

BULLETIN

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(GAYATRI VIDYA PARISHAD)

RETRIEVING INDIA'S POLITICAL CULTURE

The persisting political discontent of the people of India with the working of democracy since its inception more than sixty seven years ago does not augur well for India's future. 'The revolution of rising expectations' at the dawn of independence, as Rajni Kothari put it, led to 'a revolution of rising frustration.' The Constitution drafted with care and vision reflected the political culture of those times. Ernest Barker summed it up: 'The fundamental thing' was that 'the mixture was one between a great Indian tradition of devout and philosophic religion and the Western tradition of civil and political liberty in the life of the community. Because there has been this mixture, Mr. Gandhi has been a great bridge.' Granville Austin struck a similar note when he wrote that 'the Indian cultural tradition, rich, deep and undogmatic has been able to absorb the most advanced intellectual concepts' adding that 'Indians did not default their trust with destiny.'

The political culture that nurtured and inspired the freedom struggle and the early years of independence when Indian democracy stood for high values, is almost extinct now. The ideals enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution such as *liberty, equality, justice* and *fraternity*, still remain beyond the reach of a vast majority of the people of India.

The last few weeks have witnessed feverish activity on the economic front mainly because of the presentation of the first budget by the BJP led NDA government after the verdict of 2014. The focus has been on growth rate and better fiscal management. The reduction in global oil prices has helped India, to some extent, to embark upon new economic policies and programmes. The underlying assumption is that economic solutions would enable India to overcome chronic political and social problems.

Alexis de Tocqueville wrote one hundred and fifty years ago that customs and conventions are as important as laws. He observed that 'the French were adept at making good laws while Americans at customs and that American democracy became vigorous because of good laws and customs.' The unwritten British Constitution

gives utmost respect to conventions and customs. Conventions are described as 'unwritten laws' and customs as 'habits of heart.' Having adopted the Westminster model, India followed some of them in the early years. But all that lasted for about a decade. Pointing out that India's problem is 'the unending gap between customs and laws', sociologist Andre Beteille wrote that 'favourable customs are as necessary as good laws.'

Democratic India has yielded too much space to political leaders and bureaucrats who, not all of them though, assumed that they were born to rule as their colonial masters had done, resulting in the decline of civility, integrity, responsibility and accountability. The mindset of the people who were empowered with the right to vote did not change. They began to treat the political masters and the bureaucrats with unwarranted reverence and submissiveness. For instance, addressing heads of state and government as 'Your Excellency' and officials as 'Honourable Sir' continued to be practised in independent India. Dynastic politics is not confined to Delhi only. It has spread to many states.

The truth is that Indian democracy has been let down by political parties/leaders, elected representatives and bureaucracy. Elections are only a means to an end. They can change governments and cause the downfall of leaders. But retrieving the political culture of those halcyon times is the responsibility of the people of India who gave to themselves the Constitution sixty five years ago. It is time the civil society reinvented its role for course correction.

Civility is a civic virtue. Discussion, debate and even dissent are the backbone of democracy. We have waited too long in the hope that every election would usher in better governance. It's time we made civil society stronger and more vibrant to make government accountable and good governance a reality. That endeavour must begin in every home, school, college and place of work, irrespective of caste and creed. Destiny beckons India to rise, act and realize the ideals and goals enshrined in the Constitution.

- The Editor

We have to snatch the initiative from the hands of politicians, from the Parliament and the Legislatures and give it back to the people. This is our job. - Jayaprakash Narayan (1969)

Modi's Indian Ocean Diplomacy India's maritime awakening? Modi endorses a Blue Revolution

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The three island-nation trip that took Prime Minister Modi to Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka in mid-March may well mark the beginning of India's long overdue maritime awakening. For a nation so richly endowed with a distinctive maritime geography, the paradox has been the tenacious indifference, often veering towards inexcusable sea-blindness, that has characterised Delhi's policy orientation as regards the Indian Ocean.

However the very fact that Modi embarked upon such a trip to three strategically important island states in the Indian Ocean which have been long neglected by way of a summit visit reflects a political determination that has the potential to become the beginning of the end of this self-inflicted strategic myopia.

In Mauritius, Modi handed over an Indian built off-shore patrol vessel (OPV) to that country's Coast Guard and this marks the first such export of a naval ship designed and built in India. Christened the MCGS Barracuda, the 1350 tonne ship, valued at US \$50 million was commissioned by Modi on March 12 and his speech at this ceremony could well be described as the most lucid and comprehensive articulation of India's resurrected maritime vision for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Highlighting the centrality of a cooperative strategy to manage the vast water body of the Indian Ocean and the role of the smaller island nations, Modi drew attention to the strategic significance of the IOR and noted: "Because, the Indian Ocean is critical to the future of the world. This Ocean bears two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, one-third of its bulk cargo; and half of its container traffic. Over three-fourths of its traffic goes to other regions of the world."

This overview is familiar to the professionals but what is instructive is the manner in which Modi invoked rich symbolism related to the national flag and endorsed the need for India to embark upon a Blue Revolution. In the course of his remarks at Port Louis,

Modi observed: "To me the blue chakra or wheel in India's national flag represents the potential of Blue Revolution or the Ocean Economy. That is how central the ocean economy is to us." The speech writers in the prime minister's stable warrant praise for the manner in which form and substance have been leavened.

India has witnessed two seminal revolutions that transformed the profile of the nation and the well-being of its people - namely the Green Revolution that began in 1963 and transformed India from a 'basket-case' to becoming self-sufficient in food production; and later the White Revolution (also referred to as Operation Flood) of 1970 that made India into the world's largest milk producer.

The Blue Revolution endorsed by Modi, if realized in its entirety, has the potential to transform India in similar manner and both the normative vision and the policy clarity are laden with deep import. Asserting that the "Indian Ocean Region is at the top of our policy priorities", Modi added that the regional vision "is rooted in advancing cooperation in our region; and, to use our capabilities for the benefit of all in our common maritime home."

The five elements prioritize the core security interests of India and yet combine the collective well-being of the IOR. Inter alia, they include: "We will do everything to safeguard our mainland and islands and defend our interests; we will deepen our economic and security cooperation with our friends in the region, especially our maritime neighbours and island states; collective action and cooperation will best advance peace and security in our maritime region; we also seek a more integrated and cooperative future in the region that enhances the prospects for sustainable development for all; and those who live in this region have the primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean but we recognize that there are other nations around the world, with strong interests and stakes in the region."

This maritime pentagon provides the foundation for the Modi's vision of the IOR and is in many ways a logical extension of the modest but relatively still-born 'sagar mala' (ocean garland) enunciated by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari

In India, the laws are all on the side of equality, but custom puts almost its entire weight on the opposite side.

Vajpayee in August 2003 that sought to revitalize the moribund Indian ports sector and inland connectivity.

India's comprehensive national power that includes the economic and trade sinews and the military component can be robustly advanced by sustained investment in the maritime sector. This is a well-trodden path taken by many major powers before India and the symbiotic relationship between ship-building, port efficacy and inland cum coastal connectivity lie at the core of such national endeavor.

China, which is the most recent of the major powers to focus on the maritime sector, offers many policy cues for India. One of the first priorities is to review and rationalize the myriad ministries and departments that have sectoral and insular responsibility in managing India's maritime assets.

This is a subject worthy of immediate cabinet and legislative attention and Modi would be well-advised to fast-track the implementation of the Blue Revolution. Furthermore, the coastal states need to become committed stakeholders in this national endeavour and this in turn will strengthen the federal character of the Indian polity - an often stated Modi objective.

The Indian Ocean is not India's ocean alone but the Modi vision is laudable: "We seek a future for the Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region."

Acronyms are addictive but the challenge now is to walk the talk and convert rich rhetoric into tangible reality.



Alexis de Tocqueville on democracy

The good things that freedom brings are seen only as time passes, and it is always easy to mistake the cause that brought them about.

The advantages of equality are felt immediately, and it is daily apparent where they come from.

Political liberty occasionally gives sublime pleasure to a few.

Equality daily gives each man in the crowd a host of small enjoyments. The charms of equality are felt

the whole time and are within the reach of all; the noblest spirits appreciate them, and the commonest minds exult in them. The passion engendered by equality is therefore both strong and general.

Men cannot enjoy political liberty without some sacrifice, and they have never won it without great effort. But equality offers its pleasures free; each little incident in life occasions them, and to taste them one needs but to live.

Democratic peoples always like equality, but there are times when their passion for it turns to delirium. This happens when the old social hierarchy, long menaced, finally collapses after a severe internal struggle and the barriers of rank are at length thrown down. At such times men pounce on equality as their booty and cling to it as a precious treasure they fear to have snatched away. The passion for equality seeps into every corner of the human heart, expands, and fills the whole. It is no use telling them that by this blind surrender to an exclusive passion they are compromising their dearest interests; they are deaf. It is no use pointing out that freedom is slipping from their grasp while they look the other way; they are blind, or rather they can see but one thing to covet in the whole world.

