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CENTENARY OF A MOVEMENT LAUNCHED BY MAHATMA GANDHI

A hundred years ago, in the summer of 1921, Mahatma Gandhi accompanied by Maulana Shaukat Ali, toured Andhra Desa where towns vied with one another in welcoming the Mahatma with civic receptions. Gandhiji responded with stirring speeches emphasizing the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability and Khadi promotion. What he saw at Masulipatnam gladdened him though what he heard at Cocanada (Kakinada) saddened him. At Rajahmundry on April 3 he made a memorable speech in which he said: "Hindu-Muslim unity is necessary for national evolution as breathing is necessary for life. Maulana Shaukat Ali and myself have been presenting to India what we mean by Hindu-Muslim unity. We are both staunch in our respective faiths—he to Islam and I to Hindu Sanatana Dharma. Hindu-Muslim unity and non-violence means controlling of passion, clearing of minds and hearts of mean jealousies, and therefore I call this movement a movement of self-purification and self-restraint. You cannot drink and cannot womanize."

"The Andhras have captivated me," said the Mahatma. He was impressed by their spirit of sacrifice, zest for social reconstruction and their resolve to eradicate the obnoxious practice of untouchability. At Bezvada he was visibly moved when he was shown dhoties and sarees made of Khadi. He commended 'the nobility of bearing combined with modesty and generosity' of the Andhras. The hard working Andhra women reminded him of the women of Maharashtra. "The Punjabi sisters must give the pride of place to the Andhra sisters in fine spinning. Some of the ladies of Masulipatnam have demonstrated their skill in weaving fine yarn which would beat any from Japan, France or Lancashire," For Gandhiji it was 'a soul-stirring experience' to see women working in a leaf-cottage. "They cleaned and carded and spun. For me the wheel gave the music of the spheres," wrote the Mahatma.

"My visit to Masulipatnam brought tears of joy to my eyes," wrote Gandhiji. "It was my day of silence. I told Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya to procure freedom from all noise and demonstration when I entered Masulipatnam. People had been warned beforehand. It was early morning when we motored in. People lined the decorated streets, but not a sound was heard. All were noiselessly standing in their places. I appreciated the gentle love and I realized the capacity of the people for discipline and their quick response to varying demands on their patriotic spirit. I praised God for his abundant mercy with tears of joy."

It was Gandhiji's first tour of Andhra desa and at every place people of all age groups attended his meetings with women liberally giving away their ornaments for the Harijan Relief Fund. He said that the Andhra desa was second to Bihar in serving the poor and the less fortunate sections of the society and hoped that Andhra desa would soon catch up to claim the first place. Two things, however, amused him and he smilingly said that in Andhra desa men wore jewellery, not knowing, perhaps, that he would 'snatch' it away from them. The Andhras, he observed, were 'lavish in conferring titles on their leaders.' He, however, made two exceptions Konda Venkatappayya, older than the Mahatma, and Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao who richly deserved their titles 'Desabhaktha' Venkatappayya for his selfless service and 'Viswadatha', Nageswara Rao for his generosity. "He was never so happy as when he was giving," said the Mahatma about Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao in a fitting tribute.

The Movement for self-purification and self-restraint was conceived by Gandhiji in 1921 during his Andhra tour. Gandhiji fasted for self-purification. Self-restraint which Plato described as a superior virtue was relentlessly practised by the Mahatma. The Movement launched a hundred years ago continues to be relevant forever. It was said of Abraham Lincoln that "The longer he is dead the more he is remembered." It applies to Mahatma Gandhi as well with the addition of the words "the more he is needed in today's world."

- The Editor

In the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists,
in the midst of darkness light persists. God is Life, Truth, Light.

- Mahatma Gandhi

INDIA'S AIR-POWER CONUNDRUM

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India's Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) could have avoided controversy and the recent Inter-Service spat, had he been a little more selective about phraseology. While the Air Chief was entitled to take umbrage at the IAF being termed a "support arm," no one could have reasonably objected if the CDS had described 'air-power' as performing a support function, since the two are not synonymous.

One felt a sense of *déjà vu*, at the ensuing uproar; having witnessed similar scenarios during the proceedings of the 1999 Arun Singh Task Force, as well as the 2011 Naresh Chandra Committee on defence reforms. This was, by no means, the first time that air-power issues had triggered bitter debates that served to stall and delay the process of defence reform in India – and elsewhere.

Ever since the advent of military aviation, air-power has been the cause of fierce controversies and debates, world-wide. While the outcome of strategic bombing, in WW II, remains an issue of disputation, the extensive employment of air-power in support of land and maritime operations met with outstanding success – the German *Blitzkrieg* being a prime example. Allied air-operations did, however, see multiple instances of inter-Service overlap and confusion, and this led the US Congress to enact the National Security Act of 1947, which, apart from unifying the armed forces, created an independent US Air Force (USAF).

However, many issues related to resources, as well as institutional boundaries, remained unresolved, and bitter infighting broke out between the US Navy and the USAF, over aviation 'roles and missions.' Given the urgency of addressing these contentious issues, in March 1948, the US Secretary (Minister) of Defense cloistered himself with the service Chiefs, and, together, they hammered out a consensus. This was enshrined in the 'US Code of Federal Laws,' and remains the legal basis for roles and missions of the US military.

In India, no such discussion has ever taken place and there is no mutually agreed upon or government-mandated demarcation of aviation roles and missions. Periodic 'sniping' and even 'poaching' has, therefore, taken place; leaving the IAF beset with a deep sense of insecurity, for reasons that I outline.

The 1970s saw an acrimonious debate between the IAF and the Indian Navy (IN) about discharge of the maritime reconnaissance (MR) role, which the air force had inherited, at independence. The penetration, in 1971, of our waters by Pakistani submarines, having brought matters to a head, the government decided to hand over the MR role and aircraft to the IN in 1976.

The Indian Army, too, had been demanding the creation of an integral air arm, citing unsatisfactory aviation support by the IAF in forward areas. The issue became another inter-Service squabble, till the government intervened, in 1986, and sanctioned the transfer of assets from the IAF to the newly formed Army Aviation Corps. The controversy did not end here, because control of attack helicopters still remains an issue of inter-Service contention.

Thus, the IAF, having seen sister Services appropriate its roles and assets, twice within a decade has, understandably, remained wary about joint ness. The concepts of CDS and integrated commands which would require air-assets being placed under non-IAF control, ring alarm bells in Air HQs. There are misperceptions on both sides of the 'air-power divide', and the crying need of the day is for the tri-Service leadership to sit around a table and provide mutual reassurance regarding service 'roles and missions.'

Air power, in the post-Cold War era, acquired a new aura, through hyperbole like 'strategic paralysis' and 'shock and awe,' which gave new life to old dogmas. Based on the lethality and speed of modern air-power, it is claimed that once 'air-dominance' has been achieved, the war is virtually won. In this paradigm close support of surface forces receives low priority, because quick military victories can be won from the air at minimal cost. However, such euphoric assumptions were based on recent conflicts where modern air forces wielding advanced technology, had

Parliamentary democracy means tolerance not only of those who agree with us but all those who do not agree with us; it calls for discipline and restraint and above all for peaceful methods of action.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

encountered irregular forces.

India, on the other hand, is faced with well-equipped, motivated and competent adversaries. The PAF, although numerically inferior, is a professional peer and has the assurance of Chinese support. The PLA Air Force not only outnumbers the IAF but has the advantage of an advanced technological base. In our calculus, therefore, we cannot afford to bank on any specific advantage, nor speak nonchalantly about establishing ‘air dominance’ over Pakistan or Tibet.

For too long have we treated the demarcation of air-power roles and missions as a ‘holy cow’ and shirked from free and frank discussion at the highest level. Therefore, the facade of inter-Service bonhomie has concealed a germ of discord, which needs to be exorcised. The conundrum that needs to be resolved is posed by, the IAF’s certainty about the ‘indivisibility of air-power,’ versus the belief of the army and navy, that aviation must be an integral resource, available at their disposal.

The questions that our military leaders will need to address, jointly, are: (a) Should attainment of air dominance be an end in itself which supersedes military and maritime strategies? (b) Should air power be seen as merely an instrumentality to gain operational objectives on land, sea and air? (c) Or is there a via-media which will maximise the synergy and combat effectiveness of all the three Services, perhaps by modifying the IAF’s 2012 Doctrine?

Three final points need to be made, in the closely related context, of Joint Commands being currently contemplated/constituted. Firstly, it must be ensured that allocation of air-power is not made piece-meal, but flows from an integrated, tri-Service plan. Secondly, operational deployment of the Command’s aviation resources must be managed, on behalf of the C-in-C, by his 2/3-star IAF Component Commander. Finally, the government must clarify that most high-level posts will, eventually, be tenable by officers of all three Services. The rationale for integrated commands, must, therefore, not be dictated by provision, to each Service, of its ‘quota’ of ranks.

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AUKUS ROILS THE INDO-PACIFIC

The strategic implications of AUKUS for the geopolitics of the extended Indo-Pacific region in general, and the maritime domain in particular, are significant and multi-layered

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United States (US) President Joe Biden unveiled AUKUS — the acronym for trilateral security cooperation between Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the US — on Wednesday. At a joint press event, the leaders of the three nations announced that Australia would soon acquire conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines for its navy with the help of the other two countries. Canberra has decided to cancel a submarine deal with France, much to the dismay of Paris.

The strategic implications of AUKUS for the geopolitics of the extended Indo-Pacific region in general, and the maritime domain in particular, are significant and multi-layered.

This major policy decision comes just ahead of the first in-person Quad summit to be held in Washington on September 24 that will bring together the leaders of the US, India, Japan and Australia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is travelling to the US next week for the Quad summit and the annual United Nations (UN) General Assembly deliberations, will also have a bilateral meeting with Biden for the first time in-person, since the latter assumed office.

The Donald Trump administration had accorded high priority to the Indo-Pacific in the US security calculus, and the Biden administration has retained, and further built on, this focus. The first multilateral summit, convened by Biden in March (weeks after assuming office), at the virtual level, was of Quad leaders. The common objective of the four nations was reiterated in a rare joint op-ed article in the Washington Post. As is the norm with Quad, no explicit reference was made to China but the four leaders (Biden, Modi, Yoshihide Suga, and Scott Morrison) shared their vision of an Indo-Pacific that is “free, open, resilient and inclusive”, and

The easiest and most fruitful method of keeping yourself free from dust and rust is a good company (satsang).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

which, they added, has “increasingly been tested”. They also asserted that this had only “strengthened their resolve to reckon with the most urgent of global challenges together”. Despite his preoccupation with Afghanistan and domestic politics, Biden has clearly sustained the initiative and energy displayed in March on the Indo-Pacific.

