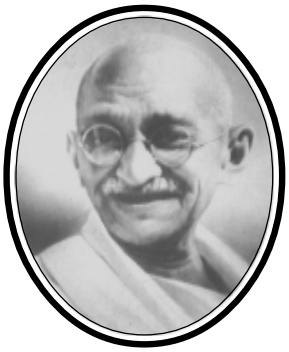

BULLETIN

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GANDHIJI'S IDEA OF INDEPENDENCE

As we celebrate the 140th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, apart from the official ritual so routinely and uninspiringly performed on October 2 every year, our minds are filled with sadness over the utter disregard shown to Gandhiji's ideals during the last sixty two years and considerable anxiety about the future of India. In this age of globalization, reckless spending and lavish living those who talk of Gandhian ideals, even if it is for an hour before a small gathering, might be labeled uncivilized and medieval in their mindset.

But the bright new younger generation who constitute more than fifty percent of India's billion plus population and who are ordained by destiny to shape India's future in the first century of the new millennium would certainly love to know about the legacy the Mahatma bequeathed to us and the relevance of Gandhian ideals and values. Today's youth may be in a great hurry to achieve their goals through hard and innovative work despite being hard pressed for time. But they are also sensible enough to apply their sensitive minds to learn about the roots of our culture and the value foundations of our system so that course correction, wherever and whenever necessary, can be done without further delay. The younger generation would feel proud to know that the greatest minds of the last century, scientists like Einstein, philosophers like Russell, literary giants like Bernard Shaw and Nobel laureates of different hues, saw in Gandhi a beacon, an extraordinary light that would show humankind a way out of the darkness.

Likened to the Buddha and Jesus Christ, Gandhi lived and died for the poor, the entire humanity. The words of an Arab poet, Mikhail Noema quoted in Rajmohan Gandhi's classic ***Mohandas,*** sum it up : "the spindle in Gandhi's hand became sharper than the sword; the simple white sheet wrapping Gandhi's body was an armour plate which guns from the fleet of the Master of the Seas could not pierce and the goat of Gandhi became stronger than the British Lion."

We need to answer the basic question that every youngster is asking today six decades after India became free. Is this the Independence for which Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders fought and which we celebrate pompously twice a year on August 14 and January 26? What are our leaders so religiously praying for on October 2 and January 30, sitting in front of the Rajghat in Delhi and Gandhi statues all over the country? What according to Gandhi was Swaraj or Independence? Would the Father of the Nation have rejoiced at India's achievements if he were living in our midst today?

They need to be told that Swaraj for Gandhi was empowerment of the weak and the disadvantaged sections of the society. Sad but true almost as many people as those who woke to freedom on August 15,1947, about 330 million, are today living below the poverty line! Independence, Gandhi defined, means 'self- mastery, self –discipline', not the greed and selfishness that permeate every walk of life and every branch of government. Commending the Gandhian philosophy of simple living and high thinking Aldous Huxley had warned not only India but the entire world not to suppose 'that technology and organization could turn the petty human animal into a superhuman being and could provide a substitute for the infinities of spiritual realization."

From May 1893 on that cold night in Pietermaritzburg in South Africa when he was thrown out of a railway compartment till that fateful Friday, January 30, 1948 when the treacherous assassin's bullets killed him, Gandhi's life was a fight against violence, greed, injustice and exploitation. Probably no single individual in human history suffered and sacrificed for so long and so intensely as Gandhiji did. That is why young minds of today, like the great Einstein prophesied, would rub their eyes in disbelief hearing the Gandhi story. And we, the fading generation, have a duty to tell the younger generation of what little we know and how much we all and the future generation owe to Mahatma Gandhi.

- The Editor

"We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary— a beacon to the generations to come." - ALBERT EINSTEIN

GANDHI, NEHRU and INDIA's INDEPENDENCE —III

- A. Prasanna Kumar

The dawn of independence for over 330 million people of India at the midnight hour of August 14 was a transition from 'darkness to light' as Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru metaphorically declared hoisting the tricolour. It was indeed 'Freedom at Midnight' — the result of the greatest non-violent revolution in human history, ' a glorious triumph of noble and spiritual powers over all the material forces that the world can boast of." (Shriman Narayan) Independence came sooner than expected. Notwithstanding the countrywide jubilation and celebrations, millions of people became victims of the tragic partition riots. Mahatma Gandhi was far away from Delhi, the centre of hectic political activity and celebrations. He was in Calcutta, spending the time in the house of a poor Muslim family, fighting communal madness and arresting the spread of the virus of hate and violence. Fasting, mourning and praying most of the time, the 78 year old Mahatma walked and worked day and night in pursuit of his mission. It was 'a one man army' as Mountbatten said successfully doing what '55,000' soldiers were unable to do in Punjab.' Still Gandhi was sad at the double tragedy that shattered his dreams and hopes of keeping India united. India was partitioned and communal clashes continued to take a heavy toll of life and property. Both he wanted to prevent at any cost. Only a few months earlier he was going all out to save India from breaking into two, with a number of suggestions and submissions to the feuding political rivals and the scheming British government. " Cut me to pieces first and then divide India'' said Gandhiji in 1940. Partition then looked improbable though many Congress leaders knew that Jinnah and the Muslim League would not accept anything less than a separate state, as per the two-nation theory. Rajaji was more forthright than the other Congress leaders and said that partition was inescapable.

Gandhiji, however, was hopeful of brining together the Congress and the League through some mutually acceptable formula to prevent the break-up of India. As Rajmohan Gandhi writes " a Jinnah-led Muslim League government in Delhi, if installed with Congress agreement, could address all of them. ..a Congress-supported Jinnah government could preserve the unity not only of the Punjab and Bengal but also of India as a whole. " (*Mohandas)* But tide and time began to move more rapidly and furiously than ever before and Gandhi and his loyal friends like Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, protagonists of a united India, could not swim against the current. Gandhi's 'ill-conceived plan' as Rajaji put it, was rejected. Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy, tried to mediate between the Congress and the League. Jinnah, obviously not interested in these talks and negotiations, gave an ultimatum to Mountbatten: "Either India will be divided or it will be destroyed by the Moslems." (William Shirer *Gandhi* A Memoir p 184). Partition became inevitable. Gandhiji conceded " I find myself alone. Even Patel and Nehru think I am wrong. May be they are right and I alone am floundering in darkness." (William Shirer op cit)

The frail and ageing body that housed the grea spirit, *maha atma* had to put up with many other setbacks and disappointments. A Dalit woman or man should become India's first President proposed Gandhiji. In the words of Rajmohan Gandhi " the proposal was sparked off by the death, at the end of May, of Chakrayya, a talented young Andhra Dalit who had been with the Sevagram ashram from its inception. Gandhi had nursed high hopes for Chakrayya. ' I feel like crying over his death, but I cannot cry.' On June 2 he said at his prayer meeting : " The time is fast approaching when India will have to elect the first President of the Republic. I would have proposed the name of Chakrayya, had he been alive." On June 6 he repeated the thought in conversation with Rajendra Prasad suggesting that some prominent leaders should stay out of the government. In his prayer meeting Gandhiji said that Harijan like Chakrayya or a Harijan girl should be made the nation's first President and Jawaharlal should become the first Prime Minister. Similar arrangements can be made in the provinces too…" (*Mohandas* p620)

For him there was no celebration of Independence on August 15. But that was the day he gave the sternest caution, if not warning, to the newly sworn in ministers of Bengal government in a few lines that should be read every day by all who occupy positions of power and seats of authority. "Beware of power; power corrupts. Do not let yourselves be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry. Remember you are in office to serve the poor in India's villages.'

