

Fifty Years After ...



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Edited by

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Introduction

The Government of India has gone to town, as the phrase goes, in celebrating 50 years of freedom. Apart from a committee appointed by the central government to plan the celebrations (from which committee veteran journalist Mr. Nikhil Chakravarty resigned on the ground that it contained persons who were being prosecuted for alleged criminal offences) almost every department of government at the centre and the states has been 'instructed' to suitably observe the 50th year of freedom.

Are these celebrations justified and warranted by the reality of life in India for the poor and the not so well-to-do. Maybe we can pat ourselves on the back for having remained a democracy while countries all around us in the sub-continent and in other countries of Africa and Asia fell prey to dictatorships (though for a brief 18-month period we too had a taste of what it is to be under a dictatorship). But the basic problems we inherited in 1947 when the British handed power to the Indian National Congress, remain. Around 48 per cent of our population continue to be illiterate; the majority of our people do not have basic health care; a large number of womenfolk still trudge long distances to fetch drinking water. The basic necessities are denied to an uncomfortably large percentage of our people.

To make things worse there has been a marked deterioration in the quality of our public life and leadership. Public character is at an all-time low. Quite apart from the fact that the spirit of public service has all but disappeared, criminals have taken over politics and public life. Scams abound, and but for the judiciary, the situation could well have been described as hopeless.

As the 20th century draws to a close the contours of Indian politics have changed considerably. When Mrs. Indira Gandhi decided that the Indian National Congress was a family affair, decimated Congress leadership in the states and split the party, it signalled the beginning of the end of one-party dominance and the beginning of coalition politics. This process accelerated with the defeat and subsequent demise of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. At the time of writing, the 13-party United Front after being in

power for about two years lost its majority when Mr. Kesri withdrew his party's support, and is functioning on a caretaker basis with elections in February and March 1998. While there has been much chest beating about instability many feel that the end of one-party dominance gives hope for the emergence of a genuine federal polity which is what the Constitution makers intended India to be all along.

The economy is also going through the convulsions of change. The command economy which pauperised India collapsed, giving way to a market economy. Not everyone has taken kindly to it - particularly all those who benefited from the permit-licence-quota raj. At the time of writing economic reforms have stalled. It would seem there are not enough people in the establishment who want the reforms to succeed.

Inadequacies in executive decision-making have provoked the judiciary into taking action on behalf of citizens *suo moto* or in response to public interest petitions.

The quality of our parliamentary institutions has deteriorated considerably whether it is the Lok Sabha or the UP Assembly.

The virulence of the caste factor has not only not abated but is on the increase. While one party whipped up religious fanaticism as a vote catching device, another pulled out of the mothballs, the Mandal Commission's recommendations for the same reason, and brought caste, a important and divisive factor, on the national agenda.

While all this is happening, technology has entered the scene in a big way and appears to be both an antidote and a cure. For instance technology has broken the state's stranglehold on communications and led to the freeing of TV and Radio from the tentacles of the state so that it could compete with independent channels.

These and related issues were discussed at a seminar entitled 'India-Fifty Years After' held in April this year in Mumbai. The presentations by the four distinguished speakers, eminently qualified to speak with authority on their subjects, are published, more or less in their entirety. The discussions, some had to be edited to avoid repetitions and to highlight the salient points.

S. V. Raju

Is This the Freedom We Fought For?

Sadanand Varde

I left Elphinstone college where I was a student, joined the freedom struggle in 1942 and was jailed for a year. Hence I was labelled 'freedom fighter' But the nomenclature 'freedom fighter' and all that is associated with it is not something that I carry with any pride or enthusiasm because many persons who carry that 'designation' have ruled the country and some of them, very distinguished ones at that, have been hauled in courts for criminal offences. Those who have been freedom fighters and those who were born after freedom, have a sense of sadness, a sense even of alienation with the sorry state of affairs of our country today.

A Vision of Free India

When Gandhiji gave the "Do or Die" call, many like me responded. We had dreams of what we would do after freedom. And those dreams, or the vision that we had were described, for example, in the 8th August 1942 Gowalia Tank resolution which proclaimed that power would belong to the toilers in the fields and factories and depicted a very inspiring picture of things to come.

Why Bhagat Master Wept

Recently I was at an institution in Neral called the Kotwal Wadi Trust. Kotwal was a freedom fighter. By profession a lawyer, he belonged to the barber community, and responding to Gandhiji's call, he did a big job in the Karjat taluka, to the extent of making the functioning of government administration almost impossible. He was much sought after by the British, and he went underground. This function to which I went was to celebrate the completion of 50 years of the Kotwal Wadi Trust, founded by Mr. Haribhau Bharsale, a humble Gandhian who has been working among the adivasis. On that occasion, my friend Liladhar Hegde sang a ballad composed by Vasant Bapat on the revolutionary exploits of Bhai Kotwal, who was shot dead during an encounter in 1943. As he was singing that beautiful composition, Mr. Bharsale said that of the 18 people

who were associated in that struggle in 1943, only one had survived and pointed out to an old man ('Bhagat Master', he called him) sitting in a corner. I could see tears flowing down his cheeks, and I asked myself the question why Bhagat Master was crying. Is it because he remembers Bhai Kotwal or is it because he is sorry that he is alive today to witness the sorry state of affairs of the country.

What Have We Done to India?

The question is what has happened to India? What have we done to India? What have we done to our representative institutions, to our law and order agencies, to our education; to our growing population? Now, while trying to answer these questions, I must mention two things that struck me. Once, while going through India Today magazine I came across a beautiful photograph of Gandhiji. In fact, it was Ben Kingsley's photo. And the title said: "India, the land that worships feet". Gandhiji was sitting and an elderly woman with her little child was touching his feet. The lower portion of that page, read: "Lakhani, the shoes that worship feet". Gandhiji was being used to promote a product. I am not going into the question of whether it was right or wrong, but when this advertisement is criticised by many as the outcome of the influence of Western ideas, I feel highly offended. This is a totally indigenous product. I don't remember having seen any advertisement or product promotion using Lincoln's or Kennedy's name.

Recently, I read a news item that some six so-called 'freedom fighters' were sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment for having forged documents to create a record that they were freedom fighters. Though they did not undergo any imprisonment during the freedom struggle they did undergo rigorous imprisonment after freedom!

I don't take the view that over the last fifty years, nothing has happened in the country. Take a balance sheet. We have had industrial development, our coverage of education has expanded, we have succeeded in establishing a large network of railways and communications and we have a reasonably modern scientific establishment to mention a few. But by and large when we take an overall view, the development that has taken place has bypassed a large majority of the people for whom, the 1942 resolution proclaimed, freedom was to be fought. May be we had

this illusion that when we attained freedom, all our problems would be solved. And therefore, I would like to quote from Winston Churchill's speech in the British Parliament when he attacked Clement Attlee. It is a very malicious statement. This is what he said:

"Power will go into the hands of rascals, rogues and freebooters. Not a bottle of water or loaf shall escape taxation. Only air will be free and the blood of these hungry millions will be on the head of Clement Attlee. These are men of straw of whom no trace will be found after a few years. They will fight among themselves and India will be lost in political squabbles."

When I look at the present scenario in the country, the most dominant factor in our public life today is political squabbles, be it in a state or in Delhi.

Who is to Blame?

When I said that the Development that has taken place has bypassed a large majority of the people, I refer to the lack of the basic minimum amenities of life. We have, after 50 years of independence, a government drawing out a common minimum programme, in terms of drinking water, primary education and health facility! This is not the result of the new economic policies that have been pursued in the last 5 years i.e., since July 1991. It is as though Mr. Manmohan Singh is the real villain of the piece, on account of whom we have landed ourselves into problems of growing poverty, unemployment, overpopulation and so on. I don't also subscribe to the view that the onslaught of multinationals in the country is jeopardising our sovereignty - our freedom. When I make my submissions, let it not be misunderstood that it is with reference to policies that have been pursued in the last five years.

As the poet William Wordsworth wrote "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven". That was the period in which I was involved in the freedom movement, and therefore I quote from an interview which Mr. Achyut Patwardhan gave over fifteen years ago around the time the Bofors scandal had surfaced. This is what he, one of the tallest among freedom fighters, said:

"Initially I believed that India would flourish when the British left;

later I believed that India would flourish when it adopted socialism. Now that I am proved wrong both times, I would prefer to be quiet."

It is only great men like him who could speak with such humility. Achyut Patwardhan went on to say:

"Today, the State has lost all moral authority. It is viewed as the creation of crooks, by crooks for crooks. Nothing seems to work without the use of money, muscle power or influence. So even if we have achieved a little prosperity, people think it is "inspite" and not "because" of the State. Back in 1947, you could distinguish between 'bandits' and 'politicians', not now. That is a measure of how far we have fallen."

These agonising words came from him much before the Kesris and the Sukhrams, came on the Indian political scene.

An All-Powerful State

When, after Independence, we established the National Planning Commission, in our early enthusiasm we placed the State at the head of the economy in all the decision making processes hoping that the controlling mechanism would bring out all that is necessary for rapid economic development. We did not realise that the business of government is not business. We therefore created a closed economy, raised a big tariff wall to protect our industrial structure so that it could grow, which for some time no doubt was necessary. But we created an industrial and trade regime in which enormous powers were handed over to ministers and bureaucrats. We followed in the wake of that model of development, with fiscal policies or taxation policies which could never be expected to be complied with, but which instead led to the growth of a parallel economy which today accounts for nearly half the economic activities equated to half the national production of the country.

We created a huge public sector. We have sunk more than Rs. Two lakh crores in the public sector. And we associated the public sector with public interest in only one sense - protecting the employment of those who are employed. Whether they are productive, whether they add to national wealth, whether they meet the needs of the community, were considered irrelevant considerations and the capital of over two lakh

crores did not give a return of even 2.5% on investment.

As the loss making industries were supported with annual budgetary grants, the managers were happy that losses would be taken care of. The result was, that funds from the state exchequer which ought to have legitimately gone to education, infrastructure, health services, were denied those resources. In the process, we inherited a system where government became a very important agent, a very powerful factor in all decision-making processes.

VIP Republic

The next point I would like to refer is the complete debasement of the entire political class. There are very many outstanding examples, no doubt, of men committed to ideals, to values. The debasement of the political class has led to what we have in the last 50 years created - a VIP Republic. We wanted to create a democratic republic but what we have created is a VIP Republic.

In this VIP Republic we have MPs who occupy government bungalows even though they have ceased to be MPs. They are in heavy arrears of rent and telephone bills. The result is that those to whom people look to solve their problems, to set the economy going, are the very people who are using their positions of power, their offices whether as MPs or MLAs, to pursue interests which are neither social nor national. During a discussion I attended recently someone asked "How is it that Dr. Ambedkar, after having considered so many constitutions of the world did not make any provision for controlling defections?"

Crabs or Lobsters ?

We have representative institutions which speak in terms of parliamentary privilege. I remember, when Pandit Nehru was the Prime Minister, he picked up the telephone and spoke to the Speaker Mr. Mavalankar: 'Will you please drop in, I have some work' requested Pandit Nehru. In reply Mavalankar sent him a note saying: "Mr. Prime Minister, the Speaker does not go to the ministers' chambers.' Within seconds, Nehru rushed to Mavalankar's chamber and said, 'I am sorry'. But what do we have now? We have in our parliamentary institutions new conven-

tions e.g. a government is defeated, yet its budget survives! These are the result basically of the debasement, the degeneration of the political class. Mr. Biju Patnaik (he is no more) was also a part of that establishment. He described the United Front which is in power, as a group of lobsters. George Fernandes in his response said that crabs were being upgraded as lobsters.

I mentioned earlier the point made by Achyut Patwardhan in his press interview about criminals being indistinguishable from politicians. We have a very similar version here in Mumbai. The Shiv Sena took the stand that if you want to apprehend the goondas, you must not apprehend the Marathi goondas before you have apprehended the other goondas! We have the spectacle of an elected member of parliament going on fast within the precincts of a police station because a notorious criminal was arrested by the police. And the MP could not be arrested because parliament was in session. When parliament is in session, you cannot arrest an MP without the permission of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. If parliament was in session, he should have been there.

That is why I said we have created a VIP democracy. Crores that go into VIP security and the crores that go into maintaining this establishment is an indication of the opportunities that are denied to the common people. I don't think the law and order situation immediately after independence or even in the worst days of Partition was so bad as it is today. The agents of law and order are looked upon more as enemies of the people than as friends.

The question is: Is this a systemic failure? Have we adopted a political system, a constitutional apparatus which is alien to our genius and our tradition, or is it a shameful failure of the principal play actors in the system?

A Question of Legitimacy

Then there is the question of legitimacy. What is legitimate? We have come to a situation where anything that has the sanction and support of powerful groups or interests or the power to hold society to ransom is considered legitimate. Demands get legitimised on the basis of the

capacity of those who make the demand to hold the society to ransom. And then, in sheer helplessness the people on the other side yield to the demand. Today is the third day of the BEST strike. It has caused considerable hardship to millions of people travelling by buses. So we now have new ideas of legitimacy.

Competitive Populism

In our zeal to provide for those who are below the poverty line, we have been dishing out various kinds of programmes with a delivery system which is incompetent and corrupt. Andhra Pradesh has been following for quite some time a policy of dual cards in their rationing system. A study made of their scheme proved that the total number covered by the dual card system, amounted to more than the total population of Andhra Pradesh!

And then we have, both on the side of people's organisations and on the side of the government what one may call competitive populism. Whether it is a trade union, a government department or it is a people's organisation clamouring for something, the demands made are often at variance or totally indifferent to the overall requirements of the nation. This has resulted in our governments following the policy of open ended subsidies of different kinds representing a wastage of resources and which are not cost effective - be it in the power sector, or in the sector of education as a result of which our economy has suffered.

New Federalism?

Currently there is talk about what is called new federalism. This is a new development. I am of the view that the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution conceived India as a federation where the focus of power would be more in the states than in the central government. The provision of the Grants Commission every five years is in itself some kind of a guarantee for balanced regional development so that resources can be transferred from the better off states to the not so better off states. We have now a situation where the chief minister of Punjab after having come to power gives water and power free to farmers and before the ink on that order has dried, and without batting an eyelid, he comes to the central

government with a request that a particular loan extended by the central government for a particular purpose be completely waived.

