

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

MADNESS!



The world stands horrified and distraught at the brutal and senseless killing of children in a school in Peshawar. This utterly inhuman act brings to the fore how the fueling of the Taliban has come back to haunt Pakistan.

Dear Freedom First reader – A Reminder

A DECLARATION ON CULTURAL FREEDOM was adopted by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) at a Conference in Bombay on 31st March 1951 and published in the inaugural issue of *Freedom First* No.1, June 1952 and reprinted in *Freedom First* No.558 of December 2013. The purpose was to seek your assistance in re-examining the Declaration in the present context when many issues impacting cultural freedom – political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual have arisen in the last six decades. We invited your written inputs and based on your response we had planned a conference early this year to which you would be invited to discuss updating the Declaration.

Explaining why a re-examination of what was adopted 63 years was needed we wrote: “The belief that political and economic freedom and individual liberty go hand in hand has not been quite borne out by time. The many struggles of the right to speak and write freely have not materialised as even free nations find free speech an encumbrance as revealed by the ‘Arab Spring’ for instance. And then there is the huge impact of the ongoing Information Revolution giving rise to furious debates on privacy and national security. There are many other concerns involving tolerance and cultural freedom that have surfaced in the past decade,” for example, that we need to review.

The planned conference could not materialise because of the absence of response from our Readers. A year later we are making another attempt to elicit your response. **HENCE THIS REMINDER.**

Declaration on Cultural Freedom

1. Culture has both an individual and social content. Individual culture is an attitude to life on the part of a human being who seeks awareness of himself and the world. Social culture results from the integration of the culture of the members of a community and of the social relationships emerging in the geographical environment and historical tradition which define the community.
2. Culture can only flourish, find its best expression and be secure in a free society. A society is free in which the integrity of the individual is recognised and respected as a primary ethical value, with all the guarantees of social justice, including equality of opportunity, which this principle implies. All spiritual pursuits and attainments arising from culture are rooted in this fundamental principle.
3. While culture has a universal basis, its expression is as particular and varied as communities themselves. This variety is inherent in the creative genius of peoples and enriches the content of human experience on which universal culture is based.
4. Each concrete social unit which has a geographical environment and a historical environment and a historical tradition must enjoy independence and be able to evolve its own culture and afford and maintain the necessary freedom for its members and for their individual cultural progress.
5. It is the duty of the individual to protect and develop the conditions, mentioned above, necessary for the freedom of culture.

Freedom of cultural pursuits is of intrinsic significance not only for the individual but for the individual as well as for the community as a whole.
6. The best expression of a free culture presupposes an attempt to widen, deepen and perfect the individual’s awareness of himself and the world. In modern times civilization has been mostly governed by an undue emphasis on externalities and a tendency towards standardisation of human life. Totalitarianism, an extreme expression of this evil, has carried it into the social and political fields.
7. At no period of time and in no region has perfection of cultural freedom been attained. But the recognition of the integrity of the individual as a primary ethical value provides the basic condition for the march towards perfection. While social tyranny has existed in the past and continues to exist in greater or lesser measure today, it is obvious that in a society where the basic political, economic and social conditions have been denied or destroyed, even the possibility of a contemporary culture ceases to exist. The effect of modern tyranny is more insidious and destructive than any tyranny in the past, inasmuch as the modern tyranny of totalitarianism seeks to dictate not only the form in which, truth, both aesthetic and scientific may be expressed but truth itself. In such a tyranny truth itself ceases to exist and have meaning; it is made subservient to political belief, economic advantage and expediency.
8. The new tyranny founded on the theory and practice of totalitarianism is the gravest challenge man has faced in civilized history.

The defence of cultural freedom is, in the main, the defence of free society against this challenge.

Indifference or neutrality towards this totalitarian tyranny amounts to a renunciation of the Indian tradition and our human heritage, and a betrayal of all spiritual values.

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Between Ourselves

In the November 2012 issue of *Freedom First*, we wrote in this space: “A 15-year old schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai, from Swat in Pakistan has been showing immense courage in taking on religious fanatics, a lesson they are not likely to forget for a long time to come. *Freedom First* derives great satisfaction in honouring her on our cover. As we go to press BBC reports that she is recovering satisfactorily and may have to undergo another operation. But she is out of the ICU.”

Not only was she out of the ICU but two years later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her courage and determination, sharing the Prize with India’s Kailash Satyarthi, a save the children activist and founder of the Bachpan Bachao Andolan. Malala has become a very special person for the whole world, a famous young lady not yet eighteen but a symbol of hope for the world’s children. We were planning a celebratory cover to begin the new year.

Instead we have a cover mourning the loss of over 140 innocent human beings mostly school going children, mercilessly shot down in their classrooms by black liveried savages who call themselves the Taliban – all in the name of religion. The Peshawar horror has horrified and deeply shaken the conscience of the world. Will this universal outrage unite the peoples of this world to take stern action against the perpetrators of this dastardly crime or will it, after a few days or weeks, be back to business as usual?

The cover facing this page is a reminder of a request made a year ago by our publishers to our readers and which has gone unnoticed. Being optimists we still hope it will catch some readers’ eyes who might consider responding. Hence the reminder.

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From Our Readers

Swachh Bharat

I have been a regular reader of *Freedom First* for more than 15 years. On my recent visit to Jaipur I was appalled to see how plastic bags were indiscriminately strewn all around. The side streets were unpaved and footpaths filthy, especially in a city that attracts maximum tourists. Strong garbage bins at regular intervals – not broken down tins and pails are a must. A systematic and regular garbage disposal method must be in place. Ban manufacturing of plastic bags as western countries have done. Provide more toilets, bins and waste disposal methods. Only then can the guilty be punished for flouting rules. Our Prime Minister's and our dream to see 'Swachh Bharat' can be a reality if we stop merely highlighting only the issue and instead work on solutions for the same.

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Justice Delayed

The number of cases pending before the courts of the country has inundated the judicial system. The Government and the Supreme Court, aware of the injustice inherent in this present state, are attempting to come up with solutions. Substantially larger benches could be one quick fix, though this carries with it the risk of diluting the quality of the benches. A bouquet of systemic changes is essential.

Recalling my personal experience of a cheque-bouncing case in the lower court, I have identified real, practical reasons why there are countless postponements.

1. The defendant is not present and his lawyer seeks an adjournment.
2. The lawyer was present but sought an adjournment as his client was not present / was ill etc.,
3. The judge was not present/ ill
4. The judge was transferred and his successor was not immediately appointed.
5. The listed matter did not come up for hearing.

Between these five causes and their permutations and combinations, my case could not progress. An open and shut case of bounced cheques remained unheard for over three years, while my lawyer and I attended every hearing. The delays cost me more than the amount to be recovered!

This simple example throws up one simple, actionable decision: No party should be allowed more than

3 postponements. After that, an ex parte decision can follow.

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Jagada Dals

The Janata Dal was a combination of casteist groups in more or less all the states where it functioned. Since its theology is social justice and since it is a combination of different castes, some of which are in mutual opposition, the various leaders and their followers have not been able to be together for long. They had been splintering into various Dals – Rashtriya Janata Dal, Janata Dal (United), Janata Dal (Secular), Biju Janata Dal, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Indian National Lok Dal, Samajwadi Party (SP) and so on.

They are in fact *Jagada* (quarreling) Dals. It is aptly said that they can neither remain united for long nor can remain separated for long. It is in fulfillment of this fact that the various *Jagada* Dals of the original Janata Party founded by Jayaprakash Narayan are once again trying to come together this time to fight the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These *Jagada* Dals are disintegrative of Indian society and the nation. Competing with one another and with Congress and BJP in the name of secularism and social justice, they are splintering Indian society – Hindus as well as Muslims. This is promoting strife and not harmony. Intellectuals have a duty to expose the *Jagada* Dals as disintegrators of Indian society nation.

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Bharatiya Sanskriti Bhavans

Germany has been establishing and running Max Mueller Bhavans to get people in different countries acquainted with the history, heritage and culture of the German people. Great Britain has British Councils in several cities of different countries. Of late, China has been establishing Confucius Institutes in many countries especially in Africa.

India whose Rishis and Sages have taught us that the whole world is one family (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*) ought to establish Institutes of Indian Culture named after Swami Vivekananda in different countries, especially in Asia, North America and the OECD countries .

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Obituary: A Delayed Tribute to Two Outstanding Individuals

Freedom First slipped up in not informing our readers of the passing away of two outstanding individuals in 2014 – Aspi Moddie and Balraj Puri and paying them our tribute. Both were associated in one way or another with our publishers the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and *Freedom First*. – Ed.

A. D. Moddie



1921-2014

A. D. Moddie or Aspi Moddie as he was better known passed away in Pune on 9 January 2014. He was 93.

His associate in the Himalayan Club, Harish Kapadia, editor emeritus of the Himalayan Journal in the obituary to Aspi Moddie wrote: “Aspi Moddie lived several lives in his long life of 93 years. He

was part of the British Army and fought in the Arakan mountains in Burma. Being injured he returned to civil life soon. Starting as an IAS officer in Independent India he was posted at the India-Nepal border. In later years he developed an active interest in the Himalayan environment, and with three international colleagues promoted a movement to protect the environment. It took them eight years to give their vision concrete shape and in 1983 ICIMOD (International Centre for integrated Mountain Development) was formed at Kathmandu. This centre flourishes today as a tribute to the like of Aspi.

“For the last couple of years he moved to Pune to be near his daughter. The Himalayan Club has lost a pioneer and supporter, who was member of the Club for 65 years.

The Liberal movement in India has lost a spokesman of unparalleled competence. Aspi Moddie was a much sought-after speaker. His clarity of thought and expression and, above all, says and write, without mincing words was a pleasure to hear and read. A prolific writer his Brahmanical Culture and Modernity” is considered a classic. He wrote a number of other books the last two of which he particularly wanted us to draw the attention of *Freedom First* readers and members of the Indian Liberal Group were “*The Failed Mahabharata*” and *Making of the Indian State - Making of the Indian State: History and Present Avatar*”. A *Failed Avatar*” and *Geo-Strategy in the Realm of the Blind*.

Just a month before he died *Freedom First* published his comments on the “Cyrus Edict” about the ‘Cyrus Cylinder’ which was then being exhibited in the Museum in Mumbai. This was to be the last of the many articles he wrote for *Freedom First* on a wide variety of subjects.

Balraj Puri

“In the sad demise of Balraj Puri at Jammu India has lost a great champion of human rights and a political analyst of high repute” wrote Mr. N. D. Pancholi, a fellow humanist, in the *Janata* of September 7, 2014.



2nd Aug. 1928 - 30th Aug. 2014

Mr. Pancholi went on to recall: “He was a participant in numerous political events of such as the Quit India Movement of 1942, and the Quit Kashmir Movement of 1946 with Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz against Dogra Ruler Maharaja Hari Singh. He did his utmost to prevent

outbreak of communal violence and check its spread in Jammu in 1947 and on many occasions thereafter, even at the risk of his life. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, sought his opinion on Kashmir affairs on crucial occasions. Puri always tried to bridge the gap between Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah. He rendered great help in the conclusion of the Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Award in 1974.”

Balraj Puri was actively associated with Jayaprakash Narayan and was a founding member of the two organisations founded by JP – Citizens for Democracy and the People’s Union for Civil Liberties. Minoo Masani held him in high regard and there were occasions when as General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, Masani consulted him on policy issues relating to Kashmir. He was as a frequent invitee to speak at seminars and programmes organised by the Leslie Sawhny Programme for Training in Democracy. *Freedom First* itself had the privilege of carrying articles written by Balraj Puri.

He was honoured with Padma Bhushan Award besides the National Harmony Award instituted by the Organization of Understanding and Fraternity (given by Mother Teresa.) . He was the first individual recipient of M. A. Thomas Human Rights Award. A *festshrift*, including contributions by leading Social Scientists of India, was published on completion of 50 years of public life with Om Saraf and Ved Bhasin as its editors. Puri was awarded the 24th Indira Gandhi award for National Integration by the then Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

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

Return of a Jihadi

Point

1a) A young man aspiring to be an engineer turned to global jihad under the influence of social media and perhaps guided by somebody he respected. Areeb Majid from Kalyan went to Iraq six months ago and returned claiming to be injured but still clinging to the jihadi spirit. He was supposed to be dead but emerged somehow in Turkey and his parents got the NIA/MEA to intervene and brought him back. Three others who went with him may also follow suit. A number of questions remain. Who made arrangements for his outward journey? What did he do in Iraq for the ISIS? How was he allowed to run away to Turkey? If he has not changed his mind-set, why has he abandoned the jihad? He is guilty of joining a terrorist organisation so declared by the UN and fighting against an established State. He would be prosecuted even if he now claims that all he did was construction work in Iraq. His parents did one better by claiming that when he went to Iraq in May 2014, ISIS was not established and he and his friends went to Iraq just to find work and got trapped in the subsequent developments there. Nobody believes this explanation as it runs counter to Majid's own claims. All such legal ploys would be used to get the aspiring jihadis exonerated under our feeble criminal justice system.

