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INDUSTRY HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO ENGAGE WITH THE IDEA OF INDIA, SAYS SUHEL SETH

Has India matured as a democracy? Yes, it has.

Proof of that maturity came to the fore in May when the ruling dispensation in Tamil Nadu was voted out by overwhelming numbers.

If that is the case and if India is indeed a mature democracy, then why is it beset with such debilitating problems?

The reason for this is simple – a reluctance to be brave and courageous.

“Gandhi didn’t teach non-violence. He taught us to respect and enjoy the absence of fear. That’s what Indian industry should do. Enjoy (if not create) the absence of fear. We have no one to worry about except our destiny. And we will be the spoilers of that destiny if we don’t do what I think we should be doing.”

These views were expressed by Mr. Suhel Seth, one of India’s leading television personalities, who is actually a top-notch branding and marketing strategist, while addressing the last meeting on a rather controversial subject, “The hypocrisy of industry”.

But is there a solution for the ills plaguing India, especially for Indian industry? Yes, again.

According to Mr. Seth, Indian industry would have to engage with youth as consumers, as citizens of India, and not through the newly-developed social marketing tools. Further, industry would have to address the two crucial issues concerning youth, viz., education and skills development which it had been ignoring.

“You can’t have a country of 1.22 billion people built on degrees; it has got to be built on skills. You’ve got to make skills relevant, rewarding and respectable. You’ve got to make education employable. You’ve got to replace education with knowledge in order to create a society that is equal not only in spirit, but equal also in the opportunities to garner and harness the intellect that is offered to it.

“I genuinely believe that we are a tremendous nation; we’re a nation that has faced adversity and, more often than not, we have come out triumphant. We’re a nation that can tolerate a Narendra Modi and a Bal Thackeray for their idiosyncrasies and their absolutely poisonous mindsets. But we can also understand the poison in them,” said Mr. Seth.

Programme Chairperson Dolly Thakore, who introduced Mr. Seth,



We have nothing to worry about but our destiny, says Mr. Suhel Seth while speaking at the last meeting. He asserts that Gandhi’s non-violence means respecting and enjoying the absence of fear

pointed out that he was the founder and Managing Partner of Counselage India which advised chairpersons and CEOs on branding and marketing. It was associated with Tata Steel, the Taj Group of Hotels, Hero Honda and so on. Mr. Seth was a board member of Citibank, Coca Cola and the Max Foundation.

He had an opinion on everything under the sun and television news channels usually featured him in discussions because of his candid comments and caustic opinions. However, he respected everyone’s right to an opinion. Dolly added that along the way Mr. Seth had found the time to act in 135 plays and six films.

Mr. Seth got into stride straightaway. He did not mince words as he said that while much had been made of industry’s role and of the so-called icons of industry that were at the vanguard of governance and good behaviour, he had always believed that industry had been parachuted into governance because of the lack of it (governance) in the political executive.

When India got rid of the British in 1947, she inherited another feudal system which had turned into today’s political-bureaucracy class. It was the same feudal mind-set of

yore in which the country was willing to crawl when asked to walk. This had become part of the people’s DNA. Nobody wanted to ask questions, nobody wanted to question the status quo.

Every chamber of commerce wanted a Minister as the chief guest irrespective of whether he was inarticulate, a crook or a dolt. They wanted a Minister because that would get them press coverage.

(Continued on Page 2)

HOMAGE TO THE VICTIMS OF THE JULY 13 BLASTS

Members at the last meeting observed a minute’s silence in memory of those who had been killed in the triple bomb blasts in the city on Wednesday, July 13. President Paul George, who regretted the blasts which had caused the loss of several innocent lives, noted that terror had once again raised its ugly head.

The Rotary Club of Bombay, he said, was observing a minute’s silence not only as a mark of respect for those who had lost

their lives, but also as an expression of solidarity with the bereaved families.

“We pray that the Almighty give them the courage, the strength and the fortitude to cope with their sorrow in their hour of grief,” Paul said.

The Board of Directors was considering ways in which it could help the victims’ families. This could be by way of scholarships for the victims’ children, he added.

Forthcoming meetings

July 26, 2011

The “Citizen of Bombay” award for 2010-2011 to be presented by IPP Pradeep Saxena to Mr. Gerson da Cunha. (The presentation was delayed for lack of dates suitable to Mr. da Cunha.)

Mr. Da Cunha to address the Club after receiving the award.

August 2, 2011

Mr. Dilip D’Souza on “The bomb blast in Bombay”.

