



Towards a Great India

A magazine of the [Freedom Team of India](#)

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India's governance can be reformed, but first Indian at least 1500 citizen-leaders must come together and agree to a common policy platform. **Join the Freedom Team of India.**

Target/ achievement

Year	Number of leaders wanted	Number of initial FTI members
2008	100	38*
2009	500	91*
2010	1500	108 [#]
2011	2500+	

*Including *Observers* who have since been transitioned to Freedom Partners.

[#]Less than a third of FTI Initial Members are expected to become full members. **Only about 35 members are reasonably active at the moment.**

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Passing the baton

With this issue, it is my great pleasure to hand over the role of Editor (henceforth called Chief Editor) of FTI's magazine, ***Towards a Great India***, to Anupam Sarwaikar.

The chief editor's role is multi-faceted. It involves not only writing the Team's message and other editorials but bringing together the magazine which means collecting, and in some cases lightly editing, articles from FTI members, designing the final layout, undertaking the relevant PDF conversion, uploading it on FTI's website, and announcing its release to Freedom Partners and others on FTI's Facebook groups. These tasks are completed around 15th of every second month. Doing this properly can take a fair bit of time!

TAGI continues to be an important tool of communication for the Freedom Team. It aims to bring together many of the key arguments that underpin FTI's efforts and objectives and showcases FTI processes and member thoughts.

Since 15 April 2008 I've had the privilege of editing 15 issues of TAGI (16 to be precise, including this one). With this issue I will recede into the background as Editor-at-Large, contributing to TAGI as time permits. Anupam will lead. Please join me once again in welcoming Anupam to this role.

I would encourage other FTI members to join as Editors, to support Anupam.

Sanjeev Sabhlok

Message from the incoming Chief Editor

I want to start with thanking Sanjeev for providing me the opportunity to be the editor of *Towards a Great India*. This is a big responsibility and I realize that it will be hard to match the standard Sanjeev has set in last 15 issues. At the same time, I am excited to take over something which, I feel, will play a big role not only in the membership growth but in overall overarching strategy during this extraordinary journey in Indian political spectrum.

This piece has been at the back of mind for last couple of weeks. During all the travel and the commute I have been thinking about what I should write about. I have decided to set some goals.

To list some broad goals:

1. **Increase the circulation of *Towards a Great India*** - Now this is a very general statement and something every editor hopes for. I have some ideas but nothing concrete at this point. I do realize that this is critical to the success of FTI and to ensure that our message reaches to a huge number of Indians - loud and clear.
2. **Publish articles in more than one language** - India, as we all know, is a very diverse nation. Although English is sort of becoming a binding language its penetration is not that deep. It is important to publish some or all of the content in local/vernacular languages. This relates to point 1 above.

Become a Freedom Partner



Freedom Partners are supporters of freedom and well-wishers of the Freedom Team of India. See more details at: <http://partners.freedomteam.in/>. We need at least 1500 members to join the Freedom Team and 2 lakh Freedom Partners before the movement for freedom can *really* take off.

Freedom Partner groups have started in a few cities in India and abroad. Local meetings and activities are being organised. Join and help grow the movement.

About TAGI

TAGI is published once every two months by the Freedom Team of India. Only FTI members can write for TAGI, although letters from readers (and Freedom Partners) are invited.

Chief Editor: Anupam Sarwaikar
Editor-at-Large: Sanjeev Sabhlok

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- Increase the content** – This is a big challenge. All FTI members have a job and are volunteers at this point. It is not easy to find time to write from ones busy schedule. I plan to publish more articles form FTI members, partners and the blogs FTI members run.

These are certain broad goals I have set for myself and for TAGI. I will need all the support I can get from you to achieve these.

Key is to ensure that FTI's message is conveyed to the readers. FTI is a platform for the leaders to assemble to bring the political change in India. FTI believes in classical liberalism and all the proposed policies revolve around that.

I want to end this post with a request to you all to wish me good luck.

Anupam Sarwaikar

List of FTI members

Current FTI members (excluding a guest member Meera Sanyal) are listed at <http://freedomteam.in/blog/all-members>. Most of these members have not yet graduated to full (i.e. paying and voting) membership.