Counter Point

1b) Majid is obviously not telling the whole truth. A lot of stories within stories would emerge to confuse the interrogators. Educated young men are capable of self-radicalization by listening to religious sermons and chatting with like-minded youth from other parts of the world. The call from the Caliphate (ISIS) is supposed to be binding on all 'true' Muslims who are then prepared to die for their beliefs. Young men from over 40 countries are fighting for the ISIS in Iraq and Syria. A small number from India should not surprise us. The young men have grievances of their own (who does not?) but relief is promised by the Caliphate. Muslim scholars claim that Islam does not accept such a Caliphate but why are they shy of launching a public campaign to disabuse the young men of this wrong notion? ISIS made impressive advances initially but once the US launched air attacks, the advances were halted. It is a strategic error on the part of the ISIS to capture territory and show itself. Terrorism succeeds since a terrorist is unseen. When he is visible, he can be attacked by superior forces. That the US is unwilling to fight it on the ground is the key to ISIS survival. Meanwhile, young men will flock to join ISIS as it promises deceptive salvation.

The Hisar Seige

2a) A self-anointed Sant, Baba Rampal of Hisar, tried to display his muscle in defiance of all canons of law for over 10 days, forcing the entire police force of Haryana to engage itself in arresting a single individual. It exposed the 'Andhashraddha' (blind faith) of our innocent people, shameless use of religion by unscrupulous elements and the inability of our administration to act swiftly. The simple thing was for Rampal to surrender before the police. Instead, he built cordons of devotees to obstruct the police from arresting him. Any precipitate action by the police would have led to casualties in hundreds. News Channels described it as inaction of the police. Godmen are sprouting in every corner and their wealth is growing as blind followers shower gifts on them. There is another one in Punjab, who was frozen 11 months back in 'samadhi' but the disciples refused to give up the body. Can the society not intervene or is everything to be done by men like Dr. Narendra Dabholkar and die in the process?

2b) The Haryana State Government spent Rs.26 crore on the operation to arrest Rampal. The amount should be recovered from him. On such occasions, the media must act with a sense of responsibility. Every reporter and anchor pretends to be a General; that the disciples were equipped with molotov cocktails and gas cylinders to attack the police did not come into the calculation of the media. Our police are not as good as they ought to be but they are not imbecile as depicted by the media. The media should show patience to wait till the crisis blows over and then analyze events, find fault and apportion blame – not in the midst of a battle. The Western media has developed a sound system to keep out of the conflict zone till the action is over. In Rampal's case, it would be a good journalistic project to find out his political linkage and the reason for his arrogance. The battle against 'Andhashraddha' has a long way to go. Meanwhile, all 'Babas' should be prevented from building private armies and running their own empires.

Mamata's Ire

3a) The mercurial Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, got enmeshed in her own rhetoric when faced with two serious criminal cases with long-term consequence in her State. Instead of acting with prudence and caution, she reacted as she used to as an opposition leader. She hit back at the messenger instead of attending to the contents of the message. As the Saradha Chit Fund scam (Ponzi scheme) that cheated lakhs of investors, started unraveling and bringing important TMC leaders into the police net, Mamata didi took offence with the investigating agency (CBI) calling it the tool of the Centre. To add to her burden, the Burdwan bomb blast investigation by the NIA (another Central agency) started exposing a much wider terrorist conspiracy. Mamata and TMC, instead of cooperating with the Centre, accused it of targeting her Government and challenged it to dismiss it if it dared! Their bravado was wasted. The plot could not have gone more astray. Here was growing evidence that it was a plot hatched by the Jamaat ul-Mujahideen, Bangladesh to establish a network in WB and Assam to carry out attacks against the Sheikh Hasina Government in Bangladesh. The TMC treated it as an attack on Muslims by the BJP-led Central Government, all for the sake of protecting the Muslim following of the TMC. Political interests of TMC trumped national interests!

3b) Mamata didi and her TMC colleagues tried to defend the indefensible by attacking the Central Government for creating communal rift as the Burdwan blast accused happened to belong to a minority community. They chose a wrong target alleging that Ajit Doval, the National Security Adviser, was an RSS man. NSA's political association was not relevant to the issue but the TMC wanted to hang on to some argument. NSA needs to be professionally sound. Doval is an outstanding intelligence expert, which should be enough for anybody. His affiliation or non-affiliation to the RSS does not change the nature of the Burdwan conspiracy or the Saradha scam. TMC made a serious error of judgment in blaming the Centre for both crimes as pointing a finger at the Center made TMC's evasion more conspicuous, not less. TMC's distress is understandable but it needs to put national security interests above its political gains or losses. Its argument that infiltration from Bangladesh is the Centre's responsibility is reasonable enough but it is the location of the terrorist cell in Burdwan and the bomb-making factories there that should be the state government's responsibility. TMC cannot wish it away. It is of course capable of claiming that the bombs were made by the RSS/ Doval in Nagpur! In political rhetoric, logic has no place and Mamataji is famous for her tangential thinking. That is her strength and weakness both.

Shiv Sena's Contortions

4a) The never ending talks between the BJP and Shiv Sena ended at last (4th December) with the Sena deciding to join the Government. A lot of rhetoric was the daily offering by the Sena as it took its Leader of Opposition role seriously while keeping one eye on a possible sharing of power. Shiv Sena calculated that BJP had realized the folly of depending on the NCP as Sharad Pawar, running true to form, was capable of finding excuses to withdraw NCP's support to the BJP Government any day and on any issue. Consequently, the BJP had to patch up with the Sena. The Sena tried to extract its pound of flesh and the negotiations dragged on unconscionably. The people who had opted for a new dispensation watched in exasperation. The reunion of the two brought relief but no real satisfaction.

4b) The entire exercise of power-sharing became so tortuous and farcical that the new Government seemed to have lost its way even before it began sorting out the mess created by the earlier Congress-NCP combine. The sheen of the new Government was reduced. Ministers who force themselves into their positions by arm-twisting do not inspire confidence. Nor does an alliance brought about at gun-point! The hope of a dramatic change in the state has evaporated. If Devendra Fadnavis can still do some good, it will come as a bonus. An alliance partner whose only desire is to count the number of Governmental posts it has grabbed cannot be expected to provide stability. Constant bickering could be the theme of the future. The messy alliance will have to regain the people's goodwill with extraordinary effort.

Readers are invited to email their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in. Readers who do not have the facility of a computer can also post (mail) their points of view on serious issues of the day to "Point Counter Point", c/o Freedom First, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai, 400001.

It would be a sad day for this country if an impression was created that there is one law for the poor and disadvantaged, and another for the rich and the famous.

Judge Thokozile Matilda Ma Sipa, sentencing Oscar Pistorius, the South African track star, to five years in prison for killing his girlfriend. NY Times.com, October 22 2014

“Look East” to “Act East” and “Link West”:

New Direction and Dynamism in Indian Foreign Policy

B. Ramesh Babu

*“Purpose of foreign policy is not to provide an outlet for our sentiments.
It is to shape real events in a real world.” – John F. Kennedy.*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi went on yet another trip abroad in November, his longest foreign foray since assuming office. The way he is going, he will soon surpass Manmohan Singh’s five year record in less than a year. This trip took him to Myanmar, Australia and Fiji.

Modi’s visit to Myanmar in essence signifies the transition from “Look East” to the more energetic formulation called “Act East”. India’s earlier policy of principled support to human rights activists protesting against the military regime in Myanmar yielded place to a more pragmatic policy of establishing proper and good relations with that country’s Government, under UPA rule. Such a shift was also overdue in view of the growing influence of China in the country, which is vital for our security. Modi was in Myanmar to participate in the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN-India Summit that followed. He was welcomed ceremonially by the host, President Thein Sein. Together they took the bilateral relations forward on the economic front. One of the important agreements signed in Myanmar was to build a super highway connecting Bangladesh, the North Eastern states of India with Myanmar passing through Mandalay and going all the way to Yangon (Rangoon). He also met the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and described her as the “symbol of democracy”. Since the meeting was with the knowledge of the Myanmar Government, Modi was able to strike a new balance in India’s relationship with the country. In any case the military rulers and the opposition led by Suu Kyi have been on the path of reconciliation for some time. Modi also used the occasion to follow up on his one to one equation with President Obama.

Continuity and Change

Usually continuity and change are the permanent features of foreign policies of all countries. Prime Minister Modi’s initiative to “Act East” and “Link West” was built on the ideas and actions of two of his illustrious predecessors: 1) Atal Behari Vajpayee, who described India

and US as natural allies. 2) P. V. Narasimha Rao, who had the sagacity to realise that the Nehruvian legacy of socialism, anti-western bias, and non-alignment has run its course had the courage to opt for new pathways to meet the new challenges facing the country. Above all, PV had the rare skill and patience to build the needed consensus across the wide political spectrum in support of his well considered departures from long established policies, i.e. “the holy cows” of national politics! To manage the dramatic shifts and nurture those along for five long years while heading a minority Congress Government indeed called for an *Apara Chanakya* at the helm!

PV was the architect behind the historic reforms of 1990s, which put the economy on the irreversible path of rapid growth along capitalist lines. His Finance Minister Manmohan Singh was ready to stick his neck out, which suited PV very well! PV was the one who initiated the policy shift of moving close to the US and the West. PV was the philosopher and moving spirit behind the ‘Look East’ policy of building political and economic relations with the ASEAN nations. He saw India’s economic future in the region and beyond.

‘Modification’ of Foreign Policy

Transiting from “Look East” to “Act East” and “Link West” with dynamism can be seen as the *‘modification’* of the nation’s foreign policy and relations. As is more than obvious by now, the overarching and pressing goals of Prime Minister Modi are twofold : Firstly, to put the country back on the track of rapid and sustained economic growth. Secondly, to enhance the nation’s strategic security, especially *vis-a-vis* China on the border and *vis-a-vis* Pakistan on the terrorist front. His purely partisan objective of ridding the country of Congress rule for ever (i.e. “*Congress Mukth Bharat*”) is not addressed here. However, let me add that the country needs and our parliamentary system of government calls for a strong and viable opposition party of an all-India character. Let us hope that the grand old party will somehow put its house in order soon. The rise of the so called “Third Party” is a

non starter and a mirage.

From Modi's perspective and that of most analysts of the Indian scene today, rapid growth is possible only by creating a business friendly political and economic environment at home and thereby promoting large scale domestic and foreign investment in manufacturing and infrastructure (i.e. roads, bridges, railways, schools, hospitals, etc.). Agriculture should be transformed into a profitable enterprise. Accordingly, Modi is doing his best and a bit more to promote domestic investment because doing business in the country has become increasingly more difficult over the decades. Domestic capital is fleeing out of the country. Modi's foreign trips are aimed to attract foreign direct investment from all major powers like the US and the West, Japan, and even China. He is also working hard on the Indian Diaspora as a source of investment, technology transfer, and patriotic help to the land of their origin. Modi is seeking closer political relations and a large scale increase in trade and commerce with SAARC and ASEAN countries, Fiji, Maldives, etc. America is crucial not only for the huge potential of its corporate investments but also as a bell-weather for investments from the rest of the West. Since the new Government assumed office there seems to be a perceptible change in the climate of doing business in the country.

“Link West” Strategy

The visit to Australia was vital in many respects, i.e. the G-20 Summit; Modi-Abbott interaction; free trade agreement by 2016; Indian Diaspora; supply of uranium and nuclear cooperation; and in reinforcing the ‘Link West’ strategy. Yet another chance for Modi and Obama to meet informally was a bonus indeed. While the rest of the West ostracised Modi, the then Gujarat Chief Minister was warmly received in Australia in 2004, it must be added.

In order to enhance the nation's security, Prime Minister Modi opted to move closer to the US. Despite its relative economic and political decline recently, America is still the lone Super Power and strategic and political proximity to that country is the best available means to contain China. India's bid to rapidly build up defence capabilities, modernise our weapon systems and import “dual use” technologies for joint production of advanced weapons, the US is the best available source for us today. Obama's “Pivot-Asia” policy of shifting its naval forces from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean is seen by China as a policy aimed against her rise in the region and beyond. The only thing China fears is India's political and strategic proximity to the US. By inviting President Obama as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day ceremony in Jan 2015, Modi had taken a crucial step forward in this direction.

