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DENTED IMAGE OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

In less than two weeks, India will celebrate its 75th anniversary of Independence day with Narendra Modi delivering his ninth address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort as the prime minister of the world's largest democracy. It is a historic occasion that conjures up memories of the first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's stirring *Tryst with Destiny* midnight speech in which he proclaimed the goal of the liberated people of India and the path for them to follow : 'It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.' India's foreign policy goal of promoting good relations with all nations and cordial relations with neighbors earned for the nation the trust and goodwill of both big and small nations across the globe. Among those who commended India's role were Nobel Laureates, scientists and philosophers such as Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell and Arnold Toynbee. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, both the superpowers held frequent consultations with Indira Gandhi, the then prime minister for advice and help in easing tension between them. India is no longer the prominent role player and trouble shooter it once was in world affairs.

According to the Washington based Freedom House, the global watchdog of human rights and civil liberties, India's ranking as a democratic nation declined from *free* to *Partly Free*. 'While India is a multiparty democracy, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has presided over discriminatory policies and increased violence affecting the Muslim population. The constitution guarantees civil liberties including freedom of expression and freedom of religion, but harassment of journalists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other government critics has increased significantly under Modi. Muslims, scheduled castes (Dalits), and scheduled tribes (Adivasis) remain economically and socially marginalized,' said the Freedom House report.

Intolerance of dissent and criticism and arbitrary arrests and harassment of those who write or speak adversely about the Narendra Modi led BJP government bear testimony to the increasing authoritarianism of the ruling class. This trend has unfortunately spread among the 29 states of the Union in which the Chief Ministers feel like France's Grand Monarch Louis IV who said : "I am the State" and the more arrogant utterance of his successor Louis VI "My words are Law" was repeated by the Chief Minister of a state in India not long ago. The gap between rhetoric and reality keeps widening always in politics. When he assumed charge as the head of the BJP led government ten years ago Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to eliminate corruption in the government and create opportunities for employment to alleviate the suffering of millions of frustrated young men and women. Corruption has not been eliminated and India is ranked 86 on the scale of corruption among the 180 countries indexed by the Transparency International. Noted historian and author Ramachandra Guha said that India is 'election- only democracy.'

What India needs today is the elimination of the dominance of the fundamentalist forces at all levels that use caste, religion and faction to oppress the minorities and disadvantaged section of the society and the restoration of freedom from fear and insecurity. Creating a climate of peace and harmony, reducing inequalities between the haves and have nots and access to all for equal opportunities pave the way for good governance which is too nuanced a process to be left entirely to the politicians. The legislatures, including Parliament of India have let down the people while the executive has failed to fulfil the promises made to the people at the time of elections. Nor has the judiciary inspired much public confidence in its role as the custodian of the rights and liberties of the billion plus people. Former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh aptly said that 'judicial overreach' was due to 'executive under reach.'

On August 15, 2022 will begin the platinum jubilee celebrations featuring the nation's completion of 75 years of India's independence and also the 150th birth anniversary of the great seer Sri Aurobindo!

- The Editor

We end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us.

- Jawaharlal Nehru (from *Tryst with Destiny* Speech of August 14-15, 1947)

AGNIPATH, BETWEEN THE LINES

India lacks a National Security Doctrine. Armed forces have remained outside ambit of reform

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SO DREADFUL is the prospect of a military defeat, and so horrifying its consequences, that nations are willing to go to any length to avoid such an outcome. It is for this reason that national security has been historically deemed, worldwide-by economists and not soldiers - as the first charge on the treasury.”

Independent India, unfortunately, saw defence expenditure being relegated to the “nonplan” category, within the ambit of a Soviet-inspired, central economy. In another anomaly, the pension bill of veteran soldiers - a separate charge on the exchequer - was linked to the defence budget and its inevitable) growth trotted out as an excuse for the dwindling funds available for force-enhancement and hardware replacement/modernisation.

Thus, for years, governments dragged their feet, for “want of resources”, over the army’s demand for a mountain strike corps. But, ironically, the 2020 Chinese incursions in Ladakh resulted in the deployment of 50,000-60,000 troops-over a corps strength- and the outflow of a huge unplanned expenditure to support this indefinite deployment.

The most disheartening aspect of this situation has been the fact that the finance ministry, instead of finding ways and means of raising essential, additional funds for national defence, has passed the buck to the armed forces, and demanded that they evolve measures for reducing the pension bill. One presumes that the Agnipath scheme, launched with much fanfare, is an outcome of this demand.

But rather than engage in a critique of this controversial project, which has already seen much debate, controversy and public disturbances, let me focus on two larger issues, which lie at the root of much that is wrong in our approach to national security.

Every nation faces the eternal “guns vs butter” dilemma, and has to find its own way to resolve, what the US military terms the “endsways-means” conundrum. All major powers undertake a periodic (every 4-5 years) review of their evolving national security objectives, the options available, and the economic/military means available for achieving them. Such reviews automatically generate assessments of existing/potential adversary threats to national interests, as well as the state of own military’s material/operational readiness.

From here, it is a short step to the estimation of the military capabilities required, and the funding support that the nation will need to generate. Apart from providing fiscal guidance, this process also facilitates the evolution of a national security strategy. Our neighbourhood adversary, China, has, since 2002, been issuing, with unfailing regularity, a biennial “Defence White Paper”, which encapsulates all of the foregoing, and is available on the Internet; for the information of foes and friends, alike.

The government of India, on the other hand, has neglected to undertake any such exercise, in the past 75 years. It has, thereby deprived itself, and the taxpayer, of a holistic, national security picture of: (a) Where we stand; (b) where do we want to go; and (c) how do we intend to get there? Unsurprisingly, India is amongst the few major powers which has failed to issue a National Security Strategy or Doctrine, and is consequently seen offering fumbling responses to emergent threats as well as to financial stringency in the security domain.

A second fact that we need to face is that our armed forces have remained in a Second World War time-war, as far as their organisation and doctrines are concerned. Halfhearted attempts at organisational reform have come to naught due to lack of political will as well as internal resistance from the services; with the constitution of a Chief of Defence Staff and creation of a Department of Military Affairs providing the latest examples.

However, the most troubling lacuna is that our 1.4 million strong army has neither benefitted fully from the “revolution in military affairs” of the 1980-

The greatness of humanity is not in being human but in being humane.

- Mahatma Gandhi

2000 era, nor learnt all the lessons of the ongoing “hybrid warfare,” and remains fixated on the “boots-on-the-ground” syndrome. Given the transformed nature of warfare, down-sizing of the Indian army, by substituting manpower with smart technology and innovative tactics, has become an imperative need. Against this backdrop, a scheme on the lines of Agnipath, appropriately constituted, and focused on enhancing “combat effectiveness” rather than “effecting savings” or “generating employment,” could have triggered a reformative process. But a number of caveats need to be borne in mind in this context.

Firstly, given the parlous security situation, on the country’s northern and western borders as well as the ongoing domestic turbulence, this is not the best time to cast the armed forces - already short of manpower-into turmoil, with a radical and untried new recruitment system.

Secondly, such a scheme, in its present form, is suitable only for the army, whose large infantry component is not excessively burdened with technology. In case of the navy and air force, it must be recognised that at least 56 years are required before a new entrant can acquire enough hands-on experience to be entrusted with the operation or maintenance of lethal weapon systems and complex machinery and electronics.

Thirdly, no matter how extensively the issue was discussed in meetings or on files, a radical change of this nature should have been subjected to a trial before servicewide implementation. Ideally, a few units of the regular or Territorial Army could have been earmarked as a testing ground, and feedback obtained.

Lastly, bitter experience of the past has shown that the home ministry has resisted induction of ex-servicemen into the armed-police and para-military forces, on the grounds that it would spoil the career path of their own cadres. Similarly, state governments and other agencies have blatantly ignored the reservations mandated for ESM. Therefore, if the Agnipath scheme has to offer a meaningful promise

of post-demobilisation employment or education, this must be mandated by an Act of Parliament, on the lines of the “GI Bill” enacted by the US Congress.

In conclusion, seeing the detritus of burnt trains, wrecked buses and social turmoil, often seen in the wake of many recent pronouncements, one is left wondering whether dissenting opinions are tolerated and contrarian advice accepted or given any weightage in our high-level decision-making forums?

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THE MILITARY’S APOLITICAL ETHOS IS KEY. PRESERVE IT

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The need for an objective review and transformation of the Indian military is imperative of course, but the drivers must be those of abiding national security interests at all times

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi’s penchant for big-ticket reforms in the defence sector was on display in the recently unveiled Agnipath scheme, which is expected to radically transform the recruitment of soldiers, sailors and airmen, and, consequently, the profile of the Indian fauj. While many veterans have expressed their reservations about the potentially negative long-term consequences of this initiative on the combat efficiency of the military — the Army in particular — the die has been cast. The Agnipath scheme has been launched and the first batch of recruits under this framework are in the process of being selected and inducted.

This policy move mirrors, in some manner, a similar far-reaching decision to create the post of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) that PM Modi announced from the Red Fort on August 15, 2019 — early in his second term — and the first incumbent was appointed on January 1, 2020. This was again welcomed as a decisive step because this issue was pending for a very long time, since higher defence reforms were mooted after the 1999 Kargil war, but remained suspended for two decades.

The mother is everyman’s primary wealth. There is no higher god than the mother.
The father is one’s treasure. Everyone should cherish one’s parents as embodiments of the Divine.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Tragically, the first CDS, General Bipin Rawat, died in a helicopter crash last year, and the post remains vacant currently. It may be recalled that Rawat was the Army chief prior to being appointed as the first CDS and this transition was seamless. It was deemed logical that as the first among equals, the CDS would be an officer who had held four-star rank — that is, a service chief.