To their credit, the AUKUS sherpas have worked swiftly over the last six months to bring Australia into the small group of nations that have nuclear-propelled submarines. Outlining the rationale for the decision to enable Australia with nuclear boats, Biden noted, “We need to be able to address both the current strategic environment in the region and how it may evolve. Because the future of each of our nations — and indeed the world — depends on a free and open Indo-Pacific enduring and flourishing in the decades ahead.”

The strategic environment of the Indo-Pacific has been roiled by China’s muscular assertiveness in the South China Sea in recent years. Beijing’s blatant rejection of international law, the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), related to the maritime domain was compounded by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy resorting to unilateral muscle-flexing to advance its own interpretation of historical territorial claims over disputed waters. Smaller Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) neighbours were intimidated by this belligerence and China has defiantly contested the “free and open Indo-Pacific” formulation of the global community.

Quad nations have been consistent in upholding the principle of freedom of navigation, as contained in UNCLOS, at the political and diplomatic levels. However, there had been much speculation over whether the US, in partnership with like-minded nations, would be able to lend this principle any tangible military profile – or whether it would be limited to talking points?

AUKUS is the first step that conveys the US resolve to punctuate the maritime domain in a manner that will not only protect Australia’s core security interests, but shape the regional strategic environment.

A nuclear submarine has reach and stealth that is of a much higher order than a conventional diesel boat, and will be able to ensure a very high degree of sea-denial to any potential adversary.

Historically, major power contestation has been influenced by sea-power in a definitive manner. Beijing has been cognisant of this tenet, as also of its own maritime vulnerabilities and geopolitical constraints.

By providing nuclear propulsion assistance to Australia, the US is making a rare exception (as it did with the UK in 1958) to its domestic policies. Barring the US, there is no other navy that has nuclear submarines in China’s proximity, and the inclusion of Australia into this category will inhibit the PLA Navy in a variety of ways.

China has castigated the US for building “exclusionary blocs targeting and harming the interests of third parties”, and accused Washington of being in transgression of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). This ischutzpah of a high order, given that China had provided assistance to both Pakistan and North Korea in their illicit nuclear programmes, against the letter and spirit of NPT, of which China is a signatory. But this is part of the multi-layered opacity that characterises the complex regional strategic environment.

On the same day that AUKUS was unveiled, the Korean peninsula was animated by ballistic missile tests conducted by both Koreas, with Seoul carrying out a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) test. China has called for “restraint”, with Japan and South Korea remaining wary of Pyongyang.

While AUKUS has been cautiously welcomed by Japan and Singapore, France is incensed by the cancellation of its lucrative contract. India has chosen to remain non-committal for now. But there is little doubt that the Indo-Pacific teacup has been stirred vigorously by AUKUS. How China reads and reacts to the tea leaves will be critical for the peace and security of the region.

(HINDUSTAN TIMES - SEP 17, 2021)

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There is in Jawaharlal Nehru so much of the spirit of Spring to which Rabindranath Tagore likened him. Few men of his age in India, fewer men at his age anywhere, can claim to possess the amazing vitality and perennial charm which are the secret alike of his greatness and glamour. - K. Iswara Dutt

GANDHIJI'S THOUGHTS - MORE RELEVANT NOW, THAN EVER “WE MAY IGNORE HIM AT OUR OWN RISK” - I

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Albert Einstein said of Mahatma Gandhi that:
“Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

On August 15, 1947, when the rest of India was celebrating Independence in great pomp and splendour, and its leaders were waxing eloquent on the nation's *“tryst with destiny”*, Mahatma Gandhi, who successfully spearheaded the country's freedom movement, had just returned to Kolkata from an epic four-month peace mission in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to douse the communal fires at Naokhali. For him, to bring peace and communal harmony in Bengal was more important than participating in the Independence day celebrations in Delhi.

When the present Prime Minister had recently declared August 14 as the “Partition Horrors Remembrance Day” to acknowledge the pain undergone by the Indians due to the partition of India in 1947, any right thinking Indian would have recalled the crucial role played by Gandhiji to restore communal harmony at that time and strive to prevent partition of the country based on religion. Today's political leaders, on the other hand, display no hesitation whatsoever to misuse caste, creed, language, religion and what not, to splinter the society and disturb its harmony, just to win elections.

Gandhiji was a practitioner of his ideas, not a gratuitous preacher, a thinker *par excellence* in search of the truth, not an obscurantist who suppresses the facts, a true believer in the strength of communal harmony and unity, not a promoter of societal dissensions and tension and, above all, a visionary who could think of the welfare of the future generations, not a short-sighted, self-styled political leader of the kind we witness these days.

Efficacy of non-violence as the means to stem violence:

“An eye for eye only ends up making the whole world blind” sums up his profound concern for the long-term implications of retributive justice, an idea that permeates governance these days.

To understand the violence that we see all around these days, we should recall what Gandhiji had said about its causes. The “roots of violence” lie in *“wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice and politics without principles”*. If a responsible government truly wishes to eliminate societal violence, it should address each one of these root causes individually, rather than dealing with the symptoms on the surface.

Poorna swaraj:

It was as early as in 1931 that Gandhiji had explained his idea of “poorna swaraj”.

*“The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning **self-rule** and **self-restraint**, and not freedom from all restraint which ‘independence’ often means”*.

Gandhiji's idea of “independence” is thus at variance with the way it is interpreted by today's leaders, who seem to believe, not in empowering the people, but opiating them to depend on charity and who are ever ready to sermonise the people to exercise self-restraint without practising it themselves. The country may have attained independence from the colonial rule, but it is yet to become independent of the colonial practices and attitudes.

Gandhiji had explained his idea of swaraj in the following words.

“Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority..... By political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have

To plead for an awakened interest in Indian culture is not to advocate a return to the conditions of antiquity. The past never returns.

- S. Radhakrishnan

systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be is more than I can tell. I have described it as Ramaraj, i.e. sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.”

The Indian Constitution derives its legitimacy from the sovereignty of the people. Unfortunately, power in the hands of the people is anathema to those who are authoritarian in their thinking and who view themselves as “strong” leaders. Today’s politics are based on authoritarianism. If a citizen were to resist authority, in today’s environment, he could face vexatious court cases and perhaps indefinite incarceration.

Gandhiji firmly believed in the moral fibre of the citizens as the driving force for self governance.

“Self-government depends entirely upon our internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds. Indeed, self-government which does not require that continuous striving to attain it and to sustain it is not worth the name. I have, therefore, endeavoured to show both in word and deed, that political self- government, that is, self-government for a large number of men and women, is no better than individual self-government, and, therefore, it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule”.

Gandhiji’s idea of swaraj is that it is indivisible, not fragmented along the fault-lines of divisions in terms of caste, creed, religion etc.

“The Swaraj of my... our... dream recognises no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of the lettered persons nor yet of moneyed men.....It has been said that Indian Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e. the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all people, is the rule of justice”

One wonders whether the political parties these days have any clarity on the idea of swaraj, as envisioned by Gandhiji. In fact, Gandhiji’s concept of “Poorna Swaraj” is not exclusive, as is being made to appear today. It is a secular, inclusive one, encompassing the society as a whole, not in parts, as

the parts are interdependent and they cannot stand on their own.

“Poorna Swaraj—‘Poorna’ complete because it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich landowner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Musalmans, as much for Parsis and Christians as for the Jains, Jews and Sikhs, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life.My notion of Poorna Swaraj is not isolated independence but healthy and dignified independence. My nationalism, fierce though it is, is not exclusive, is not devised to harm any nation or individual. Legal maxims are not so legal as they are moral. I believe in the eternal truth of ‘sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas’ (‘Use thy own property so as not to injure thy neighbour’s’)”...Complete Independence through truth and nonviolence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. This Independence is never exclusive. It is therefore wholly compatible with inter-dependence within or without. Practice will always fall short of the theory, even as the drawn line falls short of the theoretical line of Euclid. Therefore complete Independence will be complete only to the extent of our approach in practice to truth and non-violence”

One should not miss Gandhiji’s reference above to the purist geometry of Euclid, the great mathematician of the 4th Century BC, a reference that shows an entirely different dimension of the Mahatma, that of an erudite scholar, familiar with the history of mathematics and its basic foundations.

Gram Swaraj:

Gandhiji extended his idea of self-rule to propose the basic socio-economic unit of reconstruction and development at the village level, coining the term, “Gram Swaraj”, the grass-root level foundation of a democratic system for the nation, a concept that visualised the village as a self-reliant, self-governing unit of democracy. After all, one cannot have a democracy at the national level, without its building blocks at the village level equally, if not more, being democratic. This concept later found a formal expression in Article 40 of the Constitution, that came into force on the 6th of November, 1949. It took more

Scientific research, as is well known, even when inspired purely by academic ideals, leads sooner or later, to results of practical value.

- C.V.Raman

than four decades later for the law-makers to enact the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 to provide a Constitutional status to the Gram Sabha with an elected Panchayat, with some limited powers to be transferred to it by the State, at its pleasure. After another four years, the Centre felt compelled to legislate the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act or PESA specifically for the tribal areas notified under the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution, giving near total authority to the tribal Gram Sabhas in decision making on all aspects of economic development, still a far cry from the Gandhian idea of a self-reliant village democratic entity. More than two decades have elapsed but neither the Gram Sabhas in the Scheduled Areas nor those in the rest of the country have attained the extent of self-rule and self-reliance visualised by the law of the land. Gandhiji's idea of Gram Swaraj is far from being translated into action.

Today's political leadership at all levels, though elected through the democratic processes set in motion by the Constitution, seems to be more authoritarian than democratic, contrary to what Gandhiji had visualised during the thirties and what the framers of the Constitution had envisioned more than seven decades ago. Had the Gandhian concept of Gram Swaraj been adopted in its letter and spirit when India got its independence, the nation would have become a far more self-confident and self-reliant than what it is now, justifying the idea of independence in its real sense.