(Democracy in America)

Rajni Kothari on State and Civil Society

In thinking about the challenges facing the new generation, including 'redesigning the nature of the state', I should like to add an important dimension that has been in a way implied all along given my interest in both grassroots politics and the upsurge of consciousness from below, namely the role of civil society and its relationship to the state. There has of late been a great deal of discussion and debate on civil society, particularly given the growing disenchantment with the state and the political system on which it presides. 'Civil society' is supposed to arrest the excesses of the state and play a role in democratising the same and for achieving this goal engaging a new set of actors—both individual and institutional—of a 'voluntary' and 'associational' kind.

The secret of happiness lies within you, not outside.

- Sri Satya Sai Baba

The latter are meant to carry further both the deeply felt need for enlisting democratic energies beyond the purview of the state through processes and structures involved in what I had earlier called the 'nonparty political process'. What I want to say now, though, is that despite my having played a major role in putting forward the NPP perspective I soon discovered its limitations, realising that it could not be pursued outside the context provided by both the liberal state and the capitalist order. This began to dawn on me all the more when the idea of civil society was sought to be extended globally through a conception of 'Global Civil Society (GCS)'.

On this latter, I have over time offered a set of critical responses. These have been brought out in some detail in an article published by Mustafa Kamal Pasha and David Blaney in an issue of *Alternatives* in which I have been extensively quoted, in particular my observation that such a conception of GCS involves a 'redefinition of world citizenship, leaving out much of humanity', quite apart from the point already made that it cannot be pursued outside the context of the capitalist model of the liberal state. It will be seen that this opposition of mine to the idea of GCS is only in continuation of my differences with the Western 'globalists' in the World Order Models Project and later my critique of the worldview of globalisation as provided in my various writings on that subject (starting with three articles in *EPW* and going on to a rather major one in *Alternatives* entitled 'Globalisation: A World Adrift' where I have argued for providing a counter force, to 'globalisation' by drawing upon both the dissenting voices found in the hegemonic part of the world and those emerging from other regions and from hitherto marginalised social strata, and the activists and intellectuals associated with the latter). I consider that this critique of mine is addressed to the concept of civil society in its global incarnation despite my having quite often, in my writings, argued for the need to draw upon elements in the civil society within national and local contexts in our struggles against vested interests (even including those who control the state). I still continue to associate myself with both the idea of the non-party political process

and the conception of civil society in the context of a predominantly state-centred and party politics oriented polity and indeed as a corrective to them.

But I, at the same time, reject the idea of globalising the concept of civil society (just as I earlier questioned the notion of a centralised conception of world order) for I fear that this might willy-nilly become an instrument of the more hegemonic idea of 'globalisation' as propagated in the framework of corporate capitalism.

(From *memoirs* Rupa & Co. New Delhi, 2002)

Somnath Chatterjee on Indian Parliament.

"I have always felt that every leader and every political party owes a lot to strengthening our democratic polity which is based on electoral politics. Democracy gives centrality to the people of the country. People are the deciding factor. Members of Parliament come to the House as the people's representative. They come to discuss people's issues, and there is no dearth of issues in our country. Large sections of the people are still illiterate, suffer from acute poverty, and have no proper health care. Many children are out of school and working in tea shops and roadside dhabas. I feel there are some national issues on which all parties should work together to bring about a solution. But that has not been the case, except when opposition parties united to fight against the Emergency. Nowadays we have coalition politics, so parties have to adjust their policies and programmes according to the coalition dharma. But unfortunately, we are yet to reach a stage where national interest is given top priority by all parties. On many occasions party interests overshadow or overtake national interest. This is an area where Members of Parliament can work together and demonstrate greater maturity and selflessness in the interests of the sanctity of both the Parliament and the nation. Only when will Members of Parliament do justice to the faith the people of the country have reposed in them."

(From *KEEPING THE FAITH*, Memoirs of a Parliamentarian, Harper Collins, New Delhi, 2010.)

The past belongs to us but we don't belong to the past.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Governance through Participation

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Democratic governance, by definition, is based on the primacy of people. Elections, accordingly, reflect the will of the people and consequently, whom they decide to delegate governance to. In Israel, for instance, Netanyahu has been elected for a fourth term. In Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa was defeated against all odds and speculation. In India, Narendra Modi swept aside the Congress. And in Delhi, AAP created history.

People, in other words, gave their verdict, through the electoral process, on who their preferred option was and consequently, who had let them down. Governments and elected representatives were, in other words, replaceable if they did not deliver on promises and the aspirations of people. This is the core principle of democratic governance.

Over time, this has dramatically changed. Today, people matter only when elections are to be held. It is only then that they are wooed and feted. They are made to feel that they are important and relevant. Their woes are heard and promises made. However, once elections are over, people cease to matter.

This was not how democracy was envisaged by the founding fathers. When Lincoln spoke of governments by, for and of the people, he emphasized the centrality of people. People were the *raison d'être* of democracy. Governments, in other words, were servants of the people and thus, accountable to them.

This is no longer the case. Increasingly, elected representatives have come to enjoy enormous prestige, power and influence, which they are known to regularly exercise over the very same people, who elected them. As a result, a deep disconnect characterizes the relationship between people and elected governments. This alienation goes counter to the very

spirit behind democratic governance.

Bertolt Brecht had once proposed in jest that when people lose all faith in the government and governments realize that the situation is not likely to be reversed easily, governments might find it more convenient to simply dissolve the people and re-elect another. In other words, in democracies people have become dispensable and thus, replaceable.

So, how did this occur? We are all aware as to how elected representatives, especially in developing countries, enjoy considerable power and authority. Power, by definition, is alienating because power can only be exercised over the powerless. Power, in other words, does not operate in a vacuum. Power is also visible. It evokes fear. It subjugates. It divides the society into those who have power and those who are denied.

Consequently, power creates jealousies. It evokes strong interest among many others in joining this exclusive club of power elites. Unless the membership co-opts the like-minded, the power base would be challenged and even, dismantled. This would lead to conflict, crisis and disorder.

Consequently, power structures, especially in developing countries, are distributed between the polity, the bureaucracy and the corporate sector, who continually connive to reinforce each other's power and thus, ensure their own survival. This cozy club can be ruthless when challenged.

Often criminal elements are, accordingly, co-opted to ensure that the power system is not threatened. In several Latin American countries and even in the US, not very long ago, drug and gambling syndicates wielded significant influence over local administration and politicians. Indeed, the local administration, including the law enforcement agencies, and politicians were often in the pay roll of the syndicates. The situation is no different in the sub-continent. In Pakistan and several African countries, the government and security forces make for strange bedfellows. This ensures survival, wealth sharing and corruption.

My greatest complaint against democratic government is not the extreme freedom reigning there but the shortage of guarantees against tyranny.

- Alexis de Tocqueville 5

Over time, contemporary societies have seen the emergence of new spheres of influence that appear committed to challenging existing power structures. Recall the Watergate scandal and the fearless manner in which the journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein brought down a powerful US President in a courageous manner in which a newspaper in India carried a blank front page to protest curbs on the freedom of press during the infamous Emergency. The media, in other words, has emerged as a potent stakeholder.

The judiciary in India has, similarly, played a significant role in chastising the government on various issues ranging from the environment to the most recent one on freedom of expression or what has come to be known as the 66A verdict. Given the constitutional authority that the judiciary enjoys and the respect it commands, the judiciary is, most certainly, an important protector of democracy.

The third significant stakeholder is people. R.K. Laxman had powerfully brought out, through his brilliant cartoons, how the common man had been marginalized and reduced to a mere bystander by the power elite. AAP's recent victory in Delhi demonstrates that the common man or *aam aadmi* is no longer willing to be by-passed.

It is possible, therefore, to bring back democracy, as envisaged by the founding fathers, through an alternative partnership or, what I call, the *panchsevak* model. This is governance *through* participation. The five partners or *panchsevak* are government, bureaucracy, business & industry, the media, and civil society. The judiciary plays the over-arching role of ensuring that the partnership model operates within the boundaries of the constitution and the law. The need for the judiciary to be independent disallows it from being one of the *sevaks*.

The contours of the model envisage collective realization of aspirations and consequently, of collective responsibility for failures. Governance, in other words, is too important a job to be left to governments and bureaucracy alone. This is contrary

to current practice where governance is seen solely as the responsibility of the elected governments and of the administration. Indeed, successful governance requires that governments realize the aspirations of the people. Governments, in other words, need to consult people and deliver on what the people desire. Today, this is simply not the case.

Visakhapatnam is a clear instance of the manner in which politicians and administrations have imposed their decisions on the people. Take the RK beach, for instance. Were the people consulted on how the beach was to be beautified through the installation of bizarre statues and the patchwork that is done on every occasion that the beach is eroded?

Indeed, projects are introduced and implemented without consultation because it reflects the power that the administration and the polity have to be able to do so. There is a strong rumour, for instance, that the Vizag zoo would be shifted, so as to make way for a government project. Have the people been consulted on this? Do people really matter?

