enterprise. Above all, it postulated private property as one of the conditions of social progress. It was, therefore, the function of government to guarantee the peaceful employment of property and provide

the external conditions of law and order.

Liberalism was a revolt not merely against feudal interests but also against the dogma and authority of the Church. It rejected the medieval claim that "Truth" was revealed. It went back to the Greek idea that Truth had to be discovered through the methods of science. Since truth had to be discovered, it became necessary to protest against institutions and individuals claiming possession of final truths. In the process, liberalism asserted the right of free men to express opinions and assert their civil and political rights. The heart of the matter was the liberation of individuals and society from irrational restraints. In its revolt against the authority of the Church, it emphasized the demarcation of the spheres of Church and State. Thus the history of liberalism in Europe is coterminus with the process of secularization and the growth of a modern rational bureaucracy.

Before we leave behind us this brief account of the intellectual origins of liberalism in Europe it is necessary to mention that liberalism was primarily a social and political philosophy and acquired its economic content later. The great exponents of liberalism were philosophers and not business men and even a casual look into any history of liberalism would show that they were often as critical of business interests as they were of the Church or the State.

Liberalism is not an Ideology

Liberalism is a *philosophy* and not an *ideology*; it provides the broadest framework for the progress of individuals and societies. This is why most of us get stumped when confronted by a question requiring us to give a short definition of liberalism. It has been a movement of ideas emphasizing freedom and growth; the variety and complexity of society. It postulates the diversity of human interests and the creativity of individuals. When classical writers on liberalism talked of "Minimum government" they did not ask for the total withdrawal of the State, giving free rein to individuals. Politics

is but a small part of social life, occupying a corner of the average man's universe of interests. In its many spheres he desires to be left alone. Even in the sphere of the economic and the political he stands to gain only in arrangements which make possible the free play of competing forces. Liberals have been opposed to monopoly in every form and in every sphere. It was the Church in the sixteenth century; it is the State in the twentieth. Liberals want government to enter wherever it can promote social progress through the freedom and creativity of individuals but never to smother and snuff them out.

Liberalism made a distinction between Society and State, regarding the latter as primarily a regulatory mechanism, taking over only those activities which individuals cannot and which are directly in the larger interests of society. Liberalism was never a negative philosophy—a positive element of State activity was always present in the classical exposition of liberalism. This is why liberalism has found little difficulty in adapting itself to the expanding activities of the State under the growth of science and technology. What liberalism has retained in the course of its development, however, is a suspicion and fear of the concentration of power in the State, to balance which, it has sought the strengthening of other competing social forces. Liberalism has no dogmatic creed, no ideological strait-jacket. It claims to have no body of solutions—unlike Marxism—for all countries irrespective of their history, culture and development. The spirit of liberalism lies in finding solutions appropriate to given situations but only those compatible with freedom.

Liberalism in India

It is against this background of European intellectual development that Indian liberalism has to be viewed. It was a product of the Western impact on the Indian mind and contributed to India's constitutional and political development. So profound, indeed, has been this influence that the history of Indian

nationalism and constitutional development, more or less, coincides with that of liberalism until World War I. The Gandhi period of Indian politics which followed cast a veil over the real achievements of the outstanding liberal leaders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and it is but appropriate that we now seek to lift it.

No one, except purblind Marxist intellectuals, will deny the contribution British rule made to the process of modernization of India; Westernization became the vehicle of modernization although it is perfectly valid to say that the two processes are not identical. Ram Mohun Roy, with whom the history of Indian liberalism begins, was quick in perceiving the significance of the great changes on which India was poised in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He was, to quote his biographer Sophia Collet, the "bridge over which India passed from her unmeasured past into her incalculable future" and "in him, the New England became acquainted with the New India." His mastery over English, Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic and his interest in comparative religions gave him an unrivalled position in understanding the historical forces which were shaping India in his time. Roy's concern for social reform and the uplift of women, for education as a means of social transformation, for the freedom of the press—not to speak of his passion for liberty—were inherited by the great liberals of India. Some of them were in government service, others in important political positions but they were never the flatterers or sycophants that they have sometimes been made out to be by those ignorant of modern Indian history. The liberals were the most incisive critics of British rule. One has only to recall the great volume of critical thought based on study and reflection which the literature of Indian liberalism has produced. Men like Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha and Pherozeshah Mehta were no captious and irresponsible critics. One finds in their writings a power and intensity which has, perhaps, never been excelled in the Gandhian era. What gave urgency to their thought and commanded the

attention of the rulers was their anxiety always to be fair in criticism and the integrity with which their arguments were documented. It has been the lot of Indian liberals—then as now to be cast in the role of an opposition, with little or no chance of getting into power and they saw themselves as the creators of public opinion.

For instance a recurring idea in Gokhale's writing is that leaders of public life must reconcile themselves by serving their country through disinterested activity regardless of results. Superficially viewed, we have the political counterpart of the *Karmayogin*, indifferent alike to failure and success. But a deeper study of Gokhale's thought would show that his concept of a political leader is very different. Since public life is a matter of slow growth, even a failure may be deemed a success, if it contributes in the long run to the political education of the people. A classic expression of this aspect of Gokhale's political thought is found in the noble peroration at the close of his speech on the *Elementary Education Bill* in the Imperial Legislative Council on 18 March, 1912:

> "My Lord I know that my Bill will be thrown out before the day closes. I make no complaint. I shall not even feel depressed. I know too well the story of the preliminary efforts that were required even in England, before the Act of 1870 was passed, either to complain or to feel depressed. Moreover, I have always felt and have often said that we, of the present generation in India, can only hope to serve our country by our failures. The men and women who will be privileged to serve her by their successes will come later. We must be content to accept cheerfully the place that has been allotted to us in our onward march. This Bill, thrown out to-day, will come back again and again, till on the stepping-stones of its dead selves, a measure ultimately rises which will spread the light of knowledge throughout the land. It may be that our efforts may not conduce even indirectly to the promotion of the great cause which we all have at heart and that they may turn out after all to be

nothing better than the mere ploughing of the sands of the sea-shore. But, my Lord, whatever fate awaits our labours, one thing is clear. We shall be entitled to feel that we have done our duty, and where the call of duty is clear, it is better even to labour and fail than not to labour at all."

Westernized Elites?

It has often been said that the liberals constituted an elite—a description which they would hardly have objected to. They constituted an elite, in the true sociological sense, and were alive to their social responsibilities. But to imply that they were not interested in the welfare of the masses, is both wrong and unfair. A few of them were aristocrats with only tenuous contact with the masses but they were not the outstanding leaders of the movement. To judge Indian liberalism through its lesser lights is like passing an indictment on Mahatma Gandhi through the performance of those who have crucified his ideals.

Nor were Indian liberals imitative, blindly accepting the principles of Western liberalism. Western concepts were tested, adapted and even rejected. Let me cite but one example. Indian liberals like Roy, Ranade and Gokhale never accepted the negative role of the State—the passing idiom of nineteenth century England.

In his *Essays on Indian Economics* Ranade pointed out that the reaction to the meddlesomeness of mercantilism had been carried to the other extreme. But there was a reaction to the *laissez-faire* system. Ranade said "speaking roughly, the province of state interference and control is practically being extended so as to restore the good points of the mercantile system without its absurdities. The State is now more and more recognised as a national organ for taking care of national needs in all matters in which individual and co-operative efforts are not likely to be so effective and economic as national effort. This is a correct view to take for the true functions of a state. To relegate them to the simple duty of maintaining

peace and order is really to deprive the Community of many of the advantages of the Social Union. Education, both Liberal and Technical, Post and Telegraphs, Railway and Canal Communications, the pioneering of new enterprize, the insurance of risky undertakings, all these functions are usefully discharged by the State. The question is one of time, fitness, and expediency, not one of liberty and rights." I must add that it was not Ranade's intention that liberty could be sacrificed in the pursuit of economic development. The whole temper of his work was to strike a balance between progress and freedom. Like all liberals, he derived the rational temper from Western thought. They approached the institutions of traditional Hindu society with a rational outlook and sought to reform them through an appeal to reason. Liberals in the West, as mentioned earlier, saw the danger to personal freedom from concentration of power in the State. Indian liberals, on the other hand, saw the individual cribbed, cabined and confined by ancient superstitions and irrational practices. They took a deep and abiding interest in questions of social reform and did not hesitate in using the power of the State—even that of a foreign government—for purposes of social reform.

Four Aspects of Indian Liberalism

In my *Liberalism and the Modernization of India* (Twelfth Annual Lecture at the Harold Laski Institute, 1966) I have discussed four major aspects of the outlook of the Indian liberals. Firstly, they perceived the "total" character of the modernization process and the inter-dependence of economic development and political stability. They saw how closely related were the processes of social and political development and stressed the need to maintain continuity in the cultural traditions of the people. Consider, for instance, Roy's interest in India's religious history, Ranade's theism and his exposition of the relevance of the teachings of the saints of Maharashtra, Sastri's interest in the *Ramayana* and Rajagopalachari's love of the *Kural.* Liberalism has sometimes been described as

conservatism—so it is, in the best sense of the word for it seeks to *conserve* everything that is good in the past.

Secondly, Indian liberals have always entertained a certain apprehension of unenlightened revolt of the masses and sensed the dangers of mass movements. Liberals, at all times, have cautioned against rousing the people through an exploitation of their emotions: Shivaji and Ganpati festivals at the time of Tilak, non-cooperation movements under Gandhi and the populist gimmicks of politicians which have become endemic in Indian public life today. The liberal apprehensions of the orgies into which uncontrolled movements often degenerate have now been amply supported by studies in crowd psychology. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar pointed out that one of the great difficulties in non-cooperation and non-violence movements is to maintain their essential non-violent character and this line of thinking can be found also in the speeches and writings of Gokhale and of Srinivasa Sastri.

Thirdly, they saw the danger of helpless dependence on foreign assistance. They welcomed the import of Western skills and knowledge but they warned against unimaginative dependence on foreign aid and foreign experts. What is important is to develop the initiative of the people and promote the skills necessary for development. Consider Gokhale's warning in this direction, echoed after many decades by Rajagopalachari in the pages of *Swarajya* and Sivaswamy Aiyar's plea for technical and professional education.

Finally, all the liberals have shared a common concern for the expansion of education and opening up opportunities for woman—without watering down standards. Theirs was no sentimental flirtation with the Goddess of Learning. They examined the educational needs of the country; they saw the weakness of a purely "Arts" education compelling people to take government jobs and making them more dependant than ever on the foreign government. This is one of the reasons why Sivaswamy Aiyar had emphasized the importance of education in commerce and mechanical engineering. More than any other liberal, with the exception of Gokhale, it was

Sivaswamy Aiyar who gave his utmost to the problems of Indian education. As early as 1919 he drew attention to the problem of popularizing Western knowledge and encouraging the translation of standard works into Indian languages. But he gave a timely and early warning against the tendency of coining equivalent words in the vernacular in the pursuit of a false patriotism. Some of them saw the political implications of thoughtless educational expansion resulting in the swelling of the ranks of the educated unemployed. A certain "man-power approach"—as ugly expression this!—was implicit in their thinking, and made explicit at times as in the writings of Dadabhai Naoroji.

Thus the contribution of the Indian liberals was not only outstanding but far removed from what one might conclude from the superficial and uncharitable remarks of Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Autobiography*.

The Relevance of Liberalism

In India, as all over Asia, the path to economic development is generally believed to be socialism and there is a widespread belief that liberalism is an outmoded doctrine of nineteenth-century England. Most people regard it as an apology for capitalism unrestrained by the State. Capitalism in India is a dirty word; so are "business", "businessmen" and "profits". In the context of the massive poverty of the country and its ever-expanding population and gross inequalities, these words naturally evoke the image of a few profiting through unscrupulous ways. Despite the assumptions and strategies of Indian planning seeking to give both the private entrepreneur and the State responsibilities in economic development, politicians and socialist-minded intellectuals have talked as though private enterprise exists only at the mercy of government. Socialism, has been an attractive siren song for many centuries; it has appealed to the masses as the only way to material prosperity and a just, egalitarian society. Its many shades of meaning range over the entire ideological spectrum; it covers everything

from regulated private enterprise to State-regimented economics; it includes utopianism of many varieties—of Gandhi, Vinoba, Jayaprakash Narain *et al*—and much romantic sentimentalism.

It is difficult, even futile, to examine here the reasons for the popularity of this ill-defined concept in India. Let it be granted straightway that its emphasis on egalitarianism and equitable distribution is both correct and laudable; that it springs from a concern for social justice on the part of most people, except those who aspire to profit from their admission into the ruling class. More than this cannot be said for socialism. But at the heart of the Asian Drama lies the great debate between socialism and liberalism, between those who advocate the expansion of the State in every sphere of economic activity and those who wish to broaden the entrepreneurial base. Socialist-minded economists and political scientists have argued the irrelevance of liberalism on the ground that its validity is tied up with the notion of the free market mechanism—a figment of the nineteenth century economic imagination. They further assert that free enterprise and liberalism have worked in the countries of Western Europe through a fortuitous combination of circumstances; therefore, they will not work in the peculiar circumstances of India. The notion of the free market was merely a model and no one has ever pretended that existing markets can ever approximate to it. This is why liberalism has always recognized the need for regulation.

The exponents of classical liberalism were fully aware of the imperfections of human nature and their deleterious effects on the economy. Adam Smith, for instance, spoke of the "sneaking arts of underlying businessmen" and further observed! "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices."

In the history of liberalism, there has been a significant distinction between *intervention* and *interference*, between

controls and regulations which sustain and strengthen competition and those that hamper and destroy it. It is hardly necessary for me to add that those who speak of the "Permit-License-Quota Raj" do not advocate the dismantling of all governmental restraints. Such a step would lead not to competition but to the law of the jungle—the very thing which liberals have been anxious to avoid. Likewise, liberals recognise that the State has a crucial role to play in the economic development of Asian countries.

Pragmatism of the Liberals

Liberalism never supplied any formula for the scope of State activities; these would be determined by the particular circumstances of the country and even within each country, the extent of State participation would change from time to time. At a week-long seminar held in Poona under the auspices of the Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung and the Indian Group of the Liberal International in January 1968 the point was emphasized by many participants. The points made then are still relevant after twenty years. Thus V. K. Narasimhan rightly argued that the "mixed economy" should not be regarded as something determined once and for all. It is necessary, he urged, to have a dynamic view of the mixed economy in which the proportion of the "mix" would be determined from time to time, *not on the basis of some abstract principle but in the light of knowledge and experience.* This is the crux of the liberal position and the main point of departure from that of socialism. Throughout its history, liberals have always insisted that political and economic problems should not be approached from an ideological point of view. Ideology, by its very nature, runs counter to science and rationality; it is impatient of reality as the history of Marxism has demonstrated over and over again. In the long run, facts are stubborn things and reality will assert itself: Lysenkos and Michurins must own up their ideological charlatanry and socialist countries are compelled to accept, albeit reluctantly, the logic of the market mechanism

and even provide for the profit principle!

The massive poverty and gross inequalities of India do not prove the irrelevance of liberalism but its contrary. Precisely because the entrepreneurial base is narrow does it need to be broadened so that the fruits of technological development can be increased and distributed. Production and distribution are but aspects of industrial production—private enterprise and State regulation have both important roles to play in the process. Nowhere have the great liberal writers asserted that production alone matters and that distribution will take care of itself. Peter Drucker is right when he speaks of the inter-dependence of modern economies leading to the "symbiosis" of organizations; it is equally true that the lines dividing "private" and "public" tend to get functionally blurred. But it is not true to say that the lines need not be drawn or that they are irrelevant. Liberalism has stood for releasing the creative energies of people, treating the State and its agencies as means for social progress and not as ends in themselves. Paradoxically, both Marxian socialism and liberalism have been concerned with the problems of production and distribution; but while Marxism has emphasized these in purely economic terms, liberalism has sought to place them in the larger perspective of human freedom. I have mentioned earlier that liberalism has been primarily a political philosophy of freedom and it seems odd that one should want to prove the "relevance" of freedom for India. The possibilities of freedom in under-developed countries are tied up with the problems of production. Students of revolution from Aristotle to Hannah Arendt and Crane Brinton have pointed out that the most crucial periods of history are those which promise signs of improvement and it is not difficult to see that India is now passing through a period of great ferment.

In conclusion I wish to argue that to speak of relevance of liberalism to the Indian situation is an understatement. It is more than that for it provides not only the philosophy of our Constitution but also a framework for the future development of the culturally diversified society of India. Ironically the

policies of the Indian government for three decades and a half have served to underline some of the lasting lessons of liberalism. The expanding power of the state in all the key areas of human activity, the growth of Indian bureaucracy, the control of not merely the economy but also of the mass media, the clumsy and costly system of regulation and control have all conspired to smother initiative. It is no wonder that creative individuals have either suffered frustration or have become sycophants of the powers that be. Several who have had the opportunity to go to foreign universities have been reluctant to come back to the country. The philosophers of Liberalism have always warned against the dangers of *Etatisme*. Thus John Stuart Mill in his classic work *On Liberty* said:

"A government cannot have too much of the kind of activity which does not impede, but aids and stimulates, individual exertion and development. The mischief begins when, instead of calling forth the activity and powers of individuals and bodies, it substitutes its own activity for theirs; when, instead of informing, advising, and upon occasion, denouncing, it makes them work in fetters, or bids them stand aside and does their work instead of them. The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it; and a State which postpones the interests of their mental expansion and elevation, to a little more of administrative skill, or of that semblance of it which practice gives, in the details of business; a State which dwarfs its men in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes— will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished; and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish."

The near "one party system" which has long dominated the Indian political scene has given rise to a host of social problems and heightened intolerance of criticism. The threats to individual freedom are ever present making it necessary for freedom loving individuals to organise for civil liberties

and constantly explore new channels for the expression of critical thought. In the long perspective of Indian history and tradition concern for the individual and his rights has been conspicuous by its absence. India can progress on the lines indicated in the Constitution only through a break with the dead past.

From Political Liberalism to Liberal Humanism

R. Srinivasan

Indian political thought and experience throughout the last century and a half has been basically dialectical, each school emphasizing an aspect neglected by the other, and all of them together influencing the common policies to be pursued. Cumulatively, they contributed to the development of the nation and each responded to the Indian situation as it perceived it.

There are three senses in which we can use the term Indian Liberalism:

(a) A broad sense of making the country modern, on western lines in contrast to the traditional social norms and order. This is historically the oldest and names such as those of Vidyasagar, Agarkar and Ranade are associated with it. It did not press for an uncritical adoption of western norms but advocated absorption of western critical standards, rethinking on social matters and a gradual change of Indian social structure. While the Liberals worked hard in trying to bring about a transformation, they were labouring in an environment where attempts at changing coagulated customs was not even conceivable. But in debating about these, they created a climate of opinion where change could be contemplated as a theoretical possibility. Indian society, particularly Hindu Society was gradually changing but it was due more to economic, and sociological factors than to conscious adopting of new values. One cannot categorically state that as social

philosophers they were successful in transforming Indian society. For instance, while for more than half a century they were advocating the education of women, it was only after the second world war that girls from the upper classes and castes began to attend schools first and colleges later in significantly large numbers. This was certainly due to social and economic changes. But one could claim that the Liberals made the proposition of women attending schools a distinct possibility.

(b) In a narrower sense, we can view Indian liberalism as basically a *political* approach. This had distinguished adherents and in a sense was extremely successful in that, that it not only gained a following but was able to strike roots into the intellectual consciousness of the country. It was by and large derivative, deriving its inspiration from the doctrine and the political practices of the British. Its leading figures were Gladstone, Bright and John Stuart Mill. Those among Indians who were intellectually gifted attempted to grapple with the writings of Bentham and Mill and other leaders of liberal thought.

However, such people with these rare skills were a minute group. A larger number had to nibble at more tender pastures. Vast cohorts of western educated Indians indirectly imbibed liberal principles, though initially they had no clear conscious desire to be educated in these values. Many of them took to the law and drew their principles mainly from their legal practice and whatever social and political philosophy they learnt came from their study of law and jurisprudence. Since the law in which they cut their teeth was mainly the Common Law of Britain, it was inevitable that the philosophy of Common Law as it had developed till their times should have become part of their intellectual baggage.

Secularism, individual rights, legal channels for the redress of grievances, limited government, separation

of the executive from the judiciary, all these constituted elements in the liberal doctrine. Every one who carefully read the newspapers and followed the proceedings of the legislatures and the political meetings more or less in a vague sense understood these principles. Whatever the school of politics, extremist or liberal, these political principles were part of modern India's intellectual heritage.

(c) In a third sense, the Liberal Federation of India, the Liberal Party also stood for liberalism.

Were they Anglophiles?

It has been criticised that they had been exclusively moulded by British influence and practice; this of course is a true charge but Britain transformed itself in half a century and it was the only model of economic and political development then available to them. The way of progress was the way Britain had traversed and other countries too such as Germany and the U.S. had followed. They advocated similar policies for India. Individual initiative had played an important part; business and industrial enterprise did have an equally distinct role to play; political parties were founded, so were self-help associations, co-operative ventures, libraries, and financial institutions. These things transformed Britain, they would transform India too. The gospel of work, service and dedication advocated by Samuel Smiles is now generally sneered at. But whole generations were trained on his books both in the English speaking world and in India.

Smiles put forward the gospel of Manchesterism and the leading figures of these were Cobden, Bright and the *Manchester Guardian* with their advocacy of laissez-faire and reform. The high moral tone of politics that Bright and Gladstone advocated and which later Morely was to popularize was the pabulum on which the liberals in India were fed. Since the British liberals had supported reforms in the country and were ardent supporters of nationalist

movements in Europe and Ireland, the Indian liberals expected them to extend their support to Indian aspirations too. In Bright as well as in Gladstone they found ardent champions.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the liberals simultaneously advocated social, political, and economic reforms which they attempted to do through several organizations; the Indian National Congress which they helped to found was the most pre-eminent of these. S. N. Banerjea spread the message of Mazzini to crowded audiences in north India. It could be said that he single-handedly did for Indian nationalism what the Italian did for his. Liberals controlled the Congress, the annual conventions were mainly their affair; the Congress and the liberals were synonymous.

With the passing of time they found it increasingly difficult to do this. Many historical reasons can be offered. Educated Indians and liberals themselves among them began to expose the economic exploitation of India by the rulers. The Dadabhai thesis on poverty in India could not be refuted—subsequent books only confirmed the conclusions of Dadabhai and economically, British rule was examined and rejected as a baneful influence.

Politically, the record of the British had much that called for condemnation. The numerous petitions made to the government fell on deaf ears, the bureaucracy was a veritable juggernaut. The successful organization of opposition by the whites against the Ilbert Bill which was one of the most liberal measures devised by Ripon, the lack of co-operation by the officials to the extension of the principles of local government, the policies of Lord Curzon which ultimately culminated in the Partition of Bengal clearly indicated that the liberal methods were inadequate. But they were not prepared to throw overboard these

which they thought were basically sound. New challenges needed new responses and the adoption of boycott and *swadeshi* as an answer to the Partition were certainly novel ways of meeting the challenge. The liberals were compelled to recognize these as legitimate, clearly conceding to the failures of their methods.

Condemning the liberal methods as inadequate and outworn, the Extremists tried to capture the Congress from the liberals—but this was successfully prevented. But even this was no new thing; the climate of opinion in the country had changed and a new generation had been nurtured which was impatient for change. This is understandable, for it experienced severe privation and was eager for immediate solutions which the Extremists promised. They criticised the liberals as a group of starry-eyed idealists who took the statements made by British statesmen like Lord Morley at their face value. This criticism is partially true.

Also, their admiration for the British Liberal Party came at a time when the party in England was itself undergoing a change. One of the important figures of the party, Joseph Chamberlain, resigned from the party on the question of Ireland. The cluster of the saintly liberals in British politics was not due to any especial character of the party. Mainly a combination of dissenting elements in British public life, it was fortuitous in its formation. A year after the founding of the Congress, the British Liberal Party split upon the Irish question. In developing their political principles exclusively from the British political party, the liberals inadequately realized the historical peculiarities of British political life and principles and the impossibility of their replication elsewhere.

Even if one were to concede to the criticism of the Extremists, one should not lose sight of their stressing certain political principles which was their contribution to the development of a new social and political outlook.

They clearly recognized many important dimensions of the new public life that was emerging in India—the idea of a public domain, the importance of open discussion, collecting of social facts, pressurising the government on ground of facts, suggesting alternative methods, creating a public opinion on issues, challenging the claims of the governing class, floating associations for collective action, pioneering social reform, running local government institutions; all these were their distinct contributions to modern Indian politics. It was basically an elitist political movement as all political movements then were, but the leaders did have a sense of responsibility to the masses.

The Record of the Liberals

The Liberals came into their own in the 1890s; this was the period of their glory. The best among them occupied important public positions and continued to do so during the next three decades. Since they were mainly taught to look up to the British it was but natural for them to believe that similar developments in India would be in order. They supported a government that would economise, support and promote Indian industries, (here of course they departed from Free Trade), Indianize the services, gradually extend the representative element, promote primary education etc. They had the example of Japan and they argued that if Japan could modernize herself so rapidly, so could India. Industrialization, representative government by stages, gradualism were their ideals. They were not fully aware of the shortcomings of an industrial civilization.

With their predominantly legal background, their exclusive exposure to British political institutions, and their urban and upper caste filiations they tended to see certain aspects of politics and ignore others. The native traditions and social order were regarded as basically backward and a drag upon

the future. They tried to replicate as many institutions of the west as would be possible in this country. They were concerned with questions such as ensuring the foundations of a liberal democratic order, with the issue of Dominion Status, Indian immigrants in the colonies, the implications of the cry of *Swaraj,* the civil service question, the communal issue, local self-government, primary education, reduction in military expenditure etc. These were issues that particularly suited the liberal mind and approach. They could be debated upon, issues clarified, social implications unravelled, and some sort of acceptable solution hammered out.

They were committed to work with the government wherever possible. They realized the limitations of such a compromise and this very often reduced them to ridicule in the public eye. For instance Gokhale with considerable search of heart agreed to the Press Bill (1909). The intense debate that took place within the inner councils of the liberal elite, the moral dilemma in which both he and others were placed were not known to the public. Opposing the bill would have led to the resignation of Lord Sinha, the first Indian member in the Council and to the jubilation of Tories and the diehards in the British bureaucracy and to halt the tardy pace of reform. Assenting to it would have meant betraying the cause of nationalism. Gokhale did not want to throw a spanner in the wheels of reform. He was misunderstood then and it is only now that we have the full details and are in a position to judge the event with the full background. But to his contemporaries, he was a betrayer. Similarly, on the extension of the communal franchise, the liberals almost persuaded Lord Morley to a secular alternative principle. The Viceroy was more persuasive and the Secretary of State gave in despite his reservations. The Liberals were again to be twitted by the Extremists.

As the decades passed by, the liberals mattered as individuals but the group as a whole could do little in Indian politics. Its annual meetings conducted in an esoteric language were barely of any appeal, for there was little of sloganeering and the bandying of phrases. They had no charismatic leaders.

Also they did not engage in the type of work that the group around Ranade excelled — collecting vast stores of facts relating to the Indian economy and pressing for the redressal of economic grievances. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri captured the mood and the prospects for the liberals very well:

> May be, the days of our power are gone. But the days of our influence are by no means gone. Few though we are, we are not without the power of warning against danger, of advising in difficulty, of pointing out the way of safety and security. These things we can do always, and now that we are totally free of all temptations to consult the polling booth, now that we can look facts in the face, we can afford more than any other person in the political life of India to speak the truth just as we see it, to serve India whom we love so much without fear or favour. It is not a small role to play, and so long as we still can do it, we will not be found wanting.

This of course was a statement made in 1937, but it summed up admirably the mood, the work, and the limitations of the liberals.