August 9, 2011

“Educating our daughters, securing our future,” a talk by Ms Safeena Hussain.

'We are slowly becoming a nation of TRPs; but countries can't be built on sensationalism'

(Continued from Page 1)

"Proximity to power is not an aphorism in today's India, it's a curse; it's a curse that we have invited upon ourselves.

"Therefore, the first parameter of hypocrisy is when we don't even know that we are being hypocritical. And we are not being hypocritical just to ourselves (that's understandable behaviour); we are being hypocritical to the cause that we revel in, the cause of governance, of nationalism and patriotism.

"We talk so valiantly about all the good that we are doing and how bad the political class and the bureaucracy are, but they actually feed on our hypocrisy; and therein lies the paradox and the irony. They need people to be supplicants, they need people to be servile – and industry is a willing flogging horse."

Mr. Seth said the genesis of this trend was in history. India had inherited the feudal system which in colloquial terms was described as "mai-baap"; and then (in independent India) the "licence raj" engineered the worst form of corruption.

Things would not have come to such a sorry pass, he opined, had Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, had a son rather than a daughter. It was she who, unlike the goddess Kali, destroyed all that was good and replaced it with evil. Indira Gandhi had destroyed every institution that India should have been proud of.

This was true of the judiciary, too. Former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of India were known "to have flamed themselves in corruption and scandals".

India needed icons, people who could be looked up to and revered. There were many good people, many good human beings who did amazingly good work, but their work was never highlighted.

"It never gets coverage; and it doesn't get coverage because slowly we are becoming a nation of TRPs. But countries can't be built on sensationalism. They must be built on the fundamental strength of character, dignity and respect.

"We have started to disrespect institutions, to fix them. There is hypocrisy in that. For every corporate leader (other than a handful) who stands up and says he believes in this thing or that, you know that he is actually saying it either for the next Padma Shri or for the next government July 26 to August 1, 2011

ment junket that he wants to be part of so that he can tell people, 'Oh, I just met the Prime Minister'.

"There is a telling and enduring danger in all this. The danger is that we will slowly build ourselves into a nation and (into) categories of crony capitalism; we will build ourselves as role models for all the wrong things. And that's why I am delighted that we finally have a youth which (perhaps for unfortunately tragic reasons) is engaged."

Mr. Seth said he had always believed that there were three kinds of citizens – the engaged, the enraged and the indifferent. For a long time, India's citizenry was either enraged or indifferent. Today, finally, the youth of India were becoming engaged.

Sadly, this engagement was limited. Although they were in the forefront of the candle-lighting brigade in the aftermath of the three-day-long terror attack on the city from November 26, 2008, those very people had not come out to cast their votes when elections were held a few months later (in 2009). It was said that the reason for such apathy was the lengthy weekend that offered an opportunity to leave for Alibag rather than visit the polling booth.

This was clearly an instance of the hypocrisy of the elite, of people who wanted to venerate (icons) and who wanted to be venerated; these were the people who could espouse values, but obviously they didn't genuinely believe in those values. And this was a worrying sign for a country like India that was at inflection point.

However, Mr. Seth was very happy that the Tata companies (he

was an adviser to many of them) held values that rose far above the drivel that was visible all around. Further, 66% of the holding company of the Tatas was held by committed trusts.

That was what was expected of corporate India. Besides, there was no sense in talking about "rich lists" if there was no "give list".

Alas! The art of giving had also vanished. Industry was not interested in a "give list" because if one was produced it would shame many members.

Industry gave lip service to the cause of leaving behind legacies, but the truth lay hidden elsewhere. Industry had actually obliterated and wiped out almost every possible legacy issue.

A quick look at the treatment meted out to artisans, to arts and crafts, to museums, cultural indices and so on would reveal that they had all been destroyed. "And I would blame industry for that."

Captains of industry would refuse to play ball if requested to sponsor a stage play; but they would be delighted to sponsor something frivolous if it was close to a Minister's heart.

In other words, industry had stopped engaging with the "idea of India". The same industry that raved over India's robust judiciary had no compunctions as it had quietly gone about "fixing" the justice system.

"Two immediate past Chief Justices of India were completely corrupt and should be in jail; but one of them chairs the National Human Rights Commission! Isn't that a shame?"

"Only two persons, Anu Agha and Deepak Parekh, had refused to join

the others who protested against the CII's indictment of Narendra Modi. And what did the CII do? It went and apologised.

"So when we have industry which is willing to crawl when asked to walk, you will be the flogging horse; you have let yourself open to such enormous influence and such enormous power that the politician and the bureaucrat will continuously whip you into shape."