The *panchsevak* model envisages that each of the five partners has a common objective: sustainable development and growth. This is contrary to the existing system, which assumes that only the government has the wisdom on what is best for the people. In other words, governments impose the will of the government rather than realize the will of the people. Shifting from this kind of thinking requires transforming mindsets. It will also lead to the erosion of power of the privileged few. I believe that it is not only possible but rather, that it is eminently desirable. The late D.V. SubbaRao, for instance, during his tenure as Mayor, demonstrated that it could be done.

Let me elaborate, through an example, as to how the *panchsevak* model of governance would work. Consider tourism in Vizag, which is the port city's potential USP. Indeed, handled well, Vizag could well emerge as one of the world's great tourism destinations rather than continue to be in the present woeful state it is in.

Vizag is blessed with an outstanding coastline,

Sanskrit is a language amazingly rich, efflorescent, full of luxuriant growth of all kinds, and yet precise and strictly keeping within the framework of grammar which Panini laid down two thousand six hundred years ago. -Jawaharlal Nehru

ancient Buddhist ruins that date back to 2nd century BC, old heritage buildings and structures, and a countryside of extraordinary beauty. This is rare. Yet, the port city has not been able to capitalize on these to emerge as a top tourism destination. This is largely because tourism is yet to be perceived and nurtured as a serious revenue and employment generating industry. Till this shift in mindset occurs, Vizag will continue to remain as a 'could-have-been-but-is-not' destination.

In the *panchsevak* model, the corporate sector or business & industry would see tourism as an investment and thus, would actively participate in value addition. The open fish market in the fishing village operates, for instance, under stressful conditions. No conscious attempts appear to be made to improve conditions and to attract visitors. Vendors sit on the floor, which is also where they ply their trade or gut the fish. It should come as no surprise that the conditions appalled the European Commission officials, who refused, thereafter, to receive marine products from Vizag. Unless these conditions are improved, the approach roads upgraded and facilities for visitors and buyers augmented, it will remain a tourist attraction for the wrong reasons. Vessels destroyed during cyclone Hudhud, at the harbour, still remain as a grim reminder of the devastation caused.

Business & industry, working in tandem with government and bureaucracy, can transform this. Recall the Sydney fish market, for instance, where fresh produce, not unlike the catch in Vizag, is displayed and sold under superb hygienic conditions alongside excellent restaurants. This is a business & industry led enterprise and its successful model is not difficult to replicate.

Restaurants in Vizag, similarly, operate under unhygienic conditions. Cockroaches and rodents are regularly visible. Nor indeed, is the food particularly extraordinary or appetizing. To emerge as a world-class tourism and business destination, Vizag needs to focus on its hospitality industry. This requires investments in training and infrastructure – all of which, business & industry can execute as a business model in

consultation with government and bureaucracy.

Government and bureaucracy need to recognize the rampant and arbitrary manner in which the city has grown. This has put enormous pressure on limited resources and created a virtual urban jungle. There is a clear absence of city planning or waste management. Piles of garbage lie unattended attracting sewage rats that are carriers of deadly plague. A clear absence of any master plan or architectural design characterizes the city.

Ambitious plans of converting Vizag into a Smart City can be deceptively attractive. What Vizag needs is urgent correction of arbitrary and ad hoc decision making that has reduced it to the urban chaos that it is. Governance through participation recognizes that a lotus does not survive in sewage. It is the sewage that first needs to be treated before the lotus is planted.

The people and media, similarly, have responsibilities. PM Modi's Clean India campaign points to the manner in which people, through their callous attitude, have dirtied the city and rural countryside. The ancient Buddhist heritage sites, for instance, have become an attractive picnic spot and it is distressing to see the manner in which litter and paper plates are strewn all over the site. The beach, similarly, is full of garbage and an eyesore. Unless the consciousness of people is raised, the situation will simply deteriorate from bad to worse.

Governance, in my view, is too important a task to be left to governments. For governance to be sustainable, it must be participatory in nature. Without the collective realization of aspirations, we will continue to be a nation of *jugaad* and *chaltahai*, neither of which should make us proud.

Change, even transformational change, can occur but only if we aspire towards it. The 5-partner model seeks precisely this.

(This paper is based on a talk delivered by him at the Centre for Policy Studies on February 28, 2015.)



No society is static, no law is unchanging and no constitution is permanent.

- S.Radhakrishnan

Unfashionable Thoughts : VII

An ex-policymaker's perspective on regulation in education

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(Lecture delivered at Workshop on Education Policy at TISS, Hyderabad on 18 December 2013)

The Golden years came to an end in 1966 which incidentally was the year in which the Kothari Commission submitted its Report. In that year the economy was in the grip of such an acute economic crisis that the planning process had to be interrupted till 1969-70. Even as the Fourth Five Year Plan started belatedly the country drifted towards the Bangladesh War, and all through the 1970s the country was stuck with the Hindu rate of growth of 3.4 % increase in GDP a year. The 1970s also witnessed the beginning of the deterioration of the finances of the State Governments, and the deterioration continued unabated till about mid-2000s. Suffice to say, the fiscal capacity of the Central and State Governments could no longer sustain the spectacular expansion of educational institutions of the first two decades after Independence. Further, the expansion of technical education did not appear to make much sense as by 1964 when the Kothari Commission began its work, educated unemployment loomed large as a national problem, and among such unemployed were engineers. The large number of unemployed engineers was a strong evidence of the limitations of manpower planning as the basis for the establishment of higher education institutions. Manpower planning presumes that it is possible to accurately foresee the structure of the economy fifteen to twenty years hence, that it is possible to deduce from that structure the demand for different types of manpower. It was inevitably overambitious as it is not possible to accurately foresee the future because of the inevitably large errors in the scale of different activities, changing skill inputs of each activity, and unforeseeable technological

developments which unleash gales of creative destruction which sweep away many economic activities and usher new activities. A very good example of the limitation of manpower planning is the emergence of a strong Information Technology service sector in the late 1990s; no one foresaw that emergence. The proliferation of engineering colleges which professional educators bemoaned turned out to be a blessing in disguise as those colleges provided the much needed manpower for the IT sector. Whatever, the acute resource crunch the Central and State Governments faced together with, the unemployment of engineers led to professional education ceasing to be an investment priority of Governments.

Complementing this development was a paradigm shift in development praxis and the emergence of poverty reduction and provision of basic needs as development priorities. From the First Five Year Plan to 1968-69 the shares of higher and professional education in total plan expenditure of the Central and State Governments continued to increase at the expense of elementary education and the paradigm shift of mid-1960s led to the reversal of trend. As a result of the confluence of all these factors few professional institutions were established by Central and State Governments after mid-1970s. Thus till 1970, Central and State Governments established 69 medical colleges with over 8,500 seats, and during the next three decades they added barely 2,000 seats. From Independence till 1975, 121 engineering colleges had been set up by Governments while thereafter almost all engineering colleges established were private engineering colleges.

Planned and coordinated development is possible only if parents and students are satisfied with the educational facilities created in accordance with norms and manpower planning, and demand no more. If they demand more, the demand in excess of supply should be curbed by rigorously enforcing a policy of restricting admissions or by enhancing fees so as to lower demand or both. The Kothari Commission estimated that if the then prevailing

Pleasure and pain are two creatures with one head.

- Plato

rate of expansion of enrolment continued for the next twenty years, the enrolments would be more than twice the estimated requirement manpower for national development. A developing economy like ours could neither have the resources to expand higher education so as to fully meet the demand for it nor could it provide suitable employment for all those who pass out from higher education institutions. The Commission, therefore strongly recommended a policy of selective admission in all areas of and institutions of higher education. The expansion of higher and professional education was to be strictly limited to the manpower requirements. Quality should on no account be compromised; the intake of every course in every institution should be rigorously determined with reference to the faculty and facilities available. Admissions should be strictly based on merit subject to reservations for SCs and S Ts. The recommendation of the Kothari Commission was outright rejected by the Committee of Members of the Parliament which examined the report as degrees were perceived as a passport to employment and social mobility. The backward classes were in particular opposed to selective admissions below the postgraduate level. Babu Jagjivan Ram threatened to launch a Satyagraha if the government accepted the recommendation. Unlike a totalitarian state, a democratic polity finds it difficult to peg down the demand for higher education by the cold logic of manpower planning. In China, for example, the available seats were strictly rationed so much so that till mid-1990s, enrolment in Chinese higher educational institutions lagged behind that of their Indian counterparts. However, what aggravated the problem was an economically irrational policy of misguided egalitarianism which fuelled the demand for higher education by pegging fees at levels that bore no relationship either to the cost of providing the education or to the expected benefits, and which did not differentiate between the rich and the poor in the matter of fees. A case in point is the ridiculously low fees, charged by Delhi University. The fees were a negligible fraction of what most students paid in their schools, or as was being said

jocularly those days on what the students spent on Coca Cola.