Success and Failure

Though they had concern for the masses and the downtrodden, their approach was basically one that was elitist and paternal not in the sense of condescension but in the sense of *noblesse oblige.* Ranade and no less than Sivaswami Aiyer knew of their responsibilities to the masses. But their methods were out of tune with the developments that were taking place in the country. B. C. Pal, and Tilak had indicated the enormous potential that could be mobilized in this country and which once aroused would shake the edifice of the government and the administration.

The methods used by Gandhi and his capacity to mobilize the masses, his absolute control over his followers made

the liberals lose the field totally to the Congress. Gandhi's contribution was to completely accept the methods of the liberals of an open polity, reasonable compromises, and dialogues with other parties in search of an acceptable solution. But he tried to foist populist politics on liberal methods and founded his brand of politics which only he could manage because of his personality, moral earnestness and tremendous seriousness. Only a saint in politics could do this—but alas Indian politics had not many of that vintage.

By the late thirties the liberals in a general sense had succeeded in converting the whole nation to the value of an open polity and a limited government. They remained valuable links between the government and the Congress and tried to work out the compromises as best as they could. Electorally with no base to stand upon, they had to be acceptable to the government, to the Congress and other interests. Sheer character, hard work, intellection of a high order, a sense of visible altruism were all the assets they had and they were indeed valuable assets. They had no ideology that would have been acceptable to the masses—it was too open-ended to make sense to a people restless for instant solutions.

Economic and Political Policies

It should be remembered that Indian Liberalism was primarily a social and a political movement and its economic dimensions were derived from the earlier liberal school of Adam Smith rather than of Herbert Spencer. Adam Smith had advocated state activities in those areas of the economy where the individual would not act on his own. Following him, J. S. Mill was to give an impressive list of economic activities to be fostered by the state: roads, docks, harbours, canals, irrigation, hospitals, schools and colleges. Ranade propagated state interference in the economy for promotion of economic goods and production. He contrasted the administration of the Dutch in Java against the inactivities of the Indian government in the economic sphere. While in the field of political economy,

the liberals led by Ranade expected active state promotion, in the field of social reform too they advocated that the state step in and regulate social customs and legislate on many social evils. Indian liberals were not Social Darwinists.

The programme of Ranade and Gokhale remained the core of the liberal's economic ideology. Beyond this they were not able to innovate. With the political problems nearly within reach of solution, for it was only a matter of time, one would have expected that they would come to grips with economic developments and with Western intellectual movements that were shaking Europe and which soon were to have wider ramifications. But having come of intellectual age in an earlier decade they were not willing to re-examine the foundations of their economic ideas and were not willing to risk revolutionary ideas. Not only in India, but in other parts of Asia as well the liberals were no great enthusiasts or champions of either revolutionary or Marxist ideas. Most found the broad confines of their ideology ample enough for them to roam about. They failed precisely in an hour when their contribution could have been most valuable. For as Sastri had mentioned they did not have to chase votes and had nothing to lose by pursuing ideas to their logical end.

At this stage it may be necessary to contrast the political and economic principles of Western Europe when the liberals adopted European principles. By the last few decades of the last century their political principles had been vindicated by European and American practice. The philosophy had effectively controlled government, made responsible government practicable and helped in the realisation of individual rights. It was easy to see the utility of the philosophy and adopt it. The only alternative to this was either anarchy or irresponsible government.

The twentieth century economic counterpart to this was socialism. The theory was attractive and the moralist humanism that informed it was doubtless a strong magnet.

There were two economic alternatives—one fuzzy and unclear but highly acceptable and the other with extensive

"scientific validity" and hence having its own attractions. These were the Congress versions of economic development and the varieties of European socialist alternatives. Unlike now, till the first decade of the century, none of these varieties of social, economic and political alternatives was available for consideration for the national reconstruction of a country.

The Congress congeries of ideologies dominated by the populism of Gandhi would brook little of any questioning. Rural economic issues were regarded as basically solvable by constructive work, promotion of khadi, prohibition and the practising of contentment. The Mahatma believed that all the differences and conflicts between the capitalists, and labour, zamindar and tenants could be harmoniously resolved by love, peace and *ahimsa*. The Congress would take care of all of them. *Ipse dixit*—and could anyone question it? It should be remembered that the supporters of the Congress from the rural areas would not have tolerated any interference into the rural *status quo*. Temperamentally, the Congress did not want to rock the boat.

Western Ideas and an Indian Setting

The liberals therefore lost their importance and they could play only an extremely limited role for the decades following the rise of Gandhi. To the new generations that had now been recruited to politics the old solutions of the liberals appeared to be of little significance in an international context where the well-worn institutions were collapsing all around. The new generation was educated in foreign lands and it was schooled and socialized in new values. To those who had been educated abroad in the twenties and thirties and who were to take over the leadership of the country, European challenges mattered greatly. These were basically European and American issues and to the westerner they were matters of life and death.

The great crash in the west meant to the sensitive westerner the collapse of almost everything that was taken for granted—property rights, stability of institutions, the price structure,

employment opportunities etc. It was difficult to explain the harrowing experience of burning of grain to keep up prices, when people elsewhere were starving. Economic and political stability collapsed. And in countries that had a sense of discipline such as Germany there was a total chaos with Hitler rising out of anarchy. Mussolini with his weird political philosophy and the capitulation of the capitalist system to the dictators compelled people to believe that fascism was the last stage of capitalism. How long would British and American institutions last? But in India these were not immediate issues. It was not as though the country was not plagued by the Depression. But with industrialisation here being far from developed there was nothing similar to the terrible experience of the queues for doles, unemployment etc. In our country Hitler and Mussolini were far off figures and there appeared to be no urgency to rethink of economic and political terms other than in terms of *purna swaraj,* dominion status etc. Most issues were seen as evils arising out of imperialism and bureaucratic rule and if these were replaced the problem of reconstructing India would automatically sort itself.

However, in spite of these the tendency was in some quarters, to see Indian problems in terms of western experience. Typical of these was the position taken by Jawaharlal Nehru who in 1929 declared his socialistic sympathies and proclaimed his distrust in kings, princes, the captains of industry who according to him were basically predatory. The triumph of the new ideas is well-recapitulated in the 1931 Karachi Congress where it was resolved that the "state shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport."

In asserting this, the Congress was only anticipating a general trend of thinking in the country. To the Indian intellectual the gap between theoretical possibilities and the depressing reality was striking. Europe and the U.S. for a hundred years had demonstrated that it would be possible to reduce poverty, restructure the social and economic patterns,

extend health and welfare, educate its growing citizens and in fact move towards giving some effect to the dream of political philosophers. True, there was still a long way for the working classes to go ahead. But the terrible days of the early nineteenth century were things of the past. With discipline and order many things could be achieved.

In aiming at this, two schools of socialist thought emerged and both tended to give a new emphasis to the Indian economy and were to have a deep influence in the coming decades. Unfortunately, Indian liberals like Sastri and Sivaswami Aiyer both of whom were widely travelled and exposed to social developments abroad were not able to see the larger role of the state and educate the public regarding what the state could do and could not do. They were not able to challenge the socialist presumptions or meet their arguments. This was in sharp contrast to what they could do in the political sphere where they challenged the Congress and offered alternative solutions. An essay in an alternative economy could have given rise to a debate and a genuinely Indian solution perhaps would have emerged. But the fact that the new ideologies went unchallenged itself indicated the exhaustion of ideas that haunted the liberal camp.

Of the two socialist movements one was the Communist which wanted a reorientation of the economy and society on lines that were delineated by the Soviets in their directives. It generally parroted their arguments and their positions and in the absence of any other economic ideology it tended to make an impression. The other was the socialist school and this was mainly inspired by a group of intellectuals (Jayaprakash, Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, M. R. Masani among them), who wanted a genuine socialist transformation of the economy and hence of the society in India. Within the socialist movement itself contrary influences were dominant. One was the labour experiment on lines of the British party, another Marxist Socialism and the third the Soviet transformation. While the ideology of the Congress Socialist Party might have been Marxist, their direct

acquaintance with the Soviet system was more or less superficial. Among them Masani was the only one who had seen the length and stretch of the USSR on two occasions; Nehru too had visited the USSR and was to write enthusiastically about it. In the context of a crumbling capitalist order in the west and the rise of totalitarian systems, the record of the Soviets when seen through conducted tours was certainly impressive.

Congress Socialism, Theory and Practice

These intellectuals attempted to be active in the inner circles of the Congress and it was the peculiar genius of Gandhi that he could accommodate all these divers opinions and groups within the Congress umbrella. They had a definite programme of action and hoped to influence the Congress in their programmes. It could be said that in the 1930s a very genuine break was registered in rethinking on matters economic. With Gandhi, economic programmes were basically an aspect of a moral vision; it was left to the socialist to break through fresh ways of resolving economic issues.

There was a contradictory development between the theory and practise of politics. In the late 1930s when the Congress took office in the provinces, the policies followed were far from ameliorative of the lot of the peasants, or of the workers or towards abolition of zamindari or relief to the sharecroppers. In Bihar, United Provinces and in Madras the legislation passed barely affected the entrenched economic interests adversely. The defeat of Bose at the hands of the right wing of the Congress clearly indicated that the organisation was fully with the old guard who did not want any changes.

While this might have been the position of the Congress governments, the climate of opinion in Congress party circles was for experimentation. By 1938, the National Planning Committee was constituted with Nehru as Chairman. The era of planning was to come to India soon. It is significant that the disillusionment of the leftist intellectual immediately

after the Popular Front in Europe was not to have any impact on Indian socialist opinion. In Europe by the late 1930s, all those who were once ardent leftists got educated in communist ways and left the Communist party in droves and recanted and tried to reinterpret the strength and weakness of a capitalist economy. Neither the liberals in India nor the socialists, leftists or progressive Congressmen in the 1940s were to engage in any revisionist exercise.

This is understandable but hardly surprising considering how distant these were then. To the westerner, his very survival as individual and a self-determining group was at stake. To us other problems were important. But this meant a persistent myopia to the dangers of the problems of social organisations that had arisen in the west—the rise of single party totalitarian systems, the cruelties of command economies, genocide on flimsy and fantastic grounds, total regimentation of individuals and glorification of sheer violence. To people in India till the 1940s there was no way of knowing how it had worked and it was difficult to take what its detractors alleged about it seriously. For they had much to lose, their privileges and their profits. That capitalism was in crisis was evident. While the rank and file of the Congress was suspicious of these new fangled theories, the intellectuals felt attracted for it was by and large an intellectual's reconstruction of society. It was only by the late forties that a few came to know of the totalitarian dimensions implicit in the collectivist system. By the fifties the truth was well-known but the fact that much of the publicity came from the capitalist press made it suspect in the minds of the intellectuals. It is one of the ironies that a group of Indian intellectuals could not meet, discuss or judge for themselves the realities of the collectivist economic system.

The Indian Constitution Embodies Liberal Values

Except for a fringe of extremist Gandhians a political consensus had been arrived at regarding a constitution for free India.

With independence, some of those who were trained by the liberals entered the Constituent Assembly and worked at the writing of the Indian Constitution which is basically a liberal document. As in other countries with a constitution or a settled political framework, there have been controversies regarding amending the constitution. Fears have been expressed that the powers of the government sought to be extended might whittle away the rights of the individual. The courts have given conflicting judgements and by and large our system has proved both flexible and tough. Values have been in conflict and the resolution of these generally have emphasized certain procedures which cumulatively have emphasized democratic liberal ideals, though they are sicklied over with populist stances. We could assert with a certain confidence that ours is one of the countries in the third world that have reconciled liberal and collectivist values. Such reconciliation is admittedly far from stable. Every few years the forces for change confront those for stability, and debates are started again regarding the values of the Constitution. This should not be regarded as abnormal; Mill noticed this as central to any social system by contrasting the positions of Coleridge and Bentham.

But what is important is to note that such a discussion can take place only in the context of freedom and dissent. This the liberals hammered in our tradition of political thought.

In our country the private sector and indigenous capitalist institutions have proved to be indeed very adaptive and innovative. A mixed economy has come to stay. Even if we conceded the primacy of the public sector, their uniform abysmal performance has discredited them totally. Socialist practices are on the defensive here as in many other parts of the world. Not only in China but in other socialist sectors too socialism and collectivism are on the retreat. The performance of the socialist economics in Afro-Asia by and large has been dismal.

In the western world itself opinion on the desirability of public sectors is far from being dogmatic. There has been

a total abandonment of nationalization as the panacea for economic ills. State control of the economy is accepted as is public control and regulation of all enterprises. There has been a total rejection of totalitarian methods while in India under the influence of Gandhi we had already adopted this decades earlier.

The democratic aspects of socialism are regarded as important as the economic ones. Free speech, freedom to propagate and organise opinions are regarded as basic. Since a revolution would destroy all these, revolutionary methods have been abandoned. Another important modification in the western world is the transformation of class as a factor. Parties which had started as class parties now have attempted to broaden out to include other classes, and have become mass parties. The wit of man has found new ways of extending social justice. The budget has been used as a weapon of egalitarianism, affirmative action takes care of the unfortunates. Even as Gandhi emphasised constructive programmes as releasing a great deal of voluntary activity, social work, social service and promotion of voluntary groups are encouraged. Political participation has gained a new dimension in these areas.

Also there are dimensions of a new liberal society that have developed in the west. Unfortunately they were yet to be absorbed within the Indian political and social experience. It was left to different intellectuals to stress different aspects of these and arrive at an Indian version of liberalism, that is still in the making. Persons as different as Gandhi, Jayaprakash, M. N. Roy, M. R. Masani and later Rajaji have stressed aspects which cumulatively can be regarded as a liberal philosophy. But this is yet to be developed systematically.

As it has developed, it is more an attitude than a consistent philosophy. The emphasis is on a rejection of the importance of material values for their own sake. Humanism, the dignity of the meanest individual and a sense of spirituality (not in the sense of religiosity) are central to it. The root is man. Decentralisation is both regarded as a means and as a value in itself. Education in public awareness, co-operation in social

matters are important and central. Equally important is the stress on self-help, in helping people to stand on their own rather than lean on others all their lives. The *Antyodaya* programme was partly a fulfillment of this ideal. Mechanization, consumerism for its own sake, the need to live up with one's international neighbours (whether it be in grand structures or in hosting conferences) are the least important things. There is need to mobilize people and the only way this can be done is through democratic means for there is no other way out. This is particularly true of the poor—deny them the democratic rights to organize and press for their claims and what is left for them? It stresses participation, but participation in groups. In short it harks back to Rousseau's dream but totally devoid of the totalitarian implications in Rousseau.

Incentives to Goodness in Public Life

R. M. Lala

For thirty years Jayaprakash Narayan pursued the road to Marxism. In 1934 along with Minoo Masani and some other idealists, he launched the Congress Socialist Party. J.P. and his young colleagues spent hours discussing with Gandhiji questions on Marxism and religion, on ends and means—all against the back-drop of the freedom struggle. "One day," said Gandhiji of J.P., "this young man will speak my language."

He did—four years after the Mahatma's death. Gandhiji was not the only one to be interested. Minoo Masani had already changed his views on Marxism. In the 1940s when J.P. was in prison, Masani sent him books like Arthur Koestler's 'Darkness at Noon'. Still J.P. held on to his views. It was only in the early 1950s that J.P. began to waver. He had just concluded his three week fast in Pune, in 1952, when he bade good-bye to Marxism.

In an article he wrote at Masani's invitation in *Freedom First,* J.P. said that for years he had worshipped at the shrine of the goddess of dialectical materialism but he had come to realize that "materialism of any sort robs man of the means to be truly human. In a material civilisation man has no rational incentive to be good."

"In days gone by", said J.P. "men tried to be good, impelled by some higher moral force in which they believed; and goodness means such things as truthfulness, honesty, kindness, chastity, unselfishness. Men felt that it was the highest moral duty to try to be good. Society provided every individual with the motive to be good; it was the command of religion, of God; it was necessary for one's highest growth, for self-

realization; it brought peace and supreme happiness; it brought salvation and freedom from births and deaths.

"In present society, with the hold of religion gone, faith in God shaken, moral values discarded as dead-weights of the dark ages of history; in short with materialism enthroned in men's hearts, are there any incentives to goodness left? Indeed, has the question any relevance at all to present facts, problems and ideals of human society?

"I hold emphatically that no other question is more relevant to us today."

J.P. spoke how man has drifted away from goodness: "The individual asks today why should he be good. There is no God, no soul, no morality, no life hereafter, no cycle of birth and death. He is merely an organisation of matter, fortuitously brought into being, and destined soon to dissolve into the infinite ocean of matter. He sees all around him evil succeed—corruption, profiteering, lying, deception, cruelty, power politics, violence. He asks naturally why he should be virtuous. Our social norms of today and the materialist philosophy which rules the affairs of men answer back; he need not."

Jayaprakash concluded that "man must go beyond the material to find the incentive to goodness."

If a materialist philosophy fails to provide an incentive to goodness, can a moral philosophy and a set of values do it? What can propel a man into the orbit of goodness, and sustain him there against temptations of selfishness, greed, fame, power and position?

The first thing to be clear about is that, to exercise goodness in public life may not necessarily invite appreciation but ridicule. That is precisely what happened to Gandhi when in pursuing goodness he admitted he had made a "Himalayan blunder". "My confession," he said, "brought down upon me no small measure of ridicule but I have never regretted having made that confession for I have always held that it is only when one sees one's own mistakes through a convex lens and

just the reverse in the case of others, that one is able to arrive at a just relative estimate of the two."

Later, the national civil disobedience movement that had swept the nation was called off by Gandhi because of the Chauri Chaura incident, where a crowd went berserk in one corner of India and killed twenty-two policemen. Nehru and others were furious at Gandhiji's decision. "Our mounting hopes tumbled to the ground," Nehru wrote. But Gandhi made millions like Nehru think. Asked Nehru, "Ends and means, were they tied up inseparably, acting and reacting on each other, the wrong means distorting and even destroying the end in view?"

Geoffrey Ashe, a biographer of Gandhi put it this way: "He (Gandhi) threw away his ace and briefly lost his bearings. But in the act he enrolled himself among the immortals. For the first time a course that would have gained a political objective was vetoed at a higher level.... Mahatma Gandhi was willing to fail."

"Willing to fail." The incentive for Gandhi was not success, because his incentive was not power. His incentive was that strange indefinable term 'Truth'; one might say "to do what is right." And he was willing to gamble and throw away his all on that. To thirst for righteousness as a hart thirsts for a spring, to paraphrase from the Bible. Gandhi had that thirst. And he went to the fountain-head to quench it—through prayer and listening to the inner voice. "The only tyrant I recognise," he said, "is the voice within." His love for goodness came from his personal love for the source of all goodness. In words that ring so similar to Gandhi's, Lord Acton said almost a century ago:

"The true guide of our conduct is no outward authority, but the voice of God, who comes down to dwell in our souls, who knows all our thoughts, to whom are owing all the truth we know, and all the good we do; for vice is voluntary, and virtue comes from the grace of the heavenly spirit within."

Centuries before Machiavelli propounded his denial of good in public life, Socrates discussed goodness at length.

To him virtue was "Knowledge of what ought to be." Evil "ignorance of what ought to be." The definition is incomplete for conduct does not depend only on intellectual perception. Conduct is determined by the human will, with its concentric layers of pride, hate, lust and fear. Most of us are in the situation of St. Paul: " . . . For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not that I do . . . " Mark Twain put man's dilemma as follows, "What worries me about the Bible are not the parts I do not understand. It is the parts *I do*."

While Socrates may have fallen short in his definition of virtue, he succeeded in the demonstration of the meaning of goodness in the last days of his life.

When sentenced to death by the Athenian Tribunal everyone expected him to ask for exile or a fine as others did—a request that was invariably granted. But to the despair of his friends, Socrates did neither. Crito persuaded him "Men will love you in other places and not in Athens only." So, why not escape from jail by bribing the jailor?

"Not life," replied Socrates, "But a good life, is to be chiefly valued." Of course, Socrates noted, he could be feasted abroad, "but then what about those fine sentiments of justice and virtue?" Crito then touched him at a sore spot. He accused Socrates of neglecting his children still too young for he had married late in life.

As with Gandhi 2400 years later so with Socrates "the inner God given voice" as Socrates called it, spoke. "Listen then Socrates," the voice told him, "think not of wife and children first. Now you depart in innocence a sufferer and not a doer of evil."

And then came the jailor with the hemlock . . . . The exit of Socrates was a brief moment in history but as a symbol of man's courage and goodness it shines down the ages.

The healing power of goodness manifests itself in many ways, especially in the aftermath of great inflictions. In the Pacific wars, the deepest wounds were inflicted by the Japanese on the Filippinos who had offered stout resistance. Manila was one of the most damaged cities outside of Japan and even

a decade after the war's end hulks of half-sunk ships were visible against the skyline. The reparation talks between Japan and the Philippines were still dragging on. The Speaker of the Japanese Diet, Niro Hoshijima represented the Japanese Prime Minister on a mission of Moral Rearmament to Manila in 1955. At the end of the performance of a play, Hoshijima was introduced from a platform at the Far Eastern University. As he started speaking in the hated language, Japanese, hissing and stamping broke out. Then, the words of the translator came through: "We must come to a just settlement on reparations." Sarcastic jeering greeted the announcement. Hoshijima continued. The translator, a young Japanese lady, gulped and with tears welling in her eyes as she translated in English: "But first, I must apologise for what we did here as a nation during the war."

The translator recalled later: "So strong was the feeling coming from the audience that it was like a strong wind rushing at you, and I felt I had to lean into it as I translated with all my passion. When they heard the apology there was a sudden hush, followed by applause, in what was a tremendous change of emotion."

Magsaysay was then the President and he prophesised that the apology would make the settlement of reparations possible. It did; President Garcia who succeeded Magsaysay observed "the bitterness of former years is being washed away by compassion and forgiveness." Goodness won the day for both nations.

The translator was a young lady called Yukika Sohma. Today, thirty years later she is a celebrated public figure and President of the Federation of Asian Women's Associations. Stirred by the suffering of Indo-Chinese refugees, she appealed in the press and on TV to each Japanese to give only 1 yen to assuage their sufferings.

"I wanted to help the refugees, but at the same time I want to help the Japanese, and the best way to do this is to open their purses not just those of the rich people, but of the ordinary people."

Japan responded. In four months the initial target of 110 million yen was exceeded and in addition came gifts in kind. Thousands sent clothes. Not only the receiver but the giver was also blest.

In our times Australia produced a remarkable statesman in Kim Beazley, Sr. labour MP who was 28 years in opposition and finally 3 brief years in office as Education Minister. But when he retired from parliament in 1975 the Australian National University in its doctorate citation said of Beazley that "few people have done as much, and none have done more" than Kim Beazley to change the attitude of the Australian people to the Aborigines. The Australian newspapers called him "probably Parliament's best orator". When Beazley took office in 1972 Aborigines' Schools could receive instruction only in English. In some states teachers could be penalised under the law for teaching in Aboriginee languages.

On his first morning after being sworn in as Education Minister, Beazley, who like Gandhi had regular times of quiet, wrote down: "To deny a people an education in their own language is to treat them as a conquered people, and we have treated the Aboriginees so. Arrange for Aboriginees to choose the language of Aboriginee Schools, with English as second language."

At 3 p.m. that day he discussed the matter with the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. At 5 p.m. Whitlam announced it on the National news.

Soon after he retired from office I asked Mr. Beazley what are the qualities he deemed essential for leadership and the first he mentioned was "Compassion." He said elsewhere: "If you do not accept the importance of conscience, you accept only the importance of power. This question of motive is the key to social advance."

It was not always so with Beazley. When he began political life in the early fifties he spent his time in the pursuit purely of political power. When someone first suggested the discipline of the conscience he said to himself, "What a shockingly subservient thing to say to a politician!"

"God," he said, "till then had occupied in my life the place of a constitutional monarch." But over the years through the discipline of times of quiet and of obedience, God became an effective monarch. In the long years of waiting in opposition Beazley awakened Australia to the injustice of not giving the Aborigines even a vote in the elections. He succeeded after 15 years of effort along with others, to right this injustice. Says Beazley, "It is not necessary to be in power in order to be an effective force. I have spent 28 years in opposition and I have come to believe the true function of opposition is to out-think the Government at the point of its successes."

What are the various elements that can provide a man incentives to goodness?

A man's value system can be such that he enjoys doing what is good. It is deeply satisfying to him as grabbing power, authority or money is to another. It may or may not be linked to the fact that he has a faith in the Divine for I have met many an atheist and agnostic who pursues goodness, and so-called "men of faith" who relentlessly pursue their selfish ends. There is a consistency of behaviour when a humble man seeks to obey a power beyond himself, call it God, the Divine, or what you will. As the Psalmist sings:

"This alone do I ask of the Eternal,
This one thing I desire
A vision of the Eternal's goodness
In the temple at the morning hour."

The man's conduct can, with all his frailties, often reflect his vision of the Eternal's goodness.

A love for other people, often for those near and dear, can also, prompt a man to choose goodness. If you love another person you are not dishonest, selfish or readily resentful. You may feel tempted to be any of these, but you attempt to soar above it. Sometimes love overflows beyond to a community, a nation, even to the world.

When Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Writers' Club in Moscow Mrs. Sakharov met outside the Club, a lesser known writer whose face was radiant—a picture of happiness.

She had a brief word with him saying to herself, "Good Lord, has this man fallen in love or what? As she stepped into the Club someone pointed to the writer she had just met and told her, "You know he has just written a letter of protest against the expulsion of Solzhenitsyn and has left the Club."

Mrs. Sakharov adds, "Then I understood that the writer's face had been so happy because he had made an effort and forced himself to be honest—honest not only with himself but honest aloud." There are times when the candle of goodness has to be established on a hill-top so all can see and find inspiration from its glow.

In the tapestry of goodness are woven strands of honesty and courage and the humility to listen to a higher source within.

J.P. stated that a society that provided incentives to goodness would not come from "the inert mass" as from "the elite." It is the philosophy and action of this group of the select that determines the destinies of man. "To the extent the elite become Godless or amoral to that extent evil overtakes the human race," observed J.P. Three decades after he wrote these words a sizeable section of the elite is more amoral than in the 1950s. But history shows that the tide of evil and corruption can be turned back, as Victorian England demonstrated.

To undertake "the task of social reconstruction" that J.P. was eager about, we will have to go beyond diagnosis of falling values and instead create a climate where incentives to goodness flourish—to begin with each in his own way.

In his *Study of History* Arnold Toynbee noted that only "a creative minority" can leaven a society. In India the minority is there but in one sense it is too dispersed, too fragmented to make a difference. Could there be a catalyst, a force to bring them together beaming their resources on to a common task?

The Persistence of Unwisdom in Government and the Duty to Dissent

Nani A. Palkhivala

When the history of India comes to be written a hundred years hence, the name of Minoo Masani will continue to shine brightly as one of the finest exemplars of the true values so fundamental, and so rare, in citizens. He will be remembered for his patriotism, his indomitable courage and his passionate love of freedom, when the names of countless politicians who have held high public offices in our country are totally lost in the silence of the centuries. I thought no subject would be more appropriate in a volume intended to commemorate Minoo Masani's 80th Birthday than the one to which his long public life has been single-mindedly devoted — The Duty to Dissent.

According to Barbara Tuchman, twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize, who recently wrote on *An Inquiry into the Persistence of Unwisdom in Government,* governments act unwisely because politicians cannot admit error; they lust for power; they lack self-confidence and magnanimity; they are more interested in image than in substance; they rarely get the right information let alone know how to act on it.

Democratically elected representatives of the people can act no less foolishly, and often no less oppressively, than authoritarian states. Hence the necessity of the right "to freedom of speech and expression" guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) of our Constitution. The right to dissent is at the heart of every democracy. This right becomes the duty of every knowledgeable and right-minded citizen, when government

acts in a manner detrimental to civil liberties or otherwise against the public interest. The *right* to dissent is conferred by the Constitution; the *duty* to dissent is dictated by the realization that in a democracy citizens have to practise obedience to the unenforceable.