Mr. Seth continued his tirade against industry and politicians running the country. Calling the latter "jokers", he said had there been intelligent people at the helm, India would have easily out-paced the rest of the world.

And if India still registered a GDP growth rate of 9%, then it was clearly "in spite of the clowns running the country".

India was like the bumblebee, he said. Aerodynamically, the bumblebee was not supposed to fly, but the bumblebee did not know about this; so it flew about happily.

Technically, and by all parameters of national success, India was not supposed to succeed – yet it was doing well. Things would change dramatically if intelligent people were put in control.

When industrialists lauded Ministers who were honest, they overlooked the fact that Ministers were supposed to be honest. But it was worrisome that honesty, rather than competence, had become a badge of honour.

It was a dubious situation in which the political leadership was analysed on the strength of competence rather than on the strength of character.

Thus, the hypocrisy was "not in what we believe; it is in what we do. The hypocrisy is more in what we don't do, in what we avoid, in what we escape from. To my mind, Indian industry has escaped from several realities".

One of these realities was philanthropy.

Indian industry had to engage in sustainable philanthropy but it was not doing so. Industry had not grasped the fact that philanthropy was no longer about merely giving dolos.

It required engagement with society and giving to the underprivileged the same kind of opportunities that the more fortunate had been offered.



We are building ourselves into a nation of crony capitalism and becoming role models for all the wrong things, says Mr. Suhel Seth

THE GATEWAY, The Bulletin of the Rotary Club of Bombay

(Continued on Page 6)
Page 2

WHY DOES THE ROTARY YEAR BEGIN ON JULY 1?

Have you ever wondered why the Rotary year begins on July 1?

The Rotary International Convention had initially played a key role in determining the starting date of Rotary's fiscal and administrative year.

Rotary's first fiscal year began the day after the first Convention ended on August 18, 1910.

The 1911-12 fiscal year also related to the Convention, beginning with the first day of the 1911 Convention on August 21.

At its meeting of August, 1912, the Board of Directors ordered an audit of the International Association of Rotary Clubs' finances. The auditors recommended that the organisation end its fiscal year on June 30 in order to give the Secretary and the Treasurer some time to prepare a financial statement for the Convention and the Board and to determine the proper number of Club delegates to the Convention.

The executive committee concurred and, at its April, 1913, meeting, designated June 30 as the end of the fiscal year. This also allowed for

changes to the schedule for reporting Club membership and payments.

Even *The Rotarian* changed its volume numbering system to correspond to the fiscal year (beginning with Vol. 5, July, 1914).

Rotary continued to hold its annual Conventions in July or August until 1917.

But delegates to the 1916 Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, approved a resolution to hold future Conventions in June mainly because of the heat in cities where most of them occurred. The next one was held from June 17 to 21 in Atlanta, Georgia.

The term "Rotary year" has been used to signify Rotary's annual administrative period since at least 1913.

An article in *The Rotarian* of July, 1913, noted, "The Rotary year that is rapidly drawing to a close has been signalled by several highly successful joint meetings of Clubs that are so situated as to assemble together easily and conveniently".

And so, since the executive committee's decision of 1913, the end of the Rotary year has remained June 30.

Birthday donations

President Paul announced at the last meeting the receipt of birthday donations from many members.

He said that while Vice-President Nirav Shah had contributed Rs. 11,111, Vinod Juneja had given Rs. 11,000 and Jehangir Dubash Rs. 10,000.

A cheque for Rs. 5,001 had been received from Framroze Mehta, and Hoshang Billimoria and Dr. Ashok Kripalani had given Rs. 5,000 each.

Similarly, Hariprasad Nevatia had sent a cheque for Rs. 2,100, Paul added.

Welcoming the R.I. President



'The Free Press Journal,' one of the oldest newspapers of Bombay, devoted a full page to an interview with R.I. Kalyan Banerjee on July 12. He was interviewed by Jagdish Rattanani, the newspaper's Editor for Economic Affairs. The photograph alongside the interview (reproduced above) was taken at the first meeting of the Rotary Club of Bombay, held at the Taj Mahal Hotel, on July 5. It captures Kalyan and Rotary First Lady Binota as they are entering the Crystal Room and being welcomed by Devina Shah. President Paul George is between her and Binota

At the last meeting

(Held on July 19, 2011)

PRESIDENT Paul George called the meeting to order and welcomed the guest speaker, the Visiting Rotarians, Rotaryans, guests and others.

