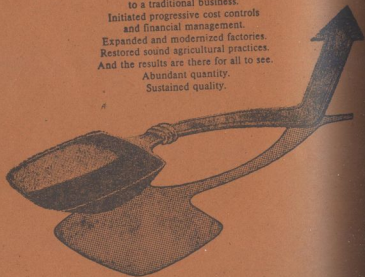


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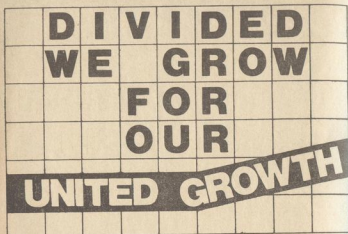
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Churn on diligently

CONTENTS

Chairman Nanaji Deshmukh	
Editor & Publisher K.R. Malkani	
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1. Justice for All and Appeasement of None : Concepts of Nationalism Versus Communalism in Historical Perspective —K. R. Malkani	9
2. Improving Indo-Bangladesh Relations : Report of a Symposium	23
3. Why Saving Tropical Forests is Mankind's Foremost Task —Sailendra Nath Ghosh	35
4. Tropical Forests of India and the World—How to Save them —Sailendra Nath Ghosh	43
5. An Emergency Call to Action for the Forests, their Policies, and Life on Earth	51
6. Two Questions to R. S. S. —S. N. Nagarajan	55
7. DRI to Build Houses for Flood Victims of Beed	57
8. News from Far and Near	58
(i) Alternative Agriculture : US National Academy of Sciences' Recommendations	
(ii) Genetically Engineered Tomato	
(iii) Moscow's TV Healer of Body and Soul	
(iv) Hazards of left-handers	
(v) No 5-star Hotel in Russia	
(vi) Japan's Nobel Prizes	



जनसेवा सहकारी बँक लि.

प्रधान कार्यालय : भोरवली (पश्चिम), मुंबई ४०००६२

भोरवली शाखा :

नंद धाम लो. टिक्क मार्ग,

भोरवली (पश्चिम)

मुंबई-४०००६२

दु. : ६६६७३४

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ममला, वामनराव सावंत मार्ग,

दहियर (पूर्व)

मुंबई-४०००६८

दु. : ६५३०००

वेला : सोम. ते बुध. सकाळी ८-३० से १०-३० सायं. ५-०० से ७-००
शनिवार : सकाळी ८-३० से १०-३०

इतर बँकिष्ट्ये :

- * अल्प मध्यम गटासाठी कर्जाच्या विशेष सुविधा
- * लहान कर्जाची तातडीची मंजूरी
- * ठेवीवर एक टक्का अधिक व्याज
- * सेफ डिपॉझिट लॉकरची सुविधा
- * सार्वजनिक ट्रस्टच्या ठेवी स्वोकारण्यासाठी सरकारी मान्यता

संचालक मंडळ :

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| * श्री जनार्दन कामत, अध्यक्ष | * श्री राधेश्याम सिद्धानियां, उपाध्यक्ष |
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| * श्री विनोद घेंडिया नगरसेवक | * श्री श्रीकांत तांबवेकर |
| * डॉ बासुदेव श्रृंगी | * श्री मोहन मिठवाकर |
| * श्री दत्ताराम माने | * श्री सिताराम घाग |
| * श्री बासुदेव राऊत | * श्री रामजी यादव |
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श्री कुंज बिहारी देसाई-वरिष्ठ व्यवस्थापक

“Justice for all and Appeasement of None”

Nationalism and Communalism in Historical Perspective

By : K.R. Malkani

THE BIGGEST single problem facing the Indian polity today is 'communalism'. Very often it is white-washed with 'secularism'. And that in turn has made 'secularism' almost a dirty word in India. It is important to go into the genesis of this problem for a rational and amicable solution of the same.

The communal problem as we know it today, began with the 'Muslim' invasions of India. Between 638 A.D. and 712 A.D. nine Khalifas had launched fifteen attacks against India in the Sindh-Baluchistan-Gujarat area. It was only the fifteenth attack in 712 that succeeded. Sindh was ravaged. Conversions, forcible and opportunist, took place. Here the first communalist was born. A Durbari of Raja Dahir Sen had embraced Islam and become 'Maulana Islami'. When he was sent with an Arab to negotiate with Dahir, while the Arab saluted the king respectfully, this new Muslim refused to bow to Dahir—on the ground that he now recognised only 'the king of Islam'! (vide 'Chachnama', p. 108). Communalism had been born in India.

Worse followed when Mahmud Ghazni led his seventeen raids against India three hundred years later. His contemporary, historian Al-Biruni noted that Mahmud "utterly ruined the prosperity of the country and performed those wonderful exploits by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims." Ghezni was followed by Ghori with like consequences. Even after 'Muslims' were firmly seated on the throne of Delhi, barbaric incursions from beyond the Khyber Pass continued right upto Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali in the eighteenth century. However, India was too big, too populous, too well socially organised in the joint family and the caste, and too well spiritually fortified in its philosophy and religion, to completely go under, like Egypt or Iran. Therefore a positive interaction followed, resulting in peaceful co-existence at the people's level. Though religion continued to be invoked as a war-cry when convenient, armies became more and more mixed, and rivals fought for territory, wealth and power, and not really for religion.

Even Mahmud Ghazni's coins in India carried the figure of Lakshmi—and at times Shiva's Nandi—to be acceptable legal tender to the people. In the interest of the economy, the Khiljis allowed Multani traders and money-lenders to carry on their business unhindered as before. Very soon, writes Barani in his 'Tarikh-e-Firuzshahi', they were "rolling in wealth". The Khilji kings said they dared not stop Hindu religious processions passing by the royal palace. "They do not care for our power and magnificence", said Sultan Jalaluddin Khilji.

Soon the State was vertically divided between Turks and influential local converts like Malik Kafur Hazardinari and Khan-in-Jahan Tilin-gana. The Mughals warred on the Daecani kingdoms not only for territory, but because while Delhi was Sunni and Turkish, Deccan was Shia and native. (The Nizam Shahis of Ahmednagar made Marathi their official language.) This conflict created a power vacuum, which Shivaji came up to fill. The first nine Khalifas were all murdered. In 1258 the Mongols sacked Baghdad and murdered the last Abbasid Khalifa. And it was not until 1517 that the Sultan of Turkey appointed himself Khalifa. In the process the Khilafat had lost all its legitimacy, and Islam, its unity.

Even the early Turkish dynasties had no use for Shariah, by which, ironically, extremist Muslims are swearing even in the twentieth century. Allauddin Khilji said he would do as he thought fit, and not what was required by Shariah. "I do not know whether such commands are permitted or not by the Shariah, I command what I consider to be of benefit to my country and what appears to me to be opportune under the circumstances," Akbar said that Hindustan could not be governed by the Arab rules of a thousand years ago. Notes Prof. Mujib, author of 'Indian Muslims' (published by Munshiram Manoharlal), that throughout Muslim rule, "for the generality of Muslims, the Shariah was only an object of reverence, not a body of law that was, or could be, enforced."

When some local converts began to adopt the customs of Turkish rulers, Sheikh Gesu-daraz, leading Sufi Saint, pointed out that these were Turkish customs, not Muslim customs—implying, thereby, that Muslim Indians need not adopt foreign Turkish customs.

While the Sultans and their Ulema and Kazis followed the official political line, the Sufi Saints became the real rulers of people's hearts. And these Sufis had no use for orthodoxy. Rumi said *An'al Haq* ('I am God)—just like our '*Aham Brahma Asmi*'. The Sufis also said '*Hama U-i*' (all that is, is God), just like our '*Isha Vasyamidam sarvah*' (all creation is encompassed by the Lord). They sang and danced and drank—just like the Tantriks—to the horror of the orthodox Muslims. But the

masses were thrilled. The Sufis and the masses lit lamps on the graves and bowed to the Pirs, contrary to orthodox Islam. Said Nizamuddin Auliya: "A command of the Pir is like a command of the Prophet." He also said that a visit to his Sheikh's tomb in Ayodhya was "spiritually more exhilarating than a pilgrimage to Mecca." And he was moved by Hindi songs with their tender charm, where Persian ghazals left him cold.

Amir Khusrau sang: "Muslims regard India as paradise while the rest of the world is mere prison." He added: "Mecca might go round Delhi in reverence; its people are like angels."

The Sultan of Bijapur said he derived all his inspiration from Ganesh. Paragal Khan, the Afghan ruler of Bengal, listened to the recitation of Mahabharat every evening with reverence. From a word of abuse, 'Kafir' became a term of endearment. Sang Amir Khusrau in Persian:

Amir Khusrau said Mecca should go round Delhi with reverence

"Kafir-e-Ishq-am ;

Musalmani ma-ra darkar n-ist."

(I am an infidel who idolises Love; I have, no use for the Islamic faith.)

While Turkish rule "Turkised" many aspects of urban life—even as British rule has led to much Anglicisation—Hindu influence began to be felt not only by immigrants in India but also in Muslim lands far beyond India. And so Shabistari extolled idol-worship; Rumi adopted the sacred thread; and Hafiz, saluted Indian 'suttees'. Hafiz, the great Persian Sufi poet, struck the right note when he said:

"*Halifa gar wasl khwahi,*

"*Sulhi kun be aam-o-khas;*

"*Ba Mussalman Allah-Allah,*

"*Ba Brahman Ram Ram.*"

(Oh Hafiz, if you want to be one with God, make peace with high and low; greet the Muslim with 'Allah-Allah' and the Hindu with 'Ram Ram'.)

Actually Kabir had already shown the way by singing that Kashi and Qaaba are the same — and Ishwar and Allah are also one and the same.

Many prominent Muslims bore partly or wholly Indian names. These included Yasoraj Khan, author of 'Krishna Mangala' in Bengali, Magan Thakur, Prime Minister of Arakan, and Haridas, who became a disciple of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

The Mughal Emperors drank only Ganga Jal; they gave Jharokha-darshan every morning and practised Tulya-daan every year — like the good old Hindu kings. The court observed not only the Idd and Navroz, the Persian New Year Day, but also Basant and Holi, Diwali and Dusshera. Sarhad Faqir, who was born Jew, and who later converted to Islam, ended up a 'Kafir', singing the glories of Ram and Lakshman. Early in the eighteenth century Satya pir gave rise to Satya Narayan Katha. Ghalib in a Persian ode to Kashi, 'Chiragh-e-Daur', said the world had not gone to pieces only because of Kashi. And in this very century we had a phenomenon like Sai Baba of Shirdi, revered alike by Hindus and Muslims.

The Mughal Empire was basically ruled by a coalition of Delhi and Jaipur. We can't think of Akbar without Man Singh — and we can't think of even Aurangzeb without Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh. As Prof. Mujib puts it: "While the Muslim proclaimed his mission and trumpeted his intentions, Hindu influences, moving silently and unobtrusively like the waters of a flood, surrounded him from all sides, leaving only small islands where the flag of Islam flew high and defenceless." While the towns were islands of Muslim influence, the country-side was overwhelmingly Hindu.

The Hindu society also handled Muslim rule in a mature manner. It resisted all oppression; but it did not condemn Islam, just because the oppressor was a Muslim. The Hindu had been brought up on the idea of 'Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava' and 'Sarva Dharma Samanantam'. He had been taught to look with a friendly eye on everything and everybody (Mitrasya Chakshusha Pashyem). The Veda itself said:

"Janam Bibhrati bahuda vivachasam
Nava dharmanam prithivi yathoukasam."

(This our motherland gives equal shelter to people speaking different languages and following different faiths.)

The Hindus noted that the Koran also says: "There must be no compulsion exercised in matters of religion. Unto you, your faith be welcome; so my faith to me."

*La ekrabha f-id-din; La-kum
dinu-kum wale yadin; Udu ela
sabili Rabbeka b-il-hikmate
W-al-mauzezzatil hasanate.*

The Koran elaborates: "To every people have we given a law and a way whereby they may reach God. If God had wished it so, he would have made you all one people. Wherefore, let every people, in the way prescribed for it, press forward to good deeds. And let none laugh at any other man; perchance they may be better than themselves."

Hindus resisted Muslim oppressors; they did not quarrel with Islam as religion

*Li kullin ja'lanamin-kum shira'an
wa minhaja, wa lau sha-Allaho
la ja 'alakum ummaman-wahidah,
wa lakin leyabul-lowakum fi ma
ata-kum fasto-lequ-l-Khairato,
Yaayyoh-allazina amanu layaskhar
qaumun min qaumin.
A'sa anakupa Khairam minhum.*

In other words, according to Koran, God has given every people or nation, its own religion, specially suited to it. The Koran says:

*"Ashraf-ul-imani-un Yamanak annaso,
wa ashray-ul-Islami-un yaslam annaso mil-lessaneka wayadeka."*

(Noblest religion this, that others may feel safe from thee; the loftiest Islam, that all may feel safe from thy tongue and hands.)

The Hindus took Islam at its word and did not quarrel with it. And so Sant Tukaram, who condemned all kings as "Butchers", went so far as to say: "Never forget to take the name of Allah first". And Mahamati Pran Nath, the spiritual forbear of Mahatma Gandhi, resisted Aurangzeb's Jeziya, but in his Nijanand Sampradaya 'Haveli' (mandir) there was no idol, only sacred texts from Hindu and Muslim scriptures.

