



BULLETIN

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THAT ELUSIVE HEAVEN OF FREEDOM

“Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake” - Rabindranath Tagore’s immortal invocation in *Gitanjali* comes to our mind when we talk of freedom and celebrate Independence Day in August every year, just as that famous line in Jawaharlal Nehru’s “tryst with destiny” speech - “At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom” is recalled with pride and joy at most celebrations on August 15.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan addressing the Constituent Assembly on the night of August 14 uttered equally important words of caution: “From tomorrow morning... - from midnight today..we cannot throw the blame on the Britisher. We have to assume responsibility ourselves for what we do. A free India will be judged by the way in which it will serve the interests of the common man in the matter of food, clothing, shelter and the social services. Unless we destroy corruption in high places, root out every trace of nepotism, love of power, profiteering and blackmarketing which have spoiled the good name of this great country in recent times, we will not be able to raise the standards of efficiency in administration as well as in the production and distribution of the necessary goods of life.”

Mahatma Gandhi who was in Calcutta dousing communal flare-ups, spending that historic eve of Independence in ‘the poorest corner’ of Calcutta in the house of a Muslim family, was approached by the newly sworn in ministers of the West Bengal government for his blessings: “ Be humble. Be forbearing. Now you will be tested through and through. Beware of power; power corrupts. Do not let yourselves be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry. Remember you are in office to serve the poor in India’s villages” was his message.

Gurudev Tagore’s prayer for a world without fear, human life of dignity and self-respect and universal brotherhood was made almost a hundred years ago and *Gitanjali*’s centenary will be celebrated in a few years time.

That heaven of freedom continues to elude us. How many of us can hold our heads high today? Could we prevent the world from being “ broken up into fragments narrow domestic walls.”? Are our minds “led forward into ever-widening thought and action?” All that we can do today is to offer *anjali* to Tagore’s *Gita*!

When India awoke ‘to life and freedom’ Nehru metaphorically said that the world was asleep. Sixty two years after that golden hour, India seems to be in deep slumber when most of the world is awake, alive and kicking. Radhakrishnan’s warning was stern and timely. Freedom, he reminded, implied responsibility and his concern for the common man especially in providing food and shelter is as relevant today as it was then, like reference to corruption in high places and need for administrative efficiency. Gandhiji’s message was, in fact, an admonition not merely to those ministers of West Bengal government but to every minister and political leader since then. Power has corrupted every branch of government, all political parties and most leaders and civil servants. About that there is no doubt, though the few honest leaders and civil servants remain helpless. Otherwise as many people as those living India, when those warnings were issued on the first day of India’s independence by the Father of the Nation and one who later became the second President of India, would not be living today below poverty line and their equal number struggling for their livelihood.

To those in power liberty might mean opportunity to abuse power or use it for personal gain. Equality and justice, also enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution, shall continue to be unrealizable goals as long as the three branches of government and the numerous institutions created to strengthen democracy subordinate public interest to the inflated egos of political masters, bureaucratic bosses and aimless political parties that search in political darkness for crumbs of power and pelf. Borrowing the words of Tagore and Nehru let us pray on August 15 : My Father let our rulers awake to the reality and try to redeem the pledge.

- The Editor

“India has demonstrated through the ages that not by strife and conflicts but by correct understanding and assimilation of diverse faiths and dogmas—not by hatred and violence but by love and goodwill-mankind can find the path towards peace and freedom.” - JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

CPS Publication in honour of Shri Vavilala Seetaramaiah

Centre for Policy Studies brought out a book on 'Education, Culture and Development', a compilation of essays and articles by eminent persons on different subjects, in honour of Shri Vavilala Seetaramaiah, on his 75th birthday. The volume was released by former Chief Election Commissioner of India Shri T.S.Krishna Murthy on June 26, 2009 at the Gitam University. Shri Seetaramaiah, the well known Chartered Accountant, was on the Executive Council of the Andhra University for eleven years and a founder member of Gitam University and Gayatri Vidya Parishad. Currently the Pro Chancellor of Gitam University and Vice President of Gayatri Vidya Parishad, and Vice President of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Visakha Kendra) School Sri Seetaramaiah is a Member of the Governing Body of Centre for Policy Studies.) Published below is a newspaper report on the book-release function

'Intelligentsia have a big role to play'

Noted educationist Vavilala Seetaramaiah feted

Professionals and intellectuals should not remain inactive but make their contribution to the nation as much as they can, said former Chief Election Commissioner T.S.Krishna Murthy here on Friday.

Lack of professional leadership was one of the reasons for the economic slowdown being experienced at present, Mr.Krishna Murthy said at a function organised by GITAM University during which he released a compilation of essays, "Education, Culture and Development", to mark the 75th birthday celebrations of noted chartered accountant and vice-president of GITAM University and Gayatri Vidya Parishad Vavilala Seetaramaiah. Mr.Krishna Murthy wanted senior professionals like Mr. Seetaramaiah to share their experiences through their writings. Mr.Seetaramaiah donated Rs. 5 lakhs to the Sweekaram scheme of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation. Deputy Mayor K.Dorababu received the cheque from Mr.Seetaramaiah. GITAM University President and former MP M.V.V.S.Murthi presided over the function. GITAM University Vice-Chancellor M. Gangadhara Rao, former Mayor and former Chairman of Bar Council of

India D.V.Subbarao, former Rector of Andhra University and director of Centre for Policy Studies A.Prasanna Kumar, president of GVP and former Vice-Chancellor of Nagarjuna University B.Swami, recalled their association with Mr.Seetaramaiah and described him as an asset to Visakhapatnam. GITAM Registrar P.M.Valli and others participated.

Responding to the felicitations, Mr.Seetaramaiah briefed about how he came to Visakhapatnam from Guntur and his association with Andhra University and later on with GITAM University and GVP. He is presently working on a Rs.2 crores senior citizens' resort in Visakhapatnam with the help of different organizations.

(Courtesy : THE HINDU, June 27, 2009)

THE 2009 GENERAL ELECTIONS – ONLY TWO CHEERS TO OUR DEMOCRACY?

- Prof. R.V.R. Chandrasekhara Rao

Former Vice-Chancellor
Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University

It is obligatory to congratulate the participating electorate in a general election. Obligatory because democracy needs to be praised time and time again as occasional frustrations that *vox populi* can cause need to be exorcised. The sway of regionalism, casteism and sheer greed and the aberrations of the 'revolution of rising expectations' do generate a sense of vexation among many. Democracy is a blessing, but a mixed-blessing all the same. Democracy indeed as the least dangerous form of government requires careful nurture. It is but common to regard the democratic temper as naturally endowed. There is an element of western racist prejudice implying that only Greece-Roman heritage confers entitlement for real democracy. But this is not so. Centuries of cultivation of the democratic temper is behind that 'nature's' endowment. The very idea of a developing democratic polity underscores the inherence of a developmental process. Thus 'nurture' not 'nature' constitutes the essential component of democracy's sustenance. India has demonstrated that 'gardening' the democratic plant, even if it were to be transplant from outside, is possible and sustainably so. Three-score years of democratic experiment amply entitles odes suffice to call for self-congratulation. In comparison to most of our neighbours and fellow-travellers in the developing nations

carriage, we do deserve applauds.