For the past few months, there was speculation that one of the chiefs retired recently would be appointed as the new CDS, but in June, the government widened the pool for selection. Serving three-star rank officers (Lt. General and equivalent) will now be considered for CDS and, in a rare departure from existing rules and norms, retired officers of three-star rank may also be appointed. This has led to conjecture that the tweak was done to accommodate an officer more acceptable to the current political leadership.

While it is the prerogative of the elected leadership in a democracy to select officers to the highest ranks of the military — thereby asserting civilian primacy — overt and unwarranted political intervention in matters that are within the professional military domain can have negative consequences and imperil core national security. This was borne out in the Indian experience and warrants scrutiny in the run-up to the 75th anniversary of August 15, 1947.

India's first PM, Jawaharlal Nehru, had a challenging task in nurturing a nascent democracy and rewiring the exploitative colonial infrastructure of governance. While there was a very effective and sagacious home minister in Vallabhbhai Patel to enable the transition of the senior bureaucracy and police (the erstwhile Indian Civil Service and Indian Police Service) who had diligently served the colonial ruler, the Indian military was seen with deep-seated mistrust by Nehru. A lurking military coup remained unstated but the anxiety was palpable. This sentiment was exacerbated by the tempestuous Krishna Menon, who as defence minister vitiated civil-military relations leading to the infamous resignation of General Thimayya as Army chief in 1959 and the subsequent humiliation in the October 1962 war with China.

In the decade that followed, two highly regarded political stalwarts — Yashwant Rao Chavan and Jagjivan Ram — as defence ministers restored the institutional integrity of the fauj and the equipoise in civil-military relations. The 1971 victory that created Bangladesh became illustrative of the professionalism of the Indian military, despite many constraints.

Apart from defending national sovereignty and dealing with external challenges, the Indian military has played a quiet but significant role in enabling the Indian democratic experience by its innate professionalism and proven apolitical orientation — which is in stark contrast to the experience of many post-colonial States that have fallen victim to military transgressions of different hues.

This was demonstrated during the June 1975 Emergency imposed by then PM Indira Gandhi, when the Army was sought to be requisitioned in a subversive manner by then defence minister Bansi Lal and the Sanjay Gandhi coterie. The Army chief at the time, General Tappy Raina, in a subtle but firm manner conveyed his inability to comply with this imprudent political overture and an undesirable precedent was avoided. Fidelity to the constitutional role of the military remained the lodestar.

In the current context, two structural determinants germane to national security and the democratic timbre come into focus in relation to the Agnipath scheme and the tweak in the rules to appoint the next CDS. How will the composite combat efficiency be impacted by the Agnipath policy at a time when the Indian Army is already looking to pare down its manpower by almost 100,000 personnel? This, when Galwan-like challenges in relation to China and the terror shadow across the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan remain dynamic. And secondly, by introducing a visible political filter to the selection of the next CDS, will the institutional rectitude and much cherished apolitical DNA of the Indian fauj be adversely impacted?

The need for an objective review and transformation of the Indian military is imperative of course, but the drivers must be those of abiding national security interests at all times.

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Time is not measured by the passing of years but by what one does,
what one feels, and what one achieves.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

A CRITIQUE OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR POWER POLICY

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Nuclear Energy in India: From Self-Reliance to Import Dependence.

India was an early entrant in the field of nuclear energy. It was Dr. Homi J Bhabha who initiated nuclear science research in India by setting up the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) in 1945 and later the Atomic Energy Establishment at Trombay (now known as Bhabha Atomic Research Centre or BARC) in 1954 to intensify effort to deploy nuclear technology for generating electricity. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) headed by the Prime Minister started functioning since then.

As a part of an agreement with the USA, India set up its first nuclear power station (410MW) in 1963 at Tarapur in Maharashtra. It was based on Boiling Water Reactors (BWRs) using enriched Uranium fuel supplied by the USA. This project started commercial operation in 1969. Tarapur marked the beginning of India's nuclear power development effort.

Initially, it was the DAE that implemented the nuclear power development programme till the creation of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) as a Central PSU in 1987.

It was Dr Bhabha's vision that India should become self-reliant in the field of nuclear energy. Accordingly, India adopted a three-stage nuclear power development programme based on indigenously made reactors and fuel processed from domestic resources.

The first stage was based on indigenously manufactured Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) that used natural Uranium from domestic sources as fuel and indigenously produced Heavy Water as both the moderator and the coolant. In the second stage, Plutonium-239, separated from the spent fuel in the first stage, was to be used in indigenously developed Fast Breeder Reactors

(FBRs) for generating electricity. In the futuristic third stage, it was envisaged to use the indigenously available Thorium raw material from the sea sands along the coast and produce Uranium 233 which in turn would be the fuel for electricity generation.

During the last five decades since its inception, with a heavy emphasis on indigenous effort, DAE has installed around 5,780 MW of nuclear power generation capacity. As on date, nuclear power constitutes only 1.7% of the total installed electricity generation capacity in the country and, in terms of the total electricity generation, its contribution is only 3.3%.

It was in 1988 that India started deviating from the path of self-reliance in the field of nuclear energy when it signed an agreement with the then Soviet Union for setting up a 2x1000MW capacity power project based on Soviet manufactured pressurised water reactors at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu. Actual work on the project started in 2002.

The signing of the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2005 marked the beginning of a series of bilateral inter-country agreements that India signed for importing on a very large scale both nuclear reactors and fuel from overseas sources. Such bilateral agreements lack transparency in price fixation in respect of both the reactors and the fuel. Such bilateral agreements make it difficult for the country to demand the highest standards of safety in the design of the reactors. Compounding this is the fact that the nuclear MNCs are reluctant to assume full liability for a Fukushima-like disaster as and when it occurs as a result of deficiencies in reactor design.

Safety of nuclear power technology

During the last six decades, there have been a very large number of nuclear accidents, both minor and major. As a result of the overall cover of secrecy that surrounds the nuclear industry, many of them have gone unreported.

As per the list of the accidents disclosed to the international agencies, more than 30 major nuclear accidents occurred globally, involving multiple fatalities and property damages exceeding \$100

I am a Muslim. I lit a Hindu lamp using a Christian candle. This should be the unity in India.

- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

million. Out of these, nine were very serious accidents and three of them, the first at Three Mile Island in USA (1979), the second at Chernobyl in the erstwhile Soviet Union (1986) and the latest at Fukushima in Japan (2011) were of a devastating nature. While the Three Mile Island accident forced at least fifteen States in the USA to impose formal restrictions on the setting up of new nuclear power projects and drastically slowed down nuclear power development in that country, in the case of Chernobyl, the stricken plant had to be encased in a high-cost “sarcophagus” or a tomb as it could not be cleaned up fully. This plant has since come under threat in the ongoing Ukraine war, revealing the potential danger that nuclear power plants can pose.

The disaster-affected Fukushima reactors are releasing, even today, more than 200 tonnes of radioactive water daily into the Pacific ocean. The local ground water aquifers stand contaminated. Japan may not be able to clean up these reactors for decades and may ultimately have to encompass the stricken reactors in an expensive metal casing to insulate the surrounding community from radioactive exposure. Japan now proposes to release huge quantities of contaminated water accumulated since the accident into the Pacific ocean, posing a threat to the marine resources.

Some estimates place the liability arising from the Fukushima accident to touch seven lakh forty thousand crores of rupees. The Western MNCs supplying reactors to India are unwilling to assume responsibility for such a huge liability! If a Fukushima-like accident were to occur in India at one of the projects being set up, the government will find it difficult to meet the liability of that order from its limited budgetary resources.

When the Parliament enacted the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act in 2010, it was on the insistence of the parties in opposition that the ceiling on liability on account of an accident was raised to 300 million SDRs (roughly Rs 2830 crores at today’s exchange rate). Keeping in view the magnitude of the Fukushima liability referred above, this statutory ceiling thus imposed is marginal which implies a

near 100% exemption from liability for the MNCs supplying reactors to India, which will not only cost the public exchequer dearly but also incentivise the reactor suppliers to cut corners in the safety features of reactor design.

Human lapses, mechanical failures and natural calamities could lead to both radioactive leaks and major accidents at the nuclear power project sites. In addition to radioactive leaks from the power station, transportation of fuel to the power plant and the movement of the spent fuel from the power plant for storage elsewhere could also expose the local communities to radiation risks. Low-intensity radioactive exposure can have long-term health impacts on the people. Major accidents can impact large areas around the accident stricken plant. The zoning norms adopted in the USA suggest that such impacts could extend upto 80 km around the plant site, depending on the wind velocity and the wind direction. According to news reports, radioactive material from the Fukushima accident could be traced as far as near the west coast of the USA!

Looking at the risks associated with the nuclear power technology, private insurers are reluctant to insure nuclear power plants and the international financial institutions like the World Bank are unwilling to provide loan assistance.

Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) subordinate to the DAE

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) in its present form is subordinate to the DAE whose activities it is expected to oversee and regulate.

Post-Fukushima, as a result of the global concerns about the safety of nuclear power technology and the need to introduce independent regulation, the the government introduced the Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority (NSRA) Bill in the Parliament. The concerned Parliamentary Standing Committee considered the Bill in 2012 and made several far reaching recommendations to make sure that the proposed NSRA turns out to be truly independent. Neither the then UPA government nor the present NDA government has cared to enact the new law.

As things stand today, the regulatory authority is not in an unfettered position to question the DAE on the safety aspects of either the existing plants or the new ones being set up. The Atomic Energy Act in its present form unduly restricts the citizen's right to have information on the activities of NPCIL. This compounds the public fears about the safety of the nuclear power projects.

In the recent times, the European and the US regulators have detected largescale use of substandard components in the nuclear power projects being set up in different parts of the world. False quality certification and fraud seem to have become a rule rather than an exception these days. This is far too serious a matter to be ignored by the government, as it potentially enhances the probability of major accidents taking place.

