

Profiles In Courage

Dissent on Indian Socialism

A D Shroff
Khasa Subba Rao
Pitoo Mody
B R Shenoy
N G Ranga
Rajagopalachari
Minnoo Masani

Edited by Parth J Shah

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About the Contributors

R K Amin

Professor R K Amin was born on June 24, 1923, in Ahmedabad district in Gujarat. He holds a BA (Hons) and MA from Bombay University and a BSc and MSc in economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Professor Amin started his career as a Professor of Economics at the L D College of Arts in Gujarat University and then worked as Principal of a commerce college affiliated to Sardar Patel University at Vallabh Vidyanagar. In 1958, he was appointed as Professor and Head of the graduate department of Economics at the same University. In 1966 he resigned from the post to contest Lok Sabha elections. He served for two terms in the fourth and sixth Lok Sabha as a Swatantra Party Member of the Parliament in 1967, and as a Janata Party MP in 1977.

He remained in politics from 1966 to 1990, working both in legislature as well as party organizations. He has been closely affiliated with the Swatantra Party as well as the Janata Party, Lok Dal, and Bharatiya Janata Party. He is very well versed with the political economy of India and has been a supporter of a free-market economy with a limited government. He was associated with several leaders like Pilo Mody and Madhu Mehta. He was also both student and colleague of Professor B R Shenoy. Professor Amin has published several books, textbooks, and articles in economic dailies and journals. His Gujarati book "*Kisan Bole Chhe*" (*The Farmer Speaks*) is published by the Centre for Civil Society, New Delhi.

Mahesh P Bhatt

Professor Mahesh P Bhatt completed MA in Economics from Bombay University and MSc from the London School of Economics. He was a Professor of Economics and Director of the School of Social Sciences at Gujarat University. He was associated with Dr B R Shenoy for more than 14 years. He has been a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institute, Stanford University, USA and Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo, as well as Visiting Professor at Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad. He was president of Gujarat Economics Association. Professor Bhatt is a member of the Mont Pelerin Society.

Currently he is a Managing Trusty of Vishleshan Trustee, which arranges lectures and seminars, including an annual B R Shenoy Memorial Lecture. He is also Chief Editor of *Vishleshan*, a Quarterly Journal of Research and Readings in Economics, which disseminates liberal ideas. He has published books and large numbers of articles in learned journals.

G Narayanaswamy

Mr G Narayanaswamy is a Chartered Accountant in practice for nearly 50 years and a partner of S Venkatram & Co., in Chennai. As a practicing Chartered Accountant, he came into contact with Rajaji and was in close contact with him for over 12 years from 1960 till his death. He was closely associated with Swatantra Party and at present is the Founder President of Rajaji Centre of Public Affairs in Madras, a non-profit organization that has been carrying on weekly programmes in educating the people on current, economic and political affairs.

Mr Narayanaswamy is the Regional President of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, Madras, Vice-President of the Forum of Free Enterprises, and also Vice-President, Hindustan Chamber of Commerce, Madras. He maintains a keen interest in public affairs.

S V Raju

Mr S V Raju, who holds an MA degree in political science from the Bombay University, was a close associate of Mr. Minoo Masani for four decades. He was Executive Secretary of the Swatantra Party at its National Headquarters, from 1959 to 1973. This position provided him with the opportunity to be in close touch with outstanding liberals like C Rajagopalachari, N G Ranga, N Dandeker and M Ruthnaswamy, among others. In association with Dr. S P Aiyar of the Bombay University, he authored a book on the Emergency and edited the volume "Fundamental Rights and the Citizen." Currently, Mr Raju is editor of *Freedom First*, a Liberal Quarterly published from Mumbai, and President of the Indian Liberal Group.

Kilaru Purna Chandra Rao

Dr Kilaru Purna Chandra Rao was born into peasant's family on November 30, 1948 at Mangalapuram village in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. He first studied Agriculture and later Economics at the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management, an institution under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). Besides contributing a large number of book chapters and articles to Professional journals, he is involved with communicating his views to people in general and farmers in particular through both print and electronic media.

P Vaman Rao

Mr P Vaman Rao, born June 12, 1928, joined The Hindu as a correspondent in Hyderabad in July 1947. In 1963 he became chief of news bureau. He served the newspaper for 22 years during a crucial period— during the Nizam's rule and the consequent disintegration of Hyderabad State and its reintegration into Andhra Pradesh.

Rao has been the only Indian Journalist to be appointed as the Director of Information, Public Relations and Films and Tourism in Andhra Pradesh, which he took over in 1969 at the invitation of the government for a period of 5 years. As a founder member of the Public Relations Society of India's Hyderabad chapter he has been closely associated with a number of social, cultural and educational organizations including the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

In 1974 he joined the Birla Industrial house as director of Corporate Affairs of one of the companies. He continues to be Director for a couple of companies. He is also the founder editor of the *New Swatantra Times*, a monthly in memory of the late Khasa Subba Rau.

Parth J Shah

Dr Parth J Shah received his Bachelor of Pharmacy from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara, India, and PhD in economics (with a special emphasis on Austrian Political Economy) from Auburn University in the US. He taught economics at the University of Michigan-Dearborn before returning to India in August 1997 to start the Centre for Civil Society, a free-market think tank in Delhi. He has published academic articles in the areas of development economics, welfare economics, business cycle theory, free or laissez-faire banking, and currency board systems. He has edited several books and has regularly written for newspapers and magazines. He is a columnist with *Economic Times*. He enjoys applying economic principles to understand human and non-human behaviour, and is always doing economics except when he plays chess, badminton or tennis.

Minoo Shroff

Mr Minoo Shroff is a management Accountant and Business Economist by training and experience. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, London, and Fellow of the Institute of Directors, London. He has had wide experience in the field of business as Senior Executive in various companies for over 20 years including Raymond India.

He was a visiting lecturer at various management institutes in India and abroad. Mr Shroff is a strong advocate of the market economy and has effectively espoused its cause over the last 40 years in his public speeches and writings. He has written several publications and addressed many groups in India and Japan to promote joint economic co-operation between the two countries.

Currently Mr Shroff is President of the Forum of Free Enterprise, senior trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, and Chairman of the Leslie Sawhney Programme of Training for Democracy.

Introduction

It is a tremendous pleasure to offer life narrative of the seven men of Swatantra—the men who fought against the British for political freedom and then against the Indian state for economic freedom. C Rajgopalachari, Minoo Masani, N G Ranga, B R Shenoy, Piloo Mody, Khasa Subba Rau, and A D Shroff stood courageously against the socialist orthodoxy of post-independence India. Not only did they challenge the state in their own field of work, whether academia, journalism, or business, they launched India's first truly ideological opposition political party, the Swatantra Party. A D Shroff formed the Forum of Free Enterprise, India's first free-market think tank. Khasa Subba Rau ran *Swarajya* and *Swatantra* when most of the press was reluctant to take on the ruling party. These men dedicated their lives to protect the freedom and dignity of the individual.

Students of Indian economics or political science would hardly learn or even hear about the unique struggle these men fought that kept India from falling completely into the abyss of collectivization and communism. It was their courage to stand against the popularity and charisma of Pandit Nehru that, as Khasa put it, "saved individual life from the soul-crushing oppression of the Leviathan State disguised in Socialist raiment." Even in these heady days of liberalization, these men are at the very fringe of public memory. For any revival of liberalism in India, it is critical to bring the freedom fighters, not of the British India, but of post-independence India into public discourse. The volume establishes that liberal principles have deep roots in the Indian soil. And to stand up for these ideas against all odds is also part of the Indian tradition.

No politician of stature was willing to oppose Nehru's march towards socialism; Rajaji at the age of 81 took up the challenge and formed the Swatantra Party in 1959. Rajaji coined Permit-License-Quota-Raj, the ubiquitous phrase since used to describe the Indian central planning. He understood the unintended consequences of economic restrictions. During 1938-1942, in the wake of the War, severe controls were put on the movement of food grains, and the rice was rationed at about 30 grams per person per day. It was typical for wedding invitations to carry an insertion, "Please bring your ration card with you." These controls were in place in 1952, when Rajaji became Chief Minister of the Madras State. Without any notice or discussion, he announced at night over the All India Radio that food rationing and restrictions were abolished with immediate effect. Dire predictions of scarcity and starvation were made, but Rajaji stood by his decision. He understood the laws of supply and demand. The supply of food grains actually increased and the prices fell! If the current ministers were as clever, they would abolish all restraints on the movement of agricultural goods and create a common market in India.

N G Ranga led anti-zamindari struggles and established training schools for activists, but when Nehru proposed ceiling on land holdings, prohibition on the storage of grains, and collectivisation of agriculture as a solution, he became the founding president of the Swatantra Party. The difference was not of the end—to help small farmers, but of the means—freedom versus force. Professor Shenoy's 1954 *Note of Dissent* on the Second Five Year Plan must be seen as the beginning of the Second Freedom Struggle in India. It provided the intellectual foundation for the struggle that has led to today's policies of liberalisation.

The selection of these glorious seven was, unfortunately and painfully, not as difficult, as there are a few contenders. I have left out the contenders who are still fighting the battle. These seven also help trace the evolution of Indian liberalism as they come from varied background, practiced different professions, and traveled all the way from Marxism, to the mixed economy, to Gandhism, and to liberalism. The celebrated diversity of India is well reflected in the personalities, lives, and the paths taken in search for the truth by these seven profiles in courage. The authors of the profiles also reflect the same diversity—accountant, academic, politician, journalist, entrepreneur. I chose them because they have either worked very closely or have known the subjects intimately, which would enable them go beyond the standard biographical or intellectual account, and infuse the narrative with personal observations, memories, and anecdotes that would bring the whole human drama alive. The varied background of the authors has effected different style, tone, and structure for each chapter. I have maintained the individuality of each chapter, despite a strong impulse for linearity.

Each of the seven authors—R K Amin, Mahesh P Bhatt, G Narayanaswamy, S V Raju, K Purna Chandra Rao, P Vaman Rao, and Minoo Shroff—have painted an engaging canvas, by digging into memories painful and pleasant. T H Chowdary, D V Venkatagiri, M R Pai, and R K Amin helped identify and persuade the authors. Tapan Ghosh worked hard for the necessary linearity. The dedicated team of Bhuvana Anand, Yazad Jal, Sujatha Muthayya, and Manali Shah at the Centre made it possible to bring out the volume on time. Long hours put in by Tessy Joseph and her team at Macro Graphics cannot be wholly acknowledged by the money payment. And all the payments were made by the Sir Ratan Tata Trust. The support and encouragement of H D Malesra, Sudhir Rao, and Vartika Jaini of the Trust has indeed been invaluable. Despite the ambitious nature of the project and lengthening gestation, they stood with us.

I now invite you to join these courageous men—the men of Swatantra—to walk the path they have forged, to continue the Second Freedom Struggle.

Parth J Shah

December 2001

Minoo Masani: The Making of a Liberal

S V Raju

The newspapers of June 8, 1959 reported that at a public meeting in Madras¹ held on the previous day, C Rajagopalachari announced the formation of a new political party, the Swatantra Party. Others who addressed this meeting included Prof N G Ranga, V P Menon and M R Masani. While reading this report (I was then 29), little did I realize that an association was about to begin with M.R. Masani that was to last for the next 40 years.

Six months after that press report, I was working as office secretary of the Swatantra Party at its central office in Bombay² and reporting to the Party's General Secretary, Minoo Masani. My association with Masani ran through different phases. First as office secretary, later executive secretary, at the central office of the Swatantra Party; next as management consultant in Masani's consultancy firm, Personnel & Productivity Services; and, finally, as a fellow-champion of lost causes in the various organizations he founded, and these were quite a handful!

What sort of a man was Masani? How does he qualify to be a part of this volume about courageous men who stood up for what they believed even if it meant bucking a powerful establishment and being in a minority? The answer to the first is the subject matter of this essay. The answer to the second, the reader may decide after reading this profile of a man who, in my view, could be described as among those very few, who kept alive the spirit of liberalism in India after independence.

The Masanis

Minoo Masani, the first of four children, was born to Rustom and Manijeh Masani. The family was upper middle class at best but by no means rich. His father Sir Rustom P Masani was a self-made man with a distinguished career spanning many facets—municipal employee (Secretary of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and later Municipal Commissioner), writer, biographer, crusading journalist, banker, historian and anthropologist.³ Minoo had two brothers and a sister, all of them achievers. Keki was a well-known psychiatrist and Pesi, a mathematician who taught at the Pittsburgh University in the United States. His sister Mehra entered government service to retire as Deputy Director General of All India Radio, prematurely though as a protest against what she perceived as gender discrimination when she was denied promotion to the position of Director-General—or was the denial due to the fact that her brother Minoo was an outspoken member of the opposition? Such vindictiveness was not unknown when “The Family” ruled India.

Minoo was the only politician in his family and that too a left-leaning one. Sir Rustom Masani, though not in politics, held views that can only be described as liberal. He did not participate in the freedom struggle though he was close to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta who was a member of the Indian National Congress and its President.⁴ A strict father and known to have a temper, Sir Rustom Masani was nevertheless not one to impose his views on his children. He was not antagonistic to the British and at the same time, neither overawed nor servile. His book on *Britain in India* takes a balanced view though the then freedom fighters including his son Minoo were not very appreciative of his views on the benefits of British rule. Minoo Masani’s brothers were quite indifferent to politics though his sister Mehra, a government servant, took a sisterly interest in his political activities. I know for a fact that he consulted Mehra for advice when he felt he needed such advice.

Choosing a profession

Minoo Masani’s early schooling was at the Cathedral High School and the New High School, now the Bharda High School, both in Bombay from where he matriculated in 1921. He played cricket and hockey in school and also took to the violin taking music lessons from Count Odone Savini who had settled in Bombay. Minoo passed the examination conducted by the Trinity College of Music. Another of Savini’s pupils was Mehli Mehta (Zubin Mehta’s father) who became one of Bombay’s most successful musicians. Wrote Minoo in his autobiography: “I felt rather happy to recall having actually played in a quartet which used to perform chamber music in Savini’s home with Mehli Mehta playing the first violin and I the second.”⁵

While Minoo Masani’s father wanted him to become a doctor and he was reconciled to it “for lack of anything better to think of” he took to law on the

suggestion of his friend and classmate Yusuf Meherally. Meherally convinced Masani that he was better suited to be a lawyer. His argument was that with law, Masani could “serve the country better in public life.” “I wonder!” says Masani in his autobiography. About his friendship with Meherally he wrote: “While I was very fond of Yusuf, I found it very difficult to reciprocate with the same intensity that he displayed, and he often called me a cold person. It was a matter of different temperaments. Yusuf was a warm, gentle, dedicated person. With him, patriotism became a religion, nationalism a creed.”⁶ A frank admission and very true as I found out for myself! Masani was both cold and very private. He brushed aside any question that he considered was personal. For example if he absented himself from office for a day or two and when I asked him what was the problem, he would reply with some brusqueness, “Its nothing. Let’s not waste time” and then would get straight down to work.

After school it was the Elphinstone College in Bombay, the London School of Economics (LSE) and Lincoln’s Inn. Returning to India he joined the Bombay Bar but soon gave up practice, which, as he himself confessed was, “not very successful anyway,” to participate in the freedom struggle.

The LSE and Laski influence

Masani’s entry into public life was via the legal profession, the London School of Economics and the Middle Temple, his early training grounds for a career in politics albeit a leftist, pro-Soviet one. “I probably learned more about committees, elections, commissions and party politics during my student days than many Indian politicians have bothered to learn in a lifetime, and in the speeches and writings of our later day socialists I can hardly fail to hear the echoes of my juvenile outpourings.”⁷

A fellow-student at the LSE was V K Krishna Menon, then an Annie Besant follower and a “moderate” by Masani’s standards.⁸ After an initial and altogether brief period when Masani was his admirer, the relationship turned adversarial even before Masani had returned from London after completing his education. Strangely he drew away from Menon not for his communist views but for not being enough of a communist! Krishna Menon went on to become a member of the British Labour Party and switched to the British Communist Party of which he was a card-holding member. Masani takes the “credit” for introducing Menon to Nehru. Nehru and Menon were to become very close friends. After independence Menon was appointed Indian High Commissioner to England, and later India’s Defence Minister. Ironically a reluctant Nehru had to ask Menon to resign both positions before the end of his tenure. He had to step down as High Commissioner when he was involved in what came to be known as the “Jeep Scandal”⁹ and from the Defence Ministership when he was held responsible for India’s humiliating defeat in the 1962 war with Communist China.

It is said that Harold Laski, Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics, exercised considerable influence on his students, particularly Indian students. While Masani was no exception, for he too came under his spell, he was soon to see the contradictions in Laski's thinking and move away. But Laski left a lifelong impression on others like Jawaharlal Nehru and Krishna Menon. This, perhaps, was one of the reasons for the statist and ambivalent policies that free India pursued during the Nehru regime including the pronounced pro-Soviet tilt.¹⁰

An admirer of the Soviet Union

Influenced by Laski and while a student at the LSE, Masani joined a group, which went on a conducted tour of the Soviet Union in 1927. He was greatly impressed by what he saw there and returned singing its praises, convinced that this was the model for a free India to emulate.

Masani visited the Soviet Union twice; the first time in 1927, when he was a student at the LSE and the second, eight years later in 1935, when he was secretary of the Congress Socialist Party. The second trip, Masani records, was on Jayprakash Narayan's insistence. Interestingly, the reason he was given why he should visit the Soviet Union once again, was that it would be better to deal directly with the Russian communists than through the British communists! Much like Nehru preferring to talk to the Soviet leadership rather than with the Communist Party of India (CPI), often to complain about the behaviour of the CPI in India!

When he reached Moscow, Masani found that he had to deal with the representatives of the Comintern, the body representing the international communist movement. And these representatives were none other than the British communists led by Harry Pollitt and R Palme Dutt! Masani carried a mandate from the CSP to offer to associate with the Comintern! When he therefore told them that the CSP was prepared to associate with the Comintern (though not affiliate to this body) provided Moscow dropped its support to the CPI, R Palme Dutt on behalf of the Comintern declined, saying, "You see Comrade Masani, we must have our own Party in India."

After this trip Masani published his booklet *Soviet Sidelights* in which he gave vent to his unabashed admiration for the Soviet Union and its achievements. Masani admits that his observations were "naïve" but says "I can only excuse myself on the plea that I was one of thousands of young intellectuals, who in the 1930s could hear no evil, and speak no evil of the USSR."

This marked the beginning of Masani's socialist phase. He went on to become one of the founding members of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) which was not an independent political party but a pressure group within the

Indian National Congress to take the Congress to the Left. In its early years the Congress, was a party of liberals with a liberal orientation. The entry of Gandhiji into the Congress and the death of Gokhale ended the liberal domination of the party. The liberals left the Congress in 1918 and formed their own party, the Indian Liberal Party.

When Gandhiji emerged as the unquestioned leader of the Congress, the socialists in the CSP were his main critics. Jawaharlal Nehru looked kindly on the CSP, though he was reluctant to openly identify himself with them. Naturally, as a founding member and Joint Secretary of the CSP, Masani found favour with Jawarhalal Nehru. On the other hand neither Sardar Patel nor Rajaji looked upon Masani kindly. To them he was a socialist troublemaker. If Masani had not renounced socialism, had not become an uncompromising critic of international communism in general and of the Soviet Union in particular, then perhaps Masani would have, like his contemporary V K Krishna Menon, gone on to hold public office including that of Union Minister. Instead the farthest he reached was as a member of the Constituent Assembly, Ambassador to Brazil and Chairman of the UN Sub-Commission for Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

Freedom fighter

On his return to India, Masani tried to combine his legal practice with active participation in the freedom struggle. The two did not mix well and as Masani himself confessed he was not much of a lawyer. His law practice receded into the background and participation in the freedom movement came to the fore. In May 1932, four years after his return from England, Masani underwent his first imprisonment as a freedom fighter. He was imprisoned for two months without trial for participating in the civil disobedience movement, which was then gathering momentum. Less than a year later, in January 1933, he again courted arrest while defying a ban on meetings and spent the whole of that year in the Central Prison in Nasik.

It was in Nasik jail that he joined with the other prison inmates, who included, among others, Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), Achyut Patwardhan and Yusuf Meherally and Asoka Mehta, to form the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and became its joint secretary. An enduring relationship between these four was forged in prison that year, even if in later years they took to different political paths.

As a student in the United States, JP came under the influence of the Communist Party of the United States and was, as Masani put it, “for all practical purposes, a communist.”¹¹ Jayaprakash considered himself a “national communist”—a contradiction in terms. And the contradiction soon surfaced leading to JP’s rejection of Communism. He was, reports Masani, horrified when the Communist Party of India (CPI) followed Moscow’s line that all nationalists

and democratic socialists were “social fascists with whom no cooperation was possible and whose influence among the people had to be undermined.”¹² So JP, a “staunch believer in the dictatorship of the proletariat” for whom “Marxism was the bedrock of his faith” and Masani, “a staunch democrat of the British Labour Party kind” even if a “starry-eyed admirer of the October Revolution,” got together to form the party because both were “keen on projecting socialism on the political map of India and thus developing the anti-imperialist struggle.”

Masani the socialist

Interestingly, around the same time, attempts were being made to revive the Swaraj Party (also a pressure group within the Indian National Congress but advocating policies not very different from that of the liberals even if they were rather reluctant to describe themselves as liberals. Perhaps because the liberals in the Congress had left the Congress and formed the Liberal Party of India as they did not approve of Gandhiji’s resort to mass struggles, the Swarajists did not wish to be identified with the Indian Liberal Party). In his autobiography, Masani records a speech he delivered at a convention of the Swaraj Party in Bihar in 1934, which in effect amounted to exhorting the Swarajists to abandon the legislatures and come out on the streets to further the freedom struggle! Writing about this three decades later, Masani observes rather wryly “My speech must have sounded somewhat impertinent to the Liberal gentlemen present, each of whom had a long and fine record of public service.”¹³ This was Masani in the early thirties, a staunch socialist who even wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru seeking his support for the newly formed Congress Socialist Party!¹⁴

In fact, his father whose own beliefs were liberal (though he was not involved in politics or the freedom struggle) told his son that he did not like propaganda for class war being conducted from his home. Masani moved out. The “separation was friendly” records Masani with some relief.¹⁵ Life was hard for Masani who, until then had a fairly comfortable home to return to after his agitational activities. Many years later as General Secretary of the Swatantra Party he would often narrate his own experiences as an activist and the many physical hardships he cheerfully accepted as a socialist along with his comrades. He would recall stories of travel over long distances in unreserved 3rd class compartments, often forgoing breakfast or lunch at stations, because he had little or no money to spend. He would wait anxiously to reach his destination so that he could have a square meal at the expense of his hosts!

Once, travelling with him in his car we passed Cecil Hotel not far from the famous Gowalia Tank *maidan* now called “August Kranti Maidan.” Cecil Hotel is located at the intersection of the roads leading from Chowpatty and Opera House. With noticeable nostalgia he recalled how he would borrow a chair, a plate and a ladle from Cecil Hotel, place the chair on the footpath in front of the Hotel, climb on the chair, hit the plate with the ladle to attract

passers-by and make an impromptu speech denouncing British rule. The moment the police approached he would quickly retreat into the hotel, have a cup of tea and quietly disappear. Compare this, he would tell me, with today's activists who wish to travel comfortably, expect a generous allowance and want a microphone to make their speech. He would console himself, adding, "Then we wanted freedom from British rule. Today, we are seeking freedom from Congress misrule. Guess the two are not quite the same thing." The fact was that whenever Masani recalled his socialist days, it was always with considerable nostalgia tinged with regret. He would tell me that man-to-man, they were so much more dedicated and true than most other politicians in other political parties.

Disillusionment with Soviet Communism

With such strong adherence to socialist beliefs and loyalties, what made him give up socialism? But before we come to that it is necessary to recount the circumstances that led to his resigning as Joint Secretary of the CSP and later the membership of the party itself. The immediate reasons were that it had to do with his growing disillusionment with Soviet Communism and the failure of his attempts to dissuade his colleagues, JP included, from having a united front with the CPI. But there was another reason. It was his questioning the assumptions of Marxism.

The early thirties were the period of Stalin's purges of his rivals in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the liquidation of millions of farmers who opposed his policy of forced collectivization of farms. Horrified by Stalin's brutality Masani's disenchantment with Soviet Communism led to his questioning the credentials of the Indian Communists.

He strenuously resisted communist attempts led by E M S Namboodiripad and P C Joshi to infiltrate and capture the CSP when the leaders of the CSP were in jail. Unable to convince the majority of his colleagues of communist designs on the CSP, he resigned his position but continued as its member. He resigned from the Party's primary membership in 1939 when it gave up its resolve not to support the British war effort.

However, his departure from the CSP did not mean giving up on socialism. That was to come later. For the moment he decided to "retire" from active politics. He called it his first retirement. There were two more to come, as we shall see presently. But he remained an ordinary member of the Congress. He retired from active politics and went on to do other things! This other thing was to write a book that made him a popular figure in his own right. The book was *Our India*, which turned out to be a bestseller, and to seek gainful employment. More about this later. It drew him closer to Nehru because *Our India* echoed what later used to be referred to as "Nehruvian Socialism."

Gandhi replaces Marx

Masani had a number of maxims up his sleeve. I used to be at the receiving end of many of these. One of them was "You cannot replace something with nothing. You have to replace something with something better." In his case, Marx was being replaced by Gandhi. But the replacement was gradual, spread over a number of years. And Masani had to thank his father for introducing him to Gandhi!

As a young socialist agitator out of prison he was determined to oppose Gandhi's policies. "I was determined not to be converted," he wrote in his memoir. "In fairness to the 'old man,' it must be conceded that he never tried to work on us to persuade us to give up our socialist principles. On the contrary it was I as the young crusader, who thought I would bring enlightenment to the old man and open his eyes to the superiority of our panaceas and the limitations of his."¹⁶ Gandhi obviously treated young Masani with patience and tolerance. The bonds grew stronger after Gandhi invited Masani to accompany him on his walking tour of Orissa dedicated to the removal of untouchability. This was in May 1934. At the end of the ten-day tour Masani left with Gandhi some questions and draft resolutions of the Congress Socialist Party and its programme.

About Gandhiji's answers Masani writes: "To me Gandhiji's comments now appear to be extremely reasonable and practical. Indeed, my own views later, came very much in line with what he had to say, but at that time his answers shocked me."

The subjects ranged from the rule of princes, "I am not for the abolition of the rule of the princes; but I believe in its reformation and modification in consonance with the true spirit of democracy;" to nationalization, "the progressive nationalization of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange is too sweeping to be admissible. Rabindranath Tagore is an instrument of marvelous production. I do not know that he will submit to be nationalized;" and to state monopoly "Should not the state be satisfied with all the power it will possess? Must it also exercise all the powers in one swoop, whether such an exercise is necessary or not?"¹⁷

There were many other occasions when Masani would debate argue and even disagree with Gandhiji. But, at the end of it all, if Masani had a mentor, it was Gandhiji. For unquestionably it was Gandhiji's influence that enabled Masani to get rid of his socialist blinkers and turn in the direction of liberal values. "Undoubtedly," wrote Masani in his autobiography, "the greatest man I have known was Mahatma Gandhi." ¹⁸

"Two fundamentals I accepted from Gandhi's thought — first, that the end does not justify the means, and that no decent social order can evolve through the use of force or fraud; and that in the second half of the twentieth century, the omnivorous state is in danger of becoming the biggest single threat to human

liberty. No school of thought or system of government offends against these two beliefs as violently as totalitarian Communism.”¹⁹

Despite this tremendous impact of Gandhi on Masani, his denunciation of communism and his resignation from the CSP did not mean that he had given up on socialism. This was clear from his book *Our India*.²⁰ As I mentioned earlier, one of his maxims was “you cannot replace something with nothing. You must replace something with something better.” This “something better” would come some years later. Meanwhile *Our India* turned out to be a bestseller with a million copies sold by the early fifties. It was also translated into a number of Indian languages. *Our India* was quickly followed by two others books: *Picture of a Plan* and *Our Food*. The income from these books also helped Masani live a little more comfortably.

This was in the early forties. And, as he writes in his autobiography: “While World War II and the Quit India campaign were proceeding along their respective paths I was engaged in an intensive re-thinking of my own position *vis-à-vis* the problems of socialism and a free society. Marxism and State Socialism had lost all appeal for me. The question was what philosophy or way of life was to take their place.

“The two major factors that had contributed to this change in my thinking were the failure of the Soviet Revolution to deliver the goods in any sense of the word and the influence of Mahatma Gandhi.”²¹

Socialism reconsidered

The result was *Socialism Reconsidered* written in 1944 in which he questioned some assumptions of Marxism:

“There are at least four assumptions of Marxism—there may be more—which, I believe, need to be reconsidered. The first of these is that the abolition of private property and its nationalization will automatically bring in economic democracy and a classless society. It has now been shown in Russia that it need do nothing of the sort.

“The second Marxist assumption that needs reviewing is that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is a possible and indeed a necessary transition state to Socialism! The theory was that having served its purpose the dictatorship would evaporate and indeed, as Lenin following Engels put it: ‘The State will then wither away.’ In Russia the Soviet Government... shows not the slightest tendency to relax its complete stranglehold on individual liberty of every kind, much less to ‘wither away.’

“A third Marxist assumption that appears unable to stand a review of the past two decades is that socialism can be achieved by appealing to the collective selfishness of the working class and its collective hatred for the property-owning

classes... Unfortunately the appeal to the collective selfishness of the workers leads quite as often to their becoming a party to exploitation and injustice. We have already seen how the British working class, being given a minor share in the profits of the Empire, becomes through the Labour Party a party to the perpetuation of imperialism, which is the very antithesis of a world socialist order.

"Yet another belief is that socialism is the only alternative to capitalism. I must confess I held this view myself till around 1937 or 1938... But must it? That the old type capitalism is played out is obvious. But will socialism inevitably follow or is there not a third something that is likely to emerge..."

"In the context of today only he is a *socialist* (italics mine) who insists on having both liberty and a planned economy. For all such it has become necessary to reconsider the assumptions on which orthodox socialism has so far been based and redefine the means by which one may hope to achieve the end."²²

The choice Masani explained was not "between capitalism and socialism, but between the democratic or free way of life and the totalitarian way, whether of the fascist or communist kind."²³ In fact, Masani kept repeating time and again that he was not against the objectives of socialism of a free and equal society but of its methods. He appealed to his fellow socialists to give up their doctrinaire approach. Even as late as August 26, 1965, in a speech in the Lok Sabha, Masani said: "We accept the socialist aim of a free and equal society but we are perceptive enough to see that the method of Statism and controls is not the method that leads to a free and equal society."

And so he worked on a new recipe and called it a "Mixed Economy." In 1947 he was invited by the Bombay University's School of Economics and Sociology to give an address in the Silver Jubilee Lecture series. This gave him an opportunity to share with the students of the University and the public the outcome of his reconsideration of socialism. He called it *A Plea for a Mixed Economy*. I am unable to assert with any degree of certainty that Masani was the first in India to think of this form of economic organization. But it would be factual to say that he was among the first in promoting this concept. It found its way into India's Five-Year Plans though, as it invariably happens when translating concepts into action, it got distorted and was hardly recognizable. As he once told me, Nehru had turned his (Masani's) concept from a "mixed economy" into a "mixed up economy!"

Masani's "mixed economy" was a middle-of-the-road recipe, where the state and the citizen had their respective roles to play in the economy even while ensuring that the freedom of the individual and an open society were safeguarded. The Soviet experiment had convinced him that political power combined with economic power would result in the oppression of the people.

In any case is "State ownership and management of industries the answer to our needs?" he asked.

"The rejection of a policy of State ownership and management of industries... need not lead one to be content with the *status quo*... I put it forward, not as a poor substitute, nor as a mere half way house to the real thing but as a better, more scientific and more modern method of working for the same ends than the so-called 'scientific socialism' of the nineteenth century...

"There are certain things that need to be stressed in making an approach to the Mixed Economy. The first is that our approach must be free from dogma of any kind... The second thing to stress is that India is big enough for all forms of production to be tried out at the same time and since we are still at the beginning of our Industrial Revolution, the mere nationalization of existing enterprises would, in any event, touch only the fringe of the problem that faces us. The third factor in our approach is to make the fullest use of the great contribution that has been made to economic thought in our country by Mahatma Gandhi, namely, the emphasis on decentralization of industry and of its control. The fourth thing to do is to shift the emphasis from the State to increasing workers' control over industries and to foster the partnership of Labour both in the administration of industry and its fruits... Fifth and last, the Mixed Economy will depend less on ownership and management and more on control to see that the interests of the community reign supreme." ²⁴

This was a halfway house and clearly an attempt to reassure his socialist friends. But they did not forgive Masani for his heresy. Though many remained friends, I can personally testify that barring Jayaprakash Narayan, who drifted away from socialism to Sarvodaya and Achyut Patwardhan who turned to the philosophy of J Krishnamurthi, some of the more dogmatic ones treated Masani with a certain amount of disdain.

In fact as Masani noted rather unhappily, an article reviewing his speech on the Mixed Economy in the Socialist Party's organ *Janata*, was entitled "The Fallen Angel of Socialism." On the other hand "Rajaji already moving from the role of an angry critic (of Masani's views) to that of an appreciative reader, wrote to him "Your pretty little book is as full of truth as it is handsomely got up."²⁵

During this phase, while transiting from socialism to liberalism and literally longing for understanding if not approval of his comrades in the erstwhile CSP, Masani was uncompromising in his opposition to the communists within the country and overseas. He made it his mission to interpret, expose and combat the communist movement. Once I made the mistake of referring to a labour leader, a communist, who had died as a "good" man. "My dear fellow," replied Masani "there is no such thing as a good communist. The only good communist is a dead communist!"

The anti-communist crusade

In the concluding chapter of his book *The Communist Party of India - A Short History*, Masani wrote: "The Communist Party of India is a dagger pointed at the heart of democracy in the most populous country of the world outside the Iron Curtain. Its role is to disrupt the national economy, create intellectual confusion, infiltrate into key positions and prepare for the day when, in the face of national emergency or international crisis, it may be in a position to paralyze the will to resist. Only purposeful democratic leadership that arouses the country to the internal and external dangers with which it is faced can immunize India from this threat."²⁶

Those were the cold war years when the Soviet Union sponsored front organizations to promote its interests worldwide and to capture or destroy democratic, non-communist organizations. For instance the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was a genuine federation of trade union organizations worldwide. When the Soviet communists managed to capture this organization and to do the bidding of the Soviet Union, Western nations founded the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU). In India, the All India Trade Union Congress was actually an outfit allied to the CSP and the Indian National Congress. The CPI managed to capture this organization and the Congress Party had to found a new trade union organization, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). Organizations of writers, artists and intellectuals were special targets of the communists to infiltrate and capture. The West's answer was the Congress for Cultural Freedom based in Paris. In India, Masani, along with Jayaprakash Narayan, Asoka Mehta and A D Gorwala took the initiative in 1950 in establishing the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and affiliated it to the Congress in Paris.

During the years before independence, as a socialist freedom fighter, Masani had incurred Sardar Patel's displeasure more than once. The transition from a socialist to a Gandhian made Masani more acceptable to the Sardar. Soon after independence as India's Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister responsible for the country's internal security, the Sardar made a determined effort to combat communist activities in the country. In this he found a useful lieutenant in Masani.

"Some time in 1950, when Sardar Patel complained to me in the course of a talk that the Prime Minister would not allow him to take the kind of security measures he would have liked to, I asked him whether it would be helpful if a little research and information centre were to be established on a non-official basis to combat communist subversion among the intelligentsia. Patel thought it was a very good idea, and was ready to help."²⁷

And help he did, by securing for Masani office space in Bombay, a telephone connection and Rs 10,000. And thus was born the Democratic

Research Service (DRS) in November, 1950. The main activity of the DRS was pamphleteering and the publication of *Freedom First* a monthly of 16 pages, which for the next 35 years, carried on a relentless campaign exposing the international communist movement based in Moscow and the activities of their fifth column in India.²⁸

But what was even more valuable in educating not only the Indian intelligentsia but also official security agencies was the publication by the DRS of secret documents of the Communist Party of India (CPI) with help of a mole who was a member of the Central Committee of the CPI, no less. He was disillusioned with the CPI and the Soviet Union and decided that rather than resign he would stay inside and help Masani with secret documents. "The Democratic Research Service was thus able to scoop everyone, including the police by publishing this material and releasing it to the press." The Communist Party did not dare challenge when the DRS published the secret documents of the Party's Madurai and Palghat Conferences.²⁹

Not surprisingly, the DRS was not looked upon kindly by Jawaharlal Nehru. In November 1956 when Soviet troops crushed the revolt by the Hungarian people, and the Nehru government prevaricated on whether or not to condemn the Soviet action (and finally they didn't), the issue was debated in the Lok Sabha. In the course of his speech Nehru defended his government's response. But he could not resist attacking the movement launched by the DRS and described it as "a convenient handle to run down the government." Jayaprakash Narayan defended the DRS and said, "The object of this organization is not to run down the government, as Mr. Nehru says but to educate the people of this country in democracy."³⁰

Naturally the communists and their fellow traveling friends conducted a campaign of calumny against Masani calling him an "agent of American imperialism," a "CIA Agent" etc. Even well meaning people accused him of seeing communists under every bed. Such charges did not deter him from carrying on an unrelenting crusade against a group he considered the enemies of freedom.

While publicly members belonging to the ruling establishment said nothing, privately there were many who would come up to Masani and tell him, that they were glad he was exposing the Soviet Union's activities in India through their fifth column. One of them, I remember Masani telling me, was S K Patil the then Congress strongman in Bombay.³¹

The flood of information that has come out of Moscow and other capitals of hitherto Soviet satellites after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, proved the authenticity of Minoo Masani's charges and how justified he was in his anti-communist crusade.

Sometime in early 1994, a well-known journalist and an associate during the freedom struggle, (a card holding member of the CPI, according to Masani) was passing through Bombay. He called on Masani. This journalist was on his way back from a tour of Russia and Eastern Europe after the break-up of the Soviet Empire. He complimented Masani for his accurate assessment of the real nature of Soviet communism and confessed he had been wrong and Masani had been proved right. Masani was of course delighted and asked this journalist friend of his to publicly “recant” and “confess” his faith in communism, just as Jayaprakash Narayan had publicly renounced Marxism in an article he wrote for *Freedom First* many years earlier.³²

Even though Masani had quit being a Marxist he continued using words that have been popular with communists. Two such words were “recant” and “confess.” His friend said he couldn’t do that and give up his faith at this late stage in his life. “Then,” Masani retorted, “you are not cured.” However, this friend as a mark of his admission of error left Rs 500 with Masani as “life subscription” for *Freedom First*!

With the demise of international communism, Masani decided that the DRS no longer had any reason to continue. In consultation with his friends who had been supporters of the DRS he had the organization wound up. *Freedom First*, however continued, changing its focus from anti-communism to a more positive “Quarterly of Liberal Ideas,” and as a publication of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom.

As mentioned earlier soon after resigning from the CSP and writing his bestseller *Our India*, Masani looked for gainful employment. His father introduced him to A D Shroff who took him to J R D Tata who gave him a job at Bombay House the Headquarters of the Tata Group of Companies.

Earning a living

For the next 16 years, from 1941 to 1957 he was associated with the House of Tatas with two breaks. The first in 1943 for a brief spell when he courted imprisonment during the Quit India movement and the second for a year, from 1948 to 1949, when he was India’s first Ambassador to Brazil. While with Tatas he was simultaneously, Mayor of Bombay; a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, which converted itself into the Constituent Assembly to draft the Constitution³³ and later as a member of the Provisional Parliament;³⁴ Government of India’s representative on the UN Sub-Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities 1947 to 1952,³⁵ the last two years as its Chairman. The fact of the matter was that differences with Nehru mainly on issues of foreign policy came out into the open in debates in the Provisional Parliament. In discussions in the Congress Parliamentary Party, Masani invariably supported Sardar Patel, which naturally infuriated Nehru. The Sardar died on 15 December, 1950. In 1952, when the Provisional Parliament

dissolved he resigned from membership of the Congress Party. He had been its member for 20 years.

Regarding his stint as India's Ambassador to Brazil, I remember asking Masani why at all did he agree to leave the Constituent Assembly and go to Brazil as Ambassador in the first place.³⁶ He admitted that he should have stood firm and not have been persuaded to accept this assignment. Admittedly not a satisfactory answer but that's all he would say.

After terminating his ambassadorial assignment, he returned to the Tatas in 1949. His resignation from the Congress Party signaled his second retirement from active politics. This was to last till 1956, when he stood as an independent candidate for election to the Lok Sabha. In the intervening period he was a full-fledged business executive, an anti-communist crusader, writer of books particularly for children, and a much sought-after speaker.

Writing about Masani's years with Tatas and his contribution to the Tata organization, J R D Tata wrote:

In Tatas, Minoo played a variety of roles, always with competence and despatch, demonstrating a remarkable adaptability, to ideas, tasks and problems wholly different to those he previously had to deal with. Although I was, therefore, happy to have him in the Tata team, I was delighted when the Prime Minister appointed him India's Ambassador to Brazil in 1948, as I hoped, in the national interest, that it would lead, on his return to more important assignments possibly within the Government itself. But that was not to be, presumably because his strongly independent character and the mistrust his radical change of political ideology had made him unacceptable to the Congress party. Minoo would indeed have proved a difficult colleague in a Government and party so heavily infiltrated by Marxist fellow-members.

So Minoo came back to Tatas where, in charge of the Group's Public Relations Department, he filled increasingly valuable roles, as an adviser on management, on human relations in industry, on personnel and labour problems, for which his earlier experience in the trade union field made him particularly helpful. In fact I found his views and advice to the firm so useful to me that I got him to join my personal secretariat as '*chef de cabinet*' where I could take full advantage of his practical and insatiably active mind, his wide ranging experience of men and affairs, his sense of history, his authorship and his mastery of English. I could not have made a better choice.

All in all Minoos Masani was... a remarkable human being whose talents and character, sadly for India, failed to be recognized and used as they could have been in the country's great benefit.³⁷

Nine years into freedom, there were a number of people, who could be loosely termed leaders of public opinion who were getting restless with the direction in which the Congress was taking the country. The First Five Year Plan (1952-57) had been in the right direction with its emphasis on agriculture. But the Second Five Year Plan (1957-62) was based on Moscow's Gosplan and headed towards state capitalism. Comrade Professor P C Mahalanobis with his 'medicine' of planning by physical targets was in. Prof B R Shenoy who was totally opposed to the Mahalanobis model and was a firm votary of a free market; and totally opposed to deficit financing, and to the State occupying the commanding heights of the economy was out.³⁸ Professor Shenoy, a member of the Planning Commission and a Liberal economist, submitted a Note of Dissent and this put paid to his membership of the Planning Commission. In Madras, Rajaji's columns and articles in *Swarajya* got sharper by the week. Rajaji too had not renewed his membership of the Congress.³⁹ "Since the Congress Party has swung to the Left what is wanted for the body politic is not an ultra or outer Left but a strong and articulate Right," he wrote in *Swarajya*.⁴⁰

Towards a new party

About the same time Masani was discussing with his friends, similar concerns. "We felt that the time had come for a new political initiative by which the monopoly enjoyed by the various socialist and communist parties could be broken. In our view the situation had matured enough for a Liberal Democratic Party to be brought into existence with a programme distinct from the various versions of the collectivist paradise which has been presented to the Indian people since Independence."⁴¹ But the second general elections were close and there was not enough time to organize a new party.

So Masani and his friends decided to do the next best thing — put up some independent candidates for the Lok Sabha in the 1957 elections. This would be like staging a dress rehearsal or testing the waters as it were before the real thing, which was the formation of a new liberal party. The following candidates contested these elections as independent candidates supported by local parties. Sir Homi Mody in Rajasthan, S Goyal in Uttar Pradesh, R V Murthy in Andhra, H R Pardivala in Orissa, Eric da Costa in Jamshedpur, and Masani in Ranchi. Of these only Masani got elected to the Lok Sabha. He had been supported by the Jharkhand Party. With his election, the liberal voice was heard in the Lok Sabha for the first time after independence.

And so began Masani's third essay into party politics. But his election cost Masani his job with Tatas. J R D Tata approved Masani's decision to contest as

being in the public interest, but told him that if he was elected to the Lok Sabha even as an independent sitting in opposition to Nehru's government, he would have to resign from the Tata organization as "such a decision would be in the interests of the shareholders of the Tata Group of Companies."⁴² Masani, a strong believer in the maxim that you "live for politics not off politics" set himself up as a Management Consultant specializing in personnel management, industrial relations, management training and development and public relations. J R D Tata helped him find office premises from where he conducted his business for the next 22 years. His consultancy firm, Personnel and Productivity Services did reasonably well. In 1979, he sold his company to Tata Consultancy Services.

As soon as he found himself back in his familiar hunting ground, parliament, he lost no time in looking for like-minded people in the House and outside as the first step towards the formation of a Liberal Democratic Party. In Parliament he formed an Independent Parliamentary Group along with two other MPs. Outside, he pursued Rajaji and Jayaprakash Narayan among others. One group of friends he had not given up on were his former colleagues in the CSP. Soon after independence, Jayaprakash Narayan had dropped the "Congress" from the Congress Socialist Party, and offered a major challenge to Nehru and the Congress in the 1952 elections. The Socialist Party's rallies were well attended and matched the rallies held by the Congress. But when the results came in the Socialists suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Nehru. Some time later the Socialist Party split between those loyal to Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and those who followed JP – the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) of Lohia and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) of JP. JP himself gave up party politics and launched himself into the Sarvodaya movement.

Most of Masani's erstwhile colleagues were in the PSP. He decided to write to Ganga Saran Singh. Ganga Babu, as he was popularly known, was then Chairman of the Praja Socialist Party. In his letter Masani said that he and his friends were thinking in terms of establishing a new Party of a Liberal colour and explained why this development was essential. He added that there was a great deal of common ground between them and the Social Democratic leaders of the PSP in so far as their basic approach was concerned. "Could we not" asked Masani, "come together and form a new Party of a national democratic character?" Masani went on to suggest that the "PSP drop the label 'Socialist'" and Masani for his part would be prepared to go a long way in accepting social justice and the objectives of socialism in the new Party." Ganga Babu's reply communicated verbally to Masani was that his suggestion was not a "practicable proposition. The rank and file of the Party, were so dedicated to the socialist myth or label that they would defeat such an effort if it was made," he records in his autobiography.⁴³ A disappointed Masani sadly observed that the Indian socialists were still way behind their socialist counterparts in Great Britain and West Germany. "Who knows what could have happened if liberals and democratic socialists in India had joined hands at that time to form a progressive national Democratic Party. The whole history of India might

have been different and happier” he speculated and added “Certainly the miserable failure to produce an alternative government for the country in 1970 might have been averted. I have always felt that the conservatism of the ‘Left’ is as pernicious as the conservatism of the ‘Right.’ The inability of good men to turn their guns from old enemies to new ones has led to many a tragedy, and this was one of them.”⁴⁴

The Swatantra Party emerges

Though Rajaji and Masani shared similar concerns about the future of India if Congress rule went unchallenged, Rajaji asked to be excused on grounds of ill health and old age when Masani asked him to join him in his efforts to form a new Party. Jayaprakash Narayan also asked to be excused as he believed in a partyless democracy and was engaged in the Sarvodaya movement. Masani was clear in his mind that without one of them the new Party could not take off. He was honest enough to accept the fact that he did not have the qualities of a leader to lead a new Party. He wrote in his memoirs, “I never had any illusion about the fact I personally lacked the political appeal of the kind that a country like India needed for the purpose. I had always conceived my role in Indian politics as an effective No.2 man, who could run the machine efficiently, provided there was a leader who had the necessary charisma. Such was the role I was able to play along with JP in the 1930s and with Rajaji in the 1960s.”

Masani’s definition of an acceptable leader in India was “a home-spun and earthy personality with deep roots in the Indian tradition” which Masani admitted he did not possess. And how is this reflected? It is reflected in one’s way of life, one’s dress and a certain austerity and abstinence from allegedly ‘Western’ habits such as drink and ballroom dancing. He felt that he was “too much of a world citizen of the kind Stalin described as a ‘rootless cosmopolitan’ to play the role of Supremo in an Indian Government.”⁴⁵

Meanwhile, pending the formation of a new Party he played the role of a one-man opposition. Masani was perhaps the first to launch a frontal attack on the Second Five Year Plan in the Lok Sabha. The occasion was the debate on the Union Budget 1957-58. He described the Five Year Plans as the source of evil and the Budgets a device to secure the financial resources, which the Plans would swallow. He also drew attention to the harm done to the country’s image by the “provocative utterances and postures” of Krishna Menon in his capacity as India’s Representative in the United Nations. On the other hand he supported the dismissal of the Nambudiripad government and the imposition of President’s rule in Kerala. While his criticism of the Plan and Krishna Menon irritated Nehru, his support to Nehru in throwing out the Communist government in Kerala, drew communist ire. He was laying the pattern for the manner in which the new Party would function as a party in the opposition. Not opposition for opposition’s sake but constructive issue-based opposition. Masani was trying to introduce the concept of “His Majesty’s Opposition” in India’s parliament!

