



Towards a Great India

A magazine of the Freedom Team of India

14 March 2010

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Care for India? Then lead India:

India's governance can be reformed, but the best Indians must come together and agree to a common policy platform, first. At least 1500 leaders are needed. Join the Freedom Team.

Target/ achievement

Year	Number of leaders wanted (excluding observers)	Number of initial FTI members (including observers)
2008	100	38
2009	500	91*
2010	1500	101*
2011	2500+	

*It is likely that **less than a third** of these will join the Team as **formal** members in compliance with all FTI requirements.

Join the White Force in its war against corruption and mis-governance

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Message from the Team

The true leader is not the one with the most followers, but one who creates the most leaders.

Neale Donald Walsch

This is the first issue of TAGI since November 2009. We have been very busy over the past three months, organising and then holding our first conference. The conference, held in Mumbai, was an extremely positive experience. It was heart-warming to be in the midst of highly competent, positive and non-cynical citizens. **There is STILL hope for India. That much is now clear.**

Unfortunately, most educated Indians (who have, sadly, never received any education in citizenship) see themselves as petty clerks whose job is to serve India's 'rulers', whether (as in the past) the British, or corrupt Indians (today). They have buried their head in the sand and allowed India's moral structures to collapse around them. "Do-Nothings", they have become India's bane.

If you are one of those millions of 'educated' clerks of India, please try to meet at least one FTI member. In that meeting you will surely experience a new surge of life through your veins; a new sense of hope. FTI members are not typical Indians, that much is now clear. True citizens, they are **unwilling to accept anything less than a Great India**. No third rate India for them. We hope that you don't want a third rate India, either.

Clearly FTI members can't bring about the necessary change until each of you becomes a leader in your own right. Please rise to the occasion. **The White Force is now assembling.**

Become an FTI member or Freedom Partner. It is not very hard. Just stand up and be counted. We will only assemble and plan in the next year. The fight with the Black force will be launched at a time and place of our choosing.

Key FTI documents

You may want to go through these key FTI documents:

- [FTI Trust Deed](#)
- [FTI Rules \(including Code of Conduct\)](#)
- [FTI Basic Principles](#)
- [FTI Strategy](#)
- [How to join FTI](#)

Improved FTI website

The FTI website is maintained by FTI members on a voluntary basis. It has now been standardised entirely to a Wordpress template, making it easier to edit and change. FTI wants to thank Anubhava Srivastava, an FTI member, for his tremendous efforts on the FTI website which was launched in early 2009.

Support FTI with your time and money

FTI seeks your contributions of **time** for various support work. In addition, we have a bank account and seek donations of **money**. Only through cheques please. One way to support FTI is to pass on this magazine to all your friends!

Articles by Team Members

NOTE: Only FTI members are entitled to write for this magazine. Non-members can contribute to [India Policy Update](#). We aim to provide an outlet for Freedom Partners in the coming months. Since FTI members are volunteers with full-time jobs, we don't have time to edit this magazine. As well, we aim to give full freedom of expression to our members. Therefore these articles are either not edited, or very lightly edited. Please do note that the views expressed in these articles **may not** represent the views of FTI.

1. Minutes of the FTI Conference

Minutes prepared by Supratim Basu, condensed by Sanjeev Sabhlok



Main Conference dates:	20 and 21 February 2010
Venue:	L. J. Business and Training Centre, Dadar West, Mumbai
Who paid for the venue?	The local Mumbai team of FTI
Who paid for participants?	Individual FTI members paid for their travel and lodging

Photograph below: FTI members on the first day of the Conference, 20 February 2010



Left to right: Rahul Pandit, Ajay Anand, L.K.Kandpal, Siddharth Shankar, Ritesh Shukla, Supratim Basu, Anil Sharma, Akalpita Paranjpe, Ujjwal Bannerjee, Sanjeev Sabhlok, Dipinder Sekhon, Vishal Singh, Col. L. Anand, Shantanu Bhagwat, Kamal Sharma, Arun Shankar.

Not depicted (attended on the second and third days): Ashish Jauhari

Apology: Sandeep Shelke, Ram K. Atri, N.P. Singh. Many other members had wanted to attend but could not make it to this conference. We look forward to meeting them in future conferences.

Day One

First Session: Introductions - Key points

The team members recognised that we are trying to build an institution, hence the need for slow and measured steps. Yet, it was recognized that quick wins are also required so that the organisation does not dissipate and more people can be attracted to join. The need to work on systematic development of long-term structures, even as we increase momentum on the ground, was acknowledged.

It was recognized that there are many good people with the potential to lead especially in rural or semi-rural India, who are not connected to the internet. We need to work out ways to reach them. It was noted that some FTI members are more active than others in networking with other like-minded and not so like-minded people and groups. Such members have mostly come to FTI after being involved with other political initiatives or organizations. Having this experience and skill-set can help FTI reach out more widely within India, especially outside the internet.

For many others, however, FTI is their first and only social and political initiative so far. They need to be stepped through the processes that are required to gain the relevant skills.

Second Session: Urgent strategic matters - Key points

The idea of freedom was discussed in some detail. In brief, every individual should be free to pursue his life in liberty, to hold property, choose any occupation, pursue social mores and customs of his choice – and any religion – in the pursuit of his happiness, without let or hindrance from any other person or group, subject only to being responsible and accountable for the use of such freedom so that no other person's life, liberty or property is harmed in the exercise of these freedoms.

The discussions in this session brought up the idea of **force multipliers** (essentially, of leveraging FTI concepts and ideas). The essential idea is to create and use a strong and efficient marketing machine to disseminate our thinking and policy proposals to all constituencies without FTI members leaving their jobs. This could be done through Freedom Partners and the media, among others.



It was also agreed that if one wanted to represent the people, then one **must** have the ability to solve local problems. People must feel comfortable in talking about their problems to FTI members. This is a listening and organisational skill. FTI members must pay close attention to what is going on around them.

Third Session: FTI Strategy - key points

Hard questions were asked in this session: e.g. Do FTI members actually trust each other? Do we have the time to devote to such a mammoth task, most of us being full-time employees? Do we have (or can we get) the funds needed to expand this effort? Team members agreed on one thing though: that the conference had gone a long way in fostering trust among those who had attended. Face-to-face interactions are very powerful and energizing. More such occasions should be periodically organised.