Modi did not allow the long years of his ostracization by the West and the denial of American visa to stand in the way of doing what needs to be done for the economic growth and national security of his beloved homeland. Putting patriotism above personal ego by the leader deserves the admiration of one and all.

Close Relations with Neighbours, But...

It is worthwhile to highlight Prime Minister Modi's declaration that while he is committed to an all round improvement of India's relations with next door neighbours, there are “*Lakshman Rekhas*” that they should not cross. He did not hesitate to declare that enhanced relations with China are not possible unless peace and stability are maintained on the border. He said so openly during the Chinese President Xi's State Visit in the country when the eminently avoidable and entirely unacceptable intrusion of Chinese forces into Chumar valley occurred.

In the same vein he did not hesitate to cancel the scheduled meeting of the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan at the very last minute, when despite India's objections in advance the High-Commissioner of Pakistan met the separatist Huriyant leaders in his office prior to the meeting. Since then Pakistan has been sulking and expressing its resentment. The unavoidable Modi-Shariff handshake in Kathmandu did not lead anywhere. The latest (December 5th) coordinated multiple terrorist attacks in J&K are to be seen as Pakistan's way of testing Modi's resolve. Shooting is also a form of talking! And this is nothing new as far as Pakistan is concerned. Let us hope the terrorist attacks and counter attacks will not escalate into another war between the two arch rivals.

It is important to let the other nations know when and where we draw the line. But what is far more crucial is to make our warnings credible. After announcing the “*Lakshman Rekhas*”, it is vital to equip the country with the necessary wherewithal to uphold them. At the same time it is crucial to put in place the needed international support to restrain potential violators. Hence the series of Modi initiatives to energise our equation with the US, to rope in Japan and Australia on our side, and to seek to build a coalition of concerned countries in the Asia-Pacific region to contain the aggressive expansionism of China. The US and Germany came out against the terrorist attacks in Kashmir. Whether the new found bonhomie with Obama and the US will go beyond public statements and lead to credible pressure on Pakistan to behave is yet to be seen. I have my doubts because keeping the Kashmir issue alive by all and any means is a question of life and death for the political and military leadership of Pakistan. Each passing year the Kashmir issue is receding further

into the periphery of global attention.

Intriguing Invitation from China

In an interesting analysis of Modi's "Act East" and "Link West" policy, a recent commentary close to the official circles in China noted that the Indian Government and Indian scholars "have not endorsed" the "Asia-Pacific geo-strategy" scripted by countries like the US and Japan. Therefore, China is looking towards India for establishing an "Indo-Pacific era" based on shared interests and avoiding the "Asia Pivot" doctrine, the commentary adds! India and China should overcome their foreign and domestic problems and pursue an "Indo-Pacific geo-economic plan" that includes the ancient Silk Road and the new Maritime Silk Road. The analysis says that the Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Economic Corridor (BIMC) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor are part of this grand inter-continental plan. In a subtle way China is reminding India of its long standing goals of countering America's global hegemony and democratisation of the world order!

If this is the nature of China's response to India's strategy of moving close to the US (and Japan and Australia) with a view to contain China, the trial balloon need not be dismissed in a hurry. May be we are on the threshold of an uncharted terrain. The real touchstone in this scenario is whether this means that China is ready to settle the border issue amicably in the near future? If this is a likely prospect, India should continue its policy of political, economic, and strategic proximity with the US with greater vigour. We should test the Chinese sincerity in this regard. The dragon cannot be trusted. We should not expect quick outcomes. In the interim we can say that Modi is on the right course.

The Russian Link

The impending visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India (10-11 December 2014) is happening at the most opportune time for us. The opportunity should be fully utilised to revitalise, expand, and intensify our historic and close bilateral relations. The new global context of growing hostility between the US and the West on the one side and Russia on the other is an area India has to watch carefully as we move closer to the US. Of late, the US, the NATO, and the Western powers are doing everything possible to push Russia's Putin against the wall. Putin is fighting back with determination. At the recent G-20 Summit in Australia, the Western leaders went out of the way to humiliate Putin personally and isolate him socially. This was uncalled for. Putin felt compelled to go home in the midst of the Summit. He will now move closer to China to get even with the US and the West. China has every reason to respond positively. Wary of the U.S

"pivot Asia" policy, China is already moving close to Russia. The latest development in this realm is the announcement from Beijing (on 24th November 2014) that China and Russia will hold joint military exercises in the Pacific Ocean and the Mediterranean next year. It seems that a new cold war type realignment is underway.

In the evolving global context, it is very important for India to make sure that our close equation with Russia is nurtured further. Our "Link West" should not be at the expenses of our traditional and historical relationship with the former Soviet Union yesterday and Russia ever since. We should not make the mistake of drifting away from Russia as we did in the early years of the end of Cold War. Russia has been a good and dependable friend of India and we need Russia on our side in order to deter China. India should not support American excesses in dealing with Russia. The US also needs access to our economy for its own revival. We are not the India of the 1950s and 1960s. Still, this would be a tight rope walk and we should not lose our balance.

Global politics are once again on the threshold of transformational changes. India should be ready to not merely deal with the emerging scenario but also play its part to mould it to our advantage. India today is a global player and we should do our act with confidence and perseverance.

The policy to "Act East" and "Link West" has come at the right time and let us hope it works. Prime Minister Modi deserves the support of all the people as he leads the struggle to translate his promises into performance.

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On the Medical Profession

This appears to be the business plan. It appears to be, you do whatever you have to do, and you know that eventually you will pay fines but you will pay the fines and still make a lot of money.

Eric G. Campbell, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, on conflicts of interest between doctors and the drug industry. New York Times, November 28, 2014.

Modi and his Alter-Ego

Firoze Hirjikaka

*We are heading towards an India different from anything we have known before.
Whether it will be a golden era or otherwise, only time will tell.*

The golden era of Hollywood spawned some memorable couplings, like Tracy and Hepburn, or Bogart and Bacall, or the Lone Ranger and Tonto. The partners did not necessarily share the same temperament, or the same opinions, but they complemented each other perfectly. Now India has its own Dynamic Duo. I am referring of course to Narendra Modi and Amit Shah.

The politically naive may believe that having been elevated to the country's top job, Modi has achieved his goal. They would be wrong. Modi is just starting on his journey. For sure he obtained an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha - and that was brilliantly crafted by the way. Taking full advantage of Indian democracy's first past the post system, Modi and Shah realized that they did not need to win more than 50% of the votes polled; just more than 50% of elected members. They also realized that the BJP did not have a big enough pool of candidates who could win by thumping margins. They just needed people who could just about hold their own against their electoral rivals; then relied on Modi's oratorical wizardry to push them over the top. The BJP thus achieved a brute majority with less than a third of the popular vote.

Modi, however, is only halfway there. His next aim is to gain control of the Rajya Sabha and to establish BJP rule in all the states. For this, he primarily needs to neutralize the long entrenched regional satraps in forthcoming assembly elections; since the Congress has ceased to matter as a political force for the foreseeable future. Observe what is happening in Kolkata. Modi's chief lieutenant is continuing the tried and tested practice of unproven charges and innuendos by implying a link between the Badwan bomb blasts and the Saradha scam. He knows it is a charge the BJP will contemptuously dismiss once it achieves its goal of coming to power in West Bengal. Amit Shah is in fact the perfect foil to Modi. The PM uses him to perpetuate the old school no-holds-barred politics Modi favours but cannot admit to, since he is now trying to project himself as an international statesman. In Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha has been fortuitously removed from the political scene and Karunanidhi is literally tottering on his last legs. In Karnataka, the Congress is in a self-destruct mode and will soon implode. The stars continue to favour Modi.

Modi's political genius shone through in his decimation, nay annihilation of the once omnipotent Congress Party. The Congress's fall from grace has been so sudden that the entire political spectrum in the country is in a daze; most notably the Congress itself. The Congress has not only been defeated, it has ceased to be a relevant political entity in Indian politics. Modi and Shah demonized the Congress to such an extent that they convinced almost the entire nation that the Grand Old Party was beyond redemption. Corruption has always been an issue in Indian elections, but it was rarely a deciding factor. The people of India had become inured to the reality that when it came to corruption, all political parties were cut from the same cloth - only the degree varied. For sure, the Coalgate and 2G scams exemplified graft on a monumental scale but in reality, it did not directly affect the common man. The people suffered far more due to the countless instances of petty corruption in their daily lives; and in this respect, the Congress was no better and no worse than all other political parties, including the BJP.

Modi however, deftly used his oratorical brilliance to convince the people that their hardships, including the rise in price of vegetables, petrol and other essential items were a direct consequence of the Congress's financial profligacy. He played a master stroke by convincing the people that the Congress's apparent hesitation in bringing back black money stashed away in foreign banks was preventing the dramatic enrichment of the common man. He grandly promised that if elected, he would bring back the stolen loot in 100 days and put Rs. 15 lakh in the pocket of every Indian. That prospect - however distanced from common sense - was so irresistibly alluring that millions of Indians abandoned their logical faculties and voted for him in droves. Above all, he convinced the people of India that all the ills and tribulations that had befallen them during the past five years could be laid irrevocably and exclusively at the door of the Congress. The very name of the Congress became a hissing and a byword. This was brought home to me in a dramatic fashion when even my normally tolerant Parsi friends who had traditionally voted for Congress, denounced the party with epithets they normally reserved for those they considered beneath contempt.

Now that Modi has achieved his immediate goal of ascending the PM's chair, he is increasingly relying on his sidekick to wrest control of the states not yet in the BJP's fold. Shah is achieving this the old fashioned way through engineering defections from rival parties, strong arm tactics and forcing his opponents into a position of surrender or perish. In fact, Shah's political adroitness was in full display in the Maharashtra Assembly. Although BJP had been assured support from the NCP during the trust vote, Shah was shrewd enough to realise that a show of open support from a party his leader had lambasted as "naturally corrupt" would not sit well with the voters. Hence, he engineered the seemingly "spontaneous" voice vote where it was virtually impossible to determine with certainty just who had voted for the BJP. Yes some PILs have been subsequently filed, but that horse has already bolted. His next target was the BJP's recalcitrant ally, the Shiv Sena. He realized that Uddhav Thackeray's take-it-or-leave-it posture was mostly bluster; and he called the latter's bluff. The strategy was to drag out the drama for as long as possible in the hope that some Sena members, impatient for power, would either jump ship or pressurise Uddhav Thackeray to accept a deal less favourable than what he would have wanted. It worked. Fadnavis may be the Chief Minister but make no mistake; it is Shah who is calling the shots.

As I write this, the polls in Jammu and Kashmir are under way and the first two phases have been completed. From a symbolic point of view, this is the big one. What would send a bigger message than the party headed by a man vilified by the country's Muslims for over a decade, winning an election in a Muslim majority state? With his typical flair for the dramatic, Modi announced a Mission 44, later upgraded to Mission 50. His rallies are drawing massive crowds, but that has become almost routine now. The hordes listening in rapt attention do not care about the BJP's flip flop on Article 370, or leading RSS icons gloating over what they claim is the return of Hindu Rashtra. Modi promises to bring development to their state and put money in their pockets; and that is all they want to hear.

We are heading towards an India different from anything we have known before. Whether it will be a golden era or otherwise, only time will tell.

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Why China Wants to be a Full Member of SAARC

Nitin G. Raut

At the 18th SAARC meet, more than any tangible action, what resonated more was the call by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan to upgrade China from its present observer status to a member.

The 18th South Asia Association for Regional Corporation (SAARC) meeting in Nepal's capital Kathmandu showed more weakness than its strength. The signing of a framework pact on electricity was a mere fig leaf to cover its shortcomings and salvage its prestige to showcase an achievement of sorts.

The asymmetry of the eight-member SAARC is unmissable. India is the largest state in this association with common land and maritime boundary with all except Afghanistan. India's landmass is 70% of the entire SAARC Territory, with a population of 1.25 bn about 5/6 of the entire SAARC Population. Its economy predictably outstrips even the rest put together.

SAARC was formed for the economic integration of the region but has made little headway. Unlike the European Union or NATO, it has no ideological cohesion or uniform political system of democracy. There is not just suspicion and unresolved boundary disputes but even absence of favourable bilateral economic and trade ties as a basis for multilateral economic union. SAARC even lacks a mechanism to resolve its major problem – the India-Pakistan rivalry.

