



BULLETIN

Vol.8 No.5
June 2, 2004

OF THE
CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES
(GAYATRI VIDYA PARISHAD)

THE 2004 VERDICT

The 2004 elections have shown again the strength and maturity of the Indian electorate. With quiet dignity the people of India have demonstrated their power to defeat a government and choose another. Nowhere and at no time in human history was there an electorate of 670 million of whom more than 350 million voted in a general election. Atal Bihari Vajpayee hit the nail on its head when he said that the 2004 election was a victory for Indian democracy. *The Guardian* of the United Kingdom wrote that "It was a massive vote of confidence in India's democratic system, a vote that swept aside declarations of a surging economy."

First and foremost let us salute the Indian voter for keeping the world's largest democracy alive. He/she is also the anonymous author of the silent democratic upheaval that shocked the high and the mighty, stunned the experts and political pundits and amazed India watchers all over the world. The skeptics who had predicted the collapse of Indian democracy after Nehru and who wrote its epitaph in 1975 when Indira Gandhi imposed the infamous emergency learnt their lessons. Still, cynics and prophets of doom are there in good number eager to consign Indian democracy to the dustbin of history.

Not only the NDA government but also some theories and generalisations stand rejected. For example if anti-incumbency was put forth as the main reason for the defeat of NDA at the centre and some ruling parties in the states that went to polls, states like Orissa, Bihar, Delhi and West Bengal prove it wrong. If it is argued that it is a fractured verdict, the counter-point is that in a heterogeneous and fragmented society and in a polity of more than 25 contesting parties, the result could not but be otherwise. The Congress with just 26.69% vote share emerged as the single largest party with 145 seats while the BJP with 22.16% vote share finished second with 138 seats. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) with 5.69% vote secured the third place with 43 seats. The NDA with 35.30% total vote share was edged out by the Congress led UPA with 35.19% and almost as much percentage voted for neither of these two alliances. The Congress which had obtained 45% of votes polled in the first general election in 1952 has slipped to a little over 26% in 2004 while the BJP which

as Jan Sangh had a meagre 3% vote share in the 1952 election has, during the last few general elections, raised its share to over 22%.

Parliamentary democracy is governed by the FPP-first past the post-principle. In coalition politics dominated by too many parties it is possible that the gap between votes polled and seats secured could be very wide and disproportionate. That has been the major flaw of Indian democracy, particularly during the last fifteen years. Another major defect is the inability of the system to prevent those facing criminal charges from getting elected to Parliament and state legislatures. Some of them have become ministers too! Money and liquor continue to be the weapons in the hands of many candidates and parties in fighting elections. The 2004 election must have been the 'costliest' election in the annals of Indian democracy as most of the candidates and parties spent huge amounts in every constituency.

Media hype, road-shows and film stars' campaigns have trivialized the election campaign making it appear, at times, more like a film show. As Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz whose book *In Light of India* was widely acclaimed cautioned: "Marx's famous phrase about religion as the opiate of the masses, can now be applied and more accurately to television which will end up anaesthetizing the human race, sunk in an idiotic beatitude." Some TV channels seemed to think that they made and unmade leaders and governments in the recent election.

The 2004 election has administered a severe punishment to those who had chosen to advance the election for no other reason except to regain power when the going was good. That the Election Commission did not buckle under political pressure, upholding its autonomy in the formulation of ground rules and in the conduct of the massive exercise, augurs well for the future. The new government at the centre and in the states that went to polls would do well to bear in mind the hopes and aspirations of the people in policy formulation and decision-making, keeping scrupulously away from the culture of self-advertisement and high-voltage publicity. No one is indispensable in a democracy in which people are the sovereign.

The Editor

"The poor and suffering classes have kept the democratic process alive far more than the elite and affluent middle classes".

- Rajni Kothari

THE GENDER VIOLENCE

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The growth of the Indian Independence movement and the emergence of Gandhi, the moral colossus, on the political scene, have led to a full participation of women in every sphere of political activity. Finally, in the story of women's struggle against their thralldom came the crowning triumph of a Constitution of a Free India in which it was laid down that there shall be equality of opportunity to all citizens and that "no citizen shall be on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent or place of birth ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of employment in any office under the State".

It has now become an accepted norm for women to receive education and take up jobs, the reasons for which may be varied-economic, social or personal. Women proved themselves in all fields and many of them now pursue their careers as seriously as men and a rising number of them have opted for hitherto male bastions. But, the most disturbing aspect is that the woman is not getting the better treatment she very much deserves at the hands of men as the entire social milieu with predominant cultural codes of male domination is hostile to her.

Globalisation and modernism, instead of bringing the desired changes in the attitude of the people, have created greater availability of tools of violence and added new categories of crimes such as eve-teasing, sexual harassment at workplaces, child prostitution, female foeticide, dowry deaths, rape etc.