Justice Frankfurter expressed the pregnant thought that in a democracy the highest office is not that of the president but that of being a citizen. "Democracy is always a beckoning goal, not a safe harbour. For freedom is an unremitting endeavour, never a final achievement".

A study of history, regardless of the period or the type of government in authority, makes one wonder why man makes a poorer show of government than of almost any other human activity. In the field of governmental activity, wisdom — which may be defined as judgment acting on experience, common sense, available knowledge, and a keen appreciation of probability — is amazingly absent. Why do men in high office so often act contrary to the way that reason points and enlightened public interest enjoins? Why does intelligent mental process seem to be so often paralyzed?

Why did successive ministries of George III — that "bundle of imbecility" as Dr. Johnson called them collectively — insist on coercing rather than conciliating the thirteen Colonies which, as a result, broke away and declared themselves as a republic, destined to be the most powerful in the world, — the United States of America? Why did Napoleon invade Russia and Hitler repeat the same mistake? Why did the Kaiser's government resume unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 despite the clear warning that this would result in the entry of the United States into the war? Why did Chiang Kai-shek refuse to heed any voice of reform or alarm until he woke up to find that his country had been irretrievably lost to him? Why did Lyndon Johnson engage in the Vietnam war which was the wrong war fought with the wrong weapons against the wrong enemy on the wrong battlefield?

Wooden-headedness is a characteristic feature of governments. Wooden-headedness assesses a situation in terms

of preconceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contra indications. In short, it is the obstinate refusal to learn from experience.

Summing up this basic lesson of all history, Barbara Tuchman concludes, "Philosophers of government ever since Plato have devoted their thinking to the major issues of ethics, sovereignty, the social contract, the rights of man, the corruption of power, the balance between freedom and order. Few — except Machiavelli, who was concerned with government as it is, not as it should be — bothered with mere folly, although this has been a chronic and pervasive problem. 'Dost thou not know, my son,' said a dying Swedish statesman in the seventeenth century, 'with how little wisdom the world is governed.' More recently, Woodrow Wilson warned, 'In public affairs, stupidity is more dangerous than knavery.' . . . Meanwhile, bureaucracy rolls on impervious to any individual or cry for change, like some vast computer that when once penetrated by error goes on pumping it out forever."

Gibbon observed that human history is "little more than a register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." The history of the Republic of India for several years upto 1984 was a sorry chronicle of the follies of our administration. Let us cast a glance at some of them — for instance, the pernicious doctrine of fundamentalism which infected our constitutional processes and our economic thinking till last year.

Constitutional integrity must be sharply distinguished from constitutional fundamentalism. While Pakistan has gone in for religious fundamentalism, India's besetting sin is secular fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism is the triumph of the letter over the spirit. It spurns the lesson taught two thousand years ago that the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. In our unwitting addiction to fundamentalism, we are strongly supported by two defects in our national character — lack of a sense of fairness, and lack of a sense of moderation.

In the past, constitutional fundamentalism enabled the

Union to rob the States of their constitutional right to deal with industries, by the simple expedient of Parliament irrationally declaring that control over them by the Union was "expedient in the public interest." The letter of the Constitution was satisfied, while the spirit of the Constitution was buried fifty fathoms deep.

Similarly, the governments at the Centre and in the States bypassed with impunity the legislature and promulgated a spate of Ordinances which were patently unconstitutional. An ordinance can be promulgated only when *necessity* compels *immediate action* while the legislature is not in session (Articles 123, 213, and 239B), whereas Ordinances were being regularly promulgated in India just before the session of the legislature was to begin, so as to confront the legislature with an accomplished fact, or just after the session was over. All schemes of nationalization of individual undertakings or of entire industries were invariably kept back while the legislature was in session and were promulgated only in the form of Ordinances. The letter of the Constitution was satisfied by the President or the Governor making a declaration that while the legislature was not in session, circumstances existed which rendered it necessary for him to take immediate action. The President as well as Governors were (and still are) bound to act on the advice of the Council of Ministers who were jubilantly aware that outraging the sanctity of the Constitution, however shamelessly, was not a punishable crime.

An Ordinance which is intended to be a temporary law to meet an urgent crisis ceases to operate at the expiry of six weeks from the reassembly of the legislature. But by the simple device of repromulgating Ordinances again and again, they were kept indefinitely alive, while the assembly and prorogation of the legislature were merely interludes in the Ordinance Raj. As Dr. D. C. Wadhwa pointed out in his book *Repromulgation of Ordinances: A Fraud on the Constitution of India* published in 1983, in the Bihar State alone 256 Ordinances were kept alive for periods ranging from one to fourteen years.

In the field of economics we had the same phenomenon of

fundamentalism as we had in our method of working the Constitution. In the past the Government respected the letter of socialism — State control and State ownership — while the spirit of social justice was left no chance of coming to life.

A telling illustration is the type of controls which were imposed upon cement in the name of socialism. The industry writhed for four decades under the crushing burden of wholly irrational price and distribution control. Politicians and bureaucrats in public administration, and racketeers and buccaneers in private deals, made fortunes at the expense of the common man and the exchequer, while the honest manufacturer was left with no resources even to maintain his plant. Cement control had to result in one Chief Minister being summarily deposed and two others being severely discomfited, and the generation of black income from cement had to reach the level of Rs. 700 crores per annum, before the king-size folly of control dawned upon us.

Take, again, the direct taxes which were levied in India year after year, corroding national character and making the people thoroughly dishonest, till the nonsensical rates of tax were dramatically lowered in 1985. For several years, our income-tax rates went up to 97.75%, and wealth-tax rates went up to 8% (plus 7% in the case of urban property): they virtually amounted to annual confiscation of income and wealth. The burden of income-tax and wealth-tax combined, was the highest in the world, on the fruits of non-agricultural activities. It was possible to become wealthy in India, but not by mere ability, industry or enterprise, or even by a combination of all the three. Different classes of the new rich emerged — tax evaders, black marketeers, bosses of co-operatives, prosperous farmers and some successful politicians. The pre-1985 annual budgets, with their absurd levels of taxation, constituted a supreme ironic procession with the laughter of the Goddess of Wealth in the background.

Fruitful egalitarianism is in glaring contrast to sterile socialism. I wish India would be the first country in the world to call itself — not socialist but egalitarian. An egalitarian

government does not aim at ideological socialism, i.e. State ownership and State control, but it aims at raising the level of the poor by efficacious means. Egalitarianism means the investment of human and material resources in an imaginatively planned manner which can contribute to the vitality and progress of the whole nation, keep it in the mainstream of self-generating growth and development, raise the standard of living of the masses, and enhance the quality of life. While ideological socialism is within the reach of any fifth-rate politician, the translation of egalitarianism into action demands intellect and knowledge, character and dedication, of the highest order. The great merit of the present Government is that it is steering the country towards egalitarianism, in practice if not in name.

A law does not cease to be tyrannical because it has been passed by the elected representatives of the people. The types of laws passed by the Members of Parliament during the dark days of the Emergency are frightening examples of the type of tyranny which would have prevailed in this country but for the far-sighted wisdom of our founding fathers in enacting fundamental rights. It was the elected representatives of the people who in 1975 passed laws to the effect that no one could write or speak anything in public which was not acceptable to the government. Anyone could be put in jail without a trial and the barbarous law went to the absurd extent of expressly stating that, apart from the total suspension of the fundamental right to liberty in the Constitution, no citizen could plead a right to liberty based on common law, natural law or rules of natural justice. The law further laid down in effect that a government official may not be *permitted*, leave aside compelled, to disclose even to the court of law the grounds of indefinite detention without trial. The judgments and reports of judicial proceedings of cases argued during the Emergency could not be published, however accurate, except in a form which was acceptable to the Censor.

No impartial mind studying the history of the Indian republic over the last 35 years would have any doubt that

one of the fundamental obligations of the ideal Indian citizen has been the duty to dissent. But how many citizens had the integrity and courage to fulfil this obligation during the 35 years of our republic? If this duty had not been performed, regardless of personal considerations, by the few brave and perceptive citizens like Minoo Masani at crucial moments, the history of this country would have been tragically different.

The Constitution and the judicial protection of the rights of the individual

Soli J. Sorabjee

On 26th November 1949 the people of India gave unto themselves a written Constitution. This formidable task was accomplished by the Founding Fathers in a period of 2 years, 11 months and 17 days at a cost of Rs. 63,96,729/-, the current price of one of the better types of ownership flats in Bombay.

Constituent Assembly debates make fascinating reading, especially those relating to the subject of fundamental rights and their protection against the legislature and the executive.

The role of the Judiciary

The Founding Fathers laid great store by the judiciary. They realised that without an effective and independent enforcement machinery fundamental rights would be no better than mere maxims of political morality. They did not accept the position that the legislature and the executive can be trusted to observe the limitations placed upon them. Mr. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar warned that the "executive which comes into being for the time being is apt to abuse its powers, and therefore the Supreme Court must be there, strong and untrammelled by the day-to-day passions which may bring a set of people into power and also throw them out in a very short time." Kazi Syed Karimuddin bluntly said: "We cannot entrust the interpretation of these clauses in the fundamental rights to the vagaries of legislatures."

Accordingly a constitutional remedy for enforcing fundamental rights was provided as a guaranteed fundamental right itself. Dr. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution, attached deep importance to this provision (Article 32 of the Constitution). He said: "If I was asked to name any particular article in this Constitution as the most important—an article without which this Constitution would be a nullity--I could not refer to any other article except this one. It is the very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it . . . "

Courts in India have never had any doubt about the role of the judiciary and the power of judicial review in our constitutional scheme. Although courts have not acted as a super legislature or a third chamber and have generally sustained legislation, especially socio-economic measures, there have been occasions when laws made by Parliament and state legislatures have been declared unconstitutional.

Countless executive acts have been struck down. To the common man the efficacy of judicial review has been in its ready availability to check executive arbitrariness, particularly at lower official levels. Innocent persons illegally detained, government servants wrongfully dismissed or illegally superceded, doctors capriciously refused passports, petty traders illegally deprived of licences and the countless victims of discrimination are all beholden to fearless judges.

The Supreme Court has refused to fold its hand in despair and declare 'judicial hands off' because the question has a political colour. Indeed on two occasions, constitutional amendments have been pronounced to be unconstitutional on the ground that they violated the basic structure of the Constitution, a unique constitutional doctrine innovated by our Supreme Court.

True, there have been aberrations, like the disastrous judgement in the Habeas Corpus cases during the Emergency, when the Supreme Court by a majority of 4 to 1, ruled that a proven *mala fide* detention of a person could not be successfully challenged because of the suspension of the

fundamental right of personal liberty. But it would be entirely wrong to conclude from this instance that the Indian judiciary is subservient. It should not be forgotten that it was a single Judge of the Allahabad High Court who invalidated the election of the most powerful person in the country, the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In 1977 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was out of power and she was arrested during the time when the Janata Government was in power, it was a Magistrate who declared her arrest unlawful and ordered her release.

Of late the Supreme Court has made significant advances in the sphere of two of the most basic human rights: equality and personal liberty. Our Constitution guarantees those rights to citizens and non-citizens alike.

Discrimination has been the bane of Indian Society. It has been practised on a vast scale and in a relentless manner for centuries. In some parts of India the practice of discrimination has almost become a way of life. Not surprisingly, the equal protection guarantee has assumed great importance for the protection of individual rights in recent years. It is in administrative law that our judges have most innovatively extended the ambit of the concept of equality.

Fight against arbitrary power

Burke's classical dictum, "Law and arbitrary power are in dreadful enmity", has had a pervasive influence upon judicial thinking in India. It has led to the emergence of the doctrine of 'absence of arbitrariness'. The seeds of this doctrine were laid in 1967 when Justice Subba Rao warned that "official arbitrariness is more subversive of the doctrine of equality than statutory discrimination. In respect of a statutory discrimination one knows where one stands, but the wand of official arbitrariness can be waved in all directions indiscriminately."

A new meaning and added dimension were imparted in 1974 to the equality provisions in the case of *Royappa* v.

State of Tamil Nadu in which the Court held that 'equality and arbitrariness are sworn enemies,' and an arbitrary act is *per se* violative of Article 14 and unconstitutional. With this judicial declaration of war on arbitrariness equality has steadily marched forward in India and victims of arbitrary action can approach the Supreme Court directly for judicial redress.

The guarantee of the equality clause has been extended to trading activities of the State. In the famous black-listing case the Supreme Court observed: "The State has the right to trade. The State has therefore the duty to observe equality. An ordinary individual can choose not to deal with any person. The government cannot choose to exclude persons by discrimination."

Patronage and bounty have been and are potential sources of discrimination and therefore in the matter of concessions also the State is obliged to respect the mandate of the equality clause. In the landmark judgement of *Ramanna* v. *International Airport Authority,* Justice Bhagwati speaking for the Court declared that every action of the executive government should be free from arbitrariness and it makes no difference whether the exercise of the power affects a right or withdraws a privilege.

The sweep of the equality provisions has been further extended by the Supreme Court's expansive interpretation of State action.

The expression 'State' has been held to include statutory bodies and statutory corporations such as insurance corporations, nationalised banks, airline corporations, electricity boards and also educational institutions whose composition and administration are predominantly controlled by the State.

The restraints and inhibitions flowing from the equality provisions which apply when government acts through its officers have been held to also operate in cases where the government acts through the instrumentality or agency of corporations or other institutions.

The salutary consequence of these judicial pronouncements is that fundamental rights can be claimed and enforced against the multitudinous agencies and corporations set up by the State in India which have become the biggest employers in the country in the organised sector, particularly in respect of diverse discriminatory practices in the field of employment. Otherwise these corporations could well become citadels of patronage and arbitrary action.

The most generous Bill of Rights would be of little use if it did not provide effective and meaningful protection to the most basic of all human rights: the right to life and personal liberty. The Constitution of India has provided for it in Article 21 in the following terms:

> No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Due Process of Law

In its first historic judgement delivered on May 19, 1950, in a matter arising out of the detention of the well-known communist A. K. Gopalan, the Supreme Court placed an unduly narrow and restrictive interpretation upon Article 21. The Court by a majority held that 'procedure established by law' means procedure established by a law enacted by the State. Once there is a law which is otherwise valid and constitutional and a person is deprived of his personal liberty according to the established procedure, that was the end of the matter. The Court refused to infuse the procedure with principles of natural justice.

Years later in 1978, the Supreme Court atoned for its niggardly approach in the case of Maneka Gandhi were it ruled that the procedure contemplated by Article 21 must be 'right, and just and fair', and in conformity with the principles of natural justice and must not be arbitrary, fanciful or oppressive; otherwise, it would be no procedure at all and the requirement of Article 21 would not be satisfied. After

the judgement in Maneka's case procedural due process has taken firm roots in Indian constitutional law.

The law of bail has been revolutionised by drawing inspiration from Article 21. The Court deprecated the practice of requiring indigent persons to furnish bail or to provide sureties with monetary obligations which would be plainly beyond their capacity. The Court observed:

> Poor men—Indians are, in monetary terms, indigents—young persons, infirm individuals and women are weak categories and courts should be liberal in releasing them on their own recognisances—put whatever reasonable conditions you may.

The question of free legal aid has been discussed and debated in the country for years. Till now, there is no central legislation embodying a comprehensive scheme for legal aid. The Supreme Court took the lead in the case of Madhav Hoskot. In this landmark decision the Court held that free legal services to the poor and needy are an essential element of any reasonable, fair and just procedure and ruled that where the prisoner is disabled from engaging a lawyer on grounds such as indigence or incommunicado situation the Court shall, if the circumstances of the case, the gravity of the sentence and the ends of justice so require, assign competent counsel for the prisoner's defence and pay the assigned counsel such sum as the court may equitably fix, provided the party does not object to that lawyer.

Article 21 has come to the much-needed succour of numerous undertrials languishing in Indian jails waiting for their cases to be heard and disposed of. The Supreme Court in an epochal judgement held that "speedy trial, and by speedy trial we mean reasonably expeditious trial, is an integral and essential part of the fundamental right to life and liberty enshrined in Article 21." This and subsequent judgements of the Supreme Court have secured freedom for numerous under-trial prisoners.

Affirmative remedies

One of the greatest contributions of the Supreme Court has been the easy access to justice it has provided by revolutionising the concept of *locus standi* and developing affirmative remedies. The court has repeatedly ruled that where judicial redress is sought of a legal injury or a legal wrong suffered by a person or a class of persons, who by reason, by poverty, disability or their socially or economically disadvantaged position are unable to approach the Court, any member of the public, acting *bona fide* and not for oblique considerations, can maintain an action for judicial redress. This has been done even by addressing a letter drawing the Court's attention to such legal injury and the Court has taken action upon it.

Of late, the Court has concerned itself with the Bhagalpur blindings, the evils of traffic in human beings, bonded labourers, and deaths in so-called 'encounters' with the police. In cases concerning bonded labour, it has appointed advocates as commissioners to visit certain quarries and report to the court whether labourers were working there willingly or were in a state of involuntary servitude. It has also issued directions to the authorities to take positive measures for rehabilitation of the labourers freed from their bondage.

More important, the Supreme Court by its rulings has secured the implementation of welfare legislation for the benefit of employees in respect of their wages and living conditions. Thanks to these liberal pronouncements, vast sections of our people are able to avail themselves of their basic human rights despite their poverty and ignorance.

There are indignant critics who charge that the Supreme Court is acting as a super legislature and is dabbling in matters outside its proper sphere. These critics forget that it is the proverbial tardiness of legislatures and the inertia, almost bordering on callousness, of the executive branch which provide a proper occasion for judicial activism. When a public-spirited person or a *bona fide* organisation brings to the notice of the Supreme Court derelictions of constitutional

obligations by public authorities, the Court cannot refuse to act. Unlike an administrative bureaucracy or a legislature, the judiciary can neither prevaricate nor procrastinate. It *must* respond if fundamental rights are to be living realities for the downtrodden and the oppressed.

It is not sufficiently realised that, in all these public interest cases, the question is of the enforcement of a particular fundamental right or the other. The Court's recent role in this field indicates its commitment to 'Taking Rights Seriously', or as Prof. Upendra Bakshi has aptly said 'The Court is taking suffering seriously.'

Ultimately it is by that yard stick that one can answer the question whether the Supreme Court of India is the sentinel on the *qui vive* for the bulk of its citizens.

Academic Leadership: A Major Challenge in University Education

C. D. Narasimhaiah

What Makes a University Eminent?

It is trite to say that the function of a university is not, truly speaking, determined by senates and syndicates but by its teachers and yes, its students. But both teachers and students as collective bodies, without enlightened leadership, far from shaping a university, may in the mass, contribute to its ruin. Many universities have amply demonstrated it throughout the country and its implication to learning and the future of the country is disastrous and assumes the gravity of a major challenge in higher education today.

Not for nothing did a great Englishman assert. 'Destroy Oxford and Cambridge, destroy British Civilization', because presumably a university by being a symbol and store-house of a country's best traditions and the values that its people live by, can, in moments when the national mood is threatened by depression and defeat, help to stiffen its back and shame it into proper behaviour by just saying the equivalent of 'It's not done'. Precisely what a controversial Chief Minister of Orissa (perhaps a drop-out from university) asked a Visiting Committee of the University Grants Commission in the early sixties: Has any Professor of Economics in our universities torn the First Five Year Plan to pieces? (He added he was himself a Member of the Planning Commission, by invitation.) His stand was: if professors don't dare, can you expect the economist in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs or the Reserve Bank to do it? And if they can't do it, what do

they want autonomy for? We felt totally disarmed. There was a distinguished economist on the committee and he nodded assent apologetically.

Is it cynical, then, to shout 'Bomb our universities and be done with them: it's good riddance'? The box-like buildings without character are an eye-sore. The labs and libraries are full of foreign imports and don't make a difference to the texture of Indian life and thought—very different from a young lecturer's observation at Edinburgh: Pointing to the Medical School, he remarked with understandable pride, 'Blokes there don't *buy* a single book; they *write* their own books!' Our students are best left on the streets to let them learn from life. As for teachers, most of them will only miss their salaries, not their vocation. The young American who came to learn Sanskrit at Benares Hindu University was not too harsh when he wrote to *The Times of India* 'My India died 1500 years ago' and so asked his countrymen 'If you want to learn Sanskrit, don't come to India, better go to Harvard or Heidelberg'. It is sad that a country whose universities of Kasi, Nalanda and Taxila which once drew advanced scholars from all Asia before the Christian era should have thrown away such a heritage after sustaining it for a thousand years, for Benares continued to attract eminent thinkers in those days of hazardous travel to test their newest theories and passionate claims against those of their rivals. We have today some 150 universities with half a million students and several thousands of teachers, with degrees and memberships of learned bodies, enough to make a simultaneous equation in algebra; the dominant desire of the best of them is to seek recognition and material rewards in places of dubious merit and worse, *collect* testimonials, not *give* them.

Vice-Chancellors—This Picture and That

In response to a friend's dismal picture of our universities Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, then Chairman of the U.G.C., queried: 'But, don't you think a good vice-chancellor

can be the nucleus of regeneration in a university?' Yes, but where is he? The answer is: There are indeed many within the universities, in the professions and in public life who could fill the bill if, that is, governments and governors are truly concerned and their interest is less in distributing patronage among *their* men and pressure groups than in the future of the universities. There is the scandalous instance of a selection committee consisting of 'eminent educationists' (all three of them—alive—former vice-chancellors with two of them, ministers holding in succession the Education portfolio in the Government of India) including in the panel a P.A. to the vice-chancellor, hastily appointing a Registrar, one who was earlier dismissed as Lecturer on grounds of inadequate qualification for the post! He was ultimately appointed vice-chancellor of a distinguished university, because he was the cousin of the Chief Minister in power. Most professors were on their proper behaviour with him while juicy gossip flowed like electric current in the campus!!

It may be salutary to turn to the British example. Soon after the last war, there was a meeting of vice-chancellors with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to determine the extent of Government's grants to the universities. The Minister, understandably, used the occasion to plead for a larger ratio of seats for young men returning from war-service, because a government worth its name had to safeguard the rights of those whose education was interrupted by conscription. But there was another side to the question: Young men of promise coming fresh from schools couldn't be abandoned on the streets; there wasn't enough room in the universities for both. And in England (someone could write an explosive book on the way universities mushroom in India to the sad neglect of Primary and Secondary education) they wouldn't start new universities without adequate preparation or assurance of resources. A real dilemma! The vice-chancellors were divided—the redbrick universities softening and the older ones taking the hard line, with one of them, the vice-

chancellor of Oxford, raising his voice to assert (I quote from memory) "If by giving grants, the Government thinks it can dictate to the University, it will fling the grant back on the face of the Government". He could speak the way he did, because older universities are largely self-supporting. In any case, no Government could withhold grants from Oxford and Cambridge and save its skin. Such is the prestige a university could give to its vice-chancellor (poor man, when he was returning from the meeting on a night train, the papers reported, he opened the exit door mistaking it for the toilet, fell from the train and was killed).

More: Vice-chancellors there cannot be taken for granted. A good number of them are intellectuals whose advice on matters of State policy is avidly sought by Government and heard with respect. Men like Butler and Lord Boyle, senior ministers in Government, with prospects of becoming Prime Ministers, walked out to become vice-chancellors because, presumably, of a realization, on the one hand, of the futility of the pursuit of power and fame and on the other the value of the life of the mind. Lord Boyle, known to be 'Heath's right-hand man', chose at the height of his popularity to be vice-chancellor of Leeds University. A talk he gave in the English Department comparing Beethoven's sonata movements with Wordsworth's sonnets by digging up references from forgotten reviews in the back numbers of the *Scrutiny* could have done credit to a first class academic anywhere. No wonder he could afford to come to the Senior Commonroom everyday to eat his lunch and stand in the queue to collect his coffee. He had much to gain by so doing and nothing to lose as we seem to fear, in our set-up. I recently learnt Lord Boyle not only volunteered to sign a petition against the denial of human rights in South Africa, but himself took it to the South African Embassy in London to present it personally. He took care to telephone his action to the Lecturer who had sponsored the campaign—he knew he wasn't his boss but perhaps the captain, the first among equals and so must constantly justify the trust. We in India corrupt our vice-

chancellors with sycophancy—for miserably small gains. Our pettiness breeds their omnipotence. Cause and effect are inexorably linked. Not that occasionally men of high calibre from public life don't become our vice-chancellors, though by and large, the government's penchant for choosing wrong men is notorious. Such indeed were C. D. Deshmukh in Delhi (despite the fact he had fallen out at the time with Jawaharlal Nehru) and Sardar K. M. Panikkar in Mysore. Even of Panikkar, I can privately share some piquant anecdotes. Suffice to say the Government chose the right man for wrong reasons! However, when Panikkar died before he completed his six months in office our students made a magnificent gesture by carrying the body in procession through the main streets of Mysore. Such was the impact of his personality that the students felt honoured to have had him as their vice-chancellor—and yet he was not a 'son of the soil' but came to Mysore as a total stranger except for his reputation.

Where are those vice-chancellors whom the students could adore and teachers look up to and themselves know they have made a sacrifice in accepting a vice-chancellorship? An eminent scientist was vice-chancellor of a university in a neighbouring State thanks to an enlightened Chief Minister (who himself had the credentials to teach in a university) and it was my privilege to sit on a selection committee and turn down a politically influential applicant for Readership—the place, it seems, had been kept vacant for 3-4 years when he was working for a Ph.D. which he was known to have acquired by questionable means. The vigilant vice-chancellor raised his voice to remark *he* wouldn't agree to appoint him Reader even if the experts did—he was the kind of man who would frown on a brilliant lecturer who had returned with 'the best Ph.D. of the year' from an American University for showing no signs of productivity since his return. His argument: Must he take so long to settle down even after three years of absence from home!

True, mediocre papers are no sign of intellectual aliveness but the assumption is: Mediocrity would in course of time

mature into something better; in any case, keep a teacher from mischief—the reason why Sir Ivor Jennings, when he was Vice-Chancellor of Colombo University in Sri Lanka sent for a young history lecturer and queried 'I see no publication against your name for a whole year'? 'No, sir', pleaded the Lecturer, 'I couldn't find a proper subject'. 'Surprising that a history man should say this. Look, go and collect a few coins and write a paper. I am afraid I'll have to stop your increment if this continues for the coming year'.

Political Wolves in Academic Clothing

Can our vice-chancellors say this and survive the onslaught of Teachers' Unions? But then, who made the Teachers' Unions strong? The vice-chancellors should squarely take the blame upon themselves. Did they take care to appoint the best possible men as teachers? I recall a vice-chancellor once rejected the unanimous recommendation of us 'experts' on the Selection Committee because, he argued, 'Is he as good as those we have so far recruited for the Department?' And yet, the post was of a mere lecturer in English and the vice-chancellor, a chemist, but watchful and alive to his responsibility. If by chance, good men were recruited, do the vice-chancellors take care to retain them? See through the ignoble designs of heads of departments and the experts, many of whom are anxious to avoid the displeasure of the head or the vice-chancellor and defer to their wishes as if their first obligation is to them rather than to their own profession?

The vice-chancellor who turned down a candidate for readership had just assumed office when I met him. The Registrar, himself a good academic, sought to whisper deferentially, because the vice-chancellor was new to the politics of the university: 'Sir, he made bold to say, we'll have to face the fury of the Syndicate and the Senate; every Minister, except the Chief Minister, has spoken to me about him'. The vice-chancellor waved an imaginary note in a gesture of nonchalance and assured him, 'Look, here is my

resignation.' Now, if a vice-chancellor's survival in office assumes paramountcy, if he doesn't feel he has conferred a favour by agreeing to be vice-chancellor, neglecting his serious professional interests, he isn't worth his salt — the salt hath lost its savour and better be thrown out of the window than kept to serve the sinister interests of small men.