To what extent is the Tamil Manila Congress an expression of the regional aspirations of the Tamilians other than that represented by the DMK and the AIADMK. I concede the point that there is such diversity in terms of problems etc. that it is necessary to take note of this, but let us remember that it is in this era of planned development that the central government in the name of centrally sponsored schemes has acquired more and more power. So this again is a problem with our republic.

And then, we have over 2.5 million pending court cases. We have not been able as yet to devise a system where we could do something to sort out this problem.

Wasted opportunities

Therefore, when I look back, I do feel that these 50 years have been years of wasted opportunities and lost morality. I think the decline started when Indira Gandhi became the prime minister. Not that these elements were not present in the polity before that, but using men as material to achieve objectives became fashionable and the decline started from that time. Therefore, we are now in a situation where we want freedom without responsibility, power without accountability, rights without duties, remuneration without work. In such a situation where there seems to be an attitude of total unconcern and a no-holds barred obsession to pursue sectional interests, the country is really facing a major crisis. This is not the freedom that I visualised when at the age of 17 I left college and joined the struggle.

I would like to end by reading out to you a letter from Sheila Kaul to Nanasaheb Goray. At that time, Rajiv Gandhi was the prime minister, during whose tenure, there were different kinds of gimmicks. And one such gimmick was the 'Freedom Run'. Another was 'Dandi March Run'. In her letter Sheila Kaul requested Nanasaheb Goray to associate himself with this particular run. This was Nanasaheb's reply:

"March 8, 1988.

Dear Sheilaji,

I have to thank you for your letter dated 22.2.1988. The proposed 'Dandi March' is, in my opinion, a parody of the original, as comic as the freedom run in Delhi. Instead of wasting money on this pseudo heroic march, make salt cheaper by 50%. That will be some tribute to the memorable event.

"Why not leave Bapu alone? At that time, Gandhiji had compared the real income of the common man with the salary and perks of the Viceroy of India. Is Rajivji willing to do it now. Needless to say, I will have nothing to do with these funsters. I hope they will have plenty of Pepsi Cola on their way to Dandi."

The Discussions

K. F. Rustomji

Democracy only for the Few?

Our achievements in science have not been very significant, except in the field of agriculture. The middle class has expanded and there are more rich and more poor in India today. But there are many things that have seriously deteriorated. Out of our population 44% i.e. 400 million live below the poverty line or in absolute poverty; 230 million have no safe drinking water - double the population of Japan; and we have 300 millions illiterates. Ours, we have 70% literacy.

The British handed over a system of justice which had a lot of merit. A murder case which took six months for a decision (there was day to day trial in sessions courts in those days) now takes over 8 to 10 years for a decision. In contested cases the conviction rate is almost zero. So we cannot claim that we have achieved deterrence in our courts of law. On the other hand we have instituted a system in which the police beat up, torture or even kill in order to secure deterrence which is not possible in a court of law. I ask you whether this is a civilised method. Is this the way

which we wanted it to be 50 years ago. In consequence we have not been able to contain crime and corruption which have invaded the system from end to end. Do you think all these scam cases in which ministers are involved will be convicted? Ten years from now we will even have forgotten who Satish Sharma (former Petroleum Minister) was. We will not be able to get a conviction in any case because of the way in which our courts are now constituted.

Although things are bad it is not as though there are no signs of hope. A real hope is the new home minister Mr. Indrajit Gupta who in a recent letter to the chief ministers says: "There has been a general fall in the performance of the police as also a deterioration in the policing system as a whole in our country". He refers to "an overdose of unhealthy and petty political interference at various levels starting from the transfer and posting of policemen of different ranks, misuse of police for partisan purposes and political patronage quite often extended to corrupt police personnel." After holding up the recommendations of the National Police Commission for 20 years, the government of India now recommends its implementation with the formation of state security commissions which would give the general direction for police performance.

Today our only hope is public interest litigation, and the supreme court apart from the direction that the Union home minister has given. The tragic performance of prime ministers at the centre; Narsimha Rao's misuse of the CBI against his opponents followed by Deve Gowda, the simple farmer towards the end of his term behaving like a malguzar and using the CBI and other agencies against his political enemies. How are we going to check politicians from misusing the police, the CBI and the anti-corruption agencies.

The sad part is that there has not been enough condemnation of this in the media or in forums like this. It is almost accepted as the new method of politics. The main question before us is, is our democracy only for a few or for the millions who are deprived. That is the question that we have to face.

Maj.Gen. (retd.) E. D'souza

The Armed Forces

I would like to relate a small incident on the night of the 14th/ 15th

Aug. 1947. I can claim to be the first one to raise the flag of free India on a parade ground in Japan at midnight and I would like to tell you, as a young officer, what our feeling were. We were exulting in the fact that the British yoke had been thrown off and soon we would be part of a free India.

I am basically an optimistic and I keep saying that India has bumbled along for 2,000 years and we will bumble along for 2,000 years more. Lal Bahadur Shastri gave us the slogan "*Jai Jawan Jai Kisan*". Today it is Jai Brashtachari, Jai Maha Brashtachari and Jai Param Brashtachari. My fervent hope is to that our armed forces, the sole remaining bastion of dependability in this country, is not politicised.

Arvind Deshpande

Today's Pindaris

In his autobiography, Mr. B. K. Nehru, recalls an incident which I think exemplifies a great deal the tragedy we are facing. As a young ICS officer in the Punjab cadre, he was invited by a big landlord of the Punjab, Mr. Omar Khayat Khan Tiwana, to a cup of tea and this big landlord told him: 'Look young man, a ruler who does not help his friends or harms his enemies is useless.' This is the kind of thing that not only Mr. Tiwana believes in but practically all those who have become rulers of India, particularly the present variety. Unfortunately, unlike the friends of our earlier rulers like Rajaji, Nehru, and Patel who were gentlemen, the friends of today's rulers happen to be criminals. And who are the enemies? People like us sitting here. Prof. Varde talked about Shri Achyut Patwardhan. I would like to recall one more instance, In 1991, when I invited him to inaugurate a 'People's Parliament' in Delhi he refused. I asked him why? He said: 'I do not know what you people think of India, but my feeling is that we are soon entering a phase which is equivalent to the phase when the British consolidated their rule in India', i.e. 20 years before 1857 - around 1837. He said 'just recall what happened when the Mughals had collapsed, the Peshwas had collapsed and the British had not yet consolidated their rule. That period if you will recall, we were ruled by thugs, pindaris, all kinds of rajas and there was total anarchy. In the 1990's that is the kind of thing we are likely to face again. What will you do with this people's parliament', asked Achyut Patwardhan.

The two basic problems we have been facing are mainly political:

(1) The collapse of the Constitution and, (2) the fact that in 50 years, we have not been able to find a long term viable alternative to the Indian National Congress which succeeded the British raj. The Congress too would have gone the way of the Muslim League in Pakistan, if there were no leaders like Nehru, Patel and Rajaji at that time. The values which these leaders had were in conformity with the values enshrined in the Constitution. What exactly are the values of today's rulers like Laloo, Jayalalitha, Mulayam Singh, etc.

If the reality is going to be such that there would be a vast discrepancy between the values of our Constitution and the so-called new rulers, either the Constitution will break down or we may have to have a Constitution which is on the lines of the South African one based on the actual percentage of population. In South Africa we find a similar situation - 70% OBCs and SCs are equal to 70% of blacks in South Africa. 19% of whites are equivalent to what we call the upper castes and better off people and the 12% Asians there are equal to the Muslim population here. The new South African Constitution that is going to replace the existing Constitution is going to be a compromise based on these percentages. So something has to be done that the rulers have the same values that the Constitution has otherwise we will be in trouble. It doesn't matter who rules. Our own submission in the Leslie Sawhny Programme or wherever we have been working is that in the freedom struggle it was all right to have a Lokmanya Tilak, an Aurobindo, Ghosh a Bhagat Singh or a Savarkar, but after freedom, for liberal democracy to survive you will need a combination of people like Gokhale, Gandhi, J.P. and M.N. Roy - people who look at poverty in a rational and not in a sentimental way and try to remove it.

Dr. Maneesha Tikekar

Our Failures

It is obvious, we have failed to create a civil society and that I would attribute to excessive governmentalisation and politicisation of our entire society. Politics has become an instrument of social mobility. Perhaps this happens in all traditional hierarchy-bound societies where social mobility is not easily available and therefore politics becomes an immediate avenue for acquiring status and money. Second, our political culture itself has played a very ambiguous role in the sense that we have still retained what

we may call a working democracy. Though of course many things are wanting. At the same time we have made it a kind of *tamasha*. We have retained the framework but the substance is lacking. Our culture has been resilient always. Indian society has come back after several catastrophes and therefore we may continue to be democratic for sometime but one doesn't know in what way. Thirdly as Dr. Ambedkar had mentioned, constitutional morality needs to be inculcated with great effort. What we have been doing at the most is only observing constitutional technicalities or formalities but constitutional morality has been overlooked altogether. Fourthly, the sudden coming of mass society in India - by mass society I do not mean goods and services that are used or in demand but even ideas and ideologies. We haven't cultivated anything in our country - we have simply, like technology, been borrowing so many things and therefore it is very natural that the rulers tend to be extremely populist.

Admiral Ramdas (retd.)

Let's Look Forward

Let us not dwell on the past, but look forward to how we can improve matters. One, the quality of leadership. Second, the sense of discipline. Third, some values which are still cherished have endured. The armed forces have a basic subscription to democracy and help maintain the structure of democracy and ensure that the nation stays together. The armed forces do not recruit on a caste basis. We have always rallied to national causes like floods, restoring disrupted civil services, electrical failures, etc.

Dr. Usha Mehta

Keeping Alive the Ideals of the Freedom Struggle

Being a freedom fighter my memories go back to the days of the freedom struggle and it was our good fortune that we got an opportunity to fight under the unique leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and other our respected national leaders. Our struggle certainly was quite different from many of the struggles fought in other countries of the world and that is that not only did our leaders and especially Mahatma Gandhi insist on the convertibility of means and aims but tried to see to it as far as possible that the movement remained non-violent.

I would also like to point out that the freedom struggle was not confined merely to the educated sections of the society or to the middle class. In our revolution almost all the struggles especially the Dandi struggle and the Quit India struggle were spontaneous revolutions in the sense that all sections of society and all age groups and all communities participated very willingly and spontaneously.

So far as the ideals of the freedom movement were concerned, certainly the ideal of liberty was there along with the ideals of equality and justice. I would go a step further and say that not only Gandhiji but many of our leaders then had said that our nationalism was not a narrow nationalism i.e. our freedom was connected with the freedom of the world; liberty and equality had to go together and therefore it is that Gandhiji always said that whenever an active satyagraha is not on we must concentrate on what he called constructive activities i.e. nation building programmes. He had a picture before him of India that was a slave country but all the time the dream that he had was of an India that was progressive, an India that was free and developed and therefore it is that he tried to draw a picture of independent India with us.

Now we cannot overlook some of the achievements that our government has made during the last 50 years. In the field of science and technology, also in the industrial field and I would say that even in our foreign relations we have certainly made a mark on the world map. Also we must say so far as our Constitution is concerned personally I am of the view that we have one of the best Constitutions in the world only that we have not been able to put it into practice or to implement the several salutary features of our Constitution.

However, inspite of this it is certainly true that a majority of us freedom fighters do feel that this certainly is not the freedom we fought for. Very often even the common people feel that perhaps we were better off under British rule than we are under our own rule today. And there are many reasons for that. There have been any number of legislation passed; our army has done well, they have protected our freedom and the judiciary has certainly come to our rescue. Let us not be completely pessimistic. I am reminded of an encouraging statement made by Mr. M.C. Chagla during the emergency. At that time many of us were feeling

terribly depressed and someone took me to Mr. Chagla and said look she is so terribly depressed. He said, what should I tell you because I myself feel very depressed I have just refused an invitation from All India Radio to give a talk. Then he talked to some of us. After that he specially sent for me and said there is no cause to be depressed and dejected because India that has survived so many attacks and so many foreign enemies, will certainly survive the emergency and Indira and that boosted my morale. So that is what we want.. Gandhiji was once asked for his message for ministers. He said in his usual style. "My friend you have come to a wrong person. A person who has never been a minister nor who has a likelihood of becoming a minister". But when this journalist persisted Gandhiji gave just one advice and that is let the ministers hold their chair by all means but let them hold them lightly and not tightly.

The greatest responsibility today lies on voluntary organisations and they have to come forward to do two things. To see that the ministers behave and they are given some training in parliamentary affairs, procedures, etc. At the same time we too have to do our duty. That is, just as the days of one party dominance have almost gone and we have come to coalition politics similarly voluntary organisations working in different directions will have to come together and form what I may call a loose confederation so that we can tackle the different aspects of life and there is be good distribution of work. We have to make people feel that they are being denied their rights and they have to organise themselves.

Last week, some friends met to discuss as to what can be done to improve the situation and some of them suggested that there should be a people's movement. Now personally I feel that what we have to do is to prepare the ground for a people's movement. At this moment if you give a call I am afraid the response may not be very good. Firstly there are no leaders today and much less leaders of calibre of Gandhiji, J.P. and others. And therefore let us train leadership on the one hand and create awakening among the masses and go on doing nation building work; cooperate with the government in all its good activities and be prepared to resist government when the time comes. This way, if social or voluntary organisations take the lead I am sure the picture will not be as dismal as it seems today and therefore, friends, what we should say is not my country right or wrong but pray that our country always treads the right

path in the hope that when the country celebrates centenary year of freedom, our successors will not have to repent having had to live through their 50 years.

Justice R. A. Jahagirdar (retd.)