Leave alone Gandhi's vision of a woman walking fearlessly along the road at midnight, even to walk down a street in broad day light has become an ordeal for her, for fear of being kidnapped and gangraped. The horrifying rape of a 17 year old college student recently in Delhi, which is fast becoming a crime capital, by four soldiers of the Presidential Guards in broad daylight would speak volumes of the degeneration of moral values in the country. The list of such spine-chilling acts is endless and as per the National Crime Records Bureau's report, the statistical graph of violence against women continues to climb everyday.

Of all the crimes, rape is the most devastating in terms of the trauma it would cause to victims and it demands immediate attention of the authorities to take a fresh stock of the issue and review the rape laws. Basing on the recommendations of the Law Commission headed earlier by Justice Jeevan Reddy, the Government would do well to incorporate new clauses in the IPC and Cr.P.C. for stringent punishment for the offence of rape and also set up special Courts to ensure speedy justice to victims. After having amended the Evidence Act in 2002, the Government should not hesitate to consider amending the law to award capital punishment if necessary. Alternatively, life sentence, if not capital punishment for rapists will act as an effective deterrent.

Another crime of alarming frequency is that of domestic violence being manifested often in the form of dowry deaths which have quadrupled over the last two years. Despite the enactment of the more stringent "Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961" and the "Protecton from Domestic Violence Bill of 2001" there has been too little let-up in the incidence. It is a pity that the rising tide of consumerism and modernism has exacerbated the problem with a bride increasingly being seen as a goose that can be harassed into laying golden eggs if she does not deliver the desired goods. The Government would do well as suggested by the Supreme Court to enact a law that will make the registration of marriage compulsory and make it mandatory for all bridegrooms, particularly those employed to declare all gifts received at their wedding.

However, this Sisyphean problem does not admit a quick and easy solution and the greatest need of the hour is to bring about attitudinal change and social awareness by mobilization of public opinion. Of course, this may be a tall order but there seems to be no other way.

Another variant of the problem is the second wife syndrome which is slowly spreading its tentacles into our society and resulting in the harassment of the first wife who, in all innocence, nurses a hope that some day her wayward husband would return and things would be hunky dory once again. Strange as it may seem, that the offenders are being left with impunity, despite bigamy being an offence. Thus the sanctity attached to the institution of marriage is set at naught and perhaps Bernard Shaw had this in mind when he wrote that "Marriage is legalized prostitution". It is time Government plugged the holes in the law.

It is generally presumed that eve-teasing is a victimless crime but the boot is on the other leg. By taking ugly turns, it has been causing immeasurable damage to a woman's self-esteem and sometimes resulting in death. In this context, the movie-makers and Television Serials Directors are to be put in the dock for the continued glorification of eve-teasing and the Censor Boards would do well to play their role honestly. Behavioural change is the only lasting solution which can be brought about by healthy interaction between boys and girls at educational institutions and by extensive public education aimed at every section of society. Probably, more than the reservation of seats for women in Parliament and Legislatures, it is the eradication of eve-teasing that will help the women have free access to public places and will further gender equality.

Lastly, no less violent is the on-going saga of sexual harassment at workplaces across the country and it is a fallacy to think that empowerment would offer a natural shield to a woman. It is disheartening to note that the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court to deal with this crime were more honoured in their breach and the women employees continue to suffer. It is in the fitness of things that the National Commission for women would monitor frequently the compliance of these guidelines by the employers to keep them at bay.

All said and done, the various laws will not yield the desired results unless people change their mindset. Let us pledge ourselves to build a new society by making an effort to demystify the notions of masculinity and clear the stench of violence from the land of Mahatma Gandhi and preserve the basic human values, for, otherwise, chaos not order will be our fate.

ALISTAIR COOKE

' a one-man bridge between two cultures'

- A. Prasanna Kumar

"This side of the Atlantic" read the citation when Cambridge University awarded an honorary D.Litt. degree on its alumnus and the celebrated writer and broadcaster Alistair Cooke, "he is an American, that side he is an Englishman". British universities, unlike their Indian counterparts, are cautious in their choice of persons for conferment of honorary degrees and moderate in writing the citations. Alistair Cooke who died in New York on March 30 at the age of 95 was the most durable cultural and literary link between America and Great Britain. As *The Economist* of April 2 wrote "For more than half a century he formed a solid, though urbane, one-man bridge between the two cultures".