In this context our just pride also owes an acknowledgement to our own inheritance from the past. It is common though, to chastise us for our 'feudalistic-fatalistic' legacy and thereby doubt even our eligibility for genuine democracy. Would a *Homo Higherarchicus* ever become a *Homo Egalitarianismus* is the implied refrain of this skepticism.

Narrowly viewed, there is cause for a pause in our optimism. But seen in a wider perspective, an innate pluralistic cultural Weltanschauung pervades the Indian ethos. The 'argumentative' tradition, as alluded to by Amartya Sen, is one of the well-springs of this manifest pluralism. This pluralistic temper gains further sustenance from a unique skepticism about ultimate values-including epistemological provenance. Democratic values need not be venerated as the ultimate criteria in ordering human concerns. A sort of 'uncertainty' criterion about ultimate truth has always been the hallmark of our tradition. In a rather instrumental value like democracy a pluralist temper is supremely valuable. That is not to relegate the imperative need for democracy. What is emphasized here is that the very spirit of healthy skepticism over beliefs and systems nourishes democracy better because other alternatives have less of a prospect to survive argument. India is proving this point in its engagement with democracy despite alternative schemes being pressed with vigour and even with violence.

Remember Ambedkar's withering criticism about how caste and ruralism forbade for ages the spread of public spirit so essential for the democratic order. But it was he who was also instrumental in ushering our mammoth constitutional edifice. Obviously, he was convinced that institutional devices can inaugurate a political culture if only education and wise leadership are made available. Probably, he was overwhelmed by his totally negative assessment of our cultural milieu to admit of the positive contribution that this tradition it could make to sustain a polity based on argument, dialogue and patience- which democracy in essence is. Still, the point is that Ambedkar was convinced that India can be run on a democratic order. Societal vistas impact the dynamics of democracy. The notion of political development is closely related to the evolution of robust

democracy especially in a society economically backward till recently and where the game of contemporary democracy is also new. In the language of Political Economy, political development and economic development should go hand in hand. It is to be fondly hoped that that is happening. There are serious distractions to this process. In fact, economic development as a concept has assumed a skewed connotation. Gone is the vectorial dimension of 'development' with a direction toward all round welfare. Only aggregate quantitative measurement remains the criterion. In other word 'growth' has replaced 'development'. What, then, about political development? Tomes are written on political participation, socialization, articulation and communication under the overarching rubric of political development. How does Indian democracy measure up to these categories? Periodical elections under freedom of speech and communication, plethora of political parties, a veritable jamboorie of electoral contests and a modestly increasing voters turnover at the polls are good indicators. Above all, a largely independent institution to regulate and guide the elections facilitates the orderly conduct of the hustings. Ironically though, Indian general elections increasingly project the scenario of a 'state under seize' during election time. The security arrangements point out to a scenario of a terrorism-stricken environment than a celebration of a supreme democratic event. The electorate stands at 714 million voters and more than 2.1 million security personnel are to be involved, in addition to 4 million civilian staff manning 8.2 lakhs of polling booths. It is a scaring thought to relate the 'security' dimension with our armed forces strength (all the services included) of about 1.3 million on active roll and 1.55 million on reserve. Thus the election needs a deployment of men and women numbering more than our entire armed forces on active duty. Is our democracy in a state of seize? May be the peaceful conduct of the polls in the world's largest democracy needs such robust protection? But even this phenomenon can be put up with given the context of terrorism trying to destabilize and demoralize the society. Obviously the most critical of the political processes, Elections, constitutes the most vulnerable and soft targets for terrorism. Thus, the dictum: eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, in this context is to be literally observed. A 'state of seize' during elections is a price worth paying for.

"The end of wisdom is freedom; the end of culture is perfection; the end of knowledge is love; the end of education is character." - SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

A wider aspect of vigilance is the institution of the Central Election Commission (CEC). Its transformation from a toothless child to a robust centurion ready to pounce on electoral malpractices is a very significant one. Still, even here there are some serious hiccups. The structural-functional ordering of the CEC riddled with problems. First, there is the problem arising out of the 'triumvirate' composition giving rise to inter-personal relationship in this apex body. The near constitutional crisis that arose from the out-going chairman expressing no confidence in one of his colleagues is well known. Further, the Central Government's action in making this 'colleague' as the new CEC has created embarrassment all round. However, whatever may be the departure from constitutional courtesies, the affair closed without a crisis exploding. More serious structural inadequacy lies at the state-level position of this election agency. The appointment and termination of the states' Chief Election Officers lead to serious problems both relating to their functioning and careers and to the over all observance of dignity, fair play and probity of the states' governments in general. The appointments are no doubt made by the CEC collegium from the state-level bureaucracies. They can function autonomously without fear or favour from the state governments in power. But as is said: 'power is as power does'. It very much depends upon individual CEOs as to what extent they choose to wield their powers. Some are more courageous and assertive, while others are less so. However, there is a structural fault-line in this regard. There is a manifest ambiguity and uncertainty about the CEOs own future careers and about the credibility of their powers because of their weak constitutional position.

Even as they become 'supremo' during the 'elections' period (an interlude, as it were) and can and do rein in the government of the day to observe the 'Lakshmana Rekhas' of election process imperatives, there is the ever-present hazard of reaping victimization later if the government were to return to power. It would indeed require the qualities of a true 'karma yogi' to play the role of a CEO undaunted. The inherent irony in the situation is to be noted. They are 'appointed' to the 'exalted' post by a purely temporary period by the CEC. But routinely they go back to their state bureaucracy. It is here that difficulties are mostly likely to arise. The 'regulatory' actions of the state election officer and his

erstwhile colleagues are by their very nature prone to be irksome to the political parties and even more so to the government if those actions are seen as 'obstructionists' to a government's single-minded pursuit of returning back to power. The concerned officers are therefore, under the threat of governmental vengeance no sooner than elections are over.