''If India is to be saved, it will have to be saved by the small man.'' - MINOO MASANI

Independence for Gandhi should lead to 'Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions' He defined Swaraj ' in terms of empowering the weak.' (Mohandas p 633) In a recent article (*Seminar* September 2009) Sunil Khilnani explains Gandhi's concept of Swaraj succinctly: " Swaraj for Gandhi was a condition of the self, an internal relationship; freedom was, first and last, self-rule and self-mastery." Freedom itself is not free, wrote an American judge, unless it implies responsibility.

The *Id* celebrations of August 18, three days after India won freedom, in which millions of Hindus and Muslims joyfully took part gave Gandhi immense satisfaction and hope for the future. He planned to visit Pakistan where he vowed to fight for communal harmony. " I shall die for the Hindus and Sikhs there. I shall be glad to die there. I shall be glad to die here too." He said (*Mohandas* p 645) Another poignant line from Gandhiji in October 1947: " Jesus Christ prayed to God from the cross to forgive those who had crucified him, It is my constant prayer to God that He may give me the strength to intercede even for my assassin." The prophet made no secret of his premonitions. In November he said that "when I die I shall die with Ramanama in my heart. The faith becomes stronger in me each day."

The new year began with a heavier agenda for Gandhiji. His biographer records that "as a new year commenced Gandhi recognized his restiveness." He had to attend to a number of pressing problems that appeared likely to destabilize the infant democracy. First he chose to set at rest doubts about unity between Nehru and Patel saying that they were 'an inseparable pair. Neither can do without the other." (*Mohandas*) He took up the issue of transferring Pakistan's share of the 'sterling balance' of Rs 55 crore that the Indian government decided to withhold and got it transferred against the wishes of Sardar Patel and others. Later Patel nobly conceded that Gandhiji was right as 'he took a long range view.'

He cautioned Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, one of the leading figures of the separate Andhra movement, then a member of the JVP Committee studying linguistic redistribution of provinces, against balkanization of the country. The letter of another senior Andhra leader Konda Venkatappayya whom Gandhiji always respected, caused considerable unhappiness. Venkatappayya wrote that because of "the moral degradation of the Congress legislators who made money by protecting criminals the people were saying "that the British government was much better." Rajmohan Gandhi records that the Mahatma "found the letter too shocking for words."

"To Rama" is the title of the last chapter of Rajmohan Gandhi's biography of his grandfather 'Mohandas.' The last line is a moving and an apt tribute to Gandhiji and a perfect evaluation of the Mahatma's life and legacy. "That Gandhi, the spirit that wanted to bless and forgive his assassin, even as he wanted to bless and forgive all the grudge-bearing residents of India, Pakistan and the world—the spirit that brought the chadriya's hands together and wanted to take the name of God at the moment of death, that Gandhi the bullets did not kill. They only released that Gandhi for the ages and the continents." (*Mohandas*) Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan had conveyed the same message forty eight years earlier in equally memorable words: " nothing better has ever been taught or lived since the world first began."

(to be continued)

WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS -10

- Prof. M.N. Sastri

Food for the Billions

"When a man's stomach is full, it makes no difference whether he is rich or poor."

- Euripides (480-406 BC)

"Slaughterhouses are kept far away from human eyes because that makes meat much easier to digest"

- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

For the first time in recent decades, the availability of food for the teeming billions seems to be in doubt. While the global food production continues to increase, the growth in demand has overtaken the growth in supply.

Efforts have been continuously on since early times to increase food production to meet the food needs of the rising population through improvements in agricultural technology. To begin with, the farmers knew that the first yields on a plot of land were much better than those of the subsequent years. This caused them to move to new uncultivated areas which again showed the same pattern of reduced yield over time. This system, known as *shifting cultivation, is* still pursued by the aboriginal population in some regions. Eventually it was discovered that plant growth on the same plot could be improved by spreading animal or bird manure throughout

the soil. With advances in fertilizer technology based on scientific chemical theory, nitrogen and phosphorus were established as the essential major nutrients for plant growth. By mid 19th century, naturally occurring inorganic fertilizers such as Chile Saltpetre (sodium nitrate) and rock phosphate came into use for increasing food output. At the beginning of the 20th century, Germany, faced with the shortage of Chile Saltpetre, looked for alternate sources of nitrogen through developing methods for fixing the nitrogen in the atmosphere in a form suitable for manufacture of fertilizers and also explosives. This was achieved successfully by Fritz Haber and his associates through the synthesis of ammonia, a convenient starting point *for* the purpose. This gave Germany the capacity to improve food production as well as build up arsenals of explosives and prepare for World War I. This war was followed by the most destructive World War II in which an unprecedented quantity of nitrogen explosives was used. The world currently faces the bloodiest phase in its history with nitrogen explosives of various types making life insecure every moment.

Current agriculture technology is based essentially on the Green Revolution achieved in the 50s with high yield hybrid crops, using nitrogen (and phosphorus) fertilizers and intensive irrigation with huge quantities of water from groundwater sources and river dams. This has enabled one person to be fed from no more than 0.2 hectare as compared to two hectares in the 18th century. The global use of nitrogen fertilizers (excluding the then USSR) in 1960s was 9.0×10^{s} tonnes. In 1995 this rose to 80×10^{6} tonnes. By 2008-09 nitrogen fertilizer consumption is expected to go up to 101×10^{6} tonnes and phosphate fertilizer consumption to 3.7×10^{6} tonnes. Only about 4 per cent of nitrogen in the fertilizers ends up in the form of plant-based diet and 4 per cent in the form of meat diet. The rest of the nitrogen in various chemical forms finds its way into the water courses, the soil and the atmosphere.