Many Muslims appreciated this Hindu liberalism and, as an Urdu poet put it:

"Kahan aisee azadian hai muyasir,

'An 'al Huq' Kaho aur mat na poo?"

(Where else do you get the liberty to say 'I am God', and not be put to death?)

Shah Jahan, held captive by Aurangzeb, wrote to his cruel son: "All honour to the Hindus who feed their ancestors even after death; but you, a Muslim, deny me water to drink even in life!"

Shivaji's letter to Mirza Raja Jaisingh was written in Persian. In this letter he pointed out that Allah was the God of all people (Rab-ul-Alimeen) and not the God of Muslims only (Rab-ul-Muslimeen). He also said that all would have been well if Dara, and not an oppressor like Aurangzeb, had succeeded Shahjahan. In brief, he was not fighting Islam; he was resisting an oppressor whose wore by Islam. Shivaji himself had two Muslim Generals — Siddi Hullal and Nur Khan — and three Muslim Admirals — Siddi Sambal, Siddi Misri and Daulat Khan. The core of Guru Govind Singh's forces was 500 Pathans. And at the battle of Haldighati, while the Mughal vanguard was led by Mansingh's brother, Jagannath, Rana Pratap's vanguard was led by Hakim Khan Suri!

The Third Battle of Panipat, 1761, was not a battle only between Afghan Muslims and Hindu Marathas, as is commonly believed. Both sides had mixed armies. The Maratha artillery at the Third Battle of Panipat, was manned by Muslims led by Ibrahim Gardi and prominent in Abdali's Army was the Nanga Sadhu contingent of Shuja-ud-daula, Nawab of Banaras. Shuja-ud-daula's chief Adviser was Pandit Kashi Raj, a Maharashtra Brahmin. It was Kashi Raj who negotiated unsuccessfully with Sadashiv Rao Bhau. And after the Third Battle of Panipat, it was on Kashi Raj's insistence, that Bhau's body was not taken to Kabul as a trophy, and the last rites were performed with due ceremony by Kashi Raj himself.

There was prolonged mixing and increasing synthesis. Even while the Hindu was Hindu, and the Muslim, Muslim, they all began to feel Hindustani. Indian Hajis in Mecca were known as 'Hindi'. As E.B. Havell, expert on Indian Architecture puts it: "All the Mohammedan styles — at Delhi, Ajmer, Agra, Gaur, Malwa, Gujarat, Jaunpur and Bijapur — all these tell us plainly that, to the Indian builders, the sect of the Prophet of Mecca has only one of the many which made up the synthesis of Hinduism; they could be good Mohammedans but yet remain Hindu."

It is significant that Hindus and Muslims fought together in 1857. "There was more cultural uniformity in India between 1750 and 1850", writes Prof. Mujeib, "than there has been ever before or since." Actually this cultural uniformity became very real after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, and it survived right upto 1907, for full two hundred years!

However, the British sowed the seeds of Hindu-Muslim separatism soon after 1857. (They also sowed two other seeds of dissension: they concocted the 'Aryan invasion' theory to separate the South from the North; and they got a Sikh leader, Kahan Singh, Prime Minister of Nabha, to write the pamphlet 'Hum Hindu Nahin Hain', to separate the Sikhs from the Hindus.)

Shaken to their roots by the joint Hindu-Muslim action in 1857, they set about dividing the two. Till then the British Indian Armies were mixed. The Bengal Army, the Bombay Army and the Madras Army had Indians of all castes and communities in the same units. After 1857, they completely reorganised the Army. There were now separate regiments of

Shivaji, Rana Pratap, Guru Govind Singh all had Muslim soldiers and Commanders

Hindus and Muslims and even of Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs, Gurkhas, Mahars, etc. Eastern U.P. and Bihar, whose soldiers had revolted the most, were now declared "non-martial", barred from recruitment to the Army, and otherwise crushed. That partly explains the general backwardness of Eastern U.P. and Bihar to this day.

Because Muslims had been more active than Hindus in 1857, the British wreaked their vengeance more on Muslims than on Hindus. British historians described Hindu rebels as "Pandeys" — after Mangal Pandey — but Muslim rebels as "Badmashes" (rascals). The Jama Masjid, Delhi, was converted into a military stable. For some years Muslims were not allowed to enter Delhi. The Muslim society in North India suffered terribly. It was as a result of this acute suffering that, under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed, a large section of Muslims decided to lie low, and toe the British line. The instrument of this growing Anglo-Muslim alliance was the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, presided over by a string of "empire-building" Englishmen. Noted Lelyveld in his "Aligarh's First Generation": "The British professors enforced attendance at prayers with a determination unmatched by their pious Muslim professors." Very soon Principal Beck was all in as the popular description of the situation was:

"Kaum Khuda Ka, College Sir Syed Ka, Hukum Beck Bahadur Ka."

(The nation belongs to God, the college belongs to Sir Syed but it is the writ of Mr. Beck that runs.)

When people, particularly in Bengal, began to talk of Swaraj and practise Swadeshi, the British decided to punish Bengal by partitioning it in 1905. The British also decided to change sides, and use the Muslim Card. They organised a Muslim delegation to wait on the Viceroy, Lord Minto, at Simla in 1906. This delegation asked for, and received, assurances of separate electorates and more seats and more jobs for Muslims. It was a command performance.

Lady Mary Minto, the Viceroy's wife, noted in her diary that Dunlop Smith, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, had sent her a note saying: "I must send Your Excellency a line to say that a very big thing has happened today. A work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition."

Writes M.J. Akbar in his recent book on Nehru: "It took them just three years to institutionalize the guarantee to the Muslims through the principle of separate electorates in the famous Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909. The Muslims had been given critical advantages over Hindus. Apart from separate electorates and weightages, voting was made easier for them. A Muslim could become a voter if he paid tax on an income of only Rs. 3,000 per year while a Hindu had to have an income of Rs. 3 lakhs (Rs. 300,000). Similarly, in the graduates category, a Muslim needed to be a graduate of only three years' standing, while a Hindu required thirty." The seeds of Partition had been carefully sown and amply watered.

However, things did not come apart immediately. Many Muslims joined Hindus in opposing the Partition of Bengal. In 1916, Hindu and Muslim leaders signed the Lucknow Pact, making united demands on the British. When Gandhiji first attended a Congress session, he thought Vithalbhai Patel, then sporting a Fez cap, was Muslim; and he thought Mr. Jinnah (his name, an obvious corruption of 'Jaina') was a Hindu. In 1921, Hindus and Muslims jointly agitated for the restoration of the deposed Sultan of Turkey as the Khalifa of the Muslim world.

However, when the Khilafat movement failed, and failure led to frustration, bickerings and violence, the British saw their opportunity; they now aided and abetted communalism. Separate electorates and separate organisations—Muslim League in 1906, Hindu Mahasabha in 1909—began to separate and divide the people.

The Muslims, according to 1931 census, were less than 30% of the Indian population. Congress agreed to 32% representation for them.

But the British outbid the Hindus (two sides of a triangle will always be greater than the third!) and, in 1933, they awarded Muslims 33.3 percent seats. They, thereby, effectively killed Hindu-Muslim accord. It is now well established that the Partition plan was conceived and executed by the British in their own—and the American cousins'—imperial interests. Muslims plumped for it only in continuation of their habit of Anglo-Muslim alliance since 1906. It is now also well documented that Mr. Jinnah and Churchill were in secret correspondence all through the negotiations for transfer of power. The British Labour Government of Attlee reluctantly acquiesced in Partition because Churchill's Conservative Party was in majority in the House of Lords, and it could have stalled the Indian Independence Act for years. Mountbatten also played their sinister role in bending Congress leadership to their will and their wives. However, it is significant that Pakistan was not demanded by the Ulema, but by English-educated Muslims, led by Aligarh Muslim University, foolishly supported by Communists. They set out to bifurcate India; in the event they only succeeded in trifurcating Muslim Indians!

The partition of a living political organism like the Indian State, inevitably led to much bleeding. And to this day India and Pakistan continue to arm — and waste their substance. This may be good for the

1857 sealed Hindu-Muslim unity— and the British broke that seal!

war industries in the West — and for commissions for "leaders"; but it can only bode ill for the people of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh,

It is important that the people of the Hindustan Peninsula see through all this, come to an amicable settlement of all issues, and effect a Great National Reconciliation. For there is no doubt that Hindus and Muslims of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are One People with a Common Destiny. However, before that is attempted, old cobwebs of misinformation and misunderstanding have to be removed.

Hindus have an acute grievance against 'Muslim' invaders who brought rack and ruin to the country. However, India was not alone in its suffering; even Arab lands suffered terribly from the onslaughts of Turks and Mongols. But Muslim Indians, while abiding by Islam, must dissociate themselves from the "exploits" of these scourges of mankind. For example Sindhi Muslims have rightly learned to look upon Qasim as villain and Raja Dahir Sen as hero.

Hindus think that all conversions were forcible. Muslims think that all conversions were voluntary. The truth lies somewhere in-between.

Many conversions were forcible; many more were caused by temptations of land/office; but many conversions, particularly in East Bengal, were voluntary. (These people were Buddhists, with a weak will to resist; and they did not have the protection of the caste structure.) Both Hindus and Muslims have to recognise these facts.

Many Hindus think that Muslims were pro-British and that they did not take part in the Freedom Movement. This, again, is only a half-truth. Fact is that, by and large, there was an Anglo-Hindu entente before 1905, and an Anglo-Muslim entente after that. Muslims resisted British rule—and English language and Western culture—more than Hindus. Tipu Sultan was the only Indian ruler who fought the British unto death. On the other hand, Hindus in many areas preferred orderly British rule to the anarchy of the eighteenth century, often presided over by decadent Nawabs. As Bankim Chandra remarked in his historic novel 'Anand Math': "No doubt, the Muslim rule is over and Hindu rule has not yet been established. But unless the British take over, there is no possibility of the revival of Sanatan Dharma. We shall advance towards the spiritual by mastering the secular through the medium of English education. Then there will be no hurdle in the way of spreading the Sanatan Dharma. The true Dharma will rise once again. Until that happens, until the Hindus become knowledgeable, accomplished and powerful, the British will continue to rule."

In 1857, the Muslims fought more than the Hindus. Bengalis, who were to lead the Freedom Movement in another fifty years, were not prepared for it in 1857. The Bengali Colony in Kanpur put up a sign-board reading: "Bengalis, cowards, live here. No enemy of British."

In the 1921 movement also, Muslims were more active than Hindus. It was only in the 1930 and 1942 movements that Muslims kept away due to the seeds of separatism sown by the British. In the INA and Naval Mutiny again Muslims took an equal part. It would, therefore, not be correct to accuse Muslims of a lack of patriotism.

On the other hand, many Muslims in India continue, as per old habit, to complain about this, and ask for that, to the irritation of the Hindu. These complaints need to be understood and explained—and these irritations removed.

Taking only the broad issues, complaint No. 1 of Muslims is that there is much rioting, in which Muslims suffer the most. One need not go into the genesis of riots or the relative losses of different communities. All violence is bad; and whether it is a Hindu or a Muslim who dies, it is

Bharat Mata who bleeds. Both, Hindus and Muslims, must jointly urge the Government to maintain law and order or get out. In the event of any serious rioting, there must be an inquiry—and condign punishment for the guilty and ample compensation for the victims. At the same time it must be recognised that most of the time Hindus and Muslims are living in peace and amity all over the land. The way some people play up the riots and make political capital out of them, amounts to a defamation of our country and our people.

Complaint No. 2 is that Muslims don't have a fair share of Education, Employment, Industry and Commerce.

Muslims are welcome to attend government schools or start their own private schools, like anybody else. They can't blame the Hindus or the government for their children not going to school. Lack of education in turn affects their chances for employment. A recent study shows that

Hindu grievances and Muslim complaints examined

although Muslims are 12 per cent of the total population, Muslims constitute only 1.2 per cent of the school population of India. It would seem that the real problem here is their weak educational tradition; very few Brahmins embraced Islam.

Traditionally, Muslims were prominent as soldiers, zamindars and artisans. Their misfortune is that soldiery has moved far away from sword-wielding to computer-reading; and zamindari has been abolished as per the socialistic pattern of society. They are still very prominent in the various arts and crafts. And these artisans find it more profitable to induct their children young in the family craft—and not waste years on an education that will, at best, get them a job carrying less money than their ancestral occupation.

Industry and Commerce are free in India. Many Muslims are happily coming up nicely in these lines. Let more of them do so. Their problem here, again, seems to be that of a weak tradition; very few Vaishyas embraced Islam. I am reminded of Haji Sir Abdullah Haroon, businessman, long-time President, Sind Provincial Muslim League. He could not get Muslim accountants; so he engaged Hindu accountants. He had only one request to these accountants: they should read namaz! And they did—to keep their master happy!

Complaint No. 3 is that they don't have adequate representation in the legislatures—and a fair share of political offices. Here the position is

that they have equal political rights. It is true that the number of Muslim legislators is less than their proportion in the population. But they more than make up for that by securing the election of Hindus of their choice, who otherwise would not get elected and who, for that very reason, are specially solicitous of their interests. As for share in political power, it goes by party, and not by community. If, however, Muslims think better of proportional representation—much of the non-Anglo-American world has the RR system—they are welcome to sound out the various parties for support on the subject.

