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Founder-Leader Shetkari Sanghatana, Shetkari Mahila Aghadi, All India Kisan Coordination Committee;

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Member, Advisory Board of the World Agricultural Forum (WAF), St. Louis;

Chairman, WAF India Chapter and South Asia Chapter of the World Agricultural Forum (WAF);

Chairman, Standing Advisory Committee on Agriculture (SAC), 1990-91 with the rank of a Central Cabinet Minister; Member, National Integration Council (NIC) since 1990; Member, Committee for Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Independence (1997), Chairman, Task Force on Agriculture, Govt. of India (September 2000 to July 2001) with the rank of a Central Cabinet Minister; Representing Swatantra Bharat Paksha, the only liberal party in India, as Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) from 7th July 2004 elected unopposed by the elected members of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly; Member various Parliamentary Committees; Member of Governing Body of Indian Council of Agricultural Research as an elected representative of the Rajya Sabha (July 2003 to July 2010).

Sharad Joshi, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) July 2003 to July 2010

Member

- 1 Standing Advisory Committee on Agriculture
- 2 Consultative Committee on Commerce and Industry
- 3 Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
- 4 Parliamentary Committee on the Restoration of Democracy in Myanmar
- 5 Governing Body of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research
- 6 Indian Council of Agricultural Research Society
- 7 Steering Committee of the GEF-World Bank Project on Capacity Building on Bio-Safety.
- 8 Parliamentary Network on the World Bank, The Indian National Group
- 9 Advisory Committee of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat for the use of Hindi
- 10 Advisory Committee on the use of Hindi in the Department of Posts
- 11 District Telephone Advisory Committee, Pune District, Maharashtra

- 12 Railways Zonal Advisory Committee of the Central Railways
- 13 Rajya Sabha Committee on Rules
- 14 Parliamentary Forum on Water Conservation and Management
- 15 National Oil Seeds and Vegetable Oils Development Board
- 16 Public Accounts Committee

Permanent Invitee of

Consultative Committee on Agriculture and Consumers Affairs

Bio-Data

JOSHI Sharad, born September 3, 1935, at Satara (Maharashtra, India); son of Anant Narayan (1905-70) and Indirabai Joshi (1910-92); wife Leela (1943-82); two daughters: Mrs. Shreya Shahane, M.A., B.Arch. and Dr. Mrs. Gauri Chandrasekhar, MBBS, DIS (France).

M.Com. (Sydenham College, Bombay, 1957), Dip. Informatics (Lausanne, 1974); Awards: C.E. Randle Gold Medal for Banking (1955), Cursetjee Dady Prize for work on Computation of Irrigation Benefits.

Lecturer in Economics and Statistics, University of Poona, 1957-58; I.P.S. Indian Postal Service (Class I) 1958-68; Chief Informatics Service, International Bureau, UPU, Bern, Switzerland, 1968-77.

Agriculturist and Peasant Leader, founder of *Shetkari Sanghatana*¹ Peasants' Organisation in Maharashtra and at national level, of the Kisan Coordination Committee (KCC¹) comprising of sister organisations from 14 states; led a number of mass agitations in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana etc. for remunerative prices of onions, sugar cane, tobacco, milk, paddy, cotton, against hike in electricity tariffs, for liquidation of rural debts and against State dumping in domestic markets. Original and persistent propounder of the postulate that the Government imposed negative subsidies on farmers as a matter of deliberate policy, which has, since, been vindicated.;

Founder of the largest organisation of rural women Shetkari Mahila Aghadi (SMA) celebrated for its work for women's property rights notably for the 'Lakshmi Mukti' programme that has conferred land titles on lakhs of rural housewives.

¹ An economic, non-political, secular and non-violent peasant movement that is opposed to all subsidies and militates towards non-intervention by the State in the economy and particularly in the commodity markets

Executive Trustee, *Krishi Yogakshema Samshodhan Nyasa* (KYSN, Research Foundation on Economics of Sustainable Agriculture); Founder President and, presently, National President, **Swatantra Bharat Paksha**, 1994 devoted to abolition of License-permit-quota raj and to minimal government and plural society; Chairman, Shivar Ltd. (Supermarket network); Chairman, Bhama Constructions Ltd. (Farmers' undertaking for industrial estate development on their own land.)

Publications: 'Organisation of Peasants: Thought and Practice', and several other books and articles in Marathi, translated into Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, Telugu; 'Bharat Speaks Out' (1982); 'Bharat Eyeview' (1986), 'The Women's Question' (1986), 'Answering Before God' (1994) in English; Columnist for 'The Times of India', 'Business India', 'Lokmat' etc. and hundreds of articles.