And then came the opportunity that Masani was waiting for—a development that would propel the hesitant to join his efforts to form a new Party. The All India Congress Committee met in Nagpur in January 1959 and adopted what came to be known as the Nagpur Resolution on joint cooperative farming and a ceiling on landholdings. In a speech in Parliament, Masani denounced the AICC resolution and said that the farmers of India would fight what was really a move to collectivise Indian agriculture. When he said in the course of his speech that he knew for a fact that many members even in the Congress benches were opposed to the Nagpur resolution but were not prepared to say so openly for fear of invoking Nehru's wrath, Professor N G Ranga jumped up and defiantly proclaimed his opposition to the Nagpur resolution. He resigned from the Congress soon thereafter.

The Farmers Federation of India rose in revolt and, in association with the Forum of Free Enterprise which was already protesting the regime of licenses and permits in industry and commerce, was ready to help in the formation of a party to champion the cause of peasant proprietorship and a free market economy.

Masani was invited by M A Sreenivasan of the Forum of Free Enterprise in Bangalore to address a public meeting on May 29, 1959 which would be chaired by Rajaji. At the meeting both were at their fiery best. The next day May 30, 1959, Rajaji told Masani that it was time to form a new Party and said he was prepared to join in the convening of a meeting to announce its formation! "In public life, time takes over the years its sweet revenge. In 1937, it was Rajaji who had complained against me to Jawaharlal Nehru, who as Congress President, had come to my rescue. Now here we were in 1959, joining in forming a new Party in opposition to Jawaharlal" observed Masani in his autobiography.⁴⁶

A week later on June 7, 1959 Rajaji convened a meeting in Madras for a closed-door meeting of those who were keen on forming the new Party to be followed by a public meeting that evening. Masani's plane was delayed and by the time he arrived in Madras, the closed-door meeting had settled a set of 21 principles of the Party drafted by Rajaji, and a press statement containing the 21 principles and the names of the office bearers of the new Party yet to be named. Masani was happy with the principles but disappointed with the names of office bearers who he complained to Rajaji were either too old or were mostly from the South. He was also disappointed with the choice of N G Ranga as President. Masani was hoping it would be Rajaji. However on his request, Rajaji agreed not to consider the Madras meeting as the date of the birth of the Party but the date when a formal function would be held so that people from other parts of the country could attend and a more representative organizing committee set up. As for Ranga, Rajaji informed Masani that while he had no intention to hold office but was prepared to be a member of the National Executive, he had offered the Presidentship of the Party to Jayaprakash Narayan who happened to be in Madras

that day. JP, even while in full agreement with the 21 principles, declined the offer on the ground that he had decided to refrain from party politics. In the circumstances Rajaji felt that the best person to hold the office of President was Ranga and therefore Rajaji had invited Ranga to be the new Party's President. Masani accepted the decision and there the matter rested.

It was at this public meeting in Madras on June 7, that Rajaji announced to the surprise of everyone present, including Masani that the new Party's name was the Swatantra Party.⁴⁷

The formal function in the form of the Preparatory Convention of the Swatantra Party was held in Bombay August 1 and 2, at a place not far from Gowalia Tank where Gandhiji had launched the Quit India movement also in August. It was the height of the monsoon and raining heavily. This did not deter around 2000 people from braving the storm to attend the Convention. Of these, 600 came from other parts of India.

I remember attending this Convention as a reporter for a Kerala weekly. The atmosphere was electric. It was, as if, a new freedom movement was being launched. On the platform were a galaxy of luminaries led by Rajaji and which included men like N G Ranga, V P Menon, K M Munshi, Homi Mody, Prof M Ruthnaswamy, Sardar Bahadur Lal Singh, K B Jinaraja Hegde, J M Lobo Prabhu to name a few. For the first time since independence speeches were heard that were critical of socialism and Jawaharlal Nehru's governance from the liberal point of view. Masani as Chairman of the Organizing Committee set the tone with a blistering criticism of the Delhi government. Rajaji's was no less emphatic and so were those by the others like Professor Ranga, K M Munshi. Masani described his role in the birth of the new Party as that of a "midwife." This was a fairly accurate description. He had indeed, helped to deliver a healthy baby. The Preparatory Convention received a great press and most editorials welcomed the formation of a political party that was different from the rest.

The list of office bearers which had been prepared in Madras and the composition of which had upset Masani was revised to include many names from other parts of the country, illustrious names that carried weight. But the Central Office was still in Madras and its General Secretary, a gentleman by the name of S Y Krishnaswamy, a retired ICS officer. Masani was clearly uncomfortable that a party he had worked so hard to create was getting to be an "all-Madras" affair.

But this did not inhibit him from doing PR for the Party. A month after its formation, Masani, while on a visit abroad found that people abroad viewed the birth of the Swatantra Party as a major development? "To some extent this interest was due to my article in *Life International* as also my interest in the Liberal International." Masani was interviewed on the Austrian

Radio, “had an off-the-record editors” lunch arranged by *Encounter* magazine at which members of the editorial staff of *The Economist*, *Spectator*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Observer* and the *Socialist Commentary* were present. All this certainly helped to project the party abroad.⁴⁸

General Secretary

On his return home he received a message from Rajaji through Sir Homi Mody that he should take over as the Party’s General Secretary. Responding to Rajaji’s request, Masani pointed out that that there was need to be clear about the organizational set-up if he was to function effectively. The other was a personal one about his need to earning a living and that party work would eat into the time he could give to his consultancy business. Rajaji replied: “As for the personal problems that arise from it, we must face them somehow as we did in 1920.”⁴⁹ The present crisis is as big as we had then to face. Your powers and responsibilities as General Secretary will cover the entire field of the Party administration until our Constitution is passed. It will only be limited by your own discretion as to whether you should take others into confidence – me and Ranga of course you will try to keep satisfied. How can we convert the potentiality of our party into fact unless you throw yourself into this responsibility with all the courage and tact you can command?” Rajaji suggested that the Central Office should be located in Bombay and not Delhi saying, “we should think of Delhi only when we are 10 lakh strong in membership.”⁵⁰ Rajaji was, in fact, giving Masani a *carte blanche* to run the Party. This settled the matter and at a meeting of the Party’s General Council held in Hyderabad on December 9, 1959, Masani was elected General Secretary of the Swatantra Party.

With A D Shroff’s assistance, the Bombay Unit of the Party had already started functioning from the 1st floor of Sassoon Building in Kala Ghoda and across the street was Masani’s consultancy firm. The Bombay Unit accommodated the Central Office in its premises.

I had written to Masani indicating my interest in being considered for the position of secretary of the Central Office. He called me over for an interview that must have lasted around 30 minutes and offered me the job. I joined him as Office Secretary of the Central Office of the Swatantra Party on December 16, 1959.

Masani’s idea of a Party office was far removed from the traditional view of an office of a political party where people are constantly coming in and going out; which opens late in the day and closes around midnight; of smoke filled rooms and an unending supply of tea and eats. His first instructions to me were clear. He told me, and the words still ring in my ears though he said this over 40 years ago, “Raju, please remember this is the Central Office of the Swatantra

Party. I am in charge and I will not permit this office to be used as a caravansarai by anyone even if he claims to be an active worker of the party. It will function like any commercial office and observe regular hours. If I find that you are unable to carry out these instructions then you will have to go." I was so intimidated that all I could say was "yes sir!" The Central Office observed regular hours viz. 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday and 9 am to 1 pm on Saturdays. Sunday was the weekly holiday. And the number of public holidays was strictly restricted. "Please do not imagine that any day declared a holiday by the government will automatically be a holiday for the Central Office," I was cautioned by Masani when once I kept the office closed because it was a bank holiday and he could not get in touch with me. This lapse however turned out to be a blessing in disguise. He could not get in touch with me because I did not have a residential telephone connection. The next day after giving me a dressing down, he wrote a letter to the General Manager, Bombay Telephones for a telephone connection on a priority basis as he found it difficult to get in touch with me outside office hours. The phone was installed at my residence in 48 hours flat!⁵¹ He was an excellent trainer. He trained me in office systems. He also taught me how to speak and write good English.

The Central Office started off with one person – me. My request for a peon was rejected out of hand. This is a habit that is prevalent only in India and nowhere else. In other countries and even in foreign companies in India, Masani informed me, office staff and executives make their own tea or do the million things that peons are called upon to do. I did get one finally, but with considerable reluctance. Next I asked for a stenographer and the response was equally negative. Don't you know typing? Why do you want a stenographer? Only when Masani found that I was being snowed under by papers and I was unable to keep pace with Masani's output did I get a stenographer. As long as I can remember I had to fight for every additional person or equipment that was required. One can understand that funds were never adequate and hence his tight rein over expenditure. But I suspect that it was not so much the lack of money, which of course was a perennial problem, as much as to find how seriously I pursued any demand! If I persisted he gave in. If I did not then he could say, "See I knew he could manage without one!" He was a hard taskmaster and a disciplinarian as I was to experience over the many years I worked with him.

Masani was that rare combination of party ideologue and organization man. He knew precisely what the Swatantra Party was about and set about organizing the Party to achieve it. This meant as he puts in his autobiography "good housekeeping and efficient field organization." For the first twenty years or more the Congress was in a majority not only in Delhi but also in most of the states barring Kerala and West Bengal. This influenced Masani to run a highly centralized party. His objective was Delhi and not the States as the centre of power was in Delhi, not in the States, which Rajaji had described as "glorified

municipalities.” Unfortunately, this strategy often brought him into direct conflict with the leadership in the states. But this did not deter him in the least. “I was elected General Secretary to be effective, not popular” was yet another of his maxims.

The Party adopted its Statement of Policy and Constitution at the First National Convention in Patna in March 1960. The Statement of Policy was entitled “To Prosperity through Freedom” an adaptation of Ludwig Erhards’ “To Prosperity through Competition.” The Constitution was a short and workmanlike one uncluttered by any kind of rhetoric. The initial draft of both, were Masani’s. The draft statement of policy was circulated well in advance and amendments invited. The amendments were placed in parallel columns to the relevant paragraph and formed the basis for discussion. It was all done very systematically. He was absolutely the master when it came to conducting meetings of Committees and Councils.⁵² The General Council of the Party, which met in Patna on the eve of the Convention in March 1960, went through the amendments and prepared the final draft for the Convention’s approval. At the end of it all what emerged was a middle-of-the road document even while emphasizing the primacy of the individual.

As General Secretary of the Party from 1959 to 1967, he was very effective even if not very much liked. The Party grew rapidly and in less than ten years emerged as the single largest party in the opposition, in the Lok Sabha with a strength of 44 members; leading a principled coalition government in Orissa (1967–1971); the officially recognized opposition in the Rajasthan and Gujarat legislative assemblies; and with significant representation in the Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu legislative assemblies.

As the Party’s ideologue he was clear that the Swatantra Party should eschew non-parliamentary forms of protest like satyagrahas, morchas, bandhs and walkouts in the legislatures. He was largely influential in ensuring that the party did not form fronts in the trade union and student movements. Gandhiji’s dictum that the end does not justify the means was a principle he implemented ruthlessly even if it meant reverses. Another Gandhian dictum, which he adhered to faithfully, perhaps even fanatically, was his rejection of the choice of the lesser evil. An evil is an evil. There is no such thing as a lesser evil he would say. This again did not help him become popular. On the contrary it sometimes made things worse. Perhaps it was his insistence on discipline and doing the right thing that led to the Party’s exit from electoral politics.

President

In 1968, he was elected President of the Swatantra Party. He had forgotten his own assessment of himself—that he was a good number two man and could never be number one because he lacked the qualities that were required in the Indian milieu. Those who succeeded him, as General Secretary did not have the

qualities and competence required to manage the Party because that was what the job of the General Secretary. Even the persons who succeeded him, as Presidents did not have his vision and his abilities. I trace the decline of the Party to the decision when he decided to seek the Presidentship of the Party even if the immediate reason was the Party's disastrous performance in the 1971 elections to the Lok Sabha.

Retirement from politics

In 1971, the so-called "Indira wave" swept all parties aside including the Swatantra Party. He accepted responsibility for the Party's miserable performance (he himself failed to retain his seat in the Lok Sabha for a third term from Rajkot) and resigned from the presidentship of the Party and from party politics altogether; his third and final retirement from active politics.

But this retirement did not mean he had taken *sanyas*. He was the active citizen instead. In the introductory paragraph I mentioned that he was a "champion of lost causes." Light hearted though this may sound, it brought out the liberal in him to a greater degree than even his political activities did. He could not be indifferent when he felt that things were not going right and where the freedom and dignity of the individual was at stake. In an appendix to this the essay is a list of organizations he founded and which are still functioning. There were many others, which have faded away because the reason for their existence is no longer there.

As we were coming out of a meeting held on June 10, 1998 to condole Masani's demise, his son Zareer asked me how I had managed to sustain such a long relationship with Minoo Masani. I replied that I had managed this in spite of his father!

Masani was not the easiest of persons to get along with. I held on because I admired some of the qualities he possessed, qualities that were very rare in those days and are getting even rarer now. Masani shared a number of qualities with Rajaji⁵³ even if they were poles apart on some others. The primacy of values in public life was one. A clinically logical mind, shorn of emotions, which led to clarity of thought, was another. This gave him both an uncanny ability to foresee events Cassandra-like and absolute integrity. The two got along very well.

The problem as I saw it with Masani was his inability to be flexible even if such flexibility would not in any way affect his principles. He had the unhappy knack of converting even inconsequential matters into matters of principle. Take his fetish over punctuality and insistence that people see him only after prior appointment. Around 1968 or 1969, when Masani was a Member of Parliament representing Rajkot Parliamentary Constituency, and I was Executive Secretary of the Swatantra Party at its national headquarters, a middle-aged farmer from Dhoraji a segment of the Rajkot Constituency, walked into my room and said to

me in Gujarati that he wanted Minoobhai's darshan. I phoned Masani, whose office was across the road, and asked him if he could spare a few minutes for one of his constituents from Rajkot who had come all the way from Dhoraji to have his darshan. "Does he have an appointment?" Masani asked me. I said, "No, he does not have an appointment." "Then I am sorry I will not see him," said Masani. I put the phone down, took the farmer across the road and into his office. Masani's secretary informed me that he was alone; I barged into his room with the farmer in tow. The farmer had his *darshan*. Masani was his charming best and made the farmer feel very important. The farmer had come to thank Masani for having persuaded the railways to install a manned level crossing on the railway tracks running through his village. This had saved the lives of many buffaloes which otherwise strayed on to the tracks and were killed by speeding trains. The entire meeting took not more than ten minutes. As we were leaving, Masani bid the farmer good bye but asked me to stay behind for a minute. He gave me a dressing down for conniving at indiscipline! I didn't mind the admonition because the job had been done and the farmer's trip to Bombay was not in vain!

Of Indian minds and Hindu traits

There were some traits that he would not take kindly to. He could never understand why an Indian would nod his head as if in agreement with something even if he disagreed. He got a taste of this trait when as secretary of the CSP he was in UP and had put forward certain proposals, "which were received with appropriate nods of the head and ready verbal acceptance. I was pleased with the response," Masani writes in his autobiography. "The trouble was that, after I returned to my headquarters in Bombay and a considerable period of time had elapsed, I found almost invariably that my proposals had not been carried out... At last some friends enlightened me. They explained that in North India, particularly among cultured people, one never contradicted a man and told him that he was wrong. My UP colleagues had never really agreed with my proposals but they had been too polite to say so. To me, a product of the London School of Economics and the British Labour Party... this came as a shock. What was so terrible about dissenting from my proposals? It was an attitude I simply could not comprehend. But like the rest of us, I, in the end learnt to live with it."⁵⁴ I wonder if Masani really learnt to live with it. This incident took place in 1934. Even thirty years later I was to hear from him the same exasperated comment. He never did get used to "this typical Indian trait."

Another Indian or "Hindu trait" as he called it, that never failed to intrigue him was the Indian's inability to take a clear stand on issues. "Is the Indian mind traditionally more dialectical than that of other people around the globe? Is it a reflection of a philosophy that nothing is black or white but everything is a different shade of gray, that there is something to be said for every side of the question, that questions do not admit of a 'yes' or 'no' answer and that perhaps

'may be' is a better answer to most questions?" As an example Masani cites an incident involving Jawaharlal Nehru. "Jawaharlal Nehru once told me soon after independence that he was dodging an invitation to visit Washington... 'You see,' he said, 'Americans are peculiar people. They are not subtle. They want a yes or a no for an answer!' As the years passed I began to appreciate that perhaps the policy of non-alignment, might after all, be a rationalization of this traditional trait of the Indian mind."⁵⁵

When the CPI was trying to capture the CSP, Masani was singled out for attack by the communists. JP asked CPI Secretary P C Joshi, "Why do you make a dead set at Masani while sparing the rest of us from a smear campaign." Joshi's answer was short and to the point. He said, "The rest of you are Hindus and we can take care of you. But Masani is an *Angrrez*." Minoo went on to explain that what he meant was that, "in the leadership of the CSP they felt that I alone had the organizational competence of the western world. Once I was destroyed the take over of the party would be complete."⁵⁶

Like his father Masani had a temper that frightened many. It did me, initially, but his personal secretary who was his match in efficiency and competence told me not to be frightened but to stand my ground if I felt that I was in the right. I did exactly that and found that he respected people who refused to be intimidated. In fact this was one of the reasons for our long association, broken only when he passed away in 1998.

For a liberal who never stifled contrary views (if he chaired a meeting or a discussion he ensured that everybody who wanted to speak got the chance), he ran his office and secretariat with an iron hand and was unwilling to see the other point of view. His chronic inability to be flexible even where principles were not involved arose from his refusal to see a gray. Either a thing was black or white.

His retirements for reasons that are not entirely convincing indicated an inability to put up a fight. He could have stayed in the CSP and tried harder to get the communists thrown out. He didn't. Instead he quit. He did not leave the CSP because he did not believe in socialism. That was to come later. He resigned from his position of secretary as a protest against his party's continuing a united front with the communists. He resigned from the primary membership of the CSP because the Party decided to support the British war effort influenced by the communists. On both occasions he did not stay and fight but retired.

A personal assessment

When the Swatantra Party lost the elections in 1971, he quit not only his presidency but also party politics. I have painful memories of this episode. Some of us tried our very best to dissuade him from resigning. Rajaji sent me a letter asking me to convey his views and also use my persuasive powers to request Masani to stay on—at least for two years by which time the Party would have

recovered from the trauma of defeat. Masani was adamant. He conducted a futile debate with Col. H R Pasricha a member of the General Council that the Swatantra Party had lost the war and not a battle. It was Col. Pasricha's position, which many of us supported, that the 1971 elections did not spell the end of the Swatantra Party and that we had only lost a battle and that we should regroup and fight. This "fatal flaw" is perhaps responsible for the fact that he is not counted among India's national figures despite his outstanding record during the freedom movement and after.

Another of his faults was his inability to tolerate people not as competent as himself. His judgment of people too left much to be desired. Smooth talk and outward appearances could easily take him in. A well-dressed man with a good accent could take him for a ride!

But these were more than made up by many outstanding qualities. Intellectual integrity was one, courage of conviction another. He was incorruptible and honest to the point of being abrasive. Above all he was not an office seeker.

The Janata Party government appointed Masani as Chairman of the Minorities Commission. He readily accepted the assignment and began work in earnest. But he wanted that the Commission be given statutory recognition and be answerable to parliament and not to the government of the day. He also demanded that the Chairman of the Commission be given the status of a Cabinet Minister so that he could be effective. If these were not done, warned Masani, the Commission would be an impotent body incapable of safeguarding the rights of minorities. Both suggestions were turned down by Morarji Desai who was then Prime Minister.

Masani resigned and returned to Bombay. Uncharitable comments including some by members of the Commission appeared in the press mainly that Masani was frustrated that he was not given Cabinet rank and had therefore resigned. Masani's fears proved so true. The Minorities Commission is today a body that nobody takes seriously.

He had the courage of his conviction to stand up to Jawaharlal Nehru though this denied him possible high office. He was not prepared for a trade off between what he believed in and a situation that called for denying beliefs based on empirical evidence. That he could have navigated successfully through hurdles that came his way without compromising his principles is also his failure. But on balance lure of office was not one of his faults.

Masani was not a "born liberal." He evolved into liberalism. The path was tortuous and often frustrating. The journey from Socialism to Liberalism was not an easy one. But he lived to see some of his enemies crumble. By enemies I do not mean people. I refer to ideas, concepts and their physical manifestation. The destruction of the Soviet empire and with it the end of international communism.

The collapse of Statism and the emergence of the free-market, and even more important globalization, for Masani was an internationalist and an unrelenting opponent of national chauvinism.

In an interview by Frits Bolkestein, an eminent Dutch liberal and currently holding high office in the European Union, Masani said in reply to a question regarding the British, "When they were in India, I was very much opposed to them on nationalist grounds. I went to British prisons three times, I supported Gandhi without any reservation. I wanted independence, but after it came I saw no point in being a nationalist anymore because its purpose had been served. So I evolved a world view."⁵⁷

This was Masani, constantly evolving and adapting his thinking to changing situations. What remained constant were his value systems.

This essay does not purport to be a *curriculum vitae* of Mino Masani nor does it claim to recount all that he did in his long years in public life. What I have tried to do is to trace Masani's journey from Marxism and Democratic Socialism to Liberalism. Not surprisingly you will find residues of both as you may have discovered while reading through this narration.

I would like to end this essay with a quotation from Masani himself, which accurately describes how he viewed his life's mission:

"I believe that Man is not merely raw material for social experiments but an end in himself; and the free enquiry of the human mind is the basis of all progress... as I was to learn from H G Wells "I do not care if I am for a time in a minority of one against all mankind, because in the long run if I have to hit off the truth, that will win, and. If I fail to hit it off, I shall have done my best."⁵⁸

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Madras now renamed Chennai.
- 2 Bombay now renamed Mumbai.
- 3 Among the books authored by Sir Rustom Masani *The Religion of the Good Life, Britain in India* and his authoritative biography of Dadabhai Naoroji which has been reprinted by the Publications Division of the Government of India in their series *Makers of Modern India*, need special mention. For more about Sir Rustom Masani read B K Karanjia's biography *Rustom Masani—Portrait of a Citizen*.
- 4 Sir Pheroza Shah Mehta was also, in a manner of speaking, the founder of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and Sir Rustom Masani was its Secretary and later, its Commissioner. B K Karanjia's biography deals with this relationship in some detail.
- 5 Mino Masani, *Bliss Was It In That Dawn* pp.18 Arnold Heinemann, AB/9, Safdarjang Enclave, New Delhi 110016; 1977.

- 6 Ibid. p. 18.
- 7 Ibid. p. 24.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Menon has the dubious distinction of being the first Indian minister to be involved in the first scam in free India involving Army supplies. The "Jeep Scandal" as it came to be known is still one of those unresolved cases though the finger of guilt pointed to Krishna Menon. He was then India's High Commissioner in London. In 1948 the Government of India needed more than 2000 jeeps for operations in Kashmir and Hyderabad. The Indian High Commission in London was asked to procure the jeeps. Traditional channels of supply were ignored and a contract was placed with one E H Potter whose firm was given an advance of 172,000 Pound Sterling for reconditioned jeeps with adequate spares. In March 1949, 155 jeeps reached Madras. None of the jeeps were serviceable and there were no spares accompanying the jeeps. The jeeps were rejected and the advance was written off. Krishna Menon could not satisfactorily explain this transaction and was asked to resign. B G Kher was sent to replace him.
- 10 "In England, Laski did not amount to very much, but in India and other countries under foreign rule he was in great vogue in his time. It is not unfair to say that a whole generation of Indians from Jawaharlal Nehru and Krishna Menon onwards, sat metaphorically at Laski's feet and swallowed neet the wisdom that flowed from his fluent lips and pen. Laski was articulate but not profound. He was terribly confused about fundamentals, with the result that his attitude towards communism and the Soviet Union was ambivalent"—Minoo Masani, *Bliss Was It In That Dawn...* pp. 22-23.
- 11 Ibid. p. 42.
- 12 Ibid. p. 42.
- 13 Ibid. p. 47.
- 14 Masani wrote: "My dear Jawharlal: Some of us Congressmen in Bombay who are socialists are attempting to form a Congress Socialist Group or Party. We feel that the lead you have given to the Congress and to the country by emphasizing the necessity of taking up a consciously socialist and anti-imperialist position should be followed by the organisation of socialists within the Congress. The Group it is proposed to form would carry out the purpose you have in view by placing before the Congressmen and the public ...a programme that would be socialist in action and objective. The Group would do socialist propaganda among rank and file Congressmen with a view to converting the Congress to an acceptance of socialism. We would also carry on propaganda among the workers (and peasants) at the same time participating in their day-to-day economic struggles. It would hearten us to know that in the formation of such a Group we shall have your approval and support. Yours fraternally, M R Masani." Ibid. p. 44.
- 15 Ibid. p. 48.
- 16 Ibid. p. 55.

- 17 Ibid. p. 56. See also the chapter on *Gandhiji and M R Masani - A Dialogue on Socialism* pages 97-100; in the book *Ramblings and Reminiscences of Gandhiji* by Professor N R Malkani, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.
- 18 Ibid. p. 55.
- 19 Minoo Masani, *Why I Oppose Communism*, Phoenix House Background Paper, 1956 page 36.
- 20 Our India appealed to the national pride of the Indian and gave expression to his discontent. It was easy to blame it all on British rule and say that once India was free, all the right things, as laid down in the book would be done. The book also popularized the concept of planning. I was later to regret some of the damage done by this particular aspect of it and particularly the passage boosting collective farming in Russia, the material for which was planted on me during my visit to the Soviet Union in 1935." Ibid 157/158.
- 21 Ibid. p. 160.
- 22 Minoo Masani, *Socialism Reconsidered*, pp. 45-47 (reprinted edition) First published 1944 by Padma Publications, Mumbai, Laxmi Building, Sir P M Road, Mumbai 400001 and reprinted 1986, by the Project for Economic Education, Mumbai.
- 23 Minoo Masani, *Bliss Was It In That Dawn ...* p.161.
- 24 Minoo Masani, *Plea for a Mixed Economy*.
- 25 Minoo Masani, *Against the Tide*, Vikas Publishing House, p. 162.
- 26 *The Communist Party of India A Short History* by M.R. Masani, p. 250 Derek Verschoyle Ltd. London, 1954.
- 27 Minoo Masani, *Against the Tide*, p. 54, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi; 1981.
- 28 The DRS published over 30 pamphlets in its campaign. Among them were: *Communist Activity in India* by S R Mohandas, *How We Took Over Hungary* by Matyas Rakosi, *Towards a Fuller Democracy* by Jayaprakash Narayan; *The Communist Peace Appeal* by Philip Spratt; *Why Does a Country Go Communist* by James Burnham; *Kashmir, India and Pakistan* by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah and Arthur Lall; and *Neutralism* by Masani.
- 29 Minoo Masani, *Against the Tide*, p. 55 ... op cit.
- 30 Minoo Masani, *Against the Tide*, p. 57... op cit.
- 31 S K Patil was the Congress Party's main fund collector and a loyal supporter of Sardar Patel. He was Union Minister for Railways when Masani was a member of the Lok Sabha. The two got along famously. It was Patil who observed in an allusion to Nehru's leadership that "nothing grows under a banyan tree." He detested the communists to such an extent that he named his pet dog Tito!
- 32 Jayaprakash Narayan, "Incentives to Goodness" *Freedom First*, September 1952; republished in *Freedom First*, November 1979.

- 33 In the Constituent Assembly, Masani played his role as a member of its Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee and Union-Powers Committee.
- 34 After completing its work the Constituent Assembly converted itself into a Provisional Parliament pending the first general elections scheduled for 1952. The Indian Legislative Assembly, which was elected in 1945, continued till 1952 converting itself twice first as the Constituent Assembly and then as India's Provisional Parliament.
- 35 Though he was re-elected by the UN Human Rights Commission to membership of the Sub-Committee in 1954, Nehru vetoed his re-election on the ground that Masani had not been nominated by the government of India, that he had already served several years and that "the Government of India do not regard Mr. Masani a suitable representative of the Government or the people of India."
- 36 Before he accepted this assignment and anxious about retaining his seat in the Constituent Assembly he consulted Sardar Patel who asked him to accept the assignment and promised Masani that when he returned he (the Sardar) would ensure that he got his seat back. A promise that the Sardar kept.
- 37 J R D Tata, "Minoo Masani as I Know Him" in *Freedom & Dissent – Essays in Honour of Minoo Masani* published in 1985 by the Democratic Research Service, pp. 2-3.
- 38 The note of dissent set out why Professor Shenoy was unable to subscribe wholly to the views of his colleagues on (a) the size of the Plan, (2) Deficit Financing as a means of raising real resources for the Plan, and (3) certain Policy and Institutional implications of the Plan Frame. Reprinted in *Some Basic Economic Ideas of B R Shenoy*, published by the Economics Research Centre, Mumbai.
- 39 When asked if he had resigned from the Congress, Rajaji simply replied that, "the question of resignation from the Congress does not arise. I have not renewed my membership."
- 40 Rajaji, *Swarajya*, August 17, 1957.
- 41 Minoo Masani, *Against the Tide*, Vikas Publishing House, p. 101.
- 42 Ibid. p. 108.
- 43 Ibid. p. 118.
- 44 Ibid. p. 119.
- 45 Ibid. p. 119.
- 46 Ibid. p. 140.
- 47 Rajaji translated "Swatantra" to mean "Freedom" in an article he wrote in *Swarajya*, July 25, 1959.
- 48 Minoo Masani, *Against the Tide*, p. 144.
- 49 Rajaji gave up a flourishing legal practice to plunge into the freedom movement and this brought much hardship to him and his family (footnote mine).
- 50 Ibid. p. 144.

- 51 In those days even a special category phone connection took at least three to six months and a normal applicant had to wait for year or more.
- 52 This is not surprising. In 1959, G H Stanford of Canada and Masani published a book entitled *The Conduct of Meetings*. This was the Canadian Edition. In 1969 an abridged Indian edition of this book was published by the Oxford University Press and was reprinted in 1986 by the Freedom First Foundation.
- 53 *Bliss Was It In That Dawn* p. 50 ... op cit.
- 54 Ibid. p. 50.
- 55 Ibid. pp. 131-132.
- 56 Frits Bolkestein, *Modern Liberalism*, Elsevier Publishers, New York.
- 57 Mino Masani, *Why I Oppose Communism*, A Background Book published by Phoenix House Ltd. London 1956.

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13. Too Much Politics, Too Little Citizenship, 1969
14. Liberalism (revised and re-printed 1985), 1970
15. The Constitution, Twenty Years Later, 1975
16. Is JP the Answer?, 1975
17. JP's Mission Partly Accomplished, 1977
18. Bliss was it in that Dawn, 1977
19. Against the Tide, 1981
20. We Indians, 1989

Rajaji: Man with a Mission

G Narayanaswamy

Writing about C Rajagopalachari, or Rajaji as he was popularly known, is as easy as it is difficult. Easy because his life span covered the eventful 20th century political history of India, consisting of the fight for freedom and as well as the building up of a new free democracy based on republican ideals to which it was unaccustomed. Throughout this period, Rajaji actively involved himself in almost all aspects of political and social life, not as a mere observer or follower of events but one who tried and on many occasions succeeded in shaping the course of events. Even when he failed, he did not yield except when he was convinced he was wrong.

It is equally difficult because he was an enigmatic personality—full of contradictions not easily understood or appreciated, much less explained without a deep study of his penetrating mind. In fact, even Acharya Kripalani who was associated with him for over 40 years found it difficult to delineate his character. To quote from his article published in *Rajaji's '93 Souvenir*:¹ “I have always found it difficult to delineate the character of individuals, even of those with whom I have come in close contact. This would be more so in the case of a complex personality like Rajaji. In whatever, therefore, I write, I am afraid I shall not do justice to his many-sided personality.”

In the years after independence, Rajaji was initially with the Congress but later got disillusioned with the policies of the Congress under the leadership of Pandit Nehru on matters like land reforms, amendments to the Constitution,

industrial policy, and the “permit license quota raj.” He felt that Nehru’s impulsive approach to improve the conditions of the country had made him impervious to criticism. Though no one doubted Nehru’s sincerity, many questioned the correctness of his policy. Yet no one had the courage to defy him either out of respect for his position or for the fear of becoming unpopular and losing positions of power.

In fact, Rajaji was asked as to why he was carrying on such a vociferous campaign against Nehru and the “permit license quota raj” when no one was willing to listen to him. He said, “I know they won’t listen to me. But when the history of India is written, no future historian should pity us that in a country where great saints have lived, there was not a single Indian to point out the absurdity of the ‘permit license quota raj’.”

Rajaji was the first person to hoist the flag of open revolt against Nehru’s policy. He did not merely revolt but led a great movement against Nehru and his policies by launching the Swatantra Party. But mutual respect and affection between them were never lost.

A complex and contradictory personality

Rajaji has been often accused as being inconsistent and changing his stance frequently. One can illustrate some situations of critical importance where contradiction seems apparent:

- He was born into an orthodox Brahmin family, had authored several books on Hindu religion, and was called the greatest saint among saints by Kanchi Paramacharya. But he encouraged social reforms that are not tolerated even today: inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage, and caste equality.
- He introduced Hindi as a compulsory subject in schools when he was Chief Minister of Madras Presidency from 1937-1939 despite strong opposition and made use of criminal laws to suppress the opposition. But in the 1950s he carried on a virulent campaign against making Hindi the official language and instead championed the cause of English.
- He was closely associated with the Indian National Congress and its leaders but campaigned against them in 1942 on the issues of Quit India Movement and that of partition of India. The same people later appointed him to eminent positions like membership of the working committee, cabinet ministership, and governor generalship.
- He quit the Congress in 1959 and started a new political party called Swatantra Party openly proclaiming that his idea was to defeat the Congress and Nehru, despite his long association and fond admiration for Nehru.

However, he changed his view or approach only after careful thought. He did not hesitate to differ even with senior leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, but at the same time was also amenable to be convinced.

Life and mission of Rajaji

Rajaji was born on December 10, 1878 and passed away on December 25, 1972 at the ripe old age of 94 years. He was a lawyer, statesman, politician, writer, philosopher, preacher, and advisor.

My own personal experience is a mere confirmation of his characteristic qualities of statesmanship, keen intelligence, integrity, far-sightedness and adherence to the dharmic way of life. He was one of the very few exemplary human beings who practiced what he preached and refused to practice what, in his opinion, was not dharma. His private life mirrored his public life.

I was associated with him for nearly 12 years from 1960 to 1972, mainly as a professional chartered accountant. I assisted him in the finalization of his pending tax assessments, which did not involve much of financial consequence but mostly matters of public and academic interest. Soon after, he requested me to contest the election to the Madras Legislative Council from Graduates' Constituency that was originally his seat when he was the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency during 1957-59. Later on his insistence, the High Court of Madras appointed me Administrator of the estate of Lakshmanaswamy Rao Saheb who had committed suicide after the government seized his residential property. My interactions with him over several years included the time spent attending Gita classes together as well as innumerable social encounters; some of them deliberately created to enable me to have more of his educative and enjoyable company.

He would not meet anyone unnecessarily if the matter could be settled through correspondence. Even when I spent ten or fifteen minutes with him, his queries were clear and his supplementary questions searching. Even before one entered his room, he would anticipate the purpose of the visit, and without wasting a minute would straight get to the subject matter. To match him, one had to be equipped to anticipate his questions and supplementaries. I have always made a mental note of his probable questions and noted down such questions and answers in my left-hand palm (in ink) before entering his room. The preparations that I had to make for meeting him were far more than those I made for any complicated professional engagement.

Rajaji can be seen as playing a multifaceted role both within the government as well as outside in a political career spanning almost 60 years. He was: (i) a freedom fighter in the pre-independence days, (ii) an administrator while in government and (iii) an ordinary advisor and commentator on political and economic matters, as a citizen, and (iv) a bitter political critic when his advice was not cared for.

A brief sketch of Rajaji's life and career:

1) He started his career in the year 1900 at the age of 22, as a criminal lawyer at Salem, a small town nearly 200 miles southwest of Madras, and was extremely successful.

2) He was the Chairman of the Salem Municipality from 1917 to 1919 during which period he introduced several social reforms.

3) He left it in the year 1919 to join the freedom movement at the call of Mahatma Gandhi, never to rejoin the Bar. He underwent imprisonment for the first time in December 1921.

4) He was a prolific writer, as the editor of *Young India* in the year 1922, and a regular contributor of articles to several magazines including *Kalki* and *Swarajya* on a variety of subjects. He has authored some invaluable books, including the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*, which have since been translated into several languages.

5) He removed himself from public life from 1925 to 1930 to devote himself completely to Gandhiji's constructive programme.

6) He was called back to the mainstream of public life to lead the Salt Satyagraha in 1930.

7) From 1937 to 1939 he was the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency, a composite state consisting of present Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala (excepting the princely states).

8) He resigned from the chief ministership in the year 1939 on a call from Congress.

9) He resigned from Congress in the year 1942 on the "Quit India" issue and started advocating the cause of separate Pakistan.

10) He was invited to rejoin Congress again in 1946 and was taken into the Congress Working Committee and also in Pandit Nehru's interim government from September 2, 1946 to 1947 at the Centre.

11) He was made Governor of West Bengal on August 15, 1947.

12) He became free India's first Indian Governor General on June 21, 1947 and went on to hold office till January 26, 1950.

13) In the later part of the year 1950, he was again invited to join the Central Government as a minister.

14) In 1952 he was requested to be Chief Minister of the Madras State.

15) He resigned the chief ministership in 1954.

- 16) He started a new political party, the Swatantra Party in 1959 at the age of 81.
- 17) He visited USA in 1962 (his first trip abroad) to meet US President John F Kennedy to advocate banning of nuclear weapons.
- 18) He passed away on December 25, 1972.

His career as a lawyer (1900 to 1919)

Rajaji's decision to be a lawyer was probably taken by his father Chakravarthy Iyengar who wanted his son to be a judge because on his birth an astrologer had predicted that he would become a viceroy, which at that time looked unrealistic, but a judgeship was not impossible. He started practicing as a lawyer at Salem, a town with a population of about 70,000. As a lawyer he was extremely successful and according to one of his contemporaries he won almost all his cases. Clients generally felt that if Rajaji handled the case, they would surely succeed.

His fees were fairly high, about Rs 1, 000 per case, which in today's value would be approximately 2.50 lakhs. He was successful in his profession in terms of recognition, reputation, and monetary reward.

Yet, he quit the profession in 1919, never to rejoin the bar. The question is why? He was financially not well off and a few rupees from the legal profession would have kept him financially comfortable. The obvious answer would be that he wanted to join the freedom movement. However, if that had been the only reason, he could have gone back to the profession like many had done, or could have practiced whenever he was not in prison, but the answer lay elsewhere.

As early as in 1907 (when he was 28 years old), he wrote in the July issue of Patna's *Hindustan Review*: "extremist forms of lawful agitation are necessary to command the attention of the immovable statesmen who control the destinies of this country."

In 1913, while he was in practice, he got agitated at the arrest of Gandhiji for peacefully opposing a racial tax. Apart from collecting some money for Gandhiji's movement, he reprinted and distributed Gandhiji's "jail experiences" with his own money and with his introduction: "Shall we sit happy in our homes, or shall we give only our tears. It is not given to all to exhibit the strength of Mahatma Gandhi. He must be ranked with the avatars... Let us give up perhaps a few luxuries and support them."

When he was elected in June, 1917 as Chairman of Salem Municipal Council, he did his best, at the cost of his active practice, spending long hours in the municipal office as well as on cases involving matters of public interest like defending Dr P Varadharaja Naidu in the famous sedition case.²

Once a client who was rescued from the death sentence requested him to arrange the return of his knife with which he had killed the person. Rajaji got

disgusted and is reported to have said, "I can understand and even forgive, a harlot who sells her body for a price, but not a lawyer who prostitutes his intellect. I am looking forward to the day when I shall quit the profession." And Gandhiji's call provided the opportunity to quit in 1919.

Rajaji in the freedom struggle

The Congress proved to be the divine opportunity for him to get involved in the freedom movement. Gandhiji felt that the visit of the Prince of Wales on November 17, 1921 would give the Congress a reason to defy the British and decided to hold a hartal against the visit. However to the British Raj, such a hartal was an act of defiance and the Madras Government issued an order prohibiting all meetings. Rajaji took the earliest opportunity to show his spirit of defiance and decided to address a meeting on December 14, 1921. The ban on public meetings and the prohibitory order continued long after the visit of the Prince of Wales. He was arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

On receiving the judgement, Rajaji wrote to Gandhiji "I feel I am realizing the object of my life as I am approaching the prison." After his release from prison, he travelled throughout the country, interacting with various Indian leaders, and thus actively involving himself in the freedom movement at the national level.

To Rajaji, the fight for freedom did not necessarily mean confining himself to addressing public meetings, arousing public consciousness on political matters, conducting *satyagraha* and holding discussions with rulers. He realized that the society itself was getting more and more divided into several religious and casteist groups, resulting in growing conflicts among Hindus themselves (Brahmins and Non-Brahmins, caste Hindus versus the Harijans), and also between Hindus and the Muslims. There was large-scale unemployment particularly in rural areas. Toddy and liquor were taking a heavy toll on the meagre income of poorer sections of the society. He felt that the Congressmen should devote their attention to Gandhiji's constructive programme. Therefore, he founded the "Gandhi Ashram" on February 6, 1925 at Tiruchencode village near Salem on the lines of the "Sabarmati Ashram" founded by Gandhiji in Gujarat. Its main objectives were:

- Provision of fuller employment opportunities for the landless labour and backward classes of society through Khadi and other village industries.
- Social emancipation of Harijans and other oppressed classes.
- Total prohibition or eradication of the social evil that was alcohol.

The Ashram to this day has been doing yeoman service by way of social work. Many leaders of repute like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Sathyamurthy, and Kamaraj have visited the place. Kesavan, great grandson of Rajaji, frequently visits the Ashram.

It was at about that time that the elections to the provincial assembly were in the offing. Rajaji thought that the Congressmen could enter the legislature and plead for the cause of prohibition. However, to many in the Congress, "Swaraj" or self-rule was the only core issue and the rest was subsidiary. In the words of Sathyamurthy, a prominent Congress leader of the time, he preferred a free nation of drunkards to a slave nation of teetotalers. Rajaji felt that constructive programme was equally important and legislators themselves should promote these causes by entering legislature.

Rajaji thought that by promoting the cause of Harijans and prohibition, he was assisting the downtrodden and the non-Brahmin community. However, on the contrary, self-styled non-Brahmin leaders like E V Ramaswamy Naicker and Varadarajulu Naidu felt that Rajaji was actually furthering Brahmin interest at the cost of the non-Brahmin community. Communal colours were attributed to Rajaji. Therefore, he decided to withdraw from active political life and exclusively devote himself to the promotion of Gandhiji's constructive programme. In fact, Gandhiji also approved of this idea and wrote to him, "your central work is to develop the Ashram that has been established and everything else is subsidiary." Thus, he devoted himself from the year 1925 to developing the cause of Khadi, prohibition, removal of untouchability, etc.

In 1929, the British had conveyed an indirect commitment to grant Dominion Status to India but later went back on its assurance. Gandhiji and Congress, disappointed and hurt, had to exhibit their resentment and dissent. Thus, the Congress was forced to decide at the Lahore Congress in 1929 that its goal was complete independence and that people of India should take a pledge on January 26, 1930 that submission to alien rule was a crime against man and government. January 26 is celebrated as the "Republic Day" to commemorate that pledge.

Gandhiji recalled Rajaji from his "political sanyas" and wrote in the *Harijan*:

Let the reader share the secret with me that nobody among those who regard the Congress acceptance of truth and non-violence as the rule of their lives fights me as strenuously as C Rajagopalachari does. But he has one essential virtue of a soldier. I became my own General of Satyagraha and my first recruit in 1906. When I announced my generalship in 1919 in India, Rajaji was among those who enlisted themselves at the very commencement. It was under his roof that the inspiration of the Hartal of 6th April came to me. From that day to this his loyalty to his General has been beyond reproach or compare.

I have boundless faith in his wisdom, his uprightness, and his unsurpassed ability as a Parliamentarian among Congressmen at least. We have in our ranks no abler fighter in Satyagraha.

Returning from Tiruchencode, Rajaji campaigned throughout the country and urged the people to revolt against the British rule. Gandhiji gave shape to the revolt in the form of civil disobedience movement to break the Salt Law (manufacture of salt without a licence was an offence) as it would have a greater mass appeal. This defiance of law termed as "Satyagraha" is based on the principle "that if you decide to break a government, first breach its law." Accordingly, Gandhiji chose Dandi, a village on the West coast 240 miles from his Sabarmati Ashram to break the Salt Law and Rajaji chose a place called Vedaranyam in Thanjavur District. Rajaji was sentenced to six months imprisonment for this defiance.

It was at about that time T S S Rajan, a close friend of Rajaji, and a Congress colleague had maneuvered the defeat of the official Congress candidate in a local election in Trichy. Rajaji took moral responsibility for the indiscipline of Rajan and resigned from all positions in Congress namely the Working Committee, Parliamentary Board and the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. He even wanted to resign his primary membership but Sardar Patel persuaded him against resorting to this extreme step.

The provincial elections were due towards the end of 1936 under the Government of India Act, 1935 and the Congress was all set to contest the elections. Having resigned from Congress committees, Rajaji would not contest assembly elections either. If the Congress was voted to power, the question of electing a leader of the party posed a difficult problem. There were two candidates for consideration, S Sathyamurthy from Tamil Nadu and T Prakasam from Andhra. Neither of them would accept the leadership of the other. Rajaji was the only candidate acceptable to all. But Rajaji was not willing to contest elections. However, Sardar Patel successfully persuaded him and Rajaji's return to active public life was widely welcomed.

Rajaji filed his nomination from Madras Graduates constituency and his canvassing was limited to the issue of a single press statement, requesting his voters to bless an experiment "in poor man's electioneering" and pardon him for not sending individual letters, which would cost Rs 1,000. Rajaji got 5,326 votes out of a total of 5,968 and the Congress had a comfortable majority of 159 seats out of a total of 185.

However, the Congress President Pandit Nehru felt that the Congress should not accept office because powers of the elected government were limited and also subject to veto by the British Governor, which, according to Nehru, was an insult to national pride. But Gandhiji felt that Congress could accept office if the British were to assure them that the veto power would not be used against the advice of ministers. Obviously, such a blanket assurance was not possible and conflicted with the Government of India Act, 1935. But Rajaji always believed that dedicated and competent people in power could do lot of good to

poorer sections. As a pragmatist and a cool negotiator, he got an assurance from the Viceroy that “there was no foundation for any suggestion that the Governor was free, or entitled, or would have the power to interfere with the day-to-day administration of a province outside the limited range of the responsibilities.” This indirect assurance satisfied Gandhiji. It was decided to form the ministry in all eight States.

Premiership of the Madras Presidency

Rajaji was elected under the Government of India Act, 1935 as Premier of the then Madras Presidency in 1937. His premiership was an extremely difficult and delicate task requiring a lot of tact, competence, and firmness. An in-depth study of his role as premier of Madras Presidency would vividly exhibit his keen intellect, tact, hard work, sincerity to serve the poor, etc. It also would be a great lesson in the art of good administration, especially for those in public or political life today who desire to be good administrators.

The following extract from the speech of Sardar Patel made on February 22, 1949 would probably sum up what people thought of Rajaji’s handling of his premiership:

Shri C Rajagopalachari is an acknowledged leader of our country and a great and wise statesman. It is our good fortune that, in a period of crisis, we have one on whom we can rely for advice and counsel. It was he who laid the foundations of India’s parliamentary life from Madras (in 1937-39). Those were the days when doubts were expressed about the capacity of our people to carry on the work of administration efficiently, when there were others to watch us, not only to watch but to put us down also, if need be.