The published FTI strategy was thereafter debated, and confirmed as a valid approach. It was agreed that we must stick to the idea of offering a 'full solution'. Partial approaches are both insufficient for the task at hand and not desired by voters, who always ignore minor political alternatives and independents. It was agreed that 500 members must assemble (an intermediate target) as a first step. These 500 FTI members can potentially consider a forming a national political party or merging with other like-minded political parties.

[**Editor's note:** FTI is **NOT** a political party. It encourages those with similar views to join and agree on key principles and strategies before offering an alternative to India. FTI's role will remain that of a platform for liberal and ethical leaders to assemble and talk to each other about citizenship and leadership.]

How to find 500 members by end-2010

It was decided that finding 500 leaders is the main task for 2010. Some ideas for this mammoth task:

- Outreach programs to be regularly organized, e.g. one outreach per month per FTI member or branch.
 - Letter to 4,000 independent candidates – to be sent out soon.
 - Contact Lead India Contestants on a systematic manner (Ujjwal to progress this idea).
 - Rural outreach programs – Akalpita would think more about this approach.
 - Create a telephonic network for those who cannot be reached through the internet.
 - Media – Some well-prepared press conferences can be organized during the year (e.g. a press conference on *BFV* can be organized by Sanjeev to set the ball rolling – *Editor's note: this could not be done.*)
 - Consider setting up an institution for thought leadership and training leaders. Such a leadership institute could be an evangeliser for classical liberalism and thought leadership, but it will need to be a non-political, separate organisation to which FTI leaders can be invited to speak.
 - FTI writings (and forms) to be translated into local languages by volunteers, given the need to communicate in regional languages
 - Half-yearly/quarterly FTI conferences or conference calls to keep the momentum going.
- (Later, other ideas were also canvassed – and form part of the Action Plan circulated within FTI).

The fact that FTI is intended to be an organization for the long haul was highlighted. We will therefore need to create a long term strategy as well, that new members can understand and are comfortable with. They should not expect wonders within a short time, and should be prepared to put in effort over an entire lifetime.

Day Two

First Session - Funding and media plans

Seed money is very important if FTI is to reach its potential within a reasonable timeframe. A range of fund-

raising and media plans were therefore discussed. In relation to media plans the idea of holding public conferences where FTI can invite speakers on different (and potentially controversial) topics – was explored. More work will be done on this idea in the coming weeks.

Second Session - Adharshila and Freedom Partners

The idea of Adharshila was reviewed carefully. Adharshila branches can potentially do many things, such as: English and computer skills training, organizing local conventions, inter-school/college debates, education of citizens about the true price of freebies given by political parties, propagation of classical liberalism thought, etc. Adharshila branches can also become a platform for corporate leaders who want to do "social" work.

However, if **Adharshila** does NGO type work, then it would be inappropriate to mix political and governance issues and discussions with that work. The linkages to FTI would therefore weaken. It may become difficult to generate more FTI leaders out of the Adharshila effort, particularly since NGO work is quite distinct from political advocacy. It was therefore agreed that individual members should continue with their independent NGO efforts (if any) and that there is no need to roll up these efforts into Adharshila.

If Adharshila is to primarily engage in outreach (and advocacy) work, then we don't need Adharshila at all. We can simply use the existing FTI brand. Outreach and evangelising programs should **always** be branded as **FTI events**, to avoid any dissonance in the message.

For those who want to work for FTI goals but do not wish to contest elections or involve themselves in full time advocacy, the **Freedom Partners membership category** will become the key vehicle. A greater boost needs to be given to Freedom Partners in 2010, with reduced emphasis on Adharshila.



Lunch hour at the Conference



Third day: Discussions in Akalpita Paranjpe's house. Ashish Jauhari, who joined on the second day, is at the extreme right

Third Session - Action Plan

A detailed Action Plan for 2010 was prepared during this session and has been circulated within the team for further discussion and approval by the FTI General Body. It may be noted that none of the recommendations of the Conference are binding on the Team, which has its own strong democratic decision making processes through voting on the General Body (which is *the* Team).

Fourth Session: FTI internal communications and other processes

It was agreed that there is significant scope to improve processes for internal communications.

Forum: FTI has recently transitioned from the FTI Google Group to a Forum on its own website. Members largely agreed that despite many hiccups, the Forum is a better solution to our long term communication needs. New members are definitely better off with this system and knowledge management has considerably improved. Ongoing improvements are necessary to create optimal functionality.

Website: The FTI website was reviewed. It was agreed that the website should be used primarily as a marketing tool, with internal communication (like the Forum) potentially moved to a separate sub-domain e.g. members.freedomteam.in. Professional help will be needed to improve the website. A branding exercise for the website also needs to be conducted in 2010.

FTI custom email IDs: It was agreed that while @freedomteam.in email IDs will not be given automatically

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to General Body members, they could be allotted these on request, or on the basis of a particular need.

Membership Form/Process: Electronic membership forms need to be established soon. Hard copy forms with proper signatures are also required for legal purposes, and will have to be stored in Indore (and scanned for internet storage as well). A membership ID numbering system needs to be developed to allot a unique ID to every member, a number that will never change in the future, and will not be recycled and allocated to anyone else.

Document Pack for new members. It was agreed that a hard copy pack – i.e. handbook, brochures, FTI visiting cards, etc., should be prepared and mailed out to each new member upon formally joining FTI, with the costs of this exercise borne from the annual membership fee.

Fifth Session: Tactics

A number of tactical issues were discussed in this session, including possible corporate "sponsorship" of public conferences, the justifications for the use of polemics in a controlled manner, the need to create a sense of urgency for change. The idea of a Freedom March, to be potentially held once or twice a year, to create awareness of the big battle needed to bring freedom and good governance to India, was considered.

Meeting with IFAN

The formal part of the conference then ended. A meeting was held with a few members of the India FNF Alumni Network (IFAN), Mumbai. A coffee meeting was later held in a roadside restaurant where no one could hear each other in the din. No minutes from that meeting!

Day Three

Most members left Mumbai at the end of the second day (Sunday), or were unable to devote more time to the conference. On the third day (Monday), a few members assembled in Akalpita Paranjpe's house in Chembur to discuss remaining issues including the characteristics of a good team and good leaders. These ideas will be presented in separate articles in the coming months in TAGI.