Mid-1970s constitute a watershed in so far as professional education is concerned. The target of paper chase slowly but steadily shifted from a BA degree to engineering and medical education, and more importantly parents were willing to pay fees which were commensurate with the cost of providing the education. Needless to say, such fees were far higher than those charged by Government professional institutions. Private entrepreneurs would not have been human if they failed to take advantage of an emerging opportunity. While private engineering and medical colleges were rare before 1970s, during 1975-85 one hundred and seventy-eight engineering colleges were set up in the country as a whole as compared to one hundred and twenty-one colleges set up from Independence till 1975; most of them were private unaided institutions which received no grant- in-aid from State Governments, or to use an expression in vogue self- financing institutions. The trend initiated in the 1970s picked up momentum in the years which followed later. Karnataka was a pioneer in that it was willing to tap private enterprise for establishing professional institutions, and its neighbouring States Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra followed suit. They had not much choice. As Education Secretary here I found that hundreds of students from my State were migrating to Karnataka for pursuing professional education. This was because N T Rama Rao put an end to the policy of the previous Government to permit private professional colleges, and at the same time could not establish new institutions or expand the intake in existing institutions. The ways and means position was very grim as the policies of his Government like change in liquor policy and supply of rice at Rs.2 a kilogram shrunk revenue and at the same time enhanced expenditure.

The policies put in place by State Governments were rather ingenious. Though the specifics varied from State to State, there were a few common features. The institutions to be established were to

be self- financing in that they could not expect to receive any grant- in-aid and had to fully recoup costs from fees they charged. In turn, the State Governments fixed fees permitted such institutions to collect fees which effect full recovery of costs. The State policies did not permit collection of amounts -by whatever name called- over and above the fees fixed by the Government. The policies of Karnataka and Maharashtra were rather ingenious. The State Government had a significant 'quota'. That is to say there were two categories of seats in these institutions: 'Government' seats, and 'management' seats. Government seats were also called 'free' seats, and management seats 'payment' seats presumably because the fees charged for Government seats was the same as in a corresponding Government institution, and the institution did not collect any amount in addition to tuition fees by way of donation or capitation. The consequence of enforcing the Government quota system was that the private sector financed the expansion of seats in the public domain. A minimum proportion of the management seats were required to be filled with candidates belonging to the State. Students belonging to other States were required to pay higher fees than those belonging to the State. Given that a significant proportion of the total seats comprised Government seats the fees charged for management seats cross-subsidised the students who were allotted Government seats, and the extent of cross- subsidisation by students from other States was higher than that by students from the State who were allocated. This differential fees is similar to China that introduced a decade later in 1985; 'ultra plan' seats were provided for 'self-supporting' students who had to pay fees unlike other students. Broadly speaking, the admission cum fees policy adopted by State Governments sought to square the circle; they attempted to balance different considerations like merit, equity, ability to pay, and the financial viability of institutions which were avowedly self- financing and did not depend on grants from the State Government.

(to be continued)



PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AT WORK IN INDIA

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*(Abridged text of address given at a seminar jointly
organized by the BLDE's SBS College, Bijapur and the
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When our Constitution was finalized in 1949, the political leaders were familiar with the parliamentary way of governance. Satyagraha and opposition to the British government went on even as cooperation with the government of the day and active participation in the parliamentary proceedings were also noticed. When the time came to frame a constitution of our own for independent India, there were no doubts in the minds of the leaders of the Constituent Assembly whether any system other than the parliamentary was suitable to India. The Government of India Act 1935, or the Constitution operating at the time from 1937 onwards, was perhaps the best constitution ever devised so far for governing the whole of India with all the political fragmentation and aspirations of different kinds in the country. The leading lights of the Constituent Assembly including Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel were holding the reins of power in New Delhi under the very 1935 constitution for more than a decade. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who was the most dominant dalit leader and who was not in consonance with the Congress, had demanded no new constitution for independent India but the continuance of the 1935 constitution with appropriate minor changes. When eventually our constitution was framed and adopted one could see the positive and overwhelming influence of the 1935 constitution on it. Dr. Ambedkar himself acknowledged this fact in his speech in reply to the felicitation offered to him by Delhi Gymkhana on April 28, 1948 ("250 out of 315 draft

A great man is one who affects the mind of his generation.

- Benjamin Disraeli

provisions were taken from the 1935 constitution”).

Almost everybody who was responsible for framing our constitution has claimed that the Westminster model of England has been adopted in our constitution. This is a correct statement. But the sad point about it is that the founding fathers of our Constitution expected rather naively that they who had held high stature with high moral values would be followed by similar people in Indian politics for all the times to come. Alas, the test has failed within two decades. For, most of our political leaders have exhibited qualities in public life which have no resemblance to the Westminster model of political system.

However, with ebbs and tides, democracy has survived in India. Democracy has two parts; one the procedural and the other substantial. Procedural is the outward or external dimension. Rules and regulations are observed whether in keeping with the spirit or against it. Elections are the most significant part of the procedural democracy. This has been observed almost without fail. But electoral method and practices are questioned with justification. Even then, one can in its defence, say that there is nothing perfect either in politics or democracy or elections.

But, the worrisome aspect of our democracy is the functioning of the parliament/state assembly. The Parliament is supposed to be the focal point of the substance of democracy, that is, a forum for open, public and knowledgeable debate on policy issues. From out of the parliamentary churning, should emerge conciliation of varied points of views, honest introspection and accountability of the executive or the government of the day to the public representatives. However, these expectations have not been fulfilled to the point of full satisfaction. Hope persists that it may improve in the coming days.

For the parliamentary democracy of the Westminster type to succeed, it is essential that the society or the country should be functioning in an orderly fashion. The pre-condition which was in

existence in England over the past centuries is not found in full measure in our country. Rising expectations that are radical and quick pace of socio-economic development expected by the people, the constitutional conferment of equality for all, electoral rhetoric of promise of providing basic necessities of life and end of corruption in public life, the persistence of ignorance and poverty on a significant scale, have all made the smooth functioning of parliamentary institutions difficult. People’s impatience is reflected in their representatives’ behaviour inside the parliament. Besides, the behaviour of the governing class - both political and bureaucratic, has made the divide wider. That is not the case in countries like England and the U.S. Hence, the question arises what is the prospect of parliamentary democracy in India.

Going to one extreme a distinguished political thinker and respected leader (also, a Minister in the Congress Ministry in Maharashtra for some time) Dr.Rafiq Zakaria wrote some years ago: “For India, the parliamentary system has become a curse. It should be scrapped if India is to be saved. Our founding fathers committed the greatest blunder in adopting it.” (*Asian Age*, 29 January 2003). His tone was more of sorrow than accusatory. For, he was commenting on the entry of criminal and irresponsible elements into the parliament. His disappointment was over the lack of decency, decorum and worthwhile discussions in the forums of the legislature. Hence, he thought it was a disgrace to democracy.

After noticing the deplorable blemishes and unhealthy aberrations which have crept into the parliamentary system, one need not get panicky and throw the baby out with bath water. It is better to identify the exact malady and apply the required remedy. Perhaps the right time has now arrived to do so.

The various areas of deficiency in the working of our parliamentary system and the remedial measures against them would be given in a summary form, thus:

Knowledge is the most democratic source of power.

-Alvin Toffler

ABERRATION	CORRECTION
1 Proceedings disrupted	a) More enlightened leadership from the ruling party to reach out to those who do not agree with it. b) More assertive and tactful speakers c) Better floor coordination from among the opposition.
2 Quality of debate appalling	a) Each party to choose a panel of subject experts in various fields. b) Assistance may be provided to the MPs/MLAs in making presentations. c) Put up intellectuals as party candidates in elections. d) Conduct courses for MPs & MLAs in parliamentary proceedings and technical details.
3 Rule of Procedure, including Vote of Confidence, adjournment motions, question hour etc.	a) These rules and provisions need to be revisited and simplified. b) No need to go by British classics on the subjects.
4 Committees & their reports	a) The American Committee System may be followed here. What we find is no useful work is done by our present committee system. b) Reports submitted annually by a whole range of ministries, federal agencies and institutions (like UPSC, UGC etc.) are hardly taken up for review or acted upon by the parliament/assembly. The trend must be reversed.
5 What is left to the conventional wisdom in England is written down in Indian Constitution with clumsiness and ambiguity like; relationship between the President and the Cabinet & PM; between the Parliament and the Judiciary (fundamental right of expression versus writ jurisdiction in case of contempt of parliamentary privileges); federal issues; treaty powers; economic planning and finance etc. Emergency provisions and dismissal of state government.	a) The entire range of issues which push the Centre and the States into a conflict institutions should be amicably settled through negotiation. b) Relationship between one set of authority and another need to be understood and classified not only by lawyers and courts but also by statesmen & politicians. c) Leaving the problems to the “good sense” of the leaders as done by various committees, Recommendations will not suffice.

It is strange that our founding fathers did not think it fit to mention in the preamble the phrase ‘parliamentary system’. They all as well as text-book writers and judges have been telling us repeatedly that the British Westminster model or the parliamentary

system is what we have prescribed for ourselves in the Constitution. Why was not this feature enshrined in the text or Preamble of the Constitution?

Two more important features are also eluded or excluded from the text of the Constitution which bear

Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.