Nai Talim:

In 1937, Gandhiji put forward his idea of "Nai Talim", a different approach to the education system, as the means to transform the society by removing the existing social disparities, the distinctions between knowledge and work, teaching and learning, among others. Nai Talim is aimed at removing the caste-based vocation system that was prevalent at that time much more than it is there today. He wanted education to be accessible to all equitably. Nai Talim sought to bring in parity between mental abilities and manual abilities so that the idea that the latter were inferior to the former could be dispelled. "By education, I mean an overall, all around drawing out the best in child and man, in body, mind, and spirit," Gandhiji said.

Nai Talim proposed an education system in which education and labour are complementary and felt this move in turn would help in eliminating unnatural division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', rural-urban divide through equitable balances. The dignity of labour and skill-based learning were the basic tenets of the Gandhian approach.

Eight decades after these paradigm changes were proposed by Gandhiji, the education system we have in place today is yet to get rid of the inequities that caused concern to him. It has not succeeded in fully removing the rural-urban and the caste-based inequities. During the last several decades, a new kind of divide, between expensive private school education facilities and more easily accessible public sector education facilities has emerged, without adding in any way to the quality of teaching. To some extent, urbanisation has ironed out the inequities, though to a limited extent. Every time a new government takes over, a new education policy is brought in, without addressing the means to address the inequities that Nai Talim sought to remove. It is perhaps time to revisit Nai Talim and modify the basic approach to education system.

(to be continued)

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Remembrance of Things Past - II

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On the flip side, however, the ethos of the university was provincial and paternalistic, and the pursuit of a degree a Russian Roulette. The flagship programmes were the honours course and doctoral programme. Students who completed honours courses in arts and humanities were automatically conferred the M. A. degree a year after completing the honours course, and their science counterparts the M. Sc., degree after a year of research and submission of a dissertation. Till 1957, students who graduated from affiliated colleges in the *mofussil* and desirous of acquiring a post-graduate degree had to migrate to the universities in North India like Sagar, Benares and Allahabad, or alternately join the second year of the honours course in the Andhra University. Any course

Bold has been my message to the people of the West.
Bolder is my message to you, my beloved Countrymen.

- Swami Vivekananda

in which the performance in final examinations is the sole determinant of the eligibility for a degree cannot but be, at least in part, a roulette. But the honours course was an unusual roulette. A considerable proportion of students failed to qualify for an honours degree; such students were recommended for a degree. A 'recommended degree' was more a badge of shame than of achievement and was virtually useless. In my class of twelve, four were so recommended for a degree, and another four just made it. Such results were bizarre if the student recommended for a degree was one who joined in the second year of the honours course, after passing the degree examination with distinction. In the University of those days, the bizarre was not an anomaly but a common occurrence. Human beings find it difficult to accept adversity with fortitude and tend to blame others for their plight. That being so, it was but natural for students to believe that the roulette was fixed, that what counted was not so much their performance but what the teachers thought of them. Except for law, and to some extent the engineering departments, the other departments were small communities with all the strengths and weaknesses of such communities. A communitarian spirit of solidarity was set off by intrusiveness, lack of private space, and clannishness. Everyone knew everyone else, or thought he knew. Whether a student was obsessively devoted to his studies or distracted by other activities, such as politics, cultural activities, or just teen-age romance, was common knowledge. To compound the students' difficulty, departmental politics was all too obvious, and baffling. In the University of my days, many teachers were like jealous warring Gods on Mount Olympus. While no organisation can be immune from organisational politics, 'academic life seems to foster feuds with particular ease' The well-documented enmity between Henry Tilzard and Frederick Lindemann [Later Lord Cherwell], distinguished British scientists who made signal contribution to the British war effort, is a good example of that ease. 'To those he liked,' the Prof.', as Lindemann was called, 'was generous, helpful and entertaining', and 'against those who had displeased him he waged a vendetta'. The memoirs of Milton Freidman brings out that American campuses are no different; respected academic figures could be small-minded and petty in campus academic politics. Nor

was Andhra University an exception. Students who were my contemporaries widely believed that one could not be 'in the good looks' of a teacher without incurring the hostility of some other teachers. Rare was a student who was not stressed out by the very thought of as well as the hectic preparations for the final examinations of the honours courses. The trauma of my university days still turns up in my dream life as incidents such as not preparing for an examination or not completing the thesis, or more figuratively missing a bus or a train, or in recent times of a flight. Even while I was at the university, the honours course was phased out, and after a few years the University offered only postgraduate and doctoral programmes, and with several post-graduate centres coming up in the affiliated colleges, the University campus ceased to have a monopoly over postgraduate courses.

Life after honours was not a bed of roses either. Pursuing a doctoral degree was as much playing the Russian roulette as studying the honours course. Life as a research scholar was a *gurukulavaasa*- living in a hermitage serving the *guru*, which was the traditional mode of learning in ancient India. The learning environment that permeates a *gurukula* is legendary. Teaching undergraduates makes one learn, teaching post-graduates makes one think, and daily communion with a seeker of Truth transmutes one's learning experience and even one's Self. However, the Real is often different from the Ideal. In conjuring romantic images of *gurukula*, one tends to forget the implicit postulates of the traditional *guru shishya* relationship as well as the sociology of the *gurukula*. The underlying principle of *gurukulavaasa* is that one learns only through revelation for which the Grace of the *guru* is necessary, and that Grace can be secured only by propitiating through steadfast devotion the *guru*, who is an embodiment of God himself and has *shaapaanugrahashakthi*, awesome power to bless and curse. One cannot take Grace for granted, take it as a quid pro quid for *shraddha* and *bhakthi*, effort and devotion. For millennia, theologians have been grappling with the inscrutability of Divine Grace; that is the subtext of Kafka's oeuvre. As Sri Puttaparthi Narayanachary put it in his devotional hymn, *eeswaraajnaetulunna doovaruguduru*- who knows what His Will is, whether God would choose one for redemption or damnation. Some *gurus* were

The emergence of Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) bolsters civil society, strengthens law enforcement and makes markets more efficient. It can also humble some of the world's most powerful countries.

- The Economist, August 7, 2021

loving and caring, but many more were forbiddingly stern given to subjecting their disciples to fiery ordeals. Fellow disciples, being only human, were prone to run down others so that they can rise in the opinion of the *guru*. Man, human, all-too-human, playing God, even if he were a revered *guru*, could be devastating to other men who are at the receiving end. Or to draw a historical analogy, research guides of my university days were like the *doktorväter* of old German universities who could make or mar the life and career of his students. All in all, for most, life as a research scholar was often Kafkaesque- utterly unpredictable and inscrutable. The discovery of the problem [the research topic] as well as its resolution was as much a matter of luck and perseverance as of pluck. There were, of course, a fortunate few who could complete their doctoral work in the stipulated minimum period of two years. But for most, pursuit of a Ph. D., degree was a seemingly unending Odyssey, or a marathon race seemingly without a finish. Few research scholars escaped a patch of despair and frustration. Many overcame that patch and went to complete their theses, but many more could not. Either they dropped out of research altogether, their self-confidence shattered, or alternately they moved out to other research institutions. Parting of ways between the guide and the scholar, the disruption of an erstwhile intimate relationship like divorce, often led to bitterness and acrimony. Needless to say, completion of the thesis and its acceptance evoked a universal feeling of relief.

II

Looking back, there were many strands of education I received in the university: the education I received in the Chemistry Department, a good acquaintance with other disciplines that unconsciously seeped in from living on a university campus with students belonging to different disciplines, the vast sweep of knowledge acquired from a rambling study of books of all types in the University Library, and a broad liberal education flowing from the all-pervasive ambience of cultural and political ferment that pervaded the university. The ambience of the Andhra University in those happy, less constrained days is captured by what 'Professor' C.E.M. Joad said about the Oxford University:

One is surrounded by the visible loveliness of the places; there are also invisible influences by which the very texture of existence is pervaded. These together form an atmosphere by which dwellers in the University are unconscionably impregnated; and just as a fire of leaves in autumn may smoulder for hours and then break suddenly into flame, so, as one gets about one's business,...one may find one's senses, suddenly unsealed and one's spirit flaming out to meet the beauty with which one is surrounded.

I can trace to my University days two of my cardinal beliefs, namely that a university education is very much more than the study of a subject, and that a university stands for a community of scholars belonging to different disciplines and engaged in inter-disciplinary dialogue. I could not therefore but appreciate the principled stand years later of Professor Yash Pal objecting to the recognition of the Telugu university by the University Grants Commission, even though Yash Pal's stand ran counter to what I was striving to secure as state education secretary. A single discipline university, be it language, medicine, or technology, is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms.

The cultural and political ferment that pervaded the University was mainly a legacy of the movement for carving out a separate State for the Andhras which began in the first decade of the 20th century. It is to the credit of Andhras that they established, through their long agitation for a separate linguistic state, the principle underlying the linguistic reorganisation of States in 1956. It is also to their credit, through the long agitation for the separation of Telengana from Andhra Pradesh, that they established the contrary principle that language alone may not be adequate to sustain the political and emotional unity of a linguistic state. As in Central and Eastern Europe, the Andhra movement extensively used history, language and culture as the primary means to advance its political agenda of creating a separate State. The glorification of the achievements of the Telugu people and fostering a sense of cultural superiority were essential components of the Andhra movement. A good illustration is the popularity of songs like *Cheyetti Jai KottuTelugoda*, *GathamenthoGhanakirtiKalavada*. The song calls upon the Andhras to be proud of their

Liberty is liberty not equality or fairness or justice or culture or human happiness or a quiet conscience.

People must be free to make their own choices about what constitutes good living.