In order to appreciate the significance of the above passage of Sardar Patel, one should have an idea of the limitations under which Rajaji was functioning as a Premier. The Congress president Pandit Nehru was not entirely in favour of accepting the office and if any time he felt that the dignity of Congress or the nation was compromised, the ministry would have to resign. No formal assurance had been given that the Governor’s veto powers would not be used and therefore no opportunity should be given for the exercise of their right.

Many well-meaning Indian intellectuals honestly felt that the Congressmen were merely agitators and platform speakers and could not be relied upon to be good administrators. There were others including political parties who owed their loyalty to Englishmen and English culture who wished for the failure of Rajaji’s tenure. Thus the ministry was on the “watch list” for some and on the “hit list” for others.

Civil servants, many of them Englishmen, whom Rajaji had to control and elicit cooperation, had been his masters. Now, they had become his servants. Therefore, Rajaji would have to deal with them with courtesy, tact, and at the same time, firmness. The members of the civil service were intelligent—many more intelligent than ministers—and they were also conscious of this. Many ministers, though patriots were inexperienced in the art of administration.

In fact, I still remember that Dr Karamchand Wade, a professor in English, who was subsequently my principal at the Government College, Kumbakonam, and later in Presidency College, Chennai, had openly remarked in a public meeting that “an arch idiot from Madras has the minor idiots in the suburbs and formed an idiotic ministry.” However, unpalatable and harsh it may appear, this was the general sentiment of elite Indians on the eve of Rajaji assuming premiership.

Rajaji survived all these handicaps. At the end of the two-year period, even his political opponents like T T Krishnamachari admired him, admitting that Rajaji’s ministry showed grit and ability to rule and that his administration was a model provincial government. Even the Englishmen and English Indians who doubted the capacity of Rajaji, subsequently acknowledged his ability. Nehru, who was originally against forming ministries, admitted later that the Madras government did more than any other provincial government.

On the whole Rajaji’s administrative capacity, tact and knowledge were generally appreciated as could be seen from the letter of Lord Erskin (then Governor) dated December 29, 1937 to King George:

As to the premier himself, I get on quite well with him, but he is an odd mixture.... He is an idealist and his main object in life seems to get India back to what it was in the days of King Ashoka. He runs the whole show and if anything were to happen to him we should be all over the place.

It is important to analyze Rajaji’s special qualities which made him a successful administrator, i.e. (i) his keen intellect and ability to anticipate problems, (ii) his ability to avoid problems, if possible, and if not, to find solutions quickly in a fair and firm manner without fear or favour, (iii) his willing and early realization that civil services are the backbone of the administration without which no ministry can function effectively; their morale should always be kept at the same time not allowing them to overpower the elected ministry, (iv) his personal integrity and refusal to interfere in day-to-day administrative functions, and (v) his intense desire to be of service to the poor.

Let us see a few instances as to how he dealt with matters.

(1) Even at the first meeting, he addressed the officials, many of who were Englishmen, as “my comrades in the permanent public service” and requested

them “to renounce rancour and prejudice against anybody for everything done or suffered in the past, I want the entire service including the police to look upon me as a friend.”

(2) J B L Munro, an English under-secretary, was offended by a scathing attack on ICS Officers by one of Rajaji’s inexperienced ministers. He requested the minister concerned to make a conciliatory approach, which satisfied the officer. He also advised the officer that he should get reconciled to the happening of such occasional pinpricks.

(3) He called Sir Charles Cunningham, the then Inspector General of Police to his room. Sir Cunningham entered the room well dressed in a suit. Rajaji remarked, “I did not want to meet Sir Charles Cunningham but the IG of Police.” He got the message and returned fully dressed in police uniform.

(4) He presented a suit length made of khadi to Charles Brackenbury, the Chief Secretary, representative of Civil Service to exhibit his affection, or lack of prejudice, to civil service as also the importance he attached to the cause of khadi.

(5) He did not hesitate to appoint a European as the Presidency Magistrate and as the most suitable person and he did not discriminate against the officer in terms of his caste or race.

(6) A sub-inspector of police from Madras had, while chasing a criminal, crossed over the neighboring Mysore State (then a princely state) and accidentally shot the criminal who died. The Mysore State police remanded him to custody. Rajaji requested V L Ethiraj, a highly respected and “expensive” barrister at that time to personally argue the bail application before the Mysore High Court. He also added jocularly that the Madras government “had enough financial resources” to pay his fees. Ethiraj personally argued the bail application and got the sub-inspector released on bail. (This was a signal to the civil service that Chief Minister would be with them in the discharge of lawful duties.)

(7) A statue of General Neill, who quelled the 1857 mutiny, considered as hero by British and “heartless” by Indians, had been erected in Mount Road, the heart of Madras. There had been a long pending emotional demand by Indians for its removal and the British would not accept it. Rajaji had it removed quietly at night and had it preserved in the government museum not to offend British sentiments.

(8) As per rules, British Governors would preside over cabinet meetings. Congressmen particularly B G Kher, Premier of Bombay, felt it beneath their dignity to be subordinates in a meeting to be presided over by a British Governor. Rajaji suggested that a formal meeting, lasting 5 to 10 minutes, might be held under the chairmanship of British Governor and the real cabinet meeting where regular business could be carried on can be had either after or before the formal meeting. This was generally accepted and followed by all Congress premiers and unnecessary controversy was not allowed to arise.

(9) Rajaji had always felt that the government employees should be free from political affiliation and prohibited employees of local authorities also from joining any political party including the Congress. Nehru was displeased and objected but Rajaji refused to budge.

(10) In another incident, a firing ordered by Crombie, the Visakhapatnam District Magistrate, in Chirala (Andhra Pradesh) in connection with a labour strike caused a stir among the workers throughout the Madras State. Rajaji rejected suggestions that action should be taken against Crombie. Instead, Horwill, an English judge was appointed to make an inquiry into the matter and he exonerated Crombie. The ordering of an inquiry satisfied the public and appointment of an English judge infused confidence in Crombie and other officers regarding the impartiality of the enquiry. All were satisfied. When his report was objected to by a crowd in Andhra, Rajaji was firm in his reply that the report had been accepted—because it was right, though unpopular—and that administrative decisions cannot be disposed of by a crowd. To him, correctness, rather than popularity of a decision, was important.

(11) Most of the then secretaries, who were ICS officers would generally leave office by about 3.00 p.m. and thereafter attend to social activities like visiting clubs etc. Rajaji made it a habit to come out of his chamber at about that time. One day, he remarked to an officer leaving at 3.00 p.m. “You ICS officers are extremely efficient and competent and are able to complete your work by 3.00 p.m. But I am not that smart and have to stay till 8.00 p.m.” This put a stop to the habit of their leaving the office by 3.00 p.m. No one was offended and the purpose was achieved.

(12) M/s Harveys Mills, owned by the British in Madurai, had declared a lockout and nearly 20,000 workers were denied employment. The management’s intention was to retrench the inconvenient trade union workers and employ only loyal workers or recruit fresh hands. Rajaji decided to issue an order under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code that the Mills should not open till a settlement was arrived at. Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Court authorise the State Government to issue an order directing any person to take an action or prevent him from taking any action in order “to maintain public tranquillity or to prevent any disturbances”. It was an extraordinary power to be used in extraordinary circumstances. The Governor would not approve the proposed step. Rajaji was firm and threatened to resign, if his proposals were not accepted. The Governor yielded and for the first time Section 144 was imposed until a satisfactory settlement was arrived at.

This steadfastness was visible even in his second term as Chief Minister in 1952-54. In 1952, V P Raman, one of his close family friends from his Salem days, a sympathizer of the Communist Party, (which was generally considered to be a party of revolutionaries and spies of Soviet Russia) applied for a passport.

Rajaji refused his passport application and V P Raman's personal influence had no effect.

Such illustrations can be multiplied but no instance can ever be pointed out where he could have used his power for the benefit of himself, his family, or friends. That is why even his most bitter political opponents could not, even at his worst time, raise a finger at his integrity.

Some of his notable achievements as Chief Minister during his second term of two years can be recollected:

(1) For the first time, he authorized the entry of Harijans into temples. Vaidhyanatha Iyer, an ardent Congressman and a close friend of Rajaji led the temple entry at the Madurai temple, and other temples in Tamil Nadu followed similarly.

(2) He introduced a "Debt Relief Bill" under which, if an agriculturist had in total paid more than twice the amount of what he had actually borrowed then the whole debt would stand discharged.

(3) He introduced prohibition selectively in some of the districts, and when it was found to have benefited a large number of poor people, it was extended to other areas later on. To compensate for the loss of revenue on account of prohibition, he introduced the sales tax, which today is the main source for revenue of all state governments. This levy was initiated by Rajaji.

(4) If no suitable candidates from Harijans for a "reserved job" were found, he asked for repeating the advertisement till a suitable Harijan candidate was found. In this way, many Harijans who later on went to achieve high gazette ranks were initially recruited.

It was not as if these reforms could be pushed through without difficulty. Stalwarts like V S S Sastri, T T Krishnamachari, Panneerselvam, all raised objections like offending the religious sentiments, immorality in respect of waiving of farmers' debts, etc. but he convinced all of them with cogent arguments.

Rajaji was sure that in independent India, Hindi would be one of the major important Indian languages. He did not want the South at that time to lag behind and introduced Hindi as a compulsory subject in Standards VI to VIII in 125 schools on an experimental basis. Many young students benefited from that, I being one of them. However, for the opposition, particularly the Dravida Kazhagam and its leaders like E V Ramaswami Naicker, this had come as a God-given opportunity to create trouble for Rajaji. Emotional appeals were made to Tamil chauvinism and anti-Brahminism, all of which resulted in violence and disturbances. Nearly a thousand people were convicted for terms ranging from six months to one year. In later days, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Government had recognised them as "Thiagis."

Rajaji had to resort to oppressive measures to suppress the agitators. Even the Congress leaders like Sathyamurthy and educationists like Dr S Radhakrishnan urged Rajaji to make Hindi an optional subject, but Rajaji felt *satyagraha* was being misused and did not like to condone such misuse.

Rajaji was also slowly trying to assert his right as the Chief Minister in that he should be consulted on important matters and British Raj also became more assertive and conscious of its reserved rights. The honeymoon between Rajaji and British Raj seemed to be coming to an end.

Britain declared war against Germany on September 3, 1939 and automatically the Viceroy proclaimed India as a belligerent state without consulting any of the elected governments.

Rajaji submitted his resignation on October 30, and section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935 was invoked and Governor's rule with the help of advisers was ushered in.

Jinnah celebrated the resignation of the Congress ministries as Deliverance Day. The success of the Congress rule in eight states also created a conviction amongst the British that the Congress was their irreconcilable enemy.

Differences with the Congress and Gandhiji

The period from 1939 to 1942 was the most confusing period in the history of the freedom movement. The British diplomacy had easily overtaken the immaturity of Congress leaders. They had embarrassed the Congress to such an extent that the provisional ministers had to resign. Even after resignation, moderate elements in the Congress wanted to support Britain in their efforts against Nazism, and with a commitment from Britain regarding Indian independence after the war. There were younger elements in the Congress who were particular about embarrassing the British. The attitude of the British was totally indifferent to the Congress and they did not want to give any such assurance. For the first time, they took the stand that the Congress represented only a section of the Indian public (viz. Hindus) and there were others especially Muslims and the Princes to be considered.

The following extract of the letter of the Viceroy to the King would give an indication of their policy to divide Hindus and Muslims:

As soon as I realized that I was to be subjected to heavy and sustained pressure designed to force from us major political concessions as the price of Congress's cooperation in the war effort, I summoned representatives of all the more important interests and communities in India, including the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes and Mr Jinnah... and interviewed them one by one... a heavy and trying task but well worth the trouble.

The declaration does not give to Congress what they are asking for... an undertaking by Your Majesty's Government that India will be given political independence at the conclusion of the war.

The declaration has made plain the fact that we cannot concede to Congress the validity of that party's claim to speak for the whole of India (author's emphasis).

Meanwhile, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, President of the Muslim League, had openly declared that (i) Hindus and Muslims were totally distinct, (ii) they did not inter-marry or inter-dine, (iii) their customs, literature, epics and heroes were different, (iv) very often one's heroes have been the enemies of the other, and (v) they constituted two different nations.

The Muslim League also resolved in its annual convention in Lahore in 1940 that the creation of sovereign Muslim majority territories—Pakistan—would alone be acceptable to the Muslims. The question whether this sentiment was encouraged by Britain or not would always be debatable, but the letter of the Viceroy to King George referred to earlier would indicate the British diplomatic efforts to create a wedge between Muslims and Hindus had succeeded. The vast majority of Muslims in India, even in the far South, supported Jinnah's call for Pakistan. The British Government further indirectly indicated that the Indian princes would also be counted as an integral part of any negotiation regarding independence.

The Congress including Gandhi had no option but to express their restrained disagreement with Britain's war effort without embarrassing them. Therefore, Gandhiji decided that they could make a symbolic protest, non cooperation with war efforts; and a few selected individuals would recite the unlawful slogan: "It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money" and court imprisonment. The individual *satyagraha*, as it was then called, was an expression of symbolic dissent by helpless patriotic Indians. Nearly 15,000 *satyagrahis* were arrested.

In pursuance of this decision, Rajaji wrote to about half a dozen people on the following lines:

The British Government has ordered India to be in the War without asking her legislature. Other parts of the British Commonwealth were allowed the choice of remaining neutral... Taxes rejected by the Legislative Assembly are being imposed by the fiat of the Viceroy...

It is wrong therefore to help the British war effort with men or money. A copy of this letter is being sent to the authorities so that they may proceed against me if they desire.

Rajaji was arrested on October 3, 1941 and later released on October 6, 1941. Gandhiji was awaiting the release of Rajaji to have his advice. Rajaji and

Gandhiji met at Wardha towards the end of October and had detailed discussions. Rajaji must have given, during the period of his imprisonment, deep consideration to the political situation.

While the Muslim league and others like the Communists and the Justice Party had already extended partial support to the British efforts in the war, there was already a difference of opinion among Congressmen whether or not to oppose war efforts, and if so, to what extent.

Rajaji felt that the best option for the Congress was to negotiate with the British and obtain some sort of an assurance regarding independence. This was not acceptable to Gandhiji. Rajaji came out openly for the first time against Gandhiji in a convocation address at Lucknow University (*The Hindu*, December 14, 1941):

I have worked with Gandhiji these 22 years and feel a just pride of having helped him to develop and put into action his principles and methods. Many are the ties that bind me to him. It is not a pleasure to discover a difference and recognize it as leading to a parting of ways...

We keep our face turned steadily in the direction of *ahimsa* but cannot make the mistake of killing the principle itself by opposing it to common sense or reality. The defence of India is a case to be treated as an exception.

He also felt that in case of an attack on India by Japan, Britain would not be able to defend India and he wanted Indian people to prepare themselves for war. It was at about that time that under pressure from Roosevelt and Chiang Kaishek, the British government had deputed a cabinet member, Sir Stafford Cripps, to India for persuading the Indian leaders to join in war efforts, with a proposal that at the end of the war, (i) India would be given dominion status, (ii) Constituent assemblies would be formed to decide on the federal form of a government, (iii) Provinces not willing to join the federation would directly enter into an agreement with British government, and (iv) in the meantime, all portfolios other than defence would be entrusted to Indians subject to the veto power of the Viceroy. According to Rajaji, these proposals could form the basis for negotiations and could be accepted with modification but Gandhiji and Congress totally rejected the proposals.

Rajaji came to the conclusion that independence could not be obtained without conceding the demand for Pakistan and that a national government should be formed immediately to face Japanese aggression.

He had resolutions passed by Madras Congress Legislative Party that, (i) the demand for Pakistan may be conceded, (ii) a popular government in Madras with the support of Muslim league could be formed, and (iii) South India be prepared to face any Japanese attack.

The Congress leaders were totally upset at these unexpected developments and Rajaji was taken to task and was requested to resign from Congress and all its committees. Accordingly, he severed connections with the Congress and took the case for a national government and for Pakistan to the people. The split between Congress and Rajaji seemed to be complete. Most of Rajaji's colleagues had deserted him. He lost the support of Congress leaders, colleagues, and the public at large and became totally isolated.

Pushed to the wall, Gandhiji came up with the idea that Congress should ask the British to quit India. To Rajaji such a simple solution did not take into account actual realities and he opposed the "Quit India Movement." He was heckled and chappals were thrown at him, but by that time he was used to it.

In pursuance of a decision of the Congress working committee to start the "Civil Disobedience Movement" asking the British to "Quit India," the All India Congress Committee met on August 8, 1942 and even when the session was in progress, all the leaders of Congress were detained. What followed thereafter was utter commotion in the whole of India. A few pockets of India declared themselves free. Violent demonstrators streamed out of bazaars, factories, villages, and colleges condemning the arrests. There was indiscriminate firing to quell the riots. Many were killed and even more were imprisoned. Several leaders went underground. By the end of August, the brute force of the government had broken the movement.

Rajaji's efforts to get in touch with the British for a compromise were spurned. In fact, he was not even allowed to meet Gandhiji in prison. Later, Rajaji was allowed to meet Gandhiji as his relative, and during their discussions in the prison, Rajaji was able to convince Gandhiji on the inevitability of Pakistan and the formation of a provincial government consisting of the Congress and Muslim league.

Partition and Governor Generalship

The post-war elections in Britain brought the Labour Party to power with Clement Atlee as Prime Minister. The Labour government decided to expedite the process of independence for India, the first honest effort of the British government to grant independence to India.

A cabinet mission comprising of three cabinet ministers arrived in India on March 24, 1946 and had detailed discussion with the leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League, and princes. It was agreed that India would be partitioned and be given independence and pending actual independence, an interim government consisting of the members of the Muslim League and Congress would be formed.

Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy of India and the modalities of partition were agreed upon. The Muslim majority areas called Pakistan would be

carved out of India and the princes would be free to accede to India or to Pakistan or declare themselves independent. Rajaji would persuade Jinnah to agree that Punjab and Bengal could be further divided into contiguous Muslim and Hindu majority areas. Accordingly East Punjab and West Bengal came to India thanks to the persuasive efforts of Rajaji.

The interim government, formally called the Viceroy Executive Council, which included Rajaji, took office under the Prime Ministership of Pandit Nehru. Though August 14 and 15, 1947 brought joy to millions, in the process, millions of people were killed, and millions were uprooted as a result of communal riots, both in Bengal and Punjab.

Rajaji seemed to have been born as a man for the crisis. Gandhiji, Nehru, and Patel unanimously felt, and P C Ghosh, then Chief Minister of Bengal, also insisted that Rajaji alone was competent to manage any unforeseen contingency in the communally sensitive state of Bengal. Rajaji accepted the proposal of becoming governor of the state, but was not a welcome guest to the people of Bengal. Earlier he had opposed C R Das and later the election of Subhash Chandra Bose as the President of the Congress in 1939. Sarat Chandra Bose—brother of Subash Chandra Bose—who had left Congress had been encouraging the anti-Rajaji sentiments, but Rajaji was least affected.

On August 15, 1947, Indian National Flag was hoisted at Khulna, predominantly a Hindu majority district and Pakistan National flag on August 14, 1947 in the districts of Murshidabad and Malda, a predominantly Muslim majority area. Cyril Radcliffe, who had been given the job of demarcating the boundaries, had reversed the position. The whole region was ready to explode and any small incident would spark off a spate of devastation unheard previously.

Rajaji's suggestion that a joint statement signed by the chief ministers of East and West Bengal, Pakistan and India, appealing to the people to remain calm and that any change in the Award could only be effected between the two countries by mutual agreement averted untoward incidents.

As Rajaji had been specifically sent to control the communal riots, he had regular contact with the army and the police. He himself visited the disturbed areas and addressed the policemen, soldiers, and officers. He arranged for a common undertaking to be given by the leaders of all communities—Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs—that they would restore peace. He tried to infuse confidence among Muslims. He performed his role beyond the strains of his office.

It would appear that the astrologer's prediction at the time of Rajaji's birth that the child would become Viceroy seemed to be coming true. Rajaji officiated as the acting Governor General of India from November 10, 1947 to November 24, 1947 at New Delhi when Lord Mountbatten had to leave for London for a short while.

Eventually, at the end of his 10-month term as Governor, Rajaji could win the affection of Bengal people. According to *Ananda Bazaar Patrika*, “Rajaji’s initiative in the maintenance of communal peace will long be remembered by the people here.” According to the Muslim owned *Morning News*, “Rajaji’s earnest moving appeals finally stirred the conscience that had sunk to its lowest depths.”

Rajaji as Governor General—a prophecy fulfilled

Lord Mountbatten was to relinquish office as Governor General around June 22, 1948 and a successor had to be appointed. Pandit Nehru’s initial request to Rajaji that “he should accept the office as Governor General” had no response from Rajaji, but his second letter that “we want you to help us in many ways” and Sardar Patel’s letter that “you would be of great help to us, after Bapuji’s death it is all the more essential that the remnant pull their weight together and the advice of each should be available to all,” probably reminded him of his duty to Gandhiji and he also felt that both the colleagues genuinely needed him. He was sworn in as Governor General of India on June 21, 1948.

As the Governor General, he had to have the charm and charisma in receiving the presentation of the credentials from many foreign governments establishing diplomatic relations and exchanging diplomatic missions and play host to them. Rajaji had this in plenty. Apart from his constitutional obligation, his close association and intimacy with both Nehru and Patel had helped him iron out the differences between them.

Rajaji’s role in the integration of princely states

According to the agreement arrived at the time of independence, the princely states could either join India or Pakistan or declare themselves independent. All states except Kashmir and Hyderabad had been persuaded to join India or Pakistan.

Hyderabad, the biggest of all princely states, had mostly consisted of Hindus. Apart from this, it was well in the interior region of India. Therefore, logically it should have acceded to India. However, the Muslim Nizam of Hyderabad, under the influence of Muslim fundamentalists called Razakkars, attempted to declare Hyderabad independent. Rajaji’s efforts to solve the problem peacefully did not succeed. Both Patel and Nehru, differed in their approach to tackle the problem and what happened thereafter cannot be better expressed than by reproducing the note of V P Menon, Secretary in the States Ministry at that time:

The Government and the neighbouring provinces were much concerned... about the activities of the *Razakkars* and the refugees who were leaving the state... The States Ministry pressed their view that we should occupy Hyderabad and put a stop to the chaos there.

The Prime Minister was strongly opposed and he was very critical of the attitude of the States Ministry. Sardar left the meeting in the middle. The same afternoon, the Governor General, C Rajagopalachari called a meeting in his room, of the Prime Minister, Sardar Patel, and himself. It was then decided, "We should occupy Hyderabad".

The next morning Hyderabad was occupied by Indian troops and Hyderabad became a part of India. The nation owes largely to Rajaji's statesmanship and wise counsel for not having had another "Kashmir" in Hyderabad.

Once during a visit to Madras as the Governor General, many distinguished persons including ministers and old friends called on him at the Raj Bhavan. Among them was his old friend M P Sivagnanam, popularly known as Ma Po Si. Rajaji came out and hugged him. Ma Po Si indirectly reminded him that he was the Governor General and other VIPs were waiting. At this, Rajaji replied that the waiting VIPs were there to welcome whoever was the Governor General but Ma Po Si was there only because of Rajaji.

At the birth of the Indian Republic

The Constituent Assembly decided to declare India as a Republic on January 26, 1950 and elect a President. The choice was between Rajendra Prasad and Rajaji. Though Nehru preferred Rajaji, it would appear that the majority of the members of the Constituent Assembly were not in favour of Rajaji because of his non-involvement in "Quit India." In any case, it would appear Rajendra Prasad was not willing to concede in favour of Rajaji and no one wanted a contest. Rajendra Prasad was elected as President of the Indian Union. Rajaji declared birth of Republic of India on January 26, 1950 and Rajendra Prasad took over the Presidentship. Rajaji left for Madras the same evening.

Minister without portfolio

Having retired as Governor General, it looked as if Rajaji had come back to Madras for good and would not to take up any new assignment. After Rajaji left Delhi frequent differences of opinion arose between Nehru and Patel. Both of them needed Rajaji back in New Delhi. In less than six months after his leaving Delhi, he was sworn on July 15, 1950 as a Minister without portfolio. He continued the job as a shock absorber. As the chairman of the Cabinet Economic Affairs Committee, he encouraged the then finance minister Dr C D Deshmukh, an eminent and respected economist, to conduct the meeting. As a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, he had expressed his opposition to the recognition of China's sovereignty over Tibet as could be seen from one of his letters (December 1, 1950) to Nehru, "May God help us from drifting to be just a satellite of China! I feel hurt whenever Panikkar (India's Ambassador to Peking)

tells us with extreme satisfaction that China is very friendly to us and has no territorial ambitions. We do not want any patrons now, do we?"

It would appear that in one of the meetings of the Foreign Affairs Committee when Nehru seems to have said, "You see, Rajaji, the majority is with me," Rajaji grinned and said "Yes, Jawaharlal, the majority is with you but logic is with me."

Nehru got infuriated at the election of Babu Purushottam Das Tandon as the president of the Congress against his wishes and threatened to resign. Rajaji pointed out to him in a public statement that the country needed continued guidance of both Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru and added, "some of us who have put together all these 35 years must do so to the end of our active life." Thus, he averted an explosive situation; several such situations were diffused by him.

A disillusioned home minister

On the demise of Sardar Patel in December 1950, Rajaji was the obvious choice to be Minister for Home Affairs. As Home Minister he dealt with the agitation of the communists in Telengana and West Bengal firmly and piloted the controversial Press Bill. But he slowly realized that he was drafted to Delhi only to sort out conflicts between Nehru and Patel and that with the demise of Patel, he did not have much of a role to play. He and Nehru had been colleagues for years but he thought Nehru needed followers and not colleagues.

Nehru caused a lot of pinpricks to the Congress President Tandon, practically forcing him to resign. Though Nehru had always held the view that no single individual should simultaneously hold both the office of the Prime Minister and that of Congress President, he assumed the office as President of Congress on the resignation of Tandon and also retained his Prime Ministership.

Several other incidents also made Rajaji feel that after the death of Sardar Patel, Nehru needed only persons to obey and not equals. But he never gave out his disagreement openly except probably in one of his letters, reproduced below, to Lord Mountbatten who wanted Rajaji to be the High Commissioner in London:

You and Edwina are so intensely interested in Nehru that, may I say you have no eyes to see or mind to think about any other. Rajaji is just a matchstick to light the cigarette... You throw the matchstick into the ashtray without a thought after it has served the purpose.

I am so tired and so hungering for rest, you cannot guess it.

My career is truly remarkable in its zigzag Cabinet Minister, Governor without power, Governor General when the constitution was to be wound up, Minister without portfolio, Home Minister and Parliamentary work, and now the

proposition of Acting High Commissioner in the UK Finally I must one day cheerfully accept a senior clerk's place somewhere and raise that job to its proper importance.

In his farewell speech while leaving Delhi, Rajaji said, "my prayers and not brains will help Nehru and his colleagues." He returned to Madras a disillusioned man.

Rajaji as Chief Minister again

Back in Madras, he decided to spend his time in writing articles for *Kalki* and spending his time in literary association. Before taking to literary work, he had taken off for Courtellam, a resort in the South to take complete rest and recoup his health, in the company of literary persons like T K C, Kalki³ and others.

At that time, Madras was a composite state and the Congress lost the absolute majority in the 1952 assembly elections though it came out as the largest single party. The Communists were trying to form a government with the help of independents and smaller parties. The Communist Party at that time did not believe either in democracy or in orderly form of government and their main object was to subvert democracy and the Constitution both from within and from outside and create confusion and take over the country by violent means. Their loyalty was also suspect, as they had looked upon Soviet Union and China as their role model (both of them were powerful and together at that time). Kamaraj, the then President of the Tamil Nadu Congress, who was not politically well disposed towards Rajaji, felt that if at all formation of a Congress government was possible, Rajaji alone would achieve a miracle. Rajaji had at that time retired from public life, and was not willing to take up the responsibility.

The persuasive efforts of leading personalities in Madras, including C Subramaniam, were in vain. Rajaji coolly advised them to have President's Rule or offer prayers to God. Notwithstanding his refusal, the Congress legislature party elected him their leader and gave Rajaji no option. Pandit Nehru was pressurized to request Rajaji to lead the party but he had left the option to the local legislature party. Somehow Rajaji was finally persuaded.

Besides, Rajaji was not a member of either of the house without which one cannot be a Chief Minister. Rajaji was unwilling to contest an election both because of his age and the prohibitive cost involved. However, Nehru insisted he should get elected. Thus, the Congress had to either flout Nehru's direction or lose Rajaji and a chance to form a Congress government.

Finally, Rajaji was nominated to the Upper House by the then governor T Prakasam "as one having special knowledge in such matters as literature, science, arts and social services." This power which vested with the Governor was not conceived to enable a non-member and one unwilling to contest an election to become Chief Minister. H V Kamath, great parliamentarian observed in *Rajaji '93*

Souvenir, "is it not strange... that in a democratic set-up like ours, a politician who amid the vicissitudes of a remarkably long and distinguished career has adorned the highest office in the land, and held with distinction other top positions such as those of a Central Cabinet Minister and the State Chief Minister has never had the occasion to face a direct election by enfranchised adult people?" Legal formalities were complied with but the spirit of the Constitution and democracy was violated.

Whether one who had occupied such a distinguished offices as those of Governor General, Governor and Central Minister, could accept a much lower position of a Chief Minister of a State was a subject matter of debate. Rajaji had no such inhibition and felt that "all work was equally noble." To use his own words, "a broomstick has to do its duty—whether it be in a dining hall or in a toilet." In any case, these two were the subject matters of controversy for a long time.

The nomination of Rajaji as a member of the council and his election as leader were hastily done to avoid the possibility of a rule by the communists and presented to Nehru as a *fait accompli*. Nehru was not likely to agree to Rajaji's terms but would not disturb a concluded arrangement.

Rajaji was sworn in as Chief Minister in the first week of April 1952 and he invited the support of all groups — excluding communists. While moving a vote of confidence in the assembly when it met for the first time, Rajaji made it clear that communists were indeed their main enemies. To repeat Rajaji's electrifying words:

I am here to save my country from the traps and the dangers of the Communist Party. That is my policy from A to Z. I am placing my cards on the table. I am your enemy number one, and may I say you are my enemy number one. This is my policy.

This frontal attack on communists had a dramatic effect. All, except communists, rallied round him and he had a comfortable majority. Though his first speech was considered undemocratic and unparliamentary, later he made good by making conciliatory speeches towards communists and even communists later had a lot of praise for his quality of administration.

During that period, there was rationing and severe inter-restriction of movement of food grains. Each person would get eight ounces of rice per day (poor quality). Wedding invitations would carry an insertion— "Please bring your ration card with you." No one brought the ration card but yet, the regular wedding feasts went on. These restrictions originally introduced in the war time during the period 1938 to 1942 as a temporary measure have become permanent. Notwithstanding these restrictions, better quality rice was available at everyone's doorsteps brought secretly from the bordering districts like Nellore, etc. and all connected persons were looked after. But the system kept everyone happy. Consumers got what they needed and the "illegal" vendors had a roaring business and the middlemen earned well and ration shops would make profit by short measurement. The only casualty was the debasement of values.

Rajaji being a shrewd observer, knew that there were enough food stocks in the country and that the food controls and officials concerned alone had created the artificial scarcity and that to demolish the powerful vested interest built around the corrupt system was not an easy task.

Therefore, he announced—without any notice whatsoever—on a night over the All India Radio—that food rationing and all restrictions of food grains have been abolished with immediate effect, without giving any opportunity for maneuver. Many economists and civilian officers predicted food scarcity and starvation deaths. Rajaji was unaffected and replied that he knew his country and his people much better. There was neither food scarcity nor starvation deaths; on the contrary, what was being stealthily done has come up into open and the prices also started declining. Probably, this was Rajaji's first experiment with the abolition of controls and a trial run for his future campaign against "Permit Quota Licence Raj."

He had also noticed the steadily increasing popularity of communists particularly in rural areas due to the frequent clashes between landlords and tenants and unjustifiable eviction of many cultivating tenants from their lands.

To benefit the farmers, he had introduced "Debt Relief Act," which discharged a farmer's debt, when twice the amount of his actual principal borrowed had been paid by way of interest and principal. In addition, he introduced an Act called "Pannayar Act," according to which, the agricultural produce from the land would be divided between landowners and tenants in the ratio of 60:40, and the unjustified eviction of cultivating tenants would be prevented and the tenancy would be restored, if unjustified eviction had taken place. Wages of agricultural labourers were also increased. Though this had evoked a lot of protests from landlords, he convinced them that a lower but assured return and satisfied tenants and labourers were more important. This measure eliminated the dispute among them and also lowered the popularity of the Communist Party. This is one of the reasons why even today communists have no foothold in Tamil Nadu.

This time also he did persist in keeping the corridors of Secretariat clear of politicians and kept the identity of government and party separate. He directed the officers to do their duty, according to merit. It was conceded by well meaning officers that the administration was toned up to a level not attained before or after independence.

Though Rajaji was generally against the division of the State on linguistic lines, he could not deny the unanimous demand by Andhras for a separate State. Even when he was chief minister in 1937, he had written to the then Secretary of State that: "There can be no stable administration of the province unless it is divided as desired by the people of Andhra... In the interests of sound administration, the demand of the people should be granted."

However, Andhras felt that only because of Rajaji, Andhra was not being separated and Potti Sriramulu fasted and unexpectedly died in Madras City for the

cause of a separate Andhra Pradesh. There were riots and terrible commotion all round Andhra areas and a separate Andhra State had to be carved out hurriedly on October 1, 1953. Attempts were made to make Madras a joint capital of both the States, like Chandigarh, but it was foiled by his stubborn opposition to such proposal, even as a temporary measure. Andhras have not till now forgiven Rajaji.

The most brilliant idea of a creative mind in Rajaji, i.e., the historic "Educational Reform" unfortunately happened to be the beginning of the end of his second term as Chief Minister.

He had expressed his idea of Educational Reform as early as in 1907 in an article in *Hindustan Review* and also when he was Governor General on August 8, 1949 in the following words:

I venture to suggest to crusaders of compulsory primary education whether we cannot be content with three days in the week for schooling. Our schools ... could then take two sets of children in the week. Give the children a chance during the other four days to work with their parents. [In the villages] the homes are homes as well as trade schools, and the parents are masters as well to whom the children [can be] apprenticed.

He expected a great welcome for this scheme launched in June 1953 without having it approved by the assembly. Zakir Hussain, the great educationist, later President of India and the Central Advisory Board of Education appreciated and welcomed the scheme. Bihar considered adopting it. Acharya Kripalani felt that this was the most scientific form of educating the young. But, the resistance of the scheme was strong in Madras and the political opponents like EVR and Annadurai attacked it as a Brahmin's ruse to confine non-Brahmins to their fathers' occupations. The argument was that the scheme was intended to preserve the dominance of Brahmins and the caste system, had a devastating effect on the public mind. Sentiments of the opposition were unmistakable and Rajaji admitted that his education policy had cost him his general political popularity.

Even the Assembly had to save the scheme by the Speaker casting a tie-breaking vote and later referred the scheme to a committee for fuller consideration, and thus the reform was buried without trial and without consideration. It would appear that when the subtleties and implications of his reform were explained to Kamaraj about 5 or 6 years later, he seems to have greatly appreciated Rajaji's genius and felt that it would have helped South India to become a power house of trained manpower from rural and semi-urban areas. He seems to have faulted Rajaji for not having explained to him or to his colleagues or members of the assembly the implications of the scheme. If he had done that, Kamaraj would have pushed it through as if the idea were his own and no communal colour could have been attributed.

C Subramaniam, the then Education Minister in the Rajaji's cabinet, later observed that Rajaji's scheme was one of the most brilliantly conceived educational reforms and it was unfortunate that it was not implemented.

After the separation of Andhra, the Congress was in a majority in Tamil Nadu and the inevitability of Rajaji had disappeared. All these compelled Kamaraj as the leader of the Congress to feel that the scheme should be dropped and there should be a change in the leadership. Though Rajaji felt that Kamaraj was stabbing him behind his back, he did not realize that Kamaraj was only doing his duty to respect the sentiments and strong resentment of the public against the scheme.

Events compelled Rajaji to make a statement in the Assembly on March 25, 1954 that "he would resign from his office on account of his illness" and made no reference to the education scheme or to the bitterness around him. He ultimately resigned on April 13, 1954. Kamaraj was elected to succeed him as the Chief Minister.

Rajaji was awarded free India's Highest Civilian Award, the Bharat Ratna on January 26, 1955. In fact, it was a personal recognition by Prime Minister Nehru of the invaluable contribution made by Rajaji. This must have given him great satisfaction.

After his retirement, Rajaji led a comparatively quiet life, mainly devoting his attention to literary activities like completing his *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and spending time with his old friends like A V Raman, Sadasivam, and others.

Forming the Swatantra Party

Even though Rajaji had retired from active public life, his mind was too alert to keep quiet and his conscience too strong not to revolt against injustice.

He communicated his thoughts through public meetings and the print media particularly a Tamil journal *Kalki*⁴ and an English weekly *Swarajya* on a variety of subjects like medicine, politics, economics, nuclear weapons, the importance of the English language, and the need for having it as the official language. His meetings and writings would be eagerly welcomed and widely followed.

His frequent interaction with his visitors from different walks of life and news appearing in the press had kept him informed of political developments both at national and international levels. He had also realized that the Congress had become the largest monolithic party and Nehru its unquestioned leader. There was no one in the Congress to criticize him. Even if there was criticism, Nehru resented and silenced the critics.

Rajaji had always been emphasising the importance and the need of an effective opposition in a democracy. To use his own phrase, a democracy "without a strong opposition is a motor car without a break and is liable to get involved in accident at any time."

Probably the most significant contribution which he had made—and which none else could have—to the Indian political life was the founding of the Swatantra Party and thus proving that an alternative to Congress was possible. If there is a fairly stable non-Congress Government functioning in Centre and States, its seeds were sown by Rajaji in 1959.

At this distant of time, it will be difficult—if not impossible—to imagine the mere impossibility of forming a new political party in the 50s to oppose the Indian National Congress. The Congress had always been associated with the Freedom Movement and its leaders like Gandhi, his political “successor” Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Jayaprakash Narayan, Rajaji, etc. and Nehru has been leading the ruling party and the Government since independence. Therefore, Congress and Nehru have been identified by people with patriotism and any one opposing was being considered “anti-national.”

Apart from this, Nehru was having a great mass appeal as the champion of weaker sections and minorities. He had also introduced several populist measures such as (i) setting up of public sector units, (ii) introduction of various licensing and controls, (iii) ceiling on agricultural land, (iv) land ceiling, (v) frequent amendments to the Constitution, etc. all of which had given him a “pro-poor” image. He had also endeared himself to the educated middle class as a patriot and visionary. There was no other leader of comparable stature in terms of popularity with vision. The various restrictive “socialistic policies” like licensing, controls, etc. had created a new class of industrialists, politicians and educated elites who were the beneficiaries of the system and dependent upon the government patronage. They were reluctant to oppose or come out openly against Nehru or Congress. Any one who would talk against Nehru or Congress was dubbed even by Nehru as a reactionary, anti-national, pro-capitalist, etc.

Apart from this, the only party which was right of the Congress was the Jan Sangh founded by Shyama Prasad Mookerjee espousing a militant Hinduism. It was fairly popular in the North. It was under this near impossible situation that Rajaji thought of the idea of encouraging the formation of an opponent.

Rajaji was convinced that Nehru’s wrong policies had created a new class of corrupt elite in the society which was sapping nation’s financial resources. He was firmly convinced that (i) the frequent amendments to the Constitution, (ii) restrictive industrial policy which he named as “permit-licence-quota raj” (iii) policies of nationalisation, co-operative farming and other socialist policies had to be opposed.

Notwithstanding all these handicaps, he could involve leaders like N G Ranga, V P Menon, formerly secretary to the Government of India, under Sardar Patel, K M Munshi, leading businessmen like Homi Mody, A V Rao, etc. all men more of distinction than of popularity. But the party had sown the seeds of an opposition party and helped people to openly debate and question the correctness of “permit-licence-quota raj.”

It was at that time Minoo Masani spoke to Rajaji about Nehru's leanings towards pro-Soviet and Communist policies in foreign and economic matters. He requested Rajaji to lead an opposition party to fight the leftist policies of Nehru. Rajaji expressed his inability because of his age and requested other leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, C D Deshmukh, C P Ramaswami Iyer, and others to lead, but no one came forward, and ultimately, Rajaji took upon himself the challenge. He announced the formation of a new party, the "Swatantra Party" at Madras on May 8, 1959. N G Ranga was its first president and Minoo Masani, the general secretary. Rajaji addressed two to three meetings every month, and on an average wrote ten to twenty newspaper columns every week.

His writings to arouse public conscience and awareness after retirement from public life run into nearly 2000 pages. It is not possible to reproduce even a small part of them.

To understand or appreciate his line of approach, a few of his writings, which are illustrative in nature, are reproduced:

i) "The Constitution protects and guarantees all the rights of the citizen to live, work, and earn. His property can be taken hold of by the State for just reasons and on payment of just compensation and not a formal or arbitrarily fixed amount.

ii) "We should defend the fundamental rights and the Constitution as Winston Churchill defended Britain against Hitler, and in the spirit of the true warrior, which inspired him, not surrendering to fear or the prospect of defeat.

iii) "The land ceiling is 'a child of sadism.' Common cultivation or joint ownership and co-operative farming, was 'not an idea born of experience or thought' but one tried in countries 'where personal liberty is absent and forced labour is commandeered'.

iv) "Congress was 'borrowing from the Communist their brush and paint.'

v) "Truth, like a precious creeper, has now lost support of the tree in a storm and is lying on the ground without restraint and loss of both will generate more and more hunger for power and democracy will be replaced by the dictatorship of a party, thanks to the unlimited, unaccounted big financial backing of the Permit-Licence-Raj.

vi) "Socialism as conceived by all those who make it their slogan is pure Statism. According to them, wisdom resides only in the State, and the citizens should be driven by the State to do what it considers good.

vii) "Once upon a time, which some of us remember, corruption was limited to the law and order investigation officials and the petty magistracy, and to the land revenue department. But today corruption has seized the entire field of national industry and a moral anarchy prevails at all levels of national life. There is no evil today affecting the nation so terribly as this national misfortune of the Permit-Licence Raj.

viii) “Socialist planning is now mostly Parkinsonian waste and increase of (a) political and commercial corruption, (b) printed money, and (c) direct and indirect taxation all leading to the increase in cost of living. The roots of true socialism are in the increase of productive private concern. Attempting to achieve socialism without producing wealth is a hunt for the bewitching stag described in *Ramayana*.

ix) “Socialism has become an empty and deceptive slogan to catch voters and the communists are happy that this confusion prevails.

x) “The ironic situation in India in the year of Gandhiji’s Centenary is the tendency towards an almost total dependence on the State’s power for national welfare and disciplined conduct.

xi) “Attractive Welfare State ideal and huge administrative expenditure to carry them out exhibitionist adventures in the industrial field, and schemes for dispossessing existing lawful owners and distribution of lands to people, who have no capital to manage and make full use of the positions thus conferred on them (all for getting their votes), vast foreign loans recklessly obtained are all component part of our socialism, a method that discards all natural incentives for production. All this has ended in what is euphemistically called foreign exchange stringency, which is really ‘bankruptcy.’

xii) “The laws of production are laws of nature and hence not alterable. Food production, or any other production, depends on labour, intelligence and investment by those who have a strong personal interest in good management. If the harmonious blending of these elements are wanting, production suffers. The ‘State’ cannot produce, it can tax or hinder or encourage but not produce. The efficiency and integrity in a public sector enterprise can be expected, when you can have a ‘boiling ice cream’ or ‘vegetarian tiger.’

xiii) “People and governments should realize that certain fiscal and economic laws are axiomatic. All subsidized advantages must ultimately be paid for in taxes and duties. If urban factory workers get cheap rice, the employer is saved from paying them fair wages and the farmer is asked to be content with less than a fair reward for his work and capital.

xiv) “Unless government spending—both Central and States—is very substantially reduced, there can be no improvement in the economic situation. We are caught in a vicious circle where the government spending and the consequent high taxation have served to block private industries. We must break these vicious circles at some cost. Government servants should be given a ‘pension’ for ten and less number of years and this dole is worthwhile, because otherwise the vicious circle could not be corrected. The temptation to solve the problem by slow gradation will not work and it has to be explosive and sudden to produce any results on the economy.

xv) "There has been 'a gradual collapse of independent thinking' in Congress and 'socialism has been adopted only as parrots learn to speak.'

xvi) "Some dear people have the jitters because Rajaji and Nehru are quarrelling... Yes, I have differed and have spoken harsh language for the sake of clarity. But can't friends differ and yet continue to love one another?"

xvii) "As long as the impossible expensiveness of elections is kept up, no public purpose is served by increasing the salaries and allowances of MPs and MLAs. The poor cannot come in, unless they sell themselves to somebody who is rich enough.

xviii) "There has of late been plenty of admissions as well as other evidence to show that the licence-permit-raj has resulted in the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer. Equitable distribution of wealth can only arrive through work and, therefore, the creation of scope for useful employment should be made. Big industrial plants in a few centres may achieve other things but not wide and well-spread opportunity for employment.

xix) "The rural classes should not have to run to the big cities to earn a living and to dwell in unsanitary slums and subject themselves to oppression of all sorts and to degrading conditions of life. They should find work nearer their rural homes and to this end, smaller industries should be installed and evenly spread out in the country.

xx) "Great shout has been raised over big favouritism in the distribution of licences and permits. The system is the root poison and is bound to lead to corruption. We must direct our intelligence and energies to curtail, if not put an end, to this pernicious system which creates monopolies and prevents healthy competition and invests the ruling party with immense economic power which it uses for party purposes. 'Congressmen look so well off. Have they taken new avocations and earned money? Then how have they made money?'"

xxi) "The desire of party leaders and their colleagues to get governmental power for their respective parties is spreading like epidemic. Had governments been mere law-and-order organizations and industrial development had been left to the entrepreneurs, this disease would not have seized our politics. The basic mischief is the permit-licence-raj.

xxii) "The Congress has disastrously demonstrated that this gives party-bosses money power and all the other parties have caught the contagion. And this desire makes men to act against their better judgment to knowingly commit wrong.

xxiii) "State governments have started demanding a share in the Permit-Licence-Raj, a direct share and not a mere consultative one. The basic error should be basically ended and not augmented by expanding the field for favouritism and reaping political advantages.

xxiv) “Moral regeneration can be hoped for only if the government boldly does away with the permit licence raj. Trade and industry must be freed from industrial licence and permits without which we cannot hope for an improvement in the moral atmosphere.

xxv) “There can be no meaning in expecting a total growth percentage to be produced on the Secretariat desks. Unless the ruling party divests itself of its total control over individual producers, obtained through the permit-licence-system, and allows the economy to grow under free competition.

xxvi) “Production in India is running a three-legged race or a gunny bag race, the Government’s interventions and clampdowns being the handicaps. No industry or business can run smoothly when, at every turn in some essential matter, an official cannot cooperate through sheer arrogance or something worse. In spite of this, the ‘private sector’ has done the greater part of production as compared with the ‘public sector’.”

At a public meeting held in Marina Beach, Madras, Nehru accused Rajaji of speaking “in anger” and the “confusion of mind caused by unaccountable anger” and wanted him to say precisely “what Rajaji wanted” and “paint the picture of India, as he desired it to be.”

Next morning *The Hindu* carried Rajaji’s reply:

I want an India clear of the atmosphere of fear in which it is now enveloped, where honest men engaged in the difficult tasks of production or trade can carry on their occupation without fear of ruin at the hands of officials, ministers, and party bosses.

I want an India where talent and energy can find scope for play without having to cringe and obtain special individual permission from officials and ministers, and where their efforts will be judged by the open market in India and abroad.

I want the dense permit-license fog not to sit on us. I want statism to go and government reduced to its proper functions.

I want the inefficiency of public management to go where the competitive economy of private management can look after affairs.

I want the corruption of this permit-license raj to go.

I want the officials appointed to administer laws and policies to be free from the pressures of the bosses of the ruling party, and gradually restored back to the standards of fearless honesty, which they once maintained.

Nehru says he has not been approached by any permit-seeker. True. But he has an army of 150 ministers under him and numerous professional Congressmen busy in this new occupation of assisting men to get quotas and permits.

I want real equal opportunities for all and no private monopolies created by the permit-license raj.

I want an India where the peasants are not intimidated or beguiled into giving up their lands for Nehru to build castles in the air through cooperative farming.

I want security for all owners of property, land or other forms of acquisitions, without Damocles's Sword hanging over them threatening expropriation without payment of just and full compensation as fixed by judicial authorities on correct principles and not according to the dictation of political legislation.