Gave guidance for research work of many Researchers, Scholars, students including Dr. Ashutosh Varshneya, Harvard University, ; Dr. Conney Lenneberg, La Trobe University, Melbourne; Dr. Staffen Lindberg, Lund University, Sweden; Mike Youngblood, USA; Dr. Gail Omvedt, University of California.

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The Need for a Second Republic

Sharad Joshi



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The Indian Republic, born on January 26, 1950, is in agony and possibly, already beyond help. Fairly elaborate life-support systems keep hopes flickering but the people who resolved solemnly, thirty seven years ago to adopt the Constitution of the Republic know, in their hearts, that a misfortune here or there, and even the formal end is not far away.

It had started all so well some forty years back. The nation had been thirsting for a republic through centuries of native despots alternating with ruthless alien plunderers, and over a millenium of internecine wars waged for victory for this or that dynasty or for the glory of this or that Almighty. The last of the alien monarchs, the British, had, for over a hundred years, ruined local industries, depleted our natural resources and left the country poor and miserable. But his methods were such that he had, in the process, to establish law and order under a unified political control, introduce a network, howsoever rudimentary, of transport and communications and foster a community of urban elites, the middle class, familiar with the ways of western society, com-

The tribulations of the first Indian Republic were essentially due to the fact that at the inception of the Republic, India was not an integrated nation. It was divided into so many castes and creeds. It had a colonial dualistic economy. Under these circumstances the Constitution and the Republic were at best objectives to strive for. In the last forty years, the State has worked in the opposite direction and accentuated the dualism in the national economy, in consequence polluting the polity, damaging the structures of the Republic and creating the monster of national disintegration

merce and administration.

Euphoria

With the end of colonial rule came the nation's 'tryst with destiny'. On 15th August 1947, it appeared that with the infrastructure left by the colonial masters, there could be no limit to what a nation of 300 million could achieve. The resurgent nation possessed a wide variety of natural and human resources; the exploiters had been driven away and nothing stood in the way of peace, prosperity and progress. The enthusiasm was so overwhelming that the people took in their stride the horrendous aftermath of the partition.

In less than three years after Independence, the people adopted a Constitution — a marvel of meticulous scholarship and farsighted statesmanship. A Republic was born. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, fully at home with the ways of the West, established protocols and rituals: Flag-hoisting on the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day, Republic Day parades, the ceremonial arrival of the President at the inauguration of Parliament and so on. They are all, even today duly performed with full fanfare. It is said that the "Beating the Retreat" ceremony to mark the conclusion of the Republic Day celebrations in the Capital represents the most outstanding bag-pipe music in the world including Scotland.

And yet, 37 years later, we find the Republic very tenuously hanging by a few fragile strings. How has this come to pass?

In essence, the Indian Republic represented a configuration of the States of

the Union, serviced by a number of counter — balancing institutions viz. the Presidency, the Judiciary, the Executive, the Legislature. The totality of the system is committed to the protection of fundamental rights as also to progress on stipulated guidelines. Each of these institutions represents an important element of the whole. Any attempt made by one of them to make inroads into the authority of any of the others is certain to disturb the balance, and work ultimately to the detriment of the Republic.

Delhi's Fieldom

What has happened in the last forty years? Simply put, the structures of the Republic have been irreparably damaged. How?

The states of the Union have ceased to be the basic units of the Republic. President's Rule has been imposed nearly a hundred times, more often than not for partisan reasons. The Centre has been making increasingly bold forages into the non-union list in the Constitution. The purse strings are held firmly by the Centre and the expanding size and proportion of discretionary funds have put the states literally at the mercy of New Delhi. The chief ministers of states (ruled by the party in power in Delhi) are of course designated from above; but even junior ministers in state cabinets have to be okayed. The issue of 'tickets' for the assembly elections is regulated at the highest echelons. The Indian Airlines flights to and from Delhi are packed with state ministers and officials on their routine pilgrimage. States have ceased to be the basic components of the Republic. They have be-

come a part of the fiefdom controlled from Delhi.

The Executive has been subjugated and it offered no resistance at all. The mental and moral qualities of the old ICS could not of course be expected in the IAS of the post-independence era. We now have the bureaucratic rat race, the attempt to up the colleague; not only that but the threat of transfer if some officer appears to be outstanding; to humiliate him publicly or privately; and feathering the service conditions of the lower grades. And we have the whole bureaucracy competing among itself to double up in order not only to carry out the desires of the ruling party but even to anticipate the wishes of the rulers; and of course, the undreamt opportunities opened up by the licence-permit raj for side-incomes took care of the civil servant.

