

“Fault Lines of Indian Democracy”

Extracts from the

20th T. A. PAI MEMORIAL LECTURE

delivered by

Dr. Abid Hussain

*(former Member of Planning Commission, Government of India and
former Indian Ambassador to the U.S.A.)*

on the occasion of the

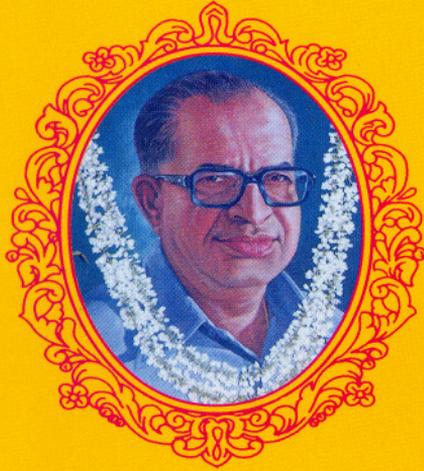
Founder’s Day Celebrations

on 17th January, 2003 at Manipal



T. A. PAI MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Manipal – 576 119, Karnataka



T. A. PAI – A Life Sketch

(17-1-1922 to 29-5-1981)

“Eminent Banker, Able Administrator, Empathic Philanthropist, and Great Visionary”

The Late Shri Tonse Ananth Pai (T.A. Pai) was born on the 17th of January 1922, the eldest of four sons of the Late Shri Tonse Upendra Pai. After his early childhood spent in Udupi district, he went to Bombay (now, Mumbai) to pursue his education. He graduated in Commerce from Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in 1943.

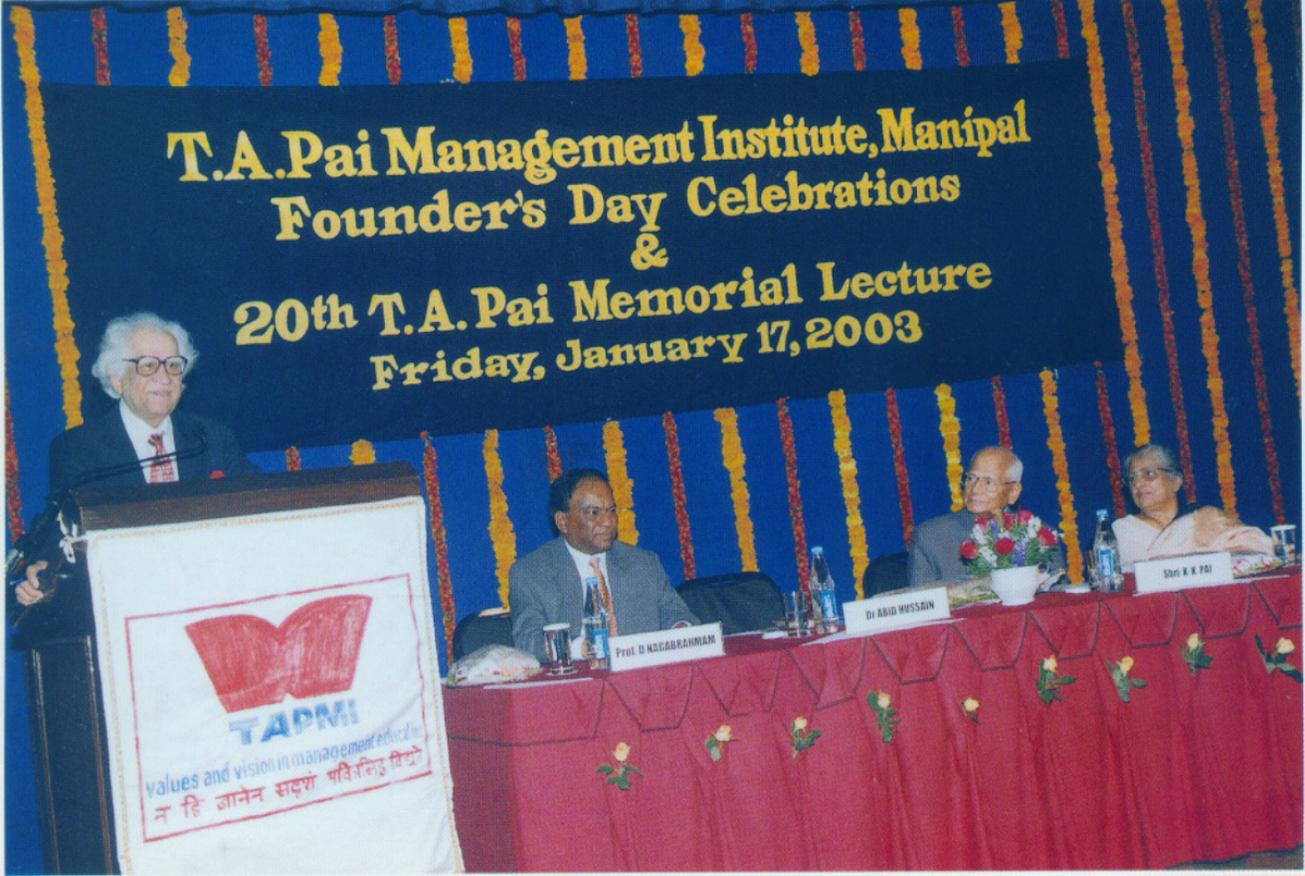
Shri T.A. Pai joined the Syndicate Bank in 1943 as Deputy Manager. After holding several positions in the bank and being the General Manager from 1944 to 1961, he rose to become the Managing director of the bank from 1962 to 1964. His stewardship of the bank is credited with a number of achievements – fastest growth, pioneering schemes, innovation in mobilisation of small savings, agricultural financing and focus on the common man.

He was appointed the Chairman of Food Corporation of India in 1965. After a little over one year, he rejoined the Syndicate Bank in 1966 and was appointed its Chairman in 1967. The Government of India appointed him Chairman of Life Insurance Corporation in 1970. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1972 and appointed the Union Minister for Railways. In 1973, he was given the responsibility for the newly created Ministry of Heavy Industries, and subsequently, additional charge of the Ministry of Steel and Mines. Shri Pai took over the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry and Civil Supplies in 1974, and thus became responsible for the industrial development of India.