Cost of nuclear power

There are certain elements of the cost of nuclear power that cannot be easily quantified. For example, there is no known technology as yet that can satisfactorily process the radioactive waste generated by nuclear power plants and the costs associated with waste management are anybody's guess. The cost of decommissioning an aged nuclear power plant is difficult to estimate as the global experience in decommissioning such plants is woefully negligible.

Globally, most nuclear power projects are known to have undergone enormous time and cost overruns in their implementation. For example, in the case of the Olkiluoto reactor being set up in Finland by Areva, the French company, the construction period has gone up from 5 years to 12 years and the cost has more than trebled. There is no guarantee that the project will not undergo further delays. Both Areva and the other French company, EDF, as well as the US-Japan companies, Westinghouse and Toshiba, which are setting up nuclear power projects in Maharashtra (Jaitapur) and Andhra Pradesh (Kovvada) respectively are financially stressed and it is doubtful if they can ever stick to their time schedules or cost estimates. Since India is planning to depend heavily on such foreign reactor suppliers, the future

trajectory of nuclear development in the country is going to be uncertain and highly expensive.

In the name of inter-country bilateral agreements, the DAE has chosen a highly non-transparent procedure for negotiating the price of the reactors and that of the Uranium fuel required for operating the reactors. In other words, India will be at the mercy of the MNCs supplying the reactors and will have to accede to the prices quoted by them which need not necessarily be competitive. In the case of the fuel, there has been a global trend towards mergers/acquisitions among the fuel companies that tend to create monopolies which in turn will dictate the fuel price. Considering that such high fuel prices will also be dollar-denominated, the price of electricity from nuclear power plants will be several times higher than the average electricity tariffs that the domestic consumers pay today.

Nuclear power projects generate steady power that is needed to cater to the base loads in grid operation. The Indian power system has excess base load generation capacity and additions to nuclear power generation will only accentuate the imbalance that will in turn add to the overall unit cost of electricity. This assumes importance since nuclear power plants cannot be easily backed down and, as result, their operation may force other less expensive generating stations to back down, at the cost of the electricity consumer.

Energy security implications:

Importing both the nuclear reactors and the Uranium fuel on a large scale from external sources, as is presently planned, will erode the energy security of the country. Such imports will also have indirect implications for India's foreign policy options. Moreover, some western MNCs having fuel fabrication facilities have come under an intense financial stress and, as a result, have sold those facilities to other foreign companies. In the context of such uncertainty surrounding the fuel sources, India should feel concerned about the strategic implications arising from it.

Kovvada nuclear power project:

NPCIL had originally proposed to set up a 6X1000 MW capacity nuclear power project at Mithi Viridi in Gujarat. The Westinghouse-Toshiba group was expected to supply reactors for the project. However, as a result of intense public opposition to the project in view of the serious risks involved, the DAE has since decided to ask Westinghouse-Toshiba to set up their reactors at Kovvada, implying that the concerns of the people of Mithi Viridi are far more pressing compared to the concerns of the people living around Kovvada. Even in the case of the nuclear power project originally proposed to be set up near Haripur in West Bengal, in view of the public opposition, the Centre, hand-in-glove with the Andhra Pradesh (AP) government, seems to have shifted the project to a coastal site in AP. Such decisions show the insensitive attitude of the Centre and the State to the concerns of the people living in the vicinity of Kovvada and the other locations along the coast in AP.

Though the Site Selection Committee (SSC) constituted in the case of Kovvada had recommended a comprehensive seismic study to be undertaken over a region extending up to 300km around Kovvada, no such study seems to have been conducted. There have been multiple tremours in this region over the last few years. The DAE and NPCIL, if they are genuinely concerned about the safety of the people living in and around Kovvada, should have conducted a detailed seismic evaluation of the region and taken the public into confidence.

The Kovvada project will displace farmers and traditional fisher folk and artisans over 1,916 acres, and disrupt agriculture and fishing activity.

In addition, there are 5 villages within a radius of 1.5KM around the project, designated as the “Exclusion Zone” where people are not allowed to reside. Within a radius of 5km, designated as the “Sterilised Zone”, there are 42 villages where, as a result of the project, there will be no development activity undertaken. Finally, within a radius of 30km comprising of “Emergency Planning Zone” and “Impact assessment Zone”, more than a lakh of population will face potential radiation hazards and

possible evacuation in times of emergency. Those living outside the project site, though subject to such potential hazards, may not get any compensation. The Kovvada project will thus cause an irreparable human trauma that the rulers of the day do not seem to care for. It is doubtful whether the meagre benefits, if any, of the project will ever accrue to the local people.

Such projects will perhaps benefit the western MNCs by creating a profitable market for them in India and employment opportunities for those in their parent countries, more than in India! The irony of the Kovvada project is that the government will forcibly acquire land from the people in advance, disturbing the food security of the region, whereas the the project itself may not fructify for decades to come!

Conclusion

Considering that the electricity supply system in India has several inherent inefficiencies, it will be prudent for the government to invest on cost-effective efficiency improvements as the first step towards balancing the electricity demand vis-a-vis the existing supplies. In the recent times, the unit costs of renewable sources of energy, especially, solar roof-top PV modules, have come down significantly and it should be possible for the government to align its policies to encourage roof-top solar generation systems etc. on a large scale. The social benefits of such policies far outweigh the cost of nuclear and other conventional sources of energy.

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PARTITION AND INDIAN CIVILISATION

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Partition was traumatic in several respects; except archaeologists and some historians few know that partition the antiquity of Indian civilisation. Before the discovery of the Indus civilisation, Buddhist relics from the 3rd century BCE had been the most ancient traces of Indian civilisation. There had been no material evidence for the Indian civilisation before that period; however, there was ample literary

Western dictionaries define secularism as absence of religion
but Indian secularism does not mean irreligiousness. It means profusion of religions.

- Shashi Tharoor.

evidence by way of Vedic literature. The consensus among European Indologists was that the oldest hymns of the Rigveda, such as those to *Ushas*, may have been composed around 1200 BC. That would mean that the Indian civilisation was not as old as the Egyptian and Sumerian civilisations. The discovery of the Indus civilisation in 1920s was momentous for it pushed back the history of Indian civilisation by about 2500 years and spectacularly altered India's civilisational history. That discovered established that the Indian civilisation was as old as the Egyptian and Sumerian civilisations. That discovery bestowed colonial Indians with an unbroken legacy of more than 5,000 years and provided a subjugated people with a history that was older than their colonial subjugators'. The fact that 'India now takes place side by side with Egypt and Mesopotamia, as the country where we can trace the dawn of human civilisation' instilled considerable patriotic pride, all the more so as it was believed that while 'the people in Egypt and Mesopotamia have no bond whatsoever with the civilisation that flourished there millennia ago' Indian history and institutions 'form an unbroken chain by which the past is indissolubly linked up with the present'.

Ironically, as a result of Partition, India was deprived of the Buddhist sites of Gandhara region and almost all the major sites of the Indus civilisation while Pakistan, the avowed homeland of Indian Muslims, was deprived of all major Mohammadan monuments. The lopsided geographic distribution of monuments came in handy to Pakistani intellectuals to forge a Pakistani identity unconnected with the Indian civilisation. Paraphrasing the famous statement of Massimo d'Azeglio about the challenge faced by Italy after its unification, Pakistan having been made it was necessary to make Pakistanis; portraying Pakistan as the 'Other' of India was not considered adequate by many intellectuals. Mortimer Wheeler who was the last Director General (DG), Archaeological Survey of India before Independence accepted the offer of the Pakistan government to be its archaeological adviser and gave a mighty leg up to such intellectuals. In whatever position Wheeler held he was overzealous. As DG, ASI Wheeler literally waged a campaign

to modernise ASI. Among the various deficiencies of ASI that Wheeler decided to address was the scarcity of junior archaeological staff and inadequate archaeological training. The Taxila School of Archaeology which he set up in 1944 at the famous eponymous Buddhist played 'an influential role in the postcolonial trajectory of Indian archaeology in later years Students from this training camp came to be the 'who is who' of post-independent archaeology, went on to head various archaeological departments in the country and run the ASI for the following few decades. Wheeler's epistemological shadow 'overwhelmingly informs the methodological and theoretical bulwark of the archaeological practices of the contemporary ASI'. Before laying down office in 1948, Wheeler advised Indian archaeologists to end their Indus-obsession and shift the focus of their study to the Gangetic valley that has 'given India a faith.' Thus, in effect, he 'assigned the proprietorship of the Indus civilisation to Pakistan and of the Gangetic civilisation to India'. As Archaeological Adviser to the Pakistan government Wheeler organized a popular excursion from Karachi to Mohenjo-Daro to make the people of Pakistan aware of their ancient roots; huge crowds boarded the train and were lectured by Wheeler amidst the ruins of Mohenjo-Daro. So popular was the excursion that more such excursions were organised. To add insult to injury, he authored a book *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan: An Archaeological Outline* which made it appear that Pakistan was more ancient than India. This was in keeping with the attempts in Pakistan to inject Pakistani identity with a clear ethno-territorial dimension and to that end create appropriate narratives. These narratives contended that the geographic area covered by Pakistan was geographically, historically and culturally exclusive in relation to the rest of the Indian sub-continent. The case for exclusivity rested on the claim that the Indus civilisation was the most ancient civilisation to flourish in the Indian sub-continent, that it had more in common with the contemporary civilisations of the valleys of the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates in the Middle East than the civilisation in the rest of India, that in fact the Indus civilisation was destroyed by Aryan invaders, and that Aryans who were 'wreckers

Don't limit a child to your own learning for she was born in another time.