About 70-80 per cent of total water used globally goes to the agricultural sector. This is increasing further with rising irrigation operations. Water derived from irrigation systems cannot be recycled because it carries large quantities of nutrients, minerals and pesticides. This water is released into river, marine and ground water systems causing extensive damage to the ecosystems through eutrophication. Excess of nitrogen reduces soil fertility through salinization and promotes weed growths, and risk of pests. Water polluted with nitrogen also affects human health. By the end of the last century, nitrogen pollution has reached high levels in the US, parts of Europe, India, and China. By 2050, the *nitrogen cancer* is projected to spread over large areas and engulf nearly all the Earth, including the oceans. While chemical fertilizers help increasing the crop yields, the irreversible damage caused over a period of time also leads to lower food production. Reports indicate that crop yields in the most intensively cultivated areas using chemical fertilizers, both in developed and developing countries, have not only reached their physical limits but are even declining in some areas. It is reported that the 2-1 per cent a year growth of yields from world's grain fields between 1950 and 1990 during the height of the green revolution has already declined to 1.2 per cent. At the same time there has been an accelerating demand for food by the rising population and rise in prosperity in countries like China, India and Vietnam. Global demand for meat also has multiplied in recent years, especially in China and India, leading to increased demand for cereals (e.g. soya) as animal feed- It takes 2 to 6 kilograms of grain fed to a cow, pig or chicken to make one kilogram of meat, milk or eggs. About a third of harvested grain in the world is used as animal feed. In US it is as high as 50 per cent. David Pimentel of Cornell University says, ''If all the grain fed to livestock in the United States were consumed directly by people, the number of people that could be fed would be nearly 800 million." Compounding the problem is the increasing cost of inputs, such as fuel (diesel, petrol and natural gas), petroleum-based fertilizers, and transport. The sources of phosphate fertilizers are also running out leading to their steep price rise. Some countries, notably China and India, have even restricted grain exports to make their own people get fed. This has particularly hurt net food importers such as Bangladesh, Indonesia and most African countries.

The policy of several countries to mandate the use of biofuels such as alcohol has led to the diversion of large tracts of agricultural land from food production with attractive subsidies for growing corn, a source of alcohol for use in the blended fuel called *gasohol.* The rising demand for biofuels is leading to deforestation of vast areas of land for corn production. Worldwide fael ethanol production rose from 7.8 billion gallons in 2000 to an estimated 20.9 billion gallons in 2008 with Brazil and US as the topmost producers. India produced 52 million

gallons in 2007. We now see on the roads drunken automobiles (running on gasohol fuel) in addition to drunken drivers! The diversion of agricultural land for biofuel production to meet the growth in demand has driven up the food prices steeply sparking riots, political instability and growing worries about feeding the poor people and making it problematic to achieve the Millennium Development Goal to halve the number of hungry by 2015- A recent UN World Food Program report says that the rising food prices have pushed another 102 million people into hunger in the first half of 2009, raising the total number of hungry people to 1 billion.

The FAO says that the world faces the challenge of not only ensuring food for the one billion people (most of them in Asia and Africa) who are currently hungry but also for the projected nine billion people in 2050. For this we need to double global food production by 2050 and require additional agricultural land of about 1500 sq. km each year. Though tropical forests in Amazon, Indonesia, and the Congo are being chopped down for conversion to farmland, the area of farmland around the world now in use has been shrinking due to salinization and desertification and water shortage, partly offsetting the gain. Water availability for agriculture is another problem the worid is going to face. Over the past 50 years, as the world's population rose from 3 billion to 6.5 billion, water use has roughly trebled. With the population rising to 9.0 billion by 2050, the demand for water for raising food will soar. The FAO estimates that the world will need as much as 60 per cent more water for agriculture to feed these billions of extra mouths. With unpredictable variations in water availability through climate change, water management problems will become more andmore complex.

To meet the rising demand for food and biofuel, rich nations and companies are buying up farmland in some of the world's poorest countries (especially in Africa where people are starving) to grow food and biofuel for themselves and their customers. A number of companies from various nations are already growing sugarcane in Tanzania for supplying ethanol fuel to European Union countries. China, Sweden and many Gulf States have also initiated farm projects in Africa and South-East Asia. China with 20 per cent of the world's people has only 9 per cent of farmland. This land is dwindling due to human activities and desertification. The Chinese government and companies purchased 2.8 million hectares of farmland in Congo for oil palm plantation and invested £400 million in Mozambique to expand rice production. Worried by the difficulties of increasing food supplies in South Korea, Daewoo, the South Korean corporate giant, signed a deal to lease no less than half Madagascar's arable land to grow grain. Widespread anger at this deal led to the overthrow of Madagascar's president. South Korea has also bought 90,000 lectures of land in Sudan for food production UAE has bought 378,000 hectares in Sudan while Qatar bought 40,000 hectares in Kenya. India has spent $2 billion in leasing land in Ethiopia for sugar, tea and several other crops and is planning to spend double this amount for expanding these activities. The Sudanese Ambassador to India recently extended an open invitation to farmers in Punjab to take up cultivation of the vast land available in Sudan. Food outsourcing is now a worldwide realty. Several countries are importing food *from* abroad, thus conserving their limited water resources for other essential purposes. World seafood production also has reached its limit. Most of the stocks often popular fished species are being fully fished and overexploited. With the increasing emphasis on aquaculture to cater to the needs of the affluent sections of the society, the wild catches are dwindling, depriving the world's poor of their protein sources. Freshwater fish populations also are on rapid decline. According to WWF, fish stocks in lakes and rivers have fallen by nearly 30 percent since 1970. This represents a bigger population fall than that suffered by animals in jungles, temperate forests and other large ecosystems.

Global warming poses a serious threat to food production. Scientists warn that approximately half of the entire world population may face severe food shortages by the end of the century especially through declining crop yields such as maize and rice due to the rising temperatures. With rising sea levels, large areas of the fertile coastal land will be submerged compounding the problem. James Lovelock, the well-known chemist, inventor and environmentalist, feels that with the projected temperature rise of more than 4 degrees Celcius, the food output will fall to levels where the number of people remaining at the end of the century will probably be a billion or less. He does not think that the world "can react fast enough or clever enough to handle what is coming up". The hardest hit areas will be the poor and densely populated regions along the equatorial belt, which is the home of approximately 3

billion people. Demand for food is already increasing due to rising population in the region; and this number is projected to come close to doubling by the end of the century. The food situation will be critical in view of the fact that the food grown there is not resilient to climate change. India and some other countries are currently having a foretaste of such food shortages.

Scientists say that the only solution to meet the rising demand for food is through a second Green Revolution in terms of new higher yield varieties of pest-resisting paddy, wheat and corn under changing temperature conditions. Unfortunately there are yet no indications of a technological breakthrough in this direction. It should however be noted that attaining higher yields with new crop varieties or is also dependent on the soil's ability to supply the nutrients. This is possible only by intensive irrigation practices through the use of increasing quantities of nitrogen and phosphate fertilizers and water resources causing further damage to the ecosystems. The world thus faces the hard task of not only meeting the disproportion between a growing population and a lagging growth in food supplies, rise in hunger and malnutrition but also developing the technology to provide food for future generations as well, without harming the earth.

Global food security is thus a complex many sided demographic issue with economic, social, political and technological dimensions.

