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Over To The Young

By MINOO MASANI



THESE are great days. Everything is on the move. After a year and a half of stagnation in an atmosphere laden with timidity and craven fear, the Indian people breathe freely again. There was a somewhat irritating slogan one used to see on buses and hoardings which has suddenly come alive: "The Nation is on the move"! The Emergency has been lifted and we are back again to normal times. Let us rejoice.

It is natural that, in such a situation, the young folk in our country who have played such a notable part in the election campaign that has just concluded, should ask themselves the question as to what kind of country they are to live in during the coming years and decades.

I retired from party politics in India in 1971 after forty years devoted to such activity which started in Nasik Road Central Prison in 1933 during the days of the struggle for Independence, with drafting the programme of the Congress Socialist Party along with my friend Jayaprakash Narayan. In 1959, I joined with Rajaji

in establishing the Swatantra Party. When I was asked some time ago by a friend whether I would not consider starting a new party, my reply was that I had done my bit: "Do bacche bas". It was for young people to start a new movement, a new party, I said, and those of my generation to stand back and be content with guiding and encouraging them.

Dark Days

Then came the Declaration of Emergency on 26th June, 1975. There followed some very dark days when national leaders like Jayaprakash and Morarji Desai and others, along with perhaps a lakh or more, were detained without trial. The people were stunned, but there was very little visible resentment or opposition. It appeared as if the people were cowed by this authoritarian take-over.

As the Editor of a little monthly called *Freedom First*, I refused to go along with the way in which most

Editors of newspapers and periodicals bowed to the pre-censorship that was then imposed. I refused to accept the position that the Rule of Law, which even the British during their rule in this country had never to their credit abrogated, had come to an end. I had faith in our courts of law. I therefore suspended publication and appealed to the Bombay High Court to strike down the arbitrary decision of the Censor. My faith in the judiciary was indicated, first by a single judge and then on appeal by a Division Bench of the Bombay High Court. I was thus able to publish most of what the Censor had banned and since then I was left alone to write as I pleased without let or hindrance.

These dark days are now over and I rejoice that the courageous men at the helm of daily newspapers like the *Statesman* and the *Indian Express* who refused to bow to the insolent demands of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, have managed to see their papers survive and not be taken over or silenced like some others.

Flash Points

SCENES FROM A VICTORY

by ANEES JUNG

JAYAPRAKASH Narayan in Delhi. The crowds are gathered to hail the man who chased a dream and found it. It is a happy crowd, a jubilant crowd, unlike the one I have seen before at official airport receptions. A number of faces are familiar. I had seen them during the tumultuous days of the 'Total Revolution.' They had then disappeared. No one wanted to know where they were. Probably in jail, people said, and changed the subject. Those faces are back now at the airport. They embrace each other, offer salutations. The atmosphere is charged with camaraderie, warmth, a joy that is felt. They look like a family gathered to celebrate a happening in which each of them has played a part. There is no smugness about the victory. Some of them carry garlands. Others don't. But each one in the scattered reception line has torn out a flower from someone else's garland. So there are flowers for everyone. The short dark man, garbed in bright orange and green, who stands next to me has a garland of marigolds. He has come from Madhya Pradesh he tells me. He is not a sadhu as I gather from his robes but a Janata Party worker. He wore orange and green all the time whilst he campaigned. Now I can change my clothes, he tells me. Then there are others in the crowd whom I have not seen before. They have come to share the victory without earning it. And

scattered around are the policemen in khaki and white uniforms trying to form a barricade between J. P. and the people. The Emergency is over. Why don't you go home and rest, I tell them. They laugh as if it is a family joke. J. P. arrives, seated in a wheel chair at the head of the airline staircase. They have reduced him to a wheel chair, I tell myself remembering the days when I had followed him across India—the tall man with the gentle face who went to far out places to tell people of what his dream of India is and how they could all help in completing it. The crowd turns its eyes on him. The sun that now stands behind his face stares at them. The face, though tired, is still the same—gentle, serene, distant from the ovation that surrounds.

All over the city streets I notice peasants in bullock carts coming into the city to hail the victors. Seeing them I know that this time the victory is theirs—the people whom one saw standing endlessly in lines, whom one took for granted as passive, apathetic, dumb. This time their quiet conviction has arisen and turned the tide of history.