- Rabindranath Tagore

of the Indus Civilisation' were the pioneers of the Hindu religion. In fact, in his article *The Culture of Pakistan*, Ahmad Ali claimed that it was Pakistan which ought to be called 'India' as the word 'India' was derived from the River *Sindhu*, the Sanskrit name for the Indus, and the Indus civilisation, the most ancient civilisation in the sub-continent, was located in Pakistan. Before moving on, it should be mentioned that few Indians, including Lal Krishna Advani, a Sindhi himself, were aware that even after Partition the river *Sindhu* flowed through India. In 1996, Advani visited Leh and was surprised to espy the *Sindhu* at Choglamsar, eight kilometres from Leh and decided to revive the practice in Sindh of Hindus worshipping the *Sindhu*. That decision led to the annual *Sindhu Darshan* festival held every June, the first of which was celebrated in 1997 when I was Union Culture Secretary. The contention of Ahmad Ali and Wheeler that the civilisation of the territories covered by Pakistan is distinct from that of the Indian civilisation was carried forward by Aitaz Hasan who made a heroic attempt in his book, *The Indus Saga: From Pataliputra to Pakistan*, to establish that the inviolable 'oneness' of the Indian sub-continent asserted by Nehru and other Indian nationalists overlooked the fact that the 'Indus region'- or more accurately, the geographic mass in undivided India to the west of a straight line connecting Gurdaspur in the North and Kathiawar in the south, roughly the area corresponding to the present Pakistan -had been 'seldom a part of India'; the Indo-Pak divide is of primordial origin, and "Pakistan" preceded even the advent of Islam in the sub-continent'. In retrospect, the attempt to anchor the identity of Pakistan in the Indus civilisation turned out to be a passing fad, no different from the vision of a secular Pakistan outlined by Jinnah in his address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947. In that address, Jinnah famously declared that:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are

all citizens and equal citizens of one State... you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State'.

Beginning from Zia-ul-Haq's rule the state machinery was used 'to promote an Islam-centric history of Pakistan'. Pakistan continues to define itself as the 'Other' of Hindustan, and the absence of a coherent and widely accepted national identity is considered by many scholars to be the primary reason behind Pakistan's 'nearly continuous post-colonial travails such as the fragility of its democracy, military emerging as the most powerful institution in the body politic able to determine policies and condition governance, not-occasional military dictatorships, its uneven social and economic development and its severe ethnic divisions'.

The partitioning of antiquities and museum collections proved to be very contentious and an agreement could be reached only after 'prolonged and convoluted negotiations'. The division of 14,000 objects from Mohenjo-Daro held by the Archaeological Survey at Delhi proved to be particularly contentious. Pakistan argued that since Mohenjo-Daro fell within its territory and the objects were originally held in a site museum at Mohenjo-Daro the entire collection should devolve on Pakistan. Indian negotiators maintained that the entire collection should devolve on India as the objects were moved to Delhi not from Mohenjo-Daro but from the Lahore Museum and that they were moved not for temporary display and as early as 1944 Wheeler as DG, ASI decided to concentrate all the best Indus objects in a Central National Museum to be located in New Delhi. After several rounds of negotiation, based on a suggestion by Wheeler who was by then the archaeological advisor to the Pakistan government, the Museum Committee agreed in 1949 to a division down the middle. Wheeler suggested a similar division for unique articles that could be divided with the result that 'several necklaces and girdles were taken apart with half the beads going to Pakistan

He whose peace is not shaken by others, and before whom other people find peace,
beyond excitement anger and fear is dear to me.

- Bhagavad-Gita

and half retained in India'. Such fragmentation of unique articles included the famous camelian and copper girdle, and a magnificent necklace made of jade beads, gold discs and semiprecious stones. The integrity of cultural objects was sacrificed at the altar of the principle of equity with the result that 'the past came to be portioned in an unfortunate way'.

Give the claims of Wheeler and some Pakistani intellectuals that Pakistan was more ancient than India Indianising the Indus civilisation past came to be perceived as the foremost 'nation- building' by post-Independent Indian archaeologists. It was the historian-cum-statesman K.M. Panikkar who first articulated the imperative of reclaiming for India the Indus civilisation; he had been Dewan, Bikaner State till early 1948, and had a conversation with the legendary Central Asian explorer Aurel Stein who, in 1940-41, had conducted extensive surveys along the dry-bed of river Ghaggar-Hakra (supposedly the River Saraswati of Vedic times) in the Bikaner (India)-Bhawalpur (Paksitan) area, reported the presence of several pre-historic as well as historic remains within India's territory and published an article in 1942 titled 'A Survey of Ancient Sites along the "Lost" Sarasvati River'. In a letter to Nehru in March 1948 before he moved to China as India's ambassador, Panikkar wrote that 'with the separation of the Pakistan Provinces, the main sites of what was known as the Indus civilisation has gone to Pakistan. It is clearly of the utmost importance that archaeological work in connection with this early period of Indian history must be continued in India'. He also indicated that 'a preliminary examination had shown that the centre of the early civilisation was not Sind or the Indus but the desert area through which the ancient river Saraswati flowed into the Gulf of Kutch at one time'. Nehru immediately acted on the suggestion of Panikkar and directed the ASI to expedite exploratory work of the Indus civilisation in India. Before moving on, it is appurtenant to mention that Stein bought back from his three expeditions to Centra Asia during the period from 1900 to 1916 thousands of artefacts, ranging from about 3rd to 12th century ; the books and manuscripts he brought from Dunhuang caves in Western China (similar to the Ajanta caves) are important for

the study of the history of Central Asia and the art and literature of Buddhism. As the *Raj* funded the explorations of Stein about 12,000 objects collections devolved on India and are an important part of the collections of the National Museum, New Delhi.

It was mentioned above that Wheeler's disciples at the Taxila School came to dominate the post-Independent Indian archaeological establishment and Wheeler's parting advice to his disciples was to give up the Indus-obsession. However, the disciplines chose to defy the Guru's advice, and went on to discover literally dozens of sites in India thereby demolishing the Guru's thesis of Pakistan being a cultural unit more ancient than that of India. Thus, Amlananda Ghosh surveyed in 1953 the area along dry bed of the river Ghaggarand brought into light several Harappan sites. Before Independence, the Indus civilisation, in the first phase of research, was seen largely as a Sindh and West Punjab phenomenon with a marginal presence in Baluchistan and Gujarat. Today, we know it included the deserts of Rajasthan in India and Cholistan in Pakistan, large parts of East (Indian) Punjab and Haryana, parts of Uttar Pradesh and all parts of Gujarat, with even a trading post in Afghanistan. It covered about a million square miles and was much, much larger than the combined area of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations.. No less importantly, instead of accepting the modern political boundaries as a determining factor in their historical framework, Indian scholars preferred to perceive undivided India as a cultural region. In his presidential address to the Indian Historical Congress (1968) A. K. Narain outlined the conceptual challenges facing Indian historiography as a result of Partition; as vividly put by him, if political boundaries were to determine history writing, 'we are not required to own...the invasion of Alexander or even the rule of Indo-Greeks because they have not really much to do with our present boundaries'. He went on to say that 'it is no exaggeration to say that Central Asia holds the key to the solution of many of our historical problems...the history of the Indian Union, if it has to be written in the right perspective, should include not only what happened in Pakistan but also what happened in Afghanistan and Central Asia'.

What, after all, is immortal fame? An empty hollow thing. To what then must we aspire?

- Marcus Aurelius

In addition to challenging the inherited ideas about the geographical spread of the Indus civilisation, post-Independent Indian archaeologists and historians threw a challenge to inherited theories about the identity and general character of the Indus civilisation as well as the reasons for its decline and demise. Initially, Marshall provisionally labelled the culture of the Indus people as Indo-Sumerian in order to emphasise 'the close connection between this prehistoric civilisation of the Indus and that of the Sumer'; however, soon thereafter he came to the conclusion that despite the links between the Indus and Sumerian civilisations the Indus civilisation was distinctive and unique. By the end of the 19th century a racial history of Indian civilisation came to be the dominant paradigm according to which the Indian civilisation was 'produced by the clash and subsequent mixture of light-skinned civilizing invaders (the Aryans) and dark-skinned barbarian aborigines (often identified as Dravidians)'. Paradigms are focussing devices that exclude some possibilities and prescribe some others; even in exact sciences, believing is seeing. Facts 'must be placed in in a system of belief before they yield to interpretation. The same astronomical observations in the Copernican theory, convey an entirely different image of the universe in the Ptolemaic system, and phenomena assume new meaning, when we shift from the Newtonian system to the Einsteinian system'. Paradigms even condition the collection of facts; paradigms 'not only fix the mesh of the nets that the [historian/archaeologist] drags through the material in order to explain' what happened; they also direct the researcher 'to cast nets in select ponds, at certain depths, in order to catch the fish he is after'. A good example of paradigms guiding the collection of facts and their interpretation is the fact that even though Alexander Cunningham, the first Director General, Archaeological Survey, visited Harappa and explored its remains he missed out the Indus civilisation as Alexander's invasion and the travelogues of Chinese pilgrims like Hsuan Tsang constituted a pair of spectacles through which Cunningham perceived and interpreted all that surveyed and explored. Whatever, given the reigning paradigm of Indian civilisation Indus civilisation was

considered to be distinct from the Vedic civilisation as it flourished prior to 1500 BCE when the first Aryan invasion was considered to have taken place. The noted philologist Sunit Kumar Chatterjee was the first to characterise the Indus civilisation as Dravidian; it did not take long for the hypothesis that the Dravidian Indus civilisation which was destroyed by Aryan invaders. Wheeler claimed to have found archaeological evidence for the 'massacre' of the inhabitants of Mohenjo-Daro by the invading Aryans and dramatically claimed that the Vedic God Indra 'stands accused of destroying the cities of the Indus Valley Civilisation'. Given his penchant for coming out with dramatic scripts 'which he could have marketed in Hollywood' Wheeler went on to announce that Indra won the battle but Siva won the war, implying that even though the invading Aryans destroyed the Indus civilisation Siva who figures along with bulls in Harappan seals came to be a part of the supreme Hindu pantheon. The strong scholarly reaction against Wheeler's indictment of Indra together with other reasons for decline of the Indus civilisation like environmental changes like deep floods led Wheeler to concede that no single explanation can wholly explain the 'dissolution' of ancient civilisations and that the rise or fall of a civilisation is 'a highly complex operation which can only be distorted and obscured by easy oversimplification' and that he 'light-heartedly blamed Indra and his invading Aryans' the end of the Indus civilisation. Even when the racial history of Indian civilisation held sway there were quite a few Indian scholars who believed that there was no Aryan invasion, that the Sapta-Sindhu region (broadly corresponding to Punjab) was the homeland of the Aryans and that the Vedic texts are far older than the date commonly assigned to them. The logical conclusion of such a belief is that the Indus civilisation and Vedic civilisation are either not distinct or could have co-existed. Gradually, Indocentrism, in other words 'autochthonous visions of ancient India', gained ascendancy among nationalist Indian archaeologists and historians. An extreme version of Indocentrism puts forth an 'out of India' thesis whereby Aryans migrated from their homeland of India to countries outside like Iran which