One thing became clear from the conference. FTI is a flat organisation. There is no hierarchy. There is no 'leader'. All are citizens: equals in every way. That is the defining feature of FTI.

2. A report from my India trip - Part 1



Sanjeev Sabhlok, PhD, former member of the Indian Administrative Service, currently works as a public servant in Australia. Contact: sabhlok@yahoo.com. Sanjeev is Honorary Member of FTI, being an Overseas Citizen of India.

I recently visited India for three weeks after a gap of two and a half years. My main reason for spending so much time and energy in India was to be able to attend FTI's first conference held in Mumbai. In addition I wanted to do a number of other FTI related things. In Part 1 I summarise what I did. In Part 2 I talk about some of my key learnings from the trip.

This trip was quite special for me. I had interacted over the internet and on Skype with many FTI members for a long time (with some of them for over two years, after FTI was proposed as an internet group on 23 December 2007), but had never physically met any of them. Indeed, I had been in touch with Anil Sharma over phone and internet for over five years now, and met him only for the first time during this trip, as well! As you can imagine, it is quite an experience to find that the people one has know over the internet/ phone are even more outstanding in real life!

I was somewhat unsure before the trip whether the Team that has assembled over the internet is actually a **viable team** or whether this effort too will fail, like my previous three efforts and most other efforts started by Indians in the recent years. But any doubts that I had have now been put to rest. This team possesses tremendous energy, calibre, and commitment. After meeting so many Indian cynics (both in India and abroad) for so many years, it was like a breath of fresh air to find like-minded people who have not given up on India. These are true leaders. **I can now announce to the nation that we have a Team.** It is now up to the remaining bright and determined young leaders of India to join the Team, and for the good people of the nation to support this effort to transform India's governance. As I have said in this month's editorial, **the White Force is now assembling. The fight against the Black forces has now begun.**

In addition to meeting FTI members, I took the opportunity to meet a number of relatives, friends and erstwhile colleagues, and spoke about FTI to a wide range of people. I began the trip with a flight from

Kolkata to Jorhat on 14 February where I met my 90 year old uncle, Arun Goswami, whose mind is as sharp as a fiddle even though he is now almost completely blind. I stayed overnight there, and took a day train to Guwahati where I stayed for a few days. Then I flew to Mumbai and finally to Delhi.

Despite my best precautions, I caught a stomach bug (in Delhi) which gave me the most severe cramps I've experienced in my life. It was a nightmare I hope never to repeat again. The traffic in India was also far more disastrous and difficult than ever before, and the obnoxious smells of India and tragic sights (of street children not attending school) relentlessly impacted one's senses and emotions. I continue to feel as sad as I ever did about India, for our lost opportunities, and for the severe harm *still* being caused by its 'leaders'.

Overall, though, the trip was definitely a good investment of my time and money. It is true that I can't afford such trips to India frequently, but if FTI finds support among good people in India, I might be able to spend some time and money on such trips again. The nation has to speak up and say whether it wants to change. Else there's not much point in wasting time and money offering one's suggestions (and services) to India.

I won't talk about the FTI Conference in this article. That has been covered above, and many aspects of it will be covered in future issues of TAGI. Instead, I'll focus on other FTI issues/events.

Other FTI members

During this trip I met **five** other FTI members as well (those who could not come to Mumbai). These include the following:

- **Ram Atri**: He was extremely active in organising a number of meetings in Delhi despite his chronic spinal injury. A dynamo of a man, he is General Secretary of [Bharat Shodh](#), an organisation of some of India's best people. He has by now produced many documentaries which will soon be aired on Doordarshan to help improve self-respect among the peoples of India, and to also improve their skills; he has done some really brilliant work in Uttarakhand, and I would urge him to write about his work in the future issues of TAGI.
- I met **Mayank Chauhan** and **NP Singh** (initial FTI members) briefly at the FTI event on 27 February in Delhi. I did not get to talk to them in detail since they left after the event. Some other day, perhaps.
- I met **Barry Bharatam** a couple of times during the trip. Barry has since joined FTI (Barry is former Vice Chief of Staff of the Indian Navy).
- In addition, I met **Somnath Bharti** for an extensive meeting after which I wrote a [blog post \(please read it – it is about Vikram Buddhi\)](#). Somnath has recently joined FTI as well.

In brief, **I met 21 FTI members during this trip!** That's a great outcome! I also hope that many of those who listened to me or to other FTI members will soon join FTI (such as Meera Sanyal whom I met in Mumbai).

Outreach events/talks

18 February Guwahati: I gave a talk on FTI at the Darwin School of Business, organised by Ranjan Baruah of the Liberal Youth Forum.

27 February Delhi: I spoke (along with four other FTI members) to a fairly largish group at ASSOCHAM house, Delhi organised by Liberty Institute and IFAN.



18 February: A talk on FTI to students at the Darwin School of Business, Guwahati



27 February: Five FTI members spoke at ASSOCHAM House, Delhi (the event was video-taped)

3 March Delhi: I had a two hour conversation with few people at the Centre for Civil Society, Delhi, organised by Chintan CCS. This discussion was focused on organisational issues related to FTI, and what other liberal organisations could potentially learn from FTI's (limited) experience.

3 March Delhi: I had an interaction with a small group of ex-armed force officers in Dwarka, Delhi. The meeting was organised by Ram Atri in his own home.



3 March: A talk on FTI at Chintan, Centre for Civil Society (the event was video-taped)



3 March: A talk to senior retired armed force officers at RK Atri's house in Dwarka

4 March Delhi: Three FTI members (including me) spoke with a few professors at IIT Delhi. Event was organised by Dipinder Sekhon and Ram Atri.

5 March Delhi: I spoke at a small get-together of retired people at Chiranjiv Bharati School, Palam Vihar (Gurgaon), organised by a group called Knowledge Seekers (main organiser was Vinay Shankar).

Individual meetings to introduce FTI

Overall, I met about 200 people during this trip. The following list excludes FTI members and those I met during outreach events, as well as relatives, batch-mates from the 1982 batch of IAS, one former colleague from the LBS National Academy, and a former colleague from the Assam Civil Service, among many others. Clearly not everyone I spoke to about FTI is listed here.