- Joseph Nye

influence on the political system of ours. One is the absence of any conditions for political parties to come up and function. More than sixteen hundred political parties are recognized by the Election Commission. This becomes a laughing stock in European or American context. As one notices in our political system, several political parties exist only on paper. Political parties in our country are mostly family holdings both at the national and much more so at the regional level, with hardly one or two exceptions. If we are serious on making our system stronger, healthier and stabler, we should at once set right the political parties through an amendment in the text of the Constitution. The Election Commission of India may be given the power of recognition, de-recognition, regulation and inspection of the political parties.

The second feature missing in our Constitution is the eligibility criteria for people to stand for election to the public offices. Any person who is a criminal, illiterate, tax-evader, loan-defaulter and not having any noticeable employment/profession/business can today stand for election to the Lok Sabha/State Assembly/Rajya Sabha without a let or hindrance. Nehru and Ambedkar perhaps made a mistake in believing that they would be succeeded in politics by only such people who would pass the test of scrutiny in integrity, intellect and service like themselves. This one lapse has caused much dismay in our political system. Instead of leaving provisions to curb undesirable candidates from propping up to the conventions or weak laws, there should be special mention in the constitutional text itself as to who can and who cannot become an M.P./M.L.A or a Minister, Prime Minister and a Governor or President. The National Commission to review the working of the Constitution headed by Justice M.N.Venkata Chaliah (2001-2002) held out a homily on how the parliament should improve itself thus; parliamentarians must voluntarily place themselves to open public scrutiny through a parliamentary ombudsman. Supplemented by a code of ethics It would place parliament on the high pedestal of people's affection and regard (para 5.11.1, page 224). This kind of pious hope would not perhaps cure the political ailment.

It would, however, be a mistake to think that the parliamentary democracy has failed and it would be thrown out lock, stock and barrel. It would be like cutting the nose to spite the face. Right from the year of inception of the Constitution, many eminent people suggested that instead of the parliamentary we should adopt the (U.S) Presidential model of democracy. The very thought that we have two choices between the British model and the U.S., one suggests that we have no creative thinking of our own. Arguments for the sake of argument would not serve the right cause. If, inspite of this, we were to adopt the (U.S.) Presidential system of democracy, we would have solved some problems faced by the parliamentary system, but at the same time we would have confronted many other, perhaps greater, problems. Parliamentary system ensures that power is shared by many unlike in the presidential system. Sharing of power is in consonance with the spirit of democracy. It is also in keeping with the geographic, cultural and economic diversity of the country. Pragmatism demanded a less share of power whereas concentration of decision making power would have led to dissent and dissociation. Could under the presidential model a non-Hindi speaking leader from South India, Bengal or North East emerge with a clout strong enough to beat a rival from the Hindi belt? Possible perhaps, but unlikely. One has only to look at how Deve Gowda or Narasimha Rao fared in New Delhi. On the contrary in a parliamentary system the power is distributed among few 'powerful' ministers from different states.

Parliamentary system does not necessarily mean that whosoever holds prime ministership is rendered weak, indecisive, unstable or slow. Look, for example, at Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. The parliamentary system did not wear them down. On the other hand, many a president of the U.S. has been a nonperformer! Mrs. Indira Gandhi at one time did contemplate the switch over to the presidential system. She gave up the idea when she was told that in keeping with her line of thinking the Chief Ministers at the state level too would turn into Governors who would be non-removable by her from

If you pay peanuts you will get monkeys.

- Lee Kuan Yew

New Delhi. Therefore, the debate over the desirability of presidential system in lieu of the time tested parliamentary one is inspired by idle pass-time rather than serious pondering over by the thinking public. In fact, in the U.S. there is a growing debate among the intellectuals and political circles over the feasibility of parliamentary system for the U.S. itself.

The parliamentary system has been with us, and it will be with us for a long time to come. Its distortions and shortcomings need to be attended to and the effectiveness of the system needs to be enhanced through apt surgery and medication. Not by mutation and destruction. Also, we have to bear in mind that a large number of countries look up to India to devise an appropriate political/constitutional system. Our experiment is eagerly watched by them. We should not behave in an immaturish way ourselves.



THE SHADOW OF THE SILENT PRINCESS (I)

Prof. Manoj Das

(A seer among scholars the venerable Prof Manoj Das who lives in Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, has graciously permitted the publication of this essay from his book **My Little India**)

Thus spoke James Tod in the second decade of the 19th century:

What nation on earth -would have maintained the semblance of civilization, the spirit or the custom of their forefathers, during so many centuries of overwhelming depression, but one of such singular character as the Rajpoot? Though ardent and reckless, he can, when required, subside into forbearance and apparent apathy, and reserve himself for the opportunity of revenge. Rajasthan exhibits the sole example in the history of mankind of a people withstanding 'every outrage barbarity can inflict, or human nature sustain ... and bent to the earth, yet rising buoyant from the pressure, and making calamity a whetstone to courage.

Many factual errors might have crept into *The*

Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan by this British Political Agent enamoured of that wonderful people and their past, but it is doubtful if there is another work as fascinating as his, written by an Englishman, on any other area of the British empire. If Tod conjures up a magnificent vista of history coloured by myths and romances of Rajasthan in general, Arnold Toynbee surely holds up a very inviting picture of Udaipur: I have always known that Udaipur was one of the beautiful places of the world, but pictures and photographs do not give one an adequate idea of it. One has to see it with one's own eyes to take it in. I have done this today.'

It was a temperate, bracing noon when I descended on Udaipur. I had deliberately arrived a day before my scheduled talk at the University and did not expect to be received at the airport. But a friend had alerted his industrialist cousin who owned a cozy little guesthouse in the city, and the latter, who lived away from the city, had sent his car. The chauffeur sported a board on his chest bearing a couple of words which resembled my name as much as half a dozen other names but I struck a lucky guess.

'I'm at your disposal, Babuji, for the whole day,' he informed me while greeting me. I was happy. I had no desire to contact my hosts at the University until the next morning. I should feel much more comfortable in the company of the chauffeur in my unacademic activity of driving along or roaming about the city than in the company of a learned professor or two.

The chauffeur had, in principle, placed himself at my "disposal". But by the time I had had my lunch and set out for a drive, he reversed the position unilaterally. The young Rajput was sure that I was at his disposal. He drove me wherever he liked and was fluent with the legends and proverbs of his race. That was good. I sat resigned and relaxed.

He was keen to draw my attention to every monument, associated with the memory of the Maharanas, but even when I would ask him about some impressive modern structure, he would just shrug: 'Babuji, these are nothing but foppish, use-less Government showpieces!' (I understand that your Maharana had turned his palaces into hotels, one after

With fame I become more and more stupid which, of course, is a common phenomenon.

- Albert Einstein

another. How do you like that?' I provoked him at one point, a bit impatient with his exaggerated nostalgia.

'Who are we to like or dislike? You're of course at liberty to do what you please with your father's property, aren't you?';

'But weren't they built with the resources of your forefathers?'

The young man was hardly prepared for a question so unabashedly pragmatic and probably superfluous for him. He kept quiet for a moment, but then burst out like thunderclaps, at times gesticulating with both his hands, giving a fearsome autonomy to the steering wheel, even though the road was zigzag with abrupt ups and downs.

This was the substance of his speech: His forefathers had fought and died under the leadership of the Ranas of bygone days. If he can boast of his ancestry, it is because of the Ranas who made heroes out of ordinary mortals. What is bare material wealth in comparison with that kind of glory? True, values had changed, but how does he care! Who on earth could stop him from feeling proud of the colour and quality of the blood in his veins?

'Do you see the present Maharana?'

'Why not! But his stay here is always short. He does not mix with many; he does not like the politics of the day.'

'How did you know?'

'Should we not know about our Maharana?'

'But didn't you say that he does not mix with many?'

'Why should he? Was he not a monarch till the other day?'

I understood that the arguments had reached a blind alley. For him the Maharana was a symbol and a tradition, not an individual. The term measured up in his mind to an average of the personalities from Bappa Rawal to Rana Pratap, with so many mediocres between them.

According to legends, Lava, one of the twin sons of Sri Rama, founded his capital at Lahore that was

then Lavapura. A branch of the dynasty shifted to Indur in Gujarat. Generations later a scion of the dynasty, Aparajit, was assassinated by some rebel Bhils. Bappa, his son, fled to Rajasthan. He brought under him Chittorgarh, the capital of Mewar, and founded the dynasty of the Ranas. The capital was shifted to Udaipur in the sixteenth century. (I met the symbol of my chauffeur, the last Maharana, a few days later at Pondicherry.

A learned prince, he was unassuming and betrayed no impatience at having to stand in a queue for a visit to Sri Aurobindo's room.

Once on the soil of Mewar, one naturally remembers numerous legendary personages. But those who dominated my memory, Rana Pratap apart, were four women. Of them, three - Rani Padmini, Meera Bai and Dhatri Panna - were widely known. But the fourth one, Princess Krishna Kumari, was, rarely remembered.