- Isaiah Berlin

great Past, and after a spirited narration of the heroes and heroines of the Past, exhorts Andhras to put an end to the step-motherly treatment of Tamilians who purportedly dominated the government in the Madras Presidency. Though the Andhra movement antedated the establishment of the Communist Party by a couple of decades, Communists came to be at the forefront of the Andhra movement by late 1940s. Seen through the prism of Stalin's Soviet nationalities doctrine, India was a conglomeration of several nationalities, each of which is entitled to self-determination and a homeland. That doctrine also came in handy for communists to build up political strength in areas like Andhra where there were deep rooted feelings for a separate state. The Communist Party dominated the cultural front of the Andhra movement through the cultural performances of its front organisation *PrajaNatyaMandali*, espousal of *Vyavaharika Bhasha* (the spoken language) as the medium of literature and of folk cultural forms like *Burrakatha*, and the activities of *Visalandhra* Publishing House (VPH), a party organisation that published the party paper *Visalandhra* as well as a vast range of original and translated works in Telugu. VPH made a yeoman service to the propagation of literature and political education by bringing books within the reach of millions. It organised sale of books in schools and colleges with the help of student volunteers such as me. The array of books these sales offered was vast indeed: the in-house publications of VPH, Marxist canon in English and Telugu, low-priced reprints of Russian literature as well as English translations of Russian science textbooks, and books of the People's Publishing House. I found the Russian textbooks rather quaint as they attributed every scientific discovery to some obscure Russian, and brought in Marxist-Leninist philosophy at odd, unexpected places. Be that as it might be, in the Coastal Andhra in which I grew up, the American response in the Battle of Books during the Cold War was weak and ineffectual. No doubt, there were on sale low-priced editions of a few American political classics such as the *Declaration of American Independence* (one of the editions was a collector's item) and *Federalist Papers*; however, the range was narrow and there was no attempt to pit American authors, say Walt Whitman and Mark Twain against the Russian Greats

like Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Gorki. I do remember a Telugu book on life in Soviet Russia brought out by the Americans; that book portrayed the grim life of the people and Russian chauvinism that attributed all scientific discoveries to Russians. However, I do not remember the Americans attempting to popularise Khrushchev's secret speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (1956) denouncing Stalin. The Telugu edition of *Soviet Land* was well-illustrated like Henry Luce's *Life* but was cheap and widely subscribed. Where Americans scored was in the network of USIS Libraries which were more widely spread and used than their Russian counterparts. However, as a student, I had no access to these libraries as they were situated in metropolitan cities. In fact, it was only about fourteen years after I left the University and moved to Delhi did I first visit a USIS library. Nor did I as a student encounter *The Encounter*, the literary magazine founded by Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol that challenged communism, its beliefs and its *agitprop*; I began reading it only in 1969, three years after I left the University.

The espousal of *Visalandhra*, a separate state for Andhras encompassing the Telugu speaking regions all over the country - the districts now encompassing Andhra Pradesh as well as parts of Salem, Chingelpet, Bellary, Kolar, Bastar, Ganjam and Koraput districts- yielded rich dividends to the communist movement. It secured for the communists the admiration of not only 'progressives' (the non-communist liberals and sympathisers of the Left) but also of Telugu patriots and proponents of *Vyavaharika Bhasha*. During my University days, the communist movement was strong. In 1955, in Andhra the Party suffered a crushing defeat because of the electoral strategy of its rivals as well as to the crude class war language that some of its leaders adopted buoyed up by the expectation that the Party was certain to win. It was reported that Makineni Basavapunniah told an election rally that if communists were to come to power, the women of the rich peasant class would replace oxen in the yokes that draw ploughs. One is not aware whether this fiery rhetoric enhanced the electoral appeal of the party to the poor but sure it did rally almost everyone except the Party faithful to vote against the Party. Further, it gave a brilliant motto for

Narla Venkateswara Rao, well-known litterateur and journalist, to run a powerful campaign against the Party, in *Andhra Prabha*, a mass circulation Telugu daily, with the colourful caption *Comradula Rajyam Vasthe* (If the Kingdom of Comrades were to come). From the wisdom of the hindsight, the electoral fortunes of the Party never revived after that defeat in 1955. However, that was not what appeared to be in those days. The formation in 1957, in Kerala of the first Communist-led government in the country gave rise to wide expectations that similar electoral successes could be repeated in states like Andhra. Whatever, after the Andhra State and Telengana of the Hyderabad State were merged in 1956, in pursuance of the linguistic reorganisation, the resultant State was deliberately christened Andhra Pradesh so as to sever the link with the name *Visalandhra* popularised by the communists.

(To be continued)

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A Brief Meeting: An Immortal Poem

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

The British Government which had realised that Indians were taking up revolutionary activities (referred to as the Bande Mataram Movement) in the opening decade of last century, and were ready to “do or die”, the British Government passed the draconian Rowlatt Act in 1919. This brought Mahatma Gandhi into Indian politics in a big way. Since the leaders of the Bande Mataram Movement (Ba Gangadhar Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Bepin Chandra Pal) had ‘prepared’ the Indian soil, Gandhi began to tour India to know the pulse of the people and receive their views on a movement to get the Black Act withdrawn. In the course of his tour, he came to Chennai and was staying in Sri Rajaji’s house meeting people and discussing the pros and cons of a non-cooperation movement. This was in 1919.

One day, in March, as the discussions were on, and others waited to speak to Gandhi, the famous Tamil poet, Subramania Bharati, simply walked in and went straight to Gandhi who looked up. Others who were with him (including Rangaswamy Iyengar, editor of *Swadesa Mithran* and S. Satyamurti) remained silent. Bharati sat near Gandhi and asked him whether he could preside over a meeting that evening where

he would be the speaker. Gandhi detected the fire in the eyes of Bharati and asked his secretary Mahadev Desai whether the evening was free for him. Desai looked into his notebook and replied in the negative. Gandhi asked Bharati whether the meeting could be postponed to a latter date. Bharati replied that it was not possible and took his leave immediately.

As he went out, Gandhi asked Rajaji who this gentleman was, as he had gauged about Bharati’s importance by the silence from others. “He is our national poet” replied Rajaji. Gandhi said that if it was so, he must be looked after well, and then turned back to the agenda on hand. Bharati’s biographer, Va. Ramaswamy Iyengar who was present when the incident took place has recorded this meeting of two master minds of India’s freedom movement.

Subramania Bharati was truly Mother Saraswati’s child. His poems remain a continuous inspiration to us even today. So is his poem on Mahatma Gandhi that streamed out as a result of this meeting. Incidentally one may say Bharati was the first to refer to Gandhi as Mahatma, as the Tamil term he uses is “Emmaan” (Mahatma); I had the good fortune of translating this poem into English for my book, *Bharati in English Verse* which was published in 1958 and was welcomed by Rajaji and reviewed by Navaratna Rama Rao. A reviewer referred to it as a welcome attempt to remove the iron curtain between Bharati’s poems and non-Tamils because of the lack of translations. Here are two stanzas from the poem:

“In all the wide, wide world
This my Bharat land
Lost freedom’s breath,
And lived degraded,
Miserable and poor.
Now art thou come, Master,
To liberate us.
Long live Gandhi, my Master!
An infallible plan you forged
That we might be rich and free
Having shed this slavery.
And rear new life, and learn;
Reap wisdom’s harvest
And boldly march ahead;
First among the sons of the Earth,
Undying fame is thine!”

* * *

Basic liberties are those rights that are essential for humans to exercise their unique power of moral reasoning.

- John Rawls

UNDOING THE MISCHIEF OF THE DEMI-GODS

Prof. Manoj Das

This was a part of the Presidential Address delivered by the author at the inaugural function of the 20th World Book Fair, New Delhi, in February 2012, as the theme of the event was Translation. Courtesy: The Hindu Literary Supplement.

The ancient Babylonians were a proud and united people and they had the audacity to try building a tower to touch the heavens. Built they on- with giant ambition and mighty zeal, supported by a perfect understanding among themselves as they exchanged ideas and finalised each phase of the plan.

Alas, all of them stood bewildered one morning, for nobody understood what the other was trying to say. Each one raised his voice higher and higher until it cracked. Exasperated and frustrated, they dispersed in different directions, never to come together again. The Tower of Babel remained incomplete and slowly disintegrated.

The irony was, probably they were all speaking the same thing; but overnight they had forgotten their common language and each one had been equipped with a language exclusive to him. The demi-gods had worked out the mischief in their consciousness, while they lay asleep.

Without delving into the deeper significance of the myth, we can learn enough from the surface of the story: no global endeavour can succeed unless there is perfect understanding — the opposite of which is the perfect Babel, a situation that characterizes mankind today, more or less. The language is only symbolic.

To undo the mischief done by the demi-gods, to achieve that lost understanding despite our keeping to our own languages is indeed the pronounced or unpronounced philosophy behind the culture of translation.

We cannot conceive of an Indian literature without the role played by the great translators like Kamban, Tulsidas, Sarala Das, Kashiram Das and Thungam. In fact, most of the modern Indian languages achieved adulthood through a translated

or trans-created version of the two great epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. What is more, we are beholden for the entire robust branch of our pragmatic literature to an illustrious translator, Somadeva. This 11th Century savant of Kashmir translated a much earlier work, Gunadhya's Brihat Katha, from a language that was dead since long, Pishacha, into Sanskrit. The impact of Somadeva's work, entitled Kathasaritsagara, not only on Indian literature but also on the literatures of the world, is incalculable and can be rivalled only by the Panchatantra and the Jatakas.

Behind the tradition of translation remains the faith that consciousness of mankind, essentially, is one. I was in school when a friend of mine took home my copy of the Odia translation of Uncle Tom's Cabin. His mother was in tears while reading it. "Mother, that is an American novel!" observed my friend. "But, my son, Uncle Tom brought alive in my memory my own grandfather!" What moved the German audience while witnessing Kalidasa's Abhijnana Shakuntalam is the play of fate in the heroine's predicament. Basic emotions and aspirations of man cannot be qualitatively different, whichever be his continent.

Needless to say that translation of creative writing must be faithful; it should be far from the kind of stuff that made Louis Borges to comment, when asked about the quality of a translated work, "The original is not faithful to the translation!" But can there be anything as a perfect translation? A good translator can transmit the elements of emotion and intellect from one language to another; but what about the dhvani — the sound — of the word? In a sense, every word is a miracle. If I utter "sky" or "ocean" and instantly the vision and the vastness are invoked in the listener, the word is performing a miracle. This miracle becomes more striking when the sound plays a role - almost a mantric role. Like the mantra or the incantation, where the meaning and the sound are inseparable, there are words, particularly when used in poetry or poetic prose, that cannot produce the right effect merely through their meaning, devoid of the sound. Here comes the second formidable hurdle in the process of translation - the association of ideas. Tagore's Bengali Ksudhita Pasan is translated as Hungry Stones. But pasan in several Indian languages

If objective factors define the substance of foreign policy, subjective factors are of considerable consequence in the conduct of a nation's external engagement. Strong governments seize fleeting moments of opportunity that present themselves, while the weak squander them at great cost to the nation. - C. Raja Mohan

is intimately associated with the idols of deities, an association that is imbedded in the collective subconscious. Similarly, ksudha is not just hunger; it has far deeper psychological import in Sanskrit and several other Indian languages.

. An imaginative translator must explore ways, even if roundabout, to recreate the effect of the original in the language into which it is translated by locating phrases and words that are closest in the latter to the ideas in the original.

