

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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M. N. Roy

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Historical Role of Islam: Islamic Philosophy
M.N. Roy

The Coming Second Emergency
Justice M. Katju

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Secularism a Must to Protect our Democracy

India was divided in 1947 because of the two nation theory floated by both the Hindutva forces on the one hand and the Muslim League led by Jinnah on the other. The theory was based on mutual mistrust and the belief that the Hindus and the Muslims could not live in peace and develop together as part of a united country. We know that the partition led to the ruthless massacre of both the Hindus and the Muslims during the mass exodus that followed on both sides of the dividing line. It was a gruesome human tragedy in which lakhs and lakhs of people died, and those who survived became homeless and had to undergo untold suffering, the scars of which are present not only on the pages of history but on the faces and hearts of those who underwent that trauma. If history has any lessons to teach, we should have learnt not to let that mistrust raise its ugly head again – not in this country in any case which declared itself a ‘Secular’ country where people belonging to all faiths would live in peace, respecting the faiths of people belonging to other religions as they would have them respect their own religious faith.

But in independent India we have seen too many communal riots to believe that the people have learnt that lesson. At least the politicians who survive on the communal divide to consolidate their vote banks would not let them learn that lesson, though no religion teaches hatred towards others and we all know that the ordinary people have a natural instinct to live a peaceful life and they hope to complete their normal cycle of life and also to let others do so.

However, hate-mongers will not let them do so. These hate-mongers become more than life-sized big as soon as a communal party like the Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P.) comes to power. The result is that with the arrival of the Narendra Modi led BJP government at the centre and many states, they have started raising their ugly heads. The result is that they have started implementing their communal agenda – from innocuous looking ‘*Surya Namaskar*’ and compulsory teaching of The Gita in schools to advising Hindu

women to produce at least four children to overcome the supposed danger of the Muslims overtaking the Hindu population at some future time, thinking to turn the country into a ‘Hindu Rashtra’, calling those who do not vote for the BJP ‘bastards’ and going to the extent of glorifying Nathuram Godse, the killer of Mahatma Gandhi, calling him a patriot; some of them going to the extent of erecting his statues and building temples for him. They have been threatening artists, vandalizing theatres as in the case of the film ‘*PK*’, muzzling every voice of dissent and framing activists in various cases. The purpose of them all is to enforce fundamentalism and spread hatred against the Muslims, the Christians etc. and to consolidate the Hindu vote bank to win elections.

The worrisome pattern is that the State which is supposed to be ‘secular’, as the Constitution of India declares it to be, seems to patronize these communal elements rather than protecting the minorities against their onslaught and taking strict action against these elements for attempts to tear apart the social fabric of our society which is based on the principle of ‘unity in diversity’ in which nobody can be discriminated against on the basis of religion, caste, sex, creed, language and region. These elements also forget that people from all the communities fought for the independence of the country and none of them can be ‘advised to go to Pakistan’, as some of them have done without any action being taken against them. They have to be told, once and for all, that all the Muslims, Sikhs, Christians etc. along with the Hindus belong to this country and the country belongs to them equally. The right place for those trying to create mistrust amongst them and divide them is jail and not the Parliament House. If this country has to remain united and prosper, people of all communities must get equal status as equal citizens to live honourably and the State must remain truly secular as mandated by the Constitution of India. If the country fails to resist these communal-fascist forces, the unity of the country and our democracy will be in real danger.

Mahi Pal Singh

Book: Historical Role of Islam
Chapter VI
Islamic Philosophy

An order of Khalif Omar has been usually cited as evidence of the barbarous act ascribed to his general. It would have been much easier not to record that order than to suppress any historical work composed by Christian prelates who had endless possibilities of concealing their composition. A diligent examination of all relevant evidence enabled Gibbon to arrive at the following opinion on the matter: "The rigid sentence of Omar is repugnant to the sound and orthodox precept of the Mohammedan Casuits; they expressly declare that the religious books of the Jews and Christians, which are acquired by the right of war, should never be committed to the flames, and that the works of profane scientists, historians or poets, physicians or philosophers, may be lawfully applied to the use of the faithful" ("Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire").

Since history began to be written with impartial criticism, the tale of the destruction of the Alexandrian library has either been discredited or subjected to grave doubt.

In any case, at the time of the Saracen conquest, the library of Alexandria had

ceased to be the repository of the valuable records of Greek learning. Long before that time, Alexandria had enshrined Christian bigotry in the place of scientific knowledge and philosophical wisdom. The character of the contents of the library must have changed accordingly. The pagan scholars, driven by Christian intolerance away from the seat of ancient learning, must have carried away the treasures they valued more than all other things. If the flame was actually lit by the order of Omar, it consumed ponderous tomes of theological controversy which had done immensely more harm than good to mankind. The fire of Islam might have consumed the

none too precious records of vain and futile theological disputations; but the admirable ardour the free-thinking Khalifs collected, preserved and improved the valuable records of ancient learning which had left the Alexandrian library before its useless and pernicious contents were put to the flames.

Byzantine barbarism had undone the meritorious work of the Ptolymies. The real destruction of the Alexandrian seat of learning had been the work of St. Cyril who defiled the Goddess of learning in the famous fair of Hyparia. That was already in the beginning of the fifth century. The Christian Saint would not tolerate that philosophical lectures and mathematical discourses held by a young pagan woman should be patronised by the elite of Alexandrian society, while the pious but incomprehensible sermons of the Archbishop were attended only by the rebels. If he was no match intellectually, he possessed the power to eliminate competition once for all. Under his instigation, the rebels, led by a regiment of monks burning with religious frenzy, attacked the seat of Alexandrian learning and, in the name of religion, perpetrated crimes too painful to be recorded and too shameful to be remembered.

"Thus, in the four hundred and fourteenth year of our era, the position of philosophy in the intellectual metropolis of the world was determined; henceforth, science must sink into obscurity and subordination. Its public existence will no longer be tolerated. Indeed, it may be said that from this period for some centuries it altogether disappeared. The leaden mace of bigotry had struck and shivered the exquisitely tempered steel of Greek philosophy. Cyril's act passed unquestioned. It was now ascertained that throughout the Roman world, there must be no more liberty of thought... Such assertions might answer their purposes very well so long as the victors maintained their power in Alexandria, but they manifestly are of inconvenient application after the Saracens had captured the city... For the next two dreary and weary centuries, things remained, until oppression and force were ended by foreign invaders. It was well for the world that the Arabian conquerors avowed their true argument, the scimitar, and made no pretensions to

superhuman wisdom. They were thus left free to pursue knowledge without involving themselves in theological contradictions, and were able to make Egypt once more illustrious among the nations of the earth,—to snatch it from the hideous fanaticism, ignorance and barbarism into which it had been plunged.”

(Draper, “The History of the Intellectual Development of Europe” Vol. 1, p. 325).

The works of the sages of ancient Greece were not only rescued, collected and preserved by the Arabs. They were profusely commented and improved upon. Complete works of Plato, Aristotle, Euklid, Appolonius, Ptolemy, Hyppocrates and Galen were available to the fathers of modern Europe at first only in Arabic versions, accompanied by erudite commentaries. Modern Europe learned from the Arabs not only medicine and mathematics. The science of astronomy, which widens the vision of man and reveals before him the mechanical laws of nature, was jealously cultivated by the Arabs. With the aid of new instruments of observation, Arab philosophers acquired exact knowledge about the circumference of the earth the position and number of planets. In their hand, astronomy began to outgrow its primitive form, (devinations of Astrology), cultivated more or less by the priests of all Oriental countries, and to develop into an exact science. Although algebra had been invented by Diophantus of Alexandria, it did

not become an object of common study until the age of Arabic learning. As a matter of fact, the name of the science has given currency to the theory of its Arabian origin. But the Arabs themselves modestly acknowledged their indebtedness to the Greek master. Botany was studied for medical purposes; yet the discovery of two thousand varieties of plants by Dioscorides represented the birth of a new science, Alchimy was a secret, jealously guarded by the priests of ancient Egypt. It was also practiced at Babylon. In a much later period, rudiments of chemistry were also known to the physicians of India. But the science of chemistry owes its origin and initial developments to the industry of the Arabs. “They first invented and named the alembic for the purposes of distillation; analysed the substances of the three kingdoms of nature; tried the distinction and affinities of alkalis and acids; and converted the precious minerals into soft and salutary medicine.” (Gibbon).

It was in the science of medicine that the Arabs made the greatest progress. Masua and Geber were worthy disciples of Galen, and substantially added to what they had learned from the great master. Avicena, born in distant Bokhara, in the tenth century, reigned in Europe as the undisputed authority of the medical science for five hundred years. The school of Salerno, until the sixteenth century, was the centre of medical learning in Europe. It owed its origin to the Saracens and taught the lessons of ‘Avicena’.

.....to be continued

FROM THE WRITINGS OF M.N.ROY (1987-1954)

The spirit of Freedom and Revolt

When, as a schoolboy of fourteen, I began my political life, which may end in nothing, I wanted to be free. Independence, complete and absolute, is a new-fangled idea. The old-fashioned revolutionaries thought in terms of freedom. In those days, we had not read Marx. We did not know about the existence of the proletariat. Still, many spent their lives in jail and went to the gallows. There was no proletariat to propel them. They were not conscious of class struggle. They did not have the dream of Communism. But they had the human urge to revolt against the intolerable conditions of life. They did not know exactly how those conditions could be changed. But they tried to change them, anyhow. I began my political life with that spirit, and I still draw my inspiration rather from that spirit than from the three Volume of Capital or three hundred volumes by Marx.

The Coming Second Emergency

By Justice M. Katju

Even if this shocks some people, I can accurately predict that a second emergency, like that we witnessed during 1975-1977, is coming in India, may be in about one year's time, in which democracy, freedom of speech and of the press, and civil liberties will all be totally suppressed. Consider the facts logically :

1. This government came to power on high expectations with the slogan of ' vikaas ' or development. This meant, or at least was perceived as, millions of jobs for the youth, industrial growth benefiting businessmen and others, and general prosperity for the public.

2. We are now 7 months since the new government came to power, but one can see no traces of vikaas (see my articles ' The Shape of Things to come ', ' Vikas ', ' Healthcare in India ', ' Malnutrition in India ', ' Unemployment in India;', ' The Trickle Down Theory ', etc on facebook and my blog justicekatju.blogspot.in), but only stunts like Swatchata Abhiyaan, Ghar wapasi, Good Governance day, etc. In these articles I have demonstrated that under the economic policies being pursued by this government there is bound to be further economic

recession and further unemployment, malnutrition, farmers' suicides and poverty, though a handful of big businessmen may benefit.

3. Consequently this government will become increasingly unpopular day by day, as people, especially the youth, get disillusioned and realize that they were befooled and taken for a ride by our superman who promised a paradise and Shangri-La in India with his accession to power, but have left people in the lurch.

Presently no doubt the BJP is winning state elections, but that is because the Congress party has given a walk over by persisting in retaining a discredited Sonia and Rahul Gandhi as its leaders, not because the BJP has fulfilled its electoral promises.

4. This disillusionment and disenchantment, coupled with the terrible economic hardships and distress the Indian people are facing, with rising prices, rising unemployment, widespread malnutrition, farmers suicides, etc, is bound to lead to widespread popular agitations, disturbances, and turbulence all over the country

5. To deal with these, harsh measures will be employed by the Government, in other words, some kind of Emergency which we witnessed from 1975-1977, will be imposed in the country, in which all civil liberties, freedom of speech and of the press, and all vestiges of democracy will be suppressed.

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“Ghar Waapsi” A ploy to push anti-conversion bill and the second round of Privatisation

Dr. Javed Jamil

[The Ghar Waapsi (Home-coming to Hindu fold) movement is in fact a well thought out and well planned attempt at bringing a new law which would make conversion almost impossible, and through the expected nationwide raucous, to silently roll through the second round of privatisation opines Dr. Javed Jamil.]