The Patient is still Alive and curable

Poverty in India, right from Dadabhai Naoroji's days, was attributed to foreign rule. Gandhi brought in charkha, swadeshi and khadi so that some poverty could be alleviated; our demand for self-government for the country as a whole also meant self-government for people at different levels right down to the village panchayats. Gandhi's dream was the country should be ruled by village panchayats. It is pertinent to recall that Dr. Ambedkar was opposed to rule by village panchayats which he said would be cesspools of casteism, violence and corruption because in those days, the village panchayats were dominated by caste Hindus. That is why, despite Article 40 in the Directive Principles of State Policy, the entire Constitution of India had no mention of village panchayats or local self government. These came after 1993 with the 73rd and 74th Amendments.

The political unity of the country has been maintained thanks to the civil service, the armed forces and, to some extent, due to the judiciary. As for welfare of the people we did make some progress initially. We are better off than our forefathers.. In the villages and towns you can now see cars, tractors and cement concrete houses.

With the adoption of the amendments mentioned above, to the Constitution, Acts were passed which led to the village panchayats acquiring some real powers. New village panchayats for the tribal people are being established in the tribal areas. I suppose this is the dream or vision of what India was supposed to be and it was for this that people like Prof. Varde fought and went to jail.

Around the time India won its independence, Ghana too was liberated from the French. At that time, a comparison was made between Mr. Nehru of India and Dr. Nkrumah of Ghana. It was suggested that Dr. Nkrumah would bring greater glory to Ghana than Nehru to India. Within two years after that there was an alleged attempt on the life of Dr.

Nkrumah. The chief justice of Ghana was appointed to try those persons who were accused of the attempt on the life of Dr. Nkrumah. And all the five persons were acquitted. The next day Dr. Nkrumah went with his soldiers to the Supreme Court of Ghana and dismissed the Chief Justice of that country. So when tributes are being paid to the Indian judiciary tributes must also be given, partly at least, to the politicians who have not, like Ghana or Charles I, got soldiers to parliament or the Courts. And Ghana thereafter went into darkness and has never known freedom since. Several countries became independent after the second world war both in Asia and Africa. And if you compare the history, development and progress of all other countries in Africa and Asia, India is the only country which has retained its constitutional framework and government all these fifty years. At no time did India go under any dictatorship though it nearly went to the brink in 1976-77. Also, thanks to the unfortunate judgement of the Supreme Court, that act of dictatorship was legitimised when four judges of the Supreme Court said it was provided for in the Constitution. But that was only an observation.

Our Army is extraordinarily professional. At no time has any Army officer developed any political ambition. Out of 50 years of Independence Pakistan has been under Army rule for 37 years have been in Army rule.

Dr. Usha Mehta rightly said don't quarrel with the Constitution, don't quarrel with the tools. In economics, we usually say the gold standard did not fail, we failed the gold standard. Similarly in politics, we can say it is not the Constitution which has failed us we have failed the Constitution. With a much smaller Constitution the Americans have achieved much. They have consolidated their freedom and expanded their liberties. We have detailed provisions in the Constitution for every situation, so we can't blame the Constitution for any situation that has arisen. Even if we become a little pessimistic let us realise the patient is still alive and we can still cure him and make him live and kicking again.

Too Many People, Too Little Health Care, Too Many Illiterates

Indumati Parikh

What is freedom? Did any of our freedom fighters define freedom. Freedom was never defined nor understood by the common men and women of this country because we belonged to a hierarchical culture where freedom was unknown. Freedom was within the community, within the caste, within the religion. This was all the freedom that we understood. By and large, the modern meaning of freedom was never understood even, I am sorry to say, by most of our freedom fighters. Our slogan was let the Britishers go away and everything would be fine. I was not a freedom fighter but I fight for my freedom even today and for the freedom of my people. And that fight is going to be a life long one. Freedom is not achieved at one point. It is a continuous process and you have to constantly achieve that freedom to enjoy it. That is how I feel.

The Real Meaning of Freedom

I have got the highest respect for Gandhiji but he did not describe what Ram Rajya was. His *Gram Swaraj* or self-sufficient village is not possible in this modern world. Then somebody wanted socialism and someone else wanted communism. But these terms were never defined in terms of what they meant to the life of people. As a person who deals at the grass-root level this is important to me. It was M. N. Roy who said that freedom is the continuous removal of impediments to the development of human beings i.e. you keep removing the impediments, becoming more and more free. That is why I said that freedom is not achieved at one single moment but is a continuous process.

Have our freedom fighters ever bothered about how to deal with this hierarchical society? Most of our problems, I would say, are economic, socio-cultural and only then political. For the common man and woman, politics has become the politics of goondas. Have we tried to change our socio-cultural ethos? Have we tried to change the attitude of people towards what freedom is, how they could achieve it by their own efforts.

We have never involved people in anything we are doing. And this involvement is absolutely necessary - right from planning to implementation. We sit in Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta or Madras and we make big plans. We then give these plans to government officers to implement and then blame them when the plans fail. Why do these plans fail? Because those who implement them are not good enough. Have we trained them? Have we motivated them? Have we told the people what it means to their lives? Because, unless you touch the life of a person, it is not possible for them to be motivated to do something. And that is exactly what I mean.

Why So Many Illiterates

Why do we have so many illiterates? Because literacy has no meaning in the everyday life of the poor man. Government programmes for literacy unless combined with income generation will not be effective. That is my personal experience. And that is why we have 71% women as illiterates though the government's figures put it at 56%. The difference arises because they have not added to that those who began but did not complete their primary education. These drop-outs lapse into illiteracy in two or three years. That has been my experience in the literacy programmes I have conducted. You teach a woman for a year, she starts reading, and when she starts writing her name we leave her alone and within four or five years, she is back again in the literacy class.

The Sham of Rural Schools

The same is the case with rural schools. Have any of you visited a rural school? On one of my surprise visits to one of these rural schools, not a single girl was present in the class though there were 29 girls on the rolls. When I questioned the teacher, I was informed that they (the girls) were probably helping their mothers. One teacher was very honest. He said: 'Bai, if you had told me you were coming, I would have asked the girls to come to school to be present during your visit.' This is a common feature in all rural schools. And then we have one room, one teacher and four classes. Most of the rural schools are like that. If you go to municipal schools in Bombay, there is an unwritten law that no student should be failed before the 4th standard. The other day, in my institution, a girl was reading something. I asked her what it was she was reading. She showed me the book. I asked her in which standard she was, and she said 4th. So

I told her to read something. She didn't know what she was reading.

There is something seriously wrong with our education system even after 50 years of freedom. This is because we have not paid any attention to primary education. In our people's plan, we have mentioned that education and cultural development of the people is the basic foundation of a people's state. If we want people to take part in that state and if we want them to be knowledgeable, then we have to educate them.

The Population Problem

Let's look at the population problem? In 1951, we accepted population control as official policy. Yet from 1951 to 1991, we have more than doubled. Our population control policy has been a complete failure. Why? Because we failed to view it as a socio-cultural problem. It cannot be solved by laws or by economic reforms. We are well aware of people in high places having 9 and even 10 children. Those of you who have some knowledge of slums may know that those living in these slums imitate the elite. If we have a President who has nine children, how can we tell the poor man in the slums, that he must have not more than two.

The basic is women's education has been completely neglected. The number of women is going down in this country. At the beginning of this century there were 971 women to 1000 men. Now it is 927. It has been a continuous fall. Why? Because of the continuing neglect of women. Every one of us learnt our first lessons at our mother's feet. And that person is the most ignorant in this country. How do you expect all of us to be cultured when we are learning from an ignorant person? What is her status in the family, her status in the world, her status in the country. 30% reservation for women in local self governing institutions is just on paper. I have seen that 30% who have been elected. What status do they have in society; in the panchayats? Even as Sarpanchs they have no status. There is a man who is ruling from behind. I know this first hand as I often go to slums and to rural areas.

Women's Education

We did a survey in 1969 of women's education in Bombay's slums and we found that women who go from illiteracy to even primary level education have fewer children. The number of children born to educated

women goes down and child survival increases. And child survival is a very crucial factor. Once the child survives the woman does not want more children. And this I learnt from a very poor woman. She told me: 'Bai if you have two children they will survive, but I will have to have eight for two to survive.' Yes. We have reduced infant mortality. But the progress is very slow and statistics do not reflect the real situation. In Kerala, the literacy rate among women is very high. It is almost 90%. So women's illiteracy percentage comes down in national statistics because of one or two states. Infant mortality comes down because Goa and Kerala have low infant mortality rates. What about Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan (the BIMARU States) - 22% women's literacy in these states. And the infant mortality rate is 110.

Then there is the social-cultural issue - everybody wanting a son. Even the most elite people want a son who can do the last rites. You can burn a woman alive. You can burn a child for not bringing dowry, but you cannot let her perform a dead man's rites. This is the height of hypocrisy.

Phule and Ranade

This fight for freedom began many years before in Maharashtra. Phule in his book Satya Dharma Katha has given thirty three points which are practically what we are demanding today including human rights, equality of gender, etc. Ranade when he wrote about these issues listed thirty two points. Ranade's list includes even kindergarten schools.

We haven't really gone back into recent history to understand what some of our social reformers wanted to change. Ranade started alongside the Congress the Sarvajanik Sabha. And the sessions of these two organisations would take place together i.e. the political and social issues were taken together. Then came the dominance of political parties. The Sarvajanik Sabha's mandap was burnt and the Sabha practically went into the wilderness. So we pushed the social revolution part completely into the background and went ahead to have just political freedom.

Real Democracy

We have accepted democracy - meaning thereby individual freedom, individual development, individual vote. In such a system there can be no place for a hierarchical society. Where is the freedom for women,

where is the freedom for the shudra. I am tempted to quote Manu because he has bracketed women and the shudra together. There has been some kind of social revolution among the shudras but unfortunately there are brahmins among shudras now. And they are ruling, not the ordinary shudras.

So taking into consideration this social reality unless we accept that social revolution must precede any other revolution we will continue to find that we have not progressed at all even after another fifty years. Our caste system is breaking down not because we are consciously doing it but because of the Britishers, because of the railways, because of education because of the employment policy. We are not doing anything consciously to really change our attitude to life. And then most of our people are fatalistic in their attitudes - leaving things to fate.

Need for a Social Revolution

That is why I say that unless we go in a big way in seeking a social revolution, in educating our people we are not going to change. Changing the caste structure, changing the attitude of the people towards life; changing their attitudes to get them to take destiny in their own hands instead of leaving it to fate means education. In 1942, the people's plan said that education and cultural development, would bring down the numbers of the population - not laws. At the Cairo Conference, it was clearly the consensus that development is the best contraceptive. I remember Roy saying in 1937 that India needed a social revolution first and only thereafter a political one. And he was a firebrand politician.

Health Care

Take health care. Who bothers? We have accepted the Alma Ata definition of health care that is promotive, preventive and curative or the well-being of a person - physical, mental and social. This covers everything. And we medicos who are working in the field must de-mystify medicine. Dr. David Werner wrote the book 'Where There Is No Doctor'. This book has been translated in 98 languages and has been used as a Bible for people's education. Promotive health is health education. Through health education we can bring about considerable social change. We need to educate people on how a child is conceived, what is the

reproductive system, and how we can stop conception. Let us not give them slogans like 'two or three are enough'. By doing so we are putting the cart before the horse.

The same thing happened during the fight for freedom. We gave them slogans like 'Quit India', 'Let the Britishers go and everything will be fine'. This did not happen. Everything did not become fine. Even the middle-class do not know what freedom is. It was an act of parliament that gave us our independence. We got independence, not our freedom. We got a chance to rule ourselves and we have made a mess of it. The basic lives of the ordinary people have not changed. And unless we do something to change their basic lives we will continue to have too many people and too little health care.

I have visited many primary health care centres. They are poorly manned and poorly equipped. They are hardly used because people don't know how to use them. We have not explained to people about preventive and promotive health. Go to the adivasi areas - they do don't know anything about such matters. Numerous political movements have taken place. But not movements that have meaning in their everyday lives. Have we taught these adivasis basic facts about nutrition. Nutrition plays a very important part in the development of the brain. If you have malnutrition in the first four or five years then only 80% of the brain develops. And then we complain that 80% of our people are not intelligent. How can you expect them to be intelligent if they don't know the basic facts about proper food. In some adivasi areas, even today, people do not know how to eat vegetables.

Non-Formal Education & Appropriate Technology

The basic fact is we are not educating people; we are not teaching them on how to better their lives and we are not giving them confidence that they could shape their destiny. By education I do not mean putting everybody in school. I am talking about non-formal education which every one of us can impart. And then there is the question of appropriate technology. Technology that could be used by anybody and understood by anybody. To begin with start treating the illiterate and ignorant as human beings, treat them with dignity and equal to you. People have enough intelligence to understand. I speak from personal experience.

The Discussions

A. Solomon

The Need for Values

When India got political independence, what was the world view prevailing in the country? What were the expectations of the people? We were lucky to have a liberal Constitution, a Constitution based on secular values. But was the ethos of the country liberal and democratic? The problems that the country faced were well known: The question of population; of education; of poverty. India was the first country which, after independence, introduced family planning. But the task of implementing the family planning policy of the then government was left to a catholic health minister who did not believe in artificial methods of family planning and therefore Dr. Abraham Stokes was invited to introduce the rhythm method which was a disaster. The government was warned by many people that India would be drowned because of its population. But no attention was paid to that. What I want to emphasise is that a country develops according to the kind of vision the people have.

We have an impression that we are being ruled by our members of Parliament and ministers. I am afraid we are not ruled by them. We are ruled by their astrologers. The kind of country that the people build will depend on the values they cherish. After independence, no attempt was made to promote a rational and moral outlook on life. No massive movement of adult education or for promoting the values of freedom. We have a fine Constitution but the values on which that Constitution is based have not been promoted. Recently, in Parliament, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee defined secularism as *Sarva Dharma Samabhav*. And no one challenged him. I call it saffron-secularism. And he said that *dharma nirpekshata* was atheism and *sarva dharma samabhav* was secularism. Now this is the kind of ideas that are being spread. A secular state is also neutral between all religions. But what is more important, a secular state is neutral as between religion and non-religion. It is only in a secular state that there can be religious freedom. Many people think that Soviet Russia was a secular state. It was not a secular state. It was an anti-religious, totalitarian state. So the kind of ideas about secularism that is being promoted in the country is confusing to the people.