This particular hazard has actually occurred in one state. None other than the Director General of Police was transferred on orders from the CEC for praising the state government at a meeting of police personnel. And this in the midst of the pre-election period. After a furore raised by the opposition parties, the state election officer referred the issue of this gross violation of official neutrality to the CEC which transferred that DGP, selecting another senior officer for the DGP's post. The CEO as well as the new DGP have earned laurels for ensuring a fair and orderly election in India's one of the largest states. But, behold, after the results are out, post-haste the C.M. returning to power with a thumping mandate, replaced the DGP with the same officer whom the CEC transferred for improper conduct during the electoral process. It would seem that his 'reappointment' has been one of the most urgent priorities for the state government. Technically there is nothing illegal or malafide in the CM's action. Yet, at the broader level of administrative etiquette, the action is a crass assertion of authority's arrogance bordering on moral malafides. The CEO has himself now expressed his intention to opt for a move to the centre. There are two issues involved here. First, what are the implications when officials are transferred by the relevant CEC authority for transgression of conduct required during the electoral powers? Are such transfers to be reckoned as disciplinary measures or as routine transfers as are made in normal times? Common sense would conclude that such transfers are more in the nature of 'disciplinary' proceedings warranting an entry into the concerned officers' service records. The problem is that the 'regulatory regime' of the CEC/CEO is in practice looked at as a game played out by the CEC – a morality play – only to be unabashedly swept aside as soon as the elections are over. The 'returning' government reinstates the 'erring' officers in a spirit smacking of unrighteous indignation at the election authorities gumption to check-mate governmental excesses.

"The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems." - MAHATMA GANDHI

The second issue concerns the 'safety' of the erstwhile personnel of the EC from governmental retribution when once their temporary but exalted roles abruptly end on the morrow after the election results are out and a new government is installed.

These issues require urgent attention. The high constitutional position given to the CEC does not extend to the state-level election outfits. Many of the later categories are destined to disappear among the bureaucratic crowd. Of course, there is not much to be surprised about this. But what indeed is surprising is that such of those on whom the election regulation function is thrust and when they earnestly play that role, they find themselves totally stripped of the armour they wore during their sojourn as representatives of the CEC. In other words, the state-level election process enforcing agency is left in a legal limbo in the matter of post-election security from vengeance of the political class in power. On the celebratory side, the general election has on the whole confirmed the viability of the electoral powers regulatory system as it evolved over the last six decades. Many constitutional experts compare the Indian system highly favourably with the U.S. election-holding mechanism where the diverse state governments have their own funny anarchic ways of managing even federal-level elections.

The Gratifying Outcome

One very gratifying outcome is the emplacement of a stable central government with the Congress Party in power though still lift with a dependence on coalition politics. The last five years saw the extremely unseemly play of black mail politics at the Centre. The coalition-partners, and those like the left-parties giving support from the 'outside', frequently held the Manmohan Singh regime to ransom. Some of the coalition-parties, the DMK and the RJD in particular, did so to achieve family-based and clan-based agendas protecting their very narrow socio-economic turfs through cynical political manipulations. The left-parties, on the other hand, as their won't, flavoured their economic radicalism and their favourite anti-U.S. platform. The unsavoury game of subtle and not-so-subtle black-mail seriously compromised the over all credibility of the government, only partly compensated by the forbearance, perseverance and urbane conduct of the Prime Minister.

Yet it only diminished Manmohan Singh's stature. It made him look ineffective and lost some of his sheen.

The great pity is that the left-parties withdrawing the support to the Manmohan Singh regime over the Indo-American nuclear deal led to sordid horse-trading by almost all concerned parties for the regime's survival in the Confidence Motion over the deal. Many seasoned analysts even called it the nadir of Indian parliamentary politics. With the Congress now picking up a sizeable representation of its own in the Lok Sabha, the abatement of black-mail tactics, though not cease completely. For, the DMK, in particular, there are causes potent enough to get provoked to challenge the government. The Shri Lankan Tamils problem could be a source of bickerings. Even though the civil war there ended, problems relating to the rehabilitation of the Tamils and especially the wider issue of a satisfactory constitutional settlement are certain to crop up in the Indian Parliament. Already frustrated at the collapse of the LTTE and Prabhakaran's death, Karunanidhi will now demand his pound of flesh in getting the maximum advantage for Shri Lankan Tamils autonomy. However, as the issue is not entirely in India's hands, even the DMK cannot press their point to a breaking point, as the Left did over the nuclear deal.

Mamta Bannerjee is also a tricky customer with a prickly personality. No doubt, she has succeeded in worsting the Left-parties combine in West Bengal to the delight and benefit of the Congress. But this factor in itself can embolden here to be assertive in the Central coalitions give-and-take game. There is the on-coming West Bengal state election and hard bargaining over seat allocation as between the Trinamool Congress and the Congress party is certain to cause troubles. The congress cannot afford to delink itself from the Trinamool for fear of the Left forces regaining firm hold in West Bengal. After all, the economic law of supply and demand in itself is a sort of benign black mail syndrome. Therefore, benign blackmail may still be the template for the future coalition dharna. The Congress Party, on its part, regained its earlier stature and morale. Its Prime Minister now replicates the distinction that only Jawaharlal Nehru enjoyed of becoming Prime Minister twice completing a full term. His integrity and full-some competence will now confirm with new buoyance of spirit. Even more important is Rahul Gandhi's emergence as a young leader

"The system of parliamentary democracy becomes fragile if its conventions are not respected."

- JUSTICE M.N.VENKATACHALIAH 5

in his own right His David like successful confrontation with the Goliath, Mayawati in reestablishing the Congress presence in U.P. owes as much to the tutelage he undertook with modesty as to his quick maturation as a responsive and responsible political figure. Very few of his age and political inheritance can use the assets with such poise and patience. Critics may still cavil about his reluctance to be inducted into the government saying that he does not want to be anything other than the Number One. But ambition combined with a disposition to wait and learn is in itself a rare commodity.

The election while giving cause for felicitation, still leaves something to be desired for the reinforcement of the polity with a strong positive thrust. It is true that a vote for stability is a great consolation. But, it would seem that in going after stability gross instances of corruption at high reaches is set aside by the voters, at least in some instances. Not that we make light of the sanctity of the over all choice of the voters. The orderly conduct of free and fair elections for the world's largest democracy in the world is indeed an amazing feat. The great resourcefulness shown by the Election Commission's agencies does not warrant crying foul about the election process itself. Even so, the maturation of democracy does demand that the 'stability', criterion alone is not sufficient. Again, the indication that the 'development' factor weighed with the voter is not an infallible guide to the voters maturity. Populist indicators are as often the stuff fed by plebicitarian Ceasarisms as of a truly responsible regime with respect for clean governance and conscientious politics. Voting in some regions does not reflect a vote for clean government. The showing in a few places like Orissa, and to an extent in Bihar, is a very welcome exception to this trend.