While residing in Vadodara in the early 1920s, Sri Aurobindo rendered into English several works of Kalidasa. While agreeing with the theory that had gained some ground in the 19th Century — though even to this day most translators have not proved equal to the demand of the theory, that there is a spirit behind the word that eludes the “faithful” translator, that unless the translator captures that spirit, no poetry worth the name can be presented in a different language, Sri Aurobindo offered several examples of his translation of lines from Kalidasa, explaining the reasons for his not being literal. While “the dark foot of Vishnu lifted in impetuous act to quell Bali” should be the faithful translation of a line from Kalidasa, where the poet describes through comparison, a huge dark cloud striding northwards, Sri Aurobindo renders it as:

Dark like the cloudy foot of highest God When
starting from the dwarfShape world-immersed With
Titan-quelling step through Heaven he strode.

Vishnu (in the last decade of the 19th Century) may not have meant for a Western reader anything more than a bizarre Hindu deity and Bali simply would not convey anything to him. Hence “highest God” and “Titan”. The Sanskrit shyama padah has been presented as “dark like the cloudy foot”, as Sri Aurobindo explains, “the word cloudy being necessary both to point the simile which is not so apparent and natural to the English reader as to the Indian and to define the precise sort of darkness indicated by the term shyama”.

One of the finest things that has happened to Indian literature in the recent past is the institution of Akademi Awards for translations. Even though workshops on translation are yet to produce any

credible results, we should feel stronger in our inspiration for transmitting the creative splendours of one language into another if we remember that the act of translation is a natural phenomenon native to our consciousness, for, even when we speak or write our own language, it is a translation, an articulation of what existed as formless vibrations of ideas.

(From: **Manoj Das** *Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays* Edited by Supriyo Bhattacharya 2018)

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PROF. SWAMI JNANANANDA **The Saint and the Scientist - I**

Prof. B. Mallikarjuna Rao

Former Rector and
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Andhra University

The Andhra University was established in the year 1926, with Sir C. R. Reddy as the Founder Vice-chancellor, followed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and later by Dr. V. S. Krishna during the important initial years. If Sir Reddy laid the foundation, it was Dr. Radhakrishnan who built the super-structure and the institution was embellished by addition of new and novel faculties by Dr. Krishna. The University invited eminent Professors to establish quite a few new Courses and Research Studies, perhaps, for the first time in the country - Geophysics, Geology, Applied Physics, Meteorology and Oceanography, Chemical Technology, Business Management, Statistics, Nuclear Physics, to name a few. The Department of Nuclear Physics was established in the year, 1954 by Prof. Swami Jnanananda, D.Sc. (Prague), Ph.D. (Liverpool), Fellow of the Institute of Physics(London), Member, Sigma Xi (U.S.A.).

Prof. Swami Jnanananda, was born on December 5th, 1896, to Sri Bhupathiraju Ramaraju and Smt. Sita Devi. He was named Lakshmipathi Raju at birth. His Father, a very rich landlord, lived in Goraganamudi, a village in Bhimavaram Taluk, Andhra Pradesh. Shri. Rama Raju garu was a very religious person and used to devote time to read Vedic Literature. Eminent Scholars were invited to give lectures on Vedanta and Puranas. Young Lakshmipathi Raju grew up in such a vibrant traditional environment. At the age of 11 years, Swami was admitted in a High School

Few billionaires waste their time pursuing officials and ministers when they can so easily
get work done by Judges.

- Sanjaya Baru

in Tanuku. It was here that he met, Maharashtra Swami. The Swami was so impressed with young Lakshmipathi Raju that he initiated him by giving Sri Krishna Mantra and planted a seed of Bhakti and later Vedanta in the young mind. He was later shifted to Taylor High School, Narasapuram, and it was here that he was attracted to Swami Vivekananda and read his Life History, Books and Lectures. Sir Edwin Arnold's book "The Light of Asia", created a lasting impression on his young mind, of the Life of Buddha and his path of renunciation and liberation. Mildly perturbed at his deepening interest in Spiritual matters, his father got him married in the year 1916, but Swami was totally disinterested in the life of a house-holder.

In 1917, he came to know that he failed his S.S.L.C. Examination and instead of returning home, he went to the Railway station and boarded a train to Calcutta. There he did Yoga Sadhana under Swami Sivananda of Ramakrishna Math. A close friend and classmate located Swami in Belur Math, Calcutta and requested him to return home. Swami heeded the advice returned to Goraganamudi and started intense practice of yoga and reading of books on Vedanta.

During this period, Swami felt a strong desire to leave home and withdraw from Social and Public duties of life. On 14th of December 1917, he left for Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, in Nepal. He reached the banks of River Gandaki and took shelter under a big rock on the slope of a hill near the riverbank. He practiced Yoga, performing Asanas, Pranayama, Mantra Japa and Dhyana. It was while meditating in one particular Asana called Paschimottasana that his mind would transcend to the higher realms of consciousness and he frequently experienced Bliss, momentarily, feeling the manifestation of the Supreme Divinity. For over 10 years he moved around the Himalayas, visiting several Shrines and Holy places mostly spending time in Yogic Practices and Meditation in solitary caves. His Yogic practices became highly intensive and he moved around naked, even in the harsh winters of Himalayas at heights of over ten thousand feet. During 1921, Swami was at Swarga Ashramam, Rishikesh for 5 months, in a cave, along with his Guru, Sri Purnananda Swami. It was here that his Guru initiated him into Sanyasa and

he assumed the name, Swami Jnanananda.

He experienced various states of Samadhi while doing Dhyana Yoga in a remote cave called Santhi Guha near Mount Abu. These ideas crystallized into Sutras and prompted him to record and compile them in the form of Book entitled, the "Purna Sutras". The sutras, being the plain expressions of Mystic Revelations, are characterized by Philosophical Coherence, Cogency, Subtlety and Spiritual insights. During 1925-27 he travelled all over the country giving lectures on the Purna Sutras. At some point in his journey, he felt that the book should be published in Germany. He wrote a letter to his father, Sri Ramaraju Garu mentioning his wish. Sri Raju garu was overjoyed and promised to bear the costs of the Publication. Swamiji left for Germany on the 27th March, 1927. He reached Dresden, in Germany during the first week of July. While in Dresden, he gave about 150 Lectures on Philosophy, Yoga and Purna Sutras. His lecture on "Time and Space", attracted Prof. Dember, a Professor of the College of Science and Technology and an expert in Mathematical Physics. Swamiji and Prof. Dember used to meet frequently and discuss Yoga and Philosophy. During one such session, Prof. Dember mentioned that he was giving lectures on Einstein's Theory of Relativity to his students. Swamiji expressed a desire to attend the lectures. The Institute authorities insisted that Swamiji pass the entrance examination, like the other students, to participate in the lecture. This perhaps was a turning point in life of Swamiji wherein he started to wear a Scientist's Apron over his Ochre Robes. Swamiji commenced studies in Higher Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry and appeared for the examination in October 1927 and passed with Distinction. He also completed his under-graduate studies with laurels and started performing experimental studies on the effect of Electric Field on Electronic Spectra. He was about to start to write his Thesis, but unfortunately, the entire equipment fell on him and he suffered a High Voltage shock and severely injured his hands. He returned to India for recovery, in the month of December 1929.

In 1930, four of his Dresden Lectures were printed in Madras, as a book entitled, "*Darsanika Maha Pravachanam*" (Discourse based on personal experience). Prof. S. Radhakrishnan, Professor of

The joke in Calcutta : There is only one post in the T.M.C. and Mamata holds it.
Everyone else is a lamp post.

- Ruchir Sharma

Philosophy and Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University wrote the foreword for this Book. He extensively traveled around Andhra region giving lectures on Yoga and Philosophy.

He traveled to Pratap Nagar at the invitation of Raja Ganga Prasad, In 1933, Maharaja Ganga Prasad offered to send Swamiji to Europe so as to enable him to complete the research that he had started during his earlier visit. Swamiji accepted the offer and traveled to Dresden, Germany. On reaching Germany he observed the rise of Adolf Hitler to power. Hitler's hate campaign against the Jews pained Swamiji very much. Prof. Dember, being a Jew, left the country along with his family to an unknown destination. It was around this time that Swamiji happened to meet Sri Subhash Chandra Bose, who was in Dresden for treatment of his health problems. Bose invited Swamiji for a dinner and spoke at length regarding his resolve to free India from the British. This event was reported in the newspaper, Modern Review.

Unable to tolerate the terrible and ghastly killings going on under Hitler's Rule, Swamiji decided to leave Germany and go to Czechoslovakia. Prof. Dolshek of Charles University in Prague, Czechoslovakia, invited Swamiji to work in his Laboratory. In Prague, he started his work on X-ray spectroscopy and published three Research papers in Czechoslovakia Journal of Mathematics and Physics. To qualify for his Thesis submission for the award of Doctorate, he had to pass three examinations which he cleared with Distinction. He submitted his Thesis entitled "*New and Precise Methods in the Spectroscopy of X-Rays*". He also wrote another Thesis entitled "*Philosophy of Natural Sciences and the Theory of Time and Space*." He was awarded D.Sc Degree by the University July 1936.

On his return to India subsequently, he was invited by His Highness Maharaja Sir Narendra Shaw Bahadur, King of Tehri Garhwal State to come and stay with him in his palace. Around this time, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji, Vice-Chancellor of Benaras Hindu University, invited Swamiji to attend the Convocation of the University and spend time with his students and researchers. Swamiji accepted the offer and spent some time at the University. Towards end of 1938, Swamiji returned to Narendra Nagar to

stay with Maharaja Narendra Shaw. The Maharajah came to know about his interest to work in the field of Nuclear Physics and made all arrangements for Swamiji's third visit to Europe.

Swamiji reached Prague and started working for a year in the field of Absorption Limits of Radiation in Three Isotopes of Lead. Meanwhile, in and around 1939, Germany occupied Czechoslovakia and Swamiji, holding a British Passport, decided to shift to London. He wrote to Prof. James Chadwick, who won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of the Neutron in 1935, with a request to work in Laboratories. Prof. Chadwick at that time was involved in the installation of a Particle Accelerator, Cyclotron, in his Laboratory and asked Swamiji to associate with him and build a Charged Particle Detector, the Wilson's Cloud Chamber. Swamiji worked for a year in this project and successfully completed the same. He also completed writing the book, "*High Vacuum*", which he started while in Czechoslovakia. This book was later published by Von Nostrand Co., New York, U.S.A. For this work he was recommended for a Fellowship of Institute of Physics (London). Swamiji built a Long Lens Magnetic Beta-ray Spectrometer and studied the low energy spectrum of Radiation from Radioactive Gold. He was awarded a Ph. D. degree by the University of Liverpool in June 1943.