Not in his goals but in his transitions man is great.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

have Indo-European languages. In this vision, the Indus civilisation was but 'a phase in the composite Indian culture inaugurated by the Rigvedic people', 'Nationalist' archaeologists and historians have come to prefer calling the Indus civilisation as 'Indus-Saraswati civilisation' given that after Independence several Harappan sites were discovered in the terrain where River Saraswati is believed to have flown during the Vedic age. As a number of Vedic seers are believed to have lived on the banks of the River Saraswati the label of Indus-Saraswati civilisation links tightly the Indus civilisation with the Vedic civilisation. All in all, cultural nationalistic narratives 'lay emphasis on *origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness*'; they 'represent national identity ... as primordial' and hold that 'national character remain unchanged through all the vicissitudes of history'. Not all Indian historians agree with the views of nationalist archaeologists and historians; while few subscribe to the Aryan invasion theory nowadays, historians like Romila Thapar question the ideas that the Indus civilisation was Vedic in nature and that Aryans are indigenous to India. In the ongoing history and cultural wars between 'nationalist' and 'left-liberal' Indian historians one of the highly contested terrains has been the nature of Indus Harappan civilisation; the controversy over the question 'whether the Harappan civilisation and the culture reflected in the *Rigveda* are separate entities, or archeological and literary manifestations of the same phenomenon continue to be passionately contentious'. That controversy is inextricably intertwined with the conception of India and Indian culture as well as the politics of identity.

In conclusion, the discovery of the Indus Civilisation opened a Pandora's box of contentious issues; the inability to definitively decipher the hieroglyphics of Indus civilisation ensures that the arguments are not clinched. Thus, who were the people who built the Indus civilisation? Was that civilisation an offshoot of the Mesopotamian civilisation or was it indigenous? What contributed to the demise of the Indus civilisation? Was there a cultural breakdown following the demise of the Indus civilisation? What is the relationship between the Indus civilisation and the Indian civilisation? In other words, was Indus

civilisation a piece of a continuous, unbroken chain of Indian civilisation? Or was the Indus civilisation a standalone civilisation? More particularly, what is the relationship between the Indus civilisation and the Vedic civilisation which is believed to be the fountainhead of Hindu religion and culture. These issues were and continue to be hotly debated; one is reminded of the observation of the Pieter Geyl, the famous historiographer, that history is an argument without an end, and that 'there always remains a *for* and *against*, and perhaps to bring the two into a stable equilibrium is not even possible'. What is further significant is that over the nearly hundred years after the discovery of the Indus civilisation the parameters of the debate had changed significantly from time to time.

* * *

MANTRA OF PATRIOTISM

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

One could write reams about Sri Aurobindo and the Bande Mataram Movement. Yet it will always remain an unfinished story. For a portion of the movement was acted out underground. The brief messages that were sent or received by the leaders of the movement must have been immediately destroyed on receipt. Such were the repressive measures used by the British Raj to quell the Movement. They succeeded for a while but who could silence the cry, Bande Mataram? The words have endured to this day and one can hear the song being played daily by the All India Radio to mark the dawn of the day.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-1894), the famous Bengali novelist who may be said to have introduced the art of the novel in Indian languages, was a great patriot. A servant of the British Raj of course. But he held the creative Agni in his hands, and was to be hailed as a Rishi by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's articles on Bankim appeared in *Indu Prakash* from July 16 to August 27, 1894. Every page of this critique is informative, elevating. Thus of the facets of Bankim's genius, gleaming like that of a well-cut diamond:

"Bankim, the greatest of novelists, had the

Instead of condemning people, let's try to understand them. Let's try to figure out why they do what they do. That's a lot more profitable and intriguing than criticism; and it breeds sympathy, tolerance and kindness. To know all is to forgive all.

- Dale Carnegie

versatility developed to its highest expression. Scholar, poet, essayist, novelist, philosopher, lawyer, critic, official, philologist and religious innovator, the whole world seemed to be shut up in his single brain..."

All this is true and certainly Bankim was the creator of the modern Bengali language. However, his greatest novel was to be *AnandaMath* that turned out to be a healthy oyster propagating patriotism that contained a priceless pearl, the song *BandeMataram*. If India was always a Union from Himalayas to the Cape Comorin, its spiritual unity was never questioned by anyone through millennia, '*BandeMataram*' would re-unite the nation being fragmented by deprecators from abroad sporting alien religions and the British Raj that partitioned Bengal on 16th October, 1905. Our Mother Bharat is no weakling, She has everything. March to the clarion call: Mother I bow to Thee!

"The mantra had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself. Once that vision has come to a people, there can be no rest, no peace, no farther slumber till the temple has been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifice offered. A great nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror."

Such was a Mahayogi's tribute to a Maharishi. The two words '*Bande Mataram*' would become the sounds of the victory gong in poems composed in the early years of the twentieth century in all the languages of India. In the novel of Bankim, the song is sung in a dramatic moment when the hero sees three portraits in the monastery, *Ananda Math*. One is Mother India, glorious, crowned, bejewelled, happy. The second is of the same mother, but now in chains, clad in torn clothes, shorn of all her jewellery and the crown. The third is of the mother, now free, rejuvenated, a figure that is full of strength and beauty, the crowned mother of the Indian nation. The sannyasis who have established the monastery have vowed to rid India of the foreigners and restore the glory of Mother India. Sri Aurobindo, a young Professor in the Maharajah's College Baroda drawing a rich pay cheque, the idol-ideal of his students,

husband of the lovely young girl, Mrinalini forsakes everything to work for the freedom of India so that Bankim's dream in the novel would come true. He translated parts of the novel and translated the poem itself into an enchanting classic:

"Mother, I bow to thee!

Rich with thy hurrying streams,

Bright with thy orchard gleams,

Cool with thy winds of delight,

Dark fields waving, Mother of might,

Mother free."

Was there a particular critical moment or incident that transformed the eminent Professor into a worker (and soon the leader) of the *Bande Mataram Movement*? There are no recordings of such an occurrence though there is plentiful information how even before the partition of Bengal, Sri Aurobindo was becoming increasingly conscious of the repressions unleashed by the British Raj, and its soft-peddling the incidents when Hindus and Muslims clashed in Bengal. Muslims were Indians, our brothers but Sri Aurobindo detected easily the "divide and rule" policy of the Rulers. Had he not had a first hand idea of the ways of the British? Had he not occasionally referred to the need for Indians to love their motherland and seek freedom from foreign rule? K.M. Munshi who was Sri Aurobindo's student in Baroda has reminisced about those days in the early years at the Maharajah's College.

"We came ardent revolutionaries. We talked of Garibaldi and the French Revolution, and hoped to win India's freedom by a few hundred drachms of picric acid.

"I remember only one occasion when I directly talked to Prof. Arvind Ghosh. 'How can nationalism be developed?' I asked. He pointed to a wall-map of India and said something to this effect:

"Look at that map. Learn to find in it the portrait of Bharatmata. The cities, mountains, rivers and forests are the materials which go to make up Her body. The people inhabiting the country are the cells

There is an easier way to get what you want from life involving attunement with nature and the universe.

- Deepak Chopra

which go to make up Her living tissues. Our literature is Her memory and speech. The spirit of Her culture is Her soul. The happiness and freedom of Her children is Her salvation. Behold Bharat as a living Mother, meditate upon Her and worship Her in the nine-fold way of Bhakti----

There is then the question. When did this Professor who was an ideal teacher crowned with monumntal scholarship become an intrepid political activist? But, of course, we cannot ‘date’ such happenings. We only know that a day came when he was unable to hold on to the comfortable job at Baroda while India was a subjugated nation where the British did whatever they wanted looted, demoralised, turned friends into enemies, divided a beautifully integral country so that they could rule this land for ever and for ever. It was then he wrote the letter to Mrinalini, his charming, loving, young wife about his three ‘frenzies’. The thuird frenzy was:

“My third madness is that while others look upon their country as an inert piece of matter - a few meadows and fields, forests and hills and rivers - I look upon my country as the Mother. I adore Her, I worship Her as the Mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother’s breast and started sucking her blood? Would he quietly sit down to his dinner, amuse himself with his wife and children, or would he rush out to deliver his mother? I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength, - I am not going to fight with sword or gun, - but the strength of knowledge. The power of the Kshatriya is not the only one; there is also the power of the Brahmin, the power that is founded on knowledge. This feeling is not new in me, it is not of today. I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to earth to accomplish this great mission. The seed began to sprout when I was fourteen; by the time I was eighteen the roots of the resolution had grown firm and unshakable. After listening to what my aunt said, you formed the idea that some wicked people had dragged your simple and innocent husband onto the bad path. But it was this innocent husband of yours who brought those people and hundreds of others onto that path - be it bad or good - and will yet bring

thousands and thousands of others onto that same path. I do not say that the work will be accomplished during my lifetime, but it certainly will be done.”