The total subjugation of the judiciary was neither possible nor desirable even from the point of view of the usurpers and was not even attempted. But the judiciary was effectively muzzled all the same. The comparatively unattractive service conditions of the judges even at the highest levels, partisan manipulation at the time of initial appointments, promotions and transfers as also the ever dangling carrot of post-retirement possibilities of prestigious posts have been producing an increasingly larger bevy of judges over-anxious to bend themselves double in meeting and even anticipating the conveniences of the rulers. This is enough not only to make the judiciary subservient but even mediocre. The judgements have become verbose, prolix and even shoddy. The Mishra Commission's report is a patent example.

Parliament Weakened

The Indian Parliament was conceived of as the paramount forum of deliberation and decision-making. Today it is the meeting place of political and licence-permit horse traders. They gather there in between visits to the ministries for obtaining favours for themselves or their constituents. The real decisions are taken elsewhere. Parliament, after the Anti-Defection Act has become a quasi-automatic stamping machine for ratifying such decisions. For some time the Union Cabinet acted as the decision-making forum. But the Planning Commission owing allegiance

to the Prime Minister made serious inroads into the authority of the Cabinet. After Nehru, the erosion of the planning function witnessed a concomitant strengthening of the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The proportion of the cadre of civil servants in this prestigious group has been steadily declining to the advantage of personal friends and buddies of the present Prime Minister. The ministers, generally ineffective, have become irrelevant. Those who betray any signs of capacity or ambition are quickly disposed of.

This is the extent to which measures have been taken systematically to concentrate the entire power in the hands of one single person — the Prime Minister.

This is the extent to which republican institutions and structures have been vitiated and subjugated. Their place has been taken by the hobby-horses of the ruling prime minister — socialist pattern of society twenty point programmes of different vintages, science and technology and the approach of the 21st century. The totality of political power is now concentrated in the hands of the prime minister whose accession to power is in effect by dynastic succession. The system as it is effectively working is totally unrelated to the grand design of the authors of the Constitution.

This is one aspect of the Republic which I think is dying.

The second aspect even more important (for the structure even if damaged can be repaired) is that the spirit of the Republic appears to be eroding very fast.

In 1950, we all appeared to be persuaded that our destinies lay together and that we had to live together. The fissures that have appeared in the spirit of the Republic are far more tragic. The very integrity of the nation appears questioned by various fratricidal conflicts. Punjab, with its daily quota of macabre killings is obviously the gravest of them all. The Nagas have been dissatisfied for years. The brave Gorkhas are following suit. The valiant Sikhs — saviours of the Nation on numerous occasions in history — have been estranged. The 1947 partition, it was hoped would permanently resolve the festering Hindu-Muslim rift. Unfortunately the current wave of communal riots recall in their frequency and ferocity the horrendous 1940s. For tiny par-

cels of land that can satisfy no hunger and reservations of jobs that mean nothing to the vast majority of the unemployed, brothers are at each other's throats.

This disintegration crisis has created a scare in the minds of people at large. A sort of schizophrenia.

Dualistic Structure

People suddenly develop great hopes. A few years back the large majority of citizens believed that the Prime Minister was a messiah sent from above; that he had all the good qualities and that he was certainly bound to lead the nation to a great epoch to come. Equally unreasonably people have developed a sort of a pessimism that everything is going to pieces. These are the symptoms not of a healthy mind but of a schizophrenic.

In 1984 we needed a leader and since no leader was forthcoming we endowed Rajiv Gandhi with the possession of qualities which we thought he ought to have.

Not only have the republican structures collapsed it is the spirit of unity which is withering away.

I will produce a third evidence to show that the Republic is on its way out and is dying. In 1950 when the people gave the Constitution unto themselves there was a specific reference made to equality of opportunity and to economic and social justice. I would like to quote some figures. In 1951, a year after the inauguration of the Republic, the per capita net product in the agricultural sector stood at Rs. 405 (at 1970-71 prices) as against Rs. 593 in the non-agricultural sector. The corresponding figures in 1983 were Rs. 415 and Rs. 1216 respectively. The ratio between the products of the non-agricultural and the agricultural sector products moved from 1.46 to 2.93. At current prices, the per capita net domestic product in 1981 stood, in the agricultural sector at Rs. 859 as against Rs. 4930 in the organised non-agricultural sector. The per capita income in the latter sector is six times as high as that in the agricultural sector.