(to be continued)

THE NEED TO RELOOK AT BRITISH RULE

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan

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Chairman, Investment Board

It took nearly sixty years for an Indian leader, our former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, to acknowledge the positive impact of British rule on India. In a now famous 2005 speech in Oxford he observed that, 'Today with the balance and perspective offered by the passage of time' and benefit of hindsight, it is possible for an Indian Prime Minister to assert that India's experience with Britain had its beneficial consequences too. Our notions of the rule of law, of a constitutional government, of a free press,

No nation can rank as civilized which does not pay homage to the artistic craftsman who puts all his self into the work; to the poet and to the painter who out of pure love of the beautiful spend infinite pains to choosing their most perfect expression in words or in canvas for their ideals. - Bertrand Russell

of a professional civil service, of modern universities and research laboratories have all been fashioned in the crucible where an ancient civilization met the dominant Empire of the day. These are elements, which we value and cherish. Our judiciary, our legal system, our bureaucracy, and our police are all great institutions; derived from British Indian administration and they all have served the country well.”

The near past is ever present in India. We are still fiercely debating the role of Savarkar and Bose in India’s struggle for freedom, decades after we ceased to be a British colony. Many of the issues that bleed us to this day – Kashmir, the NE and even our border issues with China – are the outcomes of what happened years back when we were still a colony of the British.

The narrative of our past especially about the colonial experience has remained for the most part unchanged, unexamined and unchallenged. This has shaped the way generations of Indians have looked at the rest of the world – suspiciously, with a sense of aggrieved victimhood, self-righteousness and a sense of moral superiority.

Unfortunately the political forces that led us to freedom, chiefly the Congress Party was till the other day running the country. It ensured that its version of what happened in the run up to our country’s independence prevailed. Now with a nationalist party at the helm history is being re-written all over again, running down people who had long been cherished as icons – especially Gandhi subtly, but Nehru loudly and directly.

The time has come to rescue our contemporary history and give it the authenticity of directness it has so far lacked. It is in this spirit we need to challenge the generally accepted versions of our country’s recent past. While doing so we ought to endeavour to keep in view EH Carr’s observation that the function of the historian is to ‘neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master it and understand it, as the key to understanding the present.’

A chronic inability to accept history as a continuum comprising both pleasant and unpleasant experiences that together have forwarded us to ‘now,’ needs a rethink. How did such a state like India emerge from

colonial rule? How is it being sustained? Over seventy years after freedom came and the British exited we are in a position to see our past with greater objectivity and how it contributed to ‘us’ being ‘us’ today.

By now much of the information regarding India’s colonial experience under the British is freely available and easily accessible, leaving little room for conjecture. Using such information, India’s mainstream historians have given us similar and flawed interpretations of the country’s contemporary history. These are centred on an unmitigatedly harmful British colonial experience, notorious for its alleged ‘divide and rule’ policy, giving way to a freedom movement leading to India’s partition and independence in 1947.

They barely pause to consider the kind of India that would have existed had the British not come in at all. Very likely there would have been several liberation struggles within the subcontinent - against Maratha or Tamil domination?

Perhaps India was fortunate to have had the British interlude. The righteousness the British professed through their commitment to liberty, free speech, the rule of law were powerfully turned on them through a unique non-violent freedom movement under Gandhi. This was of a kind that could not have found traction in Dutch Indonesia or French Indochina or Portuguese Mozambique. In none of those places was there an alternative to the kind of violent struggles for freedom that led to liberty. British colonialism was unique and shaped the attitude of Indians till this day. It was a whole lot better than Mr Sashi Tharoor and his kind make it out to be. We need to recognize that, at least today.

* * *

INDIAN PRESS AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Prof. D.V.R. Murthy

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The Indian press evolved during the last two centuries since the beginning of the first newspaper, *Hickey’s Gazette* in 1780. *Hickey’s Gazette* involved in the exposure of private lives of servants of the East India Company and devoted considerable

Bureaucrats in New Delhi need to get out of the business of owning airlines and coalmines and into the business of regulating them.

- Dani Rodrik (Harvard Development Economist)

space to scurrilous attacks on the Governor-general Warren Hastings. The first newspapers started by the disgruntled ex-employees of the company aided the East India Company's servants to further their personal rivalries. However, many publications came into existence subsequently. Since the circulation of these publications was negligible, they did not influence the public opinion. In a way, the Britishers did not allow political journalism to flourish as it would affect their administration. With the birth of Congress party in 1885, the political opinion in the country was shaped and furthered by the existing newspapers and in turn newspapers were moulded by the thriving political decisions. In fact, there were 421 daily newspapers with a circulation of nearly two lakhs, and 340 periodicals with a circulation of 1.9 lakh by the end of 1885. The period between 1885 and 1905 witnessed the division among the existing newspapers and periodicals in supporting the Congress party. Publications from Calcutta like the *Bengalee*, the *Amrit Bazaar Patrika*, the *Indian Mirror*, and the *Reis and Ryat* were supporting the Congress party while the *Indian Daily* and the *Statesman* exposed the defects of the administration. *Pioneer* published from Allahabad and the *Civil and Military Gazette* published from Lahore (now in Pakistan) were opposing the Congress party. During that period a few vernacular dailies were born, they were edited by people who were less educated as compared to the English dailies. One research scholar noted that 'the English language papers even though edited by the Indians could not be responsive to urges of the common man as the English-educated Indian was far from his countrymen in ideas, emotions and outlook; whereas the vernacular editor was in emotional sympathy with the people and brought a fund of common sense and a practical outlook on the problems which were agitating the people'. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in *Discovery of India*

I remember that when I was a boy the British-owned newspapers in India were full of official news and utterances, of service news, transfers, promotions; of the doings of English society, of polo, races, dances, and amateur theatricals. There was hardly a word about the people of India, about their political, cultural, social, or economic life. Reading them one would hardly suspect that they existed.

Moreover, the British rulers attempted to muzzle the press because they did not want the newspapers to mould the opinion of the people against them. The year 1907 saw a series of arrests and prosecutions of editors and journalists and the confiscation of printing presses.

As soon as Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1915, he started his political life. He launched three newspapers during 1919-20 defying the Indian Press Act. Although the Act barred new publications, he boldly launched *Satyagrahi* (in Hindi and Gujarati), *Nava Jivan* (Gujarati), and *Young India* (English). Consequent upon the World War I and the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, B G Horniman, the English editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, was vehemently condemning the British administration for the atrocities and supported the National Movement. As a result, Horniman was deported to Britain. The directors of the *Bombay Chronicle* who were running the other journal, *Young India* requested Gandhi to take over it. Gandhi agreed on the condition that the editorial office would be shifted to Ahmedbad from Bombay as he set up an *ashram* at Ahmedbad which would require his guidance. As he purchased a printing press, Navajivan Publishing House to publish his monthly, *Navjivan*, he would bring out *Young India* from Ahmedabad. He did not accept advertisements and believed that the newspapers should survive on the revenue from subscribers. The circulation of *Young India* was 45000, and his articles were effective. However, *Young India* was closed in 1932 owing to repressive acts of the British administration. The thought of having another weekly was lingering in Gandhi's mind when he was in prison in Poona on account of Civil Disobedience Movement. Though he was in prison, he established Harijan Sevak Sangh and asked the Sangh to publish *Harijan*. On February 11, 1933 *Harijan* was published as a weekly carried, 'Gandhi's views on untouchability, village sanitation, rural reconstruction through village industries, women's education, women's rehabilitation, basic education, and the upliftment of all (*sarvodaya*) through employment for every able bodied person'. With such educative contents, the print order of the weekly was 10000. However, in response to the censorship imposed on the newspapers, Gandhi suspended the publication of *Harijan* in November 1940 with an

For any society to lift itself out of absolute poverty it needs to build three critical institutions: taxation, law and security.

- Paul Collier

article, “good-bye”, and within a gap of one year, he resumed the publication in January 1942. In eight months of its resumption of publication, Gandhi went to prison on August 8, 1942, and immediately the administration closed down the weekly. But it came back to life after a lapse of three and half years on February 10, 1946. Looking at the prevalent attitude of the political leaders, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* in July 1947: ‘Perhaps we may have to close the *Harijan*. My mind rebels against many things that our leaders are doing. Yet I do not feel like actively opposing them. But how can I avoid it if I am running a paper?’ Further, he wrote: ‘Sardar, I feel that *Harijan* should now be closed. It does not seem to me to be right to give contrary guidance to the country’. Though Gandhi viewed that the duty of the newspapers was only to serve the people, he used *Young India* to resist the Britishers boldly in not compromising with any aspect related to the freedom of India, and also the freedom of the press. Gandhi considered journalism as a by-product of his activities, and newspaper was a vehicle for him to propagate his views. He firmly asserted that he was writing these articles only to awaken the Indians and to rouse desirable sentiments in them against the British rule while engaging more number of people with nationalism. The press also played a key-role in national development during that period. During Independence Movement, the press was an effective medium in the hands of nationalists as well as social reform groups. They exposed social evils like casteism, child marriages, ban on remarriage of widows, social, legal, and other inequalities for which women were subjected. It also helped them in carrying out a massive campaign to educate the people on the eradication of untouchability.

* * *

The Political R. K. Narayan-II

Dr. B.Parvathi

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Narayan was – nominated and short listed for the Nobel Prize year after year. In “Reflections on Frankfurt” he writes: “... I am already a victim of excessive public attention...I love to be left alone and not noticed whatever reception my writings might

have, and the prospect of becoming a “laureate” was nightmarish. Thank God, it passed.” In “The Nobel Prize and All That” he writes how George Bernard Shaw had once shouted in exasperation, “I can forgive Alfred Nobel for inventing dynamite but not for inventing the Nobel Prize”!

Interestingly Narayan was honoured by at least three different Governments which conferred the honours of “Padmabhushan in 1980, “Padma Vibhushan” in 2000, and between the two his nomination to the Rajyasabha. It was after his simple but relevant maiden speech about the load school children carry that Prof. Yash Pal committee made the recommendations to changes in school system.

