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RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

A stunned world is watching with deep concern and anxiety the escalation of Russian attacks on Ukraine, with bombs and missiles destroying huge buildings in Kyiv the capital city, in particular. Vladimir Putin was planning to launch 'special military operations' to denazify Ukraine long before February 24 when Russian forces from Crimea poured into Ukraine. "Russia has turned the Ukrainian sky into a source of death", said Ukrainian President Zelensky in an emotional address to the members of the U.S. Congress on March 16. He even compared the Russian invasion of Ukraine to the attack on Pearl Harbour by the Japanese in December 1941, obviously to impress on the American leadership that the Russian invasion, if not checked would lead to the third world war. US President Joe Biden called Vladimir Putin 'a killer' and a 'criminal' and declared that 'Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction this attack will bring and the United States and its allies will respond in a united and decisive way.'

Has Putin miscalculated? Even the people of Russia are upset over Putin's act of aggression that may trigger a global conflict. Putin is driven by the twin goals of restoration of 'historical Russia' and 'establishment of a new buffer against NATO'. Putin is highly suspicious of NATO powers and he is worried about the possibility of Ukraine becoming a member of NATO. Apart from the political consequences of invasion of Ukraine, the economic problems confronting Russia are quite daunting, especially on the domestic front.. Analysts have confirmed that Russia would be the eventual loser with the western powers widening the support network for Ukraine. "Invading Ukraine could ultimately prove Mr.Putin's undoing," wrote *The Economist* editorially. Annexation of Crimea in 2014 and invasion of Ukraine in 2022 by Vladimir Putin have earned for Russia the antipathy of not only the western powers but that of the entire world as well. Millions of Ukrainians have fled their homeland for shelter and security while the helpless people led by their courageous president Zelensky are bravely fighting for their freedom and honour.

Russia helped India at the UNSC meetings and stood by her during Chinese and Pakistani attacks and India has benefited from Russian aid and support in many ways. But that should not come in the way of India's condemnation of Russian invasion of a third world democracy. India's role as a balancer in global affairs began even before India became free. It was in March/April, 1947 that Jawaharlal Nehru summoned the Asian Relations Conference for promoting solidarity among Asian countries as the cold war winds started blowing across the world. It was India that played the role of 'an honest broker' in the relations between the West and China at a time when the Asian giant was kept at a distance by European powers and the United States. India's policy of non-alignment enhanced her reputation in world affairs. It was aptly observed that Nehru did not need to go New York to meet the world press as the world press used to come to Delhi to meet Prime Minister Nehru. The trio of India's Nehru, Egypt's Nasser and Yugoslavia's Tito was a formidable combination in world politics in the second half of the last century when cold war was at its peak.

All that appears today as forgotten history. India has been passing through ups and downs mainly because of leadership inadequacies. The Indian Prime Minister's appeal for "peaceful settlement" of Russia's differences with Ukraine has lowered the image of the world's largest democracy and a champion of the rights and freedom of the peoples of Third World countries. India's stand on the Ukraine crisis and reluctance to condemn Russian invasion at the UNSC meeting is politically timid and ethically wrong.

- The Editor

Russia's invasion of Ukraine could yet become the biggest military action in Europe since 1945.

- *The Economist*, March 5, 2022

CHINA'S MARITIME RISE; WHAT IT SHOULD MEAN FOR INDIA

Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.)

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It would seem that the surprise and indignation expressed by USA, on obtaining satellite pictures, of construction work on a “secret Chinese military facility” in the UAE port of Khalifa, was unwarranted. This is because the importance of overseas bases, to support a sea-control navy that guards seaborne trade, was emphasized, by none other than the American oracle of sea power, Admiral Mahan, who has a significant following in China's strategic circles.

China also takes its cue from 18th century Britain. Having been transformed, by the industrial revolution, into the ‘workshop of the world,’ Britain deployed the Royal Navy to protect the sea-lanes, so that British goods could find markets worldwide. Britain acquired bases in strategic locations around the globe; from Singapore to Mauritius, Cyprus and Malta and from Gibraltar to the Falklands, Fiji and Hong Kong. As China's overseas interests grow, by leaps and bounds, demanding power-projection capabilities, Beijing, too, focuses on overseas locations that can help it oversee vulnerable Indo-Pacific sea-lanes.

The surprise, amongst US (as well as Indian) diplomatic and security establishments may have been even less marked, had they paid attention to China's 2019 Defence White Paper (DWP), which declares that, “*Overseas interests are a crucial part of China's national interests,*” and adds, “*To address deficiencies in overseas operations and support, China builds far seas forces, develops overseas logistical facilities, and enhances capabilities in accomplishing diversified military tasks.*”

On its official founding, in May 1950, the PLA Navy (PLAN) was equipped with warships and submarines supplied by the Soviets, who also shaped China's early maritime outlook. Soviet doctrine visualised the role of navies, mainly, for guarding the seaward flank of armies and for waging of ‘guerrilla warfare’ at sea, through submarines.

Signs of China's ‘maritime awakening’ started emerging, when the 2006 DWP expanded the PLAN's responsibilities to embrace, “*...integrated offshore operations, strategic deterrence, and to gradually develop its capabilities of conducting cooperation in far seas.*” While successive Communist party leaders had been advocating modernisation and enhancement in PLAN's capabilities, General Secretary Hu Jintao startled western analysts by declaring, at the 2012 Party Congress, that China aimed to become, not just a maritime power, but ‘*a maritime great power.*’

It is, now, clear that this was a well-considered and strategic objective, driven, as much, by China's growing dependence on the seas, for trade and energy-driven economic growth, as by its ambitions for territorial aggrandisement and global status. China's shipbuilding industry, run on the socialist model, till the 1990s, had remained technologically backward, and shown abysmally low productivity. Noting the giant strides made by Japan and South Korea in shipbuilding, China embarked on a crash-programme of modernisation and corporatization of this sector.

Having designated shipbuilding a ‘strategic industry,’ China had, by 2010, become the world leader in shipbuilding. China's emphasis on ‘civil-military integration’ ensured that the boom in merchant ship building, and availability of large, modern shipyards and skilled manpower, directly benefitted its naval programmes. Even as we derive, justifiable, satisfaction from the delivery by Mazagon Docks, of a modern destroyer and a submarine, in the same week, our shipbuilders will need to set the bar much higher.

Tangible examples of China's shipbuilding prowess are: the commissioning of its first homebuilt aircraft-carrier, the *Shandong*, in four years flat and the ‘assembly-line’ delivery of 30 Type-54A frigates, within weeks of each other, in 24 months. By way of contrast, India's indigenous aircraft-carrier was 12 years under construction, and a frigate/destroyer takes, on the average, 7-9 years, to build. These lengthy build-periods are attributable, largely, to the significant import content of our ships – siren song of ‘*atmanirbharta*’ notwithstanding.

It is the duty of all leading men, whatever their persuasion or party to safeguard the dignity of India.

- Mahatma Gandhi

China's aspiration to become a 'maritime great power' is being driven by a clear-eyed vision, that goes well beyond the Belt and Road Initiative and its seaward component, the Maritime Silk Road. According to the Pentagon's 2021 China Military Power Report, the PLAN has "*a battle force of approximately 355 platforms, including major surface combatants, submarines, aircraft carriers, ocean-going amphibious ships, mine warfare ships, and fleet auxiliaries.*" This force already outstrips the US Navy, and is expected to grow to 460 ships by 2030; vastly exceeding every estimate.

As we reflect on India's response to China's maritime rise, let us note historian KM Panikkar's observation that the arrival of Portuguese adventurer, Vasco da Gama off Calicut in 1498, "*marked the beginning of four centuries of domination, by European powers, based on control of the seas,*", simply because no Indian ruler, of that era, was blessed with a maritime vision, much less a navy. Little seems to have changed, as we note the irony that our navy has come into the limelight after May 2020, not because of the entreaties of Indian Admirals, but due to the machinations of Chinese Generals.

India has neither the economic and industrial wherewithal, nor the need to compete in a naval arms race with China. But we do need to ensure adequate naval capability to safeguard our vital interests: seaborne trade and energy traffic, as well as marine wealth; present and latent. At the same time, our naval forces should be able to field capabilities (in all three dimensions) to exercise control of the seas, where and when we want, and to deny their use, to hostile powers. Our interests also extend to the security and well-being of our maritime neighbours, and while expediting projects like Chah Bahar in Iran and Agalega in Mauritius, we must reach out to locations like Madagascar, Comoros and Socotra.

Calls for enhancing the navy's share of the defence budget from a paltry 12% to at least 18%-20% are certainly justified. But, of equal importance, is the formulation of a 'National Strategy for Maritime Security,' that goes well beyond building a capable 'fighting navy' and encompasses the upgradation of

the full gamut of India's maritime capabilities including shipbuilding, merchant shipping, ports, seabed exploration and fisheries etc. As it stands, India's failure to bring sharp focus on maritime capacity-building, represents, not only an economic 'missed opportunity,' but also a yawning gap in maritime security.

(Courtesy : *Indian Express* December 3, 2021)

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TIME TO REVITALISE ACT EAST POLICY

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The omicron threat on the global economy, the emboldening of terror groups from taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and China's geopolitical ambitions spell unforeseen challenges for India.

The new normal is anything but 'normal'. 2022 will be a more unpredictable year than the one we left behind. The Covid-19 virus is mutating all the time and the world is unable to keep up. Just when we thought the worst may be behind us, the more transmissible Omicron variant is spreading across the world. Borders which were being opened tentatively, gingerly are snapping shut again. Airline business, which was limping back to solvency, is likely to face terminal decline and most service industries, such as hotels, restaurants, travel and retail, will further suffer severe blows. The major world economies responded to the health crisis and the acute economic and social disruptions in the wake of the pandemic by expending an estimated \$11 trillion (Rs 819 lakh crore) over the past two years. There is not much firepower left in their economic armouries to sustain such massive outlays for another year.

We are experiencing the beginning of an inflationary surge. This is likely to sharpen in 2022. If central banks in the advanced economies react by raising interest rates and reducing the liquidity overhang built up over the recent past, then developing countries, including India, are likely to see significant financial outflows. Their cost of external borrowing will go up. 2022 will be a more challenging year for

Reigning in your senses is a mark of growing in wisdom.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

both the developed and developing economies but as is always the case, the latter will suffer the most. India has seen some welcome signs of economic recovery lately, but this will be difficult to sustain.

