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CONTENTS

Editorial

Page

Freedom of Religion or Coercion?

1

Guidelines to Life's Problems

By S. Kashyap

3

Page

Afro-Asian Anarchy

By K. Kumara Sekhar

5

Politicians Play with Pandora's Box

By Louella Lobo Prabhu

7

Editorial

Freedom of Religion or Coercion?

Mr. Tyagi, the Janata member of the Parliament introduced towards the end of last year in the Parliament, a private bill "The Freedom of Religion Bill", which has raised a fierce controversy among the different sections of populations following divergent religious faiths. The title of the Bill appears to be misleading. One wonders how a necessity arose of re-affirming the fundamental Right conferred on the Indian Citizen to fully exercise his freedom of expression, conscience and faith. The Republican State of India, being avowedly and unequivocally a secular democratic State, one would naturally come to believe that this right was fully ensured and protected by the existing law of the land and any infringement of it would instantly come under a legal penalty.

But it appears that conversion in tribal areas, particularly and among the poor and ignorant masses in general, are taking place on a large scale under the influence of monetary power wielded by some rich religious mission foreign and indigeneous. The bait of money-doles and relief extended to the poverty stricken masses, it is believed by people like Mr. Tyagi, works havoc with the traditional faiths of these unfortunate people who lend themselves to be easily converted to alien or different faiths. They are, thus, alienated from their tribal and communal moorings, leaving behind them a great deal of bitterness among those who stick to their old faiths. The

Bill lays down that "no person shall convert or attempt to convert either directly or otherwise any person from one religious faith to another by the use of force or by inducement or by direct or by any fraudulent means, nor shall any person abet any such conversion." It will thus be seen that this Bill is in fact a "Prevention of Conversion" Bill through employing unfair and fraudulent means and has no direct relation to the freedom of conscience and Religion, which the author of the Bill so loudly professes to defend. It would be like introducing Total Prohibition under the pretext of defending The Freedom to live a simple and pious life and preventing its erosion by Prohibition Act. Acts of force, fraud and cheating are punishable under ordinary law, and can be effectively dealt with by it.

RELIGIOUS LIFE UNDER POLICE CONTROL

It has been the experience in all the States where total or partial prohibition was introduced that gangsterism of manufacturers of illicit liquor stalked vigorously in every nook and corner of the city, town and village under the protecting wings of the special police force employed for enforcing Prohibition. Drunkenness spread by leaps and bounds and uppity millionaires sprang up, as if by mushroom growth and they held the public to ransom, challenging the latter to dare and fight them if they could.

(Contd. on page 2)

(Contd. from page 1) therein coercion both official and non-official all round.

If the Bill be passed into law with the support of anti-conversion enthusiasts, the whole tribal population and the backward areas will come under the vicious grip of a new gang of daredevil missionaries who will all the same carry on their trade of conversion by bribing the police and terrorising the people who dare to challenge their activities. From the tribal converts themselves will arise 'conversion' gangsters or 'Dadas' who will carry on their work by giving the tribal people the option of 'Sword or Religion' with the tacit support of the corrupt officials and powerful politicians.

COERCION ALL ROUND

'Freedom of Religion' like other freedoms cannot become fool-proof and knave-proof in an imperfect society like ours. This is true of all democratic countries where restrictions on such freedoms could only be reduced to the minimum. As for dictatorial countries, they concede no such freedom except the freedom to be slaves of the State. The tribal poor people are entitled to enjoy the freedom to change their religion even out of monetary considerations. After all, there is nothing spiritual in the religion practised by the common man who runs to his God only for help in his difficulties. It may be pertinently pointed out that if politicians could be allowed to change their political affiliations for the loaves and fishes of ministerial posts in the government, poor people forsaken both by God and man, would be more justified in welcoming any aid from their God who may come to them in the form of missionaries and dole out money to them or provide for them schools, hospitals and home industries. In fact, the missionary activities must act as a spur to the Government and other missions and philanthropic institutions to extend their sympathy and support to these unfortunate sections of humanity and try to remedy the short-comings, if any, in the humanitarian work being done by Christian Missionaries.