I want the fundamental rights to be restored to their original shape and kept intact.

I want an India where heavy direct and indirect taxes do not prevent the building-up of private capital, discouraging enterprise and effort.

I want an India where the budget of the Centre does not cause inflation and soaring prices.

I want an India where the State does not tax capital investment, making the present generation's life miserable.

I want the money power of big business to be isolated from politics. Democracy is hard to be worked and it should not be ruined by money power and rendered into a simulacrum by expensive elections and big business supporting the ruling party with funds in return for privileges or in fear of the State's regulatory powers.

I want an India where dharma once again rules the hearts of men, and not greed.

I want the spirit of compassion and benevolence to have free play and not stifled by State schemes of monopolizing all welfare by over-taxation and over-centralization.

I want the State to know its limitations and function in humility and the citizens to realize spirituality through the traditional channels inherited by them in that regard.

I want a strong party to be in real opposition to the ruling party—whichever party it may be—so that the wheels of democracy may run on the straight road.

I want India to regain her moral stature abroad and I do not want our people to be bamboozled into thinking that we have not lost what moral authority we commanded during Gandhiji's days

His bitter campaign against Nehru had not in any way diminished mutual admiration between them. During the course of one of Rajaji's visit to Delhi, after the formation of Swatantra Party, Nehru (Prime Minister, 70 years) called on Rajaji in the place where he was staying in Delhi (second floor) to inquire how "young" he was.

At the request of Nehru, Rajaji led a delegation consisting of himself, R R Divakar and B Shiva Rao, on behalf of Gandhi Peace Foundation to persuade the United States to stop the nuclear explosion. As the delegation was waiting in the cabinet room of US Government, a young man walked in, shook hands, and took them to the presidential room nearby. Rajaji looked up at the man—nearly a foot taller—and asked him; "Am I in the presence of the President of the United States?" The young man who had led them was President Kennedy himself.

Rajaji presented the case for nuclear disarmament with a lucidity of argument, economy of speech, felicity of language, gentleness of manner, and command of facts. Rajaji knew that he would not immediately succeed in the venture but he was sure he could leave an impression on the world community.

The interview was scheduled for 20 minutes but the President spent nearly 75 minutes in discussion with Rajaji. He was touched by Rajaji's way of presenting the problems of radiation injury to the whole human race.

On his return from the United States, Rajaji continued his usual writing and speeches. Subsequently on the demise of Nehru on May 27, 1964, Lal Bahadur Shastri became the Prime Minister and attended an Indo-Pak Summit with Ayub Khan at Tashkent. Rajaji blessed Lal Bahadur on his attempt, "May God bless this enterprise and let us not allow it to go as one more addition to the limbo of 'might-have-beens'."

After the successful conclusion of Tashkent Summit, Shastri dictated a letter to Rajaji: "I am sure you will agree with what we have done in Tashkent and it would get your full support. Trust you are keeping well." Shastri passed away suddenly in Tashkent.

Subsequently, Kamaraj got Indira Gandhi elected the Prime Minister because as Nehru's daughter and as a woman, she would have better mass appeal, and would be pliable because of her political inexperience. It would appear that Rajaji warned Kamaraj later that he had made a serious mistake in electing Indira Gandhi and that she was a self-willed woman and would throw

him off once her purpose was achieved. Rajaji's statement proved prophetic and later Kamaraj faced a series of humiliations at the hands of Indira Gandhi.

The end of an era

Probably, it would be appropriate to conclude at this stage by recalling Rajaji's thoughts on Kashmir: "Sheikh Abdullah and Kashmir have come into the scene so that a fresh beginning can be made without loss of face or grace. We should demonstrate to Pakistan unmistakably, that the people of Kashmir desire to be affiliated to India. That alone will stop its mouth. To shirk this process, because it may turn out that they want to be unattached either to Pakistan or to India and remain non-aligned but friendly is not quite fair."

His last message (16 days before his demise) makes prophetic reading: "My call to all people is that there should be summit meeting as soon as possible... to take the Simla accord to its true fulfillment." (*Swarajya*, December 9, 1972)

Rajaji passed away on the Christmas Day of 1972 and twenty years later his policies were resurrected.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 To commemorate the completion of 93 years of Rajaji, "Rajaji '93 Souvenir Committee" consisting of T Sadasivam, H V R Iyengar, S Narayanaswamy and G K Soundaram brought out in December 1971 a souvenir containing articles by about 250 distinguished persons including Jayaprakash Narain, R Venkatraman, Dr Radhakrishnan.
- 2 P Varadarajulu, a veteran freedom fighter had been arrested by Govt. of Madras on charges of sedition in connection with his address to the agitating mill workers in Madras. He was tried by a Court at Madurai, 300 miles South of Madras. Protesting the arrest, nearly 3000 people marched towards the Court, ignoring military forces in and around the Court. In a sedition case, prosecution can be initiated only with the prior sanction of the Governor, which in that case came from the Governor by telegram. Rajaji argued that the telegram did not prove the sanction. He lost the case, but succeeded on appeal in the High Court where the Bench consisted of three judges, including two British Judges.
- 3 Kalki was the pen name of R Krishnamurthy, the editor of the Journal *Kalki*.
- 4 A popular Tamil daily containing articles on matters related to politics, economics, religion, philosophy, and short stories, etc.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS OF RAJAJI (All published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan)

1. Ramayana
2. Mahabharata
3. Thirrukkural
4. Bhajagovindam
5. Dear Reader
6. Jail Diary

N G Ranga: From Marxism to Liberalism

Kilaru Purna Chandra Rao

Gogineni Ranganayakulu, better known as “Professor N G Ranga” and “Acharya Ranga,” lived a full life of 95 years. His life is remembered not only for his record as the longest serving parliamentarian, but also for his multi-faceted accomplishments and the high standards he set in public life. He was a farmer at the core of his heart, an economist by training, a literateur by passion, a teacher and researcher by profession, a social worker by choice, a politician by compulsion, and a leader revered by many leaders. He was a real *acharya* (a reverential term for Professor), a *karma yogi*, and a personification of selfless service. He epitomized the ideal of simple living and high thinking.

Family roots

Professor Ranga was born on November 7, 1900 in Nidubrolu village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. His interest in history is mirrored in his description of the historical and cultural significance of his native village and the surrounding places such as Bhattiprolu, Chebrolu, and Kondamudi. In his autobiography he aptly describes the influence of Buddhist, Vaishnavite, and Saivite traditions and the principle of decentralized village administration practised by Chola kings, to complete the socio-political-cultural milieu of his place of birth. While tracing his family’s origin to Kshatriya and martial traditions of Kakatiyas and Nayakas, he took pride in saying that he belonged to a farming family. His elaborate descriptions of the toiling communities of his village and

their multi-religious and folklore traditions, revealed his keen observation and analytical ability, which is necessary to develop a holistic perception of life.

He was born into a middle class farmer's family. While discussing his financial assets, he asserts that he inherited the traditions of charity and public service along with them. He passionately narrates how his parents struggled for six years, during a period of financial hardship, denying themselves all comforts till they emerged from the debts. He lost his mother at the tender age of eight, which threw his father into depression and sickness. He and his two younger brothers were looked after by his maternal uncle, after whose death they inherited his riches as well. He vividly describes how his father fought against injustice and for right to property when government officials sought to acquire their land and their neighbours tried to encroach upon part of it. Those incidents strengthened his father's resolve to give his sons a good education. Seeing Ranga's steady progress in studies, while also sharing several family responsibilities, his father was determined to send him to England for further studies, with the hope that he would make it to the Indian Civil Service.

School life

Professor Ranga faced some initial hiccups in his formal education particularly with the difficult script of Telugu language. The routine methods of teaching which emphasized rote learning and stiff punishments by teachers repelled him. While he was slow in showing progress in formal studies, his learning about farming and society through informal methods proceeded rapidly under the tutelage of his maternal aunt and foster mother, Mangamma. His creativity and imagination was fired by a railway employee in his village, who excelled in story telling. Not only did Professor Ranga become an enthusiastic listener of mythologies and *puranas*, but soon also emerged as a storyteller to many illiterate farm hands. The arrival of an old Harijan teacher, who recounted many stories of angels rebelling against the traditional Gods in the tradition of Sakti cult further fuelled his imagination. The establishment of a library in their village further encouraged the literary interest aroused in him by the storytellers. He started reading book after book and magazine after magazine. The guidance provided by Jampani Anjaneyulu, a village teacher, helped him in choosing the reading materials. By this time, he also recognized the need for spreading literacy among the farmers and harijans. During weekends, he started teaching the youth who were interested in studying. At the tender age of 15, he started arranging community meals for the youth to promote harmony and unity among them. He was inspired by the works of Kandukuri Veeresalingam, a well-known social reformer, and started believing and preaching equality among people.

While Ranga's progress in studies and literature was remarkable, his well wishers felt that his education would not be complete without the knowledge of the English language and mathematics. But, meanwhile, the death of his maternal uncle caused a break in his studies, as he had to concentrate on farming. But, he

continued to run the local library and to educate rural youth even while managing the farm. Mangamma, his foster-mother whom he considered to be his first guru, finally bowed to his desire to join the English school at Ponnuru in 1914. Very soon, he earned the recognition of a first division student.

The demands for total independence of the country and for the formation of a linguistic state for Andhras further sharpened Ranga's political consciousness. Defying the ban of Governor Pinblend on students from participating in politics, he attended the Andhra Mahasabha meetings at Nellore in 1917. He also organized and led a demonstration against the exile of Dr Annie Besant. He was attracted to Mahatma Gandhi who had returned from South Africa after a successful agitation, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was released from a Burmese jail after imprisonment for six years.

When the District Cooperative Society meetings were held at his school in 1920, he was elected as a leader of volunteers. That meeting instilled a belief in him that cooperative movement alone could liberate indebted farmers from the clutches of traders and moneylenders.

He took active part in conducting a "Kamma Jana Mahasabha" in Madras State. In those days of ignorance and illiteracy, even caste-based meetings were identified as progressive activities. The Sabha called for opposition to untouchability, dowry system, and *purdah* system and for promoting universal access to *vedas* and *upanishads*, removal of illiteracy, and establishment of rural libraries. He was responsible for reflecting the peasants' view points in the resolutions. The Mahasabha decided to run a telugu weekly with the caption "*Rythu*" (farmer). Despite involvement with the above Mahasabha, he did not become a party to the "anti-Brahmin meeting" held at Vijayawada in 1917, as he did not consider it conducive to the freedom struggle. As a result of the crusade of Tripuraneni Chowdhary and Swami Saraswati against the Brahmins and their casteist activities, there developed a confrontation between Brahmins and non-Brahmins within the Mahasabha. As a disciple of Veeresalingam, who preached social equality despite being a Brahmin, Professor Ranga found this debate and confrontation unfortunate. He tried to steer a middle and conciliatory path in the matter. Even though he distanced himself from caste-based conflicts, Ranga was accused of casteism time and again during his lifetime by the well-orchestrated campaign of some Brahmin leaders. But these allegations did not stick with him as he was above these narrow, casteist tendencies.

Professor Ranga was also attracted to the teachings of Vivekananda and Swami Ramatirtha. In 1920, he translated 200 pages of Ramatirtha's lectures, which were published in *Samadarsini* and *Swarajya*. He also wrote the life sketch of Rudrama Devi (the ruler queen of Kakatiya Kingdom, capital Warangal, around 12th century) in 1919. Thus, the first two decades of Professor Ranga's life were packed with studies, practical farming, social service, literary pursuits, philosophical debates, and participation in freedom struggle.

He consciously attempted to align his actions with his beliefs. He admired the identity of mind, speech, and action achieved by rishis and philosophers. Inspired by Veerasalingam against casteism and untouchability, he started living very closely with the youth of all communities. After he was convinced by the arguments of Swami Dayananda Saraswati against idolatry and animal sacrifices, he started opposing them. After reading about Abraham Lincoln's efforts to liberate American Negroes, he dreamt of achieving the same with the people belonging to the fifth caste (scheduled castes, now called Dalits) in India.

Oxford days

When he set out for England in 1920, he had no idea about the subject that he would study there. At Oxford, he specialized in three subjects, Economics, Political Science, and Sociology. He was allotted three tutors as an exceptional case. In 1926, he obtained his research degree, B Litt in Economics. He also took two diplomas with distinction in Political Science and Sociology.

Professor Ranga underwent a great transformation in England. The liberal tradition and creative literature of England strongly appealed to him. He was influenced by the works of H G Wells, Norman Angels, Sydney Webb, Bertrand Russell, J S Mill and others. He regularly attended the meetings of the Asiatic Club, Lotus Club, Oxford Students Sangam, and Bharatiya Majlis, where students discussed many controversial and important issues.

He was attracted to the Guild Socialists and gradually to Marxist ideas. Inspired by the stories of progress in the USSR, he dreamt of a similar progress of farmers and workers of India in a free democracy. He toured Europe to understand the socio-economic conditions of the people. His basic motive was to compare and contrast the living conditions of Indian peasants with those in Europe.

While he was still a student at Oxford, Ranga's marriage was solemnized in 1924 with Velugu Bharati Devi, daughter of a prominent farmer from Machavaram village. He took his wife to England to provide her with a good education and to mould her to become a perfect ally in his socio-political activities. Both of them decided not to have children, because they felt that they would not be able to render selfless service if they had children. Professor Ranga openly acknowledged his adoration of his wife's kindheartedness, intellect, and good qualities. Bharati Devi, on her part, was a very simple, unassuming, and graceful lady with total devotion to her husband.

Academic career

Upon his return from England, he joined Pachaiyappa's college of Madras as a Professor of Economics in 1927. During the short span (1927 to 1930) of his academic assignment, he trained many students and motivated them to study the practical problems faced by people in the countryside. The Late C N Anna Durai, the illustrious leader of DMK and former Chief Minister of Madras, was one of

his students who assisted him in conducting economic surveys. He served as an Academic Advisor to the Madras Government. He was also appointed Secretary of a Committee to reassess land revenues by the Madras Government. He toured many villages and met thousands of farmers. He finally recommended that the land revenues should be reduced. Once on a visit to Udakamandalam, he observed the appalling living conditions of the tribals there. This led him to submit a research report on "Tribes of Nilgiris" to the Madras Government, which responded by taking immediate relief measures.

Professor Ranga's passion for rural development and social work did not permit him to continue with his academic career for long. He responded to the call of Gandhi given to educated youth to join the freedom movement and left his lucrative and comfortable job. His very first task after quitting academic career was to build Kisan organizations.

He returned to Nidubrolu after resigning his professorship in 1930 and established residence in the cattle shed, which came as his share in the division of properties between the brothers. He named it as "Gobhumi." Bharati Devi put her training and expertise in painting acquired in England to remodel it as their home. Professor Ranga continued to live there till his death.

Early meetings with Mahatma Gandhi

Professor Ranga contributed articles on the problems of farmers to an English weekly, *Comrade*, while at Oxford. Mahatma Gandhi read his articles with great interest. Professor Ranga too developed an intense admiration for Gandhi over the years. When he returned from England, he met Mahatma Gandhi at Delhi with a letter of introduction from the editor of the *Comrade*. Gandhiji was impressed by Professor Ranga's views and he gave him his first assignment of talking to several national leaders and getting their endorsement for universal franchise. Professor Ranga was happy to argue in favour of adult franchise, which would arm farmers, agricultural labourers, and artisans with the weapon of voting.

Upon visiting Ranga's native village in 1929, Gandhiji told his foster-mother, Mangamma "You should be proud of Professor Ranga. Will you give him to me to be my associate? Don't be angry with me for taking away your son!" These words of Gandhiji proved prophetic.

Anti-Zamindari struggles

Professor Ranga's meeting with Venkat Rama Naidu of Nellore, who recounted to him the miseries of farmers at the hands of the zamindar of Venkatagiri, provided him the first opportunity to plunge into mass action. Ranga agreed to address the farmer's gathering organized by Naidu at Venkatagiri. The success of that meeting sparked a powerful movement against the atrocities of the zamindar of Venkatagiri. Naidu started a political weekly *Zameen Rythu* in

1930. Very soon, the anti-zamindari agitation spread to several places in Andhra Pradesh like Mandasa, Munagala, Challapalli. Despite the objections raised by several individuals inside the Congress that the anti-zamindari agitations were taking place without the approval of the Party, Ranga had the support of Mahatma Gandhi as long as the agitations were peaceful.

Professor Ranga presided over the Andhra Farmers Protection Conference organized at Tenali in June 1931. Similar conferences followed virtually in all talukas and districts. In the same year, Nellore district farmer's conference was organized at Alluru. This conference constituted an enquiry committee to look at the conditions in zamindaris with Ranga as the president. When Mahatma Gandhi came to Venkatagiri in 1934, he studied the conditions in the region and the objectives of the farmers' movement. He praised Ranga and blessed their struggle.

Early parliamentary career

The year 1930 also marked the beginning of Ranga's foray into the mainstream of Indian politics, as he entered the Central Assembly. He was unanimously selected by the Congress to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of T Prakasam. In his maiden speech in the Central Assembly, he opposed the participation in the Round Table Conference without the presence of Mahatma Gandhi in the delegation. In his second speech a week later, he opposed the Simon Commission Report. He was re-elected to the Central Assembly in 1934 and continued in it till 1945. He went to England during the First Round Table Conference. He took the view that those meetings were useless and that complete independence was the only lasting solution.

Ranga was elected a member of the All India Congress Committee with a large majority at the Congress conference held at Visakhapatnam. But since the delegates from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan largely comprised of Zamindars, they did not approve the anti-zamindari agitation of Professor Ranga. Pandit Nehru also did not take cognizance of Professor Ranga's agitation. Gandhiji sympathized with Professor Ranga's agitation and advised him to be patient for some more time. He advised him to develop friendship with leaders like Pandit Nehru and evolve an understanding with all the important leaders.

Political schools

While Professor Ranga was in England, the Labour Party established a political school to train its workers. He was a participant in it in one year and was a faculty to it in the very next year. He was impressed by the organization, the curriculum, and the teaching methods followed there. As soon as he gained access to a few buildings donated by elders, he decided to establish a political school for activists in the kisan movement. When Gandhiji came to Guntur

district on his anti-untouchability campaign, he inaugurated Ramineedu School and Ranga Library at a mammoth public meeting on December 23, 1933. Professor Ranga started "Andhra Farmers' School" on April 12, 1934 in the same buildings. The first batch, comprising of 30 students drawn from six districts, underwent training for a month. The strength of the school doubled in a short while and therefore another school was organized at Giddalur in Kurnool district with a batch of 60 students for 20 days. On account of the inconvenience to students coming from distant places, schools were organized at Madanapalle in Chittoor district (1938), Tunikipadu in Krishna district (1939), Idupulapadu in Guntur district (1940), Chennur in Cuddapah district (1941), at Nidubrolu in Guntur district (1945), Avanigadda in Krishna district (1946), Diguvamagham in Chittoor district (1947), Vijayawada in Krishna district (1948 and 1949), Tiruthani in Chittoor district (1953), and other places. Over time, the number of students per batch swelled from 30 to about 200-225. Many of the kisan activists who received training in these schools played prominent roles in different political parties in subsequent decades.

Professor Ranga realized the need for having a newspaper for farmers. Although eighty percent of the subscribers to newspapers were farmers, they did not have a newspaper that reflected their concerns and promoted their cause. While he was still a student in school, he launched a weekly with the title *Rythu*. He encouraged Venkatrama Naidu to start a weekly *Zameen Rythu* to report about anti-zamindari agitations in the state. Later he started other magazines such as *Vauhini*, *Kranti*, *Gobhumi*. *Vauhini* propagated his ideology and action programmes regularly.

Professor Ranga researched and wrote several books and articles. He also served as a reporter to *Bombay Chronicle* and *Andhra Patrika*. During his academic career, he brought out a two-volume book on the *Economic Organization of Indian Villages*. It was followed by contributions such as *Labour in South India* (1928-30), *Economic Conditions of Zamindari Ryots* (1931-32), *Economics of the Handloom* (1933), *Tribes of Nilgiris* (1928-30), *Modern Indian Peasant* (1935-36), *Kisan Movements* (1937-38), *Kisan Speaks* (1937), *Kisans and Congress* (1938-39), *Kisan's Hand Book* (1938) etc. All these books were products of his research and experiences. They reflected his concern for farmers, handloom weavers, and other rural workers. Thus, his political agitations were outcomes of his profound understanding through research into the lives of rural people.

Ranga founded the All India Kisan Mahasabha in 1935. He was elected President of the organization at Faizpur in 1936. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who presided over the Congress, inaugurated it. During the Great Depression of 1929-34, prices of agricultural commodities fell drastically. Professor Ranga pleaded for a moratorium on land revenue collection. He backed up his demand with a powerful movement and got it approved by the Faizpur Congress. The Congress Chief Ministers enacted and implemented a debt relief act during the period from

1936 to 1939, thereby benefiting a large number of farmers. But there was an unfortunate exchange of words and disagreement between them on the dais itself. Many Congress leaders argued that there was no need for a separate organization of farmers. But Ranga persuaded the Haripura Congress in 1938 to resolve that farmers could establish separate organizations.

After Independence

Professor Ranga became a member of the All India Congress Committee in 1930 and he retained that position till 1951 when he left the Congress Party. He became the President of Andhra Congress in 1946 and was elected to the All India Executive of the Congress Party in 1947.

He was a Member of the Provisional Parliament between 1947 and 1951. He was democratically elected as the President of Handloom Weaver's Cooperative Federation of Madras Province in 1940. He established the All India Rural People's Federation in 1947. In 1956, the Central Government allotted 2500 sq. yds of land in Indra Prastha estate to construct a building to house this Federation. Bharati Devi laid the foundation stone for it but he faced a terrible shortage of funds in constructing it. He did not want to raise donations because of the controversies dogging them. Ranga refused when Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the then Union Minister, offered to arrange Rs 3 lakhs for it. Finally he surrendered the land back to the Central Government, as he could not arrange funds for construction.

He struck a good rapport with Gandhiji and maintained it till the latter's death. But he had temperamental and ideological differences with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru right from the beginning. He had mixed relations with Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad. Both of them held the interests of farmers and rural poor dear to them. Since Professor Ranga was a champion of farmers and agricultural labourers, they liked him. But they were unhappy that he was keeping company with Indulal Yagnik, a crusader for Kisan causes, who was expelled from the Sabarmati Ashram for his alleged misbehaviour. Both of them complained to Gandhiji about Ranga. At the suggestion of Gandhiji, Ranga met Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad and explained to them that he was unaware of the incident for which disciplinary action was taken against Yagnik. They warmed upto him later and even Yagnik was forgiven after he made amends for his behaviour and was rehabilitated in the organization. Ranga proved himself a misfit in power politics. He was straightforward and refused to be part of the power game. On account of this, he faced many setbacks and did not occupy positions, which were commensurate with the influence and the support he had.

Vijayaraj Kumar, a freedom fighter and follower of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, wrote a book on Netaji with the title *Revolutionary President* (of Congress) to which Professor Ranga wrote a lengthy introduction. He praised

the patriotism and braveness of Netaji. Ranga knew Subhash Chandra Bose in England and was in constant touch with him in India also. He held discussions with him on a variety of socio-political issues when they were attending the Karachi Congress in 1931. When Netaji established the Forward Bloc after the AICC meetings held at Tripura in April 1940, Ranga followed him. When he returned to Madras, he was asked by the Government to leave Madras within 24 hours. As he defied these orders, he was arrested and imprisoned. Professor Ranga did not like the idea of Netaji taking the support of Nazi forces to fight the British. He remained loyal to the non-violent path of Gandhiji.

Literary works

Professor Ranga was inspired by the novel *Malapalli* (village of Malas belonging to an untouchable caste) written by Unnava Lakshminarayana, a well-known patriot and writer of Andhra. He wrote four articles in *Andhra Patrika* extolling the greatness and social relevance of the novel. Perhaps, *Malapalli* provided the motivation to Ranga to write a novel with the title *Harijan Nayakudu*. He reflected the aspirations of the people belonging to the socially suppressed community.

Professor Ranga compiled an anthology of inspirational songs with the title *Rythu Bhajanavali*. The first version of this compilation consisted of 30 pages when it appeared in 1934. It was later expanded to 125 pages over the 12 editions published in next 15 years. The first version of this compilation appeared ten days after another gripping and inspiring work of Srirangam Srinivasa Rao titled *Maha Prasthanam* (The Great March). Both these works inspired and stirred the Andhra youth for decades. In the footsteps of *Rythu Bhajanavali*, similar compilations were published with the titles *Karmika Bhajanavali* (devotional songs of workers), *Cheneta Bhajanavali* (devotional songs of handloom workers). Of these, *Karmika Bhajanavali* was banned by the government as it felt that it contained anti-government songs.

Differences with Pandit Nehru

The Congress Party appointed a committee headed by Kumarappa to make recommendations about land reforms. Professor Ranga and Omanduri Ramaswami Reddiar were also members in it. Both of them opposed the proposals to impose ceilings on land holdings, although the majority members endorsed those policies, which were in line with the thinking of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. That was the starting point for the differences between Professor Ranga and Pandit Nehru. Ranga also opposed the setting up of Planning Commission and Five Year Plans which were pushed through by Pandit Nehru with a lot of zeal. He did not join the ministry when Pandit Nehru offered him a berth.

Professor Ranga, who served as the President of the Andhra Congress Committee between 1947 and 1951, did not get re-elected to that position in 1951. He lost to Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy,¹ (who became the President of India in 1977) by the narrowest of margins due to casteist and class manipulation. He joined hands with Tanguturi Prakasam and Acharya Kriplani to found a new party "Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party." But very soon because of differences with Prakasam, he founded a new party "Krishikar Lok Party." His party won only 13 seats in the 1952 elections to the Madras legislature. Communists under instructions from Stalin and the Comintern waged armed struggles in several states in the country to overthrow the Nehru government, which they characterized as the running dog of Anglo-American imperialism. Armed communist gangs murdered many landlords. Many of the communist cadre were shot dead in armed encounters with the police in Andhra. The ban on the Communist Party was lifted to enable them to participate in the elections. In the 1952 elections, the first in independent India, the Congress Party was reduced to a minority in the Madras Presidency. Professor Ranga joined hands with Congress and Praja Party to prevent the Communists from coming to power. He helped Rajagopalachari to become the Chief Minister of Madras but declined his offer to become his Deputy. After Andhra State was formed in 1954, he helped Prakasam to become the first Chief Minister but did not join his ministry. The Government of Prakasam collapsed within one year after which Governor's rule was imposed. When a decision was taken to conduct elections in Andhra, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru persuaded Professor Ranga and Prakasam to merge their parties with Congress to form United Congress. This formidable combination defeated the Communist Party in 1957.

Launching of Swatantra Party

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru believed in cooperative farming and always wanted to introduce it in India. The Sarvodaya Movement started by Acharya Vinobha Bhave and Jaya Prakash Narayan provided Pandit Nehru an opportunity to revive the proposal of cooperative farming. All these three stalwarts addressed a meeting at Elwal in Karnataka in which they exhorted that no one should own land and that it should belong to the society. Professor Ranga decided to organize the farmers against this thinking. He organized the Conference of Krishna District Kisan Sabha at Machilipatnam on October 9, 1957 that was attended by lakhs of farmers. He gave a clarion call to oppose cooperative farming, which divests ownership of land from farmers. When the Congress Party passed a resolution endorsing cooperative farming in 1959, opposed it. He also opposed the decision to

1 N Sanjeeva Reddy who was official candidate of Congress Party for the President of India in 1969 was defeated and that event led to a split in the Congress Party. He was later elected as the President of India after Janata Party came to power in 1977.

prohibit storage of grains by farmers. As he differed with Pandit Nehru's policies, he joined hands with Rajaji and Masani to start a new political party, Swatantra Party, in 1959. He was elected as the founder President of the Swatantra Party.

Defeat of the 17th Amendment Bill

He was defeated in the Parliament elections of 1962 and 1967 at Tenali and Chittoor respectively. But his followers did not rest till he was elected to the Lok Sabha in by-elections from Chittoor in 1962 and from Srikakulam in 1967. Pandit Nehru wanted to introduce the 17th Amendment Bill which would empower state governments to acquire lands of ordinary farmers without paying any compensation. The farmers would not even be permitted to challenge land acquisition in High Courts or in the Supreme Court. Professor Ranga opposed the proposal vehemently and some Members of Parliament suggested that it should be referred to a Select Committee. Ranga did not agree to join the Select Committee, as he was opposed to the basic content of the bill.

While the Select Committee deliberated on it, Professor Ranga and Gowthu Latchanna spearheaded a mass agitation against it. After the Select Committee endorsed it, the bill was introduced in the Parliament. Ranga made a historic speech opposing the amendment. Many Congress members who were convinced by Ranga's arguments slipped out of the Parliament at the time of voting. The bill was defeated when it was put up for voting. The defeat of the bill in the House where Congress party had a two-thirds majority infuriated Nehru. Soon after that, Pandit Nehru suffered a brain hemorrhage and breathed his last on May 27, 1964. Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succeeded Pandit Nehru, also did not like the amendment. But in order to pay homage to Pandit Nehru, the bill was reintroduced in the Parliament as the 19th Amendment Bill with some exemptions and concessions and was finally adopted. But Shastri did not take any initiative to promulgate. Indira Gandhi, who succeeded Shastri, gave a silent and decent burial to the 19th Amendment Bill by not using it even amidst her socialist rhetoric.

Return to the Congress

But the grand alliance, in which the Swatantra Party was a partner, was comprehensively defeated by Indira Gandhi in 1971. Perhaps, the fighting spirit of Professor Ranga was shattered by that decisive poll. He joined the Congress Party on August 16, 1972 shortly before the death of Bharati Devi. Although he continued to work for the welfare of farmers, agricultural labourers, handloom weavers, and other rural people, he lost the fire and courage to oppose the Emergency which Indira Gandhi declared to save her Prime-Ministership when the Allahabad High Court set aside her election on grounds of corrupt practices.

He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1977 and was later elected to the Lok Sabha from Guntur in 1980, 1984, and 1989. He was defeated in 1991 elections from Guntur Constituency. Yet, he was active till he suffered a fracture in the leg in 1993. He breathed his last on June 8, 1995.

Large band of followers

Professor Ranga served as a Member of Parliament between 1930 and 1991, with a break between 1971 and 1977. He was Secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the 1950s and was Deputy Leader of Congress Parliamentary Party in the 1980s. He served in Finance Commission, Estimates Committee, and as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. He represented the country as member of several delegations to international conferences. He took part in national and international fora of farmers, workers, handloom weavers, and several other worker and intellectual groups. He declined positions such as Union Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, Governor, and Vice-President of India, when they were offered to him at different times of his political career.

Perhaps Professor Ranga is rivaled only by Prakasam in touring all the nooks and corners of the State. He was obviously the leader in Andhra politics with the largest band of followers. Sardar Gowthu Latchanna was his chief organizer for a long time. P Rajagopala Naidu was his trusted follower all through his life. Daruvuri Veeraiah documented many an event in his life. Dr Bandlamudi Subba Rao established a foundation in his name to propagate his ideals. The Indian Peasants Institute, which was founded by Professor Ranga at Nidubrolu, is still active in spreading his message and policies. The agricultural university of the state is aptly named after him.

Ranga's political and economic philosophy

Professor Ranga was a rare politician with strong convictions and a missionary zeal to serve rural India. As Lenin once said "Politics are the most concentrated expressions of economic interests;" behind Professor Ranga's political philosophy lies a clear economic thought. He believed that property owning, self employed, and independent people are the best bet for Indian society to prosper. Professor Ranga disagreed with both Capitalism and Communism, as both of them were opposed to freedom and prosperity of peasants. His economic thought is fully set out in his book *Credo of World Peasantry*.

Village commonwealths

Professor Ranga believed in decentralized, cooperative, democratic society. He described his book *Credo of World Peasantry* as his contribution to the twentieth century conception of progressive and socialistic co-operative commonwealth. He was fascinated by the evidence obtained from inscriptions

and archaeological findings on the ancient forms of village commonwealths and panchayats. He found a parallel between them and his own conception of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj and Gandhiji's conception of self-sufficient village communities. He gathered every possible piece of evidence and described the ancient village commonwealths as follows:

All the adult males (possibly only males) had votes. The panchayats were elected by the free votes of the people. The Executive Officers were chosen from among the Panchayatdars by lot to avoid friction between rival candidates and their partisans. There were sub-committees to manage tanks and irrigation facilities, roads, public safety, village industries (arts and crafts), public asylums, and shelter for the poor and also to protect the local forests and village commons. And policing was provided by the whole panchayat. All the unoccupied and common lands of the village were vested in it, though the arable and cultivated area was generally divided up among the peasant families (most of them were then joint families) with heritable rights. And sometimes, land sales were permitted and when such had happened, the permission of the Panchayat was obtained and the new holder agreed to perform his duties towards the Village Commonwealth. The Village Commonwealth was the bank for all the people had its special sub-committee to manage its banking and would give loans, receive deposits and when any debtor failed to repay, the lands lapsed to it and it was empowered to grant that land to another. It alone was responsible to pay the land tax to the King or the Emperor of that Province or Country and also to settle any new peasants or any part of the unoccupied land of the village. A Village Commonwealth was a unit in a series of bigger commonwealth emerging in a concentric circular fashion, with itself as the common centre. There were the hundred (century) villages commonwealth. On each of them, that is, the hundred villages commonwealth and the thousand (district) and the Nadu (Seema-Province) commonwealths, the village commonwealth was represented either directly or indirectly. Where any matter could not be settled by these commonwealths, King can settle it as the final judge.

Professor Ranga admired the ancient village commonwealths of India, China, and Slavonic Europe since the peasants and artisans there could attain a position based on social justice. It was an egalitarian society and its democratic leadership was not beyond the control of the people. It was indeed a pluralistic society where political and economic power was decentralized to the greatest

extent and social life was conducted according to certain well understood social maxims (known as *dharma*s) that respected people's mutual obligations and individual rights. According to the available evidence, that society achieved full employment, social security, and cultural amenities for all to the highest limit by utilizing the benefits of surplus labour that society was able to put forth. It did not give any scope to exploitation of man by man. The leaders of the village commonwealth made arrangements to insure themselves from external aggression and to maintain internal peace and amity. When some village commonwealths found their resources to be inadequate to cope with any famine or other emergency, it would to borrow the required quantity of grain from its neighbouring commonwealths and even from King's agents. The tax collections were suspended and remitted during all such crises. The many Ashokan rock inscriptions, dispersed in all parts of India, show that despite the maximum amount of decentralization of political and economic power, there was a strong stream of unity and central government had a pervasive influence which inspired and integrating the whole of the country and its people.

Professor Ranga noted from history that hefty, fierce people who, like wild animals, developed the pack-spirit of parasitism and who, therefore, pounced upon more docile and hard working and kind people periodically raided their villages, robbed their grain and cattle. At different stages, by various accidents such raiders in the troops of Gengis Khan, Attila, Timur the Lame, and Cortez, discovered that they could settle down in their conquered areas and live parasitically upon the labour of their conquered people. There were innumerable struggles between the raiders and the defenders of their homes and homelands. After the advent of Mohammedan Raj, the commonwealth began to lose its resilience and owing to the demoralization of most of the upper castes like Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas into drones and parasites and owing to the rise of the local agents of government to new power, village commonwealths began to disintegrate. The history of every part of India recorded instances of self-sacrificing resistance offered by village commonwealths against oppression and aggression.

Professor Ranga called for a resurrection of the village commonwealth system that was destroyed by the invaders and feudals. He believed that the Panchayat Raj system would lead to the resurgence of the village commonwealths.

Surplus value

Professor Ranga disagreed with and objected to Marxists for concentrating only on the study of surplus value created by workers. Marxists had delineated a theory and technique of revolutionary endeavour to be made by the proletariat to triumph over the capitalists and to achieve a classless society. Professor Ranga argued that peasants and artisans also produce surplus value and that too to a

much greater extent and that it was being swallowed up not only by the feudal lords, but also by the capitalists and socialists. The industrialists extract the surplus value from the proletariat and share it with other sections of capitalists. The commercial classes perform that function in capitalist countries with regard to peasants and artisans and share it partially with general consumers. In fact, the condition of peasants is much worse than that of industrial workers. While peasants are allowed to derive only an infinitesimal portion, if at all, of the surplus extracted by industrialists from the worker in the shape of lower prices of manufactured goods, the latter are able to obtain a good share of the surplus value extracted from peasants by both the commercial and industrial classes, passed on to them in the shape of higher wages and lower prices of wage goods. The industrial workers, though constituting hardly one-tenth of the total population of world peasantry, are able to attain a better standard of living and better and fuller social services and privileges due to their better organizational, political and economic position, and consciousness.

The whole Marxist position regarding the relations of peasants to markets for agricultural produce and to prices paid in these markets is governed by the general assumption that, on the whole, exchange takes place at or around the real values of commodities, and in the long run, agricultural or other produce is paid such prices as either fully cover or fluctuate around the axis of their value. Marx wrote, "commodities may be sold at prices which deviate from their values but this deviation is an infringement of the law of exchange of commodities." Lenin also wrote, "The Theory of Value must assume equal supply and demand but does not assert that such an equality is always to be observed or can be observed in capitalistic society." The Soviet economist, Leontiev wrote, "the price is sometimes higher, sometimes lower than the value of the commodity. The value, however, always remains the center of axis around which the price oscillates." Professor Ranga noted that all these Marxist scholars stopped short of studying the process of extraction of surplus value by traders from peasants. Marx merely observed, "The merchant, who parasitically thrusts himself in between the buying producer of commodities and selling producer of commodities, manages to over-reach both" (*Capital*, Vol.2 1, p. 150), but he did not follow it up. Neither Marx, nor Lenin, nor Leontiev cared to study whether capitalism was extracting undue profits or squeezing out all the cumulative surplus accumulated from agricultural produce, not to speak of its equally effective control over the purchases made by peasants?

Marxists had not realized that there is a world of difference between capitalist (industrial) entrepreneurs and peasants and that, while the former are obliged to give only a part of their surplus value or profits to merchants as a remuneration for their services, the latter (peasants) are forced to part with not only all the surplus value produced by both the peasant's family and

workers, but also a portion of their legitimate remuneration, that is, the socially necessary maintenance. The industrial entrepreneur engages other workers and considerable amount of capital in production and has the capacity to manage the merchants and manipulate the markets. He needs to pay interest at a rate much lower than his own profits. The peasant engages himself and his family members and a few occasional wage earners along with a relatively smaller amount of capital. He has to pay usurious rates of interest to the moneylenders. While the industrial entrepreneurs are organized and have gained control over the economic and political institutions of modern society, the peasants are helpless, unorganized, and powerless. Ranga was disenchanted with the Marxists for their failure of a proper assessment of peasants. He, himself, developed a few principles to explain the plight of peasants.

Production under duress

Professor Ranga argued that agriculture is subject not only to the Law of Diminishing Returns but also to the Law of Production under Duress. He enquired into the family and agricultural budgets of thousands of peasants for twenty-five years and found that they showed deficits in most of the cases. When he wondered how they could get on while losing every year on their farming, peasants pointed to their half starved and half-clad children and ill-fed cattle. Professor Ranga highlighted the difference in production conditions under village commonwealths and subsequent exploitative regimes.

As long as self-sufficiency was prevailing in the village commonwealth, peasants were obliged to work for so long, on such crops and lands, as to yield as much of crop as was needed for the maintenance of the local people both during the months of work and leisure and also during the festive seasons. They were also accumulating their surpluses, vouchsafed to them by fair weather conditions, and the culture of improved crops under better system of production, as a matter of famine resistance. On the whole, there was no greater compulsion on them than what was implied in the need for production and the needed momentum for working hard. Such cultivation can be treated as “free production” or “production without artificial compulsion.”

In contrast, in the feudal regimes of the past and the Soviet regimes of the present, peasants would be obliged to work hard especially on lands belonging both to themselves and the feudal lords or on collective farms or state farms, for so many hours a day or so many days in a season or an year, on pain of imprisonment or loss of their holdings or orchards, in order to make it easy for the feudal lords and their dependents of the past and the Soviet masters, proletariat and city people of the present, to live well on their toil and production. Such production is to be classified as production under duress because peasants would not care to work thus; over and above whatever work

they perform on their own holdings for their own benefit. The world peasantry has been obliged during the four centuries of capitalist hegemony of the world, in greater or lesser measure in ever growing areas of the world, to produce under duress the agricultural commodities, fell forests and catch fishes and rear live-stock, although for all outward purposes, there seemed to have been in practice no such compulsion upon peasants, as it is obviously the case in the feudal or Soviet order of society. The so called "free enterprise" world blithely pretends to believe that peasants are producing their various crops, and rearing livestock just because it must be paying for them to do so. But the fact is that peasants are all working on land and producing different crops, irrespective of the degree of demand for their products because they had no other go and they had no other employment. The significance of the existence of this law of "production under duress" is that it explains how and why the peasants have had to accept for all these ages, prices which have left them such little margin over and above the subsistence allowances and prices, that have condemned the peasants, their families, cattle and even soils to over-exploitation, over-exhaustion, and malnutrition.

Law of key services

Professor Ranga also identified several "key services" which are exploiting the peasants after establishing that the peasants are producing agricultural commodities under duress. Peasants have come to be at the mercy of these key services, which exploit them through all possible invisible ways. The most important of these key services are the processing industries and their activities through middlemen. Next come the institutions which provide finance to the agriculturists such as moneylenders, commercial banks and cooperative banks. Then comes the class of retail traders. Even communications go against peasantry; railways and lorries dominate the transport world and their services have become so indispensable as to form a key service to agriculture through the policy of discriminating freights. With the erection of tariff walls and their protection, backed by the worker's demand for cheap food, industry also turned itself into a key service, which extracts, for its services, too high a price from the agriculturists. The provision of currency is another key service that levies its own toll, being the handmaid of banks. Here, dealers in foreign exchange have their own share. This exploitation assumes a pernicious form when it is carried on by the foreigners. Landlordism and officialism are two powerful key interests, which levy a heavy toll on peasantry.

Peasants have been accepted by all as the primary producers, and yet they are accorded the lowest place in the modern socio-economic dispensation. If they look back into the history of their class, they find that through all the millennia, they had been the very axis around which the rest of society revolved and depended for its socio-economic status and privileges.

Ranga clearly explained why peasants stagnated while all other sections of the society marched over them. In the self-sufficient rural economy, there were direct dealings between peasants and consumers. But once the towns began to grow in numbers, populations and in political importance, division of labour, diversification of production in agriculture, and specialization in different aspects of agricultural production began to grow in importance. Similarly, the distances in social, economic as well as physical spheres between the producers and consumers also began to grow. Gradually, marketing took its modern shape, as the main medium through which the producers could reach the consumers. As commerce took in its embrace different parts of each country and different countries across continents; and assumed its modern world significance, the various means of transport, with all the complicated and highly mechanized equipment, have assumed a new power. Since world commerce and communications could deal in huge quantities of the various agricultural products of many countries, all expensive paraphernalia like harbours, ports, railways, ware-houses, elevators, refrigerators and cold storage, drying plants, and processing factories, grading and packing, accounting, stock-exchange and markets have consequently grown in importance. All these can be constructed and maintained only at great cost, and colossal capital investments have become necessary. The powers of finance and capitalist organization have come to displace the peasantry as the centre of the modern socio-economic life. Thus, the various services that modern finance and capitalist organization have come to provide for modern economy, have assumed a key position, and it is only through their ministrations that the primary producers (peasants) and the ultimate consumers (citizens) can try to come into touch with and serve each other. The emergence of this new phenomenon has caused the downfall of the peasantry from its former leading position. It is this new force which has given the key and commanding strength to the modern state, whether it be capitalistic, socialistic or communistic, through its control over the new socio-economic institutions or activities of modern society, to continue to degrade the peasants, the primary producers, who form the majority of the world population. These economic activities and institutions have not only become the inseparable concomitants of modern society, but also the indispensable equipment or environment, with which or through which alone modern peasantry can carry on their daily activity, and swim or sink in the swelling stream of contemporary social life. These are, therefore, the key forces with which they have to deal in their efforts to reach the consumers with their primary products. It is their key service that the peasants have to propitiate; if they are to eke out their livelihood in this increasingly complicated society.

Professor Ranga described the plight of modern day peasants as follows: "Looked at from a great distance, our peasants appear to be the owners of their lands, the masters of their daily or seasonal programmes of crop production and personal labour, and the possessors of the produce of their crops. But from a

close-up look, we can see that they are not such free agents. They may seem to be free agents in their dealings with the moneylenders or banks, but they are not actually so because they have no staying power if credit is not advanced to them. They may deceive themselves with the feeling that they are free to draw water from irrigation sources, canals and tanks, but they must propitiate with bribes the officers-in-charge of such water supplies. They may cart their produce from their homes to the markets but the merchants therein have already gained as their invisible allies: the tax-gatherers, moneylenders and store-keepers, to put pressure, all so quietly, upon them to decide upon the acceptance of whatever prices are offered by them. For all outward purposes, the regulated markets, the newspaper reports on market conditions and other matters may appear to be intelligible and available to all people, but actually the modern commercial mechanism is so complicated and marketing has become so highly specialized that most of the peasants cannot understand its secrets. The controllers or owners of processing factories have achieved so much key-power that the peasants of most countries have been obliged to do their bidding, not only in giving their produce at dictated prices, but also in political voting. Therefore, it is true to say that the modern peasants have come to be very much at the mercy of these key services. Thus, whoever controls these key services can and does manage to control the economic life of peasants.”

Professor Ranga distinguished the capitalistic mode of exploitation through key services from a direct and naked form of exploitation adopted by the feudals. “It is through their control over one or more or all of these key services that modern capitalists have been extracting the cream out of the peasant’s toil. To exploit the peasants in a direct manner as the feudal lords, religious priests or autocratic rulers previously proved to be not so profitable or useful. It had even caused the downfall of these political masters and their agents who indulged in that direct exploitation. To exploit them in this indirect manner through key services has proved to be so profitable, lasting and convenient, that even the authorities of the Soviet would have adopted it as their primary instrument of exploitation of their collectivized peasants. Marx espied the truth of the exploitation of workers by employers, through the extraction of their surplus labour. The present day communists are taking advantage of the capitalist discovery of exploiting the peasants through the operations of the key services.”

Professor Ranga described the situation 44 years ago which sounds so true and revealing even today: “Thus, the paradoxical position arises, namely, while the producers complain of low prices received, the consumers groan under high prices, and while the producers are unable to meet their costs, the consumers are obliged to pay too high prices. In such cross currents in business, the whole battalion of middlemen, from the village merchant to the city speculator, from the retailer to the wholesaler, and even the corrupt officials

reap the fullest benefit possible. Large sections of peasantry must go on producing, if for nothing else, at least for keeping themselves, their workers and cattle employed, and gaining the barest possible fare, since there is no other avenue for employment and since the state has not yet undertaken the responsibility of providing unemployment insurance for both the landed and landless peasants.”

Government support to capitalism

Professor Ranga pointed out several instances of how different governments in the world were helping the development and entrenchment of capitalism to the detriment of peasants. Various governments burden peasants with their unjust and unbearable levies of taxation direct and indirect, whose incidence is much bigger on them than on the richer classes, especially the commercial and industrial sections. Indian peasants have also had to pay heavy taxes to government and even heavier rents to landlords and that too, just during those months when the harvests are just coming in and prices are bound to be too low. The insistence of African governments that peasants should pay their taxes only in cash had dire consequences for them. Marx observed in his *Capital* (Vol. II, p 123) that the desperate poverty of the French peasantry under Louis XIV was due to the gross amount of taxes in money, instead of in kind. “Payment in kind is one of the secrets of the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. If the foreign trade which the western powers have forced upon Japan should lead to the payment of land rent there in money, instead of in kind, it will be all up with the model agricultural system of that country.” The need to pay taxes and rents in cash has invariably driven peasants into the arms of moneylenders most of whom have their finger in the pie of marketing. The rates of interest have varied from 24 to 50% per annum and 30 to 50% for the season. When peasants were unable to repay their debts, the creditors naturally deprived them of their lands and converted them into the mere tenants at will, thereafter in eternal indebtedness, since such rack-rents could never be fully paid.