Anupam Mehta

The State of Municipal Schools

During my stint as President of the Bombay Unit of the Hindustani Andholan, I visited 43 municipal schools in various wards along with the respective Corporators. Of these, 29 schools had neither blackboards nor benches. We went to a school in the union territory of Silvassa where there were 65 teachers on the rolls with only 190 students. When questioned we were told that this was only a mere formality as only 11 teachers were coming but 65 were on the regular muster roll. When a person sits as a Chairperson of an Education Committee in the Municipal Corporation and he himself is not literate or educated, it would be very difficult to expect him to bring in any reforms.

Major Gen. E. D'Souza.

Nutrition and Education

I agree with Dr. Indumati Parikh that without proper nutrition, the brain does not work. Dr. Parikh also said that 'freedom' is a quality of life for people in rural areas. What does quality of life mean? The availability of fuel, food, water, shelter and clothing. You give these to the rural folks and their nutrition will improve. If their nutrition improves, you can get to them through education. This is what we press hard for when we talk about environment.

I was recently invited to Talasari to speak to the Warli tribals. I went to 5 schools there (60% of the children in those schools were girls). I was asked to speak to 30 bright Warli girls and boys about what to do after they finished school, and I discovered they were directionless. Most of us who go there tell them to become MBAs etc. But we do not stress that they should use their innate talent, the knowledge of the forest they live in, to develop their prospects. So I tell them that they should get into the forest department. You know what their answer was - that without the bribes, one can never get into the forest department !.

Lalita Ramdas

Need to Educate the Educated

I was only 7 years old at the time of independence, so obviously I

did not participate in the freedom struggle. But those who did, the women or the ordinary folk who came out of their homes to participate no matter in how limited a manner, were encouraged actively by our education system and by our families not to really worry much about the state of the nation, about poverty, about politics, about the socio-cultural ethos that we talked about. It took several years, I think for a whole generation which I represent, to begin to articulate and think critically and independently about the real problems of this country. It was around the late 1970s that I began what I call, my real education when I was pushed into questioning the kind of development; the kind of structural negation of the status of women in this country; and of course the fact that 70 per cent of our population has never had access to any of the basics which I think constitute freedom.

So I worked, unusually I think, for the wife of a service person, in a lot of non-formal adult literacy and primary education work in slum areas in Delhi that inevitably led one into raising the kinds of issues which Dr. Indumati Parikh has raised. I now live in a village in Maharashtra which is far better off than many others in states which have been referred to as "Bimaru". But when we talk of education I would also like to stress the point that what I believe needs to be done is to educate ourselves, the so-called educated; because if policies have not worked or if things have not been implemented, we have to identify who are responsible. It is very easy to target the government, to target the politician, to target the others but not ourselves.

I think it is time for us to start taking the responsibility if we are going to look for the answer on how we are going to get some of these things done. We have to target ourselves as being that part of India which has had access to the best that India could offer. And yet we ourselves have never really created either a platform at a national level, raised a voice strongly enough about the kind of injustices and the lack of access to opportunities, whether it is for women, whether it is for people of other castes, to the kind of privileges that you and I have enjoyed all our lives.

Arvind Deshpande

Municipal Schools - Preparing Raw Materials for Senas?

We have 1360 municipal schools in Bombay, we spend about Rs. 140

crores on this education by collecting education cess. Out of these 1360 schools consisting of around 7,20,000 students, the number of students who reach S.S.C. is 78,000 which means a 90% dropout - 25% students dropping out at the 4th standard level only. One of the reasons we found for this was the absence of pre-primary school i.e. kindergarten which is not available in the municipal schools because it is not in the Municipal Act! We have only 200 Balwadis whereas there are 1360 schools. The basics are weak for want of the kindergarten system. The student takes fright when the teacher takes the first lesson when he is pushed into the first standard at the age of 6, and then it is all over for him by the 4th Standard. Students from the 5th to 7th Standards, are weak, compared to students in other schools, in Maths, Science and the English language. What I am worried about is, if out of 7,20,000, 6,00,000 are drop-outs, what is the future? There are 11,00,000 students appearing for SSC in Maharashtra. Half of them fail. What happens to them? They form what is called the raw material for all senas. How are we going to deal with this huge population of unemployed youth.

Prof. Yashawant Bhide

Converting Liabilities into Assets

We should not take the 92 or 93 crores of people that we have as liabilities. We can convert them into assets. I do not know whether in our national planning we have had strategic options. For example we had the Mahanabolis model. Can there be a model of economic planning where we take human resources development as the strategic option. Studies have shown that if you have primary education, perceptions change. If you have a higher level education what happens. And in the same fashion if we have better human resources policies, will we be in a position to convert these so-called liabilities into assets. Our unemployment level is very high. Unemployment is a bad thing. But isn't unemployment also an opportunity? We had a meeting in the suburb where I live, where we were thinking in terms of launching a campaign for cleaning and greening of that small suburb. We thought of the large number of young people as also senior citizens who have retired, and there are a number of senior citizen clubs and the membership of these clubs runs into thousands. They try to involve themselves in useful activities. Can this manpower not be used for social causes.

Dr. Usha Mehta

The Meaning of Freedom

Dr. Parikh has given us a very penetrating and realistic analysis of the social situation and also given some valuable suggestions for improving this situation. I think she is very right in saying that today we need to concentrate on non-formal education, employment generating activities and also in saying and emphasizing the fact that it is high time we spell out what we mean by freedom. But let me tell you that there were some leaders, and Gandhiji was one of them, who had thought of the full connotation of the term "freedom". As students of political science know there are two aspects of freedom. The positive aspect and the negative aspect; that freedom does not mean licentiousness but the freedom to choose your ideal and follow it in a dedicated manner. Gandhiji put it beautifully by saying that one is free but he is free to tell the truth and not to tell a lie. He is free to serve others but not to kill others. Freedom goes with responsibility and freedom and duties are co-related.

So far as Gandhiji's economic programme was concerned, he too was conscious of the fact that unless we have some employment generating activities, the country will not be able to develop and less so, develop in the right direction. It is exactly with a view to make people self-supporting that he had given us the "*charkha*" or the spinning wheel. As much as Gandhiji was not against machinery, so too he was not against a co-operative economy. In those days he certainly emphasised the importance of self-reliant and self-sufficient village economy. But Gandhiji's was an evolving personality and therefore he would have said we can co-operate with others and what we need more than a self-sufficient village is a self-reliant village. Dr. Parikh has rightly emphasised that we should combine theory and practice. Seminars like this certainly go a long way in making us conscious of what our duties are and educating us also, but I think Mrs. Ramdas who rightly suggested that we must have such seminars at the ground level. Programmes like this have their own value. We should also have seminars: One on 'Freedom - what we mean by freedom. Another on 'Development' - what we mean by development. Development has to be measured not only in physical and material terms. Again, as Gandhiji said by development what we mean is the optimum combination of material and moral progress. A third seminar on 'Secular-

ism'. And along with these seminars if we could also organise some classes not only for formal and non-formal education, but for educating men on how to behave with women and how to improve the standard of society. And finally the coming together of many voluntary organisations needs to be emphasised. If we could channelise and distribute work amongst them, perhaps we could develop faster.

Dr. G. B. Nagporewalla

To control population, the emphasis should be on education and employment of women. The government has tried to give protection to women especially where organised industries are concerned under the Factories Act etc. They have provided for creches, limiting hours of work for women, disallowing women to work in shifts, and so on. However, these factors have led to a curtailment in women's employment.

Malini Karakal

We know that many girls don't go to school because they have to look after their younger siblings. It has been noticed if provision is made for creches near the schools, attendance by girls would increase. It is therefore the responsibility of the state and whoever is responsible, to provide such facilities. But no thought is being given to the large section of working agricultural women in the fields, for their children.

Mangesh Kulkarni

Making Entitlements Effective

The well-known economist Amartya Sen in his work on the political economy of hunger found that in situations of drought, very often it so happens that sufficient foodgrains are available to go around but it is just that large sections of the population do not have effectively enforced entitlements to those foodgrains. Now this can also be generalised to other kinds of resources like health and education.. For example, we may by all means try to teach the tribals to eat vegetables or bread. The point is unless they have effective entitlement to their land, or to the forest produce to which they traditionally had access to, which they have now been deprived of or access to shelter which many of our developmental

projects deprive them of any talk of changing their consciousness or simply teaching them to do this or that is not going to help.

I shall give a couple of examples of how effective entitlements have been created. One, with all its limitations, is the employment guarantee policy in Maharashtra. The second is the land reforms in West Bengal. Both of these have created entitlements to basic things like employment and means of production i.e. land which most people in our country still lack. And also when it comes to transformation of consciousness there is a very good example in Kerala which is the science movement. And what I want to emphasise is that these changes have not been brought about by well meaning gentlemen farmers, or by foreign funded NGOs or for that matter by some show-piece project of a private sector company which are some of the kinds of agencies which are increasingly bannerised, but by radical people's movements, by parties, and governments controlled by these kinds of parties and governments pressurised by these kind of formations. So these large kinds of party-non-party formations essentially political kinds of formations which create entitlements independently and by pressuring the government through control of the government, these are the agencies which will bring about the change.

J. B. D'Souza

Where Do the Funds Go?

I have a son and daughter-in-law, both with post graduate qualifications in medicine (specialising in community health), working in Orissa. They tell me the most horrendous stories about the tribal areas and how schools and health care are totally neglected. There is a 'wonderful' residential school, where a teacher comes twice a month! There are primary health centres where the doctor comes on payday to take his pay and take away the medicines which he then uses in his private practice. These happenings are recurring across a large number of states in this country. You find health centres with no medicines, not because doctors have stolen them, but because there are no funds. Our rural health care system is starved of funds. So also our primary education system. Where do the funds go?

We should take note of a recent report by Mr. Mabibul Haque in which he has pointed out that in all countries in South Asia, money is being

poured into defence preparedness to fight one another and the sectors that are important for the freedom of the country - the economic sectors, the core sectors - primary education and health care, are starved.

This report which has just come out, needs a lot more attention than it is getting. I am sorry to find that one of our regular hawks who writes in *The Times of India* attacked this report on the ground that we have to be more and more prepared to fight one another, otherwise, where will our freedom go. Real freedom lies in the strength of the people, in their basic education, and having access to health care.

Yogesh Kamdar

India's Khomeinis

Lots of good things have been done by voluntary organisations all over the country in the field of education, in the field of social awareness, in the field of women's issues. At the same time, there is a very distressing phenomenon which is taking place over the last 4 or 5 years, and that is the glorification of the traditional lifestyle. It has become not only politically correct but also very fashionable. Now any talk of cultural change is always branded as cultural invasion - do not do this, do not do that, because that lifestyle is so crystal pure and so sublime that we will pollute it with your sort of knowledge, your sort of education, your sort of information. This is not only becoming fashionable and popular but it is now the root cause of a number of so-called people's movements as well. And that is a very distressing state of affairs, because harping on some invented past glorifying it as being so great means that we will go back to the 13th and 14th century rather than move forward. Now whenever such things are talked about, we have to be a little alert because these are the Khomeinis who are masquerading as progressives and they ought to be shown their place and clear told that such glorification and romanticisation will not be tolerated. Therefore, when we talk of the glorious village life and about "*panihari*" (women carrying 8 pitchers of water on their head), if we think realistically, it is an utter shame that a woman has to carry eight pitchers on her head and walk eight kms. This symbol is used as the symbol of a glorious village life! It is something we should be ashamed of and not something to be glorified.

Admiral Ramdas

Making Peace with Pakistan

If the politicians cannot come to a clear understanding of what they want and where they want to go (particularly the politicians in India and Pakistan), I am afraid we cannot wish away things by denying ourselves the requisite investment for our defence.

Recently, I was asked by a reporter what were my reactions to the statement made by Farukh Abdullah that a possible solution to the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan would be to treat the line of control as a kind of international boundary between the two countries.

My response to that was very simple. For the last 50 years, both our nations have been banging our heads against each other, making heavy investments in armaments, and it is going up exponentially - can we not talk across the table and come to some understanding that would certainly enable us to scale down many of the investments that we are making.

I am the first one to say, more roads, more schools, more health. Believe me, 86 paise of the rupee is going for all these things. But we know, only 2 paise worth reaches the villages. Most of this money is lost due to corrupt practices and most of the corruption lies between the politicians and the bureaucrats. This is a fact of life and these are the implementors of policy. Bureaucracy across the board is responsible for negating the good objectives of all our plans and the huge investments we are making. I see it with my own eyes, now that I am down the road, at the other end where the drop is supposed to come out of the long pipe. Rajiv Gandhi made a statement once. He said that 16 paise reaches the end of the pipe.

So long as the situation does not change, so long as we do not come to a political understanding between our two nations, I am afraid we just cannot wish it away. I would be the first one to say, let's be friends. That should be the common objective. It has happened in many parts of the world - Arabs and Israel, East and West Germany, North and South Korea are talking about it. Many other countries have become more mature than we have. It is time we talked and got somewhere, and hopefully, with this new team of Inder Gujral, we hope to get there.

Poor Communications, Bad Roads, Scarce Drinking Water, Power Failures

Jiban Mukhopadhyay

What I wish to discuss is based on simple economic observations. You may or may not agree with me, but it is a point of view based on my imperial study and conviction.

I migrated from West Bengal to Maharashtra in 1975. Why? Because that was the time when West Bengal's economy, which was once at the top, started declining. Maharashtra looked greener than Bengal. Since the 1960s a full generation in West Bengal, my generation, has never known what 24-hour supply of electricity is! Power is one of the basic inputs for our development. Sitting here in Bombay, I witness the same signs today that I witnessed in West Bengal over two decades ago. Bombay may be relatively better off but if you go to other parts of Maharashtra or the other States, or even to our capital - Delhi, there are many hours of load shedding. Why is this so, despite power being one of the priority items in our national planning?

Let the facts speak for themselves.