In Orissa, in particular, the factor of a regime least tainted with corruption has triumphed with the development thrust also weighing in as a factor. Anti-incumbency has been ignored by the voters. Neither the Congress nor the BJP (only till recently a partner in the government under the NDA grouping) made any difference to Navin Patnaik's victory. Nitish Kumar in Bihar, also reaped a fitting reward for being able to wipe-off the laugh-in-stock label that stuck to Bihar for decades. This is qualitatively a major achievement with at least some development dimension also given during the Nitish

Kumar's leadership. These two instances do indicate that the electorates in some regions does look beyond the growth / development criterion alone and good governance in the real connotation of the term is recognized and rewarded. Viewed from another angle too, the voters exhibited exemplary native wisdom. This consists in the deserving down-sizing of two haughty leaders; Narendra Modi in Gujarat and Lallu Prasad Yadav in Bihar. These two can be counted as paradigms of malcontents of the conscience of a democratic polity. Modi personifies the flouting of the basic norms of secularism with impunity. Even if the BJP's taunt at official secularism as pseudo-secularism is given some berth, the manner in which the communal carnage was perpetrated in Modi's Gujarat remains as horrendous as the blasphemous destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. Yet, not even an iota of regret has ever escaped from Modi's lips. A true Hindutva subsumes a level of tolerance that for ages-long is associated with the Indian ethos – as a precipitate of the Hindu ethos. Thus Modi contrived at once not only in the elimination of thousands of Muslims – but, most importantly, in inflicting a ghastly wound on the body politic's ethos itself. As for, Lallu Prasad Yadav, he has come to personify the absence of rectitude in public office. And he too has not shown any sort of contrition over his past conduct.

It is true that both of these long survived because of some countervailing factors in their favour. Mr. Modi is untainted by 'corruption' and received positive marks for his 'development' stewardship of his state. Lallu Prasad Yadav's record in Bihar is low on the rectitude scale as well as on the development leadership scale. Yet his asset is his populist flambuoyance with a rather endearing mask of cherubic simplicity. He galvanized the backward classes and harvested the produce of the Mandal-epoch. Now nor can one dismiss the credit due to him for regenerating our Railways. Even so, the point is that the harm they have done to the spirit of our polity is much more than whatever good that resulted from their political career. They have gnawed at the roots of the democratic organism. Their 'deflation' at the recent hustings is most heartening. A look at the broader canvas of our electoral record should also bring us good cheer. Essentially this consists in the projection of the 'lower' classes onto the electoral scene. A broad brush outline would look like this. To start with this projection of the underclass was,

"Perhaps it is the success of electoral democracy that has prevented our country from falling under authoritarian rule." - T.S.KRISHNA MURTHY

naturally enough, confined to the Scheduled Classes and Scheduled Tribes because of the constitutionally guaranteed reservations in the electoral constituency allotment. But its indirect outflow has been to galvanize the Backward Classes into making a defacto reservation facilitation. To be sure, this happened gradually. The Mondal epoch quickened this Backward this aspiration in the election arena too. Its manifestation was two fold first in increasing pressure on the national political parties to field more of the Backward Class candidates and secondly, the formation of Backward-based political parties, though with a regional orientation too. The Samajwadi Party (S.P) anchored primarily in U.P. and Rashtriya Janata Party (RJD) rooted in Bihar. Somewhat later in time the formation of the Bahujan Samjwadi Party (BSP) which seemed to have penetrated U.P. as deeply as the DMK in Tamil Nadu. The DMK - phenomenon was much earlier to the Backward Classes – and its alternating yet counter-partner the AIADMK – base nearly monopolized Tamil Nadu politics for nearly four decades of Indian politics since 1950 the Congress Party totally marginalized. Still while ‘older’ in entry into national politics – the DMK – AIADMK political base is not dissimilar to the one acquired by the Backward Class / Regional phenomenon in the Northern States. In a sociological sense the DMK origins is essentially a Backward-Classes genre, though thanks to the operation of the so called communal G.O. in the Madras Presidency, even during the pre-Constitution era made the Backward-Classes in the South much less Backward than those in the North. It may be recalled that the explosion of the Mondal agitation in the late Eighties had practically little impact in the South precisely because the Mondal – model in its diverse fields of impacts is rather an ‘old hat’ already being worn for more than half a century. Further, the DMK-AIADMK phenomenon is largely regional, confined principally to Tamil Nadu and the tiny Pondicherry.

The seminal print is that the explosive entry of the Backward Classes into our political crème is a direct vindication of the democratic process in India. However, the 2009 election it appears, has inserted a comma in the fortunes of these Backward Class – based parties. Both in Bihar and U.P. – the parties made a poor-showing. Interestingly indeed, in West Bengal a purely regional party though manifestly not married to a Backward – Class bride, the Trinamool Congress, emerged as a force

to be centered with both by its foe – the Left and its present partner – the Indian National Congress. Parties identified almost entirely with Backward Classes – might have taken a beating, but what is significant is that the National Level parties themselves have given a big berth to these sections. Yet another vindication of the majoritarian populations representation in Indian politics.

There is another way of understanding this shift in electoral politics upto the 1970s – economic class interests, in the Marxist sense, provided the stereo-type (with variations on the theme) characterized much of the electoral scene. The most important mass movements were led by either the communist or socialist parties, centering around the interests and demands of workers, landless labourers and poor peasants, in particular, in states like West Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. In contrast, the 1980s witnessed the rise of distinct regional politics in many states as also the formation of regionally anchored parties with compatible configuration of caste mobilization and minority rights. In this transformation there is also a perceivable departure from earlier stress on the ‘economic classes’ claims. While the earlier stress hovered around the ‘producing sectors’ exploited classes, the new emphasis concerns the exploited sections of the now-producing sector. And this non-producing sector is not necessarily of the narrow economic category. For, the dimensions of inequalities in India are based on class, caste and gender in complexly interwoven ways. Here we confront a new set of problems in conceptuating justice. In other words, the masses of the under class are seen as not merely the ‘appropriated’ of the capitalist system but also those ‘appropriated’ by myriad other forms – caste, tribal, and above all, the abysmal condition of Indian women. Analysts highlighted the marginalization of classical economic class politics as claims from other ‘expropriated’ sectors got propelled into mass politics. It is, as if, working classes of the Marxian stereotype are merely the tip of the ice-berg with a vast sheet of ice submerged for long. It is the identification of this vast column that manifested in Indian politics prominently over the last quarter century.

The 2009 elections demonstrate this phenomenon as also the earlier election Coalition politics based on the ‘cooption’ of regional parties – championing diverse interests going beyond the economic classes. The all

“Much of the past thirty years of macroeconomics was spectacularly useless at best and positively harmful at worst.” - PAUL KRUGMAN

India parties too named along this trend. The coalescence of diverse interests of the vast underclass has thus been the dominant trend.

The upward surge of hitherto submerged groups in electoral politics does throw up perversions and gross mal-practices from which not even 'mature' democracies are exempt. And in the case of the world's largest democracy these deleterious factors operate with more force. The maelstrom of electoral mobilization leads to large-scale bribing and a no-holds barred approach in seeking votes. This runs in tandem with the massive collection of election funds from the 'public'. But when in reality the 'public' means the corporate sector and various other private sectors, the rise of an unholy alliance between the political class and industry and business is highly infuriating to a slowly maturing democracy.