“Ghar Waapsi” programmes are being organized with fanfare all over the country. The impression is being disseminated that hundreds of Christian and Muslim families are returning back to their ancestors’ religion. Not only the reports of the conversions through offers of money and other rewards are appearing thick and fast, there is also a distinct possibility of inflated claims about the numbers. There are also no proofs that those paraded are really Muslims or Christians.

Are Hindutva organizations really interested in Ghar Waapsi? The dominant possibility is that they are not. They very well know that if such open methods of attracting people towards their religions are adopted by Muslims and Christians, the chances of Hindus converting in big numbers are even higher. The Ghar Waapsi movement is in fact a well thought out and well planned attempt at bringing a new law which would make conversion almost impossible, and through the expected nationwide raucous, to silently roll through the second round of privatisation. The anti-conversion law, they believe, would ensure that the ratio of Hindus and other communities will not change in favour of other communities. By making Ghar Waapsi movement a big issue, they seek to force Christian and Muslim leaders to accept the anti-conversion bill. Already some Muslim panelists appearing on TV debates can be seen favouring the idea of the new Act.

Muslim and Christian leaders need to reacognize the hidden motive, and they need to oppose any such move because it will be against the very essence of

the Constitution, which recognizes Freedom of Conscience as a fundamental right of every citizen, and an anti-conversion act will amount to snatching this right away from him. What is to be ensured is not that no conversion takes place at all, but that no conversion takes place through force or lure of any kind.

The larger motive however is bigger, and the chances are that even other “secular” parties may be privy to it. With the “Ghar Waapsi” movement gaining momentum, the communal bomb seems to be heading towards huge explosion. This is the kind of the trigger which can explode the bomb within no time with a devastating effect on the country. When privatisation was sought to be introduced in 1980s, the communal agenda was set into motion with the launching of Ayodhya Movement. The country forgot about what was boiling at the economic front; and the political and social parties including the leftists busied themselves in combating the monster of communalism. This continued till the privatisation got fully entrenched. The situation was then allowed to settle down. Now, the second round of corporatisation seems to have begun. Privatisation is again in full swing, and every government scheme – good as well as bad, is being tuned in to suit the interests of the big business.

The forces of the economics including the corporate and the government supporting them know the likely effects of the move on the public mind. They fear that the forces that are more concerned about the common people can embark upon a nationwide campaign against the corporatisation. It is therefore necessary that the public mind is kept busy somewhere else. What else can be the best option other than using the time-tested card of communalism? With the hatred engulfing the nation, the social forces and the political parties like Congress, Janata Parivar and Communists will again be busy in countering the communalisation. The forces of economics can play their cards without attracting the public attention. Once the second round is finished, the situation will be eased again for some years in wait of a suitable time for the next round.

According to the following report, the key areas which are being described as “reforms” by the industry — remembering that “reforms” almost always means the ways by which the big industrial giants can monopolise the wealth of the country — are as under:

“FDI IN INSURANCE

The government needs approval during a parliamentary session ending on Dec. 23 to allow overseas investors to hold a 49 percent stake in insurance companies, up from the current 26 percent cap. The law would also raise the cap for the pension industry. The opposition has not yet promised support needed to pass the law in upper house. The industry expects that raising the cap would result in \$2 billion of inflows into insurance.

LAND PURCHASE RULES

The government wants to make it easier to buy land for infrastructure and industrial projects, possibly by exempting public-private partnerships from an act passed last year. Opposition parties are expected to resist. Modi could seek to change the law in a joint session of both houses of parliament or by decree early next year. Road projects alone worth \$10 billion face delays over land disputes and other clearances.

LABOUR REFORMS

Modi has moved to amend archaic labour laws, reducing regulatory interference while coaxing employees with more benefits. Earlier this week, parliament approved a bill to simplify the process of complying with 16 labour laws for small companies employing up to 40 workers by placing the forms online. The government will have to overcome union resistance to move forward on relaxing restrictions on hiring and firing.

GOODS AND SERVICE TAX

The government wants to move a constitutional amendment in the ongoing session of parliament, then win the consent of state assemblies to implement India’s first nationwide service tax union by April 2016. If successful, economists say the measure could add 2 percentage points to GDP growth. Most state governments are on board, but the main opposition

Congress has still not given its backing. Consensus is still missing on the final GST tax rates – recommendations vary from 16 percent to 27 percent.

ASSET SALES

The government plans to raise nearly \$9.5 billion by selling stakes in state-run and private companies including oil explorer ONGC (ONGC.NS) and Coal India <COAL .NS> by March. Analysts doubt whether the target will be achieved. Market valuations are high and Modi seems determined to overcome labour union opposition to the Coal India sale, but the government has started the sell off late in the financial year. Separately, the government has reiterated its commitment to lowering its stake in public sector banks, while retaining a majority holding. It has not given a timeline.

SUBSIDY REFORMS

The government plans to cut wasteful subsidies on fuel, fertiliser and food, estimated at over 21 percent of total estimated revenue receipts in 2014/15. It has ended diesel subsidies and is waiting for a panel’s report to announce next steps, possibly in the annual budget in February. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has suggested subsidies on cooking gas could be slashed for the well-off.

COAL

Coal fields are due to be auctioned by February, followed by plans to allow commercial coal mining for the first time, and to invite in foreign miners. The government used an executive decree to bring about the changes. Now it needs parliamentary support.

MOBILE, RADIO SPECTRUM

The government is planning the sale of mobile telephone and FM radio spectrum in early 2015.”

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/11/28/india-economy-modi-reform-idINKCNOJC18T20141128>

Except for the Left parties, the present Indian political set-up including the so-called “Samajwadis” are all the agents of the corporate, the difference being in the degree. The BJP of course remains the extreme right group in India. The Leftist movement has become too weak to withstand the onslaught of

privatization. They had made the historical blunder by forgetting the economic agenda in the Communal Strife of the late 1980s and the early 1990s. There is hardly any possibility that they will not repeat the blunder. They would not understand that the biggest anti-dote to communalism will be to counter the monopolization of wealth. Even if they want, they are hardly in a position to mobilize the masses. Congress suffered defeat in the last elections primarily because the Corporate world had lost faith in its leadership. It is likely that they may opt for the faith of the corporate rather than mobilizing the masses against the steps that will accentuate Economic Disparity to new heights. Power, after all, is what everyone is aiming for.

[Dr Javed Jamil is India based thinker and writer with over a dozen books including his latest, "Quranic Paradigms of Sciences & Society" (First Vol: Health), "Muslims Most Civilised, Yet Not Enough" and "Muslim Vision of Secular India: Destination & Road-map". Other works include "The Devil of Economic Fundamentalism", "The Essence of the Divine Verses", "The Killer Sex", "Islam means Peace" and "Rediscovering the Universe". He can be contacted at doctorforu123@yahoo.com or 91-8130340339. For his shayri visit <http://urduyouthforum.org/shayari/poet-Dr-Javed-Jamil.html>]

Courtesy Muslim Mirror, December 26, 2014

An Appeal to the Readers

Indian Renaissance Institute has been receiving regular requests from readers, research scholars, Rationalists and Radical Humanists for complete sets of books written by M.N. Roy. It was not possible to fulfil their demands as most of Roy's writings are out of print. IRI has now decided to publish them but will need financial assistance from friends and well-wishers as the expenses will be enormous running into lakhs. IRI being a non-profit organization will not be able to meet the entire expenses on its own. Initially, following 15 books have ordered for print: New Humanism; Beyond Communism; Politics, Power and Parties; Historical Role of Islam; India's Message; Men I Met; New Orientation; Materialism; Science & Philosophy; Revolution and Counter-revolution in China; India in Transition; Reason, Romanticism and Revolution; Russian Revolution; Selected Works – Four Volumes; Memoirs (Covers period 1915-1923).

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Thanking you.

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Obituary

A Tribute to B.G. Verghese (1927-2014)

B.G. Verghese who passed away on 30th December 2014 at the age of 87 at Gurgaon was an inspirational personality, not only to large number of journalists but also to the generations of social and civil liberty activists. He belonged to that rare breed for whom journalism was a sacred mission, not a mundane profession. He started his career in 1949 in Times of India and his rise in profession coincided with the period when modern India was in the making, brick by brick, and he not only witnessed the process closely but took care that each of his steps was to be his contribution to the said 'making'.

Tributes are pouring in for him, highlighting his exemplary qualities and number of noble causes which he took in his long career. I would like here to mention a few.

One of his distinguished qualities was 'fearlessness'. During 'Indo-China War' of 1962 he was sent to NEFA to cover proceedings of the war at the North East front. Chinese had launched a sharp offensive that scattered the ill-equipped Indian forces. Verghese was in Tejpur in Assam when news came on 18th Nov. that Chinese had attacked the Se La which fell to them without a fight and they were further advancing. Lt. Gen. B.N. Kaul, commander of the 4th Corps stationed at Tejpur disappeared somewhere and the battalion was called back to Gauhati. In the prevailing anxiety and confusion order came to evacuate Tejpur and the North Bank as part of scorched earth policy and the Nunmati refinery to be blown up. By the evening of 19th Nov., the Tejpur town was evacuated. Indian Press had already left the town previous day, anxious to seek safety rather than stay with the news. Tejpur became a Ghost town. The State Bank had burnt its currency notes. Official records were destroyed so that Chinese could not get possession of the so called 'state secrets'. The administration had unlocked the gates of the mental hospital and around thirty bemused inmates could be seen wandering around the town like lost souls. Nehru

broadcast to the nation that his heart 'went out' for the people of Assam and promised that struggle would continue.

However only eleven journalists remained in the ghost town, only two of them Indian, one Prem Prakash of Visnews, also covering for Reuters, and the other B.G. Verghese. They wandered around the deserted town having their companions the hapless mental patients and a number of uneasy dogs and cats, waiting for the invading Chinese and what would follow. Unexpectedly, a transistor during midnight of 19th&20th Nov. cracked the news that Chinese had announced unilateral withdrawal. Radio stations around the world started flashing this news then onward, but for All India Radio (AIR) it was otherwise. In the words of B.G.Verghese:

"AIR's early morning bulletin still had the Indian Army valiantly fighting the enemy, while all other stations around the world and the newspapers carried the Chinese ceasefire announcement and other details. None in Delhi had dared to wake up a tired prime minister and brief him about the night's dramatic developments. The imbecility and paralysis that had come to characterise Delhi and the pompous vacuity of the official information policy could not have been more strikingly demonstrated. For days and even weeks earlier, everybody from jawan to general, including Bijji Kaul(Lt.Gen.), had been tuning in to Peking (now Beijing) Radio to find out what the hell was going on in their own battlefield."

He writes : "*...His (Nehru's) words offered cold comfort and to this day the North-easterners hold it against him and the Indian State that they had been bidden farewell.*" (First Draft-Witness to the Making of Modern India by B.G.Verghese).

How many journalists there are in India at present who, instead of relying upon the official handouts, generally unconvincing to the discerning eyes, would risk their lives in trying to find out the truth of the claims and counterclaims of rival sides in situations prevailing at present on either sides of our borders where cross firings and ceasefire violations seem to have become the order of the day and each side keeps on blaming the other?

I came in touch with B.G. Verghese during the 'emergency' when he joined People's Union For Civil Liberties & Democratic Rights (PUCL) in 1976, after having been ousted from the post of Editor of the Hindustan Times on account of his opposition to the policies of the then govt., especially his criticism of the annexation of Sikkim and proclamation of the 'emergency'. (PUCL) was founded in October 1976 at New Delhi by Late Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan and V.M.Tarkunde to organize opposition to the 'emergency' and to fight for restoration of the democratic rights. He also joined the Citizens For Democracy (CFD) which was also floated by Late Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan and V.M. Tarkunde in April 1974. I was founder member of both the organizations. After the end of the 'emergency' in March 1977, Verghese who was then working in Gandhi Peace Foundation, was elected as President of the Delhi chapter of the C.F. D. and myself as its Secretary. He continued to guide CFD for about four years in that capacity till he joined the Indian Express in 1982. CFD took up many notable activities under his leadership and guidance like Jail reforms, electoral reforms, campaign for autonomy for radio, voters' education, etc.etc. To work under his stewardship was very profitable experience for me.