Cooke's broadcasting romance began in October 1934 when the BBC appointed him as a film critic in the United States. By then Cooke not only completed his two year study of theatre on a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship at Yale and Harvard but also impressed Charlie Chaplin so much that the great 'tramp' offered him a job as assistant director on the movie *Modern Times*. Emigrating to the US in 1937 Cooke became US citizen in 1941. After working as a freelancer for *The Times* for a shortwhile Cooke became the UN Correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* at the instance of its editor A.P. Wadsworth. He wrote for the *Guardian* till 1972 and the 27 year old relationship between the leading daily and its American correspondent was summed up in an editorial on the occasion of a Cooke anniversary in 1968: "Cooke is a nuisance. He telephones his copy at the last moment, so that everything else has to be dropped to get it into the paper. He says that he will be in Chicago but turns up in Los Angeles. He discards the agreed subject to write about something which has taken his fancy, news of the moment or not. But we think he's worth it, and we love him just the same".

Letter from America launched by the BBC on March 24, 1946, originally planned for just 13 weeks, lasted for 58 years. The last radiobroadcast of this most popular weekly programme was on February 20, 2004 five weeks before Cooke passed away. The last sixteen of the total 2869 broadcasts were made from a hospital bed. During these 58 years only on three occasions Cooke failed to make the feature.

The hugely popular radio feature was broadcast by the BBC radio at least twice every week. The resonant voice, simple English and easy delivery style drew listeners to the radio in every part of the world for fifteen rewarding minutes. No broadcaster in the world had such a long and enviable record as Cooke who spoke on FDR's New Deal Years, John Kennedy's assassination in November 1962, Robert Kennedy's murder when Cooke was present in the same Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, the disgrace of Richard Nixon, how Bill Clinton would have preceded George Bush Jr in invading Iraq but for the Monica Lewinsky affair and even on American football with such amazing clarity. Cooke spoke in the early 70s about how a change had come about in the style and approach of the media after the Watergate scandal. Journalists and media generally chose not to probe deep into the personal lives of political heads till then. Otherwise many great leaders would have had a torrid time, he added.

The son of a metal worker Alfred Cooke (later Alistair) was born in Salford, Manchester on November 20, 1908. He had the good fortune of studying English under the celebrated scholar Sir Arthur Quiller Couch who instilled in Cooke the skill of writing simple, clear English. The British Queen honoured him with a knighthood in 1973 while the American Congress chose him for the honour of delivering the keynote address at its bicentennial celebrations. As the host of the television feature 'Masterpiece Theatre' for two decades Cooke won the admiration of millions of viewers. His gentle humour and masterly sweep of history were evidenced by just two, among many, profound utterances. "As empires go the British Empire was a wink in the eye of history", he said in one television programme. Reacting to criticism that like a typical reporter he was a 'fence-sitter' and 'a moral coward unwilling to take a stand' Cooke replied "Once every four years at least I take a stand : I vote".

MUSIC THERAPY

For Children and the Elderly

- Dr. T.V. Sairam

Chief Commissioner of Customs and Central Excise, VSP

Mythologically, all living and non-living things are reported to have responded to music.

Today's modern science too endorses such a view. High intensity sound waves are used in diagnosis and treatment.

In recent years, application of music as a complementary medicine has gained ground in the advanced countries, especially in Netherlands, USA, Australia, and Japan apart from the developing countries like Argentina, Brazil, China and India.

Indian system of music, known for its unique system of raga, often referred to as 'miracle of microtones' shows great potentiality for future research, which appears quite promising.

While music is universally beneficial - as plants are

reported to grow well and cows yielding more milk and the like, there appears a dire and urgent need for extending the beneficial effects of music to at least a selected few population groups.

Music Therapy for Children and Infants :

Music therapy provides a unique variety of musical experiences in an intentional and developmentally appropriate manner to effect changes in a child's behaviour and facilitate development of his/her communication skills, social interactions, besides developing emotional, sensory-motor, and/or cognitive skills.

Music therapy, no doubt, enhances the quality of life in children as it makes them more cheerful and flexible to face the harshness of the current times and cultures.

The therapy involves close relationships between a qualified therapist and child; between one child and another; between child and mother; and between the music and the practitioners.

All such relationships build up a feeling of 'belongingness', which helps in creating a positive environment and set the occasion for successful results.

Music acts as a stimulant of the child's senses, and facilitates many developmental skills. Quality learning and maximum participation, besides the traits such as coordination, cooperation, team-spirit, friendly rivalry - as we find in musical genres such as jugabandhi etc - occur when children are permitted to tamper with music naturally and frequently, without restraints on them.

While being highly motivational, music is also calming and relaxing.

Enjoyable beta-forms of music with active rhythms and quick tempo can activate towards success of the children by making them feel better and confident about themselves.

Music therapy can even help a child manage pain and stressful situations and even overcome complexes due to physical or mental disability, if any.

Music can encourage socialization, self-expression, communication, and motor development.

Because the brain processes music in both hemispheres, music can stimulate cognitive functioning and may be used for remediation of some speech/language skills.

Music Therapy : Technique for Children :

Children are normally involved in singing, listening, moving, playing, and in all creative activities associated with music, which can even include solving mathematical puzzles !