18th Poorest Country

Our per capita national income increased from Rs.239 in 1950-51 to Rs.9,321 in 1995-96 in nominal terms. Adjusted for inflation, and if one takes 1980-81 as the base year then obviously the figure for 1995-96 would be less Rs. 2,573. This is equivalent to per Capita GNP of \$ 340 in 1995. Per Capita GNP of Sri Lanka, our next door neighbour, is double that of India, \$ 700. Pakistan too has done better than India, with a per capita GNP of \$ 460. After 50 years of centralised planning in a kind of "mixed economy" with the public sector dominating the "commanding heights", we are the 18th poorest country in the league table of 133 countries for which data are compiled by the World Bank.

What has been the growth rate of our GDP? Between 1950 and

1979, the overall annual rate of increase in the GDP was only 3.5%, the so-called Hindu-rate of growth. Since population was increasing by over 2%, the real per capita GDP increase was a mere 1.5%! In the 1980s, when there was a half-hearted liberalisation, the rate of growth of GDP increased to 5.5% and per capita GDP to 3.5%. For the period 1992-97, it shot up further to 6.2% with per Capita GDP at 4.2%. In fact, in the last 3 years, the growth in GDP has been around 7% in real terms. A breakthrough has been made in these years.

What is the significance of relative high growth to the economy? Anybody having some knowledge of compound rate of interest would tell you that anything that grows @ 7.2% for ten years, doubles. Will our GDP be doubled in 10 years?

Looking back in history, one finds that England after the industrial revolution, took 57 years to double its GDP. The United States, took 48 years after its war of independence to double its GDP. Japan took 37 years to double its GDP after World War II. But it took little more than 10 years for China to double the size of its economy after it initiated market-oriented reforms in 1979. But we cannot even now dream of doubling our GDP in ten years time, not to speak of the per capita GDP.

What we want is the sustainability of the 7% + growth rate of GDP which will result in increasing per capita GDP by over 5%. At that rate it will take more than 15 years to double per capita income. Even then it will not be equal to Sri Lanka's standard of living today! In about 10 years South Korea doubled its income. South Korea is a country without any worthwhile resource factor endowment. South Korea's standard of living has been so good that the height of South Koreans has increased. In schools and colleges furniture had been replaced with bigger chairs and desks because the new generation of South Koreans is now taller and healthier. But we have not been able to match the Chinese or Koreans. Why?

Population Growth can be an Asset if ...

What has happened in our case? At the time of Independence we were 339 million and today it must be around 952 million. Every 1.5 seconds a child is born in this country, over 16 million people are added every year to our stock of humanity. From the day of his birth to the last

day of his life, he consumes things. If his contribution to society is more than the money value of what he consumes in his whole life, he adds value to the system. He becomes an asset. The more value he adds, the more of an asset he becomes. If he does not contribute anything, he lives on the transferred income of somebody else. He then becomes a liability. When we say we are too many of us here, we mean that increased population is a liability. In one sense it is true but in another sense it is not right to say it so. When somebody is born we have to manage that person as a part of human resources. But our success in managing human resources and controlling population growth is a mixed one.

Birth and Death Rates

If you were to look at the birth and death rates, a lot of things have happened in our country in the last 50 years. The birth rate has declined from about 40 per 1000 in 1950-51 to 28 in 1991. There has been considerable improvement, in the sense that the death rate has decreased from 27.4% to 9% per 1,000 during this period due to the availability of modern medicines and better health facilities. This shows that something has happened. Some credit has to be given for that. Let's take life expectancy. At the time of independence it was averaging over 32. Now it is 60.8. Again some improvement, but compared to others like China's 69, our record is poor. From 1956 to 1994-95, 183 million births have been averted through family planning measures.

Half a Billion Illiterates!

The overall literacy rate which was over 18% in 1950-51 improved to 52.2% in 1991. Hence, in this area too something has happened although more could have been done. It is sad that the country will enter the 21st century with almost half a billion illiterate people!

Foodgrains Production

Let's take foodgrains production. In 1950-51, we were producing about 50.8 million tonnes of foodgrains. By 1995-96 it has increased 3.8 times to 192 million tonnes. This means that the rate of growth of foodgrain has been slightly better than the rate of increase in population. But the fact is, if our growth of population too had been slower the

availability of foodgrains would have been more. Per capita availability of food grains has very marginally increased by say 100 gms. per day from 395 in 1950-51 to 498 in 1996-97.

Poverty Line(s)

Poverty ratios in our country tend to change with every change of government! Before the present UF government took office in June 1997, we were informed by the previous Congress government that the poverty ratio was 19 per cent in 1993-94.

There is a peculiarity in the calculation of this ratio. Though we have many reputed economists and statisticians, we have not been able to measure poverty based on basic minimum requirements, which include food, shelter, health, education and other essential ingredients of life. If these were to be the basis for calculations, we would have a higher figure of poor people living below the poverty line. But our poverty line is based on the definition of minimum daily calories intake of 2,400 per person in rural areas, and 2,100 in urban areas. Thus, if somebody's per capita per month expenditure is less than or equal to Rs.228.0 in the rural areas, he is poor. In the urban area a poor person is one whose per capita per month expenditure is at Rs.264.1 in 1993-94. If a person's per capita expenditure was more than Rs.229 in rural areas or Rs.264 in urban areas, the person is not technically poor! But sure, they still are poor.

The earlier figure of 19% based on the Lakdawala mode of calculation has now become 36% as adopted by the Union Government. The best method, however, would be to go with the basic minimum requirement and based on that one can certainly say that almost 45% of the people in this country are poor. If our economists or statisticians cannot formulate a poverty line based on basic minimum needs they should pack their bags and go home.

We Don't Get Angry Enough

These poor people in terms of numbers may have come down. It is a peculiar society of ours. Dr. Indumati Parikh said that "a sociological revolution" is required, which might be happening in a very small way. But the point is that people are just not getting angry enough or impatient enough with their state of poverty. I will give you a small anecdote to which

I was witness. During the Bangladesh war, we, from the Ramakrishna Mission, Narendrapura were running relief camp near the border. One day we had to distribute milk. More than 5,000 people were waiting in queue for six hours. The supply of milk did not arrive. There were a few foreign journalists with me. And they wondered at the patience of our people and observed that if this had happened in Europe, it would have caused another French Revolution. But the people were just sitting and laughing and talking without getting angry or impatient!

I think the ritualistic aspect of religion has become so peculiar in our country that we leave everything to God, who may or may not exist. Even in our scriptures, poverty has been glorified. With such background we have a low "arousal" in people, as Mr. N. A. Palkhiwala often tells us. Perhaps this "arousal" may happen through the media effort to the next generation.

Basic Goods & Services

Coming back to the more mundane things of life - consumption of sugar, edible oil, etc. have increased to some extent. There is also some improvement in the availability of flour, eggs, meat, etc. but the most important thing that has improved is electricity. In 1995-96 electricity available was only 2.4 units (Kwh). It has improved to 53 Kwh in 1995-96, which is an increase by over 22 times. But our demand for electricity has grown and so in many parts of the country there is a shortfall in electricity varying from 15 to 18% in different States.

The installed capacity for power since 1950-51 has increased by almost 41 times from 2.3 million Kwh to 94.5 Kwh in 1995-96, while generation too has increased by 63 times from 6.6 Billion Kwh to 415.2 Billion Kwh. But the basic issue regarding power is very simple. It is understood by everybody but things are being done in the peculiar Indian way. The main culprit in this regard is the state-owned State Electricity Boards. These electricity boards were established like most other public sector units in this country with good intentions. Our Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 consisted of two schedules. Schedule I had 17 priority core sector industries which were exclusively reserved for the public sector. Hence the term 'commanding heights'. Schedule II has yet another 12 industries where the public sector were given preference. The private

sector was, thus, assigned a residual role. But a few companies like TISCO, CESC, etc. were allowed to exist, while others like Tata Airlines were nationalised.

The Public Sector

How was our public sector run? A particular public sector company is attached to a particular ministry in which a particular deputy joint secretary used to be responsible. In management science the basic issues of management are termed as the principle of five 'Ws' : Who manufactures, what, at which place, sells to whom and at what price. The power to decide on these five 'Ws' was vested with the government. For example, TELCO was not allowed to expand its capacity to manufacture more trucks based on the economy of scale. Tatas were not allowed to manufacture passenger cars and Birlas were not allowed to manufacture trucks.

So it was like in the animal kingdom where animals have demarcated territories. As a result, what has happened is that the total public sector investment in our country (including the state level) is an astronomical amount of about Rs.400,000 crores. The returns on this huge investment used to be 1.5%, if we exclude the oil companies and a few other profit-making PSEs, a financial blackhole. Nothing used to come back from such public sector investments.

The Power Sector

When we invest money, our intention is that money should multiply money with increasing returns. It did not happen in this country. Power and petroleum are still in the public sector though there has been some opening up since 1992. In the Eighth Five Year Plan, it was felt that since government did not have enough funds to invest in the power sector, the investment had to come either from the private sector or from foreign direct investment. The door has half-opened, but not entirely. But if a foreign investor or a private investor wants to invest in the power sector, he can sell only to one customer - the State Electricity Board (SEB) of that state. The SEBs usually do not have any financial strength. The overall rate of return of all Electricity Boards in India combined is a negative one. In 1996-97, it was -17.7%.

Commercial losses are massive, because power is subsidised for certain users. The average cost of generating one unit of power used to be Rs.1.61 in 1991. The average sale price, Rs.1.30 per unit. This means that there is a subsidy of 31 paise per unit. As a result, and due to other reasons too, a large number of State Electricity Boards are financially bankrupt. Since an investor is faced with a situation of selling electricity to an electricity board, which cannot pay, he insists on a guarantee from the state government, whose fiscal position is also equally bad. It has to borrow from the private sector to pay the wages of its own employees. For instance, the marxist government of West Bengal had to borrow money at 22% from Peerless to pay its employees. So a state government guarantee is also not enough. The investor wants somebody else to give a guarantee, a sovereign guarantee signed by the President of the country!

Why Enron?

There are eight 'fast-track' power projects in the country and one of them is Enron but they certainly are not treated "fast" enough. There are several problems, apart from policy-decisions. For example, if we want to have a thermal power plant in a particular place, some people will say it will pollute the environment. If it is a nuclear power plant, mercifully, they are no new ones, all hell will be let loose. If it is a chemical plant, it will also be polluting. If land is to be taken over, some people will say government is not paying enough. Environmental "terrorists" would barge in to stop such plants.

The point is if we want to have power, or any industrial project, whether hydro-electric or thermal power, one has to pay the price. These days industries are not all that polluting. If it is so one can monitor them through anti-pollution laws as is being done in other countries. But in our country we just tell them to stop the projects. Besides litigation will go on.

The High Cost of Subsidies

If we want to give power or any economic product or services to somebody free, the government should provide the subsidy from its own exchequer. Take LPG. It is an economic product. One has to invest to manufacture it. Scarce capital resources in a poor country were invested. LPG is heavily subsidised. The real cost is more than Rs.200 per cylinder.

We pay much less. The point is that if some product comes out from the route of economics and is not a natural gift, then it has a price tag. If somebody consumes, he or she will have to pay the price. If government pays for it, then indirectly all of us are paying for it. This is the kind of dharmashala type of economics going on in the name of public sector-oriented economic development for a large number of products. Of late, in most government documents the lament is that fiscal restraints prevent investment in industries in the public sector. No fresh investments are being made. While there is need for subsidies in a poor country like India, these subsidies need to be targetted.

The fact is there is a reduction of budgetary subsidies. In the 1960s, 1970s anything coming from the central budget would have 80% budget support. It has now come down to about 36%, the balance being raised through internal and extraordinary generation of resources.

In the Eighth Plan, the target for additional generation of power was 30,538 MWs. Yet at the end of the Five Year Plan we will be lucky if we have 18,000 MWs. So, there is a massive shortfall in achieving the target. There is just one private company which has been established and which has taken this route of liberalisation and has started generating power. And that company has been formed in Andhra Pradesh by Dr. Reddy, an NRI who just went ahead without bothering for counter guarantees etc. In the last couple of years, there has been an increase in captive power generation done by industry for its own sake with a little bit sold to the government. They have generated 1,000 MWs. Apart from this solitary instance, the Eighth Plan has been a total failure in terms of power generation by new private/foreign investment, although a target of 2,810 MW was specifically assigned for the private/foreign sector. (See Table I)

Petroleum - From Profit to Losses

The public sector is there in many countries in many industries, and they are operated in an autonomous way, based on economic principles. But in India, the public sector is considered as one form of creating employment for people. The public sector in these areas are highly technology intensive, capital intensive and on top of that the government makes it "labour intensive". The result is that public sector companies are over-staffed by over 30%.

Table I
50 Years of the Indian Economy : Major Indicators

	1950-51	1995-96	Increased by (Times)
Demographic:			
Population (Mn.)	359.0	920.0	2.6
Birth Rate (Per 1000)	39.9	28.3*	-
Death Rate (Per 1000)	27.4	9.0*	-
Life Expectancy (Yrs.)	32.4	60.8+	-
Literacy Rate (%)	18.3	52.2+	-
National Income:			
GDP (At Factor Cost)	42,871	274,209	6.4
(At 1980-81 Prices, Rs.crores)			
Per Capita National Income (Rs.)	1,127.0	2,573.0	2.3
Foodgrains:			
Production (Mn. Tonnes)	50.8	198.2@	3.9
Per Capita Availability (Grams p/d):	395.0	498.0@	1.3
Per Capita Annual Availability of:			
Sugar (Kg.)	5.0	14.1	2.8
Edible Oil (Kg.)	2.5	7.2	2.9
Milk (Kg.)	47.1	71.0	1.5
Eggs (Nos.)	5.1	27.5	5.4
Cloth (Mt.)	15.0*	28.0	1.9
Electricity (KwH)	2.4	53.0	22.1
Power:			
Installed capacity (Mn.Kw.)	2.3	94.5	41.0
Generation (Bn.KwH)	6.6	415.2	63.0
Petroleum: (Mn. Tonnes)			
Crude Oil Production	0.3	34.5	115.0
Petroleum Products	0.2	58.5	292.5
Petroleum Products Consumption	3.3	75.0	22.7
Roads:			
Road Length ('000 Km.)	400.0	2884.0^	7.2
National Highways ('000 Km.)	22.0	34.0	1.5
Railways:			
Railways (Route Km. '000s)	53.6	62.9	1.2
Electrified ('000s)	0.4	12.3	30.7
Av. Passenger Fare (Ps./Km.)	1.5	17.9	11.9
* 1994-95 + 1991 @ 1996-97 ^ anticipated			

Administered Prices

In the oil sector, there is a peculiar thing called administered price. Every now and then, if you read economic/financial newspapers, you will see that the oil pool account is so much or so high, this means there is a cross subsidisation for things like LPG, diesel, kerosene, etc. These items are sold at a reduced price and you charge a higher price for such items like petrol, aviation fuel, etc. If I suggest that some of these subsidies should be withdrawn, many of you will be angry. Political parties are so scared of losing votes that no decision has been taken in the last two years. The present UF government has been postponing taking a decision of raising prices of some items for reducing oil pool deficits*. Oil pool deficits are increasing and oil companies' finances, which have been robust all through, are now under strain. Here also, while the issue is that subsidies need to be reduced and targeted, administered price should be abolished and the price-mechanism should be based, by and large, on the market.