"SEN BOOK, PRIDE OF INDIA"

(Newspaper report on a Seminar conducted jointly by Visakhapatnam Public Library and Centre for Policy Studies on September 2, 2009 on "Amartya Sen's Idea of Justice" with Prof. R.V.R.Chandrasekhara Rao as Chief Guest and Shri D.V.Subba Rao as President)

"The Idea of Justice, latest book by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, which had received encomiums from a conservative magazine like 'Economist', was a book that every Indian could be proud of. It was an in depth analysis of economics and search for justice. It enhanced the stature of economics and philosophy. This book was a contribution of high rank," said speakers at a lecture-meeting on Amartya Sen's latest work. The meeting was jointly organised by the Visakhapatnam Public Library and Centre for Policy Studies at the Gayatri Vidya Parishad premises here on Wednesday. The speakers, included former Vice-Chancellor of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University and noted intellectual R.V.R. Chandrasekhara Rao, former Mayor and president of the Public Library D.V. Subba Rao and Director of Centre for Policy Studies A. Prasanna Kumar. Mr. Subba Rao, who presided over the meeting, recalled the remarkable output of Dr.Sen and said even though economics was his closest subject, he had touched all aspects of life and remedial justice. It was search for justice which would go on and on, he said. Quoting elaborately from the book, Prof. Chandrasekhara Rao said 'you can understand justice by understanding injustice'. "People have their own concept of justice. Justice is a journey of becoming, it is a continuous journey and it has no destiny. There is no simple formula for achieving justice," he added. He said Amartya Sen made a distinction between global and international justice. In India one had to concentrate on removing injustices that were identifiable and that could be removed.

Prof. Prasanna Kumar, who welcomed the gathering, recalled the saying 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice every where' and said that Sen's 'Idea of Justice' was a sumptuous, although a heavy, feast. The idea of justice was immensely important. That had moved people in the past and would continue to move in future also, he added.

(Courtesy : The Hindu, 3-9-2009)

"SHED HOSTILITY, RIGHT, LEFT TOLD"

(Newspaper report on a lecture delivered by Prof. RVR Chandrasekhara Rao on August 14, 2009 at Centre for Policy Studies on "Significance of 2009 Election)

"The divide between the Left and the Right is not necessary. This contradiction would do great harm to the nation. They should stop acting as enemies and be political adversaries," said former Vice-Chancellor of Dr.B.R-Ambedkar University R.V.R. Chandrasekhara Rao, delivering a lecture on 'The Significance of the 2009 Election' organised by the 'Centre for Policy Studies' here on Friday. He said that the 'arrogance of the Left was as bad as the confidence of the Right about religion'. The Hindutva of the BJP was betrayal of real Hinduism in spirit and the only label that the Left was left with was anti religion. Both should convert themselves in the interest of the nation, he said. 'Man exploits man' one says and the other contradicts it and asserts 'it was the other way round! This was the present stand of the Left and the Right. Warning about the new nexus between

politics and real estate money power, Prof. Rao called for a better understanding between the Right and the Left.

(Courtesy : The Hindu, 3-9-2009)

UNCLEAR EXPLOSION

- Cmde (Retd.) C Uday Bhaskar
Director, National Maritime Foundation, Delhi

Was the thermonuclear device tested by India at Pokhran on May 11,1998a failure? This question, first raised in the immediate aftermath of Pokhran II has been resurrected again. Speaking at what was deemed to be a closed-door seminar in Delhi last week Krishnan Santhanam formerly with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and part of the team that oversaw the Shakti series of tests in 1998 observed that the yield in the test results of the thermonuclear device was lower than what was expected and later claimed. Soon thereafter a controversy seems to have been generated in some section of the media — on television in particular — with words like 'dud' and 'hoax' being bandied about rather freely.

The official response has been to reject these doubts and the principal scientific adviser, R Chidambaram has reiterated that the thermonuclear device test was "satisfactory" and had met the requisite design parameters. This view has been further endorsed by former president APJ Abdul Kalam who was the head of the DRDO during Pokhran II. It is instructive that these two eminent scientists were part of the apex team that provided the necessary techno-strategic advice and assessment to the then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee about the outcome of the Shakti series of nuclear tests that radically altered India's strategic profil.

Post Pokhran II India declared that it had successfully acquired a 'minimum credible deterrent' and then realised that it was necessary to prioritise 'credibility' first before deciding on numbers. Hence the words were re-ordered and it was later declared that India had indeed acquired a credible minimum deterrent. Thus the central question that arises post the Santhanam observation is the texture of India's nuclear deterrent credibility. Is it robust enough to deal with what it was expected to — that is, 'deter' the potential adversary from embarking upon a nuclear attack against India? Here Santhanam clarified that India does indeed have the ability of ' vacating ' — the term that he chose — any nuclear threat that may arise.

So to that extent the various audio-visual aspersions — some very shrill — being cast about the quality of India's deterrent capability are misplaced. The more nuanced Santhanam formulation was about the implications of his view of "partial success" of the thermonuclear device apropos the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty(CTBT). Again this is an old debate that is often raised in India.

In May 1998 itself when India had announced its no-first-use policy and a voluntary moratorium on further testing, numerous well-meaning critics castigated the Vajpayee government for its strategic naiveté. Yet the government of the day represented by then national security adviser Brijesh Mishra and the apex scientific team assuaged the many concerns that were voiced. Despite the limited number of tests, it was the considered strategic assessment of the establishment that India had acquired appropriate nuclear deterrent sufficiency. These misgivings about the CTBT came up more recently during the intense public debates that ensued over the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with the US.

So to that extent these are old issues being re-visited with greater intensity and concomitant media glare. India is now committed to a de-facto CTBT and can decide when it wishes to move to a de-jure process after a careful and objective assessment of the prevailing regional and global environment. The assertion that the thermonuclear test had a yield below that which was expected or desired is a very complex nuclear physics issue and has been discussed by domain experts for the last 10 years. A detailed technological assessment has been published by Chidambaram in 2000 (re-published in 2008 with revisions) which reviews the seismic data collectedin relation to the specific soil conditions obtained in Pokhran — and the conclusion is that the yield was satisfactory — and not a 'fizzle'.

Chidambaram and his core team of physicists and atomic scientists have spent a greater part of their professional life in enabling India to reach its current nuclear status and their technical assessment has been validated by the peer group. Here Chidambaram's suggestion is welcome that since the doubts that have been raised are technical — the quantum of the yield and its analysis — if backed by appropriate scientific data, these can be referred to BARC. In matters of nuclear strategy, while the actual capability and its complex

technology is the purview of the scientist — the final decision about the quantity, quality and deployment of the arsenal is a political one based on an objective assessment by the national security professionals. And in the Indian case, it is evident that prudent decisions to attain deterrence credibility have been arrived at. The current controversy is best resolved in the tea-cup of scientists.