This Republic in the last forty years has been deliberately trying to vitiate the terms of trade against a major sector — the basic foundation of the Republic. The assurance that we will try for social and economic justice and that we will

assure equality of opportunity, has been blatantly disregarded.

To summarise:

1. The institutions have been eroded.
2. The spirit of the Republic, its unity is disappearing; and
3. We are not a single unified nation at all but that we are actually working a dualistic structure where one part of the country is exploiting the other. A relatively small part is exploiting a larger part.

What Went Wrong

What is the reason? What went wrong? Most politicians, many leaders and many thinkers say that it is because of the moral decline of the people. That somehow people are less patriotic now; their moral standards have gone low; that they are less honest than they used to be. These, according to them, are the reasons why our institutions are collapsing.

The history of Indian parochial conflicts shows that they flare up principally in periods of stagnation, regression and despair and disappear during periods of dynamism, growth and hope

I have my serious doubts about this line of thinking. Can one talk of moral decadence in a country which only forty to fifty years back created martyrs like Bhagat Singh and Babu Genu? When a nation could produce freedom fighters on this scale and in this number can the criticism of moral decadence be applied to that country? Is moral decadence the basic cause, the prime mover? I have my serious doubts.

Reasoning on moral and ethereal terms is the last resort of those who fear to admit the more earthly and proximate causes. One does not need to enter the eternal philosophical debate about the primacy of matter as against idea. Suffice it to say that economic factors provide a sufficiently cogent explanation for the present malaise to render introduction of any other element

entirely superfluous. Art Buchwald once observed that the American people were interested in the Watergate scandal only while meat prices were soaring. Whenever the prices showed an inclination to come down they were prepared to forgive the Nixon administration almost anything. The history of Indian parochial conflicts shows that they flare up principally in periods of stagnation, regression and despair and disappear during periods of dynamism, growth and hope.

National Stagnation

Thus it was, that under the leadership of the Mahatma, the nation could transcend untouchability, injustice to women, communal hatred, linguistic chauvinism and urban exploitation to forge a common front against the colonial exploiter. Not that they always succeeded. But he did succeed in putting the parochials on the defensive and in fact on the run with the help of, not *Rebeiros* but *Rajajis*. The latter, for example, kept the Madras province in the forefront of the propagation of Hindi as the national language. The 'Hindi Hatao' movement came much later under spurious Gandhis.

Sir Choturam's is another example. The pre-independence Punjab consisted of the Muslim dominated west, the Sikh-majority Punjab of today and the Hindu Haryana and Himachal Pradesh — three communities which collided with each other for centuries together. Their conflicts led to one communal holocaust followed by a partition of the country and appear to threaten a second. But, for a very glorious though brief period, Sir Choturam and his Unionist Party rallied the farmers of all the three communities on an economic platform and kept the Muslim league, the Akalis and even the Congress at bay. It was only after the death of Sir Choturam that Jinnah could open the first office of the Muslim League in The Punjab.

Economism vs. Parochialism

Why did the economism of even giants like Mahatma Gandhi and Sir Choturam fail in the face of parochial chicanery? It is probably a consequence of civilisation. Men do not like to appear to be fighting for bread or even for butter. They like to feel that there is a principle involved. It is only after so persuading themselves, that men get pre-

pared to die and, even more important, to kill. Caste, language, religion and region provide ready-made principles for which men can be made willingly to die and brutally to kill. It is perhaps, related to the primary urge to seek security in community. May be the fraternity of an economic class has identity of interests but not the means and structures for securing them. The fact remains that time and time again honest economic movements have had to beat a retreat before contrived and even dishonest parochial onslaughts.

Many a movement engendered essentially by economic considerations has degenerated and finally gone down in history as cultist and parochial. Battles between the different feudal warlords, contending the right to plunder the surrounding peasantry, have been recorded by historians as religious wars. The struggle of the Moplas in Kerala, deprived of their rights in the land to the benefit of the priests, very soon became communal conflicts. The struggles against the Hindu landlords waged in Sind and East Bengal by the landless — preponderantly Muslim — were purely economic in character. But they were eventually hijacked to create a Pakistan where the grandchildren of the original participants live as miserably as ever. The genuine grievance of a Maratha unemployed youth in Bombay is tapped by regional patriots blaspheming even the great Shivaji. The hunger pangs of the Gujarati youth are similarly turned to their advantage by the pro or anti-reservationists. Brothers get at each other's throats trying to snatch from each other's hands more than their just share because there is just not enough to go round. The funny thing is they need to shriek slogans of caste and religion rather than beg pitously for bread.