Narayan’s engagement with post Independence India- its history, politics, government, education, language policy become more pronounced in the essays from *Next Sunday*, *A Writer’s Nightmare And Other Essays*, and the collection *Salt and Saw Dust* for which John Updike an American writer calls him as one “who is immersed in his material.” In “When India was a Colony” Narayan wonders: “How did this island so far away maintain its authority over another country many times its size?... How was this feat achieved? Through a masterly organization, which utilized Indians to run the bureaucratic and military machinery” where the Englishman “carried his home on his back like a snail”. In the essay “After the Raj” comes the description of India- England -relation as “an unholy wedlock, followed by a deadlock, ending in divorce” because the British maintained a “velvet glove -iron hand technique”; and when the tempo grew of demand for independence, the “velvet lining wore out”!

Prejudiced British historians presented India as “subservient to the glory of the Union Jack” by excluding all Indian names in the otherwise extremely “well documented and researched but not always impartial text books.” He writes that the “Black Hole of Calcutta” never was and that many Muslim rulers actually protected Hindus and gave grants to temples. After 1947 however, the two countries parted on cordial terms, even as the values of British culture and life continued to be honoured, more so as English language and literature -Shakespeare, Shaw, Eliot --con-

To refrain from rapping Pakistan’s rulers for fear of destabilizing that country is a flawed proposition.

- Shyam Saran

tinue to form an integral part of our education.

Narayan voices the bewilderment of common people about “grand narratives” in the truly postcolonial essay “History is a Delicate Subject”: “History is a delicate subject; the slightest falsehood could poison the whole body, like the invasion of bacteria in the human system. There are many sources of confusion for the historian, and many misleading paths open to him.” The relevance of the statement, “A future historian will have more headaches than any of his predecessors. The plethora of memorials and statues and news reports, often contradictory, will bewilder him,” cannot but be heavily underscored in the present times.

To the question how foreign the English language is, comes the answer in this delightful tension deflecting essay “Fifteen Years”. In this essay English language appearing as a defendant in a court of law, wants to know as to why it should be thus hated and banished; and refuses to leave! It argues: “The judge may be fifty or sixty years old but I am two hundred years old!” And asserts: “I am afraid this is my country”. The judge is so confused by the defendant’s argument that he has no option but to allow its continuance for another fifteen years. Pat comes from English, the seemingly innocent question: “From what date?” It is clear that a fanatical avoidance of English is unnecessary and absurd.”For me, at any rate, English is an absolutely swadeshi language.” “By its uncanny adaptability it has citizenship in every country in the world,” he says. -

The language question in India continues to act as a flint stone for unrest at any time. To understand the Hindi versus- English question which the three seemingly simple essays “To A Hindi Enthusiast” “Fifteen Years,” and “English in India,” raise, a serious reader has to go back and forth delving into the many political events of yester years. The resistance to Hindi in the South--the Presidency of Madras dates back to the 1930s. Even Rajaji, once a staunch supporter of Hindi, opposed its imposition in 1958. Prime Minister Nehru’s assurance to Madras removed the stipulation on the discontinuance of English. However, as 1965 approached, due to the agi-

tation in Madras State, Lal Bahadur Shastriji assured its continuance. Official Languages Act of 1963 was eventually amended in 1967 on Mrs. Gandhi’s guarantee of the indefinite use of Hindi and English as official languages; the “virtual indefinite policy of bilingualism” of the Indian Republic was thus ensured. (After 1967 Hindi became a non entity in Madras). The essay “To a Hindi Enthusiast” is a clear and firm protest, though it is never loud. And that it is a protest not against Hindi but its imposition on all. “Leave it to our good sense and pleasure and nothing will go amiss.”

“Table Talk” about Delhi Doordarshan, the only channel in the country in the 1970s underlines two points which are of relevance at present; one, that the many languages speakers of our country would enjoy Hindi programmes telecast with English subtitles; that a reciprocal courtesy should be extended for programmes telecast in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam and from all north Indian stations; and two, that a fanatical avoidance of English is unnecessary and absurd. (Thanks to the innumerable TV channels and the film industry, the wide popularity inter lingual translation has gained in India -- ‘dubbing,’ thankfully, is no longer an abhorred inferior pastime, parochialism about languages should be hopefully minimized.)

Censorship of the press was but one of the widely protested issues during the “Emergency”. There was a ban on all political statements against the government in print or line.”Permitted Laughter” is a short essay by Narayan and by far the most vociferous pronouncement though not pungently political, on the state of the nation at that time. Narayan’s younger brother and cartoonist R.K.Lakshman --the famous creator of the speechless, silent witness/observer “Common Man” -- was no exception. In the essay “Indira Gandhi” he records Mrs. Gandhi saying to him in one of their meetings: “Your brother is hard on some of us you know!” as she referred to Laxman’s political cartoons. Narayan who stood by his brother at this critical time gave this simple reply to Mrs. Gandhi: “Oh, he is made that way, he could be equally hard on himself and on all of us too,” was all I could say”! The average citizen was convinced

The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was the culmination of a process of political awakening, which had been going on since the middle of the 19th century.

- B.R. Nanda

that day by day he was being fed on exaggeration, half truths, quarter truths and mini truths, if not lies, and he steeled himself against their influence.” “What a censor will not realize is that truth cannot be kept hermetically sealed under a lid. It will be out in all sorts of unexpected ways like a blob of mercury pressed under one’s thumb,” observes the writer. “It was in the above context that I viewed Laxman’s cartoons,”... “banned during the Emergency, bearing out my hopeful statement to him in the dismal days that he would survive his censor,” he writes.

In “My Educational Outlook”, he says, “I am not averse to enlightenment, but I feel convinced that the entire organization, system, outlook and aims of education are hopelessly wrong from beginning to end; Educational theories have become progressively high-sounding, sophisticated and jargon ridden (like many other subjects aspiring to the status of a science),but in practice the process of learning remains primitive.” In the field of education, the educator and the educated seem to be hopelessly arrayed in opposite camps, each planning how best to overwhelm the other.”He writes:”If our educational system is not to continue as a well-endowed, elaborately organized, deep-rooted farce, a remedy must be found immediately.” -

Narayan’s observations about teaching are full of the writer’s uncanny insight into the profession. He writes:”The teacher’s chair exercised its own magic-like the throne of Vikramaditya of our legends. Even an idiot spoke inspiredly when he ascended its thirty-two steps, and occupied the seat, although when he came down, he was again dumb and dull.” How should education be? Anything but rigid according to Narayan. He first highlighted the negative effect of the system on a child’s creativity in his novel *The English Teacher*. The tantalizing and only fictionally –viable-leave- alone system of education-- which Krishna adopts in the novel *The English Teacher* --is idealistic and therefore unfavourable in a society driven by market economy. In the essay “Teaching in Texas”, Narayan happily writes about his “lifelong ambition to abolish the examination system and all the unnecessary tension that kills the joy of living in young people” he realized as Visiting Professor at

the University of Austin in Texas.

We studied a beautiful essay called “National Prejudices” in our high school on the prejudices common among European nationals. Narayan’s essay “Pride of Place” too is similar in spirit. The best of the Indian spirit of integration comes out here. No sooner a person takes excessive pride in one’s own place or region than prejudices rise on their own against all others. Narayan writes: “We need not aspire for “the one world” idea mooted by the late Wendell Willkie yet. Let us make a start with the thought that we belong to one country and are not living in the midst of strangers. North, South, East, West, are relative terms. Even the Himalayas are south of some other place; and the extreme point of south India could be viewed as North by a Sinhalese.”

Narayan’s writing has a neutralizing effect in a world of polarities. Who can say that he had worked only on his inch of ivory? That inch has all the details, the finest of them -as in a Mughal miniature work of art. His language is capable of capturing all aspects of reality. On first look the comic appears predominant in what he writes, but the tears become visible as one sees through the thin veil of laughter. Our sympathies go to the victims in Mulk Raj Anand’s work, our anger at the inequality and injustice they suffer. Narayan’s people-- be it a roadside cobbler or a pick pocket or a snake charmer, however, are somehow endowed with a resilience, an outlook of optimism and an innate dignity. His social cartooning has a deep spiritual significance.

Narayan’s healthy dislike of all academic scalpelling into his work such as the present needs mention. “What puts me off is the academician who cannot read a book for the pleasure or the pain.... But this man or woman (sic) will not read a book without an air of biting into it.”! In 1978 in an interview to a young researcher, fascinated by his work he said, “Why take life too seriously?” and by implication (all) academic interest in his work! That is the perennial R.K.Narayan!

(Concluded)

* * *

Today free and open societies are once again coming to terms with the reality of political warfare.

Matt Pottinger (Foreign Affairs, September-October 2021)

TOWARDS HOPE AND TRANSFORMATION

Dr.(Ms.) Ahana Lakshmi
Environmental Consultant

A couple of days ago, I read that in the UK, they are hoping to introduce a high school qualification option in natural history which will comprise a mix of theory and fieldwork. In India, we already have this as part of our school curriculum – in biology and environmental sciences. But the fact remains that we are textbook bound and with the growing urban population living in apartments, the likelihood of being able to recognize a *Dieffenbachia* seems greater than being able to recognize *Tulasi*!

That the malaise has spread to rural areas is not surprising, for after all, the school syllabus is common. Recently I had occasion to visit a village on the East Coast Road near Chennai and interact with some students who had been taken for exposure visits to different places as part of a project some half a dozen years ago. When asked about the highlight of her trip, one of the young girls mentioned the visit to an herbal farm run by a tribal society. Her eyes lit up at that memory when she was stunned to realise that most of the plants were not exotics, but herbs that they saw around their houses, in their backyards and open spaces! It was a ‘Eureka moment’ for her because that suddenly spiked her interest in science; that there was more to science than learning by rote from a textbook, and she has taken that up as a career now.

There is an increased interest in the natural world around us, especially the plant kingdom which is quite heartening. As Joseph Conway recently wrote, “Nature can sometimes be the poor cousin to climate change. There are few people around the world unable to articulate at least some causes and impacts of our climate crisis, but if you were to ask the same about our biodiversity crisis, you would largely be met with blank stares.”

Conversations about climate are everywhere around us – it is hotter than usual, it is raining at the wrong time, the cyclones are stronger. But biodiversity? Oh yes, there is talk about the disappearing forests. And increased attacks by

leopards straying into habitations. In 1987, 19.49 percent of the total land area was covered by forest and in 2019, it was 21.67%. The area under forests appears to have gone up, so what is the problem?