BIRTHDAYS

Members and spouses celebrating their birthday during the week were felicitated.

ATTENDANCE

Members	161
Visiting Rotarians	1
Rotaryans	9
Guests	7
Total	177
Svc. box collection	Rs. 5,100

For the Cancer Endowment Fund

A contribution of Rs. 5,000 has been received from Mr. Abhishek Soni for the Aloo Dalal Cancer Endowment Fund.

President Paul George stated at the last meeting that the donation was received through the good offices of Farokh Balsara.



Thank you, my dear; the 'dhanshak' was simply wonderful. Mr. Suhel Seth, the guest speaker at the last meeting, with Renu Basu



No, it's just an optical illusion. Shivkumar Israni is not holding a candle as he chats with Natoobhai Brahmhatt at the last meeting

'Fight the Filth!' Hinduja Rotaractors join the anti-litter campaign

What a way to start the new Rotary year. Members of the Rotaract Club of Hinduja College spent a part of Tuesday, July 5, participating in the municipal corporation's campaign along with a daily newspaper *Mumbai Mirror* to keep the city clean.

The campaign was styled "Fight the Filth!" and was open to all concerned citizens. Sadly, the number of such citizens has registered negligible growth over the years.

But the students of Hinduja College felt differently. They stepped forward to take part in the campaign that needs to be implemented all through the year if the city of Bombay is to remain inhabitable for its citizens.

According to Aliasgar Sabuwala, Vice-President of the Rotaract Club of Hinduja College, an email was sent to all members. Soon, a team of 18 gathered in the college premises; all of them were geared up to "Fight the Filth".

The Rotaractors formed three groups of six each and were assigned



Cleaning up the neighbourhood. Members of the Rotaract Club of Hinduja College spent a part of Tuesday, July 5, participating in the municipal corporation's campaign, 'Fight the Filth!', along with a daily newspaper Mumbai Mirror to keep the city clean

specific areas where they would join the campaign to clean the streets.

And so they got down to work.

The area allotted to the Rotaractors was the lane near the famous diamond market leading to Opera House which has the maximum number of food stalls and handcarts vending snacks and foodstuffs. This is also the area where huge amounts of waste is strewn on the road and not disposed of properly.

The students made an effort to make the owners of small *paan-bidi* shops see sense and insist on their customers throwing wrappers and other throw-aways into dustbins.

It was the very area allotted to the Rotaractors of Hinduja College for the "Fight the Filth" campaign, viz., the lanes near the famous diamond market leading to Opera House and which have the maximum number of food stalls and

handcarts vending snacks and foodstuffs, that was the site eight days later of one of the three bomb blasts that shook the city of Bombay on Wednesday, July 13, and claimed about a score of lives.

In the course of their drive, the students encountered the perennial sceptics who thought that their entire exercise was a waste of time and laughed at them. Some even threw wrappers in defiance.

But overall there were more smiles than sneers as the campaign proceeded apace. A few passers-by appreciated their campaign and wished them well.

In turn, the Rotaractors felt that if a clean environment could lead to smiling faces, then their efforts had not gone waste. And that if every citizen realised the importance of throwing garbage into garbage bins, there would be no need for clean-up campaigns.

Creative writing workshop for underprivileged children

An innovative programme called "Aashayein" for underprivileged children was conducted at the Sharda Sadan on July 9 by members of the Rotaract Club of H.R. College.

Under the programme, the children were taught the basics of creative writing and were later given an opportunity to match their skills against the others in the same workshop.

There were a total of six topics that were covered by the workshop; these were, dialogue-writing; letter-writing; comprehension; crosswords; grammar; and dictation and picture composition.

Each Rotaractor was assigned one of these topics and asked to interact with the students and to teach them in his/her own innovative way.

The Rotaractors had the freedom to teach the children and also to give them the opportunity to exercise their creative freedom; while some cited characters from movies to illustrate

their lessons, others used common people from the streets to get their point across. The basic idea was to make them imbibe the subject being discussed in their own way.

Once a subject was explained to them, the children had to take a test on that particular topic. The same policy was adopted for all six topics. To sustain the children's interest, the tests

were interspersed with a few memory games and friendly contests between them.

Although the children had a great deal of fun, they left the workshop with some knowledge beyond their ken, knowledge that would help them in dealing with the big, bad world with a trifle more confidence and self-assurance.