Again the question. Was there a catalytic moment when he entered this path of service to Mother India which made him write this letter to Mrinalini? Who was the agent who made him recognise the reality and dive into the turbulent waters of political activism that would soon be well known as the BandeMataram Movement (Swadeshi Movement)? To watch that psychic drama in Sri Aurobindo’s life, we have to go to his Sanskrit poem, Bhavani Bharati: This one hundred-verse poem is said to have been written during the days of Sri Aurobindo’s political activism and has a realistic opening bringing to us the young Professor as happily married and engaged in what he liked most to do: writing poetry. Here are the first two verses.:

“1. As I lay sunk in the comfort of my couch
and my mind wandered
on the roads of Spring, I thought of my people,
of poetry,
of wife and enjoyments, pleasure and
possessions
I shaped my delight into elegant verse in lyrical
stanzas
of sensuous passion; I sang of the smile on my
beloved’s face
and of the revered and most sacred feet of the
Mother.”

Obviously this was not enough for the Mother. So she appears as she is in a dream-vision to Sri Aurobindo, exactly like thesecond portrait of Mother India described by Bankim in his novel, Ananda Math.

“Garlanded with the bones of men and girdled
with human
skulls, with, belly and eyes like a wolf’s, hungry
and poor,
scarred on her back by the ‘Titan’s lashes,
roaring like a
lioness who lusts for kil”.

Real effectiveness comes from clarity about your principles, values and vision.
Change is only real if it is habitual.

- Stephen Covey

Steadily the poem traces the history of India in terms of psychic stings and we are led to the sublime end. Mother India will be forever! Lord Curzon had announced the Partition of Bengal on 19th July, 1905; Sri Aurobindo writes his famous letter to Mrinalini on 30th August; the Partition comes into force on 16th October 1905, driving a deep wedge between people who subscribe to Hinduism and those who are followers of Islam. How dare the foreigner separate brothers, children of the same Mother India? The two words, 'Vande Mataram' did unite the entire subcontinent against the foreigner. How the leaders of this major independence movement like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Sri Aurobindo, Subramania Bharati, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai plunged into the Movement, sacrificed their all at the feet of Mother India forms the golden page of self-sacrifice in our annals. The Movement was not mere opposition to the British Rule; it taught the Indian the value of Swadeshi, of the need to uplift our villages, of being our own producers and even sail our own ships on the wide seas for commerce as Raja Raja Chola did a thousand years ago. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai started the Swadesi Steam Navigation Company and it was welcomed by Sri Aurobindo in the pages of Bande Mataram which he was editing, a unique political journal which was also a tremendous literary feast for the readers. Today, when we read the Bande Mataram issues, we realise how Sri Aurobindo educated the emergent India. We recognise that Sri Aurobindo was not a destructive revolutionary but a constructive pace-maker for the Indian nation.

"We believe, therefore, that Divine Power is behind the movement, that the Zeitgeist, the Time-Spirit, is at work to bring about a mighty movement of which the world at the present juncture has need, that that movement is the resurgence of Asia and that the resurgence of India is not only a necessary part of the larger movement but its central need, that India is the keystone of the arch, the chief inheritor of the common Asiatic destiny. The Mongolian world, preserving the old strong and reposeful civilisation of early Asia, flanks her on the right and has already arisen. The Mahomedan world, preserving the aggressive and militant civilisation of Islam, flanks

her on the left and in Egypt, in Arabia, in Persia, is struggling to arise. In India the two civilisations meet, she is the link between them and must find the note of harmony which will reconcile them and recreate a common Asiatic civilisation."

It is unfortunate that these words of wisdom have been allowed to vaporize. The unity would have brought us self-sufficiency in everything. However, as long as the Indians pursue with assiduous vigor "the triple unity of Swadeshi, Boycott and Swaraj" Indian independence will not remain a dream. The British repression had used the hanging rod, the dark prison, the incarceration in Andaman to silence the leaders, but the 'mantra' had been heard and the nation did not go to sleep again. The Bande Mataram Movement which had even spiritual luminaries from abroad like sister Nivedita take part in it, remains our Glorious Badge of Courage, now and for ever:

"This, this is the land that saw
 Father and mother live and thrive;
 This the land where countless ancestors
 Lived their hoary lives and died.
 Thoughts a thousand grew
 And flourished in this land.
 In remembrance of it all
 May I not praise my land?
 Let me sing time and again.
 Vande Mataram!
 Mother I bow to to you."

* * *

A CENTURY'S SALUTATIONS TO SWADESHI AND SWARAJ – 11

Prof. Manoj Das

Let us turn to Henry Nevinson, the author of *The New Spirit in India*, for his first-hand account of the event: "Waving their arms, their scarves, their sticks and umbrellas, a solid mass of delegates and spectators on the right of the Chair sprang to their feet and shouted without a moment's pause... the whole ten thousand were on their feet, shouting for order, shouting for tumult. Mr. Malvi (Chairman of

I believe that the proper utilization of time is this: If you can serve other people, other sentient beings. If not at least refrain from harming them. I think that is the whole basis of my philosophy.

- The Dalai Lama

the Reception Committee) still half in the chair, rang his brass Benares bell and rang in vain. Surendranath sprang upon the very table itself. Even a voice like his was but a whisper in the din. Again and again he shouted, unheard as silence. He sat down and for a moment the storm was lulled. The voices of the leaders were audible, consulting in agitated tones – Dr. Ghose shrill, impatient and perturbed with anger; Mr. Gokhale distressed, anxious, harassed with vain negotiation and sleepless nights. Already one caught the word ‘suspension’. ‘If they will not hear Surendranath, whom will they hear?’ said one. ‘It is an insult to the Congress,’ said another. ‘An insult to Bengal,’ cried a third. Again Surendranath sprang on the table, and again the assembly roared with clamour. Again the Chairman rang his Benares bell, and again in vain. In an inaudible voice, like a sob, he declared the sitting suspended.”

The session resumed the next day and so did the confrontation. Surendranath exhorted the audience to maintain calm and Motilal Nehru spoke briefly to the same effect before Dr. Ghose occupied the chair. The president had hardly begun reading his address when Tilak stood up. He had given notice for an amendment and he must move it. “You cannot move an adjournment of the Congress,” cried Mr. Malvi. “I declare you out of order,” the “president” added.

“I wish to move an amendment to the election of president and you are not in the Chair,” replied Mr. Tilak.

“I declare you out of order!” shouted Dr. Ghose.

“You have not been elected. I appeal to the delegates,” retorted Tilak.

Once again let us look up the inimitable Nevins: “Uproar drowned the rest. With folded hands Mr. Tilak faced the audience. On either side of him young Moderates sprang to their feet, wildly gesticulating vengeance. Shaking their fists and yelling to the Chair, they clamoured to hurl him down the step of the platform. Behind him Dr. Ghose mounted the table, and, ringing an unheard bell, harangued the storm-in shrill, agitated, unintelligible denunciations. Restraining the rage of the Moderates,

inseminating peace if ever man inseminated, Mr. Gokhale, sweet-natured even in extremes, stood beside his old opponent, flinging out both arms to protect him from the threatened onset. But Mr. Tilak asked for no protection. He stood there with folded arms, defiant, calling on violence to do its worst, calling on violence to move him, for he would move for nothing else in hell or heaven. In front, the white-clad audience roared like a tumultuous sea.

“Suddenly something flew through the air – a shoe! – a Mahratta shoe, reddish leather, pointed toe, sole studded with lead! It struck Surendranath Banerjea on the cheek; it cannoned off upon Sir Ferozeshah Mehta. It flew, it fell, and, as at a given signal, white waves of turbaned man surged up the escarpment of the platform. Leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury, brandishing long sticks, they came, striking any head that looked to them Moderate, and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the green-baize table, I caught glimpses of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos. Like Goethe at the battle of Valmy, I could have said that today marks the beginning of a new era, and you can say that you were present at it.”

Nevins on was not totally wrong. It was indeed the beginning of a new era. (“The Congress is Dead – Long Live the Congress” was the headline in Surendranath’s daily, *The Bengalee*.) Next day the Nationalists held their conference in a large courtyard – and they streamed in as “silent crowds”. Nevins observes, “Grave and silent, I think without saying a single word, Mr. Aurobindo Ghose took the Chair and sat unmoved, with far-off eyes, as one who gazes at futurity. In clear, short sentences, without eloquence or passion, Mr. Tilak spoke till the stars shone out and someone kindled a lantern at his side.”

Nevinson travelled with the delegates by train. He records that each station rang with the shout: “Down with the Moderates!” Sri Aurobindo and Tilak were hailed as the harbingers of a new age.

Lt-Governor Fuller, accused of inefficiency, had to go. Curzon too resigned and left for home because of some difference with the authorities in London. Sri Aurobindo was implicated in what is famous as the

Alipore Conspiracy Case and spent a year in jail, in solitary confinement, for the greater part of that time, but setting out on a splendid spiritual odyssey in his consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo's trial, conducted in the court of Mr. Beachcroft who was his classmate at Cambridge and only second to him in academic excellence, had several serious moments when the brilliant defence lawyer, C. R. Das (later the celebrated Deshbandhu) or the prosecution lawyer, Mr. Norton, a barrister specially brought from London for the purpose, argued or probed the witnesses. But here is a lighter moment when a policeman is being examined by Mr. Das. Lighter, but it presents the popular perception of the politics of the Moderates.

Das: Up to what standard did you read?

Witness: I read up to the Entrance-failure.
(Laughter)

Judge: Up to the standard of Entrance-failure.
(Renewed laughter)

Das: Who are Moderates?