AAryan Rao	Dr Munish Raizada	Rahul Bhartiya
Abhijit Gadgil	Dssovani	Rahul Pandit
Aditya Dash	Geeta Gokhale	Rajeev Jain
Aditya Sheth	Gowtham Thotapalli	Raju Choppella
Ajay Anand	Harshad Borkar	Ramanadr
Akalpita Paranjpe	Himanshu Joshi	Ranjan Kumar Singh
Anil Sharma	Hiten Mehta	Rathri.rvce
Anubhava Srivastava	Honish Zaveri	Ritesh Shukla
Anupam Sarwaikar	Joe Winston	Ritu Nigam
Anurag Shrivastava	Kamal Kishore Sharma	RK Atri
AR Patil	Kamal Shah	Sachin Kundu
Arrk00	Kumar Narasimha	Sandeep Shelke
Arun Shanker	Lalit Anand	Sanjay Mehrotra
Arvind Shah	Liju Nair	Sanjeev Sabhlok
Ashish Jauhari	LK Kandpal	Sasy Kumar
Ashok Sagar	M.sundarraaj	Satinder Gambhir
Ashutosh Shastri	MA Farooqui	Saurabh Dwivedi
Atul Agarwal	Madhu Shankar KS	Shankar Warriar
Awadhesh Sharma	Mail2hargovind	Shantanu Bhagwat
B. Krishna Kanth	Maria	Shishir Kumar
Babu Joseph	Mayank Chauhan	Shivendra Mathur
Barry Bharathan	Mayank Mishra	Siddanagouda Biradar
Bhanu MH	Merlin Francis	Siddharth P K
Bhrigu Dutta	Nalin Malhotra	Sidharth Shankar
Bhuvan Singh	Namita Prakash	Somnath Bharti
Biren Soni	Namrita Bendapudi	Sanjay Seth
Bruce Varughese	Neosurya	Sudhir Gupta
Captain Sidhu	Nikhil Ojha	Sumeet Tayal
Chandrasekaran Balakrishnan	Nilesh Sonar	Suneeta Dhariwal
Charan Srinivasan	Nimmish Chaudhary	Sunil Gehlot
Chetan Agrawal	Nitinrastogi73	Supratim Basu
Deepak Maun	NP Singh	Suresh Adina
Dharmendra Mishra	Prahlad Pandey	Swapnil Khandelwal
Dipinder Sekhon	Pranav Sharma	Tathagat Mohanty
Dominic Fernando	Pratheek Gadde	Ujjwal Banerjee
	Prem Sagar Nagarth	Vishal Singh

Recent public talks by FTI members

Since July 2009 FTI members have been speaking in public forums about the changes needed in India and about what FTI is doing to bring about these changes. These outreach events include:

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1. Indore, Madhya Pradesh, 2 July to 9 July 2009 [Shantanu Bhagwat]
2. Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh, 30 August 2009 [Anil Sharma]
3. Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, 2 September 2009 [Anil Sharma]
4. Bangalore (March 2010) [Sanjay Mehrotra]
5. Guwahati and Delhi, Feb/Mar 2010 [PDF report] | Videos [Sanjeev Sabhlok]

In addition **two recent talks** have helped spread the message:

6. At IIT Delhi by Shantanu Bhagwat on 2 August 2010 [Shantanu Bhagwat]
7. At TEDx in Kakinada by Dipinder Sekhon on 21 August 2010 [Dipinder Sekhon]

The slides used by Shantanu and Dipinder are available [here](#). Videos will be uploaded in due course. Enjoy!

FTI Youtube video series by Bhuvan Singh

Bhuvan Singh is leading a program to develop FTI videos for Youtube. A number of them are now online. You are particularly invited to view this one (click on the title below).

THE RISE: Freedom Team of India

Articles by Team Members

NOTE: Only FTI members can write for TAGI. Non-members may wish to contribute to [India Policy Update](#). Freedom Partners could send in comments, as well. Since FTI members are volunteers with full-time jobs, this magazine is very lightly edited. We also aim to give full freedom of expression to our members so you can get to know them better.

The views expressed in these articles **do not necessarily** represent the FTI views.

1. Religious freedom in the free society



Sanjeev Sabhlok, PhD, formerly of the Indian Administrative Service, works as in the Australian public sector. He is Honorary Member of FTI. Contact: sabhlok@yahoo.com. Subscribe to his blog at <http://sabhlokcity.com/>

This article was first published in Freedom First, September 2010. Freedom First is published from Mumbai. Subscription details at: <http://www.liberalsindia.com/freedomfirst/rightframe.htm>

Tolerance and respect for others' opinions is the basis of religious freedom – the distinguishing hallmark of the free society. This month I briefly review how mankind discovered tolerance. I then ask whether India is tolerant. Finally, I outline the religious freedom policy of the Freedom Team of India (FTI:

<http://freedomteam.in/>).

The History of Religious Freedom

Intolerance has been the norm throughout most of human history. Organised religions have spearheaded this intolerance, their surface claims of love for humanity masking their support for brutal violence against those who hold different views. Collectivist, even tribal in their origin (often geographically localised), organised religions think of life as a zero-sum game with the loss of one 'soul' from a particular religion being seen as another's gain. There is, in consequence, a ferocious competition to harvest our souls.

It is true that, as Vivekananda noted, it is not necessarily the founders who stoked intolerance, but their followers. "The disciples of all prophets have always inextricably mixed up the ideas of the Master with the *person*, and at last killed the ideas for the *person*". But it hardly matters to the innocent child killed in religious violence whose ideas killed him – the founder's or a follower's.

The modern conception of tolerance has taken an inordinately long time to develop. Nascent forms of tolerance arose in ancient Persia and India. Thus, "[t]he Hindus had one peculiar idea – they never made any doctrines or dogmas in religion; and the latter has had the greatest growth" (Vivekananda). In its policy on

religious tolerance, FTI accepts that India should be proud of this history of tolerance. It is important to remember, however, that the ancient Hindu conception was not a theoretical formulation but an experiential practice, a loosely defined way of life. Hindu tolerance therefore frays easily when stressed, often being skin-deep. On the other hand, religions now often classified as intolerant, like Islam, had some episodes of (relative) tolerance in the past.