Now it appears that the nexus between the political parties and the donors of funds is manifesting in another form. The 'donors', instead of merely remaining as donors per se, seem now anxious to enter the electoral arena themselves. The entry of many hundreds of crorepathis into the elections amply illustrates this trend. No wonder that quite a few of these succeeded in entering the state legislatures and Parliament. Prima-facie, the 'fund donors' themselves seeking entry into politics resemble the manner in which 'under-class' vote suppliers over a period of time projected themselves as contenders for candidature in elections. Yet, there is a profound difference between the mass of vote-suppliers projecting into the arena and the money-suppliers seeking direct entry. The former trend is a manifestation of a very positive democratic aspiration. The latter phenomenon of wealth doubling its role to bludgeon itself into politics as well as wielding a very powerful influence over the nation's economy is not a healthy denouement for democracy. For, in this case the nexus between muscle-power and money power tends to be much more intense and mutually reinforcing. The road-blocks to the sustained progress of democracy are many. Mature democracy is a process of 'becoming' not one of 'being' with education, patience and good grass-roots leadership we can win. Many reforms about representation in legislatures have been mooted. Probably a fail-safe approach stands in the way. Yet it is time, a representation model reflecting 'genuine representation' of a real majority

voters' choice is necessary. What this would curtail is the need for reopening of a debate among the public. Proportional representation, run-off elections among the two largest vote-getters, recall of legislations – these are among the many usually prescribed remedies to ensure genuine representation. Service to the cause of sustaining Democracy would require serious dialogue.

WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS-9

- Prof. M.N.Sastri

Resource Consumption

"We inhabit a single planet but live in several worlds, There is a world of abundance where plenty brings pollution. There is a world of want where deprivation degrades life. Such a planet cannot survive in harmony with nature and the environment or indeed with itself We must therefore ensure that the affluence of some is not derived from the poverty of many"

- P.V. NARASIMHA RAO

Address to Earth Summit, 1992

Resource consumption has become a vital component of demographic trends, especially during the last century, with the growing population and technology becoming major players. The capacity of the early man was limited to his muscle power for gathering food and defending himself against wild animals. With time his needs increased and his interventions became more complex and widespread through exploitation of technology. Large areas of forests were cleared for agriculture, timber harvesting, animal grazing, fuel wood gathering, mining and industry and for human settlements. Vast stores of energy, obtained almost through the use of fossil fuel resources (coal, oil and gas) have been harnessed to reshape the earth through clearing and ploughing land and building highways, ports, townships and airports, digging up minerals and building vast factories for production of machinery and consumer products. As a result the per capita energy consumption of the technology man rose to 11.13 kilowatts per day as compared to 0.1 kilowatt per day consumed by the early man. Record levels of resource consumption by the global population numbering more than 6.6 billion are pushing the limits of ecosystem services upon which all life on the planet depends. With the humans consuming 20 per cent more natural resources than the earth can

produce, the world is heading for an ecological crisis. More than three quarters of the world's people are ecological debtors now, living in nations where consumption has outstripped their country's capacity to produce natural resources. About 50 countries are currently facing moderate or severe water stress and the number of people suffering from year-round or seasonal water shortages are expected to increase as a result of climate change. "The consequences of global ecological crisis are even greater than the current economic meltdown".

Consumption of fossil fuels (oil, coal, and gas) increased by almost 700 per cent between 1961 and 2001 and is rising further. Projections indicate that oil output will reach a peak by 2030 and decline thereafter, presenting the world with unprecedented energy management problem through creating adverse affects on the oil dependent economies. The consumption of metals has been mounting to a point where viable reserves of important metals such as iron, copper, zinc, nickel and cobalt are rapidly dwindling. A more disturbing feature however is the growing inequalities in the consumption levels in different countries. The developed countries are characterized by high industrial production and resource consumption. Only 25 per cent of the world's people live in the developed countries. Yet they use 80 per cent of non-fuel minerals. For supporting their lifestyles. Some developed countries import resources such as food (including marine food), wood, cotton, minerals and other products from the underdeveloped countries. These richer countries underpay the poor, less developed countries through domination of international trade. To earn the capital necessary for their own economic development, the less developed countries are forced to sell their natural resources to the developed nations at uneconomic prices The US with only 5 per cent of the global population uses 30 per cent of the world's natural resources. Other developed countries also consume natural resources to a far greater extent than an equitable distribution would allow.

*The rain, it falleth on the just
As well as on the unjust fells;
But it falleth more on the just
Because the unjust, stealeth the
Just's umbrella!* - ANON

Two fast developing nations, China and India have now become part of the resource consuming group of nations. These two Asian giants together with a population of 2.5 billion (nearly 40 per cent of the world population), despite their low per capita consumption, are bringing heavy pressure on resources. The Worldwatch Institute says, "If China and India, each with more than a billion people, were to match by 2030 the per capita use of resources of Japan, together they would require a full planet Earth to meet their needs". This is due to the fact that these countries are following the developed nations on several fronts especially the use of fossil fuels. China which was till now managing with internal oil sources has now become the world's largest importer of oil. China has already surpassed the US in the consumption of grain, meat, coal and steel except oil. In 2004 China consumed 382 million tons of wheat compared to 278 million tons the US consumed. In the same year Chinese ate 63 million tons of meat, 37 million tons more than the US consumed. In 2008, China consumed 26 per cent of world crude steel, 32 per cent of rice, 37 per cent of cotton and 47 per cent of cement. If China's per capita grain consumption were to double to roughly European levels, China alone would require nearly 40 per cent of today's global grain harvest.

India, like China is also feeling the impact of economic surges coupled with expanding population and damage to ecosystems through depleting its ecological assets in support of its economic boom and growth of population. The country needs the biocapacity of two Indias to provide for its consumption and absorb its wastes. *The* amount of land and sea area required to produce the resources it consumes and absorb its wastes has doubled since 1961. All its major river systems are polluted. The inequality in income between the rich and the poor at the global level is also a matter of concern. Currently the richest 20 per cent of the people in the world accounts for three quarters of the world income while the poorest 40 per cent accounts for just 5 per cent. The ratio between the average incomes of the top 5 per cent in the world to the bottom 50 per cent increased from 78 to 1 in 1988 to 114 to 1 in 1993.

In a recent report the ILO observed that despite strong economic growth that produced millions of jobs since the 1990s, income inequality grew dramatically in

several regions of the world with more than 80 per cent of the world's population living in countries where income disparity is widening. For example, in the US in 2007 the Chief Executive Officers of the 15 largest companies earned 520 times more than the average worker - up from 360 in 2003. Between 1990 and 2005 approximately two-thirds of the 73 countries studied experienced an income inequality. The incomes of richest households have increased relative to those of the middle class and poorer households. This is because a major part of the world's population lives in the poorest countries and within the poorest regions of these countries, particularly in the rural areas of China, rural and urban India and Africa.