Colonial governments helped capitalism by encouraging production of cash crops under capitalist-ownership through such devices as indentured labour. By their public expenditure too, governments have been following the commercial and industrial classes. Ranga quoted the example of allocations to housing in the second five-year plan. It was proposed to spend only Rs 200 crores on rural housing where millions of houses were needed for the rural poor, while Rs 160 crores were allocated to urban housing, where only 15% of India’s population lived. Especially in colonial countries, so little of public expenditure finds its way back to peasants and workers who really contribute most of their tax revenues but so much of it is spent for the benefit of the white settlers who pay so little. Governments are almost everywhere actually transferring wealth from the poor to the rich, from peasants and workers, to commercial, industrial

and professional classes and from rural to urban masses. This means of grabbing the surplus value produced by the peasants and workers, adopted by the capitalist classes and extracted through the medium of the state, which they control, is in addition to the direct profits, derived by them from their exploitation of peasants and workers in agricultural, industrial and commercial spheres of life.

Tryst with Marxism

Professor Ranga was influenced by the ideals of Guild Socialism and Marxism during his student life at Oxford. His methods of organization and mass action were similar to those of the Marxists. He established many associations to agitate for the rights of farmers, agricultural labourers, handloom weavers, and artisans. Many of these associations carried red flags with the symbols of hammer and sickle. He worked together with many communists in the struggle against zamindars, jagirdars, and inamdars. But he neither joined the communist movement, nor was he a cardholder.

The Bolshevic Revolution Day in Russia was celebrated on November 7, which was also Ranga's birthday. As he was leading movements in the company of communists, the coincidence of his birthday with the Russian revolution gave him immense pleasure. His followers celebrated the day with a lot of enthusiasm.

Professor Ranga was under the ideological influence of Marx, Engels and Lenin for about a decade and a half. He described Marx as an intellectual giant and lamented that there were no records available concerning village commonwealth when Marx was busy researching. Implied in this statement was the hope that Marx would have recognized the merit of village commonwealth, had the informative records about Indian village democratic system come to light earlier. Marx believed that a system based on common ownership of land prevailed in India. He wrote "these small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which have continued down to this day, are based on common possession of land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on an unalterable division of labour, which serves, whenever a new community is stated, as a plan and a scheme ready cut and dried" (*Capital* Vol.1, pp 390-391). Obviously, Marx had no inkling of village commonwealth system, which was functioning on democratic lines with the land-owning peasants and artisans playing the central role in it.

Marx had confidently declared that peasant agriculture which he classified, as "petty industry" would effect its own destruction. Marx was aware of only medium to large-sized farms, which were run with hired labour. He did not know of the small-sized, family-operated farms of India or China. That may be why Marx bracketed peasants with industrialists rather than with the proletariat. Ranga, who was otherwise impressed with the brilliance of Marx, could not digest his characterization of agriculture as "petty industry."

Lenin, who had seen farms of smaller size in Russia than what Marx saw in Western Europe, characterized peasants as the “last of the capitalist classes.” He also declared that peasants must be won over by the proletariat to their side to be their allies in the revolution. Lenin’s attitude raised hopes in Ranga that the peasants could progress along with the working class in the new socio-political order. That was the reason why Ranga worked closely with the communists in India. His own anti-zamindari agitations and other peasant struggles were carried out under the banner of red flag.

Ranga firmly believed that the farmers of Russia would have a rightful place in the Bolshevik State. But reports of the Stalinist repression of peasants, forced collectivization and the extermination of the freedom loving and property owning farmers as the enemies of people angered him. Till that time, he believed that Marxian analysis could be enlarged to explain the exploitation of the Indian peasants at the hands of British colonialists. He learnt that farmers in Russia were branded as Kulakas, counter-revolutionaries and were deprived of their lands to establish collective and state farms. By mid-thirties, his ideas about Russian Bolshevism were shattered. He started distancing himself from the communists and the red flag. He strove to set up independent and democratic farmers’ associations after breaking links with the communists.

Ranga had many basic differences with the communists that came to the fore as the years passed by. He was a votary of self-employment, individual freedom, liberty, and independent thought. In contrast, the communists had immense faith in government and public sectors. He had strong faith in democracy. The communists believe in a different kind of democracy known as “people’s democracy,” which is also called the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat!” These grandiloquent words were facades for the dictatorship of the party leader and his underlings. Internal party democracy was talked about but rarely practiced.

Communists were naturally infuriated and dubbed him as an agent of the landlords. That marked the beginning of an intense, determined, bitter and uncompromising political struggle between Ranga’s followers and communists over the next few decades. Among the leaders of the national movement, Ranga was the first to get disillusioned about what was happening behind the iron curtain. He saw the need for developing an alternate theory, which took birth during his jail life in the early forties, and this theory came in the form of the “Kisan Majdoor Praja Raj.”

Gandhian Influence

In developing his “alternate path” Ranga was greatly influenced by Gandhi’s ideas of self-sufficient villages. Mahatma Gandhi also preached egalitarianism, which he sought to achieve through non-violent means. Even during his Oxford days, Ranga took up the difficult task of convincing his thesis supervisors about Gandhian ideology.

In *Harijan* (August 29, 1936), Gandhi wrote: "The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition, and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village as a self-contained manufacturing unit mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industries is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others."

As Ranga's disillusionment with Marxism started growing, he was drawn more and more towards Gandhian ideology and modes of struggle. Ranga tried to give a definite content to Gandhian ideals in the form of "Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj." After Independence, he differed with Vinobha Bhave on how to operationalize the Gandhian ideals of self-reliant villages. He opposed the trusteeship concept and common ownership of land. Professor Ranga believed in the revival of village commonwealths, which existed before feudalism, capitalism and communism came in to marginalize the peasants and artisans.

Unity of agricultural labourers and farmers

Professor Ranga identified himself with agricultural labourers as much as he identified with farmers. He wrote a book: *Labour in South India* (1928-30) and argued that the term "labour" should also include agricultural labour. Although this book was mainly based on the living conditions of urban, slum and pavement dwellers, it had references to the conditions of agricultural labour as well. In those days, voting rights were restricted to the propertied and educated people. Because of this reason, no one bothered about labourers and their problems remained unaddressed. Many national leaders were opposed to the grant of voting rights to agricultural labourers. But Professor Ranga convinced them of the need for granting voting rights to agricultural labourers. Professor Ranga argued in the Central Assembly for the extension of all the Acts meant for industrial labour to agricultural labour as well. He also pleaded and agitated for assigning government's wastelands and ceiling surplus lands to agricultural labour. He argued for the fixation and implementation of minimum wages to agricultural labour. He proposed a moratorium on the loans advanced to farmers and agricultural labourers in the aftermath of the Great Depression and agitated on the issue. Legislation to that effect was finally passed in 1935. Ranga wanted that the agricultural labourers should be freed from bonded labour and that they should be provided with housing in a phased manner.

Professor Ranga desired the unity of farmers and agricultural labourers. He included the demands of agricultural labourers in the agitational programmes of the farmers' associations. Communists and some Congress leaders harped on the

class contradictions between farmers and agricultural labourers. They argued that farmers are exploiters and started organizing agricultural labourers against them. These separate organizations of agricultural labourers came in the way of his efforts to build powerful associations of farmers and agricultural labourers. Ranga founded the South India Peasants and Agricultural Labourers Federation in 1935. In his book *Kisan Speaks*, he says: "those who aim at cordiality and unity of farmers and agricultural labourers should see that the farmers behave in such a way that it is not harmful to agricultural labourers." He wanted the government to fix minimum wages for agricultural labourers and minimum support prices to farmers in order to maintain cordial relationship between them.

Alternate path

Professor Ranga propounded an alternate philosophy of "Kisan Mazoor Praja Raj" with freedom, liberty, property ownership, and democracy as its main pillars. He argued that enforced equality, which constrains freedom and independence, could kill an individual's development and creativity. He believed that creativity and initiative of an individual would vanish when either the government or planners take his place. In a totalitarian regime, lack of competition leads to stagnation and gradual deterioration of the means of production and finally to a decline in production and the collapse of the economy. The role of government is only to suppress anti-social elements, protect the weak, and maintain law and order by reducing conflicts. But it should not try to substitute a farmer, a factory owner, a businessman, a contractor, and the like. Although Ranga's ideological position did not get elevated to an "ism," it provided the necessary ammunition to his followers to wage an ideological battle.

Professor Ranga kept on writing books, contributing articles and manifestos in support of his political philosophy. Some notable ones are: *Kisan and Communists* (1946), *Revolutionary Peasantry* (1947), *Peasants and Co-operative Farming* with P.R. Paruchuri (1957). But his most significant contribution has been the *Credo of World Peasantry* published in 1957. It provided the theoretical base and rationale for his cherished ambition of "Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj." The "Farmers Protection March," started by him on November 7, 1945 at Ichapuram in the north-eastern corner of Andhra Pradesh continued for two months traversing a distance of 2500 kms and involved twenty thousand volunteers, congregating into hundreds of public meetings on the way. This was the most memorable mass agitation of his life. The volunteers obtained the signatures of millions of farmers on the way demanding the abolition of zamindaris and proclamation of a moratorium on agricultural debts.

Professor Ranga earned the titles of "Rythu (Peasant) Ranga" and "Coolie (Labour) Ranga" because of his dedication to and struggle for their welfare. He was wedded to the ideals of (small) property ownership and freedom of

profession. He opposed Pandit Nehru, who had risen to the heights of Himalayas after independence. Ranga said "None of the National Leaders were courageous enough to face Pandit Nehru and join issue with him. Why did I oppose such a Pandit Nehru? It was for the freedom of the peasants and in defense of dharma. I have visualized the resulting implications of his anti-farmer policies. Knowing fully well that opposing Pandit Nehru can be politically dangerous to me, I performed my duty in defense of my convictions." No wonder Pandit Nehru complimented Ranga by saying, "As long as Rangaji is in Parliament, the Indian peasants can sleep without any worry." Such was his identification with the peasants, agricultural labour, handloom weavers, artisans and all other toiling masses of rural India.

Professor Ranga studied history and declared that the peasants have been the traditional votaries of freedom and independence of the producers and citizens. He wrote: "When freedom was banished by empires and emperors, it took refuge in peasant homes. When independence was destroyed in industries, crafts and national life, it took shelter in peasant way of life. When nations lost their freedom and independence, their soul found its inviolable habitation in peasant hearths. When people's national language, culture, native idiom and genius were being ridiculed, and put out of the courts and universities of the conquerors and rulers, they found their natural hermitage in peasant's language, song, laughter and dance."

Professor Ranga had immense faith in the peasantry of the world. He called them an eternal class as they have risen again and again, in every country against their oppressors and regained their rights in part or in full over their holdings which are the *sine qua non* of their independence. Instead of being liquidated, as was so confidently anticipated by Marx and Engels, they have gone on winning successive victories over landlords in country after country. Their last and latest struggle was in Soviet Russia and China. Even there, they are regaining their rights, though slowly and after terrible sacrifices. He was convinced that the peasants, as a class, are growing in numbers and in productive power and in economic significance in modern society. Throughout the world, peasants are striving for advancement of just and equal evaluation of services of all classes of people. The International Federation of Agricultural Producers is championing this cause. He gave a clarion call to the peasants of the world to unite. He offered to carry the proletariat (industrial working class) and the artists along with the peasants on equal terms into the new cooperative social commonwealths which would be achieved through the building of powerful cooperatives as were already built by the farmers of Scandinavian countries. Being the largest single class in the world, he was hopeful that the peasants of the world would unite and overthrow their oppressors both in the capitalistic and communistic social orders. In short Professor Ranga gave the same hope to the world peasantry as Adam Smith and Karl Marx respectively gave to industrial entrepreneurs and the working class.

Relevance of Ranga's economic thought today

The exploitation of peasantry by the capitalist economic orders is going on unabated. The collapse of the communist social orders during the late eighties of the last century has given capitalism an ideological supremacy in the world. The leading capitalist countries have succeeded in fully mechanizing their farms, thereby reducing the number of farmers and increasing the sizes of crops and livestock farms. They are able to extract profits and surplus values generated all over the world on the strength of their technological innovations and enormous economic and military power. They are able to recycle a part of these profits to benefit the small and dwindling number of farmers and keep them happy to some extent. On the contrary, the ranks of the peasants are growing in the developing countries. Along with their numbers, their impoverishment is also taking place at a rapid pace. Enamoured by the flourishing of capitalist economies in the industrialized West and attracted by the perceived opportunities in the global markets, the rulers of developing countries are aping them in introducing capital intensive technologies in order to produce quality products required by the domestic and export markets. As the employment elasticity of new investments is falling rapidly, the story of industrialization is becoming a matter of "growth without employment." The thirst for more and more capital is leading to more and more borrowing from abroad and to more and more brutal exploitation of the peasants and the agricultural sector.

The biggest failure of developing countries has been their inability to develop "labour intensive" production technologies as an alternative to the "capital intensive" methods of the West. As a consequence, these countries have failed to move labour from agriculture to industry although enormous transfer of capital and wealth has taken place from villages to the towns and cities. The agricultural sectors of the developing countries are facing a "structural retrogression." While the share of agriculture in the Gross Domestic Product has fallen from 55 per cent to 24 per cent over the five decades of planned development, the proportion of the labour force dependent on it remains as high as 62 per cent, recording only a marginal fall over a period of fifty years. The relative impoverishment of the agricultural sector has proceeded at a phenomenal pace. Ranga computed that, in 1955-56, the per capita income in agricultural sector was at Rs 195 and that of non-agricultural sectors was at Rs 485. These figures showed that a person dependent on non-agricultural sectors was, on an average, having an income that was approximately 2.5 times that of a person dependent on agricultural sectors. Today, a person dependent on non-agricultural sectors has a per capita annual average income of Rs 35,526, which is about five times the annual average per capita income of Rs 7,258 received by a person depending on the agricultural sector. Devoid of employment opportunities in the industrial sector and with a slow growth of employment in the service sector, there is an overcrowding of labour force in the agricultural

sector. It is leading to more and more disguised unemployment and increasing dependency ratios in the peasant families. Peasants are forced to turn to high-risk crops and enterprises, borrowing capital at high rates of interest. Production and price shortfalls have driven them to destitution and desperation, which are mirrored in the increasing number of suicides, sale of children and ever growing indebtedness. The green, white and blue revolutions ushered in by the efforts of peasants, scientists, policy makers and extension workers have finally benefited only the consumers. The relative prices of agricultural commodities are falling both in the domestic and international markets. The rich countries are subsidizing their agricultural sectors heavily, contributing to the depression in the international prices of agricultural commodities. Agricultural commodities are entering the markets of countries like India not so much on the strength of their competitiveness as it is on the strength of artificial support leant by their respective governments.

The agricultural sectors of the developing countries were systematically exploited by the commercial and industrial classes, thriving on the support extended by the state. In India, an import substitution model was followed for four decades (1951-1991) with the stated objectives of attaining self-sufficiency and a socialistic pattern of society. The overvalued exchange rates administered by the Government benefited the industrialists and bureaucrats at the cost of peasants. The enterprising peasant classes were subjected to ceilings on land holdings, while no ceilings are imposed on the wealth or the incomes of the industrialists, businessmen and other sections of the urban rich. The land ceilings, which were born out of a socialistic rhetoric, were a clever ploy to aid the process of transfer of wealth, capital and incomes from the agricultural and other rural sectors to the non-agricultural, urban sectors. The protection of high tariff walls given in the name of "infant industry" has fattened the parasitic classes without any necessity to be efficient or quality conscious. The industrial and business classes looted the wealth of the country without making any investments for technological innovations or developing labour-intensive production methods. The peasants were subjected to severe restrictions on the movement and processing of agricultural commodities. The corrupt and powerful clique of politicians and bureaucrats looted the public sector by throwing a few crumbs to the organised labour. The vast amounts of investments extracted from the surplus values of peasants and other toiling masses were rendered infructuous. The sick and outmoded public sector is on the verge of closure or is up for grabs at nominal prices to the private sector, while an equally inefficient private sector prospered on the strength of state support extended by corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. It is evident from the negative Total Factor Productivity (TFP) growth shown by the Indian manufacturing sector during the period from 1965 to 1985 (I J Ahluwalia, Oxford Publishing House).

In contrast to this poor performance of industrialists with hi-fi lifestyles, the half-starved and half-naked Indian peasants achieved a positive growth in TFP in the agricultural sector during the post-independence period, encashing the opportunities thrown open by science and technology (Evenson, Kalirajan, and Shand etc.). Then why did the inefficient industrialists and commercial classes amass wealth, while the efficient peasants were impoverished? Professor Ranga explained the process of exploitation of peasants vividly in his *Credo of World Peasantry* (1957) and other books. The same process of exploitation was further intensified during the life and after the death of Professor Ranga. The state has made enough investments in the agricultural sector to ensure that sufficient agricultural commodities are produced in the country. After the green revolution became a fact, the state withdrew investments from the agricultural sector. Hardly ten per cent of the capital formation is taking place in the agricultural sector now and, that too, from the peasants and not much from the state.

The diagnosis of Professor Ranga was quite thorough and is valid even today. But one cannot say the same about his prescription. Cooperative movements in Scandinavian countries have achieved limited success and no wonder, they have the most egalitarian societies among the capitalist world. The experience of the village panchayats and co-operative societies in India has not been good. Of course, there never was a decentralization of power and financial resources. There is a greater and greater centralization of power and financial resources, with the local self-governments reduced to the status of beggars. Democracy has taken roots only in form but not in spirit and content. The ideal of Ranga, "Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj" remained a slogan, just as the ideals of "self-sufficient villages" and "trusteeship of rich" voiced by the Father of the Nation did.

Acharya Ranga's message to Indian liberals

Ranga stood for the liberal ideals of democracy and equality. Egalitarian values appealed more to him when he was in the prime of his youth at Oxford. But as soon as he learnt that there was no democracy in the Soviet Union, he opposed the system, upholding the primacy of democracy over socialism. Professor Ranga campaigned for universal suffrage and adult franchise. He eulogized the ancient village commonwealths where democracy flourished and where the rulers exercised their powers solely to facilitate the welfare of the peasants and artisans. He followed Gandhiji who embraced the liberal ideals of sarva dharma samabhava, multiculturalism and concern for the welfare of the poorest of the poor. Professor Ranga struggled for the emancipation and empowerment of peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers. He dreamt of "Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj" in which a large majority of work force will have a voice rather than a small minority of organized industrial labour calling the shots in the name of "dictatorship of the proletariat." Professor Ranga opposed

controls and rationing which the British imposed. Pandit Nehru's penchant for socialism and public sector led to the supremacy of bureaucracy and erosion of individual citizen's role. Although Professor Ranga was closely associated with Pandit Nehru in politics, he opposed continuation of rationing, controls and permit systems. He opposed collectivization of farms, which the Communists and Socialists wanted to pursue to achieve higher efficiency and equality. He argued that the loss of personal liberty of farmers would dampen their initiative and urge to produce more. His opposition to the 17th Amendment Bill, which provided for compulsory land acquisition from peasants at low rates of compensation, was born out of his love for the liberal values of personal liberty and independence of small landholders. The defeat of the 17th Amendment Bill on the floor of the Parliament, despite a huge majority of the treasury benches, symbolized the victory of liberal values over the forces of political bureaucracy and state power leaning towards totalitarianism.

He upheld the values of Gandhiji in public life. Just as Gandhiji was evincing concern for the "poorest of the poor in society," so also did Professor Ranga champion the cause of rural masses, peasants, agricultural labourers, handloom weavers, artisans and artists. He admired the smallholders' model of production, which was not exploitative of others. The way of peasants' enterprise is partnerships with their collaborators like agricultural labourers and artisans, and is not to be confused with the feudal or capitalistic models of exploitation. He strove for the welfare of rural masses so that they could pursue their occupations with dignity of labour and self respect.

Professor Ranga was more loyal and committed to the pursuit of the principles he formulated rather than to the parties and individuals. His opposition to the philosophy of totalitarian dictatorship of the proletariat of the communists and to their armed struggles was total and uncompromising. His politics were not populist. He did not speak the convenient or fashionable ideas. For example, when under the instruction of Joseph Stalin, the Indian communists waged armed struggles against the Government of the newly independent India in the late 1940s, he called upon the government to use the power of the state to ruthlessly suppress them. He was the only politician who did not hesitate to characterize the communists as traitors to India, for their armed struggle against the Nehru government.

Professor Ranga walked out of the Congress braving the wrath and vengeance of the high and the mighty like Jawaharlal Nehru, when he was convinced that their policies were ruinous to the self-employed, farmers, artisans and weavers. He was undaunted by the might of the Congress. He left Congress to form parties like the Krishikar Lok Party to oppose Congress's anti-farmer policies and dissolved them to rejoin the Congress when he thought that the menace of communism was more important to fight than the

Congress itself. When the Congress under Nehru's leadership wanted to force the Indian farmers into cooperative farming, just a step short of collectivization of Indian agriculture, he boldly founded the Swatantra (Freedom) Party, in association with stalwarts like C Rajagopalachari and K M Munshi. All these leaders were old and yet age did not deter them from taking on Nehru and his ruinous policies of socialism head on. Professor Ranga traveled throughout the length and breadth of India, exposing the perils that India would face if we went socialist. He gave a lucid exposition of the principles of freedom, democracy and the non-exploitative entrepreneurship of self-employed people and farmers. The intellectual as well as political campaigns against ruinous "permit-license-quota-raj," against burgeoning bureaucracy and their total power over the citizens of India, and his appeal to the innate love of the people of India attracted considerable following for the Swatantra Party. At one stage it emerged as the largest opposition in the Parliament of India. In the States of Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan, it was the number one party.

The fact that a good cause taken up by leaders with conviction and sincerity would not fail to enthuse Indians was what the Swatantra movement of Professor Ranga proved. The populism of Indira Gandhi and her crushing victory in 1971 broke the heart of Professor Ranga. That was the beginning of decline and demise of the Swatantra Party, the only party that stood for a political philosophy different from the populism and socialism of the Congress and other parties born from it.

One of the greatest distinctions of Professor Ranga was that he established a school to train political workers to equip them with the intellectual ammunition that is necessary for them to become good leaders and communicators. His school in Nidubrolu (Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh) trained and produced a large number of self-confident and self-respecting leaders mostly from the self-employed people. They were trained in economics, history and political philosophies as well as in the organization of parties and in the conduct of peoples' movements.

Professor Ranga stood for equality of opportunity to all sections of the people, which is another liberal value. He opposed the concentration of economic power, whether in the hands of feudal lords, holders of finance capital, or the state. He emphasized decentralization of both political and economic power so that individual initiative and entrepreneurial spirit get the appropriate encouragement and motivation. As Mahatma Gandhi said: "My life is my message," the values for which Professor Ranga stood and fought for all through his life are his message to Indian liberals. They are freedom of expression, democracy, equality of opportunity, self-employment, decentralization of power, right to property and compassion for the have-nots.

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B R Shenoy: The Lonely Search for Truth

Mahesh P Bhatt

The late Professor B R Shenoy was a world-renowned economist. In the words of Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman, "Professor B R Shenoy was a great man who had the economic understanding to recognize the defects of central planning in India and what was even rarer, the courage to state his views openly and without equivocation. Rarely does such a man bless our society."

I was fortunate to be associated with him as his colleague in the Department of Economics, School of Social Sciences, Gujarat University. In what follows, I recount his economic thought as also a biographical account of his life, with the hope that it would bring to life the ideas as well as the person that was Professor Shenoy.

For almost two and a half decades, Professor Shenoy dominated the discussion on Indian Economic Policy and Planning. Through the vast number of articles he contributed to professional and popular journals, he gained world wide recognition as a powerful dissenter to what Professor Bauer has called "the spurious consensus of development economics."

He was an economist of the liberal tradition both by training as well as conviction and therefore found himself in major disagreement with the "mainstream" view of development planning quite naturally. His ideas were strongly influenced by Hayekian liberalism and throughout his life as an

economist a social philosopher and a critic, he remained a fiercely uncompromising liberal. He was seriously apprehensive of the development strategy adopted in the Second Plan. According to him the strategy, in its heavy reliance on deficit financing for meeting the resource requirements of the ambitious investment plans was permanently committing the country to a regime of inflation and controls. In his view, a genuine and long-term commitment to the policy of maintaining monetary and price stability was an essential part of a truly growth-oriented strategy. Furthermore, Indian planning in emphasizing on the development of highly capital-intensive goods industries was imposing a programme of large-scale transfer of resources from agriculture and other sectors to low-return public sector industries. In fact this was a low-employment strategy, which in his view, a poor country like India could ill-afford.

At a more general level, Professor Shenoy did not share the methodological predilections of most of the development economists of that time, formulating and analyzing the development issues in terms of mechanistic growth models, devoid of price-theoretic contents. He considered the process of development as a complex phenomenon and believed that it could be attained only as a by-product of the economic activities of individuals in the environment of free markets and decentralized choice. In his view, the attempt at supplanting the "market-determined" priorities by the "planned" priorities through administrative fiat, however well intentioned, rested on an extremely weak understanding and appreciation of the strength and direction of market responses to such attempts and the ultimate allocational and distributional effects of these responses. Generally these attempts produced results quite opposite from what they intended. Obviously, his disagreement with the prevalent view pertained to issues that were fundamental in nature and his opposition to them was total.

Before 1955, his interests were more or less equally divided between theoretical and applied economics. He published his first paper, "An Equation for the price level of New Investment Goods" in *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (1931). The paper arose out of his dissatisfaction of Keynes's treatment of the price level of new investment goods in the "Fundamental Equations" in *Treatise of Money*. In Professor Shenoy's view Keynes's discussion merely showed under what conditions the banking system may prevent a fall in the price-level of investment goods, and did not tackle the more fundamental issue of how the price-level of new investment goods itself gets determined. Adhering to the terminological and definitional frame of the *Treatise*, Professor Shenoy supplemented the system of Fundamental Equations by an additional equation and attempted to show how the system can yield a determinate solution for the price-level of new investment goods. Subsequently, he published another paper "Interdependence of Price Levels," again in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (1933), wherein he presented further important results pertaining to this issue.

These two papers were received as important contributions to the field and established him as a promising young monetary economist within the profession. He was perhaps the first Indian economist, whose theoretical papers were published in a world-class journal.

However, in the changed intellectual climate from 1955 onwards, he concentrated on Indian economic policy and planning. His contributions to the field of Indian economic policy are distinguished by their underlying unity of approach, a unique understanding of the market principle and appreciation of the role of the price-mechanism in the allocation of resources. They bear an irrefutable testimony to their author's genius for creative application of this principle and correct sense of judgement, relevance, and perspective. Above all they point to a social scientist who had utmost regard for his discipline, made no compromises in reaching the conclusions, and once reasoned upheld them courageously. For Professor Shenoy was anything but a "Committee" man. He was an economist who preferred to be right in a minority of one. Every important contribution he made to the subject sparked off long-drawn controversies and memorable debates amongst the Indian economists. It would not be an exaggeration to assert that his contributions went a long way in demonstrating the substantive importance of the theory of markets, in the analysis of development issues, and thereby changing the character and quality of the professional discussion on Indian economic problems.

At the time of the preparations for the Second Plan, the government of India formed a panel of economists and Professor Shenoy was invited to be its member. As a member of the panel, he wrote his famous Note of Dissent against the massive programme of deficit financing that was proposed by the majority of the panel members in their memorandum on the Second Plan. He presented an extended and fuller treatment of the issues he had dealt with in his Note of Dissent in his Sir William Meyers Lectures (1955-56) which he delivered at the University of Madras. The lectures were subsequently published by Madras University as a book, *Problems of Indian Economic Development*.

In the Indian context, the book has been recognized as the first major contribution to the analysis of monetary aspects of development planning, in the tradition of neo-classical monetary theory. It contains a definitive discussion on the relationship between deficit financing, inflation, and economic development. At a technical level, it provides an excellent analysis of the factors influencing money supply in the Indian economy with a sharp focus on the relationship between money supply and government budgetary operations and contrary to the established consensus, it ardently advocated a substantial pruning of the Second Plan and maintaining the rate of planned expenditure to a level consistent with the available quantum of real voluntary savings. Professor Shenoy pursued this theme further in his two papers, "The Indian Economic Sense" and "Professor Gadgil: Rephrasing the Second Plan" which were

published respectively in the April and July issues of the *Indian Economic Journal* (1958).

Just after the commencement of the Second Plan, inflationary pressures started gathering momentum, the balance-of-payments situation became increasingly fragile, and the government resorted to stringent import and exchange controls. In 1957, Professor Shenoy was elected as the President of the fortieth annual conference of the Indian Economic Association and in his presidential address, he put forth a vigorous plea for floating the Indian Rupee as a solution to the prevailing balance-of-payments situation. His presidential address evoked a good deal of discussions on the efficacy of devaluation in correcting the prevailing balance-of-payments crisis amongst several prominent Indian economists, and important papers pertaining to this issue subsequently appeared in print.

Professor Shenoy's analysis of the balance-of-payments crisis and his advocacy of devaluation had a distinct flavour of originality. While most of the contributors of the debate based their analysis on the conventional elasticity approach, he considered the approach as largely irrelevant in the Indian context. By adumbrating impressive evidence, he showed that the balance-of-payments crisis was caused by domestic inflation and was reflected in the observed wide margins between the international and domestic prices of traded goods at the prevailing official exchange rate. He also pointed out that the devaluation was to take place in the context of imports and exchange controls and in analyzing the effects of devaluation, this particular fact needed to be properly recognized. In his view, for all practical purposes, Indian traders had little influence on the international prices of traded goods. Consequently, devaluation did not imply change in the terms of trade for India. Devaluation in the Indian conditions essentially amounted to elimination of implicit tax on exportables and subsidy to the importers. He contended that it would involve an increase in the rupee prices received by the exporters and a shift back of exportable goods from domestic consumption to sale in the international markets. He recognized the importance of the domestic supply elasticities of exportables in this context. However, he considered the impact of devaluation on domestic prices of imports as nil; the impact being fully borne by the abnormal profits earned by the importers due to differences in the landed rupee costs and domestic market prices of imports.

For several subsequent years, his plea for monetary and price stability and reliance on autonomous exchange rate adjustments rather than on trade and exchange controls remained unheeded by the government. As a result, during these years he undertook a further inquiry in this direction and devoted himself to the analysis of the functioning of overvalued exchange-rate system in India. He wrote a large number of papers on almost all major manifestations of this system: over and under invoicing of imports and exports, trafficking in import

licenses, clandestine exports of capital from India, financing of the smuggling trade, and the misallocation of foreign aid.¹

Obviously, it is not feasible here to go into a detailed presentation of his contributions related to these subjects. However, it may be noted that in those days he was perhaps the only Indian economist who was putting in a good deal of technical research effort in investigation of these issues. His studies on the various aspects of the working of exchange and trade controls in India vividly brought out the pronounced anti-egalitarian and perverse allocational effects. Moreover, they highlighted the large-scale wastage of foreign aid received by India in the form of overcapitalization of public sector projects, and financing of the smuggling trade. His views on foreign aid made him quite unpopular with the ruling circles of the country. However, he remained undeterred in widely publishing his views on this issue in a forthright and categorical manner. Realizing the government's ideological opposition to accept a national exchange-rate policy, he pressed for a policy of auctioning of import licenses in a number of papers. Such a policy would have reduced the anti-egalitarian income shifts and allocational distortions that were largely generated by the government's adherence to the policy of trade and exchange controls.

Besides his contributions to the monetary aspects of Indian planning and exchange rate system, Professor Shenoy also made contributions on two other important topics: the effects of PL 480 food imports on the Indian economy and the increasing transfer of resources from agriculture to the protected urban industries. In 1960, he was drawn to the study of the effects of PL 480 imports on the Indian economy. After a careful study of this issue, he concluded that the budgetary operations related with PL 480 had a net expansionary effect on money supply and consequently were responsible for aggravating inflationary pressures on the Indian economy. On the other hand, he reasoned that in an overall inflationary situation, the food imports were likely to lead the economy to a state of substantial and longrun dependency on food imports, by artificially depressing the food prices and inducing a resource shift from food production to other commodities. His analysis of the monetary impact of PL 480 entailed a long-drawn debate and controversy, in which besides a number of non-government economists, economists from the finance ministry, from the US embassy, as well as from the RBI participated. For several years, Professor Shenoy pursued this theme in a large number of papers and it was because of his persistent writing on the subject that the government of India was ultimately obliged to appoint a commission to look into the monetary impact of PL 480 in 1966.²

We have earlier remarked on his opposition to the planning strategy adopted by the government of India since 1956. In his view, the strategy involved a programme of large-scale transfer of resources from agriculture to public sector industries and other sectors that had easy access to organized capital markets and government and semi-government financial institutions.

By carefully distilling the relevant data, he highlighted the deplorable state of lagging food production and stagnant level of per capita availability of food, prevalent in that period. He further demonstrated the emergence and development of a complicated and discriminatory system of differential interest rates and their inimical effects on resource allocation in general and on agricultural development in particular. His comprehensive analysis of the effects of the policy of repressed interest rates in organized capital markets in an overall inflationary situation with its usual accompaniment of the policy of selective credit controls has generated a multitude of research projects in this field.

Unlike other economists, Professor Shenoy's emphasis on agriculture rested on a subtle and distinct reasoning. Several economists of those days advocated greater priority for agriculture, which meant a relatively greater proportion of government outlays be spent on agriculture. Professor Shenoy however differed in his opinion. According to his reasoning, there should be sufficient curtailment in the total volume of investible resources appropriated by the government, which should be left to flow in the productive sectors, agriculture being one of these important sectors in accordance with the market forces. His idea of the appropriate pattern of resource allocation, therefore, was based upon the twin principles of comparative costs and marginal productivity and was miles away from the usual simplistic priority discussions.

In a pervasive climate of intellectual opposition and apathy to market principles and market-determined solutions, his writings evoked considerable opposition and strong criticism from his colleagues and over a period of time he came to experience a wide communication gap with them. He became an "outsider within the profession" as one commentator of *Hindu* remarked. With stoicism and fortitude, he accepted his professional alienation and in the tradition of his great predecessors like Lord Keynes, he tried to reach out and influence the enlightened public opinion by writing profusely in prominent Indian and foreign newspapers and journals like *Swarajya*, *Hindu*, *Times of India*, *Statesman*, *Economist*, *Fortune*, *Wall-Street Journal*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, etc. As a publicist, he remains unequalled amongst the Indian economists for his tremendous expositional and dialectical prowess and for his unreserved and untiring willingness to expound and to espouse "unpopular ideas" of the time.

The quality of an economist is generally measured not by the conclusions he pronounces on particular matters of his inquiry—though that is important—but by the quality of his logic, the technical competence he demonstrates in his analysis, the empirical validity of the model he has accepted for operational analysis, and above all, by the extent to which his contributions come to reflect and pre-date the analytical interests and contributions of the subsequent generations of scholars in his field. On the basis of these criteria, Professor Shenoy would be recognized as one of the most outstanding and important economists by the future historians of Indian economic thought.

A perfunctory perusal of literature related with development economics that is recently coming out in professional journals would convince anyone with an open mind that the problems which Professor Shenoy identified as important have largely come to command significant amount of research interests from the new generation of development economists. More importantly, many of his findings like the effects of PL 480 on the Indian economy, distributional and allocational effects of exchange control, resource transfer from agriculture etc. have been more or less collaborated.³ However, it is indeed sad to note that during his lifetime, his professional colleagues largely ignored his contributions or relegated them to the background. Almost all the academic writings and surveys dealing with Indian economic policy published during the sixties and seventies seem to be conspicuous in their universal silence on his contributions and views.⁴

He stayed with the Gujarat University from 1954 to 1968, a period of almost 15 years. During his directorship he established a strong tradition of economic liberalism at the Economics Department and exposed generations of young students to liberal economic ideas and doctrines. For a number of years, he taught courses in monetary and international economics. His lectures used to be uniformly lucid, extremely well organized and highly stimulating. In those days of an almost axiomatic acceptance of anti-market ideology and the left radicalism, students probably for the first time in their lives encountered someone who relentlessly challenged the basis of every "sacred cow" of the interventionist ideology and programmes, and presented with an impeccable logic, the desirability of maintaining monetary stability, the socially useful functioning of forward markets and the virtues of flexible exchange-rate system, thus compelling them in turn to reconsider their views on many important issues of theory and practice and to study and appreciate the logic of free market economy and the theory of markets. He disliked the widely observed propensity of Indian students and scholars to perorate the arguments of famous economists uncritically, emphasizing instead on the importance of understanding the underlying logic of these arguments and evaluating them critically.

His weekly seminars, where he discussed the problems of his ongoing research were a sort of star attraction for the students and were frequently attended by the other faculty members and scholars from outside the department. It is difficult to convey the atmosphere of intense intellectual confrontation and argumentation that prevailed in those seminars. All his students felt that they learnt most of their economics in those seminars.

During his days at the University, Professor Shenoy attained the zenith of professional recognition. In 1957, he was elected as the President of the Indian Economic Association. In 1962, he was honoured to deliver the prestigious Walchand Hirachand Memorial Lectures, and in 1966, he delivered

Sir Ramaswami Mudalliar Lectures at the University of Kerala at Trivandrum. His writings won him international recognition as well. He was invited to be a member of the Mont Pelerin Society. Subsequently, he was the recipient of the prestigious Relim Foundation Grant and went to USA as a Relim Foundation Visiting Scholar and delivered a series of lectures on Indian planning at several American universities, and in 1966, he went to the London School of Economics as a Visiting Professor.

In 1968, his life took an unexpected turn. He resigned from his position in the Gujarat University due to a difference of opinion over the appointment of a Reader in the Labour Welfare Department of the School. He felt that in the appointment, the University administration had not paid due weightage to the opinion of the faculty. He was deeply committed to the ideals of academic freedom, and he found it impossible to reconcile with the decision of the administration. Many leading intellectuals and educationists, irrespective of their political ideologies, were unanimous in censuring the University and in supporting his stand, which was in many ways a tribute to his intellectual integrity, and an indication of the esteem in which he was held by the enlightened public in the country. He was deeply sad in leaving the Economics Department and the School, which with his hard work and planning he had tried to develop according to his ideals. He spent a major part of his life in Ahmedabad, the city he had come to love almost as his native place. He had made plans for establishing a research centre at the Department along the lines of the Institute of Economic Affairs in England to attract and support young research scholars and to build up a lively research tradition at the University. There is no doubt that his resignation was an irreparable loss to the University and the Economics Department. Professor Shenoy shifted to New Delhi and established an independent Economic Research Centre. With an undying sense of dedication and zeal—surprising in view of his approaching old age—he continued to work at the Centre, bringing out a number of research papers and writing regularly in various newspapers and journals. He had already developed some heart ailments, but refused to take rest and relentlessly worked until his sad demise on February 8, 1978.

Professor Shenoy was a deeply religious man and spent most of his spare time studying the scriptures of different religions. He was especially impressed by the theosophical writings of Madame Blavetsky. He considered the religious experience to be of paramount importance to individuals and there was a wholesome unity between his religious beliefs and practice. He respected all outlooks and religions alike. All those who knew him would testify that he was truly above divisive religious prejudices.

With deep humility and unbounded devotion, he tried to fulfill the calling of his *dharma*, his duty. He was a pious man...

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Although he had published quite a voluminous literature on these issues, the following papers may serve as a representative sample on this subject:
 - a. "Overvaluation of the Indian Rupee" (*The Banker* 1969).
 - b. "Currency Overvaluation in Some Underdeveloped Countries" (*II Politico*, University of Pavia, Italy, 1968).
 - c. "Freedom and Order in UDC and the Problem of Foreign Aid. (*Ibid.* 1965).
 - d. "Errors and Omissions in Balance of Payments statements and No.II Money" (*The Account* 1971).
 - e. "Errors and Omissions in India's Balance of Payments (*IL Politico* 1972).
2. All his major writings on the subject can be found in his subsequently published book, *PL 480 and India's Food Problem* (1974).
3. For a sample of corroborative examples in this regard see Mellor, *New Strategy of Growth*.

J Bhagawati & A Kreuger *American Economic Review* 1978. J Bhagawati and P Desai *Industrialisation*.

4. An illustrative example of this tendency is J Bhagawati & S Chakravarti's survey paper on Indian economic policy. The paper, commissioned by the American Economic Association and bearing the usual mark of authenticity of that august body, is meticulous in mentioning even the least important papers on PL 480 auctioning of import licences etc. but largely keeps away from referring to Professor Shenoy's contributions, which as everybody knows were first contributions on these issues and which have been instrumental in initiating widely participated controversies and debates around these very issues. Similar tendency is also observed in case of Professor Bhavatosh Datta's otherwise excellent work on history of Indian economic thought.

Professor P T Bauer in his *Dissent on Development* has also recognised this unfortunate omission in case of Gunnar Myrdal's widely famous work *Asian Drama*.

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1. Ceylon Currency and Banking, Longman Greens & co Madras, 1941.
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Piloo Mody: Democracy with Bread and Freedom

R K Amin

India can claim to be the largest democratic country in the world. This claim if seen with adult franchise of illiterate masses appears to be a supreme achievement. With such a brilliant record, it is difficult to explain one political aberration in the post-independence period, the Emergency from June 26, 1975 to March 21, 1977. However, this episode came as no surprise to Piloo Mody, who ceaselessly continued to warn the public about the emergence of fascist tendencies in India. His warnings were expressed loudly during his speeches in the Parliament from 1967 onwards. He was convinced of the fact that socialist policies followed by India were really the root-cause of fascist tendencies and he sensed an attempt to tamper with fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution. It was therefore, natural that Piloo described Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister of India till June 12, 1975, impostor Prime Minister till June 26, 1975, and dictator of India till she relinquished office on March 21, 1977.

The birth of Piloo's political career

When India began to adopt co-operative farming on the Chinese pattern and introduced state trading in food grains, some prominent thinkers and political activists like C Rajagopachari, N G Ranga, and Minoo Masani thought it necessary to counter these monstrous forces by starting a new political party. The Swatantra Party, based on a liberal ideology and policies, was founded in April 1959. Piloo, along with his father Sir Homi Mody, joined the new party as founder members. Was it then not unusual for Piloo to have plunged into a

tumultuous political life from the opposition when the Congress Party had an absolute sway over the country? Was it not then puzzling when Piloo, the son of a wealthy father, born and brought up in western traditions preferred to face the rough and tumble of political life at the young age of 33, especially when he had already achieved a name and a place in his professional field?

It is true that one would not have normally expected Piloo to enter politics. His professional career had bright prospects. He was born on November 14, 1926 in Bombay to a wealthy Parsi family that was in the forefront in many walks of life. He took his Masters degree in architecture from the University of California at Berkeley in 1951, and was soon associated with the world-renowned architect Le Corbusier in the Chandigarh project. By 1958, Piloo was already one of the leading architects in India and was fairly well known in the international sphere of his profession. In spite of having such a brilliant professional career, after a short span of seven years, Piloo decided to join the Swatantra Party where he had to face an uphill task to make his way. A casual observer will surely wonder why?

But it was no puzzle to those who knew Piloo and his family closely. His father, Sir Homi Mody, was a leading figure in Indian politics. He had participated in many of important political events since 1910. During the Second World War, he worked as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, which was then equivalent to India's cabinet. After independence, he served as governor of Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in the Indian Union. He was also an active participant in framing India's Constitution during 1947-49. Piloo's elder brother, Russi Mody, was for many years, India's foremost business manager in his capacity as the chairman of Tata Steel, for many years the largest company in post-independent India. Thus Piloo was born in a family, well cultivated in the liberal tradition of the Victorian era, and was greatly influenced by persons like. Dadabhai Naoroji, and Pheroza Shah Mehta.

How could Piloo remain in the narrow field of architecture when India was moving on the disastrous road of socialism? No wonder the government's move towards cooperative farming on the Chinese pattern and introduction of state trading in food grains impelled Piloo to join public life where he had to fight against a two-faced monster: socialist policies and the growth of fascism.

Piloo's public life can be examined in thought as well as in action, and in both, he remained steadfast. We find him steadfast in thought when we read his book *Democracy Means Bread and Freedom*. And we find him firm in action when we read another book, *Critique*, containing his important speeches in Parliament. He also wrote in periodicals like *March of the Nation* and *Encounter*. Both his thought and action was best seen during his work in Godhara, his parliamentary constituency in the Panch Mahal district of Gujarat. A significant portion of his voters were scheduled tribes or advasis who lived

below the poverty line and worked as daily labourers either in building or road construction. His constituency was a place where communal harmony was disrupted from time to time. However, just as sugar mixes with milk, Piloo was at one with his voters. His plea to have democracy with bread may well have been the result of his intimate connection with *adivasi* voters.

In his public life, he fought tooth and nail against all socialist measures of the Indian government and warned people about the inevitable growth of fascist tendencies as a consequence of socialism. He was probably the only person who continued to oppose Indira Gandhi during her second reign (1980-84), when all others who opposed her during the Emergency either preferred to remain silent, or joined her party.

Piloo was even more disgusted with his own Janata Party during his last days. His close friend and colleague, the late Madhu Mehta, wrote:

On 24 January, 1983 (five days before his death), I met him for the last time at his home in Delhi. His last words to me were: "India has survived many tyrants in the past. India will also survive Indira Gandhi and the present motley crowd in the Opposition. We must not despair, we must continue to work."¹

Piloo and Swatantra

Piloo joined the Swatantra Party on August 1, 1959 at the time of its first convention held in Bombay, inaugurated by Rajaji. He remained with the Party until it merged with Bhartiya Kranti Dal, to be a new party known as Bhartiya Lok Dal in 1974. At the time of the merger he was the national President of the Swatantra Party and was mainly responsible for its merger. Piloo wanted to create a national alternative to the Congress Party by merging as many opposition parties as possible, except for the communist parties. Piloo's political life was therefore intimately connected with the ups and downs of the Swatantra Party as well as the Bhartiya Lok Dal and the Janata Party created in 1977.

Soon after independence, the Indian National Congress Party gave up the Gandhian path. The efforts to take the Party on the socialist pattern were visible after the death of Sardar Patel in 1950 and especially at the Avadhi Congress in 1953-54, where the Party accepted the objective of a socialist pattern of society for India where the state would occupy the commanding heights of the economy. These socialist expressions were actually put in action on a significant scale when the framework for the second five-year plan was prepared and the policy was implemented soon thereafter. By 1958, it was clear that Pandit Nehru wanted to lead the country on the Russian model of planning which contained most of the elements of communism. Pandit Nehru's efforts to bring the Chinese type of cooperative farming and introduction of state trading in foodgrains were like the last straw on the camel's back. This convinced many people who

believed that the days of liberalism were numbered if the same policy continued any longer. Hence they felt a need of a new party as a liberal alternative to the Congress Party. These sentiments were first voiced during the public meetings held in the Indian Merchants Chamber in Bombay in 1959. Three leaders—great sons of India: Rajaji, Jayprakash Narayan, and Minoo Masani, declared their intention to start a new party to serve as a liberal alternative to the Congress Party. The response to their call was very enthusiastic – especially from merchants and enlightened farmers, which ultimately led the rich people, especially industrialists and Indian Princes, to join the new party. Rajaji expressed in that historic meeting that the Congress Party was no longer a Gandhian party. It had left the path of *dharma*, which Gandhiji wanted to bring in politics and he warned that the country would be ruined if we did not return to the Gandhian path. JP pleaded with the audience to listen and follow Rajaji, as he was the conscience-keeper of Gandhiji, and Masani was highly critical of planning and the economic policy which the Congress had adopted by that time.

Soon after the meeting various people expressed their desire to join the new party; among them Sir Homi Mody, A D Shroff, and K M Munshi from Bombay; Prof N G Ranga—the well-known farmer leader from Andhra Pradesh; and Bhailal bhai “Bhaikaka” Patel from Gujarat. Very soon various princes, the Maharaja of Baria from Gujarat, P K Deo and R N Singh Deo from Orissa, Maharani Gayatri Devi from Jaipur, and the Maharaval of Dungarpur from Rajasthan too joined the new party. Farmer leaders from Punjab and Bihar also wanted to join. The response was very encouraging – though there were some voices from minority communities praying to work with the Congress and improving it from within rather than attacking it by forming a new party. But Rajaji, Professor Ranga and Masani, who were in favour of liberalism were so disturbed with the Russian type of planning that very soon they decided to hold the first provisional convention in Bombay on August 1, 1959 – when Rajaji performed the birth ceremony of the Swatantra Party. Piloo, as a founder member, was entrusted with looking after the organization of the convention.

It is interesting to note how Piloo looked like at that time. His intimate friend in political life, Madhu Mehta, describes him when he met him for the first time, a few days before the inauguration of the first convention. He said, “Piloo was very fat, dressed in one of those colourful, sporty-looking half-sleeved bush shirts, wearing a large antique ring and with a cigar in his hand... I found him to be very pleasant and jovial.”