He constituted a committee for jail reforms which included V.M.Tarkunde, B.G.Verghese himself, Mrs. Amiya Rao, Leila Fernandes, Arun Shourie and myself, amongst others. Delhi Administration appointed all the members of the Committee as 'jail visitors' for Tihar jail under Prison rules and the said members used to visit Tihar regularly. Several suggestions were made for reforms. CFD also intervened in 'Sunil Batra Vs. Delhi Administration' case in the Supreme Court and submitted its suggestions. This case resulted in the celebrated judgment (1978) on jail reforms delivered by Justice Krishna Iyer. Verghese was part of the investigating team which was formed on behalf of the CFD in 1977 to enquire into the allegations of killings of Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh in so-called police encounters. The other team members were Justice V.M. Tarkunde, Naba Krushna Choudhury, K.G. Kannabiran, Arun Shourie, M.V. Ramamurthy and K. Pratap Reddy. The

report of the committee revealed that many of such deaths were the result of cold blooded killings. This report was the first systematic exposure of such fake encounters by the police. The report was widely discussed and reinforced the demand for reforms in the police administration.

The 2nd Police Commission, called as 'Dharamvira Commission', appointed in 1978 to suggest police reforms, submitted its report in 1981. By that time Government had changed and was not willing to publish the report. CFD and other organizations were agitating for publication of the report but the Government did not respond. C.F.D. then filed writ petition in the Delhi High Court praying for mandamus to the Central Government directing it to publish the report. After some hearings the Government was forced to publish the same under pressure of the Court in 1982. Thereafter campaign for implementation of the recommendations of the commission commenced which campaign is still going on though more than 32 years have passed since then.

Two notorious criminals Billa and Ranga had abducted two young persons, a brother and a sister, namely Sanjay and Geeta Chopra, in New Delhi in 1978, raped the sister and murdered both near Budha Garden. There was wide spread anger among the public who did not know how to ventilate its feelings. The present type of organized demonstrations were unknown in those days. It was B.G. Verghese who organized a big public meeting in protest. To my memory this was the first organized demonstration in Delhi in protest against 'rape'. An award i.e.' Child bravery award' was instituted in the names of brother and sister by the Indian Council of Child Welfare.

Soon after joining The Hindustan Times as Editor in 1969 Verghese started a regular column on one village, namely Chhatera, as a mirror to rural life at a time when news and public attention used to be fixed on urban developments, even of the most trivial kind. This village was situated in Sonapat (at that time Rohtak) district in Haryana, had a population of around 1500 composed of land owning Jats and Brahmins and landless Harijans. It was the most

neglected village and therefore an ideal choice for Verghese who used to visit it almost fortnightly along with experts of various kinds to discuss the problems of the villagers and seek their solutions. Discussion would take place in the cemented Jat Chaupal and none was barred on caste grounds. The problems of education, health, communications, sanitation, availability of fertilizer and many other things used to be attended. Regular fortnightly column 'Our Village Chhatera' in the Sunday Magazine of HT began to appear from 22nd February 1969 focusing on the problems of the village till 1975 when Verghese was ousted from the Newspaper. The feature carried a logo showing a pretty but shy eight year old Dalit girl, Premvati, holding a staff and with a lamb draped around her neck. The authorities took notice. Much needed bridge was constructed. A branch of Syndicate Bank was opened and within four hours Rs. 20,000/- were deposited. Young interns and junior doctors of AIIMS started visiting the village. Scientists from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute conducted complete soil survey and water analysis. The number of tube wells doubled in four years. Separate toilet blocks for boys and girls were made beside the school to habituate children to use a latrine rather than go out in the fields. A.T.V. set was installed in the Panchayat where all used to sit together, irrespective of caste or gender to view programmes between 6 and 7 p.m. Many developmental activities were undertaken. Chhatera became the most completely documented village in India and a lesson as to how 'development journalism' can become an agent of change.

Two years back CFD was revived (it had become non functional since 1997 due to certain reasons) and he gave his blessings for the effort. He agreed to become member of its newly constituted national council. Thirty four Burmese- Arakan and Karen freedom fighters, who were in Indian jails for about 13 years, first in Andamans and then transferred to Kolkata, were got released as a result of strenuous efforts made by Nandita Haksar. They were in Delhi

in June 2012. On the occasion of the observance of Anti-Emergency Day on 26th June, 2012, C.F.D. decided to honour them. B.G.Verghese chaired the meeting and welcomed the Burmese who were overwhelmed by his affection and warmth. They soon got recognition as refugees by the UNHCR and are now in Netherlands. None of us was aware during the function that Verghese was born in Burma in 1927.

Verghese stood for democratic rights of the people and fought for the freedom of the Press. He repeatedly said that in a democracy people had a right to know as to what the terrorists have to say. He equally criticized the terrorists' attempts to intimidate the journalists and dictate to them as to what they should publish and what not. He stood for secular values and communal harmony. He relentlessly criticized the communal propaganda pursued by the Sangh Pariwar. At the beginning of militancy in Kashmir in 1990 the Sangh Pariwar, with a view to justify its campaign towards destruction of Babri Masjid, had launched a propaganda campaign alleging that hundreds of Hindu temples had been destroyed in Kashmir by the Kashmiri Muslims. Verghese investigated such allegations and found them false. His report dented the Sangh Pariwar's mischievous campaign. He was great votary of 'Indo-Pak people to people contact' campaign and made significant contribution to the said process. He wrote important books such as 'Waters of Hope', 'India's North-east Resurgent' and 'First Draft -Witness to the Making of Modern India'. The last one, besides being his biography, is in my opinion the best book to better understand the historical developments of the post independent India.

In his demise, India has lost a great journalist and good human being- a humanist to the core. Having closely associated with him in some of the activities concerning struggle for democratic rights, I pay my tribute to him and salute him.

N.D. Pancholi
6th January, 2015

**MINUTES OF THE
GENERAL BODY MEETING OF THE
INDIAN RENAISSANCE INSTITUTE
HELD ON 23RD AND 24TH JANUARY
2015 AT KOLKATA (WEST BENGAL)**

General Body Meeting of the Indian Renaissance Institute, in short IRI, was held at the Seminar Hall of The Indian Institute of Engineers, Jadavpur University, Kolkata (West Bengal) on 23rd and 24th January 2015.

Following members participated:

1. Mr. Subhankar Ray
2. Mr. N.D. Pancholi
3. Mr. Ajit Bhattacharyya
4. Mr. Nazimuddin SK
5. Mr. Asit Kumar Roy
6. Mr. Kameshwar C. Wali
7. Mr. Kiran Nanavati
8. Mr. Arun Bose
9. Ms. Swati Sinha
10. Mr. Amit Srivastav
11. Mr. Mahi Pal Singh
12. Mr. S.C. Varma
13. Mr. Narottam Vyas
14. Mr. Gautam Bhattacharya
15. Ms. Anjali Chakraborty
16. Mr. Debi Prasad Ray
17. Mr. S.C. Jain
18. Mr. Bhaskar Sur

Mr. Subhankar Ray, Working President, presided.

1. Condolences for departed members:-

At the outset the members observed two minutes silence in memory of the departed members who had passed away during the last year namely:

1. Dr. Gauri Bazaz Malik
2. Ms. Malladi Subamma
3. Mr. Balraj Puri

Agenda No. 1

Inauguration by Mr. Subhankar Ray

Mr. Subhankar Ray in his inaugural address welcomed the members and started the proceedings as per agenda.

2. Agenda No. 2 Confirmation of the Minutes of the last General Body Meeting held on 30th Nov. and 1st Dec. 2013 at New Delhi:

Shri N.D. Pancholi, Secretary read the minutes of the last General Body meeting held on 30th Nov. and 1st Dec. 2013 at New Delhi and the same were confirmed.

3. Agenda Item No. 3 - Secretary's Report:

Shri N.D. Pancholi, Secretary read his report and the same was approved.

4. Agenda Item No. 4 - To receive and adopt the accounts for the IRI for the year's ending 31.03.2014

Copies of the accounts for the year ending 31.03.2014 as well as a statement of accounts from 01.04.2014 to 31.12.2014 were circulated among the members and same were adopted.

The appointment of M/S Sharma & Sharma, the auditor, who had audited the accounts of the IRI for the year ending 31.3.2014, was approved for the current year.

5. Agenda No. 5 - Status of the Court case regarding 13, Mohini Road, Dehradun pending at Nainital High Court:

Shri N.D. Pancholi, Secretary informed that the appeal filed by Shri S.N. Puri in the Hon'ble High Court against the judgement and decree of possession granted by the Civil Court of Dehradun in favour of IRI was dismissed by the Hon'ble High Court of Nainital for non-prosecution on 29th May 2014. Thereafter execution proceedings were initiated by the IRI in Dehradun and the court issued warrant of possession in favour of IRI. Shri N.D. Pancholi,

Secretary, along with the Amin of the court had gone to take possession of 13, Mohini Road, Dehradun in September 2014. However, Shri Virender Puri the son of Late Shri S.N. Puri and his wife said that they were very old persons and requested to grant them 3 months time to enable them to vacate the property for making alternative arrangements. As they had refused to hand-over the possession of the property and Shri N.D. Pancholi and the Amin were not empowered to take the possession of the property forcibly without order of the court and without police escort, which proceedings would have taken another period of 2/3 months and by that time the opposite party would have got enough time to file application for restoration of the appeal and would have obtained stay of the execution proceedings, it was considered advisable to grant them time and obtain in writing that they would vacate after some time. A written undertaking was prepared in which it was written that Shri Virender Puri would vacate the premises within one and half months and the same were signed by both Shri Puri and his wife. However it was known after some time, i.e. in October 2014, that Shri Virender Puri has filed an application for restoration of the appeal in the Hon'ble High Court. As the previous advocate had not conducted the case properly, a new advocate was engaged in place of the old one. When Mr. N.D. Pancholi had gone to Nainital in the month of November 2014 to discuss the matter with Shri Vipul Sharma, the new advocate, he came to know by chance that the restoration application was listed on the next morning in the Hon'ble High Court. Shri Vipul Sharma, the new advocate along with Shri N.D. Pancholi appeared in the court on the next day when the matter came up. Opposite party pressed for the stay of the execution proceedings pending decision on restoration application but our advocate opposed it and accepted notice of the court. It was agreed that no stay of the execution proceedings would be granted provided the restoration application as well as appeal was finally decided on merits without further delay. The next date was given by the court as 9th December 2014 but the case could not be taken up due to heavy work in the court. Now the case has been fixed on February 23, 2015 when the court will open after one month's vacation.

“Shri Narottam Vyas suggested that there should be someone on behalf of IRI present in the Hon'ble High Court on every date to ensure that the opposite party does not play any delaying tactic for seeking adjournment and prolong the case. He further proposed the names of Shri S.C. Varma, and Mr. A.K. Roy, who are practicing advocates, and who were also present in the meeting were prepared to go to Nainital on every date to ensure that the case is not delayed unnecessarily and that they would manage the task in such a way that either or both of them are available at the time of every hearing in the case. This proposal of Shri Narottam Vyas was approved in the meeting.”

6. Agenda item No. 6 - Future management of 13, Mohini Road, Dehradun

It was decided that this issue would be decided in the light of decisions taken in the previous meetings when the property comes into possession of the IRI.

7. Agenda No. 7 - Publication and Circulation of The Radical Humanist

Shri Pancholi informed that Dr. Rekha Saraswat had tendered her resignation from the editorship of The Radical Humanist. It was decided that the issue of her resignation and the corresponding viable arrangements including the appointment of new editor, the arrangements of printing of the journal and its financial implications would be discussed in the Board of Trustees meeting and the appropriate decisions would be taken in this regard by the Board which was going to meet the next day.