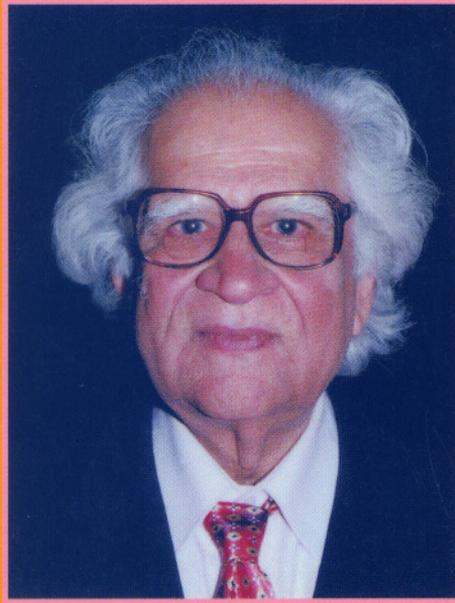
Awards and recognition came his way in many forms. He was conferred the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in 1972. He was awarded the degree of D. Litt. by the Karnataka University in 1973. The Andhra University decorated him with the degree of D. Litt. In 1975.

He passed away on the 29th of May 1981.

**T.A.Pai Management Institute, Manipal
Founder's Day Celebrations
&
20th T.A. Pai Memorial Lecture
Friday, January 17, 2003**



Dr. Abid Hussain delivering the 20th T. A. Pai Memorial Lecture. Also seen in the picture are (L to R) Prof. D. Nagabrahmam, Director, TAPMI, Shri K.K.Pai and Smt. Vasanthi Pai.



About the Speaker...

A young man of 75 years, Dr. Abid Hussain has been active in the Indian public life for over five decades. Dr. Hussain has dedicated his life's work to the development of India's economic and social growth. A member of the Indian Administrative Service for over 35 years, Dr. Hussain has held various positions of responsibility in India and abroad during his career. Among the positions held by him have been:

- *Secretary to the Government of India.*
- *Member, Planning Commission.*
- *India's Ambassador to the United States of America*
- *Chairman and Professor Emeritus at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT).*
- *Member of the Committee constituted by the Government of India for Review of Indian Constitution.*
- *Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.*

Dr. Hussain has had the unique distinction of working out the Trade Agreements for India with the USA, USSR, China and other countries.

In recognition of his services to the nation, Dr. Hussain was conferred the PADMA BHUSHAN for meritorious services in 1988.

FAULTLINES OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

I deem it an honour to be invited to deliver T.A Pai Memorial Lecture. Mr. Pai was a man of great eminence and a person of many splendored qualities. His role as a banker, financier, policy maker, creator of educational and cultural institutions enriched the country. His contribution will be long remembered by coming generations. It was due entirely to his efforts that this city of Manipal has become a great centre of learning. If Mr. Pai were alive today, he would have been gratified with the results of the seeds of knowledge that he had sown. I am grateful that Mrs. Pai and Mr. Pai's other relations are present here today. I speak in their presence today to pay my humble homage to a man whom we all admired and like of him is not easy to find today. Needless to say, that I owe my presence in Manipal today to Prof. Balasubramanian who would not take a 'no' from any body to an invitation sent by him.

This evening, I have selected to speak on the subject of democracy which, of late, has assumed a significant global acceptance. The Term "End of history" has gained currency and has become a part of political vocabulary. "End of history" does not mean demise of history but refers to end of authoritarian phase of Government and emergence of democracy as the most acceptable form of Government. Democracy is not a new concept but its relevance has acquired a new significance after the end of the cold war. This is not to suggest that with the end of the cold war, an era has ushered in where all authoritarian forms of governance and polity have come to an end nor does it mean that democracies everywhere have become functioning democracies in the real sense of the word. But certainly, one can assert that these are the times when democracy and democratic forms of Government have gained general political acceptance. In no part of the world do we find voices raised against democracy nor protests made against the idea to be ruled democratically. Even Military Generals and Marshal Law Administrators, who have usurped power from the civilian hands, spare no occasion to pronounce their commitment to democracy. Democracy as an idea has now become irresistible and we see its irresistibility in our contemporary times.

As far as we Indians are concerned, on gaining Independence from the British *Raj*, we made a deliberate choice in favour of establishing a secular democratic polity. Several alternatives to democracy were available to our leaders to choose from. As a reaction to the formation of Pakistan, they could have gone for a theocratic and a non-democratic Hindu State but they did not for, in their view, it was totally medieval and undemocratic to mix religion and State. There was also a possibility that Britishers could have been asked to leave India handing over power to be exercised by the representatives of the largest political party - 'Indian National Congress' - to run the State as they

were in the forefront of the Freedom Movement. There were many instances where on the collapse of the ruling regime, the right of governance was passed on to a political party which had played a significant role in bringing about the fall of the ruling regime. A Government by a Council of selected elders could also have been a possibility or a military junta could have been entrusted to take over the Government as the situation after partition in India was extremely difficult to be handled by any normal civilian Government. I do not wish to go into all these except to say that while India, on gaining Independence, had many alternatives before it, it deliberately chose democracy as the form of Government. Thereby India exercised a choice which was in tune with the rising political trend of the time.

While one would hail the choice which India's Constitution-makers made in favour of democracy, one should remain aware of the fact that there were many doubts expressed by knowledgeable people regarding India's capabilities to run a democratic State. There were a number of people who doubted India's credentials for democracy in this regard. They felt that India had no traditions or culture of democracy to fall back upon. Even Dr. Ambedkar had said that democracy in India was at best a top dressing on the soil, which was essentially non-democratic. India, in their assessment, was a classical case of a society run without any norms of democracy. From the times of *Rig-Veda*, it was held that India had not known any form of democracy however rudimentary it may be. *Samitis* and *Sabhas*, which were there in ancient India, never discussed matters of governance but confined their interests to matters of social interest. The concept of democratic polity as such was just not there and ancient India did not practise democracy of equals as such nor did the Moghuls and others who came much later laid any basis of any democratic form of Government. The rulers, kings and monarchs ruled on the basis of a divine right and not on the basis of democratic laws as such. The British who had democracy back home were also convinced that India could not be entrusted with a fullfledged representative Government. India, in their view, was not in a position to run a democratic Government. Winston Churchill and his likes had many strong comments to make regarding India's capacity to set up and run a democratic form of Government. Thus, there were voices which were skeptical of India surviving as a democratic polity. There were some others who thought that India cannot have democracy (i) because of its size, (ii) because of the heterogeneity of its people, and (iii) because of its non-democratic traditions and culture. Stuart Mill had written years ago that he cannot imagine a democratic form of Government to function in a country of continental size. Salig Harrison, a good friend of India and a serious student of politics, in his book '*The Dangerous Decades Ahead*' had predicted that with its many diversities, if India were to take to democracy, it would run the risk of getting splintered into many separate States and there will be no India left. There were some,

including Rajendra Babu, who had told Jawaharlal Nehru that in a country where we have so many millions of illiterates, how can one expect people to form a Government on the basis of adult franchise and to run it. But it was Jawaharlal's insistence that prevailed. He could foresee people's power irrespective of their educational backwardness and past practices. He believed that democracy would itself transform the culture of its people and keep India together under one flag.