China introduced and has recently re-introduced the most severe lockdowns by any country. Their impact has been offset to some extent by a surge in Chinese exports of health equipment and pharmaceutical ingredients. China was an island of relative economic stability in a highly disrupted global economy, and this reinforced its geopolitical profile. But as we head into the new year, the Chinese economy looks more vulnerable. The debt to GDP ratio of over 280 per cent looks unsustainable for an economy likely to grow by a slower 5 per cent in 2022. Another vulnerability relates to the property and construction sectors, which contribute roughly 30 per cent to China's growth. The largest real estate firm, Evergrande, is facing bankruptcy and others are also in dire straits. This may trigger an economic and financial crisis which even China's state-led dispensation may not be able to contain. The pandemic has adversely affected the country's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects and concerns over debt exposure and political pushback have surfaced in several partner countries. A slowing Chinese economy may pose a bigger problem than the relentlessly advancing one because there are no other drivers of global growth remotely close to China's scale.

Geopolitics is in a churn and is likely to become even more volatile. The key equation is between China and the US. Since the global economic crisis of 2008, China has assessed that it has fundamentally altered the balance of power in its favour and entered a phase of significant strategic opportunity. Its assertive and even aggressive foreign policy is anchored in this perception. Will China have passed its peak in 2022 and could this result in the retrenchment of its "wolf warrior diplomacy"? Or will it double down on its increasingly coercive and unilateral assertion of its interests-interests that have expanded as its power has? Either trend is possible and may become apparent in Chinese actions on Taiwan and its posture on the India-China border.

China looks at power in relative terms. It may be entering a phase of diminished growth and even over-extension, but its perception of the credibility of the US has diminished even further thanks to the precipitate and chaotic American withdrawal from Afghanistan. It may well be tempted to resolve the Taiwan issue in its favour either through a blockade or military occupation, convinced that the US will have no stomach for a fight. The new year is likely to provide more tangible clues regarding Chinese calculations but increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait are a given. This may confront India with difficult choices if its partners in the Quad, all of whom have much greater stake in the Taiwan issue than New Delhi does, press for its greater formalisation and its more overtly military role. This may expose India to greater pressure on its land border with China.

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is a setback for India. It has given Pakistan geopolitical leverage even if this proves to be short-lived. Pakistan has ensured that the dominant faction in the ruling dispensation in Kabul is the Haqqani group, which was described by former Pentagon chief Mike Mullen as a "veritable arm of the ISI". It is the Haqqanis who targeted the Indian embassy and Indian nationals in Afghanistan on behalf of the ISI. Any effort by India to revive its presence in the country in any form will always be risky. Indian humanitarian and economic aid will be welcome at a time when the country is facing famine and economic collapse but this will not provide any meaningful leverage.

The Taliban takeover is proving to be a major morale booster for jihadi groups, who are already turning their attention to Jammu and Kashmir and other targets in India. China will be a more powerful shield for Pakistan in international fora, frustrating Indian efforts to isolate Pakistan diplomatically on the issue of cross-border terrorism. India has done well to coordinate with regional countries to deal with the security challenge posed by the political change in Kabul. Inviting the Central Asian states as chief guests at the forthcoming Republic Day is an imaginative move but its substantive impact must not be overrated.

One hopes that 2022 will be the year of a re-

Bapu gave life to a dead country. Ba lent him a helping hand.
Let the picture of both of them be constantly before our eyes.

- Vallabhbhai Patel

vitalised Act East policy. The key to this is a return to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. India cannot dispense with the economic and commercial pillar of Act East. It should also revive its application to become a member of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which does not entail making trade concessions but will provide a networking and learning platform for Indian business and industry. India is the only Quad member which is not an APEC member. It should leverage its Quad credentials to become one. These are some of the initiatives which may help India navigate what will be another year of unpredictability and fresh challenges.

(Courtesy : *India Today* January 17, 2022)

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REVIEW THE LAPSES IN DEFENCE MANAGEMENT

Intro: That an Indian missile was launched into Pakistan requires a rigorous internal review and scrutiny to ensure that such gaps in defence systems are plugged

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India's national security challenges came into sharp, albeit disconcerting, focus in early March due to a series of unrelated developments that included the war in Ukraine and a missile fiasco related to Pakistan. The latter incident could have had serious consequences, but luckily, this did not happen. A brief review of the chronology of the events points to disturbing institutional lapses in the higher management of defence — lapses that merit preliminary scrutiny and objective deliberation in the months ahead, when more factual information is available in the public domain.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine entered its second week on March 10 and in this period, the reference to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by Moscow, ostensibly to warn the United States (US) and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies was a significant politico-military punctuation

and has very corrosive implications for global strategic stability. Has the nuclear threshold been lowered 76 years after Hiroshima-Nagasaki and is it now kosher to invoke this capability in dealing with perceived threats to national sovereignty? The aspersions and allegations made by both the US and Russia about furtive chemical and biological weapon labs in Ukraine have only further muddled the nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) weapons spectrum that is still seeking answers to the Covid pandemic.

The Cold War experience of ensuring WMD stability after the 1962 Cuban missile crisis demonstrated the imperative for nuclear weapon capable adversaries to maintain a degree of trust in each other's professionalism and institutional integrity, in relation to respecting the sanctity of agreements and protocols. This trust, alas, received a rude jolt in relation to the subcontinent on March 9, when an Indian missile malfunctioned and landed in Pakistan. For reasons that can only be speculated upon at this stage, India did not acknowledge this lapse when it occurred and the fact that March 10 was the day when major state election results were to be announced is pertinent.

Predictably, the next day, on March 11, Pakistan held a public briefing and protested at what it described as violation of its airspace by "irresponsible incidents" and added that this reflected India's "disregard for air safety and callousness towards regional peace and stability". Unsubstantiated media reports claimed that Pakistan was preparing to launch a similar missile to strike India in retaliation — but held back since the final assessment was that something was "amiss" about this Indian missile and its malfunction. What could have rapidly escalated into an India-Pakistan missile exchange in the run-up to the March 10 state election results in India was averted due to the restraint and prudence of Pakistan's military.

In what can be described as a belated response, India put out a terse press release on the evening of March 11, stating that on March 9, "in the course of a routine maintenance, a technical malfunction led to the accidental firing of a missile. The Government of India has taken a serious view and ordered a high-level

The true joy in life is to ally yourself to a great purpose, to throw yourself into it heart and soul and forget your little self.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

el Court of Enquiry. It is learnt that the missile landed in an area of Pakistan. While the incident is deeply regrettable, it is also a matter of relief that there has been no loss of life due to the accident.”

On Sunday, March 13, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) and some features that reflect the current texture of higher defence management warrant mention. The missile fiasco and its potentially grave consequences did not receive any explicit reference and the mishap was couched in a bland statement that the PM “was briefed on latest developments and different aspects of India’s security preparedness in the border areas as well as in the maritime and air domain.”

The CCS meeting was attended by the Cabinet ministers concerned and the National Security Adviser, as also the defence and foreign secretaries but since the government is yet to appoint a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), national security challenges and inadequacies of a kinetic nature were deliberated on at the highest level without a military representative. It is understood that the PM met with the three service chiefs later that day, but there is no detail in the public domain, thereby suggesting that “all is well”.

While the court of inquiry will hopefully identify the reasons for this technical malfunction and accountability will be fixed, heads must roll. The delay in acknowledging the accidental launch of a missile and in not informing Pakistan through established channels of communication is inexplicable and merits a rigorous review (Was the hotline between the directors general of military operations used?). Given that India prides itself on a robust and responsible command-and-control infrastructure in relation to its WMD capability, the question is —did the absence of a CDS lead to this fiasco? When was the PM informed about this accident and who in the command ladder decided that the matter should be kept under wraps? Strategic communication and restrained signalling of political intent is integral to WMD stability among uneasy or adversarial interlocutors and India’s relations with both Pakistan and China are currently strained — to put it mildly.

While India and Pakistan demonstrated their ability to restrain their hyperactive audio-visual media from going ballistic over a cruise missile malfunction — regional WMD stability needs a restoration of trust and nurturing this with sincerity. Revisiting the 1999 Lahore Declaration — an agreement that pledged to reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons — may be a useful starting point after carrying out a rigorous internal review of India’s higher defence management and plugging the gaps.

(Courtesy : *Hindustan Times* March 18, 2022)

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REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST – V

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An account of my student days would be incomplete without a brief narration about my research work under the guidance of Prof. Gopala Rao. Gopala Rao was very fond of me, treated me like a son, had confidence in my abilities, and had high expectations of me. And yet like a stern father of those yesteryears, he would not allow affection to come in the way of administering a timely admonition, if he felt that I was not applying enough. Literally, I was the Chosen One, chosen by Gopala Rao to fulfil his long-cherished aspiration of including Chemical Kinetics in the oeuvre of his research. Opening an entirely new line of research carries an in-built disincentive for a doctoral student, whose time horizon is usually short, and who is keen to secure a degree as fast as possible. Compared to fellow researchers in the established line of research, my setup costs were far higher; so were the risks of failure. The first three years were years of gruelling struggle, spent mostly on what in modern parlance of American graduate education is called course work, acquiring by self-study the necessary competencies in Chemical Kinetics and cognate fields, pooling the apparatus, and mastering the relevant experimental and mathematical skills. In his teaching most of the time, and in guiding my research, Gopala Rao practised the famous Hindu maxims of *purusha prayatna*

Railways may do for India what dynasties have never done – what genius of Akbar could not do;
they may make India a nation.