8. Agenda No. 8 - Publication of Humanist literature and M.N. Roy's Selected Works:

It was decided that the possibility of publication and reprinting of the writings of M.N. Roy by the Renaissance publishers, Kolkata should be explored. It was further decided that Shri N.D. Pancholi should try to finalize the draft of the Vth Volume of Selected Works of Roy within next six months.

9. Agenda No. 9 – Role of 'The Radical Humanist' in the present social scenario in the country.

There was a lively discussion on this issue. The overwhelming opinion was that The Radical Humanist should try to build public opinion to

strengthen the values of rationalism, scientific temper and democracy in the country. Ms. Swati Sinha proposed that IRI should have its Page on Face Book which suggestion was approved.

10. Agenda No. 10 - Other programmes and activities with the permission of Chair

It was decided that programmes for holding study camps ought to be planned by the Board of Trustees.

11. Agenda No. 11 - Proposed amendments of the rules of IRI by Mr. Ajit Bhattacharyya

Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya confined his proposal to only the creation of the post of vice-chairman of Indian Renaissance Institute. He dropped his other proposals. Shri N.D. Pancholi seconded it.

It was therefore resolved that Rule 7 (a) of the Rules and Regulations of the IRI which is as follow at present:

“7(a) The Board of Trustees shall elect from among themselves one Chairman, one or more secretaries, and one Treasurer for attending to the day today working of the Institute.” is amended as follows:

“Rule 7(a) The Board of Trustees shall elect from among themselves one Chairman, one Vice-Chairman, one or more Secretaries, and one Treasurer for attending to the day today working of the Institute.” (as amended on 24th January 2015 by including the word ‘Vice-Chairman’).

12. Proposals of Shri Subhankar Ray:

Proposals of Shri Subhankar Ray i.e. (i) Creation of one post of Vice Chairman and one post of Asst. Secretary, and (ii) merger of the Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI) and the Indian Radical Humanist Association (IRHA), were discussed and following decisions were taken:

(i) Post of Vice Chairman was already created by the amendment of the Rules as above vide item 11 and that it was further decided that there was no need for appointment of Asst. Secretary as the Rule 7(a) already provided that more than one Secretary could be appointed.

(ii) It was decided that IRI alone was not empowered to decide about the merger of the IRI and IRHA, and that such a decision could be taken only by the joint meeting of the General Bodies of both the organizations.

13. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES:

Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya proposed the names of Shri Narottam Vyas and Shri Ramesh Awasthi for the post of Life Trustees. Shri Mahi Pal Singh seconded it. Both Shri Narottam Vyas and Shri Ramesh Awasthi were elected as Life Trustees of the IRI.

Now the position of Life Trustees is as under:

Life Trustees :

1. Dr. R.M.Pal
2. Prof. Jayanti Patel
3. Shri Subhankar Ray
4. Shri Vinod Jain
5. N.D. Pancholi
6. Dr. Rekha Sarswat
7. Shri Narottam Vyas
8. Ramesh Awasthi

ELECTED TRUSTEES:

Shri N.D. Pancholi proposed the following names for being elected as Trustees for the ensuing term:

1. Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya
 2. Shri Innaiah N
 3. Shri Gautam Thaker
 4. Shri Bhaskar Sur
 5. Shri S.C. Jain
 6. Shri Mahi Pal Singh
 7. Shri Kran Nanavati
- Shri Subhankar seconded it.

The following were unanimously elected as trustees for the ensuing term:

1. Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya
2. Shri Innaiah N
3. Shri Gautam Thaker
4. Shri Bhaskar Sur
5. Shri S.C. Jain
6. Shri Mahi Pal Singh
7. Shri Kran Nanavati

14. Letter dt.17th January, 2015 of Shri Vinod Jain, Life Trustee:

Letter dt.17th January, 2015 which was sent by Shri Vinod Jain, Life Trustee, through e-mail raising certain objections was discussed.

(i) Regarding the objection of Shri Vinod Jain about the account in the name of Indian Radical Humanist Association running in SBI Bank in Kolkata, Shri Subhankar Ray informed that the same was very old account which was opened 30 years ago or more and it was for all practical purposes the account of the West Bengal unit. Since it was opened about 30 years ago by the then elected body, therefore it cannot be said that the same was opened without the consent and knowledge of the elected body of the IRHA functioning at present. Therefore there was no question of closing it.

(ii) Regarding the objection raised by Shri Vinod Jain about the merger of the IRI and IRHA, no such decision was taken in favour of merger by the conference and therefore this objection becomes infructuous.”

(iii) Since all decisions taken by the Conference were within the four walls of its rules and regulations, no necessity arose to decide on other objections of Shri Vinod Jain.

15. Suggestions of Dr. Rekha Saraswat, Life Trustee

Dr. Rekha Sarswat, Life Trustee, had sent certain suggestions by her email dt.21st January 2015 for consideration by the conference. The said letter was discussed by the participants and the following decision was taken:

“It was decided that there was no question of taking ‘any opinion poll’ on “all the points raised and circulated by various IRI trustees in their recent mails” as suggested by Dr. Rekha Sarswat in her mail dt.21st January 2015 and that all the decisions taken by the conference held on 23rd and 24th January 2015 at Kolkata are valid and final.”

16. Shri N.D. Pancholi produced applications of the following persons for requesting to be members of the IRI:

1. Kiran Nanavati, Ahmedabad
2. Debi Prasad Ray, Kolkata
3. Anjali Chakravorty, Kolkata
4. Apurbadas Gupta, Kolkata
5. Kanai Paul, Kolkata
6. Shri Surya Kant, Delhi
7. Deep Shikha Bharti, Delhi
8. Swati Sinha , Delhi
9. Amit Srivastava, Delhi
10. Varun Punia , New Delhi
11. Satish Chandra Varma, Delhi.
12. Ved Prakash Arya, Delhi
13. Ghanshyam Singh, Delhi
14. Arun Kumar Majhi, Delhi
15. Kameshwar C. Wali, USA

The aforesaid persons were already actively involved in the radical humanist activities and many of the applications were pending for a long time though they had already deposited the membership amount.

The conference unanimously sanctioned the above applications from the date they had applied.

The meeting ended with thanks to the chair.

N.D.Pancholi, Secretary

**MINUTES OF THE NEWLY
ELECTED BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE
INSTITUTE: 24th JANUARY 2015**

MEETING OF THE NEWLY ELECTED BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE INSTITUTE, IN SHORT 'IRI' TOOK PLACE ON SATURDAY THE 24TH JANUARY 2015 AT THE OASIS, GUEST HOUSE 3, RAJA SC MULLICK ROAD, JADAVPUR, KOLKATA.

Following Trustees participated:

1. Shri Subhankar Ray
2. Shri N.D. Pancholi
3. Shri S.C. Jain
4. Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya
5. Shri Mahi Pal Singh
6. Shri Bhaskar Sur
7. Shri Kiran Nanavati.

Following persons attended as Special Invitees:

1. Mohd. Nazimuddin
2. Anjali Chakraborty

The meeting was presided by Shri Subhankar Ray. Following decisions were taken:

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING HELD ON 1ST DECEMBER 2013 AT NEW DELHI:

The minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Trustees held on 1st December 2013 at Delhi was read over by Shri N.D. Pancholi, Secretary, and the same was confirmed.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED TRUSTEES:

Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya proposed following two names for co-option of two trustees as co-opted trustees:

1. Mohd. Nazimuddin, Murshidabad, West Bengal.
2. Ms. Anjali Chakraborty, Kolkata.

Shri Mahi Pal Singh seconded the proposal. Mohd. Nazimuddin and Ms. Anjali Chakraborty were elected as co-opted trustees.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS OF IRI

(1). **Post of Chairman**

Shri N.D. Pancholi proposed the name of Shri Subhankar Ray for the post of chairmanship of the IRI. Shri Kiran Nanavati seconded it.

Shri Subhankar Ray was elected unanimously as Chairman.

(2). **Post of Vice-Chairman**

Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya proposed the name of Shri S.C. Jain as Vice-Chairman. Shri Mahi Pal Singh seconded it.

Shri S.C. Jain was elected unanimously as Vice-Chairman.

(3). **Post of Secretaries**

Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya proposed following names for the post of Secretaries:

1. N.D. Pancholi
2. Kiran Nanavati
3. Bhaskar Sur

Mohd. Nazimuddin seconded the proposal.

N.D. Pancholi, Kiran Nanavati and Bhaskar Sur were elected unanimously as Secretaries.

It was further decided that N.D. Pancholi shall be responsible for overall functioning of the Institute while Kiran Nanavati will concentrate on the development of the work of the organization in Northern and Western Regions while Bhaskar Sur will devote his attention to the Eastern and Southern Regions.

(4). **Post of Treasurer**

Shri Mahi Pal Singh suggested that S.C. Jain may be given duties of the treasurer ship of the organization in addition to his duties as Vice-Chairman.

Shri Kiran Nanavati seconded it. Shri S.C. Jain was unanimously elected as treasurer in addition to his post as Vice-Chairman.

4. BANK ACCOUNT OPERATION:

Following resolutions were passed relating to operation of the bank account

(i) Resolution

“Resolved that as a result of the newly elected office bearers, the SB A/Cs No. **02070100005296** and **02070100005297** in UCO-Bank, Supreme Court Branch, New Delhi shall be operated by either two of the following office bearers:

Vice Chairman – cum-Treasurer : Mr. Suresh Chand Jain
Secretary (1) : Mr. N.D. Pancholi
Secretary (2) : Mr. Kiran Nanavati

(ii) Resolution

“Resolved that as a result of the newly elected office bearers, the Current A/C No. 0349201821034 , in Canara Bank, Maharani Bagh Branch, New Delhi in the name of **‘The Radical Humanist’**, the monthly magazine of the Indian Renaissance Institute, shall be operated by either two of the following office bearers:

Vice Chairman –cum-Treasurer: Mr. Suresh Chand Jain
Secretary (1) : Mr. N.D. Pancholi
Secretary (2) : Mr. Kiran Nanavati

(iii) Resolutions regarding investments:

(a) “Resolved that as a result of the newly elected office bearers, the following investments in the **HDFC Bank, New Delhi, i.e.,**

INVESTMENT RECEIPT AMOUNTS	NO.	DATE OF INVESTMENT	DATE OF MATURITY	INTREST PERIOD
RS.400000.00	CP/145415(HDFC)	29.05.12	28.02.15	MONTHLY
RS.300000.00	CP/145408(HDFC)	29.05.12	28.02.15	MONTHLY
RS.250000.00	DE/2768979(HDFC)	26.11.09	28.11.16	MONTHLY
RS.200000.00	DE/2822222(HDFC)	16.04.09	16.04.17	MONTHLY
RS.600000.00	CP/410668 (HDFC)	22.04.14	22.01.17	MONTHLY

in favour of the **‘The Indian Renaissance Institute’**, shall be operated by either two of the following office bearers:

Vice Chairman –cum-Treasurer : Mr. Suresh Chand Jain
Secretary (1) : Mr. N.D. Pancholi
Secretary (2) : Mr. Kiran Nanavati

(b) “Resolved that as a result of the newly elected office bearers, that the following investments in the **UCO Bank, New Delhi, i.e.,**

INVESTMENT RECEIPT AMOUNTS	NO.	DATE OF INVESTMENT	DATE OF MATURITY	INTREST PERIOD
RS.100000.00	CKY-192206(F.D) (A/C NO.TD207396) (F.D. UCO-BANK)	19.12.14	18.12.15	YEARLY
RS.100000.00	CKY/01-317182(F.D) (A/C 02070310166369)	07.05.14	07.05.15	YEARLY

in favour of the **‘The Indian Renaissance Institute’**, shall be operated by either two of the following office bearers:

Vice Chairman –cum-Treasurer: Mr. Suresh Chand Jain
Secretary (1) : Mr. N.D. Pancholi
Secretary (2) : Mr. Kiran Nanavati

5. RESIGNATION OF DR. REKHA SARASWAT

Shri N.D. Pancholi placed before the Trustees the request of Dr. Rekha Saraswat to accept her resignation from the editorship of 'The Radical Humanist' sent by her through her e-mail id dt. 30th Sept. 2014 addressed to Shri Subhankar Ray, Shri N.D. Pancholi and Shri Narottam Vyas. The Trustees discussed the same and unanimously accepted her request for resignation. The Trustees also appreciated and expressed their gratitude for the dedication and hard work with which she edited 'The Radical Humanist' for the last several years. The Trustees took note of the fact that during her tenure she not only maintained the standard of the journal but also brought about qualitative improvement in it. The Board of Trustees unanimously passed a vote of thanks in favour of Dr. Rekha Saraswat for the valuable services rendered by her in editing the 'The Radical Humanist'.