The Hindu-Muslim Problem

The Hindu-Muslim problem will for ever remain festering, unless it is recognised that, unlike their urban leaders, the common Muslims constitute, side by side with the Dalit masses, the most deprived people in the country. In fact, they converted to the new religion, in the first place, because of their deprivation. The conversion gave them a dignity and pride but no economic relief. The resolution of the Muslim problem presupposes improvement in the situation of the landless labourers and of the village artisan. In the absence of such a

dynamic context, the common Muslim, understandably will stick stubbornly even to the most obsolete tenet of his faith, since it gave him, for the first time, a sense of dignity. It is, indeed unfortunate that Muslims as a community have rarely found a leader who could articulate their economic problems.

The Dalit Question

The Dalits are in an analogous situation with some differences. Their alienation with the mainstream of Hinduism is less complete though rapidly snowballing. Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism succeeded only partially in conferring on them a sense of fierce pride *a la* Islam. Further there are no big Dalit industrialists or merchant-princes. Their top consists of politicians generally profligate and a few officials, beneficiaries of the reservations policy. The Dalit leadership, as much as the Muslim one, have a vested interest in their flocks remaining both alienated and backward and thus providing fuel to their mills. If the present squeeze on agriculture and the artisan persists, these two major blocks of backwardness are likely to be forged together in an axis potentially catastrophic for national integrity. The early

signs of such an alliance have been visible for some time now.

Punjab Imbroglio

The agrarian character of the Sikh question is even more explicit. It fell to the lot of the farmers in the north-west to stand up against the invading marauders and the native plunderers whose armies were crisscrossing the region until the British came. Sikhism was the spiritual expression of that independent peasant movement. In the course of the prolonged warfare, the peasants in the frontline Western Punjab finally succumbed and sided with the invaders and accepted Islam. Those in the rear remained with the native plunderer-princes and retained their ancient religion. In the Punjab of today, Hindus remain confined to trade, moneylending and other non-agrarian activities. Historically and politically in conflict with the Muslims as he was, the Sikh peasant developed a close social relationship with the Hindus in spite of the economic antagonism.

It is in this context that certain enigmas in history get clarified eg. the early affinity between the Sikhs and the British regime; opposition by the Lala

Lajpatrai-led Congress to the Land Alienation Act the piloting of which made Sir Choturam the instant hero of the Punjab peasants of divergent creeds. Partition and its aftermath brought the Hindus and the Sikhs so close together as to seem indistinguishable. But the liquidation of the Muslim problem took away one major prop of Hindu-Sikh unity. The contradictions in their economic interests were bound to burst out in the open sooner or later.

It came about later than sooner. The green revolution brought about a technical transformation of agriculture in the Punjab. It was principally the contribution of the Punjab farmer that made the country get out of its chronic food-shortages and reach self-sufficiency. Paradoxically, as a consequence of the anti-farmer price policies of the Centre, the economic benefits of the green revolution devolved on the traders and on the consumers rather than on the farmers. Traders were largely Hindus and the farmers happened to be Sikhs. This is the basic stuff of the Punjab imbroglio.

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The Sikh farmer has two grievances. There are areas in Punjab which for want of irrigation facilities are unable to participate in the green revolution, and hence, the demand for additional water supply. Secondly, they want their toil in the fields to be rewarded, either by reducing costs or augmenting prices. Since 1970, principally under the secular and non-political banner of the Bharat Kisan Union (or its predecessor, the Kheti-Badi Union — BKU —), the farmers waged a number of agitations for these objectives. The following the BKU commanded amongst the farmers was beyond compare more massive than that of the Akalis. The Akalis have been trying in vain to plagiarise the BKU demands and programmes. Thus it was that the Anandpur Sahib resolution mentioned not only a demand for decentralisation of power but also demands relating to remunerative agricultural prices and canal waters.

The fact that Punjab produces most of the foodgrain surplus while its prices are fixed by the consumer states has hurt the farmers there since decades. During World War II, Lord Wavell had fixed, in consultation with the other provinces, the procurement price of wheat at Rs. 7 per maund. Sir Choturam had fearlessly stated that in fixing wheat prices the only opinion that mattered was that of the producer in the Punjab and that he would ask the Punjab farmers to burn down their crops rather than sell them for less than Rs. 10/- a maund. Even the alien Viceroy had seen the force behind this argument. Decentralisation is a peasant and not a Sikh demand.