The point to be noted is that democracy in India was indeed a difficult choice which its political leaders made. Democracy was not given to India as a gift or a passing present by the British while leaving the country. Democracy, though not an extension of India's historical inheritance, had certainly been an offshoot of India's Independence movement. The Congress-led freedom movement was a mass movement which proved helpful in creating a sort of democratic consciousness in Indian people. Throughout the struggle of Independence, Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and others always adhered to a course which required accountability to the people and most of the decisions they took were invariably got endorsed by the people in open meetings and taken with their consent. The Congress organisation itself, by and large, worked on democratic principles with elections held to choose leaders to hold high positions in the party. One could perhaps say that Gandhi, Nehru and their likes who were educated abroad brought the idea of democracy to India which was not genuinely Indian. Be that as it may, the fact of the matter is that India under their leadership accepted that idea. The beauty of the whole thing is that even when these leaders remained committed to democracy, they did not superimpose it on the people of India. Three years of intense debate in a Constituent Assembly preceded India's acceptance of a democratic Constitution. The Indian people may not have been earlier exposed to democracy but they did accept the idea of democracy as such and to this day have remained committed to it.

Democracy is indeed a difficult and complex form of Government. It is more as a process than a one-shot occurrence. It is also true that India, with long feudal culture and traditions, with people divided on religion and caste lines, with duties, work and privileges fixed on the basis of birth, etc., lacks those ingredients of equality which are fundamental to the formation of a democratic polity. In such a context, it was indeed a very daring challenge which India accepted to set up a democratic form of Government. What indeed came as a surprise to many of India's critics who had reservation about India's ability to function as a democratic State is to find an undiminishing rising faith in the Indian people to uphold the legitimacy of democratic processes. Except for a very few on the fringe, none in India, at any time (of discontent or otherwise), advocated any alternative to democratic institutions as visualized in the Constitution. On the contrary, conditions were devised to ensure their working. Institutions relating to Legislature, Executive and Judiciary were set

up and made to function on lines provided for in the Constitution. Piece by piece new types of institutions were also devised (like Planning Commission) to make India a modern industrial State. This was not an easy task to be undertaken in one go. More difficult it became when the objectives of economic and social development were decided to be achieved through democratic means. For a poor country to come out of poverty, illiteracy and backwardness, to build the sinews of agriculture and industry, to develop a scientific temper and a modern mindset are not tasks which are easily accomplishable in a generation or two. But this is a vision which India kept in view and started working to achieve them through democratic governance.

Achievements made by India in the last 50 years are a great tribute and testimony to India's success with democracy. Thirteen elections to Parliament and about 300 elections to State Legislatures were held. Holding of elections on the basis of adult franchise in a large country like India –with teeming millions casting their votes – was not easy. It was like attempting a miracle. India came out with great success in this regard. Elections were held on time and were, by and large, peaceful and fair. These were counting of heads and not breaking of heads as it proved to be elsewhere. Successive Governments were installed through this process and no military coups were attempted or thought of. Even the brief aberration of an emergency had to bow out before people's will to restore normal democratic way of Government formation. In India, you cannot quote any incident like the one which happened in one of our friendly countries where a person having cast his vote against the ruling Presidential candidate later, when wanted to change his choice lest he would face the wrath of the State power, was told by the polling officer that his choice had already been corrected and that he should be more careful next time.

Apart from holding fair and regular elections, the developmental performance of Indian Government within the framework of democracy was largely acclaimed. A country which was not able to produce even 50 million tonnes of foodgrains could stimulate production to reach a figure of 300 million tonnes - not an easy figure to be achieved democratically or otherwise. No doubt, we have still to ensure that people have earned purchasing power to buy food and live well. But if one were just to see the rise in agricultural production, one is amazed at democratic India's performance. People may attribute it to 'Green Revolution' based on use of new technologies but that it became possible for India to do so within a democratic regime earned for India an international acclaim. Famines which were the order of the day vanished though pockets of hunger, and malnutrition continued to haunt India and still remain to be tackled.

Similar have been achievements in the field of industrialization. At the time of Independence, India was an industrial desert. There was half a steel mill

at Jamshedpur, a few textile mills in western India, some industries connected with railways, house construction, road building, etc. There was nothing much to boast about. Today, one can see that with all our faults and limitations of democracy, India has emerged as the tenth big industrial country in the world.

Our achievements in the area of learning and professional education are lauded all over the world. A land of illiterates and unlettered people today claims to be ahead of many developed countries. Large numbers of qualified men and women, coming out of our universities, laboratories and institutions, are in demand all over. There was a time when the best of our engineers and doctors had to go abroad to get their degrees and certificates stamped to be employed as engineers and doctors by the Government. Today, we have our doctors, our engineers, technicians, etc., not only working in large numbers within the country but also going abroad and doing marvellous work there. Today, if these boys and girls are accepted in the most competitive country in the world, that is, in the USA, it is not that they got their jobs as a Christmas gift from their employers or out of a feeling of charity towards them. They found the jobs as they were rated men and women of world class in their profession and have been contributing substantially to the growth and productivity of the countries which have employed them.

Our approach to gender development has also been unique. UK, USA and several other countries took hundreds of years to give political rights to women. They had been scarcely employed by them in higher echelons of power while in India we have had a woman Prime Minister and several women Chief Ministers presiding over the State Governments. This is apart from women holding high positions of eminence in several fields of professional excellence. Again I will not go into these details except to emphasize the fact that if one were to look at India's record of development, one is amazed to see what India has achieved through a democratic process. Democracy implied development with freedom as different from the Chinese model of development with which India is generally compared.