- Edwin Arnold

(conscious effort) and markatanyaya . God expects the devotee to strive for fulfillment, be it dharma, or artha, or kama, or moksha (righteousness, wealth, desire and liberation). He is not given to handholding, and, analogous to the mother monkey's expectation from its baby, He expects the devotee to steadfastly hold on to him and dharma, much like a baby monkey having to exert and cling to his mother. These lofty maxims can bring out the best in a disciple, provided- a big provided- the disciple has a strong moral fibre, has unflinching faith, and is fairly mature. But they could be very exacting for a callow youth in a hurry. The autodidactic acquisition of the necessary theoretical and experimental competencies and skills was arduous enough. But what made that phase of life harrowing was a confluence of factors: my lack of self-assurance, inability to live with uncertainty, and the inclination- human, all too human- to indulge in facile comparisons, and to wrongly bemoan the fact that in the competitive race to submit the thesis, I was losing out to juniors whose research topics appeared to be facile extensions of previous research, who were not required to do the 'course work' I was required to, and who seemed to be favoured by the practice by the Professor of a different maxim: marjalanyaya, (wherein kitten, unlike the baby monkey has no need to exert, as it is held tightly by the mother cat with its teeth), and of minutely guiding those students at every step and specifying to the last detail each and every experiment to be conducted. Life, it is rightly said, has to be lived forward and understood backwards. As one navigates farther in life, one realises that one's perceptions and judgement are prone to be clouded by the mood of the moment, that there is an antinomy between the short term and the long term, and that what seems to be happening at a given moment is usually not what actually happened. Only with passage of Time and the perspective that Time provides can one discern the true meaning of events, and grasp what actually happened and its significance. It was only much later in life that I realised that 'sweet are the uses of adversity,' that knowledge and wisdom come only through struggle and suffering, and that failure offers more valuable lessons than

success. Looking back over half a century later, I now realise that in keeping with his assessment that I was exceptional, the Professor deliberately set me on a path 'the one less travelled by,' and 'that has made all the difference,' so that I could acquire a sense of personal responsibility, pioneering spirit, perseverance and tenacity, and autonomously seek truth. These qualities of head and heart that I acquired to some extent in those years stood me in good stead later in my life and career. I should also mention the fact that my research took me often to the University Library which by then had moved to the new building where is now located; apart from looking at the latest Chemistry journals and browsing articles of interest to me , I used to browse the books from one end of the library shelves to the other end and pick up books which seemed to be of interest and read them, following Francis Bacon's maxim: some books are to be tasted, some swallowed and some to be chewed and digested. A lasting legacy of those days is the Baconian ambition to take all knowledge to be one's province. It was, no doubt, hubris but, in retrospect, the ambition ideally suited the profession to which I moved, where one has to be a jack-of-all-trades; it also helped me, in the short term, to scale the Mount Everest of the IAS examinations without any special preparation, and in the longer term lead a life of contemplation, reflection and introspection (vita conemplativa)

It gives me great pride that I opened up a new flourishing branch of research in the University Chemistry Department. I fondly remember the warm remarks the Professor used to make to my father about me, as well as the remarks he made in a mutually congratulatory mood about the ideal relation between the teacher and his research student when I completed my thesis. He said that from his experience he found that path breaking work could not be completed within two years, the minimum period of research work stipulated for submission of a Ph. D., thesis. He illustrated his observations with examples such as the path-breaking doctoral work of B.V.S.R Murthy, a student of his who joined the Geological Survey of India. He went on to say that the relation between the guide and the research scholar should not

Nehru took on himself political administrative burdens which would have broken a lesser man in a few months.

- B.R. Nanda

be an ionic bond in which the bonding is dependent upon one atom transferring to the other an electron. Instead, it should be a covalent or coordinate bond in which the atoms bound together are equal partners sharing the electrons that bind them together. The relationship between the guide and the scholar should not be that of giver and taker; instead, it should be that of explorers jointly exploring uncharted territories. As I recall his wise observations, I find that human bonding is more complex and more fragile than chemical bonding, and that inert matter is more predictable than sentient human beings.

In retrospect, my education would have been incomplete but for my hobnobbing with student politics, savouring the rich cultural fare offered by the Andhra Vaarotsavalu, harnessing the treasures of the University Library and doing research under the guidance of Prof. Gopala Rao. An earnest educator faces an eternal dilemma. The tree of knowledge is one, and the various disciplines constitute its branches. So exponential has been the growth of that tree that a lifetime is not adequate to fully explore even a part of a branch. In this age, specialised education is unavoidable, but such an education by itself would be far too narrow to achieve the multiple objectives that education has to fulfill. As Learning: The Treasure Within, the Report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century set up by UNESCO, put it so vividly there are four types of learning that education should foster. One has to work for a living, which necessitates learning to do, acquiring the specialised skills and competencies necessary for a career. At the same time, learning has to be lifelong and continuous, so as to cope with the fast obsolescence of the specialised knowledge, and with unforeseen changes in society economy, work and job content. This requires learning to know, acquiring a taste for lifelong learning. It is also necessary to learn to live together in an increasingly complex and inter-dependent world. Above all, it is necessary to learn to be, to learn to be oneself, to be at peace with oneself and the world, and to engage in Great Conversations, be in communion with the great thinkers and thoughts

of the world, Past and Present. Even while trying to do justice to the multiple objectives of education, the educator cannot be indifferent to the constraints imposed by the curricular load. The best universities in the world have sought to cope with the educator's dilemma by designing the undergraduate curriculum as an amalgam of a sufficiently broad general liberal education, and specialisation in one or more subjects. Unfortunately, the curriculum of the intermediate and honours courses in my student days was not such an amalgam. The education that occurred outside the classroom in the University compensated for this deficiency in curriculum, and provided me with a modicum of a broad liberal education. The University, Prof. Gopala Rao and Sri K. V. Gopalaswamy have, without any design, prepared me for my life and career in general. Watching a play or listening to a concert in the evening as Secretary, Culture, Government of India, helping the National School of Drama (NSD) to institute Bharat Rang Mahotsava, the National Drama Festival covering all the scheduled languages of India, or following the cultural wars over history textbooks, the nature of Sikh identity, the true nature of Indus Valley Civilization, and the historical authenticity of the Aryan Invasion, was no more than reliving the Andhra Vaarotsavalu. Before moving on, it should be said that there was a significant difference between the plays I saw in the University and at NSD. Unlike the plays at the University, many of those that I saw at NSD addressed the philosophical questions associated with human condition, and I was in a better position to understand such questions because unlike $H_2O = \text{water}$, History, Philosophy and Literature could be understood only at an advanced age. The NSD plays served to trigger an interest in serious literature and served as a visual 'Cambridge Companion' to the existential condition of Man, and the perennial questions that confront him. But for the NSD plays, I would not have made his acquaintance with the work of Aeschylus, Samuel Becket, Bertolt Brecht, Dario Fo, Luigi Pirandello, Vijay Tendulkar, and Indira Parthasarathy.

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Knowledge will not come without self-communion, without light from within,
not even the knowledge of the practical steps that can lead to success.

- Sri Aurobindo

BANA BHATTA'S KADAMBARI

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

Kadambari; Chandrapida; Vilasavati; Vaishampayana; Patralekha. These names have been the very stuff of romance ever since the inventive genius of Bana Bhatta introduced the 8th century to the novelty of a work written in prose. A culture that had used poetry even for informative treatises whether the subject was the elephant, the missile or economics, now noticed that prose can also be a valid instrument for cultural commerce. Bana Bhatta's *Kadambari* is now hailed as the first Indian novel and indeed some Indian languages use the term to denote long fiction. Bana also authored a biography of his patron, Emperor Harsha.

Bana has given some details about his family that belonged to the Vatsyayana gotra. He was born to rich parents in Pritikuta village on the river Sona. In his youth he led a carefree life and then was seized by wanderlust. He returned to Pritikuta after years of traveling all over India. Apparently Emperor Harsha did not think much of Bana as the latter had been denigrated by scandal scatterers of the court. With the help of the emperor's half-brother Krishna, Bana cleared himself and soon became a favourite of the emperor. It was now that he composed *Harsha Charita*.

Harsha Charita is more of an imaginative Purana though some of it has been corroborated by contemporary chroniclers like Hieun Tsang. King Prabhakaravardhana of Thanesar had two sons, Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana. Their sister Rajyasri was given in marriage to the Maukhari prince, Grahavarman. When dying, Prabhakar chose the younger son Harsha to succeed him and Rajyavardhana had no objection either. Harsha accepted the crown. Unfortunately Rajyavardhana was killed while he went to the help of Grahavarman. Bana uses colourful language to render this history and presently we are reading about Harsha's conquests and an account of the gifts he received from other kings. Here is an umbrella brought as an offering to Harsha by the king of Assam:

"It manifests many miracles. It stores in its ribs the cool rays of the moon and it drips moon-bright water as long as desired. It honours only those destined to be sovereign of the four oceans and none else. Fire does not burn it, nor wind bear it away, nor water wet it, nor dust defile it, nor age corrodes it. Let your majesty honour it with a glance."

The work concludes with Rajyashri's rescue by Harsha. She is about to immolate herself. Bana's portrayal of this scene is very famous for its poignancy. Bana was more of a flamboyant poet than a hard-headed historian but he certainly opened the way for such recordations that have helped us to reconstruct life in ancient India.

While *Harsha Charita* has been studied for its historical recordation, it is *Kadambari* that has made Bana Bhatta famous for all time. Known as the first novel in Indian literature, *Kadambari* was inspired by the story of Sumanas in Somadeva's *Katha sarit Sagara*. In Bana's version which changed the proper names in the original, we have the progression of the tale marked by the lives and love-stories of two personalities: Chandra (the Moon) who was born as Chandrapida first and as Shudraka later; Pundarika as Vaishampayana first and a parrot after. To the King Shudraka's court comes a Chandala huntress with a parrot which has the amazing skill of speaking fluently and in terms of courtly flattery:

"The women in the harem of your enemies keep their breasts bereft of necklaces, and keep also their breasts bathed in tears, as they are very close to the fire and grief in their hearts."

Shudraka takes the parrot and places it in a comfortable lodging. He then requests the parrot to tell him its story. How come he is so learned and wise? How was he caught by a hunter? The parrot tells the king that his is a long story that spans several births and proceeds to relate it. It is a long, long remembrance of things past and there are so many tales that come out in a Chinese-box pattern. The Prince Chandrapida and the minister's son Vaishampayana become good friends. Chandrapida's mother presents him with Patralekha as his companion. Installed as the heir-apparent, Chandrapida goes on a vijaya yatra.

Creativity and imagination of the human mind would always be superior to any computer.

- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

During the tour he meets Mahashveta, a gandharva maiden who tells him a long story that impresses him deeply. She thinks she has caused the death of her lover and would like to die. Chandrapida is full of pity for her. Mahashveta leads him to the Gandharva maiden Kadambari who has vowed to remain unmarried like her friend Mahashveta. Kadambari falls in love with Chandrapida. The prince has to hurry back to his native kingdom, and so he leaves Patralekha behind with Kadambari. On his return Chandrapida learns that his parents are arranging his marriage. Patralekha returns now to report to the prince the love-lorn state of Kadambari.