People stream into the gates of 6, Krishna Menon Marg. No policemen at the gates, no checks. It is the house of Jagjivan Ram, familiarly known by the high and the low as Babuji. A *panchal* has been pitched on the lawns. There are *bharpurivalas*, *channavalas*



and ice creamwalas at the gates—all doing brisk business. It looks like a spontaneous mela. But it is really a political rally, Indian style. The peasants, the idle men, the hangers-on, the journalists and the politicians have all gathered to cheer Babuji and to find out whether he will join the new cabinet or not. They linger outside for hours. Through the main door, which has a missing pane, a man locks and unlocks the door, letting a privileged few in. There are negotiations (far beyond my reach), bustle and activity. Finally, Babuji emerges hemmed in by a circle of men. He is a short, heavy man with a dark broad face that is very amiable. He ambles out as if he is very tired. The people see his vision and get restive. When he speaks they are quiet. "Jayaprakashji had a dream—of an India where everyone will have enough to eat and enough to wear," he begins in the manner of a teacher. They listen to him with the wonder

of children. "Jayaprakashji tells me that his dream will be incomplete if I am not part of it. Hence I have decided to give my full cooperation to the Prime Minister". Babuji withdraws behind the door with the missing pane. There are sighs of relief, cheers. The mela shifts to another locale.

At the oath-taking ceremony at Rajghat, Ravindra Pratap Singh (the peasant lawyer from Amethi who defeated Sanjay Gandhi) loses his chappals. At the solemn swearing-in ceremony of the new cabinet, Raj Narain produces *pedas* from his shirt pocket and distributes them. At the public meeting in Ramlila grounds, I hear speeches that have a semblance of truth. "Do not think of politicians as sanyasis, yogis or saints," says the ancient Acharya Kripalani. "We too are men with feet of clay. And it is your job to tell us when we err. So watch us, be vigilant. Eternal vigilance is the only price to freedom."

Why The Election?

There has been a great deal of speculation as to why the Prime Minister should have suspended her authoritarian rule and called for General Elections to Parliament. There has been much scepticism about her motives. That "the Devil knoweth not the mind of man" is an old maxim of British equity. How then can one speculate as to what goes on in the mind of a woman? The fact remains that, whatever her motive, Mrs. Gandhi did permit a free and fair election without rigging — a thing that few dictators have been known to do — and for this final act which has ended her chequered career, we should be grateful.

My own guess is that Mrs. Gandhi was wise enough to see what lay ahead of her if she did not end her authoritarian rule and try to get back a measure of legitimacy. There is an old limerick which runs as follows:

*"There was once a lady from
Riga,
Who went for a ride on a
tiger,
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside
And a smile on the face of the
tiger."*

It would appear to me that Mrs. Gandhi decided to jump off the back of the tiger of authoritarian rule before it devoured her. Unfortunately, she did this very belatedly. She miscalculated and she missed the bus.

Let us be clear that the result of the election is not a victory of the Janata Party. It is a rejection of dictatorship. Wherever the brutalities of the regime that were felt, as in the North, the people reacted. Where, as in the South, these brutalities did not travel all the way from the capital, the electorate still voted for the Congress Party.

Future Belongs To Youth

When, as a young man, I wrote my little book "Our India" for children in 1940, I had expressed the view that the future belongs to youth and they alone can solve the country's problems. I then wrote: "Do this, do that — and India will be a paradise of plenty. Which is all very well, but who is going to get all this done, you wonder. Yes, who? ... My answer, in case you'd like to know, is 'You'. Yes, you, Young

Sir, and you, Little Lady, you alone can fit together the odd pieces. You alone can make a lovely picture out of them. After all, this is your country, and if you don't, who do you think will?"

The years that have passed have only confirmed this feeling. It is time those of us who fought for Independence under Gandhiji's inspired leadership should stand back and let younger people take over. Perhaps in the hurly-burly of the sudden short election campaign, this transition could not adequately take place but it should do so in the coming months and years.

For the past few years, there has been a general impression that young people of today are apathetic, materialistic and selfish, that they only care for their own careers and for having a good time and cannot be bothered with the problems of the nation as were the young people of our youth like Yusuf Meherally, Achyut Patwardhan, Ashok Mehta, Jayaprakash and others. That was only natural because to us young men fighting foreign rule came naturally. Participating in public affairs when one's country is free is another matter. Also, the example set by the older generation was not an inspiring one. Now, however, that we have realised that freedom is not only to be won but vigilantly defended by each succeeding generation if it is to last, it is to be hoped that young men and women in this country will from now on participate more fully in national affairs.

So Much To Do

There is so much to be done. Under Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership, we so badly mismanaged our country's affairs that a great deal of the dream that I dreamt in "Our India", of all the wonderful things we would do when the British left and we Indians took over control of our country still remains unfulfilled.