This Bill of 'Freedom of Religion' will on the other hand, curb these humanitarian activities of the missionaries without giving the poor any better alternative. It will only usher in an era of all round coercion practised on the tribal poor, even in religion by a new band of missionaries working in a surreptitious way on the one hand and the police force and Government officials appointed to enforce the legislation on the other. The sad experience of prohibition introduced in the States could be ignored in this matter at the risk of law and order being seriously affected in tribal areas and letting loose

THE THIRD FORCE

The third force in India's political firmament is a much-talked about and discussed subject in the press and the public. This talk of a Third Force is symptomatic of a sense of deep frustration that is rapidly spreading among the intelligent sections of public opinion, at the poor image presented by the Janata Party which was voted into power during the last General Elections with high expectations and hopes about its performance. The Congress Party, built up as a fighting organization for achieving freedom from the British yoke, was cleverly used by the leaders in the post-freedom days for acquiring pelf and power at the Central and State levels of Government by way of compensating themselves fully for the sacrifices, small or great, made by them during freedom's struggle.

This example set by most of the Congress leaders, could not but catch the imagination of younger elements thrown up towards the second rank of Congress leadership by General Elections held since 1952 on the basis of adult franchise. This resulted in innerparty struggle for power between the old and the young and presented a golden opportunity to Mrs. Indira Gandhi to assume a pose of leading a progressive section of younger Congress leadership as against her elderly colleagues who were unceremoniously thrown out in 1969 both from the Congress and the Government. Thus her initial success made her still bolder till at last, she virtually made herself the dictator by declaring emergency in the country in 1975. World opinion and internal simmering discontent compelled her to hold elections in 1977, in which she and her party suffered a complete ignominious eclipse and the Janta Party came to power.

But however high-sounding the Janta Party's promises appeared to be, they have remained as yet unfulfilled. Party feuds for power at the Centre and the States are galore and are perhaps the main activities in which Janata leaders seem to be interested. Ministers either resign or are dismissed on flimsy grounds or no ground at all, at their own sweet will and pleasure or that of the Chief Minister. In this State of instability and confusion, it is not surprising that its executive and administrative performance is poor or not impressive and people are searching for a new enlightened leadership outside Congress and Janata ranks.

(Contd. on page 5)

Guidelines to Life's Problems

"Health and Modernisation"

by S. Kashyap

Man must eat to live and he must work to eat! In essence, he is what he eats and the stuff he eats has a direct influence on his brainstuff, mind-stuff, body-stuff and on the organisational complexity of cells and tissues leading to the internal formation of his behavioural pattern.

What is consumed by man as food and digested within his psychosomatic system passes into the blood and circulates throughout the body, supplying each and every cell the nutrients needed for growth and preservation. Though this empirical phenomena is shrouded in a mysterious inter-relatedness of action and reaction involving the entire organism, it works with the precision of the pattern which is universal, having inward application and outward ramifications.

Eating wholesome food when one is hungry promotes health and eating for the sake of eating whatever comes on the way to appease the tongue demotes the body's capacity to resist bacterial and viral invasions and diminishes its inherent natural intelligence to cope with adverse circumstances.

Foods may be either carbohydrates, proteins, fats or combinations of these. As a rule, each food supplies vitamins, minerals and other elements which are essential to good health and which perform particular functions in the body vehicle in cooperation with other nutrients to promote and regulate the harmonious functioning of the entire organism on all levels of existence. This includes not only the physical level, but the mental and emotional levels as well. It is believed that even such a subtle factor as intensity of thoughts arising in a person while cooking influences one who eats the food. Those who grow and harvest foodstuffs also leave their own subtle thought impressions on them. This shows the subtle inter-relatedness of all creation. On a grosser level, it can be proved that the value and essence of nutrients contained within a particular food item directly influence man's mental condition as well as physical well-being.

We are living in what we call the machine age! We have built a society on the ruins of some civilisation or other and call it modern and culturally advanced! We have invented sophisticated gadgets to minimise work and give more leisure and comfort

to the body. We process our food, refine our oils and add what we generously call vitamins and beautifully coloured preservatives. Our's is a developing country struggling continuously at the sensitive point where abject poverty and contumelious affluence cross!

In reality, majority of the people cannot afford food items high in protein, but derive most of their energy from carbohydrate sources such as rice, wheat, sugar and other cereals. In urban markets, we see refined food packed in neat polythene bags and displayed on sale counters. We also see refined oil tins and hydrogenated cooking fats prominently exhibited in various selling centres with free offers of soaps or some other tempting article along with the tins. However, majority of the consumers do not know the worth of these processed food items and hydrogenated cooking fats.