Bana stopped his novel here. We have no idea what made him call off the project, but his son Bhushana completed the tale, which is referred to as *Ut-tara Kadambari*. It is possible death intervened for this change of guard. Though the title indicates the heroine, critics often vote in favour of Mahashveta for she is created as the very image of purity by Bana. Her chaste love for the hermit boy Pundarika is brought out beautifully in the narration as also her all-consuming grief at the loss of her beloved. But then, it must be remembered that Bana's brilliant powers of narration had stopped with the entry of Kadambari into the tale. Her story is mainly the result of Bhushana's narrative art.

What we have of Bana in Kadambari's story has attracted the admiration of great critics. Anandavardhana, for instance, considers the description of the mutual love at first sight between Chandrapida and Kadambari to be one of the finest passages in Sanskrit literature that project the rasa of love. A few lines from the long passage:

"Confused by the sight of Kadambari yet illumined by the brightness of her gaze, he stood for a moment like a rock, while at the sight of him a thrill rose in Kadambari, her jewels clashed, and she half rose. Then love caused a glow, but the excuse was the effort of hastily rising; trembling hindered her steps – the swans around, drawn by the sound of anklets, got the blame; the heaving of a sigh stirred her robe, it was thought due to the wind of chowries; her hand fell on her heart, as if to touch Chandrapida's

image that had entered in – it pretended to cover her bosom."

Bana has endured not only because he is the first novelist or because he deals with romantic love in all its aspects of limpid moonbeams and silvery lakes and radiant stars. We love Bana for all those obiter dicta that remain relevant for all time and particularly for his reverence for the concept of Guru:

"... the words of a *guru* are a bathing without water, able to cleanse all the stains of man; they are a maturity that changes not the locks into gray; they add weight without increasing bulk; though not wrought of gold they are an ear-jewel of no common order; without light they shine; without startling, they awaken. They are specially needed for kings, for the admonishers of kings are few."

Writers like Bana Bhatta stand witness to Sri Aurobindo's perfect description of the classical Sanskrit Age as one of "opulent maturity". Be it the description of childhood or a market-place or a Chandala huntress, luxurious words enter the flow of Bana's imaginative exuberance. According to scholars, his attention to detail is astounding. Here is a palace horse:

"The animal, which rose up straight from its resting position, spread its hind legs, straightened its back, raised its body, bent its neck so that its face, brown with the dust of the mane, was turned towards its chest and with jaws already working in expectation of food, stood pawing the ground with its hoofs."

Bana Bhatta's fame as the author of prose romances has made us ignore his *Chandi Sataka*. There has also been a doubt cast about his authorship of the century of verses. However, as Prof. Krishnamoorthy says "the evidence of the preserved manuscripts of this work as well as the numerous citations from it found in early writers on literary theory is quite conclusive" about Bana being the author. *Chandi Sataka* celebrates the destruction of Mahishasura by Devi.

"Vishnu's discus clanged at the touch of his body-hair as if it had struck a rock. Shiva's arrow rebounded at the touch of his hard hide as if it had hit a breast-plate. Laughing at these two gods and their

vain weapons as it were, the Devi kicked the demon with her foot and sent him to death at once. May that goddess preserve all!”

Bana was thus indeed the master of the twin harmonies of prose and verse in Sanskrit.

* * *

TOWARDS AN ASIAN IDENTITY

Prof. Manoj Das

A talk by the author as the leader of the Indian Delegation of Writers for the Chinese writers at Beijing in December 2000. Courtesy: The Hindu Literary Supplement, 7 January, 2001.

“Europe is but a molehill; there never have been mighty empires, there never have occurred great revolutions. But the East, where live hundreds of millions of men, is the cradle of all faiths - the birthplace of all metaphysics.”

--Napoleon Bonaparte

Calm twilight engulfed us as we sat in a cosy valley not far from Bandung, Indonesia, in June 1956. We, a few Asians, (more interested in literature than other delegates to the Afro Asian Students Conference) had broken away from the rest for a rendezvous.

In a jovial mood we told humorous anecdotes of our countries - China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka. Before long, we were amazed at the intimate affinity underlying those stories. Characters and situations resembled one another so closely. Our conference known as “Little Bandung” - after the historic Bandung Conference of 1955 which gave the doctrine of Panchsheel, the five principles of ideal co-existence - had knit us together into a comradeship, but those few of us certainly emerged from our unpublicised get-together as slightly more enlightened Asians.

Asia the largest of the continents, extending from the Ural mountains to the Caspian Sea, from the Caucasus mountains to the Black Sea, from the Asia Minor coasts and southeastern Mediterranean to the Red Sea, from the East Indies and Japan to Kamatchka has naturally many faces. Yet, a feeling or affinity

runs through the veins of its peoples which the Asians themselves take for granted and the Westerners can feel perhaps only in contrast to their own attitude to life. Kipling’s Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet is famous, but he did not belittle the East. What he meant was, the West should not dream of achieving any unity through the means of Westernising the East. Elsewhere, he said, “Asia is not going to be civilised after the methods of the West. There is too much Asia and she is too old.” However his picture of the East was that of a static hierarchy. And here is a glimpse of that amusing picture with a British colony as its backdrop:

“Mule, horse, elephant, or bullock, he obeys his driver, and the driver his sergeant, and the sergeant his lieutenant, and the lieutenant his captain, and the captain his major, and the major his colonel, and the colonel his brigadier commanding three regiments, and the brigadier his general, who obeys the Viceroy, who is the servant of the Empress.” (The *Mythology of Imperialism*, Jonah Raskin)

While there are many Asias, geographically speaking, there is also an Asia transcending geography and that one is not a vague idea or concept; it has evolved over millennia. From gross facts of history, like battles and commerce, to subtle forces of curiosity for the neighbour and the quest for truth as well as aspirations to spread the truth one has realised, numerous factors contributed to its formation. Indeed it is based on the needs of the inner life, man’s need for the knowledge of the meaning of life, of the enigma of suffering and death, the need for true happiness ... expressed through philosophy and mystic doctrines at a lofty plane and through fiction and poetry, tales, legends, verses and proverbs at the popular plane. If the Buddhist theories discovered kinship in Taoism and out of their fraternal dialogue sprang the Quington school of thought in the third century, dozens from the Indian Panchatantra and Kathasaritasagra, mingling with the elements of Chinese folklore resulted in the cultivation of a fresh crop of tales. Characters and situations from the Indian epic, the Ramayana, in particular, had a unique role to play in this process of intermingling. The relationship between the

Every year since 2006, according to Freedom House the number of countries registering a decline in political rights has outstripped the number registering an increase.

- Ruchir Sharma

Indian Hanuman and the Chinese Sun Wukong is unmistakable. Needless to say, such assimilations were not confined to China and India; this went on among practically all the countries of Asia. And the process continued. The genre of fiction in Japan known as Shosetsu since the 19th Century owes its origin to China, though it had undergone a change in its meaning during the past decades. The Japanese Haika has gained currency in several countries including India.

A powerful element that identifies a significant area of the modern Asian literature is the cry for freedom from imperial, colonial, and feudal oppression. Novels, short stories, plays and poetry carrying the voice of protest against the oppressors are too numerous to be listed. I would like to refer to a book that belongs to another Asian country - *Noli Me Tange-re* (Touch Me Not) by Jose Rizal (1861-1896), the genius who was killed by a Spanish firing squad at the age of 34. The novel begins on a gentle satire. A native, proud of his proximity to the colonial rulers, is throwing a party. Thus it goes: "So the news of his dinner party ran like an electric shock through the community of spongers, hangers-on, and gatecrashers whom God in His infinite wisdom had created and so fondly multiplied in Manila. Some of these set out to hunt polish for their boots; others collar buttons and cravats; but one and all gave their gravest thoughts to the manner in which they might greet their host with the assumed intimacy of long standing friendship, or, if the occasion should arise, make a graceful apology for not having arrived earlier where presumably their presence was so eagerly awaited. The dinner was given in a house which may still be recognised unless it has tumbled down in some earthquake. Certainly, it would not have been pulled down by its owner; in the Phillipines that is usually left to God and Nature. In fact one often thinks they are under contract to the government for just that purpose."

The fun slowly gives way to a bitter projection of the common man's life at that time which is not so remote in history. The theme of the novel is the making of a rebel and here is the man whose reminiscences feed the spirit of rebellion in the protagonist:

"About sixty years ago, my grandfather lived

in Manila, working as a bookkeeper in the office of a Spanish merchant. My grandfather was then very young but already married and had a son. One night, the merchant's warehouse caught fire from an unknown cause; the fire spread throughout the establishment and then to many others. The losses were very heavy; a scapegoat had to be found; and the merchant brought charges against my grandfather. He protested his innocence in vain; he was poor and could not retain eminent counsel, and so he was condemned to be paraded along the streets of Manila and publicly flogged. This degrading punishment, a thousand times worse than death, was still in use until not long ago. My grandfather, forsaken by all except his young wife, found himself bound to a horse, followed by a sadistic crowd, and flogged at every street corner, before the men who were his brothers and before the many temples of a God of Love. When the wretch, condemned to perpetual infamy, had sated the vengeance of men with his blood, his suffering and his screams, they had to cut him loose from the horse, for he had lost consciousness - would he had lost his life! In a refinement of cruelty, they set him free. His wife, who was then pregnant, went from door to door begging in vain for work or alms for her sick husband and helpless child. But who would trust the wife of a convicted arsonist? So she became a whore." (University of Indiana Press, 1961)

This sort of bitter realism sharpened by satire, grew on the soils of all the European colonies in Asia with little or no influence over one another, but out of a common fate. Life under colonial rulers was a field for bizarre experiences - of humiliation, pain and anger resulting in decades of depression, taking among its toll the creative zeal of the writers. But it also cultivated a sense of solidarity among the people of a nation and often among nations too. The literature of protest naturally inspired patriotic upsurges and the sacrifices of the martyrs and the sagas composed by them stirred the minds of different peoples for a long period. But imperialism and colonialism, in their raw form, are no more. Even feudalism has met its end, though not the feudal mindset in many countries. Tyrannies experienced in the past can still make a solid stuff of literature, but only of memories. A memo-

Dr. Ramaswami Mudaliar, no mean judge of politicians, spoke to me of C.R. Reddy as the greatest phrase-maker in politics since Disraeli, not excluding Randolph Churchill who, in England, came next to Disraeli.