The idea is that a child should be made into a better learner.

Music therapists work on developing a child's self-awareness, confidence, readiness skills, coping skills, and social behaviour and may also provide pain management techniques.

It is necessary that the therapists explore which styles of music, techniques and instruments are most effective or motivating for each individual child and thereafter, expand upon the child's natural, spontaneous play in order to address areas of need.

Music therapists may also help parents of children with suggestions and resources for using music with the child at home.

After developing realistic goals and target objectives, music therapists can plan and implement systematic music therapy treatment programs with procedures and techniques designed specifically for the individual child.

Music therapists should invariably document responses, conduct ongoing evaluations of progress, and often make recommendations to other team members and the family regarding progress.

Music Therapy for Parents and Family Members :

It is obvious that music therapy can extend enjoyable yet purposeful activities and resources for parents and other members of families to share with their children.

Families can learn to use music through meaningful play and nurturing experiences. Tensions and relaxations, questions and answers, ascending notes and descending notes -- found in a musical piece can be profitably employed to stretch the children's imagination, thereby making them more creative in their outlook.

Music therapy may also serve as a positive outlet for interaction among the members of the family, thereby relieving any differences or tensions among them, providing fun activities that can include parents, siblings, and extended family.

Often music therapy allows a family to see a child in a new light as the child's strengths are brought out in the music therapy environment.

Music Therapy for the Elderly :

Music therapy is as efficacious and valid with older persons as with children and families. As a form of sensory stimulation, music provokes in the elderly citizens responses due to the familiarity, predictability and feelings of security associated with it. Elders, who have functional deficits in physical, psychological, cognitive or social functioning thus find music as a dependable 'old age companion' par excellence. There is no generation-gap, no fear of losing relationships with music, say by separation, neglect or divorce !

Recent clinical research endorses the greater viability of music therapy even in those - like terminally ill patients - who may be resistive to other treatment approaches.

Music Therapy : Technique for the Elderly :

Music therapists use music to facilitate movements (especially in elders who have problems such as arthritis etc)

and changes, or to maintain functioning or the 'feel-good' levels, which contribute to life quality.

The therapeutic intervention is again, based on individual assessment, treatment planning, and ongoing program evaluation.

Programs could also be tailor-made to a group of elders, so that there is an attempt to make them interact in non-threatening environment.

In special circumstances, the therapy can be extended to bed-ridden patients as well to enable them 'visualize' the lighter side of their existence.

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RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES AND LIMITATIONS OF JOURNALISTS

- Sri C.S. Rao &
Smt. Challa Mahalakshmi
Advocates

Speech is God's gift to mankind. Through speech a human being conveys his thoughts, sentiments and feelings to others. Freedom of speech and expression is a natural right which we acquire on birth and it is a basic human right. "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek and receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" proclaims the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948. We declared in the Preamble of the Constitution which we gave to ourselves our resolve to secure to all our citizens, liberty of thought and expression. Our resolve is reflected in Article 19 (1) (a) found in Part III of the Constitution which enumerates the Fundamental Rights.

The Press and other media have played the role of a 'Social Scientist', 'critic', evaluator of plans and schemes by provoking ideas and thoughts, helped the poor and weaker sections, to have access to justice and in the matter of correcting arbitrary and capricious power of the executive and by various institutions charged with the responsibility of dispensation of social justice. In addition, they have contributed to the maintenance of 'rule of law' and resisted forcibly any attempt to degrade 'democracy' and 'free society'. The power of the Press reflected through 'public opinion' enables the victory of opinion over armed forces of the Government. It has served as the main source of information, discussion and advocacy to reach the public. The Press and other media can facilitate thought and discussion, advance civilisation, help in creating a world community, promoting comprehension and appreciation of the goals of a free society. The attempts of the Government as a wielder of power cannot be restrained from exercising the same arbitrarily or capriciously, without independent press.

The freedom of the press is basically the freedom of

the individuals to express themselves through the medium of the press. This implies that the freedom of press is not superior to that of an individual. In fact this freedom is fundamental to the life of an individual. In the words of Blackstone, 'the liberty of the Press is indeed essential to the nature of a free State. Every free man has an undoubted right to lay what sentiment he pleased before the public; to forbid this, is to destroy the freedom of the press. But if he publishes what is improper, mischievous, or illegal, he must take the consequences of his own temerity'.

Freedom of Press has always been regarded as an essential pre-requisite of a democratic form of Government. It has been regarded as a necessity for the mental health and the well being of the society. It is also considered necessary for the full development of the personality of the individual. It is said that without the freedom of Press truth cannot be ascertained. The freedom of press is a part of the freedom of the speech and expression as envisaged in Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution of India. Thus, the freedom of the press is included in the fundamental right of freedom of expression. The freedom of press is regarded as 'the mother of all other liberties' in a democratic society.