Shri N.D. Pancholi also informed that Dr. Rekha Saraswat was requested to edit the 'The Radical Humanist' till the issue of February 2015 so that by that time decision on her resignation would have been taken by the Board of Trustees and she was kind enough to agree to do so.

6. ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLICATION OF THE RADICAL HUMANIST

Alternative arrangements for editing the journal, 'The Radical Humanist' and its financial aspects were discussed and following decisions were taken in this regard:

Following members were appointed as Advisors:

a. Dr. R.M. Pal b. Shri Innaiah Nariseti

Editor:

Shri Mahi Pal Singh was appointed as editor of the journal w.e.f. March 2015.

7. EDITORIAL BOARD:

An Editorial Board for 'The Radical Humanist' consisting of following persons was formed:

- i. Shri Ramesh Awasthi
- ii. Dr. Deepavali Sen
- iii. Shri Vidya Bhushan Rawat
- iv. Shri Qurban Ali
- v. Shri N.D. Pancholi (Ex. Officio Member)

8. PRINTING

Shri N.D. Pancholi and Shri Mahi Pal Singh were authorized to take necessary steps to make arrangements for printing of the journal at Delhi. It was further decided that the members would raise funds by enlisting subscribers, raising donations and advertisements to make the journal financially viable.

9. OFFICE

It was decided that address of the office of 'The Indian Renaissance Institute' and the "The Radical Humanist" will be as follows:

G-3/617, Shalimar Garden Extn. I
Rose Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad 201005

10. WEBSITE

Shri Pancholi brought to notice that Dr. Rekha Saraswat had informed that it was not possible for her to continue the website from Meerut. It was decided that Shri N.D. Pancholi and Shri Mahi Pal Singh will take necessary steps for making appropriate arrangements for shifting and continuing the RH website from Delhi. Shri Pancholi informed that Dr. Rekha Saraswat had told that she would transmit the entire data of the RH Website in a pen drive and would give the same to the Secretary of the IRI so that there is no disruption in its continuance.

11. PUBLICATION OF THE HUMANIST LITERATURE

(i) It was decided that the possibility of the publication and reprinting of the writings of M.N. Roy and other humanist literature by the Renaissance Publishers, Kolkata should be explored. Shri N.D. Pancholi and Shri Ajit Bhattacharyya were authorized to enter into negotiations with the said publishers.

(ii) Prof. Anjali Chakraborty informed that since the Bengali translation of M.N. Roy's book "Science and Philosophy" by Swadesh Ranjan Das was published, she had received lot of responses. One response which she considered the best one was from "Jnan Bichitra Publications" which is a renowned publisher in the State of Tripura. The letter which she received from the said publisher dt.30th Sept. 2014 is reproduced below:

“Jan Bichitra Publications is interested in exploring the possibility of publishing the projected 3 vols. of manuscripts on Science Encyclopedia, which was authored by M.N.Roy, and which is reportedly still remaining unpublished. Please provide us the relevant information that may be considered useful in this connection.”

It was decided that Shri N.D. Pancholi will visit the M.N. Roy Archives in the Nehru Library to find out the status of such manuscript i.e. on ‘Science Encyclopedia’ and, thereafter, both N.D. Pancholi and Dr. Anjali Chakraborty would discuss the matter of publication with the Jnan Bichitra Publication. Their recommendations in this connection will be considered by the Board of Trustees and final decision would be taken accordingly.

(iii) It was further decided that IRI will form a Board of experts for editing and informing of total works of M.N. Roy.

(iv) It was further decided that DVDs of the literature of M.N. Roy should be prepared and distributed.

12. REMEMBERING DR. RAJNI KOTHARI

Board of Trustees also remembered Dr. Rajni Kothari, the eminent political thinker and social activist who met his demise on 19th January 2015. The Trustees paid their tributes to his memory and expressed their condolence for the bereaved family. Condolence

message in this regard would be sent to the family of Prof. Rajni Kothari.

13. SANCTION OF APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP OF IRI:

The applications of following persons requesting for membership of the Indian Renaissance Institute was placed by the Secretary before the Board and the names of the applicants for membership of IRI were sanctioned:

1. Kiran Nanavati, Ahmedabad
2. Debi Prasad Ray, Kolkata
3. Anjali Chakraborty, Kolkata
4. Apurbadas Gupta, Kolkata
5. Kanai Paul, Kolkata
6. Shri Surya Kant, Delhi
7. Deep Shikha Bharti, Delhi
8. Swati Sinha , Delhi
9. Amit Srivastava, Delhi
10. Varun Punia , New Delhi
11. Satish Chander Verma, Delhi
12. Ved Prakash Arya, Delhi
13. Ghanshyam Singh, Delhi
14. Arun Kumar Majhi, Delhi
15. Kameshwar C. Wali, USA

Meeting ended with thanks to the chair.

N.D. Pancholi, Secretary

Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist

Dear Friends,

Please mail your articles/reports for publication in the RH to: **theradicalhumanist@gmail.com** or post them to: **G-3/617, Shalimar Garden Extn. I, Rose Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad-201005 (U.P.)**

Please send your digital passport size photograph and your brief resume if it is being sent for the first time to the RH.

A note whether it has also been published elsewhere or is being sent exclusively for the RH should also be attached with it.

-- Mahi Pal Singh

**Mrs. Ellen Roy
Jawaharlal Jasthi**

Continued from the last issue...

4. HER INDIVIDUALITY

Every person has a personality. It is manifest in his or her appearance and demeanor which helps in identification of the person. In addition to that certain persons have an individuality of their own. It is manifest in the values they cherish and the ideals they uphold and the purpose they choose for their life to make it meaningful. Viewed from that angle, Ellen Roy could be seen as an individual with high values and noble ideals.

As a housewife she made all her people happy – those who were part of the house and those who visited the house. She made them feel they belong to one family – the family of ideals. While looking after the members of the household, she also took care of the cats roaming in the house. Being a revolutionary in her ideals, in her personal conduct she was kind and gentle and liberal in her approach to others. Even at the pitch of arguments she managed to ensure that no feathers are roughened.

Her association with Roy did not start with a love at first sight. Even before she met Roy in person she was hearing of him in the leftist movements. She was impressed by his activities and dedication to ideals. She realized that there is some similarity between the ideals and values cherished by both of them. As Rocha Sara swat said, she found her reflection in him. That is what brought them together and kept them working to the end. She served Roy not because she was his wife. She became his wife because she recognized him as an individual worth supporting and emulating. She was an idealist and chose it as the purpose of her life to propagate those ideals. That is the basic difference between Ellen and other faithful wives. When this difference is recognized, we cannot afford to compare Ellen with traditionally faithful wives. Every great man had a wife who served him faithfully.

But those wives had nothing to do with the ideology or politics of their husbands. That is because they do not have any ideology of their own. It is not that we deprecate or underestimate their contribution. That is their way of life. They feel satisfied that they are doing their duty as a wife. But Ellen was something more than a wife to Roy. She stood by him as an anchor and points man. She never craved for wealth or luxury. She never found fault with him for not providing her with luxury. She chose Roy as the man who could stand for her ideas and ideals. She worshipped him as a reflection of her own individuality. She did everything to enthrone the individuality and image of Roy without any reservation even to sacrifice her own identity and image. That is why we find it necessary to bring out her identity and individuality for realistic estimation and appreciation.

Richard Park, the President of the Association of Asian Studies was a close friend of Roy. He was there with Roy when he was in Mussorie in his last days. Once Park was travelling from Delhi to Mussorie. Agehananda Bharati was also with him. On the way to Mussorie he wanted to meet Roy in Dehradun. He had an impression that Roy does not like the saints and ochre robes. So he stopped his car at the entrance to the compound and told Agehananda to stay in the car while he would have a short talk with Roy and come back in a few minutes. But after a short time Roy came out with Park to the car and invited him respectfully to his abode and took him inside. Having entered into conversation with Roy Agehananda Bharati stayed with him for two days continuously and derived immense pleasure of the meeting. Agehananda Bharati was a professor in the Syracuse University. In spite of being in a place of educational center, he could not get to know of any person with whom he could have meaningful discussion on philosophical matters. He found such a person in Roy and felt enriched with his discussions for over two days. After that Agehananda used to meet with Roy frequently. He dedicated his research work “Great Traditions and Little Traditions – Indological Studies in Cultural Anthropology” to Roy. Such was the affection he developed for Roy. During all his

meetings Ellen did not try to impose herself on those deliberations. Thus Agehananda could not have an opportunity to know her closely. But he came to know of her better later and regretted that he should have included her name as well in the dedication of his book. Such was the self-negligence of Ellen. She did not crave for the lime light. Even those who were close to Roy failed to appreciate her contributions and recognize her individuality. "Ellen is an individual of renaissance" proclaimed Aagehananda Bharati.

Ellen had great regard for the philosophy of Karl Popper.

Once an intellectual takes a stand on a subject, he usually tries to stick to it at any cost and refuses to see the other side of it. That is one of the drawbacks of intellectual pursuits. But Ellen was not like that. She was always willing to reconsider her opinions. She happened to write some articles in the Radical Humanist supporting cooperative agriculture. Later when A.B.Shah met her he brought to her notice some of the research articles published by one Mr.Deshpande in Marathi language. He pointed out with examples that productivity in community agriculture is always far below than in other forms of agriculture. In the light of those research results she agreed to change her opinion about farming.

In the light of her personal experience and understanding of the European situation, she explained the political forces playing in Europe before the commencement of Second World War. Every leader warns that the coming war will destroy civilization. But every country was actually involved in preparations for war. That was the same with all the leaders and countries. Everybody knows that war is equal to a mass suicide. There will be no winners. All are losers only. Even then nobody tries to prevent war. Everybody says it is inevitable. That is the dichotomy between the personal opinions and practical acts of the leaders. Everybody declares that it is a crime to use poison gases even in war. But nobody believes others and earnestly prepares in making gas masks. There will be many agreements between the leaders but none of them will be honored finally. Everybody manufactures weapons of mass destruction and proclaims it is only for self-protection. Preposterous!

Ellen found fault with Britain and France as they remained mere spectators while Germany was occupying European countries one by one. Everybody felt the same after the event. They opposed the formation of Customs Union to keep Austria free from occupation. But when actually the occupation started, they remained mute spectators.

Imperialism gave birth to fascism. But it grew to a stage where it has become a threat to imperialism itself. Britain stepped aside to escape the fate. Ellen declared that both are of the same blood. That was how Hitler was able to occupy even Czechoslovakia. In his first attempt he stepped back in view of his precarious financial conditions. Everybody in Europe misinterpreted it as due to opposition in Europe. Hitler was never daunted by opposing forces. He made proper arrangements in his second attempt and sent his forces to the border and encouraged the German residents in Czechoslovakia to revolt. None of the European countries offered support to Czechoslovakia. The best industrial part of the country fell for Hitler. What all he wanted was the immovable property lying there and he got it. Ellen prophesied that Hitler would try to occupy the colonies of Spain, Portugal and France after he finishes with Austria and Czechoslovakia. She also said that Hitler would try later to take over that part of Soviet land where Germans are living, but he would not succeed in that effort she said. She has also explained that the efforts of Hitler, in spite of being branded as fascist by the imperialists, were really the onslaught of imperialism on the forces that stand by the poor and backward countries. It indicated her deep understanding of the forces that were playing in the international field and how the countries behave different from what their leaders proclaim.