The sad face of the princess almost assailed me from every dusky nook and corner of the old palace of the Maharanas. The face, of course, had been formed out of the impressions given by legends, for no painting of this extraordinary beauty existed. But her phantom figure developed more and more distinct contours in my vision as the labyrinths I explored grew darker.

A very different kind of darkness had one day swallowed up that sweet but sad princess that was in the 19th century. Princess Krishna Kumari, the daughter of Maharana Bhimsingh, was already a legend by the time she was sixteen. Such a beauty had never adorned Rajasthan - nor even on the canvas of the most gifted painter. The minister of Maharaja Jagat Singh of Jaipur called on the Maharana and submitted that his master was most willing to wed the princess. There was nothing inappropriate in the message and it was received with the courtesy it deserved.

But the minister had hardly retired for a happy night's sleep when the emissary of Maharaja Maun of Marwar bowed to the Maharana and informed him that his master was no less willing than Jaipur's. 'I'm afraid you are a bit too late!' the Maharana told him politely. The Marwar emissary nodded, sighed and left. Hardly three days had passed when the news of the army of Marwar marching upon Mewar reached the Maharana.

Just as it is impossible to know when a fish moving in water is drinking it, so it is impossible to find out when government servants in charge of undertakings misappropriate it. - Kautilya

That was a time when Mewar's military might was on the decline. Jaipur was alerted. The combined army of Mewar and Jaipur offered stiff resistance to the invading Marwar force, but in vain. Maharaja Maun pushed his way into Udaipur and camped on a meadow not far from the palace. 'Since I have won a victory over the Maharaja of Jaipur, I must win the hand of the princess, too,' was his argument. But Jaipur sneered at Marwar's claim and its army besieged Marwar's capital. Maharana Maun had no other go than to rush back to his kingdom. He managed to save his palace, but his city had been ransacked. It came to light that some of his kinsmen were conspiring to dethrone him. The unhappy Maun decided to commit suicide. However, he announced his decision rather loudly, thereby obliging some well-wishers to snatch the dagger from his grip which did not appear to be very tight!



Condemned to the *Devil's Island*

Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty
(University of Hyderabad)

Rene Belbenoit's account of the Devil's Island in French Guiana is a story of human depravity, betrayal and treachery; it is also a story of supreme human kindness, compassion and courage that has contemporary relevance. We see similar instances in the case of Barindra Kumar Ghose who was incarcerated at the Andaman Cellular Jail for twelve years.

'We come after and that is the name of our condition. We cannot pretend that Belsen is irrelevant to the responsible life of the imagination'

—George Steiner

What is the relationship between the penal experience and that of the Holocaust? To get an answer, we must turn our attention to penal and holocaust narratives of the 20th Century as well as the earlier trajectories embedded in systems of internment dating back to the late 19th Century.

Jeremy Bentham's 'panopticon' introduced the principle of observation and control that underpins the

design of the modern prison. Similarly, in his study of genealogy of modern penal institutions, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of Modern Prisons*, Michel Foucault asks why imprisonment has replaced torture or total banishment.

As the secular systems controlled by courts replaced the public spectacle of torture, a whole apparatus of judicial devices were now directed against the 'soul', a psychic object rather than the body. It is precisely this aspect of targeting the 'soul' that we see manifest in Belbenoit's *Dry Guillotine: Fifteen Years among the Living Dead* (1938).

Belbenoit's experience in the Devil's Island is torn between 'the impossibility of recounting and the necessity of describing the indescribable'. Like Emmanuel Ringleblum's *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, discovered in the rubble of the Warsaw uprising, or Leon Welles's *Janowska Diary*, the personal experience of Belbenoit 'cries out to be acknowledged as a register to the fate of a whole people.'

In the *Devil's Island*, French Guiana

Born in Paris on 4 April 1899, abandoned by his mother as an infant, left to the grandparents by his father who was a railway inspector, Belbenoit's early life was made up of heroic service (to the French army during World War I) and petty thievery, betraying the trust of his employees. Convicted, he was condemned in 1920 to eight years of penal labor in French Guiana.

Dry Guillotine comprises the hellish experience of Belbenoit in the Devil's Island. It records in minute and horrifying detail, what he, [carrying the convict number 46635] and his fellow prisoners went through: complete stripping of all clothes, and human dignity, unspeakable trauma, the ubiquitous reality of chained gangs and homosexual exploitation, the self loathing acts of cannibalism, mutual slaughter, accompanied by tropical dysentery, leeches, sharks, deadly fire ants and mosquitoes. It is also a story of human depravity, betrayal, treachery along with acts of supreme human kindness, compassion and courage.

Rene Belbenoit's experience at the capital city

A great man is one who affects the mind of his generation.

- Benjamin Disraeli

of Cayenne as well as at the *Salvation Island* and *Devil's Island* in French Guiana convinced him of the unspeakable horror of the French criminal justice system. As he recalled poignantly later: 'Guiana is not fit for colonization; it has been said that the man who cultivates the earth is digging his own grave. Every year France sent thousands of new convicts, yet the population never increased, that is why they called it 'the dry guillotine.'

Those that got freed called *liberes* were condemned to spend an equal number of years in the hell hole. Those who spent eight years were condemned to live there forever. They lived in shacks, fought swarms of mosquitoes, quicksand, deadly piranhas, and tropical diseases and caught butterflies to eke out a living. Homosexual abuse was rampant. The *Maroni* River led to Dutch Guiana, and beyond lay the alluring, but impossible prospect of Venezuela. Few nations would welcome the *liberees*, barring Belgium, and there was no transport to that country, no money to pay the fare.

While many gave into despair and were reconciled to their hopeless and tragic fate, Belbenoit attempted escape several times from the penal colony in Saint-Laurent du Maroni: the first on 21 June 1923, for the second time in 1926, and for the third time after he met the American author Blair Niles [who wrote *Condemned to Devil's Island*, 1928.] 'Freed' as a *liberee* in 1931, on the island, Belbenoit finally managed to escape on 2 May 1935. He journeyed perilously through the Caribbean, Jamaica, Columbia, Panama, the West Coast of Central America, El Salvador, and finally arrived in Los Angeles in 1937.

In each attempt, Belbenoit unfailingly carried his manuscript in a closely packed oil skin cover. He published *Dry Guillotine* in 1938; the text was reprinted quickly into many languages. Later he published a sequel *Hell on Trial* in 1940.

Thanks to the uproar in the media, France stopped operating the penal colony in 1946, officially closing it down in 1958. Belbenoit managed to get a citizenship in America after deportation and imprisonment. For a while, he was employed by Warner Bros. and briefly worked in the 1944 film *Passage to*

Marseille. He opened the Rene Ranch Store in Lucerne Valley, California in 1950s and was married to Lee Gumpert. He acquired American citizenship in 1956 and died on 26 February 1959 in Lucerne Valley, survived by his wife and a step son. It is an eventful life sadly forgotten today.

Contemporary Significance

As 'literature of atrocity', Belbenoit's narrative disrupts traditional generic expectations, and captures the 'atmosphere of monstrous fantasy'. It defies rational comprehension and calls attention to the 'sense of cosmic irrationality'. As Barbary Foley aptly suggests: by the reading of such narratives, we 'can come to understand better, the historical blindness that continues to impede full recognition of the significance of horror in our own times.

Belbenoit's penal experience shares ominous parallels with the account of Barindra Kumar Ghose, Sri Aurobindo's younger brother. Barin was exiled, along with other revolutionaries like Sudhir Sarkar and Ullaskar Dutt, to the Andaman Cellular Jail. On 12 December 1909, Barin and six others were taken on board the *SS Maharaja* from the Kidderpore docks in Calcutta for Port Blair. They faced inhuman treatment in the hands of the authorities in Port Blair's Cellular jail. While the British claimed to uphold the rule of law in the Indian mainland, they tried their level best to destroy the will and bodies of the political prisoners by breaking every rule of the jail book with impunity. Quite simply, there was no one there to appeal to. For prisoners like Barin Ghose, the choice was to cooperate with the colonial jail administration, and betray fellow prisoners, or face the prospect of starvation and psychological torture. Solitary imprisonment was a common practice, and so also merciless flogging and force-feeding by the wardens in case of strikes by the prisoners. Convicts like Ullaskar Dutt went insane, and others like Indu Bushan Kar had no option than to end their lives as a relief from the endless torture. Working in chain gangs, or slogging nonstop in the oil mills, forced to run uphill with bucket full of water for the camp commander's residence even when one was running high fever, were common practices and forms of punishments. Escaped prisoners were summarily

The only wisdom we can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility; humility is endless.

- K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar

hanged as a public spectacle meant to induce fear and terror. Those who were foolhardy enough to jump into the waters of the Bay of Bengal were eaten up by hungry sharks. There was practically no communication with the mainland. Even after release, no one could hope to be repatriated home.

Every one of us should read Barin Ghose's *The Tale of My Exile*,¹ as well as Rene Belbenoit's *Dry Guillotine*. The savagery of penal life, recorded in the two accounts, is testimony to man's inhumanity, and certainly questions our claims to a civilized existence.