The Railways

Let us turn to the railways. Over 85% of the total railway route kilometres we have inherited from the British. After 50 years of planned development and after the railways became a government sector enterprise we have added only 9,300 kms. or an average of 186 kilometers per year. Actually in the 1990s it came down to less than 100 kms per year. As for the electrification of the railways earlier it was 400 kms. now it is 12,300. This, growth, is an achievement of sorts. But why such slow development in increasing route kms? One has only to study the railway budget to discover that over 40% of the railway's revenue is spent on salaries, wages and the pensions of employees. The Railways are India's largest employer employing 1.6 million people; the largest landlord in the country; the third largest railway network in terms of route kms; the fourth largest railway network in terms of freight kms. And yet a person who may want to travel to, say Calcutta, twenty days hence, may not get a berth. Why is this so? Because the average passenger fare which was 1.5 paise per km. in 1950-51 has, after 50 years, increased to just 18 paise per km. No wonder, amenities on the railways are so woefully inadequate. We pay much more per kilometer when we travel by bus and car. But the railways find themselves unable to increase the passenger fare appreciably.

Drinking Water

The percentage of households in the country having electricity, drinking water and toilets is a mere 16%. In the rural areas it is far lower, 3.9%. And then there is the issue of drinking water. We all know how unsafe is the kind of drinking water we get in the cities. Water which is described as safe drinking water in statistical tables is not really safe. So much so that even those who cannot afford it, drink mineral water because the opportunity cost of not having it is much more! A basic amenity that should have come from the government sector has not come yet - even after fifty years of freedom. (See Table 2)

Table 2
Selected Amenities Enjoyed : % of Indian Households

	Elect- ricity	Safe Drink- ing Water	Toilet	Elect- ricity & Drink- ing Water	Toilet & Drink- ing Water	Elect- ricity & Toilet	All the three facili- ties	None of the three facili- ties
Total	42.37	62.30	23.70	30.42	18.22	20.35	16.07	24.54
Rural	30.54	55.54	9.48	18.67	5.58	6.53	3.90	31.32
Urban	75.78	81.38	63.85	63.60	53.90	59.37	50.46	5.41

India and China - a Comparison

When one compares China and India, China is till today a communist country and our Constitution still declares India is a socialist republic. The per capita GNP for India in 1994 was 320 and China's 530. China started a programme of massive agricultural development which could even be described as being revolutionary as it is based on the free market concept of economics, even though China is a communist country. The earlier communes were broken down and the land given to people on renewable long lease. The people are free to sell a part of their produce in the free market. This policy led to so much agricultural growth,

development and prosperity that it created the base for their industrial development. Last year, China received foreign direct investment worth \$ 37.5 billion, while India a paltry \$ 1.75 billion. And yet our communists and other 'progressive' elements in India are scared that multinationals will eat away into our sovereignty. (See Table 3)

Table 3
India and China : A Comparison

	India	China
Per Capita GNP, 1995 (\$)	340	620
Per Capita PPP, 1994 (\$)	1,400	2,920
Inflow Foreign Direct Investment (\$ Bn, 1996)	2.6	42.3
Per Capita Annual Energy Consumption (Kg.)	243	647
Per Capita Daily Intake (Grams, 1992):		
(i) Fats	38	64
(ii) Proteins	55	64
(iii) Calories	2,395	2,729
Index of World Competitiveness, 1996 (Rank)	38	26
Rice Yield (100 kg./h, 1994)	28.2	58.2
Wheat Yield (100 kg./h, 1994)	24.2	33.2
Arable Land (Mn.h, 1993)	169.7	96
Fert. Cons. (Kg./h, 1994)	72.9	261.4

Note: Data has been revised/upgraded subsequently.

PPP

There is another element called PPP ie. Purchasing Power Parity. You take a composite basket of consumption items and value it with a particular identical price and you get a PPP. In 1994, India's PPP was 1,280 while China's was almost double at \$ 2510. This means that China's standard of living, the purchasing power of the average Chinese is much more than that of the average Indian. Even in terms of world competitiveness, we rank 38 out of 40 countries while China is 26. Let's take the figures of yield. You take the yield of any product and China's is much higher in comparison to our's. Our arable land is about 170 million

hectares while China's is only 96 million hectares. This means land use management in China particularly for agricultural production has been so good that it has contributed to a massive improvement in their overall economy. Coming to demographics, life expectancy for Indians is 62 in China it is 69. Adult illiteracy rate (15 years plus who are illiterate) India is 48, China is 19. Infant mortality rate per 1,000 at life birth - for India it is 70 and for China it is 30.

The Union Budget 1997

The Union budget presented by current Finance Minister Mr. Chidambaram was referred to as "the best budget presented so far" by Shri N. A. Palkhivala. I agree. This budget has certain ingredients which may help sustain the 7% + rate of growth. All the problems of the Indian economy cannot be solved in one budget. The social-sector allocation becomes a lower priority item because other things like the infrastructure sector become much more important. It is a contradiction. One can complain about it and criticise the government but when there is no money you need to fix your priorities. Unfortunately, this is the result of the policies we pursued in the last many years. Even if the social sector gets a higher allocation it will not reach the target beneficiaries in full. They will get a small part because, in between, it will get eaten away by layers of middlemen, touts and bureaucrats. The point is that this budget will have a psychological impact.

An 80-20 Chance

To sum up, the present budget has all the ingredients to retain the 7% rate of growth, it could increase to 8% or even enter double digits if implemented in the right spirit. The Indian economy has immense potential in terms of human resources. It is an old civilisation in which people have genetically evolved - what needs to be done is to harness this large reservoir of human resources to be converted into assets.

In one of its articles in the early days of liberalisation The Economist concluded by saying that the Indian economy has immense potential to become one of the formidable economies of the world but whether its political economy will allow it to be so is the question. I give a 80-20 chance for the rescue of the Indian economy from the hands of the politicians.

The Discussions

Of Dams and the Environment

Sidney Pinto

Mr. Mukhopadhyay attacked people who attacked dams. World-wide. There have been several reports which have proved that various dams that have been constructed all over the world have been complete failures.

J. K. Mukhopadhyay

India, Nepal, Bhutan have enormous capacity to generate hydro-electric power. Dams could be good as well as bad. It depends on how we manage these Dams. The most important factor is the human factor - the rehabilitation factor. It has been found that the rehabilitation of people who have to evacuate that particular area has never been done satisfactorily. The point is that people willfully migrate from one place to another place if it is in their interest. It has been happening all round. When there is economic development in Punjab, the people go from Bihar, Orissa and U.P. to work as agricultural labourers. The point in the context of Dam is that some people want the tribal people to be kept the way they are. But they should be given an opportunity for a better life, and one can give them proper opportunities through rehabilitation. It can be done, but is not being done. Mr. Pinto has a point.

The second point is the management of the dams, the siltation of the Dam. It is not just putting a dam in place. Desiltation is not done. As a result, the longevity of the dams in our country has been reduced to such an extent that even for the established dams, there could be danger. It is therefore a question of management.

Sidney Pinto

The problem is it can be done, but it is never done. You called the environmentalists as "terrorists". I don't belong to any environmental organisation. Isn't it a strong term that you used. I think in this country, unless you are a "terrorist", unless you lead a procession, nothing ever happens.

J. K. Mukhopadhyay

I admit I have used a strong word. I have deliberately used it. Many others have used this word too. You see the development debate at the world level. Take *The Economist*, for example.

The point is that if they are genuine environmentalists and their objective is not to hog the headlines, then they have made their contribution - they have underlined the need for environmental concern. Thereafter, it is upto the authorities or the people concerned to follow it up.

Sidney Pinto

Knowing our history, our tradition for inefficiency and corruption and bureaucracy, do you think that the people who are displaced will ever be rehabilitated in any dam project in India?

J. K. Mukhopadhyay

I seriously think that this is an issue for which there can be a solution. It can be done. Dams are built by a particular authority, which is accountable for its function. The point is, if we want electric power (and power is an expensive item), then we need either a hydel, nuclear or thermal power plant. If we do not want to have any, then let's all go back to the Gandhian type of village economics - self sufficiency and all that.

The point is, if we want to have a paper plant or a power plant or some plant in the chemical industry, there is bound to be some amount of pollution. There are, of course, new technologies available to arrest and to see how it can be less polluting. The point I wish to emphasise is that as a result of this type of on-going protests and litigation in the name of "environment", everything is delayed, and if it goes on for another 2-3 years, the power deficit will double to more than 25%, and then it will be too late to rectify this situation.

Anupam Mehta

Harnessing Water for National Betterment

All of us will agree that one can live without food, but one cannot live without water. It is very sad that even after 50 years of independence, 46% of the people have still to walk 3 kms. to fetch a bucket of water.

Water resources and water management are extremely important subjects for the government. Every day, we Indians throw about 750 million gallons of pure potable water into the sea. We fight on river issues - sharing of river waters. After all, rivers are god's gift. It is not made by politicians. The state boundaries are made by politicians. Therefore, we in the Hindustani Andolan approached the then Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, and suggested that rivers should be nationalised. National water should be harnessed for national betterment. There should be a National Water Commission to be headed by a retired chief justice of India, comprising expert bureaucrats and technocrats. Techno-economic feasibility ought to be the consideration for harnessing water.

J. B. D'Souza

Dismal Record

We have had this argument on dams, purely on the question of rehabilitation of those displaced. That is not the only disqualification for dams. Worldwide, especially in the US, it has been found that dams are a poor economic investment. They silt up. If you don't want them to silt up, you have to spend much more money dredging and damage all the other things, so it is a recurring expenditure. Our experience over the last 50 years with irrigation projects has been most dismal. The projects are made with falsified figures to show a great advantage with a very small investment. This is the cheating that goes on every year. Every state practices it. Finally the command area shown in the project paper is much larger than the acreage benefited. And even within that acreage, it is the rich farmers who collar all the water and the majority of poor farmers continue to suffer from lack of water. It is not enough to study the problem of dams just from the point of rehabilitation - which lends itself to politicisation and merely deplored. There are other technical aspects which have to be considered. It is no good saying as a grand proposition that dams are goods for the country. They may not be.

J. K. Mukhopadhyay

I have no disagreement on the technical aspects. There could be large dams as well as medium size or small dams. We have to see what is relevant, what is useful what can be done in the given circumstance in the country. But the single fact is that in our country, we need power, and

hydro electricity can give us pure, clean non-pollutant power. I work for a group of companies, the founder of which had advised his two sons to build power plants with hydro-electricity, because that gives a clean environment as against thermal power plants. The concern for environmental pollution was expressed and it was implemented much before today's environmentalists were born.

Prof. Varde

You said that liberalisation seems to have succeeded in countries which are a dictatorship, and in countries which are democracies not more than 10% of the people are benefited. We are neither.

J. K. Mukhopadhyay

Democracy and the Pace of Growth

Ours is a democracy, not by choice, but by historic coincidence, inherited from the British. China, which is a communist country with market economy, has advanced at a much faster rate than India. It has happened because, among other things, of one important factor - speed in decision-making. In a "dictatorial state", it could be very fast. For example, year before last, China's oil production was in the region of 145 million tonnes against our 35. It was decided to reduce oil production, and they removed 50,000 employees from the oil industry to the agricultural sector, just by an order. This cannot even be considered in India. We cannot transfer a single worker even from one shop-floor to another.

As we saw recently, even one old man can destabilise the whole government, because someone seemed to be in a "hurry" to be prime minister. We have had three governments in ten months, and there is no guarantee there won't be a fourth one a few months hence.

Drawing particularly on our type of governance, in which accountability is not at all important, it slows down economic development. As a result of the factor of instability, we are losing at least one percentage point of the rate of growth of our GDP, because of this particular factor.

In the recent (April 1997) truckers' strike for 11 days, there was no machinery available in the government to negotiate. As a result, we lost 0.2% of the GDP. The truckers had given a 60-day strike notice, even then,

no negotiations took place. So such issues cannot be handled expeditiously in our type of democracy because, passing the buck is the normal practice here. Bureaucrats are not going to decide in an unstable situation, and politicians would like to stay in power for five years to be entitled to parliamentary pensions and to get returns on the "investments" made by them to win elections. So they too will not decide on hard issues.

Therefore, this is not an ideal government. But if I say that, I have lost faith in the Indian democracy, I think, after my remarks on "environmental terrorism", I would be labelled as being "anti-democracy". To be honest with you, unless the spirit of democracy is improved through public awareness (very easy to say and very difficult to do), it is very difficult to get a sustained 7% plus rate of growth of GDP, so that it could double in 10 years. When you take the average of another ten years (from or 5.5% in the eighties, we may move over to 6.5% in another ten years. That is not enough, this is not the right kind of growth for us. What we wish to have is a much higher rate of growth so that it could provide more and more opportunities to a larger number of people to get employment and income. Perhaps, in our type of democracy, we will have to wait for a long time for such a dream to materialise. I am just making a statement of fact, and not passing any value judgement on the Indian democracy.