- K. Iswara Dutt *Swatantra Annual*, 1952

rable work on such themes can be no more than an occasional phenomenon. Can we direct our national zeals into a transnational zeal, embracing the spirit of our continent? Needless to say, nothing can be forced on the creative mind. Efforts in that direction have resulted in stacks of unimaginative and uninspired literature and no repetition of that or any similar process should interest the writers and authorities today and tomorrow.

But the time-spirit is bringing the nations together on different fronts - social, economic, educational, technological and of course, political. If we neglect forging a literary togetherness, that will be a surrender to inaction, running against the time-spirit.

What then do we do? The answer is not far to seek. Why do I, as an Indian, know more about English, American and French literature than the Chinese, Japanese or Vietnamese literature? The colonial rule over India created situations that at first obliged us to learn that way. But what was once a historic compulsion, became a spontaneous acceptance in a changed situation. Thus our acquaintance with western literature which gradually became an exchange too, continues happily. We have not been losers on that account. The West dominated so many countries in the East. At least, some notable works of one Eastern country reached other countries of the Continent through a Western language. That was perhaps nature's compensation to the East for having lost on many fronts to the West. But sometimes, I ask myself: suppose India had not been colonised and I had the option to choose, which literature should I read? English or Chinese? It could probably have been Chinese.

I believe, like the historic compulsion which made me familiar with English literature, it is time we create a moral and happily voluntary compulsion for ourselves and get to know the literatures of Asia. It is true, only a few of us can learn Chinese and only a few Chinese or Koreans can learn any of the Indian languages. But today we live in a world when massive efforts in international cooperation have been made and several have succeeded. The simple fact is, no serious thought has gone into the need for creating

an institution or agency which could dedicate itself to introducing the literatures of Asia to one another through translations.

The Asian identity is there, concealed in the heritage of most of the Asian countries. It is also there in contemporary literature. But it is not pronounced. It remains veiled.

We in India have debated as much as other Asian countries have, about issues like the desirability of Western influence on our culture, its inevitability or otherwise, and the relation between tradition and modernity. Like the May Fourth Movement in China which championed western values and ideals in the 1920s, we too had voices against our traditions and they were given a reasonable hearing. An exchange in experiences of this kind would no doubt be highly educative.

For quite some time, Indian literature for the common Englishman meant what Rudyard Kipling and the like wrote. For long, India's window as well as that of the West on Chinese life has been Pearl S. Buck's *Good Earth*. But when I read Lu Hsun, a number of his short stories and *The True Story of Ah Q*, I realised that despite the realism in the works of Pearl Buck and other gifted writers, Lu Hsun's work had an authenticity that could be expected only of a native of China. I do not propose to display my meagre knowledge of Chinese literature here, but what I propose is a strong and well planned academy of Asian literatures to take care of the great need to know one another.

And who could take any effective step in that direction? For me, the answer came from the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. Speaking to Mr. Paul Feng of the Central News Agency, he said on January 20, 1946, "If China and India hold together, the future of Asia is assured." This holding together need not be confined to diplomacy; it can, by all means, be a psychological force that can work wonders in the realms of creativity.

Another celebrated Indian, Rabindranath Tagore expressed the same sentiment when, in *A Message to my Chinese Friends*, he said: "Age after age

Strategy can be changed with the stroke of a pen, but changing culture means altering how human beings actually behave.

- Michele Flournoy

in Asia, great dreamers have made the U world sweet with the showers of their love. Asia is again waiting for such dreamers to come and carry on the work, not of fighting, not of profit-making, but of establishing bonds of spiritual relationship. The time is at hand “when we shall once again be proud to belong to a continent that produces the Light that radiates through the storm clouds of troubles and illuminates the path of Life.” (Professor Tan Yun-shan and Cultural Relations Between India and China by V.G. Nair) Tagore established a department devoted to Chinese studies in the Vishwa Bharathi University that he founded.

A great vision of mankind’s future that 20th Century India gave the world is through Sri Aurobindo. He visualised man as an evolving being capable of rising above his present state of consciousness and stepping into a new phase of existence. I had the good fortune to know a Chinese savant Hu Hsu, a great painter and litterateur who lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry for many years and translated several major works of Sri Aurobindo into Chinese. He lived the last phase of his life in China and passed away on March 6 at the age of 91. His latest translation was Sri Aurobindo’s Life Divine.

The subtle, but undying, sympathy that exists between India and China sometimes surfaces through symbolic events and such an event took place in the late 1930s when the Indian National Congress, then fighting for India’s freedom, sent a medical mission to China during a critical phase of its history.

A member of the team, Dr. Kotnis, died in China in December 1942 after rendering heroic service to his cause. I published the story of Dr. Kotnis, And One did not Come Back by veteran author Khwaja Ahmed Abbas in the magazine I was then editing, The Heritage, since the original edition of the book had disappeared for decades. I did so with the help of Abbas and reproduced several photographs of the life of Dr. Kotnis in China provided by Dr. B.K. Basu, the sole surviving member of the medical mission and a great friend of Dr. Kotnis and of China.

“Once in a while, the relationship between India and China may grow hazy at the political plane but it was always warm so far as the hearts of the peo-

ple are concerned,” Dr. Basu assured me. I learned how true he was once that issue of my magazine was published. “Tell us more,” demanded my readers.

All I could wish was - long live the assurance of Dr. Basu; long live the bond between India and China symbolised by the sacrifice of Dr. Kotnis and let the bond embrace all the other nations of Asia.

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

* * *

KASTURBA GANDHI MEMORIAL DAY - 22ND FEBRUARY

Prof. D.K. Oza I.A.S., (Retd)
Former Vice Chancellor
Gandhigram University

Dear All

This rather belated message is important to me and I hope it will appeal to at least some of my friends. The background is this.

After the Quit India Movement launched by Gandhi in August 1942, he was “imprisoned”. His companions in the prison were Kasturba, Mahadev Desai - his life long secretary and Dr Sushila Nair, his physician. Thus altogether four persons.

It was not really a prison. The then British government negotiated with Aga Khan who said that his “palace” in Poona could be used to confine these persons. That “palace” looks rather ordinary but has a very large compound, probably three acres. Kasturba Gandhi passed away in that prison on 22nd February, 1944.. Therefore on that day, even now, her memorial day is observed.

Aga Khan who owned the palace was very generous and held Gandhi in very high regard. He therefore donated the entire very large property to the Gandhi Peace Foundation based at Poona and then headed by a distinguished woman Smt. Shobana Ranade who belonged to the famous Justice Ranade of the same city. It still remains a rather simple building.

Now, I come to the point. Smt. Shobana had

Autocrat, long focused on bare survival, are now on the offensive.

— Yascha Mounk

frequently invited me to join the 22nd February devotional music, etc. Once I managed that and reached early on 22nd February 1998.

Suddenly Smt. Shobana asked me for some help. She said “ Ozaji, we have to bring a few ladies and girls by car to attend the program. Can you take our tempo and bring them?” I readily agreed and the driver brought the vehicle. I got in and we started because we knew that we had to be quick. this was fairly early in the morning, 7 am. Within about 5 minutes our vehicle entered the Red Light District of Poona city. It hardly took me a few seconds to understand where we were. The commercial sex workers of the city lived there CSW’s. Suddenly the driver stopped right in the middle of that street, jumped out of the car and entered a house. I was furious and started shouting at him for his “criminal behaviour”. I followed him in the house and saw that he was talking to four women dressed in impeccably white khaddar saree and three teenage girls similarly dressed - total 7. Before I could say anything the driver told me we have to take these seven to join the prayer. It took me a minute to realize that it was probably the practice to invite these women on a memorial day of Kasturba Gandhi. (For the record it was on her advice that Gandhi had often distributed charkas to such women, and that became a major event in Srikakulam district which is now in AP every year on 2nd October). The CSW’s were also taught how to spin and their produce was purchased by the then Khadi board - I am referring to the mid 40’s)

To continue the story. The women, the girls, myself and the driver quickly reach the Palace where a couple of hundred women and school girls had assembled for prayer etc. Smt. Shobana received each girl and woman whom I brought and invited them to join the event. Suddenly I noticed that in front of the whole crowd which was seated, the lady in the centre appeared to be a familiar face. I asked Smt Shobana who confirmed that she was Smt. Kishori Amonkar who was then a Doyen of Hindustani Vocalists. I still consider Kishori Amonkar as among the best in that field.

The prayer started with Vaishnava Jana song.

A few invited school girls spoke about Kasturba. The girls who had come with the CWS’s also spoke and gave their homage to her memory. I noticed that the CSW’s had carefully joined the rendering of Vaishnava Jana and at the end “Raghupati Raghav Rajaram (Earlier Smt. Kishori had sung “Hari Tum Haro Jana-ki Bheer”). Later Smt. Shobana explained separately to me that the CSW’s are invited to participate in the 2nd October, 30th January and 22nd February and most of them being good spinners of the charka also joined in that ritual.

Can I have some comments on this message?

* * *

THE PRIVILEGED SHOULD WAKE UP

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan

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Chairman, Investment Board

Presently teaching at Indian Institute of Science,
Bengaluru

Every minute of our lives as citizens of India is lived negotiating the failures of governance in our country sometimes with fatal outcomes. As citizens - especially the more fortunate among us - we must accept this fundamental truth and demand a change from our indifference to those worse off than ourselves. When governance fails vigilantism and corruption thrive. A demand for strongmen and summary justice inevitably replace faith in public systems and legal processes.

The misfortune of the underprivileged only fleetingly appears in the news.- a few instances: A transformer explosion in Bangalore on 24th March 2022 killed 55 year old Shiv and his 19 year old daughter, Chaitinya. Akshaya, a class 9 student at Stella Maris School in Sadashivanagar Bengaluru was killed on 22nd March 2022 by a speeding garbage truck while trying to cross a busy road only because the subway through which she could safely make it to the other side was flooded.

A graduation certificate and marks list not delivered by the Postal Department in Hyderabad has

Markets should never be an end unto themselves.

- Oven Cass

forced a young women to go through the torturous process of getting duplicates losing time to apply to institutions abroad. In the National Capital Region thousands of people have seen their hopes of living in flats they had taken huge loans to finance, evaporate as the builders decamped with their - often - borrowed money.