While one is happy with India's achievements, one is not satisfied with what is achieved. With our potential, we should have done better. I do not wish to compare India with those countries which are lagging behind but would like to compare its achievements with those which came out of ashes after the Second World War and are now in the front-line of development. Lord Keynes, when once asked as to how was his wife, said: "Compared to whose wife?" I do not feel satisfied comparing India's achievements with those which are described as 'failed nations'. With all its potentials, India could have done far better. There is no reason why India should be lagging behind countries like Japan or Germany. Surely, a part of this problem is certainly not democracy.

No form of Government can make any significant durable achievements unless it is run efficiently and commands the general support of its people. This is much more so in the case of democracies since democracy is the Government of the people, by the people, for the people. It is the people's role which becomes significant in a democracy where they are not just treated as mere instruments of development but as humans with dreams and aspirations. While Indian democracy, as already described, brought several significant gains to its people, but by not making mid-term corrections and inducing improvements needed to correct the fault-lines of democracy as they became evident over time, it failed to transform Indian society and polity on the lines visualised by its democratic Constitution.

I would now attempt to describe some of the fault lines of our democracy which of late have become obvious and are holding back our progress. It is necessary that we identify them and provide remedies which can improve the working of our democratic institutions.

The very first fault line of Indian democracy begins with our failure to live up to the spirit of the very first lines of our Constitution which describe the People of India as sovereign, entitled to all the freedoms mentioned in article 19 of the Constitution. It was the power and wisdom of these words "We, the people" which had captured the hearts and minds of Indian people. Unfortunately in real life, the position and status of the people, that is the common man is at great variance from the flourish of these words. "We, the people" sounds a myth or a figment of imagination. The common man's story continues to be a long tale of woes which democracy had promised to eradicate. He feels himself a helpless cog in the wheel of democracy, his democratic presence remains of no consequence. Nirad Babu (Chaudhary) wrote in one of his articles that India has given what one would call subjecthood to its people but not conferred citizenship on them. The man in the street hardly asserts his rights and remains the most dispensable part of the sovereignty of the State except at the time of elections. The dependence syndrome is so overwhelming that it does not make him feel that he is a free citizen of a free democratic State who could exercise his rights irrespective of his status or position in the society. Laws are there but they do not help him unless someone takes up his cause. Therefore, the thing which we have got to pursue is to raise the esteem of the common man in his eyes, making him feel a fullfledged citizen with power to get his rights accepted, thereby putting an end to the arbitrary ways in which he is treated by the State functionaries. It is essential for the success of democracy that the common man is made to feel that he is just not a subject of the State but a citizen with his rights, that the State is for him and not he for the State.

It is also imperative that every Indian should feel that irrespective of the group, the community and caste to which he belongs, he is an independent individual

in his own right who could exercise his individual rights without being bound to group's dictates. The State by not providing an environment conducive for individual to assert his strong independent position, he gets deformed to seek his rights as a citizen. It should be remembered that democracy becomes ineffective when individual is not free and is dependent on the will and whims of others - group or community. This is a very big challenge which Indian democracy is facing and must handle effectively. An Indian has always been brought up as a subordinate to the group to which he belongs, brought up as a part of a family, a part of a caste, a part of religion but not as an individual who could assert his will above the group. This syndrome has been further regimented by the conditions which our polity has imposed to improve the status and position of the groups. The British had recognised the rights of groups, and had left the individuals to be subordinate to the will and practices of the group or community to which he belonged. Though the rights of the individual are enshrined in our Constitution, yet they have remained ineffective. One need not deny the security which a man feels within his family, within his community and group, but the syndrome of dependency which it encourages takes away from him the right to assert his position vis-à-vis the caste and religious groups. Constrained by the will of the group, the individual withdraws from seeking his destiny on his own terms. This is a fatal shortcoming which adversely affects the growth of democratic temperament and conventions in the society. The Indian leaders have failed to foresee its adverse impact on the growth of democratic consciousness. Justice Verma in a certain context had put it well that every individual in India must feel that this is his country where he has got his rights which he could exercise irrespective of what the group feels. Such a spirit of individual assertion once made possible could correct the present fault line of dependency so essential for making an individual a citizen functioning as an effective piece on the chessboard of democratic polity.

Yet one more fault line has been the State's failure to encourage growth of civil institutions in India. While emphasis on statutory bodies is legitimate and correct but one would have liked emergence of intermediary citizen bodies to checkmate the highhandedness or callousness of administration. Countervailing forces to statutory bodies could go to strengthen the functioning of democracy and hence the value of civil institutions and also civil organisations to intervene between the citizen and the State. Formation of civil society has so far remained weak in India and to that extent enfeebled Indian democracy in its working. Trade unions led to acceptance of fair wages for labour, teachers' unions had helped to raise the miserable salaries of teachers, chambers of commerce and associations of industries have restrained the Government policies and helped them to move towards reforms. I am happy that of late this trend is catching up, and, I am confident that with the coming up of more civil institutions, life could become more

democratic and people would get Governments more caring. Mr. Shourie's work in Delhi, Jai Prakash's organisation in Andhra Pradesh or Manubhai's efforts in Gujarat and their likes elsewhere could give teeth to the rights of citizens and make democracy more meaningful to them. Emergence of individuals as citizens and fostering of a civil society are the two important aspects of a democratic set up and together they lend strength to the fibre of Indian democracy, eradicating the fault lines of Indian democracy we have referred to.

Secularism

Secularism and pluralism are the two cardinal principles of our democracy.

Success of democracy in India (which is a country of many religions and several linguistic, cultural and other diversities) rests largely on State's commitment to a theory of State which puts a premium on multi-cultural outlook of letting different schools of thought and beliefs to flourish along with a coherent process of national intergration. This implies that the structure of the Indian State has to be democratic and secular according equal treatment to all irrespective of religious, caste and other differences upholding the principles of common citizenship. Secularism as observed by the Supreme Court in Bomai's case is a positive concept of equal treatment of all religions. So far as the State is concerned, the religion, faith or belief of a person is immaterial. In the affairs of the State, a religion is declared to be irrelevant. It is strictly a personal affair. A secular State is not anti-religious but it does not allow a religion to direct or determine the State policies. Religion and affairs of the State have to be kept separate. One remains a matter of private belief and the other a matter of public concern.

In spite of being traumatised by the partition of India and large-scale communal clashes that followed, the Indian State has remained committed to the principles of secularism. Things in this regard have so far been deftly handled and clashes between religions, by and large, tamed. But of late, practice of secularism has developed certain fault lines which instead of bringing the votaries of different religions closer have created estrangement and discord among them. This situation has to be handled with dexterity, imagination and a sense of urgency since secularism has important implications for India becoming a modern forward looking nation instead of remaining stuck in the marshy land of communal strife and backwardness.