It is needless to emphasise that a free and healthy press is indispensable to the functioning of a true democracy. In a democratic set-up, there has to be an active and intelligent participation of the people in all spheres and affairs of their community as well as the State. It is their right to be kept informed about current political, social, economic and cultural life as well as the burning topics and important issues of the day in order to enable them to consider and form broad opinion about the same and the way in which they are being managed, tackled and administered by the Government and its functionaries. To achieve this objective the people need a clear and truthful account of events, so that they may from their own opinion and offer their own comments and view points on such matters and issues and select their further course of action. The primary function of the press is to provide comprehensive and objective information of all aspects of the country's political, social, economic and cultural life. It has an educative and mobilising role to play. It plays an important role in moulding public opinion and can be an instrument of social change. It may be pointed out here that Mahatma Gandhi in his autobiography has stated that one of the objectives of the newspaper is to understand the proper feelings of the people and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is to fearlessly express popular defects. It, therefore, turns out that the press should have the right to present anything which it thinks fit for publication.

Freedom of Press, however is not absolute, unlimited and unfettered at all times and in all circumstances as giving an unrestricted freedom of the speech and expression would amount to an uncontrolled licence. If it were wholly free even from reasonable restraints it would lead to disorder and anarchy. The freedom is not to be misunderstood as to be a press free to disregard its duty to be responsible. In fact, the

element of responsibility must be present in the conscience of the journalists. In an organized society, the rights of the press have to be recognised with its duties and responsibilities towards the society. Public order, decency, morality and such other things must be safeguarded. The protective cover of press freedom must not be thrown open for wrong doings.

There are several laws about which the Journalists should be aware of since ignorance of law is no excuse. Knowledge is power and knowing laws of the land is very important. If the Journalist has no information about the laws that governing their conduct they will face several problems and for want of knowledge in laws they cannot do their job in perfect manner. For example Section 21 of the Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of children) Act, 2000 prohibits publication of name, etc. of Juvenile involved in any proceeding under the Act and whoever contravenes the provisions of Sub Section ibid shall be punishable with fine which may extend to Rs.1000/-.

There are several laws that regulate the conduct of the Journalist and the Press Council Act, 1978 is one among them. The Press Council established under the provisions of the said Act, has powers to warn, admonish or censure any newspaper and news agency, Editor or the Journalist if any complaint is made to it that they committed any professional misconduct and after due enquiry it comes to the conclusion that the contents of the complaint are true. As well the Council may require any newspaper to publish therein in such a manner as the Council thinks fit any particulars relating to any enquiry under section 14 of the Press Council Act against any newspaper or news agency, an Editor or a Journalist working therein, including the name of such newspaper, news agency, Editor or Journalist, Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code defines what is 'DEFAMATION' and Sections 500, 501 provide for punishment for committing the offence of Defamation.

There are other provisions in the Indian Penal Code which regulate the conduct of the Journalist and Newspaper. Section 228 A of the Indian Penal Code provides that anybody who prints or publishes the name or any matter which may make known the identity of any person against whom an offence under Section 376, 376 A to 376 B, as alleged or found to have been committed shall be punished with imprisonment of either discretion for a term which may extend to 2 years and shall also be liable to fine. Also who ever prints or publishes any matter in relation to any proceeding before a Court with respect to an offence referred to above without the previous permission of such Court shall be punished with imprisonment of either discretion for a term which may extend to two years and shall also be liable to fine.

The breach of privileges of the legislatures, contempt of Courts and other aspects have to be known to the Journalists so that they can effectively discharge their duties to bring truth to the public.

PLATO (427-347 B.C.) - I

- Sri Challa Sivasankaram

Plato was born on May 21st, 427 B.C. and attained no-return rest in 347 B.C. He was one of the few chosen sons of the Supreme. There had been very few who could enjoy the bounty of God's gifts as Plato had enjoyed. He was affluent, aristocrat to the core, related to various men that matter and were influential in the government of the day. He was tall, broad-shouldered, charming, charismatic, masculine every inch, sound in mind, passionate in love of wisdom and above all a scion of sun-clan. To Greeks, the descendants of Apollo were of noble origins and were therefore regarded thoroughbred. Born as he was with a silver spoon in mouth he was not careworn. Leisure he found. Leisure is the richest source wherefrom man derives things that mould him as a model gentleman, a consummate aesthete and an inspired man of wisdom. Wisdom is the highest virtue that man as a rule must gain. Goethe was a perfect example of power and uses of riches and Leisure.

It was Athens at its height of glory as a democracy. Athens was the cradle of occidental civilization and aesthetics. It was the fortunate land that saw the birth of great man whose name, philosophy, caliber, spiritual attainments and will to give up life for the sake of that which they thought beneficial for the generations to come.