India and Pakistan are cotton exporting nations and together, with the cotton fabric industry of India and Bangladesh, can dominate the cotton garment industry in the world. Likewise India is the largest producer of groundnuts and together with the other cash crops of member states can command a good price in the world market. India and Sri Lanka as the largest producers of tea can make South Asia the hub for the Tea Exchange Centre instead of London where World Tea Trade & Pricing is determined.

In fact, at the 18th SAARC meet, more than any tangible action, what resonated more was the call by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan to upgrade China to full membership from its present observer status.

Communist China as an aspiring global power knows the imperatives to have captive groups of Asian States especially East Asia and Pacific regions and

subsequently extend its sway to South Asia and Indian Ocean Rim States. China is converting the proposal for road and railway connectivity to its strategic advantage. All this to effectively challenge the United States in Asia

First, the SAARC Plan for rail and road connectivity is seen by China a ready link for its road and rail network in Tibet. This will provide direct access to the Bay of Bengal and passage through India will be on a platter given the multilateral arrangement.

Strategically and multilaterally it is a security threat to India given the narrow corridor called 'Chicken Neck' separating India and Bangladesh, and perhaps when it becomes necessary China can even misuse the civil facility for military aggression.

Secondly by joining SAARC it will pursue an unrelenting policy of undermining Indian leadership of SAARC and misuse it to stall India's emergence as an Asian Power.

Thirdly with the ASEAN, a confirmed ally of the USA, no pushover for China, SAARC with its internal contradictions, rivalry, border disputes and the India Pak standoff is sought to be exploited by China to further its hegemonistic designs in Asia and gain a foothold in this Asian Regional Bloc.

After 1962, India followed a dovish foreign policy on China and as a member of the Non-aligned Movement; India was just one among the many with no leadership role. It was only in 1991-92 when Prime Minister Narsimha Rao accorded *de jure* recognition to Israel that India Foreign policy blazed a new trail.

China in its quest for Asian hegemony has forced BRICS' new Development Bank to be headquartered in Shanghai and is also leading the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank - both initiated by China to have monetary influence especially in Asia and promote its economic and strategic plans. By membership of SAARC it will acquire a political clout to dominate Asia. With its over \$3000 bn reserves, it can make India irrelevant in SAARC (by doling out aid).

India should take the initiative for SAARC and ASEAN to have structured dialogue partnership on strategic issues and form an economic bloc that can counter China's growing economic muscle. It is not a quick fix solution but can be a mutually beneficial co-operation to engage China and offset its hegemonistic designs.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's successful visit to Nepal and Bhutan were precisely to ensure that there is no scope for misgivings given the asymmetry in SAARC. But it is also an excuse for Pakistan to canvas for China's membership to balance India. Given the frayed ties with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh they are only eager to support China's membership and thereon lies both a challenge and an opportunity for India to assert itself. India will have to leverage its economic clout to rally SAARC members other than Pakistan, to create an interdependent economy which will pave the way to consolidate diplomatic and political relations.

China of course will not sit idle. It will cordon independent economic ties with SAARC members and Pakistan will play a willing Trojan horse to scuttle any Indian initiative for a deeper economic co-operation. At Kathmandu India just managed to ward off the issue of China's membership.

It is to checkmate China's diplomatic onslaught that Prime Minister Modi is going to hold a conference with twelve Pacific Island countries to forge close ties. In Fiji, for instance, Indians account for 47% of the population. Along with Australia and New Zealand it will provide a vital support base. The Pacific being contiguous to the Indian Ocean rim state it will also enhance India's maritime diplomacy. This also means the necessity for a modern blue water Navy. The regional power imbalance in Asia requires India to bolster its military strength and expedite economic reforms at home.

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Kashmir

V. P. Menon and Col. (later Field Marshal) Manekshaw returned from Jammu & Kashmir on 27 October 1947 after obtaining the Accession Instrument from Maharaja Hari Singh. Next day the Cabinet Committee for Defence met. The Army Chief was also called in who took Manekshaw along with him. Nehru started with the functions of the United Nations. After about ten minutes, Sardar Patel interrupted him and asked "Jawaharlal, do you want Kashmir or not?" Nehru replied "Yes. I want". Sardar Patel asked him then to give orders to the Army. Nehru remained tongue tied. Sardar Patel turned to the Army Chief and said "You have your orders. Send the army to Srinagar."

Contributed by Brig. S. C. Sharma

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Constitution – As an Instrument of Governance

B. N. Mehrish

The Austinian and Ambedkarian Perspectives of the Indian Constitution

Granville Austin (1927-2014) was a highly celebrated constitutional historian. At Oxford University, Austin developed an interest in the Indian Constitution. His book, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (1966) has clarity of thought according to Arvind Elangovan*. His second book, *Working a Democratic Constitution: the Indian Experience* (1999) “has its astute insights, perceptive judgments and gives an extensively researched account” of India’s Constitution at work. He has provided a vivid account of the constraints that guided the vision of the framers of the Indian Constitution. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2011 by the Government of India for his unique contribution as an interpreter of India’s Constitution.

The first President, Rajendra Prasad, signed the Constitution of the Indian Republic, passed by the Constituent Assembly in November 1949. For Austin, the spirit of the Constitution of India was its “indelible faith in Indian nationalism”. Austin argued that the voice of the framers of the Constitution was to foster the goal of social revolution. Austin quoted Jawaharlal Nehru’s famous speech in the Constituent Assembly on India’s “tryst with destiny”. Austin highlighted the salient features of the Constitution - fundamental rights, directive principles, cooperative federalism - as being primarily oriented towards the achievement of a social revolution. Parts III and IV of the Constitution are the “conscience” of the nation. The Supreme Court justices have cited Austin’s books on the Indian Constitution in several landmark judgments – for instance in the Golaknath case (1967), and the Kesavananda Bharati case (1973).

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution and the Chairman of the Drafting Committee also observed, like Austin, that the Constitution was the finest expression of Indian nationalism. Dr. Ambedkar was, by any reckoning one of the principal makers of modern India. He had a multi-faceted and eclectic personality. He was a professor of political economy and a reputed lawyer. Dr. Ambedkar is remembered as the emancipator of millions of downtrodden people. India’s post-1991 economic reforms

constitute a major and decisive break with its post-Independence economic policy.

Dr. Ambedkar wanted effective intervention of the State in the economic affairs of the country. He was a staunch advocate of economic planning. He wanted all basic heavy industries to be owned by the State in the interest of the nation and wanted the rest of industries to be left to private enterprise to secure the benefits of the innovative and enterprising skills of India’s entrepreneurial class.

In his speech from the Red Fort on 15th August, 2014, Prime Minister Modi invoked the slogans ‘*Swachh Bharat*’ and *Jan Dhan* scheme designed for the poor. Modi, during his visit to the United States, praised Martin Luther King for his movement to protect the civil rights of the Black. Modi rejected Dr. Ambedkar’s advocacy of planned economy, announced the dissolution of the Planning Commission, substituted it with a ‘Think Tank’ relevant to present realities, and called for “Minimum Government, Maximum Governance.

Some steps taken by Modi reflect his leadership to resolve the much delayed restructuring of the bureaucracy to make governance easy, effective and economical. He proposes to fill several senior positions by short term contracts, enabling a lateral entry of technocrats, professionals and entrepreneurs – real delivery agents rather than ‘gate-keeping babus’.

Jawaharlal Nehru, when asked what he considered to be his greatest failure as India’s first Prime Minister, replied “I could not change the administration; it is still a colonial administration”. There is hope that Modi will grasp the nettle and change what is considered as the most corrupt institution in India’s polity. Modi has announced that 25 December 2014 – the birthday of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee – will be celebrated as Good Governance Day.

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Threats to Upright Bureaucrats and the state of Investigative Journalism

V. Krishna Moorthy

Threats to journalists who report such murky deals face dire consequences, which have become common from the underworld and the unlawful elements of the society.

A free press is the lifeblood of a vibrant democracy and it is the right of every citizen to know the truth and towards this end a free press plays a pivotal role. *Freedom First*, *Opinion* and a few other newspapers like *Indian Express* proved their credentials admirably during the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi, while the majority in the print media bent backwards to please the powers that be. It is in this context recalling the story of Washington Post's sterling performance and its ace journalists and the great editor Benjamin C. Bradlee who died recently, would be inspiring to the present crop of journalists and editors. It is particularly relevant, at a time when threats to journalists, is becoming the order of the day when they are performing their professional duties. The recent incident when the ANI reporters were unlawfully detained, when Robert Vadra was questioned about his controversial land deals in Haryana is a case in point.

The Washington Post is known for investigative journalism of a very high order. The high watermark of its success was when it consistently reported the Watergate stories through its journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein that ultimately led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974, almost 40 years ago. The ace journalists of the well known daily had a great boss in Benjamin C. Bradlee, who presided over *The Washington Post* newsroom for over a quarter century and guided the *Post's* transformation into one of the world's leading newspapers. Bradlee who retired from the newspaper in 1991 died on 21st October 2014 at the ripe age of 93.



It was only in 2005 that America's popular magazine, *Vanity Fair* in its May 31, 2005 issue revealed the big secret in American journalism about the 'source' of the Watergate stories. In an interview published in *Vanity Fair*, FBI's No.2, the 91-year old Mark Felt had said: 'I am the guy they used to call 'Deep Throat.' The source

was kept secret for over 30 years. The investigative journalists had decided earlier that they would reveal the name only after *Deep Throat* had died. Till then the trio (Woodward, Bernstein and Bradlee) had carefully guarded the secret of the 'source' code named '*Deep Throat*' in their reports, and it had acquired mythical stature in American journalism.

That brings me to the fate of whistle blowers in our country's public administration. Haryana bureaucrat



Ashok Khemka's story and that of Mrs. Shakti Nagpal of UP IAS cadre is well known and has been covered widely in all media. Here in Karnataka, we have some excellent bureaucrats who strictly follow the law and can take on the politicians and the interested parties head on. One such bureaucrat is Mrs. Rashmi, presently posted as the Director General of the Administrative Training

Institute (ATI), Mysore, apex training institute for the



state's bureaucrats, where newly recruited IAS officers from different states also join in the initial years of their service for training. All IAS officers posted to the State invariably undergo Kannada language training at the institute which is funded both by the State and Centre. It is these civil

servants and police personnel who are supposed to implement and execute the laws of the land.

Threats to the persona and life of the police personnel and at times to civil servants is a common feature in Naxal-ridden states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, UP, West Bengal and Telangana etc., It is not the case in other states, particularly in southern states. But the trend

appears to be changing with corruption and scams on the rise. There are a handful of bureaucrats in these states who are bent on upholding the rule of law in whichever position they are manning.

Mrs. Rashmi Mahesh, since she took charge, has been reporting the financial anomalies at the institute to the State government from time to time, highlighting the discrepancies in the management of the finances of the institute against the established rules in her correspondence



with the government. The 'source' (the Canteen Manager and book-keeper) through whom she was able to ascertain the murky-deals in the previous six years has reportedly led to Rs.100 cr. scam in running the institute. In mid-October, the 'source' died in mysterious circumstances, with his body floating in the Centre's

swimming pool though he was reportedly seen by the watchman the very morning. The dead man (the source) is reported to have revealed the details of the corrupt deals of the previous DG. With this development, Rashmi has suddenly got into news since mid-October, when she was manhandled in public resulting in head injuries, a broken tooth and serious bruises, when as the Chief of ATI she went to pay her last respects to the dead man. Rashmi survived the attack and there was a news report in the local press that plans were afoot to even kill the bureaucrat by putting a bomb in the vehicle she was to travel. This is the fate of upright bureaucrats who strictly follow the rule of law. All this has happened when there is a District-in-Charge Minister, who is from the city and is stationed here.

Threats to journalists who report such murky deals face dire consequences, which have become common from the underworld and the unlawful elements of the society. Religious fanatics, powerful leaders of religious organizations, powerful politicians and top police personnel are also getting added to this group because of which even professional journalists prefer to take the soft option of not reporting such murky deals, though they hurt society in general. The recent incident of Robert Vadra detaining the ANI journalists seeking his response in respect of his controversial land deals in Haryana is a case in point and a dangerous trend which goes against the freedom of expression and the right of every citizen to get to the truth.

It is in this context that the United Nations has in 2012 developed an approach called the UN Plan of Action

on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and designated November 2, as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. The Plan is designed to uphold the fundamental right of freedom of expression, which ensures that citizens are well informed and able to actively participate in society. Can the NDA government under Prime Minister Modi do something to set right the rules to take care of such eventualities?