Teaching them the basics. Members of the Rotaract Club of H.R. College engage with the children of Sharda Sadan in the course of their innovative programme, 'Aashayein'

And this is the for 2011-2012: 'I Embrace I

R.I. President Kalyan Banerjee wants Rotarians to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity* during the current Rotary year.

While unveiling the R.I. Theme for 2011-12 during the 2011 International Assembly, a training event for incoming District Governors, in San Diego, California, USA, in January, he urged Rotarians to harness their inner resolve and strength to achieve success in Rotary.

"In order to achieve anything in this world, a person has to use all the resources he/she can draw on. And the only place to start is with ourselves and within ourselves... Once Rotarians find their inner strength, they can accomplish great things in their communities and around the world.

"Discover yourself, develop the strengths within you and then unhesitatingly, unflinchingly, go forth and encircle the world, to embrace humanity," he said.

Kalyan emphasised the family as a starting point in serving others. "The communities we live in are not built of individual people but of families – families living in homes together, sharing their lives and their resources and their common destinies. Good families lead to good neighbourhoods and good neighbourhoods build good communities... Rotarians can focus on projects that support families, such as those that provide safe housing or improve maternal and child health."

Continuity in Rotary's work, including polio eradication, was also important, Kalyan said. "There are so many things we are indeed good at: working for clean, safe water; spreading literacy; working in so many ways with the New Generations, our youth, in our newest Avenue of Service and assisting them to become the leaders of tomorrow."

Citing Mahatma Gandhi's call to "be the change you wish to see in the world", he asked Rotarians to focus on change, too.

"If we wish for peace, we start by living in peace ourselves, in our homes and in our communities... If we wish environmental degradation to stop, if we wish to reduce child mortality or to prevent hunger, we

The R.I. Theme Reach Within to Humanity'



must be the instrument of that change – and recognise that it must start *within* us, with each of us.”

The Theme that he unveiled inspired the roomful of Rotary leaders, including Jogesh Gambhir, Governor-Elect of District 3250 in India.

He said: “It is a touching Theme, but also very purposeful and meaningful. I’m sure we can inspire the Clubs into action to solve the problems in the community. That’s the ultimate goal of Rotary.”

Said Jane Millar, Governor-Elect of District 6290 (parts of Ontario, Canada, and Michigan, USA): “There are no words for me to describe how remarkable it was. To me, he was right on and weaved everything together beautifully... I am so thrilled to be a District Governor when this man is President... I loved the focus on family, continuity and change. Family is the centre of everything and not just our immediate family. It’s also about the family of Rotary and the world as one big family.”

When Husain donated autographed prints to the Rotary Club of Bombay

By BURJOR POONAWALA

Many years ago, the legendary painter M.F. Husain gave us permission to bring out special reproductions of one of his paintings for the Rotary Club of Bombay. We brought out only 12 copies – which we actually printed on canvas to give the feel of an original.

Those prints were autographed by Husain and sold to Rotarians for about Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 13,000 each, with the proceeds being donated for Rotary charities.

That was in the late 1980s. But our association with Husain had started much earlier. In fact, my father and I were associated with him since the late 1950s. Over the years, our company, Commercial Art Engravers (which was established in 1934), has worked with him as a team to reproduce some of his most outstanding works.

For example, in 1988 we reproduced a full volume of about one hundred of his paintings. The coffee table book was called simply *Husain* and was printed at the Tata Press. The book is now out of print, but luckily I saved one copy of this collectors’ item for myself.

Another volume on which we worked with him was a limited-edition collection of portfolios entitled *Theorama*. This consisted of ten paintings each based on all the religions of India. This, too, is certain to have become a collectors’ item.

Incidentally, *Theorama* emerged from Husain’s firm belief in religion. He was not a terribly religious person himself but he held all religions in high esteem and respected them in

equal measure. It was this belief that led him to decide upon this particular volume.

Everybody knows that Husain started life as a hoarding painter about six to seven decades ago. He used to paint colourful posters for the Indian films that used to be made in those times in black and white (b/w) only.

Husain was such a genius that he improvised the original b/w figures in colour for the hoardings. It often took him weeks to complete several copies of these posters to be displayed at sites all over the city.

But few people know that today there are machines that print huge, colourful hoardings in minutes if not hours.

When we installed a machine in early 2003 capable of printing outdoor hoardings of size 16 feet x 12 feet in under two hours, we invited Husain to see how it worked.

He was simply amazed, to put it mildly. It brought back memories of his own struggle with paints, palettes and brushes, but he marvelled at the new technology even as he reminisced over “the good old days”.

What did he think about the quality of the print reproduction of his works which were always embellished with real colours?