(Contd. on page 4)

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The health and calorie-conscious West is becoming more and more averse to highly processed and refined foods in view of the fact that they reduce the 'staff of life' to a mere twig! The most nutritious and health-promoting portions of wheat are the wheat germ and the bran. The germ of wheat, which is naturally rich in the B vitamins, vitamins E and iron, aids the digestive system and supplies natural nutrients required by different cells and tissues. When wheat is processed and refined, the germ and bran are partly burnt and totally discarded in order to prevent the flour thus obtained from becoming rancid and to increase the storage life of the flour. This makes the flour fine, white and light, but it cannot support life in the real sense! The roughage lost with the discarding of the bran contributes, according to the opinion of nutritional experts, to cancer of the stomach and intestine in the later years of life.

The processing of food started with the advent of machinery during the latter part of the Nineteenth century and this process developed enormously with invention of sophisticated machines till the countries involved in processing food and many other items were termed as 'developed' countries. In the later years, this trend was scrupulously followed by developing countries in the name of 'progress' as a result of which even a country like India has been found discarding what was once considered to be the best methods of obtaining all the natural nutrients available in the foodstuff consumed by its teeming millions.

Before the invention of the machine, especially in India, people used to eat preparations made out of fresh, whole grains and hand-pound rice, which retained the natural nutrients generously provided by nature. Our forefathers were, therefore, not susceptible to the innumerable diseases against which we are defenseless! They used to draw their requirements of vitamins and minerals from the fresh food they ate.

The B group of vitamins generously available in unprocessed and unrefined whole grain cereals, are so essential for the normal functioning of the nervous system that without them, one feels the normal stress and strain more pronounced in every-day life. Moreover, these vitamins are quite important in building healthy muscle-tissues and in promoting proper digestion and metabolism of carbohydrates, fats and proteins. They are also essential for the health of skin, hair, eyes, mouth, tongue and liver. Without them, formation of red blood cells and antibodies is not possible. They are also necessary for releasing energy from carbohydrates and to maintain normal appetite. Vitamins and minerals build up a fort of protection against fatigue, stress and strain.

Majority of the Indians eat rice and rice is the staple food of the country. Whole and hand-pound brown rice is rich in B vitamins and minerals such as iron, phosphorus and calcium. But unfortunately, the commodity called brown rice is not to be seen in the Indian cities though it was available in generous supplies some three decades ago. It is even disappearing from the countryside!

In the name of progress and modernisation, we have discarded nutritional values of food and adapted to circumstances and methods which make us prone to diseases of various kinds which were not known in the golden olden days! The cases of degenerative diseases like blood-pressure, diabetes and heart disease are so rampant in the country that the modern medicines have failed to cope with the spread of these killer diseases. Our ignorance is such that we consider polished white rice to be better than any other variety. The motto 'whiter the rice, better the quality' is fallacious! As we are attracted by the whiteness of rice, we are deprived of the brightness of health! This is a single important instance which proves how we are enmeshed in the idea of modernisation! As a matter of fact, white rice has no essence, as all the natural nutrients are discarded in the milling and polishing process.

If we look at the food items which are available in the open market, our attention is especially drawn to the white sugar which is available in abundance. This is one of the items predominantly used in everyday consumption throughout the country. Even villagers who were not accustomed to white sugar have started using it in abundance. Scientifically speaking, processed white sugar which we eat and which we use for innumerable preparations of sweets, is one of the main causes behind the degenerative diseases (the other being salt). White processed sugar is considered to be structurally incomplete and it robs the body of B vitamins, thus creating a marked deficiency. Though white sugar is a major source of quick energy, it is devoid of any life-supporting properties. Moreover, it directly floods the bloodstream and prepares the ground for many of the modern diseases. There was a time when Indians used only jaggery and molasses for all their sweet preparations. Jaggery and molasses are considered to be rich in vitamins and minerals and are structurally complete and, therefore, don't rob the body of B vitamins for their assimilation. They are rich in iron, which is essential for the growth of red blood corpuscles and promotion of strength. White processed sugar ruins appetite and encourages tooth decay.

(To be continued)

Afro - Asian Anarchy

K. Kumara Sekhar, B. A.

The recent mass killings in Iran, with the troops killing the people, and the people killing their generals, and foreigners and foreign embassies left to the mercy of marauders, show to what nadir of disorder and anarchy, eastern countries could descend, because the West pulled out of the East, rather prematurely. "Get out from here, and leave us to manage our affairs". Afro-Asians repeatedly said to Westerners, and cited their right to liberty and sovereignty, quoting profusely from the latter's own idealistic books, till the latter's conscience pricked, and they felt guilty, and left.