In respect of the Mysore event, there were news reports that the State government even tried to transfer Rashmi from her present posting at ATI, but withdrew the same within hours as such a move would have boomeranged on the government. This bureaucrat Rashmi Mahesh, known to be a no-nonsense type is reported to have seen 23 transfers in 17 years of her service for adhering to the laid down rules and taking on the politicians of the day who wanted to bend them for their benefit. Soon after the incident where she was manhandled by the mob and the police personnel present were mute spectators, she addressed the local press. The State Chief Secretary is reported to have issued a notice to Rashmi seeking an explanation for addressing the press on the matter without taking prior permission! The Chief Secretary Kaushik Mukherjee considers Rashmi's behaviour in the matter as an act of indiscipline under provisions in All-India Services Conduct Rules, 1968 and All-India Services Discipline and Appeal Rules, 1969. Reports indicate that in his latest interview to *Deccan Chronicle*, the CM said that Dr. Prasad's services appear to have been sought by the Centre and therefore relieved from State service! Is it not time to change the rules of All India Services to protect honest civil servants? Can the NDA government under Modi give some thought to the issue to enable honest officers do their duty without fear or fervor?

Since I started this piece with *The Washington Post* story, it is appropriate to conclude it by telling the readers of *FF* with the way the paper was run and upheld the value of the First Amendment and the fundamental right of every citizen to know the truth and form his/her opinion. Mrs. Katharine Graham, the then owner who ran *The Washington Post* from 1963 to 1991, in her best-selling and Pulitzer Prize winning memoir, simply titled **PERSONAL HISTORY**, dwells at length on the interesting period when the paper published the Watergate stories against all odds and threats from the American establishment, which makes racy reading. While most of the other papers did not even run the Watergate stories or buried them somewhere towards the back pages, the *Washington Post* carried the stories in the front pages with attractive headlines that finally brought Nixon to his heels.

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Some Thoughts on Our Judiciary and the Media

H. R. Babu Satyanarayana

it is observed that some times the judges in their enthusiasm indulge in extra-judicial pronouncements or judicial overreach that tends to reveal their personal proclivity to be either pompous or make remarks that sends a wrong message all round.

Background

It is observed that in recent times the judiciary has been strident and assertive and it is a welcome sign. However, as long as they go strictly by the law of the land and pronounce their verdict discouraging a tendency among lawyers to seek repeated adjournments, it is good for the judicial health of the country. But, it is observed that some times the judges in their enthusiasm indulge in extra-judicial pronouncements or judicial overreach that tends to reveal their personal proclivity to be either pompous or make remarks that sends a wrong message all round. True, there is no illegality in such observations and even so it tends to discourage the enthusiasm of the executive and diminish its stature by imputing motives.

After all if the country has to develop on correct lines every institution whether legislative, executive, fourth estate and the judiciary have their assigned roles and they are not in competition to be one up vis-a-vis other organs of the State which operate with certain autonomy to take decisions. No institution has any authority to impose its will and influence outcome. It is in this context the role of the judiciary assumes relevance. Since the judiciary is the ultimate arbiter and final frontier for appeal for justice, it assumes in that sense pre-eminence.

Two illustrations

I wish to refer to two recent instances in this respect. In connection with getting back the black money stashed in offshore banks like the Swiss Banks etc., it was reported that the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India Justice H. L. Dattu said 'We can't leave the issue of bringing back black money to the government. It will never happen during our times... Why are you providing a protective umbrella to foreign bank account holders?' It turns out that the list of 627 account holders submitted to the Supreme Court was the same as the one given to the Special Investigation Team in June. If the government wanted to protect some people on the list given to the SIT it would have been different; but this was not so.

The second instance pertains to the observation

of the Supreme Court under the jurisdiction of the predecessor Chief Justice. It was observed that the cleaning of the river Ganga would take more than 200 years! The evidence indicates that the present government is very earnest in approaching the task. As Narendra Modi pointed out in one of his speeches the lives of 30-40% people depends on river Ganga. Moreover apart from the health and cultural aspects, it has huge economic implications. Many countries have come forward to help and if there is real will, the river Ganga may be cleaned in 10 to 15 years. Modi has demonstrated his ability by cleaning the Sabarmati river in Gujarat.

When the Konkan Railway was planned it was pointed that British engineers had abandoned the idea of such a railway as in their view it was an impossible task. Yet under the pioneering zeal of Sreedharan, Konkan Railway is now a reality even if took seven years to build.

Judiciary's Achilles Heel

It will be interesting to follow how our judiciary has been undergoing changes in attitudes over time. During the time of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi there was talk of a committed judiciary ostensibly to bring about social justice. Even now the same ideas are aired by spokespersons of the Congress. The corruption in judiciary has been talked of by previous chief justices of India who put it at 20%. Former Law Minister Prashant Bhushan in September 2010 came out with a most damaging statement that 8 out of 16 CJIs were corrupt and he claimed that two former CJIs were among his sources.

If one takes the public perception, it is more damaging. According to Transparency International (TI) 77% Indians believe that the judiciary is corrupt. In 2012 India ranked 94 out of 176 countries in TI Corruption Index.

Former Solicitor General of India Indira Jaisingh who heads the Woman's Right Initiative at Lawyers Collective, her observations in *Outlook Magazine* of 8 August 2014 are revealing.

"Inbred corruption and gender discrimination was often intertwined in the Indian Judiciary, indeed corruption

has been sexualized”

Elsewhere in the same article she writes: “Judges, bequeathed their cases to their sons who were practicing. So what can be posited as common in the two debates? The impunity that judges enjoy clearly foments the pernicious structure of hierarchy within, the culture of sycophancy in the legal profession and the near-dynasty that exists in the matter of judges’ appointments. One look at some judges’ predecessors will convince you that they are not only from the same class or social background, but also related with ties of blood. At one time, the Supreme Court had three sitting judges related to each other, with not a single demand to figure out how they all managed to get there at the same time. The legal profession has also become hereditary; children of lawyers becoming lawyers and the children of these lawyers’ children also bound to become lawyers. It is almost as if law was a business. But unfortunately, it is a justice-dispensing mechanism. This creates countless conflicts of interest between members of the judiciary. In India, we definitely lack a conflict of interest theory when it comes to public life; we are all brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts!”

The present government has barred access to the North and South Blocks and such kind of news has dried up. Nevertheless, it is amusing to see most of the channels showing ‘Breaking News’ whether it has substance or not.

True, in recent times efforts are being made to reform the system. For example the present government’s move to replace the collegium system for selection of judges is one such instance. Even so there is scope for serious introspection in the judiciary at all levels on the need to take steps to make systemic changes to ensure justice is not delayed. The task is by no means easy considering the huge backlog of cases and paucity of judges. If today people still repose their trust in our judiciary it is because there are still honest judges.

Fourth Estate

Probably, India has the most thriving media in the world. Also, they enjoy near unlimited freedom. It has its faults and yet it is doing its magnificent work to keep the government in check. In fact, it has played a sterling role supplementing the efforts of NGOs to revive a few high profile cases and succeeded in courts punishing the guilty. At the same time we have heard of cases of ‘paid news’.

In the Radia tapes expose, some media persons were playing foul with the system. During the UPA government’s regime, journalists had field day and with free access to

North and South block were privy to some political tidbits freely shared by ministers who had their own favourite journalists to sensationalize in their TV channels. The present government has barred access to the North and South Blocks and such kind of news has dried up. Nevertheless, it is amusing to see most of the channels showing ‘Breaking News’ whether it has substance or not.

It is amusing to see how different TV anchors monitor the discussion when they invite persons of various political parties or experts to air their views on any current event. More often they try to exhibit their knowledge of events rather than allow the participants to express their views. For example, when an issue concerning Pakistan figures one TV anchor is fond of calling the same persons from Pakistan and discussion goes on expected lines. It is not clear what earthly reason prompts the anchor to call them again and again.

The print media is another extreme. It is obvious they have their editorial policy but it beats me how blatantly one sided their views are. They have their set of political analysts who write to air their views to suit the editorial policy of siding with one political party or the other, It is another form of ‘paid news’. It is a wonder that despite internet and cellphones, the print media holds sway!

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The Late unlamented Planning Commission

During his term as prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi once called members of the Planning Commission “a bunch of jokers” after he disagreed with the Commission’s incremental approach. But the real truth, as the fall of centrally-planned economies across the world showed soon enough, was that Soviet-style planning itself was a circus. In India’s case, however, the real tragedy isn’t that we reposed our faith in planning to begin with, rather the fact that it has taken a quarter of a century post the economic liberalization reforms in 1991 for politicians to realize that the Planning Commission has to be wound up. Despite accepting that centralized planning only had an indicative role in a market-driven economy, successive governments persisted with the farce of central and state plans. By their very existence these plans curtailed the free play of market forces, reducing opportunities for private entrepreneurship and eventually inhibited India’s growth. Thankfully, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demise of the Planning Commission in his Independence Day speech and detailed discussions are now underway about replacing it with an institution more in sync with the demands of times.

Excerpted from *The Mint*, December 9, 2014. For the full text visit http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/Flqw9QlsbwFP5XJRaAf0hL/Undoing-the-ills-of-the-Planning-Commission.html?ref=newsletter&utm_source=copy

Agriculture and Rural Indebtedness - V

R. M. Mohan Rao

*Freedom from British Rule did little to improve the lot of the Farmer.
This is so even today 67 years after Independence.*



In this the Vth part of the series on the indebtedness of Farmers Professor Mohan Rao continues the discussion on cost of production and profitability and technologies that have helped increase agricultural production especially foodgrains and the risks these involve.

marginal farmers as they faced increased risks and uncertainty in addition to attendant health hazards and environmental degradation.

Trends in terms of trade are divergent depending upon the source of estimates, weights used and inclusion or exclusion of various items in the construction of indices of prices received and paid by farmers. However, a study on the terms of trade prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India noted that during the period 1978-79 and 1999-2000 though macro policies such as money supply, trade liberalization, agricultural price policy and world agricultural prices have played a significantly positive role in determining the gross terms of trade in favour of agriculture, higher per capita agricultural production and relative prices for manufacturing have resulted in unfavourable terms of trade for agriculture. (*State of Indian Farmer*, Vol.15, P-36.)

Notwithstanding the problems and controversies associated with if the terms of trade, the performance of Indian agriculture in the liberalization period in terms of production trends of crops, capital formation and employment growth clearly reflect on the plight of the agriculture sector. (.See Annexure –V for details).*

(vii) Technology

Technological developments in Indian agriculture since mid-1960 should be credited for their achievements in increasing agricultural production, especially food grains. However, this exclusive focus on increasing production through new varieties with greater susceptibility to pests is also a cause for large production losses and worsening instability in the crops. This has affected the small and

Needs and concerns with increasing production resulted in technological upgradation of crops grown in irrigated areas to the relative neglect of dry land areas and 'orphan crops'. With very limited involvement of farmers in research in agriculture, technological developments resulted in situations where farmers' concerns and requirements have not received priority. As Green Revolution technologies have reached a plateau, agricultural growth has to be more widely distributed and better targeted with focus on reducing regional imbalances. Similarly, there is need to shift the focus from increasing production to increasing earnings of individual farmers, particularly the small and marginal in unfavourable areas.

Technological developments in agriculture have totally neglected post-harvesting technology, which is critical to value addition of farm products, as well as to augment the incomes of farmers.

(viii) Extension

The significance of extension in transforming agriculture, particularly in the context of deceleration in agricultural growth on the one hand and preparing Indian agriculture to seize opportunities in a liberalized trade scenario on the other needs no emphasis. Public research and extension played a major role in bringing about the Green Revolution. The then existing system of extension was suited for the rapid dissemination of pre-set agronomic practices for the high yielding wheat and rice varieties. However, in the post-Green Revolution era, extension encountered many challenges in the area of relevance,

sustainability and accountability. In the changing economic scenario and particularly in rain-fed farming areas where diversified farming systems with widely varying local conditions and risk-prone agriculture, the extension system faced its limitations and failures. It was found to be unsuccessful in programmes for natural resource management, integrated nutritional management, and diversified agriculture such as high-tech farming, horticulture, livestock activities and fisheries

(ix) Marketing

Notwithstanding the expansion of regulated markets, and offering minimum support prices for select commodities, agriculture has become a gamble in marketing. The market committees of the regulated markets are not able to provide the required facilities for marketing viz. shelter, godowns, facilities for processing, grading, quality evaluation, packaging and information on various commodity markets. As such commission agents and traders continue to dominate these markets. The irony of it is, it is not so much due to market forces but largely due to Government interventions of forcible procurement at prices fixed by it in periods of rising prices and leaving farmers to fend themselves in periods of fall in prices. This no longer augurs well for agricultural growth and well being of the country and needs immediate reversal.