Poverty is measured in terms of income in cash or kind a family or a person requires to meet the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Till now absolute poverty income threshold is put by the World Bank (WB) at US \$ 2 a day. Now this value has been raised by the WB to US \$1.25 a day. The WB in its report published in August 2008 states 1.4 billion people live at this poverty line and below. This is more than the previous estimate of 984 million with the older measure of US \$ 1 a day in 2004. The poverty rate for India has come down faster between 1981 and 1990 (59.8 per cent to 51.3 per cent over 10 years) than it was between 1990 and 2005 (51.3 per cent to 41.6 per cent) over 15 years. But in absolute numbers the Indian poor have gone up from 421 million to 456 million from 1980 to 2005.

The Indian poor constitute 33 per cent of the global poor. People living in India below US \$ 2 a day are put at 828 million or 75.6 per cent of the population. China's poverty rate fell from 85 per cent to 15 per cent or by over 600 million people over the same period. China thus accounts for nearly all the world's reduction in poverty reduction. Excluding China, poverty fell only by about 10 per cent. For Sub-Saharan Africa the poverty rates are virtually unchanged over the period 1981-2005. The WB predicts that at the present rate, this region may be home for one-third of the world's poor by 2015. The economic current downturn and price rise in food and other essentials are increasing poverty levels the world over.

The ILO is of the opinion that such excessive income inequalities could lead to higher crime rates, low life

expectancy and in the case of poorer countries, malnutrition. There is also a perception that globalization does not work for the majority of the world population.

GANDHI, NEHRU AND INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE - II

- A. Prasanna Kumar

As Rajaji put it Gandhi taught nothing that he did not practise. Jawaharlal Nehru knew that Gandhi's intellectual conviction attracted people from far and near. The scholar and the scientist were convinced that beneath the Mahatma's simple exterior lay a strong mind allied to a scientific temper. Gandhi, the scientist, conducted his experiments in the laboratory of his mind and through the 'science of Satyagraha' he pursued his quest for Truth that is God. The true scientist always keeps an open mind, never claiming any finality about his conclusions, wrote Gandhi. Truth and God were one and the same, the pursuit of which was done in seemingly simple but amazingly superhuman way. Sarojini Naidu described it in words of enduring beauty as : " the rare and exquisite courtesy, and compassion and courage, wisdom, humour and humanity of this unique man who taught the Gospel of Truth." 'A religious actualist' was how Erikson described Gandhi who made 'an alliance of the inner voice and the outer mankind.'

Probably influenced by Jawaharlal Nehru's writings, Hiren Mukherjee argued that Gandhi's '*abhaya*' was greater than his '*ahmisa*'. Nehru wrote in *The Discovery of India* that "The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhaya* (fearlessness) not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind. Janaka and Yajnavalka had said, at the dawn of our history, that it was the function of the leaders of a people to make them fearless." For Jawaharlal Nehru the advent of Gandhi was "like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of the people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and

10 "Banish the fear of death by regarding it not with superstition or awe but merely as one of the natural functions in the cycle of life, such as eating and drinking, sleep and sex." - MARCUS AURELIUS

incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery. Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content.” (ibid) However Nehru’s regret was that the Congress did not accept and follow fully the path shown by Gandhi, though he was “ always there as a symbol of uncompromising truth to pull us up and shame us into truth.”

In Gandhi, Nehru found both the strength and hope of awakened India. Gandhi too knew that Jawaharlal was not a ‘blind follower’ and had a mind of his own and as Nanda observed “ Gandhi wanted to harness Nehru’s great talents and energies and was confident of containing his impetuous and rebellious spirit.” (p238) ‘He is undoubtedly an extremist’, wrote Gandhi after catapulting Jawaharlal Nehru to the Congress Presidency in 1929 ‘ thinking far ahead of his surroundings.’ (ibid) Described as Gandhi’s favourite disciple Nehru also seemed to have grown in confidence about the role of the Congress under Gandhi’s leadership in the struggle for freedom. He wrote in 1931 that “There was a time not long ago when an Indian had to hang his head in shame; today it is a privilege to be an Indian.” (Nanda p326). Nehru had two distinct advantages over other Congress leaders, his mastery over English language and knowledge of history. He was both a writer and maker of history. Fascinated by the range and continuity of Indian civilization, India, he wrote, is ‘a curious mixture of amazing diversity and abiding unity.’ Shashi Tharoor described Nehru as ‘a moody idealist intellectual who felt a mystical empathy with the toiling masses.’ There was something more than that, a mystic bond between Nehru and India that lasted till his end. His Will And Testament bears testimony to it with his praise of the ‘smiling and dancing’ Ganga, a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present and flowing on to the great ocean of the future’ being the highlight of the classic document. He was proud of the great inheritance and the nature of Indian civilization. “India has always seemed to me,” he wrote “to have broadly more the feminine qualities predominate—gentle and peaceful.” The life and work of Ashoka the Great who left behind ‘a deathless memory’ and great legacy had a deep impact on Nehru’s mind. Gautama Buddha’s

concern for humanity, Ashoka’s spirit of renunciation and Gandhi’s non-violence constituted the core of Nehru’s philosophy.

Jawaharlal Nehru began to give the Congress a new direction, radicalizing its policies, in spite of his colleagues not agreeing with him. In 1931 at the Karachi Congress he spoke strongly in favour of fundamental rights and foresaw the need for a constituent assembly. He was the first among the Congress leaders to stress the role of science and technology and industrialization as vital for India’s economic development. He was throughout consistent in his stance on the core elements of the Indian polity. Democracy would be meaningless if people were not guaranteed fundamental rights. He and Dr BR Ambedkar defended later the parliamentary system as it would ensure greater responsibility on the part of the rulers than the presidential type. Socialism, Nehru felt, would ensure equality and justice and was a panacea for social and economic ills. Democratic socialism was the best mechanism for achieving an egalitarian society, though progress would be slow, according to him. Andre Malraux identified four pillars of Nehru’s policy 1) democratic institutions, 2) staunch pan-Indian secularism 3) socialist economy and 4) foreign policy of non-alignment. Nehru was a staunch believer in large scale industrialization.

