

The Guardian of Liberty

by
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Poem, penned and recited by Mr. Nadir Godrej, eminent industrialist, at the function arranged to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Forum of Free Enterprise and Golden Jubilee of The A. D. Shroff Memorial Trust, on 29th September 2016, in Mumbai.

The Guardian of Liberty

- *Nadir Godrej*

As India enters her seventieth year
There is indeed much to cheer.

And we could claim that we have both
Stability and steady growth.

But when we started at the gate
All we could claim was the Hindu rate.

An opportunity was lost.

And India paid a heavy cost.

In our Republic's early days
There is so much that we should praise.

It gives us all much elation
Our selfless leaders built a nation.

Civil discourse was maintained.

A scientific temper was regained.

Alas! One thing we didn't see
Was a free enterprise economy.

Nehru had a socialist bent
And that's the way the economy went.

Heavy industry was prized.

Some sectors were nationalised.

The Government seized the commanding heights
Not much was left for lesser lights.

And where they were allowed to play
Impediments came in the way.

Such horrors businesses would see:

Exchange controls, MRTP,

Licensing in great detail

And limitations on your scale!

Tax rates that confiscated all.

The economy just hit a wall.

One man would not accept this fall

A. D. Shroff then took a call.

Surprised by these alarming trends

He roped in some good business friends

For the Forum of Free Enterprise.

Now A. D. Shroff was truly wise.

For years the lamp continued burning

And children found that they were learning

The virtues of free enterprise,

A principle that still applies

Though those with another point of view

Always fail but rise anew.

In the early days they dominated.

The Forum wasn't tolerated.

By FICCI it was castigated.

Alas! It must be clearly stated

That business support was rather low

And businessmen went with the flow.

They chose not to criticise.
Perhaps they sought a little prize,
A license here, a permission there
They did not want to lose their share.
The Government began to frown.
There was a move to close it down.
But thinking the Forum to be weak,
They thought its prospects very bleak.
A natural death was then preferred
And forcing closure was deferred.
But the Forum did find some support
And don't you think all of us ought
To lend a hand to free enterprise
And build an economy of a good size,
Where through hard work and a little giving
All can enjoy a decent living.
The Forum's famous budget speech
Where Nani Palkhivala'd preach
The virtues of free enterprise
And castigate what was not wise.
With all the facts at his fingertips,
The audience could come to grips
With the budget's intricacies.
And never with notes, if you please.
The budget contents were often grim
But Brabourne Stadium filled to the brim.

Though policies left little scope
Our Nani still filled us with hope.

By Milton Friedman they were lauded
All their efforts should be applauded.

Professionalism was always prized
And Good Governance was advised.

Their plan for youth education
Was such a boon for our nation.

And once or twice I participated
And what I said then will be restated:

“In ancient times despots ruled.

And most of them were not well schooled.

And while there was free enterprise
The rulers could claim any prize
Since power vested at the top.

Then people slowly put a stop
To absolute, unbridled power,
No more did nobles have to cower.

They did rise up and as a starter
The King proclaimed the Magna Carta.

They then set up a parliament
And representatives were sent,
All issues were discussed at length
And gradually it gained in strength.

There came a time when all could vote
But it's important that we note,

There were struggles, there were tears,
Democracy took years and years.

In England there was evolution
In France there was revolution.

The slogan there was Liberty,
Equality, Fraternity.

In every kind of polity
The have-nots like equality.

And often people think it's good
To have someone like Robin Hood,
Who creeps upon the rich with stealth
And distributes unequal wealth."

Someone is there who always panders!
Just have a look at Bernie Sanders!

"And this was tried, in many ways,
Long ago in the Soviet days.

It's true disparities were small,
Although behind the Kremlin wall,
Officials lived a life of ease,
While the economy was on it's knees.

Before we start to distribute
Someone else must contribute.

And if you take, what people make,
They will, then feel, they have no stake.

You can be sure that they won't try.

They won't produce, they'd rather die.

And so, although, equality
Is a desired quality
It can't replace our liberty.

We can't produce, unless we're free.

And yet, for years, we couldn't see
That a socialist society
Could not produce the goods we needed.

If only then we had just heeded
The good advice of M. R. Pai.

And all we had to do was try
And look at it from a different prism
And thus give up on socialism.

If only we could have been wise
In trying out Free Enterprise.

The gains that now we see at last,
We could have had them in our past.

We had to await Manmohan Singh,
World Bank and IMF to bring
Reforms that helped to save the day
And demonstrate the golden way."

By protesting strongly in its day
The Forum helped to pave the way.

As reforms come at a faster pace
Our India's bound to lead the race.

The advantages we clearly see
In the Forum's Diamond Jubilee.



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