In the absence of footpaths there is hardly a street in our country we can walk on safely making even short trips in motor vehicles a necessity rather than a choice. If at all there are footpaths the rich and the powerful have made them impassable for citizens often by extending their houses and shops into public spaces.

Frequently the government too contributes to making the average pedestrian's life miserable by forcing him or her to walk around garbage bins and transformers installed in the middle of footpaths. where they exist, or on the roads where they don't.

An expensive car with a fancy number plate can park with impunity on streets from which motorcycles and scooters are frequently removed and small nondescript cars towed away. There is a pecking order in law enforcement that's programmed to hit the weak.

Poorer neighbourhoods lack public spaces for children to play and adults to walk and parks to enjoy. The best is reserved for the most influential. Much of the scarce resources go to making already well kept parts of the city where the affluent live even better as poorer neighbourhoods languish.

In instances cited above and the hundreds of others not mentioned, bureaucratic indifference and partiality at the highest levels stand out as the principal culprit. In every instance this results in the non-delivery of public service to the weakest and most hapless who deserve them most. Thus the roads leading to airports in much of India are far better than those that connect to railway stations and bus stands.

Our leaders weigh against English education which overwhelmingly the poor want while hypocritically ensuring their own children and grandchildren

go to the best English medium schools in the country. We as citizens must challenge the idea that a powerful minority can get away with such blatant exploitation of what Mahatma Gandhi called the "dumb millions."

Even for the most selfish of reasons the privileged must work for the betterment of all. In the welfare of the many lies their security and well-being too- a common tide of well being lifts all the boats. But will the fortunate ever learn? As the protagonist in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novel "*One Day in Life*" by Ivan Denisovich muses: "How can you expect a man who's warm to understand a man who's cold?"

But nevertheless, all of us fortunate enough in life must make the effort and act on what Mahatma Gandhi told the scientist at the Indian Institute of Science when he visited the institution in 1927: "*I expect far more from you than from the ordinary man in the street. Don't be satisfied with the little you have done, and say ' We have done what we could , now let us play tennis and billiards.' I tell you in the billiard room and the tennis court, think of the big debt that is being piled against you from day to day.*"

* * *

Some great Bharatanaaris - II

Dr. R. Sampath

Former Chief of Bureau

The Hindu Visakhapatnam

Anasuya, the better half of sage Atri, is such a great personality that she could subjugate even the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, by virtue of her chaste and righteous behaviour. She could also win the

grace of the Trinity, and Dattaatreya, the three-in-one 'amsa' of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, is born to her. Dattaatreya, the great 'avadhuta' of Krita Yuga, is the Guru of Parasurama, the sixth incarnation of Mahavishnu. Anasuya's story runs thus: Once sage Narada approaches the divine consorts of the Trinity, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati, and asks them whether they could fry the iron nuts in his possession. They laugh at him, but he politely tells them that he would get them fried. When Narada returns and shows

At precisely the moment when India has its long-awaited chance to compete with China for the first time as a global manufacturing center, the government is making it harder to integrate the Indian economy into global supply chains.

Arvind Subramanian and Josh Felman

the fried iron nuts, the three Devis are astonished, and ask him how it is possible. The sage then reveals that Sati Anasuya, by virtue of her chastity, has done that. Envious of Anasuya, the Goddesses request their consorts to violate the chastity of Anasuya. As commanded by their consorts, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva approach Anasuya as mendicants and demand that she feed them without any clothes on her person. The virtuous Anasuya understands that the Trinity has come to test her, and immediately she turns them into babies and serves them food as demanded by them. The Trinity is unable to revert to their original form by virtue of Anasuya's chastity. Seeing their consorts' predicament, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati rush to Anasuya, apologise to her and supplicate 'Pati bhiksha'. Mercifully, Anasuya restores the Trinity on condition that they should be born to her. Granting her wish, the Trinity is born to her as Dattatreya, with three heads and six hands. Such is the power of a chaste woman!

Like Anasuya, Arundhathi, the better half of sage Vasishtha, is another 'rishipatni' whose chastity is a model for all newly married couples; during the wedding ceremony the bride is asked by the bridegroom to look at the Arundhathi star placed in the Saptarishi Mandalam to draw inspiration from her.

Nalayaani is yet another chaste woman glorified in our Puraanas as one who could even stop the movement of the sun! Her story runs thus: Nalayani is the devoted wife of sage Maudgalya. With a view to testing her attachment to him, the sage turns himself into a leprosy patient. By nature short-tempered, he harasses Nalayani in several ways, but she undergoes the ordeal as a chaste wife would do. It has been her custom to partake of the remnants of the food eaten by her lord. One day she finds the snapped finger of her husband in the food. She merely removes the finger and eats the remnants. Maudgalya is also a womaniser. For all his amorous activities Nalayani parts with her jewels without hesitation. One day he asks her to take him to a prostitute as he is too weak to walk to her house. Nalayani makes her lord to sit in a basket and, carrying the load on her head, goes to the prostitute's house. She waits outside that house un-

til fulfilment of his desire. Then, she carries the sage back home. While doing so, because of the night's darkness she dashes against another sage Maandavya, who has been punished by the local king to die a slow death seated on a sharp stake. Writhing in pain because of the crash of the basket, Maandavya pronounces a curse by which Maudgalya would die at dawn. She pleads with Maandavya to take back the curse, since she has unwittingly caused pain to the sage, who adamantly refuses to do that. Upon this, Nalayani swears in the name of her lord to whom she has been totally dedicated and proclaims, "Let not the sun rise at all." Because of this command of such a chaste woman, the sun does not rise the next day. All the three worlds shiver over this phenomenon of no sunrise. The celestials and other sages rush to Indra and request him to do something. Indra then calls Surya and commands him to do his duty. But Surya says that he is bound by the command of the chaste Nalayani and only if she withdraws that order, he can rise again. Indra then approaches Anasuya, who comes to Nalayani, and fondly caressing her, says: "I am proud of you Nalayani, but you should not punish the three worlds thus. Please take back your order and let sun rise again in all glory." Nalayani, after paying obeisance to Anasuya, replies, "Oh, great lady, I will abide by your request, but you should save my husband." Anasuya looks at Indra, who immediately rectifies the situation by saving not only the life of Maudgalya but also of Maandavya. Nalayani is another example of how a chaste woman could even dictate to Nature.

Can there be a greater pride to womanhood than Sita, Lord Rama's consort and philosopher king Janaka's daughter? Her story is too well known to be recounted here, as one cannot but agree with Adikavi Valmiki's remark "Sitaayaas charitam mahat" (Sita's story is great). Whether she is in the palace with Rama or with him in the forest, Sita proves her steadfast devotion to her consort unmindful of the comforts or lack of them. During the troubled time of her being abducted and imprisoned in Lanka by Ravana, she remains the same virtuous person despite the lures dangled by the demon king and the threats posed by the raakshasis in whose custody she has to remain for

almost a year. Unfazed by the difficulties she has to face, Sita treats Ravana like a straw and boldly advises him to surrender to Rama who will readily forgive his trespass or face doom. After the slaying of Ravana, when Rama teases her for having been the captive of another person, Sita undergoes the self-imposed fire ordeal to prove her chastity. As the queen of Ayodhya also, she has to suffer the malicious allegations by people and when she, in an advanced state of pregnancy, has to be abandoned by Rama, Sita bears the agony like the chaste 'Bharata naari', living an austere life in sage Valmiki's ashram. Finally, when Valmiki takes Sita and her twins Kusa and Lava to Ayodhya for reuniting Rama and Sita, she is asked to prove her chastity once again. Sita obeys her lord's command and swears in the name of Mother Earth who readily comes out and takes Sita in her lap, thus proclaiming her nobility of character. The story of Sita eulogises the greatness of Indian womanhood.

Then we have the story of Draupadi, the Pandava queen. The humiliations she has been subjected to by the foes of the five Pandavas are enormous. The polyandry of marrying five husbands by virtue of Lord Siva's boon to her in her past birth as Nalayani has been the butt of derision by the Kauravas and even Karna, leading to the extent of her being disrobed in the 'darbar' of the blind king Dhritarashtra, who is the father of the Kauravas and paternal uncle of the Pandavas. [Draupadi is considered to be the reincarnation of Nalayani who by the grace of Lord Siva obtained the boon of having five husbands in her next birth. This is because she sought the boon 'patim dehi' (bless me with husband) five times.] After Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, loses his kingdom, brothers, himself and even Draupadi in the game of dice he played with Sakuni, the maternal uncle of Duryodhana, the five brothers are humiliated as slaves to Kauravas. When Draupadi is dragged to the 'darbar' by Dussasana, she pleads with Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya and Vidura for justice, as her lord has been enticed into the game of dice and defeated by foul-play. Draupadi argues what right a defeated participant has to pledge his wife as stake. There is no answer for her question. [It will not be out of context to quote here former Attorney-General of

India K. Parasaran's remark that there is no reply to this question in legal circles even till date.] An exasperated Duryodhana orders Dussasana to humiliate her, since she has become a slave to him. Despite the presence of her five mighty husbands and venerable elders like Bhishma, she remains helpless and hence surrenders to Lord Krishna invoking His grace. And He protects her by covering her with lengths and lengths of saris emerging from her attire. An exhausted Dussasana faints. Thereafter, Draupadi proclaims that she would not tie her tresses, with which she has been dragged into the 'darbar', until Dussasana is punished for his wickedness and that she will tie them up using his blood as oil. Seeing the ruinous path his sons are in, Dhritarashtra restores the freedom of the Pandavas and their kingdom. Thus, securing single-handedly making the impossible possible for her husbands, Draupadi stands as the most valiant woman. Lured by another chance to win over Kauravas, Yudhishtira plays the game of dice once again. The wager for this game is that the defeated should go on exile for twelve years and spend a year incognito thereafter. Dharmaputra loses again. During the twelve-year exile, Draupadi is coveted by evil minded Jayadratha, brother-in-law of Duryodhana, and the villain gets punished by Bhima. During her one-year tenure of living incognito as Sairandhri in the harem of Virata, she undergoes privations by the amorous advances of the mighty Keechaka, brother-in-law of the Virata king. Thus Draupadi's is the life of a hapless woman all through. However, she bears all indignities with equanimity thanks to her devotion to Lord Krishna. And finally, when Aswathama kills the five Upa-Pandavas (sons of Draupadi) while they were asleep, she wants him punished, short of being killed, because she does not want Acharya Drona's wife to be deprived of her only son. A loving mother alone understands the distress of another mother.

