

Gandhi in 21st Century

Bharat Jhunjunwala writes:

Dr Manmohan Singh claims the heritage of Gandhiji. He traveled in the rail compartment from which Gandhiji was thrown out in South Africa with much fanfare. But is he following the policies suggested by Gandhi? Gandhi was a strict proponent of economic sovereignty of the country. His thinking can be best understood by comparing with that of Dadabhai Naoroji and Jamshedji Tata.

Naoroji advocated the policy of growing within the unjust economic order imposed by the British. In 1901 he wrote in *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*: "There was not the slightest necessity that India should suffer in order that England might gain. If only the right policy were adopted India could be made prosperous, and at the same time England would reap ten times the benefit that she now had from that connexion... If (the Indian people) were in a position to buy 1 pound worth of British products per head per annum it would equal the amount of British exports to the whole world at the present time. Let India be placed in such a position and they would be utterly unable to supply all her wants." Naoroji's view was that British rule over India could be mutually beneficial if only the British increased the purchasing power of the Indian people. Gandhi did not accept Naoroji's suggestion. He said that Indian rule was more important than increase in purchasing power. Gandhi did not compromise with the British because India was weak. He forged new weapons like Satyagraha to fight the tyranny of British capital.

Not Man Mohan Singh. In an interview to *Commandingheights.com* soon after taking over as Prime Minister, he admitted that international economic game was that of power. But he went on to say that the powerful western countries set the rules of that game. He felt that India did not have the capability of changing those rules. Instead she should try to benefit from the available world economic system as the East Asian countries had done. Dr Singh wants to avoid confrontation with the injustice of the world economic system and wants to secure whatever benefits are possible within the unjust world order. Thus he does not raise issues such as the removal of patents regime from the WTO. His government is willingly giving away India's wealth to the United States in the unnecessary accumulation of forex reserves. The United States, strengthened with Indian money, opposes India's claim to a permanent seat of the Security Council and also India's candidate for the post of Secretary General. He follows Naoroji rather than Gandhi.

At nearly the same time Jamshedji Tata was singing songs in the praise of the British rulers of India. According to his biography published by the Publications Division, speaking to the Parsee community he said: "By their peculiar position (the Parsees) have benefited more than any other class by British rule, and I am sure their gratitude to that rule is, as it ought to be, in due proportion to the advantage derived from it." The gratitude to the British

rulers was to be determined by benefits received by the Parsee community. There was no sense of right and wrong, justice and injustice involved here. Tata did not mind the exploitation of India by her British masters as long as the Parsees benefited from the British rule. ❄❄❄