Book Review :

A Journalist Reflects On Eminent Governors, Editors and Politicians S.K. Rau

Former Editor *The Searchlight*, Patna News Editor
The Pioneer, Lucknow

**(Nov 2014, Avichal Publishing Company,
Delhi, pp 253 Rs.450/-)**

"If the 19th century belonged to the novelist" wrote James Reston four decades ago, "the twentieth century belongs to the journalist." It was around that time that two journalists, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, investigating the Watergate scandal, caused the downfall of American President Richard Nixon. Journalism in America, it was said, underwent a change from 'access culture to aggression culture'. Such was the transformation that journalists yearning 'to dine with leaders and celebrities began to dine on them.'

In India too the field of journalism has undergone a change with the newspaper market emerging as the world's biggest. Over a hundred million copies of newspapers are sold every day. Ever since its debut in 1780, print media attracted public attention and later admiration for disseminating news and information and for promoting healthy debate on public issues. The print media came to be recognized as a 'modernizing elite' for its role in the freedom struggle. Newspapers and journals, both English and vernacular, were founded and edited by famous leaders

and stalwart journalists. They combined in themselves the best of England's Fleet Street culture and Indian values. Their service to society and contribution to freedom struggle through the print media earned for papers and editors wide public support and respect too.

The book under review is a birth centenary commemoration volume of the writings of late S.K. Rau, a veteran journalist and editor of the last century. His son Keshav Rau writes in the introduction how his father, working as a temporary clerk in the Collector's office, lost his job for his 'audacity' in pointing out an error made by the Collector in a file noting. The Collector, however, had the generosity to concede that S.K.Rau was 'destined for better and more interesting things in life than the monotony' of a clerical job in the government! Not only gracious but prophetic was the Collector as Seshagiri Krishna Rau, a mere matriculate, rose to become a renowned editor and journalist.

President of Indian Federation of Working Journalists K.Vikram Rao, worthy son of another famous journalist late Kotamraju Rama Rao, writes in his foreword that journalists are like playback artistes, who "give voice to the other main actors, but fade away, not writing down their own scores and losses. S.K. Rau made heroes of men, but himself remained a pen pusher." Lauding S.K. Rau's 'correct English, precise use of words and easily comprehensible style, Vikram Rao writes: 'Now knowledge and use of English grammar has turned optional for Indian editors. S.K.Rau stands out as one who wrote English as an Englishman.' Interestingly by working in the north, east, west, and south S.K. Rau combined in his person the four sides which make NEWS, says Vikram Rao. The foreword is followed by a lucid introduction by Keshav Rau about his father's early struggle in life and rise to eminence through merit and hard work. Keshav Rau has neatly organized his father's writings on four U.P. governors, seven editors and five politicians in a book that is both informative and interesting.

Madras Governor Sir Archibald Nye was the first governor to visit a Harijan home and eat the Madras dosa 'the best Indian dish he ever tasted.' Sarojini

Humanist is one who rejects authority but respects tradition.

- David Bromwich

Naidu called herself 'a wild bird in a cage' when she was made governor. The irrepressible Sarojini Naidu once told Kailash Nath Katju, Governor of Bengal, "My dear fellow Governor, you are a joker, I am a joker and governors are nothing but jokers in free India." H.P.Modi, the Bombay industrialist and aristocrat who succeeded Sarojini Naidu as Governor of Uttar Pradesh "restored to the government's house to its old regal splendour. Modi was a real 'Lord sahib'. Another Governor of Uttar Pradesh K.M.Munshi, known for his learning and respect for tradition 'nationalized' the government's house providing a 'feast' to art lovers, scholars and pandits. He also became a controversial figure for dabbling in politics. V.V.Giri 'a chip off the old block', was a famous labour leader who sacrificed his position and earnings for upholding high ideals.

The book abounds in interesting and at times amusing anecdotes. As Governor of U.P. Giri was addressing the legislature, Raj Narain asked Giri to speak in Hindi and persisted in interrupting the Governor's address. Governor Giri silenced Raj Narain by warning, "If you think you are a goonda, you must know I am a bigger goonda. I will not wait for the Marshal to throw you out. I will myself jump into your seat and throw you out." S.K.Rau's articles on U.P. chief ministers Dr.Sampurnanand, Charan Singh and other political leaders also make interesting reading.

The section on editors who left a lasting imprint on Indian journalism, begins with a tribute to K.Iswara Dutt whose style, as Radhakrishnan said, "has clarity and sparkle and his writings often cease to be journalism and become literature." S.K Rau also lavishes praise on the three Raos – K.Rama Rao, Khasa Subba Rao and M.Chalapati Rau. Khasa loved and demanded absolute freedom as editor and famously said "I never wrote a single word to anybody's dictation". Arthur Alfred Hayles, editor of *The Madras Mail* was an all rounder and perfectionist. Pothan Joseph, a physics graduate from Madras University, had a mastery over the Bible, Shakespeare and classical literature. He rose to become one of India's outstanding editors. There are brief references to M.S.Kamath, Subramaniam Srinivasan who later became famous as S.S.Vasan, Kalki Krishnamurthy and M.S.M.Sarma.

The birth centenary commemoration volume is not only a fitting tribute to a self-made veteran journalist but also an eminently readable work on some famous political leaders and journalists of yesteryears. S.K.Rau's style of writing was marked by forthrightness, generous in praise and fair in criticism of the persons he wrote on, in an admirably balanced manner. Late S.K.Rau's life and work provide inspiration not only for the present generation of journalists but also remind us of the spirit of sacrifice and service that characterized India's public life in those halcyon times.

- A. Prasanna Kumar

Journal Review :

Rejuvenation of Surface Water Resources Of India: Potential, Problems and Prospects

Editor: Prof. R. Vaidyanadhan

(Former, Head of the Department of Geography, Andhra University)

(Special Publication-3, Geological Society of India, Bengaluru 2014)

The subject of rejuvenation of surface water resources is very much relevant and apt at present, considering the problems faced on account of water scarcity, resulting in droughts in many parts of India.

The above publication edited by Prof. R.Vaidyanadhan, deals with rejuvenation of rivers, their potentials, problems, perspectives, and initiatives in the states like Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, A.P., Tamil Nadu and also regions like North-Western India, Indus and Ganges river basins, North Eastern region and East Central India.

There is a lot of awareness in public about the vagaries of monsoon occurrence, every year in some parts of the country (western and southern parts mainly) and devastating effects of floods sometimes occurring almost simultaneously in other parts (particularly eastern & northern India). This complex subject has been dealt with relevant statistics with suggestions to conserve the most precious natural

We are not human beings having spiritual experience but spiritual beings having human experience.

- Swamy Vivekananda

resource i.e. water and also dealt with geographical features of the region, types of soils, climate, rainfall which have a bearing on the run off coefficient and discharge of the rivers.

The present need is how best we can preserve our water bodies (reservoirs, lakes and tanks etc.) and augment the surface water to the optimum utilization and the conjunctive supply to fields and ultimate goal of transferring the river flows from surplus basins to deficit basins by linking the rivers, if not on a large scale, but by local linkages. This aspect has been dealt in a lucid manner.

The contents of the articles enable in arriving at National River Policy which is the need of the hour to meet the ever increasing demands for water for power (electricity), industries and domestic needs apart from ensuring the requirement for irrigation which is major. Indiscriminate exploitation of ground water creates hazards.

The alarming situation that 40% area of Maharashtra State, and about 30% in combined A.P. (Rayalaseema & parts of Telangana) and parts of Gujarat & Odisha, reel under drought conditions almost every year resulting in suicides of farmers has been highlighted in various articles. Several methods (catchment area treatment etc.) are also suggested to obviate this problem.

Thus, the publication contains valuable and useful information and statistics for policy makers, geologists, irrigation engineers and sociologists and all those interested in public welfare.

- **Shri U. Narayana Raju,**
Irrigation Engineer (Retd.) Govt. of A.P.



"Health official calls for referral system"

Newspaper report on the lecture delivered at Centre for Policy Studies by Shri L.V. Subrahmanyam, I.A.S., Principal Secretary Medical, Health and Family Welfare Dept., Govt. of Andhra Pradesh on February 7, 2015.

Principal Secretary (Health) L.V. Subrahmanyam on Saturday called for evolving referral system to avoid

crowding at premier health institutes like King George Hospital. Speaking at a meeting on public health organised by Centre for Policy Studies here, he said too much commercialisation of education and private medical care was a bane of our society.

He said for want of good referral system, on an average 1200 to 1300 out-patients turn up at KGH forcing the doctors to offer them some treatment by sparing only a minute or 90 seconds. "If majority of them are stopped from visiting KGH and given proper care at primary health centre, they need not visit Visakhapatnam," he remarked.

"Whether it is government or private hospitals, accountability should be fixed. The people involved in rendering health service should have a passion to serve society," he said referring to how nursing schools and private institutes were being promoted with people without any background due to their money power.