But how can a vice-chancellor who is obliged not only to ministers but their P.A.s take such a self-respecting stand? How many vice-chancellors can say with their hand on the heart that they were *surprised* to receive orders of appointment to the post they occupy? Prolonged intrigues, unedifying knocking on the doors of influential contacts and, not infrequently, heavy bribes, in the hope of making good through building contracts later are only a few of the sordid methods employed by aspirants to the office. The Master of a Cambridge College who was also vice-chancellor at the time (Masters are invited to hold office of vice-chancellor by rotation for two years and they accept grudgingly) was consulting the Fellows of the College to fill a vacancy. They had all agreed on an 'insider' for the position but the Master put up the name of a young scientist of great promise from the London University as distinctly superior. The Fellows persisted in their support of the insider (British Universities generally consider it incestuous to appoint an insider unless he has proved his worth in *another* university), because they were a 'harmonious' team. The vice-chancellor who couldn't carry conviction to the Fellows had at last to put his foot down to say 'Gentlemen, we are no doubt a harmonious body, but not necessarily a distinguished body!' There the matter ended and the vice-chancellor carried the day. He was a man known for his intellectual versatility with books to his credit in the classics, Christian theology and natural sciences. Clearly the vice-chancellorship was an impediment to the pursuit of his scholarly interests by which his peers in the world outside judged him. A vice-chancellor without such eminence to back him is a scare-crow in the groves of the academia — the fate of many a vice-chancellor in this country. Most of them have

reasons to feel rebuked in the presence of bright young lecturers, on the mental plane. Add to this their eroded public image.

Whose Price is far Above Rubies

The Indian counterparts of the Fellows of Oxbridge are known to go far and pose serious threats to the very survival of even a good vice-chancellor. A very distinguished economist of a prestigious university in the North, clearly destined to make history as vice-chancellor, told me privately that if he decided to step down it wasn't because of the students or *Karmacharis,* not even because of the Government or the politicians but because of the teachers — whom he had inherited thanks to the indifference of his predecessors in office. They should have gone to the ends of the earth to get the right man or keep the places vacant till the propitious time came — may be, a whole decade or more. That one isn't asking for the impossible is exemplified in the conduct of a primary school teacher even today. I was once approached by a primary school teacher for a book on the Cauvery by K. Nagarajan, author of the justly famous *The Chronicles of Kedaram.* The teacher who had come by bus from Coorg couldn't find the book in the library since I had borrowed it and having read every scrap of available material on the river, met everyone who could talk about its myths, superstitions, history, economics, politics etc. and covered by foot the entire course of the river, he thought he shouldn't allow this one book unread before he finalized his research — not of course meant for a degree, but it was his passion. And its publication meant his raising a loan, because organizations like the UGC were beyond him. We could do with a fraction of that devotion in our postgraduate departments to merit all the consideration shown to us.

It is men like him that keep the torch burning. Interestingly, if any profession is still respected in Indian society it is that of Learning. May be, the people expect us — why shouldn't they? — to give constant and convincing proof of our love of

learning, that we are eager to acquire learning, promote learning, defend learning, if necessary, by our readiness to lay down our lives for the subject we profess. Such were the great teachers of the past and it is the business of a university to make the ideal actual. A Janaka, himself a great thinker and a much loved king, nevertheless journeyed to the forest hermitage of Yajnavalkya to discuss matters of State. A great leader like Gandhi sat deferentially before Tagore the poet and promoter of learning – he was 'Gurudev' to Gandhi. It seems young naxalites in Calcutta used to skirt round in deference to their widely respected teachers whom they didn't dare to disturb to make way for them. I recall how, on a day the students of Mysore went on strike for some trivial reason, the late Acharya Kripalani (we have yet to do him justice) came to the Maharaja's College and a living flame that he was, opened his address, in the quardangle packed with students, in a language and voice charged with emotion, but also the wisdom of the centuries: 'You fools!' he admonished. And the stunned students, far from shouting back, were visibly shocked into their proper behaviour. 'Who are you striking against? And what for?' he questioned. 'Do you know the story of the Ramayana?' Seemingly blasphemous things were soon to follow: 'Dasaratha was a fool, but he had character, *you* have no character! Rama was a fool, but he had character; *you* have no character! He, a one-time great teacher, the Acharya, profoundly respected by his opponents, went on pounding them till their eyes lighted up and learnt to greet him with thunderous applause.

Here is the lesson for teachers and vice-chancellors: Let us, teachers, practise what Shakespeare so beautifully pleaded for:

'Absent thee from felicity awhile'

I am reminded of a story the much respected old Deb of Allahabad University narrated to admonish me when I became Principal of Maharaja's College. It seems at the turn of the century, young Paranjpye, on the strength of his First Class First at Cambridge, was invited by the then Viceroy of India

to serve in his Secretariat on a four-figure monthly salary – in those days, an inordinately high salary to start on, but declined it, because he had given his word to serve the Deccan Education Society, yes, for 20 years on a salary of Rs. 75 a month! What did he lose? asked the narrator of the story. He became vice-chancellor of two universities, Minister for Education and Indian Ambassador in Australia. And saved his soul. A teacher of mine on the day he retired as *Lecturer* at the end of his 30-year service at Maharaja's College said, in response to our sympathies at the farewell meeting we had arranged, that if the Lord God had been generous *he* should have paid for the privilege of teaching. It seems C. V. Raman turned down a Fellowship from Cambridge because he thought Cambridge shouldn't get the credit for the work he could do at Presidency College, Calcutta. And the Institute he has founded in Bangalore out of his Nobel Prize is as much a tribute to his total commitment to science as to his self-respect, personal and national. His reward for doing these is the profound respect he has earned not only from the community and the world outside but the shining example he has left behind for coming generations.

Salaries High, Credibility Low

Talk not of time-bound or merit-cum-seniority promotions where merit is the first casualty! Consider its logical extension and the possible student demand for automatic promotions which surprisingly no student union has made. Are the teachers, then, unashamed when students do not make such wild demands? The teachers in a university are known to have protested to the vice-chancellor who was content to accept their own confidential reports of self-assessment in lieu of those of heads of departments. They argued that the vice-chancellor was out to expose them to ridicule! While their self-awareness is commendable their attitude is, to say the least, deplorable for intellectuals, if they are, that is. American universities attach considerable value to students' rating of

their teachers at the end of a term.

Let students and society plead our cause. Let us, when we can still make a decent living (our salaries have touched an all-time high while our credentials have fallen to an all-time low) ask for better opportunities for teaching and research for ourselves and for our wards which hardly any Teachers Association is known to have done. It is even a good strategy while it certainly makes for edifying conduct. We cannot compare ourselves with civil servants and engineers (most of them, by the way, have better credentials and unassailable records of service) who have their running grades but it is good to remember their life is spent away from family for a good part of the day and in sordid dealings and so very unenviable. The teacher has chosen his profession in the full knowledge that it doesn't offer the same material attractions as civil service and banking, which do not minister to the soul, but teaching is a privilege without parallel (not because of minimum work and four months' vacation in the year!) unless it be music or the other arts. Then, it is not we who need to account to the vice-chancellor and the government, but they to us. It should be the vice-chancellor's turn to please the teachers and students; because, he is a bird of passage while the teachers are rooted for 30 years or more in the university.

If a vice-chancellor is determined to court unpopularity in the interest of acquiring a good teacher, to keep out of intriguing teachers' cliques, resist political influence from outside or within the syndicate, not let student leaders hold the university to ransom, by establishing direct contact with students and redressing legitimate grievances promptly, punish offenders among teachers and students without fear of incurring the displeasure of government or caste groups: not postpone examinations nor yield to demand for grace marks or unfair admissions — none of these beyond a vice-chancellor's reach because he is protected by Acts, Ordinances and Rules — the worst that can happen to him is the denial of a second term as vice-chancellor, though no one is known to have lost it for being just and fair.

What has demoralized the atmosphere is the appalling failure of vice-chancellors to observe the generally accepted norms, indeed be guilty of flagrant injustice and still get all the plums from the Government as though they have been rewarded for precisely the things, considered reprehensible by the vast majority of teachers, students and the community. I have known politicians defer to decent vice-chancellors; intriguing teachers fear them and student leaders feel paralysed and virtually eliminated because the vice-chancellor has nothing to hide and his behaviour honourable. The Government, on its part, should stand by such a vice-chancellor and heed his advice—in its own interest.

One dreads to imagine—governments and politicians are too occupied with the very practical present—the future of Indian society if universities fail to provide leadership: vice-chancellors without commitment to the good of the university, teachers forgetful of their disinterested pursuit of learning and parents set on material success for their children, unconcerned about means and ends and their great racial and national heritage. Failure on these fronts can spell disaster, wherever else we ensure success to generate wealth and good living. College and university students behave like hooligans with no checks from parents, teachers or society. A Cambridge contemporary of mine, now a flourishing barrister, was warned by the Tutor that there were instances of students being 'sent down' for lesser offences than his (blocking the washbasin by emptying the tea kettle every afternoon!). If only discipline of that order had been enforced at all levels in every sphere of our education, our students shouldn't be growing like parthenium in uncultivated land, a menace to public health.

Why Not Look Up To Our Traditions?

In those very areas where Indian universities should take a special pride they have become most vulnerable. A tradition which nourished a spirit of inquiry is now seen to be particularly vulnerable. The sages of the *Upanishads* who dared to ask the

Sun himself to take off his disc because the *Purusha* behind him was the same as the one within them. They made fun of the gods of the vedas and their watchwords were *Neti,* not this, not this, and *'charaiveti,* march on, march on, o ye traveller'. Even princes in palaces were devoted to the adventure of the mind. Such was young Siddhartha who wandered for years to find an answer to the human condition. Think of a monk like Sankara who before he was 32 went on foot to the four corners of India and established cultural centres. Another, whose every word 'dripped with energy', as Jawaharlal Nehru said of Vivekananda,'thundered' across the American continent and at home told the orthodox Mylapore Brahmins of Madras who accused him of being a meat-eating monk, 'Is God such a nervous fool that the river of His mercy will be dammed by a piece of meat? If such be he,' Vivekananda pronounced, he isn't worth a farthing.' As for him, he could understand the Gita better through his biceps! How blasphemous it must have sounded to the missionaries! He wouldn't dismiss reason in matters of religion, for, if reason could be our guide in selling and buying, he couldn't see how he could do without it in profound areas like religion and God! And that is how Gandhi could affirm that Jawaharlal Nehru, for all his incessant celebration of the scientific attitude, was more religious and nearer to God than most others who claimed to be religious.With a tradition which 2000 years ago invited the Charvakas (Materialists) to preach godlessness from the precincts of our temples, how can the scientist of today pooh pooh Professor Seshadri's persuasive essay on 'Religion and Science' or subscribe to the ill-informed Western view of Jagadish Chandra Bose as a 'Hindu Occultist'?

Consider how most of us parrot Western accusations hurled at us in the thoughtless phrases: 'lack of a sense of history' 'the vision of Evil' or 'moral values', 'suppression of the individual' 'of woman' etc. The terms have to be taken out of the Eurocentric context, for even a fact of history has to be mythologised in the Indian context before it can come home to our people. Such is our strong penchant for the metaphysical

(it is seen that even Western historians-Toynbee and Plumb in England and Turner in the United States, among them — talk of the 'pattern of history' and the 'cyclical view of history' and 'historical reality') that dates and facts are less important than the pattern they fall into and assume the power of a myth or an archetype in the collective unconscious of the people. Our tradition does not use the categories of Good and Evil, but rather of *vidya* and *avidya,* knowledge and ignorance. It is time we realized the inherent contradictions of Christian societies in which on the one hand, knowledge is a 'forbidden fruit' and on the other, Western science prides itself on its relentless pursuit of knowledge, while it fights shy of adventure just when it calls for penetration of areas which are beyond the realm of empiricism. And physical science's timidity became psychology's opportunity! The new science has stolen a march over the physical in many disciplines, chiefly Medicine and Neurosciences. Besides, for the Indian, Knowledge is that by which all else is known. Narada comes to Sanatkumara in the *Upanishads* to know the nature of the highest knowledge because all the arts and the sciences had not given him the happiness he was seeking. Not for nothing did Ramanujam declare that even mathematical equations had no meaning for him unless they put in him thoughts of God, God being a popular term for the Supreme Principle which governs all Life and keeps the planets in their orbits.

Now Evil, an Indian would say, is relative and arises, from one's lack of knowledge. Hence our time-bound curses on those who make a departure from the shared norms of society and thus disturb the equilibrium so that they may gather knowledge the hard way through suffering. Even the demons were all worshippers of Siva and pitted against God while striving to reach Him sooner than His Friends. (The myth of Jaya Vijaya and Hiranyaksha informs that they preferred to reach God taking three births as adversaries rather than wait for seven births and reach Him as Friends!)

As for the individual, scientists should know that the triumph of bio-sciences today is the phenomenon of the gene

which makes for continuity of the group, community or race. The west has paid the price for its tragic assertion of the self since the Renaissance. Its rebels are neurotic outlaws, not the self-sacrificing, princes, heroes and saints of the Indian society. Be a hero or a saint: 'when half-gods go, the gods arrive'!

Well, ideas do not originate in our universities. We are in most matters at the receiving end, even in such live disciplines as social sciences, agriculture and medicine. I recall with distress a syllabus presented to the Academic Council for a post-graduate diploma in Social Work. It was lifted wholesale from an outdated American University calendar. And this when the structure of our society is different, our modes of living and our values are different; our rituals, festivals, superstitions, our approach to marriages, women, widows, children, servants, neighbours, are all different. How can we send a student brought up on the American syllabus to do social work in our slums without a profound awareness of their problems and what gives meaning to their life? For, if they are impoverished economically, they are nevertheless rich in an organic culture that has given them meaning. Western economists have been amused that our planners know their London School of Economics and Harvard better than the grass roots of their own economy. The university man, in a vast majority of cases is singularly unaware of this tradition and misses the benefits of the spirit of adventure which characterised his ancestors.

No, not ancestors, but of his contemporaries too who, in industry, business, and even agriculture have to a large extent recovered the old spirit and helped to place India among the developed countries of the world. It is ironic that universities which should be shining examples of the spirit of inquiry should be lagging behind so deplorably. This, despite the most impressive achievement of Indian intelligence in Science and Technology, recognized in laudatory remarks like the one by an internationally known Professor of Physics at Yale who thought that a thesis he adjudicated from Madras University in late fifties was worth four Ph.D.s from Yale! This does

not mitigate, though, the virgin ignorance on the part of a young second class M.A. from one of our universities, of the name of Sankara while a French visitor like Malraux thought his chief business in India was to have a conversation with Sankara!

Consequently a German scholar like Max Mueller has the distinction of reconstructing our Vedas, a Warren Hastings in introducing the *Gita,* Ryder translating Kalidasa, Heinrich Zimmer commenting on the myths and legends, H. H. Wilson, Monier Williams, Havell and Marshall doing the rest. It is to Cambridge's honour that it discovered Ramanujam as Boston, Chicago and Texas did in according recognition to Ananda Coomaraswamy, Chandrashekar and Raja Rao without 'required qualifications'. Manu, Panini and Nagarjuna have to be commended to us by the West. If bad currency drives out the good our universities have much to answer, much to ponder. A Texan Professor writing a book on T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* rejected much Indian criticism on the poem as 'carbon copies' of Matthiessen and Blackmur, for what he wished to know was the *Indian* view of the concepts of Action and Time, both centrally enacted in the quartets, precisely what the Indian scholars had not touched on! And yet the *Gita* abounds with the concept of Time and Nagarjuna could make Heraclitus pale into the background on Time and Flux.

The desperate need of the hour is first to probe our identity as Indian people and relate our pursuits, especially on the intellectual plane, to the growth of *this* society and the issues facing it. And stop collecting rags and bones, as Tagore so long ago warned, at others' dust-bins.

That is the challenge of University Education.

Opposition as a Luxury – the Theoretical Challenge

Padma Srinivasan

Economic development, the most important consideration

The leaders of the new states tell us that the most urgent problems facing human societies today are those of economic development. They say that the pressing tasks of development will be hampered by multiple points of view from those who disagree. Unlike the developed countries, dissent and opposition are luxuries we cannot afford. Their argument often stretches on from the position: 'Opposition? Not now', to a further one: 'Opposition? Never.'

What is the nature of this challenge? How serious is it? Is it a new one or has something like it been made before in history? Is there any validity in the claims made? How do we meet the challenge? I am raising these questions here not because I have any satisfactory answers to them but because their challenge to all of us is alarming. It becomes all the more so when we think how easily the unwary can be convinced by them – for isn't economic development more important than all other considerations? Of course it is! And, as I hope to show in this paper, this is precisely why starry-eyed idealists are fighting for basic freedoms. Material ends and creature comforts can only be attained in an atmosphere of freedom for the human spirit. The dichotomy between the material and the spiritual is a false one.

Ubiquity of Opposition

Opposition has been occurring in all societies and at all times.

Throughout history it has almost always been discouraged and suppressed. This universal animosity towards opposition has rarely been accompanied by any conscious theorizing. Rather, the citadels of orthodoxy appear to have been maintained by constantly encouraging conformity in the young during their most impressionable years. Mankind seems to have been enamoured of the notion of unanimity. The maintenance of widespread consensus and 'Good Government' were the ideals. Every effort was made to bring the errant and the eccentric back to the fold. In the Middle Ages, consensus and unanimity were the highest ideal to be attained. Even in Britain, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the idea of a group or class opposing the Government was unthinkable. It was thought that Parliament as a whole may criticise and watch the executive; but opposition could be justified only in exceptional cases when the government was bad. The general opinion was that Parliament must be freed from the bane of parties.

A little pondering and we, today, can plainly understand that no government receives indefinitely the total support of the people over whom it asserts its jurisdiction. And yet the people of yore thought that unanimity was the ideal to be striven for. The general trend was towards conformity. Dissent and opposition were banal; they were among those things that are 'just not done'. Such being the trend there was no organized body of theory concerning the concept, and hence, no theoretical offensive against it. Indeed, opposition itself did not, until recent times, gain any elaborate conceptualization.

The theory of Opposition has arisen out of a progressive understanding of the dynamics and behaviours within democratic political systems. Since these political systems also happen to be Western the theoretical offensive is coloured by an anti-Western or anti-imperialistic stance. The most powerful arguments in this theoretical assault on opposition comes from African leaders and thinkers. Thus, though opposition, as a fact of social life, is old, its theory is young. The challenge from Africa is especially serious because it undermines the very basis of Opposition as a concept.

In order to meet the challenge with any degree of success it behoves us to examine the phenomenon of Opposition both as fact and as theory. If we know what it is and why it arises at all, it might be easier for us to answer its opponents.

Opposition has occurred, as we have noted, at all times, in all climes and in every conceivable human community. Even India's noble myth of the Lord Rama's perfect state tells us of at least one significant case of dissent. The incidence of Opposition is so ubiquitous that we, today think of it as one of the givens of man's life as a social animal. When people say: 'Opposition is a luxury' or ask: 'Is Opposition necessary?' I am reminded of Thurber's query: 'Is sex necessary?' Anthropologists have studied the different ways in which ethnic groups strive to cope with tensions and dissent and maintain the level of consensus necessary for co-operative life. Some human groups are more individualistic than others; i.e. there are different degrees of consensus among them. But no anthropologist has yet discovered a community that is wholly and continually consensual.

Opposition in a Small Tribal Society

Let us now examine a little more closely the way dissent and opposition occur in any situation. Let us think of a small group of persons. Several of them agree upon a course of concerted action and want to go ahead. But a few persons do not agree—they either want deferred action, or no action or a modified type of action. Now, these few have had occasion to disagree *because the others have taken the initiative.* If there has been no thesis in the first place, there would have been no antithesis. An observable feature of the phenomenon of Opposition is that antithesis follows on the heels of thesis. But for the thesis, the antithesis would not have come into being. So, antithesis is the other, complementary half; it is the portion that completes the globe of truth. No person or group, however learned or aged or wise, can be in possession of the whole truth. But there can be an appoximation to the

truth if the dissenting opinions are painstakingly considered and woven into the texture of the decision.

This is how decisions have been taken for centuries in Africa. Such decision-making is still a way of life for the millions of Africans who live in villages. Let us look at a real life situation to get the feel of the process. My example comes from the Sonjo people of Tanganyika among whom the anthropologist, Robert Gray, lived and worked. The Sonjo live in semi-arid country and need to practise irrigation. There are six villages, each of which has its own irrigation system under the control of a council of elders in which all members have equal authority. This council constitutes the formal government of the village. It was at one of these—the village of Kheri—that Gray made a detailed study of the methods of irrigation. There are several categories of lands which are irrigated and cultivated in different ways. One type of land called *isireni* is less productive than other types, and so it is only planted in years when water is plentiful. In dry years the limited water is applied to the more productive lands. While Gray was there, a decision had to be made whether or not to plant the *isireni* fields. The seventeen elders of the village retired to their meeting place to ponder this question in private. After two whole days of discussion they had not yet reached a decision because of the disagreement among themselves. It was only on the third day that they were able to announce their decision that the *isireni* fields should be planted. This incident, which took place in a small village in Tanganyika in the late 50s, shows us the need for weaving the opinions of all into the fabric of consensus. This is no easy task. In this process there is no suppression of dissent. The decision arrived at may not necessarily be the right one; it may only be partially so. Every problem is complex and many-sided—whether it is *isireni* fields or fiscal policy, international trade, or educational strategies. Nobody really knows what is the right strategy for development.

The interplay of both thesis and antithesis is necessary for taking decisions which are going to affect all the people.

Moving from the philosophic sub-stratum of Thesis and Anti-thesis to their organizational counterparts, we come to the phenomena of *Government* and *Opposition*. If thesis exists, antithesis must exist. So, if Government exists, Opposition must exist.

Should Opposition Have Only Negative Connotations?

Both institutions—that of Government and that of Opposition—*can* arise simultaneously from the same legal source in the Constitution because both are aspects of the same reality. They are like two sides of the same coin. The theory of democracy recognizes the equal validity and complementarity of the two phenomena. The practice of democracy recognizes that both Government and Opposition can have the same generic source in the Constitution. Both draw their sustenance from this source. Hence, Opposition has as much authenticity as the government. If Government embodies Authority, Opposition is the embodiment of Counter-Authority. The term *'Counter - Authority'* has a positive connotation, unlike the term 'Opposition'. This positive aspect needs to be stressed. The very term 'Opposition' has hostile and negative overtones, especially when translated as 'enemy' into other languages. These overtones have done it much harm in the new states. Even in Indian politics the speeches of government leaders often imply that opposition has a degree of illegitimacy about it.

What indeed is Opposition? Surely it is more than just an institution, or a group of dissenters or an act of rebellion, or an angry mood. Opposition is really a long continuum along which all these occur. It stretches all the way from the mood, goes through stages of dissent and proceeds to organizational forms. Among its organizational manifestations are two extreme examples—i) Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in Britain and ii) The Federal Political system of the United States. It was Carl Friedrich who first taught us to look at federalism as 'a system of opposition'. In the unitary state

of Britain, opposition gets greatly concentrated so that we need to spell it with a capital 'O'. In the federal pattern of the United States, Opposition is diversified to a large extent, and is very dynamic and kaleidoscopic in its shifts and realignments. In political structures that are quasi-federal, both the institutionalized form with a capital 'O' and an Upper House of Parliament become essential. Bicameralism is crucial to federalism. Thus, an Upper House is as much a part of our concerns here as an Opposition party. So, whenever the bid for absolute power has been made with the statement: 'Opposition' is a luxury we cannot afford', the term has included federal structures and bicameralism as well as Opposition parties. This happened in Kenya where Kenyatta dismantled the federal edifice after 1964. Indira Gandhi, too, found federalism inconvenient as the events in Jammu and Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh showed.

The Single Party

The challenge to Opposition is serious precisely because it is a theoretical one. For, political theory is fundamental to Man's life as a social being. Security for an absolutist ruler can become double sure only when the myth of Dissent is hanged along with the dissenter. The assault is being made on two grounds: (i) There is no *raison d'etre* for the existence of Opposition; and (ii) Opposition is an impediment to (a) Stability and (b) Economic Development.

The first challenge seeks to show that a mass party with a massive consensus of the entire population eliminates the very need for an opposition. This theoretical offensive is a special contribution of African ideologues like Nyerere, Nkrumah, Sekou Toure etc. to political theory. In the 60s there was vigorous discussion about the compatibility of the Westminster model to African conditions. Interestingly, Communist regimes produced no justification for single party rule; i.e. they had no *theory* of single-party as a permanent system of politics. On the other hand, the Nazis and the Fascists

did put forward a theory of one-party rule, but they did not claim to be democracies. The unique distinction of not only producing a theory of the Single Party but also of claiming to be democrats goes to the thinkers of contemporary Africa. Chief among them is Nyerere of Tanzania. The Single Party, according to Nyerere is even more democratic than a two-party system. During elections and Parliamentary debate freedom is curbed by party discipline. The party needs to strengthen itself vis-a-vis other parties. This happens supposedly both within and without Parliament. In a multi-party system, a dissenting M.P. is forced to consent by the party whip. But such constraints do not restrict freedom within the Single Party. The theoretical position cannot be more perfect. It was maintained that democratic values and human rights would not only survive but thrive within a one-party system.

There were waves of theorizing by political scientists. Even liberals began to have doubts. In September 1976, after more than a decade of experiment with the Single Party, an International Seminar, convened by the International Commission of Jurists in Dar-es-Salaam, on 'Human Rights in a One-Party State' was still able to sing the praises of one-partyism. However, events have not validated the superiority of the Single Party over the multi-party System in providing outlets for dissent. The area of public dabate has been shrinking rather than expanding, and the human rights record of African States is poor indeed.

Another clever argument is that the Single Party alone is compatible with African culture which stresses the need for consensus and unanimity. African philosophical tradition has always stressed harmony.* So African rulers took this theme up. In Kenya, Kenyatta stressed unity and in 1964, pressurized

*It was this sleepless concern for harmony (harmony at all levels—between man and man, man and nature, man and the spirits of the ancestors and man and God) that drove the African people into homogenizing all contrary points of view into a decision.

the Opposition Party, Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) into joining the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) *en masse.* Kenya became a *de facto* one-party dominant state after the merger. In Tanzania the case for a one-party system was based on the conviction that the country was already solidly united. The Tanganyika African National Union urged that the laws should reflect the political realities in the country. The people voted so massively for TANU, that Nyerere was able to argue that only one party would give a real choice in elections. Opposition candidates did not stand a chance. Hence, a strong case was made out for launching the new State as a *de jure* one-party state.

In Africa the idea of unanimity and consensus has a subtle appeal. The Single Party ideology exploits this cultural weakness. African leaders argue that the Single Party provides a forum for discussion that harks back to the good old days under the village council tree where everyone talked and talked till all agreed. But these present day leaders say nothing about the full and free play of dissent in those discussions. It must be emphasized that those who disagreed were not denied a hearing, or locked up in prison, or branded as enemies of the community. Not only were dissenters heard but they were heard with respect and not hostility. The more one studies the democratic polities of the Bantu, the more bewildering is it that the dictatorial regimes of many modern African states have been able to justify their authoritarianism and their one-partyism in the light of tradition.

Socialist Antipluralism

Closely linked to the fatal attraction of unanimity is the antipluralism of those African States that profess socialism. European socialism recognizes the existence of pluralism in the society by regretting the clashes between classes. But African socialists go one better; they deny that there can

ever be such clashes between Africans, given their different historical background. African idealogues like Sekou Toure and Nkrumah have been right in asserting that there are no classes to the extent that these exist in Europe. But this does not mean that African societies are homogeneous and devoid of groupings. African idealogues have used this denial of classes to deny the need for more than one party. The absence of classes is taken to imply also the absence of important ideological differences. Given the total absence of class conflicts and ideological differences, there is no need for more than one party. This leads to the dangerous and unrealistic assumption, strongly implied but never candidly expressed, that there is no need for more than one viewpoint in the Press. Hence the urge to curb dissent in the press.