Will India Survive as a Meaningful Democracy?

Gangadhar Gadgil

I have been participating in seminars where people have waxed righteously indignant about this country; pointing out how everything is wrong with it; how it is almost beyond improvement. I am always amazed that this country has survived at all these last 50 years with a dismal rate of growth, called the 'Hindu rate of growth' of 3.5%. Incidentally, it is not the much maligned Hindu social order but the brave new socialist order that is responsible for this dismal rate of growth. Now suddenly this rate of growth has gone up to 6.5 and 7%. So this is a country which fools people all the time. It is full of ambiguities and ambivalences. It would seem that everything is wrong with it and still it seems to function. When we are convinced that this country will be sunk in debt, we suddenly find our foreign reserves soaring. I am therefore not willing to write it off. In any case, I have no option. This is the only country I have!

I have good reasons for feeling rather optimistic about this country of mine. We have just heard Mr. Mukhopadhyay on what is wrong with the Indian economy. I am only going to ask him if all these things are wrong with the Indian economy, how is it growing at the rate of 6.5%? Logically it should not have grown by 6.5%, but it is and threatening to grow by 7% or more in the near future.

A Country Full of Surprises

So this country is full of surprises - many unpleasant and a few pleasant. Now looking to the possible dangers to our democracy, one is, of course, external aggression. I think by and large, the Big Powers are not interested in acquiring such a large empire like India these days. It is not a workable proposition because ruling India is a very troublesome and expensive business. When you can make money from India without ruling India, why rule India? Therefore I think no big power would be interested in taking over India though small powers in the sub-continent might like to grab parts of it. Bangladesh for example which is short of space would perhaps like to grab Assam and parts of North East India. And the

Pakistanis may want bits of Punjab, Kashmir and UP. They may have some limited territorial ambitions, but I don't think any of them are in a position to do that. One reason is, whether we like it or not, we are a nuclear power and generally, people do not tangle with nuclear powers. In my view our military strength is quite enough to deal with Bangladesh, Pakistan or to contain China. In spite of all the weaknesses of our society, we have been able, time and again, to show that we can use our military strength to put down internal dissidence and also deal with external aggression. So there is no threat of external danger, atleast not in the immediate future. As for internal dissensions for the last 50 years we have had to contend with numerous inter-state river disputes and the desire for parts of India to secede from the Union, and we have done so with a fair measure of success.

The Unity of India

In most cases, the desire to break away from India does not seem to be so strong as to succeed. Three very violent efforts were made in the Punjab, in Kashmir with foreign assistance and in Nagaland too. In spite of these efforts we have held together. Are there any factors operative now which can turn the balance the other way? It doesn't seem so. Because, in the first place, if the South East Asian countries are prosperous, they won't be interested, and if they are not prosperous, they would be so weak, that they won't be able to do anything about it. So I don't think the break-up of this country through invasions or through violent uprisings of groups of people is possible. We have learnt to live with internal disputes and external threats.

Inter-state Disputes

For instance, the river disputes have been with us for 50 years. People get very angry. There are occasional riots. Maharashtrians want Belgaum. We make a lot of noise about it from time to time. But they manage to live without Belgaum and the people of Tamil Nadu manage to live with a smaller share of the Kaveri waters. So may be because we are a lazy people, or because we are people who don't have a strong will, or because we are a people who do not act effectively, it doesn't seem as if dissidence is succeeding.

The Caste Factor

But there is another fact that is likely to result in, not the break-up of the state, but the disruption of society, and that is the caste and communal factor. The communal factor we have lived with and we seem to be reconciled or resigned to live with each other. But the caste factor is finding such violent expression for the first time. And it is this caste factor that is likely to so break up society that it will not be able to function effectively. This is happening in Bihar. Bihar is a state which seems not to function effectively. It is happening to some extent in UP. But it is not happening in the South. You will find that there is a greater measure of awareness in southern societies, where the lower castes have been engaged for half a century or more in movements for asserting their rights.

Take the example of Dalits in Maharashtra. Excepting the Mahars, other Dalits have not given up Hinduism. I am not saying that you must be a Hindu to be an Indian. I am not denying that one way of asserting that you are different is by saying you are a Buddhist. But you find that Dalits in Maharashtra, excepting Mahars, have not become Buddhists. And not all Mahars are Buddhists. In Tamilnadu there has been a powerful party in power which does not believe in God - It is atheist, yet I find that over the years, in Tamilnadu, people are returning to the temples. The rejection of the existing social order, that we are different, we cannot get along with you is an assertion that is not being made even when there is so much anger being expressed. Which means that the caste factor is operating explosively only in the North where social reform movements have not been as strong as in the South. It is only in the North that you find caste dissensions becoming violent.

We Love to Quarrel

But then again it is the peculiarity of Indian society that we have too many castes and none of them is in a majority. And so ultimately, the BJP has to tie up with the BSP. And the Dalits who were opposed to the Manuwadis have to live with them and share power with them and tolerate them. They are able to do because they have accepted each other for hundreds of years. Without knowing it, they are used to living together. And therefore they are not so violently desirous of breaking

away from the rest of the society. They want to quarrel of course. They want to have big quarrels. That is the perversity of India - there are lots of arguments, lots of quarrels but we still live together because we love to quarrel with each other! So this I think is a very peculiar factor and which always surprises me and which I certainly fail to understand.

The structure of Indian society, particularly, Hindu society, is a hierarchy of castes. There are no two sharply divided social classes - one of the exploiters and the other of the exploited. The Marxists would have loved to see such a division in this country. This is because the exploiters at one level are the exploited at another level. And therefore you find society divided into small political groups, too small or too weak to assert themselves and grab power. They of course flex muscles and declare undying hostility. Ultimately they have to team up.. The Indian mind has an amazing capacity to accept contradictions. This ambivalence of the Indian mind, this capacity to accept totally opposite things which is considered a great weakness of Indian society. It seems to me also to be a great strength of Indian society. The Mandalisation of the community, has unnecessarily increased caste consciousness. I think the results which the Mandal report wanted to achieve can be achieved in other ways. But let us accept the fact that the Mandal Report has been accepted.

Where Mandal Will Fail

Still there are factors that will dilute the effects of Mandalisation. The economy which is going to divide jobs on a caste basis is the public sector economy. And this public sector is a declining sector; the expanding sector is the private sector. And the private sector is not going to accept caste as the basis for recruitment, particularly the multinationals. Take for instance, the banking sector. With the entry of foreign banks, employees find new opportunities and rush to these other private sector banks because the pay is more. So we find a number of capable people in the nationalised banks moving over to new private banks and foreign banks, getting much better salaries and prepared to take more risks. And, as time lapses and people become self assured and feel that they can compete with other, there will be a movement from the stagnant, caste-based public sector into the non-stagnant, non-caste-based private sector. I am not saying this will necessarily happen. I am saying this seems to me to be

a possibility. In any case I want to see possibilities which gives me some hope. Because, as I said, this is the only country I have.

Law & Order

There are other major issues. One of them is the breakdown of law and order and corruption. Law and order is breaking up, certainly it has broken down very much in Mumbai, it has broken down in Bihar, UP and almost everywhere. Formerly if in my travels around Maharashtra - and I travel around a great deal in Maharashtra - I met an MLA, he would say somebody has grabbed somebody else's land. Now when you go around, you find people casually mentioning that there has been a murder. Murders have become an accepted fact of life in Maharashtra. It was not so earlier. Life used to be pretty safe here. And despite this terrible law and order situation, you find some economic growth. This is just one of the contradictions in which this country seems to revel.

If law & order is breaking down, if there is insecurity of life and property, economic growth must take a beating. I am sure it is taking a beating. As I said, we could develop much faster. But because we are India, we also seem to be able to grow at 7% when law and order is breaking down to such a degree. It is a vast society and its ability to suffer toxicity is very high.

Corruption

May be growth has a tendency to perpetuate itself, to accelerate itself. It creates an appetite, an appetite for growth, for change, for liberalisation. And this is happening. Things are loosening up and if things are loosening up, then may be the kind of corruption that we have and the background of law and order, insecurity of life and property and the red tape that we have, tend to work in a funny manner. For example, take red tape, because of which you cannot get anything done. But there is corruption, and you can get every thing done with corruption! So corruption which is a bad thing becomes a good thing in Indian society. I am not condoning it, I am not for it. But I am only putting before you a picture of reality. During the days of Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi, if the private sector could expand, it could expand only because of corruption. And if it could function, it could function only because of corruption.

Without it all of them would have been dead by now. Let me once again assert that I am not saying that corruption is the best way of dealing with red tape.

The Bureaucracy

I am in favour of the reform of the bureaucracy. And yet you find even among the bureaucrats capable, efficient and honest people. You find suddenly a city like Surat being cleaned up by a bureaucrat. I would never have believed that such a thing could happen, but the city of Surat has been cleaned up mainly because of the efforts of a bureaucrat. If the bureaucrat starts making this kind of contribution, then may be while he will do a lot of wrong, he may be doing some good. What is wrong will perish, because it ultimately leads to destruction. But the good things will survive because they lead to sustenance and growth. Take Mr. Seshan, the Election Commissioner. A peculiar kind of person, but he gave us clean elections which seemed impossible in a country like ours. But it happened. And it continues to happen even after he has retired. The same sort of thing is happening in the judiciary. Suddenly one finds that they can do something for this country. Of course, don't expect too much from them. They are not clean either and they are very inefficient. But they atleast are a force which puts a check on certain tendencies in society. So you find again and again factors which were written off suddenly showing strength and usefulness. And this is happening again and again in Indian society.

Commercialisation As a Factor

And you find the forces of commercialisation and modernisation bringing people together. For example, television. I have heard a lot of criticism about the programmes of Zee Cinema. But I must say that people from Tamilnadu to Kashmir watch their movies. And that is a unifying factor. If all people like the same movie, it is something good. Atleast there is one thing that is commonly accepted and enjoyed in this country. And automatically, the Hindi language also gets accepted. If you go to Tamilnadu, they will say they have nothing to do with the Hindi language. But if there is a good movie in Hindi, they will watch it. This means that India is one market. And one market for labour, one market for enterprise, one market for goods is a powerful unifying factor. It works very silently. Then there is the apparel that an Indian wears. In the good

old days, the way he clothed himself was his visiting card. Earlier you could identify an Indian - which part of India he came from - from the clothes he wore. But this is not the case now. We are becoming similar, in clothes, language, education, social habits. For example, the kind of food that Gujaratis once used to eat or the Maharashtrian ate is not the kind of food they eat today. And these factors are bringing us together. This is a hopeful factor for me - the commercial factor.

Opportunities for Liberalisation

There are many other things too which are wrong. Thus the Indian Railway system is rotten, the infrastructure is not working. But the very fact that these things don't work are, I think, an advantage! If the Indian Railways don't work, someone is bound to say 'let's have something else'. And at some point of time, we will become desperate and we will let the multinationals in because we are bankrupt, and have no dollars in our kitty. So one day we will say, our Railways a giant socialist enterprise, giving employment to a large number of people don't seem to do the work they are supposed to do, so let's give somebody else a chance. That much tolerance, that much flexibility the Indian has. He can do contradictory things at the same time very happily, which most people cannot! The failure of all the things which I have just said may carry within them the seeds of change.

Of Collapsing Societies & Revolutions

Of course there are instances of societies that have collapsed. I have read the history of societies that have collapsed and of revolutions that took place such as the French, the Russian and Chinese revolutions. But many of the factors that operated there and which brought about a collapse of society do not seem to be operating here.

We have not been occupied by foreign countries for 30 years as China was occupied. We are not so stagnant that there is no hope for the poor people. They have some ground for hope. They can come to Mumbai and live in zopadpattis which is bad for us, but good for them. For there, they can earn their living. So there is always an escape. And if there is an escape, then people do not want a revolution. Revolutions are dirty things. Revolutions have done immense harm to society. This was the case

with the Chinese revolution, the Russian revolution and the French Revolution too. Had there been no revolution, France would have been comparable to England in economic progress. In fact, their textile industry was more advanced than the British industry - before it got mechanised. So this seems to be the situation in India where nothing seems to work and yet where there is hope - at least ground for hope.

I am also a student of history. And I find that our society has survived for thousands of years with changes and modifications. If the local people were failures, foreigners came; they were absorbed into society, thus more competent people, more brave people took over society. Later on, others came and so on. There has been a continuous willingness to absorb change and to survive. And still the basic structure of society has remained more or less the same. Isn't this a strength; isn't this a factor that has made democracy survive for 50 years here, when it collapsed in no time at all in Pakistan? Why did it not collapse here? It didn't even when Nehru died, it didn't when Indira Gandhi declared an emergency. At that time, I had given up all hope. But look at the resilience of this society. Democracy came back. Partly because Indira Gandhi herself was an Indian and partly because Indian society is Indian.

Individual Initiative & Enterprise

We always read about corruption, about law and order breakdown, failures of railways, etc. in the newspapers. But at the same time when I travel around Maharashtra, I find a lot of constructive work being done by young selfless people in almost every town and district of Maharashtra. Recently I was in Malwan and there I met a young engineer. He had given up his job as he was interested in social work. He has improvised techniques of production for the simple people - for instance, a better way of breaking up cashewnuts. He brings together children of poor people, gives them education, trains them and sets them up as self-employed people and he seems to be getting help from politicians. He told me that money was not a problem. Elsewhere, I found somebody improving the quality of grapes, somebody exporting roses, somebody manufacturing champagne. These things never appear in newspapers somehow. I find that the face of India has changed. For example, the

Krishna Valley (Sangli, Kolhapur, Satara) in Maharashtra is completely transformed. They have a shortage of labour there. They get labour from Andhra and from Karnataka, because they do not have enough labour in the state. Isn't it a big thing that agricultural activity should find itself short of labour and be able to absorb people; that an overcrowded area of economic activity should need to get people from outside. This is happening. And once these people get used to a better standard of life, once they get used to having trucks and bicycles and motorbikes, once they get used to having banks and colleges, they are not going to look back, they are not going to give it up; they are going to ask for more.