Advocating sustainable change in public health through community involvement, Mr. Subrahmanyam pointed out how public health had become most challenging issue. "Infant and maternal mortality rate has come down and chicken pox has been completely eradicated but new challenges like swine flu and Ebola have come as matter of serious concern," he stated. He suggested improvement in quality of education, medical care, continued medical education, fixing responsibility on health care and converting the public health system patient centric.

Gayatri Vidya Parishad president A.S.N. Prasad and Centre for Policy Studies director Prof. A. Prasanna Kumar spoke.

(The Hindu February 8, 2015)

"Do people matter after polls?"

Newspaper report on the lecture delivered by Shri Amit Dasgupta, Former Ambassador of India to Philippines and retired diplomat, at Centre for Policy Studies on March 2, 2015.

When India had become a democracy six decades ago, governance through participation was supposed to be the core tenet.

First generation makes money the second generation spends it and the third generation loses it.

- Chinese Proverb

But is it really happening that way?

"No," says the former Ambassador of India Amit Dasgupta.

Delivering a talk on 'Governance through Participation' organised by the Centre for Policy Studies, the former bureaucrat pointed out that we were far away from that concept.

According to him, pluralism is considered to be the fragility of the country and many consider that it is also a major threat for survival of democracy.

And that appears to have come true. During the course of his talk, he advocated the need for an alternative model, where the five pillars would be government, bureaucracy, industry or business, media, and civil society. In an idealistic democratic country, the role of the government should be to realise the dreams of the people and not realise the dreams of the government.

"But in our country, it is happening the other way round. And to move to the right direction, there should be a drastic change in the mindset," he said.

Talking about the role of the media, he quoted the case of 'Watergate Scandal'. Not long ago, if two reporters of Washington Post Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein — could force Richard Nixon, the then American president, to resign, through their stories, it can happen even in India.

"That cutting-edge, nonpartisan, and in-depth investigative journalism is missing," he said. In today's context, 'do people matter after election' is the key question. "For one to become powerful, the other has to be rendered powerless, and that is what is happening. In the quest for power, people are becoming marginalised, and that has to be changed if governance has to be through participation," said the former bureaucrat. Centre director A. Prasanna Kumar and president A.S.N. Prasad spoke.

(*The Hindu* March 4, 2015)



Jesus

Sri. C. Sivasankaram

Jesus was God incarnate - Swami Vivekananda believed. Sri Krishna and Gautama the Buddha were predecessors of Jesus Christ. Theological history of the world affirms that Jesus was the natural outcome of the great two. He was the Star that arose in the Eastern horizon. The effulgent Star was seen by some learned men of the East who trekked their way to first worship him. As sun rises in the East all the Avatars of the world were born in the East. One of the popular epithets of Sun is Aditya. Sri Krishna pronounces that he is the Vishnu of the twelve Adityas.

Sri Krishna blew the conch of rebellion against the biased hegemony of gods. Gods are numerous. Their existence as gods is not permanent and it is subject to change. The outcome of the spiritual rebellion unleashed by Sri Krishna was the birth of a man who possessed a soul, a dauntless spirit ready to heed the word of the Redeemer. The legacy of Sri Krishna partly culminated in the form of Buddhism. Buddhism, the religion of freeman, offered and gave a life trend that did not destroy the spirit of man and his absolute right to enjoy human as well as divine fundamental rights. Sri Krishna, Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ were the triad who incarnated for restoration of some prudent and just order in the World. Tyrant Herod of Judea was the Kamsa of the times of Sri Krishna. Jesus incarnated to give order and rhyme to the philosophy of love and compassion. He was the epitome of Sri Krishna and Buddha. The teachings of the great avatars have echoed from Jesus.

Love and kindness were the two principles that could do away with the savage in man and form a world where all could live in peace.

In the life of man if anything happens contrary to the two tenets, man becomes a wreck, a befoled boat in the river. The two working principles of Love and compassion gave a new meaning and a fresh authority in the avatar of Christ. In the hour of his crucifixion too, he uttered words of forgiveness. His mouth was unused to harsh words violating the tenet of Ahimsa - non-injury. Although he was a man of

India's effort to balance growth, democracy, and multiculturalism is genuine.

- William Antholis

miracles and people flocked to him to have their ills cured by his powers, he did not build his faith on shaky miracles but on lasting principles. Swami Vivekananda doubts the soundness of the citadel of Faith founded on finite miracles. As Jesus ripened into World Teacher, history or any spiritual chronicle of his life did not feature miracles as the basis of his mission.

Christ was the champion of the rights of common, forlorn and desolate man. The downtrodden raised their head. He said " I do not want animal sacrifices but kindness. The man who did what his Father in Heaven wants him to do that man was his brother and father". The spirit of the saying confirms that Jesus was incarnation of a Buddhist Monk attained enlightenment, the State of Buddha.



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE in Lahore in February 1999

(In the summer of 1998, both India and Pakistan tested their nuclear bombs. There was the fear that the Kashmir dispute could escalate and produce a situation where both countries might use their nuclear weapons. The pressure on both governments to resolve problems through dialogue was high. As a special gesture, Vajpayee traveled by the first bus from Delhi to Lahore. This bus had been started as a first step to bring about normalcy between the two countries. His speech moved all who heard it though the talks were fruitless. Sadly, this speech loses much of its poetry in translation.)

Mr Prime Minister, friends, sisters and brothers,

As we break bread together, a new century and a new millennium knocks on our doors. Fifty years of our independence have gone by. On one side there is pride and on the other regret. Pride because both the countries have been successful in retaining their independence; but regret because even after 50 years we have not liberated ourselves from the curse of poverty and unemployment.

I am grateful to you, Mr Prime Minister, for hosting this banquet in such a historic location. It was

in this magnificent fort that Shah Jahan was born; it is here than Akbar lived for over a decade.

My delegation and I are overwhelmed by the warmth of your welcome, and the gracious hospitality extended to us. Mr Prime Minister, you have upheld the nobility of this fort and the tradition of the historic city of Lahore. On this occasion, I am reminded of the lines of the 11th century poet Mas'ud bin S'ad bin Salman.

*'Shuddargham 'Lohur rawanam Yarab!
Yarab! Ki dar arzu-e anam Yarab!'*

*(My soul goes out in longing for Lohur, O God!
How I long for it)*

Excellency, this is the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Pakistan in 10 years. I am delighted to be here. When I inspected the guard of honour and saw the beautiful panorama of the setting sun, I was overwhelmed by mixed feelings. It gave me joy that I was returning here after 21 years with the message of friendship. My regret is that we have spent so much time in mutual bitterness. It is unworthy of two nations the size of India and Pakistan to have wasted so much time in mutual ill-will.

Earlier when I came to Pakistan, I was alone. This time we have representatives from every section of Indian society.

The bus service between Lahore and Delhi is not a means only to ease travel from one country to another. The running of the bus between the two countries symbolises the desire of the people to improve relations and come together. Indeed, if this was only a bus made of metal, it would not have caused such excitement and expectations, not only in our two nations but all over the world.

It is our duty, Mr Prime Minister, to pursue the desires and wishes of our peoples; to develop, trust, confidence, amity and to create a solid structure for co-operation.

We have been encouraged that our interaction in recent months has focussed on Issues which directly

The very agency which first makes the celebrity in the long run inevitably destroys him.
The newspapers make and unmake him, not by murder, but by suffocation or starvation. - Daniel Boorstin

benefit the lives of our peoples. Our two countries have engaged within the composite dialogue process to work out mechanisms to ensure that humanitarian concerns are addressed quickly; that possibilities of economic and commercial co-operation such as sale of power are identified and pursued; that confidence-building measures are discussed and agreed upon. But this marks only a beginning. We will, together, give directions to our officials to accelerate what we have jointly set in motion.

We have also discussed those areas of relationship on which we do not see eye to eye. That is only inevitable. As we seek to resolve issues, we have to be conscious that there is nothing which cannot be solved through goodwill and direct dialogue. That is the only path.

I am convinced that there is nothing in our bilateral relations that can ever be resolved through violence. The solution of complex outstanding Issues can only be sought in an atmosphere free from prejudice and by adopting the path of balance, moderation and realism. To those that preach, practice or foment violence, I have only one message: understand the simple truth of the path of peace and amity. That is why, as part of the composite dialogue process, we

welcome sustained discussions on all outstanding Issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. As we approach a new millennium, the future beckons us. It calls upon us, indeed demands of us, to think of the welfare of our children and their children, and of the generations that are yet to come.

I have brought but one message from India. There can be no greater legacy that we can leave behind than to do away with mistrust, to abjure and eliminate conflict, to erect an edifice of durable peace amity, harmony and co-operation. I am confident that through our combined efforts we will succeed in doing so, no matter how hard we have to work in achieving it.

Permit me to extend to you, Mr Prime Minister and to Begum Sahlba a most cordial invitation to visit India. Let me assure you that you will find in India a very warm welcome. We look forward to receiving both of you soon in India.

I express my best wishes for your progress and prosperity, for the establishment of durable peace and co-operation between India and Pakistan.

(Courtesy - *Great Speeches of Modern India*
Ed. R. Mukherjee)



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