Mrs. Gandhi has made her contribution, no doubt an unintended one, by arousing anger against oppression and reviving the love of freedom. Let us not lose this adventitious benefit. Public memory is short. If we in the next few years do not use our freedom more purposefully than we did under Nehru during the first decades of freedom, we may once again hear the meretricious cry go up: 'Let us have a strong man to rule us.'

Grassroots Activity

That does not mean that all young men and women should join a political party. Parties are only a small part of political life in a free society. The essence of democracy is grassroots action and vigilance, which have made democracy in Switzerland and the United States as strong and virile as it is. In India, the political parties have floated on top, with very little infra-structure below. That infra-structure can come from the existence of thousands of voluntary associations of citizens to deal with particular problems. Let me give one or two examples. There is the Wild Life Association. There are the associations for the purification of the environment. Consumer associations are another variety of the same kind of voluntary effort. In Bombay there is the Civic Trust. I myself am Honorary Secretary of the Leslie Sawhney Programme of Training for Democracy which has by now trained over four thousand five hundred young men and women in active citizenship. Recently in Bombay, faced with a threat to their homes from proposed legislation, a Committee for the protection of Tenants in Greater Bombay has come into existence. This has been called "voluntaryism", which is the biggest bulwark against the arrogation of authority by those in Government and the danger of Statism which in the end lead to authoritarianism. "That Government is best," Gandhiji used to say, "which governs the least."

Can the generation who constitute the readers of Youth Times do better for the country than we of our generation did? I would, if I may, like to put this challenge to them, and I would like to see them win it.

(Mino Masani retired from active party politics in 1971 after forty years of public service in Parliament, as Mayor of Bombay, Ambassador in Brazil, and Chairman of the U.N. Sub-Commission on Discrimination and Minorities. He is even better known, however, as the author of India's all-time bestseller, that inspiring book for children, Our India)

Save The Examiner

by GEORGE JOHN

FOR some time, the feeling has been gaining ground that our examinations are unreliable. And now it seems Dr. A. Edwin Harper Jr and Dr. Vidya Sagar Misra, in their book "Research On Examination in India" published by the NCERT have conclusively proved that this is so. According to them, a candidate's success or failure is as much due to luck as to merit. This is the conclusion that their researchers point to. When they got 90 examiners to mark the same ten history answer-books, they found no uniformity in the marking. One answer book which was considered the best by one examiner and was awarded 35 out of 50, was given only 11 by another examiner. The answer-book which was considered the best by 77 examiners got marks ranging from 17 to 35. Seven examiners gave fail marks to the answer-book which was considered worthy of distinction by one examiner and worthy of a first class by eight. Further, the 90 examiners did not agree on the average merit of the ten candidates as a batch. The average marks awarded to the group ranged from 8 to 22 out of 50. There was also wide disagreement about the class or division awarded. But this is not all. In the course of another such research study, the authors found that examiners did not give the same marks when they marked the same answer-books twice. When 40 examiners were asked to mark a second time, 4000 answer-books in history, Hindi, biology and mathematics, the pass percentage in some cases varied as much as 58 per cent from one marking to the next.

These are the research findings. But what is surprising is what the researchers say and suggest after they have got such knowledge. In spite of having indicated that passing and failing depend a great deal on luck they say that it shows the inadequacy of the examination system in the country. One would have thought it showed the absolute futility of the examination system. Lord, if the marks I get is a matter of luck, I won't say that the marking is inadequate but downright absurd. It is sufficient reason to

scrap what we call examining altogether.

Their suggestions that grading in terms of five or six categories should be adopted instead of the 100 marks scale, that there should be proper scale conversions of the marks in different subjects, that choice should be eliminated from question papers and that there should be a system of grace marks based on the standard error of marking are suggestions that cannot eliminate erratic marking. It is difficult to see how these recommended measures can prevent the kind of marking they give examples of.

For instance, they give the example of an answer-book being awarded 76% by one examiner and 22% by another. What measures can eliminate such discrepancy? Obviously, the researchers evaded the full implica-

tion of their research. Probably they were involved in what is called the research game in which research is expected to lead to more research and not to a dead end. So, instead of saying that our examinations are irredeemably untrustworthy, they say that they are inadequate and suggest remedies to create a more reliable system. The advantage is that research could then go on on the new system. Otherwise, why assert that examinations are completely unreliable and yet we might as well have them? Reminds one of Dorothy Parker's verse:

Razors pain you;
Rivers damp you;
Acids stain you;
And drugs cause cramp.
Guns aren't lawful;
Nooses give way;
Gas smells awful
You might as well live.