Like Draupadi, her mother-in-law Kunti also undergoes a lot of suffering, despite having the Pandava princes as her five valiant sons. Her tribulations start right from her virgin days when by the boon of sage Durvasa she begets Karna through Lord Surya. Fearing social ostracism, the Khumboja princess deserts the child (Karna) by laying it in a basket and re-

leasing it in a river. This sin constantly worries her till end. Sufferings chase Kunti all through her life. If they are to be listed, the entire Mahabharata story has to be narrated again. She bears all those difficulties patiently, thanks to her steadfast devotion to Lord Krishna, her nephew. After the end of the great Kurukshetra war and coronation of her son Yudhishtira, Krishna takes leave of her and offers a boon as His parting gift. Kunti then says with determination, “My dear Krishna, give me sufferings only, so that I can constantly think of You.” Such is the greatness of Kunti, a symbol of Indian womanhood!

Gandhari, the consort of the blind king Dhritarashtra, is another woman of virtue whose dedication to her husband does not deter her from telling him that he is on the wrong track of sin in his dealings with his brother Paandu’s sons. Her affinity for Dhritarashtra is such that she does not want to see the world which he cannot see; so she covers her eyes with a piece of cloth. Her affection for her one hundred children is also on an extreme scale, but conditioned by Dharma. When Duryodhana seeks her blessings before starting the Kurukshetra war, Gandhari, while wishing him well, tells him unequivocally that Dharma alone would triumph ultimately. After the war, when Yudhishtira and brothers seek her blessings, she ungrudgingly bestows her affection on them. By virtue of her chastity, she could even curse Lord Krishna to witness the annihilation of the entire Yadava race. Gandhari is thus another great ‘Bharata naari’.

When Maharshi Yajnavalkya resolves to go into the forest to live as an ascetic, he calls his two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani, and proposes to divide the riches he has earned between them. Before accepting her share Maitreyi asks her lord whether the riches would help her to realise the Truth and achieve immortality. When she learns that they would not, and in fact, they are more a hindrance, she rejects the proposal and prefers instead the knowledge of immortality. Katyayani, however, agrees to take her share, because she has already gained that knowledge of immortality by serving the household as a good homemaker. Maitreyi and Katyayani are such great women.

Gargi, daughter of sage Vachaknu, has composed many hymns questioning the origin of existence. Learning about her profound knowledge of Vedic scriptures, King Janaka invites her to participate in a fire ritual he has organised in Mithila. During the ritual, Gargi sits with learned sages and raises probing questions on ‘Atman’ which silence the other participant scholars, including the most eminent Yajnavalkya.

When Sri Sankara Bhagavadpadacharya tours the length and breadth of Bharatadesa to spread the concept of Adwaitam, he is asked to engage in a dissertation with Mandana Misra by Kumarila Bhatta, who is on the verge of death. Adi Sankara approaches Mandana Misra, an authority on Purva and Uttara Mimamsa (logic), for a debate, but the latter in his seventies is reluctant to deal with a scholar in his twenties. Hailing the persistence of Adi Sankara, Mandana Misra agrees to the debate and asks the former to choose a judge and moderator of their discussion. Adi Sankara prefers Mandana Misra’s wife Ubhaya Bharati as the judge. “Don’t you think that I being his wife would be partial to my lord?” she asks the young mendicant, who replies: “O mother, you look like Goddess Saraswati, and I am sure you would perform your duty without fear or favour.” Pleased with the reply Ubhaya Bharati takes the role of the umpire between the rival disputants. The dissertation prolongs for days, and finally she declares the youngster the winner. Mandana Misra, as per the custom, agrees to become the disciple of Adi Sankara. But Ubhaya Bharati tells the sage of Kaladi, “You have won half the battle only. Unless you defeat me also by your arguments your victory will not be complete.” Adi Sankara agrees to the condition and starts dissertation with her. He is able to beat all her forays, but is helpless when she puts questions on Kamasutra. “Is it proper for a mother like you to put these questions to a celibate?” he asks. Ubhaya Bharati replies that in dissertations like this the participant cannot shy away from such questions, whereupon Adi Sankara seeks some time to master this aspect of life. Granted a month’s time, Sankara does ‘parakaaya pravesam’ (soul entering another body) into a dead king and learns the nuances of Kamasutra, and successfully

It would be ironic, and tragic, if Xi, a leader with a mission to save the party and the country, instead imperilled both. His current course threatens to undo the great progress China has made over the past four decades.

- Jude Blanchette

establishes his supremacy over her and receives her blessings. When somebody in the audience questions the act of 'parakaya pravesam' by a 'sanyasi' to know about aspects of family life, she silences him by citing Sri Krishna as an 'askalitha brahmachari' despite having 16,008 wives. Ubhaya Bharati's impartiality is thus a tribute to the Indian womanhood.

Down South, we have the story of Kannagi, whose greatness in fighting for justice for her innocent husband Kovalan's death sentence in the court of the Pandyan king, is narrated in 'Silappadhikaram', a Tamil epic authored by Ilango Adigal (saint), the younger brother of the Chera king Neduncheralathan. Kovalan, who hails from the mercantile class of Poompuhar in Chola desa, deserts Kannagi, after developing intimacy with Madhavi, a dancer. When all his riches were drained by this affair, he returns to Kannagi in a despondent mood. As virtuous wife Kannagi consoles him, and both leave for the Pandya kingdom in search of livelihood. As ill-luck would have it, he is trapped by a goldsmith when Kovalan offers to sell one of Kannagi's anklets to the cheat. The goldsmith, finding similarity between this anklet and that of Kopperundevi, the Pandyan queen, gets Kovalan arrested. The king in a fit of anger awards Kovalan the death sentence for stealing the queen's anklet. When Kannagi learns of the execution of her husband, she rushes to the court challenging the king's decree. The king asks her to prove the innocence of Kovalan. "Since this anklet is mine, I know it consists of rubies," asserts Kannagi and asks the king what the queen's anklet contains. He says it is filled with pearls. Thereupon, she asks the king to break the so-called stolen anklet and when he does, rubies rush out helter-skelter. A perplexed king immediately declares: "Since I have executed an innocent Kovalan, I am the real culprit and I have no business to live." So saying he cuts his throat with his sword. Seeing this, the queen faints and dies on the spot. Thereafter, Kannagi curses the capital city of Madurai to be reduced to ashes for the injustice perpetrated on her husband. Embittered Kannagi moves then to the Chera land where she is taken to the Heavens by a celestial vehicle. When the Chera king learns this, he builds a temple for the virtuous Kannagi, another great 'Bharata

Naari' who does not countenance injustice.

In the recent history of India, we find some royal women, famous for their brain and brawn. Rudramma Devi of Orugallu (modern Warangal), who ruled the Kakatiya kingdom in the thirteenth century, braved the invading Eastern Ganga and Chalukya kings. She was hailed as the most benevolent queen. Rani Mangamma (1689-1705), who was the regent of the Naik kingdom of Madurai until her grandson came of age, was not only a great defender of the kingdom from the invading hordes of Malik Kafur, but also a benefactor to her subjects. Her regime was hailed as the most benevolent one in southern Tamil Nadu. Kittur Rani Chennamma (1778-1829) rebelled against the machinations of the British East India Company to capture Kittur (Karnataka) and proved her mettle as the noble ruler of that kingdom. By far the greatest of all women fighters against the East India Company was Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi (1828-58). Enraged over the Company's demand to surrender the Jhansi kingdom, since it had repudiated her decision to adopt a prince, under the Doctrine of Lapse by Governor-General Dalhousie, she waged a battle against the Company which coincided with the First of War of Independence in 1857 launched by several kings of north India. Though the revolt was crushed, the war resulted in the dissolution of the East India Company and Queen Victoria taking over the reins of administration.

Thus women of India have played a stellar role in upholding the greatness of this land, and they have a special place in the cultural firmament of Bharat. These episodes confirm the high pedestal on which the Indian womanhood rests.

* * *

STOP THE SAME!

Dr. (Ms) Ahana Lakshmi

Environmental Consultant

While going through my twitter feed, I was struck by the headline **#Stop the Same**. Quite intrigued, I immediately explored a little further as it appeared to deal with education and the environment. Indeed so it is: **Stop the Same** is a global movement

Technology companies are increasingly geopolitical actors in and of themselves.

- Ian Bremmer

calling for transformative change – the call is from the global youth biodiversity network.

Youth of today are vocal about what is happening around them; they do not accept as blanket statements what they are told. For example – some four decades ago, we were told that there were two easy solutions to pollution. Concentrate and contain, dilute and disperse. The first was especially with reference to toxic waste such as from nuclear power plants. Now, we ask – is it necessary to generate such toxic waste and then worry about the harm it may cause in future? In the second case, dilute and disperse works when the waste quantities are small, and are within the assimilative capacity of a river or the sea. That was the rationale behind unconcerned pouring millions of litres of wastes into the sea. Now we see the seas around us are gasping and we realize that there is a limit to what the seas can absorb. Action is what the youth of today prefer – in the north east, a school run by a young couple is building tree guards by stuffing empty plastic drinking water bottles with single use plastics and using these in lieu of bricks. In Tamil Nadu, hordes of youth are volunteering to clean up waterbodies.

This year, 2022, is also the fiftieth anniversary of the landmark publication called “Limits to Growth”. MIT researchers led by Donella Meadows forecast the environmental and social consequences of industrialization saying that continued economic and population growth would deplete Earth’s resources and lead to global economic collapse by 2070. It was a time when computer modelling was not very much known; also there was high belief in human ingenuity to overcome any circumstance through technological interventions, including pollution, accepted as a necessary evil of progress but could be reversed. Donella Meadows and her colleagues called for early action to avert a catastrophic collapse and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was born. The year 1972 was also when the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) when environment reached the global agenda. Thus, 2022 is significant milestone in the environment movement worldwide and the world has

come a long way since then. It was during the Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 that the Convention on Biological Diversity came into being; Stop the Same is the campaign by the Global Youth Biodiversity Network under the CBD.