And now, the latter are forced to watch Afro-Asian anarchy, barbarism and turmoils, as helpless spectators, unable to intervene in the internal affairs of these "so-called sovereign nations", while the blood of the innocent flows in the streets of Teheran, and while Afro-Asian people in a frenzy, recklessly over-throw their established govts, even before knowing how to launch new ones in their place. Vietnam invades Cambodia, and China threatens to invade Vietnam. No one knows when mob rule would oust ordered govt, in which African, or Asian

(Contd. on page 6)

(Contd. from page 2)

In the Congress section led by leaders like Y. B. Chavan and Dr. Karansingh, the concept of the third force is gaining considerable ground. These leaders advocate a front of all those who are sincerely wedded to Nehruvian ideas of secularism and State-Socialism. But this sounds like harking back, not to the essence of secularism and socialism, but only to some Nehruvian fads like Statism, Pro-Soviet non-alignment irrespective of exigencies of new times and changed alignments in international politics, secularism which lays more emphasis on equality of all religions rather than the civil right to freedom of conscience and religion both for the majority and minority communities which is a higher right, the accent on heavy industries and public sector as an ideological goal to be achieved even at the cost of public weal, refusal to improve relations with China and Israel by way of following an independent foreign policy in the interests of India and a host of other Nehruvian ideas which are irrelevant to the present times.

In fact Congress should have been disbanded in 1948 as suggested by Gandhiji and a new political party without the Congress label should have been formed just to purify the politics of the country. It is today moth-eaten and worms are at it. To consider Congress as a political force would be a mistake. The Janata Party has yet to find its soul and feel its ground by purging itself of those elements that are not amenable to any party discipline like the old Lohia Socialists and some B.L.D. leaders who though in power, behave as if they were merely irresponsible agitators and crusaders against their own party men and who are fond of washing dirty party linen in the public. Their next task would be to present to the

country a programme which could be clearly distinguishable from the old congress programme. Then only could it be considered as a political force.

If the Janata be such a political force, then all Marxian parties despite their small differences could constitute a 'second force'.

The 'third force' could be possibly constituted of those elements in the country which opt out openly for anti-Marxian Liberal democratic principles of Individual Liberty, Free and Private Enterprise and Minimum Government, modernisation of both Industry and Agricultural and electrification of the country side, building of public sector only in selective areas where private enterprise is unable to function. Such a party could be formed out of those forces which are modern in their outlook in all areas of life, with a liberal pragmatic approach to problems political, economic and social facing the country. The Radical Humanists and certain progressive people who are not involved in any party, may form the nucleus of such a third force.

In this new alignment of political forces, the Congress on no account, should find a place. The Nehruvians Socialists had better join the Marxist Parties or form a Socialist Party of their own. The Janata will replace the Congress as the premier political party. The Royists, Progressive Swarajya Party elements, the scientific minded and pragmatically inclined intellectuals could constitute a viable third force, that might blaze a new trail in giving a constructive and inspiring lead to the people in the midst of the gloom and frustration that has overtaken them.

(Contd. from page 5)

Afro-Asian body politic, which arouse feelings of horror, in all civilised countries and peoples.

country. Such is the fear of possible anarchy, that haunts all Afro-Asian people today.

The horrifying events in Congo, when the PM of the country Patrice Lumumba was murdered, did first awaken this dreadful feeling that while the withdrawal of the Western powers from Afro-Asian countries could on the one hand give back the taste of freedom to many, it could also, let loose the old tribal barbarism and atrocities, which these peoples had still not yet outgrown. In many of the Afro-Asian countries, dictators have usurped power, suppressing human rights, and thrown their political opponents into jails. In the name of egalitarianism and social betterment, ruthless communist dictatorships have come up in vast areas of Asia, doing away with the freedoms known to mankind, and clamping a kind of despotic rule, too well known for its inhumanity. There is no certainty, whether even India will prove an exception, to this general trend.