After the propagation of her ideals, the one aspect that was dear to her heart was "nature". That is what we are now calling environment and claim to protect. She tried to stay near to the nature as part of it. The vast open area around her residence gave her an opportunity to ventilate her preference to nature and respect for it. She created a nature there according to her vision. She procured different varieties of plants and trees and planted them in her garden. Every season

has its flowers there in that garden. Plants that were not available there were obtained by her and nourished carefully. Some of the plants and trees found in her garden were not to be found anywhere else except in the Forest Research Center in Dehradun. That shows the sincerity of her efforts and love for nature. Her garden got recognition as the best in Dehradun many times in competitions. She got prizes in almost every flower exhibition held there. When she visited America for the first and last time, she brought back some rare plants and seeds with her. She was obliged to keep them in quarantine for some time according to the law in force.

She was so confident of her horticultural skills that she declared she would be serving as horticulturist for the Government of India if need be, that is, if she has nothing better to do. Once while she was talking to her friends in the house there was a sudden torrent of rain and in a few minutes the rivulets were full with water flowing. She said anxiously "Don't you hear the noise of the water in the rivulet? Let us go and enjoy it" and led them to the rivulet near her house. There would be no water there except when there was a heavy rain. She would be waiting for it. The rapid flow of water with its whirls and musical sounds is the face of real nature appreciated by her so deeply. It is that never fading novelty that proves life – both in nature and the individual.

In her garden there is a peculiar orange tree. It does not grow like other orange trees nor was it a bonsai. Its fruits are as small as limes but yield a sweet juice. She used to make a special drink out of it. She claims to have brewed it all by herself. But 'brew' is the term associated with alcoholic liquors normally. That was why one of her guests Said Ayub declined to taste it. He said it was the only dictate of Sharia that he wants to follow – not to take liquors. Ellen assured him that it was not alcoholic in any sense and even children taste it with satisfaction. After persuasion he was convinced and tried to taste it. But his body revolted immediately and he put it down. Ellen was so much upset and felt sorry for persuading him to break his oaths. Her friends include such variety of people. Every one of them gets the same cordial treatment.

Cactus is a xerophyte with thorns. But it bears beautiful flowers. A variety of it is such that it flowers only in the night. It starts blooming at dusk and continues until midnight when it opens completely. Ellen used to get her friends gather around it by that time every year and enjoy the scene minute by minute. She becomes a child at that time. It enables her to enjoy more. Every time it was a surprise for her as if it was the first time she was seeing it. She took photos of it at different stages and decorated in her room and also shared with her friends. She got the plant as a gift from one of her friends in Hawaii. Grafts of it were distributed to some of her friends. It would be a day of festival at 13 Mohini Road whenever the tree blooms.

She had a place for everybody in her heart. And also in her mind. When she went to America in 1955 after the death of her husband, she met with Evelyn Trent, the first wife of Roy. They had friendly chat and Ellen asked her to keep writing for the Radical Humanist. She could not get and no regrets for it. She claimed that she could earn her tour expenses by her lectures there. It is the usual arrangement by the friends there.

She requested the Rockefeller Foundation for financial support for publication of the works of Roy. They expressed their inability to undertake such a heavy project. Asia Foundation granted 3,000 dollars. Prime Minister Nehru arranged for an annual grant of Rs.6,000 for three years. She accepted with all humility all the contributions and carried on her burden without complaints. She did not seek any recognition for her own invaluable contribution. She did it for her own satisfaction. She derived satisfaction in working under the banyan tree that was Roy. After his death the shade has gone revealing her individuality and demanded recognition on her own. There were no successors to Roy except his wife Ellen. There are many followers. But the responsibilities of a successor are different. There was no other person with the required philosophical commitment and identity to do the work. While every other follower had his or her own life, Ellen had her responsibilities alone as her life. For all the followers and admirers his New Humanism was just a political

philosophy. For Ellen it was her breath and purpose of life.

It was but natural that the responsibility fell on the shoulders of Ellen after the death of her husband. She proved she had the will and capacity to discharge the responsibility. She strived hard to uphold the torch lit by Roy. She stood at the central point for the movement. She used to remind the followers of their responsibility to the movement. She knows that people in cultural revolution will always face resistance and criticism. That was why she did not seek public support on scale obtained by political leaders. She counted on the active support of the few people who were convinced of the philosophy and became his followers.

After the death of Roy many of their friends visited her offering condolences. One of the friends raised a very sensitive and personal question which stirred the inner depths of the person. He asked “Why didn’t you have children?” She was stunned for a minute and recollected herself. “Roy used to discourage it always” was her meek reply. Why so? He used to point to the children of other celebrities and prominent persons who have become parasites and worthless by themselves. He was afraid, if he gets children they would be like that and he did not like it. On the face of it, it was ridiculous. Why should anybody think so bad of his offspring? Just because others happened to be worthless, can you avoid having children? It was preposterous. But Roy did not agree. In her explanation there was a flood of sorrow hidden. She could not hide her disappointment and helplessness. She bore with it all these years without

any external indication. Manavendra Nath Roy might have been a great intellectual and a philosopher. But in this regard he stands with a burden of great blunder in his life. She dedicated herself to him in every respect heart and soul. She did not ask him for any physical comforts. It was perhaps the only wish she has expressed, the most natural desire that could be fulfilled only by him legitimately. The rejection of such a wish by him has to be called the most cruel on his part. No argument could justify him. The philosopher who declared man as archetype of society could not be expected to be so timid. Why was he afraid of his responsibilities as a man and as a husband? Why was he afraid of becoming a father? How could such a coward become a materialist philosopher? In spite of being a great intellectual, Roy failed to live a full life as an individual and on his way rendered the life of his beloved wife also unfulfilled. This matter must have come for discussion between them more than once as her reply indicated. But Ellen did not insist on it as vehemently as he rejected it. Why did she submit herself to that extent? What would have happened if she were equally adamant? After all, it was the natural wish of any woman. One can make any number of arguments on it. All of it would be only post facto regrets. It was the past. Now Ellen remains alone, rejected and dejected as well. Still she bears his torch faithfully.

...to be continued.

[J.L. Jawahar is a veteran Radical Humanist and Rationalist, writer and author from Hyderabad, A.P. jjasthi@yahoo.com]

Discussion on M.N. Roy on Lok Sabha TV

Watch a very good discussion which was organized by Lok Sabha TV on 3rd February, 2014 on the occasion of the 60th death anniversary of M.N. Roy under its weekly programme “A Page from History”. Participants were Prof. Subroto Mukherji , Political Science Deptt., JNU (Retd.), Prof. Rakesh Batabyal, noted Historian, JNU and N.D. Pancholi, Secretary, Indian Renaissance Institute.

Anchor: Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay

It is available on Youtube. The link is given below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJFqtbaK1oU>

Readers are requested to send their comments to The Radical Humanist at:

theradicalhumanist@gmail.com

- Mahi Pal Singh

Secularism Revisited

Justice R.A. Jahagirdar

(Since the BJP led government has taken over at the centre, the forces of Hindutva have started raising their communal agenda. On more than one occasion, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS supremo, has said that Hindustan and not 'Bharat' as the Constitution calls us) means the land of the Hindus and all those living in it are Hindus. A few days after asking why all Hindustanis (Indians) should not be referred to as "Hindus," the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsanghchalak again on Sunday, 17th August, minced no words in stating that "Hindutva is the identity of India and it has the capacity to swallow other identities." "We just need to restore those capacities," he added. More than one minister in various BJP governments in the States has said that the Modi government will lead the nation towards the formation of the 'Hindu Rashtra'. M.P.s of the BJP belonging to the Hindutva outfits advise Hindu women to produce four children each to overtake supposed faster growth of Muslims; Conversions are being conducted in the name of 'Ghar Vapasi' through allurements, inducements and bribes by them; burning of Churches is taking place: all under the very nose of the Prime Minister who neither condemns them nor stops them from doing so. Nathuram Godse, the murderer of Mahatma Gandhi, is being glorified and projected as a patriot and hero by these very people. The forces of intolerance have become more aggressive and the secular fabric of our multi-cultural society has come under serious threat. Hence the debate on the secular character of our country, as mandated by our Constitution, has again begun afresh. It has become all the more important for us to understand what secularism really means and how we can protect it.

Late Justice R.A. Jahagirdar, a leading Radical Humanist like Justice V.M. Tarkunde, both of whom valued secularism as an essential ingredient of a truly democratic society, gave three enlightening lectures

on Secularism. As part of the ongoing debate, we are going to publish all the three lectures. The following is the first one, which was delivered as the Eighth Smt. Bansari Sheth Memorial Lecture delivered under the auspices of The Asiatic Society of Bombay on Wednesday, 26th April 2000 - Editor).

Discussion on a wide scale has been taking place on the subject of Secularism in India after 1965. This coincided with the publication of the pioneering book of Prof. Donald Smith of Princeton University. The book was "India as a Secular State". (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966). Round about the same time, 12 essays contributed to a Seminar organised in November 1965 by the Indian Law Institute were published in a book titled "Secularism: Its Implications for Law and Life in India". The contributors of the essays included outstanding intellectuals – the then Chief Justice of India, two Judges of Allahabad High Court and an eminent Jurist. Later in 1968, another book of essays by different thinkers was published. The book was edited by Prof. V.K. Sinha and published by Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay.

In 1956, Prof. Abid Husain's book "The National Culture of India" (National Book Trust, New Delhi) was published. That book did not attempt any discussion on Secularism but the Foreword to the book written by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, then Vice-President of India, contains the following observation:

"It may appear somewhat strange that our Government should be a secular one while our culture is rooted in spiritual values. Secularism here does not mean irreligious or atheism or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on the universalisation of spiritual values which may be attained by a variety of ways."

Subsequently in February 1970, Mr. P.B. Gajendragadkar, the then Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, delivered K.T. Telang Endowment Lectures on "Secularism and the Constitution of India", which has been published in a book form in 1971 by Tripathi, Bombay. These lectures are full of erudition and deal in great details with Hinduism and other related subjects. The questions that would be

discussed in the lectures had been posed initially as follows:-

“Is the new society which we want to create a Secular Society? Is the Sovereign democratic republic of India a Secular State? What are the distinguishing features of Indian Secularism as contemplated by our Constitution?” (p. 1. emphasis mine)

Secularism – in my opinion and I will try to demonstrate that – cannot mean different things in different countries. Further Mr. Gajendragadkar says (p.2):

“The word ‘secular’, like the word ‘religious’ is amongst the richest of all words in its range of meaning. It is full of subtle shades, which involve internal contradictions, and of those contradictions the conventional dictionary meaning can scarcely give a correct view.”

The later discussion in India has been coloured by this view.

I have great objection to this meaning given to the word ‘secularism’. In the first place it says that there is an Indian type of secularism; secondly it says, the word ‘secularism’ contains internal contradictions and that thirdly you cannot understand the meaning of these contradictions because no dictionary can help you in this regard. In other words, the word ‘secular’ has only subjective meaning and every one can use it in any way one likes. I wish to demonstrate that –

(1) There is no such thing as Indian Secularism and English Secularism – there is only one secularism which has universal meaning;

(2) There are no internal contradictions in the concept of secularism and if there are any contradictions, they are between secularism and non-secular practices;

(3) There is a well-established and widely accepted dictionary meaning which has stood unaltered for a period of nearly a century and half since 1851 when George Holyoake coined that word and gave it an explicit meaning.

The discussion that has taken place on a wide scale and over a period of years – decades – and the large literature that has been published have addressed

themselves to the question: what meaning should be given to secularism in India or to Indian secularism. Some have argued, quite frankly, that secularism as historically understood, does not suit India. Taking liberty with the alleged flexible meaning of the word, you can talk of Hindu or Aryan or even Vedic secularism or Islamic secularism. As a result, the discussion of this subject in India has become skewed. I wish, in all humility, to point out that all this distortion of the word is not necessary and if we find that a particular state of affairs does not fit in the concept of secularism correctly understood, change the state of affairs, not the meaning of the word, or use a different appropriate word. When words of a certain kind have been in use, to employ those words as signs of new meanings is to be guilty of counterfeiting. New verbal signs can always be found for new meanings (see p.284 of Reason, Social Rights and Democracy by Sidney Hook, 1991 Prometheus Books).