Similarly, market imperfections with wide variations in prices at different marketing centres continue to persist. Extension is a totally neglected aspect in Indian agricultural marketing. Farmers are denied freedom to transport, process and sell the product on their own because of restrictions imposed by the State. There is no proper planning or organization for agricultural marketing. The unorganized sector in this area is more organized than the organized sector itself. The problem of too many functionaries and multiplicity of layers continues to haunt farmers to their disadvantage. Farmers are forced to pay market cess and fee without any service in return. Though MSP is fixed for select crops, they are not declared well before the sowing season nor is there any nodal agency for the implementation of MSP except for paddy and wheat.

(x) Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure like education and health facilities are in a deplorable condition in the rural areas. Often, the emphasis is on expansion of the programmes without adequate attention being paid to the quality of services. Universalisation of primary education and 'Health for all' by 2000 AD have remained elusive goals. This is particularly true of rural India. The poor quality of education imparted at the primary and secondary level in government schools in the rural areas is devoid of purpose. They are

neither able to procure any meaningful employment after completion of school education nor able to compete with their urban counterparts to get into professional courses like medicine, engineering, agriculture, veterinary, etc. The poor quality of available education facilities is forcing farm families to take undue risks in their anxiety to provide better education to their children. Private education even at the primary and secondary levels has become too expensive and beyond the reach of marginal and small farmers.

Similar to education, rural health infrastructure is also in a poor state. Despite the expansion of Primary Health Centres and their sub-centres, they have not had the envisaged impact on rural health services. Contrary to their basic objective of delivery of health services at the grassroots level, these centres did not reach adequately or uniformly, and large areas and population are really without even the most elementary health care. In areas where the infrastructure exists, the outreach and the extension part in many states is ineffective due to problems related to transport, lack of residential accommodation and interest in doing private practice among the professionals. These services are also impeded by underutilization of existing infrastructure due to inadequate staff, supply and maintenance of equipment, medicines and lack of commitment on the part of the personnel in charge of these centres.

Given this unsatisfactory scenario, rural people are forced to approach private health services which are costly and beyond the capacity of many to bear. In fact, the incidence of growing debt burden, apart from crop losses and un-remunerative nature of farming is also due to the growing expenditure on education and health expenditure.

PROF. R. M. MOHAN, retired NABARD Chair, Waltair Andhra Pradesh. The purpose of serialising this paper by Prof. Mohan is to invite readers to share their views on the issues raised and recommend policies that would ensure a fair deal for India's farmers.

* Email: freedomfirst1952@gmail.com, or write to *Freedom First*, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001, if you are interested in getting a copy of the paper.

To be Continued

Missing the Whole Picture

Tsewang Sonam

Why is China afraid of the media and free flow of information?

I cannot help but notice that, by and large, India's mainstream media refers to the Tibet issue only when there is Chinese military intrusion at the border or a widespread protest by Free Tibet activists. In their hurry to serve the news hot and spicy, they miss a great part of the Tibet story.

The Chinese government's grip over the mainland media and internet is absolute. The brutal clampdown of over a million Chinese protestors at Tiananmen Square (1989) and the Tibetan uprising (2008) with excessive force killing, detaining, and shattering the aspiration of the people for justice or rather freedom of expression was largely underplayed by the media after initially reporting the events for a few days.

Why is China afraid of the media and the free flow of information? Information is squeezed and filtered before the diluted propaganda is fed to the Chinese citizens. The ongoing Hong Kong protest demanding real democracy has drawn the world's attention, yet the Chinese people in mainland China are clueless and celebrating 'Guoqing', which in Chinese means 'national celebration'. Such is the fate of the media which is seen as a threat to the Government of the 'Peoples Republic of China' hence it is regulated rigorously. There is a striking resemblance between the aspirations of the youth protests in Hong Kong and the Tibetans inside Tibet.

So far, 132 Tibetans have set themselves ablaze in protests against the Chinese government and their demand for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Many of the new generation young Tibetans born under the Chinese flag are resisting its rule and going to the length of self-immolation. The question arises why are Tibetan inside Tibet self-immolating as a form of protest?

The bigger picture many miss is that China is failing to establish its effective rule over Tibet. China has been ruling Tibet for 55 years after its so-called peaceful liberation by PLA troops annexing Tibet in 1959. In more than a half century rule, it has managed to achieve economic growth and modernization in Tibet. Yet, the clampdown and harsh laws have claimed the lives of thousands of Tibetans inside Tibet who are frequently protesting against China's rule. China has so far failed in its objective of destroying the Tibetans' deep-rooted culture and religion. Denial of basic

rights of free speech, movement and religion has fuelled self-immolations – a desperate action by the protestors. Ironically China is struggling to maintain a climate of peace inside Tibet by brute force.

The Tibetan government-in-exile tries to build bridges with the Chinese government with the Middle Way Approach policy seeking genuine autonomy for Tibet; yet the Chinese government is reluctant and not ready to entertain even this diluted demand. China is unwilling to accept the Middle Way Policy of the Tibetan government-in-exile, which is supported by many western countries. Chinese reluctance clearly shows that China is not ready for any kind of political change in Tibet. The new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein on 16 October, 2014, said that he was discussing with Chinese authorities his visit to the troubled region of Tibet.

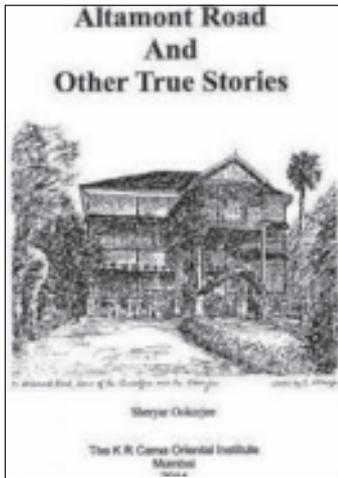
The grievances of Tibetans in the repressed counties of Tibet where self-immolations are taking place should not be viewed through a car window and camera lens. The ground realities in Tibet would be more profound if journalists and media persons are allowed to make an in-depth report and research in Tibet along with the UN delegates.

Restrictions on foreign journalists' access to "sensitive" areas of the country continue to be strictly enforced. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) reported in their survey that China's ruling Communist Party continues to place hurdles for foreign journalists and the media companies that employ them, discouraging reporting on many aspects of China

On 14th March 2012, after the conclusion of the Fifth Session of the 11th National People's Congress (NPC), Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in a press conference warned the Chinese government that it needs political reform to avert a historical tragedy. The need for political reform in China is evident. In this century of information and technology, how long will the Chinese government keep its people in darkness and under its repressive laws?

TSEWANG SONAM who graduated in journalism from the Madras Christian College is currently doing his internship in English Media with the Central Tibetan Administration.

BOOK REVIEWS



ALTAMONT ROAD AND OTHER TRUE STORIES by Sheryar Ookerjee ● published by The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai, 136, Bombay Samachar Marg, Mumbai 400023 ● 2014 ● pp.107 ● Rs.750.

Reviewed by S. V. Raju, Honorary Secretary, Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and editor, *Freedom First*.

My first ‘encounter’ with the Parsis goes back to 1945 to two classmates in the 3rd standard of Don Bosco High School in Mumbai. We did not become ‘close’ friends, but ‘good’ classmates.

Both were better students than I was, but the two were like chalk and cheese; one studious, serious minded, had to make an effort to stay on top and slightly ‘standoffish,’ the other easy going, warm, social and a topper with ease. The first was obviously from the upper crust of Parsi society and the second typically middle class. The first migrated overseas and the second became a much sought after architect whom one could meet outside professional hours at his hangout at an Irani Restaurant in Khodadad Circle, Dadar, Bombay. Alas that Irani restaurant has disappeared replaced by a shop selling cloth and shoes and have lost touch with him. I could trace replicas of my classmates in Professor Sheryar Ookerjee’s *Altamont Road and Other Stories!*

Muncherji N. M. Cama, President of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, the publishers of this volume, observes in his brief Foreword, “The book contains anecdotes of Parsis whom he (Professor Ookerjee) personally knew or were narrated to him by people who knew them.” In fact records the Professor, Cama encouraged him to write this book.

I had the privilege of counting Professor Ookerjee among my friends, apart from being the occasional contributor to *Freedom First*. My regret is I came to know him, so much more closely, so late in my life and his. Soft spoken, modest to a fault, I was overawed by his intellect and his humility. What amazed me was the ease with which he could explain Plato and Arthashastra and with equal ease recount humorous exploits of Dali the “Renaissance Man” and his wife Avabai (Chapter 3 page 62).

In his preface Professor Ookerjee writes “The original plan was to write about the Cursetjees (among

whom I was born), but I have expanded it to include other families and individuals who have had some connection, in some cases rather slender with the family. “Family” of course includes (as in the Opera – Gilbert and Sullivan’s *H M S Pinafore*), a man’s “sisters and his cousins and his aunts, and also his brothers and his uncles, and their sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts and uncles.”

“I write of times”, he adds, with nostalgia, in his preface “that were very different from the present times. Life moved much more slowly and the theatre, in which it unfolded, was much more spacious. There was not, I feel sure, the mad craze for amassing absurdly high piles of wealth. More people seemed to care for other things which make life worth living, things not to be bought with money”.

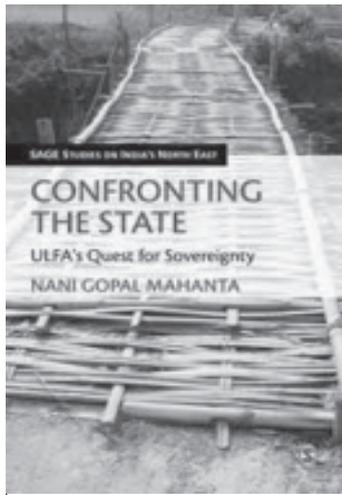
The teacher in him cannot resist instructing us at the very beginning that it is “Altamont not Altamount” Road, as an aside, when narrating a ‘minor’ hiccup surrounding his birth in the Masina hospital. His delightful anecdotes begin with this clarification and go on with numerous other “true stories”, some more amusing than the others, going back to his great grand-fathers, paternal and maternal, and beyond the family, generally the upper-crust of the Parsi community sometimes described as the Parsi aristocracy; in the process providing glimpses into the tenor of life in Bombay in the last century. Prof. Ookerjee skilfully weaves into his tapestry these anecdotes and true stories which, in a non-intrusive manner, also tell us in passing his birth, his school and college education, his experiences as a teacher and of course the fun, foibles and frolics of his extended family and his community at large.

The stage in which he and his *dramatis personae* ‘perform’ extends to Bombay south of Byculla and Matheran, Mahabaleshwar, Panchgani, (known to be favoured holiday resorts of the Parsis) and of course England.

Fun and frolics apart, the Cursetjee’s gift to Bombay is the Alexandra Girls’ English Institution founded by Manockjee Cursetjee, the maternal grandfather of Prof. Ookerjee. He also draws attention to the spelling of

Manockjee – which his maternal grandfather decided would sound better than the normal ‘Maneckji’! Regardless of the spelling, this school, which began in 1863, is flourishing. It is one of the more sought after by parents of middle and upper class girls across all communities in the city. Professor Ookerjee writes: “The Alexandra Girls’ School (with “Institution” in the proper title in place of “School” in the fashion of the day), began to give girls a modern English education from 1863. Manockjee was pelted with raw eggs and stones by the orthodox...It has had

eminent people on its Board of Directors, the two most eminent among them being Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The school has been completely cosmopolitan and secular from the very beginning. The word “Native” (which then carried no pejorative implication) was later dropped.” The School celebrated its 150th anniversary through the year and on 31 March 2014 the school buried, in its compound, a Time Capsule to be opened 50 years later when the school celebrates its bi-centenary.



CONFRONTING THE STATE by Nani Gopal Mahanta ● Published by Sage Publications, New Delhi ● marketing@sagepub.in ● 2013 ● pp.348 ● Rs. 750

Reviewed by Brig. Suresh C. Sharma (Retd.) advisor to the telecom industry, a freelance writer and a member of the *Freedom First* advisory board. sureshsharma236@yahoo.com

The author is an Associate Professor at the Guwahati University and had earlier taught at the University of California. The Government has been facing violence in the North East and has attributed it to lack of

at Ranghar, the entertainment place of the Ahom kings in the 14th century, decided to organize the United Liberation Front of Assam [ULFA]. Its influence was strengthened due to the efforts of the Asom Jatiyatibadi Yuva Chhatra Parishad [AJYCP].

economic development and easy availability of arms. These factors do play a part, but the main cause is a feeling of alienation amongst the various ethnic groups. Illegal immigration from Bangladesh and internal migration from India have added to the problem. The erstwhile Congress rulers have not shown any interest in solving these issues. In 1836, the British colonial bureaucrats declared Bengali to be the official language of Assam which hurt the Assamese cultural pride.