By the time Plato came of age Socrates was a distinguished philosopher attracting the attention of the learned and the laymen. The government of the day had already had a vicious picture of Socrates who if left to his way would prove detrimental to the law and order; they feared, consequently the city state would be overwhelmed by a civil war which might uproot the norms of governance which gave them unbridled power and unchecked freedom in taking unilateral decisions bypassing the voice of justice and fairplay.

Plato came under the influence of Socrates who was then sixty two years old. Plato worshipped Socrates. Socrates, for Plato was not only a master in its literal sense but a Guru of upanishadic injunction. The awe-inspiring personality of Plato acquired marked place of importance in the city state of Athens. At once he became a cynosure of all eyes. The unique Plato gave himself upto Socrates the peripatetic quizmaster wandering the streets of Athens.

Socrates was condemned to death. The Government removed the formidable thorn from Athens physically. The man who offered the bowl of Hemlock profusely shed tears; none but the oligarchy in the garb of Democracy rejoiced in the spiritual martyrdom of Socrates. Socrates gone, his mantle fell on his faithful Truthseekers.

Plato, dedicated as he was to Socrates found it impossible to live any longer in Athens which took cruelly the life of Socrates thought it expedient to vacate Athens. Restless and oppressed by the feeling of helplessness in the hour of necessity to save his master, Plato went in search of peace.

He decided to go on a pilgrimage of countries where there were sites that were haunted and touched by men who knew themselves. It was not improbable that the Gangetic region of India also formed as one of the pilgrim's itineraries. The places ranged from Italy, Egypt, Judea and Sicily. The pilgrimage that lasted twelve years calmed the tumultuous mind of the pilgrim, contributed to opening new vistas of wisdom, knowledge of the world at large and the other-world. His loyalty to Socrates speaks numberless volumes as Plato enunciates whatever glorious truths he was capable of delivering to the world, through the mouth of Socrates. Socrates was the celestial conch perfected for voicing the philosophy of Plato. The spirit that existed between the two was tantamount to the incomparable Guru-Sishya-Nyaya maintained in the peace chant of the Taitireeya Upanishad, "Sahana Vavathu, Sahana Bhunaktu, Saha veeryam Karavavahai, Tejasvinavahitamastu mavid vishavahai" in utter sincerity. Vivekananda says that in Plato we find traces of Indian Truth.

Eight years of Plato's discipleship under Socrates wrought remarkable change in the life style of Plato the impeccable aristocrat. The holy ghost of Socrates doggedly continued to pursue like the arrow of Sri Rama until it hit the target. Plato entrusted himself to Socratic Truth. Socrates was Truth and truth was his infallible voice. The identification of truth with Socrates led Plato to fall in line with Socrates and his doctrine of transmigration of souls. West was not as catholic as the East as to permitting the rise and growth of altogether new doctrines to exist in juxtaposition with the prevailing state favoured ideology.

Plato travelled widely from one country to another until his mind set to settle at Sicily "by some divine good fortune not of man's devising" as Plutarch wrote. Plato was an inveterate dreamer building castles of ideas, and he was an unceasing investigator and incurable utopian. The seeds of Wendell Wikies' one world were sown by Plato 2500 years ago. Plato fair and spotlessly spiritual never played a party to the intrigues occasionally engineered by courtiers. He was a philosopher without doubt. As an idealist and a man of transcendental, supraconscious awareness he chose to remain a philosopher (It was Pythagoras who got into vogue the term philosophy) himself educating on higher and still higher wisdom. A man of innate austerity and dislike for pomp and splendour Plato abhorred the hierarchy wallowing in luxury, gluttony, drunkenness and sexual irrational appetite. We know that no man endowed with a discerning heart will remain unmoved. The same was the lot of the philosopher. They were states donned the garb of secular democracy answerable to people's wishes and hopes based on moral authority. The disgusted Plato concluded that governments with little respect to justice inevitably end in oligarchies. The rulers may parrot-like spout democratic phrases and pious sentiments about people's rights.

Plato told the tyrant Dionysus that tyrants were the least courageous of all men for they held power over others only by intimidating them (what Indira Gandhi did during

Emergency) and they themselves feared everyone. On the topic of justice, Plato said only just persons deserve to be truly happy and injustice was tantamount to unhappiness. Asked who was the happiest person Plato replied without hesitation "Socrates". Asked what ought to be the purpose of a ruler, Plato boldly answered, "to make good people of his subjects". Asked what was his opinion of the significance of a just Judgement, Plato answered in tones measured and transparent honesty, that even just Judgements were like tailors, whose job it was to mend torn garments. Plato opined, with the courage becoming to a wise man that the most cowardly man on earth was a tyrant for he quailed even before his barber, afraid that he might have his throat slit. Plato was adjudged as the man that count as a philosopher far removed from real life. Circumstances had so shaped that Plato was sold on a slave market on the same island, where according to one legend he was born. Anniceris who knew Plato well and who had profound regard to the philosopher as an act of favourable fate paid the price and set Plato free. Thus Plato escaped the ignominy of spending the life of a serf.