The meaning of the word secularism is not shrouded in any mystery. It is not an ancient or archaic word having been used by Chaucer or Shakespeare.

A beginning may be made with the dictionary. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED Vol.IX 1978) states that Secularism is the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state. OED further points out, rightly, that it was George Holyoake (1817-1906) who gave this name to the definitely professed system of belief.

Earlier OED gives the meaning of the word ‘secular’ as “belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the Church and religion”.

George J. Holyoake, to whom has been credited the coinage of the word secularism, was an Owenite and had founded in 1846 a weekly called “Reasoner” for the propagation of Owenism. In an issue of “Reasoner” in 1851, he issued a statement of secularist doctrine proclaiming –

- (1) science as the true guide of man;
- (2) morality as secular, not religious, in origin;
- (3) reason the only authority;

(4) freedom of thought and speech;

(5) that owing to the ‘uncertainty of survival’ we should direct our efforts to this life only.

There was, in the latter part of 19th Century in England, a debate as to whether atheism, the denial of the existence of God, was an essential element of secularism. It may be mentioned here that Holyoake himself was not a theist. In 1841, in a public meeting, provoked by a heckler, Holyoake had asserted that England was too poor a country to have a God and that it would not be “a bad idea to put Him on half-pay” (i.e. retire him) and had been for this blasphemous utterance sentenced to six months’ imprisonment.

George Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh were two leading secularists and atheists of England in the 19th Century. Holyoake was no less an atheist than Bradlaugh, though they did not agree on the question whether atheism was a necessary ingredient of secularism. Holyoake thought ignoring God was enough; for Bradlaugh, denial of God was essential. In March 1870 there was a public debate between Holyoake and Bradlaugh on this subject and Austin Holyoake chaired the meeting. I do not for the present intend to go into that controversy.

The texts of the speeches of Holyoake and Bradlaugh in this debate have been published. I am taking the liberty of referring to the speech of Holyoake for gathering the correct connotation of the word secularism which word, after all, was coined by Holyoake. He says:

“If you desire a brief summary, which may be given in a few words, of what the principles to which I have adverted point to, so far as meets the object of this discussion, I would state them thus: 1. Secularism maintains the sufficiency of secular reason for guidance in human duties. 2. The adequacy of the utilitarian rule which makes the good of others, the law of duty. 3. The duty nearest at hand and most reliable in results, is the use of material means tempered by human sympathy, for the attainment of social improvement. 4. The sinlessness of well-informed sincerity. 5. The sign and condition of such sincerity are free thought expository speech...”

Holyoake points out that to maintain sufficiency of reason is absolutely indispensable. He accepts that this is a heretical position and therefore the secularist, standing apart, does not include himself among Christians, does not need to profess Christianity [See “A Second Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism”, Ed. Garden Stein, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, N.Y. 1987 p.348]. It must follow from this that an adherent of Christianity, or of any other religion, cannot be a secularist.

Enunciating its principles, The National Secular Society (of England) declared that “the promotion of human improvement and happiness is the highest duty. That the theological teachings of the world have been, and are most powerfully obstructive of human improvement and happiness. ...” [Ibid. p.363].

I am obliged to burden this talk with some more quotations because they are from books of knowledge to which contributions are made by eminent scholars in the field.

Encyclopaedia Britannica says that secularism is “a movement in society directed away from other worldliness to life on earth”. In the medieval period there was a strong tendency for religious persons to despise human affairs and to meditate upon God and the other life. The Encyclopaedia further points out that secularism arose as a reaction to this tendency during European Renaissance when man began to show more interest in human cultural achievements and the possibilities of fulfillment of his personality in this world. It may be added that from Renaissance three streams flowed – Secularism, Humanism and Rationalism – the last one getting particularised only in the 18th Century.

Renaissance persuaded the scholars to study man as a citizen of this world. That led to humanism. It also necessarily gave birth to a desire or an urge to study this world. This gradually led to rationalism and science. The word secularism was not born in Renaissance but the idea was born – as a reaction to the futile, fruitless attitude prevalent all through the medieval ages of indifference to human affairs and of contemplation of the other world.

Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (Vol.XX, p.264,

1960 Edition) [ESS] explains:

“If secularism is defined as the attempt to establish an autonomous sphere of knowledge purged of supernatural, fictitious presuppositions, its modern origins are to be traced to the later Middle Ages of Western Europe. The distinction drawn up by the scholastics between faith and knowledge while it left room for revealed theology, was also capable of evaluating in a type of philosophical or natural theology which placed its chief emphasis on the truths perceptible by human reason – a broad category which subserved not only all physical knowledge but even metaphysical knowledge of God”.

The ESS points out that the ideal of human and social happiness proclaimed by the French Revolution has continued to influence subsequent generations of political and social workers. It is further pointed out that this has to some extent moulded the temper of some religious groups who are now compelled to accept that mankind shall strive by the most enlightened methods to establish social justice and welfare.

Even the Encyclopedia Britannica points out that in the latter half of the Twentieth Century some theologians have been advocating *Secular Christianity* by suggesting that Christianity should not be concerned only with the sacred and the otherworldly. The power of secularism is derived from its close connection with science, and in the union of social and scientific secularism, the movement begun in Renaissance has been gathering momentum and finds its logical climax.

The Social Science Encyclopedia (Ed. Adam Keeper & Jessica Keeper – Roulledge & Kegan Paul 1985, p.737) points out that secularisation refers to the displacement of religious beliefs, rituals and sense of community from the moral life of society. The major institutions of society became legitimated by secular ideologies and formal legal doctrines rather than by religions. It was the philosophy of enlightenment that provided the pivotal impetus towards the thoroughgoing secularisation.

At the root of secularism is the principle that the society should be founded on principles devised by

rational inquiry into the universal nature of human social life. The ESS has cited other authors who have pointed out the other facets of secularism. For example –

(a) The rational principles of social organisation are antithetical to religious traditions based upon faith;

(b) The moral authority of ideologies independent of religious ethics was established for evaluating economic, political stratifications and other social arrangements;

(c) Despite their rootedness in European culture, secular ideologies have taken on moral authority in many civilisations around the globe, somewhat in the manner of world religions.

Let me enumerate some of the propositions that emerge from the discussion so far or that are necessary to understand what follows:

1. Secularism is a system of social organisation and education which believes that religion has no part to play in the problems and events of everyday life.

2. A culture is seen as secular when its acceptance is based on rational and utilitarian considerations rather than on reverence and veneration.

3. A secular society is one that engenders in or elicits from its members readiness to change customary orientation towards or definition of values regarded as essential in that society.

4. Secularism on the part of the individual means a rational state of mind which refuses to recognise the arbitrary authority of any individual or any book.

5. In the context of “State” or “Society”, secularism means an endeavour on the part of State or Society to modernise the societal values and thus a policy of not being influenced by beliefs or values of any one or other religious group.

The next step in the discussion is to study the American experiment which correctly interprets and practices Secularism. Let me hasten to add that the word secularism is not to be found in the Constitution of U.S.A. But the doctrine is embodied in it. The thirteen colonies of England in North America issued

a Declaration of Independence on 4th July 1776. The U.S. Constitution drafted by the Philadelphia Convention was ratified in 1789. Article VI, Section 3, of the Constitution reads as follows:-

“The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.” [Emphasis provided]

Two things in this Article stand out prominently. First, any person about to enter a public office need not necessarily swear in the name of God; it is sufficient if he makes a solemn affirmation. We in India may not be able to appreciate the significance of this provision; our Constitution has always contained this provision. But it was a path-breaking enactment in the eighteenth Century. In England, even in 19th Century, Charles Bradlaugh was not allowed to take seat in the House of Commons though his constituency repeatedly elected him – in fact five times. The reason – he was an atheist. Bradlaugh agreed to take the prescribed oath but the House said that he would not be allowed to take the oath because he was an atheist. This was in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Bradlaugh ultimately took the oath and his seat after getting elected again in July 1886 – this time no member of the House raised any question.

It should be noted here that Bradlaugh had at one stage made the following declaration:

“Any form I went through, any oath that I took, I shall regard as binding upon my conscience in the fullest degree, and I would go through no form and take no oath unless I meant it to be so binding.”

It was only under the Affirmation Act of 1888 that the atheists could take seats in the Parliament by solemnly affirming rather than swearing in the name of God – more than 100 years after the U.S. had so provided.

(For a detailed discussion of Charles Bradlaugh’s Parliamentary fight, please see my “*Charles*

Bradlaugh: The Infidel M.P.” published by Scientific Temper Promotion Trust, 1986).

The second important thing about Article VI(3) is the fact that a person of any religious persuasion can hold any public office in U.S.A. because no religious test is required of such a person. A religious test is a test demanding the avowal or repudiation of certain religious beliefs. In 1961 the U.S. Supreme Court held that a State constitutional requirement requiring a belief in God as a qualification for office was unconstitutional. [*Torcaso v. Watkins*, 367 US 488 (1961)]. In this judgment, the phrase ‘Secular Humanism’, which became very popular later, was first used by Justice Hugo Black. Roy Torcaso, who had been appointed as Notary Public by the Governor of Maryland, was refused commission on the ground that he refused to affirm that he believed in God. In an action brought by Torcaso, Justice Black held that the Plaintiff was entitled to the protection of the First Amendment. Justice Black mentioned that secular humanism is one of a number of religions like Buddhism “which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God. (Ref. ‘Religious Liberty and the Secular Society’ by John M. Swomley, Prometheus Books, p.117).

No oath – only affirmation.

A person of any religious belief or of no religious belief can hold a public office.

However, during the two hundred years of the U.S. Constitutional history, there is no known case of any President making a solemn affirmation. In 1962, neither earlier nor later, a Christian not belonging to any Protestant denomination was elected the President of the United States. No non-Christian has been so elected so far. I should, however, add that many non-Protestant Christians and non-Christians have occupied other positions – some of them with great distinction. Justice Felix Frankfurter is a notable example.

Then came the First Amendment, by which the following provision was added to the Constitution in 1791:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free

exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition to government for a redressal of their grievances.” (Emphasis added)

The clause to which emphasis has been provided (by me) is the clause which is relevant for our discussion. The word secularism has not been used in the American Constitution. But the First Amendment is a repudiation of religion as an authority in the governance of the country. The case law that has been developed in the U.S.A. on this subject has been vast and makes very interesting study. This is not the place to enter into a detailed study of this subject. However, I must refer to some landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of U.S.A. which has throughout taken a consistent view in this matter.

Initially some theorists were of the view that the establishment clause only prevented preferential treatment to any religion or religions and did not prohibit the use of religion in public life. However, subsequently, by a series of judgments the Supreme Court of the U.S.A. has held till today that the U.S. Constitution debars the U.S. Government and the State Governments, the Congress and the State Legislatures from having any connection with any religion.

In 1801, Thomas Jefferson was elected President. In a letter which he wrote to a group of Baptists he asserted that it was the purpose of the First Amendment to build “a wall of separation between Church and State”. It is this total separation between the Church and the State that makes the American Constitution politically a secular Constitution, though the words ‘secular’ and ‘secularism’ are not found in it. In 1879, more than 70 years after the Jefferson letter, the U.S. Supreme Court accepted that statement by Jefferson as “almost an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the amendment.” [*Reynolds v. U.S.* 98 U.S. 145 (1879)]

Some landmark judgments of the U.S. Supreme Court should now be considered. In 1947, the Supreme Court by the thinnest margin held as constitutionally valid the provision of free transportation by the State of New Jersey to children of parochial schools. This has been justified on the

ground of provision of such a facility to school children as a safety measure on highways (*Everton v. Board of Education*, 330 US-1947). However, in the same judgment the following words of warning were written:

The ‘establishment of religion’ clause of the First Amendment means at least this:

1. Neither a State nor the Federal Government can set up a Church;
2. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another;
3. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or remain away from Church against his will;
4. Neither can force a person to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion;
5. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for Church attendance or non-attendance;
6. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever forms they adopt to teach or practice religion;
7. Neither a State nor the Federal Government can openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organisations or groups and vice versa.