Secularism recognises the unique features of each religion which distinguishes one from the other but allowing them to grow together in freedom bringing out their best intrinsic inner beauty of thought and mind enriching and strengthening each other through interaction and common living. Different religions in a secular State when allowed to grow together

look like a bouquet of flowers of different colour, hue and fragrance. Differences in religion are not conceived as a stick of hundred bricks stocked to build walls of separation between believers of different religions. Like Mozart's orchestra where hundreds of musical instruments each one with its separate note of musical excellence when played together produced a harmonious melody of heavenly bliss. So is secularism conceived to bring different cultures closer to each other producing a refined multicultural and multiethnic religious harmony. This approach comes naturally to India since India's identity has basically been civilisational – spiritual rather than narrow religious open to influences of others and not remaining exclusive.

Secularists believed that when different streams of religious thoughts are allowed to flow unhampered, they not only invigorate religious harmony in the country but also evoke feelings of common nationhood among the followers of different religions. Secularists also held that in a pluralistic society if religion freedom is denied, the main national composite culture dries up as a river does when different rivulets do not join the mainstream. The national composite culture shrinks when the constituent culture shrinks. Hence, it was prudent on the part of Indian leadership to let the different streams of faith flow unhindered with a sure expectation that they would become a river of common culture.

Different religions were believed to become a common wealth of the best and the brightest treasure of their wisdom, love and truth imparting vigour and beauty to the national life. But unfortunately, some misguided religious groups misused the freedom given to them to develop their distinctive identities and use them to wean away people from the path of unity. Secularism became a pretext to foster religious rigidities. They harnessed narrow conservative sectarianism. They became a hindrance to the growth of a common national identity. Secularism contrary to its main objective became a tool in the hands of these misguided leaders to induce separatist tendencies among religious communities. In practice, secularism was misused to become status quoist and anti-reform doing an immeasurable harm to the concept of unity in the midst of diversity. It also brought religion into politics creating serious distortions.

We have to remember that secularism has values more than mere tolerance of each other's religion. It has also to uphold the value of equal citizenship and the right of individual to shape his life in the image of freedoms conferred to him in the Constitution. Where religious practices and rigidities come in the way of individual exercising his constitutional rights, the secular State is not out of bound to intervene to modify such changes in religious practices which are at variance with the constitutional rights. Religious freedom cannot, in the name of secularism, stand in the way of equality or modernisation of society. Secularism is a vehicle of overall development of people. Religion

or other retrograde practices which hold back the surge of people towards modernisation have to be restrained by the State. Secularism should remain a vehicle of progress strengthening ties of citizenship and serve as a means to move the different communities together towards the larger objective of nation building. Religious beliefs cannot become roadblocks to modernisation and reformation. Personal laws concerns matrimonial matters, guardianship, adoption, succession and several general issues have with time transcended narrow personal domain and have become matters of social concern. This provides the State the right to intervene in matters which were hitherto treated to be personal domains of religion. Communities which perceived these matters to be of exclusive religious concern and regard them to be outside the orbit of State's intervention are following a path unacceptable to a modern State. These forces are far from realities of today and not in conformity with the rights of individuals enshrined in the Constitution. In this context, importance of a uniform civil code becomes obvious. A secular State has to ensure social cohesion without, of course, undermining the plural character of a polity or respect shown to different religions. Unlike a theocratic State, a secular State is not to get into matters of religion but at the same religion cannot hold back a State from discharging its constitutional right towards its citizens. Promotion of religious liberty cannot violate the principles of modernisation of society. State cannot be held back or forbidden from becoming the vehicle of reforms. Fundamental rights like protecting religious freedom as laid down in article 25 of the Constitution should not sabotage State intervention in the interest of envisaged social revolution. Secularism should now use the mandate in article 44 to replace religion based personal laws by general secular laws. Thus, a time has come when the separatist tendencies practised under the garb of secularism have to be strongly put down and forces of fission and modernisation deliberately encouraged by enlightened State intervention and promulgation of common laws. But this indeed will have to be accompanied by education of masses and keeping the sensitivities of diversities intact.

Federalism

Another important aspect of pluralism is to maintain the federal character of Indian polity within a unitary framework. Fault lines noted in this regard are the centrifugal and authoritarian tendencies of Central leadership which give precedence to centralism over pluralism which gives rise to a feeling of alienation between the Centre and the States.

Dispersal of powers among States fostering diversities without weakening the sovereignty and unity of the country has remained one of the basic tenets of Indian Constitution. National sovereignty embodied in a strong Centre and self-governance of people at State and lower levels have remained our Central concern. Checks and balances and a catalogue of subjects assigned

to the States and to the Centre clearly ensure unification of sovereign rights in the Centre together with significant dispersal of local autonomy in favour of States. While Indian federalism responded to both these concerns, the two got embroiled in practice on questions of how authority and power are to be shared and exercised at different levels to mutual advantage. Essence of federalism is a consensus on area of decision making belonging to the Centre and to the periphery. Certain authoritarian tendencies of the Centre clashed with the legitimate aspirations of States when once the Centre becomes too power centric to override State's aspirations and impose its will on them, it impinges on the real spirit of federalism leading to increased tension between the Centre and the States, disturbing the equilibrium of harmonious development.

While old habits and attitudes of authoritarianism formed under earlier non-democratic regimes continued to assert commitments to new ways of democratic accommodation remained weak to change or mellow the unflinching attitude of the Central leadership. Feudal practices of the old Delhi *darbar* inherited from Moghul times and haughtiness displayed by the Imperial *raj* were not easy to be given up. Indeed the old disadvantages of history take time to change. The new rulers with the exception of a few acted in the mould of old rulers making Central Government treat constituent States as subordinates of Delhi and not as equals.

The distribution of powers between the Centre and the States though done with meticulous care remained tilted in favour of the Centre and States remain dependent on Centre's dispensation. Over centralisation of power gave rise to hegemonistic attitudes so often manifested by the Centre to the disadvantage of States in the public eye.

The way in which some of the Chief Ministers were made or unmade showed how scant was Central leadership's respect for the principles of democratic federalism and democratic decentralisation.

Laxman had an interesting cartoon showing the Prime Minister of India while majestically passing through the row of MLAs scornfully looking at them and tells one of them: You will be the CM of Maharashtra but what is your name? That joke, as jokes always do, had a serious sub-text.

In another case, a CM dismissed by the Central Government tells the Press that he did not know as to why he, in the first instance, was chosen as CM and why was he later sacked?

In the absence of inner party democracy, the Central political leadership is prone to assume unrestricted authority to act arbitrarily unquestioned by any other authority. Further the provisions like article 356 of the Constitution gave the Centre the right to impose President's rule by removal of Chief Ministers

who were found to be political inconvenient. This article was most misused to impose the President's Rule on States. To correct his impasse, it is necessary on one hand that a new relationship of State and Central Governments be drawn up and, on the other, article 356 to be expunged. In fact, while piloting the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar had warned and had hoped such articles like article 356 would remain a dead letter. He had also made it clear that in a pluralistic society, a true federal structure is necessary to reconcile the urges and aspirations of the people. The central unity of the country, he rightly said, cannot be maintained by an overbearing Centre but by evolving attitudes of cooperation. Different States are bound to progress at different speeds. It might also be that a single courageous State might, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.

Of late, we find that with the end of a single party rule at the Centre, installation of a coalition Governments in the States, things seem to be improving in this regard. Formation of regional political parties have compelled their national parties to readjust the balance of power in favour of the States and there is now more assertion of democratic rights by new regional political parties and their leadership than before. Formation of a coalition Government at the Centre has made Delhi more accommodate of a State's position than was the case before. The Delhi centric policy is in decline. However, there are some people who genuinely feel that more power and freedom conceded to the States might lead to the weakening of the Centre and the States may become a threat to the national unity of the country. I believe the opposite would be true. In fact, India will be more united when its people in different parts of the country begin to feel more equal and become equal sharers in the fortunes of the country. It will not lead to anti-national or anti-patriotic feelings. Centre in fact, cannot remain strong if States remain weak. One is happy to note that the relations between the Centre and the States are now being publicly articulated and debated. Enlightened opinion is swinging in favour of better power sharing than letting the power polarised in favour of the Centre. This trend has to be encouraged. It makes hope spring up to breathe life into our pluralistic polity where Centre and States are two sides of the same coin.

Control of Funds

Another fault line in this system relations to control of allocation of funds by the Central Government to the States. Larger the financial dependence of the States on the Central Government, greater their subordination to Delhi. Without financial autonomy, States will continue to play second fiddle to the Centre. A different pattern of financial assistance to States from one in vogue will have to be conceived. Finances flowing from the Finance Commission,

Planning Commission and allocations made by the Central Ministries no doubt help States at different levels of development to stimulate their process of growth but it has now turned sluggish. The present practices need to be amended to let the States raise their own revenues at their respective levels and spend money with a greater sense of responsibility than at present. The fault lines inherent and inbuilt in the present financial arrangement are obvious and need to be changed. Why should all the lucrative sources of revenue be controlled by the Central Government and why should all the moneys have first to go to Delhi and then allocated by the States? As Rajiv Gandhi had put it in such an arrangement a rupee transferred to a State becomes much less than four *annas* by the time it reaches the destination. It is encouraging to find that demand for reforms in this direction is gaining momentum. Better financial allocation of resources would lend greater independence of action to States and to that extent a greater realisation of the advantages of federalism become possible. When once State gets full control over functions, functionaries and funds, it would be in a better position to exercise its authority over the people and enable them to participate more fully as is visualised in the democratic polity.

Governance

Bad governance is another fault line of Indian democracy. While secularism, federalism and pluralism would continue to remain central to India's democratic set up, no meaningful progress is possible unless the State in which people live is well governed. That is the litmus test of the success of a polity. People can enjoy fruits of democracy only when the Government is just and fair, committed to improve the lot of its citizens, rule of law and individual liberty are ensured and rulers are looked upon with respect. When asked about the single most important ingredient for a good government, Confucius selected people's faith in their rulers. Good rulers ensure good government. Yatha raja thata praja sums up its essence. Systems collapse when rulers squander their credibility in the eyes of the people and agencies of law and order start colluding with anti-social elements to deny and suppress rights of people. Today democracy in India is precisely being faulted for such flagrant aberrations. To elaborate, people are disillusioned with government functionaries who are vital to governance. They seem to be swamped by culture of indiscipline and are seen as ineffectual in implementation of rules and regulations. The State of India is being described as a soft state as its rulers are neither deemed to be serious about implementation of laws nor keen of punishing law breakers. Public administration is no longer thought to be efficient nor time conscious about prompt performance of its duties. A number of high offices are perceived as dens of corruption. Guardian of law and order are seen as patrons of unlawful

activities. Functionaries show very little or no sensitivity towards people whose interest they are expected to serve and promote. In fact, in the every day interaction between the people and bureaucracy brazenness has become hallmark resulting in erosion of public faith. Arguably a large number of bureaucrats occupying high positions are there by merit but their performance leaves much to be desired. One of the reasons for this malice is generally ascribed to politicization of democracy which makes it act in violation of laws and tenets of justice. There are bureaucrats who do not work impartially discharging their constitutional responsibilities. They instead work anticipating the wishes of the politicians. They do their bidding, however, wrong in the eye of law. They are willing to crawl when they are asked to bend. Apart from the moral inadequacy of democracy in this respect the collapse of administration is attributed to politicians capricious manipulations of transfers and postings which render administrators meek and submissive. One suggestion in this regard is to constitute a Civil Services Board as a constitutional body for making and overseeing appointments and transfers to senior positions. This could take away the power of transfer from the politicians which has contributed in large measure to reduce once acclaimed iron frame to its present sorry state of health. Reforms and corrective measures are urgently required to stop the rot facing the civil service.

Today corruption heads the list of acts of omission and commission to official refusal to fulfill the objective of good governance to become number one priority. Past recommendations by various committees on administrative reforms have yet to become the focus of sincere application for reducing corruption. Apportioning of responsibilities for discharge of functions and accountability for any malafide act should not go unpunished. A comprehensive law should be enacted that where public servants cause loss to the state or to the individual due to gross negligence they should be made liable to make good the loss. Similarly where timely service to public does not materialize it should be taken a note of and the erring individual debarred from promotion. While another way of curtailing corruption is to make public transactions and public expenditure more transparent. The officers should be asked to take oath of transparency rather than oath of secrecy so that their working and transactions become more open. Recent attempts to do away with the Secrecy Act would definitely be a step in the right direction. Freedom of Information Bill will curtail mal-administration to continue without coming to public notice. Once access to information becomes available to general public, the possibilities of wrong doings by officers should be considerably reduced. Corrupt officers would hesitate to accept graft. Therefore, to improve the accountability of administrators to public, the Public Information Bill should be promulgated at the earliest.

Proliferation of Government agencies incharge of many socio-economic activities has also contributed negatively and spawned not only corruption

but incompetence and corruption thrives when flood gates of micro-management of development and distribution of resources are laid at the doorsteps of government machinery. Nexus between the politicians and bureaucrats in this respect has of late become more rampant with government entering into areas where money making easily becomes a flourishing business. For good administration, it is imperative that government departments are drastically reduced, size of government employees sharply slashed and a fool-proof regulatory system enforced where the intended beneficiary's involvement ensured. Findings of the Vohra Commission in respect of increasing nexus between politicians and bureaucrats should be an eye opener and action to be taken to provide correctives.

Along with civil servants, police and judiciary should also be subjected to public audit and scrutiny. This would go a long way in ensuring better performance. The idea is not to weaken the power stature of the Government officials but to restore and enhance their image in public perception. It is only when the instruments of governance inspire respect among the public that good governance becomes possible. In this context the role of political executives has also got to be looked into which has become the subject of great criticism.

Politicians

People's loss of faith in their elected representatives is yet one more faultline to which attention has to be drawn. Their credibility in public eyes has fallen all time low. People feel that once selected the political representatives do not care to serve their constituency or address to the problems of their people but pursue their personal interests making money through dubious means and floundering their power by breaking laws with immunity. Establishing a nexus with bad elements in business, bureaucracy and police, they terrorise people, extract money from them and accumulate wealth and power. This has led to severe public distrust in them. But in a democracy, a politician cannot be dispensed with. Hence, politics has to become clean and politicians delinked from the criminal and anti-social elements. Politics should cease to become criminalised and crime should not be allowed to become politicised. Time has come to take a serious note of this aspect of democracy and steps taken to stop what is tarnishing the good name of democracy. It is necessary that persons of high integrity and good reputation get elected to Parliament and State Assemblies. Election of good men as representatives of the people through free and fair elections is not an impossible proposition. Since becoming a Republic, we have held regular elections. Representatives to Parliament and Assemblies are chosen through timely exercise of adult franchise. But of late, a definite deterioration has crept in eroding the trust of the people in the process of elections. Men of doubtful integrity are contesting elections and getting elected. Most of these

get elected with minority votes under the first pass the post system. The need is to modify the system which has enabled men of ill repute to get elected with their money and muscle power. The entry of candidates with criminal record and ill gotten money is a matter of great shame. The Report of Vohra Committee in this regard and facts it has brought out are matters of deep concern. It is high time that the system is modified to bar the entry of bad characters and people with criminal record from entering the election field. They should be disqualified and kept out. One of the ways of doing it could be to insist that every candidate at the time of submitting his nomination papers should declare his income, assets and liabilities along with a statement in respect of criminal record, if any. But it is a sad commentary on our politicians and political parties that their support to such a move is muted. It is time that we should create public opinion to break the resistance and help to undo the nexus between corrupt politicians money bags and criminals to ensure that those who contest elections have a clean record and are above suspicion.

The multiplicity of political parties combined with the Westminster practice of first-pass-the-post system has also been a matter of concern. It has resulted in a majority of legislators getting elected on a minority vote of less than 30 per cent of the votes cast, that is, they get elected with more votes cast against them than in their favour. In fact, several candidates have won with less than 13 per cent of votes polled. In a pluralistic society like ours, one cannot totally avoid multiplicity of parties and we have to live with more than two candidates contesting elections. But one of the ways by which this failing can be rectified is to prescribe the principle that an elected representative should win on the basis of securing 50 per cent plus one vote. If one of the contestants seeking election is able to secure 50 per cent plus one vote, there should be a run off contest between the first two candidates so that while others are eliminated from the second round, the one finally elected will necessarily have to win on the basis of 50 per cent plus one votes polled. This will additionally compel the candidates to go beyond the caste or religious vote banks to get qualifying number of sufficient votes to become a member of the Parliament or a State legislature. As a deterrent, it may also be laid down that in case no candidate in the final round gets the qualifying number of votes, then the people of the constituency should go unrepresented. This may sound harsh but perhaps it might stimulate interest in people not to let franchise get fragmented.

Too many elections separately held for Parliament, legislatures, panchayats and nagarpalikas are not only time and money consuming but also distract government's and people's concentrated attention from work to electioneering as a matter of permanent occupation making democracy a carnival of rounds of elections rather than a process of governance. It is necessary that simultaneous elections should be introduced as to avoid this wastage of time, money and work opportunities. It is imperative that future elections be

bunged together and held in one go. More time becoming available to parties for work.

For some time now, the question of defection has also become a crucial fault line. Though of late the phenomenon of *Aya Ram Gaya Ram* has considerably reduced as a result of certain laws promulgated during Rajiv Gandhi's time. But the ailment continues. A rule should be laid down prescribing that a person defecting automatically ceases to be the Member of the Parliament, and will have to contest fresh elections to enter the Parliament again. There should also be a more logical use of whip which would not allow arbitrary use of it to suppress the expression of free views by the Members. Yet one more temptation to defection could be curtailed by laying down a ceiling on the number of Ministers in the Central or State Cabinet especially when defectors are presently getting rewarded with ministerial ranks. Maybe the maximum number of Ministers should not in any case exceed beyond 10 per cent of the total strength of the House. Knowing the limits to which a Cabinet could be expanded might curtail the greed for office.

Of late, there has been a debate on the eligibility of a foreign born Indian citizen to hold office of a Prime Minister. I hold the view that when once a person is declared to be a citizen of India, he or she should not be debarred from aspiring for any office to which any Indian citizen is eligible. Any of the rights conferred on any of the citizens by the Constitution be uniformly available to all citizens. There should not be different classes of citizens in the country in respect of holding office with some having more rights than others. Practice in USA is generally quoted in this regard. But there are other countries which have different practices in this respect. It is not a fact that while appreciating the Constitution of America, we have not accepted it *in toto*.

Yet another fault line to be taken note of is the practice in respect of moving a vote of no confidence against the Prime Minister in office. In a parliamentary form of democracy, the right to bring a vote of no confidence against the Prime Minister cannot be ruled out. But to ensure a stable Government is equally important. We have had an incident where exercise of this right caused uncertainty leading to horse-trading which weakens the position of the Prime Minister and also weakens the sinews of governance itself. Cleaning of this practice is necessary. We should perhaps examine the possibility of adopting the German practice which requires the mover of the motion of no confidence to name the name of the person to succeed him and this should be incorporated within the motion to displace the incumbent. This will provide for restraint by requiring a serious deliberation over the choice of the next person prior to moving a vote of no confidence. Uncertainty of tenure of a Prime Minister weakens the whole apparatus of Government and therefore

calls for a more careful handling. In short, there is a strong case for comprehensive electoral reforms to ensure that democracy functions smoothly and provides for good governance.

Leadership

Absence of leadership weakens the sinews of democracy. This could be ignored at the risk of making democracy itself weak. Presence of good leadership remains crucial not only to steer the affairs of the State well but also to steel the hearts and minds of people against false and misleading allegiances which divide people and do incalculable harm to the solidarity of the State preventing its march towards progress. Good leadership is specially more important in the nascent stages of democracy when politics is prone to be hijacked by populist slogan mongers.

Unfortunately, good leaders of late are at a discount and out of focus. A sort of Grasham's Law seems to be in operation. Bad and politically sterile leaders are driving out good leaders. Ability unsupported by money or party patronage is excluded from public affairs. Political parties under the spell of populism are getting mobilized around religious and caste basis which seems to be at the centre stage. Communal identities are being revived instigating irrational mass movements as nauseating as fascism. National leadership does not seem to project a single clear definition of resurgent India to inspire the youth to counter the disruptive tendencies of fake leaders. Existing Indian leadership is ceasing to be effective. India needs leaders who would change the terms of present public discourse. Democracy is, in fact, facing a dilemma. While people need good leaders, the leaders are perceived by them in terms not very complimentary. An enabling policy environment conducive to growth of good leaders has to be provided for so that political class is satisfactorily filtered. Reward and punishment system has to be in place so that public recognition is conferred on men of merit and withdrawn from those who bring discredit to public life and so excluded from holding public offices. Leaders could also come up when Government is downsized leading expanding space for civil society to create a class of men who become active part of a public process to become a deeper anchor in the local opinion making setting goals to make State functionaries more accountable. Domination of State in all matters, big or small, generally prevents political leadership to emerge. Promotion of grassroots democracy in this context could also provide more opportunities for local leadership to sprout and graduate upwards. Grassroots democracy and emergence of civil society become necessary in this context. Open discussions on public issues in public places should also be encouraged which could bring into focus the role of leaders who could define choices of public policy and make people better judges of the alternatives available. Good leaders are not manufactured to order. But a sound political process together with mass

education and a national vision placed before the country could combine together to throw up good leaders.

The Central leadership has to be of top class. The leaders should be statesmen and not mere demagogues. They should be able to hold the attention of the people and guide them on the right path. A good leader is one who is sensitive to the problems of the people, is able to identify the alternative which would meet the requirements of the people and is able to communicate with them to get them to respond positively. Unless you have this kind of leadership, the people cannot get committed to the right course of action. A dedicated band of leadership spearheading progress movements would find others following them. Not that it will be a smooth sailing but a good leader is a potent teacher. He teaches to people by his own example and if he is seen as a friend, philosopher and guide of the people, then it is an invitation for good response to come from the people.

Conclusion

While the critical catalogue of these fault lines make us unhappy and resentful of the present state of things what lifts up the spirit is the rising ferment of the people to mend things. They have shown tolerance but their tolerance is not unlimited. The fault lines of Indian democracy are not inevitable. The dynamics of election processes itself has become a source of providing correctives. A rising number of people are not willing to be indifferent to these fault lines. They are convinced that reforms are in their best interests. However, complex and difficult the process may be, the urge of people for reforms cannot be suppressed. Reforms are becoming permeable. New voices are getting added to protests which were earlier subdued and confined to a small band of people. The new forces are on the march. And they will shape the future as people are occupying the commanding position as a consequence of elections held to the Parliament and the State Assemblies. Democracy is too precious for us to be left unattended. It remains for us the bulwark of peace and the engine of development. The tide of history is on our side.

Thank you

T.A. PAI MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE, MANIPAL

RECOGNITION AND REWARDS

- TAPMI was among the first management Institutes in the country to receive recognition from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for its management programme. The Institute is a member of the Association of Indian Management Schools (AIMS). The Post Graduate Programme of TAPMI is recognised by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) as equivalent to MBA Degree.
- TAPMI is accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) with Five Stars and by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) with "A" rating.
- TAPMI received the "Best Management Institute of the Year" award from the India HRD Congress, Mumbai in January, 2002.
- TAPMI is one of the five Institutes recognised by AICTE as Nodal Centres for Faculty Development Programmes (Quality Improvement Programmes).
- TAPMI is recognised as a Research Centre for Doctoral Programmes in Management by Karnatak University, Dharwar and Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE, a Deemed University).

SOME MAJOR AWARDS RECEIVED BY FACULTY

- Prof. R. Rajagopalan received the Award for "Best Innovation in Management Education" from the Association of Indian Management Schools (AIMS) for introducing the Management-In-Practice course at TAPMI in 1999.
- Prof. R. Rajagopalan received the "Teacher of the Year Award" from the Association of Indian Management Schools (AIMS) for the year 1999-2000.
- Prof. R. C. Natarajan received the Award for "Best Case Writing and Presentation" from the Association of Indian Management Schools (AIMS) in September, 2001.
- Prof. Biresh Kumar Sahoo was awarded a Post Doctoral research scholarship by the International University, Tokyo, Japan in 2002.

SOME MAJOR AWARDS RECEIVED BY STUDENTS

- Mr. M. P. Sunder of the Class of 2001 received the Award for Best Student in Management at the India Leadership Summit, Mumbai in November, 2000.
- Mr. Vishal Dhawan of the Class of 2002 received the Award for Best Student in Management at the India Leadership Summit, Mumbai in November, 2001.
- Ms. Ritu Srivastava of the Class of 2002 won the Best Manager Award at the IRIS event of IIM, Indore in November, 2001.
- Mr. N. Venkatachalam of the Class of 2002 won the Best Finance Student of the Year Award from Finance Forum of India in March, 2002.
- Students of TAPMI have been regularly awarded Ratan Tata Scholarship for Academic Excellence.