An interesting consequence of the myth of unanimity and consensus maintained by African leaders is to be seen in its impact upon the concept of political neutrality, which embraces both the civil service and the military. The concept of neutrality puts both services, whose employees number in thousands, beyond the pale of politics. This implies, among other things, that they are not to criticize the Government. Within the pale of politics, an ordinary citizen may criticize the Government without committing treason and, thus, continue to be loyal to the State. Thus, the State/Government dichotomy is clear for a civilian. But this dichotomy is blurred for the bureaucrat and for the soldier; they cannot criticize the Government without commiting treason. Thus, the State and the Government merge for the two services. The compulsive principle here is that they shall serve the lawfully elected representatives of the body politic without demur. Civil servants or soldiers do not take sides or join political parties. All this is valid in any political system which has at least two political parties. But in the single-party states of Africa the principle of neutrality, at least that of the Civil Service, was done away with. In these states, the sole party was identical with the entire nation. Its highest chief

was also the Head of the Government and since the party was the nation, he was also the President and Head of State. The same individual was both President and Prime Minister. If these roles belong to different people, one may safely criticize the latter for his misdeeds but continue to be loyal to the former, who is the mystic symbol of the State. But, when the Nominal and Real Executives are combined, one is constantly in danger of committing treason against the state. Thus, so far as all the common citizens are concerned, there are no chances for the expression of dissent or opposition. So, is the common African citizenry *in* politics or *out* of it? We know that in Western-type democracies, the citizenry is *in* politics and so it may criticize the Government; when those (of the services) who are *out* of it begin to take interest in it, we get worried and refer to it as politicization. But in African States, civil servants and even army personnel are urged to join the party. Rashidi Kawawa, Tanzania's Second Vice-President, addressing a group of new army recruits in 1964 said: "You are just as much citizens of the country as are farmers or fishermen. There is no reason therefore of refusing any citizen of the country permission to have a say in the politics of the Country." Political discussions between officers and soldiers were to be encouraged and the army was to be represented in the national executive of the sole party, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). On the face of it, the civil service and the military are inside the pale of politics, but can we say that they are politicized? To the uninitiated, inclusion of thousands of employees of both services under the party umbrella must seem the apogee of democracy. Britain or the United States would seem by comparison to be rather undemocratic. But under that umbrella of the sole party do they enjoy the right to disagree? Indeed, it appears that the civil servants and the soldiers have neither lost nor gained aught by their membership of the sole party — at least, so far as opportunities for opposition and dissent are concerned. They cannot be *in* politics because there is no politics at all for anyone.

Stability, Economic Development and Unitarism

The second assault on Opposition must be considered in two stages:

(a) that of Stability, and
(b) that of Economic Development.

(a) Africa's leaders have made the bid for absolute power on the need for stability in the new state. They have urged that the greatest danger to stability could come from the diversities of tribal groups. Given the heterogeneity of most of the new states of Africa, the question of federalism assumes especial importance. Authoritarian forces, under the leadership of Obote in Uganda and Kenyatta in Kenya, were able to establish their rule only after dismantling federal structures. Structurally federalism is more conducive to democracy than unitarism because of its greater institutional complexities. The linkage between federalism and democracy becomes stronger in the African context when one considers the presence of two factors:

(i) the ethnic diversity of the population; and
(ii) the fact that most of the tribes have had cultures that are hospitable to democracy.

The first factor indicates the affinity between the structures of society and that of federalism. The second factor gives the linkage between political cultures and democracy. Hence, we see that African states have structural and cultural linkages with federalistic democracy. Like India, a quasi-federal pattern which has room for both a constitutional opposition and bicameralism is ideal for new states because these, along with a relatively strong centre, would make for political stability. Stability is also consequent upon the wider participation afforded by the several parties and parliamentary institutions of the federal set-up.

As a power structure the federal pattern involves decentralization. The opposite of this is the unitary pattern which involves centralization. But in the African context it was not merely a perference for one power structure to another.

The stress on Unity is more a matter of cultural engineering and ideology. In the course of my research on political development in Kenya, in the years after independence, I found that Kenyatta was following a policy of unitarization as a basic mode of cultural engineering. Political terminology did not come to my aid for I needed a new word. Fortunately, I found in the OED, a suitable word: 'Unitarism', that had been used for the first time in 1910. I needed this new word to describe what I found was a new ideology in Kenyatta's regime. I applied this word 'unitarism' to it. While political science literature is full of elaborate theorizing about 'federalism' there is none at all about *unitarism.* Not that unitary states are unknown; indeed, they are as old as history. But, it is only in very recent times that the need for unity has been keenly felt in the new states.

Perhaps, I must clarify this statement by saying that it is the leaders of the new states who have felt this need. It appears to be linked to their personal sense of insecurity in the midst of ethnic diversities and tensions. With most of them it is an almost pathological condition. Let us, in India, note that this same cry of 'Unity' comes from the supporters of our government.

It is hard to find any other subject that has been given the priority by leaders in under-developed areas that national unity has received. The assumption is that the country is faced with so many problems that it can hope to develop only if the government receives complete cooperation from everyone; for the great tasks that are to be undertaken, dissent and opposition are wasteful and debilitating. We must, especially, beware of the slogan because a call for national unity usually means that society must be directed in an authoritarian way.

Now, no person in his senses will disagree that we must all work together for the good of our country. The statement is fine in itself. But the danger is that it can be made into an ideology — the ideology of *Unitarism.* In Ghana, it had a special name — Nkrumahism; and the official tune was: "Ghana is the CPP, but the CPP is the leader," In India we

were more euphonious: "Indira is India." Indira's name was a lucky chance. In Kenya, Kenyatta had to assume the lucky name for himself. *'L'etat c'est moi'* is an old, familiar theme for mankind. Kenyatta and his followers sang the song of unity until it became the major obsession of his regime. His slogan was: *Harambee.* (Let's pull together!) The ideology of Unitarism was used by him to discredit the Opposition, destroy the federalistic institutions of the nascent state and finally rule, in monarchical style, fly-whisk in hand, over Kenya. The fly-whisk was the security powers of preventive detention which was used to whisk away the flies of opposition and dissent.

A Season of Caesars

The ideology of Unitarism finds institutional expression in the institution of the Single Party and the Executive President. This is euphemistically called the Presidential form of government.

(b) Besides *Stability,* the other argument for assuming absolute power in the State is that of *development.* This second argument is even more powerful than the first one. It has been used by most of the leaders of the Third World. It is this argument — that the problem of under-development can be best solved only if the leader is given absolute control over the state, unhampered by dissenting opinions — that social scientists must take up seriously and examine painstakingly through case-studies as well as on a comparative basis. It is a serious matter because this bid for absolute power for the purpose of rapid economic development has gained academic respectibility and is endorsed by an increasing number of liberal scholars, technical experts and officials of international assistance organizations. Ever since Gunnar Myrdal popularized the identification of the "soft state" with slow growth, many scholars have approved the search for development through discipline. Strong will, strong discipline and a strong state are some of the terms which evoke strong approval from

Western economists when it comes to prescribing liberal models of development for poor countries. Yet, they will have none of this in their own homelands. In 1964, Kenyatta officially substituted the 'government by the strong and the wise' for 'a government by laws'; thus, he reversed the Rule of Law. In a democracy we want a Government of Laws and not of men: We will be ruled by Laws and not by the whims of men, however wise they be.

The rulers of the Third World have cried 'wolf' and grabbed absolute power. If there is no emergency or crisis, it can be artificially whipped up. The theme of under-development is one of the crisis situations, and since it is a chronic condition, it is a permanent emergency. There is a wide variety of such 'emergency regimes' and they stretch all the way from South Korea to Ghana. In an incisive and brilliant study called "A Season of Caesars: Emergency Regimes and Development Politics in Asia", Jyotirindra Das Gupta covers Park Chung Hee of South Korea, Indira Gandhi of India and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. He examines their excuses for assuming absolute powers to spur development. He says: "From the official proclamations and statements elaborating on the reasons for emergency in each of these three countries, one would have a hard time discerning whether the immediate disorder or the economic necessity for decisive state action constituted the real grounds for such desperate action. The problem of personal security to rule, of course, clearly emerges as the immediate overriding concern of these three rulers. Each of them was convinced that they had sufficient popular support to allow them to continue to rule, a conviction which appeared to be fostered by the national elections. None of them denied that they had the support of the army and all had built special police and intelligence forces to bolster the degree of sophisticated coercion in their ranks. Their position of command within the dominant political group inside the country was considerably facilitated by their control of these forces. No sudden economic crises intervened in any of the three countries on the eve of the proclamation of emergency.

If anything, the leaders publicly claimed that the economy was getting markedly better under their leadership. In addition, the state of economic support did not appear to pose any conspicuously new problem to their internal authority at that time." After intensive scrutiny, Das Gupta finds that the three rulers "relied heavily on a narrowly conceived production-oriented strategy which assumed that collective enrichment comes first, and that unequal enrichment of groups within the nation is a precondition of rapid development." In all these cases, it was the ruler who knew best what the country ought to prefer. And in keeping with this, his professional planners and their external consultants knew how to arrive at a consistent ordering of the resources and objectives in an efficient manner. Moreover, the designers believed that if the contending political forces were allowed to speak out, they might have raised "unnecessary" issues of distribution and division of advantage in society. Dissenters are indeed inconvenient.

Das Gupta concludes that dictatorial rulers and social scientists have claimed more for the developmental capability of the strong authoritarian regime than it apparently deserves. It is very difficult to tell whether growth is indeed the consequence of the element of authoritarianism in the policies and methods. Two or more cases under review may have had a preference for capitalist industrialization, but with different policies on agrarian reorganization, the creation and transfer of agricultural surplus, export and import strategies, fiscal and monetary reorganization and a variety of policy combinations the results would be very confusing. Again, are similar policy combinations not possible under other power structures or ideologies?

The new Caesars of the Third World have all looked upon economic development as a matter of productive growth. But should not our concept of economic development also include a just sharing of gains and losses resulting from growth? This would imply that the primary needs of the poorer citizens must be considered before the economy sought to satisfy the needs of the better off. There is an absolute level of mass misery in the

poor countries which must be alleviated. Das Gupta's study shows that in two of the three countries he covers i.e. in India and in the Philippines — "the new Caesars worked more towards the protection and enhancement of the privileged groups than of the poorer citizen". No large-scale measures were taken to alleviate poverty. One does not need a Master's Degree in Economics to see that Asiad and Colour T.V. are circus and not bread.

The causal connection between concentration of political power and rational planning for development has yet to be demonstrated. Total planning involves total truth — and this is the sheer logic of the process of total planning. There is, therefore, no contradiction at all between the most advanced socialism and the freest kind of society. The more the planning, the more necessary the feedback in criticism.

Government and the Media

Mehra Masani

All governments would like the media to be friendly and uncritical. How nice it would be if there were no critical comments about incompetence, inefficiency, corruption, and no exposure of scandals relating to their members. Many governments take various measures to achieve such an attitude of "understanding" on the part of the media but their success depends on the degree of authoritarian and totalitarian trends in the society. In the communist countries all the media are not only controlled but operated by the government and entirely subservient, but in societies which are committed to the democratic way of life it is understood that the right to speak, to advocate, to dissent, to question are at the very foundation of a democracy.

Curbs on Freedom of the Press

All the same, even in democratic societies, press freedom is an historical accident which is too late to undo and has to be tolerated. Had the press not been free from its early days no government would have given it the freedom that it now enjoys.

In India, fortunately for us, newspapers started under British rule and, in spite of curbs from time to time, the liberal British attitude to press freedom prevailed. At the time of Independence we already had many good English and Indian language papers which enjoyed considerable freedom. But in recent years the press is constantly under attack, in one way

or another. Most recently there was the Prime Minister's allegation that the press is irresponsible—without a particle of evidence produced in support of his contention. If the press is irresponsible it is in its sycophantic attitude to the PM—ignoring his allergy to criticism of any kind, and his many arrogant answers to perfectly reasonable questions such as the grant of autonomy to radio and T.V.

By the official control of newsprint supply, advertising policies, and various other measures, pressure is brought to bear on the press, particularly the so-called big newspapers, and partiality is shown towards blackmail sheets by generous newsprint allocations which they sell in the black market. There is also the frequently recurring demand for a code of conduct for the press.

Numerous instances have occurred of violent attacks on individual newspapers and newsmen which have been connived at by Chief Ministers of Congress (I) governments and even in non-Congress (I) states such as Tamil Nadu. No Congressman ever apologised for Gundu Rao's description of the press as "snakes, scorpions and prostitutes". Anti-press bills have been passed by the Governments of Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Bihar and the Centre was only too happy to give its assent to such bills until, the pressure of public opinion forced the withdrawal of the Bihar Bill. In spite of such crude attempts at curbing the freedom of the press it survives because public opinion would not allow its suppression.

Frustrated by their inability to exercise authority over the press, the government wants to keep the tightest possible control over the other mass media, radio and TV.

Control on Radio and TV

Early in its history the radio in India became an official organ and it continues today in spite of Pandit Nehru's acknowledging the need for a change as far back as 1948. Since then the government, less and less committed to democratic values, has changed its attitude for the worse.

It would seem that every Indian government wants to keep a firm hold over radio and TV. The Janata Government which came to power in 1977, after the Emergency, promised to grant full and genuine autonomy to these. But it prevaricated after assuming office and the Prasar Bharati Bill which it introduced in parliament provided for the government's right to issue directives, whenever necessary to be carried out by the radio and TV organisation! This can hardly be called genuine autonomy. However the Janata Government did adopt a more liberal stance. It introduced election broadcasts and did not rule out autonomy for the media as Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was to do at his press conference in the USA, and later in India, when he declared that "we are not ready for autonomy for AIR and Doordarshan". Who, might one ask, is not ready? The broadcasters are ready and so is the public. It is only the government and its political supporters who are not.

In totalitarian societies radio and TV are run as government services. Surely such a system is not in keeping with our claims to be a democratic state and the stand of the Rajiv Gandhi government is entirely out of step with the desire to take India forward into the 21st century. One reason for this undemocratic stand is the misunderstanding that media autonomy means complete absence of official regulation. Such regulation exists even in democratic societies. The broad objectives of the broadcasting services should be laid down *by parliament*, and not by the government as the Verghese Panel recommended.

The Case for Autonomy

A democratic society must be an informed society. People cannot be expected to exercise their franchise intelligently, and in their own interest, unless there is a flow of information reaching them through the media. Government control over the information available to the people is a negation of their right to know and their right to access to the media of

information. The people must have the right to make their views and opinions known to AIR and Doordarshan and it goes without saying that every opportunity must be provided for the expression of opinions, critical of the government, if need be. Madison said, many years before broadcasting was born, "A Popular Government without Popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or tragedy, or perhaps both". Consider, in this context, the failure to give coverage on radio and TV to views contrary to the Government's, as for example on the Punjab and Assam accords. Serious misgivings have been expressed by many observers and students of the Indian political scene. However, the people of India, being largely illiterate cannot read the newspapers, and would be in the dark about these and have no chance to make up their minds. They can do this only after hearing all sides of the question, regarding the value of the accords.

Radio, TV and Local Transmission

Apart from the political and moral basis for freedom for the media of communication, there are several utilitarian arguments for such freedom. Run by the Government, Radio and TV provide a service which is limited in its reach and ineffective in its impact. Official spokesmen say that radio covers 95% of the people and TV covers 70%; but with only 30 million radio sets, of which only 5 million are in villages, and 3½ million TV sets, with just a few hundred in the villages, these claims are dishonest and they know it. What they *should* say is that radio signals can be picked up in those areas of the country in which 95% of our people live and TV signals where 70% of the people live. But radio signals are of no use if people don't have radio and TV sets. Even if we consider that each radio set can serve four or five people, the total number served is about 150 million, which is only about 25% of our total population; and if we allow 10 persons for each TV set, the number, 35 million,

is only 5% of our population. Also it has to be borne in mind that most of the radio and TV sets are in the cities and our huge rural population is hardly served at all. It was suggested as far back as 1967 by the Chanda Committee and later endorsed by the Verghese Panel. But the government was not interested in spending any money on local transmitters; it would rather continue a highly centralised operation over which it could have complete control. It was only in the Sixth Plan that six pilot local radio stations were provided for but, alas, only one of them has been commissioned so far in 1984.

The next point of importance is that radio, and even more TV programmes, are directed to the urban middle and upper classes. Dr. Tripathi, the Minister of State for Information and Public Relations of the Maharashtra Government said, on 19th June 1985, that coverage by TV was for urban viewers and there was nothing suitable for the rural people. He asked that many more sets should be installed in the villages. At least there is *some* correct thinking in Government circles!

The concentration on TV, "to take India into the 21st century" is putting the cart before the horse. As between radio and TV, there is no doubt that while we can cover the country with radio we certainly cannot do it with TV, government claims notwithstanding. A simple radio technology is wanted for the masses mainly because not many people can have access to TV. And yet the expenditure on TV far exceeds that on radio.

Over 60% in the plan outlay for 1984-85 for *all* the media under the I & B Ministry goes to TV while only 35% is given for radio. Obviously TV is more useful than radio in projecting the PM and his Government. And yet, with all its patronage of the TV the PM admitted, when asked about the quality of TV news, that it was "terrible". He went on to say that the TV news is like advisory bulletins or announcements. Who, he asked, could expect the latest news from Doordarshan? Has the PM stopped to consider why news on the Government controlled TV service is so poor? And has

it still not dawned on him that it is because it is government inspired and oriented?

The Privileged Position of the Government

The news broadcasts of AIR and Doordarshan suffer from a number of problems. One is over-centralisation. But the major flaws can be attributed directly or indirectly to the news division functioning as a Government Department. The suppression or dilution of views and opinions unpalatable to the Government occurs quite frequently and even more common is infiltration into the bulletins of comparatively unimportant items pertaining to the Government and the ruling party. It is not only the opposition parties that complain that reporting of news and events is biased. Government spokesmen try to meet this criticism by rattling off the number of minutes of news broadcasts given to the opposition and to the ruling party, as if the duration is all that matters. It is the biased selection of news and the distorted comments on controversial matters which is objectionable.

Only 20% of our people read newspapers and many people who depend on radio and TV for news and information are thus treated to disinformation of the worst kind.

Bias and distortion are inevitable in the absence of a communication policy. The media under Government control are treated, by the Government itself, as agencies to publicise and defend Government's decisions and actions. There is no clear perception of the purpose the media are intended to serve, nor of their role in the process of development. There is no legally enforceable broadcasting policy. The cabinet can interpret the role and organisation of broadcasting in any way it wants. It can open half a dozen TV centres in one state and none in another; it can appoint and transfer programme staff; it can broadcast or withdraw any programme and it can black out opposition leaders and criticism.

There is no memorandum of understanding between the Centre and the states as to how exactly the broadcast operation

would take place. At most there is an unwritten practice that the state's development activities should receive attention in broadcast programmes, but the states cannot exercise any authority over Radio or TV stations and the AIR code which states that no hostile criticism of any state is permissible, is often violated. Broadcasting is totally unitary in a supposedly federal set-up.

There are no constitutional safeguards for our broadcasting services. Other countries in the free world protect broadcasting organisations from political interference. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation is answerable only to Parliament. The Swedish Radio and TV are protected by a legally enforceable act of Parliament. The N.H.K. of Japan is legally protected by political authority.

The responsibility for the censorship of news is that of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. But unfortunately he does not observe the guidelines for news coverage, which were laid on the table of the Rajya Sabha on March 16, 1982. One of them reads "dissemination of information, news and comments in Akashwani and Doordarshan should be done in a fair objective and balanced manner, including contrasting point of views with emphasis on events or developments. References to personalities may be made primarily for providing human interest".

These are more or less a reproduction of the Janata Government's instructions, issued soon after it came to power. The guidelines are unexceptionable on paper. The point is do AIR and Doordarshan observe the spirit?

The AIR Code

Beside news bulletins the News Services Division is also responsible for the broadcast of several talks, commentaries and discussions on topical questions. These are broadcast in English and Hindi from Delhi and are relayed by several stations.

All the talks and commentaries broadcast by AIR and

Doordarshan are supposed to be governed by the AIR Code which was drawn up in 1967. It does not permit criticism of friendly countries, talks on religions or communities, incitement to violence, aspersions against the President, Governors and the judiciary, attacks on a political party by name, hostile criticism of any State or the Centre and anything obscene, defamatory and against law and order. The code is entirely negative and cannot be regarded as a substitute for a positive policy for encouraging free and fair debate which would reflect diverse opinions on matters of controversy.

The code was abrogated during the emergency but was restored by the Janata government which did try to observe its provisions but, in recent years, it is ignored more and more frequently.

For example although the code forbids criticism in the nature of a personal attack on any State Government, AIR and Doordarshan report at length speeches, attacking the opposition, made by the PM even though they are political speeches by the Congress (I) President. At times even slogans such as "Indian National Congress Zindabad" are broadcast! There is of course no right of reply for the opposition. On AIR and Doordarshan the distinction between the Party President and the PM does not exist.

Such violations of the principles of equity, fair play and freedom of speech reduce the media to propaganda agencies of the Government.

Autonomy the Only Remedy

To avoid such aberrations in our broadcasting service a conscious social purpose must be given to broadcasting. What social purposes are valid in our society? The first task is to define these and then to consider what methods of social control of broadcasting would be appropriate for the fulfilment of these purposes.

I believe there would be general agreement on certain

basic objectives; broadcasting must help to make us a better informed democracy and strengthen the democratic fabric of our constitution but, if such information emanates from only one source, there must be provision for the effective dissemination of critical or dissenting views.

To prevent misrepresentation of problems through the broadcasting system it must provide the maximum opportunity for the broadcast of minority and divergent comment so that the individual listener receives a diversity of information and points of view to challenge and test the accuracy and fairness of the dominant view-point.

Broadcasting must subject to criticism and scrutiny the plans and policies of the party in power and ensure that every issue of public concern is fully discussed, whether government wishes or not.

The system must also cater for the needs of the various groups of listeners on society in an equitable manner.

Broadcasting in a developing society must speed the process of change and modernisation and must give due importance to nation-building programmes which, at present, are too infrequent, too short, too restricted in their coverage, unimaginative in presentation, unrelated to the needs of the people they set out to serve because of the undue importance given to the demands of the educated people in the cities.

Finally it must ensure that various audience groups, including those who are usually inarticulate, are able through systematic audience research, to make their views and reactions known so that those who attempt to serve them can plan the programmes to their satisfaction.

It should be obvious that such social objectives cannot be realised if the media are under government control and used as instruments for moulding public opinion. Both the Chanda Committee and the working group under the Chairmanship of Mr. B. G. Verghese recommended the establishment of autonomous corporations to run the broadcasting services. The arguments for and against such an organisation have been expressed so frequently that it is hardly necessary to

repeat them. One argument advanced by the Government states that as the press in India is critical or the Government, Radio and TV must support it!

What can we do to change the present system? Sometimes ago Mr. A. G. Noorani made the plea for the legal assertion of the citizen's fundamental rights against the manipulation and partisanship of AIR and Doordarshan. He suggested that a group of citizens or an individual should file a writ petition in the Supreme Court and AIR and Doordarshan could be compelled by Judicial writ to respect the citizens' Fundamental rights to equality (Article 14) and freedom of speech and expression (Article 19(i)(a)). The broadcast media are bound to comply with the norms of fair play which constitute our administrative law. Many of us have come to agree with Mr. Noorani that we should take recourse to the Judiciary, which has been far more inclined to support citizens' rights than the Government.

In this connection it is worth-while to quote an observation of the US Supreme Court: "It is the right of the viewers and listeners not the right of the broadcasters which is paramount. It is the right of the public to receive suitable access to social, political, aesthetic, moral and other ideas and experiences. That right may not constitutionally be abridged either by Congress or the Federal Communications Commission".

Will some public spirited citizens take up the cause of broadcasting autonomy to the courts?

Free Flow of Information: National and International Dimensions

Cushrow Irani

Unesco's 1945 Constitution proclaims that a free flow of information is indispensable to democratic societies. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises that the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any medium and regardless of frontiers is a basic human right. By 1976, however, these principles had become embarrasing for the majority of governments represented at Unesco. Demands were made for "balance" to be introduced in the concept of a free flow of information and this was one short step towards demands for a "new world information and communications order". Shorn of hypocrisy and rhetoric, these demands simply meant that information be made to order—the order of governments.

News Fit to be Read

The free press world-wide did not find it possible to stomach these new definitions. Here is a sample of them. News is no longer to be what each individual newspaper decides to publish. It must be what is good for "the people" to read. The qualitative judgment must be made by somebody and who is better than the representatives of the people? Increasingly Unesco debates have been vitiated by this clash of ideas. On the one hand there are those who hold that the State exists for the individual and not the other way round and the right of freedom of speech and expression is an individual right and

guaranteed by the State. Opposed to this are those who believe that because man is a social animal, "society" must decide for him what he should read and listen to; society functions through its leaders and, therefore, the leaders—i.e. those wielding political power—must decide what information the people will have.

Basket III of the Helsinki Accords put the second group of countries on the defensive. The Soviets, their allies in Eastern Europe and a large number of oppressive regimes in Africa, Asia and Latin America then began to use Unesco to lend respectability to their objectives. The Unesco Secretariat, for whatever reason, proved very helpful to them and came up with a large number of studies, position papers, and reports—all with predetermined conclusions. For the past 20 years Unesco has been used to lend aid and comfort to regimes bent upon restricting such freedoms as exist.

When the U.S. withdrew from Unesco at the end of 1983 and several other countries led by Great Britain also served notice that they, too, would consider withdrawal, the fat was truly in the fire. At the last meeting of the Executive Board of Unesco in Paris a few months ago, the Ambassador of Japan, Takaaki Kagawa, was quoted as having said, "My country is not pleased at all with the progress made". He was referring to the demands that Unesco get out of the rhetoric of political debate and concentrate on worth-while programmes. I would add that neither are we in the press pleased. Nor is Mr. Gerald Bolla, until recently Deputy Director-General of Unesco who resigned rather suddenly. The time has come for all of us in the free press world-wide to do whatever we can to exert even greater pressure for the necessary reforms that we all think Unesco should accept. There will be difficulties ahead because there are signs of a last-ditch effort on the part of the Director-General and the Secretariat to do business as usual—and with a zeal and a determination worthy of a better cause.

It has often been said that Unesco pronouncements are not binding. It would be useful to consider how immediate

are the threats from Unesco pronouncements in our part of the world. There have been slogans demanding the 'democratization of information'. The assumption is that the press is too "elitist" and this is the fault of the ownership. Thus the ownership-structure of newspapers in many parts of the world has been attacked. Sri Lanka has an example which makes depressing reading. The Lake House Group of newspapers, owned by the Wijewardene family, was taken over by Mrs. Bandaranaike's government who vested all the shares in the Public Trustee, presumably for the public good. The Public Trustee happened to be her brother! It is sad that even the present government led by Junius Jayawardene has not found it possible to return that newspaper to rightful ownership. The reason trotted out is that it is quite wrong in the eighties for a major newspaper to belong to a single family. These thoughts are inspired by Unesco pronouncements.

Slogans decrying 'commercialization of the media' have been raised. The fact that newspapers should be solvent, that no newspaper can express strong opinions or, indeed, any opinions at all if it is not financially viable—is regarded as worthy of criticism. This slogan has been used in India for the past three years to attack the advertising revenues of newspapers.