Coming back to ‘Stop the Same’, the campaign points out that we are standing at the crossroads of an ecosystem and climate collapse, and it is time to stop giving excuses and move towards transformational action to prevent the collapse of the earth. As pointed out by the campaign, education is a clean enabler for change towards sustainability.

But what exactly is meant by transformative change?

According to Kai Chan of the IPBES, transformative change means doing things differently—not just a little more or less of something we’re already doing. He points out that we have to continue doing things like recycling, composting, cycling and taking public transport, but have to also go well beyond these actions.

Transformational changes include actions that could range from going carbon neutral and pushing for everyone around to do the same to insisting on real-time participatory decision-making that is precautionary, adaptive, inclusive and integrative across sectors and jurisdictions, among other solutions. This is where the youth come in. They are pushing hard and demanding for inclusive approach that is participatory in voices that are collective and loud enough to be persuasive. But, for even greater participation by youth to being able to push their ideas or ensure what they say is heard, education is a must. Not the textbook education that we have specialized in. Not the rote learning that is emphasized. But learning about our surroundings, about where our food comes from and where the waste that we generate goes. Why small is beautiful and how local actions impact globally.

The mantra continues to be the same. Think globally, act locally. Steps to achieve transformational change can be uncomfortable, but necessary. A

A man persuades himself best, and best convinces others, by means of his own experiences.

- Nirad C. Chaudhuri

change accepted and highlighted by a societal influencer at a local level can trigger a rapid transformational revolution all the way at the national and global level in the blink of an eyelid. The International Day of Biological Diversity is observed annually on 22nd April. Let us push for transformational changes to our way of life at every level for we are not just part of the solution, we are integral to the solution.

* * *

THE GANGA

- Jawharlal Nehru

As the Ganga is history, the historical aspect should be brought out. The Ganga is intimately linked up with tradition, mythology, art, culture and history. You find her cropping up everywhere. To deal with the subject adequately would be a tremendous task, but in any event the history and traditional aspect cannot be neglected. The superstitious side need not be stressed. Still, in order to understand Indian mythology and art, the mythological origins of the Ganga might be referred to, that is, Ganga falling on the matted head of Siva, the matted head apparently representing the Himalaya mountains. This, I suppose, could best be done by reproducing some of the I well-known sculptures depicting it. There are many such.

Then certain famous historical scenes ought to be shown, for instance, the coming of the Aryans and their reaching the Ganga for the first time and their joy at seeing this majestic river. There are two famous lines of Sir Mohammad Iqbal in his song, *Sare jah-an se achchha Hindustan hamara*. These refer to the coming of the Aryans. It would be worthwhile bringing in these lines into the picture. They are:

Ai ab-e-rod-e Ganga wah din hai yad tujh ko

Utara tere kinare jab karavan hamara.

In these days of Pakistan agitation, it is interesting to note what one of the leaders of the Muslim League said about this.

Then there are so many battles that have taken place round about the Ganga. The Greek invasion

during the time of Chandragupta Maurya was stopped somewhere near the Ganga, possibly not far from Allahabad. It would be an excellent picture to show life in Chandragupta's time. Kannauj was a great city then, famous for its wares and especially its swords and steel weapons. References to Kannauj swords occur in accounts of Sohrab and Rustam, as well as, I think, in the Shahnama describing Alexander's invasion.

Earlier than this, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata stories can be woven in. Later Asoka's period with his great capital, Pataliputra, on the Ganga.

Indian literature is full of the Ganga and you find her name mentioned in songs in Burma and Indo-China and elsewhere. In Harsha's time the Chinese pilgrim, Hieuen Tsang, describes the Kumbha Mela at Allahabad, which was even then an ancient festival. There are of course innumerable historical incidents that can be dealt with. The Gangetic valley, and more particularly the Doaba, that is the area between the Ganga and the Jamuna, is full of history and tradition and song. If you take the Jamuna, that very beautiful and gracious river, you get the whole of the Krishna legend round about Mathura and Brindavan and of the sweet songs in Braj Bhasha. . During winter

It is difficult to suggest a definite time for this survey the Ganga shrinks and is not much to look at in many places. The rainy season would be the proper time. But the big melas take place mostly during the winter. The biggest of them is the Allahabad Kumbha which takes place once in 12 years. You are fortunate that this Kumbha is taking place next year in January and February. "Ganga"

I hope you will not use the name 'Ganges'. I dislike it. sounds infinitely better. I wonder how our forebears managed to change this good name into Ganges. A friend has suggested an explanation which sounds feasible. Ganges, he says, is a corruption of Gangaji.

(A Letter to Edward Thompson, 7 April 1940)

* * *

If liberty is to mean anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear

- George Orwell

PRIDE, PREJUDICE & PUNDITRY

THE ESSENTIAL SHASHI THAROOR

(Aleph Books Company, New Delhi, 2021 – Rs.999 – pp 574)

The latest book of the multifaceted celebrity Shashi Tharoor, a collection of 75 articles published at different times in journals and newspapers, is dedicated to his parents, sisters, sons and grandsons, with all his ‘heart and soul’. It is a massive tome of 574 pages containing ten chapters. David Davidar’s scintillating introduction *MIND IN MOTION* is a perfect curtain raiser to the eminently readable book. “The fact that a book like ‘*An Era of Darkness*’ has sold a quarter of a million copies in hardback is a testament to Shashi’s great gift of writing books on serious even abstruse subjects in lively prose, without sacrificing scholarship or dumbing down what he is attempting to put forward” writes Davidar. “I’ll be a former M.P. But I hope never to be a former writer,” says Tharoor who has published about five million words over the past fifty years or so.

The Great Indian Novel Shashi Tharoor’s debut novel catapulted him to global literary fame. The distinguished writer and critic Khushwant Singh declared that it was ‘perhaps the best work of fiction written by an Indian’. The first Chapter contains a tribute to the two apostles of modern India Nehru and Gandhi. A Nehruvian to the core Tharoor begins by referring to the quintessence of Nehru’s legacy- *The Invention of India* and the four pillars of democratic India he raised; 1) Self-governance 2) Secularism 3) Socialism and 4) Foreign Policy and a detailed analysis of the above four. Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar’s unique work in the making of the Constitution and emancipation of the disadvantaged sections is presented in the third chapter.

The chapter that follows titled *Tagore’s Immortality* is studded with some brilliant observations of India’s first Nobel Laureate and a

few of his poems too. For instance, ‘The rose’, wrote Tagore ‘is a great deal more than a blushing apology for the thorn’. Dawn is ‘the departing night’s kiss on the closed eyes of morning’. ‘And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well’. ‘The world is an ever-changing foam that floats on the surface of a sea of silence.’ ‘Man has in him the silence of the sea, the noise of the earth, and the music of the air.’

Tharoor recalls how Rabindranath Tagore put it gently to a Western audience in New York in 1930: “A great portion of the world suffers from your civilisation” adding that Mahatma Gandhi was blunter. When asked what he thought of Western civilisation, the Mahatma replied, “It would be a good idea.” It is a wide spectrum of subjects that Tharoor covers in the seventy five chapters ranging from philosophy to poetry, politics to cricket and from personal to global issues and problems. There are eleven chapters on the game of cricket(a virtual team) watched almost every day and talked about by everyone at some place or the other, beginning with the *The Indianness of Cricket* and ending with *The Immortals* Kerala, his homestate, occupies a huge place in his heart and considerable space in the book authored by the internationally renowned diplomat, former Minister for External Affairs, prolific writer and a much sought after speaker.

The case for a Presidential System is a chapter with which not many will agree despite Tharoor offering four reasons in its support for it. It is difficult to agree with Shashi Tharoor’s argument, especially after watching the tenure of Donald Trump as the President of America. If India opts for the Presidential type government, there might be more than thirty Donald Trumps governing India – including the Prime Minister and 29 Chief Ministers of the States! Tharoor is uncompromising on the idea that the British were mainly responsible for India’s backwardness and exploitation of the huge population of the country. The Indian intellectuals, according to him, were ignored and genuine public protests were treated as conspiracies against the British rule. From prosperity in early 19th century to abject poverty of

millions of people India plummeted because of the greed and loot of the British rulers. Tharoor would not forgive the atrocities perpetrated on the people by the foreign rulers. Tharoor recalls how 'India's highly developed banking system and vigorous merchant capital, with its well-established network of agents, brokers, and middlemen and a talent for financing exports and commercial credit, featured such sophisticated financial networks as that of the Jagat Seths, the Chettiars in the south, and the Gujarati Baniyas in the west. This banking system was as large and extensive and dealt with as much money as the Bank of England'. In one powerful sentence Tharoor sums up how "this was the country impoverished by British conquest.

Tharoor is known for his inventiveness and is admired for the manner in which he plays on words. He loves to be called a 'wordsmith'. For instance, he quotes the word 'floccinaucinihilipilification' borrowed from the 19th century coinage, meaning 'the act of estimating something or someone as worthless' which was used for his book *The Paradoxical Prime Minister. PRIDE, PREJUDICE & PUNDITRY* is a delightful book by one of India's finest writers and it deserves to be read by all those interested in the study of literature, politics and public life and the diversity of Indian culture.

The 73rd chapter titled *THE GREAT MANGO MARCH* is a parody of Gandhiji's Great Salt March. The introduction to it deserves to be read in particular.

The Great Indian Novel, my first novel, seeks to reinvent characters, episodes, and philosophical arguments in the ancient Indian epic the Mahabharata in a satirical retelling of the political history of twentieth century India, from the freedom struggle to the 1980s. As the epic is said to be dictated by the hermit Veda Vyasa to the elephant-headed god, Ganapathi, The Great Indian Novel is dictated by a cantankerous old nationalist politician, Ved Vyas, to a scribe, Ganapathi. He tells, with digressions and occasional lapses into verse, the story of the India he has lived through. The episode excerpted here is a parodic reinvention of an event known to history as the Great Salt March, undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 to protest British taxation of salt. My fictional character, the Mahaguru Gangaji, takes on the role and attributes of Bhishma in the epic.

Shashi Tharoor the versatile cricket loving personality and prolific writer loves to 'play on words' with a straight bat!

Nannu nadipinchina charitra The history that led me, the autobiography of Prof. Vakulabharanam Ramakrishna, former Professor of History Central University Hyderabad who edited a comprehensive history of Andhra Pradesh in 17 volumes in both English and Telugu, from 5000 BC to 2012 AD, is a welcome addition to the literature on Andhra history and culture.

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