Plato the tireless wayfarer following the barbaric episode returned to Athens; bought an estate picturesque with colourful gardens, and groves and twelve olive trees sacred to Athena the goddess of Greece as neemtree is sacred to Hindu goddesses. It was here Plato the acephilosopher founded in 385 B.C. his famous school of philosophy, and it continued to function until the end of antiquity. In this Academy Plato was able to lead a modest lifestyle distinctly marked with ascetic austerity to the content of his etherwide heart. Plato's Academy consisted of a circle of selfless wisemen who served Apollo and the muses. Sometime after Plato named his own house as the "house of muses". Plato had profound regard for mathematics in general and geometry in particular. The pure ascetic way of life initiated by world's first saintly geometrician Pythagoras as a deliberate measure to attain to divine delight was adopted by Plato and his Academy zealously practiced it. According to the rules of the Academy school the head of the Academy was to be elected. In addition to philosophy, mathematics and astronomy, literature, natural sciences like botany and legal codes of different countries were studied at the Academy.

The well-known and highly popular philosopher, and teacher of Alexander of Macedonia, Aristotle was one of the pupils of this Academy. Traditions that were held sacrosanct and holy were not to be violated. Plato felt that total ignorance could bear the terrible bitter fruit of evil. According to Plato strength without reason results in despotism. Plato believed that like subjugation, unlimited freedom begets evil. Plato's ideal was a monarchy accountable to 35 guardians of the law who were elected by popular franchise and a council of elder wisemen. Plato was both a philosopher and an elegant master of style. It is certain, that Plato was among the first to work out the basic concepts of objective idealism. The word idea in Greek means, "Some thing visible" Material by itself is

incapable to produce. By the force of penetrating and splendid light emanated by the ideas, the world of ideas beyond time, it abides or reposes in eternity. The Noblest idea is Good (Sivam) which is identical with absolute Beauty (Sundaram). Plato believed, in other words in the triad, Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram. All the three are one in essence and final in their actuality. The idea of these : "Whatever is created was to decay, decline, deformation and aging" To Plato visible existence is a deliberate distorted image of the permanently beautiful ideas. In order to attain the unattainable Beauty by means of material knowledge one must become a philosopher, a seeker of the highest truth and a poet at heart. This perception wipes out ignorance, making perceptible the splendid light of knowledge, the Real as Real. The soul of Plato as that of the upanishadic mystic is the most important part of the individual for it belongs, as it were, in essence to the eternal brilliant world; not to the transitory. Wisdom, usually known as Philosophy, for Plato is a preliminary spadework for death, in that it fits the soul to stay permanently in the world of ideas, instead of being condemned to return once more. Swami Vivekananda says explaining Plato's doctrine of Ideas; "All that is but a feeble manifestation of the great ideas which alone are real and perfect. The perfect is not to return, perfect is permanent, permanent is the Idea". As we go on delving deep into Plato and his ideas we arrive at the conclusion that he believes the soul of a being, the determining principle of body and mind. Intellect, spirit and consciousness all these are material helpers for the seeker to reach the world of Ideas. Plato like the Indian seer asks of us to mistrust our nature, to see in it an indelible blemish, and exhorts us to bank upon the imperceptible Formless Idea. The process of reaching it, the spirit in us, is just an act of recollection for already it is there and we have only to reorganize. Those of us who are perfect and most righteous are most like god. The idea of the Good is tantamount to the upanishadic view of the highest God. Languages are different in letters, but spirit is always the same. We need, we earnestly need the language of heart for heart is limitless, classless, casteless and devoid of narrow chauvinism. Plato the seer pierced the veil hiding the unity of man, the sense of universal brotherhood. Without our knowledge the truth of universal oneness of mankind is in action in our day-to-day routine. It is not the working of the saints trotting the globe, loving paraphernalia, lusting the cheer of the gallery. But it is the outcome of poets, thinkers and philosophers of Plato's greatness and martyrs like Mahatma Gandhi and Paramahansas like Ramakrishna the illiterate symbol of India's unborn soul. The Vedas say, "In the midst of sun is the light, in the midst of the light is truth and in the midst of truth is the imperishable being" Likewise in the midst of the language is heart in the midst of heart is Real and in the midst of the Real is the imperishable universal idea which is all, yet not all.