TALE OF TWO COMMITTEES

- Dr. R V Vaidyanatha Ayyar, I.A.S., Retd.
Former Secretary to Govt. of India

One of his interesting experiences in the years K spent in the central education department was revision of NPE 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA) . This experience was very novel ; it as different from his previous experience of policymaking in the pharmaceutical sector as cheese from chalk. All aspects of policymaking- the content of the policy, the politics of the policy and the process of policymaking – were totally different. The pharmaceutical policy-the-making was concrete and specific; it was an operational policy that sought to specify the new parameters for licensing of manufacture as well as for regulation of prices. In contrast, the education policy is a broad framework policy that is long on ideas and short on specifics. Even its POA was not an action plan, much less a project document which specifies the concrete measures that would be undertaken, their sequence, a concrete timeframe for the actions, the human financial and material resources required, and who would do what and when. In contrast, the POA was more like an election manifesto full of contingent promises. Given the tone and tenor of educational discourse and their audience, the policy as well as its POA spells out their philosophical underpinnings; in contrast the audience those days of the pharmaceutical policy predominantly comprised hard-headed businessmen who are more interested in ' what is in it for me' than in philosophical verbiage. Further, what the government wished to do with pharmaceutical and other economic policies - then and also in subsequent years- was to undertake reform by stealth, to move away from the Nehruvian economic frame without forswearing that frame. Revision of NPE hardly caused a ripple outside the community of educationists and educational administrators. Given the ideological orientation of C and the Minister, Arjun Singh, there was hardly any opposition in the CABE to the policy that was sought to be approved. So much so at the very last minute just before the Minister concluded the deliberations, a provision to constitute a National Elementary Education Mission was incorporated in the revised policy though it was nether deliberated upon in the CABE Committee on Policy nor in the CABE itself. The process was quite informal in that neither in 1986 nor 1992 was the policy placed before the Cabinet for approval before it was laid before the Parliament. In contrast, pharmaceutical policy was a bitterly contested terrain, enmeshed in vicious interest group politics, and in dissensions within the government. So much so policymaking was protracted and could not be completed during K's tenure. It was not possible to have the luxury of a totally open 'stakeholder' consultative process, as with education policy. While democracy is government by discussion, as Atlee put it, at some time the discussion should stop , and the government should make up its mind and hand over its decision. This is all the more so with bitterly contested policies.

In Faulkner's celebrated phrase, 'the past isn't dead…It's not even past'. Therefore the revision in 1992 of the 1968 policy is best understood from a historical perspective. In the formulation of any overarching framework policy, a few questions in respect of the Past, Present and Future loom large in the mind of the policymaker: How much and what to continue? How much and what to change? What is the vision of the future that the policy wishes to construct? What is the political context? What is the range of policy options that could be considered without major adverse consequences for the government and the policymakers? Or to use the jargon, how large is the policy space? The answers to these questions determine whether the policy that comes to be adopted is incremental, that is to say, it is not one that uproots the existing policy but a continuance of the status quo with a few marginal modifications. As with science, revolutions do not occur in policymaking every day; most of the time, to borrow the celebrated schema of Thomas Kuhn, policymaking is more often than not akin to 'normal science', that is to say research that is carried out within the extant paradigm.

The possibility of a paradigm shift in education policy was strong in 1968 when free India's first national education policy was formulated. The Report of the Education Commission (1964-65) forcefully expressed

"Much of the past 30 years of macroeconomics was spectacularly useless at best and positively harmful at worst." - PAUL KRUGMAN

the view that the education system inherited from the colonial era and designed to meet the needs of an imperial administration needs radical changes if it is to meet the purposes of a modern democratic and socialist society. In fact, 'what was needed is a revolution in education' so as to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people. Among others, it recommended far-reaching changes such as Indian languages being adopted as media of instruction at all stages and in all subjects within five years; introduction of neighbourhood school concept at the lower primary stage in the first instance and at higher primary stages a little latter so that all children in a given neighbourhood irrespective of class, creed or religion attend the same school and educational segregation of rich and poor students is eliminated; introduction of work experience and national and social service as an integral part of education at all stages education; linking expansion of educational institutions to provision of facilities as per prescribed norms; limiting enrolment with reference to facilities actually available; and selectivity in admissions in higher education so that educational standards are not compromised and availability of manpower matches the requirements. The 1968 policy makes it explicit that the government is convinced that a radical reconstruction on the broad lines recommended by the Education Commission is necessary. Following Bagehot's classic distinction between 'dignified' or ceremonial institutions (such as the Crown) that legitimate government action on the one hand, and efficient bodies (like the House of Commons) that exercise that authority on the other, one can distinguish between the ceremonial parts of a policy and its operative parts. The lofty language of the ceremonial part of the 1968 policy is divorced from its operative part. The reasons are not far to seek. The Report came in for discussion and decision at a very inopportune time. The Education Commission was appointed in June 1964, two months after Nehru's death, by the new government headed by Lal Bahadur Shastri; the decisions of the government on the report were set out four years later . The intervening period is one of the most tumultuous periods in recent Indian history: two major political transitions from Nehru to Shastri and again from Shastri to Indira Gandhi, the challenge to Indira Gandhi from the Syndicate which culminated in the split of the ruling party; an acute economic crisis; and a war with Pakistan. 1964 was a year of inflation driven by food prices; it was followed by two years of unprecedented drought. India was experiencing near-famine conditions living precariously "from ship-to-mouth", perilously dependent upon PL-480 supplies, and written off as a hopeless basket case. On the top of it, PL 480 agreement came to an end. Rather than extend the agreement, President Johnson deliberately chose to "short tether" PL 480 supplies, that is to say not to make any long-term commitments of PL 480 supplies but instead compel Indians to lodge repeated pleas for the supplies. The macroeconomic situation was so desperate that the Fourth Plan formulation was in disarray and the government had to agree in 1965 to a six month long study of the economy by a World Bank Mission for making policy recommendations. On the top of it, the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 led to suspension of aid for a short period. Devaluation of the rupee followed soon thereafter; the aid expected in pursuance of the devaluation did not materialise. Radical reconstruction of education calling for substantial investment can hardly be a priority in those trying times. Indira Gandhi did not as yet plump for radical populism, and even if she did educational reconstruction on the lines suggested could hardly have been politically expedient.

The National Policy on Education, 1968 was in force till it was supplanted by another policy in 1986 when another Congress government was in office. It should be said to the credit of the 1986 policy that it was more specific and concrete than that of 1968. A number of significant measures were taken in pursuance of that policy. To mention a few, the central government assumed a major role in the financing of universal elementary education, so much so the centre now contributes about 70 percent of the plan [investment] expenditure on elementary education as compared to just 8.6 percent in 1985-86; major centrally sponsored schemes like Operation Blackboard, teacher education, nonformal education ,and vocational education were started; the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) was given statutory powers under an Act of the Parliament to regulate the growth of technical education; accrediting and assessment bodies were set up for higher and technical education; distance education was promoted in secondary and higher education; and academic staff colleges were established to improve university administration. Never before was there such a flurry of activity as in the years immediately following the policy of 1986. Yet all the changes in the policy as

well as the measures were undertaken were within the existing framework only. In 1986, when the 1968 policy was revised no disavowal of the past was conceivable given that in 1968 and 1986 the same party held power, and the prime ministers were related by blood. The rhetoric of taking the country to the twenty-first century could as well be accommodated within the policy objectives of the 1968 Policy which included ' emphasis on the development of science and technology', and 'education be [ing] able to play a vital role in promoting its vital role in promoting national progress'. When the two policies are compared one can notice the change in the vocabulary of discourse. By 1986, terms like radical reconstruction, transformation of the system, young men and women of character and ability committed to national service and development, and a sense of common citizenship and culture had gone out of vogue. The 1986 policy explicitly recognises that Indian society is a culturally plural society and that consequently, education should be oriented towards unity and integrity of the country, and elimination of obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition, and fatalism. The Constitution has come to be the secular gospel providing 'the principles of which the National System of education is conceived of'. From a historical perspective, it is interesting to note that socialism had not yet faded away from political discourse. Interestingly, while endorsing the view of the Education Commission (1964-65) that a radical reconstruction of education was essential the 1968 policy conspicuously avoids the term 'national system of education'. In contrast, the 1986 policy has a whole part devoted to that national system of education even though the system it had in mind is nothing distinctive from education systems in other countries, expect for rural universities and selective delinking of degrees from jobs. The part in the 1968 policy dealing with 'national system of education' is no more than an ornamental facade.