That the Akalis and then the extremists were able to take advantage of the simmering discontent amongst the farmers will go down in history to the eternal discredit of whoever held the reins of power. There was a time when the Punjab problem could have been defused. As late as March 1984, the BKU had rallied over eighty thousand farmers for picketing the Raj Bhavan at Chandigarh. If at that time the Central Government had agreed to restructure the Agricultural Prices Commission and fix the support price of wheat at Rs. 190 per quintal, the communalists would have been totally shorn of whatever little support they enjoyed in the countryside. Financially, it would not have cost the Government even a fraction of what the Punjab is costing them now. It would

have cost them much less than even the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission.

But it was not to be. What followed instead was epic tragedy — making the Sikhs get down from buses and trains to prevent them from entering Delhi during the Asiad; Operation Blue Star; killing of so many innocents; the assassination of the Prime Minister; and the puerile response of the nation in massively electing the son and thus throwing another challenge at bruised egos.

The opposition in India always had the character of a motley crowd of impractical dreamers, allergic to power, content to win verbal duels with their own colleagues. Controlling them presented no problem.

Step by step, the nation is inching forward to disaster. The Punjab case is now in the emergency ward and some political action should probably have precedence. It is extremely unlikely that the Sikhs would ever be able to rejoin the mainstream of the nation under a Nehru-Gandhi. Abdication by Rajiv Gandhi of what he obtained taking advantage of a delicate situation would appear to be the precondition of any resolution of the Punjab tangle. But that by itself would not be sufficient. The solution of the problems of the Punjab peasantry alone would provide a lasting solution.

The conflicts threatening the integrity of the nation are not accidents or products of human cupidity. They represent so many pending revolutions in eruption. The caste-based Hindu society survived and prospered by the economic exploitation of the so-called lower castes and professions. The peasants, the Dalits, the Adivasis, the Sikhs, the Muslims all represent so many economic sins of the caste society clamouring for expiation. The freedom struggle provided a common target and a hope-giver by the Mahatma

that the post-independence era would be different. The British thus provided unwittingly the last framework of unity. Independence, when it came, brought no difference. The caste policies continued though in a slightly altered form. The economic injuries have festered over forty years and gangrened. Nothing short of a total overhaul of economic policies is going to mark even the beginning of the healing process. Evidently what went wrong with the 'tryst with destiny' is that the nation remained absent at the rendezvous.

New Leadership

The neo-colonial economic policies of the Indian elite have not only created the integration crisis but have, much worse, done away with the political leadership and the will to combat it. If the people are dumbstricken, their leaders who carry the formal responsibility for this state of affairs are merrily unconcerned. One has the lurking suspicion that they prefer and probably enjoy the new role of the *gendarme* with the accompanying unlimited power and the total freedom from accountability. In a silent, gradual and almost bloodless coup, the political system has been taken over by a combination of two categories of people, both products of the post-independence era. First, the urban front consisting of the slumlords, the smugglers, construction racketeers and the beneficiaries of the license-permit raj; second, their rural counterparts, the Co-opbarons of varying sizes. In brief, a collusion of the urban *Dadas* and the rural *Goondas* is lording over the polity, left and right.

The opposition in India always had the character of a motley crowd of impractical dreamers, allergic to power, content to win verbal duels with their own colleagues. Controlling them presented no problem. The successive splits in the ruling party and the brief accession of 'Janata' to power in 1977, made it even easier to bring them under the influence of the 'Congress culture' and hence of the *Dada-Goonda* combination.

The real thing that interests the combination, however, is power and influence at all levels. Control of the slums, bootlegging and 'matka' operations require complete control over the local police station and a 'committed' judiciary. The construction gang can manipulate floor/space indices only with the State Government firmly under control.

The sugar barons could earn their 'on monies' only if appropriately illogical rules are got ordered from the bureaucracy. Convenient manipulation of export/import licenses and capital issues, *a la* Reliance, presupposes cordial contracts with the highest in the land.

Power has not only to be acquired but retained and retained indefinitely. Unfortunately, in any minimally democratic system, there prevails, inevitably, an element of uncertainty. It may all of a sudden throw up upstarts like a Shastri or produce a 1977. The combination cannot afford to have any uncertainty. *Aayaram-Gayaram* methods of sticking to power, tried for a while, is all said and done, humiliating and unreliable. A controlled democracy, a populist, vainglorious regime, which derives its ostensible democratic legitimacy from dynastic succession rather than performance suits the convenience of the combination. Add to it a scared apathetic people subject to mass-frenzies, and the combination has its dish. Dynastic continuity and national schizophrenia are the very sustenance of the *Dada-Goondas*.