Whenever we reproduced his paintings, he never insisted that the reproductions should be perfect or that they should be facsimiles of his originals. He was aware of the limitations of graphic reproduction in printing a multitude of diverse colours in one go.

Therefore, he especially wrote the text for the dust jacket of a coffee-



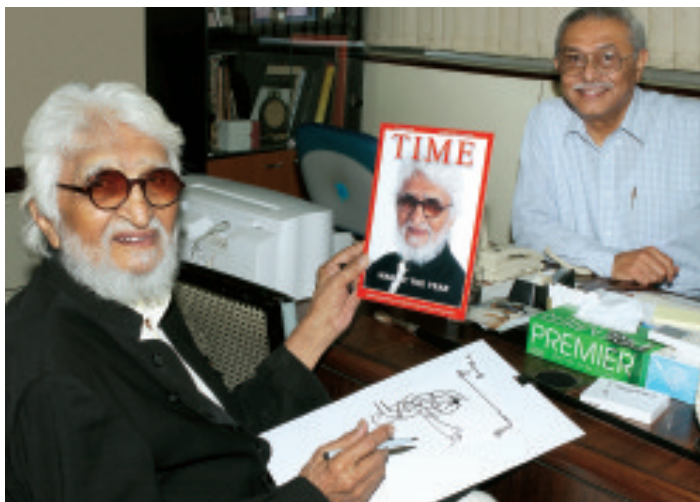
Thank you, ‘M.F.’ This painting was presented by Husain to Arnavaaz and Burjor Poonawala on their 25th wedding anniversary

table book right off the cuff, in his own handwriting, without any drafts or changes, whilst sitting in my office. This is what he wrote for one particular dust jacket:

“Here the artist and the master printer work together. The technology and nuances of print workshops have their own compulsion and creed. Reproduction is not a true replica of the original. It can never be! The printed image can only become an ‘interpretation’ of the artist’s work.”

He wrote this caption while squatting on the floor in my office, without any reservations whatsoever.

Husain loved his country with all his heart. It is truly a national shame that political parties with vested interests hounded him out of the country at the near end of his life, and exiled him, never to return till he passed away.



The master at the doorstep. M.F. Husain makes himself comfortable in the office of Burjor Poonawala. Burjor and his father were associated with the master since the late 1950s. (Right) A more recent photograph. Husain visited the Poonawalas’ establishment in 2003 when a hoarding printing machine that churned out huge, colourful hoardings within hours was installed

Replace education with knowledge and offer skills to engage the youth, pleads Suhel Seth

(Continued from Page 2)

The “opportunity rights” of the underprivileged had been usurped by the elite either by virtue of birth, or of caste or a host of other factors. It was essential to give those opportunities back (and in a meaningful manner) to the less privileged. This would not be a favour being bestowed on them.

Mr. Seth criticised as “bunkum” the announcement by a top IT leader about “giving Rs. 8,000 crores”. He said it merely entailed the transfer of shares of that value on the given day. The voting rights vested with the so-called philanthropist and there was no transfer of cash which could be disbursed among the poor.

This was a politically incorrect thing to say, but he could not help making the point.

Returning to his theme about industry being disconnected with the idea of India, Mr. Seth recalled the time when industry and groups built theatres and auditoria, they sponsored plays and they sponsored the arts.

Today, there were more industrialists in Delhi willing to sponsor Baba Ramdev’s “act” of getting in and out of a *salwar-kameez* than a real cultural issue. This was an unhappy development because all over the world it was individual and corporate philanthropy that preserved cultural legacies.

Whether the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York, the British Museum or the Royal Academy of Arts, it was civil society and the rich and progressive element within it, viz., industry that actually created sustainable pathways for culture.

This was not happening in India, said Mr. Seth. Not merely that, industry had also discovered excuses for shying away from such sponsorship. For instance, it excused itself from financing the National Gallery of Modern Art by saying that the man at the helm was a crook. That was a possibility, but the use of this alibi for not giving was worrisome.

Clearly, industry had found excuses for not only its ineptitude, but also for its unwillingness to engage with the idea of India. Engaging with the idea of India, with her plurality, her multilateralism and her enormous kaleidoscope of castes, creeds and cultures was something that had to drive the ambition of every in-

dustrialist. This did not fall in the space of philanthropy but in the sphere of engagement with the idea of India.

“If we don’t preserve the idea of India, who will? Indian industry has done remarkably well. I am delighted at the progress we have made, at the fact that Ford couldn’t turn around Jaguar-Land Rover for years but the Tatas did.