The outrageous incidents in Uganda, where President Amin behaves as a man who has the right to take the life of any white man that he wished, confirms this fear, of the need for some counter-vailing power of the West to contain the barbaric tendencies in the

The cold-blooded killings of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, and the murder of the American ambassador in Afghanistan on the 14th of this month, are yet other instances of "Afro-Asian Barbarism", that has still not been extinguished completely, inspite of centuries of the civilising influence of the West. Doubtless, Afro-Asian anarchy and barbarism, can be put down, only by the West abandoning its fanciful idea of total withdrawal from the East. For, it is the West that civilised and disciplined the barbaric hordes in Africa and Asia, and despite their own evils and drawbacks, gave them the modern form of social organisation. Left to themselves, they were killing each other, and living in an anarchic condition. And, these peoples still seem to be in need of the supervisory persence of the West again, for some centuries more. The time seems to be not far off, when the discerning here, disgusted with Afro-Asian barbarism and anarchy, would again look forward to western power and influence, as their guarantor of peace and security in the Orient.

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Politicians Play with Pandora's Box

By Louella Lobo Prabhu

In 1971, when the Congress O, the Jana Sangh and the B. L. D. formed a grand alliance to fight the elections, they were decisively defeated, because the electorate saw little hope of either a viable government or a united opposition in a loose federation of parties. The same combination of constituents became acceptable in 1977, partly because of the phallic revolt in Northern India and at least partly because the alliance approached the electorate not as a federation, but as a single party in which each of the federating units opted to merge its separate identity. Against this background, it is ironical that all newspaper headlines of the past few days highlight Jana Sangh warring with the B. L. D. and vice versa, in virtually every North Indian State. Retaliating against the elevation of Banarsi Das in U. P., the Jana Sangh trounced Karpoori Thakur, Charan's nominee in Bihar. In Harayana Devi Lal promptly sacked four Jana Sangh ministers, while in Himachal Shantha Kumar similarly engineered and accepted the resignation of some non-Jana Sangh ministers in his Cabinet. Neither the Press, nor indeed the ministers and dissidents concerned, have even mentioned the word 'Janata'. All have been talking in terms of their former identities. The virus of factionalism has proved so infectious, that even where Janata is out of power, the Deve-Gowda and Veerendra-Patil groups are fighting over "representation" of their respective factions on the Executive of the State Party in Karnataka!

All this represents not only a betrayal of the electorate, but criminal neglect of a ruling Party's fundamental duty: which is to govern, or get out. It is a shocking display of cynical callousness that these trials of strength were taking place in Bihar, at a time when it was racked with the worst communal riots in its murky history. There was dithering in the government and the administration, about a request for changing the traditional route of a Ram Navami procession, to take it past a predominantly Muslim quarter of Jamsedpur. No good reason was given for seeking such a change, and the holocaust which ensued could have been anticipated and prevented by government, in view of the fact that long before the procession, thousand of pamphlets which did not bear the name of the printer, urged Hindus to join the procession, stating that the police were in sympathy with the aims of the processionists. Although it seems likely that the figures have been played down, 108

people died, 300 houses were gutted, and no less than 40,000 people are currently in refugee camps. Among the slain victims, were 58 injured women and children speeding to hospital in an ambulance which was set on fire roasting them all to a crisp of charred flesh, on the spot.....

The law and order situation in Bihar has been underscored by these riots, but is very little better even from day to day. It is particularly bad in the colliery belt, which is full of gangland killings condoned, if not colluded with, by M. L. A.'s in Patna. In Uttar Pradesh, guns are readily available for hire or for sale, as people feel the need to defend themselves privately, since the State is obviously unable to do the job. In West Bengal, not only industry, but life itself has been paralysed but the near-total failure of power supply, caused largely by warring trade unions in the Power Plants, and the State Government inability to prove whether it, or the Power Plant Unions rule Bengal. Central experts have refused to intervene, unless the Chief Minister can assure them that workers in the Plants will render 8 hours work (they currently do 3 hours, and with overtime payments, draw an average of Rs. 2000 a month!)

As if the explosive elements on the national scene were not enough, at the time of writing (22.4. '79), Acharya Vinoba Bhave has undertaken his fast-unto-death to achieve a ban on cow slaughter in the States of Kerala and West Bengal. It would be invidious to comment on a sensitive subject about which the pros and cons are well known, and on which the feelings of protagonists and antagonists naturally run high. However, it may be said that whether on prohibition, cow slaughter, or any matter involving personal life styles which are as diverse as the people of India, persuasion and public education are preferable to either moral or legal coercion, especially from Gandhians or Sarvodaya followers, who are supposedly wedded to non-violence. It would be a tragic irony if a believer in ahimsa unleashes a holocaust as a result of the fast, and its possible consequences. It is to be hoped that government and the Press will blackout publicity about it, to minimise destructive action and reaction by communal elements on a nationwide scale.

The recent round-up of crimes and follies by
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