Another slogan constantly asks us to ensure respect for national identity and culture. As a proposition it is unexceptionable but words no longer mean what they ought to mean. The platitude has been used to deny access to news sources, and to prevent visiting journalists from coming into the country on the ground that they do not understand what the culture of that country is all about. Finally, there is the demand for respect for the national laws of each country. As a general proposition it must be self-evident that laws should be observed, but it is a different matter altogether to demand that municipal or local law must be placed on the same high pedestal as basic human rights. Let me give an example. At a certain time in India's

affairs there was censorship. We broke that law. If we had not broken that law, the rest of the world would not have known what was going on in India during the Emergency. Conversely, if every national law is to be respected regardless of whether it conforms to basic human rights, then perhaps South Africa is also entitled to respect for its laws of apartheid since they are part of the legal system of that country. So, let us agree that there is a higher law than individual pieces of legislation enforced in each country.

Before we leave the subject to Unesco I have an appeal to make. As the USA was leaving the organisation, Secretary Shultz, in a brilliantly drafted letter, made a commitment. He said that Unesco was not carrying out its primary purpose of encouraging culture and education, and the U.S. would use the same amount of money, if not more, for purposes which Unesco should be fulfilling but was not. Two years after the event, there are no signs yet of this commitment being honoured. I do not think we understand well enough what a great propaganda advantage this gives to those at Unesco who are out to subvert what we know as a free press. Propaganda is gaining ground to the effect that the USA is only interested in saving its Dollars for the tax-payer. There are a number of proposals held up in the U.S. Congress. One hopes that the right decisions will not be too long delayed.

Illiberal Objectives?

India provides strong support to Unesco in the pursuit of its illiberal objectives and has voted consistently with the Soviets against issues of basic human rights—a consistent but not so flattering record. The session of the Unesco Executive Board held in May-June 1985 is the last before the Sofia General Conference in October-November. The shortfall of $43 million in the Unesco Budget following the US withdrawal has been scraped together, at least for 1985. $25 million will come from savings in the Unesco Budget, long overdue.

$10 million have been appropriated from a fund meant for a totally different purpose—a reserve against inflation. And $8 million were raised by additional voluntary contributions; India, in an act of misguided generosity provided $500,000 of this figure. In a desperate effort to stave off US withdrawal, Director-General M'Bow had agreed to an investigation into Unesco's financial and management practices by the prestigious General Accounting Office of the U.S. Congress. Its report was damaging. Instead of dealing with the issues raised, Mr. M'Bow made it an issue of his personal prestige. T.N. Kaul, India's Ambassador, gave him strong support declaring that this report was illegal and out of order as it was "an unofficial product of a non-executive body in a non-member state". Clever, but not convincing. Once again, the Unesco Secretariat was able to confuse the issues and say to each side what it wanted to hear. To the free press countries—that their concerns were at least being met and a serious effort was under way to depoliticise Unesco programmes and cut out motivated studies of non-existent issues. To the Soviets and the large number of their allies and friends in the Third World it was suggested that the changes in the programme were more apparent than real and that, given a little time, it would be business as usual at Unesco.

The Soviets are now the largest contributors to Unesco. They have made it very clear that they are in a hurry to achieve their propaganda objectives. Their chief delegate said quite clearly at the board meeting that Unesco "is and should be primarily dedicated to political purposes". We have been clearly warned. A number of working documents which were held back for many months so as not to hasten U.S. withdrawal have now been published. We can notice a few. The first is on the World Congress of Youth which paints a dark and dismal picture of youth in the western world and in Third World Countries still suffering from the consequences of "imperialism". By contrast, in socialist countries we are told there is easy access to university education

and Soviet youth is particularly well-off in every way. Another report has been released on "Foreign News in the Media—Reporting in 29 Countries". The main editor is Kaarle Nordenstreng, president of the pro-communist International Organisation of Journalists based in Prague. This report was held up for 18 months. Some of its conclusions are interesting. There is a complaint, for instance, that Tass, the Non-Aligned News Pool, and the like-minded Inter Press Service are "hardly mentioned as a news source even in developing countries". No comment could be more telling on the lack of credibility of politically organised information systems. The study continues the old code words of the need to 'promote peace and disarmament' and notions of 'development journalism' and 'Third World perspectives' as aids to the 'new journalism'. The way in which the Soviets are now seeking immediate benefits for their positions on these questions within Unesco provoked at least one delegate to complain of Unesco a la carte!

Indian Experience

Relations between the Government and the press in India started to deteriorate from 1969 when the press did not find it possible to support Mrs. Gandhi in her "bold" decision to nationalise the 14 major banks and to break her Congress Party in the process. Since then, the attempt to whip the Indian press into line has been too obvious and has gone on for too long to need detailed documentation. Direct assaults on the integrity of newspapers have in recent years given way to financial pressures. First, there continues to be a total monopoly in the hands of the State of all newsprint, whether imported or domestically produced. Only the Government may produce newsprint in the country, although all kinds of paper are produced by a well-developed paper industry. Newspapers are still restricted to annual quotas of newsprint. Having established a monopoly, the Government shamelessly exploits it. Local newsprint costs twice the international price and is only half as good. To avoid invidious comparisons

a heavy customs duty on all imported newsprint persists.

In 1976, towards the tail-end of the emergency, the Government gave itself powers to sit in judgement on advertisement rates of newspapers. While the Calcutta High Court upheld *The Statesman's* contention that the Government could not direct autonomous corporations to advertise at a particular rate or rates or in other ways to give specific directions, the Government continues to insist on issuing certificates of advertisement rates for Government purposes. The Information Ministry is now a major dispenser of largesse to the press in the shape of Government advertisements. There is no suggestion that this power of patronage will be given up in a hurry.

Our young Prime Minister has shown that he is capable of bringing a fresh mind and perspective to bear on tired old ideas. There have been some improvements in the last few months. The disincentive to advertising in the shape of 20% disallowance for tax purposes has been withdrawn, but other constraints continue. One must be charitable and say that Rajiv Gandhi has not had the time to think about the basic issues of a free press particularly in the context of Unesco, otherwise it is difficult to see why he said what he did when he addressed that organisation on his recent visit to Paris. Unthinking endorsement of the positions taken under the pressure of the numerical majority of the Soviets and their allies is not worthy of his emerging reputation. At the same time, one cannot overlook his very categorical answer from the podium of the National Press Club in Washington earlier this year. He was asked what were his plans for giving autonomy to radio and television. His answer was, "At the moment, none". When pressed, he said because India is "not ready for it yet". One is tempted to ask the Prime Minister if he would care to identify the deficiency and give the country his estimate of how long it would take to overcome it. But his answer at least has the merit of frankness. One can recall an Information Minister in Mrs. Gandhi's government being asked a similar question at Madras airport many years ago.

She was asked when radio and television would be released from the stranglehold of the Government. Her answer was too clever by half. She said she did not understand the question: How could there be any question of a stranglehold when radio and television belonged to all the people!

I also want to say that the Press must take a good hard look at itself. Its conduct and its behaviour need to be improved. The press has no business to pass judgements on men and affairs every day when, by and large, its own conduct does not bear scrutiny. The circulation claims of even the major newspapers are open to serious question. The figures do not add up given the total quantity of newsprint made available under the Government's quota system. The short-lived experiment of requiring newspapers to print their each day's print order on the front page was complied with by a mere 36 papers, including *The Statesman,* out of a total of more than 19,000. The Government is not unaware of what is going on. They are also aware of the rampant corruption in newsprint supplies and in advertising rates "approved" by government for those newspapers that submit to this practice. The Government would like it this way, because this is how the Press can be brought into line when the need arises. It is the press that must ask itself the question whether it is prepared to pay the price for its integrity and its credibility. Because, ultimately, when the test comes, if it comes again, it will not be met by reference to Constitutional guarantees. We have known in our lifetime that these can be reduced to scraps of paper. The ultimate sanction of a free press must be in a strong and vigorous public opinion. The press must do more than it is doing now to earn that confidence.

The issues have been clearly posed. It is time we made our choice. And on that choice will depend our reputation as a free society.

Populism in Indian Politics

Adi H. Doctor

The Nature of Populist Politics

The word populism can be used in three distinct senses. As a movement; as a term to describe a community viz. a populist community; and as a term to describe the nature and style of politics viz. populistic politics. This paper is primarily concerned with the last mentioned usage of the term.

K. Ishwaran in his recent book, *A Populist Community and Modernization in India,* uses the term to refer to a peasant community that elects to preserve its local identity, essentially the core-culture.[1] Such a society may change or modernize but it follows the "populistic pattern of modernization", that is, it accepts change only at the periphery; the core culture stays intact. Ishwaran mentions its other characteristics to be, plural, emphasising localism and having no ideology.

At a conference held at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 19-21, May 1967, "To Define Populism", the term was largely understood to stand for a movement which had the following characteristics:

It glorifies people and is often inconsistent with the realities of politics; it generally advances the claims of lower classes and is peasantist in character. As Isaiah Berlin noted, it believes in some kind of integral society having its roots in the past, either imaginary or real, bound by a sense of fraternity and by a certain kind of social equality (generally held more dear than liberty) and is opposed to what it calls the western competitive atomised society. It is generally apolitical and does not put much faith in political institutions though it may use them for its ends. The state is not its ideal.

Its aim is the human individual or society and it talks more in terms of moral regeneration than laws.[2]

Finally the term is used to refer to a kind of politics, a use we are concerned with in this paper. Elaborating the nature of populist politics, J. D. Sethi observes: "It is inherent in populist politics that all parties, whether of the Right or Left, apply techniques of street politics in which masses are brought in on one excuse or another in support of one demand or another".[2] Populist politics in this sense, tend to be extra-constitutional politics. Now, it is not anyone's argument that a society should and can function hundred per cent constitutional. But for any society that wants to function effectively it is necessary that it strike a balance between constitutional and extra-constitutional politics. For instance, no society can afford to have frequent resort to populist politics to change constitutional governments by agitational or extra-constitutional means. Populist politics in resorting to extra legal mass agitation techniques, may use the language of socialism, communism, freedom, fascism, regionalism or communalism. In this sense populist politics can be right wing or left wing or be based on narrow regional or communal chauvinism. Its one essential characteristic is its seeking to bypass institutions and make direct appeals to the people. In a populist model, social and economic conflicts are not analysed in terms of class conflicts but as a perpetual struggle between the people and vested interests, in which the people are portrayed as not only having the right to rule but also as being wise and virtuous.

The Origins of Populism in India

Populism in independent India became a strident force between 1967 and 1971, though its origins can be traced to earlier times. In the late fifties, and thereafter, for instance, Prime Minister Nehru gave and propagated the slogan of a "Socialist Pattern of Society", but during all that time the country actually pursued a capitalist path of growth. During

the period from 1956 when Panditji first gave the slogan in 1964 (when he died), the growth rate of Indian big business was one of the fastest. The populist streak in Prime Minister Nehru's stance resulted in rousing expectations of a new socialist era with the masses and compelled the successor prime-minister also to resort to populist slogans. Thus Mrs. Gandhi had the slogan of "Garibi Hatao". But just as Panditji could not but let big business grow (if development was to take place in India), similarly Mrs. Gandhi could not overnight adopt drastic distributive measures without first having achieved growth.

Even then so long as the Congress party could resolve its internal differences within the party organization it was not required to adopt populist politics on a large scale. But this became impossible in 1967 and thereafter when an inner party struggle for leadership began between the two groups that popularly came to be known as "Indicate" led by Mrs. Gandhi and "Syndicate" led by S. Nijalingappa, Sanjiva Reddy, Morarji Desai and others. At this stage, one of the factions tried to bring in the masses in support of its claim, thus giving rise to populist politics. Between 1969-1971 Mrs. Gandhi's group adopted populist policies which sought to mobilize Harijans and weaker sections; small farmers and the rural proletariat; urban lower middle classes and industrial working class and resorted to such measures as bank nationalization and abolition of privy purses in a renewed bid to win a mass base. By the 1970s, Sethi opines, the Indian political system changed from democracy to pervasive populism.[4] This does not imply that Congress is or was the lone populist party. In the middle 1970s the opposition resorted, under the banner of J.P., to a purely populist movement to oust certain state and central governments. After the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi's government, during the short phase of coalition (Janata Party) rule at the centre, certain central ministers, like George Fernandes and Charan Singh did not hesitate to take issues to the people in order to settle intra-governmental disputes, nor hesitate to make use of such inherent conflicts as between management and labour, big and

small industry, city and rural hinterland to promote their factional interests.

Manifestations of Populism in Our Economic Policies

The bane of our economic development is that it is ridden with populist poison. Our planning objectives and strategies have been distorted by pressures of all kinds, some genuine, many pseudo-radical, exerted by parliament, political parties and various intellectual and economic interests. Thanks to these pressures the government came to accept and mouth various social welfare theories which won mass or popular acclaim but did not square with the economic realities of growth. When our politicians state that the goal of economic growth with social justice is within the reach of Indian planning they are not being fully honest.

Take, for instance, the various economic goals and objectives as listed in the previous Five Year plans. These included innumerable contradictory goals, but the planners gave the impression that all were possible to achieve simultaneously. Thus the plans sought (a) removal of poverty and achievement of a larger growth rate, (b) economic self-reliance, (c) prevention of concentration of economic power, (d) consolidation of the democratic political order, (e) reduction of disparities of income and wealth, (f) balanced regional development, (g) creation of massive employment, (h) realization of a socialist pattern of society. These objectives are not only conflicting but not even capable of simultaneous attainment since all of them compete for the same scarce resources. A non-populist approach to politics and development required that the government and the Commission enlighten the people about the technical feasibility of the different objectives. For instance, in the short-run it may not be possible to attain self-sufficiency and at the same time prevent the concentration of wealth. Similarly it is not economically easy to reconcile growth with the goal of reduction of income and wealth disparities. Economists tell us that economic realism

requires us to distinguish between inequalities which flow from development and may even be necessary and those which are not necessary and may arise from such property relations as help the rentier class. To disallow such inequalities as flow from development will amount to penalising innovating entrepreneurs. This is not to say that economic growth must take place unaccompanied by social justice; what is being stressed is that there can be no social justice without growth. What our failure to adopt economic realism and take refuge in populist politics has done, is that it has given us a low rate of growth which has made it difficult for us to have any meaningful programme of distributive justice. To give an example, take the textile policy of our government. The textile mills were forced to produce standard cloth; but the goods produced could not be lifted by the states because there was not enough money with the poor to buy it.

Several populist ideas especially in the realm of economics have become so deeply entrenched today that it may not be difficult to rid the body politic of them as for instance the idea that social justice demands the payment of a bonus even to those who work for a losing concern and even if the money, in the final reckoning, comes from the public exchequer; or, that it is immoral to link new wage scales with productivity; or the idea that if something is wrong with an industry, nationalization will cure all the evils, or that controls are necessary in the public interest and against business monopoly, whereas the reality is that they are welcomed by the bureaucracy because it helps them increase their power vis-a-vis politicians. Big business does not really mind these controls since it will enable businessmen to sort out problems with politicians and administrators through graft and bribery rather than on merits.

The brief Janata interlude was not very different from the earlier Congress regimes. Under the influence of its leading lights particularly, Charan Singh and George Fernandes, the party became anti-industry and populist. George Fernandes wanted nationalization of big industrial plants like Hindalco

and Tisco and constantly spoke of the growing concentration of economic power in the hands of the few. He also went along with Charan Singh in believing that nothing should be produced in the big sector or factories that could be produced in the "tiny", "small scale" or "cottage industries" sectors.

It was made out as if the country's ills could be solved if only government stopped pampering the urban middle classes and reversed the emphasis on a modern industrial society.

The reasons why we have called these stances of the Janata leaders as populist is because even at that time it was widely known to those who understood India's economic realities that:

(a) The so called big factories were really quite small by the standards of industrialized countries,
(b) the Indian public sector had not established itself as an efficient instrument of industrial progress,
(c) the mere act of nationalization, on whatever scale, could not by itself reduce economic disparities in any meaningful sense of the term and
(d) the experience of even China indicated the near impossibility of promoting development through the "tiny" and small scale sector.

As to Mr. Charan Singh's advocacy of Indian peasantry, the populist element in his stance is even more obvious. In the first place, though he projected himself as the leader of all peasants, he really represented the interests of only a handful of the rich peasantry. Thus his budget was designed to help only those rich farmers who used chemical fertilizers, motor driven pumpsets and mechanical tillers. Secondly, it was again populist to argue as Mr. Charan Singh did that the interests of the rural peasants demanded hurting those living in the urban sector or cities, for, he should have known that the plain truth is that as large a section of the urban population lives below the poverty line as that of the rural population. There is a third reason too why one is tempted to call Mr. Charan Singh a populist leader. He claimed his economics

to be Gandhian, whereas Gandhiji was never a champion of mechanised agriculture.

As economist P. C. Joshi, commenting on Janata's economic policies wrote, "Western ideologues having reached the point of satiety in material terms, may wax eloquent about small is beautiful; but in a country like India where hunger and want are the fate of the larger part of an increasing population, there can be no non-industrial path of development". In Joshi's view the policy of "primacy of agriculture" and the "complaint of discrimination" against villagers was raised by big farmers and the rich peasants lobby and the Janata government representing this elite's interest advocated reduction in agricultural input prices and price support." However, as Joshi continued, the "implications of such concessions to populism are serious at a time when a real possibility has emerged in many areas to make a sharp break with the colonial type of 'enclave' development and to explore new types of industrialization based on industry-agriculture interdependence."[5]

Congress populism in the fifties and sixties spoke of co-operative farming, with radical elements even advocating collective farming. The Janata Government actually represented and worked for the capitalist farm lobby but adopted the populist stance of advocating the cause of the downtrodden peasantry. Both parties spoke as if they detested capitalist agriculture, which, as Sethi notes, alone could have ushered in the green revolution given "the constraints of the ruling class, and the prevailing economic realities."[6]

Today, under the leadership of a young and dynamic prime-minister, it is to be hoped that the country will enter an era of real politics and abandon populist, or, what Sethi describes as "pseudo-politics". It is too early to pass judgement but it is worth reproducing here the view expressed by K. C. Khanna in the *Times of India:* "Whatever the rhetoric, in each one of its major moves on the economic front, the government is offering something to many divergent interests to broaden its popular support — just as Mrs. Indira Gandhi did when she

nationalised the private banks in 1969. The takeover meant bigger loans on better terms to entrepreneurs, more jobs for educated youth and a helping hand for taxi-drivers and poor farmers. Today, with bulging food and foreign exchange reserves, the government can afford to cut taxes, augment imports and indulge in deficit financing on an unprecedented scale to hand out largesse all round. The risk of triggering runaway inflation is there but the problem is not essentially unmanageable under the circumstances." "To recall all this" continues Khanna, "is only to emphasise that Mrs. Gandhi's vaunted 'swing to the left' in the late sixties and early seventies was as illusory as what observers on both sides of the ideological divide now like to describe as Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's 'lurch to the right'. There was no such lurch then and there is none now. Real problems needed to be tackled then and they need to be tackled now."[7]

A Populist Stand on Centre-State Relations

Several politicians as well as intellectuals have clamoured for more power to the states and have not hesitated to take the issue to the streets. The Janata party had made decentralization a major issue in its campaign. J. P. Narayan who inspired opposition unity and helped found the party was himself a great champion of autonomous, self-governing villages (and districts). But once in power, the hard socio-political realities did not enable the Janata party, to go beyond paying lip sympathy to the principle of decentralization. As things stand today there are many reasons for pleading for a strong centre.

Take for instance the argument for a radical financial devolution in favour of the states. This argument loses much of its weight when it is realized that between 1951-52 and 1966-67, the proportion of states' shared taxes and grants-in-aid to their total resources had increased from 22% to 37%. If, to this, we add central loans, the ratio increases from 29% to 50%. In other words, the central assistance to the states increased nine times and this is no small measure of financial

transfer.[8] Further, as has been pointed out by leading economists, as the national income continues to shift in favour of agriculture, it is the state's resources which should presumably acquire elasticity. The states unfortunately are unwilling to oblige because for obvious political reasons, they refuse to tax the peasantry.

Secondly, our experience of the last thirty years shows that the landlords and rich farmers fully exploited the fact that agriculture, land revenue and land reforms were state subjects to resist both structural reforms as well as resource mobilization. Now, this does raise grave doubts about the compatibility of decentralization with mass-oriented economic growth. As economist P. C. Joshi points out, a distinction must be made between an authoritarian and a strong state. Economic development and modernization of industry and agriculture, involve, among either things, a much higher level of organization and authority.[9]

The real problem is one of establishing economic and administrative norms, laying down functional responsibilities and of summoning the necessary political will to carry out the tasks of economic development. Taking into account our fragmented polity, divisive forces of region and language, and the greater tendency on the part of the states to play populist politics, one wonders whether we have yet attained that critical minimum amount of centralization necessary for our economic development and national unity. In an insightful essay, Girilal Jain observes that it is easier for the national intelligentsia to make the central government observe liberty and norms of public life (witness its ability to have compelled Mrs. Gandhi to restore N. T. Rama Rao to Chief Ministership of Andhra) than it is for the same intelligentsia to make state or local leaders (like Chief Minister Solanki of Gujarat or Rama Rao of Andhra) who derive their strength from caste or region to observe liberty or adhere to similar norms.[10]

The unfortunate fact is that our states continuously make demands for policies having a largely distributive bias as for example the Telugu Desam's populist programme of

providing free midday meal to the state's primary school children which recently had to be abandoned for want of funds and rampant malpractices.[11] Now if the centre gives in to these distributive economic ideologies it leaves little scope for productive investment. Of all the central grants given to the states only 20% are related to productive or matching mobilizational performance. The rest is based on no criteria of productivity at all.[12] If we have to break away from such an anti-growth centre-state relationship, the centre must stop pandering to the state's consumption oriented demands and must adhere to its pre-determined priorities.

Federal planning requires the central government to take such macro-decisions as determining the priorities for the economy as a whole, determining the short and long term development programmes, selecting the choice of technique for major projects, allocating investment funds between major sectors determining the consumption-investment pattern, etc. all decisions which can be taken only by an authority which is responsible to the country as a whole and not to any one or more states alone.[13]

Finally, a strong centre is a must to preserve the country's civic-democratic rule. A politically and economically weak centre would only encourage the military to become an autonomous centre of political power and may even encourage it to take over in a situation of national emergency. As Sethi insightfully observes, a strong centre alone can provide the countervailing force to growing military power.

Some More Populist Policies: e.g. the Issue of Reservations

It is an old theoretical proposition that leaders turn populist when in competition with their rivals they face the danger of losing power. The policy of periodically increasing the quota of reservations for backward classes (other than scheduled castes and tribes) does not cost the economy immediately nor does it involve hard labour as growth and increasing productivity do and hence has proved a handy device to the ruling party for

mobilizing the masses on its side. It is only now that we are paying the price for such ill-conceived policies.

Take the case of Bihar. Bihar has two socially identifiable cluster of castes viz. upper castes (Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayasthas) and backward (all the castes so listed from time to time by the Government of Bihar). These two groups have had a long history of struggle and as early as 1925 ,the two had clashed over the issue of wearing of sacred thread by the backward castes. However, it was only in the sixties and seventies that the backward caste elites engaged themselves in a major struggle for the capture of political power from the upper castes. It is this conflict, irrespective of party affiliations, that has affected the decision in regard to reservations of jobs as a part of the populist strategy adopted by the backward class elites. As Hetukar Jha comments this populist measure enabled "the backward class elite to muster the support of the backward class masses without doing anything substantial for removing the differences within their own caste group".[14].

Or, take the more recent case of Gujarat. The present turmoil in Gujarat can be traced to Mr. Solanki's folly of playing populist politics when actually he had no real need to. Mr. Solanki did not need to announce the sudden and dramatic increase of 18% in reservations for the so-called weaker sections of society to win the elections to the state legislature in early 1985. A little earlier the Congress had swept the polls to the Lok Sabha and the opposition was more demoralised than ever before in the history of independent India. At the time of the assembly polls Gujarat had the statutory reservations of 14% for tribals and 7% for Harijans plus 10% reservation for the new backward communities that the Baxi Committee recommended for 10 years (1979 to 1988). When in 1980 Mr. Solanki took office, the Kshatriya groups that had been left out by the Baxi committee sought inclusion among the backward classes. To make this possible the Rane Commission was appointed. In October 1983 it listed sixty-three occupations (including shepherds, cattle breeders, small and marginal farmers) as backward and recommended 18% reservations for

them. The Solanki government eager to satisfy Kshatriya aspirations the easy way and with an eye on the March Assembly poll announced the enhanced 18% backward class reservation, ignoring the Rane Committee Report's caveat that only those with less than Rs. 10,000/- annual income should be eligible for reservations.

The result was the agitation spearheaded by the Akhil Gujarat Vali Mahamandal and the Akhil Gujarat Navrachna Samiti. These bodies want the additional reservations to be unconditionally withdrawn, even the earlier 10% and reservation not to go beyond 1988 as suggested by the Baxi Committee. Thus, all that the government achieved by its easy recourse to populism is to have torn Gujarat as under by a caste war. It has led to the institutionalization of violence and further erosion of the institutions of civil society.[15]

One can see populist politics at work in several other areas too. Take for instance the government's oft announced policy to fight the menace of black money. If these policy statements are not to be taken as merely part of the populist functioning of government, the government must provide an effective deterrent to tax evasion. At present the punishment is only nominal and monetary and here too the amount of fine is invariably less than what the evasion itself produces. It is not as if government is unaware of the amount of black money that is allowed to be generated under its schemes of import substitution, export promotion, foreign collaborations and from what the recent report of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy on black money calls, "leakages (cuts by officials) from public expenditure, from purchases, sales or orders placed by the government particularly overseas" and from "private taxation" (illicit levies by politicians and officials to line their personal pockets).[16] What is lacking is political will to weed out such corruption. In fact so widespread and accepted is corruption among the elites that even those who indulge in it, have come to join the conspiracy of noises against it. In short, today, the elites' condemnation of corruption itself is a populist stance.

Finally, as Sethi notes, populism is manifest even in some of the foreign policy stances we take. For instance it is populist for our government to assert that our national goal is the welfare of humanity. Such an assertion may not be an outright lie, but as Sethi comments, "it turns into a nightmare for a country with little power to back such goals. The weaker a nation at any time, the narrower and more specific must be its goals to protect itself from being dragged into world-wide conflicts because global goals are a function of power and the amount of sacrifice a nation is prepared to put in. If a nation without enough power builds into her national consensus universal goals, it invites the charge of hypocrisy and possible humiliation when asked to defend these goals."[17]

The Consequences of Populist Functioning of Government

Why did the Congress and other parties so frequently resort to populist policies? Obviously it served some purpose. Populism enabled the ruling party to obtain the people's support. Through populism Congress could achieve some sort of domination by accommodation. Its radical stance was meant mainly to accommodate the radicals within the party and without. In the sixties it made for Congress-CPI alliance and helped Mrs. Gandhi thwart the crystallization of a left alternative.

Populism Destroys Institutions

But whatever its short-term-benefits in the long run populist politics can only spell disaster.

In the long run populism destroys institutions. Since populist leaders (elites) tend to appeal directly to the people bypassing institutions, the latter tend to become moribund or irrelevant. One of the criticisms political scientists generally level against Pandit Nehru is that although he set up all possible democratic institutions, he failed to institutionalize

politics because he allowed his charisma and his sycophants to undermine them, with the result that the various democratic institution today have only symbolic importance. From the point of view of democracy and its institutionalization, what is particularly worth noting is that populism weakens those crucial institutions which check and moderate the power of the state. The way in which the Judiciary was tampered with (judges suspended) during the pre-emergency and emergency days in the name of removing the opposition of vested interests and with a view to having a "committed" (committed to right ideology) judiciary is still fresh in our minds.

Populist functioning of government tends to undermine parliament too. Parliament may block decisions, highlight crucial national issues, subject ministers to questions but nothing of this affects the real centres of power which are the loosely knit lobbies (representing castes and various social and economic interests) that cut across all party divisions. The ineffectiveness of parliament can be gauged from the fact that we have failed to evolve a committee system which in other parliamentary systems is the centre of serious deliberation.