The Bombay fiasco

In the initial period after joining the Swatantra Party, it was difficult for Piloo to express his thoughts in Gujarati, Marathi or Hindi – the languages of the common man in Bombay. One could speak in English only to a select audience. It became almost like hell for Piloo to address public meetings. All his colleagues

in Bombay had the same problem – they did not know Gujarati, Marathi, or Hindi well enough. This lack of fluency in the local languages led to an important Swatantra Party meeting organized by Piloo ending in a fiasco.

In 1960, in Bombay, a high powered committee was formed of which Masani was President, Navin Mopura, general secretary, and B K Mistry, joint secretary. Madhu Mehta worked as a paid executive secretary. Both the general secretary and the joint secretary were new to politics and did not have any idea as to how a political party was organized. Navin Mopura was a businessman and Mistry was a middle-class, old-fashioned Parsi, having no idea of political, social or economic problems of the country. Both of them were well meaning individuals but were not cut out to work amongst the masses.

Piloo along with Mopura, Mistry and Mehta decided to organize a meeting at Mohammed Ali Road (a largely Muslim populated area) in Bombay. In order to finalize the venue, time, and other details, Piloo and Madhu Mehta went to Mohammed Ali Road one evening in Piloo's Cadillac. It was the month of Ramzaan and the area was well decorated by lights with various food stalls dotting the road. They parked their car in a side lane and came out to the main road. It was quite a sight. People had seen Piloo getting out of his Cadillac. He was wearing a red and blue bush shirt and was smoking a cigarette. Children trailed him thinking he was some rich fellow come to eat special Ramzaan food. It was quite a procession – Madhu Mehta in the front, followed by Piloo Mody, in turn followed by children pestering him to give some money. Piloo spoke to them in his Parsi-Gujarati-cum-Hindi while the children replied in Urdu – with neither understanding the other. Ultimately some people in the area agreed to organize a meeting if a sum of Rs 5,000 was paid, with an advance of Rs 1,500. Piloo immediately paid the advance. The time of the meeting was fixed a week later at 9:15 p.m, after *Namaaz*, and the Maulana of the area was to preside over the meeting. The speakers from the party were Piloo Mody, Navin Mopura and B K Mistry. Madhu Mehta, the only one who could have spoken in a language which public would have understood, was deliberately excluded, as he was a *paid* secretary.

Piloo arrived for the meeting in his usual attire of a fancy bush shirt, accompanied by Mopura and Mistry. Mistry was wearing a white cotton suit, a parrot green cotton shirt and a red tie with a Sola topee in his hand. Piloo told Madhu Mehta that he had just come to see the "fun;" he was not going to speak and make a fool of himself. Meanwhile, B K Mistry started inspecting everything. It was 9.00 p.m. and there was no sign of either the Maulana or other Muslim speakers. There was a dirty looking jute carpet in front of the stage. Street children had occupied it and some of them were playing on the stage as well, jumping on the eight chairs that were kept there. B K Mistry admonished Mehta about the arrangements, asking him, "Where is your great Maulana and where is the audience?" Madhu Mehta told him that the Namaaz was still going on and that the Maulana would come only after it was over. But Mistry would not

believe that. One of Mehta's Bohri workers, a small shopkeeper, got slightly angry and told Mistry, "*Bawaji tum jara chup raho. Sab kuch theek ho jayega.*" (Bawaji,² everything will turn out well. You just keep quiet). Mistry went red in the face and said in English, "We must really be more disciplined." In the meanwhile, the Maulana came accompanied by about 20 to 30 immaculately dressed people and sat on the stage. They escorted B K Mistry, Pилоo Mody and Navin Mopura onto the stage and introduced them as the leaders of the new party started by great men like Rajaji and Minoo Masani.

The meeting began with the Maulana's two assistants reciting verses from the Holy Koran. In the beginning there was then an audience of about 50 to 60. As soon as the first speaker started to speak, more people came out from where they were sitting in some shops. By the time the Maulana began to speak, there was a respectable audience of about 150 to 200 people. The Maulana's speech lasted for over forty minutes by which time there were 300 people gathered there. Before the Maulana ended, Mopura called Mehta discreetly and told him that he would not speak; he would rather let B K speak and Pилоo if he wanted to. He further said that Mehta must also speak. Somehow B K overheard what Mopura was saying and remarked immediately that a paid secretary should not be made to speak. While Mopura and Mistry were arguing, the Maulana ended his speech and called on B K Mistry to speak.

Mistry got up, carefully kept his Sola topee on his chair, and started tightening the knot of his tie. What he said was something like this: "*Dekho, hum Hindi me baat bolega. Aisa bolega ke tum bilkul samaj jayega.*" (Look, I will speak in Hindi and I will speak in such a way that you will understand it very well). He said, "*Hum ekdum point par aa jayenge aur tum sablok ko samajayanga ke Swatantra Party kya hai. Wo kyon banaya aur wo kya karega.*" (I will come to the point at once. I will make you understand what the Swatantra Party is, why it was formed, and what it will do). "*Abhi tum hamara baat suno...*" (Now you hear me). At that time, some people were shouting: "*Bawaji, Bawaji, ab tum bola; abhi yeh mota Pилоo saab ko bolne do*" (we have heard you enough, now let us hear fat Pилоo Mody). At that time the children in the front started shouting "*Bawaji Bawaji, Pилоo ko bulao, Pилоo ko bulao*" (Bawaji, call Pилоo to speak). B K got angry. He went red in the face and continued, "*Dekho, ek minute me sab kuch bol denge. Tum jara discipline rakho baba, yeh bache log ko chup rakhne ko bolni. Ab hum bhi tumare jaisa kadka hai. Dekho, humara yeh coat ne bhi thingra hai. Hum paisawala aadmi nahi hai.*" (See, in one minute I will speak everything; you should keep some discipline, ask these children to keep quiet. We are also like you – pennyless, and poor; see my coat is full of rags and stitches; we are not rich people). "*Ab Swatantra kya hai yeh suno. Chup karo aur burobar suno. Samjo ke ek bada tekri hai. Tekri par ek bada gadi hai. Wo gadi me sab Indian public bethela hai. Driver ka naam hai Pandit Nehru. Fir gadi dhire, dhire lapasna chalu karta*

hai aur fir thodi der ke bad bahut speed pakadta hai aur bethela public khoob jorse bum padta hai—'Hai, bachao, bachao, hum mar jayega.' Oos wahkat Rajaji peeche se aata hai aur jor se break marta hai aur gadi ahista ahista stop hota hai, gadi ko dhakka lagta hai, magar gadi bandh ho gaya aur public bach gaya. Samja tum lok? Yeh Congress Party ka gadi ko break kaun laga sakta—khali Swatantra ka Rajaji. Bolo Rajaji... (no response). Bolo Rajaji zindabad.” (Now hear me, I tell you what Swatantra Party is. Keep quiet and hear attentively. Now imagine there is a big hill, on the hill there is a big bus. In this bus—all Indian people are sitting. The name of the driver is Pandit Nehru. He makes the bus move slowly but after some time the bus begins to move very fast sliding down the hill—people sitting in the bus shouting loudly “save us, save us, or else we would die”. At that time Rajaji comes from behind and suddenly he stops the bus—although there were several jerks, the bus stops and all the Indians are saved. Do you understand? This Congerss Party can only be stopped by Rajaji of the Swatantra Party – therefore shout “Rajaji”... Shout “Long Live Rajaji”).

While B K was speaking, Piloo kept whispering in Mehta's ears, “What the hell is he saying? Is he making a fool of himself?” Piloo and all others were stunned by the manner in which B K explained the Swatantra Party. It was very difficult to keep a serious face when the entire audience was laughing, whistling and clapping. B K, of course, was very much impressed with his performance. The meeting was finished and Mopura came where Piloo was standing and told Piloo, “Why do we have to send fools like him to speak? He made an ass of himself.” In the meanwhile, B K came closer and with a triumphant look, told all, “Well, this is a good beginning. See how easy it is to explain our party to these people. We must have confidence. Next time, we will have a larger audience.” To this, Piloo turned around and said, “Yes, larger audience indeed, but without you.” B K was left speechless.

Piloo fights and loses an election in Bombay

When the 1962 General Elections were announced, the Swatantra Party's Bombay unit executive committee met to discuss whether they should put up any candidates for the State Assembly from Bombay. The party had just begun working in the city and there were very few constituencies in Bombay where they had the minimum number of active workers required to help the candidate win the election. Even in constituencies where they had enrolled over four to five hundred members, only twenty or thirty could be depended upon to work full time at least for one or two weeks before the election date. The Committee was keen that a beginning be made by putting up a candidate known in the area, who could be depended upon a large number of people to canvass for him regularly at the time of elections. All of them unanimously agreed that the Malabar Hill constituency was the ideal constituency for them and the best candidate would be Piloo Mody who had a large number of friends in the

constituency with their own contacts. They estimated that in the Malabar Hill area, Piloo would be unbeatable and they had to make sure that he would lead in the area with a large margin as to offset the lack of support in the weaker sub-areas such as Opera House, Khetwadi, and Sandhurst Road where a major chunk of voters were concentrated.

Piloo called a meeting of some of his close friends and party colleagues in his office. A twenty-member committee was formed. They went to work methodically printing posters, making banners to be put at right locations, badges for workers, party flags, finishing touches to Piloo's own manifesto, etc. and a small committee was also appointed to collect campaign funds. They divided the constituency into different areas and put each area under an Area-in-Charge who, in turn, appointed people living in the area. Each one would be in charge of one election booth, and his responsibility would be to recruit at least 10 to 20 workers in that area to canvass to a thousand odd voters. Everything went smoothly. The main bottleneck came when they had to select a person to look after the weakest and trickiest area in the constituency—the Khetwadi area, with its red light district. They did not have anybody in mind who could be trusted to look after this area. Various names were suggested and rejected, as most of them were either untrustworthy or unreliable. Ultimately, two weeks before the election date, the campaign committee members and Piloo himself decided to ask Madhu Mehta to take charge. Mehta told them that he would not be of much help because he had never organized an election in this kind of area and his contacts were limited to some members of his own community of Kapol Baniyas who lived in the chawls of Khetwadi.

After a week of contacting people in the area, it was possible to get at least six reliable college-going young men with political convictions and admiration for the Swatantra Party. They confessed their inability to deliver votes in any large number but they were able to meet the right kind of people. As the D-day was approaching, reports about the support given to Piloo began to appear among the political supporters of Congress. The Congress candidate was Maniben Desai, the widow of a former Congress corporator. That was her only qualification. She could not make any impact as she could not speak coherently, and before Piloo, she was just dumbstruck. S.K Patil, the powerful all-India treasurer of the Congress, had given her enough money to fight the election as her Assembly constituency came within his own Lok Sabha constituency of South Bombay. Suddenly the Congress campaign became very aggressive. Thousands of posters and hundreds of banners were put up everywhere. There were *qawwali* programmes in every other by-lane of Khetwadi. Prostitutes in the red-light areas were sporting Congress badges. Under these circumstances, Piloo was advised to take out a procession and pass through the red-light areas. That turned out to be a real disaster. There was a lot of excitement when Piloo took out his procession in the red-light areas in his open Cadillac. But snide remarks and obscene gestures greeted Piloo's procession all the way. It was a nightmarish experience.

After all this a young doctor from the red-light area approached Piloo and offered to help. All the madams and pimps were his patients. He arranged a meeting for Piloo with some ladies whom he described as the leading madams of the area. It was in a courtyard behind a restaurant. There were about 10 to 12 tough looking women wearing garish dresses and sarees, with about four to five dalals (pimps), gathered to listen to Piloo about the Swatantra Party. After five to ten minutes one of the madams had a nasty bout of coughing. She sent for a bottle of soda and gargled very loudly and while she was doing that she used her hands to signal to all the others to sit down. She came to the point immediately and said, *“Yeh sab kuch thik hai. Abhi bolo kya denge aap log. Sauda ka baat karo, dusara baat mat karo.”* (All this is okay... Now just tell me how much you people are really willing to give. Let us have a deal. All other talk is unnecessary). Piloo turned to his doctor friend who got up and smiled at them and told them that he would settle everything. He took Piloo aside and said, “I will talk to them and let you know.” The doctor friend then was reminded that not a single paisa should be spent in bribing goondas and crooks. He said not to worry.

Next morning this doctor friend said that he has settled everything for Rs 6000. It would be required for the expenses during the last few days – tables, chairs, tea, snacks, lunches, dinners, and other miscellaneous expenditure. Payment was made. However, on the day of the election there was no sign of the doctor or his friends. The chairs and tables were set up but they were occupied by Congress workers (the same dalals) and the Swatantra Party was taken for a ride.

Piloo took a lead of over 12,000 votes from the Malabar Hill area, but was trounced in Khetwadi area where the Congress candidate led by over 20,000 votes. Piloo lost ultimately by a margin of about 14,000 votes.

While the counting of votes was going on, Bachubhai Khadiwala, a veteran Congress worker of Khetwadi came up to Madhu Mehta and said politely, “Madhubhai, you are all very good and intelligent people from good families. But you should not be in politics. This is not your cup of tea or else how can this dumb woman defeat a person like Piloo Mody? It’s because there are people like me with her. We know all the tricks of the trade.” Piloo then asked him whether he knew their doctor friend. He said, “Shall I tell you the truth? This doctor was our man. I had asked him to go to you. Now, do not get angry with him. He needed money very badly and I helped him. I know its all wrong—but then this is politics. You have to learn a lot. The days of Mahatma Gandhi have gone. Our leader is now Patil Sahib.”

When Piloo was contacted thereafter at his home, he was fed-up. “Enough of Bombay. Gujarat will provide me with the right kind of constituency. Please think of it.” He proved to be right in the years to come.

Success in Gujarat

The Swatantra Party had mixed fortunes at the outset. It was well received in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Orissa. It could not do much in the cities or metropolitan areas like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, and Ahmedabad. How could the so-called leaders of Swatantra Party in Bombay even address any public meeting? This fact came out strongly during the Bombay episode. People enthusiastic about the new party did not know Gujarati, Marathi or Hindi, languages understood by the man in the street, and were of no help in spreading the message of liberalism. Also, in Bombay, some people who joined the new party as workers were not interested in training camps or in the ideology of the party; they were just interested in taking advantage of the party. Though they were capable enough to work as polling agents or distributors of publicity material—they could even dabble in booth capturing and stamping of bogus votes and would ask for money to do such work. Some of those who joined the party for grabbing money began to quit the moment they found that some of its leaders were value-based politicians.

The experience elsewhere in Gujarat and Bihar was more encouraging. Enlightened farmer leaders joined the party and were in charge of its organization. Those who were in the Congress and were really tired of its policy and method of working, left it and joined the Swatantra Party. In Gujarat it had a good start, as both the leaders, Bhaikaka and the Maharaja of Baria, were also leaders of their community. Bhaikaka was a retired civil servant. During the British era he was an executive engineer and had worked on the Shakar Barrage in Sindh as well as the conception of what is today the Sardar Sarovar Dam. He commanded the confidence of Patidar community who were mainly farmers or merchants. The Maharaja of Baria was influential with the Khatriyas which had mainly princes and agriculturists. Both the communities, if put together, would constitute a majority in Gujarat. At the same time, Gujarat had no extreme leftist elements, in a way the Congress represented the leftist side of public opinion, and hence Swatantra Party could flourish immediately as an alternative. Bhaikaka commanded the confidence of rural masses and the Swatantra Party won 26 seats out of 168 in the Gujarat Assembly at its first election attempt in 1962. This impressed Piloo and he thought it right to shift to Gujarat after his disastrous Bombay experience. He chose the Godhara Lok Sabha constituency to contest in 1967. He also decided to change his lifestyle to match the election ethos. He changed his dress to a pure white khadi kurta pyajama stitched in such a way that his corpulence could be concealed. Piloo was no longer a colourful young man from the West, he was now like an ordinary Indian. He also began to polish his fluency in Gujarati. By the time he came to Godhara to contest the election, he was a changed man. Although he could not completely hide his old moorings, he had made a commendable beginning in his metamorphosis.

At Godhara his main support was Jaideep Singh, the Maharaja of Baria, who was a prince with a difference. He had good contact with the people. He was very shrewd and politically insightful and at the same time he was well

educated – he was a genius at state level politics. He was mainly interested in Gujarat politics and wielded a great deal of influence in Panch Mahal district where Godhara is situated. He could command respect in Khatriyas and Scheduled tribes who constituted the main population of Panch Mahal district. He could easily win a Lok Sabha seat from Godhara, but as he was interested in state politics, he supported Piloo instead. Thus Piloo had an excellent start in his quest to enter Parliament from Gujarat.

In the 1967 general elections, the Congress was considerably weak. Jawaharlal Nehru had died in 1964 and his successor Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1966. Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi had not yet acquired her charismatic style. The Congress leader in Gujarat, Morarji Desai (who became Prime Minister of India from 1977-79) was losing his popularity among the people due to his policies of prohibition and gold control. The pressure due to increasing defense expenditure after two wars with China and Pakistan, along with wasteful expenditure on public sector, had put a burden on the Indian economy. The masses were greatly dissatisfied and were looking for an alternative to Congress. It was an inviting climate for the Swatantra Party in Gujarat. With the lifestyle change and the solid support of the Maharaja of Baria, Piloo had an excellent start in Godhara constituency in 1967. I remember having addressed a huge public meeting in Godhara during his election campaign. An audience of about 25,000 heard me with rapt attention and I found a good deal of enthusiasm among people to elect Piloo. He won the election hands down and entered the fourth Lok Sabha with all the fanfare of a triumphant hero.

The Swatantra Party was at its zenith in 1967. It won 44 seats in the Lok Sabha. There was a Swatantra Government in Orissa; it was the main opposition in Gujarat and Rajasthan and a sizeable number of members in the assemblies of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It gained a foothold in Uttar Pradesh. One could notice that the Swatantra Party had support in the rural areas from small merchants and progressive farmers. Moreover, in the beginning its leaders were also from the same groups, although most of the people who were elected were either big industrialists or princes of the erstwhile states or retired civil servants. Soon after 1968, the Swatantra Party tried to remove the facade of keeping common men in the front and the leadership was changed. Prof N G Ranga was replaced by Minoos Masani as President of Central Party. In Gujarat, Bhaikaka was replaced by H M Patel, a leading ICS officer during British times who had played a part in the asset division between India and Pakistan during partition. The Party could no longer command the confidence of the rural masses and bickering started everywhere, in the central organization as well as in the state units.

By 1970, the Gujarat unit was totally broken. Bhaikaka had died; the Maharaja of Baria was expelled and in turn joined the Congress (O). Most of legislators left the Party and joined one of the units of the split-up Congress, the Congress (O) or Congress (I). In 1971, when elections were announced, the

Swatantra Party was not in a position to face the election alone. It had to forge a Grand Alliance with the Congress (O), the Jan Sangh and socialist parties, ending up as part of a hotchpotch of various parties with differences in outlook and ideologies. At first the Grand Alliance had three major opposition parties, the Congress (O), Swatantra Party, and the Jan Sangh. The Swatantra Party disagreed with the Congress (O) on matters of economic policy while it disagreed with the Jan Sangh in areas of secularism or in regard to its general political stance. It was really a tough task to forge that alliance. On top of that, at the last moment the Socialist Party was admitted in the alliance, which made the position of the Swatantra Party even worse. Since the Party was on a decline and Congress (I) of Indira Gandhi was in full swing, there was no other alternative for the party but to remain in the *khichdi* of the Grand Alliance. The result was in the 1971 Lok Sabha election, its tally in the Lok Sabha came down from 44 seats to 8. Masani, its national president, was badly defeated from Rajkot.

Despite such adverse circumstances, Piloo's position was relatively favourable. Although the Maharaja of Baria was no longer in the Swatantra Party, his Congress (O) Party was in power in Gujarat was also a constituent party of the Grand Alliance. Hence Piloo enjoyed the support of the Maharaja of Baria. Since the party in power in Gujarat was in Piloo's favour, there was no difficulty from the state organization. Piloo had by now earned a name in Parliament and also had cultivated a very intimate relationship with his voters. Piloo's appeal to adivasi voters, to keep him as they keep their *hansadi* (necklace) – close to their heart, used to go down very well in winning their confidence. He was also very popular among the Muslims. Although they never supported him with their votes, they never acted against him with venom and animosity. Piloo won easily in 1971 while elsewhere opposition parties were brutally defeated by Indira Gandhi's Congress (I) and her slogan of "*Garibi hatao*" (Remove poverty). Almost all the have-nots, schedule castes, schedule tribes, Muslim and other backward caste people along with lower middle-classes were on Congress (I)'s side. Piloo's favourable position against all odds probably was to some extent because the 1971 elections were not a joint election of Parliament and assemblies.

After the disaster of 1971, the Swatantra Party was entrusted to Piloo who became its national president in 1972. Piloo tried his best to save the Party, but failed. The Party had a very poor performance in the 1972 assembly elections. In Gujarat not a single seat was won. In Parliament, out of the 8 members 3 members shifted to Indira's Congress (I) as a result of her spectacular victory in 1972. Again when assembly elections were conducted in Uttar Pradesh in 1973, Piloo put 112 candidates but almost all lost their deposits. In Uttar Pradesh, the Congress could form a government by polling only 32% of votes while all the opposition parties with 68% of votes could not obtain a majority of seats. Ultimately Piloo decided to merge the Swatantra Party with Charan Singh's Bhartiya Kranti Dal to make it the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) of which he was

chosen as General Secretary in 1974. Later on in 1977, the BLD merged with the Janata Party in which Piloo remained till he died in 1983, incessantly fighting against the factionalism, which flourished in the Janata Party.

Piloo faced an awkward situation in the 1977 election. He was by this time a great leader; he had a charismatic image; his public meetings used to be huge and lively. He was in demand everywhere in Gujarat, but unfortunately this time the Maharaja of Baria was not with him; in fact he was against him and hence it was difficult for Piloo to obtain a good support from Khatriyas and adivasi voters. Patidar voters were divided between the Congress and Janata Party and Muslims who were well inclined to Piloo could not support him in the election since the Jan Sangh was a constituent of the Janata Party. As Piloo was asked to help all over Gujarat he could not spend sufficient time for his own constituency. Moreover, Congress had put up Hitendra Desai, a popular ex-Chief Minister against him. All these factors resulted in defeat for Piloo by a narrow margin of 1,200 votes. Although the Janata Party came to power in Delhi, Piloo was no longer a Member of Parliament.

As soon as the Janata Party came to power, it immediately plunged into internal feuds. Piloo's candidature for any bye-elections was caught up in the internal squabbles of the Janata Party. During 1977, two important bye-elections for the Lok Sabha came up in Gujarat and Haryana. For both his name was suggested but could not be accepted by the Central Parliamentary Board due to the intense factionalism caused by the incomplete merger of the different groups or constituent parties into one political party. Ultimately, Piloo was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat in 1978. And hence he again became the Member of Parliament from 1978 for a term of six years.

Piloo was a Member of Parliament from 1967 till his death in 1983 with a short break of a year in 1977-78. He was so frustrated by the Janata Party that he was almost ready to start a new party for which he continued to work till his death. If he had not died in 1983, he would probably have started his new party in 1984 and started afresh in Indian politics.

Liberalism and the Swatantra Party

It is interesting to note why the Swatantra Party rose so quickly and also fell down so suddenly as if it had never been in existence at all. In fact, it flourished because people who were thoughtful and of good character were in agreement with its policy especially its liberal ideology. It was also a time in Indian politics when people were in search of an alternative to the Congress. There was a void of any alternative non-socialist party. Even though some parties grew up here and there, they were confined to a state level influence based on socialist ideology. Such a void gave an opportunity to the Swatantra Party to come up suddenly as an alternative to non-liberal parties, big or small.

The Swatantra Party vanished suddenly for several reasons. By its nature it was inflexible, it would not make compromises with its ideology. It stood for no particular interest and therefore would not believe in so called tactics, diplomacy, strategies, compromises, etc. which may be necessary on short-term considerations for special interests. Its leaders would not give false promises for short-term advantages and especially not adopt the tactics of bogus voting or bribing voters. They would not adopt any narrower view even for a foreign policy. They would not have caste, colour, regional, or religious considerations. Since their ideology was universal, they would not appeal to any narrow viewpoint, which may have been necessary to build alliances with various opposition parties.

Moreover, from the very beginning it was shaped by Minoo Masani who was in several ways inflexible, to the extent of being obstinate. In the initial period, the Party was mainly supported by rural areas but it could not work for rural interests as required. Although it was meant for an alternative ideology—liberalism or capitalism—its leaders here and there stood for mixed economy; thus instead of making compromises in tactics or strategies they made compromises in ideology for short-term gains. They also did not know that people are not thoughtful enough to understand the full implications and nature of capitalistic pattern of society. Probably they did not concentrate on educating the masses in their ideology.

Probably the lack of short-term strategies or inflexible attitude or value based politics were not harmful to social progress. But, the eagerness to win seats in legislatures and in Parliament without educating masses in liberal ideas was mainly responsible for its sudden downfall. Piloo understood this and later wanted to start a new party with a difference. He was keen to educate the masses. He wanted to recruit people for the organization of the new party who could teach liberal education. He wanted his political workers to be both thoughtful and concerned—of high character, but with his sudden death in 1983 all these ideas could not be fulfilled.

It is worthwhile to note that the Swatantra Party in India faced a unique situation. All other political parties were representing some kind of special interest, or interests; no one stood for all, or for the whole. They were the protectors of some kind of caste, class, religious, regional or ethnic interests. The Swatantra Party didn't stand for any one interest, hence all other parties were hostile to it. The Swatantra Party believed in harmony of interests. Unless it created a powerful group of enlightened citizens, it was difficult for it to stand against the combined onslaught of all other non-liberal parties. In fact a man like Rajaji in his young age could have provided the necessary leadership to create such an enlightened group of citizens. But alas, Rajaji started the Swatantra Party at the fag end of his life and Masani was not meant to provide the leadership, which was necessary against such anti-liberal forces. The Swatantra Party therefore just disappeared. It now awaits the emergence of a young Rajaji in India, because the general political and economic climate is encouraging for a renaissance in liberalism.

Can we then just describe Piloo as a liberal who fought against socialist policies and growth of dictatorship in India? No, Piloo was a liberal of a different hue; for example, there are liberal thinkers who stand for individual freedom and at the same time would like to use the instrument of state to introduce social and economic changes—the so-called democratic socialists or American liberals. Piloo was against this type of liberalism. He was also not in tune with those liberals who mainly believed in certain positive rights or entitlements. In fact Piloo would not go beyond the Constitution. Even for poverty alleviation he did not depend on the state. His idea of democracy with bread didn't go beyond protective rights for human beings.

Piloo was an individualist—first and last; for him individualism was a beginning as well as an end. We find many liberals who maintain neutrality between society and individual, but Piloo did not vacillate in this regard. For him an individual had priority over society, since society or state is no superman, nor can it dominate over an individual. In fact society is one of the social institutions, which is meant to serve the needs of an individual just as light, air, water, and food serve human needs. Thus society or state is an instrument, surely a very important instrument, but it cannot dominate an individual. This is indeed the key to understanding Piloo's liberalism. Very few people in India barring a person like Rajaji understood the real essence of Piloo's individualism.

What then was the nature and content of Piloo's liberalism? How did he see the relationship of the individual with society? In what way are different kinds of freedom related to each other? Piloo's individualism was more or less like that of Edmund Burke or Herbert Spencer, or recently Friedrich Hayek, accepting an evolutionary process of growth along with vision and morality to keep one on the right track. For him the individual is the beginning because man is unique among all species in the world. Man is endowed with reason and capacity to express and communicate and therefore a superior specie—indeed the crowning glory of the universe. Whatever he sees around him is either created by nature or by him but certainly not by an institution howsoever big it may be. Surely society or state cannot create anything by itself.

Because man is a superior specie, he is endowed with certain human rights for which Piloo depended heavily on the American Declaration of Independence which stated: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." These rights are inviolable, because they are born with him; they are inalienable because he cannot part with them. He cannot give them away to anyone else. Piloo would not mind considering them as sacred, God given, divine, natural or inherent. Just as ears, throat and nose are part and parcel of human body, these rights are also attached to human beings.

According to Piloo, man is a bundle of impulses, governed by contradictory pluralist tendencies. He is kind as well as aggressive. He is both a follower as well as a leader. He is nothing if he does not possess a territory. He likes the fulfillment of his inner desires—say for discovery, or to roam around, or to initiate new things, and has acquisitive instincts. He wants to dominate. He wishes to be praised and admired; at the same time, he wishes to associate with his fellow men. In a way he is social and loves his family. He also wants to co-operate, compete and envy. Thus we need a social organization which enables us to suppress the harmful and keep the beneficial traits of human beings. This could be done by preserving fundamental human rights, by which we try to encourage virtues and suppress vices. When the inherent and inviolable rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness are given, it is the suggested way to be safe, secure and prosperous—out of the quagmire of human impulses. According to Piloo, we neither want human beings to be slaves (as they were in the past) nor to be robots (as some expect humans to become in future). Since robots do not live and remain sane, we want a democracy which gives both freedom as well as bread.

Because of his rugged individualism, Piloo was clear about the relationship between the individual and society. According to him, “every human society emerges out of man’s needs, just as every society of bees satisfies the bee’s needs. It is man who creates society. It is man who decided his relationship to his fellows and it is man who will effect change, should his needs demand such a change.” To the argument that man cannot survive without the help of society, Piloo’s reply was that, if society is a necessary adjunct, so are “light, food, water and shelter.” If we accept the suggestion that society consists of a multitude of individuals and hence it has a life of its own, society in that circumstance, lacks uniformity and so it has to act on the basis of consensus or majority for which it has to receive human directions. It is here according to Piloo, that Henry David Thoreau’s state comes to recognize the individual as a “higher and independent power from which all its own power and authority are derived” and treats him accordingly.

There is one more concluding argument given by Piloo in favour of his individualism: evidence suggests that societies can survive if they continue to grow, those which failed to ensure growth were overcome and perished. This growth is possible when individual is free to innovate, invent, discover, create, experiment and constantly increase his stock of knowledge. According to Piloo, “all this suggests considerable scope for free thinking and action, limiting the role of society.”

Piloo knew very well that man is surrounded by nature. He tried to find out about his surroundings. In this search he tried to find out truth and truth is what is known to us, which is scientifically verified and is not hearsay. To find out the truth—to exploit it for one’s own defense or progress, human beings make efforts eternally, constantly and unfettered. It is for this reason, the

individual submits to society by pre-arrangement i.e. by certain rules agreed upon by him earlier and is also influenced by the society of his own creation.

Piloo was aware of the contradiction presented by the nature of man—the superior specie of nature. For his fullest development he requires maximum freedom, at the same time, he cannot function alone; he functions best in a social environment. Thus human actions are interrelated. For Piloo therefore individualism is to be examined in the context of existence of other individuals. This fact is to be considered in two ways: when an individual talks of his freedom, he is required to think of equal freedom of other individuals. So when one talks of freedom, one also has to accept the restrictions on one's own freedom.

The fact of the existence of other individuals has another important implication. Since a human being is dependent on other human beings, he is in a way a social animal. He seeks a relationship with others; this relationship depends on his nature, which is a bundle of impulses and is full of contradictions. He likes to love as well as to hate; he likes to be friendly at the same time is aggressive. He is selfish at the same time likes to be altruistic to others. The rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness should take this fact of human interdependence into account. This interdependence is especially important in civil life where he is required to enter into market relationships for his living and social relationships for family, friendship and cultural development.

Piloo summarizes his view on the relationship between individual and society by saying, “A society is the product of individual actions which take place in a field which turns into a common ground, where the source of all action is the individual, and society the field of such action.”

Conceived in this manner, the idea of equality becomes inevitable in the relationship between the individual and society. Unless equal treatment is assured, individual cannot function in a social environment. Piloo writes: “When it is said that men are created equal, it is not refutation of biology or rejection of anthropology's process of natural selection. It does not presume equality of mind... but it does assert that all men should enjoy the same rights and liberties. In fact rule of law should prevail.”

Piloo was therefore in full agreement, both in word as well as in spirit, when India's Constitution was framed in 1950. As the Preamble says: “We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens:

- ◆ Justice, social, economic and political
- ◆ Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship.
- ◆ Equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of nation.”

Piloo wanted human society to provide maximum economic freedom to all so that they could pursue the work they like. This economic liberty includes the territorial right which tribal societies used to enjoy. This right is attached to the right to the pursuit of happiness. Man never feels happy unless he gets maximum freedom of choice—to act, to move, to think, to experiment, etc. This is being given to him by the right to private property. That is why John Locke allows man to enjoy the fruits of his labour—labour that emanates from his body—which belongs to no one except himself. It is this liberty which can easily be the engine of his growth.

According to Piloo, those who want to attack fundamental rights begin with the right to property because it is easier to show it as exploitative, luxurious, making man lazy, capable of accumulation and creating rural indebtedness. But they forget, as Piloo believes, that property has been considered as an extension of man himself—the Englishman's house is his castle—where he can have a feeling of comfort, safety and security which were available to him when he was in the womb. In fact property is the basis of all other human rights. For example, we have the right to freedom of expression, but without the right to own a printing press or a TV station, that right to freedom of expression is just on paper. In 1978, the 44th amendment of the Indian Constitution removed the Right to Property as a Fundamental Right.

About freedom therefore, Piloo was clear in that it cannot be divided into political, civil, and economic, nor can it be partially given. Indeed there are liberals who maintain that political and civic freedoms should be given fully to all but not economic freedom, which can be curtailed here and there. Piloo opposed this view. On the contrary, he believed that economic liberty and especially the right of property is the basis for all other freedoms. He would not therefore separate right of property from all other fundamental rights.

Therefore, Piloo says that the individual is not only a means to an end, but an end in himself, a reference to Kant's philosophy. All other social institutions are the means to serve human beings. Who the individual has to serve has not been mentioned except in religion where man is supposed to serve God or other human beings but certainly not any social institution as such.

About equality also Piloo had a great deal of clarity. He was aware of human inequalities and differences. He was also aware of the changing pattern of these differences. That is why he depended heavily on obtaining knowledge, creativity, innovation, invention, ambition and aspirations to meet these inequalities and differences in a dynamic world. For this he wanted equality among individuals to provide equal freedom to all, to follow the rules meant for all, to keep the good of others always before one's heart. He was also sure of the fact that if the wealth of the rich is distributed among the poor in order to bring equality, poverty cannot be eliminated, it may probably increase.

Nor can poverty be abolished by giving so-called positive rights: the right to health and the right to satisfy one's own needs. It is futile also to point out a hungry belly to prove a positive right because we cannot create any wealth by providing any such positive rights. But he would certainly ask other well-to-do people to disseminate information among unfortunate people to improve one's own health or increasing one's own knowledge about various opportunities available for obtaining happiness in life. He would therefore, keep education at the very centre of social activities so that its rays play a pivotal role. Societies must provide opportunities for human development and inspire others to take advantage of them. But the poor must rise by his own bootstraps. He must work himself to take advantage of these opportunities. He should know that he has a duty to work if he wants bread.

Of course the poor should not be prevented by any law from getting his work. There should not be anything like a law "guaranteeing minimum wages." Piloo would probably support the state to provide schemes like food for work or employment guarantee scheme or even providing work places where work is being given at the level of subsistence which may be lower than the prevailing wages in the market. He was therefore, against any doles, charity or governmental programmes of poverty alleviation or government managed social security schemes. He wanted human society first to provide maximum economic liberty so that he can pursue the work he likes. It is this liberty which can easily be his engine of growth. At the same time, he wanted all other human beings to show him all sorts of encouragement: hope, expectation, inspiration, aspiration. In this connection, Piloo was fond of giving an example of Charles De Gaulle of France, who brought about a French miracle after the Second World War. He did it by rousing French pride and aspirations. That is why for Piloo the development of individual and increase in knowledge, ability, skill, health, awareness, pride in freedom are important. Indeed development does not rest on doles, charity or subsidy of the government.

Many a time it so happens that different people have the same starting point, but they come to different conclusions. For Hobbes man is essentially bad, while for Rousseau, he is good. For Hegel, the state is almost like God, while for Marx it should wither away. Mahatma Gandhi would view the state as a symbol of coercion and may therefore want to reduce it to a non-entity. Piloo also presented his thinking about the need of a state and its nature, which we may give here in his own words. "The entire idea of having a state, that is an authority which can dispense justice, arbitrate in individual quarrels, or arrest conflicts among people, maintain law and order and protect the rights of individuals, arises out of man's need to live in harmony with his fellow men. That alone is why it is necessary. There is no other need for a state — it is the employee of the people."³

For Piloo, the state seems to be a necessary evil. Although, sometimes he tries to show the state as a positive good, but essentially he supports the idea of a

state, both as a limited and a minimal entity. It should be mainly a protective state, but concerned for the happiness of human society. However, for tackling the problem of poverty he reluctantly suggests that the state may take some other functions besides its protective work. For example, the provision of pure drinking water or eradication of malaria or removal of malnutrition may be taken up by the state. Moreover, it may throw light on several social problems by the dissemination of knowledge. But all this he allowed the state to do just as a pilot project or as a temporary initiative. The state should get away from such functions as early as possible. In fact, Piloo would prefer welfare functions to be organized by voluntary institutions in a civil society. Basically Piloo wanted to minimize the use of force: in fact, the state may help society to organize such functions on a voluntary basis.

Piloo did not want the state to interfere in economic matters. This is so because he believed that the state is necessary because people want to live in harmony. Therefore, the state should enact laws required to secure the fundamental rights of man. The state should not enact legislation based on ideologies. Economic interference is possible only on an ideological ground and hence the state should keep off economic functions.

It should however, be remembered that Piloo was a visionary but not a utopian. He believed in the evolutionary process. He depended very much on custom and tradition but did not want to remain stagnant. He always wanted to be on the move. His morality, ethics of religion, dedication to the good of all humanity provided him the vision. His vision helped to show him the direction in which he should move. It is for this reason that he favoured democracy as a form of governance. For him democracy is not utopia, it is a process—a method of viewing things from the human point of view. Immanuel Kant's words—"Human individuals are ends, do not use them as mere means to your ends"⁴ would express Piloo's views appropriately.

What then is the vision of democracy, which provided him the direction? For Piloo the description of Athenian democracy given by Pericles about 2,400 years ago was his vision. In the words of Pericles:

Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. We do not copy our neighbours, but we are an example to them. It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of many and not of the few. But while the laws secure equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claims of excellence are also recognized; and when the citizen is in any way distinguished, he is referred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as a reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, for a man may benefit his country what ever be the obscurity of his condition. There is no exclusiveness in our public life and in our private intercourse, we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbour, if he does what he likes; we do not put our sour looks at him, which though harmless, are not pleasant. While we are

thus unconstrained in our private intercourse, a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws, having an especial regard to those who are ordained for the protection of the injured, as well as those unwritten laws which bring upon the transgressor of them the reprobation of the general sentiment. Remember that the prosperity can be only for the free, and that freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.⁵

Neither Thomas Jefferson, nor founding fathers of the Indian Constitution, nor writers of the Magna Carta or the Bill of Rights, nor even thinkers of the French and American revolutions, can improve upon the vision given by Pericles. Piloo had that vision before him, which used to guide him in his political activities.

According to Piloo, human experience so far has suggested that democracy, among all other forms of governance, is the best. But it is not necessarily the best governance. The process of evolution of democracy is long and arduous. It is the result of so many forces: the revolt against tyranny, the desire to share power, the safety implied by the doctrine of advise and consent, the need to delegate authority and facilitate administration through representation. The necessity to stabilize institutions which grew out of this yearning, for security of life and property inherent in a society based on rule of law rather than on the whims of individuals, and a desire to satisfy the urge for human dignity and well-being.

But we should remember that in democracy, we have one dilemma, which should be solved if democracy has to work. Democracy works through participation of people—hence it has to go to as many people as possible—in short, it works from below. But the government works from above. That is, the power acts by centralization. It is wielded by a few and it always moves up towards apex. In a democratic government—one force leads downwards while the other leads upwards. This dilemma is solved by giving fundamental rights to individuals and limiting power to the state.

The real problem attached to all democracies is therefore how to protect those fundamental human rights. One can answer this question by saying that democracy should be kept awake and vibrant. Piloo suggests that one can do so constitutionally. We can mention these rights as our basic rights that are justifiable, which cannot be changed, altered, tampered by Parliament or even by amending the Constitution. Secondly, we can limit the functions of government as done in the concept of limited government, or minimal state. Thirdly, we can make the “poverty sector,” “productive,” so that the working of democracy can be smooth. Besides we can put our educational system in the centre of all social activities so that we can make the democracy enlightened. Piloo would provide for a two party system, cultivate basic morality and attitude

of people, and introduce a system of checks and balances between various wings of the state.

To make a success of democracy, according to Piloo man's heart has to be in its right place, i.e. there should be a certain morality established in society, which brings out certain qualities, either through education or through the family. These qualities are: "a feeling for beauty, an affinity with an environment, a love of the soil, basic morality, ethics of religion, initiative, integrity, character, and fair-mindedness." All these will enhance the value of democracy.

For Piloo, democracy is based "on an original belief that the people are sovereign and the origin of power lies with the people. This is the only moral justification of any free society." It is because of this morality, Piloo believed that the fundamental rights we enjoy "are subject to none, not even to the elected representatives." That is why India's parliament or any country's parliament is not sovereign, because the parliament is created by the people and people can not delegate their sovereignty to anybody else. Thus by keeping sovereignty, which is the origin of power, people maintain their inviolable and inalienable fundamental rights.

Here Piloo seems to be absolutely right. If anybody else, except the people, is allowed to take away these fundamental rights, what prevents anybody else to usurp those rights and be a dictator? It is for this reason that he opposed Nath Pai's bill amending Constitution of India with a view to give supremacy to Parliament. Moreover, Piloo could see the seeds of dictatorship when Indira Gandhi argued that the "Prime Minister has the right to function independently of and unhindered by the party."⁶

It is this concern for individual freedom for which he was against the tendency to domination, aggression, and dictatorship. Human beings have these tendencies and if his inalienable rights are to be preserved they should see that the human nature for aggression should be curbed: that is only possible by forming a state. According to Piloo, we find that man has to fight against this tendency for domination through means such as the Magna Carta signed in 1215, by the Bill of Rights or by the American and French revolutions and even from struggles for independence of various countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Piloo was totally in favour of the market process as against the planning process. His opposition to planning is seen when he writes: "It is a cardinal principle and an eternal truth that wealth can never be generated from the corridors of secretariats, nor does it come from the ambitious hearts of bureaucrats or the greedy minds of politicians: it is produced only from that part of market place that is genuinely free."⁷ Further in his speech in the Lok Sabha, he said: "It is human aspirations that must build human society not these niggardly planning processes."

According to Piloo, the planning processes create a mentality of creating obstacles. While speaking on the Foreign Exchange Regulation bill, he said: "I have not understood what they (the planners) want. They do not want to work; they do not want to trade; they do not want to invest; they do not want to produce. They only want to eat. How long can they continue like this? It is the mentality of a frog in a well or an ostrich with his head in the sand."

Piloo's preference for capitalism and market economy is seen when he writes in *March of the Nation* on April 2, 1966: "Individuals can guard their interests far better than the government can, and their combined efforts on their own behalf must inevitably produce a more prosperous and more contended nation. Competition, consumer preference, the benefits of individual enterprise—all these better the lot of the common man."

One of Piloo's arguments against state socialism was that it breeds corruption on a large scale, particularly among politicians in power, higher-up bureaucrats, and big industrialists and businessmen. That is why he would say that India's ruling elite suffered from an acute case of schizophrenia. In September, 1972, when he spoke in Parliament on the frauds within the Food Corporation of India, he mentioned that in order to remove corruption the chairman of the corporation moved in the direction of centralization with a view to taking over all the powers in the hands of the chairman and then he began to adopt corruption without being noticed. "In the case of mustard oil, three unknown unregistered people were allowed to submit tenders for a quality of mustard oil, which does not exist; they call it Agmark 3. The market knows about Agmark 1 and Agmark 2 only, but this tender was for Agmark 3, and the tender was for Rs 10 per kg. more than the market prices of the known qualities." It was the same story in sugar also. Regarding the movements of foodgrains which took place without any valid reason, the chairman paid Rs 48 per bag, when normally Rs 12 per bag is to be paid and the tender was given to an unknown company. During this speech, Piloo pointed out a fact about paddy that the current rate for selling one quintal of paddy was 81 paise while the chairman paid Rs 2.25 per quintal—about three times more than the normal rate.

Again we find his scathing attack on the Antulay affair in *Onlooker*.⁸ About Antulay he writes: "When a chief minister openly tells a representative group of Congress (I) MPs that he had collected funds in Bombay in the interest of Congress (I), and during that collection certain amounts were collected from builders, contractors, industrialists and businessmen in Bombay for certain favours shown to them by the state government, and the amount passed on to the MPCC (I) president Gulabrao Patil for party work; It becomes the height of brazenness even for the so-called new values of today." The connection of this type of corruption with fascism was clearly shown by him when he remarked on Antulay affairs: "I do not think that the 'new values' of Indira Gandhi era confirms to any known system of philosophy other than that found in the pages of *Mein Kampf* and the old familiar chant of 'one people, one country,

one leader’.” Piloo has to say so because Antulay in his defense had said “My loyalty is born out of political philosophy. I am with Indira Gandhi because she stands for secularism, socialism...” but when he adds that “she symbolizes the country and the nation” sycophancy is clearly visible at its highest point.

Piloo also took pleasure in debunking the fake claims of the licence-permit-quota raj. He used to say that socialism really promises “equal sharing of miseries.” He also described corruption as India’s biggest industry. For Jawaharlal Nehru, he said: “In his attitude to every problem, he has always the party before the nation.” Under a caption ‘sing a song of socialism,’ he gave us a song in the *March of the Nation* on his birthday in 1970 in which our apathy towards the west, our docile subjugation to Russia, our follies in public sector, our dependence on Russia in defense materials, have been aptly described. The song describes our socialism and how we are treading towards slavery. Thus the song fully exposes the follies of India’s foreign policy, of nationalization, prevalence of corruption and occurrence of widespread poverty.

Of course, Piloo was full of humour, but his humour was not biting. The classic example is when the then Congress President Shankar Dayal Sharma who later became President of India, branded him as a CIA agent. Piloo put a placard around his neck with “I am a CIA Agent” written on it and moved around the corridors of Parliament House. He also put such a placard in the neck of his dog and used to point out to others how the dog could spy. Very soon people understood not only the hollowness of the accusation, but they began to suspect it as a game of opponents who tried to conceal their own guilt by branding the opponent with the same guilt. Later it was found that CIA never financially helped any political party in the opposition; it had only on two occasions helped the Congress Party which was then in power.

Piloo was universal and not confined to national boundaries. He did not like the barriers of caste, colour, race or nationality created by men between man and man. He had a vision to make this world a happier and healthier place to live in. For this, the following extract from Tagore was his favorite quotation:

Where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high,
 Where knowledge is free,
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by
 narrow domestic walls,
 Where words come out of the depth of truth,
 Where tireless striving stretches its arm towards perfection,
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in the
 dreary desert sands of dead habit.
 Where the mind is led forward by thee, in ever widening
 thought and action,
 Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake.

To conclude, Piloo had no wooliness in his thinking about freedom. For him, the individual is the beginning as well as the end. He has a priority over all other social institutions because man is a unique specie of nature—a crowning being of the universe. For him the individual is an end also because all other things in the universe are meant to meet his needs which means that even state or society is a “service cooperative” and therefore cannot dominate the individual. From this rugged individualism emanates his ideas about freedom. Freedom is indivisible—its division among civil, political and economic freedoms is just for the sake of convenience. In fact, any one of the freedoms cannot survive long without the others. Among these freedoms, economic freedom is the basis for all other freedoms. Human beings can survive for some time without civil or political freedoms, but it is difficult for him to sustain without economic freedom. In the group of economic freedom, right to private property is fundamental for Piloo because he traces the origin of private property with the territorial right of the tribal society. It is this right which gives man the room for choice and it is this right which gives him full scope for his creative instincts and the cravings for acquisition of knowledge without which no society can grow. For Piloo growth is needed for the survival of society.

This concept of freedom viewed in the context of existence of other individuals and inter-dependence among them makes it necessary that this freedom can be enjoyed when equal freedom is given to other, when some rules are observed by all while entering into relation with each others. In order to apply these rules in a just manner, an organisation known as state is necessary and this should be empowered with necessary resources to fulfil its obligations. But the state should always remember that it is meant to serve the people; it is only an instrument, a service cooperative, and therefore, cannot dominate the individual.