The last elections furnished the combination with the opening it had been hoping to get for a long, long time. The people called upon to exercise their franchise while in a state of psychological trauma accorded a massive mandate, in the absence of any alternative, to the heir-apparent. This amounted to cutting off the nation's nose to spite the extremists. The latter got a readymade hate-symbol and the nation a Prime Minister, prisoner of his ancestors' past. The poor ex-Avro-flier had no alternative but to drag in the only base he had — the 'Doon school', 'Baba-log', 'Jet-set' managerial class, consisting of the princes (old and new) and merchants of celluloid dreams. Talk of 'modern technology' and the coming 'Twenty-first Century' suddenly became not only 'in' but 'the thing' — not only amongst the intellectual and the powerful but even amongst the beautiful.

Power is a very heady wine, and absolute power devolving out of the blue can really turn even basically sober heads. The managerial executives till yesterday of the Indian branches of multinationals, suddenly started believing that they have the master-key for resolving the problems of the country. In their re-

spective businesses they had experience of the suffocating straitjacket of government regulations, taxation and planning. They had dreamt for long of demolishing these official constraints. Suddenly awakening one day in seats of paramount power with a full formal democratic mandate albeit obtained under duress, they set to work to realise their plans — supply side economics.

There is only one serpent in this parade of the new rulers. The 'Baba-log' are painfully aware that the 'ideas' they are taking out of their briefcases have no mandate as they were not even mentioned in their election platform. They know equally well that their economics is unlikely to receive any thing like popular sanction, on its own merits as it goes contrary to the basic interests of all excepting their miniscule fraternity and to the very precepts of the independence movement. The 'trauma' mandate could not last for ever and they would need a sure-fire device of ensuring extension.

This was the kind of situation the 'Goonda-Dada' combination had been hoping for but had not quite obtained during any of the previous regimes. It moved in now to reinforce its hold on these 'babes in the wood' and without any of the earlier restraints and inhibitions, are relentlessly and shamelessly indulging in sheer plunder. The synthetic fibre-safari clad elite have finally and totally usurped the revolution that the freedom movement was under another Gandhi. The plunderers of the middle ages shouted slogans of victory to their respective deities, to give their crimes a pious cover. Their modern counterparts are required only to proclaim their eternal allegiance to the prince of the 'baba-log' and declare that the petty princeling is a 'divine miracle', 'established world leader' and what not. The combination has veritably taken over. The prince, in the chosen company of his bosom buddies is amusing himself launching paper boats of accords and legislative fiats and economic gimmickry, vastly enjoying the perquisites of power he did nothing to earn.

Constitution Not At Fault

And all the time the nation is inexorably moving towards the precipice. Three hundred years after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, Delhi has come full circle. Frankly, there is very little hope, that the Republic can be saved

and the spirit of 1950 restored. Things might possibly become worse before they start improving. But, just in case we get a second chance, what are the pitfalls and mistakes we should avoid?

It would be wrong to try and find fault with the Constitution. Many an imperfect Constitution has worked because the people were, in their own enlightened self-interest, keen on making it work. Our Constitution may not be perfect, but that is not the reason why the Republic has failed. As Dr. Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution said

"I feel that the Constitution is workable. It is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace and in war. Indeed, if I may say so, if things go wrong under the new Constitution, the reason would not be that we had a bad Constitution. What we would have to say is that man was vile."

Did the Republic fail because man was vile? Only partly. A vibrant republic can exist only in a truly independent and integrated nation. On 15th August, 1947, India became neither. For the vast majority of the people, on that day, one parasitical exploitative system was replaced by another and not even a better or a less cruel one. The Constitution, as enacted in 1950, represented a dream to realise rather than a reality. It could have worked, if and only if we behaved like one people. A dualist economy and a republican democratic constitution cannot coexist. The first thing we shall need next time is the ability to think of the economic interests of the nation as a whole. The criterion established by Mahatma Gandhi would have to become the supreme law: a policy measure would be approved if, and only if, it is likely to bring about some amelioration of the life of the most deprived of our compatriots.

Second Republic

India is of continental proportions and diverse population. Most of its population lives in places that are not accessible throughout the year. It has the largest mass of the poor, the deprived, the illiterate, the afflicted, the humiliated. The rulers had better give up their tendency to compare themselves with their counterparts in the more developed countries. India just does not possess the infrastructure

necessary for a centralised government. The transport and communications network is very rudimentary and controlled mostly by the 'Indian' elites. Any centralisation of power, therefore, essentially benefits that class.