(Emphasis added)

(For American Law and the Constitution, I have relied mainly on Edward S. Corwin’s “The Constitution and What it Means Today”.)

The following other propositions have been established by the other decisions handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court:

1. It is not separation of Church and State to permit religious instruction in the State’s tax-supported school buildings even to willing children whose parents have requested for it.
2. A “released time” programme under which religious instruction takes place off the school ground is permissible because the State is not hostile to religion.
3. Recitation of even non-denominational prayers is not permissible in a State-aided school

because it gives preferential treatment to those who believe in religion or God as against those who do not so believe.

4. The so-called science of creationism is not a science at all; it is teaching of the Bible which is not permissible (Bible can be studied but not taught).

5. The Court has taken a view that statutes involving excessive entanglements of State with Church in the matter of implementation would be invalid. Therefore –

(a) a statute providing salary supplements to teachers in secular subjects in non-public schools operated for the benefit of parochial schools; and

(b) a statute providing reimbursement to non-public schools for teachers' salaries and instructional material used in the teaching of secular subjects were both held invalid as they involved excessive entanglements of State with religious matters.

In *Engel v. Vitale* (370 US 421; 1962) even optional prayers in aided schools were held to be unconstitutional. There was a furious reaction to this decision. There were countrywide demands that the judges should resign; if they did not, they should be impeached. The majority decision was delivered by Justice Hugo Black who was a devout Baptist and Sunday school preacher. He was denounced as a Communist and an atheist. This case illustrates the detachment from personal view that the judges display in their work.

Black was in his younger days a member of Ku Klux Klan and anti-Black. As a judge of the U.S. Supreme Court he was a strong desegregationist. Carl Sogan has pointed out that as a member of the Ku Klux Klan, Black wore white robes and intimidated the blacks; as a member of the Supreme Court, he wore black robes and intimidated the whites. (on p.431 of 'The Demonhaunted World', Random House, New York).

Kennedy, who was then the President of U.S.A., called upon the Americans to accept the decision which was 'welcome reminder to every American family that we can pray a good deal more at home and attend our Churches with a good deal more fidelity and we can make the true meaning of prayer

more important in the lives of all of our children'. ("The First Freedom" by Net Hentoff, Delacorte Press, New York, p.156.)

There are some only of the several propositions handed down by the Supreme Court which clearly show that no part of the money belonging to the State can be applied directly or indirectly for a religious purpose – however small it may be. This is in my opinion true secularism though that word had not yet come in vogue at that time.

I must hasten to mention here that secularism enshrined in the American Constitution is not the result of a movement for secularism. Provision for secularism was made to prevent any religion or any sect gaining a more advantageous position than another. America is inhabited by a large number of Christian denominations which were not always tolerant of each other. Different sects were in dominant positions in different States. In order to avoid conflicts among the different denominations and in order to avoid the dominance by any one denomination, the State was prohibited from having anything to do with religion in any manner. A French visitor to the U.S.A. found that in that country there were a dozen sects but only one sauce. Americans are not secular, but U.S.A. has a secular Constitution.

After noticing that in America secularism was established practically without any fight or controversy, one must turn to France where secularism came to be established firmly after a gradual conquest of the ground. Europe had been ravaged for a long time by religious persecutions and wars. That was in fact the main reason why many Europeans migrated to the New World. France had been the arena for the oppression of different Protestant sects. Only two years before the Revolution i.e. in November 1787, the existence of non-Catholics was recognised by an edict. But Louis XVI specified that the Roman Catholic Church alone would continue to enjoy public worship in France. Non-Catholics continued to have civil and political disabilities.

Then the Revolution took place on 14th July 1789. The Roman Catholic Church was too strong to be swept away easily. Secularisation in France took

place in stages. The Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen stated in Article 10:

“ No one is to be disquieted because of his opinions, even religions, provided their manifestation does not disturb public order established by law. ”

First, in 1789 December, all non-Catholics (save the Jews) were freed from civil and political disabilities. The Constitution of September 3, 1891 abolished the disabilities of Jews. The first stage was to basically remove the disadvantages associated with religion.

Certain revolutionary groups became active proclaiming the supremacy of reason.

“The cult of eternal Reason is the only one worthy of a free and enlightened nation.”

“We shall revere only Reason; Equality and Liberty are our gods.”

“Let us erase superstition’s yoke to the last trace. Let Reason take its place, Reason which is heavensent.”

Among these and other slogans, Goddess Reason was worshipped. National holidays, not based upon religions, were declared. The Church was not abolished but the Roman Catholics accepted the position that Church was in the State and not the State in the Church.

I will indicate briefly the different stages of secularisation.

The State took over from the Church the registration of births, deaths and marriages.

Education system was overhauled and the teaching institutions were removed from the control of the Church and put under the authority of the State. Between 1801 and 1804, the Civil Code, a comprehensive one, was introduced – this marked a complete break from the authority of the Roman Catholic Church over French legislation. The Preamble to the Code proclaimed that there exists a universal and immutable law and “it is nothing else than natural reason in so far as it governs all men”.

The overall political and social situation that was thus created has been described by the French word *laicite* for which, scholars say, there is no English

equivalent. One dictionary “Dictionaire de la Langue Francase” by Petit Le Robert describes ‘*laicite*’ as the principle of separation of civil society and religious society, the State exercising no religious power and the Church exercising no political power. This does not adequately convey the idea of secularism but for the purpose of this talk I will use the word ‘secular’ for ‘*laicite*’ and secularisation for ‘*laicization*’, the process of making secular.

The general framework contained three characteristics –

- 1) The State no longer ensures the salvation of the people;
- 2) The State involves itself only with the citizens’ common earthly interest;
- 3) The State considers itself not to be in a position to impose specific religious doctrines.

To be sure, religion was not ignored. In fact the purported religious needs of the citizens were recognised and the State paid stipends to ministers of recognised religions.

The second stage of secularisation in France is marked by the passing of a law of separation of State and Church on 11th December 1905. Before that happened, certain other events took place in the process of secularisation. The law prohibiting work on Sundays was repealed. The provision for divorce was introduced. Distinction between the burial grounds of different religions was abolished. The reform of the educational system has already been mentioned.

The Act of 1905 provided that the Republic neither recognises nor pays nor subsidises any religion. This meant in practice the denial of the usefulness of religions recognised earlier. Between 1905 and today several developments took place which at one time weakened the fabric of secularism (*laicite*) and sometimes strengthened it. These ups and downs reflected the social and political fluctuations in France. The debate goes on mostly in the field of education. Religions are studied today but are not taught. In the French Republican School, it is said, one does not learn to believe, but to reason.

From what has been said about the birth and

growth of secularism, in France it is seen that it is a product of social and political development. 'Laicite' in France is being subjected to new challenges during the last decade and a half. This is primarily due to the immigrant population of Muslims from the erstwhile French Colonies in North Africa. The Islamist groups are seeking a special status in the Secular Republic.

The episode involving the headscarves which arose in 1989 provides a typical example of this challenge. The principal of a school (in Creil), himself an immigrant from the Caribbean, forbade three Muslim girls from attending the classes with the headscarves worn purportedly to conceal their hair – an action which he justified on the ground of *laicite*. The then Minister of Education, who later became Prime Minister, tried to work out a compromise by suggesting that the children and their parents should be persuaded not to wear the scarves while attending the classes and if they are not persuaded, they should be allowed in the school. "Munich of the Republican School" shouted the secular intelligentsia of the

country.

Then there are several issues springing up from this and similar incidents. The educational institution is totally a secular institution – is it not entitled to insist that patently religious symbolism should not be displayed in its premises? To the progressives and non-religious, the headscarf symbolised the subservience of woman. Moreover, it created separateness in a group of students. They insist that when a person comes to France as an immigrant, he enters not only a country but also a history and a culture.

In a still later incident, sometime in 1994, the then Minister advocated that prohibition of 'ostentatious insignia' be included in the school regulations. The problem rests there and has not been resolved to the satisfaction of either party. The French have, in a poll conducted, expressed their view that fanaticism, submission and rejection of Western values were characteristic of Islam. What is the religious composition of French population? No one knows, because the census does not record the religion

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of the French citizen. It appears that secularism, like democracy, needs constant vigilance. (For an excellent account of the French experiment, see *Two Thresholds of Laicization* by Jean Beubarot in “*Secularism and Its Critics*”, Ed. Rajeev Bhargav, OUP 1998).

Secularism in America, which entered the Constitution through the first Amendment, got firmly entrenched by judicial decisions – thanks to the initial interpretation given to it by Thomas Jefferson. The idea of separation of Church and State in France was the product of the Revolution and has been fortified by social, cultural and political developments.

I must now turn to another country where secularism has been thrust upon the people by one who was for all purposes a dictator but where it has been subsequently supported and sustained by the population. That is Turkey. The Chief Executive of Pakistan, General Musharaff, within few days of his capturing power, declared that his role model would be the Turkish Secularist reformer, Mustafa Kamal Atatürk. There is in some minds a lurking feeling that Kamal Pasha was basically a good Muslim who brought about reforms in Turkey. Khaled Ahmed, the editor of *Friday Times* of Lahore, has, in an article contributed to “*On the Abyss*” (2000, Harper Collins), stated as follows :-

“Atatürk had been admired by the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The first book he gave his daughter Dina in the 1930s was a biography of the Grey Wolf. Poet Muhammad Iqbal, considered the philosopher of the State in Pakistan, had supported the secular experiment of Atatürk in Turkey in his famous 1929 English Lectures”.(page 85)

The lectures referred are “*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*” delivered in 1929. They were first published in London in 1931 but the book has been out of print for a long time (Those who are interested in the subject will be glad to know that it is now available having been republished recently by Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi).

I was a little surprised by the reference to Muhammad Iqbal, a known anti-liberal and anti-secularist, as an admirer of Kamal Pasha. I was naturally driven to check the original.

Iqbal, in his lecture on “*The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam*” (One of the lectures delivered in 1929 and included in “*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*”) has, at some length, discussed what is known as Ijtihad in Islam i.e. literature. Referring to the line of thought of the Nationalist Party in Turkey, he points out, correctly, that the point of supreme interest of that party was the State and not religion and that party emphasises the separation of Church and State. The assimilation of the theory of separation by the Turkish Nationalists is, according to Iqbal, misleading inasmuch as it suggests a dualism which does not exist in Islam. He endorses the view of Said Halim Pasha, of the Religious Reform Party, which said that Islam – the world of Islam – is one and it has no fatherland. Said Halim Pasha had further said that modern culture based on national egoism is another form of barbarism – a view Iqbal commends.

There is no admiration anywhere in these lectures of Kamal Atatürk. The only thing which Iqbal accepts is the vesting of Caliphate in an assembly – a body of persons – which was done by the Turks initially. Even this had become irrelevant by the time Iqbal delivered his lectures. Having abolished Sultanate on 1st November 1922, Kamal proceeded to abolish Caliphate itself on 3rd March 1924 and on the same day Ministry of Religious Affairs and Religious Schools was abolished. Continuing the narration of events, Kamal proceeded to ban fez cap, suppress religious brotherhoods and close down sacred tombs as places of worship. In 1926 February, new Civil Law Code was adopted which, among other things, made it impossible for a Muslim to summarily divorce his wife. Kamal had, however, given Talaq to his wife in August 1925.

Therefore, when General Musharaff declared that his role model would be Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, the religious parties were stunned into silence. Qazi Hussein Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islam said: “How can Atatürk, who destroyed the Islamic ideology, be the ideal of a Pakistan ruler? Those who are making such senseless statements to make God angry and America happy should learn a lesson from the fate of Nawaz Sharif”.

... to be continued