Another institution that has become the victim of the populist style of functioning of the ruling party is the Congress Parliamentary Party. Normally the prime-minister should depend on the parliamentary party for staying in power. Unfortunately, Mrs. Gandhi, after her first election in the mid-sixties refused to utilize the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) to draw her strength from it. She could have, had she chosen to do so, taken all crucial policy decisions to that forum for being tested and endeavoured to build up a position of trust and confidence between herself and its members. Instead she ignored it, refused to attend its meetings and opted to go over the heads of the CPP by directly appealing to the people. The result was that factionalism in the CPP increased and the opportunity to build up a fine parliamentary institution was sacrificed in favour of developing a personality cult. The real danger lies in the fact that one cannot go to the people on every issue and that once the collective decision

making machinery is destroyed, we are landed with the dominance of one person.

Now as sociologists point out, all institutions are either elite oriented or institutional. The founding fathers of our constitution favoured an institutional system and accordingly institutions at all levels were established. Today thanks to populist politics a few persons have come to dominate institutions and the institutions themselves have been rendered normless.

Since populism does not adopt an institutional approach but instead encourages appeasement, it fails to resolve conflicts as much as it fails to produce an enduring consensus. Conflict resolution and an enduring consensus both require an institutional approach to politics.

Populism Disastrous to Economic Development

The consequences of populist functioning of government have proved equally disastrous for economic development. We have had planning ever since independence but have all along planned on the basis of certain populist myths and populist pressures. One of the myths on which our planning is based is as if there is no inflation although year after year targets in the public and private sector go awry precisely due to unrelenting inflation. The second myth is to plan as if there are no serious crisis situations whereas all along we have been going through one crisis or another. It may be either the failure of monsoon or war (we have had four already) or a pervasive breakdown of law and order as in Punjab, Assam or Gujarat. A third myth is to plan on the assumption that the whole economy is planned, whereas the truth is that our economy has three parts—the planned, unplanned and black-market economy. And when the government knowing this states that its measures and controls will cure economic ills although it is all too clear that these will affect only the small and insignificant planned part, is it not induling in dangerous populist rhetoric? Non-populist

planning would imply that the government plan would be taking into account (1) the actual inflation in the country (2) the endemic crisis situation in the country and (3) the pervasive black-market economy. But then such non-populist plans would be difficult to sell to the people and would damage government's electoral prospects by exposing the myths of planned development and progress.

Not only have our planners based planning on dangerous myths they have also planned under populist pressures. As a result, our economic system has all the time been subject to short-term economic demands and we have failed to evolve a long-term economic development strategy and have instead come to work on an *ad hoc* basis—best illustrated by the case of power generation planning in our country. Another consequence of this (populist functioning of government) is that Ministers work at cross-purposes and their decisions have far too frequently to be reversed because of opposing pressures.

J. D. Sethi draws our attention to another aspect of the populist style of functioning of our government *viz.*, the phoney debate of economic growth versus social justice.[18] In the West social justice came only after discipline and austerity had brought about increased production. Ironically in our country a debate went on especially during the sixties and seventies over economic growth versus social justice that resulted in decrying growth itself. To illustrate, take the case of the government's policy to compel textile mills to produce a certain fraction of their total production as "controlled cloth" to be sold at controlled prices in fair price shops; or the policy of dual pricing in cement. Neither of these policies has really helped the needy to get substantial cloth nor build cheap houses. There were no takers of controlled cloth for the really poor had no money to buy it and the well-to-do would not touch it. What is worse, both these policies not only did not help the needy, they also hampered increased production and increased production is the only long-term way to bring down prices and help the poor.

The populist stance of the Congress and ruling elites during the sixties and seventies was such, says Prem Shanker Jha, that to be rich was looked upon as a crime and entrepreneurs were dubbed as "robber barons". The result was a deep and pervasive distrust of the private capitalist among the mass of gullible citizens. Jha contrasts this with the attitude of the Government in Korea which recovered after the ravages of war thanks to the economic miracle performed by extolling the virtues of the Japanese "Zaibatsu" and forging a working relationship with private companies during the same period when the Government of India was busy riding a populist tide running down private enterprise.[19]

The net result of populist functioning has been that it has brought about a poor to zero growth rate while at the same time it has roused social justice and re-distributive expectations. The result is that hitherto passive groups now demand more of the national cake which does not grow. At the same time it has encouraged the elite groups to change from a work ethic to a consumption ethic. But a nation cannot be built on hypocritical socialism; whether it be socialism (as in UK) or capitalism (as in Japan), both, owed their success to a work discipline and austerity. Populist politics undermine both these mental attitudes without which development is not possible.

Populism Destroys Values and Breeds Violence

One of the most baneful effects of populist politics is that it produces hypocrisy and distorts all ideologies. It produces elites which profess an ideology or values in which they do not believe or which they cannot put into practice. A populist government may proclaim and speak in terms of moral values but itself does not adhere to them. A populist government proclaims its adherance to democracy and may talk the language of egalitarianism but in practice follows the line of least resistance and of non-discrimination even against incompetence. The party and government based on

populism function as an aggregate of interest groups and yet are forced to express contempt for such groups in order to keep up a facade of ideological purity. The net result is that noisy professions are made about the fundamental transformation of society while in actuality the *status quo* is maintained.

Populism characterises not only government functioning, but also all our parties. "How else", asks Sethi, "can the Swatantra party which practises sophisticated modern conservatism, manage to sell it to its vast majority of tribals and most backward supporters?".

Because of pervasive populism, Sethi dubs Indian politics as "pseudo-politics". In pseudo-politics, everyone asks functional questions, never the crucial structural questions. For example, everyone asks to bring down prices (a functional question); no one asks for fundamental changes in the structure of production, income distribution and government expenditure (a structural question) without which prices cannot be actually brought down.

An equally disastrous consequence of populism is the institutionalization of violence. Populist leaders make all kinds of promises to all kinds of groups (reservations, textile-policy, education) with no serious thought given to either the ability to fulfill them or their consequences; such leaders thus achieve their goal of staying in power at the cost of social fragmentation and encouraging divisive tendencies. They often find it necessary to play upon the fears of the minorities or the majority. Often, to satisfy groups and get votes, they compel government to go on a spending spree, frequently making it spend from the exchequer on projects which either had no priority or never even were thought of.

But this whole populist exercise is self-defeating because it only results in a growing gap between electoral promises and actual economic-political realities. This gap can only be filled by populist violence. Since the disgruntled cannot oppose the ruling party constitutionally they challenge it in the street.

Take for instance the government's populist textile policy referred to earlier which produced closure of mills and rendered workers unemployed. With no ability to face a growing inflationary situation, the unemployed workers, like the uneducated unemployed, turn to violence, demonstrations, bandhs, loot and arson and fall prey to professional agitators, or, to what social scientists have come to call "the engineers of violence".

The Way Out

The only way out of the present crisis of growing violence, growing normlessness and the steady destruction of democratic institutions, is to abandon populist policies. This requires political will on the part of the various political leaders, the development of ethics (business ethics as well as political ethics) and the development of a genuine democratic structure by strengthening and depoliticizing various democratic institutions (like the judiciary, the press etc.). Our political parties must abandon the populist practice of trying to incorporate and accommodate every conceivable demand and interest and must instead try to build themselves into united and coherent groups. In addition, the ruling party must institutionalize the relationship between its parliamentary and organizational wings by establishing norms of conduct, recruitment, and performance for the two wings. Finally, the government must resist giving in to short-term populist demands and abandon the policy of ad-hocism and instead sit down to the task of evolving a long-term growth strategy and taking some hard and serious decisions in consultation with relevant interests and through proper institutions.

A non-populist approach to development will imply as Prem Shankar Jha, points out, reshaping our economic policies.[22] "The Indian intelligentsia" writes Jha, "approached industrialization with the intellectual baggage it had inherited from the British", an integral element of which was "the belief in social democracy which embodied, in turn, confrontationist

craft-based trade unionism and a deep-seated distrust of the private capitalist". Jha attributes the rapid economic development of Korea to the fact that it had no such pre-conceived economic model. Hence Koreans did not look on entrepreneurs as "robber barons" and their government openly collaborated and encouraged them in the task of economic production and growth. To once again quote Jha, today, "the state is set for the most important change that India needs to make. This is for the government to stop treating the so-called private sector as a pariah and to use it as a tool to achieving its economic objectives... rather than cut back annual outlays and drag out the gestation period of its projects, as the government has been doing in plan after plan; it will do well to formulate its project and let the major companies in the so-called private sector bid for them.[23]

The change in attitude towards the private sector must be accompanied by an equally realist approach to the public sector to see that it actually performs. On both fronts we notice under the regime of PM Rajiv Gandhi that the government has already begun taking sound economic decisions. Thus along with a distinct improvement in the government's attitude towards the private sector *viz.* a belated realization that it has a major role to play if the country seeks rapid economic development, there is also the realization that the public sector too must deliver the goods. Some healthy developments in the public sector are the likelihood of the formation of a Public Enterprises Board to remove snags in the performance of public sector undertakings; Rajiv Gandhi's offer of freedom to the heads to take decisions and function without any hindrances; and the permission granted to public sector units to borrow from the market by floating loans.

A populist regime bandies radical slogans and policies. It is their economic administration that is rare and costly, if not often, impossible. It is the unnecessary and disproportionately large diversion of economic surplus towards meeting politically

oriented demands that has reduced our growth rate. Hence less of sloganeering and more professional use of resources are the crying need of the day. Populist sloganeering may cover up unproductive government expenditure, but for how long? From time to time, the government has announced a cut in central and state budgetary expenditures; but not once has government seriously retrenched superfluous staff or strictly regulated new recruits. The tragedy of populist functioning is that those items which have no powerful political or vested interest support (such as health, education etc.) get cut and not the unproductive expenditure. Even today ministers and civil servants spend money on tours far in excess of the amount justified by the constituency's or country's demands.

Knowing that a strong centre is essential for economic growth, social transformation as well as for national integration and unity, the government as well as political parties must desist from indulging in populist rhetoric which strengthens the divisive forces of region, community and caste. The government must redress the balance between the centre and states in favour of the former (for example, transfer agriculture and higher education to centre). Decisions about projects must similarly be based on technical rather than regional considerations. And finally, the Government must steadfastly refuse to appease or bribe or buy various protest movements. We can pamper our unlimited social and political pluralism only at the expense of national unity and progress. Democracy in a diverse and divided society always encourages political parties to adopt populist stances. Hence a long-term remedy would be the inculcation of nationalism. There is, of course, no guarantee that nationalism will lead to democracy; but this much is certain that democracy without nationalism cannot survive. In the long-run it is nationalism alone that will make for sober thinking on the demand for decentralization or "rampant federalism" of the Anandpur Sahib variety.

NOTES

[1] K. Ishwaran, *A Populist Community and Modernization In India,* Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978, p. 3.

[2] *Vide,* the precis report of the conference in *Government and Opposition,* London, Vol.3, 1966, pp. 173-179. The Conference opined that "the main populist strain of thought in India at the moment was that associated with Jayaprakash Narayan and his writings" (pp. 152-53).

[3] J. D. Sethi, *India in Crisis,* Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1975 p. 148.

[4] J. D. Sethi interprets the 1969 split as no radical transformation of the Congress but as a classic example of inter-elite power struggle. This he asserts, is clear from the fact that subsequent to the split no radical economic transformation was worked out; all that happened was that the victorious elite succeeded in mobilizing the poor in its favour by selling them the "garibi hatao" slogan and other radical programmes (like bank nationalization and abolition of privy purses) which did not touch the core of the economic system. *Ibid.,* Ch. viii.

[5] P. C. Joshi, "Janata's Economic Policy", *Times of India,* Bombay, 3rd January, 1979.

[6] J. D. Sethi, *op.cit.,* p.15

[7] K. C. Khanna, "Mesmerised by Supermarket", *Times of India,* Bombay, 25th June, 1985.

[8] *Vide,* J. D. Sethi, *India's Static Power Structure,* Vikas, New Delhi, 1969, Ch.8. p.98.

[9] *Vide, Times of India,* Bombay, 3rd January, 1979.

[10] *Vide,* Girilal Jain, "The Solanki Phenomenon: A poser for Decentralizers", *Times of India,* Bombay, 10th July, 1985.

[11] While announcing that the scheme was scrapped, in May, 1985, the reason given was that the sarpanchas had shown no interest in it. But as Amarnath Menon writes ("Andhra Pradesh: The Food Fiasco", *India today,* 15th June, 1985,

p. 52), "This was only an excuse to save upto Rs. 33 crores a year".

An official of the state education department confessed, "if there was a watchdog panel, the children would have got the meal. All that we can boast after spending Rs. 85 crores is creating huge assets in kitchen vessels." While State Labour and Employment Minister, P. Indra Reddy observed "The only ones who put on fat by the midday meal programme were the sarpanchas and this is why some legislators urged the chief minister to wind up the scheme". *India Today,* 15th June, 1985. p.52.

[12] *Vide,* J. D. Sethi, *India's Static Power Structure,* p. *109*

[13] A good example is the current controversy between Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on the sharing of the Krishna waters. Karnataka has strongly protested against the unilateral revision of the Telugu Ganga project. The Karnataka Public Works Minister D. Deve Gowda declared in the Legislative Council that "No state had a right to violate the Krishna water tribunal award. It is the duty of the Centre to intervene when such attempts are made". *Times of India,* Bombay, 23rd July, 1985 p.9.

[14] *Vide,* Hetukar Jha, "Caste Conflicts in Bihar: Competitive Elites", *Times of India,* Bombay, 5 May, 1978 p.8.

[15] For detailed account of the Gujarat agitation see A. S. Abraham, Caste War in Gujarat, *Times of India,* Bombay, 6 July,1985 and Rajni Kothari "Gandhi & Gujarat", *Illustrated Weekly of India* Bombay, 16 June, 1985, pp. 14-17.

[16] For some interesting comments on the Committee's findings see K. C. Khanna, "Ravages of Black Money", *Times of India,* Bombay, 9 July, 1985.

[17] J. D. Sethi, *India's Static Power Structure,* p. 149.

[18] J. D. Sethi, *India in Crisis,* pp. 9-10.

[19] *Vide,* Prem Shankar Jha, Reshaping Economic Policies, *Times of India,* Bombay, 10th June, 1985.

[20] J. D. Sethi, *India's Static Power Structure,* p. 126.

[21] *Ibid,* p. 131.

[22] Jha uses the term "so called" private sector since government or its financial institutions own 45% of the paid-up equity capital of the 447 major companies in the private sector.

Jha shows how this (letting private sector bid for government projects) will not only enable us to overcome the problem of lack of funds but also give us more return since "one rupee investment in the private sector has yielded the same output as two rupees of investment in the public sector". On the whole Jha feels that thanks to the disastrous consequences, "the populist tide of the sixties and seventies has ebbed". *Vide,* "Reshaping Economic Policies" *Times of India,* Bombay, 10th June, 1985 p. 8.

Foreign Aid: Rewarding Impoverishment?

P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey

Purpose and Methods of Aid

Relief of acute need and misery in poor countries has been the declared purpose of foreign aid—that is, official transfers from richer to poorer countries, as distinct from military assistance, commercial investment, or the efforts of voluntary agencies—since President Harry Truman launched the Point Four program in January 1949, well over a generation and hundreds of billions of dollars ago. This objective has always been the aim of the many genuinely compassionate supporters of foreign aid. Yet foreign aid goes to governments, not to the poor. To support rulers on the basis of the poverty of their subjects effectively rewards the policies that cause impoverishment. We have not emphasized this critical consideration sufficiently in our previous writings on foreign aid.*

Since in those writings we have considered at length the numerous other arguments which have been advanced for

*These writings include certain essays in two books, *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* by P. T. Bauer (Harvard University Press, 1982) and *Reality and Rhetoric: Studies in the Economics of Development* by P. T. Bauer (Harvard University Press, 1984). See also the following articles: "Western Guilt and Third World Poverty" by P. T. Bauer (Commentary, January 1976); "Against the New Economic Order" by P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey (Commentary, April 1977); "Foreign Aid for What?" by P. T. Bauer and John O'Sullivan (Commentary, December 1978); and "East-West/North-South" by P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey (Commentary, September 1980).

foreign aid—including restitution for alleged Western misconduct; promotion of exports and employment in the West; the interests of Western political strategy; and the need to avoid a financial crisis—we shall not examine them here. We shall instead confine ourselves to the most durable and most effective argument behind this policy, the insubstantial nature of which has been so dramatically exposed by recent events in Africa.

Aid advocates have usually envisaged two different routes or methods for reaching their proclaimed goal. One, which may be termed the direct method, is the relief of acute poverty through transfers of money to governments of the poorest countries in the expectation that this will help directly to improve the lot of the very poor. The second, or indirect, method is the transfer of funds to governments in the expectation that this will promote development which in turn will reduce acute poverty, or even eliminate it. In the early years of aid, the primary emphasis was on the promotion of development; in the last decade or so, the emphasis has shifted to the direct method.

These two methods are often intertwined in aid discussions. They do, however, differ radically in their criteria of allocation and in their expected results, much as scholarships, grants, or subsidized loans to promising youngsters for their education or for setting up in business differ from alms to the poor, or from support to a disabled person.

Here we shall discuss the direct method first.

What happens to Aid?

The money sent via the direct method does not go to the pitiable figures whose photographs we see in the campaigns of the aid lobbies. It goes to their governments—that is, their rulers. All too often it is these very rulers who are responsible for the gruesome conditions depicted in aid publicity. Foreign aid enables them to go on pursuing policies harmful or even utterly destructive to the population at large. A depressing yet

incomplete list includes: maltreatment and expulsion of productive minorities; suppression of trade in farm produce, simple implements, and consumer goods; state monopoly of import and export; large-scale underpayment of farmers; forced collectivization and coercive removal of people from their homes; wholesale confiscation of property; restriction on the inflow of badly needed skills, enterprise, and capital.

In Asia and Africa many recipients of aid routinely pursue such policies. Even singly, some of these policies — e.g. suppression of trade, underpayment of farmers, or restriction of essential supplies — often cause havoc over wide areas by undermining or even destroying the exchange economy. Pursued in combination, they can greatly aggravate any natural calamity, and indeed can be devastating in the literal sense of the term, as can be seen today in Ethiopia, the Sudan, the Sahel, Uganda, and elsewhere. Simultaneously, many of these governments neglect such elementary responsibilities as public security, public health, and the maintenance of basic communications.

Aid can relieve immediate shortages. It thereby conceals from the population, at least temporarily, the worst effects of destructive policies. It also suggests external endorsement of the activities of the government, and this confers spurious respectability on the rulers. In these ways, aid keeps governments afloat and enables them to persist in their damaging policies. The famine in Ethiopia is only a recent and conspicuous example of this sequence, which has many antecedents and analogies elsewhere in Asia and Africa — for instance in Vietnam, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, and Ghana, among others.

To support rulers on the basis of the poverty of their subjects not only enables the rulers to pursue extremely damaging and even inhuman policies; it positively rewards them for doing so. Thus, per-capita incomes are reduced if a government restricts, persecutes, or expels its most productive people, often but not only ethnic minorities — Asians and Europeans in East Africa or Chinese in South east Asia; or if a

government restricts the employment opportunities of women in the name of Islamic orthodoxy; or if it cripples or destroys the exchange economy. As incomes in the country are now lower, such governments can then qualify for more aid.

The notion that official aid can help the poorest through direct transfers in any case does not apply over most of Asia and Africa where there is no machinery whatever for state relief of poverty. Indeed, state help to the poorest usually does not accord either with local mores or with the political priorities of contemporary rulers. This is especially so where there are ethnic, cultural, and tribal diversities. Is an Arab-dominated Sudanese government likely to help the poorest among blacks in the southern Sudan, hundreds of miles away, with whom most of the time it is in open armed conflict? Can the rulers of Ethiopia be expected to help the people of Tigre when their distress is exacerbated by the government's military action in that extremely poor region? Is a Hausa-dominated government in Nigeria likely to assist the poorest among the Ibo and the Tiv? Are the Sinhalese rulers of Sri Lanka likely to help the Tamil poor? Such questions can be asked about practically every government in Asia and Africa.

The priorities of Third World rulers are also reflected in their lavish spending on prestige projects. Familiar examples include brand-new capitals built from scratch at the cost of many billions of dollars and often incomplete many years after construction has started (Abuja in Nigeria and Dodoma in Tanzania). There are the extremely expensive international meetings of the grotesquely named Organization of African Unity. Nor are the poorest helped by the huge expenditures on arms by Third World governments (accounting for about one-fifth of total world spending on arms) intended almost wholly for use against other Third World countries, or their own subjects.

While official aid represents a relatively small proportion of total government expenditures in Western countries (and therefore a yet smaller proportion of GNP), it is nevertheless substantial relative to government revenues and export

earnings of recipient Third World countries, and often even exceeds them. The inflow of aid therefore much expands the resources and the power of governments. It reinforces and extends the politicization of life in the Third World. It increases the stakes — both gains and losses — in the struggle for political power, provokes or exacerbates anxiety and tension, particularly in the multiracial and multicultural societies of many Third World countries.

The strains and tensions provoked by politicization often erupt into armed conflict even in countries where, in the past, different communities have lived together peaceably for generations — for instance in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Chad, Uganda, and Nigeria. Politicization of life, reinforced by foreign aid, helps to unleash the forces behind the recurrent or persistent civil wars in these countries. Among other effects, these sequences necessarily divert energy and resources from economic activity to political life. The poorest, especially the rural poor, are harmed most.

The misery in Ethiopia has been brought to the notice of many millions of people in the West. But not many have been told that the Marxist-Leninist government there has regularly received much Western aid, mostly from multilateral sources, with an appreciable U.S. and British content. This totalled about $1 billion over the five years 1978-82. Throughout this period, the government pursued most of the damaging and destructive policies we have listed above, including persecution of productive groups, coercive collectivization of agriculture, large-scale confiscation of property, and underpayment of farmers by state buying agencies. Western aid continued nevertheless.

What has happened to all this money? Obviously very little of it has gone to the poorest. Some of it has presumably helped the government to fight its several civil wars, and to finance the extravagant Organization of African Unity with headquarters in Addis Ababa.

So much for the direct method of relieving poverty and distress.

Aid and Development

Can official aid, then, help relieve poverty and acute need indirectly, by promoting development through augmenting the supply of investible funds? The answer is no. Official aid cannot contribute substantially to Third World development, and is indeed quite likely to retard it.

To begin with, the volume of investible funds is not critical for economic development. If it were, millions of very poor people — individuals, families, groups, and whole societies — could not have risen from poverty to riches in a few years or decades, as immigrant communities in South-east Asia and North America, among others, have done. And governments and enterprises which can use capital productively and conduct their finances responsibly can borrow at home or abroad, even if they are poor.

Thus, even in very poor countries Western trading firms in the past habitually provided substantial financing to trustworthy local firms and individuals. And governments of poor countries have often borrowed commercially for infrastructure or other purposes. Therefore, the most that aid can do for development is to reduce the cost of borrowing investible funds, the volume of which — to repeat — is not critical for development. Incidentally, this applies also to technical assistance, which can be paid for by governments, as was often done in the past, for instance by the Japanese in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Against the benefits of the reduced cost of investible funds must be set major adverse repercussions affecting the basic personal, cultural, and political determinants of development. In addition to those we have already mentioned (especially the politicization of life, with its adverse or even disastrous consequences for economic activity), official aid also often encourages imprudent financial policies and discourages, for instance, the building-up of reserves. All too often balance-of-payments deficits are not unwelcome because they can serve as a useful argument for requesting external assistance and

also for imposing domestic controls, both of which can serve the interests of the government. All this goes counter to a favored shibboleth of the aid lobbies — that aid helps people to help themselves.

The reality of the limitations and consequences of aid should not be called into question because the economies of a number of aid-recipient countries have genuinely advanced, or because some particular aid-financed projects have succeeded. The maximum contribution of aid to these success stories cannot in the nature of things have exceeded the avoided cost of borrowing. Indeed, the more promising a government's policies or the more attractive a project, the easier it is for the government or the firm to raise external funds. It is simply not true that without foreign aid governments of poor countries could not borrow commercially abroad, or that productive projects could not be financed. The contrary is clear, for example, from the plantation, mining, manufacturing, trading, and transport enterprises, both local and foreign, established in Asia, Africa, and Latin America long before foreign aid.

Significance of Aid

In sum, at best foreign aid can do little to relieve Third World poverty or promote Third World development. But this does not mean that foreign aid is not important. It is, in fact, extremely significant on several grounds. As we have discussed these grounds — which are altogether different from those suggested by the proponents of aid — in various publications, we simply list some of them here.

First, it is official aid that has created the Third World as a collectivity which, as such, is hardly a friend of the West. Aid therefore underlies the North-South conflict. Further, because, unlike Soviet-bloc aid, Western aid routinely goes to governments at loggerheads (even at war) with each other, it enables each to claim that the West, especially the United States, supports its enemies.

Second, by promoting and reinforcing the politicization of life, aid not only damages the welfare of Third World peoples in the ways described above; it also harms the political interests of the West.

Third, the advocacy of aid has spawned a plethora of writings hostile to the West and its economic arrangements.

Fourth, powerful strands in this advocacy envisage aid as a first step in a world-wide income redistribution among countries, again to the detriment of the West and its economic arrangements.

It does not follow from our argument that the West cannot do anything to improve the lot of the peoples of the Third World. Indeed, the countries of the West already offer both huge markets and vast sources of supply not only to one another but also to the Third World. The removal or reduction of trade barriers could expand the opportunities and the benefits of international commerce. Moreover, the condition of the poorest in the Third World could be alleviated by the operation of non-politicized charities, which could be expanded with judicious official encouragement and support.

We recognize, in conclusion, that a demonstration that aid cannot achieve its proclaimed purposes — even if such a demonstration were seen to be valid — is not likely to change the operation of foreign aid or reduce its volume. This is so because of the powerful emotional, political, commercial, and institutional interests behind it. These forces are unlikely to be deflected or attenuated by analysis, evidence, and argument, whatever their cogency. And so the damage will go on.

The Consumer Movement

M. R. Pai

Consumer Rights or Obligations

There is a character in one of Moliere's plays who is surprised when told that he has been speaking prose all his life. Most people are surprised to learn that all, irrespective of any difference based on sex, caste, creed, religion, ideology or what-have-you, are basically *consumers*; further, the end of all economic activities is the satisfaction of consumers. Moreover, many day-to-day troubles and problems can be solved only if people realise their importance as consumers and fight for their rights and fulfil their responsibilities as consumers.

Basically, consumers have four rights:

(1) Adequate and correct information on the product or service offered to them.
(2) Reasonable quality of goods or services.
(3) Reasonable price.
(4) In the event of any dispute, regarding the purchase, a fair interpretation of the law or rule governing the sale.

Because most consumers are not aware of these rights, they suffer in their day-to-day life. They get meagre or misleading information from the suppliers; exorbitant prices are charged for goods and services; quality is either absent, or poor; when people find that they have got a raw deal, the table is turned against them that they have been at fault and nothing can be done about the complaint.

These four rights carry with them some corresponding responsibilities also.

Unlike other movements which place stress only on rights, the consumer movement is based on rights balanced by responsibilities. These responsibilities are:

(1) The consumer should not make wild allegations or general complaints. Complaints should be specific, and wherever possible supported by bills and other documentary evidence.
(2) Before making a complaint, the consumer should try to understand the viewpoint of the seller.
(3) In some situations, the consumer has to cooperate with the seller of goods or services. For instance, standing in a queue for a bus is in the general interest.
(4) Consumer rights should be asserted, but never by means which hurt the legitimate interest of others. For instance, *satyagraha, rasta roko* (halting traffic on roads), *morchas* (processions) which disrupt traffic etc., are undesirable methods of asserting one's rights. The general public which has nothing to do with a specific complaint, is hurt by these methods of expressing one's displeasure.
(5) Consumer complaints should be normally against a system, and not against individuals. It is customary to attack the head of an organisation or specific individuals, while the real culprit is the system which works against consumer interests.