Opportunities arose again in 1977 and 1989 when anti-Congress governments were formed at the centre to attempt a paradigm shift in the education policy. The end of Emergency and the emergence of Janata government in 1977 were widely perceived to be the second dawn of independence; there were high expectations that the opportunities lost in 1947 could be regained and that there could be a return to the Gandhian values and nationalist aspirations abandoned by Congress rule, particularly under Indira Gandhi. The Janata government did attempt to come forth with a new National Policy on Education but it did not last long enough to finalise the draft policy document that was prepared. Again in 1989, the National Front government sought to make a break with the past; the order of the government setting the Ramamurti Committee sets out the objective of excluding' the elitist aberrations which have become the glaring characteristic of the educational scene'. The choice of the chairman and some of the members was designed to ensure that the objective a reality. The chairman was Acharya Ramamurti, a *Sarvodya* leader from Bihar, hoary associate of Jaya Prakash Narayan, and member of the political affairs committee of the Janata Dal. Among the members were Gandhians Usha Mehta and Manubhai Pancholi, and Anil Sadgopal an educationist who saw as his life mission the actualisation of the common school system, whereby all Indians irrespective of class, caste or creed would study in neighbourhood schools with a common curriculum and syllabus. Yet as luck would have it, within a little over three months after its constitution, the end of the government began with the Prime Minister's his Independence Day Speech in which he announced his government's decision to resuscitate the Mandal Commission and provide for reservation in employment for backward classes; in another three months the V P Singh government fell. The American Supreme Court, it is said, 'follows th' illiction returns''2 ; likewise, the Ramamurti Committee could not ignore the cataclysmic events outside: the fury of the student protests against the decision of the government, Advani's *Rath* Yatra, the death throes of the V P Singh government, and the coming into power of a minority government led by Chandrasekhar which was critically dependent upon the Congress Party. Consequently, the tone and tenor of its report was less sharp than its perspective paper, and its recommendations more ambivalent than what the committee would have liked. The Committee began with a bang and ended with a whimper. The Committee even claimed in its report was that it was in 'basic agreement with the NPE perspective and thrust and that it had only elaborated on certain "key result areas" that did not receive adequate ground level priority such as re-design of curriculum and methodologies and a machinery for effective implementation'.

C spent the eight months from the constitution of the Ramamurti committee to the submission of its report

"While some men are born small, and some achieve smallness, it is clear that Adam Smith has had much smallness thrust on him." - JOHN STUART MILL Quoted by AMARTYA SEN

working single-mindedly to ensure that the committee report did not stray too much from the 1986 policy, and that where it did its opinion was divided. This was because on several issues dear to him such as nonformal education, total literacy campaigns, and centrally sponsored schemes, the activist members of the committee would have undone the existing policies and approaches. The activist members of the committee targeted as bastions of elitism the Navodaya Vidyalayas , a brainchild of Rajiv Gandhi and P V Narasimha Rao; they were critical of the scheme of nonformal education as they felt that it aggravated the disempowerment of the poor by relegating their children to an inferior education; they were also skeptical of the TLCs. If they had their way, the total literacy campaigns would have been critically evaluated by independent study group, programmes like nonformal and vocational education discontinued, Navodaya Vidyalayas would have been wound up, all centrally sponsored schemes would have been transferred to states in about a year, and no new centrally sponsored scheme would have been started. In the realization of his objective C was greatly helped by SM, his hard working additional secretary who handled the overzealous members of the committee with boundless patience. NCERT also came in handy; it came out with a relentless critique[4] of the perspective paper circulated by the Ramamurti committee. [5] Commenting on the prologue of the perspective paper, it observed that 'there cannot be disagreement on the philosophical platitudes on what education should be and what it should lead to'. The goals set out in the perspective paper were not new and were highlighted by various commissions and committees. The problem lies in developing implementation strategies and yet it was here that the paper was vague. It found fault with almost everything that the paper had to say and concluded with an epilogue that found fault with the very setting up of the committee and the adverse effect it had on implementation on ongoing schemes. To quote:

On matters like Education, there should be broad national consensus on the directions in which education has to be used as an instrument for national development and, as far as possible; it should not be subject to repeated reviews at short intervals. Such an approach may not be conducive to tangible growth and development, particularly in the field of education which requires a long gestation period, a minimum of 8 to 10 years, for programmes to be developed. The present review, though might be necessary for obvious considerations (sic) has already resulted in slackening the apace of implementation of the NPE, 1986'.

Pretty strong words from a governmental organisation! The political context – the imminent fall of the V P Singh government explains the extraordinary courage of NCERT. It should be said to the credit of C and the government of the day that the report was laid on the floor of the Parliament instead of being consigned to the *gulag* as Naik's 1978 report was. May be the fact that Ramamurti as well as the Prime Minster Chandrasekhar were colleagues of the Total Revolution movement of Jayaprakash Narain saved the report from physical oblivion.

In July 1991, soon after the government headed by P V Narasimha Rao assumed office, a committee of the CABE was appointed to review all the developments since NPE and make recommendations on the changes to be made. J, the chief minister of the state to which K belonged was its chairman and K himself the member secretary. The committee was evenly balanced having ministers from different political parties and representing different regions. The committee also had a few experts like Malcolm Adiseshiah. J was a qualified teacher, who had set up and managed many educational institutions, was very much interested in education, and even as chief minister held the portfolio of education. When K briefed him of the background of the committee he burst out into laughter and summed up his job as 'burying the Ramamurti report.' J's committee could easily conclude after deliberations stretched over seven months 'only a few of the recommendations (of the Ramamurti committee)…have policy implications…while very little of the policy requires reformulation though the POA needs to be revised considerably.' Thereafter the CABE and the government left the NPE almost intact, except for the ritual shifting forward of the target date for achieving universal elementary education and a few changes such as recognising total literacy campaigns to be the major instrument for eradicating adult illiteracy, highlighting the importance of promoting computer literacy, and declaring the intent to establish a National Elementary Education Mission. K coordinated the revision of the POA but that was after the *Mahabhinishkramana*- the exit of the C on superannuation.