City	Name	Key reason to meet/organisation	Relationship with FTI, if any
Guwahati	Prof. Srinath Barua	Vice Chancellor KK Handique State Open University*	-
	Indrajit Barua	Assamese liberal and prolific writer	Supporter and well-wisher
Mumbai	S.V. Raju	Editor, <i>Freedom First</i>	Member, FTI Speakers Panel
	Meera Sanyal	Independent candidate, Parliamentary elections 2009	Currently exploring FTI
	Iris Madeira	IFAN, Mumbai	Supporter and well-wisher
Delhi	Atanu Dey	Author, http://www.deeshaa.org/	Member, FTI Speakers Panel
	Nandan Nilekani	Author of <i>Imagining India</i> (which I consider the best book by an Indian in the past 60 years)	-
	Mukti Misra	Chairman, Centurion Group of Institutions	-
	Barun Mitra	Liberty Institute	Member, FTI Speakers Panel
	Parth Shah	Centre for Civil Society	Member, FTI Speakers Panel
	Pavan Choudary	Author, <i>When You Are Sinking Become a Submarine</i> , etc.	Member, FTI Speakers Panel
	Gurcharan Das	Author of <i>India Unbound</i> , etc.; India's Voltaire.	Member, FTI Speakers Panel
	Rene Klaff	Regional Director, FNSt	-
	Prof. Balakrishnan	Deputy Director IITD	-
	Shantanu Sharma	<i>Economic Times</i>	-
Pramod Chawla	National Network for India (NNFI)	-	
Vipen Mahajan	NNFI	-	

*Former Head of Economics Department in Guwahati University, he has created a great innovation in public administration in the University, which I'll talk about separately in due course.

Video recordings

The talks at ASSOCHAM House and CCS were video taped. I trust that CCS/Liberty Institute will provide these recordings to those who are interested. If you want to get a copy of these recordings, please write to me at sabhlok AT yahoo DOT com, and I'll pass on your request to the concerned person.

In addition, Ram Atri brought his team of experts and recorded a tête-à-tête with me on the Skills Development program of the Government of India. He may, in due course, publish the recording as part of a documentary. He also spared resources to record my unprepared comments regarding FTI. That recording, along with other such recordings by FTI members (including Ram himself), should perhaps be converted into a documentary/ marketing film for wider dissemination across India. We need to get the message out, as soon as we can.

Acknowledgements

It is impossible for me to adequately acknowledge the contributions of those who organised (or participated in) the events/talks during this trip. Despite that, I'd make a brief attempt. In particular I'd like to thank:

- the Mumbai team (and more particularly Supratim Basu) for organising the FTI Conference;
- Ranjan Baruah for organising the Guwahati event, but also the Director and senior faculty of the Darwin School of Business;
- Manali Shah for organising two Delhi events (Assocham and CCS); and Barun Mitra for organising and chairing one of them;
- Ram Atri and Dipinder Sekhon for the IIT Delhi event;
- Ram Atri for the event organised in his house in Dwarka; and
- Vinay Shankar (retd. Secretary GOI) and also the Principal of Chiranjiv Bharati School, for the Palam Vihar event.

I apologise for missing out the names of the many others who contributed in so many ways to these events.

3. A report from my India trip - Part 2

- by Sanjeev Sabhlok

In this part of my report I'll outline some of the learnings from my trip. Please note that these represent my *personal* views, and may not represent the views of FTI. That distinction must be drawn at all times, although I do hope that team members will support most of my views – at least broadly.

FTI's approach in a nutshell

The following extract from an email that I sent to an eminent Indian best summarises, in my view, FTI's approach to reforms in India.

Extract from one of my emails

As you are aware, I am deeply committed to the reform of India's governance. One can choose one of three approaches to achieve such an objective:

- a) advocacy (of the Liberty Institute or Centre for Civil Society type);
- b) joining an existing political formation; or
- c) promoting an alternative (ethical and liberal) platform.

Since February 1998 I have opted for (c). Full change - or nothing - is my simple approach. I believe that advocacy cannot achieve much on its own, and will always need (c) to make a genuine difference. Also, the liberal must always offer a liberal political platform as an option to voters. Hence (c).

I am also very clear in my mind that (b) is ethically unacceptable - today. Had leaders like Sardar Patel still existed, (b) may have been a genuine option. In his time even the slightest corruption could lose a politician his job. On the other hand, being corrupt or conniving with it is a pre-condition for political success in today's Indian political parties.

In Mumbai I met Meera Sanyal who contested parliamentary elections in 2009 in Mumbai. She informed me that her declared electoral expense of Rs. 8 lakhs (all of which came from her personal funds) was the highest expense declared by any candidate in her constituency. That, despite most major political party candidates spending crores of rupees. **The idea of ethics is anathema to our major political parties. Hence they are India's enemies, worse in many ways than the British who looted India before independence.** [*emphasis mine*]

While I am committed to a total cleansing of India's governance system (subject to India actually wanting

it), I am happy to work in a half-way house between (a) and (c) through a world-best policy training institution. I look forward to considering opportunities that may arise in such an area so long as I am not expected at any stage to:

- i) 'sacrifice' my self-interest (i.e. not asked to take a pay cut from the modest salary I draw in Melbourne);
- or
- ii) muffle the truth.

To this email extract, let me add that (i) I would have not left India in December 2000 had viable options to live and work in India in my chosen area of work – i.e. political reform – been available; and (ii) for the past nine years I have repeatedly offered to work in India in areas compatible with my overall goals for India – but so far no one has asked (and paid) for my 'services'. Those who wonder why I'm in Australia and not in India may want to think how serious they are about reforms.

My regret is that there is no JRD Tata in India today. Only petty businessmen with petty personal goals: people who have no great ambition for India, people happy to lend their shoulder to the totally corrupt system in India so long as they are allowed to make their little pile of lifeless metal (money). Will they take that metal to their next life, I ask? What is gained for India if it becomes wealthy but loses its soul? And indeed, to become genuinely wealthy one can never compromise one's soul. That is the basic premise of capitalism.

I insist on a small little thing called self-respect, and insist on my personal priority over all others. I'm keen to extend my joint responsibility for India, but not as a beggar, nor as a thief, nor as an altruistic fool. Only as an equal partner. Indians can get me only on my terms, not on corrupt terms. And I have no intentions of playing second fiddle to those who are either *directly* corrupt or *connive* with corruption, for both these are enemies of India and I will brook no compromise with any enemy of India. I hope all FTI members are with me on this.

Today we are engaged in a war against the most dangerous enemies that India has ever encountered: those who come from within and cannot be readily identified (as foreign enemies can be). Today, these enemies rule India. A war against the Black Force cannot be fought by becoming part of the Black force. Let every citizen in India now choose his banner: Support the good or support evil. There is no middle ground.

The moral confusion prevailing in India

I have always found it hard to understand spiritual matters. I do believe, nevertheless, that spiritualism must be a way to the Truth, and not a way to moral relativism or moral confusion. If spiritualism doesn't help us distinguish good from evil, then it is surely a dangerous superstition, to be shunned and banished.

It therefore bothers me no end when I hear, from those who profess to be spiritual, and who talk about the decay of spiritualism in India, that "**Rahul Gandhi is the new hope for India**". Many of my pious relatives (many of them devoted to Godmen or Godwomen who proliferate in India like flies, or perhaps like leeches) have made such statements during this India trip. This section is addressed to them and to people like them.

My blunt question to such spiritualists is this: How can a spiritual person even remotely think that a person like Rahul Gandhi, who has fully accepted the black money and corruption of his party, can help India in any way? He will surely help himself, but to help India requires a vision and clarity of policy thought, apart from impeccable integrity, that he has surely not demonstrated at any stage.

In my view Rahul has ruined the possibility of being a credible leader for India by **choosing** to represent the MOST CORRUPT organisation of independent India – the Congress Party – an organisation that has STOLEN thousands of crores of public money, destroyed the lives of millions, and in general, been one of the most anti-India outfits one can think of (along with most other major political parties).

Is it not criminal to loot taxpayer's money? Is it not criminal to supply sub-standard road or other construction material as a result of which hundreds of people lose their lives? Is it not criminal to auction jobs in police stations and thus employ criminals? Is it not criminal to take bribes to let illegal immigrants into the country? This – and hundreds of other crimes – are committed by our major political parties today. Our 'leaders' reward those bureaucrats and policemen who connive or actively support such crimes. There is no place for the honest man in India today.

How can a so-called 'spiritual' person consider criminals to be India's saviours?

And what about the lies that politicians feed us? Is lying no longer relevant in the world of spirituality. Why does the Congress continue to talk about socialism even as it adopts policies that could (in some cases) be best described as hypercapitalism (a corrupt crony capitalism of the sort they have in Russia). Why doesn't

Rahul Gandhi talk about capitalism as the ideal (which it should be)? - because in that case he'll be forced to advocate **and practice** personal integrity, which is one thing he simply can't now, having joined the Black Force.

I agree that Rahul was born pure and innocent as a baby, but he now effectively heads a criminal outfit. People like him have to be brought to book. Had he chosen to resign from the Congress the moment he became an adult (age 18), the hope that some 'spiritual' people in India have of him may have been at least somewhat justified. But by dipping his hands in the **filth** called the Congress, he is no longer relevant to India's future as a Great Nation. He is relevant to India's future only as a miserable Third World nation. He will ensure it is kept that way.

Note that corruption STARTS AT THE TOP. That has always been the case. It starts by people spending CRORES OF BLACK MONEY DURING ELECTIONS. Where does this huge amount of money come from? From LOOTING INDIA. And **who has looted India?** Our politicians, from the exchequer, from giving illegal favours to industrialists, from defence 'deals', etc. Who has led this loot since independence? - The Congress, but also most other parties.

While many corrupt officials abound, they are often mere stooges, collecting money for their political bosses. The rot must be stemmed from the top.

I'm not suggesting that we chase after these *individual cockroaches*. There is simply no time for that. And how many of these cockroaches can we destroy, anyway? In the end we may have to give all these enemies of India amnesty and rehabilitate them as some form as humans, merely to prevent a dangerous civil war in India. The solution we must aim for is to destroy the cockroach nest, not through violence but through the ballot box. Let the people of India be educated about these crimes. Let them demand a change.

The way forward now is to find citizens **who respect themselves** and are willing to fight corrupt organisations, not 'spiritualists' who can't distinguish right from the wrong, good from evil, enemy from friend.

What FTI must offer to the people of India is the White Force, with policy competence. It doesn't matter how many people are part of the Black Force. The voter will desert them when a credible offer is made by the White Force.

I also suspect that **many spiritual (i.e. religious) leaders are themselves a deep part of the Black Force**. For instance, how many of them make clear that no black money should be contributed to their organisation? How many take donations purely by cheque? How many disclose their accounts publicly? Most of them, I suspect, will gladly accept 'wealth' stolen by corrupt politicians from hard working Indians.

I am sometimes led to believe that there is no connection between spirituality and morality. Perhaps there never was.

My batchmate is now presiding over a totally corrupt regime

One of my batchmates (Depinder Singh Dhesi) from Haryana cadre has now been the head of the Town and Country Planning machine for a number of years. I always thought of him as a decent and honest man. And he surely remains so, at least at some underlying 'technical' level, even now. But during my trip I found huge evidence of the deep and **entrenched corruption that is rampant in his organisation**.

I ask: What good is it if one is honest but the organisation that one heads is totally corrupt? What is honesty, anyway? Is it merely not taking bribes personally? Is it OK to allow a hugely corrupt machine to pay bribes to politicians right under one's nose?

I would like Depinder to **wake up from his stupor** and to confirm whether he is with the White Force or with the Black Force. Depinder, please stand clear of the Black force. These are India's greatest enemies. Let's assemble against the Black Force, not join them or shelter them in any form. Don't be Macaulay's clerk. Don't serve the corrupt. You are not obliged as a CITIZEN to do so. You must defend India, not its enemies.

Confirmation of FTI strategy

One of the most important outcomes of this trip from my perspective was that FTI's overarching strategy was confirmed after extensive debate at the FTI conference. Hopefully all remaining doubts about this strategy among team members have now been dealt with, and they will be able to explain FTI's approach to groups like Lok Satta, Professionals Party of India, Jago Party, etc., which are wasting a lot of effort and resources on sub-national approaches that are not strategic and will (unfortunately) fail.

The task at hand is much harder than what these groups envisage. The White Force must not dissipate its energies. Converge, Conserve, then Leverage. Fight the battle only when you are ready. And pick the time and place of the battle – you **must** be in control. Don't become a laughing stock of the Black Force by feeble attempts that are rejected outright by voters. I admire these new groups but do suggest to them that they pause for a moment and consider the more systematic FTI approach.

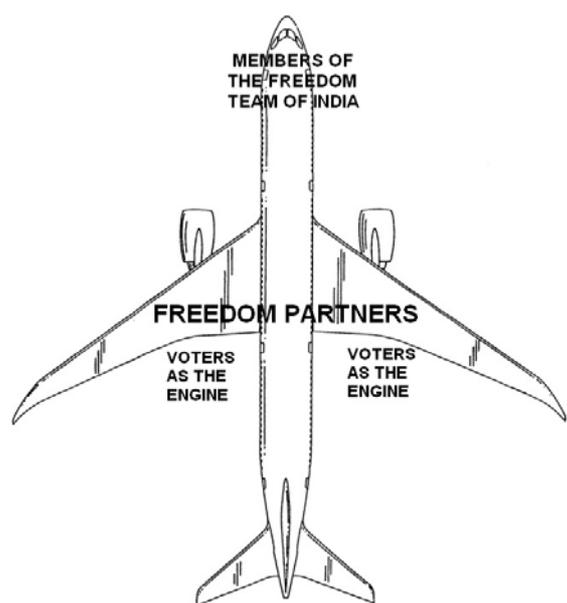
Note that FTI doesn't block anyone from pursuing their preferred approaches. All it suggests is that **by bringing together all liberals of India on the same table**, viable agreements and approaches can be arrived at in the coming years. There is no loss to anyone by joining FTI, and hardly any cost. Only great (potential) gain. Joining FTI can provide a huge strategic advantage to existing efforts.

In any event, the Team is clear that it will **not** squander its resources and energy on unproductive activities and will go only for the 'full solution', when ready; not partial solutions that no voter wants and are irrelevant anyway. Having said this, no strategy is worth pursuing if it fails repeatedly. We must remain open to continuous review and examination of the FTI strategy.

Presenting FTI's strategy more evocatively

By explaining FTI strategy to a good number of people during the trip, and through robust discussions at the FTI Conference, I have been able to evolve ways to explain FTI's strategy more evocatively, outlined below.

1) FTI members as pilots of a plane



Imagine that the new, reformed India is an airplane.

- The **cockpit** is operated by members of the Freedom Team who are its pilot (acting as *one* pilot with one strategy and one set of policies).
- Freedom Partners form the plane's **wings**. Freedom Partners will need to leverage FTI members' reach. Being mostly full-time employees they can't spare the time to reach out into the remote villages of India. Freedom Partners will therefore need to talk to the remotest village in India, explaining to the people why change is needed and why the Team members will deliver a *dramatically* better India.
- Of course, without the mandate of the people (**engines**) the plane cannot take off. And of course, the people will not demand reforms unless FTI members are credible, and sufficient numbers of Freedom Partners agree to form its 'wings'.

Consider this: if at least 1500 or 2000 FTI members are needed to launch a political battle, then there must be at **least 1000,000 Freedom Partners** first. This (largely intellectual) support must be leveraged across India. Only then will the people of India find it worthwhile to choose a reform agenda to help India finally 'take off'.

Without three things: (1) sufficient number of FTI members, (2) a large support base of Freedom Partners, and (3) the mandate of the people of India, the idea of a Great India will remain a pipedream: idle talk. Let's always recognise that ideas need legs. Freedom Partners are an equally important leg of FTI, as are the members themselves. Our retired folk are waiting to be deployed in the service of India. Let's give them an opportunity to do so.

2) White force vs. Black force

I've already used these terms extensively in this magazine. One way to describe FTI's approach is to visualise it as a battle between the Black and White forces in India. A *mahabharat*. However, the way this battle must be fought is not through direct conflict but by offering a credible choice to the voter. Let the voter discriminate between the two.

The White force (being the members and supporters of FTI) need not do much, at the beginning. The force should merely assemble as quietly as possible, building a cohesive approach through agreement on strategy and policy. It should definitely include a major flank of Freedom Partners. The Partners also don't have to do much initially. Just assemble. They can, if they wish, go out and discuss the White force strategy with other like-minded people when they get a chance. In the first instance they may not even need to go to villages.

The main thing in this battle is to **conserve energy and firepower**. No one should waste energy and resources by contesting elections prematurely. It simply won't work, and will defeat the momentum that is needed for the people of India to collectively switch allegiance from the Black to the White force. They want a credible alternative. We must provide that.

Note that the mere act of assembling a White force will signal to the system that the time for change is nigh. Good policies will start getting adopted: the pressure to do something to prevent the rout of the Black Force will mount.

One fine day, when the people of India believe in the White force (which should be very large by then), and really want to change, FTI members can launch the final battle at the hustings, completely routing the Black force. Note that currently members of the Black Force often win parliamentary seats by polling as little as 20 per cent of the votes. That is because of huge fragmentation of India's polity. The White Force may need to poll only 30 to 40 per cent of votes to create revolutionary change. It is really a game of strategy, not tactics.

It is important that a plan of amnesty for the Black force also be in place, else civil war can start as the White Force strengthens, quietly. We must not forget that existing political forces are not only flush with hundreds of thousands of crores of black money, but that they have **no morals** and, if pinned against the wall, will kill. They are extremely crude and dangerous people. That cannot be under-estimated.

3) Coordination problem

Atanu Dey suggested that coordination problems are solved by issuing a **credible signal**. I like this metaphor. FTI can be seen as a credible signal for the White Force to start assembling. The 'party' is now on. The White Force is assembling. It is costless to join. No big effort involved. Just unite as a force against corruption and misgovernance. That should be our message. We don't want the Black Force to know what is happening, and where. Just assemble. That is a non-threatening act. AND THERE SHOULD BE NO LEADERS. LET EVERYONE BE A CITIZEN-LEADER. THAT'S WHAT INDIA NEEDS.

Strategy for Adharshila and Freedom Partners

The concept of Adharshila was refined considerably during this trip. It was concluded during the FTI conference that if FTI members want to undertake charitable activities they are better off by doing so under the umbrella of the existing NGOs or starting their own. Adharshila should therefore be used primarily as a brand name for policy debate and issues analysis or resolution. However, given that such things can be better conducted under the FTI banner, Adharshila is now no longer recommended as a key strategy for FTI.

Freedom Partners

The idea of *Freedom Partners* became much clearer during this trip, as well. The best way to induct Freedom Partners is to invite participants of outreach events into Google Groups named after the town in which the outreach event has taken place. Thus, we would have a Freedom Partner **Delhi** group (started by Dipinder Sekhon). Similarly there can be a Freedom Partner Group for *Indore, Bangalore, Allahabad, Guwahati*, etc. I also believe that Adharshila members on various Google groups should be transferred to their local Freedom Partner groups.

It is crucial that Freedom Partners meet regularly on the ground, if only to ask questions and clarify their doubts. I hope that the Freedom Partner Delhi group will take the lead on this. The groups can later split by constituency when the time comes to expand. The optimal size for each group is around 150 (refer *The Tipping Point*).

FTI member/s must actively cultivate their local Freedom Partners. From them will come not only the human resources (time and energy) needed to leverage the White Force but also the funds. We need to teach the middle class to contribute **one per cent of** its after-tax salary for improved governance.

Importance of outreach events

Outreach events do not seem to be particularly difficult to organise. Making a few phone calls to friends can help assemble a small but productive meeting. The venue is also rarely a major issue: a small room is usually enough and often readily available in some school or even someone's house.

The main reason why FTI members haven't yet organised many more outreach events is that they haven't done such things in the past. It is a chicken-egg problem. Everything needs a beginning, and practice makes perfect. My experience suggests that FTI members should aim to start small and grow steadily. Baby steps. One step at a time. I therefore hope that FTI members will start organising outreach events in a big way:

ideally one per month.

FTI members should remember that as things stand today, they have virtually no credibility with the electorate. They need to build up credibility incrementally through **active leadership** at the local level. Let the people see them talk in many events, and do things for the local community.

Just a quick reminder: It is crucial to collect the names, addresses, phone numbers and email IDs of all participants, for follow up action (e.g., as Freedom Partners). Follow up is crucial, else the effort is wasted. It can take many meetings for someone to gain the confidence to join FTI. We must keep explaining the concepts to people each time, patiently. And learn from them. Their doubts are the issues that we need to document and address.

Some support from the White Force has started flowing in

A number of good people, i.e. members of India's (currently disorganised) White force made positive comments about FTI during this trip. As a result, some of them are talking to others about it. For instance, Kiran Bedi was informed of FTI by one of our speakers, and she made some positive comments about FTI. Similarly, some senior retired officials were quite positive about this effort. Their good wishes are with us.

One hopes that the White force is not simply going to give FTI its good wishes, but will actually **do something** about battling the Black force. This is not my war, not your war. It is the war of **all good people in India** against its criminals who are ruling India. We must unite against these criminals.

Conundrum: How to confirm a person's honesty?

One of the rather sad discoveries I made in India this time was that no one trusts anyone else any longer. For us to claim that FTI members are honest and that they will remain honest when they are voted by people to govern India is no longer a believable claim. No one thinks that honest people can enter politics.

Initially we on FTI had thought that having a strong disciplinary committee would make for a credible model. But such a system won't work. This became clear to me when I heard Ram Atri tell me that someone had said to him: "Sanjeev made lots of money in India (while in the IAS) and is now sitting comfortably in Australia giving lectures to people in India"! I'm part of FTI's disciplinary committee. If people in India don't believe in me, then why will they believe in FTI's disciplinary committee's recommendations?

I must of course demolish such absurd claims about me. To those who make such claims I ask that they come to Melbourne to observe our daily routine in our home (on mortgage) belonging to two former senior IAS officers. Observe our daily struggles, observe how I skimp and save at every step. I am Bachat Singh, married to Bachat Kumari! Our whole life has been spent skimping. And observe how Smita ekes out a meagre living today as a lowly (but proud) social worker, working three night shifts a week to look after (including cooking food for!) significantly troubled or disabled people. Then try to find out the endless hours I worked in meagrely paying jobs during my US studies, to try to take back something home to India. I know (and Smita knows) what it is to belong to a lower middle class family. Till 2004 I travelled in public buses in India (when out of the IAS) to save money. No taxi for me till recently when I've finally been promoted to a level that gives me some cushion in life. And through all this we put in a good amount of our limited money into India related projects, including India Policy Institute and FTI in my case and an NGO in Assam by Smita.

The problem in the end is not about my credibility (I actually couldn't care less if people of India don't trust me – I will always do **exactly** as I feel I must). It is that no one in India now believes that those who wish to join politics can be clean. A retired IIT professor made this startling claim (during the IITD event on 3 March) apparently, "those who are more educated are more corrupt"(!). Now, FTI is full of highly educated people some with Ph.Ds! So who is going to trust FTI? Such are the **WILD** imaginations of the people of India, as well. What chance does FTI have of being seen as a credible organisation?

One solution that came to mind during the trip was that FTI should perhaps form an **independent disciplinary committee** which would inquire into any allegation against any FTI member. This committee could comprise retired Supreme Court and High Court judges, as well as random representation from villages or towns in India, in the form of a jury.

But while I was thinking these thoughts I was informed by three very highly experienced lawyers who have been working in the Supreme Court of India and the High Court of Delhi that there is no judge in the major courts of India today who is not purchasable. Whether this allegation is true or false, it does highlight the great difficulty of building credibility in India today. **When no one is credible, whose assurance can be taken?** This issue will surely have to be resolved before FTI can credibly claim to lead the White Force.

Some books I bought in this trip

Books are relatively cheap in India (e.g. foreign editions sell at half their international price). Hence I feasted on the huge range of good books available in India and managed to bring back about 15 books in all.

Pavan Choudary very kindly presented me with two of his books: ***When You Are Sinking Become a Submarine*** and ***Success Sutras for the 21st century: A Trilogy of Wisdom***.

I've gone through the first of these which is brilliant. Pavan "challenges Machiavelli's belief that a good man hasn't got a chance". He argues "how the path of goodness coupled with creativity and wisdom is the only way to enduring victory." His is perhaps the first major book on the use of white power (ethics) against black power (crime and corruption). I have started using the terms White Force vs. Black Force after meeting him. FTI is fortunate to have him on our Speakers Panel.

On a similar (and creative) plane is Saul Alinsky's book ***Rules for Radicals***, recommended to me by Atanu Dey. I couldn't find this book readily in India and hence ordered it from Amazon (the book arrived in Melbourne a couple of days ago and I've read most of it by now). There are many similarities between Saul and Pavan, although superficially they may appear to be talking a different language. In the end both want to achieve the greater good through a strong analysis of options and the creative use of available strategies. Both these books are masterly treatises on strategy and I recommend them to all FTI members (and FTI supporters).

In relation to strategy I also purchased (and read during my Jorhat-Guwahati train journey), Ashok Garde's ***Chanakya on Management***. I enjoyed it and found many useful insights from Chanakya. As Garde argues, Chanakya is a believer in ethical approaches to ensure a sustainable society. He says:

"It would prove interesting to the readers of *Chanakya Sutras* to find out which one of more than 455 sutras indicate any crooked or unethical advice by Visnugupta ... There is none whatever! In his treatise on *Arthashastra*, he does advice the king several ways of protecting himself, and several ways of acting against the enemy which are definitely manipulative and often unethical. However, within his own kingdom, **he is a strong advocate of enduring ethical behaviour at all levels through appropriate legal enforcements.**"

Given my increasing interest in Chanakya (supported also by a discussion with Supratim Basu), I also purchased the Penguin (Rangarajan) translation of ***Arthashastra***. Among other books I purchased were:

- Gurcharan Das's ***The Difficulty of Being Good***
- Narayana Murthy's ***A Better India A Better World***
- Khanna's ***Billions of Entrepreneurs***
- Rai's ***Think India***
- Kamdar's ***Planet India***
- ASSOCHAM's ***JRD Tata memorial lectures*** (1998-2009)
- Tim Hartford's ***The Undercover Economist*** (brilliant!)
- P J O'Rourke's ***On the Wealth of Nations***
- Malcolm Gladwell's ***Tipping Point*** (brilliant)
- Malcolm Gladwell's ***Outliers*** (brilliant, again)

The following two books I'd read in the past but didn't have personal copies: so I bought them as well:

- Jason Zweig's ***Your Money and Your Brain*** (outstanding book!)
- Tim Hartford's ***The Logic of Life*** (everyone must read it!)

While on the topic of books, I'd also like to suggest that everyone should read Steven Levitt's books (*Freakonomics* and *Superfreakonomics*), and Ian Plimer's *Heaven and Earth*. I could go on about the books that everyone 'should' read (*Imagining India* of course comes to mind: PLEASE DO READ IT!), but let me end on the regretful note that due to the huge amount of time I've been devoting to FTI in the past few months my own manuscript, ***The Discovery of Freedom***, is seriously languishing. I hope to finish my book at least by early 2011, two years late. Let me end this report now and get on with that book.

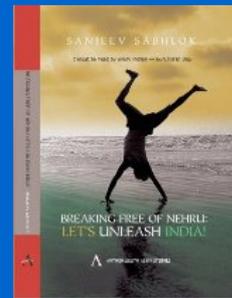
Recommended readings

1. **Capitalism and Freedom** by Milton Friedman
2. **Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal** by Ayn Rand, Nathaniel Branden, Alan Greenspan and Robert Hessen
3. **The Ultimate Resource II** by Julian Simon
4. **Breaking Free of Nehru** by Sanjeev Sabhlok
5. **Economics in One Lesson** by Henry Hazlitt
6. **The Use of Knowledge in Society** by F.A. Hayek
7. **The Constitution of Liberty** by F.A. Hayek
8. **India Unbound** by Gurcharan Das
9. **On Liberty** by John Stuart Mill
10. **The Law** by Frédéric Bastiat

11. **Liberalism** by Ludwig Von Mises
12. **Two Treatises of Government** by John Locke
13. **The Triumph of Liberty** by Jim Powell
14. **Growth Triumphant** by Richard Easterlin
15. **Roots of Freedom** by John W. Danford
16. **Good to Great** by Jim Collins

Breaking Free of Nehru – Let's Unleash India! NOW AVAILABLE FREE

This book (December 2008, Anthem Press) introduces the idea of a Freedom Team of India, and proposes policies that such a Team could consider. Now a **free e-book**: <http://bfm.sabhlokcivcity.com/>



Indian institutes

India Policy Institute (indiapolicy.org)
Centre for Civil Society (ccs.in)
Liberty Institute (libertyindia.org)
Janaagraha (janaagraha.org)

International institutes

Ludwig von Mises Institute (mises.org)
The Mont Perlin Society (montpelerin.org)
Centre for Independent Studies (cis.org.au)

Friedrich Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (southasia.fnst.org)
International Policy Network (policynetwork.net)
Institute of Economic Affairs (iea.org.uk)

Political parties in India with policies that are broadly consistent with liberty

Lok Satta, Jago Party, Bharatiya Democratic Party, Yuva Party, Lokayat

Note: FTI does not necessarily endorse these parties' policies, and almost certainly doesn't endorse their strategies.

FTI's Speakers Panel



Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar



Pavan Choudary



Gurcharan Das



Barun Mitra



S.V. Raju



Ramesh Ramanathan



Parth Shah



Atanu Dey

(not pictured)

Mohit Saytananda

Facebook groups of FTI, and related initiatives, causes, and books

Group: We DEMAND Freedom and Good Governance

Page: Freedom Team of India

Cause: We want Freedom and Good Governance in India

facebook

facebook

facebook

Page: Rajaji, the great Indian Liberal

Page: Minoo Masani, a great liberal

Group: One Rupee Freedom Movement

facebook

facebook

facebook

Cause: One Rupee Freedom Movement

Group: The Discovery of Freedom

Group: Breaking Free of Nehru

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If we wish to preserve a free society, it is essential that we recognize that the desirability of a particular object is not sufficient justification for the use of coercion.

Friedrich August von Hayek

BECOME PART OF THE WHITE FORCE. JOIN FTI OR BECOME A FREEDOM PARTNER.

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Supporting FTI is simple: Just pass on this magazine to all your friends and relatives in India so they can help us find the leaders India needs.

Surely, India has 1500 leaders who believe in freedom!