“But the question we need to ask is, are we creating respectable icons? Would you respect Indian industry’s icons for some of the strides they have made? I am delighted with the overseas forays that the Tatas make, that Reliance makes, that Ranbaxy makes; this is something we need to be proud of. We need to be proud of the fact that today brand India stands for something to be counted in the comity of nations and industry.

“At the same time, we can’t escape from the clutches of hypocrisy that we have got ourselves mired in because we are unwilling to take on the establishment. The establishment is always, perennially and across geographies, a bully; that’s why it’s called the establishment, which is a politer word for mafia. And the only way to take on a mafia is through strength of character, through strength of values and through strength of belief.”

Sadly, said Mr. Seth, when it came to strength of belief, Indian industry was willing to be compromised. This was seen in the bizarre manner in which criminals who were industrialists were embraced when they came

out of jail. This was happening all the time in Delhi.

In Delhi there were as many people who were criminals in Parliament as there were in Tihar jail. Moreover, the citizens were paying for both, for those in Parliament and for those in Tihar; this was a uniquely tragic feature of India’s democracy.

Did Mr. Seth have any suggestions that would help industry get out of the morass it was in and emerge with its self-respect intact? Yes, he said.

First of all, industry had to stand up not as an industry body but as a body of like-minded, progressive citizens who were engaged with India. They had to forget that they were in the pharmaceutical business, in the cement business or in any other business and adopt the concept of nationalism.

The concept of nationalism existed in the armed forces, in the paramilitary forces and also amongst the youth. It had to creep back into industrialists and those who headed Indian industry.

Secondly, the chambers of commerce had to stand up to question and to challenge government’s policy-making ability and its inability to implement the policies it had already created. With the existing laws (and despite the likes of Anna Hazare), it was possible to have a perfectly robust, legitimate form of handling corruption.

Unfortunately, existing laws appeared to have failed because government had done nothing about implementing them. And then, the “Great Indian Rope Trick”! When the government saw that it could not sort

out problems, it created another law hoping that all the problems would be addressed by the new law – ignoring the fact that “the same jokers are going to be implementing that law as well”.

“The people who represent Indian industry at the highest echelons must be willing to take on government and policy makers,” Mr. Seth added.

It was at this stage that he talked about the need for industry to engage with the youth as consumers and as citizens of India and not through the newly-developed social marketing tools. (He also made the other points that appear at the beginning of this report.)

When the floor was thrown open for questions, the guest speaker offered his trade-mark responses to the queries posed to him.

Mudit Jain set the ball rolling by asking what a citizen could do when the system harassed him if he dared to stick his neck out. He referred to the *Tehelka* case in which the owner (one Mr. Shankar Sharma) was hounded by the government.

Mr. Seth said he did not know much about the travails of Mr. Sharma, but he distinctly recalled that “*Tehelka* was founded in my drawing room”. Things had started to go awry when the then BJP government alleged that the sole purpose of *Tehelka* was to bring down the government on the back of financial misrepresentation or manipulation of the stock market. And he (Mr. Seth) was the only citizen who had filed a counter-affidavit against the government.

That was many years ago... “I am still alive and I have gained about six kg. since then! It’s a myth that you could be shot dead for what you say”.

Besides, the people in charge were so incompetent that they would be unable to get rid of those who had the courage to stick their necks out.

“Don’t worry about the government, just start speaking your mind. Forget this fear... will the government come and get me? They don’t have the time to get their own people. First, let Digvijay Singh kill Chidambaram, and then let Chidambaram kill Pranab Mukherjee, after that they’ll think of you and me; they’re so busy killing each other, our turn will never come!”

(Continued on Page 7)

Page 6



Indian industry has done remarkably well. I am delighted at the progress we have made, at the fact that Ford couldn’t turn around Jaguar-Land Rover for years but the Tatas did, says Mr. Suhel Seth

There is no answer to the question, why does everybody get the government that some people deserve

(Continued from Page 6)

Suresh Jagtiani wondered whether Mr. Seth would set up a forum or an action group that would help take forward the idea of combating the ills plaguing India. He had inspired a lot of people with his suggestions.

Mr. Seth said he did not believe in forums. Besides, the legendary ad man David Ogilvy had stated that there were no statues of committees in parks. It was individuals who mattered and who made a difference.

There were individuals like Mr. Gerson da Cunha who had led and inspired movements. But the Indian mindset was such that groups always disintegrated unless there was some economic motivation to keep them together; therefore, he didn't think that an action group would work.