The objective of ULFA was the liberation of Assam which according to them was never a part of India. Political and military wings were organized to support the cause. Surprisingly, its agenda included tolerance of immigrants from Bangladesh. A fifteen page booklet described these immigrants as “major part of the national life of the people of Assam.” The All Assam Students Union did not support ULFA’s policy on immigrants. ULFA had adopted this policy due to their military compulsion of locating training camps in Bangladesh and supply of arms. Lt. General S. K. Sinha, former Governor of Assam, has commented that the political party which came to power on the anti-immigration plank itself later became hostage to vote bank politics.

The people of Assam did not like the grouping of Assam with Bengal for framing the provincial constitution as proposed in the Cabinet Mission Plan in 1946. Nehru and Maulana Azad agreed with the leaders of Assam in internal discussions but did not take it up with the Cabinet Mission on 10 June 1946. Nehru told Gopichand Bardoloi that the progress of the rest of India could not be held back for the sake of Assam. Bardoloi had to approach Mahatma Gandhi to get his views accepted.

ULFA gained strength when the Assam Gana Parishad [AGN] came to power in 1985. ULFA had stabilised and it took some populist measures like punishing people who showed disrespect for women. AJYCP occupied state land and put it to cultivation using forced labour. In 1988, Munin Nobis, an AASU leader, tried to internationalise the campaign and established contacts with Intelligence Agencies of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The ULFA cadres were taken to Pakistan and Afghanistan for training. Camps were organized in Nagaland, Bhutan and Myanmar. About sixty youths were sent to Myanmar for training by the Kachins who demanded ten lakh rupees for arms. The Kachins utilised the Assamese youths for attacks on the Myanmar Army and suffered casualties. Quite a few died of various diseases and absence of medical treatment. The

The abandonment of Assam in the 1962 War, denial of funds for resettling refugees from East Pakistan after Independence and location of an oil refinery further eroded the credibility of the Central Government. The Assam Movement was launched to correct these faults. On 7 April 1979, seven young people after a night long discussion

trainees were treated like hostages. The Indian Intelligence Agency, RAW, contacted the Kachins and threatened to evict the refugees from Manipur which ended ULFA's ties with the Kachins.

Since the state government was not taking any action, the Central Government headed by Chandrasekhar imposed President's Rule on 27 November 1990 and ULFA was declared illegal. Sakia became the Chief Minister on 3 July 1991 when elections were conducted. His attempts at moderation and negotiations did not succeed and ULFA was decimated in Army operations. Terror acts by ULFA had resulted in a decline of popular support for them.

The ideological base for independent Assam was provided by Parag Das, a journalist. He wrote a few books on that theme and regularly wrote in his paper justifying the demand for independence as only 2% of the land mass is connected to India. This is not a convincing reason as island chains not connected by land can be part of a State. Another reason, he cites is ethnic difference. There is hardly any state that does not have people of more than one ethnic group. Parag Das failed to understand the pulse of the people. The market economy of India had created stake holders who expected to gain more from the Indian Union than from an independent Assam. The reasons for alienation were a disregard for history and culture of Assam and economic neglect. The victory of the Assam kings against the Mughal invaders is not included in the history text books. Public display of honour to the Ahom commander Lachit Borphukan by Lt. General Sinha was greatly appreciated by the people of Assam.

The state has opted to rely on the police and the army rather than seek a political solution. There will always be allegations of killing of innocent people by the security forces, forgetting that terror acts also result in loss of innocent lives. Negotiations can succeed only in a violence-free environment. Another method adopted was to rehabilitate militants who gave up arms. Militants who surrendered were given Rs.2.5 lakh each as grant and a soft loan of Rs.1.5 lakh. They gave useful information about the militants and became the targets of ULFA. They in

turn got together to form the SULFA, a group of surrendered terrorists, for their own protection. 130 people have been killed on both sides. We do not know why the security forces did not ensure the safety of the SULFA.

ULFA did not try to get popular support and wrongly presumed that the people of Assam wanted independence. A field survey in May 2001 established that the vast majority of people did not want independence and believed that support for ULFA was declining. To claim that Assam was never a part of India is to ignore the process of building up of a nation state. Support for ULFA declined due to indiscriminate killings, support for Bangladeshi immigrants, contacts with foreign intelligence agencies and support for Pakistan in the Kargil War. A Bomb blast at Dhimeji on 15 August 2004 in which 14 school children died shook the entire country and anti-ULFA rallies were held in all parts of the state.

More than 5,000 militants of ULFA surrendered and 1,000 were killed during counter-insurgency operations by the military during 1998 to 2001. It has lost public support but continues to be sustained by a pride in Assam culture, strong anti-Delhi feeling, poor economic development and help from neighbouring countries. Conflicts between the state and the citizens may be due to the lack of economic development and it may be seen as continuity of economics by other means.

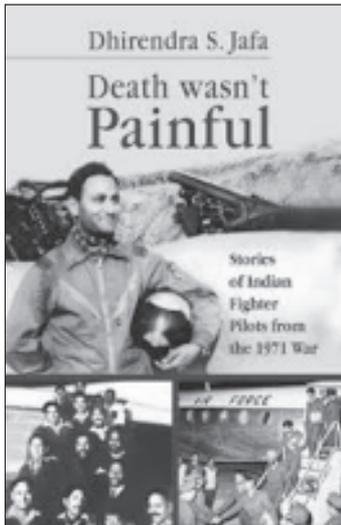
Instead of finding a political solution, the state has opted for conflict management and conflict suppression. These measures entice the groups to join the main stream. A few splinter groups continue to follow the path of violence. Liberal funding without human development turn people into recipients of charity. The empowerment of individuals is not taken seriously. The author has missed the issue of misuse of funds with the connivance of local leaders. The states are at the mercy of the Centre for development funds. The states should be able to raise their own finances and the responsibility for various types of taxes should be revised. There is need to involve the civil society to bring peace.

Satyarthi's Nobel gets muted Response

There has been "a lack of real enthusiasm" in lauding the Nobel Prize to Satyarthi in India and to Yousafzai in Pakistan, says Ashis Nandy, one of India's leading social scientist. "I don't want to get into the strengths or flaws of the man (Satyarthi). But child labour is not a very appealing subject. The Indian middle class agrees that child labour is not a happy thing but would want to say little on it publicly," Nandy says of the relatively muted response that Satyarthi's Nobel has evoked among India's industry, intellectuals, politicians, activists and the media.

Ranjana Kumari, director of New Delhi-based Centre for Social Research, somewhat agrees with Nandy. Kumari, who works among rape and dowry victims, says activists like Satyarthi and herself are frequently accused of showing India in a bad light.

Excerpted from *Business Standard*, December 19, 2014. Contributed by D. S. Ranga Rao



DEATH WASN'T PAINFUL: STORIES OF INDIAN FIGHTER PILOTS FROM THE 1971 WAR by Dharendra S. Jafa | Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2014. | Marketing at sagepub.in | pp.247 | Rs.445

Reviewed by K. S. Nair. He is the son and son-in-law of IAF officers; a lifelong student of the IAF's history, Nair is the author of several articles on the IAF, as well as of the book, "Ganesha's Flyboys", which tells the story of the IAF in the Congo in the 1960s -. ksk_history@yahoo.in

This book is in fact a re-release of Dharendra Jafa's earlier publication in the 1990s *Three Countries, One People*. Nevertheless, it remains a valuable contribution to India's small but growing body

of jawans on the ground. As a PoW, he continued to act as a mentor and advisor in his PoW camp, particularly to the three younger Indian pilots who made a determined, if unsuccessful, attempt to escape. In the manner of some Indian military memoirists, he tells his story in the third person, with sometimes incomplete names or composite characters, probably to avoid official disapproval.

of military memoirs.

Wing Commander Dharendra Singh Jafa, Vr.C.VM, to give his rank and decorations alongside his full name, was until the age of 35 a high-performing Indian Air Force officer. He underwent Staff College training overseas, and was one of the top performers in the services' annual Staff College Entrance Exam. He served as an ADC to the Chief of Air Staff, again a post usually reserved for young officers clearly marked for advancement. He chose, as great-hearted soldiers often do, to request transfer from ceremonial duties in Lutyens' Delhi, to operational duties on the front line, when war seemed imminent. Shot down by ground fire over one of the most fiercely-contested battlefields of the Western Front during the 1971 war, he ejected from his flaming Su-7 ground attack fighter, and suffered spinal injuries. This was painfully common among Indian pilots who ejected in the 1971 war – they flew so low that they never had the time to brace for ejection, and their parachutes barely opened before they hit the ground. He was captured by the Pakistanis and spent a year as a Prisoner of War (PoW) before being repatriated to India. His wartime injuries compelled him to retire prematurely, with two decorations and his modest pre-Third Pay Commission pension to support him – plus the peace of mind of a soldier who had done his duty.

The core of the book is the author's own personal experience during the 1971 war and as a PoW for a year after. As a Squadron Leader at that time, he would have been one of the three or four most senior pilots in the squadron he joined. He groomed younger officers, in the air and equally, importantly, on the ground, for their upcoming test of fire. He flew Close Air Support, one of the most demanding of Air Force roles, making repeated passes over heavily-defended airspace to meet the demands

The adventures of the three Indian pilots who managed to escape from the camp, only to be recaptured four miles from the Pak-Indian border were ably recounted in a 2013 book *Four Miles to Freedom* by Canadian author Faith Johnstone, who is married to IAF veteran Air Commodore Manbir Singh VrC VM. When that book came out, it was publicised through a number of prime-time television interviews with the two surviving escapees, now honourably retired - Group Captain Dilip Parulkar and Wing Commander M. S. Grewal. When Wg. Cdr. Jafa's original book came out there was little or no coverage by the electronic media; is it too late to ask for some now?

Wg. Cdr. Jafa's book showcases the camaraderie among the IAF personnel in enemy captivity; and recounts in detail conversations among them, and between them and their captors. Some of those conversations were hostile, some remarkably friendly, many were straightforward and professional. (Both books note that the Indians were surer of soldierly treatment when in the custody of Pakistani armed forces personnel, than when in the hands of Pakistani civilians). The content of some of those conversations is remarkably civilized. They may annoy ultra-nationalists, as insufficiently demonstrative of an India *uber alles* point of view or insufficiently antagonistic to the Pakistani.

PoW stories such as *The Great Escape*, *The One That Got Away*, and the US Presidential candidate John McCain's *Faith of My Fathers*, have always contributed to the pride, and the culture of adherence to high codes of conduct which influence the behaviour of military personnel at their best. Wg. Cdr. Jafa's book remains one of the few distinctively Indian examples of that genre. For that reason alone, and for its gentle, occasionally humorous depiction of the PoW existence, it deserves to be widely read and better known.

Educating Adults

Legalise Prostitution: Shift the Onus on the State

Hina Manerikar

Just because prostitution is legal, is exploitation going to end, or are pimps going to disappear or are they going to be arrested by the police who are admittedly in nexus with them?

That prostitution is thought to be the oldest profession is not reason enough to legalise it. Prostitution is a socio-economic problem and not one of legality or illegality. Our typical response to any problem in this country is to turn to the government, our “*maai-baap*”, rather than the civil society seeking a solution for the problem. The ultimate goal should be to eradicate this scourge and not sweep it under the carpet by legalising it and patting our backs that we have done our bit. As Elizabeth Rosen argues (*Freedom First*, December, 2014) “The State would reinforce its role as a guardian in seeing to it that sex workers fall within the ambit of social security, so that their health care needs are met, and alternate forms of livelihood could be sought for them.”

The question is how much interference do we want in our lives from the government? Do we want the government to ‘regulate’ the profession? Even if the women feel exploited the State is now telling them that what they are doing is legal, whereas she may want the State to provide her with alternative employment so that she does not have to sell her body to survive.

Legalisation is Not a Solution

Vijay Raghavan, a Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Studies (TISS) thinks that legalisation could lead to a spurt in trafficking of women instead of reducing it. He thinks that once legalised, it would be difficult for police to enter premises that have been granted licences to rescue those held against their will in those premises.