Piloo’s unique contribution is that he does not talk of freedom alone—he talks of freedom with bread. But he does not want to provide bread to all by undertaking poverty alleviation programmes as it is being done in today’s developing countries or by welfare measures as it is being done by developed countries. He was also not keen to have doles and charities—private or public. He had a novel suggestion to make. He wanted to make the poverty sector as the productive sector, by removing malnutrition or by inculcating work ethics or by providing opportunities to acquire more knowledge and skill. He did not want to give entitlement rights like the right for health care and the right for minimum wage or minimum income. Instead of such “positive” rights, he imposes a duty on the poor: the duty to work. Probably Piloo had in mind either a provision of work places spread out in the country where people who could not obtain employment may go and ask for work, which would be provided by giving them cash plus food grains at a subsistence level. The work may be of bunding of fields or of wasteland projects, or spinning of Ambercharkha or semi-skilled cottage industries; even growing of tree-rows spread

out in the area or it may be the work of digging the ponds and constructing a well or an approach road similar to employment guarantee scheme. Last but not least, he depended mainly on provision of economic liberty to all. If it is rightly given, it can achieve growth along with percolation of growth down below. The existence of growth without trickling down is evident in socialistic or statist policies. In a liberal economy, all groups of society receive the fruits of growth.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 See *Critique: Selected Works of Pilo Mody*, Foreword p. (x), published by New India Publications, New Delhi, 1984.
- 2 *Bawaji* is a term used for Parsees.
- 3 *Democracy with Bread and Freedom*.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 *Democracy with Bread and Freedom*.
- 6 Critique p. 10. This has been taken from his article "Fuehrer in the making," which appeared in the *March of the Nation* on September 6, 1969.
- 7 *Onlooker* 1-15 January, 1981.
- 8 op cit.
- 9 *Critique*, pp. 66-67, and *Onlooker* September 16-30, 1981.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS OF PILOO MODY

1. Critique: Selected Works of Pilo Mody, New India Publications, New Delhi, 1984
2. Democracy with Bread and Freedom
3. Zulfi my Friend
4. Articles in the *March of the Nation* as chief editor. Besides he gave various speeches in the Parliament from 1967 to 1983

Khasa Subba Rau: Pen in Defence of Freedom

P Vaman Rao

“A lighthouse for his generation, he was a public man, interest in politics was in his blood, and a public posture was a habit with him. He was a gladiator and he leapt into any colloseum with his pen, absolutely certain of the rightness of his cause, impeccably honest in his motive and scrupulous as to means.”

Paul C Sharbert

To describe Khasa Subba Rau only as a veteran journalist is not doing justice to him. For, there were several journalists of eminence in his time. What distinguished him was his participation in the Gandhian movements, his righteous indignation at injustice anywhere, his courage and fearlessness. From the day he was beaten by lathis during the movement for picketing of foreign cloth shops in Madras under the British rule in 1932 when he was given up for dead, his eventful career was marked by his courage of conviction, in his personal, public and professional life. He was then Assistant Editor, *Swarajya*, a nationalist English daily edited by T Prakasam, an idol of the masses.

Khasa underwent imprisonment for about three years during the freedom struggle. Quite early in his life he was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and his teachings, which by far governed his thought and action throughout his life. He was a journalist with a mission who all his life fought against injustice, nepotism and corruption whether in public life, government, or inside the offices of newspapers he served.

Brief life-sketch of Khasa

Born on January 23, 1896 in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, Khasa Subba Rau belonged to a Telugu-speaking middle class family. His father Sundara Raja Rao served as a clerk in the Collector's Office, and his mother was Rama Bai, a beautiful public-spirited lady. She accompanied Khasa in his campaign during the salt satyagraha. The surname "Khasa" made some researchers think that his ancestors might have originally come from Maharashtra.

Subba Rau passed his matriculation from V R High School, Nellore, and graduated in Philosophy from Presidency College, Madras, where he was a student of Dr S Radhakrishnan, who later became President of India. After graduation, he served for a short while as private secretary to the Raja of Amavan, Bihar. Subba Rau passed the Licentiate in Teaching examination from the Arts College, Rajahmundry, and served as a teacher in Atmakur and later as Headmaster of a high school in Kandukur, Nellore district. He ran a night school for adults in front of the high school, attended by about 40 farmers, who were also educated about the happenings in the world around. He joined Prakasam's daily, *Swarajya*, in 1924, working as Assistant Editor and leader writer for 12 years, standing by him till its closure, despite meagre and irregular pay.

The call of the Mahatma drew Khasa Subba Rau, into the non-cooperation movement in 1921. He participated in the salt Satyagraha in 1930, going from village to village in his district, with a band of 15 volunteers of all castes, and was imprisoned.

On February 25, 1932, moved by the police beating of children picketing foreign cloth shops, Khasa joined them. Severely beaten up, he was taken to hospital in an unconscious condition. This incident caused a sensation in Madras and the matter was raised in the House of Commons. The British Government appointed the Lothian Commission to enquire into it and ultimately an order was passed prohibiting the police from using lathis with metal knobs.

Except for a short spell as teacher, and lawyer, Khasa was a writer all his life. After being released from jail, he served for a year in *Indian Finance*, Calcutta. He then joined *Liberty*, a Calcutta daily started by J M Sen Gupta Group including Dr B C Roy and later the *Free Press Journal*, Bombay, under S Sadanand, when his editorial on discriminatory treatment to Indian victims of Quetta earthquake attracted countrywide attention including that of Gandhiji. For some time, he edited *Free Press*, Madras, and joined the *Indian Express* in 1940 where he worked first as Joint Editor with K Santhanam and Pothan Joseph, and later became its Editor.

One day, back in 1921, a village teacher walked into the office of *Swarajya*. It so happened that Prakasam did not have the time to write a leader for that day's issue. Being a friend, Khasa Subba Rau obliged by writing the leading article for the day. Prakasam liked it so much that he told Khasa in

Telugu; "Why are you wasting your time as a village school master? Come and take over as Assistant Editor and from tomorrow you shall write the leading article."

This launched Khasa's journalistic career and Indian journalism acquired one of whom it will always be proud. Khasa wrote with conviction. He never feared or cringed, nor had he any occasion to retract what he wrote.

He was imprisoned during the "Quit India" movement in 1942. Khasa worked in the *Indian Express* till he started his own weekly, *Swatantra*, on February 16, 1946. On an invitation from the British Government, he visited UK in 1950 for six weeks, and USA for three months in 1955, when the American Government invited him.

During the ten years of its existence, *Swatantra* made a mark by its fearless exposition of public causes standing for truth and justice. Financial difficulties and high principles impelled him to give up the paper after ten years. When most of the staff left, he had to begin afresh at the age of 60 even if it were to provide employment to those who had loyally stood by him. On July 14, 1956, he launched *Swarajya*, an English weekly with Rajaji's blessings. With a sparse budget, he continued to run it for three years, when on Rajaji's advice he handed over the management to T Sadasivam, while continuing as life editor. Khasa worked to the last day of his life, his favourite and popular feature, "Sidelights," appearing in the issue of June 17, 1961, while he passed away on June 16, 1961. On his death the comment of *London Times*, that he was an "ascetic among journalists" sums up in a nutshell the man and his mission.

Rajaji christened his weekly as *Swatantra* and wrote the first policy editorial propounding high ideals of freedom and democracy and the role of the press. Khasa always kept this in view and quoted its salient dicta when he crossed swords with Rajaji. Khasa never demurred to castigate his best friends and admirers when public interest was involved. Khasa was Rajaji's critic and admirer, at times the bitterest critic and in his last years his greatest admirer. Rajaji knew the value of Khasa's unbiased criticism.

Unbiased fearless critic

Khasa laid down two basic principles to be followed by him and other journalists:

(1) Never adversely criticize a man against whom you feel in yourself any awareness of dislike, malice or hatred. Try to see the best in him. The right of criticism is not won until all vestiges of prejudice and animosity are first got rid of

(2) Never praise anyone for whom you are conscious of blind personal devotion. Exercise the critical faculty. Bring sentiment within the orbit of discriminating judgement. Then only will praise be well balanced and carry value.

Angered by Khasa's trenchant criticism about his role in dismissing T Prakasam, Chief Minister of the composite Madras State, Rajaji wrote to Khasa on June 22, 1947 to remove his name from the free list and save a copy of *Swatantra*. He was then Minister of Industries and Civil Supplies, Government of India.

Khasa's reply was "I have just received your post card. As I have to respect your wishes, I have arranged for the removal of your name from the free list. It is evident you are angry..."

I have only tried, without counting the cost to myself, to live up to the spirit of the first editorial of *Swatantra* written by you. Let me refresh your memory with a relevant extract: 'to refrain from honest criticism of means employed is disservice to the cause. A fearless critic is a friend. A journal that prefers to flatter or be silent for safety's sake is by no means a friend.'

It is wrong of you to decline to read *Swatantra* if only because you are a member of Government. It is a misfortune of our country that as our leaders rise in power and official status, they become intolerant and resent criticism, exhibiting the very reverse of the true spirit of freedom. For my part, I will always be anxious to worship greatness wherever it is found. As I am a grateful soul greatly indebted to you, it is my prayer that you will soon rise above the petulance of your postcard to me, recover your lost magnanimity and make it possible for me to pay homage to you once again by repairing the ruin you have wrought on the politics and public life of South India."

No leader was beyond Khasa's critical judgment when public interest was involved. His forte was utter fearlessness, objectivity and criticism without malice.

Khasa was first joint Editor and then Editor of *Indian Express* run by the press baron Ramnath Goenka in Madras. There were many occasions when these two strong personalities clashed.

Goenka was upset by an article in Khasa's well-known feature *Sidelights*, which he wrote under his pen name "Saka." Khasa wrote a classic letter to Goenka: "I find you are upset over my last Sidelights. I cannot make out why you should. I have never made any secret of these thoughts and views of mine, and expressed them freely any number of times in previous issues of the paper. In my opinion, it is the free and unfettered thought of the editor, expressed without fear or favour that imparts value to written matter in a paper... You will remember, after Mr Joseph left, you at first offered me (and I resumed) the editorship of the *Indian Express* with a qualification that you should supervise my work. I replied that if you were competent to supervise my work, you were competent to be the editor as well. I wanted the place with absolute freedom and liberty, or not at all, and I accepted it only on my terms.

Subsequently, I have had occasion to tell you, that you were at any time free to ask me to leave even without a day's notice, but while I remained at my post, my view on any matter should prevail over that of anyone else including yourself: This is my conception of what is due to an editor from the owner of newspaper property and it was only on the basis of your agreement with it that I succeeded Mr Joseph as editor. Why should you take it to be a grievance if now I should act in the same way in which I always told you I would? Just because I am leaving the paper it does not follow that I should adopt on the last day a standard different from the one I had always been adopting before.

I have written this letter to you because, after my resignation, you professed friendship for me, and asked me to treat you as a friend, otherwise you would be annoyed. In my view, friendship should not entail any departure from genuinely formed ideas. Anyhow I wanted to part from you pleasantly, but unpleasantness has come in, emphasizing perhaps that all partings are painful."

When Goenka planned to bring out Travancore Maharaja's Birthday number of the *Indian Express* without the Editor's knowledge in 1941, Khasa wrote to Goenka in protest: "I have just come to know, by the merest chance, that you are making arrangements for bringing out a Travancore Maharajah's Birthday number of the *Indian Express*. I could hardly believe it, since it is customary in such cases to consult the Editor and take further steps only after securing his approval. But the authenticity of my source of information being beyond question, I have only to conclude that you have taken the extraordinary course of actually making preparations for the special edition without any reference whatever to me as Editor and indeed without my knowledge.

I resent this treatment; quite apart from that I cannot ever lead myself to converting news and editorial columns in my charge into an advertisement puff for whoever will pay for the boost.

I must therefore ask you to desist from this reported course of yours which is totally inconsistent, even contradictory with the traditions and standards of the *Indian Express*. If you wish to change those traditions and standards, of course you are free to do so, but not with me as your Editor, and I am plainly under a duty to inform you that no such special number can appear with my name as Editor."

More than the editorials and articles, at times it is such exchanges between the persons on issues of public interest that throw light on different aspects of one's personality.

Disillusionment with the Congress government

Influenced by Gandhiji, Khasa was a Congressman at heart and participated in various Gandhian movements responding to his patriotic instincts. It was the Congress, which spearheaded the freedom struggle, with

people at large behind it and was by far the nation's voice till independence. He felt with Gandhiji that Congress, after freedom should have wound up and formed a political party, not trading on its contribution to the freedom struggle, and the heritage of the people as a whole, for its electoral prospects. He was disillusioned with the Congress government in the second year of freedom itself.

In the annual issue of *Swatantra* in 1948, Khasa observed in the editorial, "First Fruits of Freedom" that: "If the high worth of Pandit Nehru's international renown is to be preserved as a national asset, it is necessary that the government of which he is the head should be strong and stable at home.

If Mahatma Gandhi was matchless among leaders in his gift of winning public confidence, the reason for it lay in the philosophy of life which he practiced no less than preached and worked into the texture of his politics. He placed service above Property and Privilege. These standards are now being reversed by those who have stepped into power in the wake of the victory of the Gandhian struggle for freedom. The Ministries at the Centre and in the Provinces generally bear the stamp of such a reversal.

In this context of affairs, the task of the press has become one of extreme difficulty and delicacy. The full vigor of the progressive elements in the Indian Press was exercised in support of Congress leaders during all their years of struggle with British power. But now the content of progressiveness has changed. It has become necessary to criticize the very leaders who in the past provided inspiration for the noblest effort of the nation. Curiously, that section of the press which used to consult its own safety and profit during the British regime by backing it for all it was worth as against the Congress, has now swung into an attitude of vociferous loyalty to the present rulers. It is injuring them now with flattery just as formerly it impeded them with hostility."

Khasa, whose standards of government functioning were idealistic, said in his assessment a year later in the annual number captioned, "From Service to Power," thus:

The British withdrawal precipitated Congress leaders from jails into ministerships. Some of them have stood the change well. Others, by far the larger number, have not. Nehru at the head of the Central Government continues to be the adored of the masses quite as much as in his pre-office days when the bulk of his time was spent in prisons. He exercises on his countrymen a hypnotism that equals, if it has not surpassed the magic hold of the Mahatma. But there is a difference between the leadership of Gandhi and that of Nehru. Discipline was the sheet anchor of the former. It did not tolerate corrupt or rebellious elements intrinsically out of harmony with its central social objective. It kept itself pure by refusing to rely on numbers for mere prestige. There were no internal disloyalties corroding the character of its endeavor, from within. Along with political heirship to the Mahatma, Nehru has inherited many of the

gifts of that great man. But succession to leadership devolved on him in a changed environment that left no scope for the transformation of common people into heroes, which was the unique specialty of Gandhi's influence, but on the other hand he reversed that process by converting heroes into clay. Coming after Gandhi, Nehru had to reckon with the exhaustion of the idealistic urges that had their rise in Gandhian inspiration. Many lieutenants of the Mahatma had tired of the austerities of the Non-cooperation campaigns. Gandhism had been squeezed dry out of them. They were in a mood to cash in on their old sacrifice and to treat the opportunities of political freedom as a means for self-rewarding license. So it came to pass that when Nehru exchanged the role of rebel for that of ruler, discordance in spirit began to manifest itself between leader and lieutenants.

We owe to this discordance the grave contradictions that are daily multiplying between Nehru's past and present. There is no end to the violations of the tenets and pledges of Nehru the non-official thinker and politician in the actions of Nehru the administrator. "

In his 1950 annual number editorial "From Power to Corruption," Khasa bemoaned:

Having passed on from service to power, the Congress, the ruling party in the country, has registered lately a further change towards corruption and disintegration. The popular attitude to the Congress is no longer what it was three years ago. Then there was hope of great things to come. Now there is discontent, disillusionment and the beginning of hatred. The great name of Pandit Nehru, Prime Minister and titular leader of the Congress retains still its magic hold on the millions. But he has ceased to be a figure commanding trust for strength.

Pandit Nehru is thus the prisoner of forces which he is unable to control. They control the Government while he covers them with the glamour of his own great name. This process cannot go on forever, and people have begun to make a distinction between Nehru and the Congress, loving the leader and distrusting the institution. The curious destiny of bolstering up an organization that has served its purpose has devolved on Nehru, and the tragic irony of it lies in the fact that it has foisted on him a reactionary role though he is the very reverse of a reactionary. There is a strange blend of loyalty to the Mahatma in Pandit Nehru's tortured clinging to the Congress, and to it must be attributed his lapse from the supreme summit of leadership where there should be no hesitation to break the mould when the soul has departed from it.

In this set-up, the evils of the Congress regime have been many, and its blessings negligible. It has failed to improve the condition of the people. It has destroyed the efficiency of the first-rate administrative machinery that it inherited. It has replaced rules with nepotism. It has used its power, not with

fairness and restraint, comprehensively for the benefit of all, but illiberally and at times meanly for the advancement of its own adherents. It has become exacting in the matter of taxation without showing any corresponding increase of benefit for the taxed. Its economic policies have wavered between opposite extremes and made a mess of trade and industry."

The Ways of the Leaders" (1953) was the caption of the leader in the annual issue in 1953, which indicts the Congress leadership. Read what Khasa had to say:

"In India, the leaders of freedom failed, when they came to power, to grasp the essential spirit of democracy, they fell into pressure groups and the whole life of the country became compartmentalized..."

India cannot be held together on the basis of the disruptive leadership of the past six years in which the outstanding achievement of the Congress regime was the enthronement of rank selfishness and communalism in politics, administration and economic life. Tenacious clinging to power by unqualified persons of narrow outlook has been the ruin of the country. We want a reversal of the outlook of leaders from the present unrealities, to a saner and more introspective pursuit of social welfare."

The standards applied by Khasa for giving tickets in elections were very exacting. He quoted Nehru who said. "The Congress is judged not by its majority but by the quality of men and women that we send up to our legislatures." Giving an instance of V K Reddi who was selected as candidate for Parliamentary elections from Nellore, Khasa wrote in *Swatantra* (Oct 19, 1951): "I ask Pandit Nehru what judgement does he expect people to pass of the Congress when its authorized election committee dares to choose in its name as a fit candidate for the legislature a social menace, judicially declared as such of the antecedents of Kodandarami Reddi? The High Court had exposed him as tenderer of false evidence implicating innocent persons opposed to him in local faction. Nehru intervened in time to check the outrage but since then Reddi had another feather put in his Congress cap by being made the District Congress President."

Khasa also commented on the selection of C R Narsimhan, Rajaji's son for the Salem Parliamentary Constituency. He observed: "Of all the forms of nepotism, the worst is the elevation of close relatives of distinguished members of Government to positions which they have given no proof of title by their own individual competence and record."

Likewise Khasa criticized Ramnath Goenka being put up as a Congress candidate in two constituencies. He said, "When one candidate is allotted more than one seat, the balance of propriety is disturbed, as though the Congress exists for the candidate concerned, is unsure of his position with the public but

is interested somehow in getting him in. Neither Kamaraj Nadar nor Pandit Nehru has come out well in this special preference accorded by them to Sri Goenka over all others. It is fishy. It certainly is not democracy.”

Khasa made no distinction when dealing with misdeeds, acts of nepotism and corruption by politicians, Ministers, Government Officers or Presiding Officers of Parliament or Legislatures.

Attention of the Speaker of Lok Sabha, M Ananthasayanam Iyengar was drawn to a letter published in *Swarajya* of February 6, 1960, which cited a particular appointment as an instance of nepotism. The Lok Sabha secretariat sent him a letter which said: “I am directed by the Speaker to say that it is a contempt of Lok Sabha to make baseless allegations against the officers of the House and thereby deter them from doing their duty to the House and also cast reflections on the Speaker.”

Khasa wrote back: “The rights and liberties of the press to ventilate grievances should be respected as much as the prestige of the Speaker in the discharge of his administrative functions in respect of his Staff. It appears to me that it would be straining the law to treat the publication of grievances in respect of office staff under the Speaker’s administrative control as contempt of the Lok Sabha”.

A legal notice was issued threatening action against him. Khasa who was sure of his ground gave a one-line reply. “The threatened action is awaited.” The matter ended there.

Khasa ran his weekly *Swatantra* for 10 years from 1946 during which period, it became a forceful exponent of public opinion, his own popular column "Sidelights" giving it a distinctive character, apart from his outspoken editorials. When he was sixty, each day after which he considered as a grace day, he experimented with making *Swatantra*, a private limited company with H D Rajah, an ex-MP and a friend of his, as Chairman and himself as Director. It did not work, as Khasa would not allow his journal to be used for anyone’s political purpose. So he bade good bye and with him came out a good number of staff devoted to him. Tamil *Swatantram* was started besides the existing Telugu *Swatantra*.

After some soul searching, Khasa had to start a more modest weekly *Swarajya* in July 1956 partly to provide employment to those who came out of *Swatantra* with him. It was Rajaji again who gave the name to his weekly as *Swarajya* and also his blessings through a widely published message. Rajaji said: “For years past Khasa Subba Rau has been no political or journalistic friend of mine except occasionally when it pleased him. But, I believe his talent for criticism is a public asset. I am glad to give his new weekly the blessings he asks me for; and I give it with all my heart for I know the great value of frank and quick criticism for

which he has great aptitude. The independence of the press has been adversely affected by the doubtful blessings of large capital and that the small well-conducted high quality weekly can supply a felt want and render great national service.”

Rajaji who was a regular contributor to *Swatantra* in its early days chose to send articles to *Swarajya* with certain regularity and at times more than one on burning issues of the day. For, Rajaji, till his end, lived in the present and never gloated over the past. The gulf that developed between Rajaji and Khasa, more or less during the period the former was in office in Delhi or Madras appeared to be bridging. They met often and exchanged views. A certain identity of opinion and views developed gradually particularly when Rajaji launched Swatantra Party with the slogan “Abolish Permit, License, Quota Raj,” against regimentation and policies of Nehru and Nehruvian doctrine.

They were seen together addressing meetings and speaking at public functions. So much so when they were walking on the beach, a passer by exclaimed: “They are like brothers.” Rajaji’s reaction was typical. He called the person and told him. “We are not like brothers. We are brothers.” Such was the identity that had developed between them.

In the issue of July 11, 1959, Khasa observed. “This is a historic moment in the nation’s destiny. In the wake of the attainment of national freedom, the conditions of life that alone can make that freedom real and significant to the individuals composing the nation have been denied to us. Out of the very fruit of freedom the poison of serfdom has come to the people of the country. Rajaji’s movement of Swatantra is an even greater movement and more difficult to lead than the earlier freedom fight against the British, because Pandit Nehru whose misguided policies are taking the country to disaster is a more formidable antagonist than any British Viceroy that went before him could be.

“There is no man in the country that could have undertaken this difficult, really Himalayan task, other than Rajaji. He symbolizes today the hope of the nation for succour from the prevailing frustrations. If his movement fails, the Nehru regime will land the country into a Communist morass. Success of the Swatantra Party is therefore inseparable from national survival. This is the simple reason why thousands flock to Rajaji as the nation’s saviour and why at 80 the energy of a young man has been given to him as God’s gift.”

One can have an insight into Khasa’s battles against the policies of the Nehru government from the constant and consistent articles he wrote in *Swarajya*. If Rajaji was a one-man opposition as a politician, Khasa was a rare specimen of a single opposition from the fourth estate.

Khasa averred, “with India’s poverty and population, the State can never step in and completely take over the setting up of a social balance except by a ruthless collectivization of all property and income and the substitution of

external force for individual incentive for producing wealth. If we value democracy and freedom, the incidents that go with a wise doctrine of Trusteeship have to be fostered and encouraged.”

Dwelling on Swatantra Party's policies he said: “the Party held that in the policies adopted for national development, priority must be assigned to the basic needs of the people, namely, food, water, housing and clothing. The Party stood for the restriction of State enterprise to heavy industries such as are necessary to supplement private enterprise in that field, such national services as railways, and the starting of new enterprises which are difficult for private initiative. It was opposed to the State entering the field of trade and distribution and introducing controls and official management with all its wastefulness and inefficiency.”

Khasa genuinely felt that the Swatantra movement under Rajaji would be able to lead the country to progress and alleviate poverty, ensuring right to property and right to work, self-employment of artisans, kisans, mazdoors and praja. Nehru criticized the Swatantra Party stating that it was “reactionary, conservative, backward, that it had nothing to do with things of the earth, with the present, today or tomorrow, and that was a ghost-like party and simply raises ghosts of the past.” Khasa rebutted this criticism and pointed out Employment and Social justice, to take only two of the Swatantra Party's objectives, and asked: “Are these not things of the earth? Have they nothing to do with the present, today or tomorrow? When the Congress and the Prime Minister speak of them and of such things, in their own party manifestoes, is it from the standpoint of a special valuation that they do not belong to the present or even to tomorrow, in fact, that they are not relevant things of the earth?”

When Khasa, through the columns of *Swarajya*, espoused the policies of Swatantra Party there were caustic comments from some readers that the journal had become a party paper. He published the criticism and replied: “*Swarajya* is not a party journal. It will not, as a matter of duty, commend any and every policy taken by the party, as one reader fears, nor will it exempt the politics of the Swatantra Party from the purview of criticism.”

Khasa went further and said Swatantra Party though called by that name, “can be described more correctly as a movement for freedom, truth, individual initiative, compassion in human relationship and trusteeship of each other for the welfare of fellowmen worse placed in life. *Swarajya's* interest in the Swatantra Party is based on the pursuit of these aims. None of them violates any journalistic duty.” He went on, “editorial integrity is the most valuable part of the journalistic work. It is violated wherever there is an inflexible commitment in advance for unvarying support to any particular organization. The appeal of the Press should be always, to the vast body of uncommitted readers and not to sectional coteries already converted to some rigid doctrine. To let down the uncommitted by propagating fixed partisan nostrums is to offend truth itself.”

Under "Freedom Now", an editorial in *Swarajya* of September 26, 1959 Khasa analyzed why Rajaji at the ripe age of 80 took the plunge and the risk to start a new party when Congress stood entrenched in the office.

"It is found that the ruling party has taxed heavily, spent extravagantly and built spectacular show places for advertisement, but it has failed to make any headway in respect of those things that contribute to good government and the happiness and contentment of the people. The hope of grand changes to come that had dawned with Swaraj faded, and in its place frustration, disappointment and despondency filled the air. Even the possibility of getting rid of the Congress government so that something better may take its place was not dreamed of. It was easier to dislodge Churchill who was a symbol of might with roots outside the body politic, but with Pandit Nehru, the beloved idol of the population, lending it prestige, the Congress regime seemed virtually unalterable and irreplaceable. People resigned themselves to it in a spirit of hopeless adjustment with the inevitable. Independent public opinion had become near dead.

It was in this crisis that Rajaji started the Swatantra Party. Nobody else could have performed this feat. Of all the children of the Revolution that had lent luster to the glory of the Gandhian tradition, none else remained outside the circle of authority, detached and independent to criticize its evil trends and resist its autocracy. Some had made terms with it and been absorbed into its charmed hierarchy of pomp, power and privilege. Others had died. Rajaji is the only survivor from Gandhi's old guard of veteran patriots with ability, influence and character enough to stand up and give battle to his political heirs without being swept away or destroyed in the efforts...

Rajaji, Gandhi's closest adherent, who had imparted the power of practical wisdom to the idealistic teaching of the Mahatma, is now that great saviour's lineal successor for investing our diluted blessing of freedom with positive content, saving individual life from the soul-crushing oppression of the Leviathan State disguised in Socialistic raiment."

Khasa never minced words. His expression and language reflected the intensity of the feelings of the people as assessed by him.

Pandit Nehru had declared that "the law of the jungle where the strong preyed on the weak could never be allowed to have free play in the economic sphere of India."

Khasa said, "the declaration sounds grand. Its effect is spoiled by one blemish, however. The ruling party and their supporters are no less immune from preying on the weak than those others whom the Prime Minister wants to prevent from acting according to this law of the jungle. Under the pretext of eliminating other wild beasts in human form from jungle India, the monopoly of preying on the weak is being progressively reserved for the Congress in India.

The Prime Minister's tall talk of philanthropic intentions does not fit in well with the twelve-year old Congress record of insatiable power hunger and greed for property acquisition. There is already the law of the jungle in India and the beast presiding over this jungle empire is the Congress. Compared to it, even rapacious capitalists with evil reputations are less dangerous."

Cooperative farming as projected by Nehru's Government was considered unsuitable for India with small farmers. Referring to it Khasa wrote: "Mr Nehru's latest feat is to accuse critics of his pet scheme of cooperative farming of 'spreading lies among the people.' Till recently the Nehru-thunder struck lightning and could make his countrymen tremble at its power and potency. But lately as a practitioner of righteousness he has lost ground. While China was aggressively occupying our territory, covering Chinese incursions with secrecy, and not only that, but also leading a chorus of Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai, what else is all this except a big lie? After enacting this lie continually for a period of four to five years, expostulations of pious concern for truth on the part of its principal protagonist have lost the power of impressing others. Mr Nehru is now a much-deflated leader whose spirited utterances bordering on the heroic are treated as stage performances. His foreign policy has broken down. His internal administration has proved to be a costly disaster. But the pose of victorious achievement has not left him."

Khasa said that an American farming expert, R A Oslen, expressed grave doubts about the practicability of cooperative farming. "I do not think it will be successful in India,' he said. The reason for this was 'that it took away incentive from the farmer and made him lose his identity and individual interest as an entrepreneur in the land.' The agricultural community in India, through its accredited organizations, has expressed the same view as Mr Oslen has now pronounced, but it all makes no impression on Mr Nehru. He knows nothing of farming but he has somehow arrived at a fanatic belief in the efficacy of cooperative farming. He goes on repeating his belief as if it were an all sufficing answer to the facts of the case and the adverse judgment of competent critics with practical knowledge of agriculture."

Khasa felt that under Nehru's socialism, the people of India had as individuals lost their liberties. He said in an article in *Swarajya* on December 5, 1959. India today is in the throes of a second liberation movement. The freedom that the Mahatma won has not fulfilled its promise of happiness to people. Two reasons have mainly contributed to this distressing result. First, the leaders of the indigenous government formed after the withdrawal of the British, ran after power, and in the process of making themselves more and more powerful, they swallowed up popular liberties one after one relentlessly. Secondly, in the course of consolidating their power they abandoned intrinsic concepts of justice, and replaced them with organized mob clamour. Anything that a large number of people could be got together to demand became administrative policy. The

pampered covetousness of the multitude, let loose on society with State patronage, made class hatred fashionable and deprived property of its sanctity. To cover up the depredatory character of this policy and make it look grand, the name Socialism was given to it.

"Under Nehruvian Socialism the people of India have as individuals lost their liberties. Their property and possessions have ceased to have any assured legal validity. An atmosphere of insecurity permeates the land. The Government on the other hand had made itself more powerful than any previous government had been by drawing unto itself more and more of economic power, thereby tightening its stranglehold on the lives and occupations of the people. Existence for citizens is being rendered practically impossible without the favour of the ruling party."

Sensing the challenge of the Swatantra Party, Nehru went all out to condemn it in every way. Khasa took cudgels against this outright and unjust denunciation.

In his "Sidelights" in *Swarajya* of January 9, 1960, Khasa said: "Mr. Nehru goes on evading the criticism of the Swatantra Party and stigmatizing its programme as suitable only for the nineteenth century.

"The only way of meeting Rajaji's criticism of the Government and the ruling party," he wrote, "was by paying attention to the points raised and meeting them. But Mr Nehru has gone on repeating his own slogans more frequently and loudly and blaming the new party for its alleged worthlessness, reactionarism and service of rich men's interests. He almost seems to have persuaded himself that denunciatory vigour is the equivalent of valid proof of worth. The Prime Minister has passed the stage when Canute-like he could order the waves of popular discontent to recede at his command. At such a stage, mere repetition of a fallacy fails to enhance credit and only makes ineffectiveness look pathetic."

Nehru complained that the press in the country had taken a pro-Swatantra attitude. Khasa had occasion to comment on this, in his journal on January 23, 1960 about the role of the press, which holds good even today.

"For sometime now," Khasa wrote, "the baneful intrusion of the socialist pattern has been making itself felt in journalism. Formerly the leaders of the profession, distinguished for merit and achievement, maintained dignity of demeanour towards officials and Ministers. They did not run after them for favours. Nowadays, it has become a regular business for the office-bearers of journalistic trade unions to make a beeline to the airport to be first in the field with garlands to receive visiting dignitaries. When there is a strike on, the organizers spend most of their time in the antechambers of Ministers waiting to beseech them to intervene and help. This attitude of dependence of working

journalists on Ministers has deprived them of the traditional status of being the custodians of the freedom of the press. That status has gone over, in some cases, to the proprietors.

“There are no doubt owners, and owners, and at a time when the incubus of State authority is becoming heavier and more and more pervasive in all branches of the nation’s economy, it is not to be expected that all of them will be able to totally steer clear of sycophancy and its allurements. The Prime Minister complained of the pro-Swatantra attitude of the Press in the country and fell foul with them for it. That was sufficient. Since then there has been a quick somersault, and in some of the newspapers, previously generous and hospitable, even perfunctory coverage of Swatantra news has disappeared. It is the distinction of Ramnath Goenka, acquired in the hard school of tough practical experience, that he rates faithfulness to news as they happen as the highest journalistic virtue, and to this loyalty he is unswerving. He is a devotee of integrity in the purveying of news and in his worship at this shrine, he tolerates no compromise, nothing short of the very best. I have known him to deviate from pristine rectitude in the presentation of news only in connection with the Communist Party.

“He regards the Communists, with their extra-territorial allegiance, as outside the pale of consideration by patriotically inclined national institutions, and he was firm in his faith that any publicity to the Communist platform carried with it the potential danger of inveiglement into anti-national plots and maneuvers. I felt at that time that this viewpoint of Sri Goenka impinged on fundamental fairness and inter-party press morality. But I am not so sure of it now. The unashamed Communist apologia in the matter of the Chinese incursions proves the validity of Sri Goenka’s insight into them as a special brand of dangerous nationals to beware of, fit only to be distrusted and guarded against incessantly for some chronic betrayal or other of the country’s interests and security.”

Nehru's intolerance of criticism

Khasa pointedly brought to the eye of the public the growing irritation and intolerance of the Prime Minister Nehru to mounting criticism and dissent against his policies particularly in regard to China, his inability to get the occupied area vacated, as also public sector, foreign policies, non-alignment, co-operative farming and the like.

In the issue of April 2, 1960 Khasa dwelt succinctly on this aspect. He said: “The Prime Minister seems to be incapable of calm thinking in an atmosphere divested of adulation. Criticism irritates him and makes him run wild and fall foul of the critic. It was all right as long as the press conformed to the general pattern of popular glamour by idolizing the Prime Minister. But when, under the compulsion of a series of disasters—the squandering of the plans, the rampant corruption, the inefficiency and waste, the mounting prices, the heavy taxation without proportional benefit, the lavish minting of paper currency reducing the

value of people's savings, the colossal foreign loans, and worst of all, the secretive surrender of large areas of the country to a foreign aggressor, accompanied by, an incomprehensible 'approach' inviting him (Chou Enlai) to the capital as an 'honored guest'— the decade-old admiration of the people for their leader began to wear thin, the assumption of his indispensability to fade, and the Press followed suit with responsive anti-Congress diatribes, the Prime Minister who only a little while ago had applauded the Press as an essential instrument of democracy, set about denouncing it as a tool of the industrialists!

Confronted with the recoil of his own blunders in the form of diminishing prestige, Mr Nehru failed to acquire fresh resources of wisdom in the hard school of experience to cope with the unpleasant situation. His sole refuge against fallacy was proclamation of the same discredited fallacy in repeated orgies of vociferous self-assertion. He seems to have taken lungpower as an adequate substitute for the intellectual capacity of persuasion. An esteemed friend who had retired after a great career in government service confessed to me sometime ago that he had given up reading Nehru's speeches as they contained rehashes of the same old shibboleths and nostrums that had become stale by too much and too long repetition, and contained nothing rewarding, no fresh stimulating thought. It has turned out that this revulsion of attitude is no idiosyncrasy of a single individual but an intensifying trend of the public mind. The Prime Minister would be appalled to discover how many outside the restricted circle of party beneficiaries have not only lost interest but become antagonistic to his trite panaceas for social benefit under the cover of socialism.

"Of all patterns of government, socialism makes the most exacting call on the character of its administrative personnel. The Congress has failed to secure this quality of personnel. Power has made them corrupt. The antidote to the corruption of power is reduction of power, but the Nehru regime has been matching the expanding corruption of the Socialist pattern with increasing doses of power. Hence the tremendous success of the Swatantra Party within a remarkably short period after its inception. The Party has already come to be looked upon as the nation's saviour in a crisis.

"Intellectual barrenness is the heaviest burden that Nehru's Socialism has now to carry. We find the Prime Minister now a days twisting the meaning of words to overcome awkward predicaments. He attributes 'confused thinking' to all who do not see eye to eye with him. The assertion of exclusive righteousness as a privilege of leadership has become such an obsession with him that dissent strikes him as an enormity and he sees no freedom at all anywhere beyond precincts commanding his approval. It is not for nothing that he cannot tolerate even the name of the Forum of Free Enterprise, it is not an institution within the Nehru political orbit enjoying his blessing, and how can freedom co-exist with dissent from the politics of the Prime Minister?"

In 1960 Khasa devoted a series of articles to the Chinese incursion into India, in the wake of Chou Enlai's visit to this country.

He wrote: "The Chou-Nehru talks seem to be based on a certain facile assumption that peace between the two countries is a matter of settlement with exercise of dialectical expertness in personal talks between their respective leaders. The reality is quite otherwise. The outstanding phenomenon in the world today is the move of Communism into shoes vacated by the old European imperialists. Sri Jayaprakash Narayan hit the nail on the head when he said that the Russian Premier was going round the world impressing on everyone that 'history was on his side and that Communism was the ultimate destiny of mankind, but he did not realize how outdated he had already become.' History, the Sarvodaya leader predicted, would soon prove that 'Communism instead of being the final flowering of human civilization, was a temporary aberration of the human mind, a brief nightmare to be soon forgotten.' For the time being, however, the nightmare is on us and the full brunt of withstanding the imperialist expansionism of Communism has fallen on account of geographical contiguity, after Tibet, mainly on India."

Khasa was critical of the five year plans and the way they were implemented without their benefits reaching people at the grass-root level.

"Mr Nehru's El Dorado of the future, built on Five Year Plans as foundation, bids fair to be a phantom of illusions. For the present, advance signals of its promised advent are forbidding and frightening. More and more of debts, heavier and heavier taxation, the wastefulness of parasites, the corruption of the time-serving, the extravagance indistinguishable from treasonable misappropriation of pampered favorites, the ceaseless expansion of bureaucracy, more intense concentration of executive power, less and less of freedom for individual initiative, soaring prices eating cruelly into the daily essentials of people's lives—these are the dreadful and tangible and immediately patent fruits of Congress economic planning under the Nehru banner."

Referring to the critical study of the planning by Prof B R Shenoy— "one of our few independent economists who has not yielded to the allurements of regimented economic thinking in Nehru's India of Socialist Pattern," Khasa said that the economist showed "that the present sort of planning we are having is an intolerable burden and is leading the country to ruin."

In January 21 issue, advertng again to five year plans, Khasa quoted A D Shroff, who described the plan "as an example of how not to plan in a democracy."

"It is a specimen of totalitarian planning in which targets are set up first and the search for resources come later," Shroff was quoted as saying.

Khasa considered the rejection by Nehru of the suggestion for a common Defence Organization by Marshal Ayub Khan of Pakistan as a "grave mistake"

and said after which there was no point in being angry when Pakistan was wooing China.

Khasa said; "whatever the difficulties envisaged in the setting up of a common defense organization for India and Pakistan against a common danger, it was due to the Marshal's great and wise gesture that it should have been warmly received and earnestly examined round a table of ministers and officials and thereafter subjected to joint scrutiny and further amplification. Instead of this, it was, so to say, pooh-pooed summarily. It was no less than an insult, the manner in which a great and historic gesture was dealt with. When you do not grasp the hand of friendship extended by an opponent, the results are, bound to be bad. The opponent's enemy is always a potential ally. India failed to remember and act on this natural law."

Khasa questioned Nehru's conception of the functioning of the majority in a democracy. He wrote in the *Swarajya* of April 22, 1961:

"The Prime Minister took the line that 'his knowledge about the Army and senior officers was far superior to that of Acharya Kripalani or any Opposition member.' From that sublime angle of self-conceit, he could not be expected to cherish anything but supercilious contempt for the opposition itself as such. We find him accusing Acharya Kripalani with failure to accept the basic fact that in a parliamentary and democratic procedure, 'the majority functions.' What exactly Mr Nehru means by this he has not explained, but he has made it clear by his demeanour. When Sri Rajindra Singh asked, 'are we to be guided by our own opinion or by that of the Prime Minister?', Mr Nehru seemed to have had a shock at so much assertion of independent opinion not in conformity with his own. He asked the member, saying 'he has chosen a wrong path permanently,' Leaders like Acharya Kripalani and Acharya Ranga, who have given as many years of their lives, if not more to public causes, as Mr Nehru himself, were shown no better courtesy. They are dismissed arrogantly with such phrases as 'wrong in judgment,' 'Wrong always,' and jeered at obligingly in concert by the Prime Minister's sycophantic party cohorts. All this is unworthy of a Prime Minister of India. Evidently Mr Nehru's conception of the functioning of the majority is not limited to running the government. It seems to include the running of it as a dictatorship, with the opposition overawed and silenced into docile acceptance of the superiority and infallibility of the leader of the majority party. This may be Communist practice, certainly not democratic procedure."

Writing in the subsequent week, Khasa questioned Nehru's proposal to ban communal parties and said, "A law to ban communal parties would only help the Congress to get rid of powerful elements likely to successfully challenge its votes in the elections. Mr Nehru's battles with communalism have been theoretical and verbally passionate. They have not been followed up by practical action conforming to the advertised idealism. Naturally, therefore, anti-

communal laws have become dead letters and the Congress administration itself has become a hot-bed of rampant communal ill-will."

Khasa castigated the practice of using positions of authority to collect party funds in the *Swarajya* issue of June 10:

"Once the sense of delicacy or shame is lost in utilizing official power for collection of funds, it will be a small jump later on for successors to collect for their own private purposes. The practice of using positions of authority to put pressure for donations for any purpose, be it for the party chest or even for charitable or educational purposes is fraught with grave moral danger. The passage from such activities to worse things is dangerously easy. Who knows whether even the collections for the party chest are properly accounted for?"

Khasa felt that, "In the life of a journalist there are occasions when a conflict arises between his own safety and the demands of the public interest. Being guided by safety would mean neglect of the higher purpose of journalism. It is promotion of the public interest that should be the guiding factor."

Mention has already been made of his well known editorial in *Free Press Journal*, Bombay on the discrimination between European and Indian victims of Quetta earthquake which resulted in the forfeiture of security. "The forfeiture of security over Quetta will remain in my mind as the happiest incident." Its editor Sadanand wrote to Khasa and added: "A truly independent, fearless journalist like you is one of the brightest ornaments to Indian journalism. With a few more honest and independent journalists like you, I am certain, the face of India can be changed (1935)." Khasa had concluded his article with these words; "The hand of God in the earthquake has not apparently cut across the bed rock of racialism on which the British rule rests and helped to it to transfer its moorings to fresh values based on broad humanitarian considerations. Humanity is evidently being sacrificed to misdirected frontier policy."

There were quite a few battles Khasa fought against authority, all stemming from his fearless comments with safety last and public interest first. A characteristic feature of Khasa was that when he realized he was wrong, he corrected himself without standing on false prestige, reflecting his transparent sincerity.

"The effect of written or printed words on the reader is not dependent on skill or expertness in their arrangement. It varies. There is nothing like absolute fairness to impart power to an argument. Experience has shown me that to cherish a grievance, even when the circumstances justify it, against even a single individual, will impair the faculty of absolute fairness. But this rule does not apply when one takes on oneself the grievances of others. It is like prayer. Prayers for one's own self may be ineffective, but every prayer sincerely offered for another is answered," Khasa wrote.

Khasa's visits to the United States and Britain

Khasa was not fascinated by travels inside the country or abroad. He was content living in Madras, but at the same time he lay a lot of stress on developing a world perspective. Except for short spells in Bombay with *Free Press Journal* and in *Indian Finance*, Calcutta and briefly in Bihar as Secretary to Raja of Amavan, his journalistic work lay in Madras. But, he had admirers all over, inside and outside the country, of his journals and his writings. He visited the UK for six weeks in 1950 and USA for three months in 1955 at the invitation of the respective governments.

Paul C Sharbert, a former Public Affairs Officer, US consulate, Madras and later Secretary Asia Society, USA who knew Khasa well, in a message sent after his death in 1961 from the US said:

Khasa belonged not only to you and to your country but to us and our country; for no man could have lived a more useful life or set a better example or been more gentle or more mindful of the interest of his neighbour, his country and the world.

While in the USA, Khasa had the opportunity to meet people from various strata of society and also see cities and observe the functioning of the press and Government. He wrote articles in newspapers as a guest editor. He attended parties in his usual khadi dhoti and half shirt, the way one saw him in Madras. A good speaker, who spoke his mind fearlessly he addressed a conference of officials, students and newspapermen in New York, when he appealed to the US to initiate a new world movement to liberate the subjugated nations in African and Asia.

In a guest editorial in the *Denver Post* (reproduced in *Swatantra* of November 26, 1955), Khasa wrote: "It should be realized by the successors of President Roosevelt that unless freedom is universally established and every country still unfree is liberated from foreign domination, there would be no peace in the world. The United States can and should head a movement for this purpose. India cannot be indifferent to such a movement organized under American initiative. Mr Nehru's neutrality will disappear the moment United States calls upon the European colonial powers to quit Asia and Africa in the same way in which President Roosevelt called upon Britain to quit India towards the end of the second world war. Its neutrality will be replaced by warm approbation and active cooperation. There will then be a new alignment of world forces consisting of, to start with the United States, India and Britain."

Of his visit to Washington he wrote: "The statue of Lincoln in white marble is thrilling to behold ... It is as if a great chapter of achievement in the country's history has been captured from fleeting time and presented to posterity in imperishable form. Washington is replete with monumental devices for turning

historical incidents into a life-stream of integrating stimulation for accentuating national pride and unity.”

Khasa attended a press conference at the White House addressed by President Eisenhower and said Eisenhower gave an impression of labouring under no inhibitions at all. “He takes every question that is put to him with ease and relaxation, and though occasionally spirited in his rejoinders, he is never disturbed or out of temper. One feels that here is a man who has nothing to hide. An atmosphere of naturalness and cordiality, with no pose or pretension, no divergence between the exterior appearance and the inner reality of self, pervades the president throughout the conference. He is at home with himself and with others. The result is an impression of integrity and honesty, which is the main source of the President’s immense personal influence and invincible popularity.”

On John F Kennedy’s election, as President of USA, Khasa wrote on January 20, 1961, “The new President of the USA, John F Kennedy, is just a name to the nation with no clear knowledge of the man. His victory at the polls has been laid to the power of money and splendid organization. With opportunity he has blossomed in a short time into a leader of remarkable capacity. An office like that of the American President, any high office of great power in fact in the modern world, can be managed well only with the aid of able assistants.

“Mr Kennedy has won praise all round with his devoted pursuit of knowledgeable men of competence in preference to time-honoured scions of pampered influential families for discharging the functions of the administration. When talent comes into its own, meritorious achievement is bound to follow. Though a note of excessive caution traceable to inexperience under the weight of a gigantic burden can be seen in the new President, there is also evidence of a powerful potential, in character and leadership, for successfully completing in time what President Eisenhower had left half done.”

Khasa was among the four Indian journalists who visited Britain on the invitation of its government. Giving insight into the British mind during a general election Khasa wrote, “I have some very pleasant recollections of the uniqueness of the British people. I spent six weeks in England as a member of the Indian Press Delegation. It happened that a young woman, one Miss Young, was the driver of the car that was given to us for making a tour from one part of the country to another. The general election was then in full swing. Sitting by her side on the front seat as she was driving, I asked her which party she would vote for. She said ‘Conservative’ Her answer took my breath away and in amazement I asked, ‘Why, are you not Labour?’ She answered, ‘Of course, I am Labour all right, but, you see, the Conservatives are man to man abler, more efficient and more experienced. They will not take away what the Labour Government has already given us. The same benefits they will administer more skillfully and the money spent will go a longer way. But at the next election, I will vote only for

Labour. For by that time the momentum of the programme set by Labour will have exhausted itself, and the Conservatives have no new and original ideas with which to make the next step forward.' She was a working woman, not very educated or intellectual, but her words gave me an inkling of the political maturity of the ordinary people of England, and of how seriously and with what a profound sense of individual responsibility they cast their votes in the elections."