Decision making will have to be as near the operative level or the grass-roots level as possible. Ideally the Union should deal with the minimum possible number of subjects viz. defence, external political affairs, currency, inter-state coordination, etc. The states as the basic components of the union should deal with most of the matters at present dealt with by the centre. A major part of the development work will be carried out at the district and lower levels. 'Decentralisation' is a wrong word to use. Rationalisation of the decision-making locations will be a more appropriate way of putting it. The Constitution will have to be made genuinely federal in character.

We may be a nation of hero worshippers. We may have also been lucky in

being bestowed with leaders who guided the destinies of the nation for scores of years. But this kind of dependence makes us vulnerable not only to the dangers of dictatorship, sycophancy and corruption but to the activities of extremists who represent an increasing tribe. A Prime Minister cannot have better protection than the fact that he is easily dispensable and replaceable. Two tenures is the maximum that should be permitted to the Prime Minister of a country as difficult to rule as India. A consortium of ministers who would hold the prime ministership by rotation for a year each would have a very healthy effect on our politics and politicians.

The new State would have to be made truly secular in the dictionary sense of the word. The State and its representatives, in their public life, should be required to display skepticism towards all religious dogma. A temple going Prime Minister is detrimental

to the healthy polity of a nation like ours.

In conclusion, it transpires that the tribulations of the first Indian Republic were essentially due to the fact that at the inception of the Republic, India was not an integrated nation. It was divided into so many castes and creeds. It had a colonial dualistic economy. Under these circumstances the Constitution and the Republic were at best objectives to strive for. In the last forty years, the State has worked in the opposite direction and accentuated the dualism in the national economy, in consequence polluting the polity, damaging the structures of the Republic and creating the monster of national disintegration. The people will need to, in the words of Mahatma Phule, try and "create an integrated nation to" to be able to get rid of poverty and then constitute on that foundation a genuine Republic.

Based on a speech delivered to the alumni of the Leslie Sawhney Programme on May 15, 1987

Tibet — "Only a Political Solution is the Answer"

His Holiness
The Dalai Lama.

The past four decades, which witnessed the invasion and consequent occupation of Tibet by Communist China, have been the most difficult and tragic period in the long history of our country. Yet we responded positively when the new leadership in Peking showed interest in having direct contact with us in the late seventies. Unfortunately, it seems there is no desire on the part of the Chinese to resolve the issue on the basis of mutual respect and for mutual benefit. The mass arrests of Tibetans in 1983, official encouragement to large-scale Chinese immigration into Tibet contrary to their earlier promises to withdraw the bulk of Chinese civilian population, continued denial of political rights to our people, and the presence of Chinese military and intelligence personnel in Tibet are creating obstacles for better understanding and the possibility for a mutually satisfactory solution.

The Tibetan people have bravely withstood the unparalleled atrocities committed upon them. They have remained steadfast and strong. Their courage and determination are remarkable — a tribute indeed to the

indomitable spirit of Man. And today when we commemorate the 28th anniversary of our National Uprising we once again remember the brave Tibetan people.

Today, there is greater danger than ever before to the survival of our people, our religion, culture and our country.

Firstly, the so-called religious freedom in Tibet today amounts to permitting our people to worship and practice religion in a merely ritualistic and devotional way. There are both direct and indirect restrictions on the teaching and study of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism is thus being reduced to a blind faith which is exactly how the Communist Chinese view and define religion.

Secondly, although economic and other conditions have been eased slightly, in reality young Tibetans are neither provided with adequate facilities nor are they encouraged in their educational development. Bad habits like drinking and gambling are allowed to spread in the society despite the knowledge of their harmful effects. Deliberate obstacles are

being placed before those who are academically inclined. There is thus every danger of Tibetans being turned into a backward and illiterate community devoid of any real culture and education.

Thirdly, the large-scale Chinese influx is threatening to transform Tibet into a Chinese territory.

It is a mistake to presume that mere economic concessions and liberalizations can satisfy our people. The issue of Tibet is fundamentally political with international ramifications and as such only a political solution can provide a meaningful answer.

In the past, too, Tibet had played an important role as a neutral buffer contributing to the stability of the region. This historical precedence provides the basis for working out a solution to the issue of Tibet for the benefit of all parties concerned. The demilitarisation of Tibet and its transformation into a zone of peace should be the first step.

Extracted from the official statement of His Holiness The Dalai Lama on the occasion of the 28th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.