Complaint No. 4 is that in a Hindu India, Muslims are likely to lose their identity. Well if you are in a sea, you will get wet—and you can hardly blame the water for that. In America, all comers get Americanised. It is inevitable that in India everybody should get Indianised. Even Urdu is 75% Hindi. The important thing for Muslims to note is that Hinduism accepts great diversity. Among all the non-Muslim countries of the world where Muslims are in sizeable numbers—India, China, Russia, Balkans—Muslims have a better position in India than anywhere else. (In the Balkans, Muslims have been told to bear local national names—or go away to Turkey. Albania, the only Muslim country in Europe, has also asked its people to give themselves old Illyrian names and not Arabic names.) These are facts that must be understood and appreciated.

However, with the spread of modern communications, a world-wide process of increasing homogenisation is going on. Every society has to separate essentials from non-essentials. And no society can afford to stand out as a sore thumb—in the name of “separate identity”. A “separate identity” which not only separates but divides and disrupts, would not be acceptable anywhere. Here the real problem is created by Tablighi Jamat which insists on Muslim Indians changing their Indian habits and customs, and adopting Persio-Turko-Arabic ways. Every society has its limits of toleration. In India these limits are wide. But nobody should strain these limits to breaking point. Minorities have rights, and so have the majorities. While every opinion must be heard with respect, no minority can presume to veto the considered will of the majority on issue after issue.

Indeed it is about time that we got over this minority-majority business and learned to live as equal citizens of a free country. Our National Watch-Word must be: “Justice for All and Appeasement of None”. The slaughter of Muslims in Hashimpura near Meerut was gross injustice; the yielding to communalism on Shah Bano case, was gross appeasement. We must steer clear of both these cardinal sins.

Much has been made of BJP position on Ayodhya, Minorities Commission, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code. Commonsense demands

that the old unhappy chapter of mass destruction of temples—and their conversion into mosques—is closed by handing over the three most sacred and much desecrated sites of Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi, to Hindus. And no reasonable man should have any objection to enlarging the jurisdiction of the Minorities Commission to a Human Rights Commission—to take cognisance of not only minority grievances but of grievances of any aggrieved section of society.

As regards the special position of Jammu & Kashmir State under Article 370 of the Constitution, the BJP opposes it because it is a “temporary and transitional provision”, and it contrary to the principle of equality of all States in a federation. On the other hand, it would like to give more financial and other powers to the States, so that all of them have more powers than J & K today has even in its so-called special status.

As for the Uniform Civil Law, it is a Directive Principle of State Policy in the Constitution of India (Article 44). The so-called “Muslim Law” has been amended in a variety of ways by various countries. Today

Truth about Article 44, Article 370, Minorities Commission and Ayodhya

no two countries have the same Muslim Law in all respects. Even Pakistan has outlawed such mediaeval practices as instant divorce and polygamy. There is no reason why India cannot amend Muslim Law at least in these two respects, to the extent that even Pakistan has.

Perhaps not many Muslims realise that until the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, Muslims in NWFP, Punjab, Gujarat and Madras observed customary law. Moplas of Malabar observed matriarchal system. The Memons, Khojas and Bohras observed Hindu Law.

When BJP takes this position on these four issues, it is only making a declaration of its faith. (The Communist articles of faith, on the other hand, are: class conflict, dictatorship of the proletariat and liquidation of capitalism and imperialism.) Obviously BJP can implement them only if, as and when there is a Parliamentary majority for these moves. The BJP is willing to wait, but it is not prepared to discard its principled positions for political expediency.

The BJP believes in the unity of the Hindustan Peninsula and the equality of all its People. It stands for “Justice for All and Appeasement

of None". It welcomes diversity so long as it does not destroy our overall unity. It invites the people of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to get over the trauma of the last fifty years, and draw on the historic experience of preceding centuries to weave a new and happier pattern of life in the Hindustan Peninsula. After all the hullabaloo about riots, most of the Hindus and Muslims are living in peace and amity most of the time. India and Pakistan, with all their hostility, have never fought for more than two weeks at a time. (Iran and Iraq bled each other for eight long years!) Even in the year of Partition, the best singers in Har Mandir, Amritsar, were Muslims. The men who built the samadhi of Dr. Hedgewar, founder of R.S.S., in Nagpur, were Muslims. With all our diversities, we in the Hindustan Peninsula are One People, whatever the number of states. We can, and must, live in peace and amity.

It is this consciousness of unity and brotherhood that made Shri Vajpayee of BJP, then Foreign Minister, facilitate the movement of people between India and Pakistan. And it is this same consciousness, that, given the opportunity, may develop into a "No War Pact" and even Joint Defence. The next step could be a Common Market, with men and goods moving as freely between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, as between UK, France and Germany.

In this great scheme of things, there is no room for communalism and separatism, special rights and special position. All citizens must be free, happy, safe and equal in the lap of Bharat Mata. That is the faith of Bharatiya Janata Party.

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Shri Nikhil Chakravarty

Independence Day DRI **Improving Indo-Bangladesh Relations**

LAST YEAR DRI had celebrated Independence Day by holding a discussion on 'Improving Indo-Pakistan Relations'. Participants included Mr. Kakakhel, Acting Ambassador for Pakistan, Maulana Waheedudin Khan, Dr. J. D. Sethi and Kuldip Nayar.

This year the DRI celebrated Independence Day by organising a discussion on 'Improving Indo-Bangladesh Relations'. The speakers included Mr. Akram-ul-Qadar, Counsellor for Bangladesh in India, Shri Nikhil Chakravarty, Editor, 'Mainstream', and President, Editors Guild of India, and Shri Chanchal Sarkar, well-known columnist.

Shri Nana Deshmukh presided.

The function began with the hoisting of the National Flag and singing of 'Jana Gana Mana'.

After welcoming the distinguished speakers, Shri Malkani said that fortunately Indo-Bangladesh problems were much less serious than Indo-Pakistan problems. But even so, problems were there. From time to time the Farakka waters issue hit the headlines.

Last year there were unprecedented floods in Bangladesh; word went round that India had deliberately released huge quantities of water.

When an Indian flood relief team landed in Dhaka, it was promptly asked to pack up and go home.

And then there was the perennial problem of influx of population from Bangladesh. As a result the population complexion in our border areas was changing. Poor Bangladeshis were found in large numbers even in Delhi, engaged in rickshaw-pulling and rag-picking. Some time back a dozen Bangladeshis were unfortunately shot dead crossing from India to Pakistan. "Why can't Bangladesh take better care of its economic development?" And now Bangladesh had declared itself an Islamic state. This would have consequences for Hindus in Bangladesh. It could also have repercussion in India.

SHRI NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTY said that Indo-Bangladesh problems were qualitatively different from Indo-Pakistan problems. Even in 1947, there was a serious move to have a third separate state of Bengal. However, the forces for partition of Bengal and the merger of the two parts, one with India and the other with Pakistan, proved stronger.

When the Dandkaranya project was being prepared for resettling East Bengal refugees, Dr. Katju, then Defence Minister, opposed the scheme. He said Bengalis had not accepted the partition of Bengal as final. They were living mostly in border areas, hoping to go back some day.

When Fazlul Huq became Chief Minister of East Bengal in 1953-54, he declared in Calcutta "Partition was the doing of the enemies of the country"—many Hindu refugees went back. Again after the liberation of Bangladesh, some old refugees also went back along with new refugees.

Kewal (Malkani) referred to the backward condition of the Bangladesh economy. Actually it is no fault of Bangladesh. It has an agrarian economy, with limited scope for development. It has therefore come to be dubbed an LDC, one of the Least Developed Countries. Actually the economies of Bangladesh and India are complementary.

In the euphoria of 1971, we did not work out an integrated project for irrigation, flood control and power generation in Eastern India.

SHRI GEORGE VERGESE has prepared a project 'The Gift of Greater Ganga', involving India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The President of Bangladesh could be the Chairman of such a project, and India, Vice-Chairman. The engineers of all the three countries could collaborate.

Likewise the Farakka problem should also be handled by economists, engineers and ecologists. If Mekong River in South East Asia, can have

an integrated project, if Indus waters dispute can be settled why can't India and Bangladesh solve the Ganga and Brahmaputra waters problems?

Actually much of Bangladesh has more water than it needs. I spent my childhood in Barisal, East Bengal. People used to wait for flood waters to spread out the silt. No ploughing was necessary; scratching the land was enough.

Kewal referred to the influx of people. There is also the problem of Chakma tribals who had had to come away.

Let Bangladesh have full blown democracy. Let intellectuals on both sides interact. Let there be free movement of books and newspapers and all will be well.

The problems that beset India and Bangladesh...

Shri Chanchal Sarkar said :

IT IS VERY GOOD that Malkani has thought about Indo-Bangladesh relations for this year's Independence Day theme. I have long had the feeling that people in the north of India, and particularly in Delhi, are somewhat obsessed by relations with Pakistan and there is endless discussion of that subject.

If there were an undivided Bengal in an undivided India, then its population would be something between 165 to 170 million, larger than Uttar Pradesh and so by far the largest segment of a composite homogeneous population of a notionally undivided subcontinent. The results of a good cordial and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh, therefore, are potentially extremely valuable.

A friend of mine in Dhaka once referred to Bangladesh as "our *avisaptha* desh", our "accursed country." This is because Bangladesh has never really had any run of stability since Liberation. The country has devoured its leaders. In President Zia's time the number of coup attempts, before one finally succeeded, were legion. Today there is in the Bangladesh mind a tremendous disenchantment about the political future. There is no special love for the military but the memory of civilian rule and its ineptitude and corruption is still vivid.

We should be the last to criticise Bangladesh bitterly. All three countries in the sub-continent, and even Sri Lanka, are examples of failure. Having received independence from the British—and Bangladesh from

Pakistan—not one country has been able to set up a stable administration, yoked to the service of the people, particularly the disadvantaged people in them. There are special reasons why the military in India have not been able to come out on top as it has in Pakistan and Bangladesh, but the Indian military forces who are perhaps the 6th or 7th largest in the world, are a universe unto themselves and, together with the paramilitary forces, and the police, suck in a tremendously disproportionate amount of our resources.

If we are irritated that the opposition in Bangladesh cannot unite and challenge the government then we should ask about our house of cards. Opposition unity. If a very large number of people in the so-called elite classes of Bangladesh see no future for themselves or their children in the country, and scramble to find a berth abroad, then is that very different from the situation here? Because our population is larger, the impact of the drain is less here than in Bangladesh or Sri Lanka.

If it is alleged that elections in Bangladesh have been rigged, one should ask oneself about the character of several elections in Kashmir and generally, the fairness of elections held in large parts of states like Bihar. One should also question the strength in the sinews of the Election Commissioner of India. But it should be said in conclusion that elections in India, whatever the drawbacks of the electoral process and election funding, are much fairer than in the other countries of the sub-continent.

Bangladesh is particularly distressed because of its economic tribulations. About 80 per cent of the development budget of the country depends on foreign aid, and agriculture, instead of being a boon, has been a steadily declining resource. Year after year Bangladesh has been knocked about by hurricanes and floods. These would once have been considered acts of God but it is now clear that they are very much the results of the acts of man.

If we are to consider the ways of improving relationships with Bangladesh we ought to first say that a country as big as India should not hesitate to act unilaterally. For instance, the rail connection with India broken in 1965 war with Pakistan has still not been restored. There can be several convenient road links between the two countries. India should keep work in readiness on the Indian side.

The greatest attraction of the people of Sri Lanka to come to India is to visit the Buddhist pilgrimage places. Similarly people from Bangladesh come to visit the Islamic pilgrim spots in this country, particularly the Dargah at Ajmer Sharif. Every time they come they have to enquire



Shri Nana Deshmukh presenting DRI Publication to the Counselor for Bangladesh and Shri Chanchal Sarkar

about the buses and trains to Ajmer, they have difficulty in reservations and the arrangements for stay in Ajmer are not very good. By making a visit to Ajmer easy and comfortable, India would, at one stroke, improve its relations with Bangladesh.

Someone was telling me the other day that he used to run a sports weekly in Bengali from Calcutta. The circulation was some 90,000. A gentleman from Bangladesh, he told me, used to take 25,000 copies every

Chanchal Sarkar's six concrete suggestions for improving relations.

week, pay in cash across the table and arrange his own transport to Bangladesh. As you know, there is a ban or, I should say, a strict control, over books, magazines and other publications from crossing the borders of both countries. What the sports weekly discloses is the tremendous hunger of people in Bangladesh for literature and news material from India. Certainly in literature this hunger is reciprocated in West Bengal. Here, too, is an example where India could take unilateral decision to allow books, magazines, records, films and, talking of people, theatre groups poets and writers in fact all people freely. Let Bangladesh be as restrictive as it wants.

With the change of opinion that this will bring about in Bangladesh, it is difficult to see how the restrictions will be allowed to work one way.

There are two disquieting things about today's Bangladesh. One is the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and, as a consequence, counter-fundamentalism, though more muted, among non-Muslims. This last is a new factor. Islam was indeed the reason why the people of East Bengal opted to part from West Bengal and India. Looking back, it is not difficult to justify the decision to separate. The Hindus were enormously dominant economically, socially and, as landlords, they treated their Muslim tenants or neighbours with undisguised contempt. It was the social discrimination and insults that led to a separate East Pakistan. As time has shown to both Muslims and Hindus, religion was not the correct reason for partition. In any case, it was not religion but a travesty of it which brought about hatred, discrimination and even communal warfare.

Muslims had also been very surprised and pained to find that in their struggle with West Pakistan they found very little support from other Islamic nations. It is against this background that it is both surprising and a little frightening to see the determined steps which the government of Bangladesh, first under Gen Zia and much more so under Gen. Ershad, have been taking towards Islamising their countries. It is true that there has been strong encouragement, backed up by financial assistance, from a number of Middle-Eastern states who are themselves extremely orthodox and fundamentalist. But this cannot be the excuse for the present administration of Bangladesh. It can only be political opportunism, the motive being emotional support and, where necessary, the vote.

Even after the several spurts of migration from Bangladesh, there is still today 10 or 11 per cent of the population who are members of minority communities. (According to Justice Debesh Chakravarti, the figure is 20%). The ultimate judgement of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India will be based on how they treat their minorities. Here India could do a lot by trying to understand the nature of Islam in Bangladesh, trying to appreciate that perhaps even more than in Pakistan and in Indonesia, people in Bangladesh are devout Muslims. India would have to take unilateral steps to see that young people in schools and colleges get to know the elements and essentials of Islam and Buddhism.

There is little doubt that the main constituent of any policy to improve relations with Bangladesh will have to be cultural. In such a policy the media and personal inter-communication will be very important. The entire concept of the Bengali broadcasts and telecasts to Bangladesh will have to change.

Such a policy can only work within a framework of enlightened awareness. Such awareness must look upon the subcontinent as aiming at a situation not different from that in Europe and its European Economic Community. After a history of the bloodiest wars that mankind has known, Europe today is steadily taking steps to becoming a unified continent. This does not mean that the countries are giving up their individual forms of government or their languages and cultures. They are simply concentrating on the commonalities between them, like doing away with frontiers, passports, different currencies, customs duties etc. and setting up many common institutions like the Parliament, a Court of Human Rights and so on. The kind of policies that India must pursue is to have a similar frame work in mind and go ahead doing whatever it can unilaterally and hoping that the others will fall in. As of now, unlike in Europe, India is so much bigger than its neighbours that it must lean over backwards to disarm their fears and suspicions.

As always, there is an institution which reflects the kind of thing that I am talking about, and that is SAARC, but its very constitution, and the way it has been allowed to function or, rather, not function,

Farakka Barrage, Teen Bigha, Moore Island, & Islamic State

in critical situations, means that the outlook and attitude towards SAARC must radically change before it can bring about good relationship between the countries in it.

One other suggestion I would make for Indian policy makers to think. Whenever there is an outstanding problem like the one over Farakka or the Moore island, India should take a unilateral decision that the dispute will be submitted to an international tribunal and that it will accept the findings of that tribunal.

Shri Akram-ul-Qader, Counsellor for Bangladesh in India, said :

I CONSIDER it a privilege to be here this morning with you. I should like to thank Mr. K.R. Malkani, Vice-Chairman of this prestigious Institute, for inviting me to this centre and share my thoughts with well-known intellectuals of this country.

The subject chosen this year concerns Indo-Bangladesh relations. Historically the areas which now constitute Bangladesh, and the people

who live there, share many things in common with the people of India. The relations are deep-rooted in the history and culture of the sub-continent.

Formally, however, Indo-Bangladesh relationship dates from December 6, 1971, three days after the outbreak of the Indo-Pakistan war, when India accorded *de jure* recognition to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. We in Bangladesh do remember that day when, announcing the decision, the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, had declared in the Lok Sabha that the two Governments and peoples shared common ideals and sacrifices and would forge a relationship based on the principles of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit. It is a fact, however, that a relationship of sorts, or contacts between India and Bangladesh leaders, had begun much earlier, in March 1971, after the crackdown on unarmed population of the then East Pakistan by the military rulers of Pakistan. India consequently had to shelter almost a crore of Bangladeshis on its soil and had to care for the maintenance of these refugees for almost a year.

The support and assistance extended by India to the provisional Government of Bangladesh, and of course to the freedom fighters, is well remembered in my country. Our aspirations perhaps coincided with the Indian foreign policy goals at the time of liberation war.

Indo-Bangladesh relations developed speedily after liberation. During a visit of the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, on March 17, 1972 to Bangladesh, a twenty-five year Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Peace was signed between the Prime Ministers of the two countries which put Indo-Bangladesh relations on an institutional basis. There were frequent visits both at the Heads of State level and Ministerial level during the Awami League Government in Bangladesh.

The change of Government in Bangladesh on August 15, 1975 somewhat adversely affected the relations between Bangladesh and India, although the New Government in Bangladesh affirmed its intention to promote normalisation of relations in the sub-continent. The bilateral relationship reached its nadir in mid-1976 over the Farakka Barrage issue, when a tremendous problem for Bangladesh was created in that year following India's operation of the feeder canal at optimum capacity and Bangladesh, as a last resort, sought redress at the United Nations.

With the coming to power of the Janata Government in India, relations between the two countries began to thaw from March 1977. The

relations between the two countries improved considerably after a meeting between Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai and Bangladesh President Mr. Ziaur Rahman in June 1977 in London, during the Commonwealth summit Conference. In November 1977, an arrangement was signed on the apportionment of the Ganges water. Following a visit of President Ziaur Rahman to New Delhi (December 19-20, 1977), there was considerable development towards further restoration of trust and understanding between the two countries. The two leaders confirmed their common desire to consolidate and further develop the improved climate of relations. The visit to Bangladesh by Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai in April 1977 further strengthened the normalisation process and fruitful and constructive discussions contributed greatly towards increasing mutual trust and friendship between the two countries. In January 1980 when Congress returned to power there was no reversion of the positive trend that emerged during the Janata rule, although certain strains emerged over the South Talpatti (Moore Island) issue in 1981 which was later defused.

Indo-Bangladesh relations showed signs of further improvement under Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. There were several visits by our President to New Delhi and the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi visited Bangladesh twice in 1985. In the aftermath of the cyclonic devastation in

Indo-Bangladesh Trade Problems — and the Chakma Problem

our coastal belt in June 1985, Mr. Gandhi went to Bangladesh for a day's visit, with the then Sri Lankan President, Mr. J.R. Jayawardene, to show sympathy and solidarity with the people of Bangladesh at the time of our crisis. He visited Urrir Char, the worst affected Island in the cyclone. The expression of personal solidarity with our people by Prime Minister Gandhi after the cyclone and material help offered for the cyclone-affected people, demonstrated goodwill towards Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has always pursued a policy of seeking friendship with all countries that honour and respect the universally recognised norms and principles for the promotion of the cause of peace, social justice and peaceful co-existence. The geo-political situation of Bangladesh makes it only natural for us to have friendly relations with India and it does not make any economic or political sense for us to jeopardise our relations with India. We have always striven for having the best of relations with India because it is not only our next door neighbour but it is a country with which we have had traditional bonds of friendship and amity. We have

good relations with India and we always intend to improve these further. We do believe that resolution of outstanding issues will bring the two countries further closer.

The irritants in our relations are : (1) Farakka Barrage and water sharing, (2) Tin Bigha, and (3) Chakma problem.

While I do not intend to go into details on these issues, suffice it to say that currently both the countries are engaged in talks about water-sharing and we are hopeful to resolve the issue in the near future to the satisfaction of both parties. The Tin Bigha corridor (an area of 178 meter X 85 meter) to connect Dahagram with Panbari Mouja of Bangladesh, was leased to Bangladesh, agreement for which was signed in May 1974. The lease area has been marked on the map but it is yet to be acquired by the Government of India. The delay in implementation could be partially explained by a writ petition against the lease agreement that had been filed in an Indian High Court. But the writ petition has since been dismissed and Bangladesh is awaiting the implementation of the agreement.

As regards Chakma problem, we feel that there is no reason why the Chakma refugees should continue to stay in the camps in the State of Tripura. Following the elections in three Hill Districts of Chittagong, Autonomous Councils have been created with wide-ranging powers with representatives of the people living in the area. These powers have given self-rule to the autonomous district councils and the people in the region are now free to practise their own social, economic and religious systems without any let or hindrance. The situation in the Hill Districts of Chittagong is completely normal and the Government of Bangladesh has made adequate provision to take care of the re-settlement and rehabilitation process of the refugees immediately on their return. We sent delegations to the refugees and the matter was also discussed at official level between the two Governments. We however feel that a section of the militant Chakmas—the youngmen of Shanti Bahini—is obstructing the return of the bulk of refugees who want to go back to their hearths and homes. We are hopeful that this problem would also be resolved soon and that the refugees would return.

Economic relations are vitally linked with political matters in shaping bilateral relations between the two countries. There is a big trade imbalance between the two countries, with the balance of trade always being in favour of India. During 1987-88, Bangladesh exports to India amounted to 310 million Takka, while imports accounted for 3883 million Takka. Both the Governments have recognised the necessity of reducing the rising imbalance. We have always emphasised the need for evolving a

mechanism to reduce the imbalance. Some measures were identified but no concrete purpose could be achieved. The Joint Economic Commission which had its first meeting in November 1982 had also reviewed the overall trade between the two countries and it is hoped that when it again meets, serious and positive steps would be taken to reduce the imbalance.

We are aware that imports from India in the short run are not expected to decline; nor it is considered desirable to regulate it in that direction, because of various factors; but then some concrete steps need to be taken to work out a long-term framework arrangement by which the imbalance could be substantially reduced. (Items of export from Bangladesh are : Newsprint, Urea, Wet Blue leather, Pulp, Rayon, raw jute—occasionally, Jamdani Sarrees, Jute carpets, etc.)

In a world with a changed international environment resulting from the super-power detente and increasing consensus on various issues among different nations, we see no reason why, with a sense of understanding and accommodation, the irritants between us cannot be removed. After all, between the neighbours sharing common borders, problems are not an unknown phenomena. We are both developing countries and there are

Pradip Bose and Sailen Ghosh pose questions and offer suggestions

things in common that we share. Both our countries are engaged in improving the standard of living of our peoples in our own chosen ways. We can also learn from each other's experience. SAARC is a common forum which has been providing us an opportunity to identify areas of co-operation and help us achieve our desired goal. There are many issues including international issues on which our positions are similar. Differences in a few matters should never stand in the way of co-operation in the areas where a convergence of interests exists.

Bangladesh will always be found more than willing to respond to any friendly overture. Let intellectuals make suggestions.

DEALING WITH some of the points made by earlier speakers, Shri Akram-ul-Qader said that Bangladesh had not been made an Islamic state. Only Islam had been declared the state religion—just as Nepal, Thailand and Sri Lanka also had a State Religion. (A non-Muslim can become President of Bangladesh.) He said this had been done to steal the thunder of fundamentalists.

He denied that Indian release of waters had caused last year's floods. And he said that the Indian helicopter relief team was asked to leave because Dhakka airport was flooded and Iraq, Arabia and some other countries had also come to help.

Shri Pradip Bose said we can get together even as West European countries are coming together. He said Shri Abdus Sattar, Pakistan's then Envoy in India, had told him that if Janata Government had continued, relations would have greatly improved. "Dozens of agreements would have been signed". India must respect the sensibilities of smaller neighbours.

Shri Sailen Ghosh said that Shri Nikhil was not right in thinking that Bangladesh was economically backward because it was agrarian. Well-managed agrarian economies can also be very rich. The real trouble was that deforestation in the Himalayas, and destruction of coastal mangroves, had led to floods and erosion. Irrigation can be a blessing; it can also be a curse. The old canal colonies in West Punjab were now 50% saline lands.

Shri Ghosh also said that Muslims should deeply consider why only mullahs and military-men dominated Muslim societies everywhere. Their monotheism had become mono-community-ism.

Shri Baleshwar Agarwal said that Shri Qader's explanation that Bangladesh was not an Islamic state, only Islam was state religion, amounted to a distinction without a difference.

Shri Devendra Swaroop asked Shri Qader why Bangladesh could not isolate the fundamentalists, and had itself become fundamentalist, by "stealing their thunder".

Shri Qader said Governments have to bow to public opinion. In India also there was the rising tide of fundamentalism.

Shri Qader said that the earlier Government of Bangladesh had settled some Bengalis in the Chakma tribal area. This policy had been proved wrong and it had been long since given up.

But Shri Qader said that there was no communal violence in Bangladesh.

Shri Jagdish Prasad Mathur said this was due to the fact that Hindus lay low.

IN HIS CONCLUDING presidential remarks, Shri Nana Deshmukh said that whatever our differences, we are *One People*, and we should never forget our unities. He said Deendayalji—in whose sacred memory this Institute stands and works—and Dr. Lohia, often discussed how relations could be improved in the Hindustan Peninsula. This dialogue, he said, should continue. □

Why Saving Tropical Forests is Mankind's Foremost Task

Sailendra Nath Ghosh

IN APRIL LAST, some thirteen internationally known organisations from Asia, Europe and North America issued an emergency call to all peoples of the world for action to save "the forests and their people" in order to save life on earth. Although this was a call to save "forests, both tropical and temperate", the emphasis in world-wide discussions is on tropical forests. Within the tropical forests, again, the highest importance is given to "rain forests" which girdle the a good part of Equator. We need to know why the tropical forests are more important, and within the latter, the rain forests are the most important.

The rainforests comprise primarily broad-leaved evergreen long-lived trees occurring in warm, humid areas on both sides of the Equator, with high annual rainfall. These are known as areas (i) where there is no distinctly dry season, and (ii) where the temperature variation is little. In plainer words, in this belt, normally, no month is dry; all months are warm and moist.

"Regions, which are marked by high annual mean temperature as well as high humidity, are the most suited for "speciation" (origin of newer and newer species). Hence these are the habitat of utmost biodiversity. These are the most complex ecosystems on earth. It needs to be noted that "rainforests" i.e. the *tropical evergreen* forests are different from the montane evergreen forests. The biodiversity in the latter is much less.

An idea of the bio-diversity of the "rainforests" can be had from the following accounts. Today, the rainforests contain about 60 per cent of the world's plant and animal species, even though they contain only about seven per cent of the world's land surface. A joint publication of the *Earthlife* and the *Observer* (U.K.) says :

"The island of Madagascar contains five times as many kinds of trees as the whole of temperate North America. Ecuador has many more plant species than Europe, which is 31 times as big. And one volcano in the Philippines, Mount Makiling, is home to more types of woody plants than the entire United States of America. A typical patch of rainforests, just four miles square, contains as many as 1500 species of flower plants, up to 750 species of tree, 400 species of bird, 150 kinds of butterfly, 100 different types of reptile and 60 species of amphibian. The numbers of insects are so great that no one has yet been able to count them. However,

the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, which compiled these figures quotes evidence that there may be as many as 4200 species in two and half acres."¹

Less than one per cent of these plants and animals have been investigated for their potential benefits to mankind and its fellow living species. These are an unexplored treasure house of substances.

A virgin rainforest stands out not merely in genetic diversity. Its biomass productivity, too, is the highest among all types of forests. This productivity in terms of addition to an existing biomass stock, may be as high as 40-50 tons per hectare per year, while the total standing biomass at any time would be 600-1000 tons per hectare, in an undisturbed condition.

Next to the "rainforests" (also known as "tropical wet evergreen forests") are the tropical wet semi-evergreen forests; the (tropical) littoral and swamp forests; and the tropical moist deciduous forests—in the given order—in respect of both biodiversity and productivity. In both respects they are much richer than the forests in temperate climatic zones. All of these are reservoirs and centres of origin of newer and newer species. This is why the tropical forests as a whole are called "extraordinary biological power houses." The tropical plants, too, are known to be "essentially chemical factories" that have evolved over thousands of years, coping with fluctuating fortunes of tropical environments that have a longer geological history.

The tropical forests are taller and higher in density than their counterparts in the temperate world. They present much more intricate complex of interrelationships between their floral and faunal populations. These functionally more complex and structurally multi-layered forests look like some divine works of art, which found their acme of excellence in the rainforests.

This is why Christopher Columbus, on the sight of a rainforest during his voyage of discovery in 1492, wrote that he "never beheld so fair a thing; trees beautiful and green, and different from ours, with flowers and fruits, each according to their kind, many birds and little birds which sing so sweetly." He thought that it was like the Garden of Eden, wherein "every tree is pleasant and good for food".

In a rainforest, there is a top canopy piercing through the canopy; and below the canopy, there are possibly a series of subcanopies overlying

¹ It is estimated that there are in the world as many as 4.5 million species of animals and plants. Out of these, 3 millions are in the tropics; and most of these are in the rain forests. Very many of these are rare species.

the top of the understorey. This is the reason why the German plant geographer, "Friedrich Humboldt, more than a century ago, described the rainforest as "forest piled on forest".

One peculiarity of the rainforests is that their canopy has more animals than any other part of the forest. In the canopy, everything is "so profuse because there is plenty of sunlight to provide energy and food. As you descend the storeys of the edifice, the light dims and life becomes less exuberant. Immediately under the canopy the darker world is dominated by the columns of giant trees, but broadly speaking, if you keep on going down to about 50 feet above the ground you will come to another layer of leaves. This understorey, as it is called, is formed by the tops of smaller trees."

"But it is on the ground floor that the real work of nutrient transfer is done. Only about two per cent of the full sunlight that hits the top-most trees filters down to the ground. Everything is hot and steamy; the

Tropical Forests Are "Live" Chemical Factories, Niches of Genetic Diversity, and Controllers of Global Climate.

air feels stagnant and smells of decay. And that very decay is the secret of how the rainforest survives on sterile ground. Spread out like a thick damp blanket is a layer of debris. It is often no more than an inch or two thick, but it is the foundation on which the edifice is built."²

The above properties that characterise the rainforests are shared in varying degrees by the other types of humid-tropical forests as well.

It is often said that this wonderful edifice of tropical forests has been built on the sketchiest of foundations. Generally speaking, rainforest soils—for that matter, all tropical forest soils—are extremely poor, though there is fertility at certain places. Is this another wonder? Does this mean that Nature has built a rich castle on mere sands?

The truth is that the soil here has emptied itself to build up the luxuriance of the forest. In the tropical forestlands, the soil only gives, it hardly gets anything to retain. In these forests, there are (i) a very efficient system of uptake from the soil and (ii) a quick recycling of these nutrients by and within the biomass i.e. between the litter and the plant bodies. "No sooner does a leaf or twig fall to the ground than the system gets to work. Fungi, bacteria and other micro-organisms attack it, releasing the nutrients for the roots of the trees, which are shallow, and (which) often simply snake across the forest floor."

² *Op. cit* p. 11.

While this phenomenon of large trees resting on shallow but extensive rootmat system is true of all humid tropical forests, this is spectacular in the rainforests. So precariously are the trees perched on the ground that they often *develop giant buttresses for support*". While we find giant trees held in balance by buttresses, we also find even the *smaller trees* depending on *giant buttresses*.

From an undisturbed rainforest "nothing (of value) escapes. Only about one per cent of the goodness of the debris gets carried away by the rain; the rest goes back into the life of the forest.

"Ants and termites labour tirelessly in the litter of the leaves; 800 ants, of 50 different species, have been counted in a single square yard. Leaf cutter ants actually cultivate their own crops of fungi.

"Lianas and other climbing plants connect the musty forest floor to the sunlit canopy, a reminder that all the life of the forest is intertwined. *All but the topmost trees have to rely on birds, insects, and other creatures to carry their seeds and pollinate their flowers since there is so little wind to do the job.* Intricate interrelationships have formed. Scientists are beginning to learn some of them, but still know very little,

"What is clear is that disruption spells disaster. The loss of one species may lead to the extinction of several others."³

If poor nutrient status of the soil has been the price for the high-nutrient status of the plants and animals in the rainforests and the other tropical forests, their high biodiversity, which equips them to stand fastly withstand untold kinds of natural shocks, has made them highly vulnerable to human interference.

Since no two rainforests—not even two patches of the same forest—are the same and "no plant looks quite like another", "the destruction of even a small tree can result in the extinction of uncounted species". "What makes the rainforests so sensitive to disturbance is the complex interrelationship that exists among their plants and animals. For example, a number of trees of different species may depend for pollination on individual hummingbirds that depend on these trees for nectar. If clearing removes from the bird's range the last trees of the only species that flowers during certain months, then the bird must leave the area and the remaining trees will not reproduce".⁴

3. *Op. cit.* P 11

4. Quoted from "Rainforests—Nature's Dwindling Treasures" in *National Geographic*, January 1983.

As stated earlier, the properties that have reached their farthest points of development in the rainforests are shared in *varying degrees* and to *substantial extents* by all the other types of humid-tropical (namely, the tropical wet semi-evergreens, the tropical littoral, the tropical moist deciduous) forests as well. Thus, the tropical forests as a whole became reservoirs of utmost genetic diversity and "live factories" for the manufacture of newer and newer chemical compounds. The continuing co-evolution (i) of these assemblages of plants and animals and (ii) of these macro-and micro-organisms held undreamt-of potential for the welfare of humans in a variety of ways—as a food source; as a provider of genetic material for new crops and for cure of ailments; and as "the most basic component of the life-support system" *i.e.* as the sustainer of the very breath of life.

What needs to be particularly noted is the key role which *all forms of tropical and subtropical forests* have been playing in the preservation of life. Here, we include not merely the above-stated tropical evergreens, the tropical semi-evergreens, the tropical littoral, the tropical moist deciduous but also the tropical dry deciduous, the tropical dry evergreens, the tropical thorny ones, the subtropical broadleaved hill forests, the subtropical

Tropical Forests Are Highly Vulnerable to Human Interference.

pine forests. In their respective climatic zones, they have been providing the maximum biodiversity, which enables most efficient energy flows through the systems. Thereby they have been absorbing sunlight the most and carrying on the processes of photosynthesis and translocation to the utmost possible extent, under their given conditions. This means :

Carbon from the atmosphere has been getting locked up and accumulating within the solid biomass of these tropical plant bodies. These carbons have remained there for centuries and could remain there for yet more centuries, through the intra-forest recycling process, if only these forests were not destroyed.

This means, further :

That over millions of years, the tropical and subtropical trees in these forests had been steadily raising the oxygen content of the air by removing from the atmosphere the toxic gas of carbon dioxide, on longterm basis as distinct from the kind of short and swift recycling of carbon by oceanic planktons.

Still further, it meant :

That these long-lived tropical forests got buried locally during the carboniferous age under geological processes and petrified into coal

millions of years back. It is estimated that the standing biomass of the tropical forests contains about one-third of the carbon of the world reservoir of carbon in the coals and other mineral fuels. Now, we are burning these coals, oil and other fuels and toxifying our atmosphere with carbon oxides, methane, chlorofluorocarbons etc. This has been raising our ambient temperature, causing "greenhouse effects" and "thinning the ozone layer." It is this ozone layer which has so far been shielding life on earth from the lethal ultra-violet light.

If the tropical forests are not there, who/what will absorb these rising percentages of carbon dioxide? (Mind you, these forests have already been drastically reduced.)

If these stored carbons within these plant bodies are also released, will this not create yet another perilous situation? Far from absorbing the carbon dioxide released by other agencies, will not these reservoirs of carbons be adding to the carbon oxide concentration in the atmosphere?

And, it needs to be noted that these trees need not even be burnt. If these are simply felled, the decomposer bacteria will themselves release the carbon oxides, for the recycling process will have been torn apart, that is, disrupted beyond repair.

Following a somewhat different reasoning, James Lovelock has come to view that destruction of tropical forests is the most immediate and the gravest danger, deserving higher priority attention than even the nuclear threat, greenhouse gas, ozone depletion and the chemical holocaust. His statement is as follows:

"To me, the vast, urgent and certain danger comes from the clearance of the tropical forests. Greenhouse gas accumulation may be an even greater danger in time to come, but not now.

"The humid tropics are both a habitat for humans and a physiologically significant ecosystem. That in the first world we try to justify the preservation of tropical forests on the feeble grounds that they are the home of rare species of plants and animals, even of drugs, that could cure cancer. They may do. They may even be...useful in removing carbon dioxide from the air. But they do much more than this. Through their capacity to evaporate vast volumes of water vapour, and of gases and chemicals that assist the formation of clouds, the forests serve to keep their regions cool and moist by wearing a sunshade of white reflecting clouds and bringing the rain that sustains them. Every year we burn away an area of forest equal to that of Britain and often replace it with crude cattle

farms. Unlike farms in the temperate regions such farms rapidly become desert...(still) more trees are felled and the awful process of burning away the skin of the Earth goes on. We do not seem to realize that once more than 70 to 80 per cent of a tropical forest is destroyed, the remainder can no longer sustain a climate and the whole ecosystem collapses. By the year 2000, at the present rate of clearance, we shall have removed 65 per cent of the forests of the humid tropics. After that, it will not be long before they vanish, leaving the billion poor of those regions without support, in a vast global desert. *This is a threat greater in scale than a major nuclear war*". (Emphasis Added).

James Lovelock has argued, not from the standpoint of the Western scientist whose concern is about the losses that the West will be facing and the possible sources of these losses. His plea has been from the angle of primarily the tropical people themselves. But he does not at all deny the disaster that will engulf the world as a whole, if the tropical clearing continues. After the warning about the further warming of the

During Life's Existence on Earth, Tropical Forest Destruction is Proving the Worst Debacle.

tropics, disruption of the rainfall pattern, the desertification and the human sufferings that will result from them, he says: all these "will happen at a time when we in the first world are battling with the surprises and disasters of the greenhouse effect, intensified by the extra heating from the forest clearance."

Destruction of forests anywhere is a biological holocaust. Destruction of tropical and subtropical forests is its crassest form. Since forests are the common regulator of the soil, water and air, this destruction certainly brings in sufferings to the tropics in all the forms, possibly simultaneously.

The importance of rain forests is not for the tropics alone. By recycling heat and carbon dioxide, they have been moderating the temperature of the atmosphere and controlling the global climate to a very large extent.

If the surviving tropical forests disappear it will mean that:

- (i) mankind's future hope—the most potential sources of new varieties of food, medicines etc—will disappear;
- (ii) the memory bank evolved over millions of years will disappear;

- (iii) the entire globe's wind and rainfall patterns will change;
- (iv) the "world's lungs" and "thermostat" will disappear; the carbon dioxide concentration in atmosphere will keep rising, thereby melting the ice caps, raising the sea level, drowning cities, farmlands, power stations, industrial installations, and entire low-lying countries;

and

- (v) after the turning point (which remains still unknown) is passed, the total collapse of the global life-support system would become inevitable.

This is the reason why Norman Myers was moved to say that if the present pattern of converting rainforests persists, it would be the worst biological debacle. There have been many debacles "since life's first emergence on the planet 3.6 billion years ago," but none as bad, none as serious. □

Why the Tropical Forest Dwellers Need Be Saved Along with these Forests

The Commercial Civilisation has advanced on the path of destruction of ecological resources. If mankind has to survive, it has to learn conservation ethics from the forest dwellers.

The publication "Paradise lost?" published jointly by the *Earthlife* and the *Observer* (U.K.) describes in the following words how important the lives of the forest dwellers are for the propagation of conservation ethics.

"Looking for profitable use of tropical forest products is like searching for a particular paragraph in Oxford's three-million-volume Bodleian library. The only hope is to consult the most experienced librarian you can find. In the tropical forest, this means enlisting the support of the forest people; for they alone know where the particular medicines, foods, and other forms of wealth are."

Tropical Forests of India and the World —How to Save Them

—Sailendra Nath Ghosh

In the foregoing article, our concern was to know the importance of tropical and subtropical forests in general and the "rainforests" in particular. We have noted their importance as (i) controllers of the global climate, (ii) reservoirs of genetic diversity and consequently, the source of varieties of benefits still to be explored.

Let us now turn to related questions which are commonly asked by interested audiences. These are as follows.

What is the significance of reservoirs of genetic diversity? What kinds of benefits can mankind derive from a huge diversity of genetic resources? Did we—or do we—in India, have the "rainforests", the most prized treasurehouse, among the forests? If we still have these, where are they and in what conditions? Exactly from which sources do the threats to them come? Cannot the rainforests—or at least the other kinds of tropical forests be regrown? What kind of policy should each tropical—and rainforest-owning—country and the comity of nations as a whole, adopt to save the remaining tropical forests?

Of these the significance of genetic reservoir is a vast subject and deserves to be discussed in an independent article. Hence we would devote a separate article on this subject in the forthcoming issue. Let us discuss the other questions here.

Indian Rainforests and their Kins

The Indian rainforests (i.e. tropical wet evergreen forests) are (i) in the Andamans and Nicobar islands (ii) along the western face of the West Ghats; (iii) on the eastern Himalayan ranges—from Arunachal Pradesh and Assam down to the shores of Bay of Bengal.

Notably, different genera of vegetation predominate in each of these wet evergreen forests.

In the Andamans, the flora have Malayasian affinities.

Interestingly, the book on Indian forests, *General Silviculture for India* by Sir Harry G. Champion and S. K. Seth, mentions that in the sub-Himalayan tract of Bengal and the adjoining part of Assam, there is a range of forests which are of the evergreen type although not clearly recognizable—or, at best only very locally recognizable—as such. "It has progressed to a semi-evergreen type as a wet mixed forest, and would

perhaps ultimately progress to typical wet evergreen." But let us leave this question out for the present.

Readers would naturally like to know how "rainforests", which are equatorial by definition, are found in Arunachal Pradesh and Cachhar, so very far from the equatorial belt, even beyond the Tropic of Cancer. The answer to this is that although these are geographically subtropical regions, these belong climatologically to equatorial regions.

Encyclopaedia Britannica describes the equatorial rainforest climate as follows: "climate of large areas on or near the Equator, characterised by consistently high temperatures throughout the year and abundant precipitation. The monthly and annual "temperature means" are about 27° C (80° F), and the diurnal temperature range is generally around five to eight degrees. Where seasons are discernible, they are usually determined by rainfall, not by temperature. Annual rainfall averages between 1500 and 3500 millimetres (about 60 and 140 inches) and the relative humidity is high at all times. Considerable cloudiness is almost always present."¹

Despite their geographical distance from the equator, Arunachal Pradesh and the above-mentioned tract up to Cachhar fulfil all these biophysical conditions, due to the presence of the Himalayas which has prevented the blowing of the cold wind from the north and also caused high precipitation in this region. This north-eastern region of India is in fact regarded as one of the world's largest centres of distribution of species of both crops and wild flora.

The definition of "rainforest climate, including tropical monsoon climate" deserves particular attention, for it will help understand the importance of those forests of India which are regarded not as "rainforests" but as monsoonal forests, as we shall see below.

India's non-rainforests having affinities with rain-forests include all the types described earlier as humid-tropical forests—namely, the humid semi-evergreens; the littoral and swamp forests; and the moist deciduous forests.

The humid semi-evergreens usually adjoin the wet evergreen, forming a transition from the moist deciduous to the wet evergreen. These are usually found along the Western Ghats. Their northern form occupies considerable area in Assam and the lower slopes of the Eastern Himalayas. Their another form occurs in the high-rainfall areas in Orissa.

¹ The said *Encyclopaedia* further clarifies that "In Köppen's climatic classification, tropical rainforest climate (including tropical monsoon climate) has a mean temperature about 18°C (64.4°F) for the cooler month and there is sufficient rainfall (with or without a dry season) to support rainforest. G.T. Treworth differs in regard to precipitation: there are no more than two dry months in his scheme."

The littoral and swamp forests are "mainly evergreen species of varying density and height". "The littoral and tidal types occur all along the coasts, the latter (i.e. tidal) being especially associated with deltas of large rivers on the eastern seaboard. These are (however) of restricted occurrence above Mangalore, common near Bombay but extending up to Dwarka." (Source: Champion and Seth. Emphasis Added.)

Mangroves are an important part of these forests. On the eastern coast, particularly in the Sunderbans, these still exist as dense forests. Over the centuries these disappeared from many other parts of the eastern and the western coasts due to human interference. Mangroves were Nature's device for saving the coasts from erosion and from the furies of cyclones originating over the seas.

As for the tropical moist deciduous forest, there are some peculiarities. Here, "the deciduous species predominate the top canopy..... with more or less evergreen species in the lower canopies." This type, together with another type—which occurs (i) in a strip along the foot of the Himalayas, (ii) in another strip along the east side of the West Ghats, (iii) in a large

India's Monsoon Forests Are the Close Kins of Rainforests.

block centring on Chhota Nagpur, and (iv) in a tract to the lee of the Khasi Hills—is referred to as monsoon forest, which is perhaps the most characteristic type of Indian forests. (Vide Champion and Seth, P 250, 1968 edition. Emphasis Added).

To highlight the richness of "rainforests and their kins" which Nature had given India, let us emphasise that the whole range of monsoon forests are populated by trees which are very valuable not only for people's uses but are also very valuable commercially. Here, again, we need to quote Champion and Seth: "The moist teak forests are characteristic of the southern form (of India's tropical moist deciduous forests) whereas the moist sal forests form the greater proportion..... of the northern half of the range. The proportion of teak is generally low in the moister part of the range, improving to virtual dominance in the drier (read "less moist" areas). In the north, sal usually always predominates and is often pure. In both regions, small or large stretches of forests without teak or sal also occur.

All the above four types constitute one class which need to be described as "rainforests and their kins".

Now, we need to move to India's other classes of tropical and subtropical forests which also are quite important for reason stated earlier.

Of these, one class is known broadly as *dry tropical forest*. It is comprised of (i) tropical *dry deciduous* forests; (ii) tropical *dry evergreen* forests, and the tropical thorn forests. The other class is known as montane forests; and the tropical thorn forests. The other class is known as montane forests; and the tropical thorn forests. The other class is known as montane forests; and the tropical thorn forests.

Under the class of *dry tropical forest*, there is the type of dry deciduous forests which populate the western (drier) regions of India from the foot of the Western Himalayas to deep down the south—bounded, on the northern stretches, by the Rajasthan desert, and on the southern stretches, by the leeward side of the Western Ghats. Here, too, we find a peculiarity. "As in the moist deciduous, *dry teak* and *dry sal* are again the characteristics of the southern and the northern region". We are entering into this little detail just to emphasise the bounties that Nature had given us and how we could benefit for many more millennia if only we had known how to enjoy these with due care and conservation (selling only the mature trees) without being too greedy and rapacious.

(In the interest of precision, let us also mention that there are extensive areas, towards the drier end of this group, where both the species of *dry teak* and *dry sal* are absent.)

Regrettably, much of the dry deciduous forests has been degraded into scrub and savannah forms by human interference.

As for the other type of forests in drier region—namely, the tropical dry evergreen forests—these are low but often dense forests of *hardleaved evergreen* trees. These are in the dry Western Himalayan range and in a relatively small area on the Carnatic Coast.²

Then there are India's subtropical forests which are broadly known as montane subtropical forests. These include (i) the subtropical broad-leaved hill forests; (ii) the subtropical pine forests; and (iii) the subtropical dry evergreen forests.³

² Source : Champion and Seth

³ In our discussion on the types of India's tropical and subtropical forests, we have not at all included the Montane Temperate Forests which comprise (i) the montane wet temperate forests; (ii) the Himalayan moist temperate forests; (iii) the Himalayan dry temperate forests. They are not subject of the present discussion (for they share characteristics of the forests in the temperate region), although they are extremely important for Himalayan ecology and for any discussion on soil conservation or flood control in the North India, East India down to the Bay of Bengal, and in West India. For the same reason, we would bypass the sub-alpine forests, too.

Rainforests in other parts of the World.

For the world outside India, we would limit our discussion only to the rainforests. According to "The Earth Report. Monitoring the Battle for our Environment", these forests girdling the Equator "encompass some 9,500,000 Sq km. (3,670,000 Sq. miles), the greatest forested area by far being in South America, particularly in the Brazilian part of the Amazon,⁴ but stretching into Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and French Guyana. The remaining forests, some five million sq. km. (two million sq. miles are found in 16 countries of tropical Asia, and in Central Africa. The tropical forests of Ivory Coasts and of Nigeria are now virtually gone, cut down over the past 40 years". We need to mention here a few more facts circulated from time to time, by the global Rain Forest Information Centre.

These are as follows :

- (i) That Sri Lanka's rainforests had been unique in the sense that these contained species showing African rather than Asian affinities. This showed their ancient vintage i.e. their uninterrupted existence since Africa and South India and Sri Lanka were parts of one Gondwanaland in

There's No Way to Save Tropical Forests Except By Resisting Western Type of Development.

Jurassic times, around 145 million years back). Now, vast numbers of the original fauna and flora have been destroyed. Much of the land, once occupied by the rainforests, has now been covered with tea, rubber, coconut and commercial crop. A whole treasurehouse has been destroyed for a mess of pottage !

- (ii) Jamaica, up to 1983, had 45 per cent of land area under some form of forests. Rainforests of the low lands and foothills were a part of these. All types of forests are currently under attack. In the past, Jamaican rainforest provided some of the most valuable timber in the world—meahogany for fine European furniture, logwood, tropical cedar, santa marica etc. Now, these are in a very bad state.

- (iii) The forests of Madagascar, the Indian Ocean island, have been unique. Almost every native thing that was found here was unavailable anywhere else. Not only the species and genera but whole families are unique in this 1000-mile long mini-continent, once a part of Africa. This is now the single area with the topmost priority in the world.

⁴ The Amazonian rainforest provided Brazil alone a third of the world's total; then, it spreads over to other countries. Three-fifths of the world's rainforests lie in Central and South America.

(iv) Ivory Coast is now almost completely logged out; and Nigeria is expected to be treeless by the year 2000.

The most famous Amazonian forests are now under heavy attacks in the name of various "development schemes."

W to South and South-East Asia :

India's forests—tropical or otherwise—have been heavily depleted. About four years back, the satellite pictures showed that only 11% of India's land surface had forest cover.

Since the conquest of Everest, about half of Nepal's forests have been cut down.

Thailand lost 45 per cent of its forests between 1961 and 1985.

The rich forest resources of peninsular Malaysia are now being denuded on a large scale and with such ferocity—with the support of the state government of Sabah and Sarawak—that they are likely to be exhausted within the next ten years.

Indonesia is chopping rainforests at the rate of one million hectares a year. Already, as a result of logging and the subsequent flooding caused by tropical rainfall and run-off of the topsoil, Indonesia's 8.6 million hectares of land have been officially classified as "critical areas"—so eroded that they can grow only along.

In Philippines, 60 per cent of the forests have been cut in the last 30 years.

Now, the international timber interests are turning their attention to Burma.

Floods in Bangladesh and Thailand and unusual droughts in Indonesia and Sarawak already show how logging of watersheds can devastate downwind and downstream farmlands.

Sources of Destruction

The sources of destruction are many and varied. One is the demand for international agencies for timber.

The other is the tide of the Western type of development which encourages (i) the cutting of forests to build industries and industrial towns; (ii) mining in such a way as destroys the forests; (iii) building dams which not merely submerge the forests but require the provision of wood for hut construction material and fuelwood for thousands of workers and their families living on the dam sites for years and which, by opening out

accesses—by way of road construction—exposes the remaining forests to illegal fellers.

In many countries, the craze for selling beef to the industrial countries has been converting forests to cattle grazing lands.

The other is the government's programme for settling people on forest lands. In India and some other countries, forest lands have been distributed among landless people, little realizing that tropical forest lands, once deforested, become infertile and unsuitable for earning a livelihood thereon.

Yet another threat comes from the surviving tradition of "slash and burn" agriculture of the tribals who have been disabled from realizing that what was innocuous in periods of smaller populations and abundant forests are no longer harmless. Still another threat to forests comes from the helplessness of the tribal people themselves who realize that they are being exploited by profiteers and that they are being made to commit suicide but do not find any way of escape from the pulls of commercial civilization.

Industrial Countries Must Write off the Third World Debts and Give Further Aids for Tropical Forest Regeneration.

Recently, the International Herald Tribune, in its August 15, 1988 issue, described another phenomenon. It said: "Spurred by U.S. and European demands for cocaine, the Peruvian cocoa growers have chopped down large stretches of Amazon rain forest. Moreover, millions of gallons of toxic chemicals which are used as herbicides and the washings of agrochemicals used as fertilisers are being dumped into Amazon's highlands and headwaters. Although the cry 'Don't destroy the Amazon, the lungs of the world' is heard at many places, 'few understand the connection between severe rainforest destruction and the rapid cocoa cultivation'. So grave is the threat and so deeply entrenched are the commercial interests that 'nobody dares go to study the effects—you not only have to deal with the mafia but also the Shining Path'. The Shining Path guerrillas do not involve themselves in cocoa cultivation but serves as a buffer between the peasant growers and the Government's 'eradication team'. They eradicate all those who protest against, the building of landing strips for small airplanes, or the building of roads through the forests and conversion of lands to fields for corns, bananas, and manioc. The workers in these latter types of pursuits, too, have developed an interest in these conversion jobs—they get eight times what the Peruvian farm workers earn.

Hence there is no way to save the rainforests *except by resisting western type of development*. Its industrial patterning, its agricultural methods, its demand for beef and promotion of unbridled cattle grazing, its mining and big dam construction programmes are all sources of threat to tropical forests.

Suggestions have been made from the industrial world itself that since the tropical forests in general and the rainforests in particular have been common *heritage* of all mankind, all the debts of the Third World be written off and more aid be given (i) to save the remaining tropical forests and (ii) to help the regeneration of forests.⁵ For regeneration to the extent possible, the best course will be to fence off the areas and let Nature do its work. This may help the seeds buried in the soils to germinate. The seeds carried by the wind and bird droppings of earlier varieties would also help the growth of forests. Although we cannot expect to get back what we have lost, still the surviving forests plus the ones that may grow on the denuded, infertile lands might still save life on the planet if the world's conscience is aroused even at this late stage.

⁵ The demands for the writing off of the debts *plus* the giving of more aid are legitimate because the industrial countries have built their prosperity mainly by exploiting the "Third World" and owe the latter far more than the "Third World" countries owe to the former by way of formal debts. The industrial countries are even now exploiting (i) by devaluing the tropical countries from genuine paths of development by unsound models and forcing them thereby into wrong purchases and unequal terms of trade; and (ii) by engineering international tensions in which the "Third World" finds no escape from engaging in arms race, which yields profits to industrial countries and rain destruction on the poorer peoples themselves.

Tribal People's View of Cosmology

Tribal peoples throughout the world have survived until this day because they had lived ecologically in balance and in relative harmony with their natural environment. Such survival has not been the simple result of brute adaptation, but instead has been the consequence of profound cosmological experience in which seasonal changes and cycles have not only been noted but sanctified in ritual and tradition. Tribal people's concepts of the Earth and their relationship to it and its other 'inhabitants' are quintessentially "gaian" insofar as they conceive the 'whole' as being necessary for vitality, continuity and sanity in the sense of health.

—Martin von Hildebrand.

An Emergency Call to Action for the Forests, Their Policies, and Life on Earth

Declaration of the World Rainforest Movement

The following declaration was by participants of the World Rainforest Movement Meeting in Penang, Malaysia on 14-17 April, 1989, which included representatives from the following organizations: The Indonesian NGO Network for Forest Conservation (SKEPHI, INDONESIA); Sahabat Alam Malaysia (MALAYSIA); Haribon Foundation (The PHILIPPINES); Project for Ecology Recovery (THAILAND); Research Foundation for Science and Ecology (INDIA); Japan Tropical Forest Action Network (JAPAN); Rainforest Information Center (AUSTRALIA); Probe International (CANADA); The Ecologist (UNITED KINGDOM); Survival International (UNITED KINGDOM); Forest People's Support Group (UNITED KINGDOM); Bank Information Centre (USA); Rainforest Action Network (USA)

1. Forests, both temperate and tropical, are an integral part of the life-support systems of the planet, performing numerous ecological and social functions that are essential for the continuation of life as we know it on earth.

Those functions include :

- regulating climate at both the regional and global level;
- providing a habitat for the majority of species on earth;
- providing a homeland and spiritual basis for millions of forest peoples;
- maintaining and conserving soils;
- regulating hydrological cycles and ensuring water supplies.

2. The continuing loss of the world's forests now constitutes a global emergency

—In temperate areas, the bulk of primary forests have been destroyed. What remains is being lost to logging and acid rain and other pollutants;

—In tropical areas, forests are disappearing at the rate of 100 acres a minute or more. Moreover, the rates of destruction are increasing and, on current trends, little will be left within a few decades.

3. The immediate and long-term consequences of global deforestation threaten the very survival of life as we know it on earth. Indeed, the scale of deforestation and its impact now represents one of the gravest emergencies ever to face the human race.

Such consequences include :

—The disruption of climatic equilibrium and the acceleration of global warming;

- A loss of biological diversity on an unprecedented scale;
- The destruction of forest-based societies;
- Increasing droughts, floods, soil erosion and desertification;
- The dispossession and displacement of peasants and forest peoples through floods and the other ecological impacts of deforestation.

4. The current social and economic policies and practices that lead to deforestation throughout the world in the name of "development" are directly responsible for the annihilation of the earth's forests, bringing poverty and misery to millions and threatening global ecosystems with collapse.

Such policies and practices include :

- Plantations, both for industrial forestry and for export crops;
- Ranching schemes;
- Dam projects;
- Commercial logging;
- Colonisation schemes;
- Mining and Industry;
- The dispossession of peasants and indigenous peoples;
- Roads;
- Pollution;
- Tourism.

5. Official solutions to the problem of deforestation have ignored or played down the fundamental causes of deforestation and have instead adopted policies that blame the victims of deforestation for their plight while simultaneously pursuing "solutions" that can only result in the further degradation of forests and croplands through the promotion of industrialised forestry.

Specifically such policies include :

- The Tropical Forest Action Plan, as promoted by the World Bank, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the UN Development Programme and others;
- "Sustained yield" commercial logging, as promoted by the International Timber Trade Agreement;
- Policies to Zone the Forests;
- The commercialisation and privatisation of biological diversity, as promoted through the International Biodiversity Programme;
- Pollution control programmes that are directed towards "managing" specific pollutants rather than reducing the source of pollution.

6. Throughout the world, the victims of these policies are taking action to arrest deforestation and reverse the process of destruction. In Sarawak, Amazonia, the Himalayas, Thailand, the Philippines and elsewhere, people are standing up to protect the forests and their societies. Such peoples

have proved that they are able to use the forests in the only way that is compatible with their preservation. It is they—not corporations, aid agencies and banks—who should be entrusted with designing and implementing the protection and regeneration of the forest wealth of the planet.

7. The victims of the development process, along with those concerned with their fate and the fate of the earth, therefore, call upon the United Nations and national governments to take urgent steps :

- To restore ecological justice and integrity to humanity by returning to the millions of people—both who live in the forest and who depend upon it—their right to sustainable livelihood.

- To restore ecological justice and integrity to life on earth through ceasing further forest destruction and regenerating damaged forest lands through the guidance of indigenous peoples, peasants, and local communities, planting only their choice of trees and plants, with the aim of restoring ecological diversity and the survival of indigenous societies.

- To restrain the overconsumption and wastage of resources by the world's privileged groups through making the necessary changes in life-style and consumption patterns consistent with the development of sustainable livelihoods throughout the globe, in order to satisfy the ecological, spiritual, social and aesthetic needs of people everywhere.

8. Specifically we call upon the United Nations and national governments :

- i) To empower forest people and those who depend upon the forests for their livelihood with the responsibility for safeguarding the forests and ensuring their regeneration by

- a) achieving land security for rural peoples, both through revising land tenure legislation and through land reform, as recommended in the Brundtland report;

- b) empowering local people with the right to a decisive voice in formulating policies for their areas;

- c) rejecting social and economic policies based on the assumed cultural superiority of non-forest peoples.

- ii) To halt all those practices and projects which would contribute either directly or indirectly to further forest loss. Such projects would include : plantation schemes, dams, ranching schemes, mining and indus-

trial projects, commercial logging, the Tropical Forest Action Plan, the UN Biodiversity Programme, etc.

iii) To revise radically the policies of those agencies that currently finance the projects and practices causing deforestation. Funding for such projects should be ceased and instead directed towards projects that promote the protection and regeneration of forests. The agencies involved include : the multilateral aid agencies and banks, such as the world Bank, the Inter-America Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank; the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme; the overseas aid agencies of the developed countries; and major international corporations.

iv) To implement, through the agency of forest peoples and under their direction, a programme for regenerating degraded forest lands and reinvigorating local cultures;

v) To take immediate steps to curb the wastage, misuse and overconsumption of timber products.

vi) To ban all imports of tropical timber from natural forests and tropical wood products.

vii) To take immediate steps to cut down the consumption of imported beef from tropical forest areas.

viii) To restructure the present unequal world economic system which is dominated by institutions and practices that favour the developed countries at the expense of the poor of the Third world. This global system at present enables the developed countries to control and use an overwhelming and disproportionately high share of the world's natural resources. A fairer and more equitable economic system is, therefore, fundamental to any strategy for saving and regenerating the world's forests.

ix) To initiate a global shift towards developing sustainable livelihoods. The basic goals of such a shift would be developing systems of production that are ecologically and socially sustainable. This will require :

- reducing the scale at which factory production is carried out and adopting practices which minimise the impact of production of the environment;

- maximising local self-sufficiency;

- and assuring that economic activities are subordinated to social and ecological ends.

Two Questions to RSS . . .

S.N. Nagarajan, 20, Fifth East Cross Road,
Katpadi Township,
Vellore-632006, (Tamil Nadu).

I have gone through the two issues of 'Manthan', April and May, 1989, with great interest—particularly the views of several people about the R.S.S. In this connection I would also like to express myself on the subject. My thinking on R.S.S. is similar to the one I have about the Marxist movement, to which I belong. I start from two basic premises :

One is : Freedom is indivisible. The Brahmin can never be free until and unless the Pariah is freed. Hence the Pariah, to achieve his own freedom, has to free the Brahmin also, howsoever much the latter may hate that. This is the great teaching of the Alvars as expounded by Sri Ramana, sitting on the tower (Gopuram) of Thirukoshiyur in Ramnad Dist. The same idea once again emerges in the West through Marx, when he says that *the working class cannot liberate itself unless it liberates the entire society*. This is essentially liberation from object-bondage. This notion, too, is a very hoary one, which is accepted by all our great Acharyas. So, Marx is not at all alien to our rich heritage. In fact he is very much an alien to modern western tradition, the so-called scientific one.

The next issue, which is also derivable from the first premise, concerns the most fundamental attitude towards others. In Tamil the old proverb says : "If you feed the other's child, your child will automatically grow." This is also the fundamental spirit of proletarian internationalism,—yet very few really comprehend its meaning and put it in practice. This is very difficult in practice. This is enshrined in the maxim "*Loka Samastha : Sukhina Bhavanthu* . ." It ends with another sentence, "*Gho Brahmananya Shubam Astu Nithyam*". The real meaning is—the weak, the meek and the un-armed (the Brahmin should be unarmed) should be happy; if this is assured, all are happy (implied)." This is also the aim of Marxism. Fascism holds exactly the opposite view : 'The weak and the meek deserve to perish'—that is its philosophy.

How far R.S.S leadership is prepared to accept this and put it in practice, that is the first question. The same criticism applies to our Marxist friends too.

SECONDLY, the philosophy of R.S.S. (as well as that of Marxists) obviously does not take into account the cognitive role of Love, which attitude is again a reflection of the male approach to reality. This is also

the dominant side of Advaita, as propounded by Shankara. However, the very same Sri Shankara rejected this when he accepted defeat at the hands of that remarkable lady, Bharathi, the wife of Mandana Misra. Only then did he write "Bhaja Govindam". Hence his absolute monism is virtually rejected. "Saundarya Lahari" is the description of divine beauty in the woman. Hence he established Sharada Peeta, not a Brahma-Peeta.

Love is the fundamental basis of life. It is expressed in many ways. It does not deny the existence of contradiction or conflict. *The conflict is a very small part. This is unduly exaggerated by the West, particularly Darwin.* This is acceptable to all those who accept the notion of the privileged people. Our tradition rejects such a notion. Love is the first condition to serve the other gladly, which alone can easily destroy the false ego (Ahamkara), which then opens out vision. We can see the truth of the living being. If we do not love, we won't serve gladly, we will not destroy our false ego, we will be bound to the worst kind of object, i.e. false ego.

Gnanamarga is not an easy way to take us to the goal: more often than not, it will only inflate the ego. This is glaringly seen amidst our scientists, who no doubt follow the Gnanamarga, though of a lower order.

The full meaning of this phenomenon of love is not at all recognized by Marxists. Marx scoffed and laughed at Ludwig Feuerbach who was his great teacher, when the latter in his last days, was toying with the idea of building a religion of love.

Love is a feminine quality. Power based on Love, is motherly; it is pervasive; it is not challenged. It is fearless. The other kind of power is coercive; it is always challenged. It is not tenacious. It is afraid of being challenged and overthrown. Winning by love is the core of Pragati, a Vaishnavite concept. It is the basis of Prem Marga.

These two are the basics of our great culture. Has R.S.S. any use for them? Marxists, who do not think much of the heritage, can be excused. But how can RSS excuse itself—or be excused? The power concept of RSS is not at all Eastern; it is Western. Gandhiji's Ahimsa and Satyagraha are very much native. I hope this my comment is legitimate.

DRI to Build Twenty Houses for Beed Flood Victims

The DRI runs a rural development project in Beed, Maharashtra.

Beed district is a drought-prone area. But this time it had the worst floods in living memory. Shri Nanaji Deshmukh, Chairman, DRI, therefore, sent DRI Secretary Shri Mahesh Chandra Sharma to study the matter on the spot. Shri Mahesh Chandra accordingly visited the affected area. His report.

WHEN RIVER BINDUSARA enters Beed town, it splits into two streams, which again become one further down-stream in the town. The land between the two streams has become a river island.

As the town began to grow, many people came and settled down on this island, which they named as Budh-bet, since most of them are neo-Buddhists. Later, some Memins also came and settled in Budhbet. They were all interested in living here because of the proximity to brick-kilns, where most of them work.

The local authorities warned the people that the island could be washed away in a serious flood; but local politicians encouraged them to stay on—and even got them water and electricity.

On July 23 morning, it started raining. By 8 P.M. Budhbet was submerged in the roaring river. People ran up the trees. Others sought sanctuary in Khas Bagh Tulja Bhawani Mandir and Mansurshah Durgah. But meanwhile 300 families on the island had lost their homes and about 200 men, women and children had met their watery grave. (Only 113 bodies could be found.)

The Local DRI worker Pawan Kumar called other young men in the night, saved about fifty people and gave them food and shelter. The RSS-sponsored Jan Kalyan Samiti distributed clothing and utensils.

Soon Government and many voluntary organisations came forward to help. On the morning of July 26, the Chief Minister announced that government would build 500 pucca houses and give Rs. 10,000 per life lost with a maximum of Rs. 30,000 for a family. This led to artificial rush to the camps. Until July 25 there were 400 refugees in four camps. But by 26th evening their number had swollen to 1500—in eight camps.

When the body of a woman wearing jewellery was found, four persons claimed to be her husband, until the actual husband arrived on the scene. Some people cut up an arm or leg of a corpse, to claim Rs. 10,000 for a "lost relative".

Since official and voluntary assistance has been promised to Budhbet sufferers in ample measure, DRI concentrated on helping sufferers in outlying villages. The Institute has decided to build ten houses each in the ravaged villages of Shiroad and Loladgaon, at a total cost of Rs. 3 lacs only.

News From Far And Near

"Alternative Agriculture"

The U.S. National Academy of Sciences has found that farmers who apply few or no chemicals to crops are usually as productive as those who use pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. The group has thus recommended changing federal subsidy programs that encourage use of chemicals.

Since the end of World War II, farmers have been taught by agricultural universities and the Department of Agriculture that the best way to increase output is to use ample amounts of chemical fertilizer and then protect the harvest with generous applications of pesticides.

If farm subsidies were reduced, researchers say, it is likely that farmers would no longer produce surpluses marketable only to the government; they might be encouraged to try natural techniques. That would bring supply in line with demand, raising prices and making up for the subsidies. This year, farm subsidies cost the government \$ 13.9 billion.

The study from the nation's pre-eminent body of scientists, released on Sept. 7, is perhaps the most important confirmation of the success of practices based on biological interactions instead of chemicals. Farming methods that play down chemicals have been developed by farmers over the last two decades almost entirely outside of the Department of Agriculture, agricultural universities and other institutions in American farming. The study was paid for by the Department of Agriculture, the Kellogg Foundation and four other groups.

"Well-managed alternative farms use less synthetic chemical fertilizers, pesticides and antibiotics without necessarily decreasing, and in some cases, increasing per-acre crop yields and the productivity of livestock systems," said the committee in the report, "Alternative Agriculture."

Several interested groups criticized the academy's conclusions. "There seems to be little science involved in this whole area," said Thomas E. Waldinger, a spokesman for the Fertilizer Institute, the Washington-based association for the \$ 8 billion U.S. fertilizer industry.

The Board of Agriculture said natural farm practices involved a spectrum of techniques that have the common goals of reducing costs, preserving the environment and protecting human health. The goals are

September 1989

59

achieved primarily by reducing or eliminating toxic farm chemicals and animal drugs.

Among the practices cited as successful in the report are careful rotations of crops to battle weeds, diseases and insects, and to keep nutrients in the soil naturally. Another is the production of crops and livestock in combination. The report also said natural practices frequently demanded greater management skills and more work than chemical-based practices.

It is not known how many American farmers practise natural techniques, but it is thought that at least 5 per cent of the nation's 2.1 million farmers have adopted such techniques; the numbers may be much greater.

Law-makers face a variety of pressures for a shift, ranging from the cost of farm programs — more than \$ 136 billion since 1980 — to consumer concerns about pesticides in their food and pollution caused by agricultural chemicals to chronic food surpluses throughout most of the decade.

But there remain strong concerns in the agricultural community about natural farming. One concern is that the quantity and quality of food could be sharply reduced; another is that the cost of food could rise. This last fear is one that even supporters of natural farming concede could be well-founded.

In Massachusetts, apple farmers learned to control codling moths, a voracious pest, with one application of diluted insecticide at the crucial moment, when the insects are most vulnerable, instead of 5 to 10 predetermined times, as was the common practice in New England until recently.

Some of California's largest farms began to grow crops this year without any synthetic pesticides, joining hundreds of smaller growers. In the Salinas Valley, a major lettuce grower developed vacuum equipment that sucks insects from the plants instead of killing them with toxic sprays. Fruit growers are using wasps and other beneficial insects to kill destructive ones.

When is a tomato NOT a tomato ?

The California biotechnology company, Calgene, has created a tomato that will look, taste, and feel like an ordinary tomato. But because of a clever feat of genetic engineering, the gene that makes tomatoes go soft and mushy as they ripen, has been blocked. This means that Calgene's

tomato will stay firm in the supermarket long after others have gone bad.

Over the next few years dozens of companies are expected to follow in Calgene's footsteps, transforming the U.S. food supply with genetically engineered versions of everything from orange juice to corn.

With millions of research and development dollars already invested, and millions more in potential sales at stake, the debate over which course the FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) should take, has become heated.

The Calgene tomato presents a complicated problem, because the tools of genetic engineering are used to change the product itself. Calgene scientists altered the tomato's genes to prevent formation of the enzyme that softens the tomato, so that growers can let it ripen on the vine before harvesting—making it sweeter—and keep it on sale long afterward.

"An organism is harmonious orchestration of thousands and thousands of different genes," said the commissioner of the FDA, Frank E. Young. "The introduction of a single new gene is like adding another violin. We have to determine whether the violin is doing something very different or adding to the whole chorus."

It is scientifically plausible that adding or deleting a gene could have unexpected consequences elsewhere in the plant, affecting nutritional content, for example, or growth rate. This has led some to call for close regulatory review.

"We are moving into unknown realms here," said Margaret Mellon of the National Wildlife Federation. "When you get rid of a gene to make a tomato go softer, you don't know what else you've done."

"If you look at the physical properties of tomatoes, the levels of vitamin A and C, all the things that make a tomato a tomato, we're not going to change anything," said Donald Emlay, Calgene's director of regulatory affairs.

But right behind Calgene's application is one from the chemical giant, Monsanto Co., where a tomato has been genetically engineered to express a gene—taken from the *Bacillus thuringiensis* bacterium—which is toxic to the insects that attack the tomato plant. The new gene, which puts insect poison into every tomato cell, has never been part of a tomato plant before and could not have been added by any other means.

Is a tomato that has its own built-in pesticide, still just a tomato?

* * *

Moscow's TV Healer of Body & Soul

USA has clergymen who run their 'ministry' through T. V. And now Russia has a Healer on its Telly. Every day at 7.15 A. M. Russian T. V. begins its programme '120 Minutes'. And along comes Allan Chumak.

Sitting behind a desk, this middle-aged man with a mane of white hair stares out at his viewers and flings his hands about. Five minutes of silent thrashing, and he is done.

Chumak's followers—and there are lots of them, according to the telegrams, letters and bouquets of flowers he gets every day—say they feel his "healing energy," even *via* video-tape. They put bottles of water, and open tubes of cold cream in front of his televised image. Later in the day, they drink "Chumak-charged" water and rub the charged cream on themselves for further healing.

Recently, the government newspaper *Izvestia* reported that "practically every city now has its own popular extra-sensory healer. Until recently, healers like Chumak would have been guided, urgently, by their local police to the nearest jail or psychiatric hospital. Now, Glasnost, indifferent medical care and a certain old native belief in extra-sensory powers have led to their remarkable success in the Soviet Union.

On a cool, late summer evening recently, more than 300 people gathered in front of Chumak's house. "I came here all the way from Kemerovo in Siberia," said Lyubova Gornaya, a 50-year-old woman suffering from asthma, bronchitis and a bad leg. "Doctors are worth nothing. With Chumak, I can feel his energy all throughout me. But now I want to get closer to television". Allan Chumak is our last hope," said "Kholorolo from Rostov. "My grand daughter has an awful leg. She limps. So I brought her picture here with me. I know it will help." And Chumak obliges them with flinging his hands around.

At first the people around him, his mother included, thought he had "gone nuts." But after a while, he says, "they came to understand and believe me." Chumak quit his job in journalism, and now he works full-time as a saver of body and soul.

Chumak is not content to heal the world. He also wants to change the weather, if need be, and help feed the Soviet Union. "Vast amounts of our farm produce just rot before they can get to the stores. Now we're doing an experiment to see if I can radiate the energy that will be a preservative and help store fruits and vegetables."

Hazards of Left-Handers

Believe it or not, but other things being the same, left handers live less long than right-handers. Although the researchers, from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver were amazed by their findings, first reported 10 years ago, recent work seems to bear them out.

They suggest a number of possible explanations, ranging from increased accident rates to diseases linked to differences in brain structure between lefties and righties. Stanley Coren, psychologist, and his colleagues discovered the phenomenon in 1979 while checking routine health statistics.

At 10 years old, they found about 15 per cent of people are left-handed. By the age of 20, 13 per cent are. By 50, it drops to 5 per cent. At 80, there are virtually no left-handers.

"We thought at first that people must have been retraining themselves to be right-handed", Mr. Coren said. Actually the left-handed had died. The average age of the left-handed is nine months less!

Bias against left-handedness appears early in the human record, and it remains solidly planted in the language. In Celtic, the word for left means "weak" or "broken" and the word for right means "strong" or "straight". In Latin, dextra is right, from which comes the word dexterity; left is sinistra, from which comes the word sinister. The French for left is gauche (our "gawky"), while the word for right *droit* means "straight" or "the law".

No 5-Star Hotel in Russia

Believe it or not, there is not a single 5-star hotel in Russia. The only 4-star hotel, now started, is the Savoy, with a joint Russo-Finnish management. Only people with foreign exchange, preferably with credit cards—which, in practice, will mean only affluent foreigners—can stay in this hotel.

Moscow Savoy has Russia's first and only casino. But Russian nationals can't gamble there.

The hotel staff, part-Russian part-Finnish, has been recruited from universities.

Japan's 'Nobel' Prizes

The world has long known the Nobel Prize for Science, Medicine, Literature etc. And now Japan Media and Communications Corporations

have instituted five matching prizes for the Arts. The prizes will be known as Premium Imperiale. It will carry cash prizes of \$1 lac for lifetime achievement in the various arts.

The first Selection Committee consists of five world statesmen, Chirac, Heath and Fanfani, former Premiers of France, UK and Italy, respectively; Schmidt, former Chancellor of West Germany and David Rockefeller of the Chase Manhattan Bank. For the first few years, Japanese artists will not be eligible for the prize.

Mexico Gas Chamber

Mexico City, capital of Mexico, is the largest city in the world, with a population of two crores. But it has a unique problem. Since the city is surrounded by hills, the noxious gases produced by its 29 lac cars, cannot always rise above these hills and then out in the atmosphere. And that makes Mexico the most polluted city in the world. For example, at times, its carbon monoxide levels are found *fifty times* the levels considered safe for humans.

Although neither the hills nor the motor cars can be eliminated, Mexican government has prepared a \$3 billion programme to fight pollution. Japan has offered credits of \$1 billion.

Lenin's & Stalin's Brains examined

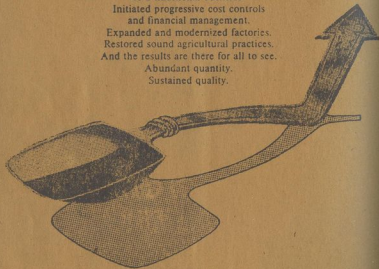
The brains of Lenin and Stalin were studied in Moscow after their death to see if their physical shape was related to the Soviet leaders' personalities, a weekly magazine reported on August 30.

Oleg Adrianov, head of Moscow's Brain Research Institute, told the magazine, Science and Religion, that "the examinations showed the superior organization and the potential for balance in the brain of Lenin." He did not reveal the results of the Stalin examination.

"A grave disease did not prevent Lenin from keeping up intense intellectual activity almost until his very death and writing his remarkable last articles", Mr. Adrianov wrote.

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The Meta-Theory of Hindu Economics

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Were Marx
and Engels
Racists ?