The assumption that sex workers would willingly register is flawed thinking considering the social stigma attached to this kind of work. As Vijay Raghavan points

out these women are cut off from the families and communities. They are made to serve the clients in many undignified ways. “One cannot understand how legislation will improve their lives”, he says. Raghavan further adds, “Licensing cannot be construed as a genuine programme of women’s emancipation, but only as half-hearted attempt to provide economic legitimacy to poverty-stricken families...”

Another important area not talked about much is the question of male prostitution which is far more widespread than we think; should that also be legalised?

Advocates of legalisation argue that legalising prostitution would improve the life of the women in prostitution by reducing harassment of the police and ensuring medical care. Just because some western countries are trying the route of legalisation does not mean that we should also take the same route, or that it will work for us. Our socio-cultural milieu is different. Class and caste factors play a role in India, which probably are absent in the West. The class of clientele is also different. The more sophisticated and educated class that use the service of ‘call girls’ or euphemistically called ‘escort service’ do not need State protection because that trade is carried on mostly voluntarily. There are enough examples of girls from well-to-do families and even married women indulging in this trade either to earn some extra pocket money or in the latter case ‘bored housewives’ looking for ‘satisfaction’ or ‘fun’ which they do not find in their marriages.

Elizabeth Rosen in her article argues that “Legalisation negates the role of the police as a willing



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accomplice to the perpetuation of the trade, and cuts off the nexus between them and the ringleaders of the trade". But in the same article in an earlier section, she herself admits that "this, (legalisation) on the face of it, looks welcome or even respectable. However, such *interference* by the State tends to allow prostitution to survive and thrive, on the sidelines. We are referring to the gaps in law enforcement, wherein the police, aided by the ringleaders, collaborate with one other to keep the trade flourishing". Isn't legalising interfering? Will legalisation change the attitude of the police overnight? So we are back again saying it is a social problem.

The second argument is that legalising will eliminate pimps. I fail to understand how just legalising can make this happen. Just because prostitution is legal, is exploitation going to end, or are pimps going to disappear or are they going to be arrested by the police who are admittedly in nexus with them.

As far as education of the children of the women in prostitution is concerned, the children should get their rights under RTE. There is no provision in the RTE which says that only children whose parents are in a legal profession have a right to education. If they are not in school, it is again a social problem where the society shuns them. This cannot be corrected by legislation.

Experience of Western Countries

Examples of legalisation in other countries are put forward to advocate similar measures in India. Before we think of imitating the west, we should study the experience of these countries. For instance the education levels of women; second the awareness of these women about the general political situation in the country and what actions are they to take if they are being exploited. Most of these women are cowed down to begin with. It is assumed that they will have the courage to approach the police or some designated agency in case of exploitation. It is also assumed that the police will help them just because their work is now legal!

Let's take the case of Sweden and their experience with the outcome of their legislation. Sweden has a strange law. While prostitution is legal, buying sex and paying a prostitute is not. Women (or men, for that matter) can sell sex, but it is illegal for a man to pay for it. The buyer is criminalised, not the seller. In Sweden, the government evaluation naturally considers their legislation a success, reporting that street prostitution has reduced. All Swedes, including feminists, agree that this is not the answer to

the problem of women's exploitation. "Even the (prostitution) law's supporters acknowledge that drops in street prostitution, which countries without similar legislation have also seen, *are more likely related to the advent of the internet*, where it's easier than ever to offer or find sexual services, than to the power of the Nordic model." They in fact admit that the jury is still out on the benefits of their legalisation of prostitution. "In fact, on almost all fronts, 'it's very hard to tell' how well the law is working, said Kristina Ljungros, of the Swedish Association for Sexual Education (RFSU)." "We don't have enough evidence." (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/jinamoore/in-sweden-being-a-prostitute-is-legal-but-paying-one-isnt>)

A study by Swedish researcher Gabriella Scaramuzzino found that the law inspired buyers to organize themselves to leverage a kind of collective bargaining power. They used the internet to review their experiences, in chatrooms that function like a Yelp for transactional sex, and they banded together to demand "consumer rights," like a money-back guarantee.

Conclusion

We have a plethora of laws in India without the machinery or the will or resources to implement them. It makes no sense to add to these laws but instead the civil society has to seek a solution to the problem by accepting that this exploitation is due basically to our patriarchal society and the importance given to male progeny and neglect of the female child. It is for the parents and educational institutes to inculcate values in children where they learn to respect all individuals, and for the government to play a pro-active role in formulating policies and schemes for the rehabilitation of women leaving their sex work. In old West Bengal even a small female infant was called "ma", thus inculcating respect for the female from infancy.

If at all we have to consider legislation, then buying sex should be made an offence like Sweden but keeping silent on the question of selling sex, is treating asking for a bribe as a crime but not giving of a bribe. We need to be very careful before we consider legalising sex work.

Hina Maneikar
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Review of the Right to Information (RTI)

Nandini Voice for the Deprived, a Chennai based NGO, organised a meeting on September 21, 2014, in Chennai to discuss issues relating to the Right to Information Act [RTI]. The objective of the meeting, attended by several RTI activists and the general public, was to provide a forum to RTI activists to express their views on the implementation of the Act.

After an in depth discussions for over three hours, the views expressed are summarised below.

Not implemented in letter and spirit

While departments do provide response to RTI queries, the overall view is that the Act, in most cases, is not being implemented in letter and spirit by the government departments and the original expectations of the common man have not been met.

Time stipulation not followed

Several instances were cited to highlight the fact that the thirty days stipulation to provide a reply to the RTI letters are not met and there have been a number of instances where the letters have been ignored or not acknowledged at all.

Appeals sent to the Information Commissioners [IC] are often treated in a lukewarm manner and require repeated reminders for the papers to move. Sometimes, the letters sent by the Information Commissioners to the Appellate authorities of the government departments are themselves ignored.

One can take up the issue if adequate replies are not given. But, what can the person do if the queries are not acknowledged at all in spite of repeated reminders?

No proper system has been developed to ensure that the RTI letters are handled within the stipulated time which is one of the reasons for inordinate delay.

Lack of transparent procedures for appointing Information Commissioners and PIO

There are no stipulated and transparent procedures such as qualification and background for appointment of Public Information Officers [PIO]. For example, in a technically oriented organisation such as MMDA, a technically qualified person can serve better as PIO since he can better understand the intricacies of the issues. Further, for the PIOs, this is only as an additional responsibility.

There are also no set procedures for appointment of ICs and sometimes such appointed ICs have unrelated background which affects their efficiency.

Personal security threat to RTI activists

Some RTI activists have faced personal security threats, since the content of the RTI letters are leaked out to the affected parties by the government departments. This has deterred several persons from filing RTI applications.

Lack of support from Consumers Court

If one does not get proper replies from the departments concerned and Information Commissioners also do not act, one cannot approach the Consumer Courts, since in several cases they have refused to entertain such applications.

RTI Activism has become a full time job

In the normal course, if rules and regulations are followed as per the RTI Act, one should get a reply to queries without hassles. But, this is not the case. An RTI activist often has to fight hard to get a response and repeatedly follow up with the departments. Often the advice of legal professionals is required. A busy individual with his own concerns may not be able to devote the required time for RTI activities.

Reflection on the quality of governance

While the rules and regulations of the RTI Act are, by and large, well drafted, the problem arises in the quality of implementation and the level of commitment of the top bureaucrats to implement the Act adequately.

The inability of the government to successfully implement the RTI Act is a reflection on the quality of governance at the central and state level.

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MANY VOICES - *From The Past*

Mr. Adlai Stevenson seemed fascinated by domestic camels and when asked whether he liked camels he said, "Yes, but my major passion is the ass."

- "Waqnis", *The Statesman*, January 14, 1958

*

Judging by what I have seen so far, I think that in a communist society, Sarvodaya workers will find themselves behind bars.

Jayaprakash Narayan, *Hindustan Times*,
April 11, 1958

*

The Plan is fast becoming a totem, and the slogan is: up the totem pole Come what may.

Periscope, *Thought*, March 22, 1958.

*

I do not suffer from a split personality.

V. K. Krishna Menon, *Bombay Chronicle*,
May 8, 1958

*

India-China dispute is not of such magnitude as can precipitate war.

Defence Minister Krishna Menon, *Thought*,
January 16, 1960

*

The press ought to imitate Cato who ended every speech in the Senate with the words *Delenda est Carthago*. Every newspaper should conclude every leading article, on whatever subject with the words *Demissus est Krishna Menon*. India will not be safe till that man is out of office.

Mysindia, January 3, 1960

*

India is not Nehru's patrimony for him to endanger its security in this country for the glorification of his outmoded nostrums and doctrines

Saka, *Swarajya*, January 13

*

The Chinese Communist troops on India's border really threaten the continued existence of India as a nation, and it is in that context that the answer to their challenge must be found.

New York Times as quoted in *Swarajya*,
February 6, 1960

*

Our enemy is not the Congress as such, but the reactionary forces inside and outside the Congress. Hence, all those Congressmen who stand firm on the declared

policies of the Congress and are prepared to fight the Swatantra-PSP-Jan Sangh combine and their friends inside the Congress are our allies.

Communist Party of India organ *New Age*,
January 16, 1960

*

China wants peace for many years for reconstruction of the country and would not like to get entangled in any war.

Press Conference in New Delhi after his
two-week visit to China,
Pandit Nehru, *The Times of India*, November 14,
1954 cited in *Freedom First*, April 1960

*

It would be "absurd" for the two countries to 'rush at each other's throat for two miles of mountainous territory where no one lives'.

Pandit Nehru, *The Times of India*,
September 5, 1959.
Cited in *Freedom First*, April 1960

*

People these days regard every Congressman as dishonest until the contrary is proved.

Sanjeeva Reddy, Congress President,
The Times of India, July 27, 1960.

*

We are not having a welfare state and we will not have it. What we are having now is an illfare state.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, *Hindustan Times*,
August 3, 1960.

*

We agree with them (the Chinese Government) that the (Tibetan) rebellion as such must be crushed, but repression is another matter.

Prime Minister Nehru, quoted in the
Manchester Guardian Weekly, December 29, 1961.

*

The Congress leaders say that the present generation is being sacrificed for the future, but the future is already mortgaged.

Acharya Kripalani, M.P., *Current*,
February 22, 1961

*

The Swatantra-ites may not be right, but they are logical when they say that economic planning as in India and parliamentary democracy practised here cannot co-exist, not for long, anyway.

Link, (a fellow-travelling weekly) March 1961.

World Human Rights Day



This year marks the 25th year of the award of Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama. World over this day, the 10th December, is celebrated as World Human Rights Day.

Friends of Tibet, Mumbai Chapter, joined hands with the Tibetan Sweater Sellers Association at Sharada Hall, Dadar, Mumbai to celebrate the occasion. The audience remembered the daily struggle faced by the people inside Tibet and their brave sacrifices. The Day began with a prayer for the long-life of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama and a minute of silence was observed to honour Tibetans who sacrificed their lives, many by self-immolation. The National Anthem of Tibet and India was played followed by speeches by eminent personalities who had attended the programme.

S. V. Raju, Editor, *Freedom First*, was the Chief Guest for the programme. He reminisced how in 1955, during his early years, he raised the issue of PLA occupying Tibet, and is still championing the struggle for freedom for Tibet.

Ajay Agarwal, Tibet author of "*India, Tibet, China: The Role Nehru Played*" who has a deep understanding of Tibet, its glorious past and current state of political affairs, spoke in

Hindi about Independent Tibet, a nation which was never colonised and about the rich heritage before the invasion by modern China. He stressed on the peaceful nature of the nation and how it was neutral in approach during the two World Wars.

C. A. Kallianpur, National Co-ordinator, Friends of Tibet spoke about the importance of Tibet as a free nation and the underlying impact on India's border security.

Tibetan poet and activist, Shri Tenzin Tsundue spoke in Tibetan highlighting the current situation inside Tibet and also spoke at length about the recent Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong. He also talked about the wily ruling methods of the Chinese. He told how the hope is still fresh in the minds of every Tibetan to return to their motherland, and be in Tibet under the leadership of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama. He ended his talk by exhorting the Tibetans to do more for Tibet and the ongoing struggle.

The programme also featured cultural programmes including Traditional Dance followed by Tibetan cuisine.

Report by Rohit Singh, a Friends of Tibet Campaigner based in Mumbai. He can be reached at: rohit.singh@friendsoftibet.org



The Tibetan Flag

Freedom First believes in an open society based on minimum government and maximum freedom tempered by a sense of individual responsibility, in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow; we reject any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another, be it based on caste, class, religion or envy.

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