While Swatantra weekly founded by Khasa lasted for 10 years, Swarajya, started in 1956 by him was closed down in 1978, with A S Raman, formerly Editor of the Illustrated Weekly, Bombay as its last Editor. Khasa was succeeded by Pothan Joseph. Then it had Philip Spratt, K Santhanam and R Venkataraman (former President of India) as editors.

When Swarajya was taken over by the Kalki group under T Sadasivam, Khasa moved to the Kalki compound where a cottage was specially built for him. Khasa died there on June 16, 1961 at the age of 65. He was not only editor till the end but also wrote till his last.

After Khasa's death Rajaji took more interest in Swarajya and wrote a well-read "Dear Reader" column. His comments on various matters of importance were published regularly some of which were circulated by news agencies for the daily press.

It was in 1986 that New Swatantra Times, a monthly was started from Hyderabad in memory of Khasa, by P Vaman Rao, his son-in-law. It carried from the beginning "Sidelights" from Swatantra and Swarajya weeklies in every issue, which are relevant to the present times, under the caption "From Khasa's pen." NST is now in its 16th year. The journal despite having a limited circulation, is read by a spectrum of people from all walks of life.

Several copies of the Swatantra were found in various libraries in the USA. Interestingly some of his articles from the New Swatantra Times were also found circulating. For example Khasa's Sidelights which were captioned "Opposition has to be recognized not as something external to Government but as part of the very mechanism for continuity of administration," was circulated by a friend to some Senators and Congressmen in the US House of Representatives and the US Senate. The occasion was Hon'ble Trend Lott having become a "Minority" leader in US Senate due to defection of Senator Jeffords. Till then he was the "majority" leader.

During his active journalistic life of four decades interspersed with incarceration due to participation in the Gandhian movement, Khasa made an impact on journalism and public life alike. From the talks one has with those who are now in late fifties and more, one gleans that his outspoken articles in his two journals were not only read, admired but looked forward to eagerly

week after week by readers who were influenced by them. In the South where his journals were avidly read, even today they recall his fearless writings and personality of selflessness and sacrifice. Khasa never wrote any books. However, a publisher brought out a collection of his Sidelights written mostly in Indian Express in 1945. Earlier in 1941, some pen-portraits written by him in other journals were published under the title Men in the Limelight and later, his articles on Rajaji in Swarajya under Sidelights on Rajaji. The first book had three sections. Profiles, journalism specially pertaining to Fleet Street and its great newspapers and great editors and on subjects like mother, marriage and divorce, love and jealousy, culture and patriotism. Khasa had the gift of writing on any subject; taking any small incident, raising it to first principles and making philosophic reflections, which contained a message.

Fourteen years after his death, poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya penned a moving poem on Khasa. Here are some of its significant lines:

“Let me salute you Khasa on this day. Marking your memories that cannot die your absence is a presence come to stay; who says dear friend that you have gone away / You were adored, even now you are adored / You who with words moulded the minds of men / Your Pen was surely sharper than sword / Yet, there was a deep compassion in that pen which stood by millions who sobbed in sorrow / The suffering for whom there was no morrow.”

He concluded: “Yes, Khasa, with your mighty Pen you made dishonesty and cowardice afraid! Who can forget your brilliance, your brain? Say, shall we see the likes of you again?”

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS OF KHASA SUBHA RAU

Some of his articles have been collected by various people and published. They are:

1. “Sidelights”
2. Men in Limelight
3. Sidelights on Rajaji

A D Shroff: The Defender of Free Enterprise

Minoos Shroff

Ardeshir Shroff's father Darabshaw, like his grandfather Rustomji before him, worked in the cotton purchase department of Killick Nixon & Co. Ltd in Mumbai. They were self-taught men. Theirs was a close and loving family with a reputation for high personal integrity. One of eleven children, Ardeshir was born on June 4, 1899.

Growing up in a middle class Parsi family in the pre-war era, Ardeshir enjoyed a protected harmonious family environment. In his own words, "owing to the grace of Almighty, I have not known what want is." He was sharp in observation and possessed a prodigious memory. One among eleven, he was never allowed to become spoilt. Very early in life he learnt to think independently and express himself freely.

In the course of a bright educational career he took keen interest in current economic problems and blossomed into an impressive debater. In 1921, he graduated with a BA in History and Economics, from Elphinstone College in Mumbai. He won the James Taylor prize for topping the University list in History and Economics. The outstanding liberals who had passed through the portals of his college made a lasting impression on his mind.

On graduation, AD was encouraged by Sir Dinshaw Vatcha, one of the Governors of Imperial Bank of India to go to London, to study economics further with special emphasis on banking and currency so that he could be eligible for the coveted services of the Bank, provided he acquired practical experience. Hence he proceeded to UK to join the London School of Economics. He also took several letters of introduction, from prominent personalities of the time like R D Tata, F E Dinshaw, Narottam Morarjee, and Sir Henry Proctor, to secure the position of apprentice in a leading bank in London. It was with great difficulty that he was accepted as an apprentice by the Chase Bank, London. However, on his return to India he was disappointed that he was turned down by the Imperial Bank as his apprenticeship had been with an American Bank and not a British one.

He turned to R D Tata who advised him to join the Tata Industrial Bank (now Central Bank of India). This did not appeal to him and instead he joined the well-known firm of stock brokers, Batliwalla & Karani. As a partner of this firm he gained increasing recognition in corporate circles and came in close contact with several senior Tata Directors, particularly the Chairman, Sir Nowroji Saklatwala. He joined Tatas as their Financial Advisor in 1939, and was soon inducted as a Director of Tata Sons Ltd.

In the early 1930s, he became a name to reckon within banking circles. He was recommended for the post of the first Indian Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India in 1936 but was rejected as he had aroused animosity of Sir James Griggs, the then Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, because of his independence of thought and frequent criticism of the government.

AD was greatly alarmed by Jawaharlal Nehru's socialist leanings, which were abundantly reflected in Nehru's presidential address at the Lucknow Congress in April 1936. As Vice President of Indian Merchant's Chamber (IMC), Mumbai, he wrote a perceptive article in the *Times of India* drawing pointed attention to its ominous portents in the post-independence era when Nehru was bound to play a leading role. This event had a considerable bearing on AD's vigorous advocacy of a liberal market economy in later years of his life.

The article generated a stir and strong pressure was brought on IMC elders to field a candidate against AD in the ensuing presidential election to prevent him from being elected President. He contested but was defeated paying the price for the courage of his conviction.

Despite Shroff's bold opposition to Nehru's socialist views he was appointed a Member of the Planning Committee formed by the Indian National Congress in 1938, under the chairmanship of Nehru. Later in 1944, alongwith seven other leading industrialists, he authored what came to be popularly known as the "Bombay Plan."

Though a strong critic of British government's Indian policies, he was selected as one of the two non-official delegates to the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 which led to the formation of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Shroff ardently put forth the case for the status of India's sterling balances. Lord Keynes, a leading protagonist of the Conference, who initially described Shroff as a highly articulate maverick—"a snake in the grass trying to catch us (British) out,"— and filled with suppressed malice, later expressed appreciation of his moderate, friendly and realistic statement of India's problem.

AD's business and corporate involvements were far reaching. On account of his enormous financial acumen he was acknowledged as a financial wizard during his distinguished professional career. His hold on the financial market was in many ways unmatched. At the peak of his career, he was Chairman and/or Director of over fifty companies like New Delhi Assurance Co. Ltd., Bank of India, Investment Corporation of India Ltd., and ICICI Ltd. He had also promoted a large number of joint ventures with world-renowned foreign companies.

AD Shroff headed a number of important government committees. The Committee on Finance for the Private Sector appointed by the Reserve Bank of India in 1953 was particularly noteworthy. The far-reaching recommendations of this Committee led to the formation of ICICI Ltd. and a number of State Developmental Financial and Industrial Corporations.

AD was greatly concerned by the increasing inroads of socialist ideology in government's policy making in the early 1950s culminating in the nationalization of a number of industries and services. To educate the public of the serious implications of these measures and to disseminate the great contribution that private enterprise had made to the industrial development of the country in the previous half century, he started the Forum of Free Enterprise in 1956. Having been involved with national planning earlier, he was totally opposed to wide ranging regulations which stifled individual initiative and enterprise and encroached on personal liberties. He was against comprehensive planning as adopted in India, which encompassed all aspects of life.

While he fervently propagated the efficacy of a market economy in the rapid development of India, he constantly urged the business community to exercise great discipline and circumspection in their conduct. In fact he helped evolve a "code of conduct" for businessmen way back in 1956 of their obligations and responsibilities, a code more far reaching than the SEBI Code on Corporate Governance made mandatory in 1999.

In 1960, a leading American banker George Woods, later President of the World Bank, invited Shroff to tour the USA. In a foreword to publication of collection of A D Shroff's writings, he observed:

It was my great pleasure and privilege to be able to act as his host on a tour which took him to the length and breadth of the United States. Everywhere he went he spoke of India with the love and understanding of a great patriot, and everywhere he went he left behind him new friends of India and a better understanding of her problems. His prodigious command on facts and figures would have made him a leader among bankers and businessmen in any society.

In every age and in every society men must express anew their faith in the infinite possibilities of the human individual when he has freedom to develop his creative talents. For this is in large part how the message of freedom is passed from generation to generation. A D Shroff spoke eloquently in a great tradition, and thanks to him we can be sure that other great men of India will continue to speak this message in the unknown context of our future problems...

His capacity for holding opinions strongly and defending them vigorously stood out. He was a staunch liberal and nationalist at heart and had the strength of mind as well as the moral courage to express his views, irrespective of the consequences.

The idea of liberalism

Liberals highly value civil liberties and believe in the equality of all men. The worth and dignity of the individual constitute something precious and inalienable. Any ideology or system that downgrades the individual is unacceptable to them, whatever might be its other merits. In their judgement, only in an atmosphere of absolute freedom does the individual personality blossom to its best and contribute to individual as well as social progress. To liberals, equality of all men irrespective of race, religion, language or sex is a matter of unquestionable faith. Issuing from this belief they place trust only in a democratic form of government.

The unqualified faith and support that liberals extend to democratic form of government naturally leads to freedom of speech, thought, and expression. Liberals recognise that freedom goes with responsibility and tolerance. Responsibility meant taking care that one's exercise of freedom does not encroach on the similar freedoms of another. Responsibility also meant that one should take care of his welfare and bear the consequences of his actions. A responsible person would not ignore the impact of his choices and actions on larger public interest. He would modify his choices and actions so that pursuit of his goals does not prejudice public interest. A responsible person would involve himself in public affairs and participate meaningfully and effectively. While the liberal might hold his own views, he also recognises that there could be

differences of opinion and even dissent. Often dissent plays a constructive role. It facilitates instructed judgement of the people or concerned authority in any matter of public importance. Under a truly democratic system it facilitates the synthesis of different viewpoints. They accepted the proposition that no one has monopoly of wisdom or constitutes the sole repository of truth. As a corollary to their faith in civil liberties and freedom of the individual, the right to privacy of an individual has emerged as a precious human right, meaningful and invaluable especially in the context of intrusive capabilities of modern communications technology.

Liberals believe in the imperative need for the economic freedoms especially those relating to choice of profession, trade, investment, location of industrial or business unit, technology, and pricing of products. Promotion of free competition and prevention of emergence of absolute monopolies by the state enabled real economic forces to interact purposefully and promote growth. This finds ready acceptance with liberals. They believe in full freedom to enter into commercial contracts. The rule of law would ensure adherence to terms of contract and generally secure full compliance of concerned parties. They want the state to play a neutral role and allow competition and social market economy to act as engines of economic growth. However, they visualize an appropriate role for the state as a regulator, as it would represent the overall community interests. Regulation would mainly set up standards applicable to all without discrimination or favouritism. It would also secure prevention of unfair trade practices that might undermine competition and prove detrimental to consumer interests. They believed in the sovereignty of the consumer. Prices determined unhindered by market forces, real economic factors and consumer choices would ensure rational allocation of resources and pave the way for rapid economic growth and consumer benefits.

In underdeveloped or developing economies, there exist the problems of unemployment and underemployment of scarce resources. In such cases the market would be incapable of freeing itself of rigidities inherited in the system. Liberals feel that the state could play a proactive role by designing and setting up a safety net appropriate to the specific needs of each economy.

Shroff – the liberal

A D Shroff was a true liberal, both in thought and action. In his college days he was greatly inspired by the speeches and writings of India's great liberals. He meticulously studied their writings and had the prescience that India would emerge an important power, once it was granted freedom by the British.

The conviction persisted with him in whatever he did right from his student days. While in his business career he was very actively engaged in investments, banking, finance, and insurance, he never divorced himself from being a very keen student of public affairs. He developed a great knack of

putting across his views in a language which was intelligible to different audiences and more to the common man. That came out of his abiding faith that liberalism and market economy were the vital prerequisites for India to emerge as an important economic power for rapidly improving the standards of living of the masses which were so deplorably low in the early part of the 20th century.

He was not liberal in a strictly political sense. But the liberal ethos was very much manifest in all his activities. He was a student in the UK at the London School of Economics in the early twenties when socialism held great sway under eminent ideologues and thinkers of the time—George Bernard Shaw, Harold Laski, Sydney and Beatrice Webb. But AD apparently never came under their spell, unlike many of his peers and contemporaries, who rose to great heights in the political and economic life of India in the twenties and thirties—the most prominent among them being Jawaharlal Nehru and V K Krishna Menon.

Right from his formative years, AD was firmly of the belief that the only way India could realise its ultimate destiny as an economic force to be reckoned with globally, was through the route of a liberal market economy where all the latent energies of the people could be unleashed. He was inspired by the great pioneering effort made by Indian businessmen and industrialists in the later part in the 19th century and early part of the 20th century in the face of active discouragement and often hostility, on the part of the British regime.

Shroff was a member of the Planning Commission constituted by Subhash Chandra Bose under the chairmanship of Nehru. He found the idealism of these national leaders highly invigorating. In fact in the 1940s, he was convinced that once a national government came to power, businessmen and government would march hand in hand, to accelerate the pace of development and improve the standard of living of the masses through rapid and large scale economic and industrial development. He was fond of quoting early liberals like Gokhale, “that India was a very rich country with many poor people,” meaning that elimination of poverty was possible through proper utilization of India’s vast resources. Shroff firmly believed that what was needed was unleashing the suppressed entrepreneurial talent and vigor of Indians by providing them greater freedom of action.

His robust optimism about the future of the country and his faith that the liberal market economy alone could deliver the goods, has been vindicated by the growing liberalization witnessed since 1991.

In his A D Shroff Memorial Lecture in 1984, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, M Narasimham observed: “He foresaw with remarkable prescience even then, what we with the wisdom of experience and hindsight have come to realise, that a centralized command economy and a pluralist democratic polity do not go well together.”

Socialism and planning

Few, not even A D Shroff, would have anticipated when he began his career in Batliwalla & Karani that he would be called upon to mobilize opinion of top industrialists and business leader against a policy prescription by Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1936, delivering his presidential address, Nehru made his socialist leanings public. Nehru stated that he saw no way of ending the poverty, unemployment and degradation of the Indian people except through socialism. He mentioned that it would involve “vast and revolutionary changes” in the country’s political as well as the feudal and autocratic caste system. It meant the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense and replacement of the existing profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service. All these were thoughts of a theoretician who visualized a larger than life image of socialism and, no doubt, of his own Congress party in power.

This speech shocked the industrialists throughout the country. It was AD who took up cudgels against Nehru and advanced well-reasoned arguments against the latter’s prescription for abolition of poverty, through a signed article in the *Times of India* immediately. He also expressed his objections to socialism in his vice-presidential address at the Indian Merchants Chamber. Nehru’s reaction was a counsel of despair, and resulted from the insensitive *laissez faire* attitude of the British Government, AD argued. Economic unrest was swelling in the country. It was made intense because of the trade depression that had led to a “phenomenal drop in agriculture prices.” People were surviving by liquidating their savings and selling off gold. Still the British Government was indifferent and did not take notice of growing unemployment of the educated and unskilled farm labor. He scoffed at the rejection of planned effort to meet the crisis by the British government. He called for an economic revival scheme encompassing spread of literacy and vocational training to ease the pressure on land and stimulate accumulation of capital. As for Sir James Grigg’s “clap-trap grants for rural upliftment,” he stated that unfocussed spending would not yield maximum return for every rupee of our scarce resources. He turned his arrows directly on Nehru, by condemning the latter’s preaching of class-hatred at this juncture in India’s history.¹ His logic in pointing out the self-contradiction in Nehru, in striving for rapid industrialization simultaneously with preaching of abolition of private property, was unexceptionable. AD also pointed out that such statements from the Congress President harmed the best interests of the country. It would also lead to flight of capital from the country. He cautioned Congress not to propagate anti-national class war. At the same time, he appealed to industry to clarify that it was not against all Indians securing minimum conditions of reasonably decent living whether they were blue-collar workers or agricultural labourers. He made it clear that Nehru’s new Marxist ideas were likely to create a chasm in the total unanimity with which the country had been fighting for independence.

Nehru's Lucknow speech upset leaders of business and industry. Twenty-one business leaders decided to send him a public message by publishing a manifesto in the *Times of India* and the *Tribune* of 20th May, 1936.² Though upset, Nehru seemed to have chosen a tactical retreat. All the resolutions passed in that session of the Congress seemed to be against the Nehru line. Besides industry leaders were divided on their assessment of the situation. J R D Tata refused to sign the manifesto and viewed Nehru as a "heroic knight in armour." The legendary G D Birla underestimated Nehru's socialist ardour. He believed that Nehru was like a typical English democrat who took defeat in a sporting spirit. Nehru, as history proved later only waited like a true Fabian for the right time. He waited for nearly two decades before a pliant Congress would pass a resolution adopting the "socialistic pattern of society" as the final goal of economic and social policy of India at Avadhi in 1955! Nehru, however, opted for socialistic pattern of society within a democratic framework. AD, though a supporter of indicative planning on the lines of the French model, would not touch with a pair of tongs the centralized planning of the communist variety with its priorities tilted in favour of heavy industry as against agriculture in a country where three-fourths of the population depended on agriculture for their employment and livelihood. Also, it brought in authoritarianism by the backdoor, which unfortunately was the result of the Mahalanobis model of Indian planning.

Finding that both the Indian Merchant's Chamber (IMC) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) generally followed a line of least resistance against the Congress and placed full faith in Nehru and his declared commitment to democracy, AD after considerable thought and discussions with friends and sympathizers, founded the Forum of Free Enterprise in 1956. Through the Forum, AD aired his liberal views and launched a campaign of educating the public on the dangers of socialism, democratic or otherwise, and its real and monetary costs.

His collection of speeches and writings³ contains his thoughts and views that he put across before the public. I have borrowed liberally from his Presidential address at the seventh annual general meeting of the Forum of Free Enterprise and other articles in this volume in the following paragraphs and sections of this paper. For, the greatness and foresight of this liberal comes out vividly in his own words. His passion for facts and tireless search for truth, not to speak of the wry humour, adorn his articles and speeches. They provide an insight of the wisdom that went unrecognised and unhonoured by the powers-that-be. History however, proved him right! He reminded the country, against the background of the Chinese aggression in 1962, that the main task was rapid and large-scale development in order to abolish poverty. Economic development had to be achieved within a democratic framework. "That means the freedoms of the people and democratic institutions like universities, and an

impartial judiciary administering the Rule of Law should be preserved in tact and strengthened, and, there should be equality of opportunity for all.”

AD divides socialism for a scientific economic analysis, into two parts: its *objective* and the *method* to be employed to achieve the objective. The objective of socialism is stated to be “a society of the free and equal.” The method to be employed is state ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, by nationalization of existing enterprises and through the establishment of the public sector (or state enterprises) taking charge of the commanding heights of the economy and centralized comprehensive planning of all economic activities under the auspices of the state. Democratic socialism uses this method through parliamentary means and relies on evolutionary changes. In contrast communism, sometimes described as “scientific socialism,” relies on the dictatorship of the proletariat (working class). It counts on expropriation of private property openly and liquidating political and other opponents described as class enemies or revisionists, without proper trial or due process of law, which are euphemistically described as “revolutionary changes.”

AD pointed out that the swing, then, was away from both state ownership and centralized comprehensive planning in countries professing socialism. Quoting the well-known British economist Graham Hutton, AD stated that private property, private enterprise, and private entrepreneurs provided the dynamics for democracy. If taken away, both democracy and its dynamics would be moved from the scene. This was the dilemma before social democrats (i.e., democratic socialists) of Europe. He also referred to a leading member of British Labour Party, Douglas Jay⁴ who had concluded that “the absence of private property was also a denial of freedom.” Jay dismissed the concept of “perfect equality” as impractical. He pleaded for not equal shares but fair shares, not equality but social justice. He also disagreed with the socialist methods of nationalization and public ownership. He quoted a leading light in the British Labour Party, Aneurin Bevan who had stated, “a mixed economy is what most people in the West would prefer. The victory of socialism need not be universal to be decisive. I have no patience with those socialists, so-called, who in practice would socialize nothing, while in theory they threaten the whole private property. They are pursuits and, therefore, barren. It is neither prudent nor does it accord with our conception of the future; that all forms of private property should live under perpetual threat. In almost all types of society different forms of property have lived side by side. Where the frontier between the public and private sector should be mixed is a question that will be answered differently in different nations.”

Features of free enterprise were not only changing institutions and receiving support in USSR and other communist countries, but were also finding vigorous advocates there. The advice offered by Soviet Press articles addressed to Chinese communists made interesting reading. They reproached the latter for

ignoring all “objective economic laws.” The Chinese had sought to substitute “planning and cost accounting” by “volitional decisions.” These policies and setting up of the communes resulted in “an abrupt drop in the living standard of the Chinese people.”

In leading socialist and communist countries rethinking on planning, effectiveness of the public sector, and nationalization as the only means of controlling private sector monopolies had commenced. AD made appropriate reference to cry halt to the excesses in the name of socialism and planning as also against throttling free enterprise and private initiatives. He studied the facts diligently. His mastery in culling out facts from figures helped him expose the sorry plight and poor performance of many a public sector undertaking. For instance, after examining the Audit Report 1963, he disclosed that the total dividend declared by 46 central government companies as on March 31, 1962 *turned out to be less than one percent of the paid up capital!*

Proceeding from the basics, AD pointed out that a major objective of planning was the employment of scarce resources so as to secure maximum returns to the society. The very low yield of public sector enterprises was a matter of concern, as the resources employed would otherwise have yielded better results, had the money remained with the people. He was alarmed by the “carefree” way in which the public sector enterprises were set up and operated.

AD took special interest in Indian Airlines and the State Trading Corporation that had an interface with the business community, as few public sector undertakings did. With subtle irony he quoted the comment of a travel agent, who said, “IAC had perhaps created a new world record of being the last to announce its winter schedule and the first to change it. Because IAC is one of the few airlines in the world which makes air-minded people travel by trains.” State Trading Corporation (STC) was set up as a public sector monopoly to enter the export trade. Starting with a few items, many goods and minerals were later reserved for exclusive channeling as exports by the STC. The bureaucratic ways of monopoly privilege of the STC conferred little or no economic benefit to the nation!

Public sector enterprises under the jurisdiction and control of the State governments presented an equally dismal picture. Even administrative discipline, maintenance, and finalization of accounts at the end of a year, was not observed.

Examples of public sector undertakings which were model employers as well as who ensured sound management could not be found. In November, 1963, production at the Rourkela plant suffered serious setback. The management attributed this to “deliberate slow down, disregard of orders, and refusal to act in higher capacities” by some workers. However, the Orissa State Labour Laws Implementation and Evaluation Officer had recorded

46 instances of violation of labour laws at Rourkela. Khandubhai Desai, a veteran trade union leader, criticized the public sector for its “feudal mind” and for being “deficient in human values.” At a meeting in April 1963, he stated that public sector enterprises were then in that stage of development out of which the private sector had emerged three generations ago. The consumer receives no better treatment at the hands of some public sector enterprises. The Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament condemned the pricing policy of the state-owned Hindustan Antibiotics Ltd. “On an essential life-saving drug the company was profiting to the extent of 32 paise on production cost of 18 paise per mega unit!” The intelligent public grew indignant in view of such grave deficiencies of the public sector, in terms of use of resources, return on capital, labour policy, and consumer satisfaction. Many of them wrote angry letters to the press that provided a mine of facts and data for AD who never hesitated to use them appropriately with considerable objectivity in his speeches and writings.

Many government functionaries were also becoming aware of the critical deficiencies of planning and the public sector. For instance, the then Union Minister for Mines and Fuel, K D Malavia, in a speech in Calcutta on November 16, 1962, praised the private sector collieries for doing a better job in increasing production to meet the needs of the Emergency than the public sector enterprise, National Coal Development Corporation. S K Wankhede, a Minister in the Maharashtra cabinet, stated in July 1963 that private sector deserved praise for setting up new enterprises while the public sector lagged behind. The Government had “bungled” in running public sector enterprises in the state. C Subramaniam said at a management conference in Ahmedabad in February 1963, that he had come across a case in which a decision that could be taken in 24 hours was not taken for two years in a public sector undertaking run by ICS managers! In its progress report on the third plan, the Planning Commission recorded its anxiety over public sector costs that far-exceeded original estimates and upset time schedules. The mid-term appraisal of the Third Plan stressed the need for “continued attention” towards efficiency in the public sector. The credit for taking practical steps should go to Andhra government, which has proposed to hand over a public sector paper mill running at a loss to private enterprises. On a previous occasion two mills had been transferred to the private sector with the result that the production in one of them had gone up from 14 to 100 tons!

AD advocated replacement of the existing socialist method of planning by taking full cognizance of the ground realities in the country to secure rapid economic growth and to ensure a better life for millions of our people. As usual he quoted the opinions of eminent economists. Prof Milton Friedman observed, “In this country, planning is taken to mean the attempt by a centralized agency to establish a pattern for the economy as a whole and to enforce it by a host of specialized and detailed controls, including government engaging in certain

enterprises and so on. This whole paraphernalia, which in this country goes by the name of planning, is almost guaranteed to (face) defeat rather than to promote your objectives. On the other hand, a Central Government which maintained law and order, provided for the national defence, secured the enforcement of private contracts people freely entered into, provided a stable monetary framework, fostered the spread of elementary schooling and the improvement of road communication and, for the rest fostered a free market to enable millions of individuals in his country to use their own resources in accordance with their own objective—such a government would be engaged in good planning... suited to the promotion of economic development..."

British economist Graham Hutton was also quoted: "Just as the opposite of communism is not capitalism but freedom, so the opposite of free enterprise is not planning but totalitarianism. Planning and private enterprise are not incompatible. The term 'economic planning' has been debased in democracies to mean 'authoritarian state planning,' the control of enterprise, production, labour, transport, exchange and trading by agents of state empowered by politicians. But such regulation of economic activity by the state drags every economic decision into politics. The decisions—the plans and their execution—are hardly ever made on grounds of economy, productivity, and efficiency. These are nearly always made on political grounds according to a tug-of-war between vested interests and pressure groups."

AD was a firm believer in promoting education and government playing a leading role in it. No wonder, he quoted the eminent economist A K Cairncross who said, "In the last resort, the problem of international poverty is only superficially an economic one, in a deeper sense it is an educational one. The poverty that has to be destroyed is far less a deficiency in the external assets of modern industrial society than in its intellectual and spiritual endowment... A good educational system is closely linked with rapid development and the investment in schools and universities may offer large returns in economic terms apart from any other merits by which it may be justified."

AD also deplored the priorities of socialist planning which accorded a low rank to agriculture. He felt that far more was required to be channeled into agriculture in terms of resources, extension services, modern inputs like fertilizer, and adequate supply of water, loans, and insurance services. He quoted Prof W W Rostow to stress the importance of agriculture. "Agriculture has three distinct but essential roles to play in promoting growth. First, it must supply the food required for rapidly expanding urban populations in the developing countries. If the demand is not met, there may be hunger, even starvation; or food must be acquired from abroad, which depletes the foreign exchange needed to import industrial equipment and raw materials. Second, agricultural expansion is required as working capital for non agricultural development, to generate raw materials for industry, to earn foreign exchange

and to free labour from agriculture and make it available for industrial construction and operation. Third, a rise in agricultural incomes stimulates other aspects of development. It provides the capital accumulation needed for further growth, through savings required for investment or as a critically important source of tax revenues. It also provides an expanded market for industries—chemical fertilizers, agricultural equipment, and manufactured consumer goods. Communist China is an example of what happens when these dynamic interactions between industry and agriculture are ignored or are inadequately respected.”

Socialism, according to historic experience, was a mirage. Shroff could not tolerate the comprehensive centralized planning and the consequent inefficiencies imposing avoidable economic costs besides abridging individual liberties and freedom of citizens to pursue vocations of their choice. The public sector and its costs as also mismanagement stood as a symbol of what its mindless pursuit inflicted on a resource-deficient developing economy. With a puckish sense of humour, he quotes Jawaharlal Nehru, the misguided politician, who speaking about the Planning Commission in New Delhi on October 7, 1963, observed, “It is frightening – you see the building itself frightens one. A closed body of people, who think and advise the Government, has grown into a huge one sending papers to the other. That is the normal habit of the Government.”

Speaking at the National Development Council meeting on November 8, 1963, Nehru had criticized the very rationale of socialist planning, i.e., concentration on heavy industries at the cost of agriculture. He said, “I find there is a passion in many areas of India to have an industrial plant. People seem to think that an industrial plant solves all the problems of poverty, which it does not. It has a long-term effect, and helps no doubt... At the present moment in India whichever way you start you come back to agriculture. We dare not be slack about it, as we have been. I am afraid.” What a transformation of a misguided socialist? How one wishes that such wisdom had dawned on him before the Avadhi session of the Congress?

AD found support in Gandhiji’s apprehension at the growing power of the state. Gandhiji had said: “I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear; while apparently doing good for the people by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which is at the root of progress. What I would personally prefer would be, not a centralization of power in the hands of the state, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship as, in my opinion, the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State.”

A D Shroff’s manifestation of liberalization

AD’s notion of free enterprise (which he vigorously articulated through the Forum of Free Enterprise) was one with a social purpose. He stood for every

individual in the country to have the largest scope to make a contribution within the framework of planned development through his initiative and enterprise. He was convinced that Indians were ready and capable of making a substantial contribution to society provided they were not handicapped and hamstrung by the sort of controls and regulation to which they were subject and which stifled initiative, and enterprise. "Excessive regulation and control lead to concentration of power in the hands of the bureaucracy and result in regimentation of economic life," said Shroff.

The Government watched the Forum's activities very closely. Prime Minister Nehru was even provoked to state that "there is some truth in free enterprise but there is a vast quantity of error." Some time later he was forced to say that there was "an assured and respected place for the private sector in our economy." This was a big concession from his earlier stand that "private enterprise profits by the distress of the country" and that "all businessmen are crooks."

"Have you seen these? These are clean hands, you cannot do anything to stop me," replied A D Shroff to the Government of India's Minister of Commerce Manubhai Shah. Shah had personally conveyed Prime Minister Nehru's displeasure at Shroff's irrepressible campaign for free enterprise and trenchant criticism of the government's economic policy in the late 1950s.

Conscious that the lobbying for free enterprise would be misused by black sheep indulging in malpractices such as profiteering, black marketing and tax evasion, Shroff placed before private enterprise a "Code of Conduct to be followed by all those engaged in free enterprise, whether businessmen, or professionals such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and journalists." He was always conscious that private business was largely responsible for the bad name it had earned because of its lack of transparency and sharp practices. The Code of Conduct, which covered the interest of shareholders, consumers and labour, could be called a four-decade-old-precursor to the Corporate Governance Code being written in the late 1990s. This is what it said:

This Code of Conduct for Free Enterprise has been prepared by the Forum of Free Enterprise and is now placed before industrialists, businessmen, and those belonging to different professions and vocations in India in the belief that they find it worthy of acceptance and of application in their daily activities. The Forum pledges itself to do all it can to create a widespread awareness in the ranks of free enterprise of the obligations that are contained in this Code. We feel that free enterprise, which has been tested and proved by time and experience of all democratic societies, should maintain its reputation by insisting on high standards of integrity, which are dictated by social purpose. Honesty, hard work, courtesy, and continuous initiative, are the foundations on which the edifice of free enterprise rests.

Producers and distributors owe it to the consumers of their products that they shall always be of the highest quality and available at reasonable cost. They shall maintain fair measure and guard against adulteration. Customers are entitled to courtesy, promptness, and good service and every endeavor shall be made to see that they receive them.

Employers owe it to labour to recognize that welfare is not conceived in terms of philanthropy, but as a social obligation. Men and women engaged in production shall do so with dignity, honor, and a sense of security. Fair wages should be paid for work done. Working conditions shall be as pleasant as possible. Opportunities should be made available for the worker to get technical skills and better his economic prospects and his social status. Procedures should be instituted for the removal of legitimate grievances so that the employee is satisfied that he gets a fair deal. The employers should welcome the existence of stable and democratic trade unions. They should recognise that in the sphere of employee-management relations, as in other spheres, checks and balances are essential for the working out of rational and democratic solutions. They should accept the role of labour as one of creative cooperation and recognise the need for providing increasing opportunities for consultation of employees and their progressive association with management to help in the promotion of increased productivity from which all will benefit.

Management does owe it to those who invest in their enterprise that they receive a fair return on their investment, commensurate with the risk they take. At the same time, reserves must be created for expansion and modernisation of the plant and machinery, and in their utilisation the management remains accountable to the investor. Money must also be provided for research. The earning by the shareholder of a fair return or profit by the entrepreneur under competitive conditions and after payment of fair wages must be regarded as a legitimate reward for the risk and the work of promotion and development which the community urgently needs. Certain malpractices have crept into the system of company management. They are to be condemned and should be removed. Hoarding, black-marketing, and profiteering are anti-social and evil. Honest business practices can be promoted and encouraged by an honest and efficient administration in a democratic state.

Professional men – lawyers, teachers, doctors, auditors, or writers – owe it to those who avail themselves of their services to maintain the highest standards and traditions. They should discharge their duties truly and faithfully and should always subordinate considerations of personal gain to the larger objective of service.

We all owe it to the community that we accept our obligations as good citizens. We shall bear our share of taxation honestly. We condemn unequivocally any attempt at tax evasion. We shall actively participate in the promotion of social, cultural and civic improvements. Wealth or power shall not be a justification for vainglory or ostentatious display, but an opportunity for rendering service to the community.

In those days, Nehru and his ministerial colleagues liked to publicly allege that private enterprise was incapable of undertaking large-scale and rapid economic development and that it led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people. Jawaharlal Nehru himself had gone so far as to say that “private enterprise and democracy are incompatible.”

T T Krishnamachari (TTK), Minister for Commerce and Industry in the 1950s claiming that the private sector showed neither initiative nor enterprise declared that “private enterprise had failed me.” Shroff, typically, could not have let such a claim go unchallenged.

TTK and Shroff had an unusual admirer-adversary equation. Shroff viewed with approval the remarkable drive and energy that TTK brought to his job and acknowledged his outstanding success as an industry minister; he “found it even more incomprehensible that a man of such fine understanding of business and industrial problems” and one who had “witnessed first-hand what was being done in the industrial sphere in those years should have made such a charge against private enterprise.” “To me,” he said, quoting Shakespeare “it has come as the most unkindest cut of all.”

Analyzing the historical role of private enterprise, Shroff said in one of his many public speeches, that for sixty-odd years before independence, private sector fought the apathetic and downright antagonistic attitude of the British to the industrial development of India. Later, the British government switched to discriminatory protection of its own industry and a pace that was totally unsuited to Indian industrial development. Yet, it was private enterprise, which placed India eighth on the list of industrial nations.

When Jamshedji Tata first thought of starting the steel industry, a leading British businessman of Calcutta had ridiculed the idea and he even offered to consume every pound of steel made in India. “Fortunately for him, he is not alive today, otherwise he would have suffered not a little from indigestion,” said Shroff caustically.

Jamshedji's great pioneering effort had ensured that Tata Steel was not only the largest single individual steel-making unit in the British Commonwealth of nations but also the cheapest producer of steel in the world at that time. The development of hydroelectric power was a tremendous venture not only in terms of generating power, but also in making Bombay mill owners believe that it was possible to do so. Scindia Steamship had made the dream of Indian shipping a reality, thanks to the efforts of Narottam Morarji and Walchand Hirachand, and offered world-class transport in the teeth of powerfully entrenched foreign shipping companies. The cotton textile industry had become an important exporter, which was competing effectively with Lancashire and Japan.

AD's speeches tried hard to counter the negative public opinion about the private sector following the tax investigations, a method the government used to build support for its policies of state socialism and nationalism.

Shroff always urged more and more businessmen who were in disagreement with the government's economic policy to give public expression to their views. He regarded the failure of business to do so as a national misfortune. Addressing a meeting of merchants in the late 1950's he had said: "Unless you make up your mind and are prepared to be outspoken and educate the public as to what is happening in the country and what is your own faith and conviction as to what should happen to bring this country to a higher standard of living and production, you cannot expect to avoid the unpleasantness. It is no use grousing in your own offices and in your own houses amongst yourselves. You must gather sufficient courage to come out publicly, for every little voice will add to the magnitude and will be finally heard. Educating people about what is good for them is the key... But if you are frightened that you are going to be victimized for what you say although you are convinced in your own mind that what you say is the right thing to say, then I put it to you in a very straightforward manner that you have no business to complain. And, if things go wrong in the country you have yourself to thank for it."

AD argued that an economic system in which the public sector continuously expands its sphere of activity inevitably leads to a system of controls, regulations, and regimentation. With this vested interests develop, which are pledged to the expansion of the system. In course of time, the system breeds a sense of intolerance among members of the ruling party and the bureaucracy, which implements these policies. Decisions are hailed as national decisions and dissent by a minority, however effective, is viewed with widespread suspicion. Even honest criticism is likely to be dubbed as "disloyalty" or "an unpatriotic activity."

Shroff advocated "a mixed economy" where there was a balance of power between the state and free enterprise because, he believed, the system of free enterprise provides the necessary and essential balance of power between the contending forces within the overall regulation by the state.

Epilogue

AD's was often a lonely fight, supported at times by like-minded intellectuals and businessmen. As pointed out earlier, his comments were greatly resented by the authorities in Delhi, but they nevertheless took serious note of it because of the force and veracity of his arguments. His contribution to public life and more particularly to the cause of free enterprise and liberalism can best be summed up in J R D Tata's tribute on his death:

Apart from his intellectual gifts of which he gave repeated demonstrations, ferocious energy in all his work, his courage and indomitable fighting spirit were displayed early. I remember how Mr Shroff fought for what he thought was right at the annual general meetings of the Imperial Bank. This led him into many conflicts within the business community. Those in the establishment or with vested interests usually emerged victorious, but he remained undaunted.

It was this combination of courage and independence of mind which made him an outspoken and fearless critic of what he considered wrong in official policies. He believed, above all, in free enterprise and in the dignity and worth of individual effort and enterprise. The government, with the backing of a majority in the Parliament, can and does pressurize the business community. It is, therefore, understandable that businessmen and industrialists entrusted with the funds and interests of thousands of shareholders may, at times, hesitate to cross swords with the government. It took great courage for him, with his commercial interests, to express his views with the vigour he did on occasion, as in the instance when life insurance companies were nationalized and his views were at variance with the government's. However, Mr Shroff was a constructive critic, motivated by what he considered to be in the best interests of the country. It is a great pity that greater use was not made of this outstanding personality in the formulation of national policies.

In recent years, his lone fight took the form of the Forum of Free Enterprise. Although we may not agree with everything that he said in the Forum or in its publications, we owe a deep debt of gratitude to him for the courage and determination with which he fought so many battles for the business community and free enterprise.

The buzz words today are markets and globalization. These are not whispered by businessmen and professionals but spoken loudly by the

government as well. For nearly a decade now it has taken steps to open up almost every activity to private sector and even sought to “denationalize” or privatize public sector enterprises. That really vindicates A D Shroff who, 50 years ago had to fight a bitter battle to pursue these very ideas.

One remarkable aspect of his many splendoured, albeit controversial, personality was the respect and esteem he commanded even among those who violently disagreed with him.

A D Shroff was called as one of the expert witnesses before the Chagla Commission in what came to be known as the Mundhra Affair. This is being adduced, as it is so relevant to the current sorry state of affairs in the public financial arena. Some excerpts from his evidence are reproduced from Sucheta Dalal’s biography:

Shroff’s powerful and categorical deposition had virtually ripped through all of LIC’s claims in its defence. It even slumped the counsel. The Attorney General who was appearing for the government did not cross-examine him. Sachin Chaudhuri, the counsel for LIC got up and pleaded that he was not in a position to question Shroff until he had gone through his entire evidence. He said that he was overborne by Shroff’s deposition and that it covered so many vital matters being inquired into by the commission that he wanted time to study the evidence. He confessed that his personal experience regarding financial matters was limited as compared to the vast and rich experience of the witness. Justice Chagla turned to Shroff and said, “the learned counsel is intimidated by your vast knowledge. He wants time to study your evidence.” On the judge’s request, the hearing was adjourned.

It is not given to many individuals to have a versatile mind and be able to apply it effectively to the practical affairs of the day. AD was one of the few such leading lights. He was a skilled orator and was capable of a lucid exposition of his ideas.

Starting in a humble way he rose to a position of fame and eminence through perseverance and hard work. A man of very sound judgement and sober outlook, his advice was sought on business and economic matters both in India and abroad. Though not one to mince words, his public utterances were objective, dignified, and restrained.

More than anything else he was a fine, warm-hearted human being who derived great joy in helping men who had risen from small beginnings. He always extended a helping hand to the poor. As Sir Homi Mody observed at AD’s condolence meeting: “He had a very combative personality and was apt to rub people the wrong way, but those who knew him know that when approached

no one was warmer in sympathies than he. He always helped with advice and financial support all those who approached him and touched his heart.

He was deeply concerned with the problems of the blind and bringing relief to those suffering from cancer and leprosy. Of him it could be truly said "He did good by stealth and blushed to find fame."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Sucheta Dalal, *A D Shroff: Titan of Finance and Free Enterprise*, Viking Penguin India, 2000, p. 50.
- 2 *Ibid.* p. 52. The signatories were Sir Nowroji Saklatvala, Chunilal B Mehta, Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas, K R P Shroff, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Ratanji Virji Govindji, Sir Phiroze Sethna, Ranchoddas Jethabhai, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Khimji Vishram, V N Chandavarkar, Haridas Madhavdas, Sir Shapoorji Billimoria, Dharamsey Mulraj Khatau, Walchand Hirachand, Ishwardas Lakhmidas, Mathuradas Vissanji, Homi P Mody, Ardeshir R Dalal, A D Shroff and R Chinoy.
- 3 C.f., A D Shroff, *On Planning and Finance in India*, Lalvani Publishing House, Mumbai. See "Will democratic socialism help India?", pp. 58-81.
- 4 C.f., Douglas Jay, *Socialism in the New Society*. Quoted by A D Shroff in his book referred to above.

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(All published by the Forum of Free Enterprise, Mumbai)

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2. Has Private Enterprise failed?
3. New Taxation Proposals
4. The Transport Bottleneck
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6. Free Enterprise and Democracy
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9. Our Economic Future
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11. Two Years of Achievement
12. The Foreign Exchange Crisis & Some Remedies
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19. The Emergency Highlights Needs For a New Economic Policy
20. Will Democratic Socialism Help India

THE CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY is an independent, nonprofit, research and educational organization devoted to improving the quality of life in India by reviving and reinvigorating India's civil society. India will be peaceful, harmonious, and prosperous, not by simply imitating other societies, but by building a system that complements, adapts, and elevates its culture and traditions. Towards that goal, the Centre provides a forum to enhance public understanding of the nature, role, and significance of civil society.

WHAT IS CIVIL SOCIETY? Civil society is an evolving network of associations and institutions of family and community, of production and trade, and of piety and benevolence. Individuals enter into these relationships as much by consent as by obligation but never under coercion. Civil society is premised on individual freedom and responsibility, and on limited and accountable government. It protects the individual from the intrusive state, and connects the individual to the larger social and economic order. Civil society is what keeps individualism from becoming atomistic and communitarianism from becoming collectivist. Political society, on the other hand, is distinguished by its legalized power of coercion. Its primary purpose is to protect civil society by upholding individual rights and the rule of law.

RELATION BETWEEN CIVIL AND POLITICAL SOCIETY The rampant growth of the political society—the institutions of government—since independence has become a hindrance to the flourishing of civil society in India. It is only by rethinking and reconfiguring the political society that India will be able to achieve economic prosperity, social peace and cohesion, and genuine political democracy. The “principle of subsidiarity” demarcates the proper arenas for civil and political society, and for local, state, and central government within the political society. The principle suggests that the state should do only those things that people cannot do for themselves through voluntary associations of civil society. The functions thus assigned to the state must be entrusted first to local governments. The functions that local governments cannot perform should be given to state governments and only those that state governments are unable to undertake should be delegated to the central government.

THE CENTRE'S ROLE The Centre's activities are based on this understanding of civil and political society. It endeavours to broaden the public debate on critical economic and social issues and to provide innovative, effective, and enduring solutions. The programs and publications of the Centre help guide public policy and private initiative to rebuild and strengthen civil society. The Centre commissions rigorous studies from scholars and communicates findings to targeted groups—policy makers, opinion leaders, and the media—and to the general audience through lectures, seminars, and conferences, and by publishing books, reports, and commentaries.

The motivation behind the Centre is the poignant paradox of intelligent and industrious people of India living in the state of destitution and despondency. The Centre was inaugurated on August 15, 1997 signifying the necessity of achieving economic, social, and cultural independence from the Indian state after attaining political independence from an alien state.

Though the Centre collaborates with all on specific issues, it accepts direct support only from the civil society. The Centre's activities can be summarized under two groups: policy research and advocacy, and education programs.

Policy Research and Advocacy

Dialogues provide a forum for discussion of topical policy issues from diverge perspectives. Issues covered: Anti-dumping Rules, Sustainable or Sustained Development, Competition Policy, Abuse of VIP Security, Watershed Development, Self-Regulation in the Civil Society, East Asian Crisis, Education Alternatives, Liberalization.

Self-Regulation in the Civil Society edited by Dr Ashok V. Desai explores voluntary alternatives to state regulation for assuring quality and safety of goods and services. Rs 100

Agenda for Change edited by Bibek Debroy and Parth J. Shah outlines precise and comprehensive reforms for various departments/programs of the government. *Out of Print*

Kissan Bole Chhe by R. K. Amin is a broad sweep of the evolution of agriculture with a specific focus on India's agricultural policy narrated through the life story of a farmer. Rs. 200

Friedman on India, edited by Parth J. Shah, with a foreword by Deepak Lal has articles that Milton Friedman wrote on the Indian economy during his visits to India in the fifties and sixties critiquing the policies of planning and correctly predicting their disastrous results. Rs. 75

Policy Studies provide scholarly analysis of important public policy issues. The topics include Economic Freedom and Economic Growth, Private and Political Markets, Taxation, Labour Laws, Telecom Services, Environmental Policy, and Intellectual Property Rights.

Research Internship encourages college students to engage in grassroots research to collect primary data over a period of two months during the summer vacation.

Education Programs

Liberty and Society Seminar aims to provide college students a greater understanding of the larger world—society, economy, and culture—from a

classical liberal framework that emphasizes limited government, rule of law, free trade, and competitive markets. It has been held in Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Delhi, Devlali, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Mumbai.

B R Shenoy Memorial Essay Competition attempts to increase awareness about ideas and principles of civil society. The last two topics were “Education: The Role of Markets,” and “Markets, Morality, and Prosperity.”

How Markets Work: Disequilibrium, Entrepreneurship and Discovery by Israel M. Kirzner elucidates the views of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek of the market as a process, competition as a discovery procedure, and entrepreneurship as the engine of economic growth. Rs. 50

Business Journalism Workshop discusses national and international issues to enhance the information base of business journalists. With the help of Swaminathan Aiyar, *Economic Times*, it has been held at Delhi, Hyderabad, and Chennai.

Liberty and Civil Society Workshop introduced ideas of economic freedom, role of civil society in social infrastructure, and new public management to IAS and other all India services at the National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie.

Issues in Civil Society; Economics in One Lesson is a one-day program for college students in Delhi to discuss issues of their interest and concern.

Resource Centre

The Centre maintains a library of several thousand books, publications of a large number of public policy research institutes, and computers with internet access. The library is open to the public. The Centre plans to open similar resource centres throughout India.

Laissez-faire Books

Through arrangements with publishers and distributors, the Centre makes available for purchase books promoting its principles and ideas.