And some of them are very enterprising. I am amazed at the number of women entrepreneurs in Maharashtra. Maharastrians are not an enterprising people at all. Still I find a number of women setting up new enterprises. So I think, there are grounds for hope. There are a number of positive factors at work.

Negative Factors

And the negative factors are that nobody wants to take over India. I don't think the army wants to take over India. Their hands are already full. Kashmir is enough for them. I do not think they would dream of taking over India and having so many insurgencies on their hands. And the Army is not in any case, a unified force as armies elsewhere. It consists of diverse people. And we internally are either too weak or too lazy or too tolerant or too willing to accept contradictions or too willing to express our anger in seminars and not let it really create problems for this society. And therefore I would say, Indian democracy will survive, seems to be able to survive - I don't know whether it will be meaningful and successful, because there will always be people at seminars who will say that it's not meaningful at all and that it has failed. It is a part of our tradition to be very disappointed with things as they are and be angry and to express righteous indignation. This is part of the Indian psyche. At the same time, all these constructive efforts that are being made, these forces that operate silently, invisibly hold promise of a society which will function and which is likely to be viable.

The Discussions

A. Solomon

Not a Meaningful Democracy

Are we a democracy? We have the shell of a democracy. Just because we have general elections doesn't mean that we are a democracy. Democracy is not merely a system of governance; it is a way of life. Some of the philosophical bases for democracy are: (1) human equality - do the people of India recognise human equality; (2) individual freedom - does it exist in India? (3) A democracy is based on certain values - do these values exist in this country. Unless the people are committed to democratic values they cannot function as a democracy and unless we make efforts to promote these values, democracy cannot survive. We have been paying attention to the shell of democracy and not its foundations. If we are really interested in establishing real democracy in this country, there should be a massive programme of rational education. The social basis of democracy must be strengthened. Do we recognise individual freedom? After all, the source of all freedom is the freedom of the mind. What have we done to free the mind of the people from bigoted and fanatical ideas. Can we subsist in a society which believes in the caste system, or the cruel doctrine of *Karma* which says that a man suffers in this life because of the sins he has committed in a previous life without telling him what sins he has committed in his previous life. Unless we inculcate the values of freedom, democracy cannot succeed. I am not willing to accept in the first place that we already have a meaningful democracy, and secondly that meaningful democracy can succeed without the values of democracy.

S. Divakara

We have Failed Democracy in India

I am an optimist. I think even if we have failed democracy in India, our future generations shall not fail us. One good thing that our present day politicians have done for us is that they have kept democracy alive in our country. Every five years atleast, we have an election when they come to us for votes. As Mr. M. R. Pai, says, whatever may be the shortcomings of politicians, they have given democracy as a gift to our country.

I interact with a lot of youngsters throughout the year - with school and college students and I think in the seminar today, we should have involved more youngsters. What is the use of us elders discussing whether we have failed or not when the future generation is not present here today. After all, what we are discussing is for their benefit and I think we should address ourselves to the future generation and involve them more in such seminars.

In the present-day scenario, the educational system has failed us. It has failed the future generation of our country. We have got some of the brightest youngsters in schools and colleges. We have not tapped them. They need exposure through leadership camps and citizenship camps, and I think that is where voluntary organisations should address themselves.

Dr. Lionel Fernandes

Ethics and Ethos in Short Supply

It is good to see a silver lining to every dark cloud. But I feel we should not lull ourselves into complacency. We need to pull ourselves up by our boot straps because there are a lot of things which have gone wrong with our society, and if as Prof. Gadgil has said, even with so much corruption and maladministration, we register a growth rate of 7%, how much more would be that rate if we could do away with a lot of corruption, maladministration, embezzlement and so on. I am sure, we could hike our growth rate several times.

You might have seen the index of clean government which has been appearing in several newspapers. Singapore is right on top followed by New Zealand. We are somewhere much lower down the ladder in terms of clean and efficient government according to a rating agency in Germany. So we cannot be complacent about it and say we can bumble on for 2000 years because we have always had the capacity for survival and well the skies haven't fallen. Skies will never fall. Even when Hitler was butchering 6 million Jews, the skies never shed a tear, they never fell. That doesn't mean that he was doing the right thing. So we cannot lull ourselves into a sense of complacency that all is well with our society.

I think that there is a shortfall of two vital ingredients in our

democracy and I would put them as ethos and ethic. We have a lot of information going around, we have a lot of talent and skills. We are not in short supply there. But we definitely are short in supply where ethos and ethic are concerned. By ethos, I mean a certain way and spirit of doing things. I am not relying only on institutional and technical arrangements. The spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. And that applies across the board to all our institutions. It is not tinkering here or tinkering there or switching to the presidential system or reforming our constitution or having a different type of federal arrangement. These have their value no doubt. I would not discount that. But I think that would be secondary. However ingenious a constitutional arrangement might be, if there is no ethos, there is no spirit of the law behind it, it can be subverted - presidential system or no presidential system.

The second thing is ethic. We are woefully short in some sort of professional code of ethics and that is a lacuna which we see in our educational curriculum. What is the use of having management, engineering, law, chemistry, physics, geography - the entire gamut, but not what it means to be a decent human being. So we get people who are very wise in so many other areas but woefully lacking in what it means to be a decent human being, what it means to be considerate towards women, towards the weaker sections and so on. I feel this lacuna in our educational system needs to be addressed - value education, how to humanise our people and how to use the media, formal and non-formal forums to get this kind of message to the rural areas. I think we have to apply our minds in ever so many seminars wherever we go, facing our captive audiences like for example, I teach in the university so I have no excuse. I am in constant touch with young people, and I should be doing my homework there. It is I think a challenge that we need to address ourselves to.

Manuwant Choudhary

Only Technically a Democracy

I do not agree with Prof. Gadgil's view that India is in safe hands and it is going to continue for ever and ever. I think all of us are aware of the way politicians are running the country. I do not think that 50 years after Independence, India is a democracy - technically, we may be a democracy. Only socialist parties can contest elections in India. If I wish to contest an

election I have to swear that I am a socialist. It is a bad thing that you have a democracy where only socialist parties can contest elections. And how did it come about. During the emergency, Mrs. Gandhi introduced two words secularism and socialism in the Constitution, and later it was required that political parties swear by it. Now unless the judiciary intervenes, it cannot be rectified and so we have politicians who are socialists of various hues ruling the country and they have gone in for liberalisation only because the country went bankrupt.

The other aspect is the communalism that has come to the fore today - and that again has a lot to do with the word secularism that was introduced. I don't think our Constitution was a secular constitution. It was a non denominational Constitution. It respected all religions equally as well as people who did not believe in religion and I think that should be restored.

I happen to come from Bihar and there was talk of bad roads, shortage of power and things like that. I think there is no other state which is worse than Bihar as far as infrastructure is concerned. I am supposed to belong to a rich farmer's family I don't have electricity in my house for the past eight months because the transformer got burnt and you can't get a replacement because the State Electricity Board cannot get it. etc. How do we manage? We have generators operated with diesel. The entire irrigation system in Bihar is diesel-based. Then again the government is making money out of the farmers, by saying it is for diesel. Do you think the farmers really want to buy diesel if they can get electricity at a cheaper rate.

The other thing is that liberalisation has not happened in the agricultural sector. This is a sector that really needs to be opened up, promoted, if India is to ever earn the foreign exchange that we need. This is what happened in South Korea, Taiwan where they put agriculture first, consumer goods, industry second and heavy industry last. But it is not happening in India. Why? Because of the vested interest of industrialists who are tied up with politicians - they pay them money during elections, for favours they get after the elections.

I had gone abroad three years ago for a Commonwealth Young Political Leaders Conference. I actually calculated how much foreign

exchange my father must have paid in foreign exchange for me to go there though the tickets etc. were provided by the British Government. My father must have had to grow approx. 50,000 maunds of brinjals for me to go abroad for a single trip - according to the rate of brinjals in the U.K.! That's the kind of price difference that exists in agricultural commodities. This is the time to exploit that. If we don't, we lose out Soon the price difference will not be the same and India will lose an advantage. But our politicians are not bothered.

List of Participants

Naozer J. Aga	Chairman of the Board of Directors of Armayesh Imports & Exports Pvt. Ltd. and Sigma Systems, Inc.
Perveez Agarwal	Managing Director, DBS Corporate Services.
Yashawant Bhide	Lecturer in Commerce and Management, Joshi Bedekar College, Thane; Post-graduate teacher in Finance & Management. Also Director, Bombay Finance and Investors Group, Mumbai.
Manuwant K. Choudhary	Chief Reporter of <i>The Afternoon Despatch & Courier</i> .
J. B. D'Souza	Retired civil servant, worked in areas of urban development, management and housing. Former Head of the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad. Urban Management Adviser to the World Bank.
Maj.Gen. E. D'Souza (Retd.)	Served in the Indian Army. War service in Egypt, Italy & Japan World War II, Jammu & Kashmir 1948 & 1971, Sikkim watershed against Chinese in 1965. Secretary General of the World Wildlife Fund, India for over 4 years. Currently, a freelance writer, book reviewer and social activist.
Arvind A. Deshpande	Hon. Secretary, Leslie Sawhny Programme; Director, Trusteeship Foundation; Hon. Director, Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy; Secretary General, Lok Swaraj Foundation.
S. Divakara	Secretary, Forum of Free Enterprise. Interests include getting involved in arranging good citizenship programmes for the younger generation and also activities of consumer interest.
Dr. Lionel Fernandes	Teaches Political Science at College and University level. Currently attached to the Department of Civics & Politics, University of Mumbai, Kalina Campus. Interested in questions of secularism and equity.
Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil	Professor of Economics at various Mumbai colleges; economic adviser to leading industrial houses; currently, Honorary Economic Adviser to Hindustan Construction Company Ltd. Writer and columnist on economic

- affairs in most economic periodicals. Distinguished writer in Marathi literature and has been the President of the Marathi Sahitya Parishad. Actively associated with the Mumbai Grahak Panchayat, an organisation of consumers.
- Justice R. A. Jahagirdar** Retired Judge of the Bombay high Court. Associated with the Indian Radical Humanist Association, Founder Trustee, Rationalist Foundation. Interested in activities relating to secularism and human rights.
- Dr. Divya Joshi** Researcher. Special interests - Gandhian thoughts and practice.
- Yogesh V. Kamdar** Engineer-Consultant by profession. Human Rights activist.
- Malini Karkal** Researcher. Consultant in Demography, Public Health and Women's Studies.
- Prof. N. M. Kondap** Chair Professor of Non-Profit Organisation, Rotary Club of Bombay West. Interested in social marketing.
- Narendra B. Kotak** Graphic Designer and Printer by profession. Actively associated with youth forums.
- Mangesh Kulkarni** Currently teaches Political Science at the SNTD Women's University, Mumbai. Has co-edited a book on *Politics in Maharashtra* (1995).
- Anupam Mehta** Heat Treatment Technologist (Metallurgy) and Marketing Consultant. Subjects of special interest: Water Resources and Water Management.
- Dr. Usha Mehta** Retired professor of Politics, Bombay University. Chairperson, Bombay Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.
- Jiban K. Mukhopadhyay** Senior Economist. Macro Economic Analysis with specialisation in Indian economy in general, International economics in particular; Editor; *Statistical Outline of India*, Tata Services Ltd.
- Dr. Gulestan B. Nagporewalla** Has taught Statistics at various college in the city. At present, connected with SNTD Women's University, Department of Commerce. Doctorate in Labour Welfare. Interested in the training and education of women in particular.

- Shyamsunder R. Pai** Chartered Accountant. Specialises in advising Indo-European business.
- Dr. Indumati Parikh** General medical practitioner for over 40 years. Working for integrated human development with special emphasis on women. President of the Centre for the Study of Social Change.
- Jehangir Patel** Publisher and printer. Editor, *Parsiana* and *Voyage* magazines. Publisher of *Freedom First*.
- Sidney Pinto** Lawyer, Financial Consultant and civil liberties activist.
- S. V. Raju** Project Director, Project for Economic Education; Editor, *Freedom First*.
- Admiral L. Ramdas (Retd.)** Former Chief of the Naval Staff. Interested in national security issues, international relations, economic, socio-political affairs etc. Currently settled in rural Maharashtra, involved in horticulture and local affairs.
- Lalita Ramdas** Professional background of work in education and development, literacy and women's improvement for nearly two decades. Has worked extensively on adult education policy at Asian regional level. At present, President, International Council for Adult Education, an international NGO based in Toronto. Areas of interest: Current affairs - Panchyati Raj, and applications of adult education as a tool for democracy.
- Kashmira A. Rao** Programmes Co-ordinator, Project for Economic Education.
- Nitin G. Raut** Advocate and Notary Public. Member, Advisory Board, *Freedom First*. Hon. Secretary, Mumbai Branch, Indian Council of World Affairs.
- K. F. Rustamji** Retired Police Officer. Worked as Inspector General of Police, Madhya Pradesh, and Director-General, Border Security Force. Special Secretary, Maharashtra Hockey Association.
- L. R. Sampat** Hon. Secretary, Swatantra Party (Maharashtra).
- Viren Shah** Industrialist. Actively associated with several public welfare organisations. Former Member of Parliament. Chairman, Mukund Limited.

Kunwar Sinha	Producer and Director of TV programmes and documentary films.
V. K. Sinha	Editor, <i>The Secularist</i> published by the Indian Secular Society.
Abraham Solomon	President, Indian Secular Society. Interested in promoting secular human values in a liberal democratic state.
Dr. Usha Thakkar	Former Head of the Department of Political Science, SNDT Women's University. Currently associated with the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.
Dr. Maneesha Tikekar	Head of the Department of Politics, SIES College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Mumbai. Areas of interest: Social and political philosophy.
Prof. Sadanand Varde	Retired professor of Economics, former Minister of Education, Government of Maharashtra. Associated with environmental groups and educational and civic associations in Mumbai.

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