Witness: Moderates are those who are always on the side of the Government.

Das: Extremists?

Witness: Extremists are those who attend meetings.

Das: At Nagpore Moderates do not attend meetings?

Witness: No. Judge: Perhaps there are none!
(Laughter.)

The Most Dangerous Man behind Swadeshi

Mr. Norton resented that "Aurobindo was treated with the reverence of a king wherever he had gone. As a matter of fact, he was regarded as the leader not merely of Bengal but of the whole country".

No wonder that Sri Aurobindo's acquittal should worry Lord Minto, who succeeded Curzon as the Governor-General. "He is the most dangerous man we have to deal with at present and he has great

influence with the student class," he wrote to Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India.

While Minto was trying to convince Morley about the justification of somehow deporting Sri Aurobindo, the latter had quietly left for the French Colony of Pondicherry. He had seen India's freedom as inevitable. Now he must move to pastures new—in quest of the passage to man's freedom from "in conscience" and elevation to a higher phase in evolution - for articulating what was his inner realization: the prospect of man's transformation into a new race. The one academic historian who saw Sri Aurobindo vis-à-vis the struggle for freedom in a new light was Tara Chand: For Sri Aurobindo, says the historian, "the Indian struggle for independence was essentially an expression of the urge of the spirit for self realisation. The spirit had a dual aspect – collectively as the nation and severally as its components the individuals..."

Sri Aurobindo had figured in the House of Commons more than once even before the memorable debate on him in 1910. For example, on 5 August 1909, Mr. J. D. Rees asserted that although deporting without trial was autocratic, Sri Aurobindo had to be deported as he commanded a great sway over the youth. "In order to make the people of the East realize that their rulers had power, it was essential to use it autocratically in grave and critical situations."

On 7 April 1910, Sir Ramsay MacDonald, then the leader of the Labour Party, referring to a news in The Times (London) that a warrant had been issued against Sri Aurobindo for an article in the Karmayogin, demanded to know its content. But the Under Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu, said that his own knowledge too was limited to the news in The Times. Sir Ramsay repeated his question a week later, again only to meet with a confession of ignorance on the part of the Treasury Bench. There were heated exchanges between Sir Ramsay and Mr. Rees — the latter too eager to bring Sri Aurobindo "to justice".

But it was on the 28 August that Sir Ramsay MacDonald made his grand speech outlining the life

When you are aligned with your higher self and your life purpose, miraculous things happen.

- Wayne Dyer

and the political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. It was probably for the first ever time that an Indian leader was prominently projected, and by no less a person than the most eminent parliamentarian of the day and the future Prime Minister of Britain. (It is surprising and sad that the Indian chroniclers of our freedom movement have never referred to this memorable debate.)

Since the government could not produce a copy of the so called seditious article, Sir Ramsay himself flashed a copy of the Karmayogin and read the important parts of the article, challenging the Government to show where sedition lay. He asserted, "Surely, to any man who reads this article as it was meant to be read, the meaning is perfectly clear and Mr. Aurobindo Ghose, as is perfectly well known by those who have followed his action and his writings, sincerely believes that the nationalist movement of which he is the head for the time being at any rate, or was till quite recently, is the one guarantee that there shall be no violence done in India and he blames the officials who have suppressed the free expression of the nationalist sentiment for the unfortunate circumstances which have led to murder and death and executions which everyone deploras."

Mr. KeirHardie, the Founder of the Labour Party, also spoke at length in support of Sir Ramsay In the Course of his speech, Sir Ramsay disclosed that he had met Sri Aurobindo in India and was convinced that Sri Aurobindo "would not be very much longer in the affairs of the world."

Only one zealous member interrupted Sir Ramsay to ask if this article had been written in Bengali and if the author was not a Bengali, to which Sir Ramsay replied, "The article is in most excellent English. Mr. Aurobindo Ghose could no more write an article in Bengali than I could."

The last time the House of Commons heard about Sri Aurobindo on this issue was on 21 February 1911. Mr. O'Grady asked "whether the publisher of the Karmayogin was prosecuted for issuing the article by Mr. Aurobindo Ghose, for writing which a

warrant was issued against Mr. Ghose, whether that trial resulted in the acquittal of the publisher on the ground that the article was not seditious, and whether the government had now withdrawn the warrants issued in connection with the article."

This was Mr. Montagu's reply: "The answer to the first part of my Hon. Friend's question is Yes; to the second, Yes; and to the third, Yes."

Lord Minto's term as Viceroy was coming to end. But he never believed that Sri Aurobindo meant to give up politics. He wrote in his last letter to Morley, "I hand the concern of Aurobindo to you. I cannot think what your information maybe about his conversion. I can only say my information was very direct indeed and his intimate friends believed him to be quite beyond reclamation."

Lesson of the Century

The Partition of Bengal, "a settled fact", was unsettled in 1911 through an announcement by King Edward VII, along with that of Kolkata losing the status of the nation's capital in favour of Delhi. What did Curzon's engineering of the partition of Bengal and the anti-Partition movement achieve? Curzon's immediate action apparently failed, but his motive did not. The venom of communalism infused into the élan vital of the nation worked viciously and divided the country in 1947 - opening a Pandora's box of intermittent bloodshed, multiple refugee problems, the Bangladesh war, infiltrations, the Kashmir imbroglio, a dusky atmosphere of suspicions, violence, insecurity, massive waste of men, resources, energy, so on and so forth.

The devilish consequences of partition continue their macabre boogie, but can we say it had triumphed? The answer is a resounding NO.

The very basic philosophy on which the nation was divided — the "Two Nations" theory - proved utterly wrong and pitiably false. If Muslims were one nation - as Mr. Jinnah so very uncompromisingly asserted - his Pakistan would not have been torn apart, resulting in yet another partition.

The meaning of life is the meaning that you decide to give it.

- Viktor Frankl

WILD HARVEST

Dr. (Ms) Ahana Lakshmi

Environmental Consultant

Hostile forces, sporting deceptive religious, social and political nomenclature, can infiltrate and exploit any ideal, as long as man is a creature of ignorance. We must learn the hard way that unity is a must for even our survival, not to speak of the higher goals of happiness and progress. To quote from the message of Sri Aurobindo on the occasion of 15 August 1947: "The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers... A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement, and its achievement can be safely foretold... India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such development as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race."

The immediate positive contribution of the Partition of Bengal, of course, was the Swadeshi movement which matured into the final phase of the fight for freedom of the country and achieved it. Despite all our weaknesses exposed by our freedom, it would have been a terribly embarrassing proposition for India to have stepped into the 21 Century as a Colony.

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

* * *

When we read the term 'wild species', the tendency is to automatically think of tigers, lions, deer and such animals on land and fish and other denizens of the sea. What does a title like "Sustainable Use of Wild Species" make you think?

But wait. Sustainable use of wild species gives one the impression that considerable quantities of species from the wild are harvested every year. Yes, we do hear about ivory from elephants and horn poached rhinos and fish captured from the sea. But don't they form a small fraction of materials that we use in our daily life? Don't we cultivate most of the food we require and have plantations for timber? Surely the herbs and other plant derivatives used in ayurvedic or other preparations is only a small quantity?

How wrong is that! A new release from the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) says that about 50,000 wild species are used for food, energy, medicine, material and other purposes through fishing, gathering, logging and terrestrial animal harvesting globally. Of these more than 31,100 species are plants. Almost 10,000 species from the wild, a fifth of the total, is used in food. "Wild Species" according the IPBES 'refers to populations of any species that have not been domesticated through multigenerational selection for particular traits, and which can survive independently of human intervention that may occur in any environment.'

The more sobering thought pointed out by the report is that 70% of the world's poor are directly dependent on wild species. Most of these include dwellers of the forests, the adivasis, tribals, indigenous peoples, local people, people in rural areas with access to the nearby forests and waterbodies who have

Constant self-improvement and a love of learning form your ticket to unusual success.

- Benjamin Franklin

been collecting materials for food, fodder, housing and medicine for generations. Firewood and fodder as well as non-timber forest produce such as tendu leaves and mahua flowers are well known examples from India. Such wild species are important part of the cultural landscape as well and central to the identity and existence of many indigenous peoples and local communities.

There has been so much media space devoted to the impacts of climate change that a crucial impact, namely on the life systems, the biodiversity, that support us, has not been sufficiently examined. At last, the IPBES is coming out with thematic reports and the news is quite alarming. In fact, the first key message of the IPBES Global Assessment Report brought out in 2019 was “Nature and its vital contributions to people, which together embody biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are deteriorating worldwide.” We are altering the sphere of life, biosphere, at a tremendous pace across all spatial scales and at the cost of many other contributions of nature to quality of life, including regulation of air and water quality, climate regulation and habitat provision.

The IPBES report on wild species also mentions that it is well established that wild species are important sources of subsistence resources and income and that uses of wild species form the basis for economically and culturally important activities worldwide. I remember how my mother would regularly shop at the small Girijan store in Vizag more than half a century ago and buy honey and other products. Today they have a website through which one can order a variety of products such as shampoo made of ingredients harvested from the wild. Such products are no more available only from such stores. Go to any pharmacy or supermarket and there are shelves stocked with a huge variety of products from pharmaceuticals to nutraceuticals, supposedly made from all natural ingredients, harvested sustainably, promising varieties of support to human well-being.

For sustainable use, an important component is good governance. Garrett Hardin in a 1968 paper about the ‘tragedy of the commons’ talked about a pasture where many herdsmen grazed their cattle and each of them tried to maximize their gain by adding just one more and just one more. He concluded: “Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons”.