India, Nehru was convinced, was destined to play a major role in bringing nations together and began to articulate India’s future goals such as universal peace and global harmony in the 1930s. Interestingly that was the time when war clouds were gathering ominously with the big powers intensifying their rivalries. It was observed that in enunciating India’s foreign policy goals Nehru “had been the mentor of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress on international affairs.” Hiren Mukherjee remarked that “none of his Congress colleagues, howsoever resistant to some of his ideas, could challenge his authority in this field.” At the Haripura and Tripuri Congress sessions The Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, articulated India’s foreign policy goals. Nehru declared that ‘the people of India desired to live in peace and friendship with all countries and that India would work for international cooperation and goodwill.’ It was during the war period, as Bimal Prasad put it, that the Congress developed ‘a sophisticated world view’ reconciling the apparently contradictory pulls of

“The real need of the hour is a re-communion between us and the sages of our land, so that the future may be built on rock and not on sand.” - C.RAJAGOPALACHARI

nationalism and internationalism and chalked out an independent path in world affairs.’ In consonance with that policy Nehru, as Vice President of the Interim Government, reiterated that India would follow an independent policy keeping away from the power politics or groups aligned one against the other.” In March 1947 Nehru summoned the first Asian Relations Conference at Delhi heralding the beginning of a new era of Asian consciousness in world affairs. After becoming the Prime Minister he pursued his ‘independent, straightforward, honest’ policy not conditioned by the wishes of other countries, as S.Gopal put it. His policy of non-alignment was hailed as ‘a sophisticated policy of retaining maximum available options at any given time in a bipolar world.’ In the words of Escott Reid India could effectively play the role of ‘an honest broker in the relations between China and the West- a role which the West found very helpful.’ Probably in response to western criticism, that of US in particular, he chose to explain the nuances of India’s foreign policy in his address at the Columbia University in 1949 “The pursuit of peace, not through alignment with any major power or group of powers, but through an independent approach to each controversial or disputed issue, the liberation of subject peoples; the maintenance of freedom, both national and individual; the elimination of want, disease and ignorance which afflict the greater part of the world’s population.” the quote could be longer, as it seems incomplete. This proclamation of a global vision by the leader of a just liberated poor country must have irritated and annoyed the western powers, the US in particular, though Bertrand Russell was moved to say “Perhaps it will be he who will lead us out of the dark night of fear into a happy day.” Egypt’s leader Nasser saw in Nehru “the expression of human conscience itself.” Biographer Gopal wrote that Nehru “seemed to enjoy the rare distinction of being of advantage to his own country as well as to the world.” The usually hostile western press hailed Nehru’s democracy as ‘the Athens of Asia, the school of democracy” and Geoffrey Tyson wrote that Nehru did not need to go to New York to address the world press; it came to Delhi to hear him.

The launching of ‘the simultaneous change model’ by India under Nehru’s leadership was unprecedented in the history of the modern world. Opting for universal adult franchise, adopting the planning model for speedy

economic development, providing for social justice through the policy of reservation for the socially disadvantaged sections, and raising institutions for the development of education, science and technology, all to be achieved simultaneously, were among the major policy decisions taken at a critical time in the country’s history. Sardar Patel was then devoting his time and energy for the gigantic task of integrating the nearly six hundred Princely states with the Indian union. Dr.Ambedkar, BN Rao, Alladi et al were engaged in crafting the Constitution combining lofty idealism with commendable pragmatism.

During those turbulent times our leaders unmindful of their problems of health and personal safety, displayed courage, determination and vision to ensure India’s safe and smooth transition from bondage to freedom. The month of August conjures up memories of that midnight hour of 14th when Jawaharlal Nehru made his great ‘tryst with destiny speech’—“at the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom”. Nehru’s immortal words resonated across the length and breadth of India, thanks to the live radio broadcast. Somewhere ‘in one of the poorest corners’ of Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi spent that night anxiously in a poor Muslim house pursuing his mission to bring Hindus and Muslims close to each other during those horrendous days of communal clashes. The Prime Minister celebrating the advent of independence by hoisting the tricolour in Delhi amidst scenes of jubilation and the Father of the Nation fasting, praying and doing penance in Bengal for his people’s frailties! The great Indian paradox!

(To be continued)

Book Review

THE MIRACLE OF DEMOCRACY

INDIA’S AMAZING JOURNEY

Harper Collins Publishers India

a joint venture with India Today Group New Delhi

2008 pp243 - Rs. 395/-

- T.S. Krishna Murthy

Indian democracy has been described variously in such terms as ‘a paradox’ ‘a puzzle’ ‘a functioning anarchy’ ‘a living museum’ ‘a land of stunning contradictions’ and ‘a lumbering elephant.’ It has both fascinated and baffled the expert, the scholar and the

visitor from abroad. It neither succeeds nor fails, observed a writer long ago, but like the Ganges endures and survives.. Mr T.S.Krishna Murthy, former Chief Election Commissioner of India has come up with a scholarly and timely publication on the 'the essence of Indian democracy.' He changed his original title *Amazing Democracy* to *The Miracle of Democracy* and felt happy and vindicated at the change made when a Bihari porter at Delhi airport recognized India's CEC and expressed joy at the free and fair poll conducted in Bihar in February 2005.

T.S.Krishna Murthy has throughout his long and distinguished career maintained a low profile. The style is the man, it is said. Krishna Murthy's balanced presentation of complex issues of electoral politics and the numerous problems that surface everyday in the world's largest democracy bears testimony to the qualities of his head and heart. No tall claims or over-projection of his role in tackling sensitive issues are made in the meticulously researched and cautiously written book. The first person singular is rarely used and credit for the Election Commission's good work is accorded to the entire team and the staff. Krishna Murthy who missed IAS selection by just two marks and joined the Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax) in 1963 became the first IRS official to become joint Secretary to the Government of India and later Chief Election Commissioner of India. Stating the reason for writing the book Krishna Murthy says : "My intention was not to produce a work of research based on surveys, studies and analyses and principles, precedents and issues nor was it to write a comprehensive study of various forms of democracy and democratic experiences. What I really wanted to do was to bring out a few aspects of our experiments with democracy, and to attempt an honest appraisal of these in the light of my own experiences. I thought that my experience of conducting elections in India would provide some insights, especially regarding the challenges and complexities of managing electoral process."

The first of the eleven chapters of the book of 243 pages presents a candid and objective account of the Evolution of Democracy in India. The author analyses the main reasons for the present 'deplorable' state of public governance in India and how the 'twin maladies of distrust and frustration' have 'crept into the entire

gamut of administration' and how 'officers in charge of the various services of the Government of India have been carefree, if not careless in their approach' and makes 'an attempt to study and portray the glorious past, fragile present and uncertain future of our democracy.' With his vast administrative experience Krishna Murthy emphasizes the importance of relationship between the political leaders and civil servants, reminding both that their basis role was 'to serve the people, not to rule over them.' How necessary it is for both to remain outwardly cordial towards each other even if it is not possible to agree on important matters. Murthy was able to reject 'unreasonable demands' of political masters though he does not sensationalize the occasions that were really challenging at times.

It was no easy job conducting smoothly elections in some states where respect for rule of law was conspicuous by its absence. The former CEC is of the firm view that the Election Commission's main role is to provide 'a level playing field for all the contesting parties' and that 'neutrality of politicians and civil servants during elections is as important as the neutrality of the Election Commission.'