Sanctifying the 1986 policy was not without a twist, an element of drama. Higher and technical education did not matter much to the Ramamurti committee. It suggested only one change in the policy relating to these areas of education The 1968 policy announced the intent of the government to establish an apex national body would covering all areas of higher education such as general, agricultural, technical, legal education for promoting greater coordination and consistency in policy. These different areas were spread across many departments of the central government, and hence the idea of an apex body for coordination has merit. However, the idea that did not make any headway as none of the existing regulatory bodies like the UGC and Medical Council would brook the idea of a body that might shrink their turf. After the 1968 policy, there were moves to set up a cabinet committee on human resource development but every ministry was wary of setting up a body which may give scope to other ministers to meddle in its arena. Life is full of comic interludes. While the cabinet committee was not set up, the post of a secretary, human resource development was created for effecting coordination between various areas of education. However, the incumbent had nothing to coordinate, as he received no file except the one relating to his appointment. The Ramamurti committee suggested the creation of a two-tier informal structure: a council of the relevant state and central minsters presided by the Prime Minister; and a council of relevant secretaries. At the behest of the department of education, J's committee accepted the recommendation.

However, J came to have an agenda of his own which ran contrary to C's wishes: knocking out the stranglehold of the AICTE on the establishment of engineering and management institutions. In order to curb the proliferation of substandard technical institutions the 1986 policy suggested conferring statutory powers on AICTE to regulate technical education institutions; subsequently the Parliament enacted an AICTE Act This change shifted the power of patronage from the states to the centre. Being a chief minister, J wanted the AICTE to go back to its former role of being an advisory body. His motive was sincere as thousands of students from his state were going to other States lie Karnataka and Maharashtra to pursue engineering education. As chief minister he wanted to create educational facilities in his state and found the AICTE to be a meddlesome body. His perception of AICTE was shared by all the states and therefore he had no difficulty whatsoever of having his view adopted by his committee, overcoming the protests of C. J's committee proposed but C disposed. A few days before the CABE was due to meet, a presentation was given to the prime minister, also from the same state as J, on the changes proposed to NPE. The PM was human resource minister in Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet and oversaw the formulation of the NPE. He now thwarted C as well as J; he would not allow any change in the existing provisions relating to higher and technical education. The idea of an apex national body covering all areas of tertiary education would remain and so would the AICTE Act. On the eve of the meeting of CABE, K met J in the Andhra Pradesh Bhavan to brief him on the meeting. K told him that his game was up; the PM was not in favour and that if he wanted to have his way thorough he should speak to the PM that very moment. J would not believe. 'How could it be?' he wondered. 'You know, I spent long hours with the PM during his by-election campaign. I had a long chat with him on AICTE and he agreed with me,' he said. Next day the CABE set up a working group on technical education; the chairman was Surendra Nath, a Governor who was a former chief of the Intelligence Bureau. During the discussions all the state ministers supported the change while 'experts' opposed ; the chairman of the committed delivered his judgment: 'as there is no unanimity the status quo would continue.' As we were going for lunch J nudged K to tell him, 'So C and you got a policeman to put me down. Of course, if I were a central minister I also would oppose the change.' K replied,' Did I not tell you that you have no support of the prime minister?' J would not give up and threw a challenge, 'OK, let me see what you would do if I sanction colleges. Would you prosecute me?' He was true to his word. He did sanction over a dozen engineering colleges without waiting for the sanction of the AICTE. The decision was widely welcomed in the state but in that process he lost his *gaddi*. He sanctioned an institution to his own organization and that came in handy to the dissidents.

Lest the inference should be drawn that it was a battle between greedy politicians and an expert dominated body, it should be said that AICTE presided over the largest ever proliferation of institutions, with engineering and MBA colleges, dime a dozen, sprouting in cubbyholes. So much of power was centralised in it

"In Africa poverty is a tragedy; in India it is a scandal." - Quoted by EDWARD LUCE

that even for a nominal increase in the number of seats in an engineering college anywhere in the country, institutions had to court the AICTE for its approval. For years, day in and day out, K would be beseeched by visitors from his state- their request was simple, please request the chairman to grant us an interview and to send a team to inspect our institution. K came to believe that AICTE was to technical education what Director General Technical Development was to industry in the license-permit-control *raj*. It was insensitive to the concerns of the states. K had a personal experience of that insensitivity when he was state education secretary. One day he was driving to his office from his home and on the way saw a new , attractively painted board which sprung up in front of the Andhra Pradesh Technological University. The board had a long list of schools that the university had set up-the school of biotechnology and so on. On inquiry, K was informed that the chairman AICTE visited the university a few days ago and approved those schools. K was not amused. In his next visit to Delhi, he met the education adviser in the central department of education who was officiating as chairman AICTE. The chairman was quite condescending and delivered a long monologue on what K and state government should do to promote technical education in the state. After a while, when he interrupted his monologue, K asked him how he approved the umpteen schools without consulting the state government which had to bear all the expenditure for establishing and running the schools. When the adviser hummed and hawed, K bluntly told him: 'You have your AICTE Act and I have my state Act. I would prosecute the vice-chancellor and you under my Act for not obtaining the approval of the state government. Let me see what you would do'. And then he walked out of the room. The board vanished by the time he returned to his state headquarters. K was happy that J took spirited measures to dismantle AICTE, and sad when he failed. Suffice to say, vesting too much power in a body, even if it were a professional bodies, leads to arbitrariness and rent seeking behaviour inherent to the license-permit-control *raj*. In fact professional bodies may be more vulnerable to the 'political economy' than a political or administrative body, which is more directly accountable to the people. AICTE had acquired such disrepute that seventeen years later the chairman as well as the secretary was arrested for corruption.

K had the satisfaction that J's committee explicitly stated higher education should progressively be made largely self-financing by appropriate support to the needy students by way of student loans, that incentives should be provided to academic institutions to augment income by way of consultancy, and that implementation of programmes should be judged not only with reference to expenditure but also in terms of outcomes.

As the process of revision of the policy went on and on, K felt that the J's committee should have accomplished more. He was irked by unending verbal acrobatics; it was only much latter he realised that 'words, words, words' are what constitute negotiations and multilateral diplomacy. He thought that the review should focus on the changes necessary in education as a complement to the contemporaneous economic reforms. The demand that public expenditure on education should be at least six percent of the gross domestic product is to a meet on education policy what liturgy is to a Church service. K felt that the demand would make more sense if higher budgetary allocations were linked with concrete measures for improving the efficiency of investment and delivery systems. Further, he felt that the AICTE was only a part of the malaise afflicting higher education, and that the litany of adequate budgetary resources for higher education, freedom for political interference and real autonomy for educational institutions was inadequate. It was necessary to address the structural deficiencies. In K's perception, the universities were like sick public sector undertakings, and unconditional grants that government gave to them were like the unconditional budgetary support government gave to sick loss-making public sector undertakings. Higher and technical education institutions would not improve unless driven by economic incentives. The Thatcherite solution of freezing grants was an extreme step, but perhaps that was an unavoidable first step if universities were to be induced to see reason and to improve their efficiency. He was all admiration for Thatcher who stuck to her convictions and ignored the petty revenge of the Oxford dons who refused her the honorary D. Lit., customarily awarded to all alumni who rose to be prime ministers. But then K lacked the courage of conviction needed to expound his views in public. He learnt the bitter lesson from his experience of making pharmaceutical policy that he should not punch above his weight; in C's territory which K inhabited, the moment he expressed views in J's committee contrary to the cues offered by C, he would cease to have anything

to do with policy. However, what he could not do in life he could do in dreams. Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg and ushered the Reformation. Similarly, on his dreams, K the modern day Luther posted his heretical tenets on the walls of the conference room where the committee met. If only dreams were to come to life!