The biography of Plato is interior. His biography is the

living account of mankind's collective life, ever new, ever alive, ever green and ever enlightening. The sun, the moon, the star are studied. Is the study over? Have we exhausted the study of the said stellar galaxy? Plato the son of Apollo, raises again and again, he like the sun sets not. His works are immortal. For his philosophy there were no boundaries. Earth and heaven converge at the point where his works meet to discuss, define that which is beyond the grasp of man (mind & word). The earth and heaven by names are several, in truth they are one for they meet their goal in unison when their hearts whisper to each other in silence in a language that is universal and the lingua franca of the World of Heart, the gods of heaven eavesdrop the sweet nothings singing the truth about the unity of the self. Man is not utilitarian but Unitarian. Of the four hands of Lord Vishnu two belong to Maya, his indivisible consort and the rest of the four belong to the Lord. Lord's energy is Maya. Maya is Lord's complement. Without Maya God becomes desolate as Sri Rama when removed from Sita. Like Flower and fragrance are God and Maya. Men contemplate distinctions because they are stupefied with ignorance. One soul exempt from birth, existence, growth, change, decay and death unifies all of us no distinction, no sinner, no saint. Soul makes up in the words of Ralph, W. Emerson (one of the Western mentors of Mahatma Gandhi). Out of Plato come all things are still written and debated among men of thought, St. Agustines, Copernicus, Newton, Behmen, Sweden-berg, Goethe are his debtors and must say after him. Plato is philosophy, philosophy, Plato-Mysticism finds in Plato all its texts "Plato has been bridge of the Asiatic and European parts of the world. The unity or the idea of one Deity of Asia and the detail of Europe, the infinitude of the Asiatic soul, and the analysing, result-desiring, fruit-conscious Europe are splendidly joined by Plato, and by contact to enhance the energy of each.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEW

MY LITTLE INDIA - MANOJ DAS

National Book Trust, Delhi 2003, PP 255, Rs.65-00

"This is indeed India ! The land of dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty, of splendour and rags, of palaces and hovels, of famine and pestilence, of genii and giants and Aladin lamps, of tigers and elephants, the cobra and the jungle, the country of a hundred nations and a hundred tongues, of a thousand religions and two million gods, cradle of the human race, birthplace of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legend, great-grandmother of Tradition,..... the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for shows of all the rest of the globe combined". Mark Twain's words about India written in

1897 conjure many visions of India that prompt Manoj Das to take the reader on a fascinating voyage through time and space, the length and breadth of India in this masterly presentation. Before quoting the words of Mark Twain, the author in the preface extends an invitation to share his 'impressions of places and people, as his mind and imagination recorded them over the years'.

Beginning with a few articles on the Andamans which are 'factual' Manoj Das takes the reader through many places narrating fact, legend and history in his own inimitable style, in 'a fusion of objective experiences and subjective reactions.' Each of the 47 articles has a thought-provoking title. 'In quest of the Mythical Forest' unfolds the vast terrain which covers areas of four states - Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, between the rivers Godavari and Narmada and the story of the tribals and rural people some of whom live in primitive conditions. The courage and character of the Rajputs are brought out vividly in the chapters on Rajasthan. The author quotes James Tod whose words describe the valour and sacrifice of the Rajputs : "Rajasthan exhibits the sole example in the history of mankind of a people withstanding every outrage barbarity can inflict, or human nature sustain... and bent to earth, yet rising buoyant from the pressure and making calamity a whetstone to courage". Manoj Das refers to 'the silence and solitude' that cast a spell over the ruins of Chitor where he sat and reflected in the verandah of the small Krishna temple on the 'historical Meera' and the 'mythical Radha'.

The scholar-mystic gives us glimpses of the 'territory of innocence' the Himalayas, where he meditated before the Samadhi of Adi Sankara who established four monasteries in the four corners of India and 72 religious institutions and took India by storm --

all in just 32 years! Mark Twain is quoted again when Das writes on "The City Older Than Time" - Varanasi : "Varanasi is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together," wrote Mark Twain while Rev. M.S. Sherring observed : "Twenty six centuries ago at least it was famous, when Babylon was struggling with Nineveh for supremacy; when Tyne was planting her colonies, when Athens was growing in strength, before Rome had become known or Greece had contended with Persia, she (Varanasi) had already risen to greatness". The author describes how Madurai retains its links with the past, the glory and greatness of Tamil poets and why some European scholars called Madurai the Athens of South India. With a touch of soft humour Manoj Das says that "While Buddha might feel a stranger in modern Patna, the famous Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar would recognise in present Madura, a good deal of the culture and civilization which distinguished her in the past".

The beautiful sojourn in "My Little India" appropriately ends at Kanyakumari where the dawn is a most inspiring spectacle. The story of the Virgin Princess, Kanya Kumari, brings the book to an end, predictably, of course, with a quote from Sri Aurobindo in whose vision "Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a power, godhead." This unputdownable modern classic by Manoj Das who teaches at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry ends with these lines from Sri Aurobindo's Savitri :

"Amid the work of darker Powers she is here
To heal the evils and mistakes of Space
And change the tragedy of the ignorant world
Into a Divine comedy of joy"

- A.P.K.

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