Calling the political parties 'the weakest link' in the system Krishna Murthy elaborately states the difficulties in managing the electoral process. He gives the examples of some successful democracies where electoral anomalies are rectified through reforms and appropriate remedial measures. The CEC who successfully conducted in 2004 'the all electronic election' using Electronic Voting Machines across the length and breadth of India in about 7,00,000 polling stations suggests several reform proposals and fourteen other proposals to strengthen Indian democracy which deserve serious and immediate attention consideration of law makers, policy makers and scholars. In the epilogue he ends the story of India's Amazing Journey as a democracy Krishna Murthy writes that the Indian democratic journey, however imperfect it may be, is exciting and fascinating because of its perplexing characteristics.'

One of the best written books on India's complex electoral process, *The Miracle of Democracy*, with a

"Democracy helps to consolidate a healthy nexus between the administrator and the politician, which would fulfil people's aspirations and redeem India's pledge of democracy." - ABID HUSSAIN

thought-provoking foreword by Justice M.N.Venkatachaliah, must be read not only by our legislators, civil servants and policy makers but also by all those interested in knowing about the huge and complex process of conducting elections, so ably managed by the Election Commission, from Sukumar Sen to Gopalaswami as its chiefs, and the entire staff of the EC, the unsung heroes who quietly and efficiently contribute to the survival and stability of the world's largest democracy. T.S.Krishna Murthy deserves our thanks and congratulations for contributing such a well written book on a subject of utmost national importance.

SRI SARADAMANI DEVI-I

- Sri Challa Sivasankaram

The subcontinent of Bharat was amazingly equipped with an impressive number of mythological and historical women of predominant mother principle coupled with and fortified by mystic temperament and esoteric disposition and religious elegance. The tretayuga (Golden age) saw the dazzling vision of women of superb intellectual integrity yoked with otherworldly leanings. First among such greats had been the unique name of Maitreyi the learned better-half of sage Yajnyavalkya one of the supreme law givers of the age. It was the Smriti known as Yajnyavalkya smriti meant for application in tretayuga. It had been a proud period of feminine spiritual awakening and women bent on seeking after achievement of that which never dies and ever produces live propensity to live in utter communion with self. Maitreyi gave expression to the immortal verse in answer to her saintly husband's desire to settle some worldly assets on her before he embarked on the life of a hermit. It is :

lead me from the unreal to the real
lead me from darkness to light
lead me from mortality to immortality

The verse is founded on the inexhaustible legacy of longing for immortality. The spiritual life of Bharat took a blithe turn to believe in its immortality and blissful absorption in the essence of the Absolute (Brahman).

Into such a mighty Bharat Sri Saradamani Devi was born on Dec 22, 1853 after Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa her Master came of age, and the first war of Indian independence was to break within five years when a 21 year old Brahmin princess Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi contained an unprincipled foreign army for over sixty four hours, when Robert Clive the henchman of East India company was plundering the fabulous opulence of Bharat, when patriotism blossomed to its perfect stature and religious and sectarian differences were pooled (such was the hour of the Mother's advent).

The holy site of her birth was Jayrambhati in Bankura district, eighty kilometres west of Kolkata. The parents of her though poverty's favourite humans, were cultured and conventionally enlightened Brahmins of flawless piety. Gadadhar was the name of Sri Ramakrishna before he attained to paramahanshood. Gadadhar's demeanor and mannerisms were so outlandish and smacked of insanity that they goaded his kith and kin to get him married. A frantic search for a bride was on. As providence would have it Gadadhar himself said that there was a girl in the house of Ramachandra Mukherjee of the village of Jayrambhati who was marked for him as his wife. In the neighbourhood of Jayrambhati and Kamarpukur (the native place of Gadadhar) there was an unbroken tradition of holding of the temple festival where quite a number of families of two obscure villages gathered in gay festive mood. It was a plain pastime in the countryside in those days particularly in the womenfolk of preplanning of possible marriage alliances for the future. When once on such festive occasion a frolicsome woman asked the baby Sarada whom she would marry among the gathering she pointed to the youth Gadadhar. Days and months rolled by. Child marriages were not rare in those days.

Queen Victoria took the reins of power. India was declared part of the Sun that never set, on British empire. It was May 1859 Sri Saradamani Devi of five years age was given in hand to 23 year old Sri Gadadhar. The wedlock was solemnised.

After the marriage Sri Saradamani Devi used to mark visits to Dakshineswar punctuated by intervals of

14 *"The ideal man is altruistic; does not speak evil of others, even of his enemies. He never feels malice and always forgets injuries. He is a good friend to others because he is his own best friend."* - ARISTOTLE

vyasa to Kamarpuku and Jayarambhati from March 1872 to September 1885. She served the Master as to a higher being solemnly furnished by God into the gamut of her unusual conjugal life for a nobler purpose unknown between moral couples. Ramakrishna offered her Shodasi puja in 1872. Shodasi is an aspect of Divine Mother supported to be a woman of 16 suffused with sublime prime. The Master abandoned at her feet the sumtotal of the fruit of His spiritual practices and religious austerities. Thus the wife of Sri Ramakrishna uncontaminated by carnal taint metamorphosed as Holy Mother to found an altogether new chapter of Motherhood of God. The lustrous light of universal and inclusive Motherhood perceptibly illumined Her form thenceforward. She was the Vidusheemani besides being Saradamani, both the epithets imply mother of priceless knowledge. She glowed not an borrowed limelight of her master. Both lived together, shared the self-same bed. Never was there even a faint carnal wise craving for appeasement. The two bodies that shared the same bed used to recede into Samadhi, the state in which both of them withdrew the whole of their consciousness inward and absorbed in the higher self. Thus they remained as long as their connubial life endured as celebrates inviolate.

Unlike the Master she had been a born yogini destined to deliver a sermon for the whole humanity that motherhood of God was not untenable and unrealizable. The master evolved into the state of paramahansa

through perseverent pursuance and graded striving towards that end. A devout woman and practical and secular at the same time herself, she ripened into a woman of virility and vision and illustrious resolve to prove to the world that motherhood of God was not opposed to his fatherhood. Her spiritual ministry endured for 32 years from 1888 to 1920. It was a glorious annal that made the previous ministrations of devout men and women pale into insignificance. Superstition and sectarian phobias never dared colour her spotless vision. She believed like the medieval catholic nuns in brotherhood of man and immanence of spirit in the secular. Spirituality was not an enemy of secularism. creed, credo and caste, have had little role to plan in her ministration. On moonlit nights, it had been her wont to spend her liesure hours looking studiously at the moon on such occasions she used to raise her palms folded in prayerful mood to the heavens above and she would sigh, 'may my heart be as pure as the rays of the moon' and yet in another mood on finding the stains in the moon she used to assure herself 'let there be no trace of stain in my mind.'

The holy mother told that the master left her behind to exemplify the motherhood of God. It was a lineage of sporadic rise of women of mighty spiritual vigour embellishing the canvas of depicting the lives of such mystic women. Once the master asked the Holy mother; have you come to drag me down to the material world?

(to be continued)

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