A TALE OF TWO 'CITIES'

- **Dr. A. Aswini Kumar,** M.D.,
Professor of Medicine, ASRAM Medical College, ELURU

There are two '*cities',* one we all like but is fast disappearing, the other we all dislike but is growing fast. The first is simplicity which we all like but it has almost vanished in today's greedy and acquisitive society. Mahatma Gandhi is the best example and noblest embodiment of simplicity. Where-ever he went or when who-so-ever went to him, he was always seen in his "kollayi" (loin cloth) with his smile, walking stick and charaka. Gandhiji's famous follower Vinoba Bhave also comes to mind for upholding the ideal of high thinking and simple living. Gandhi Jayanti is therefore a sacred day on our calendar.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, when he came to Machilipatnam as Vice-President of India to participate in the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Andhra Scientific Co., (presently BEL) stayed in our house on that memorable day in January 1953. His endearing simplicity made every one of us feel comfortable and at ease. He was seen reciting slokas in Sanskri, humming Thyagarakja krithis and talking with a smile to both elders and children, making every one happy. As teenagers we were dazzled by his presence and my brother Prasanna (now Director of Centre for Policy Studies) asked him whether he would agree to play cricket with us. Only a few weeks earlier we all had seen Dr Radhakrishnan's photograph with a cricket bat in his hands in the then popular Illustrated Weekly of India. With a gentle smile Radhakrishnan replied that his cricket was only for photos in magazines. Can we imagine such things happening in today's India? Everyone holding an office or seat of power, whether it is at the village level or at a higher state or national level, lives in the midst of so much of pomp, so much of hullabaloo and show of power that ordinary people are afraid of going near them. When we meet them, the carelessness with which they behave, the arrogance they display in their talk and demeanour makes the common man feel hurt in any interaction with them. We cant help it and must put up with wielders of power holding high positions and possessing huge amounts of money. The other city(sity) which we all dislike but which is dangerously increasing is obe*sity*. One of the main hazards of today's health care is childhood obesity. It is true that obesity is on the increase all over the world. But what is alarming is its increase particularly in children.

According to the leading English weekly *The Economist* (March 27,2004) some 300,000 Americans die every year because of obesity though Americans spend $40 billion annually on weight reduction. American Society for Bariatrics has a large membership. In United Kingdom 50% of adult population are either overweight or obese. It is not less in the developing countries. In one of the studies done recently in a college nearly 20 to 25% of students were found to be either overweight or obese. Obesity is described as excessive body fat.

Diagnosis of Obesity : By appearance - People with obesity appear more plump and rotund. By height weight charts BMI. Height Weight Charts : If the height is 5.6" roughly 1 Kg per inch (i.e.) 66Kg + 3 Kg. Another formula : If the height is 170 cm. minus 100 should be the weight. 170-100 = 70+ 3. One can check for oneself to know whether one is within the range. Body Mass Index (BMI) Of all the above BMI is considered the best. BMI is calculated by weight in kilograms divided by height in meters square. Eg :- Weight 70 Kg, Height 1.75 Cm. BMI = 70/1.752: 22.4, Normal : 18.5 to 24.9, Over Wt: 25 to 29.9, Obesity : 30 to 39.9, Moribund Obesity :>40

Suitable tests for self-assessment... 1. Waist Measurement: If more than 90 cm in men and more than 85cm in women one is fatty. 2. Pinch Test: Pinch a fold of skin on the anterior abdominal wall or on the back behind scapula. If the fold between the thumb and index finger is 2.5 cm. it indicates excess fat. Dangers of Obesity: Obesity increases both morbidity and mortality. Common diseases associated with obesity are: Hypertension, Type II Diabetes, Heart Attacks, Joint Diseases, Gallstones, Breast Cancer, Caner of Colon, rectum, prostate in men, Cancer of uterus, ovary in women, Digestive disorders, Embarrassing stress in continence of urine in women.

These are some but the list is ever increasing. *Management:* (1) *Change in eating habits :* Avoid fast

foods, fried foods Eat plenty of leafy vegetables at regular times (2) *Low fat content foods :* Fruits of any variety (3) *Regular exercise :* Walking is the best. *Medical Treatment:* Medicines have come into the market in many forms but their long term safety is yet to be known. Side effects could be many. Hence not often recommended.

Surgery: Recent advance, bariatric surgery done in very obese people. Banding, Bypass etc. Where stomach is cut down or bypassed to reduce food intake. Side effects and complications are many. Simplest way to reduce : Eat less and walk more, And that is the way to health. May simplicity replace obesity! Tail Piece: A person on the weighing scales was asked: Are your overweight?. The person replied : " No, I am just 10 inches shorter."

SRI SARADAMANI DEVI-II

- Sri Challa Sivasankaram

Sri Rama Krishna said, "She is Sarada, Saraswati. She descended to impart knowledge. She is the communicator of knowledge; she is full of the rarest wisdom" Swami Vivekananda exhorted his fellow disciples, ''Mother has been born to revive the waning power (shakti) that is Bharat, and making her the nucleus, once more will Gargis and Maitreyis be born into the world". She combined in her virtuous personality the eternal ideals of Sita and Savitri, Gargi and Maitreyi. She was not wearied of reiterating that she was as much the mother of the good as of the wicked" To the question of the Holy Mother. ''How do you look upon me?'' The Master answered, "I look upon you as the embodiement of Divine Mother''. On a later occasion Sri Ramakrishna was heard having said to his disciples, "Had she not been so spartanly pure, who knows whether I might not have lost my self-control". Sri Ramakrishna used to say "You may be saved if the being in me is hurt, but if the being in her is offended, no one can save you''. Both of them kept unbenumbed warmth of love for each other. He could not bear her becoming uneasy. He said, ''if the Holy Mother is angry, I shall be undone" Sister Nivedita says "Holy Mother is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of womanhood".

Mother to a disciple, "He is unfortunate, indeed who does not bask in the sunlight of my compassion. I do not know anyone, not even an insect for whom I do not feel compassion" She says mind will be steadied if one repeats the name of God fifteen to twenty thousand times a day. As regards liberation, it can be given any moment but God does not want to give Bhakti so easily. ''Holy mother Saradamani Devi's bequest a few damp ere her death to a devotee. If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather detect your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; this whole world is your own!''

(Concluded)

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