A forest is not something that grows overnight. It is a complex entity that only enriches as it ages. Take the banyan, India’s national tree. One day it is a seed growing in a crack or between the leaves of a palm. Twenty years later, it is a complex structure, having engulfed the palm. Aerial roots descend downwards forming new trunks. Holes in the trunk are occupied by owls. Squirrels scamper amidst branches. During the day, especially when it is in fruit, there is a riot of birds coming to feed. Wasps zoom in and out. Monkeys swing on the hanging roots. Often, the tree is a hang-out for bats. In the moist earth around its base, millipedes are gliding around. Ant armies abound. During the afternoon heat, it is cool underneath, the perfect place for the village council or for a tired wayfarer for a siesta. Why, it is an ecosystem by itself, a micro-forest. No wonder it is called a keystone species.

Just as it takes a banyan many decades, even centuries, to become a micro-forest, a big forest too takes time to evolve. A set of trees on a patch of land does not make it a forest. The diversity of the system evolves over time – with various plant seeds being brought in by birds and animals, wind and water. There is competition for nutrients and spaces to survive. A lot of experimentation, if you will have it, and the survival of the fittest. All this takes decades to develop. And why are old forests so important? Among myriad other things, these ‘natural’ forests are crucial in our campaign against climate change because they absorb forty times more effectively than plantations. And so, ‘diverting’ forest land for some industry and calling for compensatory afforestation is really not much use. And instead of complex forests with rich biodiversity, we have monoculture plantations.

UN Deputy Secretary General Amina J. Mohammad says “To halt the degradation of nature, we must transform how we produce and consume. There is hope if we take transformative action now for nature and people”. This brings to mind Gandhiji who long ago said “Earth has enough for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed”. We have pulled off or

damaged many strands of the web of life, threatening its very existence. A transformative action would be to increase everyone's awareness and knowledge about the environment, about biodiversity, about the web of life itself, so that we become conscious and aware and take appropriate action and care.

* * *

BOOK REVIEW :

INDIA AND ASIAN GEOPOLITICS – THE PAST, PRESENT

SHIVSHANKAR MENON

(Penguin Random House India, New Delhi, 2021, pp.406, Rs.699)

This recently released work of 406 pages consists of two parts in thirteen chapters. The first Part containing eight chapters in 235 pages is a comprehensive backdrop for the five chapters of Part-II dealing with the Present in the remaining 171 pages. Shiv Shankar Menon's credentials are impeccable. The renowned former civil servant was a diplomat, Foreign Secretary and National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister and is presently a professor at Ashoka University. He hails from a highly distinguished family and his grandfather late K.P.S.Menon was independent India's first Foreign Secretary while his great-grandfather late Shri Sankaran Nair was the first Kerala stalwart to become the Congress President in 1897 at the age of forty.

The first few chapters such as *The Stage and Inheritance, Independence and Cold War in Asia* offer a useful background against which the British Raj ruled the Indian state, besides the meaning and significance of geopolitics in Asia. India's independence came at a time when China was passing through a revolution led by Mao Zedong. Writes Menon: "The creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and its occupation of Tibet in 1950 marked second major geopolitical shift that accompanied the birth of the modern Indian state". "Nehru", according to Menon, "is sometimes accused of "losing" Tibet in 1950. But he had little choice but to choose non-intervention. In effect, India had no military options and little diplomatic play". Tibet became a major irritant in Sino-Indian relations and the Chinese resented India's interest in the independence of Tibet. 'China's

pretext for occupying Tibet was to protect it from Indian takeover. This was also the argument used by Mao to justify the 1962 decision to attack India', says Menon. Defending Nehru's vision and conception of Asia as an 'area of peace' Menon explains that India's policy as articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru stood for 'decolonization, nuclear disarmament and expanding the zone of peace'. Menon explains how the process of India-US rapprochement, begun under President Eisenhower, suffered a setback due to 'a combination of the defeat of India in 1962, President Kennedy's death and his successor Lyndon Johnson's domestic priorities'. It also diminished India's importance in the US strategic planning as a counterweight to China.' In 1976 both Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai passed away. But the rapid rise of China as a global power under Deng Xiaoping posed a serious threat to balance of power in Asia. As the author observes for China, surpassing Japan's economy in size was "the most significant landmark in Asian history since Japan's defeat of China in the first Sino-Japanese war" in 1894-1895. The United States and China entered into a tacit alliance against the Soviet Union." Mao, in fact, extended in May 1970 a hand of friendship to India. The failure of India to respond positively "must go down in the books as an opportunity unexplored and perhaps missed."

It was Atal Bihari Vajpayee who as foreign minister in the coalition government between 1977 and 1979 visited China, 'the first such visit ever'. Tension continued to prevail in Sino-Indian relations. "In fact, there was no real relationship," writes Menon. However, Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister visited China in 1988. Menon described the visit as "a brave one, befitting a leader who had a view of India's place in the international community unconstrained by legacies of the past." But it was P.V. Narasimha Rao who, according to Menon, understood well the nuances of Asian geopolitics and ably managed critical situations in the relations between nations. Writes Menon "Rao represented continuity in another important respect, the fundamentally realist view of the world inherited from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, which was continued by his successors in the first National Democratic Alliance and subsequent United Progressive Alliance governments, particularly Manmohan Singh. None of these leaders was taken in by claims of a "new world order" or

Peace comes from democracy, but democracy cannot be installed from the outside.

Countries do become democracies; but they cannot be made so by others.

Michael Mandelbaum

expected existing power holders to willingly share power or adjust international institutions to recognize new economic and power realities and accommodate India. That would have to await the accumulation of economic, political, and military power by India and its transformation into a strong, prosperous, and modern country, according to the author

On balance, therefore, Rao's reform of Indian foreign policy, like all great and successful reform, was both traditional and realistic, and PV reworked tradition to go well beyond it. He pragmatically concentrated on the opportunities opened up by geopolitics while flagging but effectively postponing world order or status issues, such as a seat on the UN Security Council for India. Menon says that Rao's were a remarkably wise set of choices, despite being made in the fog and confusion of a world on fundamental change. In essence, it was Rao's vision of a reinvigorated India retrieving a place of dignity and worth in a fast-changing, sometimes erratic, often unpredictable world that drove Indian foreign policy until 2014. The foreign policy reforms of the early 1990s are worth studying because they teach us how one country successfully navigated fundamental change in the international system. Today, again, the international system is undergoing a new transformation before our eyes: U.S. hegemony is challenged by a rising China; the globalized world economy is fragmenting and shrinking; and, demagoguery and authoritarianism are on the rise everywhere. The economic optimism and political hope of the early 1990s seems far, far away.

Vajpayee had long advocated that India should have the bomb. Indeed, India's is probably the most democratically discussed nuclear weapons program in the world. Both the Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh governments continued Narasimha Rao's live-and-let-live policy toward China, implementing the *modus vivendi* formalized in the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi visit to China for discussing the boundary question, without allowing it to impede the development of bilateral relations and cooperating on the international stage where possible.

Menon not only points out some of the failures of India's policy in a changing multipolar world but also suggests measures for course correction. 'History should have prepared India, for new

developments such as 'the war against terror' instead of being excessively involved in domestic politics. He warns against ignoring the dangers emanating from issues related to world economy, the environment and climate change, exhorting the nation to build necessary strength to meet the pace of economic and technological. In the *Afterword* on India's destiny, written in the last page, the author says that "India's future resides in the hands and heads of all of its citizens. How we as citizens perceive our situation and choose to build our narrative deeply affect our future."

"When Jawaharlal Nehru chose nonalignment, it was with confidence that India was entering a new era and would grow into a modern, secular, prosperous, and safe country for all Indians. "That confidence was bound in a narrative that accepted history for what it was, without ridiculous claims, manufactured enemies, or exaggerated boasts. We need some of that confidence and objectivity now, combined with logic, reason, and clarity, if we are to deal successfully with the world as it is, building a better India that is true to itself and its people, China and Pakistan have no compunction in acting together against Indian interests and sovereignty, and India is being reduced to a bit player on the international stage," states Menon In an obvious dig at the Narendra Modi led BJP government, the author writes that "We have lost five years. Our national confidence has been replaced by bravado and extravagant statements."

Shivshankar Menon makes a fervent plea for a national vision of self-confidence based on progressive and secular ideals. 'We need to get back to our roots,' he says recalling the contribution of Kautilya, Chandragupta Maurya, Kalidasa, Ashoka, Akbar and of great modern minds like Gandhi and Nehru. It is a book that deserves to be read by all interested in understanding better the geopolitical legacy that Indian state has inherited, the opportunities that the nation must utilize and the precautions India needs to take for future development. Shiv Shankar Menon's work will be of great value in undertaking the task. Unfortunately in this prestigious publication obtained in quick time from Amazon four pages have been found blank (pages23, 85, 93, 95).

A.Prasanna Kumar

* * *

WILLIAM SHIRER'S TRIBUTE TO GANDHIJI

William L. Shirer, the famous journalist and author of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* who met Mahatma Gandhi in the 1930s wrote *Gandhi – A Memoir* in 1981 was greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. The author of massive tomes published a beautifully crafted book of 203 pages on Mahatma Gandhi. Excerpts from this book are presented here.

“Generations to come, it may be, Einstein once wrote of Gandhi, in words which stand at the head of this book, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth”.

I watched this man, a saintly, Christlike figure, walk upon this earth, in flesh and blood, at a moment when he had launched his great civil-disobedience movement that began to undermine the British hold on India and that, in the end, freed his country from two and a half centuries of British rule. It was one of the great accomplishments of history and for him a personal triumph such as our world has seldom seen.

But there were, in a deeper sense, even greater triumphs for this unique man who was unlike any

great individual of our time, and perhaps of any time. He liberated India from a foreign yoke, but he also liberated the whole world from some of its encrusted prejudices and foolish ways of life. He was one of history's great teachers, not only by the example of his life but by what he preached and practised. As such, he was, as Viscount Louis Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy of India, said of him on his martyred death, akin to Buddha and to Christ.

Shirer concludes his book with this moving tribute to Mahatma Gandhi.

“What I had got from Gandhi helped me to survive. It showed the way to the development of an inner life, which over that considerable time became ingrained enough, and strong and sufficient enough, to ward off all of the assaults from the outside.

I have tried to put down, however inadequately, what I got from him. The whole wide world got a lot from him too. His impact on it may turn out to be as great and as lasting as that of Christ and Buddha, as many of us who crossed his path, including the last British Viceroy of India, believe.”

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