However, discussing crucial matters openly would make a big difference. In fact, this was becoming a necessity, given the fear about phones being tapped and freedom of speech being hampered.

Mr. Seth said he had been addressing management students at IIMs and elsewhere. Till four or five years ago, the students only talked about placements, about industry and so on.

"But today, they are concerned about corruption. They are concerned about causes. They are concerned about where the country is headed. They are concerned about

serious issues... What we have to do is to encourage dissemination from within these walls, where you take up one or two issues.

"Secondly, and this is a suggestion to Rotary, form small value groups and encourage them to become outreach groups... I've just got Tata Steel to create a website, www.valueabled.com, which has got about 35,000 followers on Facebook in ten days. Tata Steel has nothing to do with it except to fund it. It is now being administered individually by people who visit the site.

"And what are they discussing? They are putting up speeches by Jefferson and Lincoln, by Kennedy and Nehru, by Mandela. It's a whole new movement. So there is hope, it needs to be harnessed. That's something we should all attempt to work at."

Next, it was the turn of Burjor Poonawala to have a tete-a-tete with Mr. Seth. He started by complimenting him for his sensible articulation on news television programmes and even went to the extent of saying that if he didn't spot him (Mr. Seth) on a debating panel, he preferred watching a movie.

But he confessed that he had learnt through his business that it was always better to bend with the wind. If he resisted it, then he stood the risk of losing his business, his income and everything else.

"That is the reason why most business people are scared of dealing with government agencies, because every time they want to do something new, they are given ten reasons why they can't do it, but not one reason why they should be able to do it."

Agreeing with him, Mr. Seth said the best way out was to arm industry bodies like CII and FICCI with value councils. Since individuals who wanted to do what they believed was right were likely to be prevented from doing so by the system, it would help if the chambers could harness a system that would be better armed to fight the evil system.

Of course, associations were being formed, but these were of, say, bullion dealers, automobile parts manufacturers and so on. But there was no one forming associations on the basis of principles and values.

"We are so used to being run by a bunch of wimps, that we have accepted that as the lowest common denominator, or as the measure of good standard; we are not willing to question the status quo. And then we are horrified to see that half of Bombay's elite don't turn out and vote. The same people who had the so-called intellect and articulation, did not come out and vote (after 26/11).

"So you do need to be part of a bigger group because you will not be able to do it on your own."

Mr. Seth recalled that Mr. Arun Jaitley (at present the BJP leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha) had told him during the *Tehelka* imbroglio that it was not easy to fight the government of India. He was right.

Recently, Mr. Seth claimed, he had predicted on a news TV show late at night on Saturday, June 4, that Baba Ramdev would be out of business in a month's time. And sure enough, there were now 275 cases against the man who would have to expend most of his yoga going from one court to another.

"They have almost decimated him. You can't take on the government unless you are squeaky clean; and we know that half our guys also want the fiddles."

Burjor came back with another query. He said he was a regular voter but his dilemma was that if he voted out one party, he would have to choose another one which was as corrupt as the first.

He also recalled the well-known saying that "people get a government they deserve".

Mr. Seth had no words of consolation for him. All he could come up with was a suggestion to wear a blindfold and choose one of the parties, with a prayer on his lips, "God help India!"

Finally, Hon. Joint Secretary Sitaram Shah stated that while the rest of the world was rationalising and simplifying laws, India was being burdened with a surfeit of new laws and new rules and regulations. Would the future generations be able to comprehend all these laws?

Agreeing with his contention, Mr. Seth said it was on account of the plethora of laws that the best-placed persons in society today were lawyers. Unravelling the labyrinth of new laws could be extremely exhausting, he added.

President Paul George rose at this stage to thank Mr. Seth and to point out that he had been a Rotary International Scholar and that he was individually responsible for setting up Interact and Rotaract Clubs in Calcutta.

He wondered whether Mr. Seth could suggest a brand makeover for Rotary.

"Yes," said Mr. Seth, "you must have more women as Rotary Presidents in India. And don't just have them as tokens. We don't want that in Rotary International."

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Two and two equals four. While Jairaj Purandare and PP Arun Sanghi have a conversation in the background, Vijay Meghani and Suresh Mehta (in the foreground) discuss their own issues

Happy Birthday



Arif Lokhandwalla
July 31

Spouses/Rotaryanns

- Biba Arora
July 26
- Nilima Dalal
July 29
- Hanwantbir Sahney
August 1

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One Profits Most Who Serves Best

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