But it is Christianity that makes the loudest claims about its “contributions” to tolerance. Robert A. Sirico goes further, claiming that “[i]t is Christianity that lies at the root of the body of ideas we know today as classical liberalism”¹. This view is factually incorrect. In my draft manuscript, *The Discovery of Freedom*² (DOF), I show clearly that the modern conception of tolerance was a *reaction* to internecine massacres within Christendom, not a consequence of its positive advocacy of religious harmony.

The credit for laying the theoretical foundation for tolerance must go squarely to liberal philosophers like John Locke (1632-1704). Locke cited a few never-practiced elements of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to advocate “[t]he toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion”³. Voltaire (1694-1778) shamed Christendom with his commentary on the massacre in Béziers. Only then did Christendom begin to move away from its 1,500-year history of mindless brutality.

The modern liberal voice has been institutionalised through constitutionally protected tolerance. Even Christianity now speaks of tolerance. In the 1965 *Declaration of Religious Freedom*, Pope Paul VI wrote that “the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.” One only hopes that all organised religions will one day internalise this idea of the philosophers of liberty.

Religious Freedom Under Siege in India

The level of religious freedom in India declined precipitously with the advent of Islam, particularly in reaction to fanatics like Aurgangzeb who overshadowed relatively benign kings like Akbar. A bitter taste from religious excess disrupted relations between Hindus and Muslims. During India’s independence movement, a few unthinking statements and actions by the leaders exacerbated the existing rift. This led to the partition of India on religious grounds – a grievous blow to liberalism, formalising as it did, at least implicitly, a place for religion in the affairs of the state.

Post-independence, India’s major political parties did not try to clearly separate the jurisdictions of the state and religion. Instead, our lawmakers enacted laws for specific religious communities in the Indian Parliament. Our major political parties identify themselves with religion: one provides state-based subsidies for Muslims; the other insists on a greater role for Hindus. Communal tensions continue to fester below the surface, ready to explode at the slightest provocation. Religious freedom is under siege in India. This has had adverse impacts on freedom of expression as well, as I discussed in my article in *Freedom First* in July 2010.

One would even suggest that religious fundamentalism is stronger today than it was ever before. Believers in Hindutva reject the idea of religious freedom altogether and want to re-open ancient wounds (at least that is the inference one draws from the writing and actions of those who claim to follow this ideology). Therefore, even after living in India for nearly a thousand years, Muslims do not always feel welcome – which is not to say that they have always helped their own cause.

Firmly separating the domains of religion and the state by enforcing law and order and bringing about a sense of common national purpose requires leadership of a calibre that India has not yet produced. Only liberals can provide such leadership, but India’s liberals have deserted the battlefield – or they had until now when FTI has started assembling.

FTI’s position on religious freedom

FTI is a group of leaders unambiguously committed to freedom including religious freedom. Its members firmly believe that religion is a personal matter to be practiced inside our own homes, temples or churches, not something on which governments should create policy and enact laws. Governments should never get involved in any religious activity (such as through subsidies) unless it trespasses others’ liberties. FTI therefore does not inquire into or ask its members to alter their personal religious beliefs. Simply speaking, their religious beliefs are not the business of FTI.

¹ Robert A. Sirico, *Must Religion Be a Threat to Liberty?* Sydney: Centre for Independent Studies, 2008, p.12.

² Available for comment at <http://discovery.sabhlोकcity.com/>

³ Locke, John, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1689, [<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/locke/john/l81t/>]

FTI believes that once the rule of law is enforced, religions will thrive on their own merit. FTI policy asks everyone, including religions, to be given complete freedom of speech – subject to accountability. This includes the right to preach one’s religion and convert others to one’s faith. (I have reservations against the use of foreign funds for such advocacy, but this concern is not FTI policy at the moment.) FTI requires such freedom to be exercised with care since freedom is never license to cheat. To the extent that religious activity leads to conversion, the state has an interest in ensuring that no coercion, bribes, or misleading conduct is involved.

Freedom Team of India

It is abundantly clear that no major political party in India cares about our liberties. The only way, therefore, to foster religious freedom and tolerance is for liberals to assemble and seek a mandate from the people through the hustings. Please therefore join or otherwise support FTI. Become a Freedom Partner!

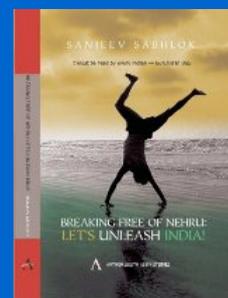
Recommended readings

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

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FTI’s Speakers Panel



Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar



Pavan Choudary



Gurcharan Das



Barun Mitra



S.V. Raju



Ramesh Ramanathan



Parth Shah



Atanu Dey



Mohit Saytananda



Vivek Iyer

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Surely, India has 1500 leaders who believe in freedom!



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