The Movement Abroad

The consumer movement has progressed phenomenally in countries like U.S.A. and the United Kingdom. Ralph Nader's heroic fight against the corporate giant General Motors, and subsequent emergence of Nader Raiders dramatised the growth of this movement into adulthood in U.S.A. In the U.K., *WHICH* magazine has become a byword for consumer

alertness because of its scientific analysis of various products and services.

Today, the consumer movement is not confined to liberal democracies of the West where people enjoying political democracy realise that it is not complete without economic democracy. While the former consists in the periodic casting of the vote for electing representative governments, the latter involves daily ballotting in the form of making a choice between different goods and services, and competing brands of goods or services. Millions of such decisions by people as consumers give a democratic direction to the economy. What makes political democracy meaningful is also the element of consumers' choice and the freedom to choose.

Where there is a Command Economy, with centralised comprehensive planning as in communist countries, one would not naturally expect a consumer movement. But even in such countries, the consumer movement is emerging as a force to reckon with. The governments of such countries have to heed the voice of the consumers and try to placate them. When the consumer is suppressed, riots overtake such totalitarian political systems. In other words, consumerism is emerging as the answer to political totalitarianism in some countries. These countries are faced with a dilemma: If consumer assertiveness is respected, the day is not far off when the freedom to choose in the economic sphere will extend to freedom to choose in the political sphere. Thus both the Command Economy and totalitarian rule will face a challenge from people.

The Movement Begins in India

The emergence of consumer movement in India, which enjoys political democracy but suffers from an attempt at centralised comprehensive planning, is a recent one.

The consumer is slowly waking up in India. For years, a closed market created by a dispensation of governmental controls left little choice to the Indian consumer. The

consumer had to stomach whatever was available, irrespective of quality, and at the dictated price. The rapid increase in the number of consumers in some sectors of the economy has suddenly projected the problem of efficient service at a reasonable price. Banking is one instance. The national objective is to convert *class banking* into *mass banking*, and rightly so. In earlier days, the manual system of operations, from maintenance of ledgers to clearance of cheques, was able to cope with the limited banking business confined to the elite. With expansion of the banking industry, territorially and in terms of new clientele, the old system was unable to cope with the load of work. It has virtually broken down. The new system of electronic banking has not yet been introduced. The result is near chaos in the banking industry, with consequential inefficiency and frauds. Belatedly, computerisation and modern management practices are sought to be applied to banking.

Whether it is banking or travel by air/railways/bus, or telephones, or civic services, or supply of consumer goods, the conversion of a class into a mass economy is the big problem facing India today. The emergence of consumer consciousness, with expectations of a better life, has shown up the inadequacies of the present economic policies all the more.

The consumer movement has started in India, but it has not yet arrived.

On the one hand, there are organised groups, and on the other, a number of individual fighters for consumer rights. The Consumer Guidance Society of India, an organisation started and mostly run by housewives in their spare time, has made its weight felt in a number of ways in spite of severe constraints on finance. Since CGSI does not accept advertisements and donations from companies, it operates on a shoestring budget. Yet its impact is felt. It has an official magazine, KEEMAT, with informative articles. Its representatives are invitees in many governmental and private business discussion groups on consumer affairs. CGSI speakers address

colleges, service clubs, women's groups and participate in various seminars and meetings. Housewives are being educated by CGSI in detecting adulteration of foodstuffs. The Consumer Week is celebrated with articles in the press, exhibition and many other activities. The processing of individual grievances and press notes on current problems affecting consumers are some of its other prominent activities. In spite of its many limitations, the CGSI carries on a number of activities to protect and promote the interest of consumers.

The Consumer Education and Research Centre of Ahmedabad, under the dynamic leadership of Prof. Manubhai Shah, is championing the cause of consumers mainly through the law courts. Its style of operations is different, but the end result is the same—consumer protection. The CERC Trust accepts donations from all sources, on the clear understanding that it would in no way be deflected in fighting its battles even against the donor, if need be. It has set up what is perhaps the finest library and reference section on consumer affairs in India. CERC collects painstakingly all legal and other information on consumer causes, and drags the offending organisations to the Court of Law. For instance, its battle against the Indian Airlines Corporation's increase in air fare has become a topic of appreciative comments amongst thousands of air travellers. But for its campaign, the air fare structure in India today would have been different, and created a bigger dent in travellers' pockets.

A special programme to train public workers in consumer activities, paying them a stipend during their training period in Ahmedabad, is an unique venture of CERC.

Well-researched publications and colour slide shows are two other special features of CERC's working.

A quiet housewife from the plantation area of Coorg, who was inspired by a Leslie Sawhny Programme leadership training camp, became the leader of the consumer movement in Karnataka. Mrs. Jaji Mandanna started a consumer organisation in Bangalore, helped others to form many more consumer groups in Karnataka, and created enough impact to get for

Karnataka the first ever Consumer Protection Board to process public grievances, with Government supporting the Board in its efforts.

It is difficult to list all the consumer groups and their heroic efforts against many odds. From small towns like Udupi or Dandeli, to big cities like Hyderabad, Nagpur, Madras, Delhi and Calcutta there are many consumer groups, each striving in its own way.

All these are virtually pioneers in the consumer movement. In addition, there is the typical Indian phenomenon of lone individuals battling for consumer rights in specific areas.

Considering the vastness of the country, the spread of population in many villages and small towns, illiteracy and many other peculiar circumstances of the Indian scene, all efforts so far have not even touched the fringe of the problems faced by consumers. Yet, the future of the consumer movement appears to be bright if one were to go by the response it has got so far.

The Government and the Movement

By far the biggest producer in the country is the Government of India—its own bureaucracy and State sector of industries dominate the scene. It has taken a positive attitude towards consumer protection and welfare, although there are many shortfalls and deficiencies in translating that objective into reality. Nevertheless, the intentions are clear. A number of laws have been enacted or amended to strengthen the cause of the consumer. Recently, for instance, in response to public demand, it has been made mandatory to indicate "local taxes" in the sale price of packaged commodities. "Local taxes extra" line was used by unscrupulous traders to exploit consumers.

The State Government of Madhya Pradesh has come out with a Bill to protect consumers. The Karnataka Government not only appointed a consumer activist to the Legislative Council, but actively assists the Consumer Protection Board. The Gujarat Government gives a grant to Consumer Education

and Research Centre, although at one stage it was stopped because CERC campaigns had hurt the ego of some leaders in the Government.

The attitude of State Sector units is a mixed bag. There are on the one hand organisations like the Unit Trust of India, highly sensitive as also sincerely responsive to consumer suggestions and reactions. For instance, it was public criticism of delay in payment of dividends which led UTI to update its system and expedite the process. Central and Western Railways in Bombay answer every letter of complaint in the Press. At the other end of the spectrum there are organisations like the Telephone Department which are as dead to public complaints as some of its subscribers' phones.

At the local Government level, the Bombay Municipal Corporation and its BEST Undertaking meticulously respond to every consumer complaint.

The Corporate Sector is sensitive to public criticism in the Press, while some of them take corrective action even with a letter of complaint. Recently, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry came out with a code for its members vis-a-vis consumers. The best work is done, however, by the Council for Fair Business Practices. It entertains complaints from the public and seeks to get satisfaction to the complainants by intervening on their behalf. Complaint boxes have been placed in public places like railway stations. Recently, some 20 leading company members started consumer grievance wings to process complaints.

Businessmen, and professionals in service organisations like the Rotary, are also actively propagating the cause of consumers by public education in the subject, through their consumer relations committees.

The biggest boost to consumer movement is from the media of mass communication. The Government controlled sector, T.V. and Radio, feature consumer interest programmes. The introduction of sponsored T.V. has led to a mass arousal of consumer consciousness through a programme, "Rajani". When LPG dealers and taxi drivers protested against Rajani

shows criticising them, public reaction in defence of "Rajani" was spontaneous and overwhelming.

The best response in the field of mass communications has been from the Press. News items of consumer interest get ready publicity in the Press, within its constraints of space. Special consumer interest columns are on the increase. To cite only a few by way of illustrations: "Indian Express", "Daily" and "Mid-day" of Bombay run weekly consumer complaint columns. "Deccan Herald" in Bangalore and "Statesman" of New Delhi publish regularly consumer interest material. The letters in "Statesman" invariably get a reply from the party complained against, "Femina," prominent magazine for women, places emphasis on consumer grievances.

In fine, it can be safely asserted that the response to consumer movement is positive and enthusiastic. The biggest danger comes, however, from the consumers themselves. Many consumers, mostly the educated ones, are apathetic and indifferent to their own interests. Even without bothering to pen a complaint to concerned authorities, they grumble and complain. Therefore, the big challenge before the consumer movement is to destroy the apathy and indifference of consumers.

The State and The Arts

Nissim Ezekiel

Wherever freedom exists and is real, it is subject to severe criticism for being inadequate or hypocritical. Its aberrations are relentlessly exposed. How little it means to the poor, the unemployed and others within power hierarchies which are only formally democratic is described over and over again. If freedom is not perfect where it is constitutionally guaranteed and available to all, it is probed into and "exposed". All this is necessary if it is seen in a human and social perspective, which is often overlooked. Our society is supposed to be free and democratic, but consider the situations in which freedom and democracy are farcical, say the critics, and they are right.

On the other hand, where freedom is totally destroyed, where democracy implies the rule of a single party or group, where dissent and opposition are virtually impossible and are driven underground, these same critics discover compensating factors. One of them is the alleged encouragement and support given by tyrannical states to the arts.

"State encouragement" to the Arts

Consider, say these critics, the funds allotted to museums and galleries, the subsidised publications, the scale of the grants and scholarships to artists. Then they proceed to attribute all negative assessments of such societies to "western propaganda". Poverty and unemployment, they argue, have been abolished, so what does it matter if certain "bourgeois values" have been abolished with them. What matters is that there is no more "exploitation" of one class by another. That

the state is now the supreme exploiter escapes their attention. Capitalist inequalities have been wiped out, so they don't notice that everybody is now unequal in relation to the State. And Art is for the people, so why worry if the people are slaves!

If double standards are excluded, serious positive questions may still be raised about the role of the state in relation to the Arts. A series of principles, with qualifications and modifications according to the context, may be outlined. For me, the first is that neither the state nor any institution should be governed by any ideology in dealing with the arts. The only consideration should be the artistic one, which does not imply the aesthetic alone or art for art's sake. There is a total complex of norms and values which may legitimately be used for assessing talent and expression. If the various elements and aspects of artistic works are judiciously balanced in assessment, it is possible to choose or reject them for suitable honours at appropriate times. As John Lehmann once put it, "....a State doctrine is.....*a bad thing in itself.*" (Italics by Mr. Lehmann. *The Penguin New Writing* No. 24, 1985).

When this principle is accepted, the responsibility of the state is restricted to funding through its own or autonomous literary and art institutions, preferably the latter. If the fund distributing institutions are set up by the State and controlled by it, the policy should still be as autonomous as possible in the political circumstances. To the extent that the state remains at a distance from the actual artistic decisions made, the responsibility for them is rightly shifted to Society. This does not guarantee objectivity and freedom from ideology, but it is a step in the right direction. The state should never be identified with society, the nation and the people.

Honours and Prizes

Artists receiving honours and money may be grateful to the state for its role in encouraging the arts, but they don't

owe it anything. They are entitled, if they are inclined that way, to be rebels, revolutionaries and dissenters. Neither do they owe anything to the nation and the people, except acknowledgement that the whole process is valid, in the interest of humanity or at least a national section of it. It follows that an honour or a prize may be refused, not because the state is its ultimate source but only because the institutions and individuals making the decisions are felt to be in some way at fault. They may be considered corrupt, for example, or incompetent, but the state cannot always be blamed for that. If the influence of the state is sensed in the way artistic decisions are made, if it can be proved that such influence is exerted, there is some ground for saying No.

Similarly, honours and gifts, after they have been accepted, should never be returned as a gesture of protest against later developments, unacceptable to the artists concerned. These developments ought to be criticised, but nothing should be done which suggests that the original acceptance of a state honour was some kind of homage to the State. I am referring, of course, to a relatively free and democratic state, with all its faults and weaknesses. If it is a totalitarian tyranny, the situation for the artist is altogether different. He may then have to decide whether to invite imprisonment and death or to express his rejection of the state's authority by joining an underground movement. In a democracy, the artist does not accept the state's authority when he accepts a prize. He accepts only the prize.

In addition to state-sponsored awards and honours, a democratic society also has private individuals and institutions offering various forms of support to artists. On the whole, the more of these, the better but their proliferation creates a host of problems. For one thing, it devalues honours, makes them a subject for jokes and satire. The artist who has won one of these prizes may be sneered at by all who know him, even if he is also envied by them. When this happens, it is wise to think in terms of very special, need felt, specific purpose grants rather than more awards and honours.

What the State can do and cannot

Such issues tend to assume importance when the state plays the game assigned to it by the liberal-enlightened world of art lovers. Unfortunately, it then tends to be rather unimaginative in its policy-making and even more so in carrying out its decisions. Artists become disillusioned with its mechanical, bureaucratic mode of functioning and some of them, often notable in the field, prefer to walk out. "State patronage", as it is then called, often quite wrongly, becomes the refuge of the mediocre. All that is gained for the arts, by persuading the state to support them financially and in other ways, is lost by allowing the state to mishandle the relationship with artists. They may not be the very special persons they sometimes claim to be but they know in what conditions their creativity flourishes or fails to flourish.

A government department is never the ideal instrument for the promotion of literature and the arts. Not only are bureaucrats unsuitable for the purpose, they positively harm the cause. Even management experts cannot create the necessary ethics. Autonomous or semi-autonomous boards or similar institutions seem ideal, theoretically, but the state fails miserably in practice when it hands over the funds and hopes for the best. This dilemma can be partially resolved by involving the artistic community as a whole, democratically, in the working of such institutions. And that is not the end of the road but only the starting point.

We come now to the heart of the matter, though not yet its soul. The state can genuinely promote the arts only when it acquires at least a minimum understanding of its functions in Society. This may seem a tall demand but anything less leads to an unending series of disasters. Time, money and energy are wasted in creating facades, in dealing with the real problems of art superficially, in constructing the superstructure without laying the foundations soundly. The same thing happens in education where every reform since independence has made matters worse. Degrees are still more

important in our colleges and universities than interest in knowledge, than creative teaching, than the integration of ideas with a way of life. The spirit eludes those who are in charge of administering the system, in education as in the arts. A government which is spiritually blind to this situation may keep the wheels turning, and agree from time to time to subsidise the purchase of larger wheels. It cannot change the direction in which the wheels are moving.

That is why Society cannot rely on the State to *improve* education and the arts. It must undertake the job itself, using the state for its own purposes. Only a very affluent and powerful society can afford to turn its back on the state and rely wholly on its own resources. Obviously, Indian Society as a whole is not affluent, nor is it powerful in its human resources. It is true that an affluent class or two exists, and that, given India's population, even if a very miniscule proportion of it becomes active and socially conscious, it can do wonders, and often does. Still, there is a case for not weakening the movement in support of the arts by giving up legitimate demands on the state. On the contrary, I am in favour of every conceivable effort by society to influence the state so that the two may function together harmoniously.

What, finally, is the soul of the matter? I am aware that my conviction may seem simplistic to the majority of my readers. It is that literature and the arts must *permeate* society if they are to realise their full potential and meaning. When they are treated as specialised "subjects", relevant only to those who are temperamentally attracted to them, they cannot affect the fundamental *nature* of a particular society. They can only provide some of its incidental values. Even if it appears utopian to long for a society in which literature and the acts *belong organically,* not marginally, such a longing is, in the long run, indespensable.

Highlights in the Life of Minoo Masani

(Born: 20 November 1905)

1921	completes school and joins Elphinstone College
1925	registers for admission in the London School of Economics and in Lincoln's Inn; elected to the Union Executive of the LSE
1927	visits the Soviet Union with a British group
1928	returns to India and joins the Bombay Bar
1932	first imprisonment
1933	second imprisonment in Nasik jail
1934	Bombay Presidency Congress Socialist Group formed; convening of the First All India Congress Socialist Conference Joint Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party Spends ten days with Gandhi
1935	visits England at the invitation of Sir Stafford Cripps. Second visit to the Soviet Union as Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party; Councillor of the Bombay Municipal Corporation
1937	attends the AICC in Delhi and opposes acceptance of office by the Congress Party
1938	presides over the Congress Socialist Party at Lahore; opposes the tactics of the United Front put forward by the Communists
1939	resigns (along with Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Asoka Mehta) from all executive positions in the C.S.P.
1940	C.S.P. resolves to expel Communists from the party Quits politics
1941	joins the Tata organisation
1943	imprisoned during the Quit India movement, elected Mayor of the Bombay Municipal Corporation
1945	gets elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly
1946	in the Constituent Assembly active in the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee and the Union-Powers Committee

1947 lectures in the Bombay University School of Economics – A plea for a mixed economy; member U.N. sub-commission on minorities

1948 appointed Ambassador to Brazil

1951 associated with the establishment of the ICCF. Lecture tour in the U.S.

1952 establishes the monthly, *Freedom First*

1954 *Chef de Cabinet* for J. R. D. Tata

1955 tour of West Germany and Yugoslavia to study association of workers and management

1956 *Quest* established
Association of workers and management introduced in the Tata Iron and Steel Company

1957 elected to Parliament from Ranchi. Resigns from Tatas

1958 Chairman of the Indian Roads and Transport Development Association. Report published

1959 Swatantra Party established. First convention held in Bombay. Elected General Secretary of the Party

1963 returned to Parliament as member of the Swatantra Party from Rajkot

1964 accompanies J. P. on a peace mission to Nagaland

1965 organises a seminar in New Delhi on the "Social Responsibilities of Business"

1967 elected to Parliament. Leader of the opposition in Parliament. Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee

1968 participates in an international seminar in Princeton on 'America in the seventies'
Leslie Sawhny Endowment established

1969 Elected President of the Swatantra Party

1971 the Swatantra Party fares badly in elections and Masani resigns from the presidentship of the Swatantra Party

1973 takes over the editorship of *Freedom First*

1975 two lectures in the Bangalore University on the Indian Constitution; fights against the government in the *Freedom First* case

1978 Chairman of the Minorities Commission. Resigns from the Commission

Organizations Founded and Books Written by Minoo Masani

ORGANIZATIONS

Democratic Research Service

Democratic Research Service was established in November 1950 with the blessings of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel "to contribute towards the education of public opinion in India to a fuller realisation of the need to defend India's national independence and her culture and of the possibilities of social and economic advance through democratic processes."

Freedom First, now a quarterly liberal journal, is published by the Democratic Research Service and is in its 33rd year of publication.

Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom

The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom was founded in 1951 as a non-party organization of scholars, writers, artists and scientists to defend intellectual liberty, to cultivate a spirit of free enquiry and an appreciation of the arts.

The ICCF published *Quest* a journal of enquiry, criticism and ideas. After 101 issues over a period of 21 years, *Quest* had to shut down during the emergency due to difficulties with the Censors.

Indian Liberal Group

The Indian Liberal Group was established in December 1965. The Group which is non-partisan espouses the cause of liberalism as enunciated in the Liberal Manifesto drawn up by the International Liberal Conference at Wadham College Oxford in April 1947.

Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy

Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy which aims at training citizens for leadership, citizenship and public service was founded in March 1968. Since then the L.S.P. has organised 444 training camps, seminars and workshops involving around 10,800 participants.

Rajaji Foundation

The Rajaji Foundation came into being in October 1972 to keep alive and propagate the principles, philosophy and teachings of C. Rajagopalachari.

Society for the Right to Die with Dignity

The Society for the Right to Die with Dignity was established in May 1981 to assert the right of every man and woman of sound mind to freedom, within the limits that may be laid down by law, to choose to live or die.

PUBLICATIONS

1939	(with C. Y. Chintamani) *India's Constitution at Work.*
	Soviet Sidelights
1940	*Our India,* new edition (1953)
1944	*Socialism Reconsidered*
	Your Food
1945	*Picture of a Plan*
1947	*A Plea for a Mixed Economy*
1950	*Our Growing Human Family*
	Co-operative Farming, the Great Debate
1951	*Neutralism in India*
1954	*The Communist Party of India—a Short History*
1967	*Congress Misrule and Swatantra Alternative*
1969	*Too Much Politics, Too Little Citizenship*
1970	*Liberalism*
1975	*The Constitution, Twenty Years Later*
	Is J. P. the Answer?
1977	*J. P.'s Mission Partly Accomplished*
1977	*Bliss was it in that Dawn . . .*
1981	*Against the Tide*

Contributors

S. P. AIYAR, Professor of Public Administration in the Department of Civics and Politics, Bombay University, has been associated with the University as teacher for three decades and half. His numerous books on modern India, modernization, and his articles have stressed the guiding values of Indian Liberalism. He is author of *Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Modernization of Traditional Society, the Relevance of Liberalism,* etc. He has edited volumes on *Gokhale and Modern India, Fundamental Rights and the Citizen* etc. He was awarded the M. Venkatarangayya Award for his contribution to political science in 1983.

PROFESSOR LORD PETER BAUER, F.B.A., is a distinguished economist who has been with the Cambridge and London Universities, specializing in the economics of development, economic policy, foreign aid etc. Professor Emeritus of Economics at the LSE, his numerous books and articles have sparked off considerable discussion and controversies. Many in India are familiar with his *Indian Economic Policy and Development.*

FRITS BOLKESTEIN attended the Barlaeus Gymnasium (pre-university school), and read philosophy at Amsterdam, taking his final doctoral examinations in 1959. He then read law at Leiden. Mr. Bolkestein worked for the Shell Group from 1960, and from 1973 to 1976 was Director of Shell Chemicals in Paris. In January 1978 he became a member of the lower House for the liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). He acted as the party spokesman on foreign affairs and trade policy. He was appointed Minister for Foreign Trade in November 1982.

ADI H. DOCTOR, Reader and Head of the Department of Political Science in the University of Goa, has been associated for over thirty years with the Universities of Marathwada, Bombay and Goa. He has written a number of books on political philosophy as well as numerous articles. He has written extensively on Indian political thought, both ancient and modern. His book *Issues in Political Theory* is his latest. He visited Czechoslovakia in 1969 as a UGC Scholar.

NISSIM EZEKIEL recently retired from the Bombay University where he served as Professor of American Literature for a number of years. Known for his numerous books of English poetry, he has championed the writing of poetry in English, discovered and encouraged young writers who have now blossomed into distinguished major poets, and edited the poetry pages of the *Illustrated Weekly of India.* He also was editor of *Quest* and *Freedom First.* Recently he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Prize for his volume of English verse *Latter-Day Psalms.*

CUSHROW IRANI has had a varied background spanning law, insurance, and party politics. Managing Director of *The Statesman,* he is President of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society. He is associated with international bodies relating to the Press. His contributions to the cause of the freedom of the press were recognised by the conferment of the Freedom Award of Freedom House, New York and the Astor Award of the Commonwealth Press. His books *Bengal—The Communist Challenge* and *Pursuit of Freedom* have had a wide readership.

AJIT JAIN, now a journalist settled in Canada was for many years Secretary of the Parliamentary office of the Swatantra Party in New Delhi. In his official capacity as well as one who had experience of party politics in India, he is widely conversant with government, parliamentary procedure and the lives of politicians. He is co-editor *Of Marx and Marxism* (Praeger, 1984) and is editing a volume on the Polish Trade Union, Solidarity, soon to be published in the U.S.

R. M. LALA's books, *The Creation of Wealth* and *The Heartbeat of a Trust* have been widely read and commended for their lucidity, elegance and dignity. A journalist of many years' standing he co-founded the *Himmat* in 1964 and edited it for a decade. He also has wide experience in publishing, being the first to establish and publish Indian books from London.

MEHRA MASANI who retired from All India Radio prematurely after more than four decades of dedicated service was educated in Bombay and London. For several years she served as Trustee and Vice Chairman of the International Institute of Communication. Her widely read book, *Broadcasting in India* published by the National Book Trust was revised and reprinted recently as *Broadcasting and the People.* She is at present Resident Director of the Leslie Sawhny Centre in Deolali.

F. A. MEHTA had a brilliant academic career in Bombay and capped it with a Ph.D. in the London School of Economics. He has served in many national and international commissions. He is on the Boards of Directors of several Tata enterprises. A frequent writer to journals of international repute his areas of specialization are economic growth and industrial development.

C. D. NARASIMHAIAH, is Director of The Literary Criterion Centre at Mysore. He has been associated with universities all over the world as visiting scholar, visiting professor and consultant. Founder-editor of the *Literary Criterion,* his journal and he have focussed critical attention on Indian writers in English. He has sought to forge the contemporary continuity with Indian tradition and at the same time has helped in drawing the attention of discriminating audience in India to world literature.

M. R. PAI had a distinguished academic career in Madras and the University of California. A trustee in a number of charitable trusts, he is at present the Vice-President of the Forum of Free Enterprise and President of the All India Bank Depositors' Association. He has tirelessly advocated and championed the rights of the citizens and of consumers. His books and pamphlets on several aspects of citizens' interests have had a wide readership. He is also a regular contributor to the Press.

N. A. PALKHIVALA was Professor of Law and Member of the Law Commission, (1955, 1958). He is one of our leading authorities on Public Finance and Constitutional Law. He has had wide experience in the worlds of business and public life and was Indian Ambassador to the United States (1977-79). He was conferred the Honorary Degrees of Doctor of Laws by Princeton and Lawrence Universities. His well-known books include *The Law and Practice of Income-tax, The Constitution Defaced and Defiled* and *We, the People.*

S. V. RAJU was Executive Secretary of the Swatantra Party for 14 years. He edited *Democracy and Development* and co-authored with Dr. S. P. Aiyar a book on the emergency in India and the general elections of 1977 entitled *When the Wind Blows—India's Ballot Box Revolution.* He is a Management Consultant by profession. At present he is one of the two editors of *Freedom First.*

SOLI J. SORABJEE was a student of the Bombay University and was recipient of the Kirloch Forbes Gold Medal for his distinguished academic performance in his law studies. He appeared as Counsel in cases relating to freedom of the press and civil liberties. Besides his classic work *The Law of Press Censorship in India,* he has contributed widely to a number of journals on matters relating to constitutional law and civil rights. He was Solicitor-General of the Government of India.

PADMA SRINIVASAN has several years experience as teacher and researcher. She has been with the Centre of East African Studies, University of Bombay since 1971 and has worked extensively on the contemporary significance of traditional African political thought and experience. Her interest in the viability of the Westminster model in the African context led her to work intensively on Parliament in Kenya, between 1963 and 1975, as a dissertation for a Ph.D. degree. She is, at present, Lecturer in the Centre of East African Studies, University of Bombay.

J. R. D. TATA, Pioneer aviator and captain of industry, has guided for a number of decades the destinies of the various companies of the Tata group with distinction and a sense of social responsibility. The first pilot to qualify in India, he has been an innovator, organizer of aviation as well as an enthusiastic flier all his life. He is trustee of a number of public institutions including the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, and the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund. He is recipient of awards and honours both from India and abroad. He is a member of a number of organizations a few among them being the Atomic Energy Commission and the Population Advisory Council.

B. S. YAMEY, F.B.A., has been teaching and engaged in research in economics and commerce for over four decades in universities spread in three continents and has published a number of books on economics, commerce and markets. He had also collaborated with Lord Peter Bauer in a number of publications. Besides he has served in a number of public bodies, and was Trustee of the National and Tate Galleries.

R. SRINIVASAN, Professor in the Department of Civics and Politics, University of Bombay, has been teaching for over two decades in the University. He has written a number of articles in periodicals and is at present working on liberalism in South India.

WHERE the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreamy desert of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into everwidening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE