

## A WRITER'S DUTY

Rajmohan Gandhi

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Extracts from his articles in  
'Himmat' (Courage),  
the Bombay weekly of which  
he is Chief Editor

with a foreword by  
Graham Turner

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## Foreword

Rajmohan Gandhi is one of the most remarkable people I have met. The grandson of the Mahatma, arguably the greatest human being this century has yet produced, he has inherited one of his grandfather's most priceless gifts: a combination of simplicity and profundity which, to my mind, lies at the heart of true statesmanship. In addition, he has a natural grace and a dry but boyish humour which make him a splendid companion.

All these qualities emerge in these pages, which include extracts from articles written during 1975 and 1976, two of the most turbulent years in Indian history. To describe them as extracts from articles is, in one sense, to diminish their worth; particularly if one adds that they appeared in *Himmat*, a magazine of modest circulation. The force of truth, however, is not determined by readership figures, and these pieces are the proof of it.

They are an eloquent defence of true liberty and a challenge to all those who would destroy it – yet they are also wholly free of rancour or sourness. Many of them are candidly critical of the actions of Mrs Gandhi's government, yet not one of them lacks a living sense of vision for those who are being criticised. Taken together, they are a masterly exercise in constructive journalism, what I would call the journalism of love. It is a most refreshing change from the triumphant pessimism which often afflicts many of us in the media business, and particularly remarkable in that it springs from a country which has gone through such turmoil.

The other remarkable thing about these pieces is that, despite India's own pressing problems, they constantly seek to turn Indian eyes outward. And whether Gandhi is writing about China, America or

Russia, there is the same striking richness of vision and the same breadth of heart.

These articles may be read as a passionate plea to the leaders of India to change their ways but – courageous though that is in present circumstances – they are much more than that. In a world rich in protest, they teach us all something about the way in which we should seek a remedy for our ills, personal and national. If every dispute and grievance were approached in this spirit, much of the bitterness and hatred which often mark our conflicts would be eliminated.

We shall, I believe, be hearing a good deal more about this Mr Gandhi.

**Graham Turner**

*December 1976*

# I RECENT INDIAN EVENTS

## Under a weight

If asked how I have felt since the end of June 1975, my answer would be, "Under a weight".

It is not, of course, as if physical burdens have been placed on my shoulders by the State. The weight is not on the body. Nor do I feel it, primarily, as a problem on the mind. (One's mind does indeed wrestle with the question of how the situation might be righted; fortunately the size of the problem is such that most men, whether humble or conceited, know that a solution must come from outside their minds.)

Nor again do I feel it, essentially, as a sorrow in the heart, though goodness knows there has been reason enough for sadness and pain. I feel it, chiefly, as an oppression on my spirit, as if it were being pressed down by a weight.

And I am certain that I am not alone, or one of a small minority, in feeling thus.

What causes this feeling? Not, I think, the mere fact that the democracy we enjoyed is now like a ship receding on the horizon. Democracy as we had practised it (by we I mean the Government, the Opposition and the rest of us) was defective; a tightening by consensus was called for; and a plea for a fresh look at the methods of our democratic system would not necessarily have seemed oppressive.

Our rulers did not make such a plea. They did not seek a tightening by consensus. The system we now have was suddenly imposed on us.

Even this does not explain the weight on the spirit felt by so many. Swift and suddenness are required at times — when, for instance, a country faces a war.

It is the untruth at the heart of the nation's political

system that stifles. One feels oppressed because personal reasons have motivated national decisions.

October 29, 1976

*In December 1975 ordinances were promulgated to curb the press. They were later replaced by an Act which embodied all their features. The Act was then placed in the "Ninth Schedule", which means that it cannot be challenged in a court of law. The Act will continue to apply after the emergency.*

## **The new press laws**

Unless and until the press ordinances are altered they will represent drastic permanent changes in the laws affecting the press of the land.

The ordinances curb the press independently of the current censorship rules and will continue to do so after the emergency is lifted. The new laws are worrying both for what they contain and for the way in which they were promulgated.

The press, profoundly affected by the new laws, was neither informed nor consulted about them. Bodies representing the editors, working journalists, owners and printers of newspapers had no notice whatsoever of the laws.

The explanations accompanying the ordinances suggest that the press has behaved improperly, but a general accusation cannot be a substitute for specific instances, which have not been given.

The editor, printer or publisher now accused of publishing "objectionable material" will not receive a full trial before a Sessions Judge. He will not be entitled to claim trial by a jury of persons with experience of journalism or public affairs. The Government has clothed itself with the powers to judge and punish him. He can go to the High Court – but only after the Union Government has heard and disposed of his appeal.



What is "objectionable material"? Anything that would "bring into hatred or contempt or excite disaffection towards" the central or state Governments or which would "cause fear or alarm to . . . any section of the public whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquillity".

The phraseology is broad and general. It would permit of abuse and allow comparatively junior officials of the Government – whether acting on their own or under the influence of politicians – to punish even constructive critics.

It is possible for good officials to avoid using a bad law, but they should be spared the temptation.

The press unquestionably requires self-discipline, as does every influential individual or institution. But expressions urging "self-discipline" are unconvincing when uttered against the backdrop of the weaponry of the ordinances.

*December 19, 1975*

## **Dissent and the regime**

Censorship ("self-" or "pre-") and a climate of fear have washed our newspapers clean of any serious criticism of the Government. The same, I believe, is true of radio news; I have to qualify the statement because, since the advent of sameness and one-sidedness in the bulletins, I listen but rarely to them.

The sports pages, always popular, now have more clients than ever; with the departure of dissent, salt and pepper have left the other pages.

That there still are Indians not agreeing with all the views of the Government is conveyed by newspapers only through statements by senior Government leaders objecting to, or ridiculing, such disagreement.

Mr Uma Shankar Dikshit, the Karnataka Governor, has come out with a statement falling in this category. *The Hindu* of April 27 publishes it with the heading:

**“Criticism of Government: Dikshit Assails Journals’ Attitude”.** Would Mr Dikshit care to disclose the names of the journals? Many might be interested.

*May 7, 1976*

*On September 1, 1976, after a Congress Party panel had worked for some weeks on changes in the Constitution, the Constitution (44th Amendment) Bill was introduced in Parliament.*

### **The heart of the problem**

What has been the heart of the Indian problem these last 14 months? The altered relationship between the State and the individual.

The State has amassed powers. The individual has lost many rights.

The history of the Constitution (44th Amendment) Bill, a Bill forbidding in scope, depth and suddenness, underlines this. Many opposition leaders and MPs were and are behind bars. They were not consulted about the Bill. A committee chaired by Mr M. C. Chagla sent recommendations on behalf of the bulk of the Opposition. Their communication was not even acknowledged by the Government.

The public had no means of influencing the Government on the constitutional changes. It could petition. It could hope, crossing its fingers, that a proposal would be modified or another dropped. But it could not expect to alter the Government’s decision.

Is this to be a prolonged feature of Indian life? Will the public’s political activity be restricted, for a while yet, to interpreting the State’s smiles and frowns, speculating about a relaxation here and a tightening there? Or will an honourable individual-State relationship be restored?

*September 10, 1976*

## **The Constitutional changes**

The 44th Constitution (Amendment) Bill is a misnomer. The Bill contains not one amendment or a few amendments but 59 separate clauses. These include amendments of 36 existing articles, an amendment of the preamble, substitutions of four new articles for existing ones and 13 insertions of wholly new articles.

Separately and together the changes will make the country's governance less democratic.

Consider clause 59. This clause, valid for two years from the date of assent to the 44th Amendment, states: "If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of the Constitution as amended by this Act . . . the President may, by order, make such provisions, including any adaptation or modification of any provision of the Constitution, as appear to him to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of removing the difficulty".

This should be read together with clause 13 which, converting a convention into a rigid rule allowing no exceptions, requires the President to "act in accordance" with the advice of the "council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head".

The two clauses would enable the Cabinet under the Prime Minister to make constitutional changes during a two year period without prior reference even to Parliament.

It appears that the Government has given an oral assurance that modifications by presidential order would only be made for technical purposes. However, oral promises are not enough to soften constitutional provisions.

Once enacted, a constitutional change cannot be questioned. Clause 55 provides that no amendment of the Constitution made hereafter or heretofore "shall be called in question in any court", except on the ground that it has not been made in accordance with the technical procedure laid down.

At a Bombay meeting Mr Chagla illustrated the

scope of the amendment by means of an extreme example. Suppose that it was decided to convert our system from that of a republic into one of a monarchy; the change could not be questioned in any court. Clause 55 would make the change perfectly "constitutional".

This clause signals the end of the notion that there is something basic in our Constitution which has to be retained.

The thrust of the impending constitutional changes is to weaken the citizen in relation to the State, the provinces in relation to the Centre, the judiciary in relation to the executive, and the President in relation to the Prime Minister.

Brief comments on the clause purporting to deal with anti-national activities and on the fundamental duties are perhaps called for.

The former is so worded that dissent or criticism would run the risk of inviting the anti-national label. Under this clause, laws against an activity or an association described as anti-national would be beyond the reach of the courts.

The inclusion of duties for citizens discloses a failure on the Government's part to understand a constitution's purpose.

A constitution is meant to regulate the governance of a country, not the behaviour of its citizens.

At a Bombay meeting held by the ruling Congress, Mr H. R. Gokhale, the Law Minister, had this to say to those not agreeing with the Government:

"Be practical. Come to us with constructive proposals. Even at this late stage we will consider all your suggestions." (*Indian Express*, Bombay, October 8.)

The practical suggestion that this writer would like to make is: Postpone constitutional changes until after the elections that were due at the beginning of this year are held – and held fairly.

A Parliament that has extended its own life hardly possesses the moral right to make constitutional changes. And an emergency with its concomitant

restrictions is not a period in which constitutional changes should be made.

At the Bombay meeting Mr Gokhale also "stated that the basic six 'freedoms' (freedom of expression, etc) could be superseded by a law enacted by Parliament or a state legislature in accordance with the Directive Principles". (*Indian Express*, Bombay, October 8.)

This remark spells out the Government's attitude to civil liberties. Be it remembered that the remark describes the state of affairs that will prevail even after the emergency is lifted, whenever that may be.

*October 8, 1976 and October 15, 1976*

*Mrs Gandhi's 1971 election to the Lok Sabha, the lower House of Parliament, was declared void on June 12, 1975, by a judgement of the Allahabad High Court. The judgement also barred her from Parliament for six years. The following was published on June 20, 1975.*

## **The moral compulsions**

The country's eyes are on Mrs Gandhi.

The Allahabad judgement gave her the chance to show statesmanship.

She could have, by an offer of resignation, brought to the Indian scene the element it sadly misses – respect for the moral compulsions.

She has the right to move the Supreme Court and will presumably do so any day. She had the additional right to take the honourable course of resigning her office, howsoever temporarily. Thereby she could have increased her real influence in the country, and dispelled the notion that she is attached to the office.

Mrs Gandhi lost the hard-fought battle in Allahabad. She knows that triumphs and setbacks are part of life. A resignation accompanied by a decision to take

the battle to a higher court would have been dignified. Each day that passes would make the stroke of resignation – if she is contemplating such a stroke – appear more calculated and less spontaneous.

A Congress Chief Minister is supposed to have said, shortly after a meeting with Mrs Gandhi, that she was torn between “pressure and propriety”. If she is in a dilemma she should ask herself what her father would have done in similar circumstances. He would have announced a resignation to the world within minutes of an unfavourable verdict.

Incidentally, Allahabad is where he briefly practised law and where his father, Motilal Nehru, won his legal renown.

Mrs Gandhi should discourage the build-up of rallies demanding her continuance in office and ask her demonstrating friends to leave the decision to her. And she should instruct All India Radio to cease its propagandist and one-sided reporting.

The country’s ears had awaited the Allahabad decision. Justice Sinha had before him an illustrious defendant. But the law is no respecter of persons, and the Judge displayed dignified courage. He was also prudent. Had he delivered the judgement three days earlier it would have affected the Gujarat elections. His granting of a temporary stay of his verdict was sound. It averted a confrontation between the High Court and the Government and a possible constitutional crisis.

The country looks at the Opposition.

It has its opportunity, but it must grasp the position that Mrs Gandhi is not, as of now, under a legal compulsion to resign. The Judge has judged her and the public has absorbed the verdict. The Congress has received a substantial setback. If the Congress remains blind to the moral factor and to the core issue of dishonesty in the nation it will lose further in the eyes of the Indian public.

Pressurising Mrs Gandhi to resign, when she is not legally bound to do so, would, on the other hand, create an issue and a confrontation that would confuse

the public. A matter that has to be decided by the Prime Minister with her conscience cannot be resolved by demonstrations of strength.

The Opposition's task now is to reform itself and to develop a personality rooted in integrity.

The public does not need the Opposition's reminders of Congress's shortcomings. It wants evidence of the Opposition's worthiness.

So far Congress spokesmen have reacted predictably, and disappointingly, to Allahabad. Does the party of Tilak, Gandhi and Nehru not have some honest men who would admit that it is the party's tolerance of corruption that has caused its unpopularity? The Congress needs a cleansing, not a burst of muscle-flexing.

Not high principles alone but practical politics require a frank facing of facts by Congressmen. Why did the party lose in Gujarat despite the fullest mobilisation of leadership, resources, propaganda films and records and more? The question has hardly been raised by Congressmen.

An event like the Allahabad verdict tests the individuals and political parties involved. The Indian public will continue to watch how they respond and draw its conclusions.

*June 20, 1975*

*The following was published after a heavy Congress defeat in a by-election to the Lok Sabha in January 1975.*

## **A new national ethic**

Observers speak of an anti-Congress wave while commenting on Congress's debacle in the Jabalpur by-election.

The Indira wave, we are informed, has spent itself.

Waves of this kind are exciting things. But they do not, for all their splashings and all their foam, change the landscape.

The Indira wave did not alter India's essential condition. A mere anti-Congress wave or a JP\* wave will not reform it either.

For that a change of national habits is necessary; a difference in the national government can come nowhere near guaranteeing it.

"My whole endeavour", says Mrs Gandhi in an interview to the editor of *The Illustrated Weekly*, "is to strengthen the human being. If he has more self-confidence then the country as a whole is stronger."

Self-confidence is the Prime Minister's prescription to the Government, the Congress party and the Indian individual. A desirable and necessary quality, self-confidence must be properly understood. In its best form, it allows light to fall on every weakness and every ugly spot, apart from supplying strength to meet every crisis. In its worst form self-confidence can be a label for concealment of error.

India needs honesty more than so-called self-confidence.

JP preaches people's power. He attacks the public's indifference to injustice and asks students, workers and peasants to take control of the situation.

But people's power without people's self-control will create more problems than it will solve. Apathy towards the ills of authority undoubtedly exists. But what about the average individual's unconcern about his own self-seeking and indiscipline?

JP knows that the public's enthusiasm for his cause is not matched by its discipline.

A new national ethic, not just a new national government is what the times demand.

*January 31, 1975*



## II THE PRICE OF DICTATORSHIP

Freedom is not the only casualty in dictatorships. Justice, too, perishes.

A Russian episode illustrates this. The episode is old, but a valiant recent book, *Hope Against Hope*, written by the wife of a distinguished poet, tells of it.

Osip Mandelstam, the poet, favoured the Bolshevik capture of power. Repelled, however, by Stalin's vanities and cruelties, he composed a short, frank verse on the Soviet ruler.

Mandelstam was not so foolish as to keep a copy of the poem. But he recited it, indiscreetly, to a small group. Coming to know of it, Stalin had him banished to a remote prison.

To whom could the poet appeal? Only to Stalin. To placate the dictator he now wrote an ode.

Truth is another casualty in a dictatorship. Let us not, however, cast a stone at Mandelstam for his insincere ode. He wanted to save his life.

Unmoved, Stalin let Mandelstam die in a labour camp – starving, diseased and untended. For mercy, too, is abhorred by dictatorship.

Stalin was the judge in the dispute between the poet and himself. That is the curse of dictatorship: it has no court above Caesar. If Caesar wrongs you, there is only Caesar to whom you can appeal.

By appealing, hoping against hope, to Caesar, you add to his prestige; in effect you strengthen his dictatorship.

Justice, so basic a human longing that one way of praising the Almighty is to call him God the Just, dies in a dictatorship.

Equality is another victim of it. In it the ruler and those linked with him at a given time have rights. The ruled have duties.

The ruler does the talking, the ruled the listening and the watching.

The ruler is everywhere – on the TV and cinema screens, on billboards, on newspaper pages and as a backdrop to many a stage.

The image of the ruler always exaggerates. He appears wiser, taller and stronger than he is.

Both the ruler and the ruled inevitably believe at least part of the image. They tend to forget that the ruler too is prey to ordinary human urges and fears.

The ruler loses humility. The ruled lose self-respect. Thus dictatorship damages two additional values – humility and self-respect.

When reality is thus distorted, and the ruler becomes vain and the ruled demean themselves, blunders and cruelties follow.

“Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, unto God what belongs to God.” Man has separate obligations to the State and to the Almighty.

Wisely governed societies avoid a conflict between the two loyalties. Totalitarian societies do not.

In such societies Caesar asks not merely for what belongs to him but also for a portion of what belongs to God. He asks to be deemed godlike, infallible, indispensable.

His citizens are forced to a horrible choice: to heed Caesar and hurt their conscience or to heed their conscience and hurt themselves.

Democracy has been deficient in practice. In it individuals easily interpret liberty as licence.

The power of wealth and of groups such as trade unions, capable of exercising pressure, can result in exploitation.

Yet the fact remains that democracy threw up Lincoln to save American unity and defend the black man’s dignity; that a democratic climate reared Gandhi, enabling him to liberate India without violence; and that when Hitler stood poised to bring Europe to her knees democracy thrust Churchill to the helm.

Dictatorships, on the other hand, have nurtured, among others, a Hitler and a Stalin.

*September 3, 1976 and July 30, 1976*

### III LIBERTY OR DISCIPLINE?

Does not the Indian public need discipline? Is not firmness necessary for progress in India?

The answers would be yes and yes, but neither the questions nor the answers are complete.

Which sections in our nation emphasised discipline and duties in the sixties and early seventies? Was the ruling Congress among them?

Did not the ruling Congress assert that the magic of bank nationalisation would make a substantial dent on poverty? Voices suggesting that only work created wealth were then labelled reactionary by self-styled progressives.

Today the idea that all firms, including losing ones, should give bonus to their workers is assailed and ridiculed. Yet the ruling Congress was among those who campaigned for this "principle", and it was the ruling Congress that translated the notion into law.

Firmness is essential. The lack of it characterised Congress rule for years. Yet firmness is not a god to be worshipped.

For one thing, impartiality has to accompany firmness. Firmness, in other words, should be applied to all, including to those close to one, and indeed to oneself.

Secondly, a policy of firmness requires safeguards. And the best safeguard is a strong judiciary not owing its life and health to the executive.

Firmness would be a boon if it exists in a state of affairs where the most powerful in the land and the weakest individual – economically or politically weakest – meet as equals in the courts; where both the powerful and the weak receive the deserts of their guilt or innocence.

The general rule is valid everywhere: without fairness firmness can slide into autocracy.

Man does not live by bread alone.

The statement was first made twenty centuries ago. Every honest person will testify from experience that it is still true.

Hunger pains and degrades. But bread is not enough. Truth and freedom, too, are required by man.

Is a free society less likely than an authoritarian system to provide bread for its members?

History contains no such evidence. Dictatorial regimes have often been unmindful of the physical needs of their subjects.

However, even if it could be shown to us that authoritarianism means economic progress your conscience and mine would reply that man does not live by bread alone.

Without truth and freedom in his environment he feels oppressed.

In the India of today both truth and freedom have suffered.

We have had to bear incorrect or incomplete or one-sided statements. Those affected have but two comforts.

One is that the most important judge is not the press or the radio or the Government but one's conscience.

The other comfort is that time rights untruths.

*August 6, 1976 and October 15, 1976*

*The following was published in February and May 1975, before the proclamation of emergency.*

Many of us understandably admire the discipline and hard work of the Chinese people. The presence in Calcutta of China's ping-pong team – the first “good-will mission” from Peking since 1962 – makes for fresh comparisons between India and China.

Not many of the players or officials are likely to know English or Bengali or other Indian languages. They will not, however, fail to notice the openness

of our society. Some of them might be tempted, or taught, to call liberty chaos and to call dissent degeneration. They could be right in diagnosing a good deal of indiscipline but wrong in blaming liberty.

Indian democracy is a fact, not a pose. Our press, constantly threatened and at times timid, is alive and often courageous. Our independent judiciary was wounded but is limping along manfully and could well recover vigorous health. Our Opposition parties are vocal and spirited, even if they are often divided and not always positive.

In totalitarianism power bends a people's labour to its will. Such a forced alliance results in hard-working but silent automatons. Their surroundings might well be clean. Dishonesty in their midst might well be stringently punished. But these still do not make up for the loss of liberty.

The marriage of liberty and discipline – this is the challenge before Indian democracy. If we achieve this union we shall soon see in our midst their offspring – creativity, compassion and abundance.

The merger of power and labour in a totalitarian state is legitimised and sustained by fear; the partnership between liberty and discipline would be blessed by a joyous populace.

It cannot be accepted that efficiency can only flow from a dictatorial whip. Japan, which has achieved an impressive harmony of democracy and discipline, offers a sufficient reply to that theory.

The Indian concensus is clearly against autocratic methods, and India's need is for an attack on inefficiency within a democratic framework.

*February 14, 1975, February 21, 1975 and May 16, 1975*

## IV THE PAIN OF NATIONS

At this season it is fitting that we expand our concerns.

To think for our countries is necessary; but we are all world citizens too, and we should be ready to be bothered by the needs of other lands.

Almost half the world lives without freedom. The Soviet Union, China, East Europe, North Korea and Indochina are among the regions where man is not free to express or propagate his views. These areas have undoubtedly seen progress in strength and economy. But their inhabitants are unable to taste the joys of freedom.

Indians have many ties with Russia. Some of these are longstanding.

Tolstoy watched the Indian struggle for freedom with sympathy and understanding. His books enabled the world, including India, to listen to the heartbeat of the individual Russian.

Before him Dostoievsky had done the same. And after Tolstoy the bravery and suffering of Russia have been portrayed by Solzhenitsyn with compelling devotion and skill.

Very few among those who read these will have visited the Soviet Union. Many will have read Solzhenitsyn. He rings true. He breathes authenticity.

Between 200 and 300 million people live in the Soviet Union. They are splendidly gifted, sensitive, strong, courageous – and unfree.

Their night has been long. Why does an all-loving Providence not terminate it? Providence is inscrutable, and knows best. Pain seems part of its plan. Possibly it is meant as a lesson for those not – or not yet – similarly afflicted.

Providence may allow the pain to continue. But we must strive and yearn and pray for it to end. We cannot play God and assert that deprivation of liberty is good or salutary for the Russian people.

With China, India has greater links. Both countries are Asian, poor and heavily populated. Both possess an

ancient civilisation. Taken together their peoples comprise roughly half the world.

India can admire certain Chinese achievements and traits – above all the industriousness of the Chinese people. There is much to be learnt from the example of our neighbour on the other side of the Himalayas.

Yet the absence of liberty is a fact in China. The Chinese heart and the Chinese mind are as active and creative as the Chinese muscle; but Chinese conditions freeze and suppress the activity and the creativity. And the absence of any news of revolt is no proof of joy; human beings have an astonishing capacity for stifling pain and bearing it.

I have not had the privilege of visiting Russia or China. But I did visit South Vietnam and Laos before their communisation. Corruption and greed were evident, but so was liberty. People I met or saw cherished liberty and were proud of their religion, which was Buddhism or Christianity.

I picture them now in their homes or rice fields or along the Mekong or trudging past their pagodas and churches. Perhaps they are working harder than before. Possibly they are more “disciplined”. But I know that they are uttering what they disbelieve, ordering their consciences to silence, and stomaching, with extreme but unexpressed pain, untruths, humiliations and insults.

I will be told that the Americans messed up things in Indochina, that some of them were cruel there. I was and am aware of this, just as I was and am aware of the sheer selfishness of many of those who opposed Communism in Indochina. But my spirit is injured by the silent misery now of those I met or saw, and enormous numbers besides them, in Indochina.

It is not in us to know when dawn will break in these parts. But totalitarianism – whether of rightist, centrist or leftist variety – in the rest of the world will not hasten it. Some country or countries have to reject the temptations of totalitarianism and demonstrate the simultaneous flowering of liberty and discipline.

*December 26, 1975*

## Socrates and others

Before I had quite deposited my long frame on the taxi's back seat the driver was off the mark – with the tongue as well as the accelerator. He was indignant, he said, over something he had seen on a cinema screen the previous night: it was, he felt, untrue and one-sided.

His demeanour suggested more than a sense of injury. The man was confident. He expected time to right things, and my mind reflected on the influence of time as a cleansing force, a detergent.

Across 2300 years we see the ungainly face of Socrates – a bald head, a great round face, a broad and flowery nose, rather the head of a porter than that of the most famous of philosophers, as Will Durant put it.

Gifted youth gathered around this figure clad in rumpled tunic, but he was disliked by the establishment and reviled by mobs. Even Xanthippe, his wife, thought that Socrates brought notoriety rather than bread to his family. But she did love him, and could “not contentedly see him die”.

He died cheerfully drinking the hemlock that his persecutors decreed for him. The prison official handing the cup to Socrates said: “To you, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison – indeed I am sure that you will not be angry with me; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are the guilty cause.” So saying the official burst into tears and turned away.

Philosophy's first martyr, Socrates, was punished for proclaiming the rights and necessity of free thought. Through the prism of time his guilt emerged as virtue and bravery. Unassuming but fearless, the dissenting, questioning Socrates became a hero to successive centuries.

If, aided by the hard-to-conquer conscience of man, time restored to a maltreated man the respect which was his due, it also removed the masks of greatness with



which, in our century, the tyrant Hitler concealed his aims.

In the early thirties Herr Hitler was highly regarded by millions of Germans; men of insight such as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill paid tribute to Hitler's success in stabilising and strengthening Germany. The drive of Germany was contrasted with the drift of the democracies – and was described to their countries by the thousands of admiring visitors who flocked to the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Before he set out openly to capture nation after nation he had captured a large number of hearts and minds.

And when a fresh European country became his, all the Germans and the occupied land's inhabitants were told of the wide acclaim accorded to occupation. Till it reached its end, Herr Hitler's life was, by some standards, highly successful.

But fame proved fleeting ( apart from being accompanied by unequalled horror ), and if a decade or two of history could be erased from records and people's minds, most Germans and outsiders would not mind.

A dedicated opponent of slavery, the American literary figure James Russell Lowell, has left memorable lines:

“Though the cause of evil prosper,  
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong:  
Though her portion be the scaffold  
And upon the throne be wrong;  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
And, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above His own.”

*February 13, 1976*

## **The cost of freedom**

The Salt Satyagraha of 1930 was before my birth; but people talked of it in my childhood, and I found myself sufficiently interested to ask and read about it.

The Independence Resolution passed at midnight on the banks of the Ravi in Lahore; the Congress' decision to launch direct action; the tantalising months when it was not known what form the action should take; the inspiration of Gandhi that he would walk to the sea and illegally collect salt; the idea catching fire and rousing hundreds of thousands into disciplined, non-violent action against the Salt Law; the bravery of the ordinary man, and the organised, large-scale involvement, for the first time, of the women of India; the nation-wide arrests; and finally, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

A saga of romance, bravery, suspense and sacrifice, the Salt Story is fit for a great film. Young Indians not familiar with it can read it in many an objective account – in Tendulkar's *Mahatma*, among others. A short but gripping version can be found in *Gandhi – A Study in Revolution*, by Geoffrey Ashe (Asia).

August 8 is the anniversary of the 1942 Quit India Movement. The British were called upon to transfer power to Indian hands.

The Congress resolution, passed in Bombay, said that if its proposals were rejected the Congress would “be reluctantly compelled to utilise all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920”.

Gandhi's practice, each time he planned a form of action, was to write to the Viceroy with specific proposals and to inform him of the precise steps he and his followers would take if the proposals were not met. On August 8 Gandhi announced that he would shortly be writing to the Viceroy in line with this practice.

The Viceroy did not wait for Gandhi's formalities. Within a few hours of the resolution Gandhi and all members of the Working Committee were arrested. Nehru, Patel, Azad and some others were bundled into a special train and taken to Ahmednagar Fort, where they were to remain for three long years. Gandhi was detained at the Aga Khan's Palace in Poona.

There was a spontaneous reaction all over India. Within a few months about a hundred thousand were imprisoned, many of them for the duration of the war.

“In almost every major city mass demonstrations mushroomed from the bazaars. Students and workers, shopkeepers and housewives marched through the streets, singing nationalist songs . . . In time the August movement became a legend, the last open challenge to British rule. Five years later Independence came.”

The sentences are from *Nehru – A Political Biography* by Michael Brecher.

Independence came – at a price. Tens of thousands of families suffered the absence of breadwinners. Some of the imprisoned died; others of them were bereaved.

Gandhi’s much-loved secretary and companion Mahadev Desai died within a week of his arrest – in the Aga Khan’s Palace, where he had accompanied Gandhi. “Bapu has lost his right hand, and his left hand! Both his hands has Bapu lost!” lamented Kasturba, Gandhi’s wife. Eighteen months later, she too died in the palace prison. Wrapped in a sari made of yarn spun by Gandhi, she was cremated on the same site as Desai.

Maulana Azad, President of the Congress, lost his wife when he was in Ahmednagar. Similar tragedies befell hundreds of the great and the ordinary.

It is useful, perhaps, to recall these episodes of which India may justly be proud. The world, including India, seems constantly to seek higher standards of living. Empty stomachs and naked bodies are degrading things that must be righted. But an abundance of comforts and conveniences is, in the final analysis, a poor goal. The quality of life is more important, it seems to me, than the standard of living. During the best moments of India’s freedom struggle, life reached a noble quality.

*August 8, 1975*

## **Is evil beaten?**

Running through Divali, Id and Christmas is a common note, the note of joy.

In the Divali story it is the crowning of Rama, after he has slain Ravana, recovered his spotlessly virtuous

and lovely wife Sita and returned from exile to his capital, that gives rise to joy.

As at Christmas the joy of Divali is symbolised by light. Evil is defeated; with light, darkness disappears.

Has evil been beaten? In applauding goodness are we not hurraing the losing side?

Neighbours seem daily to shoot at one another in Beirut and to continue doing so in Ireland. African sharpens his knife for fellow African in Angola. Untruths are pressed down hundreds of millions of throats in several large countries.

Has evil been beaten? Yes. When we cheer goodness we back the winning side. We do not see this because our perspective is faulty. Our human eyes distort; we see things upside down.

An insensible, uncivilised man watches a game of cricket. The bowler hits the batsman's head with a fiery bumper. Our insensible spectator cheers. He thinks the bowler has won. But the umpire has no-balled him.

We are like the uncivilised spectator. We imagine that meanness, greed and tyranny win. In a truer perspective they are no-balled, disqualified.

The Almighty appears to test the servants He most values. In the fire of suffering human souls are fashioned into the shape God desires for them. Such is the testimony of men of different lands whose character and worth have been established by time.

Speaking to us across the ages, these figures counsel us to be patient in suffering, yet passionate, in a hurry even, about what needs to be righted around us; to submit to suffering and also to alleviate it and fight its causes. We are advised to come to terms with the will of Providence, howsoever painful it may be, but never to come to terms with the world; to submit to the former and to seek to change the latter, reducing its hates and fears and greeds.

Can the faulty perspective with which we are encumbered be corrected? Is it possible to catch a glimpse of the world as God sees it, to begin to feel about it as God feels? The saints tell us that we can progress

towards doing so. When we fight the baser pulls of our nature we begin to perceive that evil is beaten; when, humbly, we seek to right the wrongs around us we can share the joy of the victory of good.

*November 7, 1975*

## V THE WORLD

### Martina

She looks supremely happy.

Why is she so relieved? Will she retain her joy for a decent length of time?

I speak of Martina Navratilova, the 18-year-old tennis star who has defected from Czechoslovakia and obtained asylum in the United States.

The front-page picture of her in *The Times* of London of September 8 breathes genuine happiness. Described by the paper as “the most exciting and talented tennis player of her age in the world”, Miss Navratilova has given her reasons for defection. It had nothing to do, she said, with politics or money. She wanted to become the best player in the world, and could not achieve this ambition by remaining a Czech citizen. “The freedom to play where and when she wanted, instead of having to ask permission” was, she added, her aim.

Reporters have written that Miss Navratilova “enjoys the American way of life, not least American clothes and food” (*The Times*), and that “money would seem to be one factor in Miss Navratilova’s decision” (*The Daily Telegraph*).

An Indian observer like the writer has little right to judge – to criticise or to hail – the action of this Czech girl. He also does not have access to the information that may be available elsewhere. He can but note the inherent facts of the case, and reflect in general terms.

Czechoslovakia has not been able to hold the gifted youngster. The country is – as far as one knows – free from anarchy. It has witnessed spells of liberalisation since the 1968 crushing of the brief but memorable spring. During the spring, as most will remember, Alexander Dubcek tried to present “Communism with a human face”.

Tourists from non-Communist countries increasingly seek out Czechoslovakia’s resorts. The West trades more

and more with the country and even collaborates in investment in it. Life in the country is pretty "normal".

But Martina, "groomed carefully for success by Czechoslovakia since she was 12" (*The Guardian*), – a person on whom much attention was undoubtedly bestowed by the Czech authorities – found that something she deemed essential for herself was lacking. The missing element, unquestionably, was freedom.

Freedom is precious, indeed priceless, but it still is not everything. Which explains why the second question at the beginning of this article has to be asked.

Miss Navratilova is not an ordinary person. Apart from her tennis skill she seems to have a "lively yet relaxed personality" (*The Times*). But she is young, and like young people the world over may need to learn a necessary but difficult art: how to live with freedom.

The liberty Uncle Sam ensures to his nieces and nephews (let us acknowledge that he does) has co-existed with cynicism and selfishness. Many an earlier Martina (not necessarily as talented) has been carried away by these fellow-travellers of liberty.

Liberty wants an escort, and that escort is character. Together the two can satisfy and protect anyone seeking their promise and their shelter.

While many the world over wrestle with poverty Martina will have to learn how to live with money. This year she appears to have earned nearly Rs 12 lakhs\* on the tough and rewarding tennis-star circuit.

Money is a double-edged possession, Martina. If you are not wise and careful, it can recoil on you and do you harm.

"It is your life and it must be your decision." This is what Martina's parents are reported to have told her on learning that she was thinking about defection.

She has made one decision. She will have to make many more in the future. May she be wise.

*September 19, 1975*

\* 1 lakh = 100,000

*The following was written after the acquisition in January 1975 of total powers in Bangladesh by Sheikh Mujib.*

## **Mujib's tragedy**

Bangladesh needed a second revolution.

Sheikh Mujib is right in stating this. But he is wrong in believing that the revolution can come about by his assuming total powers.

Bangladesh's judiciary has been downgraded by the new system that came into force from January 25.

Political opposition has been ruled out by law. Only those accepted in a national party, shortly to be formed, would be eligible to enter Parliament.

The new presidential regime of Dacca does not have the Congressional checks of the USA; nor is its Premier responsible, as he is in France, to Parliament.

A presidential system has been talked about for some time. On December 28 the Sheikh had taken emergency powers, and troops had moved into strategic positions in the cities. But the sudden imposition of the new system took the world and the people of Bangladesh by surprise. In less than 100 minutes the Constitution was "amended" out of recognition. Parliament was not allowed to discuss the merits of the new set-up.

Bangladesh's problems are too complex to be solved by the wizardry or zeal of a single person. Sheikh Mujib's control and direction cannot give the people of Bangladesh what only their own self-control can achieve. He can, more than any other person, challenge, stir and inspire them; the real task of reconstruction, however, belongs to them. His solo rule will be unable to extract united, sacrificial work out of them.

Democracy, Sheikh Mujib has realised, is an expensive and frustrating business. But dictatorship, with all its lures, is costlier; and it frustrates not a nation's administrators but its whole population.



Sheikh Mujib cherishes his own opinions. So do his millions of compatriots. His people love their heroes, and of them Sheikh Mujib has undoubtedly been, in recent years, the best-loved. But they also love their liberty. Because Sheikh Mujib was a champion of liberty they placed their faith in him.

Many of them would be hurt now that this liberty has been reduced. With his influence Sheikh Mujib was in a position to initiate social changes based on a combination of liberty and determined leadership. That would have been a true second revolution.

*February 7, 1975*

*In August 1975 Sheikh Mujib and his family were murdered; colleagues of his were killed in November.*

## **Horrible fratricide in Bangladesh**

The macabre killings in Bangladesh and the brazenness of those who arranged them have besmeared the entire human race.

The boundless joy of liberation has given place to horrible fratricide in Bangladesh; and some, doubtless a microscopic minority, have believed that the destruction of the heroes of liberation was the greatest virtue.

Conceit, arrogance, lust for power and vengeance, have been among the sordid motives at work in that unfortunate country.

We are shocked and revolted; but the world has seen and will continue to see similar tragedies unless it asks some frank questions.

Humanity outside Bangladesh is not superior to its members living within the boundaries of the flood-ravaged, hunger-ravaged, disease-ravaged and hate-ravaged "golden" country.

Unwise is the man who would condemn a race or a nation as inferior to his. Wherever we look the world offers a picture of man-made misery. We can take our pick: walls of barbed wire preventing escape from a country – or walls of hate dividing a million homes; the imprisonment of bodies and minds – or the debauching of bodies and minds; hunger of the body – or of the soul.

The causes of man-made suffering lie in the rejection of timeless ethical and spiritual standards. The revolt against hypocrisy was overdue, but opinion-makers in recent generations made a catastrophic blunder; they attacked moral standards and hypocrisy in the same breath.

Science was illogically set in opposition to religion; “reason” was regarded as an alternative to, and indeed an enemy of, “faith”; religion was dubbed primitive, and self-seeking and greed embraced as modern.

Our world is paying the scientific, reasonable price of the blunder.

*November 14, 1975*

*Leaders of nations described as non-aligned met in Colombo in August 1976.*

## **The Colombo summit**

Wine from Algeria, eggs from Singapore and horses from Pakistan are among items that have featured at the Colombo summit.

It is undoubtedly a gleaming affair. In that decisions taken in Colombo may affect a large number of people the meet is also, doubtless, a significant affair.

Yet the hearts of many people in what have been called the non-aligned lands are not in Colombo.

Rulers, most of them talented, many of them experi-

enced, all of them recognised as rulers by the canons of international law, are gathered in the lovely island to the south of us. But while they represent their States, and of course themselves, they do not in all cases represent their peoples.

For the sad truth is that many of the States taking part in Colombo, in fact a clear majority of them, are dictatorships. The rulers of such nations carry with them, wherever they go, the emblems of power but not necessarily their peoples' freely-given love.

When such rulers meet their counterparts they arouse curiosity but not the feelings of affectionate interest and national pride which enter the hearts of men and women when their democratic leaders do well in an international setting.

When it was first articulated in the fifties, non-alignment conveyed the absence of a tie-up with Washington or Moscow; it seemed to mean, at least in theory if not always in practice, a refusal to side with the Communist or the anti-Communist bloc.

This meaning has long since been abandoned. North Korea and Vietnam, committed to Communism, are now prominent members of the non-aligned group. Saudi Arabia, opposed at least internally to the Red ideology, is another member. It is impossible now to define a non-aligned country.

One common note, however, can be found in the different pronouncements from Colombo: denunciation, direct or by implication, of the West. ( It is possible that some countries avoided striking this note; the Indian media's coverage has been incomplete. )

Is the Colombo group above all becoming, has it already become, an anti-West forum rather than a non-aligned one? A large section, at any rate, appears united on this single theme.

This is a pity, not because the West does not deserve criticism, which it does, but because it is contrary to common knowledge to suggest that the West needs more of it than other parts of the world.

Why, for instance, is Colombo silent about the con-

tinuing suppression of civil liberties in the Soviet Union, East Europe and China? Out of fear or the desire to please, not because conditions in these lands are worth approving.

Indeed, the urge to obtain either the Soviet Union's favour or China's appears strong in many a State represented in Colombo. Radio Sri Lanka has made at least one broadcast stressing the close ties between the Socialist bloc and the Colombo group; and President Ahmed of our country opened, on the eve of the summit, an exhibition in Delhi portraying the "cooperation between socialist and non-aligned countries".

The men and the women of the Colombo group of nations have been accustomed to much sorrow, a condition from which their ancestors were not exempt.

There was a time when the hope was entertained that their representatives might act as the conscience of humanity, for the suffering of nations can forge nobility.

To serve as a conscience is, however, tough. For it are needed, among other qualities, humility, charity and fearlessness.

*August 27, 1976*

## **Should America retire?**

On July 4 a country with which India has had many differences begins a year-long celebration to be climaxed by the 200th anniversary of its independence.

We disagree with a number of American policies. We are unimpressed by the society of callous competitiveness that America has reared. The ramifications of Watergate were disillusioning. The notion that seemed to mark the American scene a year ago, namely that all means were pardonable for the preservation of power, hurt the human spirit.

But none of these things can smear the integrity of the valiant deeds of Washington, Jefferson and their associates. Many decades later Abraham Lincoln

personified a quality of the human spirit that has been cherished throughout man's history – justice.

Lincoln fought. His enemy was the belief, comfortable to some and humiliating to others, that one race of Americans had the right to lord it over another race. Against this enemy he employed his wit, his debating genius and the granite resolve of his essentially humble personality. Ready always for derision and the shame of defeat, he risked all and finally gave his life for the truth that he had embraced.

Down the ages, crossing the barriers of time and nationalities, his words still ring in the ears of all us: "With malice towards none and with charity towards all . . ." The combination of justice and mercy is not merely a formidable force; it immortalises the memory and character of the man who consecrates himself to it.

Lincoln lives. His dedicated life still breathes into our world's air. We feel the breath and are invigorated by it.

As America reflects on her true heroes, on the source of their strength and on their intellectual and spiritual nourishment, she may yet find a way out of her modern bewilderment.

Nature gave her American children a legacy of bursting bounty. America's fathers left their descendants a legacy as precious – a pattern of brave, concerned living. In the marriage of the two would lie the fulfilment of the world's hopes for America.

A people who love to be loved, the Americans must suffer from the persistence and vehemence of the attacks they receive. Many of them are justified. Many are not.

The Americans have been assailed for intervening abroad – and, often at the same time, for not intervening enough. They have been rebuked for giving aid – and for withholding it. It is the price of affluence and also of responsibility.

For many in Asia America is sick when she acts the global policeman. To them over-involvement in the affairs of others is America's chief sin.

Most people in Europe, on the other hand, dread an isolationist America. To them America is healthy only

if she is able, and willing, to come swiftly to their rescue if the Soviet Union threatens Europe.

These differences are easily understandable. The destruction and defoliation of Vietnam, followed by America's withdrawal, made America's intervention widely unpopular in Asia. The exercise cost 56,000 American and over a million Vietnamese lives and ended in a Communist takeover.

From this can one conclude that American intervention is always deathly, destructive and futile? A Europe that is conscious of the Soviet military build-up and remembers Hungary and Czechoslovakia would never accept this as an axiom.

Nor would Japan. Nor, in the light of its hostility to Russia, would China.

Europe is more worried today than it has been for 30 years, with its economy dislocated by the oil war. The oil weapon struck a Europe that had been weakened over two decades by the cult of extravagant living and by the inflationary pressures of monopolistic unions.

We get the picture therefore of a debilitated and divided West and of a shift in the world's balance of power in favour of Moscow.

The Soviet Union is neither a democratic nor an altruistic power. The world has much to fear and little to rejoice from the prospect of being steered by the Soviet Union. As a counterweight to it the world needs America, with all her flaws.

America therefore has to be reformed rather than rejected. Its exercise in Vietnam – its entry, stay and exit – may have been all wrong. But a retired, inaccessible Uncle Sam is no answer to a Sam who meddles wrongly as a global cop.

America must not be forced to choose between interventionism and isolationism. She must be helped instead to act on the basis of what is fair and just and right. Her might does not have to be resented or ridiculed or sent back to her shores; it has to be harnessed to what is right.

*July 4, 1975, July 2, 1976 and June 6, 1975*

## Zimbabwe

Indians, including journalists and writers, are poorly informed regarding African affairs. As I write this it is not clear whether a violent conflict in and over Rhodesia – or Zimbabwe, as the Africans prefer to call it – has begun.

One hears over the radio of skirmishes and casualties. A conflagration in Southern Africa will not be a matter merely for paid soldiers. There will be little distinction between combatants and non-combatants, between military and civil populations. Fresh peaks of suffering and destruction will be climbed; achievements, longings and hopes will die along with human beings.

A Southern African war will be fiercely fought, bloody and protracted. The blacks' passion for revenge will explode against the whites' passion for survival; revenge and survival are among the deepest and strongest of human instincts.

Many whites in Africa obviously still believe that civilisation is in their exclusive custody and that a white man is almost invariably more cultured, more peaceful and less greedy, in brief more civilised, than a black man.

Not all the evidence of the materialism and the lust for power in "the white world" that produced Hitlerism and Stalinism has been able to erase the conviction of some whites about the superiority of the white race.

Likewise, many blacks seem convinced that they are more just than the whites; to them the departure of white power will automatically result in the removal of oppression. They cling to this prejudice against the evidence of a series of countries in Africa ruled by blacks where the exit of the European power has been followed by the oppression of the majority by a small minority – and sometimes by the suppression of one ethnic group by another.

What is freedom in Africa to mean? Is it to be unlimited freedom for a few at the top and unlimited obedience for the masses? Is it to be a nominal freedom with real power being exercised from Moscow, the

capital of a European country? Without a leadership that disciplines its own desire for power, pomp and affluence, freedom will prove to be a fresh round of sadness for the masses in whose name it is sought.

*April 2, 1976*

## **New nation**

The Independence of Papua New Guinea takes an Indian back to August 15, 1947 when the Union Jack went down and the Indian tricolour was raised. Somehow we felt a little bigger and straighter-backed than before and held our heads higher.

Our record since then has been mixed. The new nation of Papua New Guinea will, one hopes, avoid our mistakes and take heart from our achievements.

Independence is necessary. It uplifts. But it is no wonder drug for human and social ills.

Like politicians and administrators the world over the leaders of Papua New Guinea face a tough test: how to live with power.

Relatives will seek favours from them. Money will be offered for permissions, licences and facilities. Clever, ruthless men will use the age-old weapons of wine and women to corrupt them. The djinn of jealousy and rivalry will work to divide the leaders. Flatterers will endeavour to exploit the human weakness of vanity.

The trappings of power and the adulation and publicity leaders receive can create in them the notion that they are a cut above the ordinary run of mankind. Those entrusted with the guardianship of the new nation – like their counterparts elsewhere – will be tempted to apply one set of standards to their people and a softer one to themselves.

Papua New Guinea is an uncommon country. It comprises races and tribes of whom the world has known little. A popular phrase has it that the country has traversed 10,000 years in a lifetime.



Almost overnight there have been great changes in the costumes and customs of the population. Mines, plantations, churches and modern buildings have transformed the landscape of its different islands. Modern aircraft roar across skies where until recently only rare birds flew.

Just as partition's pain was interwoven with freedom and joy in India, Papua New Guinea's entry into independence has been accompanied by a movement for secession in the copper-rich island of Bougainville. Secession will not necessarily remove the handicaps of a dissatisfied minority or region. Michael Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, says, "We have it in our power to produce what will one day be Papua New Guinea's most valuable export. That export is the knowledge we will have developed in solving many world problems on a miniature scale."

The world would be a safer and better place if this vision is realised.

*September 12, 1975*

## **The miners**

About to meet in New Delhi are representatives and leaders of the world's coalminers. The Miners' International Federation takes in 36 unions from 33 countries. The Indian National Mineworkers Federation has the fourth largest number of workers (175,000) in the world body, after the USA (450,000), UK (270,000) and West Germany (250,000). Japan (75,000) follows India.

Why is the miners' meet significant? Oil has made it so. Oil's high-and-mighty attitude has made the world turn to modest and homely coal. The neglect of recent decades has been righted and the ancient fuel has regained respectability. Digging it out has become worthwhile.

While coal has grown in popularity the same cannot be said of the miners, at any rate the miners in affluent

lands. Their use of their power to bring the economies of nations to a halt, in order to get better terms for themselves, has lost them some of the goodwill they had.

This goodwill was enormous. The coalminer worked – and works – in dark and dangerous pits in the earth's depths. He crawled and hacked his way through the blackness, along low, narrow passages where it was impossible to stand and not easy to breathe. He risked – and risks – death from choking caused by noxious gases; from irreversible damage to his lungs; and by being crushed under a mine caving in on him.

The work was hazardous, but the risk of losing work often loomed heavier. Waves of unemployment repeatedly hit miners in the industrial world.

The miner thus symbolised toughness, courage and duty. He also became a sort of conscience for the modern world, his worn-out and oft-diseased frame a sign of the injustice and inadequacy of the industrial revolution.

Much of this is changed now. The miner in the West now works in safer pathways. His risks are fewer and his income a great deal larger. And by ceasing to dig he can pressurise the community around him into giving him more and more. He has come increasingly, in the affluent world, to represent power.

“We will worry less about our share of our nation's wealth, more about our nation's share in meeting the world's needs.” Could this become the miners' decision? Would they put up a fight against wasteful consumption in their lands, and for a better pooling of global resources? Would they be ready to hold down prices, and wages, if need be, relating to things required by the poorer part of the world?

With such an attitude the diggers of coal would set an example and a challenge for the drillers of oil.

*March 21, 1975*

## VI INDIA

### **India's unfinished role**

Long centuries ago India was fashioned – for a purpose.

We are entitled to believe that our country was not a meaningless creation. India was not designed merely to be a space for the births and deaths of hundreds of millions of purposeless lives.

All would love to see a clean, prosperous, happy land. But we should look with some care at the values we want to see thrive.

Discipline will certainly be a necessary and worthwhile quality. Yet we should not forget that this would be required at all levels. Discipline in the exercise of power would be as essential as discipline in offices, classrooms or on factory floors.

Firmness and authority will also be desirable. The past was marred by a lack of grip which worsened into a fashion of drift. Standing up to greedy demands was regarded as reactionary and anti-people. A firm hand – at all levels, including the top – would be welcome; but everywhere it would need to be commanded by a truthful and just heart.

Punishment will and must have a part in tomorrow's India. Often it will need to be swift and exemplary. But since those meting out punishment will always be human – capable of error, those punished would have to be given access to truly independent tribunals of justice. An India steamrolling to progress over those – whether few or many – unfairly and hastily punished would not be pleasant to live in.

Duties would doubtless be emphasised in the India we want for the future.

Since freedom a number of us have been alive to our rights. At times we have claimed rights that did not properly belong to us. In the process students, workers, businessmen, politicians, Government servants and Government leaders have neglected duties.

This would need to be rectified, but rights are not worthless. Obviously the ideal to strive towards would be one where each of us – whether in authority or a simple citizen – is conscious of his duties and others' rights.

Harshness and indifference have for long smeared the Indian scene. Courtesy and concern are their opposites. But compassion cannot be compelled; if you have it you spread it, that's all.

To some extent those in authority – in a home, in an enterprise or in Government – can extort good behaviour from those under them. But fear is an unreliable motive for decent behaviour and produces harmful side effects.

The Almighty, who presumably could have created a robot humanity where all conduct themselves as they should, preferred a more interesting alternative – human beings with a free will, able to do the right or the wrong thing. Governments too would do well to give the public a choice and to encourage as much as possible the voluntary goodwill of the public.

India's businessmen have clever brains. Many of them are quite wealthy. Many of them are also quite dishonest. What is the best way of mobilising their talents and wealth? A system of drastic punishments and tempting rewards might be necessary: but it is bound to be hopelessly insufficient. We have to foster a new race of honest, non-bribing businessmen who care and share and take the country forward with their drive ideas and money.

A number of Indian businessmen are now efficiently running large international firms, often from foreign capitals. Our scientists and engineers are sought the world over. Many of our civil servants are extremely able and industrious. Our peasants are shrewd and readily adopt new methods if it is shown that they work.

Rightly shaped – by her people and her leaders – India can help humanity and ease its life instead of being thought of as a burden on it.

*July 11, 1975 and October 3, 1975*

## Teachers

For most of us the time spent in school is an unforgettable and special chapter in our lives.

At school we entered, for the first time, a larger world. We discovered pride in a body bigger than ourselves, finding exhilaration in its successes and sorrow in its failures. We learned a somewhat unselfish loyalty. We developed camaraderie with boys from backgrounds wholly different from ours.

The friends we made at school remain in a unique category throughout life. We see more of those whose friendships were acquired later but the relationship with those at school with us has a character all its own.

The disagreeable side of school life fades with time. We think back to the early years with nostalgia. The master who to the adolescent mind was a crashing bore or heartless and mean becomes, in the image that time refines and alters, a person evoking our respect and even our affection.

How much more would adults obtain from school or college if they had the chance again! It is truly said that youth is a time wasted on the young. With nostalgia comes regret at the murder of minutes, hours and days and the waste of precious, fleeting opportunities to observe and learn. Fortunate – and rare – is the youth who profits from the experiences of his seniors.

One is drawn into these reflections on seeing the signs welcoming teachers from all parts of India to a convention in New Delhi.

The teacher, like all of us, has his economic needs and a family or relatives to look after. But the purpose of his life is of course infinitely more than a pay-packet. He has the chance to add – or fail to add – a priceless equipment to the lives passing through his hands.

With this equipment the student may in the life that lies ahead of him act manfully and nobly. Without it he might remain an ethical or spiritual babe.

That a teacher must know his subject is axiomatic. He cheats society if he does not. But even one who is a

wizard in his field wastes his opportunities, and can misuse them, if he does not have additional qualifications.

A teacher is truly effective when he has given his student an unselfish goal in life and the means of walking courageously towards the goal. The successful teacher touches the heart of his student and strengthens the student's spirit in addition to packing his brain.

An American clergyman once asked Gandhi what caused him most concern. "The hardness of heart of the educated." Gandhi replied.

Soft backbones and hard hearts have been and presumably will be a feature of our world. The teacher who toughens the former and melts the latter contributes towards a worthier age.

Cash, comfort and kicks are the world's popular goals. The ability to achieve them is furnished in our schools and colleges. It is possibly a necessary ability; but every heart inhabited by a conscience must find the skill hopelessly insufficient. The ability to say "no" to cash, comfort and kicks is also worth having.

If I am a teacher, are my students learning to swim against the tide? Am I able to plant in their breasts a passion and fearlessness for truth and justice? Do they emerge smug and complacent after their lease with me, or with a fire to put right what is wrong? Do I generate in them a quality of respect for all or do they fall in with the custom of flattering some, denouncing others and ignoring the rest? Will they be ready, after their training under me, to tread where the stones are rough or will they seek the soft carpets?

All of us, of course, are teachers. Our children or those who work under us are our pupils. We influence, for good or ill, the character of those around us. How often do we ask ourselves about our results in this regard?

As I write this, sightseeing and much fanfare is in store for the thousands of fortunate teachers chosen for the Delhi convention. One hopes that they will also be encouraged to ask themselves the kind of questions mentioned here.

*November 28, 1975*

## VII THE MAHATMA

Not long ago an English friend of mine, who was in his sixties, spoke of his poverty-filled childhood days when he walked barefoot in winter. And I learn that an Aberdeen worker who had spent 40 years unloading fish at the port was living now, with his wife, "in an apartment as comfortable as, if not more comfortable than, the smartest Bombay flat".

This revolution in the lives of the poor of the West is a source of joy. The sufferings that Dickens mirrored, the bitter contrasts that provoked Karl Marx and the hardships that are within the memories of living Europeans are – God and man be praised – things of the past.

We rejoice at the improvement so many have found. And in this experience of other lands we find grounds for hope for the future of a country like ours. A decent home for every single Indian family is a goal that requires much faith and determination.

Yet man lives not by bread alone, nor is a roof – essential as it is – enough to satisfy his heart.

This truth – that economics is profoundly important but is not everything – is one of the legacies we received from Gandhi. After the Mahatma's entry into it, the national movement began to demand an economic revolution and not just political reforms. His terse statement that to a hungry man God would have to be manifested in the form of bread summed up his burning concern with economics.

He was as passionate, however, for liberty and for justice. Some societies have succeeded in achieving one or both of these goals; for India – and indeed for humanity – the Mahatma sought both of them.

He dared to defy the basic trend of the age. "Civilisation in the real sense of the term," he declared, "consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases capacity for service."

To many the austerity Gandhi prescribed for his co-workers seemed extreme. But the extremism was essential; without it he would have appeared merely as a modifier and not an opponent of the philosophy of "more".

Gandhi hugged prison terms; he was stern with his body and his desires; he went hungry in atonement for what he felt were his errors or the errors of his people; in the end he was killed for preaching love.

A Gandhi co-existing with comfort and pomp, a Gandhi authorised to command a million paid employees of the State, a Gandhi preceded by pilot-cars or a helicoptered Gandhi would have been largely forgotten by now. His memory and his spirit abide because he cared for truth more than for fame.

In politics, too, Gandhi was a revolutionary. Stability was and is the great goal of most rulers, while expediency is the time-honoured and universal means of achieving it.

Gandhi rejected stability as the goal of a nation and expediency as a political means. Ethics, he said discordantly, should count. Rulers should be humble, just and truthful. The oppressed should fight without fear – and without untruth or violence.

The role of the British Raj in bringing political stability to India was not unimpressive. Along with a stability came modern systems of communications and transport; a large number of poor peasants secured rights over the plots they had tilled; steel mills and textile factories rose; easier travel and the all-India civil and military services brought Indians from different parts closer to one another.

This, and more, the Raj achieved. But when Gandhi saw that its custodians had departed from justice, honesty and service he could not do other than oppose the Raj.

Was he a success or a failure? Does India have bread, liberty and justice for all? Is not falsehood often thrust down our throats? The India that Gandhi craved is distant.



The Mahatma failed, too, with respect to more limited goals of his. He fought partition – and had to yield to it, with an aching heart. Anticipating struggle for personal power, he asked – after independence and shortly before his death – that Congress be converted into a non-political body for national service. The advice was turned down.

By certain criteria the Mahatma was undoubtedly a failure. The crowning ignominy – in one sense – was his being physically disposed of by a compatriot. If universal popularity is a mark of success, Gandhi was not, towards his end, a successful man. Some disliked him enough to kill him. Again, if being jailed and isolated is a sign of failure the Mahatma failed several times.

But some failures are greater than the greatest successes, and the Mahatma's "grand failure" has luminous and stirring qualities. It sheds light, and it moves us.

Lucre, crown and sceptre have been attained and clung to by a number of people down the ages. In their time these men and women were acclaimed by courtiers and surrounded by multitudes. Today they are, at best, historical curiosities.

A man like the Mahatma, on the other hand, is a force. The reasons are not far to seek. He obeyed conscience; he did not trim his standards; the life of India mattered more to him than his personal gains, whether economic or political or strategic.

That India must fight for bread, liberty and justice is plain. Posterity will be interested in how this generation struggles for them. Muffled though it is by layer upon layer of hypocritical praise, the true voice of Gandhi is still audible.

Three ingredients, he once said, were necessary and sufficient for victory in a struggle: a just cause, adherence to non-violence and capacity for endless suffering. The first is often available, the second will have many votaries, but the third is tough.

*January 30, 1976, March 5, 1976 and March 19, 1976*

## VIII APPA

My father, Devadas Gandhi – Appa, as his children called him – was born in Durban, South Africa, in 1900, making it easy always for us to tell his age.

With his three older brothers Appa was brought up by his father, the Mahatma, in the Ashram which was a training ground for the struggles for justice in South Africa. The boys received an improvised, strict, school-less form of education. The young Devadas helped with the hand-operated machine that produced *Indian Opinion*, the Mahatma's organ. In 1915 Appa and his brothers were brought to India by their parents.

At 18 he was sent to Madras to teach and popularise Hindi and spinning, two items in the Mahatma's constructive programme. Possessing a good, strong singing voice, Appa often opened rallies with national songs rendered without a loudspeaker's aid. The newspapers of the early '20s contain many references to his talks in freedom's cause, from Cape Comorin to Karachi.

Journalism became his life, a calling rather than a career. At 21 he edited what was called *The New Unregistered Independent* in Allahabad; its registration had been cancelled, its previous editors, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahadev Desai, were behind bars, and with the help of a team Appa brought out the unregistered version; several issues were copied out by hand by over a hundred volunteers.

Early in 1922 he was arrested and tried, and made a dignified, fearless and beautifully-couched court statement in which he pleaded guilty and invited imprisonment; he was to repeat the performance four times with the same grace.

At the age of 33 Appa married my mother, daughter of Rajaji, after a five-year period of examination and waiting imposed on the pair by their fathers.

Appa's "honeymoon" was spent in a Delhi prison. On his way, with his 20-year-old bride, to the capital – to take up a post on *The Hindustan Times* – he was

asked at Nizamuddin station to give an undertaking to sever all connection with his father's Civil Disobedience movement. Courteously but firmly he refused, and paid the familiar price; and my mother spent her first married months without her husband in a strange new city.

*The Hindustan Times* and Appa were inseparably connected until his death 24 years later. He loved the paper and wore himself away for it, retiring usually at 2.00 a.m. after putting it to bed. Most of all he cherished, and jealously defended, its independence, a quality the paper maintained for several years after his death. Twice during the 1939–45 war Appa found himself in prison again – for the freedom of the press.

Independence, in 1947, was the fulfilment of a dream followed by the assassination of the Mahatma. Appa loved and revered him, his emotions a blend of the filial and the patriotic, but he was never afraid or in awe, and questioned with much logic and persistence, though not often with success, some of the Mahatma's decisions. Nearly always he felt later that his father had been right.

After the Mahatma's death Appa had two main objectives: to collect and preserve documents, including letters and newsreel films, relating to the Mahatma; and to maintain the spirit of independence in free India.

His strenuous work for the first objective possibly hastened his death. His second aim was reflected when he declined, despite persuasion on the part of Nehru and Patel, an offer of ambassadorship to Moscow. Appa wanted to be totally free to serve his conscience.

I was 21 and far away in Atlanta in the USA when Appa suddenly died of a heart attack. I had not seen him for over a year but, curiously, a few hours before my brother Ramchandra informed me over the trunk phone that Appa was dead I was shown a photograph of Appa's hanging in the office of Ralph McGill, the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. In 24 hours I was in Bombay, where Appa had died; the cremation was over, and all of Appa's bones were in a small jar.

That was 19 years ago. It is a gift to meet him in dreams.

March 26, 1976

## IX A WRITER'S DUTY

Ever since its emergence nearly 12 years ago *Himmat* has sought to encourage what is sound in man and to discourage, often by criticising, what is base.

It has done so in the belief that the two processes are complementary. A reader thinks that they are not. He writes:

"You are expending much energy on establishing the positive, on building this 'new regime' within the hearts of . . . receptive individuals. But you are also expending much energy on combating the negative . . . Each time you make a political statement you are becoming involved in the negative." And he urges *Himmat* not to "point out failings in political rulerships".

That to point out failings is not always helpful or necessary can be readily granted. To pronounce a diagnosis to a patient is not the same thing as curing him. Yet if certain tests are satisfied criticism becomes helpful and necessary.

Hatred or bitterness in the critic injures his best aims and sullies what he writes. It cannot be easily concealed; an attack actuated by bitterness may reveal the critic's weakness more than the target's. An embittered writer should therefore postpone a proposed critical piece until the rancour has been, with an honest effort, washed off.

If the writer is impelled by a wish to cast an image of courage his criticism would, again, be vitiated. But when a writer feels, after rejecting the pulls towards resentment and swash-buckling, that a criticism is called for in the public interest, has he the right to withhold it? If he still remains silent is he not, very possibly, being restrained by fear?

Especially when there is a climate of fear, a journalist has a duty towards his vocation, towards his conscience, towards truth and towards his country to throw a light on injustices. How are rulers to be helped if this is not done? How do the ruled find hope if no one does it?

Most of us are glad – and glad for healthy rather than selfish reasons – when a writer puts the public’s unease or unhappiness into words. If around one others find it increasingly difficult to do so what is one’s duty? Surely it is to supply what is missing, or at least to try, howsoever inadequately, to do so, and not to steal away from the battlefield.

It would be an error, of course, if a writer allows “pointing out failings” to become his chief activity, no matter how provocative or painful the situation around him. It is, I believe, a journalist’s task not only to warn a nation’s rulers (and ruled) about mistakes but also to help in the raising of a just society, a national and global brotherhood of man.

But voluntary silence in face of oppression would be spiritual suicide, and would soundlessly undermine the foundation of the brotherhood we seek.

Do Joan of Arc, Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi kindle us? They loved the constructive and the positive, but they also spoke out and struggled against the failings of rulers. Most of us will always be poor followers of these figures, but let us at least be followers.

*July 16, 1976*