Commons gives the connotation of an absence of clear ownership; actually it is often community ownership. What the community harvests from there is often controlled but an outsider does not always recognize the ways in which harvest from such areas is internally controlled. But poor understanding of community ownership and community control over what appears to be ‘open access’ coupled with steadily diminishing resource base (mostly to other pressures such as land-thirst) has resulted in increasing conflicts between those depending on ‘wild species’ and the conservationists and government agencies, despite enactments like the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Today, even more so than before, with climate change impacts changing the environment faster than we realise, with so many new diseases needing cures, it is good that more attention is being paid to biodiversity in general, and especially the wild species harvested worldwide. The IPBES report highlights that ‘ensuring sustainability of the use of wild species, including by promoting the sustainable use and halting overexploitation, is critical to reverse the global trend in biodiversity decline’ and last, but not the least, ‘the world is dynamic and to remain sustainable, use of wild species requires constant negotiation and adaptive management. It also requires a common vision of sustainable use and transformative change in the human-nature relationship’. Can we work hard on this?

* * *

The truly successful person will always have achieved emotional self-mastery.

- Daniel Goleman

Book Review:

Rebels Against the Raj — Western Fighters for India's Freedom

RAMACHANDRA GUHA

(Allen Lane Company, New Delhi, 2022 Rs 598- pp 497)

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These seven remarkable foreigners fought for India's freedom and helped build the nation

Five years after the publication of *Democrats and Dissenters*, with its several deeply moving biographical sketches of important Indian intellectuals fading from public memory, Ramachandra Guha has come up with another.

His *Rebels Against the Raj — Western Fighters for India's Freedom* brings back to popular attention the life and times of a few of many remarkable foreigners who came to live in India and joined hands with Indians in their struggle for freedom from British rule under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership.

The foreigners in India's freedom struggle contributed to its success.

Later, those who were alive after Independence, joined the discussions, often forcefully, on India's future course.

In doing so, a catholic India stood out in a world of ultra-nationalism and exclusions. It quietly accepted that these foreigners had earned the right to speak as stakeholders of a country they considered their own and for whose freedom they had fought and suffered.

The book is aptly dedicated to Jean Drèze, the well-known Indian economist, formerly a Belgian, clearly to disprove the notion that "no foreigner, they (meaning the BJP and the RSS among others?) believe, can teach them anything."

The seven individuals, whose lives Guha covers in his book, include four who, decades after, are still

easily recognisable by many Indians — the British firebrand, Annie Besant, the forthright journalist BG Horniman, Samuel Evan Stokes (later Satyananda, after his conversion to Hinduism), and the Mahatma Gandhi acolyte Mira Behn (formerly Madeleine Slade).

The four less easily recalled, but important for all Indians to know, ones Guha introduces us to, are a former important member of the Communist Party of Great Britain and later a rabid anti-communist, Philip Spratt, Sarala (formerly Catherine Mary Heilman) and the missionary Dick (Ralph Richard) Keithahn.

Five of the seven were British and the remaining two — Stokes and Keithahn — American.

Fighting for India

Perhaps 'renegade' used by Guha is too strong a term to describe five of seven individuals figuring in this book who were British, for what "they did in India for India," and for believing, as EM Forster does in his famous 1939 essay, 'What I Believe', that "Tolerance, good temper and sympathy — they are what matter really, and if the human race is not to collapse, they must come to the front before long."

In the lead up to Independence, those featured in Guha's book, had stood firmly on Gandhi's side and the right of India to run itself. All of them had at some stage been imprisoned and at least two of them had been externed if only for a while.

One of them, BG Horniman, the famous editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* and friend of Mahatma Gandhi was even extradited to his own country, England, only to make his way back to India and live out his life in Bombay by a clever exploitation of a loophole in the law.

Women, ecological issues

The ground-breaking work in women's empowerment in Kumaon by Sarala and the environmental concerns she and Mira Behn raised — and which are even more relevant today — have been well brought out by Guha. The pioneering efforts of Stokes in making Himachal Pradesh the 'apple State' of India is a remarkable story that is well recounted in the book.

Soul cannot thrive in a fast-paced life because being affected, taking things in and
chewing on them requires time.

- Thomas Moore

Going through the website of Gandhigram Rural Institute one cannot find even a passing reference to the American missionary, the abstemious ascetic Dick Keithahn, who conceptualised it, but Guha sets the record straight.

The absurdity of the Theosophical movement is too lightly touched upon by Guha in his otherwise forthright biographical sketch of Annie Besant. Ever the objective historian, Guha does, however, give a detailed account of her significant contributions to the freedom struggle as well as the establishment of the Banaras Hindu University.

He brings out Annie Besant's often antagonistic and sometimes acrimonious relationship with Gandhi. He also highlights her prescient observation that Gandhi's ways would lead to anarchy and mass coercion.

Perhaps Guha didn't intend it, but the Gandhi we encounter in this book has a faint cult-like air about him with his ashrams where he controlled everything and the intimate and often intrusive attention he brought to bear on the lives of his acolytes like Sarala and Mira Behn. This is a side of Gandhi that is rarely highlighted by any historian.

We learn from Guha that India, under Nehru and Indira Gandhi, did not turn its back on those foreigners who lived on after India's independence. Philip Spratt never got into any trouble for being a strident critic of Nehru and his socialist ways. After his death Spratt's widow even got a pension due to freedom fighters.

Sarala could carry on her work till her death in the early eighties and was often supported by the state. Mira Behn received financial and medical support from the Indian government after she had moved out of India to live the rest of her life in Austria. She also contributed significantly to the making of the award-winning film on Gandhi by Richard Attenborough.

Guha is a wonderful raconteur and his book is a terrific read. It is deeply researched, drawing heavily on archival records available in India, the British Library, London and elsewhere.

It is written with feeling yet with a dispassionate objectivity that makes it stand out as an exceptionally illuminating work of class forcing us to ask ourselves as Guha does, "If India was so open and tolerant in the past why is it much less so today?"

Courtesy : Business Line May 31, 2022

* * *

Book Review:

WRIST ASSURED

**Gundappa Vishwanath
with R. Kaushik**

Rupa Publications India, New Delhi 2022

The eagerly awaited autobiography of Gundappa Vishwanath has hit the stands as gracefully as his famous square cut crossed the boundary line on the cricket ground. The style is the man, it is said. G.R. Vishwanath has a style of his own, unique and inimitable. As one of India's finest and most admired cricketers and as a self-effacing gentleman in public life he is respected by millions of people in India and abroad. Absolutely true in his case the adage is that 'he never lost a friend nor made an enemy.'

This is the life story of a celebrated cricketer who has blended the values of the *Noblest Game* with human values in narrating his own life story and rise to eminence in an unostentatious manner. There are many things common between cricket and life, not only, 'glorious uncertainties' but also 'eccentric success and stunning disasters' that upset our mental equilibrium. The take-off by autobiographer Gundappa Vishwanath is smooth and steady. The narrative is lucid and endearingly honest. In the very first chapter of *Wrist Assured* Vishwanath writes about the impact of the game of cricket on his life and the ideal he set for himself thus: "Whatever happened was only because of cricket, it reiterated to me that the game is paramount. Yet, it hadn't escaped my attention that everyone who was there loves Vishwanath the cricketer just as much as they love Vishwanath the person. That made me very proud that I belong somewhere."

Make sure that you have time in your life just to think.

- Thoreau

G.R. Vishwanath was born on February 12, 1949, in Bhadravati, Karnataka. He was raised in Bengaluru where he was 'bitten by the cricket bug.' The five-feet-two-inch had aspiring youngster played in Mysore League cricket under the guidance of seniors like Chandra Shetty. His ambition to play for the state team in cricket was fulfilled under fortuitous circumstances when the Mysore team, chosen to play against Andhra in November 1967 in Ranji Trophy, was a depleted side due to the unavailability of several senior players. Vishwanath made his historic debut in that Ranji match when to the astonishment of the small crowd and sports writers, he batted all through the day and hit up a record-breaking knock of 230 runs. Vishwanath's childhood icon was that lovely Australian left hander, Neil Harvey. His mentor and a great source of inspiration was the Nawab of Pataudi. "The charismatic Tiger Pataudi, my skip, was a massive influence on my career. It was at his insistence that I made my test debut in 1969," writes Vishwanath. Among the unforgettable moments in his illustrious career were the honour he received from the President of India, Shri V.V. Giri, who conferred on him the Padma Shri Award in 1971, when the Karnataka cricket team led by the astute E.A.S. Prasanna won the Ranji Trophy Championship during 1973-1974, when Sunil Gavaskar honored him with the Castrol Lifetime Achievement Award, and when he received the Arjuna Award, the highest sporting honour in the country in 1977-1978. Vishwanath has high respect for his teammates B.S. Chandrashekar

and Raghuram Bhat. In his illustrious career, he has 14 test centuries to his credit and 6,080 runs in first class cricket. He regards Kapil Dev as India's greatest all-rounder and lavishes praise on Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, V.V.S. Laxman, Rahul Dravid, M.S. Dhoni, and Virat Kohli among others for their magnificent contribution to Indian cricket. Sir Garry Sobers and Vivian Richards top the list of his icons.

The beauty of the book lies in the humility of the author and the magnanimity towards his colleagues and cricketers in general. Right from his childhood till his retirement, G.R. Vishwanath considered the game as of supreme importance. Vishwanath the cricketer may have achieved greatness as a player but Vishwanath the person must be remembered in equal measure for the qualities of his head and heart. "Cricket has brought out the best in me and taught me the importance of adherence to its noble ideals. The one thing I can say with complete certainty is that I have not changed as a person. I am what I have always been: it's a bit like my batting... Cricket's life lessons have made me the person I am, warts and all. I will be eternally indebted to the sport I love for giving me my identity, and to the Almighty for giving me cricket, above all else," he concludes his magnum opus which will impress the connoisseurs of the game and inspire the aspiring cricketers of today. Mr. Kaushik who assisted Vishy in this noble task deserves the appreciation of all.

A. Prasanna Kumar

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